

# **“A Time to Dream” Project**

*A CD-ROM made by Kooris, about Koori History*  
*Produced by Gary Foley, Bruce McGuinness & Haydn Keenan*  
*In association with:-*

**Centre for Aboriginal & Islander Research, Participation and Development**  
**James Cook University, Townsville QLD**

**Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies**  
**Canberra ACT**

**Interactive Multimedia Learning Laboratory**  
**Faculty of Education**  
**University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW**

**Melbourne Aboriginal Education Association Inc**  
**Melbourne VIC**

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## **“A Time to Dream” - the CD-ROM**

### **Introduction**

*“A Time to Dream” the CD-ROM*, is an attempt to develop and extend the concept of raising Australian peoples awareness of the recent history of Indigenous Australians in a Multi-Media format. This was first presented on CD-ROM by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in its *“Aboriginal Encyclopedia”*. That project, as well as films such as *“Harold”* being recently screened on ABC-TV, have proved that a tremendous interest exists in the education and general communities for otherwise little known details of the history and culture of Koori Australia.

But those examples also highlight the need for Indigenous people to tell their own stories from their own perspective, and the *“Time to Dream” CD-ROM* will focus on a specific decade of Koori and Australian history, be told by Koori people and produced and presented by Koori people.

By providing an inter-active CD-ROM format containing a detailed historical time line of the "*decade of uprising*", from 1963 - 1973, the "Time to Dream" CD-ROM will incorporate historical records, newsreel and TV footage, newspaper cuttings, personal sound and film interviews, photographs, maps etc. This will enable both serious students of Indigenous history, as well as those with a casual interest, to explore the rich and vibrant history of that era, for the first time from the point of view of the Indigenous peoples themselves.

Because this CD-ROM was conceived, and is being produced by, two of the foremost Koori activists to have participated in that dynamic period of Australian history, we can expect a degree of authenticity in the Koori perspective that is perhaps missing from the "*Aboriginal Encyclopedia*". Mr Bruce McGuinness in the early 1970's produced and directed the first films by a Koori person, and in the 1960's, as the first Koori Director of the Aborigines Advancement League, played a key role in the Indigenous peoples Land Rights struggle of the time, and remains an important and influential leader of the Koori Community to this day.

Mr Gary Foley is well known as both an actor and political activist since the late 1960's. He was involved in the creation of Aboriginal community-controlled Legal Aid and Health Services in the 1970's, wrote and acted in the first all-Koori theatre and television productions, was Director of the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, and more recently was the organiser of the successful two-year campaign to re-open Northland Secondary College in Victoria after the Kennett Government had closed it. So you can see that at the helm of this project are highly experienced and uniquely qualified Koori community leaders.

Furthermore, the "Time to Dream" CD-ROM, unlike an encyclopedia, will have a specific theme and Koori perspective throughout, but will still encourage the viewer to choose their own path to exploring that theme. Technically, we would like to develop a platform which would allow viewers to move more freely through the information than has been the case with many other CD-ROM's. The game "MYST" is one which we could draw ideas as it allows free movement based on problem solving. There isn't necessarily an ending but rather a journey from which learning occurs.

Furthermore, with the Interactive Multimedia Learning Laboratory of Wollongong University involved in the technical development, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies and James Cook University Centre for Aboriginal & Islander Research, Development and Participation involved in the development of the content, this Project would seem a unique attempt to redress the imbalance in Australian history texts.

And because the "Time to Dream" CD-ROM is being developed in conjunction with a multi-part documentary film series of the same name, funded by the Australian Film Commission, there will not only be extensive supplementary material to compliment that contained in the CD-ROM, but also each project has the capacity to promote and stimulate interest in the other, thus reaching a maximum possible audience. This will also make the "Time to Dream" CD-ROM and Video/film package a very attractive proposition for School, College and University libraries and Australian History Departments.

## IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT

Over the past few years the Prime Minister and Federal Government have been at the forefront of a campaign to encourage the Australian people to gain a greater knowledge and awareness of what has happened to Indigenous Australians over the past two hundred years since British invasion, because the Government knows that there can only be genuine Reconciliation between the Indigenous peoples and the rest of Australia when the Australian nation understands the truth of Australian history.

In the combined 60 years experience of the Producers of this project, they have observed that non-Koori Australians always respond more positively to Indigenous people and issues when they are better informed about our history. Since there has been both a conspiracy of silence, and a deliberately false version of Australian history taught to all students in this country for 95% of the past 150 years, it is little wonder that the majority of Australians know virtually nothing of the real history of Indigenous Australia.

For Australians to begin to understand they must be told the story from the Aboriginal peoples perspective. Apart from a few films and a couple of inadequate TV documentaries over the past 20 years, there has never been a major series of Koori history films written, produced and directed by Koori people. We believe that is a major contributing factor in why so much ignorance and prejudice persists in the broader Australian community. The films and television shows about Kooris produced by non-Koori film makers have over 20 years been singularly unsuccessful in creating a greater understanding for their audiences, so we believe it is time for the Koori people to tell their own story.

The "*Time to Dream*" Project is a serious and major attempt to bridge this gap of misunderstanding, and in doing so make a significant contribution to the process of Reconciliation that must occur for this nation to be a viable and mature Republic in the year 2000.

## UNIQUE NATURE OF CONTENT

The most obvious aspect that makes this project unique is the fact that it has been conceived, designed, produced and controlled by Koori community people. Their unique perspective, as well as the scope of the CD-ROM and film series, will make this project the definitive work on the subject of Koori history, and will become an internationally recognised and renowned reference. This rare element of Koori control, resulting in the product being a genuine "Indigenous voice", must necessarily greatly enhance its national and international market.

Another feature of this project is the rare and unique material that will be a major part of the content of the CD-ROM. Most of the film footage, photographs, personal interviews, biographies, tape recordings and writings would be material never seen before by the majority of non-Koori Australia. Even the foremost historians, anthropologists and other serious students of Aboriginal history have never seen or heard a lot of the material that has already been examined by the "*Time to Dream*" Project.

We have been fortunate, in that, because the two of the three Producers of "*Time to Dream*" are of such eminence in the Koori

community, they have been able to trace and find a range of hitherto unknown private collections and personal archives of major Koori political and cultural importance over the past 100 years. Much of this material has never before been seen by non-Indigenous eyes because the families did not want white anthropologists "snooping" into their lives any more than they already were. For whatever reason, the fact remains that the rich and diverse story of the Indigenous peoples struggle to survive after the invasion of their land remains unknown to non-Indigenous Australia, and it will only ultimately be Koori people who can tell our story to the world.

### WHY CD-ROM?

1. If we are to "tell our story to the world", then what better way than to take advantage of the "new technology", and provide the information in a format that will be a major component of future education systems.
2. It seems to us that we are targeting the Australian high school and tertiary students of the last few years of this decade and century who will be the leaders and citizens of the proposed Republic of Australia, in which case CD-ROM will be the primary education databases used by that generation of young Australians.
3. CD-ROM format empowers the user in that they are free to explore the information from any point they choose, but from our point of view they are still able to be shown the story from the Koori peoples perspective.
4. It is an ideal format for the amount and type of information we wish to store and be accessible. It also creates a range of interesting possibilities in how that material might be presented and/or accessed.
5. Since Indigenous people have been largely excluded from producing their own films over the past 30 years, it seems to us that being involved in the creation of innovative computer software that conveys our message is a practical alternative means of communications and Reconciliation.

## POSSIBILITIES BEYOND

1. In the event that "*Time to Dream*" was a success, both in terms of reaching a major part of the vast potential audience that it has, and in terms of being viable commercially, as well as fulfilling the aims of the "*Creative Nation*" Statement, then there would exist the market and opportunity of producing a whole range of Koori history CD-ROM's each focusing on a different aspect or era of the Indigenous peoples history of Australia.

To achieve even part of that would be to make a significant contribution toward genuine historic Reconciliation, and also would be a major enhancement of the cultural heritage of the nation.

2. The interest and involvement of both James Cook University's Aboriginal & Islander Centre, and Wollongong University's Interactive Multi-Media Learning Laboratory means that education/career opportunities and job creation possibilities exist to involve young Koori people in new technology industries. The joint involvement of these two institutions alone is a historic one in terms of having technological experts working closely with Koori writers and producers. The additional possible involvement of the famous Northland Secondary College Koori students means that even Koori high school students will have a chance to develop either their interest in computers and possible computer related careers, and/or their interest in the Koori history/culture part of the development of content.

This makes the Koori involvement in this project second to none in that Koori people will control the project and be involved at all stages and every level of the project. Plus, the meaningful job/career opportunities for young Kooris that could and should come from this project is in itself a compelling reason for both Government and industry to support "*Time to Dream*".

3. The involvement already of the Australian Film Commission in the funding of research and script development of the multi-part documentary film series, "Time to dream", means that the producers are hoping to enlist AFC technical support and assistance for some aspects of the "Time to

Dream" the CD-ROM project. This will help to maximise the number of relevant agencies that might be involved in this dynamic and exciting project, as we believe that through participation in the research and development of our CD-ROM, other bodies can become part of the reconciliation process in a meaningful way.

## CONCLUSION

In October 1994, the Prime Minister announced the new "*Creative Nation*", Commonwealth Cultural Policy. Two major aspects of this policy are the emphasis on Indigenous culture as an integral component of a new mature Australian nation in 2000, and a specific focus on the need for the country to develop new, innovative CD-ROM programs as part of Australia's economic advancement.

The "*Time to Dream*" Project should be one of those funded, not just because it is the only genuinely Koori project likely to be presented, but also because we believe the Project fits perfectly what the Prime Minister envisaged in his *Cultural Nation* Statement.