



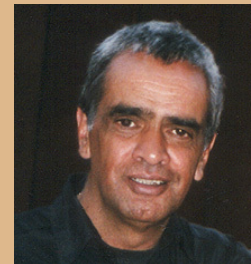
2016 has been a busy year for UC CIRI.

- [Research Grant Scheme - read about the projects we are funding or find out how to apply in the current funding round](#)
- [Annual Ngunnawal seminar presented by Professor Gary Foley](#)
- [Symposia on exploring Indigenous research methodologies](#)
- [Launch of the Bundian Way Gateway Design](#)
- [UC CIRI Visitor Program now available](#)
- [Paul Collis, new PhD and winner of a 2016 Queensland Literary Award](#)
- [Scholarship Program - Support for Honours, Masters and PhD Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students](#)

Professor Gary Foley will present the **2016 Annual Ngunnawal Lecture** with his presentation,

"Black Fire: A journey through history"

The lecture held on 25 October 2016 at 6:00pm, will be followed by reception.



[Click here to RSVP](#)

"Exploring Indigenous Research Methodologies"



Event will be held on 25 November 2016.

This symposium will explore work at the cutting edge of Indigenous methodologies with a focus on how best to collect, understand and archive the relational entanglements of human and nonhuman memories and resonances linked to place.

[Find out More](#)

UC CIRI Research Grant Scheme

We have now provided seed funding to 5 projects and are opening up

applications for more projects to commence in 2017. Projects funded so far include:

- [Knowing the Mountain: Cullunghatti as memory, place and soundscape](#)
- [Researching and Designing the Gateway to the Bundian Way, South Coast Region, NSW](#)
- [Restoring salt springs for ecological and cultural values](#)
- [Tea tree oil for the management of scabies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: a pilot randomised controlled trial](#)
- [The prevalence of deficit metrics in Indigenous education and their impact on public discourse, policy and educational practice](#)

Applications are now open for the next round of funding. For information on how to apply please go to the [UC CIRI website](#).

[Top of Page](#)

60,000 Years in the Making - the PhD of Paul Collis

Interview by Peter O'Brien

Paul Collis, one of UC's first Indigenous doctoral recipients, jokes that his PhD was 60 000 years in the making. Like many of the wily Dr Collis' remarks, it is an observation loaded with meaning. On the surface, a nod to the long years of toil - longer than most, he acknowledges, because of his cultural responsibilities, financial constraints and personal journey. But he means it also in a deeper, spiritual sense, because Paul sees himself as giving voice to the Aboriginal outsider in society and expression to ancient ways of being and knowing through his work.



As someone who has come through the UC Foundations program, completed an undergraduate degree with first class honours and now a PhD, awarded in September 2016, Paul is well-placed to provide insights into the issues facing our Indigenous students. I met up with him to ask him about it.

Paul is a Barkindji man, river people from the Darling at Bourke. Born there in 1958, he remembers a wide river, beautiful red gums and Sunday school on the reserve in the morning and in town in the evening. Calling himself 'his grandfather's hope', he recalls a household with a strong work ethic and focus on education. His mother, who could not read, saw to it that they spent time at the table doing homework. "My mum couldn't read or write", Paul reflects, "but her son can". He was a straight 'A' student in primary school, with a prodigious memory and an inquiring mind that saw him awarded a boarding scholarship to All Saints College in Bathurst. While he recognized the opportunity it presented, and took it, the six years were heart-breakingly lonely and isolated from family and friends. He was the only Aboriginal child in school and remembers tough times and an obligation to his family to stay.

He moved to Newcastle where his family had relocated and worked in a variety of jobs, marrying and having 'two beautiful daughters'. He started University in Newcastle, with a couple of spluttering attempts in education, which he says foundered because of his shyness. He then started a degree in communications, with a keen interest in identity and its representation in the media. An

important academic mentor for Paul there saw his interest in theory and encouraged him to pursue it at UC. That personal touch and word of mouth recommendation are critical in the choices that Indigenous students make, Paul says. Trust is the key.

It was a turning point in many ways. First, Paul felt validated by her recognition of a strength; second, he found at UC a supportive environment through the combination of the Ngunnawal Centre, the Faculty staff and the Harmony multi-faith centre; and third, he had found a subject of enduring interest. He credits these factors and especially the pastoral support of the Ngunnawal Centre Director with his success in graduating with first class honours. He says that they worked with his strengths, encouraged him and built his confidence - a key ingredient that is often fragile in Indigenous students. There was a personal touch, a strong confirmation of culture, his 'Barkindjiness', an extended family environment, music - and an unbending expectation that he would succeed.

Asked what advice he would give Indigenous undergraduates at UC, Paul is clear: first, acknowledge that this is hard - the university is a new place, language and culture that you have to make sense of; second, seek support, from the Ngunnawal Centre, from the Faculty and from mentors, Indigenous and non-Indigenous; third, commit to it and work at it; and last, seemingly from long personal experience, don't party too hard!

Paul went from Honours into a PhD with a University scholarship. He loved the intellectual environment of his PhD and the feeling that there were no boundaries. He was also surprised and delighted to learn that academics didn't know everything! Paul faced major challenges during his post-graduate years. It was a period when 28 family members died, including his mother and all of his uncles. Two cousins committed suicide in one night. Describing himself as heartbroken and emotionally destroyed, this period nearly derailed his studies. As the oldest man in his family, he also had substantial cultural responsibilities associated with these deaths that took him back to Bourke on numerous occasions. He felt pulled apart, committed to his studies and to his obligations. His research, which included inquiring into his wider family was also surfacing some shocking and confronting stories of violence and abuse that were deeply traumatic for Paul.

Paul credits a number of visits to Uluru and a deeply spiritual time there with helping him get back on track. He also relied heavily on his supervisors and his post-graduate colleagues and especially one close friendship. Reflecting, he believes that the quiet, peaceful, education-focussed environment of UC and the wider Canberra area were important for his success in completing the thesis. "Too many Aboriginal people", Paul says, "come from places where there is violence and argument - rough and tough communities where quiet is hard to come by."

He got there! Paul's creative arts doctoral thesis includes a novel, which tells the story of Indigenous friends, outsiders, leaving jail and heading west through country towards home in a beat-up sedan. Part gonzo road-trip, part spiritual journey, at its core is a deeply sad story of fractured and lost identity. The novel rounds up some ghosts for Paul.

Asked for his advice to his Indigenous post-graduate colleagues at UC, Paul says, "It can be long and lonely, so reach out for support from mentors, the Faculty and supervisors and the wider university; keep family close in all ways, and bring them along in your journey; be honest with yourself and supervisors about your progress and needs; and negotiate the time and space you need culturally to meet your responsibilities". Taken together, Paul believes there is a compelling

case for the PhD undertaken by Indigenous students to be designed to accommodate their living cultural needs and obligations.

What next for Paul Collis? He is keen to remain in Canberra, to work with Indigenous students and on his research. Watch this space.

Since this interview Paul has one the David Unaipon Award (2016 Queensland Literary Awards)

[Top of Page](#)

UC CIRI Scholarship Program

In 2016 UC CIRI launched it's Scholarship Program to support students undertaking Honours, Masters and post graduate studies. The program provides funds to assist students to attend conferences, conduct fieldwork/research and assist with the cost of studying.

To date the program has assisted students to:

- attend the 2016 Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) Conference in Hawaii
- Participate in the Indigenous Media Mentoring program run by the Australian Science Media Centre and the Wollutuka Institute
- Present and attend at the Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ) Conference in Auckland
- Participate in a PhD study tour with Professor Bronwyn Carlson which included participating in a series of workshops, attending a symposium at the University of Albany titled 'Global Solidarity: Harnessing the Strength of Indigenous Communities Around the World", and attending the 2016 National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Conference in Québec

If you are undertaking studies beyond a Bachelor Degree at UC and need financial assistance with an aspect of your studies please [go to our website](#) and complete an application form.

[Top of Page](#)

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