

**Remembering the Storm:**

**Indigenous people's remembrances of Cyclone Tracy explored through the medium  
of radio documentary**

**The University of Adelaide**

**Discipline of Media**

**Masters by Research (comprising Radio documentary and accompanying exegesis)**

**By Naomi Carolin,**

**B. Media (Honours)**

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## **Abstract**

This research consists of a radio documentary that explores the mood leading up to Cyclone Tracy that hit Darwin on Christmas Eve, 1974, with an accompanying exegesis that discusses the making of the documentary in the context of Indigenous media in Australia. It further explores the social fabric of survivors' lives in Darwin during this time, the uniqueness of place, and the environmental impact of the storm. It does so in regard to Indigenous cultural traditions and the impact of the storm on families. I have focused on my own extended family and their Indigenous perspective on this event. I have sought to convey the sense of intimacy that a radio program can bring to the audience and a sense of authenticity that I experienced growing up with our family tradition of oral history. The experiences of Cyclone Tracy are recalled by my respondents with each having a unique story of survival, and how they moved forward after this devastating event. I have explored themes such as survival, tradition, uniqueness of place, storytelling, and adaptation. I have used work by researchers such as Faye Ginsburg, Terence Turner, Eric Michaels, and Kristin Dowell, who look at the uses of Indigenous media in contemporary times. Indigenous academics Rosemary Van Den Berg, Lester Irabina Rigney, Helen Molnar and Marcia Langton write about the uses of and need for Indigenous media. The need for the Indigenous voice to be heard is paramount and this is the central point of my thesis and documentary, which also examine questions of the sustainability of Indigenous media. Success stories of Indigenous media are explored using examples such as the Warlpiri Media Association and Goolarri Media Enterprises in Broome.

## **Declaration**

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Naomi Deana Carolin and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library catalogue, the Australasian Digital Theses Program (ADTP) and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

### **Signed:**

Naomi Deana Carolin

04 December 2009

## **Acknowledgments**

This is an opportunity for me to thank my family, every single one of them in Darwin, Adelaide and around Australia for participating in some way or another. To my direct respondents who shared with me their survival stories: I feel proud to have produced such an amazing documentary and exegesis with your help. It would not have been possible without you. I hope what I have done makes you all proud. You have contributed to the preservation of our history.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Mike Wilmore and Associate Professor Mary Griffiths, who have been incredibly supportive and continually believed in this project, along with, Jenni Caruso and staff from Wilto Yerlo who provided me with continued help and encouragement over the course of my candidature.

I also wish to thank my mother for believing in me and my family, my patient partner Jim for his support, and of course my incredible friends.

I dedicate the completion of my Masters by Research to my late father Alessandro Feltrin.

Thank you.

Naomi Carolin

### **Forward: Remembering the storm**

My name is Naomi Carolin, I am a graduate from The University of Adelaide, Discipline of Media, and have an Honours Degree in Media. I would like to take the opportunity to give some information on my background. This will give you an insight into the diversity of my family, allow you to share the passion I feel for my ancestry. It will also draw out and understand my enthusiasm for radio production and my appreciation for the history of Darwin.

I am the youngest of five children, and my family origins on my Mother's side are from Borroloola and Darwin in the Northern Territory. My family are of Aboriginal and Spanish-Filipino ancestry on my mother's side through her mother. My mother's father originated from South Africa with French and Irish ancestry. My Father and his family originated from Treviso in Northern Italy. I come from a culturally diverse background, and love it. I have grown up appreciating my family origins from the Northern Territory and have a close connection to my Indigenous family in Darwin.

I completed an Honours Degree in Media at the University of Adelaide in 2006 majoring in Radio Production. I have a passion for history, particularly Australian history. I especially have an interest in preserving a record of Australia's Indigenous, migrant and local histories for future generations, including the oral history of my family. I have grown up with an appreciation of the history of Darwin from hearing tales about the bombing in 1942, and family yarns about growing up in the post war years and their survival of Cyclone Tracy.

Darwin is a unique place. It has endured much adversity, but the people of this town- especially the traditional Territorians' have a tenacity that is inspiring to hear and read about. My family is connected to many of the local family groups, such as the Damaso's, Bonson's, Muirs, and Ruddicks. These ties date back three generations; it is a history rich in tradition and loyalty. Being an Indigenous researcher and producer of media I wanted to use my knowledge to preserve my history and share with others the spirit and unique character of Darwin.

Cyclone Tracy remains the biggest natural disaster in modern Northern Territory history and the documentary I have produced shares my Indigenous family's reflections on the event. The accompanying exegesis outlines the need for Indigenous media and Indigenous controlled media, and explains why I chose Cyclone Tracy for my Masters research. It also outlines my research process, explains how I produced the program and the ethical components, and concludes with recommendations for the future in this field of study.

I am passionate about Indigenous media and its uses because it fascinates me how others produce media. I am determined to produce more pieces of oral history for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to listen to and enjoy. It is important for Indigenous people to share their knowledge about life and culture so that non-Indigenous people begin to understand.

From the documentary and accompanying exegesis, I want people to have an appreciation for Indigenous oral histories and their use in media. I want Indigenous knowledge to have a place in its own right in academia. I hope you enjoy reading the exegesis and listening to my documentaries.