



Media Release

A non-profit Aboriginal Organisation based in Newcastle, NSW has taken out a top award at the recent Australian Community Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Awards held in Brisbane. Arwarbukarl Cultural Resource Association Incorporated (ACRA) were joint winners for the category “Best use of Software in nonprofit settings” for their development and distribution of the “Miromaa” software program.

There were once over 10,000 traditional languages in the world. Today, every two weeks one of those languages is lost and Australia is most at risk of losing its traditional languages (estimated to have been between 250 and 500). Linguists and community leaders around the world are struggling to stem this loss. It is through the use of technology that Indigenous people globally are now attempting to access tools to capture, preserve and promote traditional languages.

Daryn McKenny an Aboriginal man from the Newcastle area and Manager of ACRA, is the person behind the development of Miromaa. Daryn says “It’s through technology that we can empower ourselves to be hands-on with work that was in the past carried out only by trained academics and linguists. Until recently all of the computer programs available for language recording have been aimed at the academics, and my goal with Miromaa has been to create a tool that our community members can easily understand and put into use.”

Over the last 4 years ACRA have been developing Miromaa to assist in the reclamation, revitalisation and preservation of the traditional Aboriginal languages of Australia. The main aim of the computer program is to be a user friendly interface for Aboriginal people to use technology in all aspects of language maintenance -from entering textual evidence of language through to the rich multimedia products of video, audio and images, and even producing word lists and dictionaries. Miromaa is able to assist in all aspects of the unique – an urgent task which Aboriginal people from all over Australia are embarking on.

Mckenny goes on to say “Like many of our people we like a challenge. Miromaa is what happened when we faced this challenge. I’m really happy that it’s now helping our people in all states of Australia to get involved once again and work towards speaking our languages. Our languages hold our culture and the knowledge of this country. They tell who we are and where we are from. Many say that language is our soul. Our work is creating a happy

marriage of the world's oldest culture and the world's newest culture, technology. We like to call this, Modern Ways for Ancient Words".

ACRA is funded under the Federal Governments Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and its Maintenance for Indigenous Language Records grants scheme. In 2007 they were also recognised for their innovative training methods in travelling to rural and remote areas of Australia, this training which centred around up-skilling Aboriginal people in the latest technology was supported by Microsoft Australia and their Corporate Citizenship program "Unlimited Potential".

All of ACRA's activities are aimed to deliver a product which is user friendly and is backed up by the necessary training.

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Web <http://www.cisa.asn.au/cgi-bin/wf.pl> and <http://www.connectingup.org/conference/>

About Arwarbukarl CRA

www.arwarbukarl.com.au

About Miromaa

<http://www.arwarbukarl.com.au/default.aspx?id=153>

Further Information

The other joint winner was Support Link Australia, for a web based application that enhances early intervention outcomes for vulnerable individuals and families.