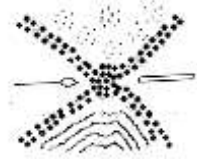


# Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring



Language and Culture Centre

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## Internships at MDWg

Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre (MDWg) is an Aboriginal organisation seeking to preserve and revitalise the Miriwoong language of the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. Our language revitalisation initiatives include a wide range of activities, such as an early childhood program, language classes, resource development, and bilingual radio programs, to name a few.

MDWg has been hosting linguist interns and volunteers from many different universities since 2010 and below is a selection of feedback received.

*"My two-month internship at MDWg was a highlight of my doctoral studies (on cultural sustainability). It gave me first-hand insight into the rich complexities and challenges of language and cultural maintenance in the Australian context, and the wonderful opportunity to celebrate with the Miriwoong and MDWg community some of the successes of their remarkable efforts in this area. It was a privilege to learn a little of the language and culture too; and KJ, Rita, and the team couldn't have made me feel more welcome. The internship experience has led to further opportunities for me to work together with Australian Indigenous peoples, including a research project evaluation with the Yarrabah community (far north Qld) and a research and artistic collaboration with the TSI Murray Island (Mer) community in Australia. Even more importantly, it greatly enriched and deepened my understanding of what contemporary life is like for people living in a remote Indigenous community - I am most grateful for that."*

(Catherine Grant, Griffith University, Brisbane)

"The internship has been an eye-opening experience in allowing me to see how linguistic theories can translate to real life. In university, we read and learn about language revitalisation efforts, remember notable examples of them, and look at statistics of ethnolinguistic vitality without fully understanding its implications. However, it is an entirely different matter when you're really working with people, immerse yourself in their culture, and see first-hand the stakes there are when a language and its interlinked culture get slowly eroded along the generations. I was very happy to be able to apply my linguistic knowledge in a practical context, and be offered a chance to bond with and interact with this community."

(Michelle Sim, Nanyang Technological University - Singapore)

"To say that my internship at MDWg was amazing is an understatement. From the moment I arrived I was made to feel welcome and able to use the Linguistics knowledge we were taught through our degree. Experiencing the Aboriginal culture firsthand and witnessing both language & cultural aspects we only read about in textbooks at uni gave me a whole new understanding of things I had only studied about. The internship at MDWg brought together what we studied and played an integral role in furthering my linguistics knowledge firsthand. I was given a front-row seat in a language revitalization project with a firsthand view of just what it means when a language is endangered. Reading about it at uni is one thing; experiencing it & having the opportunity to put it into practice is quite another. My appreciation and knowledge of both linguistics and

Australian Aboriginal language revitalization would not be what it is today without this internship. My internship at MDWg only made my love for Linguistics grow."

(Lizzie Damiano, University of New England, Armadale)

„All in all, the internship has been a very valuable experience for me. I was able to gain experience in a field which I am very interested in and which is directly related to my university studies. I am convinced that this internship will be very useful for my further professional career. I am very happy about the intercultural experience and the awareness I gained about the situation of the indigenous people of Australia. I gained a different viewpoint on the value of language documentation and revitalisation. At the same time, I am more critical about its ethical ramifications. Even if my internship was only 10 weeks long, I have grown a lot personally.“

(Gina Reinhard, Heinrich Heine Universität, Düsseldorf - Germany)

My experiences of community based language work, in particular the opportunity to get to know and work with local language workers, allowed me to develop skills and knowledge that have proved invaluable in my current job working with indigenous teachers at a bilingual school. It was through the relationships I developed with my colleagues that I was able to understand the psychosocial aspects of language revitalisation including individual motivations and aspirations.

(Gretel MacDonald, Macquarie University; now senior language resource officer (linguist) at Yuendumu School, NT Department of Education)

My internship at MDWg (2013) was highly engaging and allowed me to work on a wide variety of projects. I learned a tremendous amount about language revitalisation practices and the role of language in society. Most importantly I learned about working with a community that is not my own in a respectful way. This experience led me to study topics like history, decolonisation, cultural safety, social justice and reconciliation, mainly in the Canadian context. My internship at MDWg contributed to shaping my values and my interests in the intersections between public health and language. I am so glad that I took the opportunity to apply for and complete the MDWg internship. I can't thank the staff and community members enough for what they shared with me!

(Vivienne Walz MSc Public Health 2017, McGill University - Canada)

"... During my time at MDWg I have had the opportunity to practice certain skills and learn others such as audio editing, layouting, analysis in Toolbox, transcription in ELAN etc. I greatly appreciate that the friendly relationship with the Language Workers and Masters lead the Mirima Council to invite me to write my dissertation about the linguistic expression of possession in the Miriwoong language. As a result I was employed by the University of Cologne in Germany as a Research Assistant to work on my PhD on Miriwoong. ... - To conclude, my internship at MDWg has taught me what documentation and revitalisation of an endangered language looks like on the ground and how theoretical constructs can be applied in practice. It has led to intercultural friendships as well as opened up a career in academia."

(Christina Ringel, Universities of Paderborn and Duesseldorf - Germany, now PhD candidate at University of Cologne)

MDWg is such a successful example of a dedicated language centre and my time there was an invaluable experience for me as an indigenous linguist engaged in the revitalisation of my own community language. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the heroic language worker team, getting the chance to share our knowledge, skills, and struggles with each other; and learning so much about the similarities and differences between our communities' language journeys.

(Dr Sally Akevai Nicholas, now Lecturer, Auckland University of Technology - New Zealand)

MDWg offers different types of internships, which differ in terms of length, engagement, and level of financial support.

1. Our **Standard Internship** program engages linguist volunteers for a period of 10 or more weeks to assist us with our various tasks related to language revitalisation. Successful candidates will get insight into the typical operations of a language centre, including language documentation and revitalisation, literacy training, language teaching, resource development, radio broadcast production, training for Indigenous language workers, as well as technical and administrative tasks.
2. The **Language Nest Internship** program aims at engaging linguist volunteers for a period of 10 or more weeks. Their focus will be on the support of our team of Miriwoong women who are engaged in the Miriwoong early childhood language program. Typical tasks involve different forms of training, such as lesson planning, pedagogical skills, and resource development.

While MDWg is not in a position to pay any compensation, we have limited funds to subsidise the costs for accommodation (typically \$150 per week; more for a long-term, special internship). All interns are engaged as volunteers and their involvement does not constitute employment on any salary of wage. The weekly subsidy towards living expenses is made as a voluntary contribution. What we can offer is an unforgettable experience working with the local Miriwoong community, hands-on knowledge about the issues of language revitalisation and some skills related to the work of a field linguist.

All internships require a WA Working with Children Check and National Police Clearance. MDWg is prepared to reimburse the cost for these applications.

Applicants should have a background in languages, linguistics, education, Indigenous, or related fields, be open to working in a diverse cultural environment, and probably have some sense of adventure, including a tolerance to Kimberley temperatures. While Kununurra is located in one of the most beautiful areas of the country, please note that the region may experience extreme weather conditions, depending on the season. The nearest regional centre is Darwin in the Northern Territory (ca. 900 km).

Past experience has shown that internships at MDWg can be competitive, as we prefer to have only one intern at a time for each category. In order to apply, please send us an expression of brief interest first, indicating what type of internship you are interested in and we will respond with a detailed description.

Full applications should include a comprehensive CV and a cover letter which includes a preferred starting date - please follow the instructions on the detailed internship description.

On the following page you will find a summary of internships available for 2020.

# **Standard Internship at Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring**

Approximate start dates for 2020: Late January/March/May/July/September

The Standard Internship is an all-round experience of MDWg's work and will usually go over 10-12 weeks. The successful candidate will be involved in the various language revitalisation activities at MDWg, which includes day-to-day support of Miriwoong language workers. Regular activities include the weekly Miriwoong Knowledge Cycle, lesson planning, bilingual radio broadcasts, technical tasks such as audio/video recording and editing, resource development, fieldtrip organisation, and other language learning activities - usually based on the intern's individual skills and interests. The intern will work in close collaboration with the Language Services Facilitator.

Contact: Knut J. Olawsky, Senior Linguist/Manager; E-mail: [manager@mirima.org.au](mailto:manager@mirima.org.au)

# **Language Nest Internship at Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring**

Approximate start dates for 2020: Late January/Mar/May/July/September

Our Miriwoong Language Nest (MDWg's children and schooling program) is looking for volunteers to join us as interns during 2020. The successful candidate would spend at least 10 weeks at MDWg to support us with a number of diverse tasks. This will include assisting our Indigenous teachers in preparing for daily lessons, activities, and anything else required to run language sessions. An interest in languages and how to both learn and teach them is crucial. You would also be involved in helping the Indigenous teachers acquire various other skills such as general computer proficiency, use of Microsoft Office, and use of language learning/documentation software. Additionally, your role would include helping Indigenous staff improve spoken and written Standard Australian English skills. A background in education and teaching will be an advantage. The intern will work in close collaboration with the Language Nest Facilitator.

Subject to availability of funding, we may offer this opportunity as a Special Internship for a period of 6-12 months.

Contact: Knut J. Olawsky, Senior Linguist/Manager; E-mail: [manager@mirima.org.au](mailto:manager@mirima.org.au)

In relation to any internship, please submit an informal expression of interest first and we will send you further details about your preference. Full applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis until the end of 2019. A selection process will apply.

## **Shorter stays**

Sometimes we are asked about the possibility of shorter stays. We try to avoid such short stints as our team meets many new people throughout the year and establishing meaningful relationships naturally takes a bit of time. We therefore encourage potential applicants to consider a longer-term commitment along the lines of the internships described above.