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# Interpreting Umeewarra Mission

Jane James

## Abstract

Indigenous occupation of Australia for at least the last 60,000 years, was followed by European settlers in 1788. Christian missions and government reserves established at this time, often removed Aboriginal children from their parents, families and land. These children are 'the Stolen Generation'. One such mission was Umeewarra Mission at Port Augusta in South Australia, which was established by the Brethren church in the 1930s and operated until recently. Some of the former children who were raised at the Mission have established a committee, the Umeewarra Nguraritja (meaning 'place' or 'home'), to oversee the Mission site. The Umeewarra Nguraritja wants to establish an Interpretive Centre to tell the Aboriginal and missionary history of the Mission. It needs to preserve and interpret the mission culture in a way which maintains the integrity of that history and presents the material culture, the oral histories and stories from former children of the mission, sensitively to visitors. This paper reports on the research process being used for strategic planning of site management and interpretation. The paper addresses in particular the need for the researchers to be sympathetic to both indigenous and missionary cultures, playing both supportive and leadership roles in order to give something back to the 'stolen generation'.

## Key Words

Aboriginal  
Australia  
'Stolen Generation'  
Christian mission  
Cultural interpretation  
Cultural tourism  
Heritage  
Authenticity

Aboriginal people have lived in Australia, acting as custodians of the land, for at least the last 60,000 years.<sup>1</sup> Following the initial 'discovery' of Australia by the Dutch in the 1600s, and ultimately by the English in the 1700s, settlement by Europeans, predominantly the English, followed in 1788.

Matthew Flinders was the first European known to have explored Spencer Gulf, including the site of Port Augusta, in 1802,<sup>2</sup> and he was followed later by other sea-borne parties, mainly in the 1830s when South Australia was established as a free state and British colony in 1836, and by the explorer Edward John Eyre in 1839.<sup>3</sup> By 1842, the Port Augusta area was one that was frequented by trading ships and drovers servicing the grazing lands of the Flinders Ranges. Settlement in the area followed soon after so that supplies could be brought by sea for the pastoral properties developing in the Flinders Ranges and for the export of wool. At this time South Australia was the home of as many as 50 distinct Aboriginal groups<sup>4</sup> and the area around Port Augusta had long been used as a meeting place for local Aboriginal people.

Early settlement in Australia was accompanied by a lack of understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture, land confiscation and introduced disease, resulting in a negative impact on many Aboriginal groups. What also followed was a process of persecution, rejection and destruction of much of the Aboriginal people of Australia and their culture. Their culture and beliefs were largely ignored, and their needs and rights, as the indigenous people of Australia, were forgotten. Over the 200 years of white settlement, Aboriginal people have experienced rejection, a process of assimilation and, currently, moves towards reconciliation.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 Ibid. and J. Mulvaney & J. Kamminga, *Prehistory of Australia*, Allen & Unwin, 1999.
- 2 M. Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, London, 1814.
- 3 R.J. Anderson, Solid Town, *The History of Port Augusta*, pub. R. J. Anderson, 1988.
- 4 S.J. Hemming & P.A. Clark, *Aboriginal People of South Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1992.
- 5 C. Mattingly & K. Hampton, *Survival In Our Own Land*, Wakefield Press, 1988.
- 6 C. Bird, (ed) *The Stolen*

*Generation: their stories*, Milsons Point, NSW: Random House, Australia, 1998.

- 7 Anderson, op.cit., note 4.

Christian missions were established in the early part of the 20th century on the grounds that the children of Aborigines would have a better, more Christian upbringing, if they were taken into the care of European settlers. Missionaries often removed Aboriginal children from their parents, families and land and placed them in missions or homes. This programme, involving the removal of children, was carried out with the approval, knowledge and support of the government of the day. These Aboriginal children are known as 'the Stolen Generation'.<sup>6</sup>

One such mission was Umeewarra in South Australia. This mission was established in the 1930s by missionaries from the Open Brethren Assemblies church, at Port Augusta in South Australia. It catered generally for three groups of Aboriginal children, those removed from their families and land, wards of the State, and children placed at the mission by Aboriginal families on a temporary basis. The site of the mission now forms part of the Davenport Aboriginal Community in Port Augusta, with many of the original mission children growing up to live in the Davenport Community. These people came from Arabana, Gugada, Pitjantjatjara and Adnyamathanha lands and other areas.

The challenge for the Umeewarra Mission people is to uncover a way to preserve, conserve and interpret the mission culture, which is part of their history, in an interpretive centre which maintains the integrity of that history. The mission people will need to decide how to preserve the material culture from this time, how to record the oral histories and stories from former children of the mission, and, importantly, how to decide what to display and interpret for the visitor.

A key issue is that of site management and interpretation which is sympathetic to both Aboriginal and missionary cultures, which gives something back to the 'stolen generation' and which develops an interpretive centre that recognises their treatment and loss of cultural and family ties and their subsequent upbringing by the Brethren church.

### **Background - Umeewarra Mission**

Umeewarra Mission was located on the outskirts of Port Augusta, in South Australia. Port Augusta lies at the head of the Spencer Gulf, in the southern foothills of the Flinders Ranges, 500 km north of Adelaide, the State capital. The mission was established in the 1930s, and ran, in the same location, for about 60 years. The site was deliberately selected as close to a traditional Aboriginal camping and meeting area, in the hinterland of the tidal flats of Port Augusta. The site affords a view of the Flinders Ranges to the east and north. Port Augusta currently acts as the gateway to the Flinders Ranges, and has traditionally, in both Aboriginal and European times, been at the crossroads for travellers moving from both east to west and north to south through South Australia.

The name 'Umeewarra', from an Aboriginal word *amewara*, which means 'road of the stars', was derived from the position of the mission, located in the outback of South Australia, beneath the Milky Way. The name was suggested by Jimmy Captain, an ex-police tracker from Oodnadatta, who suggested to the missionaries that 'Umeewarra' meant that the Mission was 'the road to the stars' and 'that God has his people (the missionaries) here now to tell us right across our country' that the Mission is 'the way to heaven'.<sup>7</sup> The Mission site or

reserve included houses for some Aboriginal families, a house for the missionaries, and eventually dormitories for the children, a kitchen and dining room and the chapel.

### Umeewarra Mission Community

The Umeewarra Mission was established by missionaries from the Brethren church. The earliest missionaries would appear to have been two women who worked amongst the Aboriginal people, notably with the mothers and children who periodically camped on the shores of the salt lake adjacent to the eventual mission site. The missionary women were concerned about the welfare of the Aboriginal people who passed through this area, and did what they could to assist them.

When the Umeewarra Mission was established it catered generally for three groups of children. Firstly were the children removed from their families and land, from areas throughout central Australia, including South Australia and southern Queensland. Children taken from these areas belong to a number of different Aboriginal groups, each with its own culture, beliefs and identity, and each with its own language, for example the Pitjanjatjara people of Central Australia.

Secondly, Aboriginal children who were wards of the State from the surrounding area were also accommodated at Umeewarra Mission. Thirdly, children were sometimes placed, or left, at the mission by Aboriginal families, usually mothers, who were unable to look after them, for a number of reasons, including temporary respite care, or for schooling from the missionaries.<sup>8</sup> Up to 45 Aboriginal children were accommodated at the mission at any one time and ranged in age from babies to teenagers. Both boys and girls were accommodated, in separate dormitories.

The concept of developing an Interpretive Centre for the Umeewarra Mission has come from people at the Davenport Aboriginal Community, who were once the Mission children. Their approach has been strongly supported by the missionaries of the Brethren church who have been custodians of much of the material culture dating from the days of the Mission. Both groups see the value in not only preserving the Mission heritage, but also in interpreting that heritage to the broader community, and to visitors, as a reflection of part of the history of South Australia.

### Umeewarra Mission Culture and Site

The Umeewarra Mission, unlike many others established throughout Australia, encouraged children to keep in contact with their families, including the Stolen Generation children. Elsewhere most Stolen Generation children were actively discouraged from any contact with their families or homeland.<sup>9</sup> Umeewarra also permitted some restricted retention of Aboriginal culture and beliefs, but did not permit any indigenous ceremonies to take place. Children in the care of the Brethren missionaries were given a Christian upbringing, with school work, sport and religious instruction. Their lives were ordered and relatively restricted, and Christian teachings were part of their daily routine.

The Mission closed in 1996, with some of the Mission children staying at the site which now houses the Davenport Aboriginal Community. For some of these people, Umeewarra is the only home that they have known, and many see it as

8 Mattingly & Hampton op.cit. note 6.

9 Report to the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, *Bringing Them Home*, Commonwealth of Australia, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997.

10 J. Carter, (ed) *A Sense*

of Place - an  
Interpretive Planning  
Handbook, Tourism  
and Environment Initiative, UK, 1997.

- 11 T. Janke, *Our Culture, Our Future: Proposals for the Recognition and Protection of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property*, Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1997.

a caring and supportive environment. The Mission which housed the children was built to accommodate them in dormitories, with a communal dining area serviced by a large kitchen. The children's play activities were supervised in a semi-enclosed quadrangle, and the chapel was used for regular prayer meetings and church services. Much of the structure of the original Mission site still remains, although some of it is in a state of disrepair.

One of the issues to be addressed by the researchers, is the location of such an interpretive centre and whether it should be housed, at least in part, in some of the old Mission buildings. This will be considered as part of the development of the strategic plan, but in terms of offering an insight into life at the Mission, there is an argument that supports development at the original site which will create an authentic 'sense of place'.<sup>10</sup>

### **Umeewarra Mission Interpretive Centre**

The Aboriginal community in the area has set up a committee, the Umeewarra Nguraritja committee, composed largely of former Mission children, to oversee both the site, culture and people from the Umeewarra Mission. This committee wants to establish a museum or Interpretive Centre to tell the story, the history and the ramifications of the Umeewarra Mission times. The story, in part, is one of sorrow and hardship: the sorrow of children removed from their homes, of a destruction of Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal culture and beliefs. The hardship is linked to the loss of family, loss of identity and loss of culture linked to a sense of place, although not necessarily their own. There is some celebration, however, in efforts that were made to keep children at the Mission in touch with their families. There is also an acknowledgment of the support that was forthcoming from the Brethren church at the time, towards children who were in the care of the missionaries. Many of those children maintain their contacts with the last missionaries who were based at Umeewarra.

A process is currently under way developing a strategic plan that will outline the necessary steps required to establish an interpretive centre at the site, and it is critical that the researchers' role in this process be culturally sensitive. The stories from the Mission form part of the Aboriginal community's cultural and intellectual heritage, as does the documentation relating to the running of the Mission. Such materials could include archives, film, photographs, videos, oral histories, letters, diaries etc. Currently some of this material is stored by the missionaries of the Brethren church, some is held by the Umeewarra Nguraritja and some is at the Mission site. It is important in the development of the interpretive centre that the rights of the Aboriginal people with regard to these materials is recognised.<sup>11</sup> The indigenous community should also have some say in the preservation and care, protection, management and control of materials from the mission days. A code of ethics will be negotiated and adopted in all areas that relate to relevant materials and the site.

The committee has imposed strict guidelines for the project which aim to protect both the authenticity and integrity of the site and the people involved, both Aboriginal and missionary. The role of the researchers is clearly one of collecting, collating and analysing information on how to go about preserving the material culture and heritage from the Mission times, and to make recommendations regarding the possible structure and methods of interpretation

that could be utilised at the interpretive centre. They do not see it as appropriate for the researchers to collect individual stories from their people; rather they will do that themselves. They welcome suggestions as to how this might be done most sympathetically and effectively, and appreciate the significance of the possible inclusion of these stories to the interpretation included in the centre. The inclusion of these stories, or parts of them, in the interpretation programme will not be discussed until this process is complete. Such stories will remain the intellectual property of Umeewarra Nguraritja.

It is acknowledged that, as suggested by Daes, 'all elements of heritage should be managed and protected as a single, interrelated and integrated whole.'<sup>12</sup>

Authenticity and cultural integrity are also issues that will need to be addressed. Much of the material—missionaries' diaries, official documentation and records—will be material over which Aboriginal people have no control, as the Copyright Act (1968) recognises individual rights rather than the communal ownership notion favoured by Aboriginal people. The Umeewarra Nguraritja are in line with Fourmile who proposes that indigenous cultural heritage and property be vested in the local community, that management of that heritage be exercised by the local community and that there be local autonomy over cultural matters. Her definition of cultural heritage includes, amongst other things land, sites, objects, cultural knowledge and history relating to both pre- and post-European contact.<sup>13</sup>

This idea of cultural heritage is certainly applicable to Umeewarra, and the Umeewarra Nguraritja aims to create a high quality, educational and informative interpretive centre that satisfies both customer needs, but also those of the Aboriginal community, with the anticipation that local people will benefit from job opportunities, cultural maintenance, financial security and self determination.

The committee recognises that the community needs Aboriginal people to be trained and employed directly and indirectly in the centre; that the cultural centre will raise awareness both of mission culture as it was experienced at Umeewarra Mission, and of the nature of Aboriginal culture generally, and that it is important for the Aboriginal people to have both economic and cultural control over tourism at the Mission site. Umeewarra Nguraritja will also seek planning permission and investigate possible funding sources.

Their concerns are also related to maintaining the confidentiality and therefore the integrity of the Mission culture. The culture of Umeewarra Mission is related to various factors, which include the people who lived there, the missionaries that ran it and the site itself. The children who were raised at Umeewarra have their own personal stories to tell, and it is especially important to the Umeewarra Mission people that the stories of the older people are recorded before they die. They have concerns about the way that such stories are recorded and by whom, and feel that such oral histories are most appropriately recorded by Aboriginal people. They are eager for advice as to the best way such stories might be recorded and preserved, but are not willing to allow non-Aboriginal people to record them.

The Brethren missionaries are also supportive of the desire to tell the Umeewarra story. They are happy to make available materials that date from the Mission days that were part of the record keeping whilst the Mission was in

12 E-I. Daes, *Study on the Protection of the Cultural and Intellectual Property of Indigenous Peoples*. Report on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, E/CN, 1993.

13 H. Fourmile, *Aboriginal Heritage Legislation and Self Determination*, *Australian-Canadian Studies*, vol.7, no.1-2, Special Issue, 1989.

- 14 ATSIC, *Tourism Industry Strategy*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1997.
- 15 H. Zeppel, 'New meeting grounds: Aboriginal cultural centres in Australia' in J. Kandampully (ed) *Proceedings of the 3rd Biennial New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference*, Canterbury, Lincoln University, 1998.
- 16 C. Morris, 'MovieWorld and dreamworld: the Dreaming' *Culture and Policy*, Vol.7, no.3, pp.69-79, 1996; Janke, op.cit. note 12.
- 17 Commonwealth of Australia, *Bringing Them Home, Report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission*. Sterling Press, 1997.

operation. It is important that the photos and documents dating from the Mission days are retrieved from the last missionaries who have stored them since the Mission closed. The missionaries also have a role to play in the telling of the Umeewarra story. Their oral histories will be unique and their explanations and interpretation of the documents, diaries and photographs that have been kept, are invaluable. They have encouraged the Umeewarra Mission people to reclaim this heritage, and will actively assist in the collation and analysis of the many and varied materials.

The issue for the Umeewarra Mission people is to uncover a way to preserve, conserve and interpret the mission culture, that is part of their history from the past 50 years, in a centre that maintains the integrity of that history, and in a manner that contributes to the peace and reconciliation process into the next millennium. The people will need to decide how to preserve the material culture from that time, how to record the oral histories and stories from former inhabitants at the mission, and from the surviving missionaries, and, importantly, how to decide what to display and interpret for the visitor. They acknowledge that it is crucial that the original collection of materials—written, photographic and verbal—be kept safe and intact at all costs, as there is no point in having a new interpretive centre if the original material is destroyed in the process.

In summary the researchers must contribute to this process, without stealing the culture of the Stolen Generation. The ATSIC Cultural Policy Framework<sup>14</sup> suggests that the 'Keeping Place' or 'Cultural Centre' has the potential to become a primary focus or resource for activities concerning culture and identity. The researchers, through their involvement in the development of the Umeewarra Interpretive Centre, could contribute significantly to the maintenance of culture and identity of Aboriginal people in the region, and towards the national process of reconciliation.

### Strategic Plan Development

Aboriginal communities around Australia are constructing an increasing number of Cultural Centres, mainly as an attraction for tourists.<sup>15</sup> These centres have included the National Aboriginal Cultural Centre (NACC) in Sydney, the Dreamtime Cultural Centre in Rockhampton, the History Theatre at Tjapukai Aboriginal Park in Cairns, and one of the most recent, the Daiwal Gidja Cultural Centre in the eastern Kimberley which opened in 1998. Many of these centres aim to be major tourist attractions and are often located in high profile tourism centres, for example the Indigenous Australians exhibition at the Australian Museum in Sydney, which offers visitors traditional perspectives of Aboriginal culture.

The majority of Aboriginal Cultural Centres have had to address issues related to intellectual and cultural property rights, building location and design, and funding for the development and running of such centres.<sup>16</sup> There are also issues regarding the interpretation of Indigenous culture, including the sensitive issues involved in 'bringing home' the children who were part of the Stolen Generation.<sup>17</sup> The Museum of Civilisation in Canada has addressed much of this, and their means of interpretation will be investigated, in the light of the needs of Umeewarra.

The strategic plan for Umeewarra Mission is investigating these and a

number of other issues. Comparisons are being drawn with Brambuk Living Cultural Centre in the Victorian Grampians, where the researchers are involved in an investigation of the structure and organisation of the centre, with a view to possibly incorporating appropriate designs and practices into the proposals for the Umeewarra Mission Interpretive Centre. Members of the research team have spent time working alongside the management team at Brambuk to identify possible visitor centre strategies that could be appropriate for Umeewarra. The strategic plan for Umeewarra is being developed in cooperation with the Umeewarra Nguraritja, and includes the identification of possible funding sources, recommendations regarding the preservation and display of materials and suggestions about the methods of securing oral histories and interpretive techniques to best tell the stories of the history of Umeewarra.

Site ownership and the location of the Interpretive Centre is being addressed, as is the design of the proposed building. Whilst there is already some suggestion that part or all of the original mission buildings will be used to house the Interpretive Centre, so maintaining a 'sense of place', there is also the view that 'good buildings are rare and often potent symbols' and there could well be a convincing argument that supports the idea of a custom built centre.<sup>18</sup> Further to the buildings' location and design is the issue of the collation, preservation and conservation of the material culture that has remained since the days that the Mission first started. Appropriate conservation methods are being investigated and recommended. The documentary evidence that remains largely in the care of the Brethren missionaries, including diaries, photographs and documentary evidence that was part of the organisation of the mission, are being collated and correctly stored so that the heritage of the site and its history remains intact. Recommendations will be made regarding necessary training of Umeewarra Aboriginal people and/or expertise that is required for the storage and display of this memorabilia.

Investigations are also underway to document relevant methodologies required for the accurate, but non-intimidating, recording of oral histories from both the former mission children and also from the Brethren missionaries. Again, training recommendations may be required as the Umeewarra committee has already identified the need to have Aboriginal people record the histories and stories of the former Mission children, and have acknowledged that the sensitivity and confidentiality of this process is one that requires compassion and respect.

The strategic plan will address potential funding sources for the centre, and will also make recommendations regarding the possible staffing and training needs that would be required for the site to be run as an Interpretive Centre. At all stages in the project the researchers are liaising closely with the people of Umeewarra.

### **Interpretation**

The role of interpretation in telling the story of the Umeewarra Mission will be crucial in establishing the centre as an authentic Aboriginal cultural enterprise and in maintaining both the integrity of the site and its people. Themes will be identified with a view to representing both the Indigenous and European aspects of the heritage of the site. These themes will encompass both the historical and cultural aspects of the place, but will also need to include the concepts of

18 J. Davidson, *Brambuk, capital of Gariwerd*, Australian Society, Literature Board of the Australia Council, 1991.



19 Zeppel, op.cit. note 16.

20 South Australian Tourism Commission, *Corporate Plan 1998 - 2005*, Adelaide, SA, 1998; South Australian Tourism Commission, *South Australian Aboriginal Tourism Strategy*, Adelaide, SA, 1995; ATSiC op.cit. note 15.

21 J. Spring, *International Visitors and Aboriginal Arts*, Research Paper No. 10, Australian Council for the Arts, Sydney, 1993.

Aboriginal culture as a living and contemporary culture, which has moved forward from the days of European decision making that impacted so strongly on the lives of many Aboriginal people.

Interpretive programmes that are relevant for different visitor groups, such as schools or international visitors, will be drafted. Training programmes for potential guides will be outlined and a development and updating programme established so that the interpretation does not remain static and passive. Some sensitivity will need to be employed in the choice and telling of the oral histories of the mission children and their guardians, the missionaries, but it is likely that much of the mood of the place will be captured by the recounting of some of these oral histories. The Umeewarra Nguraritja will oversee the recording of oral histories from the former mission children and the missionaries. The methods of recording and documenting these histories is yet to be finalised, apart from an agreement that they are to be recorded by Aboriginal people.

Interpretative media and techniques will be employed most appropriately to record and display the stories of Umeewarra. Something of the atmosphere of the place needs to be captured, as the imagination at times makes the visitor feel, rather than hear, the presence of those Umeewarra children playing at the mission, as their spirit lingers in the buildings that remain. A variety of interpretive methods may be used to capture this spirit of the children, possibly utilising photographs, artefacts from the days when the Mission was running or taped stories from the Mission children. Obviously, none of these programmes or interpretation techniques will be employed without the knowledge, consent and ownership of the Umeewarra community, nor can they be discussed in detail here until those decisions are taken.

The Umeewarra committee has already acknowledged that the Interpretive Centre may well have a significant role to play in the on-going process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia. The strategic planning process represents an early stage in this reconciliation.

### **Cultural Tourism potential of an Umeewarra Mission Interpretive Centre**

It is acknowledged that there is cultural tourism potential for the proposed Umeewarra Mission Interpretive Centre. As well as their supportive and facilitating role in the interpretive planning process, the researchers need to play a role in the integration of the interpretive centre into the larger cultural tourism picture in South Australia.

Indigenous culture has long been recognised as a draw card for international visitors to Australia.<sup>19</sup> The Australian Tourist Commission uses Indigenous imagery in its promotional campaigns overseas (e.g. 1998 *Brand Australia* and 1999 *Australia into the new millennium*) and these aspects of Australia's culture are reinforced by marketing campaigns from State tourism offices, as with the South Australian Tourism Commission corporate plan 1998 - 2005 (SATC, 1998), the South Australian Aboriginal Tourism Strategy (SATC, 1995) and the ATSiC Tourism Industry Strategy (1997).<sup>20</sup>

The International Visitors and Aboriginal Arts Survey<sup>21</sup> found for instance that half of Australia's visitors expressed an interest in an Aboriginal tourism experience. The same survey also found that in 1992 AU\$40 million was spent on Aboriginal arts, crafts and souvenirs by international visitors; 16% wanted to

visit an Aboriginal art gallery or museum while 5% wanted to participate in an Aboriginal tour. Visitor statistics gathered since 1992 supports the perception that interest in Aboriginal culture, history and art has increased.<sup>22</sup>

The experiential visitor, identified often as the 'cultural tourist',<sup>23</sup> has been targeted by both State and Federal tourism campaigns. The current SATC corporate plan identifies 'Indigenous culture, art and history' and 'heritage interpretation' as sectors to be developed within South Australia. The plan also identifies the cultural tourist as a high priority visitor for the State to target, citing the interest, especially with international visitors, in Aboriginal culture and the State's history.<sup>24</sup>

Demographic studies undertaken in South Australia reveal that the client profile of likely visitors to the proposed Umeewarra Mission Interpretive Centre is in line with traditional visitors to the State for cultural events, such as for the Adelaide Festival and is in line with Bennett & Frow, who identified the predominantly female, middle age cohort of 'art enthusiast' as having a consistently high involvement with art and cultural activities and institutions.<sup>25</sup>

Visitor surveys undertaken during the 1997 *Opera In The Outback* in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia, adjacent to Port Augusta, confirmed that the cultural tourist profile was consistent with visitors who had an interest in both natural and cultural heritage.<sup>26</sup>

Analysis of the *Opera In The Outback* survey in 1997 revealed that the majority of the visitors to the region (77%) associated it with (natural) environmental activities and only a small percentage (6%) with cultural activities. Despite this, significant numbers of respondents claimed to have some knowledge of both Aboriginal (57%) and European (67%) history of the region, although this awareness was significantly higher with South Australian visitors. Perhaps more noticeably though, was the overwhelming majority (86%) who indicated that they would return to the Flinders Ranges to learn about the history and culture in the future. Visitors to the region, across all age and both gender categories, expressed a specific interest in learning more about Aboriginal culture.

Of those interviewed 74% did not believe that there was a high degree of awareness among visitors of cultural activities in the Flinders Ranges and significant numbers (88%) felt that better promotion of these, and related activities, were likely to increase the probability of them returning to the region. Overall survey results indicated a remarkable interest in indigenous culture, which in part is serviced by existing attractions such as the Wadlata Outback Centre in Port Augusta and numerous Aboriginal sites, such as Chambers Gorge, Arkaroo Rock and Sacred Canyon throughout the Flinders Ranges. Likewise, activities and attractions based on the regions European settlement history and heritage, which was also identified as an area of interest amongst visitors in the *Opera In The Outback* survey, could be further developed to enhance the tourism potential of the Flinders Ranges.

Heritage tours, visitor centres and interpretation of both Aboriginal and European culture would prove a draw card with a strong appeal to a broad range of both domestic and international visitors. As a consequence, it is likely that a Visitor Interpretive Centre, like that proposed for the Umeewarra Mission, could meet the identified demand for interpretation of part of Australia's cultural heritage in this area of South Australia. There is also in principle support from

22 Australian Tourist Commission, *Australia into the new millennium*, (video). Sydney: Australian Tourist Commission, 1999.

23 L. Leader-Elliott, *Cultural Tourism Opportunities for South Australia*, South Australian Tourism Commission, Adelaide, SA, 1996.

24 South Australian Tourism Commission, op.cit.

25 Market Equity SA Pty Ltd and Economic Research Consultants, *1996 Adelaide Festival: An Economic Impact Study*. Prepared for the South Australian Tourism Commission, Department for the Arts and Cultural Development and the Australia Council, SATC, DACD and AC, Adelaide, SA. 1996; and T. Bennett & J. Frow, *Art Galleries: Who Goes? - The Summary*, Sydney: Australia Council, 1991, pp.13-15.

26 J. James, *Opera In The Outback Survey: Analysis and Review*, Unpublished report, 1997.

27 L. Leader- Elliott,  
'Tourism with  
Integrity - Best  
Practice for Cultural  
and Heritage Organi-  
sations in the Tourism  
Industry' (Draft).  
Commissioned by the  
Department of Indus-  
try, Science and  
Tourism and the  
Department of  
Communications,  
Information Technol-  
ogy and the Arts,  
1999.

local government and from other tourism ventures in the region, notably Wadlata Outback Centre, for the Umeewarra concept.

Finally the researchers will endeavour to incorporate the 'best practice' principles into the Umeewarra project, including those in the national project on best practice in cultural tourism currently commissioned by the Department of Industry, Science and Tourism and the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.<sup>27</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The proposed Umeewarra Mission Interpretive Centre could contribute significantly to the development of cultural tourism in South Australia, but, perhaps more importantly, to the increased awareness of both past and present indigenous culture. It is hoped that such a centre, sympathetic to both indigenous and missionary cultures, could give something back to the 'stolen generation' and develop, perhaps, a greater awareness of the lives of Aboriginal children on missions. The roles and responsibilities of the researchers in such a project are wide-ranging, from supporting and facilitating the efforts of the Umeewarra community, to taking a pro-active and leadership position in its integration into cultural tourism in South Australia.