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1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous Weather Knowledge (IWK) is a multi-institution project focused on the weather and climate knowledge of the indigenous people of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands.

The project is a partnership involving the Indigenous communities, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the Bureau of Meteorology, and Monash University's Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies (CAIS) and School of Geography and Environmental Science.

The first of its type in Australia, the work recognises the knowledge of weather and climate developed over countless generations by Australia's Indigenous communities, which serves to counterpoint current approaches based on the geophysical and statistical sciences.

It provides an opportunity for communities to showcase their knowledge and for other Australians to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life and culture.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 *The Project*

The IWK project was launched in late 2002. In its formative stage it has had two major complementary components.

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2.2 *Formal Research*

The first is formal research that the first-listed author is undertaking for a Ph.D. degree at Monash University. It involves the collection, synthesis and interpretation of Indigenous knowledge on specific weather events and patterns, seasonal and inter-annual climate variability and longer-term climate change.

The project includes both archival and direct communication with the holders of the knowledge. The work focuses on the 17 ATSIC regions of Australia, will show how Indigenous Australians understand and interpret their climatic environment, and how this knowledge forms an important constituent of Indigenous identity and connection to place. The research will enable the development of an appreciation of Indigenous knowledge in the area in the wider community.

2.3 *The Website*

The other important component of the project is the development of a website which is entered via the Australian Bureau of Meteorology website (www.bom.gov.au). The Bureau of Meteorology site is the normal mode of public access for weather services (e.g forecasts or current radar images), for climate services (rainfall and temperature maps, seasonal forecasts) and for educational material and media releases.

Through the IWK project the Bureau of Meteorology wishes to give recognition to the full (or pre-existing) body of knowledge on the weather of our continent. Accordingly through this same entry is a link to a sub-website (www.bom.gov.au/iwk/) dedicated to Indigenous weather knowledge across the country. A strong

two-way flow of information exists between the formal research project and the IWK website.

3. PRESENTATION

The presentation will provide a background to the project, will discuss the significance of 'scientific' versus 'traditional' knowledge, and will provide a number of examples to show the richness of IWK. Indigenous seasonal calendars as available on the public web address will also be shown. Additionally the presentation will discuss the importance of ethical issues, in the context that past scientific studies have often not sought permission from the original Indigenous owners for the use of cultural heritage.

Acknowledgment: The authors gratefully acknowledge the Indigenous communities for their contribution to the website.