Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Resources Language Maps

The State Library contains a range of cartographic resources such as tribal / language maps of value to researchers interested in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage of Queensland.

When researching Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander tribal/language group names and boundaries there is no one primary source that is definitive. Researchers are advised to consult a wide variety of information sources such as some of the sources and items listed below. This material should be complemented by accessing knowledge held by local community Elders, groups, Indigenous Language Centres, IKCs and other organisations.

Introduction

A common query at the State Library relates to language areas or locations of where Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages were spoken. Traditionally Aboriginal languages were based on drainage systems and the associated catchment areas. While groups tended to stay within their own areas, there was a fair degree of interaction with neighbouring groups for trade, ceremonies and other social interactions. Consequently, Aboriginal people were multilingual and spoke adjacent languages. There were also many 'shared' or borrowed' words across language groups.

Within the Torres Strait the two distinct languages were based on island groups: Eastern [Meriam Mir]; and Western and Central islands [Kala Lagaw Ya].

The traditional language landscape of Queensland changed dramatically with European settlement and the impact of English on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, leading to pidgins, creoles and Aboriginal Englishes. With the onset of the Protection Act and the establishment of Missions, blended or hybrid languages also come into being. The difficulty today for many language revival groups is rediscovering the original extent of their language.

This language map was originally created in 1999 by State Library to raise awareness of the diversity of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Information on the map was provided through consultation, advice and other input from a range of community groups and individuals. Its' main purpose was to highlight the diversity of Queensland's
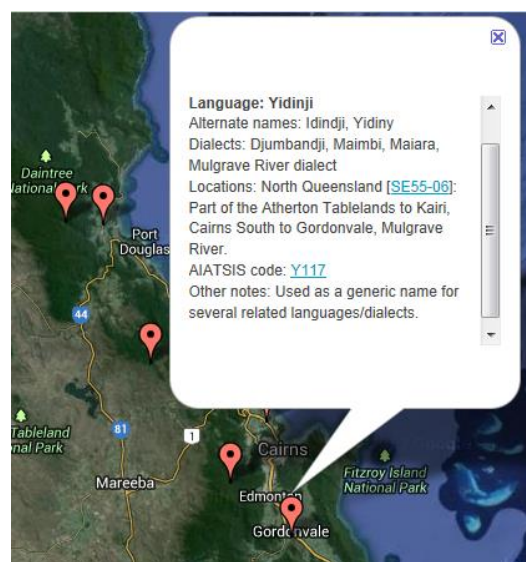
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as well as provide an insight into the areas they were spoken.

Indigenous languages map of Queensland

Select a marker on the map, or choose a language from the alphabetical list below the map, for more information about a particular language, such as its dialects, alternative names and AIATSIS code.

From this initial starting point, State Library explored ways to assist community language groups, researchers and others to identify language regions, but more importantly to locate resources in the State Library collections. Often library clients would have a general idea of the location or region where the language was spoken and from this staff could provide assistance.

By using the AIATSIS Geographic and Language codes, State Library has added subject descriptors and 'tags' to the catalogue to assist researchers. The next progression was to generate an interactive map that identified general information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages but also hyperlinked to items in the collections.

Language: Yidinji
Alternate names: Idindji, Yidiny
Dialects: Djumbandji, Maimbi, Maiara, Mulgrave River dialect
Locations: North Queensland [SE55-06]: Part of the Atherton Tablelands to Kairi, Cairns South to Gordonvale, Mulgrave River.
AIATSIS code: Y117
Other notes: Used as a generic name for several related languages/dialects.

The outcome was an interactive languages resources map on the State Library website: www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/atsi/languages/indigenous-languages-map

This is a useful reference tool for language research; however community language workers and community members wished to explore and map the areas were their language was spoken. Fortunately, there is a range of materials and other sources. Resources relating to mapping languages or depicting language maps should be seen as a guide or starting point for discussions rather than the absolute/definitive authority on language groups and their areas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Maps

The following list is a selection of State Library collection items and websites that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language maps and are useful starting points for schools, communities and Public Libraries.

Further consultation should be undertaken with local community members and other groups, including Elders and Traditional Custodians to gain an insight into the language landscape of a region.

Language Maps at the State Library of Queensland

Arrowsmith, J. *Map showing the range of Southern dialects of Australia*. **MAPS 804 1844 00000 R**

Arthur, W. & Morphy, F. (2005) *Macquarie atlas of Indigenous Australia: culture and society through space and time*. **MAPREF 305.89915 2005**

Breen, J.G. (1981) *The Mayi Languages of the Queensland Gulf Country*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Press. **J 499.15 bre**

Davis, S. (1993) *Australia's extant and imputed traditional Aboriginal territories*. **MAPS 804 1993 05000 C**

Dixon, R. and Blake, B. (Eds) (1979) *Handbook of Australian Languages*. **G 499.15 1979**

Helon, G. (1994) *The Goreng Goreng tribe of South-East Queensland: its' traditional tribal territory, clan divisions and proper names*. (Map) **MAPS 840 1998 02000 F**

Hercus, L.; Hodges, F and Simpson, J. (2002) *The land is a map: placenames of Indigenous origin in Australia*. **Q 919.4003 LAN**

Horton, D. (1994) *Aboriginal Australia*. (Map) **M 804 1999 04700 E**

Jupp, J. (1989) *Australian languages: an introductory atlas*. **P 306.44 jup**

Lawrie, M. *The Margaret Lawrie Collection of Torres Straits Materials*. **TR2082**

McGillvray, J. (1991) *Map of Cape York, showing Aboriginal place names: Shells at Port Essington*. (Microfilm). **FILM 0708**

Meston, A. (undated) *Archibald Meston Papers Undated*. **OM64-17**

Petersen, N. (1976) *Tribes and boundaries in Australia*. **J 301.2994 TRI**

Roth, W. (1975) *Reports to the Commissioner of Police and others, on Queensland Aboriginal peoples 1898-1903*. (Microfilm) Material drawn from Queensland ethnography: bulletin, nos. 11-18 / by Walter E. Roth. **FILM 0714**

Sutton, P. (1995) *Country: Aboriginal boundaries and land ownership in Australia*. **G 333.20994 1995**

Tindale, N. B. (1974) *Aboriginal tribes of Australia: their terrain, environmental controls, distribution, limits and proper names*. **Q 994.0049915 tin**

Tindale, N. B. (1940) *Map showing the distribution of the Aboriginal tribes of Australia*. **RBM 804 1940 06250 E**

Watt, R. (1966) *Aboriginal languages of Australia*. **M 804 1966 00012 B**

Watson, F. J. *Railways map of south-east Queensland showing the Aboriginal tribes in the region*. **OM73-20 F J Watson Papers**

Wurm, S. (1981) *Language atlas of the Pacific area*. **ATLASL 409 1981**

Wurm, S. (2001) *Atlas of the world's languages in danger of disappearing*. **G 409 2001**

Online / Interactive Language Maps

There is also a range of online maps / websites that can be useful for communities and language workers to explore language maps.

- ABC Holding our Tongues project:
  www.abc.net.au/rn/legacy/features/holdingourtongues/

- AIATSIS have an online version of their Horton map:
  http://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aboriginal-australia-map

- ANU Language Groups of the Torres Strait Islands:
  http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/mapsonline/base-maps/torres-strait

- AUSTLANG, developed by AIATSIS is a language database which features information on available resources, previous research as well as location of languages, etc.:
  http://austlang.aiatsis.gov.au/main.php

- Documenting a Democracy – Interactive/online AIATSIS/Horton Aboriginal languages map: http://foundingdocs.gov.au/pathways.html

- Our Languages: Language Maps: http://ourlanguages.org.au/?s=language+map

- South Australian Museum – Interactive/online Tindale languages map:
  http://archives.samuseum.sa.gov.au/tribalmap/

- State Library of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Map:
  www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/atsi/languages/indigenous-languages-map

- UNESCO Atlas of the World Languages in Danger: www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/

Disclaimer

The primary purpose of State Library's language maps and other material is to highlight the general location and diversity of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and support community language revival; it is neither designed nor suitable for Native Title research or claims. Queries relating to Native Title should be directed to the representative Native Title body.

Further Details

For further information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages at the State Library of Queensland, please contact:

kuril dhagun, State Library of Queensland

Stanley Place, South Brisbane Qld. 4101.

PO Box 3488, South Brisbane Qld. 4101.

Telephone: (07) 3842 9836   Fax: (07) 3842 9893

SLQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Webpages:
www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/atsi/languages

SLQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Blog:
http://blogs.slq.qld.gov.au/ilq/