

MUSEUM
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TERRITORY

tjungunutja

FROM HAVING COME TOGETHER



EDUCATION KIT
TEACHERS' NOTES

Introduction

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Education Kit

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Cover (left to right)

Charlie Tjaruru
Tjungurrayi, George
Tjangala, Uta Uta
Tjangala, Shorty
Lungkata Tjungurrayi,
Willy Tjungurrayi,
Nosepeg Tjupurrula
and Tapa Tapa
Tjangala
Image: Unknown.
Courtesy: Laurie
Owens.

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Contents

The Tjungunutja Education Kit includes:

- **Teachers' Notes**
- **Student Activities**

These Teachers' Notes provide a contextual background and are designed to assist teachers focus on key aspects of the exhibition with students before they visit the gallery.

The accompanying Student Activities are designed to promote student engagement with the exhibition and to enhance self-expression, self-directed learning, cooperation, social understanding and cultural awareness with a focus on Aboriginal cultural perspectives.

There are Exhibition Activities and Classroom Activities:

- The Exhibition Activities encourage students to respond to the exhibition and gather information during their visit to the gallery which may then be used for further engagement back in the classroom.
- The Classroom Activities can be linked or sequenced in a variety of ways to develop units of study or used as independent activities. They are written generically and can be adapted for student age and aptitude as required.

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Introduction

Tjungunutja is a Pintupi-Luritja word which can be translated as meaning 'from having come together'.

It refers to the coming together of people from different cultural groups to share ceremonies and paint at the Aboriginal community of Papunya in the Western Desert region of Central Australia. It also refers to the Papunya exhibition curators and artists coming together to tell the story of the art revolution that happened there.

In the 1970s men in Papunya began to make paintings using boards and other materials. They also painted murals on the school walls to express their Dreaming stories and links to traditional homelands and culture. The paintings were the foundation of the world-renowned Western Desert art movement, distinguished by mesmerising and colourful compositions of dots and symbols.

The first Papunya painters are now regarded as the originators of the contemporary Australian Aboriginal art movement. They are represented in major art galleries, museums and collections around the world.

More importantly *Tjungunutja* is about the culture, knowledge and philosophy of peoples who have occupied the Australian continent for up to 60,000 years. Tjungunutja is a statement of collective strength and artistic brilliance. It is a great example of diverse cultural groups working together and sharing for the benefit of all.



Above

Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula, 1972.

Image: Allan Scott. Courtesy: Dorn Bardon.

The paintings in the exhibition are the ones we want you to see. Respect the knowledge that the old men gave these paintings. These paintings are very important for young people to understand and learn and it's important for non-Anangu to see what these paintings mean to us. We can't show everything, but that's good, because it makes people think.

Maybe they will stop to think what there is that they can't see. Maybe they'll wonder what else we can offer them. It's good to put this in writing for people to read, but you have to see the paintings to start to understand. Tjukurrpa isn't written, it's not just drawing or painting, Tjukurrpa is places ... Tjukurrpa is everything, Tjukurrpa doesn't move; we live there all the time.

- Bobby West Tjupurrula

The Exhibition

Making the exhibition

The *Tjungunutja* exhibition has been developed by the living artists, their descendants and senior custodians. As caretakers of the collection, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) acknowledges and respects the importance of the relationships that exist between the collection of early Papunya paintings and the people whom the collection represents.

Part of the development of *Tjungunutja* involved consultation with senior elders regarding the cultural safety of the collection. This process required the removal of restricted paintings from the exhibition.

In times past there has been conflict and confusion about the management of the collection and what works are appropriate to show to the general public and what works are deemed unsuitable for public display.

Traditional Owners have been central to the development of this exhibition. Artists, lawmen, and curators are now able to ensure the cultural safety of exhibition visitors. There is a balance between making works available to Western Desert communities and sharing the knowledge with the outside public. Maintaining this balance is important. Papunya artists want the knowledge to remain strong within their communities, but also educate the outside world about kinship and association with country and the deep responsibility this entails.

The following is part of a conversation had by Traditional Owners during the exhibition development process:

Luke Scholes: *What do you think the Tjungunutja exhibition will show people about these old men, the painters?*

Desmond Phillipus: *Everything in this story leads back to the old people, because they knew everything. Every animal had songs – snakes, eagles. Some of that knowledge is here in these paintings.*

Kumanytjayi Anderson: *The paintings are really important for young people to see with their own eyes. Many of our children haven't seen these paintings; they weren't born. We've spoken about wanting the exhibition and [the Tjungunutja exhibition catalogue] to impact upon the young people.*

The curators

Tjungunutja has been curated by a group of Aboriginal [Anangu] men and one non-Aboriginal man who have worked together to tell the story.

- Kumanytjayi Anderson
- Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra
- Michael Nelson Jagamarra AM
- Joseph Jurrah Tjapaltjarri
- Bobby West Tjupurrula
- Luke Scholes

The Aboriginal curators of *Tjungunutja* wanted their audience to gain three main experiences from the exhibition:

- to provide people with the opportunity to hear their languages
- to see (like never before) the landscape that is central to the lives of Aboriginal people
- to offer the descendants of the founding Papunya artists an opportunity to share their memories, feelings and impressions of their relatives and their part in this important period in Australian art history.

Making the collection

In 1971, the founding Director of MAGNT, Dr Colin Jack-Hinton, purchased 104 of the first paintings produced by the Papunya artists. This insightful and significant purchase was recognition of the emerging Papunya art movement. These paintings are now the core of the *Tjungunutja* exhibition.

Over the next few years MAGNT purchased a total of 207 paintings, making it the most significant collection of early Papunya paintings in the world. In doing so MAGNT was one of the first Australian institutions to recognise Aboriginal paintings as contemporary art, as opposed to ethnographic items or cultural artefacts.

Curriculum Links

The Australian National Curriculum identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a key cross-curriculum priority, recognising the fundamental and holistic relationships between **PEOPLE, CULTURE, COUNTRY** and **IDENTITY**.

A visit to Tjunguṅutja will provide students with a meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspectives with particular relevance for studies of HASS and The Arts from Foundation through Year 10.

Cross-curriculum priorities:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture Key Concepts
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/ Place
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to land, sea, sky and waterways
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of life are uniquely expressed through ways of being, thinking, knowing and doing
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders societies have many Language Groups
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples' family and kinship structures are strong and sophisticated

General capabilities

- Critical and creative thinking
- Intercultural understanding
- Information and communication technology (ICT) capability
- Personal and social capability
- Literacy
- Ethical Understanding

Intercultural understanding

Through intercultural understanding students learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs and those of others. They come to understand how personal, group and national identities are shaped and the variable changing nature of culture. This capability involves students in learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect.

People and Place



Left to right
Yumpululu Tjungurrayi
and Shorty Lungkata
Tjungurrayi, West
Camp, Papunya, 1972
Image: Allan Scott.
Courtesy: Dorn
Bardon.

Papunya

Papunya is located 240 kilometres west of Alice Springs. It was established in 1959 as a government settlement to house Aboriginal people from the Western Desert and was the last Aboriginal community to be set up under the Assimilation Policy. This controversial government program aimed to convert Aboriginal people into a European way of life to integrate them into white society.

The initial population of Papunya numbered around 700 people and was primarily made up of the five Western Desert language groups: Luritja, Pintupi, Anmatyerr, Warlpiri and Western Aranda. These people were relocated from their traditional lands across the Western Desert. They were not used to living together.

Papunya was overcrowded and lacked adequate housing and facilities for the growing population. People were expected to live in small huts made out of concrete and corrugated iron. Many Anangu preferred to live in humpies that were similar to their traditional dwellings made from natural materials.

By the 1970s, the population of Papunya grew to more than 1,000 with the arrival of ex-stockmen and their families and Pintupi families who had been living in the bush in their remote western homelands.

While there were problems of overcrowding, poverty and some cross-cultural tension at Papunya, many Anangu settled there happily. As the community developed, the different cultural groups began to come together for ceremonial events and establish new cultural bonds. Despite the social upheaval and cultural displacement (or perhaps because of it), a groundbreaking art movement took root and flourished at Papunya.

They came from the bush to Papunya; some people came from Haasts Bluff because of the overcrowding there. There was too much fighting and drinking in Papunya, too many people passing away. There were two families living opposite the basketball court: Warangula family and Stockman family. They lived there in houses, the others; we just lived around in the humpies, spinifex and mulga trees.

- Bobby West Tjupurrula

People and Place



I was living in Papunya in late 1970. I was 14, too young to go through ceremony then; I was just a boy. Pintupi people were having a hard time in Papunya. There was a lot of fighting, a lot of arguments and they wanted that to change. All the tjilpis [old men], it was their idea.

The Pintupi men wanted to show people in Papunya that they had really strong law, Tingarri. They wanted to share it, teach it, because they were all together in Papunya and they wanted to show this other way, Pintupi way, Tingarri. They were giving it as a gift, that Tingarri. Warlpiri, Luritja, Anmatyerr, were watching, waiting for their turn.

There weren't very many young men in the camp because Pintupi mob went everywhere to communities north, east, south, west. It didn't matter that only six or 10 young men were in the bush camp [preparing for the Tingarri ceremonies].

Some people were getting old; they knew they were going to finish up. They were proud and happy and wanted to bring the young people together in West Camp. It's like learning at university; they've got to teach their knowledge to their sons about places, songs. Every night, they have to show you; every night until noon the next day, after they have painted your body.

- Bobby West Tjupurrula

Tingarri designs on the backs of Pintupi men, June 1972. Left to right: Long Tom Tjapanangka, Mekini Tjupurrula, Billy Barku and Ronnie Tjampitjinpa

Image: Llewellyn Parlette. Courtesy: AIATSIS, Llewellyn Parlette Collection (item PARLETTE.L02.CS-000011381).

People and Place



Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra at Papunya School, 1971.
Image: Mary White.
Courtesy: Jon White.
Mary White Design Archive. Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney (MP-696-0007).

We were all mixed up, people mixed up, stories mixed up [laughs]. But we brought all those stories together. Might be my story, other people's stories. But no one was painting stories they didn't own. My stories are proper, really [based on my knowledge of men's law].

I helped a lot of people; Pintupi people and the young people who were working with me, they give back to the old people – kuka [meat], malu [Kangaroo], pussy cat, goanna, anything – they have to bring it back for the old people.

Then late afternoon it all [ceremony] starts again. We [the Anangu curators], we're giving you our knowledge. This is the first time we're giving this knowledge in this way and you're giving us kunatinpa. We expect this, this is the way it should be. Anangu way, old way, we gave them kuka to satisfy them. But the new generation, we expect to be paid in the same way that kartiya [non-Aboriginal people] are, with money.

After that, after Tingarri, that's when they did dot painting, body painting. Then they did that [Honey Ant] mural at the school, made it public, letting everyone know they were all together.

That was when Billy Stockman, Long Jack Phillipus and Johnny Warangula, they were working at the school, teaching all the young kids in the school drawing and painting. After that they kept going [painting]; everybody knew painting after that.

They were all ninti [knowledgeable], you know, Tingarri. Challenge each other in ceremony and then they challenged each other in painting. Like a competition. Long Jack, do you remember? Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra: Yes. Elders ... but us young fellows too. Might be they thought about it.

- Bobby West Tjupurrula

The Western Desert



People and Place

The Western Desert

The Western Desert lies west of Alice Springs and extends beyond the Western Australian border today. Western Desert language groups include the Luritja, Pintupi, Anmatyerr, Warlpiri and Western Aranda.

Prior to European settlement Anangu lived in the Western Desert by moving from one location to another according to seasonal and ceremonial cycles and weather conditions. They carried implements necessary to tend the country and hunt, collect, carry, prepare and cook food. To survive in the desert, Anangu needed to understand every aspect of their environment. They needed to know every plant and animal and the location of every waterhole. They were hunters, gatherers, cultivators and land managers generally living in small family groups.

Western Desert people have a continuing connection to their land and all living things which is shown in the stories and travels of the creation beings. This is informed by the Tjukurrpa [Dreaming]. Tjukurrpa is the foundation of Western Desert life and society, it explains the world and its creation. A central principle of Tjukurrpa is that people, land and all that it contains are one.

Anangu fulfil their cultural obligations to the Tjukurrpa by visiting sacred places, performing ceremonies, passing on knowledge and taking care their country. Travelling across the land involves cultural obligations and respect for the traditional boundaries of neighbouring groups.

Groups came together at regular intervals for ceremonies and rituals associated with their Tjukurrpa. Ceremonial activities included storytelling through singing, dancing and sand and body painting.

In contrast few European settlers had any understanding of the social and geographical structure of Aboriginal society. Europeans viewed the land as an asset to be bought and sold. They thought Aboriginal people were nomadic and moved aimlessly from one place to another. The colonial government declared the Australia as *Terra nullius*, a Latin term meaning 'nobody's land' or 'empty land' and therefore assumed ownership and control of Aboriginal lands without consultation or agreement.

The result was that many Anangu were forced to move off their land to unfamiliar places. The removal severed their physical contact with their homelands and their ability to manage it. On the other hand, missions and Government settlements (such as Papunya) provided a safe refuge for a variety of people away from the violence of the pastoral industry and periods of hardship due to drought. And even though they were separated from their lands their spiritual contact remained strong.

The health of many Anangu suffered as a result of European settlement. Traditional bush foods were replaced with processed European foods. Alcohol was also introduced, having a devastating effect on individual, family and community wellbeing. Foreign diseases such as the common cold, flu viruses and sexually transmitted diseases badly affected Aboriginal people; these diseases increased infant mortality and decreased their life expectancy.

Art

The language of Western Desert art

Over many thousands of years, Anangu have developed a visual language as an expression of the Tjukurrpa [Dreaming]. These designs are connected to mythological beings of the Tjukurrpa. They refer to specific sites and are linked to plants and animals of the region. They also embody law which forms the social structure or rules of society.

Designs relating to Tjukurrpa were often painted onto people's bodies in preparation for ceremonies. Many of these designs were also carved or painted onto rock walls and wooden and stone objects. Large sand drawings using a variety of materials such as coloured ochre, feathers and *wamalu* [wild cotton] also echoed these designs.

Ochres are crushed into a powder using a grinding stone. The ceremonial bodies then covered in animal fat, fingers are dipped into the ochre to trace designs onto the backs and occasionally the chests of performers. Designs painted onto the body are *tjukurrtpjanu* [from the Dreaming]. They have been passed down from ancestral beings to ritual participants as evidence of the existence of the Tjukurrpa.

Symbols depicted in the designs can have various meanings. For example, concentric circles can mean, a camp, rock hole, claypan, spring, tree or a hill. A winding line can mean a snake, running water, lightning, hair-string girdle, or string.

The Papunya Art Movement

In 1971 after a group of men began painting on board, artists including Kaapa Tjampitjinpa, Billy Stockman, Long Jack Phillipus and Johnny Warangula painted murals at Papunya School. The murals depicted stories relating to the Honey Ant, Widow, Snake and Wallaby Dreaming. The murals demonstrated the ongoing connection the artists still had with their traditional country and culture despite being physically removed from their lands.

Inspired by the murals and assisted by local school teacher Geoffrey Bardon, other men began to make paintings on various materials found on the community including tin sheets, tea chests, linoleum and compressed fibre board.

The artists painted images applied to the body, ground and objects for ceremony. The dynamic paintings showed stories of country, ceremony and Dreaming sites.

The enthusiasm for telling stories and exploring this new form of cultural activity resulted in over 1000 paintings being produced between 1971 and 1972 by 30 artists. These early works are the foundation of the Western Desert art movement. Later the artists went on to form a successful Aboriginal art cooperative.

Secret and sacred

Some of the Dreamings that the artists painted were considered to be secret and sacred. This means that particular designs or stories can only be seen by initiated men. However, the use of permanent of western art materials and the wide distribution of the paintings raised issues concerning the revelation of designs and stories unsuitable for public display. Conventionally these designs would be removed or destroyed after the ceremony or remained permanent only in secret and restricted locations.

Initially the artists were unaware that the works would go out into the world to be seen by many different people. Concerned that some of the paintings were dangerous for Aboriginal women and children to see, the artists soon limited their work to those stories that were culturally safe. Another way to hide powerful the ancestral imagery was to cover the surface with colourful dots. While the dots had so specific meaning, their vivid effects emphasised the spiritual nature of the painting and the power they contained.

Art



Kaapa Tjampitjinpa in front of the Honey Ant mural at Papunya School, September 1971.

Image: Mary White. Courtesy: Jon White. Mary White Design Archive. Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney (MP-696-0011).

Tjala – Honey Ant Dreaming

Near Papunya is an important Honey Ant Dreaming site that many of the distinct groups at Papunya are associated with.

Honey ants [*tjala*] have been an important food source for Anangu for thousands of years. They taste like a mixture of honey and lime and are a favoured food for desert people. The honey can be eaten by sucking the swollen abdomen of the *tjala* or can also be mixed with seeds to make a sweet damper.

The three hills at Papunya form a Dreaming site representing the body of a huge Ancestral *tjala*. It was here the *tjala* returned to the ground during the Dreaming. The *tjala* travelled from near the Ehrenberg Range through Papunya and to the northeast. A mass of *tjala* also gathered for a big ceremony at Papunya.

Tjala Dreaming is significant because, like the Ancestors, *tjala* emerge from the ground, make a journey and return to the ground. Ceremonies are performed to re-enact the journey of the *tjala* and to revitalise the supply of honey ants.

The honey ant (*Campanotus inflatus*) has a co-operative relationship with the Mulga tree (*Acacia aneura*). The worker ants collect secretions from the red lerp scale on branches of the trees and take it down into the nest to feed specialised honey ants. They are found in small holes at the base of mulga trees. Women carefully dig into the tunnels to collect the honey-filled ants. Flowers are shown in Honey Ant Dreaming stories because honey ants also feed on the nectar from blossoms of the Mulga tree.

The creation of the Honey Ant Mural was an important moment in the history of the Western Desert art movement. Elements of the Government Assimilation Policy at this time sought to suppress the expression and practice of traditional culture. The Honey Ant Mural was an act of cultural strength and brought the Papunya community together after which the Papunya art movement blossomed. The men who painted the mural went on to become commercially successful artists.

Art

Yala – Yam

Another important food source for Anangu is the *Yala* (*Ipomoea costata*). This yam grows above ground in the form of a vine, its tubers forming beneath the ground amongst an extensive root system. In good seasons *yala* are a staple food of Anangu in the desert and provide a valuable source of moisture. They can be eaten raw or lightly baked in a fire and are quite sweet and juicy.

One of the major exponents of the depiction of *yala* was Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi. His representations of *yala* were directly associated with his birth place: Tjiturrrnga in the Dovers Hills on the Western Australian-Northern Territory border. Many of Tjaruru's depictions of this site illustrate the *yala*'s roots and vines and the *yala* itself. Occasionally vague shapes hint at the presence of a *yala* ancestor [spirit].



Charlie Tjaruru
Tjungurrayi
Recto: Yala story 1971
synthetic polymer paint
on three-layer plywood
84.0 x 25.8 cm
WAL 75

Glossary of Pintupi-Luritja words

Anangu	Aboriginal person	ninu	bilby
Anmatyerr	language group of people north of Papunya	nulla nulla	digging stick
apuralyi	bush tucker that can be found on a gum leaf	palya	good, a greeting
Arrernte	language group of people south of Papunya	Pintupi	language group of people west of Papunya
ingkata	ceremonial 'boss' or pastor	Pitjantjatjara	language group of people south of Papunya
inma	a form of dancing done by women and girls	pulapa	ceremony
ipalu	bush tucker plant that grows on a vine	punyunyu	a stage of manhood
katjutarri	bush tucker plant that grows under the ground	pura	bush tucker plant that grows on a bush
kuka	meat	rumiya	sand goanna
irrititja	long ago	Tingarri	a category of ceremony
jardiwarnpa	Warlpiri fire ceremony for reconciliation	tjala	honey ant
kali	boomerangs	tjammu	grandfather
kamuru	mother's brother	tjilkamarta	porcupine
kanala	ceremonial area	tjilpi	old man
kapi	water	Tjulkura	white people; the colour white
kartiya	non-Aboriginal person	Tjukurrpa	Dreaming; the time of creation of the land and the law
ker kwaty	'meat water', stew	Tjukurrtpjanu	from the Dreaming
kuka	meat	tjungunutja	all come together, from having come together
kunatinpa	ceremonial gift	tjungurringu	came together
kuninka	western quoll	tjuringa	ceremonial object
kurtungurlu	ceremonial 'manager'	tjuta	many
kutitji	beanwood shields	tywerrenge	sacred object, law
kuwarri	now, today	wamalu	wild cotton
Luritja	language group of people west of Papunya	Warlpiri	language group of people north of Papunya
maku	witchetty grub	wati	man
mala	hare wallaby	watikurnu	belonging to men
malu	kangaroo	Winanpa	Western Aranda language group
mamu	ghost; devil	wilurrara	west
mamu tjuta	many evil spirits	yajukurlu	wild cabbage
mangarri	vegetables, plants, fruits, seeds	yala	yam, bush potato, wild potato
milmilpa	dangerous techniques	Yankunyatjara	language group
mirru	woomera	Yapa	Aboriginal person
ngangkari	Aboriginal doctor, person with special healing and magical powers	yinarlingi	echidna
ngurra	home or homes; traditional country, homeland, homelands	yukari	grass/greenery
ninti	knowledgeable	yara	story or stories
		yurtininpa	showing, revealing
		yuwa	yes

References and resources

Books

Papunya School Book of Country and History

Published by Allen & Unwin

Streets of Papunya

by Vivien Johnson

Tjungunŋtja Exhibition Catalogue

Published by the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Websites

Australian Assimilation Policy

http://www.workingwithindigenoustralians.info/content/History_5_Assimilation.html

Australians Together

<https://www.australiantogether.org.au/churches/resources/episode-3/>

Looking Back: The Story of a Collection.

The Papunya Permanent Collection of Early Western Desert Paintings at the Australian Museum by Kate Khan

https://australianmuseum.net.au/uploads/journals/35041/1647_complete.pdf

Papunya Collection

National Museum of Australia

<http://www.nma.gov.au/explore/collection/highlights/papunya-collection>

Film

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TjungUnŋtja: from having come together

Short introduction – 1:30mins

<https://vimeo.com/216630495>