

P. Hamilton

SPIRIT *of the* **LAND**

JOURNAL 5 OF THE SPIRIT OF THE LAND FOUNDATION



BUILDING BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND WESTERN CULTURES

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FROM OUR CHARTER

Key Objectives of the Spirit of the Land Foundation

To build bridges of understanding between the indigenous and western cultures of the world. To acknowledge that we are joint custodians of the Earth, we need to keep the Spirit of the Land alive.

Aims of the Spirit of the Land Foundation

To record, preserve and promote the wealth of traditional wisdom of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people of Central Australia and of other Australian aboriginal people.

To produce books, cassette tapes, CD's, computer programs, videos and films that communicate this ancient wisdom and ensure intellectual copyright of the traditional owners.

To design courses, tours, trips and events that celebrate the coming together of the knowledge of indigenous and western cultures in Australia today.

To support reconciliation projects in Australia and the world that celebrate the sacredness of Land.

EDITORIAL

The story of this issue of the journal is about endings, beginnings and continuity. Endings means facing the passing of dear friends and respected elders who embody the spirit of the land. Beginnings means taking up the challenge the elders have laid down and finding the courage, commitment, vision and money to bring into reality the vision for the future that so many great souls have spoken of.

Continuity is the flame of wisdom passing from one soul to another. How bright the flame burns will depend on many external and internal factors. Great elders have seeded glowing embers in the hearts of people of all races. Only time will tell how many of the embers will be fanned into full flame by the breath of spirit.

Subscribers will know by now that the Journal is whimsical in the timing of its appearance. We aim for two issues a year ~ but just when in the year can not be pinned down. With only John Allan and Diana James working on the journal (and many other aspects of the Foundation) questions of available time and energy arise. The availability of suitable material is also a problem. At present we have to use all our tracking and hunting skills to sniff out appropriate content for the Journal. If you have a story, an article, a poem, a photo or some artwork you wish to contribute please send it along.

John Allan and Diana James

Spirit of the Land Foundation

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The two laws need to become one to care for the land

vision for a sustainable future

Diana James Director, Spirit of the Land

The vision
respect be
of the world.
edge systems to
of the ecological and

The Foundation has worked to
the creation law, that Nganyinytja

Now it is time to ask. "What does the vision of our charter mean for the children and grandchildren of the Elders growing up on remote communities in the Pitjantjatjara Lands of South Australia? What does it mean for impoverished Indigenous people on the fringes of rural towns or the sprawling suburbia of the urban poor in Australian cities? What does it mean for the wider non-indigenous Australian population whose health, life expectancy, education, employment and wealth is on average so much better than Indigenous Australians? What does it mean for the relationship between indigenous and western societies, their culture and law, the unequal distribution of wealth, health, education, employment, economic resources and power globally?"

Can the cultures meet with respect and build bridges of understanding between them? Bridges need the bricks of a real economic base in land and enterprise, the mortar of social and cultural cohesion, and the energy of many hands inspired with the vision of building sustainable multicultural community before the arcs that span the divides can meet at equal height in the middle.

Senator Aden Ridgeway recently said in his address to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations in Geneva this year, "Non-indigenous Australians are keen to embrace the rhetoric of reconciliation, so long as it doesn't require them to take effective action to share the country's abundant resources."

Nganyinytja and Ilyatjari are not 'romantic primitivists', they do not advocate a return to using a stone knife when steel is available. The elders do not want their descendants trapped in technological backwaters cut off from the benefits of the mainstream economy, education, employ-

ment and politics. They envision their children and grandchildren being educated in two cultures, able to take up the professional jobs in their communities as nurses, doctors, teachers, mechanics, store managers, policemen, and financial enterprise managers.

The reality is that since colonisation of their land and the introduction of western education on the Pitjantjatjara Lands in 1940, only five students have matriculated from year 12 High School.

Inawanytji Scales was recently the fifth.

BRAVO, INAWANYTJII!

The Elders say, "*The roots of a tree must go deep to keep it upright in the wind. Our children need to be educated in two ways, black and white, to stand strong.*"

As part of our overall vision The Foundation supports this aim of the Elders through two specific projects.

1. Indigenous Students Scholarship Fund for tertiary studies.

To encourage young people like Inawanytji, from remote Indigenous communities, to continue their studies and gain professional credentials.

2. Cultural Heritage, Education and Research Centres.

The first of these centres are proposed for Angatja and Cave Hill on the Pitjantjatjara Lands of South Australia, initially, for the use of local school students, visiting tertiary students and tourists on Desert Tracks tours. Desert Tracks is a Pitjantjatjara owned educational and cultural tour company.

These heritage research centres will be part of the Foundations *University of Earth Project*, to bring Indigenous and western knowledge together to care for the Earth.

**To help the fullness of Nganyinytja's vision come to life send your Tax deductible donations to:
Spirit of the Land Foundation Ltd.
PO Box 3893, GPO Sydney,
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Fly Free Old Man



Ilyatjari dancing Inma

Nganyinytja's life partner and dearly loved husband passed away on the 18th April 2001 at Amata. We join his children Sammy, Helen, Johnathon, Leah and Mary and many grandchildren in their grief.

THE OLD MAN, BORN ABOUT 1928, was an extraordinary leader of his community. He was among the first students at Ernabella school in 1940, and quickly learned to read and write in Pitjantjatjara. As a teenager he went to work on neighbouring cattle stations and easily learnt the skills of cattle management, camel training and fencing.

When he and Nganyinytja moved with their young family to help establish Amata Community he became one of the teachers at the local school. A clever and inspiring teacher he taught both the importance of traditional knowledge and the new skills necessary to succeed in the western world.

In 1988 he and Nganyinytja opened up their homeland to many visitors from around Australia and overseas who came on their Desert Tracks trips. He never ceased being a strong advocate of maintaining traditional Law while developing new businesses that would sustain his family during the transition from the old economy to the new.

This is the story of the old man from Angantja in his own words.

"I started teaching the children at school about bush foods; wild tomatoes, bloodwood apple, mulga apple. Foods they loved to eat and that would sustain them in the future. The children learned a lot about bush foods and would call out, "Hey Grandfather, there's food in that tree!" Now they are grown men and women, they passed through initiation because they learnt so well. They learnt by following, looking and learning. I taught them *Inma*, traditional dance and song.

This is why we started Desert Tracks, to empower our children and grandchildren in their knowledge, to give them work. Then I decided to start a camel business at Angatja. I used to work with camels a long time ago on stations. We also learnt to work with cattle and horses. I would put a bridle on the horse the right way, not the twisted way. Now I do the teaching and don't need help from whitefellas.

We encourage tourists to come to our land, so we can make some money through working at our homeland Angatja. We make money when they come and stay with us. We build wiltja and especially big shelters for the Inma, dancing ground, where we perform dances at night. In the past we lived at Ernabella and then moved to Amata and started that community. Then we came out to Angatja. At first we had to carry water in jerry-cans from the creek, we didn't have a windmill. We only had one truck so we used it sparingly. We realised that keeping our culture alive was very important for our young people. We began teaching young people and adults through Inma.

This is how we care for country.

Sometimes the soakages become low in water. I take my sons

is how Aboriginal people lived. We all join in with the tourists.

If other Aboriginal people want to start a tourism business I tell them they must have Tjukurpa. You must work hard first before you'll get any money, and you must have strong Tjukurpa, Dreaming Law, then the tourists will come. You must look after the law of your country.

Jeremiah the Old Man's grandson said. "When we returned to Angatja our Grandfather built us houses. After my schooling in Amata I returned to Angatja to learn from my people. I was happy staying here and learning many things, working with camels ~ my grandfather taught me how to catch camels and hunt with a rifle. We helped the tourists collect firewood and keep the yard clean. We also took the tourists on kangaroo



Ilyatjari and Nganyinytja in their country

and grandchildren out and say. "Dig it out as the camels have trampled the waterhole. If you dig it out the water can flow freely." When the young ones dig up the soakages they learn from me. If the soakages are not cleaned out the filth accumulates. Today we maintain and clean out the rockholes. We clean them out and wait for the rain to fill them. When it rains the water comes to the surface and there is good drinking water for all. But when it hasn't rained here for a long time, it's very dry and all the waterholes are empty. We have to cover the waterholes to stop the dingos dying in them when they try to drink. We dig separate soakages for emus to drink, we look after the land.

We keep the tourist camp clean with good facilities. There are two areas one for our Law, our big Inma dancing ground, and one separate area where the tourists can be safe and clean. We have built new shower and toilet blocks there, before tourists had to travel back to Angatja for showers, too far. When the tourists come here they see our dances for the first time, they join us and dance and sing our songs. They see this

hunts. I'm proud to be learning about this work from my Grandfather.

Ilyatjari's vision for the future:

"Long term, the young people will continue ~ when I'm gone they'll look after this business. I teach my grandchildren the Inma and how to survive in this land. The culture may be lost if they don't have a reason to learn it. The business brings in money for people to live in their own country and keep their culture strong. Desert Tracks is our business ~. We started it for our grandsons and grand-daughters to carry it on and grow this business. I am always working and planning for this future."

Story and Pitjantjatjara translation by Diana James

Ilyatjari wanted his work and words to continue, and his grandchildren to know his face so he asked that his name and photographs not be hidden after his death. Seeing the deep knowledge they hold on a knife edge of extinction several Elders have made the same request in recent years. Calling him the old man from Angantja is a mark of respect.

After all these years

Nganyinytja at the NYPWomen's Council

20th Annaversary Meeting, Kanypi 28~29 June 2000.

Story and Pitjantjatjara translation by Linda Rive

ON A LOVELY PLAIN TO THE SOUTH OF THE MANN RANGES, thick with golden spinifex growth from year 2000 rains, the Ngaanyatjarra, Yankunytjatjara, and Pitjantjatjara Womens Council (NYPWC) had gathered. The meeting place is a small grove of stunted, twisted but very beautiful ironwood or *utjanypa*.

Nearly 300 women were gathered around their fires under these warm and inviting trees. The camps are cosy and intimate and the women's swags are piles of warm blankets circled around the hot comfortable fires. The nights are below freezing and the days sunny but very cold.

Women had been arriving that morning from all over South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia member communities. Softly spoken Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara, their regional dialects, could be heard whispering around the camps.

In the centre of the grove, surrounded by these groups of women and warmly smoking fires, is a cleared sandy space. The meeting's formal furniture is a desk, some chairs and a huge and colourful banner reading Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council. Draped on boughs in the trees are numerous celebratory t-shirts proclaiming "NYP Women's council - 20 Years and still going strong!"

The formal sequence of the meeting unfolded as we slowly worked our way through the agenda. The main aim of the meeting was to document some of the women's memories of twenty years of

the Women's Council. Started in 1980 during the Land Rights movement it is now a large, dynamic and pro-active organisation delivering services to women from all the member communities in three States. The aim is to improve the quality of life not only for the women, but their children, families, dependents, disabled and elders as well.

As each notable woman stepped up to take the microphone, the women expressed their appreciation and pleasure to be remembering their own histories and were happy and secure in each others' company.

Some women were very notable in their absence. These were Diana James, the first ever secretary of the Women's Council in its inception in 1980; Di Lane the second secretary/ coordinator; Susan Woenner-Green their hard working anthropological adviser for many years and Nganyinytja.

An outcry rippled through the meeting, when it was announced that Nganyinytja was not in the ironwood grove, but at home in Amata. A staff member immediately raced off in her Toyota Landcruiser to Amata to collect her and bring her back.

Nganyinytja is now old and unwell. Her health took a fast decline last year, and she was seen to be not well enough to make the meeting and endure the frosty nights. But of course she was still hardy, having lived a life in this country after all, and if her sisters wanted her there ~ well, as long as there was someone to care for her ~ she should be there.



Linda Rive, Nganyinytja & Tjikalya Collins at Kanypi



Myra Watson and Mantatjara Wilson, the first Chairwoman and Secretary of the Womens Council

We waited for half a day for the car to return.

The meeting stopped as her carer struggled into view, pushing a wheelchair in the deep sand with Nganyinytja on board. As soon as she was sighted, a delighted sigh of admiration swirled around the meeting and a huge round of applause began at the same time and gathered force to welcome her. She raised her hands to one and a l, crying out hello and reaching out, grasping hands, stroking them fondly.

A new staff woman sitting next to me leant over and whispered, "Who is she? What is her name?"

"That is Nganyinytja." I replied.

Nganyinytja was given the microphone ~ these are her words.

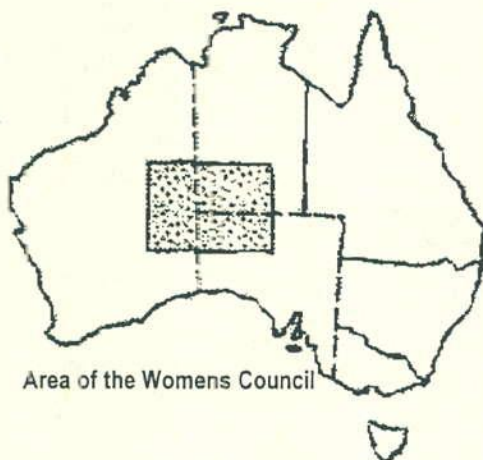
"Ngayulu pulkara pukularinyi n yurala tjunguringkula meeting-ngka wangkanyi. Kana pulkara pukularinyi, ka ngayulu meeting nyanga purunpa kanyiningi irit. Mununa kuwari nyanga minyma pamparingu mununa iluntjakitja nganyinyi - mulapa! Oh! [cutry and applause] Nyura wiru mulapa uwankara! Palu ngayulu kuwar, pukulpa ilkari kutu ankunytjakitja. God Mamanya ngayuku mukuringanyi, ka ngayulu palya nyuranya wantkatiku wakungka Godala Mamala Katjala kurunpa miilmiilta kana kuwari palumpa n'inaku. Ngayulu nyurampa mukuringanyi, nyura panya ngayuku mukuringanyi; rawa munu ngura ngayuku pulkara kanyiningi."

Translated as follows:

"I am so happy to see you all, and to talk at this meeting here today. I feel so very proud, because I used to run these meetings myself, long ago. However, as you can see, I am now an old woman, and I am

ready to pass from this world - it is true! ~ Oh! You are all so wonderful! ~ Yet I am ready and I am looking forward to my journey into heaven. God our Father loves me, so it is fine for me to leave you all soon, and journey up to join the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I love you all, as I know you love me, and I leave you my land to take care of and nurture, for all time."



"I made this painting to tell the story of how the Women's Council started in 1980. We made a cassette tape about the idea of starting a Womens Council and sent it around all the communities for women to listen to. Round the outside of the painting ~ black dashes with white marks, show the cassette travelling to all the women in the communities. The women listened to that cassette and talked about it. Then we all came together at Kanypi to have our first meeting. That is the big circle in the middle with all us women sitting around. This was the first time we came together all us Pitjantjatjara, Ngaanyatjarra, and Yankunytjatjara women"

Mantatjara Wilson

Keeper of the Lore

In the half-light of dawn on the perfect shores of Lake McKenzie, stands Olga Miller ~ she is the Thrramun, the 'queen' of the Butchalla people, the guardian of its legends and its land.

AT FIRST GLANCE SHE IS A FRAIL, DIGINIFIED, 76 year-old lady who walks with a stick and needs help to climb in and out of the four-wheel-drive. But perched in a tree for photographs she becomes a mischievous sprite, flashing her brilliant smile and trading jokes with the photographer. As we travel with her we meet Olga Miller the storyteller and illustrator; the passionate environmentalist and tireless community worker.

'Aunty' Olga has established herself so effectively as a one-woman lobby group for the well-being of Fraser Island that no one, be they politicians, developers, tourism operators or the National Parks and Wildlife Service, does anything on the island without consulting this tiny woman. She sits on boards and committees and keeps a sharp eye on every- thing that happens here. And just as Olga refuses to accept grey in her hair, she refuses to accept any compromise when it comes to the welfare of the island. She interprets her protective role not in terms of possession, scoffing at what she sees as absurd and unrealistic land claims made by some Aboriginal groups in other areas, but as a real duty of care, a promise she must keep to her grandfather and her people. She reminds us that the land does not belong to the people; the people belong to the land.

"If I have concerns, I ring up the minister; or whoever; and I sort things out," she says. Her chief concern at the moment is to establish more protection for the island, even as far as having police here to actually enforce the rules about access to vulnerable or forbidden places, speed limits and environmental damage.

"Right now, the rangers can't even fine people for damaging the island. It's not enough." Olga would like to see an end to camping on the ocean beach, which her people call the 'back beach'. She agrees that it is a beautiful place to camp, but fears that too many people will soon ruin the very beauty they come for. "How do they know they're not setting up their kitchen where some other group has had their toilet?" she asks pragmatically.

She is horrified that people swim in the lakes. "Our people would never have done that," she says, sadly. "You'd never swim in still water. And not in the creeks

either, like Eli Creek. They are for drinking water. Now Lake McKenzie (Wondunna Goong) is full of sunscreen and bacteria. I've even seen a woman here shampooing her hair in the lake!"



She thinks that Fraser's spectacular jewel-like lakes should be closed to swimming to allow them to recover; and that there ought to be boardwalks around all of them so the reed beds are not destroyed by overuse. More importantly, Olga feels strongly that places of importance to her people should be off-limits to mass tourism, to those visitors who are unaware of their significance. The middens and forbidden places should be left alone. They are significant relics of the time when Fraser was home to her people and when tourists drive over them and collect the shells it breaks her heart.

Olga wants to share her island with the world, but sees that in encouraging people to enjoy its extraordinary beauty, she also risks changing its fragile face.

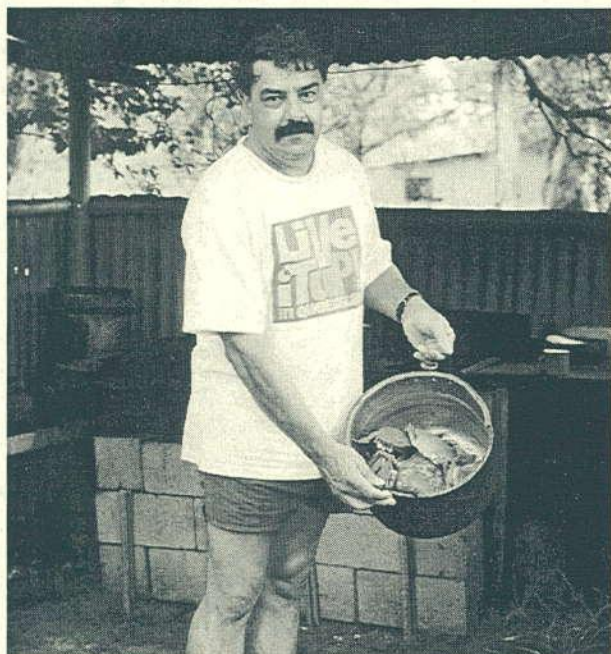
STORY BY SUZY YOUNG PHOTO BY JAMES MC EWAN

Carrier of the Flame

Introducing Glen Miller ~ new Chairman of the Board of the Spirit of the Land Foundation. Glen brings a wealth of experience in actively supporting Indigenous cultural heritage maintenance, education and tourism to his new position as the Foundatons Chairman. He has a passion for promoting Indigenous culture as a vital part of Australia's heritage and future.

A DESCENDENT OF THE BUTCHULLA PEOPLE of Queensland and the Gribble family of Cornwall, Glen Miller respects and combines two powerful cultural heritages. Glen's great-grandfather Rev John Brown Gribble, the son of a Cornish miner, emigrated with his parents to Australia in 1848. He became a well known radical Church of English missionary in W.A and Queensland championing the Aboriginal peoples. His daughter, Ethel Gribble, married Frederick, a Butchulla man. Their grandson Glen and his mother, Olga Miller (see facing page), are proud custodians of the family's traditional country which includes Fraser Island and the Hervey Bay district of Queensland.

Born in Maryborough, Glen attended six primary schools as the family moved around. Leaving school at 14 he followed his Cornish ancestor's tradition and worked for over eleven years in the coal mining industry. Then he became a custodian of Indigenous heritage as an Aboriginal relics Ranger for South East Queensland with the Archaeology branch of the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement. In this capacity he became involved in education and promotion of traditional Indigenous culture through lecturing at large numbers of schools, clubs and TAFE courses in Brisbane and Mt Isa.



Glen with a pot of mud crabs at Mumbah on Cape York



In 1982 Glen became an active member of the National Aboriginal Education Committee, motivated by his strong views on the importance of education for Indigenous people and the education of white people about Indigenous issues. Statements Glen made in 1982 are unfortunately still true today, "My reason for nominating for the NAEC was prompted by the conditions at places like Dajarra, Camooweal and Urandangie, where primary school children are caught in a hopeless situation of learning from an unsuitable system which does little to help them in their present predicament and leaves them ill equipped to handle life in the general main stream society. I'm also a strong supporter of the education of white people about Aboriginal people and see the start of this as being the inclusion of Aboriginal studies in the school curriculum."

Glen is currently the Manager of Special Interest Tourism for the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation (QTTTC). Since 1993 he has developed their promotion of Indigenous tourism. He believes that the eco-cultural tourism market is "low impact, high return and these visitors can aid the development of cultural understanding far more than mainstream mass tourism ever could. It's all about maintaining cultural integrity, developing enterprises and having fun at the same time."

Glen Miller brings a lifetime's commitment to the Foundation's core objective: "To build bridges of understanding between the indigenous and western cultures of the world"

Carrying forward the Flame

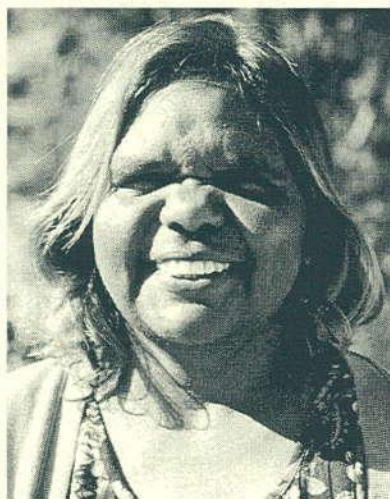
Story by Diana James

The recent deaths of the senior traditional custodian of Uluru, of several of the Pitjantjatjara elders, of David Mowaljarlai in the Kimberley and many others unnamed across Australia, heralds the time of handing on the flame. Elders of both white and black communities are passing on their vision to the next generation.

Respected elder of the western folksinger and storyteller tradition, Ted Egan, addressed the National Sorry Day celebrations in Alice Springs recently. He spoke and sang passionately of the handing on of the flame to the younger generations.

Ted Egan said, "The passing of the Olympic torch, from one hand to another, is like the Aboriginal tradition of carrying a fire-stick and lighting the fire from one camp to the next. In the Olympic opening ceremony in Sydney 2000 a tall, proud Aboriginal elder took the hand of a little white girl and lead her through the story of the creation of the seas and land to the Australia of today. A powerful symbol of Australia's desire for reconciliation of our heritage and peoples, learning from our elders and moving forward together as a united multicultural nation."

Nganyintja's daughter Leah, with her husband Lee, is carrying on the vision of teaching greater understanding between white and black Australians.



Leah Brady says, "My mother has been doing this work for a long time and she's taught me how to do this work as well. To bring people and to welcome people with an open heart, to love people from all different cultures, from all different places, not just Australia but from overseas. For many years people have been coming to country and we've been teaching them about the

land and how we love it and how we relate to it in a sacred fashion. And as we teach we're also teaching our children and our grandchildren and making sure that the Law is held strong for this land.

We teach as I was taught by my mother and she was taught by her mother and father. The Law for the land, the Tjukurpa, the Dreaming and the Creation Law, has been kept in people's heads and hearts and passed on through story and taking people into the land teaching them how to read the Land. This is what we do today, we take people in and tell them the Tjukurpa, we sing and dance, and we show them how to see it in the land, in the hills, in the rocks, in the waterholes and the trees, and the plants it's in everything. It makes people very happy it makes their spirits open to the Land."

Lee Brady spoke at the recent International Council on Monuments and Sites Conference in Alice Springs. The conference theme was Making Tracks. **Lee said**, "This is a very important time. The old people are going and we are being left to care for the land, the sacred places and the places of our heritage. We must work together to keep the stories of this country, black and white, strong. We need to preserve our heritage, care for the natural and cultural environment and teach our children to keep their stories of the Land."



DESERT TRACKS

Desert Tracks is wholly owned by Pitjantjatjara people in Central Australia. The *Ngintaka* graphic is their logo. Established in 1988 as a cross cultural tour to the homeland of Angatja ~ Nganyintja's country ~ the tours have since expanded to include several other homeland sites.

Desert Tracks are pioneers of cross cultural sharing with traditional Aboriginal communities in Central Australia and offer a unique experience of Central Australian Country and Culture.

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MAORI Renaissance

Story by John Broomfield

Soon after I returned to New Zealand in 1995, the Tainui people recovered their most precious *taonga* (heirloom). This was *Korotangi*, the sacred bird that centuries earlier had journeyed with their ancestral canoe from the tropical Pacific to safe haven in the North Island of New Zealand. Metamorphosed into stone, *Korotangi* had languished for more than a hundred years in museums. In a moving ceremony, he was welcomed home to the central *marae* (sacred meeting ground) of his people.

This event has parallels in the U.S., Canada and Australia, where museums are returning sacred objects demanded by indigenous people. But as yet there has been nothing in North America or Australia to compare with what also happened at this May 1995 ceremony: a formal national apology by the Prime Minister for war wrongfully waged by *Pakeha* (non-indigenous New Zealanders) in 1863-64 on this largest of all Maori *iwi* (tribes), along with the signing of a document of compensation for lands illegally confiscated by the government. Some 16,000 hectares were restored and a \$170 million trust fund established for the education and welfare of Tainui.

For someone like myself whose career has been devoted to the study and advocacy of multiculturalism, this was an exciting welcome home. It seemed remarkable changes had been wrought on the Anglo-dominant society I had left 35 years before. I felt like Rip Van Winkle stumbling sleepy-eyed from the Catskills as I discovered a nation awash in expressions of Maori cultural symbolism. New and refurbished public buildings were ornamented with Maori carvings and other decorative arts. Public events now commenced with Maori women's voices in melodious *karanga*, the traditional welcoming call, followed by the stirring male rhythms of *haka*, the challenge. Maori elders were routinely called upon to bless endeavours as varied as the opening of a hospital, the departure overseas of a sports team, the installation of a navigation beacon or the relocation of birds of an endangered species.

Acknowledgement of the sacred had become an everyday event in New Zealand. I found this a wonderful turnabout for a country formerly dominated by a doggedly secular *Pakeha* culture. Maori spirituality is earth-based, recognizing consciousness in all nature's forms. So rituals honouring rivers, mountains, forests, crops, whales and the like were now commonplace. What also impressed me in these ceremonies was how comfortable Maori were with the public expression of emotion. Laughter and tears came easily, and joy and sorrow found full expression in speech and song. The laconic, stiff-upper-lipped *Pakeha* were being shown different ways.

Te reo ("the language") seemed to fill the airwaves. Cities and secondary towns alike now had Maori radio stations. There were twice-daily Maori-language news bulletins on the major national TV channel, which also devoted most of Sunday mornings to Maori,

Polynesian and Asian community programming. TV presenters of all races used Maori words with relative ease and pronounced Maori place names correctly, something that would have been regarded as an absurd affectation in the New Zealand I left in 1960.

I discovered that departments of government, as well as those of universities, hospitals and other public institutions, now bore Maori as well as English titles. Many job advertisements were published in English and Maori, sometimes also in Samoan and Tongan. Candidates for professional appointments were invited to come to job interviews accompanied by *whanau* (family and friends) to lend support, as is Maori and Polynesian custom.

"Is this tokenism?" I wondered. A scarred veteran of affirmative action wars in American universities, I was not inclined to accept unquestioningly that the display in the shop window was the real goods. The deeper I have probed, however, the more convinced I have become that New Zealand is undergoing a profound transformation. The contrasts with Australia and the U.S., the countries in which I spent most of my years away, are striking.

To illustrate how different the situation is for Maori, let's take a closer look at language. During my school days, the New Zealand public education system proscribed Maori as a useless, dying language, and children overheard speaking it in schoolyards were often punished. Now Maori is a major school subject. In many elementary schools in Maori-majority districts it is the language of instruction for all students in all subjects, and in other parts of the country bilingual programs teach in both Maori and English.

Even more significant for the Maori cultural renaissance are *kohanga reo*. In the past 15 years these "language nests" have been developed nationwide by the Maori community in a successful effort to reverse a precipitous decline in knowledge of Maori. Preschoolers are the primary target, but unlike traditional kindergartens, *kohanga reo* encourage parents to come to class with the children. Elders and other community members drop in to share songs, games and crafts, knowledge of foods and healing, stories from their own lives and the lives of ancestors, and nuggets of spiritual tradition. The "nests" are like family gatherings with as much doing as talking. Language learning flows from the exchange of practical experience and cultural wisdom.

One of the founders of this movement predicted that the children it produced, "clothed in the *korowai* (feather cloak) of their culture, will be secure and proud of who they are." Graduates of *kohanga reo* and of their big sisters, *kura kaupapa* (Maori immersion grade schools), have justified his expectation. "Nobody can trample over you because you know exactly who you are," said one of them in a recent

The engraved knobs on this staff are touched when chanting genealogies as a memory aid.

magazine interview. "I learnt respect for my elders and to respect other cultures through learning my own. I've learnt discipline, determination," explained another.

The Waitangi Tribunal

Successful institution building of this kind requires vision, organizational skill and community mobilization. It also requires economic resources. Where is the cash coming from? Increasingly from Treaty of Waitangi settlements.

Here we need some history. The Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, was signed on Feb. 6, 1840, by a representative of the British Crown and 45 Maori rangatira (chiefs). In the following months, numerous other chiefs were persuaded to add their signatures. It was a hastily written, ambiguous document whose English and Maori versions said different things. The British believed it gave them sovereignty over New Zealand, leaving the chiefs with tribal authority to control local lands and resources. They also believed it committed Maori to sell land exclusively to the British government.

It is unclear that the Maori signatories had any notion of the weight the British placed on the treaty. Most critically, the concept of sovereignty was completely alien to Maori. For the chiefs, there seemed nothing to be lost in entering into an agreement that confirmed their rangatiratanga (authority) and guaranteed "undisturbed possession" of lands, forests, fisheries and sacred sites. All to the good that the British government was committing itself to rein in the unruly Pakeha freebooters who were disturbing trade and stirring up intertribal discord. In general the new economic opportunities the outsiders had brought were valued, and there seemed no harm in giving these British officials the right to first bid on land.

Land was to prove an explosive issue. I don't have to go into detail. Anyone familiar with the story of European expansion in Australia or North America can connect the dots to get the picture of what happened in New Zealand. The signing of the treaty was a green flag for Pakeha immigration, and the settlers came determined to get land by hook or by crook. Cajolery and chicanery led to violence, and ultimately the armed forces of the British Crown launched full-scale war to ensure that it was Pakeha, not Maori, who would have undisturbed possession of New Zealand's real estate.

Stripped of its economic base, with a population decimated by war, displacement, disease and malnutrition, Maori society was but a shadow of its former self through the century that followed. An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 Maori in 1840 were reduced by the turn of the century to less than 45,000, while Pakeha numbers catapulted from 2,000 to 700,000 in the same period. In the face of all odds, Maori retained their distinct identity, and their leaders never relented in the struggle to have the injustices reversed.

However, by the middle years of this century when I was growing up, Pakeha were largely unaware of the depth of grievance felt by Maori. A patronizing, paternalistic attitude had emerged. Maori, generally rural and poor, were seen to be in serious need of the health, education and other benefits extended by a then-generous social welfare state. Pointing to the reversal of the Maori population decline, Pakeha public figures pontificated

on how well we cared for "our Maori people" and declaimed that New Zealand led the world as a model of successful integration. "Two races, one people." We felt proud of the light sprinkling of Maori in prominent positions, and of the high achievement of Maori in the arenas that had shaped New Zealand's emerging national identity: soldiering in the two world wars and sport.

New Zealand had an economic boom from the 1950s through the 1970s, and an expanding job market brought young Maori flooding to town. In the '70s, Pakeha were jolted into a realization that all was not well with New Zealand race relations when angry "black power" gangs materialized in the new Maori urban ghettos and in provincial towns. At the same time from the more traditional tribal base, articulate young Maori leaders emerged in land occupations and protest marches.

The initial government responses were uncertain and confused, wavering between conciliation and repression, but ultimately the national self-image of a racially harmonious and just society decreed that a process should be developed for hearing grievances. The national boast had always been that the European presence in New Zealand (unlike that in North America and Australia) was legitimate because a treaty had been signed with the native people. Now Pakeha were caught between a rock and a hard place by Maori demands that Pakeha actions be measured against the commitments made in the Treaty of Waitangi.

In legislation passed in 1975 and broadened in 1985, the Treaty was acknowledged as a benchmark, and a tribunal was established to hear Maori claims of violation of treaty provisions. The tribunal was also to recommend restoration or compensation where appropriate. The floodgates of change were thrown open.

The Tainui settlement is just one of a number of multimillion dollar payouts in the past ten years. Many more are to come. There is no question but that the result will be a dramatic readjustment of assets between Pakeha and Maori.

Already the direct and indirect effects are palpable. There is new support for Maori students, writers, artists, crafts people and sports men and women. Traditional Maori health care practices are being revitalized, with finance from government as well as iwi. Commercial ventures funded by settlement monies are bringing Maori managers and entrepreneurs to the fore. In a ripple effect, both the public and private sectors are hiring more Maori and other non-Pakeha and paying more attention to a multicultural image. In colleges of nursing, education and social work, "cultural sensitivity" is a required part of the curriculum. Good medicine – but there's a fly or two in the ointment.

Sticking Points

For many Pakeha, particularly the older generation, the scale and speed of change are profoundly upsetting, and the renewed assertiveness of Maori, to whom they had always felt smugly superior, is offensive. Many refuse to acknowledge the restoration of Maori place names, and they grumble at the "political correctness" that exposes them increasingly to Maori usages in New Zealand English. They ridicule the amount of TV programming in Maori when at most only ten percent of

Maori speak the language. Irritation is turned to anger by the provocative actions of Maori radicals trying to spin faster the slow-grinding wheels of the Waitangi Tribunal process. How can these jokers have the gall to demand more, some Pakeha say, when the government's giving away the store as it is?

As so often in the past, land issues are creating the sharpest conflicts. Although privately owned land is excluded from the settlement process, extensive acreage of both Crown and Maori-owned lands was leased to Pakeha farmers at below-market rentals over the past 150 years. Maori are reclaiming control of these areas, with potentially severe economic consequences for the farm families who have invested generations of capital in improvements. On both public and private lands, Maori are also asserting rights over ancestral sacred sites and areas of "customary usage," for example, traditional sources of food, herbal medicines and plant fibers.

Even more contentious is the demand that the conservation estate -- the one-third of New Zealand's total land area that is protected in nature sanctuaries and national parks -- be placed on the table in the settlement process. "Why should this vast portion of Crown lands be exempt?" Maori ask. The official reply that this is a trust held in perpetuity for all New Zealanders has led to a slanging match between some Maori, who brand this as an arrogant claim that only Pakeha are fit to protect the environment, and some conservationists, who point to examples of flagrant commercial exploitation of fragile seafood stocks under cover of traditional Maori food-gathering rights. Cooler heads on both sides are at work on strategies for the joint management of reserves by iwi and the Department of Conservation.

Sovereignty

"For Pakeha, bi-culturalism means being sensitive to Maori cultural issues. For Maori, it means sharing power where power is made." The speaker is Sir Paul Reeves, the first Maori archbishop of the New Zealand Anglican church. As he states, access to power is the bottom line for Maori, but not all agree with him that sharing power is a sufficient goal.

The Maori version of the Treaty of Waitangi used the word "*rangitiratanga*" in guaranteeing the authority of the chiefs, and this has become a platform for challenges to the sovereignty of the New Zealand government. "It is important that Maori define any land resolution proposal as only part of a Treaty settlement," says Maori lawyer Moana Jackson. "That ultimate settlement requires a recognition of what colonisation has always been about -- the removal of the ability of Indigenous Peoples to exercise authority in their own land. Our tipuna [ancestors] defined that ability as '*rangitiratanga*.' Internationally it is defined as 'self-determination.' At the very least, it means dual sovereignty in this area called New Zealand."

A former Minister of Justice and Treaty Negotiations, Doug Graham, commented: "Maori people have certain rights that I don't have," which can be seen as "one law for Pakeha, another for Maori." But this is not dual sovereignty, nor (he stated adamantly) is sovereignty on the table.

Many prominent Maori agree. Local authority for iwi and a share of power at the national level is a manageable objective.

For a people that is only 500,000 in a total national population of 3,500,000, they say, it is unreasonable and even risky to demand more. Besides, Maori have time on their side. At present they constitute only 14 percent of New Zealand's population, but their younger age structure (85 percent of Maori are under 25) and higher birthrate means that by 2050 at least one in four New Zealanders will be Maori.

The joker in this deck is immigration. A large, sustained influx of people from overseas could work against the favourable population trend. Historically immigration has disadvantaged Maori, and the experience of the recent past is not positive. The 1960s and 1970s, which brought Maori job seekers flooding to urban areas, also brought large-scale immigration of Polynesians and other Pacific Islanders, of whom there are now more than 170,000 in New Zealand. They were seen as competitors for jobs, and there has been friction between them and Maori. Asian migrants, who also have come in fairly large numbers, are even less welcome to Maori.

Tribalism

Maori have serious insider/outsider problems closer to home. Bluntly stated, the scramble for the goodies tumbling from the Waitangi Tribunal table has reinforced old divisions in the community and generated new ones.

Again we need some history. There were no "Maori" in pre-European times. The word itself meant "ordinary," and it was applied to people -- the local, ordinary folk -- only when the non-ordinary Europeans sailed in from the deep blue sea. Identity was determined by one's ancestral groups: hapu (clan) and iwi (tribe). In general, hapu were subgroupings of iwi, but some were virtually autonomous. Those chiefs who signed the Treaty of

Waitangi were not making commitments on behalf of "the Maori people" but on behalf of their particular iwi or hapu. Therefore it is from iwi and hapu that settlement claims are being heard.

In the decades immediately prior to 1840, intertribal fighting was exceptionally widespread, with much consequent shuffling between tribes of control over territory. Additional conflicting claims to land and other resources stemmed from the Pakeha-provoked wars later in the century. In the Tribunal hearings, iwi dispute with other iwi, and some hapu demand the right to make claims independent of iwi.

There is a huge amount at stake, and each tribal negotiator is



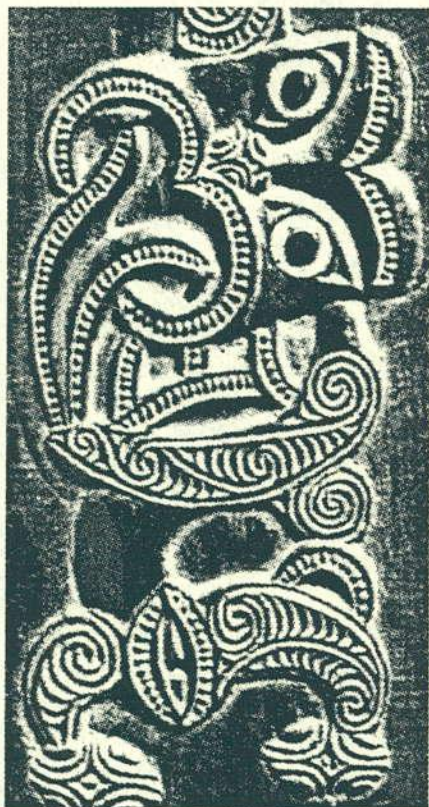
Carved flute

narrowly focused on securing the biggest possible cut for his or her group. Sir Tipene O'Regan, leader of the South Island's major iwi, is typical: "I've had a dream that my own Ngai Tahu community which is growing in numbers should be restored to the control of their own assets of which they were wrongfully deprived, so as to drive their own future independently of the dominant culture's distribution system."

Multimillion-dollar settlements are transforming the elders of large tribes into managers of mega-corporations. They are busily buttressing the structures that cement their power and digging deeper the moat that guards the iwi's perimeters against those clamouring for a share of the loot. Inevitably,

there are dissenters within the tribe who are levelling accusations of authoritarianism and of injustice in divvying up the wealth. Among these are women, who are excluded from significant portions of public debate in many iwi because of traditional sanctions against their speaking on the paepae (formal debating ground). The voice of feminism is ringing loud and clear through Maoridom, demanding that the old boys make room at the table.

"I don't waste time with *namunamu* people (pesky sandflies)!" Despite Sir Tipene O'Regan's dismissive response to criticism, there's no concealing the fact that the newly enriched Maori establishment does have a case to answer. It



detail of canoe paddle carving

comes from the ranks of urban Maori who have lost their iwi affiliations and have no access to treaty settlement monies. One of the most vocal critics, John Tamihere, explains: "The thrust for 30 years was on how Maori got ripped off, but now that the settlements are coming through, hello, large numbers of us don't exist." Castigating the tribunal process as a divisive reinforcement of tribalism, Tamihere and others accuse the old guard of a selfish exclusiveness that is shutting out the most needy of their people.

The figure these critics cite of 100,000 detribalized urban Maori is scornfully rejected by iwi leaders as a gross over-inflation, but whatever the number, there is no disputing the fact that this group is the major contributor to appalling statistics of social disintegration. Maori make up 50 percent of New Zealand's prison population. They are disproportionately represented in figures of low education, unemployment, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases and TB, alcoholism, drug addiction, family violence and sexual abuse, teen-age pregnancy and infant mortality. Maori youth have a higher-than-average rate of violent death, including suicide, and their adult population is more

prone to heart disease.

Working for those at the bottom of the heap, Tamihere and like-minded activists have developed intertribal marae and other urban organizations unaffiliated with iwi, and they are fighting in the courts for a share of the settlement monies to support their work with the dispossessed. The national Parliament is also an arena for a challenge to the old guard mounted by brash young Maori politicians who have emerged from this new urban constituency.

Mana Restored

Stepping back from the fray, what can be said of the overall situation? Full of contradictions. But then, counter currents are to be expected in a period of social turbulence. For instance, I'm confident that ways will be found to tap the settlement dollars to benefit the underclass, but equally I believe the Maori establishment will be enriched disproportionately. Pan-Maori identity will strengthen as the new century proceeds, but iwi will remain robust. As a people, Maori will become even more assertive, but racial intermarriage will continue to be as prevalent as it always has been in New Zealand, serving, I believe, as a sea anchor against any violent parting of the ways between Maori and non-Maori.

Maori *mana* is being recovered. How to translate this most important of words? Stature, prestige, standing straight and tall with spiritual assurance. The recovery of *mana* is as essential for the redemption of the Maori underclass as is an injection of well-directed economic resources. The recovery of *mana* may also open space for a gentler feminine quality in Maori culture which, at least in the modern colonial era, has been characterized by a macho warrior ethos.

The recovery of Maori *mana* benefits the country as a whole. It brings a good chance for real equality between the races. The vigour of the Maori cultural renaissance is already infusing New Zealand with a new creative vitality. At the heart of Maori consciousness is *wairua*, spirit. What a boon for a nation to have a dynamic community expressing the centrality of the spiritual in its music and art, in its ritual and in its routines of daily life.

In the past, conflict over land has divided New Zealanders -- Maori from Maori, Maori from Pakeha. Maori speak of themselves as *tangata whenua*, the people of the land, for it is from a well-nurtured land (they say) that the life force flows. But a passion for this remote and beautiful country is a distinguishing characteristic of Pakeha, too. In the future, both races may draw together in the shared awareness that it is the land that is forever, or as Maori say: *Toitu te whenua e!*

This article is adapted from an earlier version published in Lapis.

JOHN BROOMFIELD is the author of *Other Ways of Knowing: Recharting Our Future with Ageless Wisdom* (Inner Traditions, 1997; Australian distributor: Gemcraft Books). He leads journeys exploring sacred indigenous traditions in New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia and India. John and his wife, writer and artist Jo Imlay, are developing a private nature sanctuary in a remote area of the New Zealand bush, well prepared (he says) by years spent in the professorial jungles of the U.S. and Australia. John's email address is: eagle@ts.co.nz



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Maps to the future

It all gets down to Education as the foundation for knowledge. Without knowledge both wisdom and compassion have no place to grow. When I asked a Senior Elder from the Kimberley, David Mowaljarlai a question about Initiation, he answered in terms of education. "Initiation is Education, it goes on your whole life." One level of initiation leads to another and another. He, like Nganyinytja and Ilyatjari on the Pitjantjatjara lands, was sometimes criticised by members of his community for sharing traditional knowledge with outsiders and white people. Mowaljarlai said. "We are all human beings, we can all share knowledge."

People like Mowaljarlai, Ilyatjari and Nganyinytja are extraordinary in any culture. Not only holders of culture, they are active creators, who "unpack the tent of wisdom." Following unmade tracks into the future they pick up the essential elements of their traditions and breath a life into them that can be seen and understood by emerging generations and people from very different traditions.

In this they conform to the old Judaic tradition of the Prophet as someone who dives into the darkness of the essential pain of their times, and through a supreme creative act, emerge to speak a new vision of how things can be.

The two ways

Though these Elders wanted to pass on and encourage knowledge of traditional wisdom and ceremony, they also emphasised the importance of young aboriginal people mastering western knowledge and completing school. Schooling is part of initiation into the world that exists now. Many urban white people who are sympathetic to the message of visionary Aboriginal elders do not realise that such elders want their young people to walk strong in both ways of knowledge.

There is sometimes a tendency for non-Indigenous people to romanticise the way of life and traditional teachings of Elders to the point that we don't value the powerful tools of our own culture that our Education system places at our fingertips. People like Nganyinytja, Ilyatjari and Mowaljarlai are under no such illusions. They themselves are the result of a wise and compassionate exposure to both traditions, from their parents, grandparents and clan groups on one side and through the agency of some exceptional church people on the other.

On the Pitjantjatjara lands one of the sad things for the elders is that only 5 young people on all the Lands have ever completed High School, and not one has been male. This is simply not good enough. What is needed is positive expectation and help for those people on the Lands who are trying to get more young people over the line.

There is a danger in sympathy and sentimental understanding of the massive problems that grinding poverty create for Young people on the Lands. All too often, when confronted with just a taste of the grim reality sympathetic outsiders become fatalistic.

What the emerging generations of young Pitjantjatjara need is not fatalistic acceptance of the worst case scenario for them. **What is needed is a completely unreasonable expectation of high achievement for every one of them. Impossible? Good! What is needed is a belief in the impossible. The road to hell is made by "reasonable" people who only look to "what is achievable."** Ilyatjari, Nganyinytja and Mowaljarlai were never ones to be stopped by the idea of things being impossible ~ and neither should we.

At a practical level the young people need models and mentors to get through. This is in addition to specific initiatives like the ones the Foundation proposes on page 1 of this journal.

Models and Maps

This includes giving wide publicity and praise to young people from isolated communities who have made it through, not only high school, but also university or TAFE. It also means spelling out career paths for young people that directly link different levels of education to positions of status, wealth and service in the community. For young people on the Pitjantjatjara lands this is necessary as the majority of non labouring jobs in everything thing from education to administration, from health services to the service and tourism industries is done by white employees. Why? Simply because most Pitjantjatjara people do not have the education and training. The danger in this is that an unconscious assumption is built in the hearts of young people that such positions are not possible for them. In traditional times things were "mapped out" ~ people knew that different degrees of initiation, learning and competence qualified people for various positions in the culture. The same mapping needs to be done for things as they are now ~ and for how they can be.

Mentors

This means help to get through ~ not only with financial resources for education. It also needs the development of a network of personal relationships between young Pitjantjatjara people and people of good will and practical expertise in the larger Australian Community who are prepared to make the commitment to assist a young person through High School, University, or TAFE. This is necessary because of.

- (1) The low level of practical knowledge of these systems in the traditional community and.
- (2) The necessity of young people having to move off the lands to get, not only University and TAFE but also High School Education.

Something similar to the **student exchange programs** that already operate in Australia, and the **Plant Youth groups** that have started on the NSW Central Coast, to help youth stay at school is needed. Projects like these would be a great way for people to give practical assistance and build deep relationships with Aboriginal people and communities.





Spirit Of The Land Foundation

Back Page Resources



Inma Ngintaka ~ CD

Angatja Inma Festival organised by Charlie Ilyatjari and Nfanyinytja through their company Desert Tracks.

Inma singers

Traditional custodians of Inma Ngintaka from communities - Angatja, Umpukulu, Nyapari, Kanypi, Ernabella, Wiputa, Amata, Wintuwata, Ngarutjara.

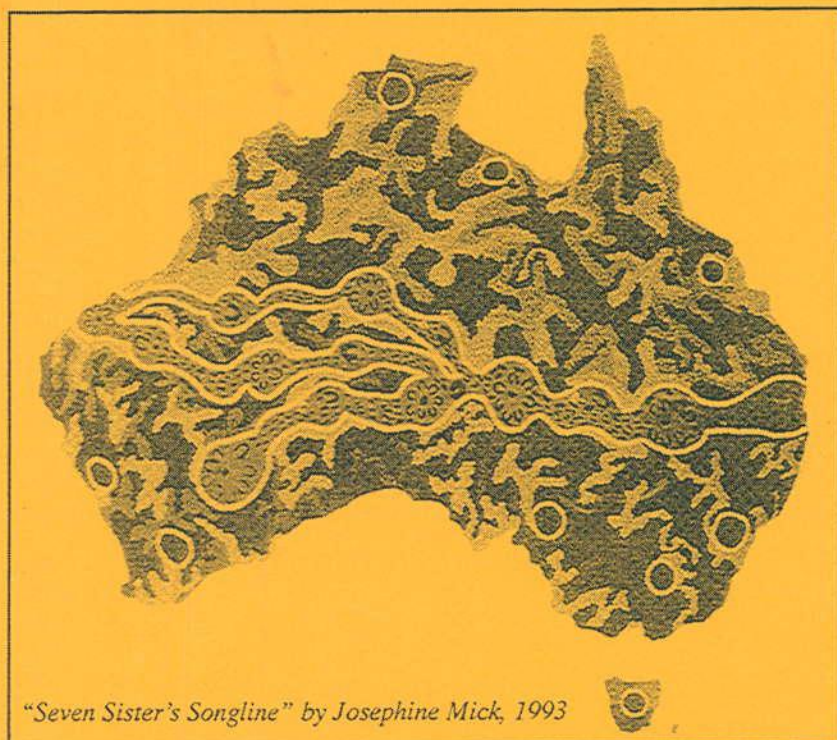
Pitjantjatjara storyteller - Nganyinytja. Lead singer -

Andy Tjilari. English interpretation - Diana James.

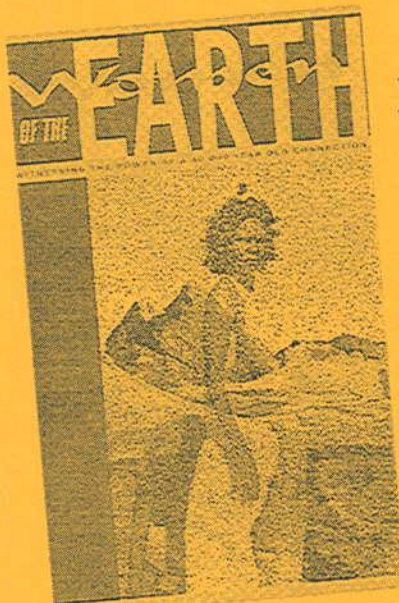
Recorded by Bob Micallef of Crystal Music Studios.

Transcription by Linda Rive

CD \$27.00. Cassette \$17.00.
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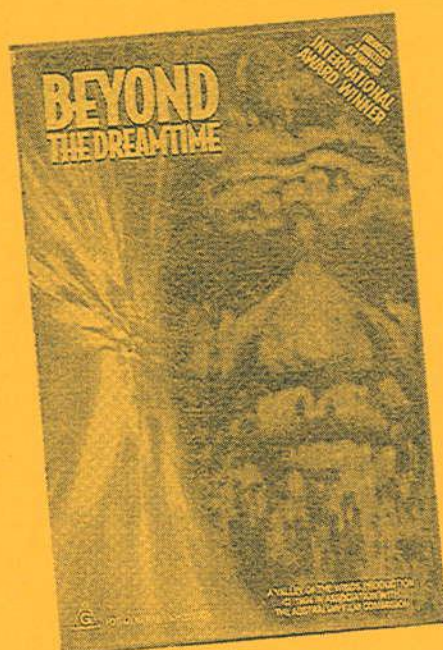
"Seven Sister's Songline" by Josephine Mick, 1993



Women Of The Earth ~ Video

This compelling journey documents the extraordinary relationship between Aboriginal women, the Dreamtime and the Earth. Nganyinytja, a tribal elder from central Australia, opens up her homeland, sharing its secrets and significance. Djakminy of the Dhuwa tribe weaves the stories of the Dreamtime into baskets, grieving that her knowledge will die with her. The Martu women of the remote western deserts are struggling to gain the right to live on their territory undisturbed. The land is their life-blood.

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Beyond The Dreamtime ~ Video

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