

*This film is about what happened to my culture when it was interrupted by your culture*  
DAVID GULPILIL

# ANOTHER COUNTRY



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A **STUDY GUIDE** BY MARGUERITE O'HARA



AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

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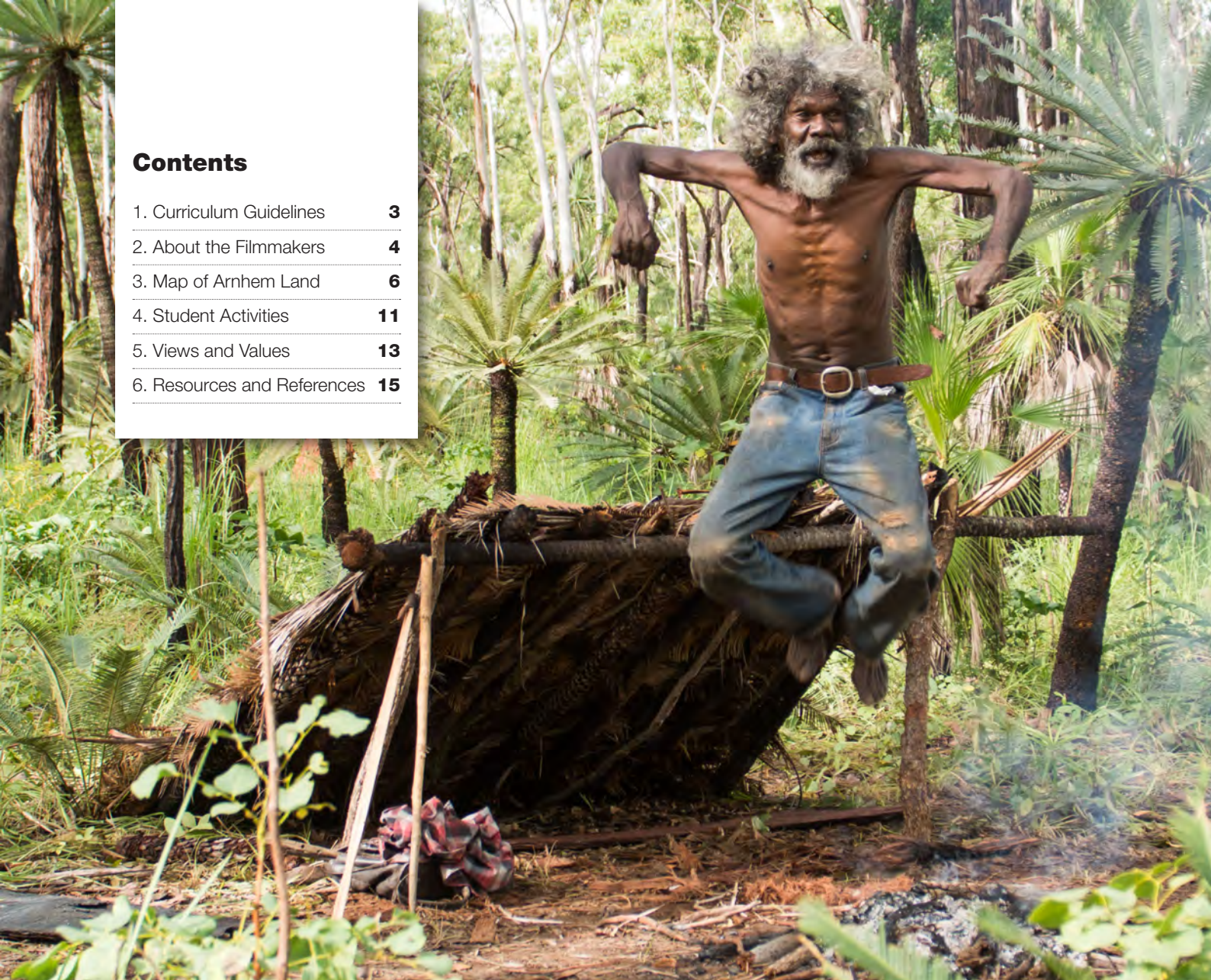
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## OVERVIEW

This is a film about Ramingining, a remote Indigenous community in north-east Arnhem Land. But, as the title of this film suggests, it is in many ways 'another country'. Some students may recognise the country as the place where Rolf de Heer's *Ten Canoes* was filmed. This award-winning 2006 film about Indigenous life before the arrival of white settlers was shot in this part of Arnhem Land on the edge of the Arafura swamp. It was the first film shot in an Indigenous language. David Gulpilil, Australian actor and local, is the narrator of *Another Country*, as he was for *Ten Canoes*, some eight years earlier.

In this film, the camera moves around Ramingining as Gulpilil explains simply and clearly why the town is as it is today. How does any community develop an identity and what are the factors that result in changes within that community over time? What are the struggles faced by this community to retain control of their lives? We need to understand the history of Ramingining, to listen to the people who live there to understand their lives and their beliefs, their strengths, their losses and their aspirations.



# 1. CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

*Another Country* is one of three films, described as 'The Country Suite of Projects' made by filmmakers Rolf de Heer, Molly Reynolds, David Gulpilil, Peter Djiggir and members of the community of Ramingining between 2013 and 2014.

*Charlie's Country*, directed by Rolf de Heer and starring actor David Gulpilil, is the story of Charlie, an ageing blackfella living in Arnhem Land today and finding life difficult as he is faced with whitefella laws that make little sense to him.

*Still Our Country – Reflections on a Culture*, directed by Molly Reynolds, is described by the filmmakers as 'an experiential film' with evocative cinematic visuals and sound. *Still Our Country* documents the swiftly morphing lives of the Yolngu people of Ramingining in the Northern Territory. The film is built on fragments and parts presenting a carnival of contemporary ways, the sum of which makes for a bold declaration of identity and a hopeful promise of a future.

*Another Country*, the third of this suite of projects, is a portrait of life today in Ramingining. It is made in a more traditional documentary style. David Gulpilil's narration offers a compelling account of what daily life is like for the community of Aboriginal Australians who live in Ramingining. Through a range of scenes and subjects with accompanying commentary, we learn about life in this remote community in Arnhem Land, up north, thousands of kilometres from where most non-indigenous Australians live. Is there 'one Australia' or are there many different places that make up Australia? In what sense is Ramingining 'another country'?

What has happened since the arrival of white settlers to the culture and ways of life of Indigenous Australians who have lived on this continent for many thousands of years in different parts of the country in clan and extended family groups — different nations with a long and shared history and many different languages?

Colonisation in Australia denied Aboriginal people access to their land, disrupting and often destroying their life cycle. Aboriginal Australians have a network of sites and tracks



embedded in the land that connect them to all living things and enable them to practice their laws, traditions and beliefs. They belong to the land that nourishes them. They are not landowners in the sense that many white people acquire and own land.

How can Indigenous Australians maintain their traditional way of life within their country today, live well on their terms? *Another Country* illustrates the difficulties and dilemmas faced by people whose traditional way of life is in many ways at odds with that of the dominant white society. The documentary runs for approximately 75 minutes.

*Another Country* is a film that all Australians should see. For school students it would be best suited to secondary students (Years 7-12) in the following study areas:

- English
- Australian History
- SOSE/HSIE
- Civics and Citizenship
- Indigenous Studies
- Film and Media Studies
- Geography and
- In many subject areas in the National Curriculum as an excellent way of 'incorporating Indigenous perspectives and understandings'.

Junior secondary students will, at the very least, see something of what life is like in another culture and in a remote place. For older students, the film offers a rich opportunity to investigate the story of a place told through the eyes of a local.

As David Gulpilil, the narrator of the film says in his introduction:

*This film is about you as much as it is about me and my people. This film is about place and history and about a strange town called Ramingining. This film is about what happened to my culture when it was interrupted by your culture.*

At the end of the film, one of the things Gulpilil says is, 'you have to try and understand us'.





## 2. ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### Director, writer and co-producer — Molly Reynolds

Molly specialises in screen-based storytelling and digital media production although she has worked in most sectors of the screen industry. When she isn't earning a living as a consultant in the digital sphere, she makes documentaries, including *Still Our Country*, *What Makes Me* and *Twelve Canoes*.

### Co-producer — Peter Djigirr

Peter Djigirr is a man of many talents. He's a Gurruwiling Ranger for the South-East Arafura Catchment, close to his traditional tribal lands. He is also a film-maker. He was co-director on *Ten Canoes* and a producer for *Charlie's Country*. He also co-starred in *Charlie's Country*, playing Black Pete.

### Co-producer and writer — Rolf de Heer

Rolf de Heer writes, produces and directs feature films. Works include *Ten Canoes*, *Dance Me To My Song*, *The Quiet Room*, *Alexandra's Project*, *The Tracker*, *Bad Boy Bubby* and, most recently, *Charlie's Country*, a film with David Gulpilil which was de Heer's fourth Official Selection at Cannes.

### Cinematography — Matt Nettheim

Matt Nettheim is a stills photographer who has come to specialise and be in demand as an on-set stills photographer. *Another Country* and *Still Our Country* are his first works as a cinematographer.

### CREW

<b>Writers</b>	David Gulpilil, Rolf de Heer and Molly Reynolds
<b>Producers</b>	Peter Djigirr, Rolf de Heer and Molly Reynolds
<b>Cinematography</b>	Matt Nettheim
<b>Editor</b>	Tania Nehme. Another long-time collaborator on films made with Rolf de Heer and Molly Reynolds
<b>Music</b>	Composed by 'Fuse', Joff Bush, Ack Kinmonth, David Hala'ufia and Saltwater Band. The Yolngu musicians and dancers whose talents are infused throughout the film are also acknowledged.
<b>Sound Design and recording</b>	James Currie and Tom Heuzenroeder. As with many of the cast and crew, the sound recorders have also collaborated on other productions with Rolf de Heer and Molly Reynolds.

*Another Country* is a Vertigo Productions and Bula bula' Arts Aboriginal Corporation co-production

### David Gulpilil — the narrator

The opening onscreen title is *Another Country* — as told by David Gulpilil

Here is how David Gulpilil introduces himself to us at the beginning of the film:

*My name is David Gulpilil. I am a dancer, an artist, like many of my people. I'm also an actor. Maybe you've seen me in 'Storm Boy' or 'Crocodile Dundee' or even in that film 'Australia'. I won awards, I travelled the world, I hung out with Jimmy Hendrix and Bob Marley and I've been honoured by Her Majesty the Queen of England. Not bad eh... for a blackfella!*

*I been to prison too, more than once. That's me, David Gulpilil — a living legend!*







Here is some more information about David Gulpilil and his impressive contribution to the arts in this country.

As a seventeen year-old, David Gulpilil lit up the screen in Nicholas Roeg's 1971 film *Walkabout*, doing more than play a role. The performance was so strong, so imbued with a new type of graceful naturalism, that it re-defined perceptions of Aboriginality, especially in the field of screen acting.

Over the next decade, he became the iconic Aboriginal actor of his generation, paving the way in the resurgence of the Australian film industry for more parts to be written for Aboriginal people, for more Aboriginal stories to be told. His charismatic, engaging and unforgettable performances in films like *Storm Boy*, *The Last Wave* and *Crocodile Dundee* helped bring Aboriginality into the mainstream of the screen arts.

In his more recent work, including *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, *The Tracker*, *Australia*, *Satellite Boy* and *Charlie's Country*, David has brought tremendous dignity to the depiction of what it is to be Aboriginal. Through his performances he has brought an incalculable amount of self-esteem to his community. In 2014 he was awarded Best Actor at the Cannes Film Festival in the Un Certain Regard category for his role in *Charlie's Country*, the feature film in this 'country suite' of projects where he plays Charlie, a blackfella who is finding life increasingly difficult in his community.

If you are unable to see this remarkable film at the cinema or on DVD, the Press Kit is available at: [http://www.](http://www.vertigoproductions.com.au/downloads/charlies_country_australian_press_kit.pdf)

[vertigoproductions.com.au/downloads/charlies\\_country\\_australian\\_press\\_kit.pdf](http://www.vertigoproductions.com.au/downloads/charlies_country_australian_press_kit.pdf).

It includes an account of how the film was developed by Director Rolf de Heer and actor David Gulpilil who is on-screen for almost every scene in this film.

David is not just a screen actor, however. He was a peerless dancer, for a time perhaps the most renowned traditional dancer in Australia. He danced at the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973. He has written the text for two volumes of children's stories based on his people's beliefs. He has performed a one-man autobiographical show to great acclaim on the stages of the Adelaide Festival of Arts and Sydney's Belvoir Street Theatre. And he paints, in his own distinct but traditionally evolved style, paintings which convey his reverence for the landscape, people and traditional culture of his homeland.

In 2013 Gulpilil, won the \$50000 2013 Red Ochre Award, the highest peer-assessed award for an Indigenous artist, for his many contributions to the artistic and cultural life of Australia.

## » COLLABORATION AND CONSULTATION

Making a documentary such as *Another Country* would not be possible without the co-operation and contributions of the people who live in Ramingining. Molly Reynolds (the Director), David Gulpilil, Rolf de Heer and the crew who worked on this film, have all spent time in Ramingining over many years, documenting the Yolngu people's culture and telling stories on film about Aboriginal life, both past and present. Embedded in the style of their work is an implicit understanding that this is Yolngu country and these stories can best be told by Yolngu people.

The filmmakers recognise and accept that the individual perspective of the storyteller is crucial in shaping the material.



[Http://www.bulabula-arts.com/Site/map.html](http://www.bulabula-arts.com/Site/map.html)

### 3. MAP OF ARNHEM LAND

#### [IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY SHOWING RAMINGININ]

Ramingining has a population of approximately 800 people, though this fluctuates. The community is approximately 817 kilometres by road from Darwin, situated on the edge of the Arafura Swamp in Arnhem Land.

The wet season in this part of the country goes from November to May.

The community was established in the early 1970s, and became recognised as Aboriginal land with the passage of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act of 1976. A written permit is required to visit Ramingining. There is an airstrip, a general store, a school, a police station opened in January 2008 and a health clinic with four nurses and a fly in doctor who visits weekly from Nhulunbuy.

Djambarrpuyngu is the main language in Ramingining, though Gupapuyngu and Ganalbingu are also spoken.

Some people know six or seven languages, but English is spoken only out of necessity and at the local school. Hunting, fishing and gathering are still practised in both traditional and non-traditional ways. The community, along with nearby Murwangi, was also the source for many of the actors in Rolf de Heer's 2006 film, *Ten Canoes*.

Alcohol is banned in Ramingining. It cannot be consumed by residents or visitors. Kava (substance from the roots of a plant that is taken as a sedative and muscle relaxant) used to be legally available but was banned in the entire Northern Territory in August 2007 as a part of the federal government's 'Intervention into Indigenous Affairs'. Ganja (marijuana) is also banned.

As in many remote communities, access to fresh food, especially fruit and vegetables, is very limited when nearly all supplies have to be brought into communities by barge and trucks, weather permitting. Some medical assistance is available locally. For more complex conditions such as type 2 diabetes, kidney disease and respiratory conditions, people have to be flown out to city hospitals in centres like Darwin.





Conventional work is scarce. Some people are engaged with arts and crafts which helps keep traditions alive and some men work as Gurruwiling rangers caring for the Arafura swamp wetlands area.

63% of Indigenous Australians who live in the Northern Territory live in what are called 'very remote communities'.

## » HISTORY

As most Australians are unlikely to have visited a remote Indigenous community such as Ramingining, we are dependent on accounts by people who have lived or still live in the community for information about daily life and the effects of different layers of governance on the people. As the map shows and the film illustrates, Ramingining is far from most of the places tourists are likely to visit. It is on the edge of the Arafura Swamp and Kakadu National Park is a 15 hour journey away. Some tour companies are now taking adventure tours into these remote areas.

Several Victorian schools have exchange programs with Ramingining School and with other remote communities such as Robinson River. Students from St Kevin's College and Cockatoo Primary School spend time with Ramingining students in their community. Ramingining students then spend time with their Victorian counterparts. Accounts from



these students would be first-hand accounts.

Filmmakers Molly Reynolds and Rolf de Heer have also spent time in Ramingining, living and working with David Gulpilil, Peter Djigir and other members of the Ramingining community, so they are also able to offer first-hand accounts.

*Another Country* is narrated by actor, dancer and local community member David Gulpilil. He tells the story about life in Ramingining and the ways in which traditional Indigenous life has been damaged in many ways since the arrival of whitefellas in 1788. As we see in the documentary and in Rolf de Heer's film *Ten Canoes*, this is beautiful country but whether 'idyllic' (beautiful simple and peaceful, without problems) as one website suggests, is an accurate description would depend on who was telling the story.

## » WHO'S TELLING THE STORY?

If you put Ramingining into a search engine, several sites will appear. Each one offers a different perspective and information about Ramingining, most quite unlike the place we are shown and told about by narrator David Gulpilil in this documentary film.

Website information is usually written for a specific purpose, such as outlining health or education services, or from local, state/territory or Federal governments or as a promotion for a tourist company. The picture created is framed through the eyes and interests of a group, organisation or individual. This is true of any account of a place. We rarely have an insider's view — that is, someone who lives





### Ramingining School

Ramingining is an idyllic, culturally rich Indigenous community, 552 km east of Darwin, in the tropical forest on the edge of the Arafura Swamp. Many outstations are situated on the banks of lagoons and rivers teeming with wildlife. The community was the location for the movie *10 Canoes* and is home to many outstanding artists and musicians.

The people's language (Yolngu Matha) is primarily Djambarrpuynu and Gupapuyngu; however Ganalbingu and others are also spoken. English is a foreign language.

The school is English speaking and caters for 310 students from Pre-School to Year 12.

in the place and understands its history and how the community operates.

Above is an entry for Ramingining School from the Northern Territory Education Department. It includes the 2012 annual school report so we can assume that is the relevant date of the information presented on the website.

- See what information you can find online about Ramingining. Identify the source of the information or the author and outline what information is offered. Do not exclude sites put up by tourists and/or travellers on their personal blogs.

## » COLONISATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Many Indigenous cultures around the world have been massively disrupted, damaged and in some cases destroyed within less than 100 years of the arrival of colonists (mostly from Europe and Britain) on boats. Here is a brief account of what happened to Native American societies after colonisation.

## » DESTRUCTION OF NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES

*Prior to 1492, Native Americans were not considered a minority population. As a matter of fact, approximately 70 million Native Americans, close to the population of*



*Europe during this time, dominated the continents of North and South America (Goldfield, 2014, p. 3). It is believed that these populations of people travelled from central and northern Siberia, across a land bridge that emerged from the current day Bering Strait. Hundreds of groups inhabited North and South America and co-existed within various tribes. Each tribe had their own culture, language or dialect, and history. However, events would unfold over the next hundreds of years that would not only turn the Native Americans into a minority but into an oppressed population.*

*By 1492, Christopher Columbus, an Italian, was in the midst of his expedition to find the new world. When the new world was 'discovered', the meetings between Europeans and Native Americans were sometimes friendly but often times confrontational. The differences in cultures clashed.*

<http://www.angelsghosts.com/destruction-of-native-american-culture>

Contact with British settlers in the early nineteenth century in Tasmania led to the near-extinction of the native Tasmanians and the loss of their languages and cultures. On the mainland and the Torres Strait Islands, there were



'Black Wars', massacres, conflict and massed forced movements of local people from one place to another. However, despite this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people did survive and eventually gain some rights over their traditional lands and how it could be used and developed for mining, farming, cattle and sheep grazing and other forms of development.

## » WHAT WERE THE NUMBERS OF ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS AT THE TIME OF BRITISH SETTLEMENT?

Experts estimate the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at 700,000 at the time of the invasion in 1788. It fell to its low of around 93,000 people in 1900, a decrease by almost 87%.

At present, 3% of Australia's population identify as Aboriginal.

Contrary to what many people think, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in Australia's eastern states and not in the remote desert regions of the continent.

More than 66% of Aboriginal people live in NSW, Queensland and Victoria while Western Australia and the Northern Territory contribute only 24% of the Aboriginal population. Queensland is expected very soon to overtake NSW for the title of most Aboriginal residents.

The population is lowest in South Australia (5.6%) and Tasmania (3.6%). The Australian Capital Territory is home to only 0.9% of Australia's Aboriginal people.

The Northern Territory has the largest proportion of its population who are Aboriginal (30%), compared with 4.7% or less for all other states and the Australian Capital Territory.

## » REMOTE COMMUNITIES

What does it mean to live in a remote community in Australia? This is a Government Fact Sheet with clear information about remote communities.

See [http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/111612/key-indicators-2011-factsheet-remote.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/111612/key-indicators-2011-factsheet-remote.pdf)



## » OUTSTATIONS AND SMALL COMMUNITIES

There are 1187 discrete Indigenous communities across Australia. Of these, 865 (73%) have a population below 50 and 987 (83%) have a population below 100 people. The average size of those with populations under 100 is 20 people. The majority of these small communities are located in remote or very remote Australia, with the highest concentration of small remote Indigenous communities being found in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland. In the Northern Territory the total population living in small remote Indigenous communities is approximately 10,000 or 25% of the total Aboriginal population in all NT communities (ABS 2006a). Just over a third of the Aboriginal population in the

NT lives in small and medium size communities.

Ramingining, with a population of around 800 is one of the medium sized communities in Arnhem Land. There are also groups of people living on nearby surrounding outstations. The people living in Ramingining mostly identify as Yolngu and within the community several different languages are spoken.





And how do you get to Ramininging at the top of Australia? Unless you are a resident, you will need a permit to go there as it is an Indigenous community on Aboriginal land and therefore the private home of the people who live there. Outsiders cannot just go in to look around or settle there.

## » LISTENING

As with many documentary films, *Another Country: as told by David Gulpilil* has a soundtrack and visuals. However, the voiceover that provides an illustrated narrative of life in Ramininging is that of David Gulpilil, sometime resident and actor who for some years has lived on his traditional country in Arnhem Land and at other times in the whitefella world of Darwin and other cities where he has worked as an actor. He is probably the best-known Aboriginal Australian actor and dancer in the world, having starred in several films seen by Australian and international audiences.

And yes, there is another soundtrack to life in Ramininging — that of daily life with birds calling, dogs barking, kids shouting, rain falling, a variety of music, both traditional and contemporary and often a fusion of both, clapsticks, gospel singing, the sounds of football and the voices of the residents as they go about their daily business.

However, it is Gulpilil's voice that offers his understandings and explanations for why life is the way it is today in Ramininging. It is his voice that supplies the history that contextualises what we see on the screen. He both raises and often provides answers to any questions you might ask about life in Ramininging. Listen to what he says before you start discussing or making assumptions about the issues he identifies as being part of life in Ramininging.

D.G. *How do you get there?*

1. See the map and calculate the distances.
2. Take David's advice.
  - (a) Take the top road from Darwin — one day's driving,

most of it on dirt roads with 23 river crossings. (Ramininging has a wet and a dry season. The wet season in Ramininging begins around November and ends around May. Over the course of the wet season, Ramininging receives around 1403.3mm of rain)

- (b) Take the bottom road from Katherine — one day driving, mostly dirt road and many river crossings. (If the roads are open, the nearest proper town is 400 kilometres away and in the wet season these roads are often closed)
  - (c) Take the plane from the airport just outside the town. In most cases it's cheaper to fly to England than Ramininging (return flights to Ramininging from most capital cities in Australia generally cost around \$2000–\$2500); Darwin to Ramininging by Tiwi air is \$550.00 per adult each way; this is the best offer, and is only available three days of every week).
3. D.G. *Why did they build a town where there is no work, no facilities, nothing to do and no future?*

D.G. They built a town here because every government for the last hundred years always decided what's best for our people...because they think they know more about us than we do.

D.G. To know what's best for us you have to know us.

D.G. No-one from any Government has even known our language. How can they know us...our people?

**(Paternalism)** is behaviour, by a person, organization or state, which limits some person or group's liberty or autonomy, supposedly 'for their own good')

As you watch this film and listen to what David Gulpilil has to say, note down any examples of paternalistic behaviour.

Later in this section of the guide, there are some quotes from the film that may help you to recall the context of some of the things David Gulpilil refers to.







- This is not an exercise in making judgements about attitudes and approaches. Rather, it is about recognising and acknowledging fundamental differences in ways of living of people from different cultures, backgrounds and experiences. How can black and white people work together, valuing each other's priorities and cultures?
- How do Australians from Anglo backgrounds live and work with the many different ethnic groups who have migrated to Australia?
- Why have generations of white Australians made such a mess of living alongside Indigenous Australians?

## 4. STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Use the chart (*Table 1*) to make notes about what we see and hear about life in Ramingining, using column 2. In column 3 make notes about the ways in which many of these everyday activities such as shopping for food and other items, using money, using land, jobs and attitudes about car ownership and collective responsibilities are different for most white people in Australia.

- What are most white people's experiences of money, work, possessions, and responsibilities for others?
- What direct Government intervention is there in white people's lives?
- What range of choices about education, healthcare and food choices are available in most white societies?





**TABLE 1**

Scene or subject	Ramingining/society/culture	Your town/society/culture
The kangaroo corralled by the dogs behind the fence.		
The store. Shopping. Waiting for store to open. Food choices.		
Land use and ownership. Cattle Grazing. Hunting.		
Religious beliefs. Responses to missionaries. Ceremonies.		
Self-determination. Making own decisions.		
Housing.		
Money.		
Work and jobs.		
Cars.		
Government intervention in lives.		
Making art.		
Recreational activities.		
Electricity.		
Welfare. The Basics card.		
Creating and disposing of rubbish.		
Time.		



**Rolf de Heer**—Director of *The Tracker* (2002), *Ten Canoes* (2006) and *Charlie's Country* (2014) filmed in and around Ramingining, in a newspaper report published in July, 2014.

Underpinning *Charlie's Country* is the impact of the Howard Government's 'intervention' into communities such as Ramingining, in 2007. De Heer reckons he's lived in Ramingining for about a year all told, before and after the package of new policies were applied to Aboriginal communities under the intervention. He says he has never seen as much alcohol consumed as now.

'They were a self-imposed dry community [previously],' de Heer recalls, noting that kava was also banned. 'Now there's a whole lot of smuggling and home-brewing going on. The alcohol causes social dislocation because there's more misbehaviour as a consequence.' He pauses, then continues: 'And now there's cops... And now that there is a major police presence a lot of people are getting arrested and sent to Darwin, which never used to happen. It's complex. A lot of people also appreciate that there's a police station.'

If de Heer was Prime Minister what would he do? 'I would call both houses together and say, 'We have to start here, now, and make this completely bipartisan. We have to promise and swear to never again do anything that brings it back into a three-year election cycle. It's a problem that is going to take hundreds of years to fix and only if we are completely bipartisan can we make a 200-year plan.'

<http://www.sbs.com.au/movies/article/2014/07/18/intervention-underpins-rolf-de-heer-s-charlie-s-country>

## I AM NOT THE PROBLEM

**Rosalie Kunoth-Monks** speaking on ABC television's Q & A program in June, 2014.

Respected Arrernte Elder Rosalie Kunoth-Monks was responding to a remark by another panellist, Peter Coleman, who was asserting that the solution to 'the Aboriginal problem' was 'assimilation integration'.

*You know, I have a culture. I am a cultured person. (Speaking Arrernte) I'm talking another language. And my language is alive.*

*I am not something that fell out of the sky for the pleasure of somebody putting another culture into this cultured being. John [Pilger in Utopia] shows what is an ongoing denial of me*

*I am not an Aboriginal or, indeed, Indigenous. I am Arrernte, Alyawarre, First Nations person, a sovereign person from this country. (Speaking Arrernte)*

*This is the country I came out from. I didn't come from overseas. I came from here.*

*My language, in spite of whiteness trying to penetrate into my brain by assimilationists – I am alive, I am here and now – and I speak my language. I practise my cultural essence of me.*

*Don't try and suppress me and don't call me a problem. I am not the problem.*

*I have never left my country nor have I ceded any part of it. Nobody has entered into a treaty or talked to me about who I am. I am Arrernte Alyawarre female elder from this country. Please remember that. I am not the problem.*

## 5. VIEWS AND VALUES

### David Gulpilil

- *Listen to our history*  
*Listen to us*  
*Listen to what we say*  
*Listen to what we do*  
*Listen to who we are*
- *This town doesn't work whitefella way and it sure doesn't work blackfella way.*
- *On our land we minded our own business. No hassles, no-one telling us what to do, no-one telling us what not to do.*
- *Think about that — no Australian Government, no Territory Government, no council, no police, no God or Jesus or Centrelink or headmaster. Just us in the bush in charge of ourselves. We were free; we could live our own way.*
- *The government came in. They said, 'we'll take over now. You blackfellas have to have self-determination. You have to have councils now. You have to run the councils yourselves.*
- *...This self-determination really is government determination. They make decisions about us but they pretend we are the ones doing the deciding.*

- *This place is all wrong for our culture. No-one living in their own land anymore. All people living together who shouldn't live together. All different languages and no way to go back. Too many people now to live the like old times. That way we'd all starve to death just like you whitefellas in the bush.*
- *People in Ramingining do lots of waiting. Good thing Yolngu people are patient.*
- *We have to learn to live whitefellas way — shopping, money, motorcars, driving licence, everything. And always people on top of us telling us what we have to do and what we can't do.*
- *Our two cultures also clash with time which is not the same for you and me.*
- *Our two cultures also clash about money....we have an obligation to share everything...this was important for survival in the old days.*
- *Now that we are living in town and not in the bush, we are choking on rubbish.*
- *The government paid lots more money for whitefellas to build houses faster... but we didn't need faster—we needed our jobs.*

See newspaper inserts above.





## » STUDENT ACTIVITY

### Choose your preferred method of responding

After discussing what you have seen and heard in *Another Country* about life in Ramingining, students could develop their own responses to the documentary in one or more of the following ways, using their preferred method of creating a response:

1. Storyboard a short film about the place where you live, whether this is a town, a suburb, in the country, on an island, in a major city, by the sea or anywhere else that is 'home' to you. Choices about what should be included will need to be carefully made and if possible, limited to no more than 15 scenes.
2. Create a picture of your place/home/community using



either photographs and postcards and/or a range of text based material that may include local newspaper reports, letters, essays, poems and even parts of local stories and songs.

3. Write an account of daily life in Ramingining from the perspective of a resident; this could be a teenager, an older male or female artist, a worker who unloads cargo from the barge and then trucks it into Ramingining, a local park ranger whose job is to protect the waterways and wildlife from unwanted human interference, a schoolteacher or a health worker.
4. Prepare a 400 word piece for the television section of a daily newspaper or an online *Television* website. Outline the content and style of this documentary as an example of storytelling.
5. Prepare a graphic arts response in the form of either a poster, painting, drawing, animation, collage or photo montage that expresses your sense of Ramingining from what you have seen in this documentary. Try to limit your colour palate to no more than four of the colours that pervade the landscape of the area.
6. List the various ways 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies like mobile phones and music such as rap and techno are shown to be part of community life in remote towns. Describe the challenges of connecting new technologies, maintaining, and servicing cars, buses and other vehicles and being able to travel to neighbouring towns and cities.
7. 'The Intervention', 'Brighter Futures', 'Closing the Gap'. David Gulpilil, who narrates this program, is not impressed by these programs, all designed to address





Indigenous disadvantage across many areas of people's lives, including health, education, employment, imprisonment and many other areas of life. Investigate the initiatives of one of these programs online. Be warned that this can be a very difficult task as there are many conflicting responses to the worth, successes and failures of these programs from different people, groups of people and official reports. Measuring improvement in social outcomes is always likely to be difficult and contentious.

8. Write a piece that outlines the vulnerability of Indigenous cultures such as that of the Yolngu who live in and around Ramingining. Who should be responsible for maintaining, sharing and strengthening cultural knowledge for succeeding generations?
9. Despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprising only around 3% of the population, their contribution to arts and culture is quite remarkable, from Bangarra Dance Company to the music of Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu and Archie Roach, the paintings and sculptures of hundreds of painters and more recently the films and television programs made by and about the lives of Aboriginal Australians such as 'Samson and Delilah' (Thornton, 2009), 'The Sapphires' (Blair, 2012) and *Redfern Now*, Series 1 and 2, (a number of Indigenous directors including Rachel Perkins and Catriona McKenzie, 2012 -2013). Investigate the artwork of some of the artists from this part of Arnhem Land and make a visual presentation to

your class group that showcases the work. This website is an excellent place to start  
<http://www.bulabula-arts.com/>

10. Research the ecology and animal and bird life in the Arafura Swamp region. Create a report using illustrations where possible and present it to your fellow students.

## 6. RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Information about Rolf de Heer's films can be found at this website

[http://www.vertigoproductions.com.au/all\\_films.php](http://www.vertigoproductions.com.au/all_films.php)

Molly Reynolds and Rolf de Heer talking about 'The Country Suite of Projects' in an interview at the 2014 Melbourne International Film Festival where *Still Our Country* was screened.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6qPqApvwpg>

An article from the *Sydney Morning Herald* dated 2008



(post-Intervention!) that provides information about the many downsides of paternalistic intervention in Aboriginal affairs in remote communities. The title — 'how to see 1 billion dollars go down the drain' is only half the story.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/alan-ramsey/how-to-see-1-billion-go-down-the-drain/2008/06/20/1213770920992.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1>

A Northern Territory Government brochure from 2012 outlining their proposals for Ramingining  
[http://www.communityservices.nt.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/144728/Ramingining\\_brochure\\_web.pdf](http://www.communityservices.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/144728/Ramingining_brochure_web.pdf)

## » OTHER FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES

Darlene Johnson is a filmmaker whose documentary films include *Gulpilil: One Red Blood* (2002), *Crocodile Dreaming* (2007), *River of No Return* (2008) and *The Redfern Story* (2014)

This is a fascinating interview with Darlene Johnson about making films and working with the people of Ramingining.  
<http://www.screeningthepast.com/2011/08/darlene-johnson-on-making-films-in-arnhem-land/>

*Our Generation* (Sinem Saban & Damien Curtis, 2011) is a documentary that presents a first-hand view of the situation facing remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. One of the key issues explored in this documentary is The Northern Territory Intervention policy of the Federal Government. The 73 minute version of the program can be viewed at <http://ourgeneration.org.au/watch> and is available at a number of municipal libraries.

A study guide for this program can be downloaded from ATOM's Education Shop at: <http://www.theeducationshop.com.au/shop/product.asp?pid=3943&cid=17>

*Charlie's Country*, de Heer, 2014

The film starring Davis Gulpilil for which he won a Best Actor Award at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival in the Un Certain Regard category.



A study guide for this film can be downloaded from the ATOM website at: <http://www.metromagazine.com.au/studyguides/study.asp>

## » THE ARTWORK OF RAMINGINING

Explore some of the artwork of Ramingining  
<http://www.bulabula-arts.com/>

View 13 artworks from the NSW Gallery's collection of work by Ramingining artists.

[http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/?images=y&origin\\_id=australia.northern-territory.central-arnhem-land.ramingining](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/?images=y&origin_id=australia.northern-territory.central-arnhem-land.ramingining)

*The Aboriginal Memorial* 1987-1988 by artists from Ramingining. See images of an installation at the National Gallery of Australia which consists of 200 hollow log bone coffins

<http://cs.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=77568>

An American's view of the richness of Yolngu art

<http://aboriginalartandculture.wordpress.com/2013/02/10/larrakirtj-encyclopedia-of-the-yolngu/>

Beautiful examples of artwork from Ramingining

<http://saintignatiusartshow.wordpress.com/ramingining-artists/>

Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney has a fine collection of art from north-eastern Arnhem Land  
<https://www.mca.com.au/artists-and-works/mca-collection/about-mca-collection/jw-power-collection/ramingining-collection-aboriginal-art/>

One of many sites about the environment in this part of Arnhem Land

[http://www.lrm.nt.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/13921/20\\_arafura.pdf](http://www.lrm.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/13921/20_arafura.pdf)

A showcase of local paintings, giving a sense of the old history and ways

<http://12canoes.com.au>







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