

In the Gulf of Carpentaria in Northern Australia, Aboriginal Elders lead their community on a traditional walk across Country to re-connect children and youth to their culture.



# JOURNEY WEST BUWARRALA ARYAH

A film directed by Gadrian Jarwijalmar Hoosan



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**STUDY  
GUIDE**

# SYNOPSIS

*Aboriginal Elders lead their young people on a traditional walk across country to re-connect them with their country and their culture.*

The Buwarrala-Journey is a traditional walk for the Garrawa, Yanyuwa, Mara and Gurdanji peoples of the Gulf of Carpentaria in northern Australia. The walk has been practiced for generations as an important rite for young people. In recent decades the cultural importance of the Buwarrala-Journey has come under threat. Like many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Yanyuwa and neighboring Elders are struggling in the face of foreign influences to maintain traditional cultural practices that are essential for their communities' *self-determination*.

Elders of the Yanyuwa and neighboring countries are deeply concerned that the younger generations are not learning their traditional ways. The influence of non-traditional government school education, the growing influence of pop media culture and the constant problem of drugs and alcohol mean that traditional learning and culture is often losing out. If the traditional ways of knowledge of the Yanyuwa and neighboring peoples are not passed on to the next generation their traditional cultures may well be lost.

The Buwarrala-Journey was last performed in 1988. The walk was documented in the film *Buwarrala Agariya - Journey East*. Yanyuwa man Gadrian Jarwijalmar Hoosan was twelve years old back then. He was one of four boys (or Daru) who were prepared for their initiation ceremony. As an adult Gadrian has become a community leader, a musician and a filmmaker. In late 2017 Gadrian and other community leaders organise over one hundred community members (children, their families, teachers and volunteers) to revive tradition and set off on the walk again. This journey is documented in this film: *Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah*.

Over seven days of the journey the group visit numerous important sites, learning stories and of the country, transmitting knowledge through song and dance, learning keys for survival and ancient traditional practices. Elders share their strong feelings of connection to country with the young people. They teach hunting techniques and traditional dancing, which often involves humour and historical storytelling. They tell of their grave concerns about the incursion of mining and other industries into their country and the damage this is doing to their land and waterways.

As they pass through light scrub dotted with anthills, sit beside billabongs and water lilies, walk across a vast dry plain blackened by fire, this group of children, youth and Elders embrace their cultural heritage and strengthen themselves for the challenges of the future...



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# CULTURAL SAFETY

Before proceeding with this study guide it is essential for teachers and students to become familiar with standards for cultural safety. The following links provide directions in (1) developing cultural safety in the classroom, (2) tackling the problem of tokenistic study and discussion of Indigenous subject matter and (3) creating safe environments for the use of visual media.

## Cultural Safety and Respect in the Classroom

Where appropriate, providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, Elders, families and wider community members to share their perspectives, histories and cultures in the classroom can be incredibly enriching. However, it is important for teachers and educators to be careful not to assume what stories or knowledges can be shared by particular community members, students, or children, and when, where and with whom they can be shared. This activity encourages staff to consider scenarios, evaluate policies and principles and consider how cultural safety could further be promoted within the wider school or early learning service community.

[www.narragunnawali.org.au/professional-learning/90/cultural-safety-and-respect-in-the-classroom](http://www.narragunnawali.org.au/professional-learning/90/cultural-safety-and-respect-in-the-classroom)

## Tackling Tokenism

'Tokenism' is often cited as a barrier to demonstrating respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and perspectives, particularly in visible and tangible ways. This activity encourages staff to reinterpret or reinvent a demonstration of respect which may, on the surface, appear to be tokenistic. In doing so, they consider how to effectively turn 'tokenism' into meaningful symbolic and practical action.

[www.narragunnawali.org.au/professional-learning/40/tackling-tokenism](http://www.narragunnawali.org.au/professional-learning/40/tackling-tokenism)

## Ensuring Film Screenings are Culturally Safe and Respectful

The following link provides general guidelines around how to facilitate culturally safe and respectful screening sessions and pre-screening or post-screening discussions.

[www.sbs.com.au/sites/sbs.com.au/home/files/reconciliation\\_film\\_club\\_planning\\_guide.pdf](http://www.sbs.com.au/sites/sbs.com.au/home/files/reconciliation_film_club_planning_guide.pdf)

# AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT LINKS

*Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah* can be linked to the following subject areas within the Australian Curriculum.

- **YEAR 11 MODERN HISTORY**
- **LANGUAGES**
- **CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP**
- **ENGLISH**
- **GEOGRAPHY**
- **MEDIA STUDIES**
- **HISTORY**

## Year 11 Modern History, Unit 2: 'Movements for Change in the 20th Century'

Recognition and rights of Indigenous peoples

- The nature of the relationship of indigenous peoples with their land and their response to perceptions of, and feelings about, the arrival of

the colonisers (ACHMH070)

- The basis on which the colonists claimed sovereignty and imposed control, including conquest, treaty and the doctrine of 'terra nullius'; and the consequences for the legal status and land rights of Indigenous peoples (ACHMH071)
- The nature of government policies and their impact on indigenous peoples, for example protection, assimilation (including the Stolen Generations), and self-determination (ACHMH072)
- The role of individuals and groups who supported the movement for indigenous recognition and rights, including the methods they used and the resistance they encountered (ACHMH073)
- The economic, political and social challenges and opportunities indigenous peoples have faced, including the role of cultural activity in developing awareness in society (ACHMH074)
- The achievements of indigenous peoples at the end of the 20th century, including the right

to vote, land rights/native title, and attempt at reconciliation (ACHMH075)

- The continued efforts to achieve greater recognition, reconciliation, civil rights, and improvements in education and health (ACHMH076)

### Languages – Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages (Years 8 & 9)

- Investigate programs, initiatives and techniques that keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages strong
- Understanding the importance of intergenerational collaboration and transmission in keeping languages strong and discussing some of the associated challenges

### Civics and Citizenship (Years 8 & 9)

- How and why individuals and groups, including religious groups, participate in and contribute to civic life (ACHCK079)
- How Australia's international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHCK093) Account for different interpretations and points of view (ACHCS085) and (ACHCS098)
- Recognise and consider multiple perspectives and ambiguities, and use strategies to negotiate and resolve contentious issues (ACHCS086) and (ACHCS099)
- Present evidence-based civics and citizenship arguments using subject-specific language (ACHCS088) and (ACHCS101)
- Reflect on their role as a citizen in Australian, regional and global contexts (ACHCS089) and (ACHCS102)

### Media Arts (Years 7 & 8)

- Develop media representations to show familiar or shared social and cultural values and beliefs, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAMAM067)
- Analyse how technical and symbolic elements are used in media artworks to create representations influenced by story, genre, values and points of view of particular audiences (ACAMAR071)
- Identify specific features and purposes of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks including of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media artworks (ACAMAR072)

### Media Arts (Years 9 & 10)

- Manipulate media representations to identify and examine social and cultural values and beliefs, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAMAM074)
- Analyse a range of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks, including media artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and international media artworks (ACAMAR079)

### English: Literature (Year 8)

- Explore the interconnectedness of Country/Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors (ACELT1806)

### History: Knowledge and Understanding (Year 7)

- The importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH148)
- The importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH148)

### Geography: Geographical Knowledge and Understanding (Year 7)

- Economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and peoples of the Asia region (ACHGK041)

### Geography: Geographical Knowledge and Understanding (Year 8)

- Spiritual, aesthetic and cultural value of landscapes and landforms for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHGK049)

### Geography: Geographical Knowledge and Understanding (Year 9)

- The perceptions people have of place, and how these influence their connections to different places (ACHGK065)



## PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1

### \* Keeping Culture Strong

At some point you will likely have come across the phrase “*Keep Culture Strong*”.

But what does it mean? Why is it so important?

Over the past 200+ years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have experienced European invasion and colonisation in profoundly different ways. Some Aboriginal communities experienced colonisation very quickly and intensely, to devastating effect. Think, for example, of the Aboriginal communities where the first European colonies were established (Sydney, Hobart, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne). In these places colonisation happened very quickly and very intensely. As a result, the local Aboriginal cultures were profoundly impacted within years of first settlement.

In contrast, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in more remote areas of Australia have experienced colonisation place more recently and gradually. Many communities in remote regions of central and northern Australia, for example, did not have first contact of European until well into the twentieth century. As a result, many of these remote communities have been able to maintain their culture by speaking their traditional language in preference to English and practicing Traditional Law such as the

initiation rites of young people.

It is therefore important not to assume there is one “Aboriginal history” that applies to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Different First Peoples around Australia have very different histories.

Something that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities do share is that all have had their cultures threatened by colonialism. Colonial violence, imported diseases and the governmental policies of *protectionism* and *assimilationism* have over two centuries damaged the passing of culture and language down generations. The modern influences of popular media, diet and drugs and alcohol also undermine traditional life. The devastating legacy of these policies and influences is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities now need to revive their culture and language. Therefore, today the determination of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is to *keep culture strong*.

Strong culture is the basis for what is called *self-determination*. *Self-determination* can be interpreted in many ways, but basically it means the right of an Indigenous community to determine its own way of life and to live according to its own cultural principles.

Teaching young people to understand and care for their country through traditional culture and knowledge (story and song) is therefore essential for *self-determination*. The walk undertaken in *Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah* should be understood in this light. This is a community’s attempt to revive a traditional practice, to pass knowledge down the generations and to *keep their culture strong*.



### QUESTIONS

- As a class discuss how colonisation has impacted the traditional culture(s) of your region?
- Why is there such a variety across Australia in the ways that colonisation has affected the many different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures?
- What sorts of things are we referring to when we speak of culture (eg. Language, belief systems, practices, social structures)?
- Why is culture so important for the survival of a community?
- What efforts are being made at your local Indigenous Council to maintain and revive traditional culture?
- Europeans first showed interest in Indigenous cultures by studying them anthropologically. Artefacts from Indigenous communities were collected to exhibit in museums. Have you ever seen such exhibits? Describe them.
- What sort of relationship does the anthropologist have with the community they are studying? Is it an “equal” or reciprocal relationship?
- Do you think that collecting and exhibiting artefacts is a respectful way of showing interest in a culture? Why?
- What are some respectful ways to engage with and learn about someone else’s culture?
- How could non-Indigenous institutions like governments and schools do a better job at engaging with and respecting traditional cultures?
- Do you think you should learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures at school? How would this be done respectfully?
- What efforts are being made by your local non-Indigenous council to engage with and respect the Traditional culture of the country?
- Should Australia celebrate and pay respect to its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage more?
- Should place names in Australia be changed back to their traditional names?
- Do you regularly practice an “Acknowledgement of Country” at your school?
- Have you ever had an Elder to give a “Welcome to Country” at your school?
- What is the difference between a “Welcome to Country” and an “Acknowledgement of Country”?
- Sometimes attempts at cultural recognition are tokenistic. For example, someone might fly an Aboriginal flag or acknowledge country without making any significant changes to their school, business or even home life. What is tokenism and why is it a problem?
- List ways that tokenism can be avoided.
- Write a short piece of reflective writing on the meaning and importance of “*keeping culture strong*”?





2

## \* The Country of the Buwarrala-Journey

The township of Borroloola and the nearby country of the Buwarrala-Journey is located in the Gulf region of the Northern Territory, approximately 50km upstream from where the mouth of Narwinbi (McArthur River) enters into the Gulf of Carpentaria. This area is home now to the Garrwa, Yanyuwa, Mara and Gurdanji peoples.

This is “saltwater” country, a name applied to many regions in Australia above the Tropic of Capricorn, but especially to those around the Gulf of Carpentaria. The word “saltwater” of course refers primarily to the proximity of these places to the sea. Saltwater country need not be coastal. Indeed, it may be many hundreds of kilometers away from the sea itself. But when compared with vast desert country of central Australia, saltwater environments are all very influenced by the sea. Rainfall can be very high in these areas, and in the Borroloola region the country regularly floods, isolating the entire community for months.

One key difference between saltwater and desert countries can be recognized in bush tucker diets. With a much higher rainfall and access to seas, rivers and streams, bush tucker in saltwater country is far more reliant on water sources. River and sea foods like fish, shellfish and turtle feature prominently alongside staples like kangaroo and goanna. Waterlilies and tropical fruits like panadanans and Kakadu plums also provide important sources of nutrition. Murnong plants, once ubiquitous across Australia, were a base staple for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Before European invasion many communities of this region interacted peacefully and respectfully with visiting Macassans from modern day Indonesia. The Macassans prized the local food, especially *trepang* (sea cucumber) as both a source of food and medicine. The oral histories of the First Peoples of the Gulf region still recount these interactions. They compare starkly with the far more violent invasions experienced at the hands of European colonisers.

### QUESTIONS

- Locate Borroloola on a map of the Northern Territory
- On what river is Borroloola located?
- How far is Borroloola from the ocean (Gulf of Carpentaria)?
- What is the population of Borroloola and approximately what percentage is Indigenous?
- Approximately how far is Borroloola from (a) Darwin, (b) Katherine, (c) Alice Springs?
- As a class brainstorm the what ways Borroloola’s remoteness from major cities and towns might impact daily life there (consider food, health, education, employment etc)?
- What resources are mined near Borroloola?
- Why do you think this country is referred to as saltwater country?
- List what kinds of flora and fauna you might expect to find in the region?
- What is the annual rainfall of the Borroloola area?
- How does the average rainfall of Borroloola compare with that of Alice Springs?
- In what essential ways would the environment of the Borroloola region be different to that of a desert region?
- What bush tucker foods are unique to saltwater country?
- When is it thought that Macassans first visited Australia?
- From what region did the Macassans come from?
- Why did the Macassans visit?
- Why do you think the First Peoples of the Gulf region might have more favorable memories of the Macassans than they do of European colonisers?



3

## \* Yanyuwa Seasons

The *Indigenous Weather Knowledge Website* provides a wonderful interactive map for students to engage with the different Indigenous seasonal calendars across Australia: [www.bom.gov.au/iwk/index.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/index.shtml)

The seasons of Yanyuwa country are entirely different to the arbitrary European seasonal calendar of summer-autumn-winter and spring. They are also very unlike the Indigenous seasonal calendars of other parts of Australia. Whereas, for example, the Karuna calendar of the Adelaide plains has four seasons and the D'harawal calendar of the Sydney region has six seasons, the Yanyuwa calendar has five seasons. The Yanyuwa seasons are shown in the table below.

**QUESTIONS**

- Copy down the name for each season and their characteristics.
- If you have time design an annual seasonal “wheel” using different colours for the seasons.
- In what Yanyuwa seasons does the country flood?
- Describe the typical weather during the season of Wunthurru.
- What bush tucker is available in Wunthurru?
- What types of storm are common in Lhabayi?
- What animals are available to hunt early in the season?
- During what months does Rra-mardu normally occur?
- How does Rra-mardu compare with the previous season of Lhabayi?
- List five of the foods commonly available in Rra-mardu.
- Why is Ngardaru called “early summer”?
- During what months does Ngardaru take place?
- What are Kurumbirbirri?
- What foods are available for harvest during Ngardaru?
- During what months does the season of Na-yinarramba occur?
- Why is the season of Na-yinarramba a time for bushfires?
- What are julayarrirri and what do important migrations do they indicate?
- Compare the Yanyuwa calendar with two other Indigenous seasonal calendars. How does these calendars compare? What are the differences/ similarities?

WUNTHURRU LATE SUMMER	LHABAYI AUTUMN	RRA-MARDU WINTER	NGARDARU EARLY SUMMER	NA-YINARRAMBA SUMMER
January-February	March-May	June-July	August-September	October-December
Early-storm period Warkungarnarra – wet season cyclones	Wet season Heavy rainfall Warkungarnarra – wet season cyclones	Dry season Cold weather Clear skies, no rain	Hot season The ground is hot First of the rains	Hot and wet The ground is hot First of the rains Warkungarnarra – wet season cyclones

# THE BUWARRALA-JOURNEY (BUWARRALA ARYAH)

Buwarrala Aryah (Journey West) is a walk practiced for generations as part of the initiation of young boys by the Garrwa, Yanyuwa, Mara and Gurdanji peoples of the Gulf of Carpentaria. After almost 30 years without being undertaken, the Buwarrala Journey began again in 2017 for all members of the Borroloola and other surrounding communities (male and female). The journey took a westward course, beginning at Managoora the moving through the sites of Wukurlijirra, Wubunjawa, Rilinya, Wungkuwa and finishing at Wulalamba.

In total the journey covered over 70 kilometers and took seven days. During the journey, the Elders stopped at various important sites to educate the young people in culture and survival. Through traditional teaching the country is explained through the ancient creation stories (“Dreamings”)

told through storytelling, song and dance. The education received through the journey is a cultural one. The stories, songs and dances of the country provide a fabric for the young peoples’ connection to their country. Country and culture are completely interwoven. Learning to survive on country, they learn their connection to country.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*“All this country was here long, long time ago from Dreamtime. And we want to bring all the kids back here, you know, show all the kids all the country and teach them about the country because the country is so important to us.*

*Showing how our ancestors been doing and keeping our culture alive – we want to show the whole world that we still have our culture.”*

I am a Garrwa man who lives in the township of Borroloola on Yanyuwa country, in the Gulf of Carpentaria in northern Australia.

At the age of twelve I had my first experience with the filmmaking process, appearing in the 1988 documentary *Buwarrala Agariya, Journey East*.

I’ve been active in the music scene in my home town of Borroloola, forming the band, Sandridge Band in the early 2000’s. I’ve collaborated on a number of documentaries including *We Paint We Belong* and *Water is Life*.

*Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah* is my first foray into film direction. Following the inspiration of a group in which I’m active, the Borroloola Men’s Group, the idea to re-enact the traditional cultural walk took began in the early 2010’s.

The aim of the film is to bring the cultural connection of the traditional peoples – the Garrwa, Yanyuwa, Mara and Gurdanji - to the world.

– GADRIAN JARWIJALMAR HOOSAN



## POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1

### \* Class Reflections on *Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah*

You have now watched *Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah* as a group. Before engaging with specific themes and issues from the film, discuss the film as a group. Note responses on the board and compare the different responses people had. There are a vast number of themes that arise in this film. What themes resonated with the students? There is also a large amount of cultural content introduced. Who was able to remember and make sense of it all?

Here are some guiding questions. You may wish to develop some more of your own.

- What did you understand of the stories told at the different sites along the journey?
  - What was the role of singing and dancing in the journey?
  - How did people describe what initiation does for a young person?
  - How did people describe life in the bush compared to life in town?
  - How was the Buwarrala-Journey an example of keeping culture strong?
- Why is the Buwarrala-Journey culturally significant?
  - Why was it so important to have people of different generations involved?
  - How many days does the Buwarrala-Journey take?
  - What were some of the characteristics of the country (or environment) shown in the film?
  - What sorts of bush tucker did you see in the film?



## \* Key Quotes from Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah

For each of the following quotes from the film, engage in a discussion of the statement's meaning and implications. You may choose to use the following general guidance questions as to formulate responses.



- What is the statement describing?
- How does the statement relate to (a) traditional culture or (b) colonisation?
- Why is the statement important for the message of the film?

**STATEMENT 2:** "If a non-Indigenous person come in this country, they won't know this country got many names that are here already. We'll be passing through a lot of clan boundaries like Wurdaliya, Mambaliya, Wuyaliya, Rrumburriya."

- What are the differences between the categories of Nation, Language Group and Clan?
- What are some of the names of the clans passed through in *Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah*?
- What important boundaries are non-Indigenous Australians blind to if they do not have local knowledge of the area?
- Where are the clan boundaries of your area?

**STATEMENT 3:** "If you go in the library and you pick up a book, a history book that tells you history about the world. With our history it's in the land and the songs that we're trying to reconnect with it."

- Why does Gadrian refer to the country as his people's library?
- How is learning and country connected?
- What is the connection between country and the stories and songlines?
- Why is it important to visit country to continue the knowledge contained in the stories?
- Could the lessons learnt on the Buwarrala-Journey be learnt in a classroom?

**STATEMENT 4:** "We want this place clean, you know, not dirty. Not got rubbish, like water poison fish, all the animals anything we eat – bush tucker, we can't eat it anymore. If that thing comes through... We're fighting to stop that thing, we don't want them to come round here, we want this place clean. Clean water and clean tucker, bush tucker."

- What destructive influences might this statement be referring to?
- What examples are there of destructive influences being introduced since European invasion/colonisation?
- What do you understand of the following statement about traditional Indigenous Knowledges: *culture = ecology*?

**STATEMENT 5:** "We own this station now. We own it in pastoral lease and we own it in Aboriginal way too."

- The Traditional Owners explain that they "lease" the country. From whom are they leasing it?
- What are the terms of a Freehold Pastoral lease?
- In what year was the Northern Territory Land Rights Act passed?
- How is a "lease" different to a Native Title?
- If people are recognised as Traditional Owners, why do they also need a lease?

**STATEMENT 6:** "Out bush is good, no beer, no grog, no breakin' in... You got bush tucker to live off, healthy bush food."

- Which influences have been detrimental on remote Aboriginal communities?
- In what ways have many communities suffered from an introduced diet?
- What kinds of foods are most likely to be available in a remote community store?
- What kinds of foods are least likely to be available (or to be very expensive)?
- How does the traditional Yanyuwa diet differ from the nutrition of introduced foods (i.e. in terms of salt, sugar and fat)?
- Why are remote communities particularly vulnerable to the problems brought on by alcohol abuse?
- How does the revival of traditional cultural practices help to address the problems of diet and alcohol for communities like Borroloola?



cultural genocide and the influence of modern media. Some languages have been lost entirely. Others are being recovered from their beginnings. It is heartening to see young First Peoples today speaking fluently the traditional languages their grandparents were outlawed from learning. There is real progress being made in the area of language revival.

**It remains vitally important that students and teachers do not presume their right to enquire about and**

**learn a traditional language. Standards of cultural awareness and respect must be maintained. Always refer to and consult the relevant council first.**

3

## \* Language and Culture

For over a thousand generations the Garra, Yanyuwa, Mara and Gurdanji peoples have taken custodianship, ownership and management of their country. Their cultures, their daily practices and their Laws all interrelate with the rhythms and needs of the country. Through cultural practices like songlines they continue their culture and maintain a vast repository of ecological and cultural knowledge.

The importance of traditional language to cultural survival is paramount. Language is the medium through which traditional Indigenous knowledge and culture lives. Therefore traditional languages must be kept alive. Simply translating Yanyuwa and other languages' words into English will not do, for as we know, so often the *cultural meaning* of a word is lost when we translate it into English.

Language is tied to the culture and country it belongs to. The interweaving lines of knowledge and story that make Indigenous cultures cannot be plucked out of context. It is therefore essential that young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities be educated in their traditional language. This is an essential ingredient to cultural survival and *self-determination*.

Yanyuwa is a critically endangered language. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' languages have been decimated by colonialism,

*Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah* a number of Yanyuwa words are shared and explained. The short list following is an expanded vocabulary of some key words relating to family, country and bush tucker.

### Yanyuwa Vocabulary

- rra-bardibardi: "old lady"
- (w)nya-malbu (m)malbu: "old man"
- kajaja "father, dad"
- angatharra-wangu "my wife"
- a-karnkarnka: "white bellied sea eagle"
- nangurrbuwala: "hill kangaroo"
- ma-ngakuya: "cycad fruit"
- na-wabija: "digging stick"
- wardarba: "goanna"
- kurdidi: "bush peanut"
- li-maramaranja: "dugong hunters of excellence"

## \* Self-Determination and The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2007 the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration differed from other human rights declarations because the right of Indigenous Peoples to cultural, economic and political self-determination was formally recognised by the United Nations. The Declaration recognised specifically that “Indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of... colonisation and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests.”

The following is a brief selection of relevant articles from the Declaration. Refer to the full Declaration for more points of discussion. [www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html)

**ARTICLE 3:** Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

**ARTICLE 8 (1):** Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.

**ARTICLE 9:** Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned. No discrimination of any kind may arise from the exercise of such a right.

**ARTICLE 13 (1):** Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

**ARTICLE 14 (1):** Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

### QUESTIONS

- What are the essential principles of *self-determination* mentioned in **Article 3**?
- What examples in Australia’s colonial history demonstrate an explicit breaking of **Article 8**: “forced assimilation or destruction of [Indigenous] cultures”?
- How might an “individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation” be threatened?
- How is **Article 13 (1)** relevant to *Journey West - Buwarrala Aryah*?
- What would be required for **Article 14 (1)** to be upheld in Australian schools?
- Is Australia required to follow the Declaration articles? What is the difference between a Declaration of Rights and a set of laws?
- In the same year as resolution of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples the Australian Federal government launched the Northern Territory National Emergency Response (known as “The Intervention”). In what ways does the NT Intervention uphold the Declaration and in what ways does it contradict the Declaration?
- Discuss as a class and/or develop essays: what does a *self-determined* community look like? What are the key elements for *self-determination*? How would Australia change as a nation if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities achieved *self-determination*?



## SOME USEFUL LINKS

Malarndirri McCarthy sharing Yanyuwa words on ABC Radio's Awaye program's WORD UP: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/awaye/features/word-up/word-up/12374222>

Indigenous Weather Knowledge: [www.bom.gov.au/iwk/index.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/index.shtml)

The Northern Land Council: [www.nlc.org.au/](http://www.nlc.org.au/)

The Central Land Council (Northern Territory) [www.clc.org.au](http://www.clc.org.au)

Kimberley Land Council: [www.klc.org.au](http://www.klc.org.au)

Reconciliation Australia [www.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.reconciliation.org.au)

The Uluru Statement: [www.ulurustatement.org](http://www.ulurustatement.org)

Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations (incl. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples): [www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html)

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) [aiatsis.gov.au](http://aiatsis.gov.au)

Closing the Gap website outlining the many different areas of the government led initiative: [www.closingthegap.pmc.gov.au](http://www.closingthegap.pmc.gov.au)

Lowitja Institute - Australia's National Institute for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Research [www.lowitja.org.au](http://www.lowitja.org.au)

Australian Human Rights Commission – Social Determinants and the health of Indigenous peoples

n Australia -a human rights based approach. [www.humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/social-determinants-and-health-indigenous-peoples-australia-human-rights-based](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/social-determinants-and-health-indigenous-peoples-australia-human-rights-based)

Creative Spirits is an independent website covering a wide range of Aboriginal cultural, social and political issues. [www.creativespirits.info](http://www.creativespirits.info)

The Cape York Partnership - outlining the initiatives in social and education reform in the Cape York region. [www.capeyorkpartnership.org.au](http://www.capeyorkpartnership.org.au)

The Aurora Project – for more information on initiatives in Indigenous education. [www.auroraproject.com.au](http://www.auroraproject.com.au)

Referendum Council: [www.referendumcouncil.org.au](http://www.referendumcouncil.org.au)

United Nations UNDRIP: [www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html)

Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Australian Curriculum: [www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2018/11/05/experts-say-indigenous-knowledge-will-enrich-science-education](http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2018/11/05/experts-say-indigenous-knowledge-will-enrich-science-education)

Indigenous X: Indigenous X is an Australian Aboriginal-owned and -operated independent media company [www.IndigenousX.com.au](http://www.IndigenousX.com.au)

Warburdar Bununu, Water Shield Film (2019) <http://watershieldfilm.com/>



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