



Stories of the water serpent, Kulunada, which inhabits a permanent waterhole
in the arid desert country of central Australia.



Crookhat and the Kulunada

A film by David Tranter



SYNOPSIS

ONE PARAGRAPH SYNOPSIS

In the arid desert country of the central Northern Territory there is a surprising strip of green where an underground spring feeds a waterhole. This country is full of surprises – not least the huge Murray cod that can be found swimming in these creeks. But the story we’re about to hear is of an even more fabulous creature – Kulanada – the rainbow serpent of the Dreaming and how he presented himself to the people when the first white men arrived.

ONE PAGE SYNOPSIS

Continuing the series that starts with Karli Jalangu (Boomerang Today), Crookhat and Camphoo, and Karlu Karlu (Devil’s Marbles), David Tranter, the director of Willaberta Jack continues to document the dreaming stories, traditional crafts and fascinating culture of his Alyawarra heritage.

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A four wheel drive journeys through the country and arrives at the spring. The three old men who emerge are Donald (Crookhat) Kemarre Thompson, Alec Pitjara Peterson and Casey Holmes. We watch and listen as they talk about this journey and make greetings to the spring and the spirit that lives here.

We listen to their conversation as they gather firewood and prepare a camp – not just idle chit-chat but a litany of knowledge of this place and how to behave in it. When they come to the concrete slab that was the foundation for the old station homestead, their conversation turns to the old days in the 1920s when white men first came here to establish cattle stations. Now we get the first hint that there will be more to this narrative than just a dreaming story.

As the campfire sends sparks into the clear desert sky the narrative continues – spoken by one man and monitored by the other.

Crookhat tells the story of Kulanada and how he caused the spring to provide water and how he keeps the waterways clean and watches over them. He relates this Kulanada story to the other Rainbow Serpent Dreaming stories too. Alec Peterson monitors the story with supplementary questions and corrections.

Crookhat then tells of the coming of the white men and their cattle and how it changed the whole of the culture and specifically the story of the leaseholder who came face to face with Kulanada and fired a shot at him and the repercussions of that event.



CREDITS

DirectorDAVID TRANTER
PhotographyERIC MURRAY LUI
EditorDENA CURTIS
Assistant EditorKEITH SKINNER
Sound RecordistDAVID TRANTER
Translator Alyawarra Language.....LINDA DOBBS
Series Producer.....TANYA FRASER
Executive Producers.....RAY LILLIS
ROBYN NARDOO
Post FacilitiesCAAMA Productions & Two Dogs Post

Featuring **Donald (Crookhat) Kamarra Thompson,**
Alec Pitjara Peterson, Casey Kamarra Holmes

2010 | 23 mins | Colour | Alyawarra language [English subtitles] | DigiBeta 16:9

ISAN 0000-0002-80E6-0000-3-0000-S (Nganampa Version)
ISAN 0000-0002-80E6-0000-3-0000-S (International Version)

A CAAMA Production for Imparja TV, in the Nganampa Anwernekenhe series. Principal investor: Screen Australia.



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DIRECTOR & PRODUCER STATEMENTS

Director - DAVID TRANTER

One of the main things about a Nganampa is to keep it simple and straight in the same way that our old people tell their stories. My grandfather used to tell me about this story of how the serpent was shot in the eye. The opportunity to convert this oral history to a Nganampa allows me not only to tell the story but also to show the way our old people pass on our stories. I believe it's important to add them to our archive.

The reason we have a narrator and a witness to tell the story is so the story is told right way – it's the same for a Nganampa – you can't bend the story or change it to try and make it fit a format. It has to be told straight.

Executive Producer - RAY LILLIS

This story of **CROOKHAT AND THE KULANADA** is also the story of a collision between two cultures. Hopefully it will serve as an antidote to those who think of the Dreaming stories as some kind of fairy-tale and provide an insight into the subtlety of a narrative that is part history, part oracle and part a manual for the correct behavior for survival. Nobody is more adept than David Tranter at coaxing the real depth and interconnectedness of these stories from his subjects. The observational approach creates a mesmerizing story and highlight the absolute comfort of these old men in their own country as they set up a camp and visit these familiar sites while repeating the tradition of the story.

CHARACTER NOTES

Donald Thompson Kemarre, known as Crook Hat, is our main story teller for the film (advised and checked by Alec Pitjara Peterson and Casey Holmes).

He is in his mid seventies and is a senior Alyawarra man from Indataning and Hatches Creek. He is the director, David Tranter's Muri (father-in-law, law way). He is a proud strong man and holds a lot of the stories for his country.

Crookhat speaks Alywarra language in this documentary, a language that is spoken now by approximately 1400 speakers. The Alyawarra homelands spread North east of Alice Springs and follow the Sandover River up towards the Barkly tablelands for a thousand kilometers.

Crookhat spent his early years as a stockman working on Kurundi Station, Murray Downs and other stations across the Barkly tablelands. He also spent time mining.

He met his wife, a Walpiri woman, at Warabri, and they had four children. He has spent his whole life on his homelands, and the only time he visits Alice Springs or Tennant Creek is for Central land Council Business.

Today he lives at Ampilatwatja where he spends his time making boomerangs, spears and woomeras. He maintains his culture and is one of the senior men for business.



PHOTOS



ALEC PITJARA PETERSON



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DONALD KAMARRA THOMPSON



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CASEY KAMARRA HOLMES



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CAAMA PRODUCTIONS

CAAMA Productions is located in Alice Springs, Central Australia, is part of the CAAMA media group and is the largest Indigenous production house in the country. Our primary purpose is to represent Indigenous people, culture and language in film and television.



Established by the CAAMA Group in 1988, **CAAMA Productions** is now 22 years old. Over the years the company has established a vast knowledge and understanding of the Indigenous film making industry.

CAAMA Productions continues to focus on the important role of maintaining, documenting and preserving Indigenous culture, language and histories and our unique slate of productions reflects this ongoing commitment.

CAAMA Productions was the recipient of the 2005 Film Australia Stanley Hawes Award for Outstanding Contribution to Australian Documentary.

NGANAMPA ANWERNEKENHE

Nganampa Anwernekenhe is a combination of a Pitjantjatjara/Warlpiri word (Nganampa) and Arrernte word (Anwernekenhe) both meaning 'ours': our language, our culture and our stories.

Produced by **CAAMA Productions** since 1988 the Nganampa Anwernekenhe series is one of Australia's longest running documentary series, and is produced to provide remote communities and urban language based speakers with television programming in touch with their own cultural and language identity.

