

Eight Ladies

A JOURNEY THROUGH ALYAWARR
COUNTRY WITH EIGHT LADIES AS THEY HUNT
ECHIDNA AND GATHER BUSH TUCKER.

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A **STUDY GUIDE** BY KATY MARRINER



<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>

ISBN-13-978-1-74295-055-6

<http://www.theeducationshop.com.au>



Rosie Kunoth takes a break from collecting Bush Potatoes



CAAMA Productions

Eight Ladies was produced by Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) Productions, the film and television production branch of CAAMA, in association with Imparja Television.

The Central Australian Indigenous Media Association (CAAMA) began operations in 1980 and was the first Aboriginal group to be allocated a broadcasting license. The Aboriginal people of central Australia own CAAMA and its objectives focus on the social, cultural and economic advancement of Aboriginal peoples. CAAMA produces media products that engender pride in Aboriginal communities, while informing and educating the wider community.

Established in 1988, CAAMA Productions is part of the CAAMA media group. CAAMA Production's primary purpose is to represent Indigenous people, culture and language in film and television. CAAMA Productions was the recipient of the 2005 Film Australia Stanley Hawes Award for Outstanding Contribution to Australian Documentary.

Visit CAAMA at <<http://www.caama.com.au>> to learn more about CAAMA and CAAMA Productions.

Nganampa Anwernekenhe

Eight Ladies is part of the *Nganampa Anwernekenhe* television series. *Nganampa Anwernekenhe* is produced by Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) Productions, the film and television production branch of CAAMA, in association with Imparja Television.

Over 180 programs have been produced since the *Nganampa Anwernekenhe* television series was initiated in 1988. The primary aim of the series is the maintenance of Aboriginal languages and culture. *Nganampa Anwernekenhe* also provides an opportunity for Indigenous filmmakers to work on an Indigenous language television series. Each program must have an Indigenous Australian in the key creative roles which include writer, director, cinematographer and sound recordist.

Visit Australian Screen at <<http://aso.gov.au/titles/series/nganampa-anwernekenhe/>> to learn more about *Nganampa Anwernekenhe*.

Katie, Jeannie, Mary, Lena, Rosie, Patsy, Pansy and Mavis are from Alyawarr country in the Northern Territory. The ladies hunt echidna and gather bush tucker that they will later prepare and eat. Their journey into the bush highlights their resourcefulness and the strength of their relationship to each other and to their country.

About the filmmaker

Dena Curtis attended the Australian Film, Television and Radio School in Sydney where she received a graduate diploma in Television Editing. On completion of this diploma, she worked at CAAMA Productions in Alice Springs for a number of years. Some of her editing credits at CAAMA include *Rosalie's Journey*, *The Lore of Love* and *Willaberta Jack*. She also directed the short documentary, *Cheeky Dog*, for CAAMA.

In 2008, Dena wrote and directed *Hush*, a five minute narrative film which won the audience award for Best Foreign Short Film at the 2008 Films de Femmes, Creteil, France. She premiered her third short film, *Jacob*, at the Message Sticks Indigenous Film Festival in 2009. *Jacob* was also nominated for best short film at the 2009 IF Awards, and won the award for best drama at the WOW Film Festival.

This study guide to accompany *Eight Ladies*, a documentary written and directed by Dena Curtis, provides information and suggestions for learning activities in English, Humanities and Social Sciences, Indigenous Studies and Media.

Teachers should preview *Eight Ladies* before showing it to students. The documentary would appeal to students in upper primary classes and is suitable for secondary students at all levels.

Eight Ladies is in Alyawarr language and is subtitled in English.

Duration: 23 minutes



CREDITS

NARRATOR
Anita Bailey

DIRECTOR
Dena Curtis

PHOTOGRAPHY
Nicola Daley

SOUND RECORDISTS
Bianca Hoolihan and
Dena Curtis

PRODUCTION
ASSISTANTS
Bianca Hoolihan and
Kathryn Gilbey

EDITOR
Tania Nehme

COMPOSER
Warren H. Williams

PRINCIPAL INVESTOR
Screen Australia

Imparja Television

Imparja Television is an Australian television network broadcasting to remote eastern and central Australia. 'Imparja' is an Arrernte word meaning footprints. The word is used to indicate that Imparja Television aims to service Arrernte people wherever they may live. Imparja Television describes its range as a footprint. The network is unique in Australia and the world, being totally owned and controlled by Northern Territory and South Australian Aboriginal shareholders.

Imparja Television delivers information and communication services to the community, while promoting Indigenous culture and values.

Visit Imparja Television at <<http://www.imparja.com>>.

Find out more about Imparja Television at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imparja_Television>.

USING *EIGHT LADIES* IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers may select from the following information and activities to support students' viewing and close analysis of *Eight Ladies*.

MAKING A START

- Use the table on the following page to make notes as you watch *Eight Ladies*. Drawing on the contents of the table, spend time as a class discussing the content and purpose of *Eight Ladies*.
- Did you enjoy watching *Eight Ladies*?
- Draw a concept map that shows the connections between *Eight Ladies* and your world.

THE EIGHT LADIES

Eight Ladies features Kate Morton, Jeannie Pula, Mary Morton, Lena Skinner, Rosie Ngwarreye, Patsy Kemarra, Pansy McLeod and Mavis Young.

ABOVE (L-R): Katie, Lena, and Pansy

EIGHT LADIES	VIEWING NOTES
<p>STORY What happens?</p>	
<p>CHARACTERS Make notes about the eight ladies</p>	
<p>SETTING Where does the story take place?</p>	
<p>THEMES What are the main ideas?</p>	



- Use 'Think, Pair, Share' to discuss your impressions of Kate, Jeannie, Mary, Lena, Rosie, Patsy, Pansy and Mavis. Review the notes that you have made about the women in the table. Talk about your impressions of the women with a partner. Share one of your conversations about the women with the rest of the class.
- What words would you use to describe the relationship between the women? Match the words that you have selected with moments from *Eight Ladies*.

TRADITION

Eight Ladies is concerned with the handing down of cultural practices.

- 'We still live and hunt like in the old days.' What does the film help us understand about traditional Aboriginal life and society?

BUSH TUCKER

Bush tucker is an Australian term used to describe the variety of herbs, spices, mushrooms, fruits, flowers, vegetables, animals, birds, reptiles and insects that are native to the country.

- Have you ever eaten bush tucker? Before you complete your answer to this question, consult the list of bush tucker at <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bangercc/bushtuckerlist.html>.
- 'Our country is rich with all kinds of bush tucker.' What bush tucker do the women hunt and gather?
- Research the modern bush food industry. Share

the results of your research with the class.

- Do you think selling bush tucker is an effective way of promoting Aboriginal culture?

Indigenous Australians were once semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers, with each clan having its own territory. Women were the gatherers of vegetables, roots, herbs, fruits and nuts, eggs and honey, and small land animals. Men were the hunters of large land animals and birds and fish.

Hunting and gathering remain important elements of Indigenous culture. Indigenous Australians want bush tucker from their country to supplement their

CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT: Ladies relax
in the dry creek bed;
DOP Nicola Daley and
director Dena Curtis;
Alyawarr country, NT;
Jeannie Pula being
interviewed



diet. They also want to protect totemic species.

Between 1867 and 1900, legislation recognising Aboriginal rights to forage was enacted in Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. The intervening years have seen many amendments to the early legislation, with the rights of Aboriginal people to gather food very often being reduced considerably in the process.

The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 makes provision for hunting and food gathering by Aboriginal people. Under the legislation, Indigenous Australians may take a protected animal or the egg of a protected animal from land that is not a reserve. Indigenous Australians can also take a native plant from Crown Land, any public land or any forest reserve.

Indigenous Australians are not required to hold a Hunting Permit if they are hunting an animal that will be used as food for the hunter or for his or her dependants, or solely for cultural purposes of Aboriginal origin.

- Working as a class make a list of the positive consequences of allowing Indigenous Australians to continue traditional hunting and gathering in today's Australia. Can you think of any problems associated with these practices? Why is there a need for these traditional practices to be regulated by legislation?

COUNTRY

The eight ladies come from Alyawarr Country in the Sandover River region in central Australia, about 250km north of Alice Springs. Alyawarr



Eight Ladies is available on DVD from **RONIN FILMS**, PO Box 680, Mitchell, ACT 2911.
PHONE (02) 6248 0851
EMAIL: orders@roninfilms.com.au

ABOVE (L-R):
 Sandover River;
 Alyawarr Country at sunrise

country contains the communities of Arlparra and Ampilatwatja.

- Have you ever visited Alyawarr country? Locate the Alyawarr homelands on a map of Australia. Use print and electronic texts to find out more about the Alyawarr homelands and about the Alyawarr people. Share your findings with others in the class.

A useful starting point is the Indigenous Language Map located at <<http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/>>. Continue your research at <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alyawarre>>.

Working with a team of your peers, find out more about one of the Alyawarr communities: Arlparra or Ampilatwatja.

Use PowerPoint to present a profile of the selected community to the class.

- 'We live here walking and hunting the land.' Katie, Jeannie, Mary, Lena, Rosie, Patsy, Pansy and Mavis travel through their country for five days hunting and harvesting bush tucker. What do we learn about their relationship with the land?

- 'This is the soakage where the old time people would walk to and get water. Nothing left now. Now it's all dried up. Whitefella went over this waterhole with a grader.' Why is this scene significant? Do you think that Aboriginal communities have changed the way non-Indigenous Australians regard the land?

THE DREAMING

- What is the meaning of the term 'Dreaming' in Aboriginal culture?
- 'When we sing, we remember the Dreaming. We hold our country strong with all our songs.' What does *Eight Ladies* help us understand about Aboriginal spirituality?
- 'The atham-areny still watch over this land today.' Who are the atham-areny? Why are they important to the women?



CHANGE

As the eight ladies hunt and gather, and as they sit around the campfire at night preparing the food, they talk about the old days and how life has changed.

- In what ways do you think the lives of the women may have changed for the better and for the worse?

ABOVE: Ladies resting in the dry creek bed

- Talk to an elderly relative or family friend or neighbour about how society has changed during their lifetime. Use the conversation to write a feature article about the person and the changes that they have witnessed.

BEHIND THE SCENES

- 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers should exercise caution when watching this program as it may contain images of deceased persons.'
Why is this warning shown at the beginning of *Eight Ladies*?
- *Eight Ladies* is an observational documentary. What does this term mean? Why do you think the filmmaker chose this approach?
- Who do you think is the intended audience for *Eight Ladies*?
- How does the filmmaker portray:
 - the Alyawarr homelands?
 - the women?
 - the practices of hunting and gathering?
- Make a list of the likely challenges of filming *Eight Ladies*.

EXTENDED ANALYSIS

- Complete a detailed analysis of *Eight Ladies*. Your analysis should provide:
 - a synopsis of the documentary
 - a description of the roles played by Indigenous Australians
 - an explanation of the filmmaker's purpose
 - an assessment of the documentary's portrayal of Indigenous Australia
 - a comment on how the film uses various documentary techniques
 - your judgement of the documentary's worth.



This study guide was produced by **ATOM**. (© ATOM 2011)
ISBN-13-978-1-74295-055-6 editor@atom.org.au

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