



NYIRR-MARIE

Evelyn Hall (Nyirr-Marie), a leader of her community in the campaign for land rights, returns to her country to say goodbye for the last time.

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A **STUDY GUIDE** BY KATY MARRINER



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In July 2009, Evelyn Hall and her family return to country. It is a time of sadness because Evelyn knows she is not well enough to take this trip again. Her journey back home becomes a time to recall stories from her childhood passed onto her from her grandfather and her mother.

Evelyn has shared many stories of the land with her family but on this trip she wants to be sure they understand their heritage and will keep telling the stories after she is gone. As she makes the trip back to country, she recalls the stories of *The Barramundi* and *Two Pigeons*.

When Evelyn visits the family cave where her ancestors have been buried, she paints her hand on the family gallery.

About the filmmaker

When you are given access to a person's life such as Evelyn and her family gave to us as a film crew you feel very privileged, and something magic happens: you are given a place to follow a story from a very different point of view than you had at the beginning and really the story takes over and what you thought the story was going to be just falls by the wayside. Such is the case with this film. From the beginning of meeting with Nana Evelyn she wanted me to document very important aspects of her life and she felt she was not well – little did she know or us as the crew that she would be diagnosed after our filming with pancreatic cancer and that her time would be a waiting game.

– Mitch Torres, Director

Mitch Torres is the writer and director of *Nyirr-Marie*. Her credits as a director include the award winning documentary *Whispering in our Hearts*, as well as *Case 442*, *Saltwater Bluesman*, *The Healing Sounds of the Bungarun Orchestra*, *Behind the Ball* and *Memories of Iwany*. Torres has recently directed Jandamarra's War for ABC TV, the series *Milli Milli Nganka* and has written an episode for the television series, *The Circuit*.



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CAAMA Productions

Nyirr-Marie was produced by Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) Productions, the film and television production branch of CAAMA, in association with Imparja Television and Wawili Pitjas.

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.

This study guide to accompany *Nyirr-Marie*, a documentary written and directed by Mitch Torres, provides information and suggestions for learning activities in English, Humanities and Social Sciences, Indigenous Studies and Media.

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

Nyirr-Marie is in Gidja language and is subtitled in English.

Duration: 24 minutes

Above: -----



Above: -----

Nganampa Anwernekenhe

Nyirr-Marie 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*.

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.

| NYIRR-MARIE | VIEWING NOTES |
|---|---------------|
| <p>NARRATIVE What happens?</p> | |
| <p>PARTICIPANTS Make notes about Evelyn Hall and her family.</p> | |
| <p>LOCATIONS Where does the action take place?</p> | |
| <p>THEMES What are the big ideas?</p> | |



CREDITS

DIRECTOR AND WRITER
Mitch Torres

PRODUCER
Eileen Torres

PRODUCTION
Alison Torres

PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOUND
Cornel Ozies, Clinton Festl

EDITOR
Cornel Ozies

COMPOSER
Petris Torres

SERIES PRODUCER
Tanya Fraser

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Ray Lillis

PRINCIPAL INVESTOR
Screen Australia

USING NYIRR-MARIE IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers may select from the following information and activities to support students' viewing and close analysis of *Nyirr-Marie*.

MAKING A START

Use the table on the following page to make notes as you watch *Nyirr-Marie*.

Drawing on the contents of the table, spend time as a class discussing the content and purpose of *Nyirr-Marie*.

- Did you enjoy watching *Nyirr-Marie*?
- Draw a concept map that shows the connections between *Nyirr-Marie* and your world.

EVELYN HALL

Evelyn Hall was born on 16 August 1942 on Cow Creek Station, which is now part of Doon Doon Station. Her bush name is *Nyerrmarria* which is the name of her dreaming on Carlton Hill. She was given the name by her sister Daisy Carlton.

Use 'Think, Pair, Share' to discuss your impressions of Evelyn Hall.

Review the notes that you have made about Evelyn in the table. Talk about your impressions of Evelyn with a partner. Share your conversation about Evelyn with the rest of the class.

Find out more about Evelyn Hall's life at <<http://www.kimberleyecho.com/archive/2007/20070201/story02.html>>.

Evelyn Hall passed away in December 2009. It was her strong desire for her story to be told. Evelyn gave special clearance for *Nyirr-Marie* to be shown three months after her remains were returned to country.

- *My Country, I speak Gidja. My Grandfather is Gidja. My grandmother is Mirriuwong. My country is Doon Doon. My country is Mandangala. My country is Gelganyem. My country is Barlow, Claypan, Carrboyd Range, Revolver Spring and Billy Goat Yard.*

– Evelyn Hall

What moments and statements confirm

Above: -----



Evelyn's love of country?

Why is her trip back to country important?

- What moments and statements reveal Evelyn, the mother and grandmother? Spend time discussing the significance of these moments and statements.
- Jodie Hall pays tribute to her mother in the final sequence of *Nyirr-Marie*. What does Jodie's description highlight about her mother? Why does it deserve to be called a tribute? Who in your family would you like to pay tribute to?

MANDANGALA

Mandangala is a locality on the Glen Hill Road in northeast Western Australia. Its closest town is Kununurra, and the closest capital city is Darwin.

- Have you ever visited Mandangala country? Locate Mandangala country on a map of Australia. Use print and electronic texts to find out more about Mandangala country and about the people who call this country home. Share your findings with others in the class. The Argyle mining lease area is in the traditional country of the Miriwung, Gidja, Malgnin and Woolah peoples, on land that was formerly part of the Lisadell Pastoral Station. In September 2004, the area's traditional owners signed a Participation Agreement with Argyle that provides a formal and binding acknowledgement of traditional owners' rights and interests, including native title rights, in the mining lease area. The Agreement was registered by the National Native Title Tribunal as an Indigenous Land Use Agreement in April 2005.
- 'It's the richest land ever going. Diamonds all over. Wherever the sand is. Wherever the rock is. I didn't know that. We didn't know that.'

– Evelyn

Use this claim to initiate a discussion of the views and values that Indigenous Australians have regarding land.

Above: ----

Read about the Argyle Mine at <http://www.argylediamonds.com.au>.

In what ways does Argyle respect the land they mine and support the indigenous people who live in the area surrounding the mine? Use the information at http://www.argylediamonds.com.au/indigenous_partnerships.html to help you answer this question.

HERITAGE

Heritage is a word used to refer to something inherited from the past.

- Evelyn wants to show her children and grandchildren their heritage.
- Who takes on this responsibility in your family?
- What do you know of your family's heritage?
- What places are sacred to Evelyn and her family?
- What places do you and your family regard as sacred?

TAKING A STAND

Mum was a very proud but humble woman. She cared for her family, culture, and land. Her love for us, her children, was endless. She always took a strong stand on injustices. When things were wrong, she corrected it in her strong but gentle way. She was an amazing person, who broke down barriers; she was respected highly, right across this nation. Her work in land rights is a legacy that will

stand forever. And the memory of all the hard work
mum did will always remain. – Jodie Hall

During her lifetime, Evelyn Hall was a senior elder in women's law in the Miriwoong region and a staunch advocate for Indigenous land rights for the Mandangala community. Evelyn's negotiations with mining companies allowed the Kimberley Land Council to secure land tenure for her people.

- *I am a Traditional Owner for the country known as Mandangala. Native Title exists over my land. My people and I have exclusive possession over Mandangala. This is my grandfather's, mother's and uncle's country and I belong to that country through them.*

This statement is taken from Evelyn Hall's affidavit to the Native Title Land Council in 2005 in regard to mining companies entering Miriwoong Gajerrong land without permission and consultation with the traditional owners. The complete record of the case can be found at <http://www.nntt.gov.au/Future-Acts/Search-FA-Determinations/Documents/WO04_315%20%20WO05_48%2013062006.pdf>.

Evelyn's campaign against exploration mining in the region was motivated by her belief that it would interfere directly with community and social activities and that it would disrupt sites of particular and very important significance for her and her people.

What is Native Title? Use the internet to research this subject. Share your findings with the class.

Why was Evelyn's campaign for land rights necessary?

- Yirrebii Arts Gallery was created in 2002 by Evelyn Hall. The gallery is wholly owned and managed by the Hall family. The gallery provides the artists with an opportunity to share their Miriwoong culture. Further information about Yirrebii Art Gallery can be accessed at <<http://www.aboriginalart.org/artcentre.cfm?id=93>>.

BEING ACKNOWLEDGED

Australia has a system of honours and awards that recognise the achievements and service of Australian citizens.

- Why do we award 'honours' to people?

The Australian system of honours and awards was established in 1975. At this time the Queen approved the institution of the Order of Australia: 'an Australian society of honour for according recognition to Australian citizens and other persons for achievement or meritorious service'.

In the Australian honours system appointments to the Order of Australia confer the highest

recognition for outstanding achievement and service.

- What do we learn about Evelyn's achievements and service in *Nyirr-Marie*?

On January 26, 2007, Evelyn Hall was granted a Member of the Order of Australia for service to the Indigenous community as an advocate for land rights, social justice, and the economic advancement and education of traditional owners in the Kimberley region.

The record of this honour can be located at <http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honour_roll/search.cfm?aus_award_id=1133763&search_type=advanced&showInd=true>.

An honour list of Indigenous Australians achievers and those who have championed opportunities for Indigenous Australians can be downloaded at <http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/publications/docs/lts_an_honour_18_Jun_2007.pdf>.

- What other names do you think should be added to this list?

ORAL TRADITION

The term 'oral tradition' refers to the transmission of cultural material through speech.

The practice of telling oral stories is an important aspect of Aboriginal culture. Specific cultural practices, histories, languages, laws and family relationships have been passed on in this way. These stories link past, present and future generations of Indigenous Australians.

Nyirr-Marie continues this tradition. Evelyn Hall valued her cultural stories and recognised the importance of sharing these stories. The stories were passed onto her by elders in her community, and before her death, she saw herself as responsible for passing on the stories to the next generation.

- 'Mum had two favorite stories. One was the *Two Pigeons* story. And the other was *The Barramundi Dreaming*.' – Jodie Hall
Why do you think these stories were Evelyn's favourite Dreaming stories?
- *Barramundi Dreaming* as told by Evelyn Hall: A Barramundi lives in the river at Dharram (Bandicoot Bar). One day, a crane fishing for food sees the barramundi and spears it with her beak, but is unable to catch it as the barramundi swims quickly away. The barramundi travels up the Dunham River, past where the Worrworrum community is today, and on to Glen Hill where she scrapes some of her scales as she passes through.

NYIRR-MARIE is available on DVD from Ronin Films, P.O. Box 680, Mitchell, ACT 2911. Phone 02 6248 0851. Email: orders@roninfilms.com.au

Today those scales can be seen near the Glen Hill community's first gate as white rock on the hillside, most clearly visible in the late afternoon.

Here the barramundi is spotted by some women who try to catch her using nets made of rolled Spinifex grass (a traditional Miriwoong fishing method known as Gelganyem). But the barramundi flicks her tail and jumps over the trap. She escapes between the two hills of Barramundi Gap, this is where Argyle Diamond Mine now have the open pit, and heads down to Bow River, where she comes to rest as a white rock. This rock, which can still be seen today, is quite different from all the others at Bow River.

Source: <http://www.gelganyem.com.au/trusts/default.php?p=3§ion=gelganyem>

Create an illustrated copy of Evelyn Hall's account of *Barramundi Dreaming*.

- Drawing on *Nyirr-Marie*, make a PowerPoint presentation that tells the *Two Pigeons* story. Your PowerPoint presentation should use words, images and sounds.



LEAVING HER MARK

Nyirr-Marie documents Evelyn's final visit to her country. In her family cave, where her ancestors are buried, she leaves her handprint alongside the handprints of other members of her family. Her daughter paints the image of her totem.

- Why does every member of the family paint their handprint on the wall?
- Why does Jodie draw Evelyn's totem on the cave wall?
- What does Evelyn hope will happen at the cave in the future?
- What records do your family make to remember family members?

BEHIND THE SCENES

- Why do you think Mitch Torres wanted to tell Evelyn's story?
- Who is the audience of *Nyirr-Marie*?
- Why do you think *Nyirr-Marie* begins with the spreading of Evelyn's ashes? How does the documentary end? Is it an effective way to resolve the story of Evelyn Hall?
- How does the filmmaker portray:
 - Evelyn and her family?
 - The trip back to country?
 - The family's time at the cave?
 - Mandangala country?

EXTENDED ANALYSIS

- Complete a detailed analysis of *Nyirr-Marie*.

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.

CREATE

- What stories are part of your family history?
- Have these stories been passed down from a previous generation?
- Why are these stories important?
- Who are the storytellers in your family?
- Your task is to make a record of one of these stories.

You may choose the form. You could make a digital story or a short film. You might like to use PowerPoint to tell your story. You could write and illustrate a graphic short story. Your story could be written as prose, poetry, a monologue, a play script or a screenplay.

When you have finished, present your story to an audience.



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