



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

# Literacy and remote Indigenous youth: Why social practice matters

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CAEPR

Literacy researcher James Gee suggests that:

*Humans need to practice what they are learning a good deal before they master it. Furthermore, they tend to lose a good deal of their learning – including school learning – when they cease to practice the skills associated with this learning in their daily lives. This is why it is easy to discover many adults who are no longer very good at school-based science, math, or literacy if they do not, in their work or home lives, practice these on a regular basis. (Gee 2003: 68)*

		<i>Living</i>	<i>Learning</i>	<i>Young adult social practice</i>	<i>Employment</i>
	<b>Early 20<sup>th</sup> C &gt; 1950s</b>	Nomadic life / missions / towns	Mission schools	Literacy linked to Christian practice (s/t in vernacular)	Training for manual skills mostly not requiring literacy
	<b>1950s &gt; 1970s</b>	Fewer nomadics / missions / towns	Mission schools / Government schools / Assimilation era secondary hostels.	Literacy linked to: Christian practice, occasional family or recreational reading.	Training for work requiring basic literacy: pastoral or domestic workers, mining, health, office or store workers, etc.
	<b>1970s &gt; 1990s</b>	Movement into settlements, communities and towns.	Government schools, independent schools and bilingual educ. Adult education.  1990s: Intro of National Training Reform Agenda.	Literacy linked to: Christian practice, occasional family or recreational reading, and governance roles.	Training and employment in jobs requiring basic literacy as teacher aides, health, office or store workers, etc.
	<b>2000s</b>	Communities and towns	Government and independent schools. Accredited VET training.	Occasional family or recreational reading, computer-based multimedia activities.	Less unskilled work, more jobs requiring qualifications, computer skills, etc

*Quotes from young adults, early 20s.  
Wingellina, Ngaanyatjarra Lands*

- My grandfather and my grandmother they didn't go to school in the missionary days because they was adults, they didn't do reading and writing back in those days. They were still in the bush, yeah. They went into the mission when they probably was young man, woman. My grandfather went to Ernabella and my grandmother went to Warburton mission... My mother went to school in Wingellina, she done a bit of schooling, old school Wingellina, when she was a child. I don't see her reading and writing much because they probably went to school in *wiltja*, humpy and that. Not like a big house school but just a sheet of iron and trees, you know. But I don't see them much writing, reading. 'Cause they never went to school much, like high school and all that see. They just went to little community school, desert school...I went to school in Wingellina school, then I went to school in town.

- So my grandparents knew a little bit of English, not pretty good...they were not really *ninti* for English, but they knew little bit. So did my mother and my two aunties. My grandparents also knew how to write Pitjantjatjara and reading, they learnt reading and writing in Pitjantjatjara...There were Bibles and *nyaapa* Old Testaments...And my mother was smarter than my grandparents, like to speak in English, she was skilled in English. When she was young adult she was working in at the clinic, when they first had a new clinic and then she moved to preschool, teaching little kids. I remember when I was little I learnt, at the school I learned to read in English and at home learned reading in Pitjantjatjara because my father had a Bible and he was showing me how to pronounce it and how to read it and showing me all the corrections. Yeah, that's what my dad showed me.



# Mt Theo Yuendumu Substance Misuse Aboriginal Corporation – Jaru Pirrjirdi

## Yapa-Kurlangu Yimi

Mt Theo - Yuendumu Substance  
Misuse Aboriginal Corporation

**December 06 Newsletter**

## Jaru Pirrjirdi

The Jaru Pirrjirdi project is a youth development and leadership project that aims to create strong, empowered, skilled and dedicated young leaders for the community of Yuendumu. It aims to create meaningful and positive futures for young adults aged 17-30 by providing a challenging and progressive framework through which young people can move forward. Many of the young adults who began with the program two years ago are now successfully working in other community organisations.

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## Louis & Larissa

Two Senior Jaru Pirrjirdi members, Louis Watson and Larissa Granites, recently completed a two week domestic violence facilitator course in Darwin and since returning to Yuendumu have begun to implement their knowledge.

Louis and Larissa are helping facilitate a course for young men that have been charged with domestic violence. This 7 week course aims to help these young men understand the wrongs of domestic violence, examine their past actions and create more positive behaviour patterns. Louis and Larissa are helping these young men become strong and communicating this message to the broader community to help prevent any domestic violence occurring.

## 'Graduate' Update

Last newsletter we published a story written by Sebastian Watson (Lingli), a senior Jaru 'graduate' who was then undergoing intensive training to become an Aboriginal Community Police Officer (ACPO). It is with great pride that Mt Theo celebrates Lingli's graduation from this training and his new role as a respected ACPO in Yuendumu (even if he does sometimes get us into trouble for not wearing our seatbelts!)

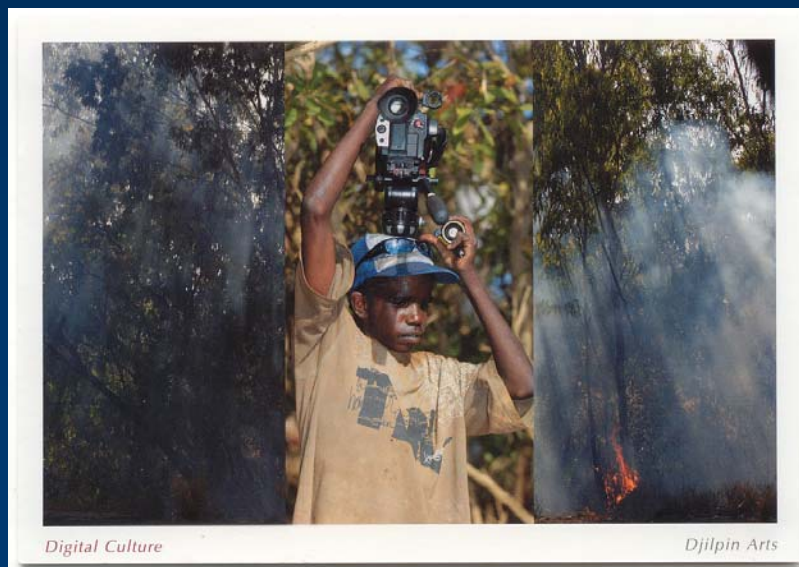
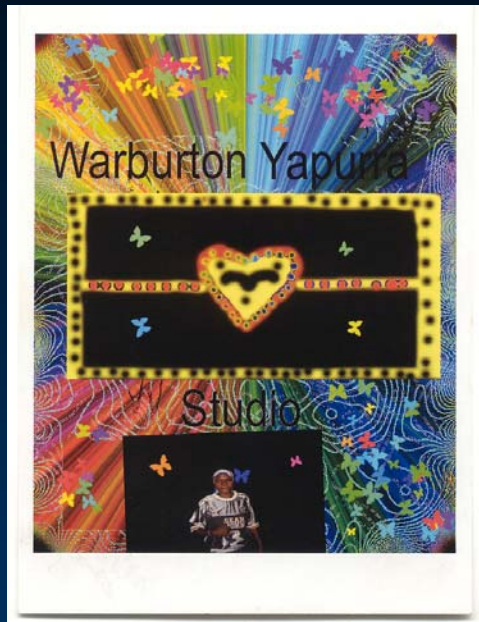
**CONGRATULATIONS LINGLI!**

## Newsflash – Jaru Pirrjirdi Short Story Website

In addition to the Mt Theo Program website, the Jaru Pirrjirdi mob have recently developed a Jaru Pirrjirdi story website. This will be an ongoing project to which Jaru Pirrjirdi members will be able to continually add so as to record and share their activities and stories. The Jaru Pirrjirdi short story website can be found from the Mt Theo Program website at [www.mttheo.org](http://www.mttheo.org). From this homepage you can simply click on the Stories link to access the website.



# Arts and multimedia youth projects





- I found computers easy for me, like to type and do everything on the computer, everything like doing internet banking and helping other people in how to use the computer in the Telecentre. I do some works for the Telecentre and for the Media, sometimes when I'm bored I come to the Telecentre, sit down, play around looking there, do a good things, then learn more good things. I like checking my emails, Yahoo, and I like to do some photo decoration on the computer, on the Publisher, scanning photos...I moved [here] in 2005. So for three years now and I've been missing my families a lot, so I've decide to have an email so I can write to my friends and families. So yeah I've got some friends that have emails in Ernabella and Adelaide, some families in Adelaide and in Ernabella. I attach photos and I write some letters, like writing as I'm talking to them.
- *Female 23 years old*

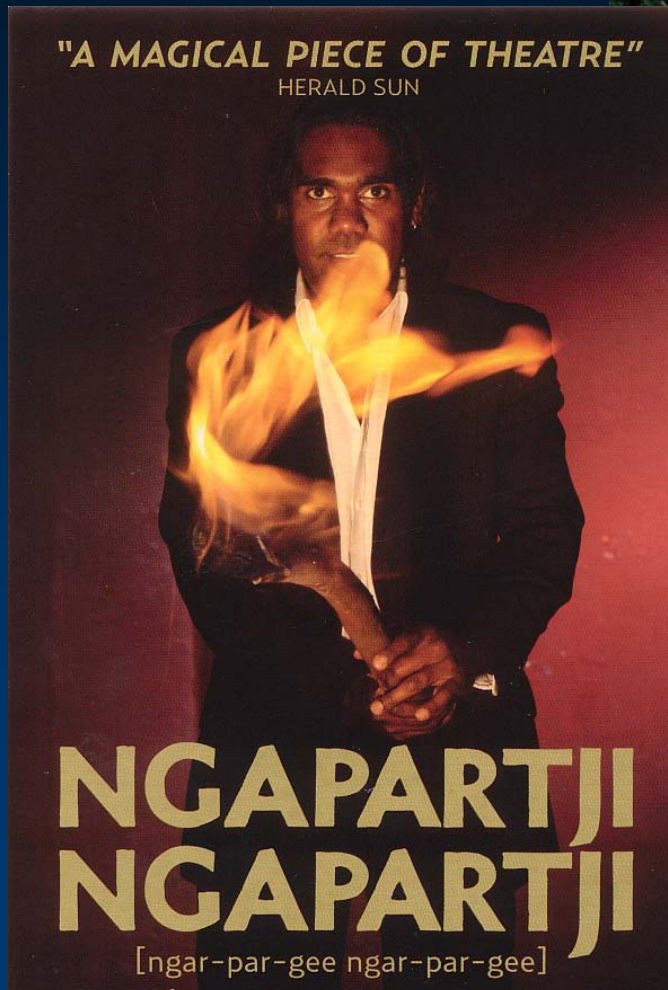


# NT Library has Libraries and Knowledge Centres in 14 out of the 22 remote libraries

All LKC photos are courtesy of NTL and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



# Ngapartji Ngapartji intergenerational language and arts project



**'A profound and moving drama, exquisitely told...  
Such beauty can make you weep.'** - Australian Stage Online

**'Ngapartji Ngapartji is a gift, packed with forgiveness  
and hope.'** - Variety Magazine

**'This is searingly truthful, vital theatre.'** - Daily Telegraph

**'It is wonderfully performed and told, and is certain to  
be remembered as one of the memorable productions  
of the year.'** - Daily Telegraph



# Ngapartji Ngapartji intergenerational language and arts project – touring and performing

Photos © Ngapartji Ngapartji and Keith Saunders



# Ngapartji Ngapartji intergenerational language and arts project back at Alice Springs











# Ngaanyatjarra Media – youth music development

Photos © Ngaanyatjarra Media





## How did we learn GarageBand?

- He came out here, about last year, came out here and showed us this recording thing, Garageband computer. Showed us that, said that we can record songs on here, easy way. Lot of good sounds on it. Yeah, he showed us and we started from there then. It was little bit hard when we first started, it was a little bit hard. Once we got used to it, it was right then. Started recording. He showed us a couple of times, a couple of days then we was doing it all by ourselves...He just let us do it. If we make a mistake we'll call him then he'll come. Then he'll just help us, then he'll go. He'll let us off then and then when make another mistake we'll call him. Then he'll show us, he'll keep showing us until we catch it all, you know. That's a good way of learning. That's a easy way of learning, like when people show you, when you practice, like when you do it, when someone show you and you do it again, and you do it, and try again and you'll get it, you'll catch it, like that. The more you practice the more you learn, like that...we learn from making mistakes.
- *Male musician, 22 years old*

# NGAANYATJARRAKU TURLKU PURTINGKATJA WARBURTON 2008

FRIDAY 30TH MAY  
TO SUNDAY 1ST JUNE

+ THURS 29TH MAY  
FASHION, DANCE & VIDEO  
WITH  
WARBURTON YOUTH ARTS

presented by



Also proudly supported by  
• Milyirrjarra Store •  
• Ngaanyatjarra Council •  
• Indervon • NATS •  
• Warburton Roadhouse •

TURLKU  
DANCE

BATTLE OF  
THE BANDS

ROCK • COUNTRY • GOSPEL • WOMEN  
JUNIORS • KARAOKE • DANCE COMP

GREAT  
PRIZES

LIVE ON  
RADIO 5NPY



I still do reading and writing, everyday life still today...like media work, we go in recording. We do reading, like look on the computers, like some files we have to go in to read and all that, to go through all that...and when we making the music, songs, that's when we do our writings and all that, spellings. When we make a song we just get a pen and a paper then write the song down, write the like meaning and all that, right meaning. We make sure if it's right, correct spelling and all that. Main writer would be me or N. Then we check it, make sure if it's right, then we put it on, record it. We record it on the computer, first we make the song right then we sing it. You press the red button that says record, press that. Then you record the voice. Then after when you finish you press stop. Then you can go back and listen to it. Press play. That's recorded there and you just listen to it. We'll practice a couple of times before we put it on, before we record it. If we're not happy we just leave it there or sometimes we just put it in the trash, just that track. Song, whole song sometimes or track.

*Male musician, 22 years old*





# Ngaanyatjarra Media – youth music development

one man, <sup>was</sup> always thinking about  
~~one~~ marijuana he was always  
 getting money and going for  
 marijuana!  
 chorus  
 his wife ~~I~~ said leave  
 marijuana, Marijuana will  
 make you bad-



## Track 6 Travelling home

I was travelling at night I was going  
 back home far away to my home  
 As I passed all the places in the  
 pitjantjatjara lands there were people living  
 there in Ngaanyatjarra As I passed by the  
 border Then I went over the hill and  
 I saw the light shining, shining so bright.  
 My my home wingelling That's our  
 home wingelling.

## Track 9 Don't Drink & Drive

Lyrics - Chris Reid & Nathan Brown & Bevan Evans  
 Wati nyuntu nyaakun tjikini  
 nyuntun traipmilani nyuntumpa  
 mutuka  
 Nyuntu kulini nyuntu ngalimpa walytja  
 tjana patani malaku ngura-rgka  
 Wati wiya nyuntu wama tjikini  
 Wati Wanyunku wama wanti  
 please don't drink and drive  
 all my people, please don't drink and  
 drive  
 Kuwari kuwari x4

Repeat Verse

With my husband I help him write in Pitjantjatjara and in English...because I can write faster than him...but he can read and write in English and he can read in Pitjantjatjara, but only little bit of writing, yeah.

<i>Lyric themes</i>	<i>Number of songs</i>
Mining meeting	1
Christian songs	2
Rain	4
Celebrating music and life	5
Worrying about kin in town	3
Longing for country/home/kin	9
Longing for girl, love songs	13
<i>Kulila!</i> Advice about not drinking, not smoking ganja, not sniffing petrol, eating good food, no sugar, clean houses, and about girlfriends	19
<i>Tjamuku ngurra, ngayuku ngurra</i> grandfather's country, my country belonging and keeping Law strong to pass down to this generation, change	20
<i>Wati kutju, kungka kutju, tjitji kutju</i> (left alone by family, drinking alone) Empathy for aloneness	22

- '\*\*\* had a desperate need to survive, he's a shit hot cameraman and he developed a visual language because he hasn't been at school. He used digital media as a survival strategy: "I can do something".'
- '\*\*\* needed to be somebody and music was where he found it.'
- Garageband, like keeps them busy. Like makes them proud of it. Keeps them out of trouble like when you do a song then you go back home, then you put it on and they listen to it, they get a bit proud like 'oh I done something, good. I can hear it now. I can listen to myself.' Something like that. And like families and all can hear it and they say, they tell you 'oh that's a good song'. So he'll be happy, proud, you know. Like make a good song, good story for people who is heavy on alcohol and ganja and petrol and all that. Can make good songs for people like that, you know... You can make a message, like that...some *anangu* people out here they see songs like a message, like that song is telling them, oh "get away from the grog, leave it, the grog is bad for you, come back to your families, look after your kids"...it'll be stronger if it comes from like younger kids, younger people. So like the older people, you know, when they hear it they think 'ah that's young ones telling us' you know "young boys, young kids singing these songs, telling us, singing this, saying this message on songs."

*Male musician, 22 years old*