



# Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project

## Executive Summary | 2019 Evaluation Report

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## 1 Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project and its context

- The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku (Men's) Project is an innovative, Anangu-led initiative to develop community capacity and resilience and prevent family violence. Beginning in late 2016, the Project is an initiative of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC) that has grown from NPYWC's Uti Kulintjaku Project that is led by senior Anangu women. *Uti kulintjaku* is a Pitjantjatjara phrase that means 'to listen, think and understand clearly'. In 2012 senior Anangu women from NPYWC's Ngangkari Program, who were concerned about young people's wellbeing in their communities, established the multi-award-winning Uti Kulintjaku Project as a bi-cultural mental health literacy project. The Uti Kulintjaku Iwara or way of working: 1) supports clear thinking; 2) facilitates safe ways to talk about difficult issues; and 3) develops capacity to find new ways to respond to and address these difficult issues drawing on Anangu cultural knowledge and Western knowledge. The Uti Kulintjaku women's team has produced a number of language- and placed-based resources and the evaluation findings identify a range of outcomes from the Project's activities that are influencing factors at multiple levels associated with systems change to strengthen Anangu wellbeing. (Togni, 2018).
- In 2016 the Uti Kulintjaku women's team invited a group of Anangu male leaders to work with them to establish the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project with a focus on family violence prevention, supported by funding from the South Australian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation. The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project brings together a team of respected senior and younger Anangu men and non-Aboriginal health professionals to learn from each other and identify ways to strengthen Anangu identity and increase Anangu wellbeing to prevent family violence. This is done by drawing on the best of Anangu and Western knowledge. Between late 2016 and mid 2019 there have been 11 Project workshops. Evaluation, using a developmental evaluation approach, has been built into the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project from the beginning. The Report presents findings from the evaluation.

## 2 Key features

- Four key features or predominant characteristics of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project were identified.

### 2.1 Anangu-led collaboration

- Over the Project's two and a half years the Anangu team members have strengthened their leadership of the Project. This group of Anangu men began tentatively and have gradually established their identity and confidence as a team who are developing the Project, directing its activities and encouraging the involvement of younger Anangu men. The strength in this unity of Anangu men from across the NPY Lands is recognised:

*The strength is definitely growing because we are honestly doing this together. It's about strength in numbers, it's about coming together and that unity makes it easier, gives you more strength.* Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (045), 2019

- As an Angu-led collaboration it is highly valued by the Angu team members who stress the seriousness of their work in terms of creating pathways for a better future for their young people. The level of commitment to the Project by the core group of men who have consistently attended the workshops over two and a half years is notable, especially given the challenging issues of trauma and violence that are the focus of the Project and the lived experience for many of the Angu team members.

*The core group [of men] who have kept coming is strong and is taking it really seriously. We understand that this is really proper work, it's not just mucking around having fun, it's serious business... All of us men know we are accountable for what we are doing in this workshop.* Angu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (048), 2019

- The Angu team members also value the opportunity to work collaboratively with the mental health professionals who are part of the Project. The Uti Kulintjaku Iwara has supported a genuine two-way learning process for Angu and non-Aboriginal team members.

## 2.2 Safe space to learn, think and share ideas – both ways

- The Uti Kulintjaku workshops create a safe and effective place for people to think deeply, learn and share ideas. These Alice Springs-based workshops enable the men to come together to focus on issues important to their families and communities without the distractions and need to respond to crises that are commonly part of their daily lives in communities. As the following quote suggests, the workshops create a calm, peaceful space that is conducive to careful thinking and learning, and consideration of how to apply this learning to take action in communities.

*...if you bring people to the workshop it allows them to do some good thinking. If you don't have the workshop you are all over the place like a wild brumby. Right from the beginning it has been thinking, talking, reflecting and learning. This process has taken us a long way. We have been on this journey and it's all about looking at the problems in our communities and we want to take back what we gained from these workshops to the communities.* Angu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (027), 2019

- Storytelling is a key mechanism for teaching and learning and the Angu men and mental health professionals have shared personal stories to illustrate experiences and ideas to support Angu healing and wellbeing. Visual representations and drawing have also been important in this storytelling and sharing of new concepts. Learning through story has been effective.

*[T]he stories like [the doctor told]... we could picture that in our head, "Oh, yeah, that's what he's saying. And now he's talking about trauma. Oh, this is where trauma is coming from."* Angu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (047), 2019

- There is reciprocity in the teaching and learning. The Angu team members have valued the opportunity to learn from the Western-trained mental health professionals about trauma, its effects on the brain as well as trauma recovery. The mental health professionals

have valued the opportunity to learn how Anangu men conceptualise and articulate the issues that affect Anangu wellbeing and the Anangu ways of being that support healing and wellbeing. It is a thoughtful and rich learning environment.

## 2.3 Strengths-based approach

- The Project values and draws on the strengths in Anangu culture and knowledge as well as the strengths in and resilience of the team members in its process and in the resources it is producing.

*...there's the problem story, but...the Uti Kulintjaku process means that...there's a myriad of alternative stories that you could look for and you look for them in the group, or you look for them in the individuals.* NPYWC DFVS staff member (018), 2019

- It is recognised that this feature distinguishes the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project from other initiatives or programs that are designed to prevent family violence in the region.

*This [Uti Kulintjaku Project] is different. This is where we're trying to help [the young men]... See the good things that [are] happening... and we can do it.* Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (047), 2019

## 2.4 Aligned with national strategies for family violence prevention in Aboriginal communities

- As an Aboriginal community-led initiative the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project aligns with strategies identified in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* and key principles and actions identified in *Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.*<sup>1</sup>

# 3 Key developments and achievements

- Four key developments and achievements of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project were identified.

## 3.1 Positioning of Anangu men's voice in family violence prevention and in supporting Anangu young people's wellbeing

- An important development of the Project has been the positioning of Anangu men's voice within the dialogue and sharing of ideas to prevent family violence and to strengthen Anangu young people's wellbeing.

*I think [Uti Kulintjaku] creates an opportunity for Aboriginal men in the Central Desert to have a voice in that space of domestic violence prevention and trauma healing. And that's new. [The fact that] a group of men can talk about those things and learn, and think about those things is a big achievement for the Central Desert.* Uti Kulintjaku Project Officer (012), 2019

<sup>1</sup> See: [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08\\_2014/national\\_plan1.pdf#page=23&zoom=100,0,109](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2014/national_plan1.pdf#page=23&zoom=100,0,109) and <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/ab55d7a6-8c07-45ac-a80f-dbb9e593cbf6/Changing-the-picture-AA-3.pdf.aspx>

- More usually this has been the domain of Anangu women, especially through NPYWC. The significance of the invitation from the Uti Kulintjaku women's team to the Anangu men is recognised as an important development for NPYWC and within the region in relation to the role that Anangu men can play in strengthening family relationships.

*It's a very powerful message that was sent to the men, and that is, "we know you care deeply about the experience of children, the experience of women, and the experience of men. We need you to be part of the considerations and you can help us understand what else we can do in community. Maybe through that you'll find ways that you can contribute to the solution." That's what they've done. That invitation... to me it was a symbolic, systemic disruption.* Health professional Uti Kulintjaku Team Member (037), 2018

- The establishment of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project challenges the dominant stereotype of Anangu men as perpetrators and users of violence. It enables men who are choosing to live in ways that nurture and support their families and young people to bring their knowledge and experience to bear on creating a safer and healthier future for Anangu communities. The Anangu men acknowledge the opportunity provided by Uti Kulintjaku women's team through NPYWC.

*...we [men and women] were separate, like as if we were sitting down on the other side of the mountain from them. But, when [the women] invited us in we were able to contribute our thinking and our stories, and...the whitefellas could hear our point of view as well, and learn from us.* Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (044), 2019

*...really it's the Women's Council...they got us involved, all the wati [men]. And I think that's the best thing the Women's Council ever did. They got all us wati [men] together. They didn't just worry about themselves, just the Women's Council, they came up with this idea and so, "why don't we start up a wati [men's] team, Uti Kulintjaku team?" And I give them a lot of respect for it. And I give respect to the wati [men] too that come in, that keep coming for this workshop.* Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (047), 2019

### 3.2 Strengthening Anangu men's confidence and capacity for healthy intergenerational relationships

- Several Anangu team members have shared personal stories of how their learning and healing through the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project has positively affected their relationships with younger generation family members. For some, learning about trauma and healing from trauma, as well as learning from the other Anangu men, has increased their ability to engage with greater empathy and more compassionately with young people to strengthen relationships.

*[My grandson]...he doesn't listen to me. He goes his own way. Yeah, he thinks he's the big boss, big man. But because of these [Uti Kulintjaku workshops] I've been able to sort of calm him down a bit... He [did] work for me... before he never used*

*to do that, but then [at the Uti Kulintjaku camp] he was working... Making the beds. Making the fire. Making tea. That's what he did... He's listening to me... I'm just talking it through really slowly, carefully, sensitively, and seeing those young people get a better sense of their right place and not going beyond... it's both learning from the doctors, and listening to the other men, all the other men's stories. Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (044), 2019*

- Many of the Anangu team members see the relationships with their grandsons as the key to supporting increased wellbeing and better lives for young people who, as a result, have a strong identity and family and cultural connections. Intergenerational camps have been a key mechanism for the men to apply their learnings, pass on cultural knowledge and strengthen relationships with their grandsons.
- Other Anangu team members have reported increased confidence in knowing that the way they are already supporting young people through caring relationships and teaching culture is consistent with healing from trauma. This learning has been validating that they are already making a difference. Others have reflected on the personal insights they have gained, as highlighted in the following quote:

*At the end of the day, I think we've got to get healed first... Because most of us live with it, live in it. We're living in it... And [Uti Kulintjaku] sort of opened my eyes up and it's not just about hearing the sickness, the trauma, but how to get healed... And how we can heal somebody else... I've got to heal myself, that's what I get out of this workshop. Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (047), 2019*

### 3.3 Innovative resources

- Language- and place-based resources are being developed by the Watiku team. These include a series of six posters. Each A3 poster includes a photograph of one of the Uti Kulintjaku team members engaging with a younger man through a different activity. These images tell the stories that the team members want to tell about positive ways for senior and younger Anangu men to engage and learn from each other. The posters carry an overall statement of *NYAKULA MUKURINGANYI MUNU ARKANI* which can be translated as 'If you like what you see follow my lead'. And each poster also has an individual statement in language about the particular activity.

*...the best thing about the posters too, we wrote in our language to explain what it means. Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (047), 2019*

- These strength-based resources can be used in a range of settings including by Anangu within families and communities as well as by service providers to strengthen engagement with Anangu by evoking storytelling. The resources are designed as tools to create safe ways to talk about relationships and wellbeing as well as difficult experiences, and to promote positive images of Anangu men and their nurturing and teaching of younger men and boys.

*...if I show people the poster of [Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team member] talking to these young men about how to fix a car, but he might not be talking about the car at all... they might be working on the car and they're talking about something*

*else, some other story, then, like I've got a million places to go, or the people in the room have... we can tell other stories and other people can [too].* NPYWC DFVS staff member (018), 2019

### 3.4 Violence prevention and NPYWC

- NPYWC's support to establish the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project is a significant and positive step in its almost 40 year history. It signals a shift in paradigm that brings Anangu leaders – women and men – together to create new ways to strengthen Anangu wellbeing and prevent family violence.

*[We are] building something strong. Uti Kulintjaku is a way of us trying to find that way to help those young fellas; being able to show them the right way so that they can go forward well.* Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (046), 2019

- In 2017 NPYWC collaborated with the Australian Childhood Foundation to develop its organisation-wide *Strengthening Community Capacity to End Violence* practice framework. The work of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team aligns with and complements this trauma-informed and strengths-based practice framework and is supporting NPYWC's implementation of the framework.

*I think [the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project is] working within that [practice] framework in that essentially the Uti Kulintjaku model is sort of like integrated into that... Also that people have time and space to consider alternative ways of practising or alternative stories – that is different to the general story that gets told about Aboriginal men. That's really vital... and it has to happen from a group of men. So, I think... it's sitting within the framework really well.* NPYWC DFVS staff member (018), 2019

- The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team is considering deeply the complex factors that contribute to family violence in order to identify and understand ways to prevent and reduce family violence drawing on cultural knowledge.

*I think it is always there, behind all the discussions, the men know that... the DV [domestic violence] stuff is there. I think the other side of it though is they're also trying to understand the environment out of which that DV comes... Health professional Uti Kulintjaku Team Member (013), 2019*

## 4 Key factors supporting success

- Four key factors that have supported the Project's achievements to date have been identified.

### 4.1 Uti Kulintjaku Iwara – the path to clear thinking

- The Uti Kulintjaku Iwara or way of working was developed through the Uti Kulintjaku women's Project. The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team has effectively adopted this Iwara and adapted it to support its work. The Iwara offers an innovative, safe and supportive way to learn, share ideas and take action in a complex, culturally diverse context, as highlighted in the following quote:

*[Uti Kulintjaku is] a new way... Our grandparents, that generation, didn't talk openly in quite the same way with the whitefellas as what we've been doing. So we kind of entered in to this to explain things, and talk too, teach the whitefellas about our way of life, about, right back from our ancestors' times through today, what it's like for us... We hadn't come together like that before, it was like separate and it's come in together. Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (044), 2019*

- Through this process the Anangu men can identify culturally relevant ways forward that draw on the best of Anangu cultural knowledge and Western knowledge. The Iwara has four core and inter-related components: a) thinking work; b) emotional work; c) supportive work; and d) iterative learning, reflection and evaluation. Relationships are central to the effective implementation of the Iwara and have been prioritised within the team. It is recognised that this way of working effectively supports Anangu men's engagement, leadership and learning and has the potential to be replicated.

*In our [non-Aboriginal] culture it's tricky to get men to meet together and stay meeting together, let alone in remote Aboriginal community and culture. [The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project is] pretty unique. So, somehow to convey to government, "Yeah, it's small, but this is a really unique process that potentially could be really helpful and could then be replicated." Social worker, APY Lands (042), 2019*

## 4.2 Privileging Anangu culture and language

- The Uti Kulintjaku workshops are conducted in the Anangu men's first languages of Pitjantjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra with the engagement of a skilled interpreter.

*And it's a lot different, we've got our mob speaking in language, we've got interpreters and we've got doctors coming. Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (047), 2019*

- There is a focus on taking the time to understand the translation of concepts, not only words, to support shared bi-cultural understandings. Anangu cultural knowledge is valued within the Project and the team members draw on this knowledge to identify innovative ways to respond to contemporary challenges as well as develop culturally-specific language-based resources.

*This way of drawing all the threads together is really good and bringing in all the things that are from traditional time and bringing them into the contemporary situation – if we can keep doing it in that way, that will make us strong. Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (027), 2019*

- This privileging of Anangu culture and language is consistent with the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara. It strengthens Anangu leadership of the Project and bi-cultural understandings as well as supports the recognition and vitality of Anangu culture through use of the Pitjantjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra languages.

*And obviously that commitment in the Project to saving language to saving Anangu concepts and documenting that. That's unique. That's not happening really anywhere on the [NPY] Lands anymore, in any of the fields of education or any services really, so that's a really special part of that work is honouring Anangu understandings and language and preserving language. That's been a very lovely thing to see and so important.* Social worker, APY Lands (042), 2019

### 4.3 Creativity, energy and hope

- The Project privileges creativity in its process and the development of innovative resources that build on strengths in people and culture. The bi-cultural learning process of the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara, gives energy to the Anangu and non-Aboriginal team members despite the challenging content.

*Every workshop it makes us feel good. It is the workshop that allows you to feel happy and positive. If you are not in the workshop, there is lots of negativity, people say "it's all rubbish", or "it's all your fault, you're not doing the right thing"...People are looking at who their leaders are, the people who can come together and who can help see a way through all the issues and problems to help people, that's what it's all about.* Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (045), 2019

*...as a worker, working at the coalface and seeing a lot of issues... I feel more inspired [by Uti Kulintjaku]. I'll go back to my work feeling a bit more inspired and energised about that there's hope. And so, if I'm feeling that, I'm sure the men must feel that too, because it's similar for them I think, facing that. And often for those Anangu men, they might be only part of a few men in the community that are trying to live differently and trying to be different men. So, then to come and meet with other men who also have those shared values that are strengthening, I imagine it's replenishing for those men.* Social worker, APY Lands (042), 2019

- The Project follows the energy of the Anangu men who lead the Project. The Project inspires hope that through working together and drawing on the best of Anangu and Western knowledge, Anangu can create the conditions for a better future for Anangu families. This creativity, energy and hope is critical to the Anangu men's continued leadership and development of the Project.

*...it's like the process of Uti Kulintjaku and how the waves of that has been spread to other people has got so much creativity in it. It's sort of like interlaced with creativity, creative thought, so people come up with an idea and think about it really deeply and then out of that comes all these options. It doesn't come to a dead end; it seems to grow in ideas – maybe because everyone in the room is listened to, so everyone's idea is an option and so then there's great richness in that.* NPYWC DFVS staff member (018), 2019

## 4.4 Continuity and leadership

- NPYWC has a strong track record of Anangu leadership to address complex social issues and make a difference in the lives of Anangu women and families. The organisation is held in high regard not only in the region but nationally for its stability and considerable achievements over almost 40 years. In supporting the establishment of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project, NPYWC again showed strong and ground-breaking leadership for an Aboriginal women's council to reach out to Aboriginal male leaders in the region with regard to family violence prevention.
- On a broader scale, some non-Aboriginal stakeholders who have a longer history working in Central Australia have highlighted the continuity of ideas and intention of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project and a group of senior Anangu men and women who were working in the 1990s and early 2000s through Nganampa Health's Uwankara Palyanku Kanyintjaku (UPK) (which translates as 'everybody creating and holding the future') Program. Some of the people who were involved in this project are the relatives of the members of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team.
- This continuity of leadership and action from NPYWC, and Anangu more broadly, that aligns with the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project, grounds the work of the Project in a strong history and belief in Anangu culture and knowledge, and an ability to listen, understand and think clearly to find ways forward. In a context of short-term funded program initiatives and interventions, most of which originate outside of the region and outside of Anangu culture, this continuity of leadership cannot be underestimated in terms of the strong foundations of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project it provides.

## 5 Conclusion

- The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project has:
  - Created a forum and a platform from which the Anangu men can position their voice within the dialogue relating to family violence prevention;
  - Enabled a place for consideration and learning about the complex factors and circumstances that contribute to family violence;
  - Provided a safe and creative space for the team members to think, learn, teach, express feelings and ideas and gain clarity to inform and take action; and
  - Enabled the Anangu men to develop their language around trauma and family violence prevention so that they can genuinely and effectively enter into these dialogues at a family, community, regional and national level.
- The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project is:
  - Developing a shared bi-cultural understanding of trauma, trauma behaviour, including violence, and healing from trauma;
  - Promoting positive narratives and pathways for Anangu men;

- Building on Anangu men's strengths to develop their confidence and capacity to support young people and develop healthy intergenerational relationships drawing on their cultural knowledge as well as Western knowledge; and
- Supporting the Anangu men's personal growth, emotional capacity development and healing.
- Anangu team members are aware of the learning by the non-Aboriginal team members, which contributes to their willingness to share their knowledge; they want to teach non-Aboriginal people so that there is greater understanding, respect and ability to work together. One of the Anangu team members articulated the essence of the meaning of *uti kulintjaku* – to listen, think and understand clearly:

*So [the non-Aboriginal team members have] already learnt quite a bit, and they can recognise more about us, understand more about us, and they can respect and appreciate what we say, so when they're with us in meetings then they can see, yeah, that person has got a good point, or they've spoken well. And then there's more understanding. So once they've got more of that experience in listening then they can understand what we're actually talking about.* Anangu Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team Member (044), 2019

- The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project clearly demonstrates an initiative that aligns with current national priorities and principles for family violence prevention practice in Indigenous communities. The Project is taking a long view with regard to family violence prevention; it is not an intervention, it is an Anangu-led community capacity development and resilience strengthening initiative that is aimed at sustainable, transformative change. As such, it sits within an increasing number of innovative initiatives and programs in Indigenous communities that are part of a paradigm shift; these initiatives are community-led, holistic, strengths-based, trauma-informed and grounded in Aboriginal culture and knowledge.
- The Project is showing much potential to contribute to transformative systems change in a similar way to the women's Uti Kulintjaku Project. This type of systems change is required to shift "the conditions that are holding the problem in place" (Kania et al., 2018:3). However, for the investment in the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project to date to achieve its full potential, it requires ongoing funding in the medium term. The challenge is to find funding programs that support the implementation of the current national strategies related to Indigenous family violence prevention.

## 6 References

- Kania, J., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). *The Water of Systems Change*. Washington, DC: FSG.
- Togni, S. (2018). Uti Kulintjaku Project: 2018 Evaluation Report. Alice Springs, NT: Unpublished report for NPYWC.

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