



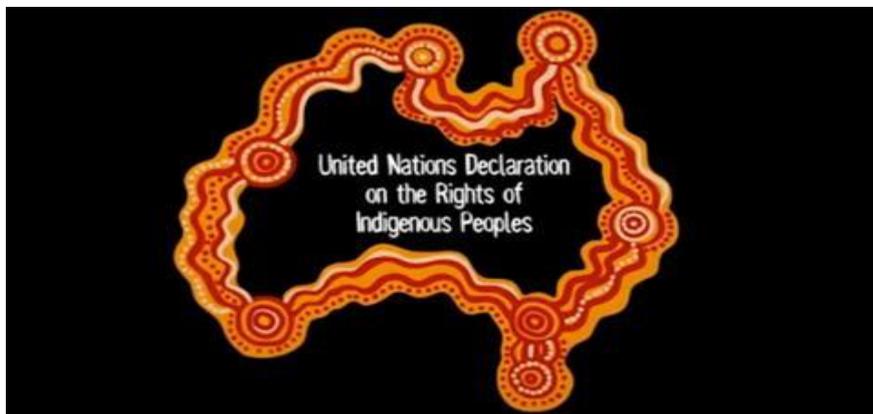
Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (Aboriginal Corporation)

NPY Women's Council - Governance Acumen

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council is an Aboriginal (Anangu) led and controlled organisation. We believe in the strength of our people, our culture, songlines, the wisdom in our languages and the collective agency of women. We continually look to women's authority, law and culture to deliver on our vision and purpose. Our vision is to see Anangu live well in both worlds and our purpose is to support all Anangu, especially women and children, to have a good life, guided by culture and sound governance, through the collective agency of women.

NPY Women's Council's governance framework and the rights of Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara women exist alongside of, and are connected to, the rights of other Indigenous peoples in Australia and around the world. The rights of Anangu Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara existed before any formal recognition by any government in Australia. Our sovereignty has always existed and it has never stopped. It is in the land we have walked for thousands of years and it is in the heavens above us. The Lands of Anangu Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara always was, is and will be Aboriginal land.

Respectfully, NPY Women's Council acknowledges the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007, as a benchmark for communities to embrace in Australia.



NPY Women's Council acknowledges, and draws attention to, the Australian Government's formal statement of support for the Declaration on 3 April 2009. We give particular note to Article 3 as it expresses our rights to our identity and governance:

“Indigenous people have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”¹

¹ United Nations. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
<https://undocs.org/A/RES/61/295>

NPYWC Governance Acumen



People looking at NPY Women’s Council from the outside, often wonder how our reputation in governance, leadership and women’s authority has stayed strong for nearly forty years. The above diagram, titled “Governance Acumen”, explains the three areas that drive the governance of NPY Women’s Council and how each staff member, member and director contributes to keep the governance of NPY Women’s Council strong.

To understand our Governance Acumen, it is important to understand the word “acumen”. Acumen, is defined as the ability to make good judgements and take quick decisions. A person with good and sound judgement can have a reputation of being clever, wise and thoughtful.

The Council has as an over-arching framework (Governance Acumen) consisting of three parts:

1. Business acumen

What knowledge is necessary to provide good **business acumen**? An understanding of the following would be a good start: policies and procedures, practice frameworks, technology and areas of laws including the NPY Women’s Council Rulebook. These documents and tools are core to the **business** of NPY Women’s Council.

Staff and directors demonstrate their understanding of these documents and tools in their performance of everyday responsibilities and tasks; demonstrating their **business acumen** by delivering a project on time and within budget, managing conflicts of interest, managing confidentiality, managing compliance and risk or by investing money wisely in projects that support the organisation and the NPY region.

2. Cultural acumen

What knowledge is necessary to provide good **cultural acumen**? In this instance, the **culture** being referred to is Anangu Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara culture; this is the community and peoples we work for, within and alongside. A good understanding of Anangu NPY culture by staff, directors and members is critical if the organisation is to have strong governance.

Having cultural acumen is important as it helps us to work *with* our clients and partners, not *for* our clients and partners.

Cultural acumen can offer staff and directors a much richer understanding of the world in which we live and work. Some examples of cultural acumen knowledge in the NPY region include: understanding the inherent rights of Indigenous people; understanding how authority and qualifications work in Anangu culture; understanding the foundations of Anangu society and knowing what are offences and how to avoid them. Cultural acumen stretches from staff starting, implementing and finishing a project well, to demonstrating good manners such as displaying the right conduct during funerals or when entering a camp or a person's home for the first time.

3. Leadership acumen

When staff and directors understand and demonstrate business acumen and cultural acumen tjungu (together), **Leadership acumen** is understood and flourishes. It is the experience of NPY Women's Council that this style of leadership has the power to deliver life-changing good in our communities. We have also found that this style of leadership is one that comes from using your head and your heart.

4. Self

Sitting in the centre of cultural acumen, business acumen and leadership acumen is self. Self is me and self is you. Self comes into NPY Women's Council with knowledge in all of these areas. Some staff and directors start with substantive knowledge across these three areas. Others start with significant knowledge in one area and little knowledge in others. And some start at the very beginning with small amounts of knowledge across these three areas.

Staff and directors are on different learning and development journeys. We may be at different stages however, the common ground we share is our drive to learn and grow so that we can be effective in our roles and have the opportunity to enable Anangu, especially NPY women, to have greater control in their lives, families and communities.

At NPY Women's Council, we aspire to create a learning and development environment where each of these three areas can be understood and then actioned.

We have this interest for directors and staff, because we want everyone to demonstrate our style of governance acumen and to work well in both worlds.

Here are two examples from our organisations history, explaining the synergy of cultural acumen and business acumen, you will read how this synergy helped Women’s Council to begin significant reforms in our region.

EXAMPLE 1.

An example of business and cultural acumen converging and resulting in good leadership acumen was in 1994 when Jane Lloyd (who eventually became the first manager of the DV Service) asked Anangu women for advice about the name to use for this newly created domestic violence support program. This was before the official launch of the DV Service and the Council were running a two-year pilot. Jane had come up with the name “*By Way of the Law*” because this service was to help women from the NPY region access protection through Australian law. Kunbry Peipei, a senior woman from the NPY region, and co-worker with Jane during these early years said no to this title, as she knew it would cause offence within the community. Instead, Kunbry suggested another name, “*Atunypa Wiru Minyma Uwankaraku*”, meaning, *Good Protection for all Women*. When Jane heard the name, she immediately accepted and recognised the logic and vision in Kunbry’s suggestion. She also acknowledged she was building the basis of a trusting, honest and respectful working relationship with Kunbry and she with her. Kunbry’s suggestion was agreed by the women, and as a result, Jane and Kunbry were able to confidently commence advocating for this new service under the title “*Good Protection for All Women*”.

EXAMPLE 2.

Another example of business and cultural acumen converging and resulting in good leadership acumen was in 2012. At the time, a number of senior women were becoming increasingly concerned about the level of mental health issues in their communities. They were worried about family members being admitted to hospital because of mental health issues and about suicide and suicide attempts in their communities. The women wanted answers to why these issues were happening and they wanted support to reduce these harms and issues in the NPY region. The women were encouraged to talk to mental health doctors who opened their understanding of the underlying psychological forces that drive human behaviour.

The women eager to understand these concepts translated many of these English concepts into language. One of the words the women learned about was trauma and how it can affect people lives. This interest to learn and understand from the mental health doctors and the doctors interest to understand Anangu understanding of human behaviour were the beginnings of the project we know today as Uti Kulintjaku – which translates from Pitjantjatjara as ‘to listen and understand clearly’. Interestingly, there is no word for trauma in Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara or Ngaanyatjarra language. This word stands in its own meaning.