



Message to all NPY Women and other interested organisations and individuals regarding the Songlines Project (Alive with the Dreaming! Songlines of the Western Desert)

Background

This project came about because Anangu decided they wanted to record the story, song and art of two stories Ngintaka and Kunkarangkalpa and take their children along the track of these ancestor creation beings who made the waterholes, hills and foods of their lands. Angatja community has already recorded parts of the Ngintaka song, dance and story on CD and films made with CAAMA over fifteen years ago. Anangu people across the Lands now want to record the story from Yankunytjatjarra, Pitjantjatjarra and Ngaanyatjarra people.

Ananguku Arts, the regional organisation of artists across the APY Lands, decided at a meeting in 2008 to ask the Arts Board for funding to support a project to record these creation stories and put on a major national exhibition of Anangu artwork about these stories. They could not get enough funding to do such a big project that included funding for bush trips to take families along the creation tracks, recording songs, dances and making films and a book about their stories for their children. So they asked Dr Diana James at the Australian National University (ANU) to help them find funding for the whole project to make sure Anangu had enough time to consult with all traditional owners and that the younger generation could participate in all the trips and recordings.

The Board of Ananguku Arts in consultation with their members across the APY Lands have been working with Diana to find money for this project since 2008. Together they approached the South Australian Museum (NMA), Ara Irititja, the NPY Women's Council, the Australian National University, the Australian National Museum, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC), APY Council, Ngaanyatjarra land &

culture, Central Land Council and the Martu organisation Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa. All of these organisations support the Project and some have decided to put in money, staff and vehicles for the trips, resources for recording information, putting on the exhibitions and the archiving of images, film and information with Ara Irititja.

They decided to call it the Songlines Project, because the women from NPYWC wanted to follow and record not only the Ngintaka story but also the Kungkarangkalpa creation track that travels across many people's country including the Martu of WA. The NPYWC welcomed two Martu ladies Doris Eaton and Evelyn Mitchell who travelled all the way from Port Hedland to talk about the Songlines Project at the recent NPYWC meeting at the Cave Hill on 18th April 2012. The Martu women are very pleased to be joining the NPY women to record this shared creation story of the Seven Sisters.

In 2010 a meeting of supporting organisations was held in Canberra for three days at the Research School of the Humanities and the Arts at ANU to discuss the application for funding the Songlines Project. Representatives of the NPYWC were there, Rene Kulitja and Jo Foster from Tjanpi Weavers, also all the Board of Ananguku Arts, two DESART Art Centre managers, SEWPaC, Ngaanyatjarra Land & Culture, the NMA and the ANU. They all agreed for the application for research funding to be submitted.

In 2011 the Songlines Project Partners were successful in gaining an Australia Council research grant for travelling and recording these two creation stories over four years. The Partners then took the Project Contract back to discuss with their members and to get legal advice regarding appropriate protection for indigenous intellectual property. This consultation took ten months before all parties were happy to sign the Contract with ANU as the administering organisation.

The project can now start in 2012 and will go till the end of 2015.

Discussions with NPY Women

Discussions were first held at an NPYWC Annual General Meeting in 2000 about recording Kungkarangkalpa (the Seven Sisters Dreaming). Mantajara Wilson, Nellie Armunda and Diana James requested approval to seek funding for the filming and recording of this creation song cycle across the NPY Lands. The Kungkarangkalpa custodians of Cave Hill had been asking for their song, story and dance to be recorded on film for a long time. The NPYWC unanimously approved their request. Unfortunately the collaborative were not successful in gaining funding for this Project at that time.

So when Ananguku Arts decided in 2008 to find funding for the Songlines Project for both the Ngintaka and Kungkarangkalpa creation story recording they approached the NPYWC for support. At the General Meeting held in September 2010, Dr Diana James from the Australian National University came and spoke to minyma tjuta about the idea of starting a project called the Songlines Project. She explained that this Project was to follow two important songlines the Ngintaka track from APY lands to Blackstone and secondly the Seven Sisters Songline through the Western Desert Lands in the NT, SA and WA. She said that this project would only go ahead with the support and consent of Anangu. At that meeting Women's Council members stated in-principle support for the project. In offering their support the women said that contracts had to protect the intellectual property of these two Songlines to protect the knowledge Anangu would share, this meant seeking out separate permissions from owners and NPYWC sought representation on the research management committee. NPY Women's Council members in 2010 agreed that we should be involved, that we should do it for the children and for generations to come. It is a project that will preserve the stories, the story will be performed, inma performed and recorded for future generations. They were also clear that only people who had ownership regarding the various sites along these songlines could speak to researchers.

Diana listened to these conditions and built into the project protection for Anangu regarding intellectual property and their control of what and how information from these Songlines are shared. Importantly an Elders Consultative Committee is built into the contract to ensure that knowledge and sites owned by Anangu are protected and not taken advantage of in any way intentionally or unintentionally without the informed consent of Anangu as a collective, as family groups and as individual custodians. Members of the Elders Consultative Committee are all Anangu and Martu nominated representatives of their country along the Songline tracks. The members are from APY Council's Law and Culture Committee, Ananguku Arts and Cultural Aboriginal Corporation; Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa; NPY Women's Council - Tjanpi Weavers; Ngaanyatjarra Council - Land and Culture Management; Martu and Pilbara people and Katiti Lands members of the Central Land Council. The Elders Consultative Committee has general oversight of the conduct of the Project, including to discuss and determine matters relating to the conduct, content and scope of the Project. All project partners, including non-Aboriginal people, must take their advice from this Committee.

Important documents in the project such as consent forms are written in English and Pitjantjatjara and these forms are being explained to people before they consider their level of involvement in the project.

This week and until the end of May, the Director of Ananguku Arts Milyika Carroll and the Songlines Project Officer Marita Baker, project coordinator Diana James and others in the research project team are talking to families and communities about this project to explain the purpose of the project, what it aims to achieve and how information gathered in the project will be told to other Australians in other places outside of the Lands. At every stage Anangu are leading this discussion and any disclosures. If Women's Council members or others in the Lands would like a copy of the itinerary for these consultations please contact APY in Umuwa.

Milyika Carroll, Marita Baker, Rene Kulitja and Diana also attended and presented information concerning the Songlines Project at NPYWC's General Meeting a couple of weeks ago. It is true to say that there are some NPY Women's Council members who have concerns about the project, a number of women spoke up strongly at the recent General Meeting held at Cave Hill Homeland. This is not a surprise because these Songlines are very important to each of these women and to all NPY women. The concerns raised only confirm the special place these songlines hold to each woman. The project officers Marita and Diana understand this and this is why they are going back if necessary and explaining the project at family meetings, community meetings and with the Elders Consultative Committee members so that Anangu are fully informed about intellectual property and consent and how the public information of these songlines will be used to promote Anangu culture.

Everyone in the project has as its paramount concern the intergenerational transfer of Anangu culture for our grandchildren and to share these important Songlines with others so that they can have a better understanding of Anangu culture today and in generations to come.

If any member of NPY Women's Council wishes to talk to me about this project or would like to speak to Diana direct, please contact me by phone 89582319 or NPY Women's Council reception on 89582345.

Palya



Andrea Mason
Co-ordinator
NPY Women's Council
10th May 2012