

# Tjukurpa Nganampa Wanantjaku Follow Our Story

A guide for researchers working with  
Anangu in the Ngaanyatjarra  
Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands.





**Ngaanyatjarra  
Pitjantjatjara  
Yankunytjatjara  
Women's Council**

Warning: This document contains images and/ or the names of people who have passed as well as information that could be regarded as culturally sensitive. NPY Women's Council pays respect to all Angu, past and present.

**Pitjantjatjara translations  
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# Table of Contents

<b>Introducing Iwara Wanala</b>	<b>04</b>
.....	
<b>Purpose of Guide</b>	<b>06</b>
.....	
<b>Working With Us</b>	<b>13</b>
Language	
Deep Listening / Big Listening	
Silence & Eye Contact	
Direct Questioning	
Ceremonial Business	
Sorry Business	
Kinship Systems & Social Structures	
.....	
<b>Payment Story</b>	<b>19</b>
.....	
<b>Ethics Approval</b>	<b>20</b>
.....	
<b>Data Sovereignty &amp; Custodianship</b>	<b>21</b>
.....	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>22</b>
.....	
<b>References</b>	<b>23</b>

## Glossary of terms

**Tjukurpa Nganampa Wanantjaku:** Follow our story

**Iwara Wanala:** Follow the road/ path

**NPYWC:** Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara  
Women's Council

**Malpa:** Friend (relational term that is reciprocal)

**Malparara:** Alongside a friend or colleague

# Introducing Iwara Wanala: Following the road/path

**“Anangu kutjara mara witara tjungu pula wanala nganampa tjukurpa. Panya ngayulu ngayuku kamiwanu nintiringu mununa ngapartjingu nintini malatja-malatja tjuta. Anangu munu Piranpangu mara witira tjungungku iwara palya nintilpai tjana kuranyukutu nyakunytjaku.”**

**“Nganampa iwarangka ankunytja kuwaripangka Anangu tjuta tjapinma. Research team-wanu tjapinma kaya ngananalakutu pitjaku. Anangu tjuta ninti kimitiku ara uwankaraku. Nganananta wirura witu-witulku NPY staff tjutangku tjungungku. Kala nyuntumpa nintiringkula nganampa tjukurpa tjutala rapangu tjakultjura pirukunta altiku tjungu waakarinytjaku.”**

“To follow our story means two-person walking together and holding hands. Like the way I learned from my grandmother, and I now learn for the second generation. Anangu and non-Indigenous people hold hands so we can show them the future ahead and look ahead to a good future...”

“...Ask Anangu first before you come on our road, before you take our track. First come through the research team then they will come to us. Anangu know everyone in community. We will encourage you and lead you with the help of NPY staff. If we know you use our stories for stronger future you come back and share with us, come back and work again.”

*- Mrs Smith, NPYWC Chairperson*

Research for Anangu is about...

**listening** for hope  
**learning** for better future  
**doing** things our way

Research iwara wanala, to follow the road/path, is to give back to community or support community directly through donations from research.

Anangu need you to remember:

**“Anangu uwankarangka wangkama, Anangu mankur-mankur kutju wiya ka kulinmaya, nganana free-ngku tjukurpa tjuta tjakultjunkupai wiya. Anangu tjuta panya mularingkupai waaka pulkaku kan ngapartji mularingkula malpa mularingkunytjaku nganampa.”**

“Speak to everyone in community, not just who you think you should speak to. And remember, no information is free.

Anangu serious you know. We need you to believe us, trust us and be a Malpa (friend/ companion) for us.”

- NPYWC Director

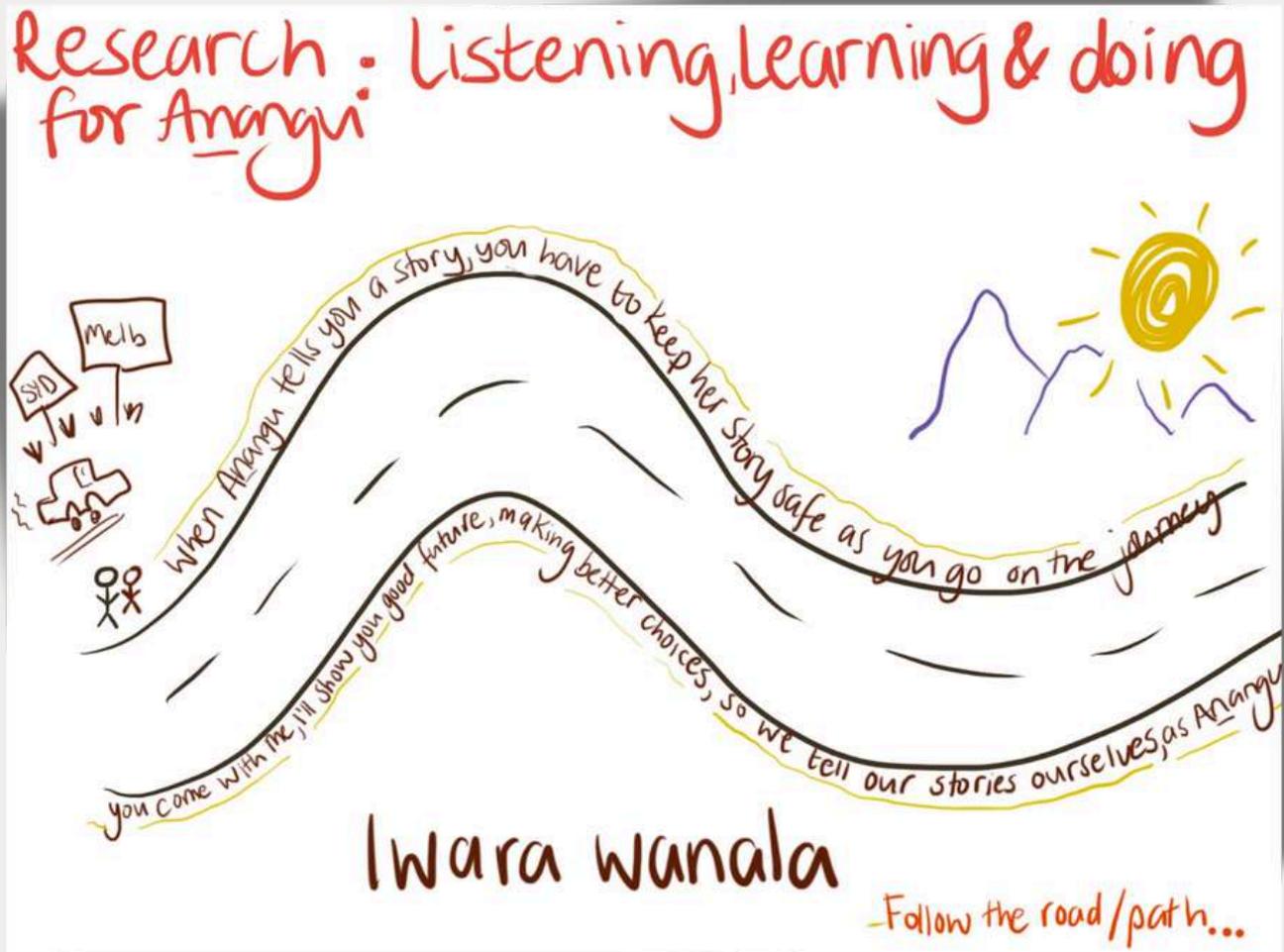


Image created by Margaret Smith, NPYWC Chairperson and Azaria Foster, NPYWC Director, with support from Research and Policy team at NPYWC.

# Purpose of Guide

In line with NPY Women's Council's Guiding Principles, our aim is to see NPYWC become a preferred research partner with more opportunity to lead research topics and shift the national research agenda towards a focus on decolonising research through centring Indigenous Methodologies and Indigenous data sovereignty. Through an Anangu-led voice and through prioritising Anangu agency, research is a way we can turn stories into meaningful data to guide the way NPYWC supports communities across the lands.

**Kututu mukulyangku**  
Kind-hearted

**Kalypangku**  
Conciliatory

**Ngapartji ngapartjiku  
kulira iwara wananma  
tjugarurungku**

Respect each other  
and follow the law straight

**Kunpungku**  
Strong

**Tjungungku**  
United

**Piluntjungku**  
Peaceful and calm

The following guide is reflective of NPY Women's Council's Guiding Principles outlined above.

Co-created and approved by our board of Directors and our Research and Policy team, Tjukurpa Nganampa Wanantjaku is intended as a best practice guide to working alongside NPY Women's Council and Anangu in the NPY lands. The name of the research guide Tjukurpa Nganampa Wanantjaku, is in Pitjantjatjara, however we acknowledge that communities across the NPY Lands also speak Ngaanyatjarra and Yankunytjatjara, along with other languages.

Tjukurpa Nganampa Wanantjaku is grounded in the information outlined in the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023

and their Ethical Guidelines for Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2018.

In addition, this document is supported by information outlined in the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research 2020.

**If satisfied that your research proposal meets the criteria outlined in this document, please fill out an EOI form on our website and/or contact [research@npywc.org.au](mailto:research@npywc.org.au) for further information or if you require additional accessibility support to complete the form.**

## A Brief History

Our first models of research were articulated in 1992 by (the late) Mrs. T. Colin from Pukatja (Ernabella) community in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in South Australia. The three key elements in the process are **kulilkatinyi**, **nyakukatinyi** and **palyalkatinyi**.



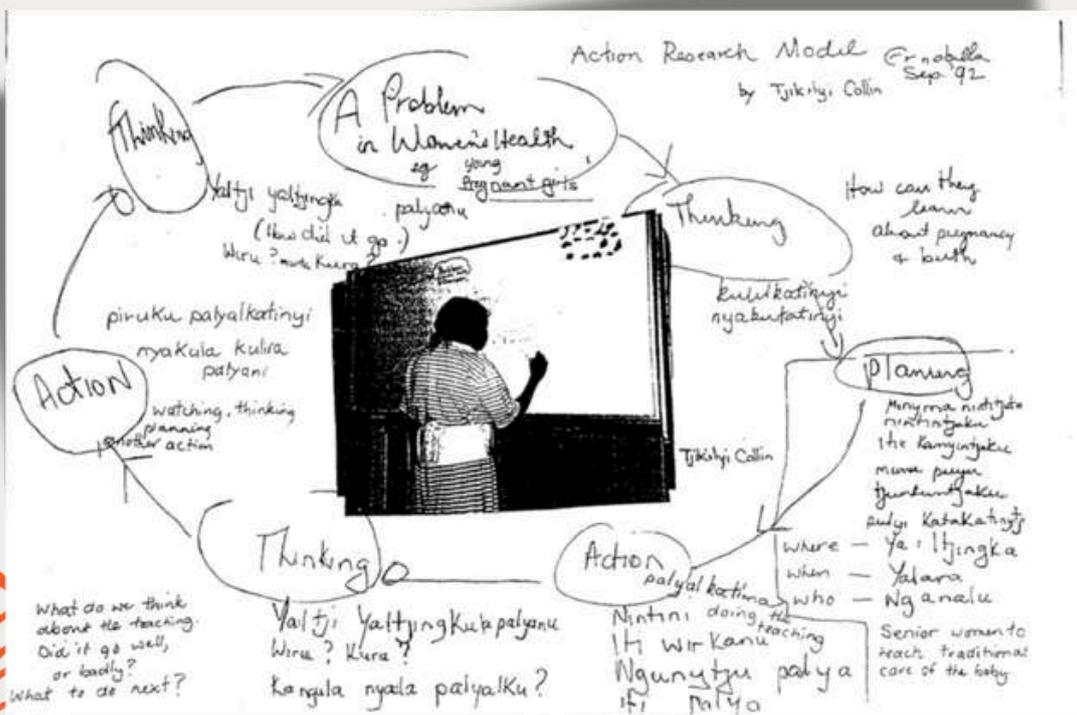
**“Stories go in circles. They don’t go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories.”**

- Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony* (2008)

This process, also documented below, is based on Mrs T Colin and Anne Garrow’s work evaluating the Mai Wiru Project that was supported by Nganampa Health from 1992. The central image includes Mrs Colin working on the Anangu interpretation of the action research model in Pukatja with Anne Garrow and action research practitioner Yolande Wadsworth.

We encourage researchers to deeply consider this when designing their research, collecting and analysing their data, and to challenge Western modes of thinking by preserving story lines created during the research process. In doing so, researchers will avoid undermining the position and power of Indigenous voices.

This is doing research our way, **Tjukurpa Nganampa Wanantjaku**. Following our story.



# Follow our path into research.

NPY Women's Council insists on privileging Anangu perspectives on knowing, being and doing. This has incredibly powerful outcomes beyond the realm of academia. The process of deep listening, hearing and sharing stories in culturally safe, trauma-informed spaces opens valuable opportunities for healing, change and transformation.

We work Malparara Way, a cross-cultural practice framework developed in the 1990s and specific to our organisation. We invite researchers who are interested to collaborate with us to consider how working Malparara Way will enrich their learning experience and create opportunities for meaningful engagement.

**Malparara** translates to 'alongside a friend or colleague' in Pitjantjatjara and reflects a two way, or both ways, working model that **celebrates and maximises skills and knowledge.**

Before engaging in research, the following questions should be considered:

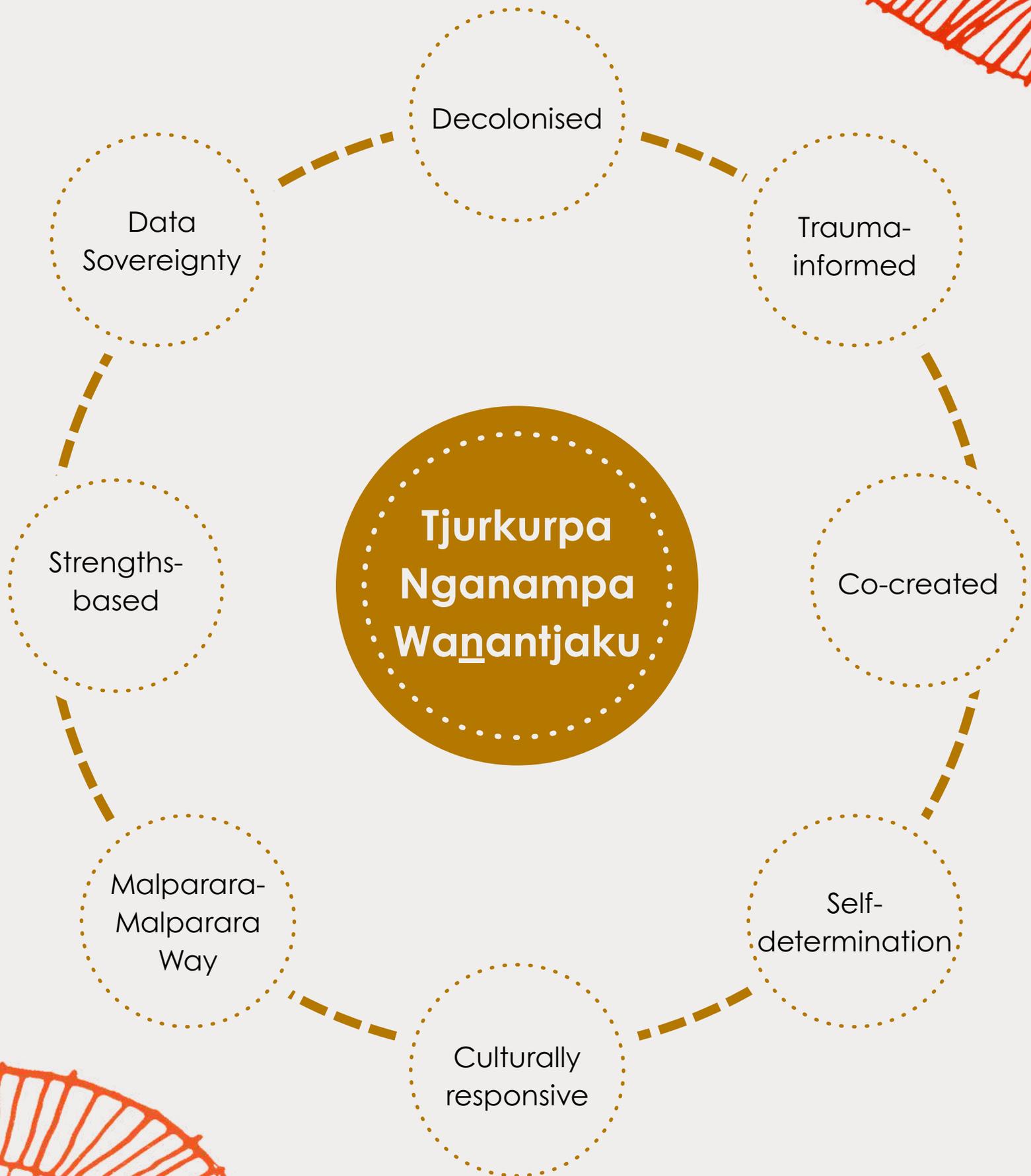
How does the research support an anti-racist framework and address systemic racism?

How does the research actively centre Anangu?

How does the research prevent further harm/trauma?

Is the language of your research focus strengths-based?

These questions and related concepts are explored below. It is important to note that research with the sole intention to raise awareness about a social issue without addressing the lack of agency communities may have in taking the research further, are unlikely to be considered.



# Key Components of Tjukurpa Nganampa Wanantjaku

## Decolonised

Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Nakata, 2007) is essential as it centres First Nations knowledges whilst challenging Western epistemologies, creating a unique standpoint. This standpoint offers Arlathirnda Ngurkarnda Ityirnda (Being-Knowing-Doing) (Arbon, 2008) that critiques and expands dominant ideologies of research that extract and control. This includes Eurocentric language that both describes and enacts colonised definitions of research that are simultaneously diffusive and distorting of Indigenous realities (Battiste, 1996). Recognising Indigenous research as a distinctive methodology and form of enquiry is therefore essential to overcome politicised associations with research in Indigenous contexts (Kovach, 2009), as well as population control.

## Trauma-informed

Moving towards sustainable knowledge systems that are not objective and observed but sentient and self-observing (Yunkaporta, 2019) creates pathways for research to centre communities and follow Indigenous methodologies that surpass Western research models. Through a different narrative that makes space for metaphor, kinship, dreams and identifying patterns in systems, holistic methodologies

that find solutions to complex problems (Yunkaporta, 2019), can be prioritized. Indigenous methodologies cannot therefore exist without a foundational understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems, so care to focus research on community priorities including justice, is paramount to ensure Indigenous methodologies are not merely Western methodologies with an Indigenous label (Kovach, 2009).

## Co-created

Developing a team of community co-researchers that are involved through all phases of the research design, analysis, evaluation, data collection (Dudgeon et al, 2020) ensures that research remains Anangu-led throughout the process. Co-creation of research is different to co-design as Anangu are not just involved in the initial discussions of research but are consulted at all stages of the research process.

## Self-determination

Reporting and dissemination of findings contributes to a strengths-based approach that promotes self-determination within a social and emotional wellbeing framework of Indigenous cultural safety (Dudgeon et al, 2020). This approach co-constructs narratives and avoids silencing or distorting community voices (Madison, 2008).

# Key Components of Tjukurpa Nganampa Wanantjaku

## Culturally responsive

Researcher and research must continuously reflect on interpersonal relationships of power as well as structural power dynamics, to ensure the research is upholding cultural respect and understanding and prioritising the needs of Anangu. Responding to the needs of Anangu throughout the process allows for research flexibility and for Anangu to exit a research process if they wish.

## Malparara-Malparara Way

NPY Women's Council specific way of non-Indigenous staff or researchers working alongside an Anangu friend or colleague in a culturally safe way. This supports our organisational vision of all Anangu living well in both worlds, which is only possible when Anangu are included in wider conversations.

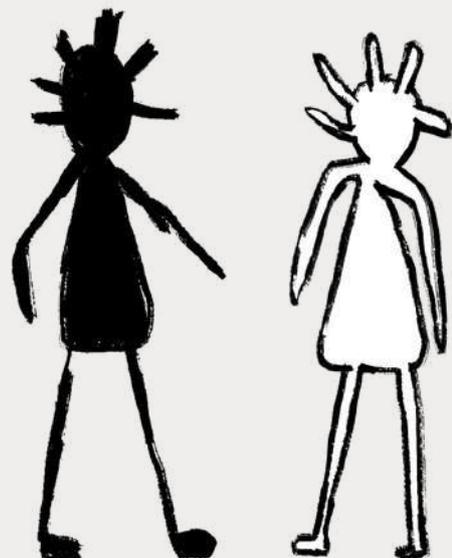
## Strengths-based

Strength through decolonisation can be achieved when communities are given the tools to 'speak back' and 'speak beyond' deficit-based paradigms, platforming Indigenous worldviews and enhancing interconnectedness of knowledges (Fogerty et al, 2018). Moving away from deficits and problem-based research whereby First Nations Peoples have

been "researched to death" (Blair 2016) is essential for upholding the agency of Anangu in decision making about research within their communities.

## Data Sovereignty

Detailing who will have access to data, where the data will be stored, in what manner and for how long the data will be stored for is essential for communities to remain in control of their stories, power and agency. This must be done in language where possible with the support of a translator or community member who can inform their community.



# Working With Us

NPY Women's Council values research that works to engage individuals, groups and communities in critical and sensitive dialogue which makes visible the pervasive social and historical stories that limit the definitions of what is deemed as true and untrue, real and not real, worthy and not worthy. This process requires that everyone involved in research finds a shared language to negotiate how meaning is prescribed to experience; an important element of working effectively with Anangu in their community. The following information is provided to give context to working with us in the NPY Lands and Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and for potential researchers to gain further understanding of the different priorities and approaches of living Anangu Way.

Communication and building relationships are at the core of working with us. Below are some important things to consider when fostering these relationships while working with participants and communities in a research capacity.

## LANGUAGE

Critically engaging with language is a core principle that highlights the centrality of language in shaping and re-shaping the scope of dialogue. Researchers are encouraged to listen deeply to the language of the community, and ways in which Anangu communicate what is important to them. This can include song, music, art, dance and other forms of performances.

For most Anangu, English is a second, third or even fourth language. For this reason, it's important that efforts are made to utilise a formal interpreter when undertaking research. There are times that this may not always be possible, and when situations where an interpreter are not available arise, the importance of working Malparara way is especially highlighted.

Working with NPY Women's Council staff and the community directly can guide you in this process, and advise whether or not to pause research if an interpreter or alternative local solution is not available.

When thinking about language it is essential that researchers understand that the deficit sits with them and their inability to speak the local language whether it be Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara or Yankunytjatjara. The expectation should therefore not be on Anangu to understand research concepts in English and via a Westernised framework only.

To assist researchers with this, a common phrases in Pitjantjatjara document can be found [here](#).

# SILENCE & EYE CONTACT

Anangu may use silence to allow others to speak first or use the silence to avoid situations that are uncomfortable. If you find yourself in a situation where someone is not engaging, be patient and perhaps avoid eye contact to allow them to take the necessary time they need to respond. Anangu may pause for comparatively long periods and will give others time to speak. If you are hoping for a reply, allow more time and wait for the reply, looking politely away from the face of the person you are talking to. Don't expect or try to maintain eye contact.

Anangu may prefer not to say 'no' and many will either say nothing or absent themselves physically to avoid feeling pressured. Anangu may also communicate in softer tones for more significant contributions that may hold deeper meaning to them. If you are unsure about engagement, always seek advice and guidance from your malpa who will be travelling and working with you in community.



# DEEP LISTENING / BIG LISTENING

“Deep listening” or “Double listening” is a process which attends to and acknowledges both a problem story and its impact in the lives of the community, as well as to the stories of courage, challenges, defiance and opposition present in people’s lives.

Researchers should sensitively listen without judgement regarding the experiences that individuals want to share about their lives.

The process of deep listening continues to source stories that contribute to community resilience. The focus should be on whole of community values that include but are not limited to trust, hope, respect and care. Telling and retelling stories at an individual, group and community level can be transformational for communities if these cultural processes are sustained by external researchers and create spaces for narratives of healing. Through pathways of curiosity that include being open to understandings of metaphor, Tjukurpa and spirit, it is possible for research to expand opportunities for social justice and genuine community change for Anangu.

Furthermore, engaging beyond deep listening to big listening, is a process identified by NPY Women’s Council directors as listening to the bigger picture systemic issues and responding to them in ways that directly benefit community.

Big listening is therefore finding ways to follow the story whilst simultaneously responding to the needs of community and following up research with the intention of actions that benefit the community. For example, research when shared back with community in an accessible format can then be used to directly influence policy, creating spaces for self-advocacy and culturally appropriate pathways to socioeconomic inclusion.

**“Pulkara kulinma  
nganana alpaku  
tjapinnyangka.”**

**“Notice when we are  
asking for help and do  
big listening.”**

– Mrs Smith, NPYWC Chairperson

# DIRECT QUESTIONING

Direct questions can be very confronting in Anangu culture and it's common that researchers may need to use a more indirect method to seek information. Simple questions like 'What is your name?' ('Ngananya Nyuntu?') may be a normal thing to ask in Western culture however it is not always appropriate to ask when first meeting someone who is Anangu.

Discuss with NPY Women's Council staff and your malpa who you intend to be working with. This information can be passed on to Directors along with any specific questions you may wish to ask them requiring approval.

**“Nyuntu kiminitikutu wirkara NPY staff-wanungku walytjangku introduce-amilanma kaya ngapartjingu nganananya wangkaku. Iniwai tjuwangka tjarpara watarku para-tjapintja wiyangu wantima. NPY staff tjutangka tjungu waakarira purkarangu waaka nyuntumpa palyalkatima.”**

*-NPYWC Director*

“When you come to community, introduce yourself through NPY staff, and they will introduce us.

Don't go into shop asking everyone their name, make sure you work with NPY staff to build trust then ask questions.”

# CEREMONIAL BUSINESS

Ceremonial business is extremely important and must be respected. It is not appropriate to press Anangu for details about ceremonial business. The period of business is generally between November- February each year. However, many other unexpected situations can arise any time of year.

It is important to be mindful that some ceremonial practices can require travelling long distances and can also take extended periods of time. It is extremely important that this must be understood and respected. Sometimes roads may be closed, or communities are off-limits during this time.

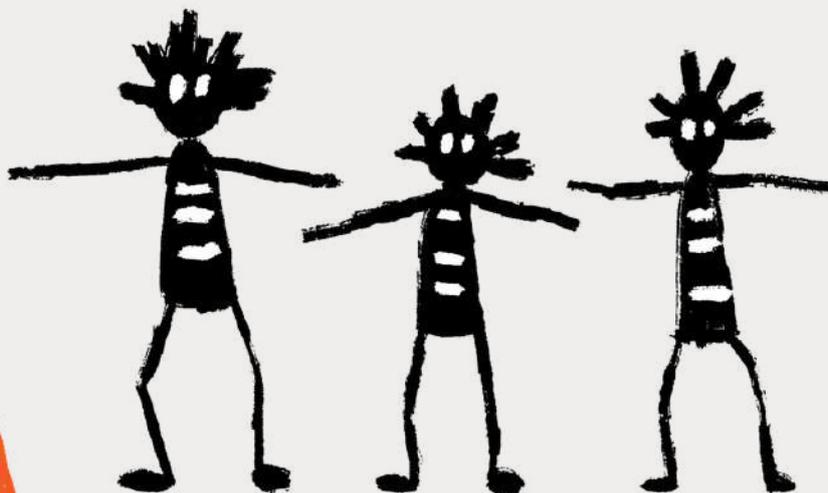
Attend only if you are invited and follow directions provided by NPY Women's Council.

# SORRY BUSINESS

'Sorry Business' is a term used to describe the process of mourning when a death in community occurs. It is extremely important business for family members and members of the community. There is a strong possibility due to the large extended family networks in the NPY region that while visiting the Lands, a death may occur.

There are particular sensitivities that must be observed when a death occurs. Using the name of someone who is recently deceased is highly inappropriate and disrespectful. If someone has the same name as the person who passed away, or a similar name, their name will also no longer be spoken, and they may be known as 'Kunmanara' or given another name.

Furthermore, broadcasting the voice or using photographs of a person who has passed away is also highly inappropriate. If a woman you are working with has cut their hair during this time, it is also not appropriate to comment on this change during a grieving process.



# KINSHIP & SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Family is the cornerstone of Aᑎangu culture. It is the set of relationships which transcend through the lifespan of Aᑎangu, giving birth to identity, knowledge, roles and ultimately, social meaning.

The Aᑎangu kinship system is what defines who can get married, ceremonial relationships, funeral roles, social structures and how specific people can interact. There are strict relationship restrictions between certain people within a group, for example, that must be understood and respected as kinship roles which also determine how individuals behave and relate to one another. It is important for researchers to be aware of particular sensitivities regarding gender, including who it is appropriate to talk to and what it is appropriate to discuss. If you are unsure, a reminder to continue to seek advice from your malpa.



# Payment Story

There is a direct benefit to communities participating in research, from basic remuneration for food and materials, through to payment, housing or employment opportunities. All research must seek to remunerate Anangu for their time, particularly for lived experience and participation, on a consistent basis, including but not limited to activities such as:

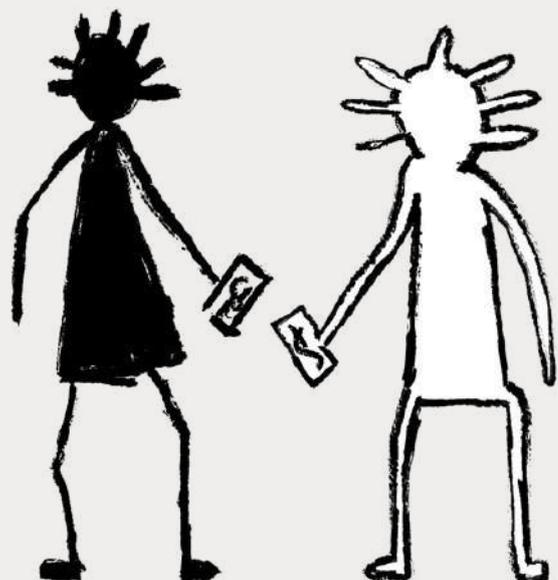
Remuneration for speaking with media outlets

Remuneration for being employed or within a research team

Additional remuneration for Anangu staff and support workers when participating in research outside their role or working hours at NPYWC

Costs for interpreting services should be budgeted by the researcher or their research institution, including payment for time and translation of materials, project management costs including indirect costs and overheads, and general consumables that may be required for community consultations.

**NPY Women's Council expects that Anangu will be provided payment for any stories or ideas shared with researchers. This includes where different participants enter the research process at different times due to personal commitments, all participants must be compensated financially.**



# Ethics Approval

Research ethics approval processes for Central Australia can be intricate due to the nature of working across a tri-state region and with Anangu in their specific cultural context. Typically, a researcher will be required to seek and obtain ethics approval from their institutional Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). If the research takes place across multiple states or territories, multiple ethics approvals will need to be obtained for each region. As well as consulting with the board of directors, NPY Women's Council may also engage with external agencies such as the AHREC, NTHREC and WAAHEC, to help decide whether a research proposal meets ethical standards.

All research must in the first instance aim to do no harm to participants and communities. Working with Anangu requires an awareness of the deep and critical need to give back to community and understand that consent in participation is an ongoing process and can be withdrawn at any time. Please refer to NPY Women's Council's Media & Communications Policy for more information regarding consent, available on our website.

**The core values and principles of Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities (NHRMC, 2018):**

**Survival & Protection**

**Respect**

**Responsibility**

**Equality**

**Reciprocity**

**Spirit & Integrity**

# Data Sovereignty & Custodianship

Data sovereignty is key to ensuring a systems approach that is responsive to community needs and self-determination. This may look like:

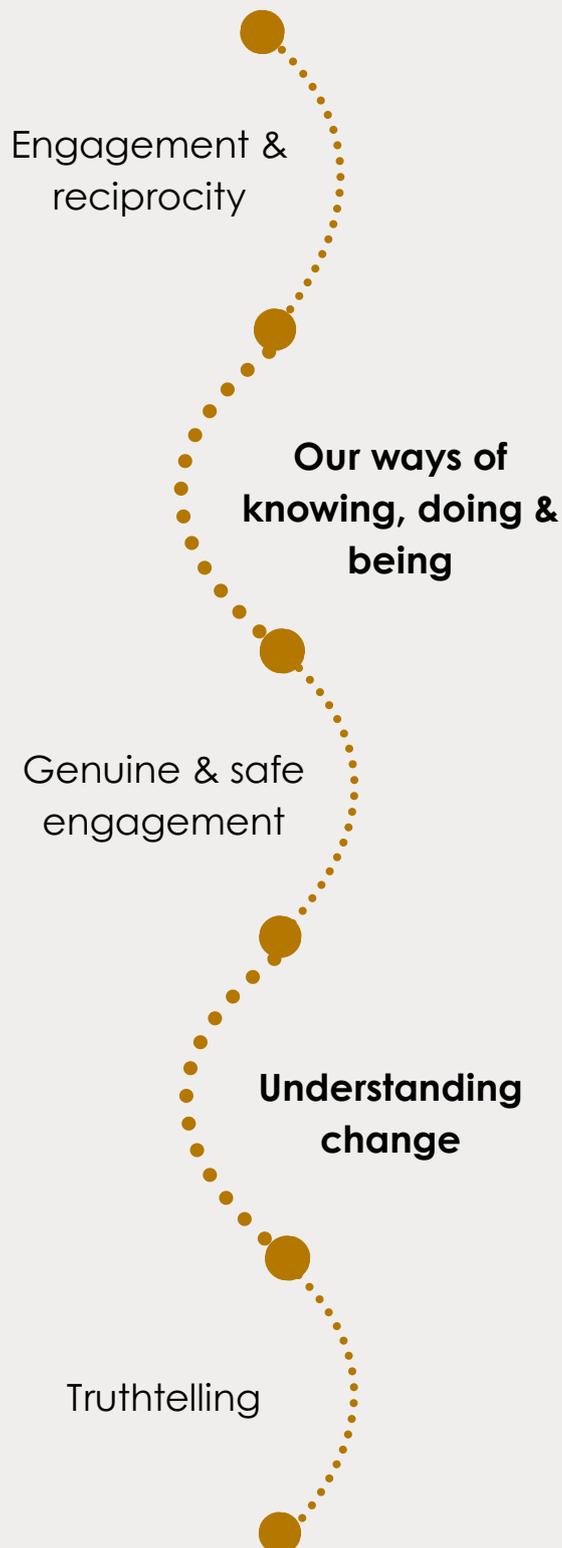
Our lives, stories, knowledges, paintings and artefacts are our living data

We own, control and can use our data for purposes determined by us

We use our methods of evaluation to analyse data; to decide the change we want to see in our lives

We determine collective priorities based on our data and collaborate with others to make change happen

According to the Australian Human Rights Commission (2020), the principles to protect and elevate data sovereignty from an Indigenous perspective are based on:



# Conclusion

Tjukurpa Nganampa Wanantjaku illustrates a path forward that unites researchers and Anangu in realising the goal of decolonising research practices and outcomes, working toward healing intergenerational trauma and “finding a better future” together.

By working alongside NPY Women’s Council, Anangu and community in a culturally safe, trauma-informed way, research can contribute to meaningful and sustainable change and transformation for Anangu.

Reciprocity, respect and keeping our stories safe is more important to us than academic papers. Anangu want to see research that directly benefits our communities and elevates our voices, not yours.

So, we look forward to collaborating if you can follow our road, our way. **Iwara Wanala.**

Palya!



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