



Ngaanyatjarra
Pitjantjatjara
Yankunytjatjara
Women's Council

Supporting Anangu men to live well

Emergence of an Anangu approach to family violence primary prevention



Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project 2022 Evaluation Report | Executive Summary

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December 2022

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ICN 2043

This is an extract from the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project 2022 Evaluation Report. The evaluation is funded by NPYWC with funding from the Australian Government Department of Social Services, Men as Role Models program that supports the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project. The full report is available upon request from Angela Lynch, Manager Ngangkari Program, NPYWC via Angela.Lynch@npywc.org.au

1 Introduction: Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project background and context

- ✚ The Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara Women's Council's (NPYWC) Uti Kulintjaku¹ Watiku (Men's) Project is an innovative, Anangu-led, strengths-based initiative that is unique in the NPY region. It positions the voice and knowledge of Anangu men in the dialogue and activities relating to family violence primary prevention within their families and communities, and within the region.
- ✚ The Project began in late 2016 following an invitation to Anangu male leaders from senior Anangu women who, in 2012, established NPYWC's award-winning Uti Kulintjaku Minymaku (Women's) Project (Togni, 2016).
- ✚ NPYWC has a strong track record over more than 40 years of Anangu leadership to address complex social issues and make a difference in the lives of Anangu women and families. Working with men to prevent family violence emerged as an important and possible next step with NPYWC's development of the strengths-based, trauma-informed practice framework – *Strengthening Community Capacity to End Violence* – in 2017. In supporting the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project, NPYWC took a courageous and unprecedented step that was not without risk, to establish a men-led family violence primary prevention project within a women's organisation. This was a significant development for NPYWC and was supported through collaboration between NPYWC's Ngangkari (Traditional Healer) Program and Domestic and Family Violence Service.
- ✚ The Project brings together a team of 15 respected senior and younger Anangu men and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health professionals to learn from each other and identify ways to strengthen Anangu identity, increase Anangu wellbeing and promote healing to prevent family violence. The Watiku team members live in different communities across the NPY region, are Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara speakers and come together regularly for workshops in Alice Springs with the mental health professionals supported by the project officer, the interpreter and the evaluator. Developmental evaluation has been part of the Project since its commencement. This Report covers the period January 2020 to June 2022 and follows the 2019 Evaluation Report (Togni, 2019).
- ✚ The Project is continuing to be developed and implemented in a complex and dynamic culturally diverse context, and there are factors that influence the Project that are beyond the Project team's control, such as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. An important contextual reality is the fact that the Project is operating within the domains of Anangu society and systems as well as the mainstream society and systems.

More than being role models, the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team members are forging a new pathway forward in family violence primary prevention in their communities.

2 Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project: key features

The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project is not an intervention or service, it is an Anangu-led community capacity development and resilience strengthening, healing initiative to prevent family violence. The following summarises key features that define the Project:

- ✚ **Uti Kulintjaku Iwara** – The Uti Kulintjaku Iwara is a way of working developed through the Uti Kulintjaku Minymaku Project that centres culture, supports clear thinking, facilitates safe ways to talk about difficult issues and develops capacity to find new ways to respond to and address these difficult issues drawing on the best of Anangu and Western knowledge.
- ✚ **Relationship-centred and strengths-based** – Trusting and long-term relationships continue to be at the core of the Project and the Watiku team members demonstrate great care and support for each other and the Project staff, which is reciprocated. The Watiku team members are explicit about the need for their healing and violence prevention work to focus on the strengths in their culture, the knowledge they hold and the resilience this offers.

¹ Uti kulintjaku is a Pitjantjatjara phrase that means 'to listen, think and understand clearly'.

- ✚ **Alignment with national strategies** – The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project’s underlying principles and activities have clear alignment with the strategies and actions outlined in the Council of Australian Government’s *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022* and its Fourth Action Plan 2019-2022 (COAG, 2019) as well as *Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children* (Our Watch, 2018).

3 Key developments and achievements

Key developments and achievements in the Project between January 2020 and June 2022 are summarised below:

- ✚ **Anangu-defined leadership and learning** – A key development in the Project has been a strengthening of Anangu-defined leadership and ways of teaching and learning directed by the Watiku team members. There have been two aspects to this: 1) the engagement of younger men as team members to increase intergenerational teaching and learning; and 2) the restructuring of the core workshops so that the balance of time in the workshops is focussed on Anangu-centred content with non-Anangu health professionals being invited to engage for one of the three days, rather than two days.
- ✚ **Unity, confidence, capacity and resilience: multifaceted approach** – The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project has developed a multifaceted approach:
 - **Core workshops** support the capacity development and strengthening of the multi-generational Watiku team. These workshops provide a creative space, incorporating learning and healing that draws on Anangu and non-Anangu knowledge and they provide the impetus and ideas for the culturally-specific, language-based resources that are developed. Knowledge shared and gained in the workshops is utilised in the Watiku team members’ work in the camps, gatherings and bush trips.
 - **Small camps, gatherings and bush trips** – an innovation in response to Covid-19 restrictions – are led by Watiku team members close to their communities and create a space to engage young men in positive activities, cultural practices, learning, reflecting and healing on Country.
 - **Large intergenerational camps**, which are led by a group of Watiku team members with logistical support from the Project staff, engage a larger number of younger men and are held at significant sites in Country over multiple days. These camps provide safe spaces where young men can effectively listen and learn without distraction and be immersed fully in Anangu cultural practices and knowledge transfer because they are on Country.

Through the workshops the Watiku team members have developed their capacity and confidence for their work, strengthened their relationships, group identity and sense of unity. Being supported to come together as a team of men from across the NPY region is identified by the team members as a key Project strength.

The challenging conditions brought about through the Covid-19 pandemic have prompted the Watiku team members to be more proactive and independent in their work, clearly demonstrating their desire, confidence, ability and capacity to lead their work with young men out bush.

- ✚ **Tjanimaku Tjukurpa: the power of one story and the process to create it** – The book *Tjanimaku Tjukurpa* was collaboratively written by the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team over more than two years and launched on 30 October 2020. There are two versions published; one in Ngaanyatjarra and English and one in Pitjantjatjara and English. It tells the story of Tjanima who experiences trauma as a young child and is ultimately cared for by his grandfather who helps him grow into a knowledgeable and caring man. The Watiku team members use this book and story in their work with young men. In addition, there is evidence that the book is being used by Anangu families as well as in services and educational institutions within the NPY region and beyond. It is a significant, tangible outcome from the Project and won the best children’s and/or young adult book in the Chief Minister’s NT Book Awards in June 2022.
- ✚ **Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team members in their families: a new resource** – The Watiku team has worked with a photographer to take photographs of the team members with their families over the last couple of years. The men have then reflected on these family portraits and shared stories that have been recorded, transcribed and translated, about their roles in caring for, supporting and teaching the next generations of their families. These photographs, together with the stories, will be published as a multi-lingual book in 2023. The aim of this new resource is to inspire community members to be good role models through

highlighting the important role that Anangu men can play in their families drawing on the knowledge passed down to them by their grandfathers.

- ✚ **The difference the Project is making** – At the end of almost six years there is evidence that the Project is achieving most of its short to medium-term outcomes articulated in its theory of change. It is making a difference in:
 - Strengthening how Anangu men and women are working together to end violence and heal trauma;
 - The lives of the Watiku team members, increasing their knowledge and capacity to do the work with young men, supporting their healing and strengthening their relationships across the generations;
 - Aligning with and enacting key components of NPYWC's organisation-wide, trauma-informed and strengths-based *Strengthening Community Capacity to End Violence* practice framework. As such, this is supporting NPYWC's implementation of the practice framework;
 - Informing and inspiring other Aboriginal organisations in the region;
 - Influencing, to some extent, the six conditions essential for systems change and therefore, well positioned to affect sustainable systems change, in part because it is Anangu-led, building on the work of the Uti Kulintjaku Minymaku team, and being hosted within an Anangu-governed organisation with a strong track record of leading social change.

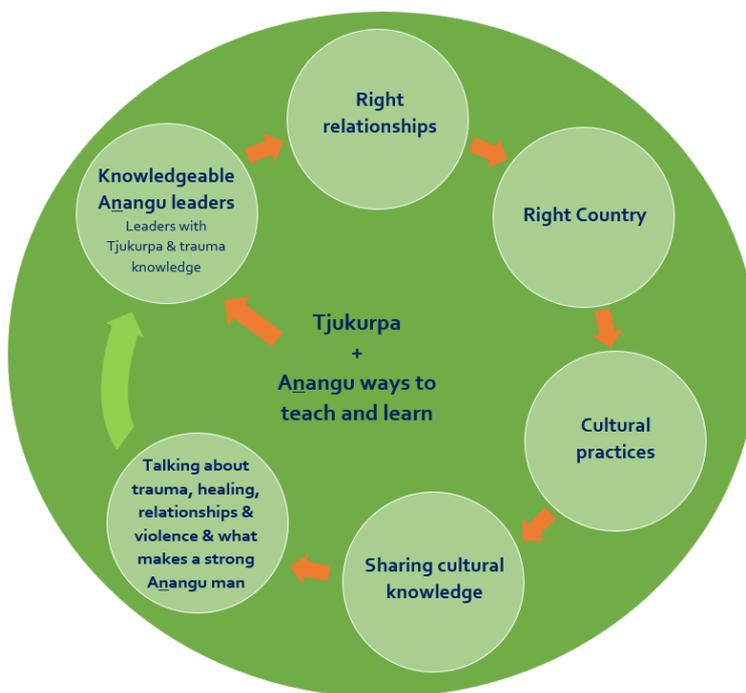
4 Key outcome: Emergence of an Anangu approach to family violence primary prevention

Just as I've learned from my grandfather, [the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project] enables me to educate my grandsons in a really good way... young men are listening and understanding and really taking on board the things that they need to survive well into the future, to live. Senior Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team member (044), 2021

- ✚ The Watiku team members trust the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project because it is following the Tjukurpa (Creation story/Law); the Anangu way of supporting and educating young men to live well and take up their responsibilities within their families and communities.
- ✚ Through the Project workshops, the Watiku team members have learned about trauma and healing from trauma from a Western science perspective. The Uti Kulintjaku Iwara (way of working) has enabled a process for the Watiku team members to gain an understanding of this information and deeply consider their existing knowledge that has been passed down to them from their grandfathers, and how this relates to this new knowledge.
- ✚ Significantly, as a result, the Watiku team members have articulated an Anangu approach to family violence family primary prevention that is grounded in Anangu knowledge and ways of teaching and learning.
- ✚ Underpinned and guided by the **Tjukurpa and Anangu ways of teaching and learning**, the key, interrelated elements of this approach include:
 - **Knowledgeable Anangu leaders:** The work with young men is led by Watiku team members who have Tjukurpa knowledge that has been passed down to them through their grandfathers, and who have an understanding of trauma and healing from trauma from a Western science perspective gained through the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project workshops.
 - **Right relationships:** The men that are included in each camp, trip or gathering have the right relationships according to the Anangu kinship system; that is, that there are grandfathers and/or eldest brothers for the young men involved, as this is necessary for teaching. Communication between the men is guided by their kinship relationships.
 - **Right Country:** The Watiku team members who lead the camps and bush trips know the Country that they take the young men to; they know the Tjukurpa stories and important sites for that Country and who belongs to that Country; they know where to hunt, what to hunt and when to hunt it in that Country. This ensures that there is no transgression of Anangu Law.

- **Cultural practices:** The young men are supported by the senior men to engage in cultural practices including hunting, tool making, Tjukurpa storytelling, alpiri (early morning broadcasting) and inma (ceremony/song and dance). These practices are determined by the senior men leading the camp or trip, the Country they are on, and the time of year.
- **Sharing cultural knowledge:** Throughout the trip or camp, cultural knowledge is being shared with the young men by the senior men. This occurs through the demonstration of cultural practices such as hunting and tool making as well as through storytelling and song.
- **Talking about trauma, healing, relationships and violence and what makes a strong Anangu man:** After engaging the young men in cultural practices on Country, the Watiku team members have prepared the space and strengthened the relationships and safety for them to talk with the young men about the challenging issues they face; issues relating to trauma and violence and how to heal from trauma and have healthy relationships as a strong man. They do this drawing on Anangu and non-Anangu knowledge.
- **Knowledgeable Anangu leaders:** This approach, over time, supports the development of the next generation of knowledgeable Anangu leaders to continue the work of Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project.

Supporting Anangu men to live well: an Anangu approach to family violence primary prevention



This is Anangu way, if young men can understand culture and Country and the stories, they know who they are and that they belong to the Country and that they are the carers for their grandfather's Country.

Senior Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team member (027), 2022

- ✚ What is important to understand about this Anangu approach is that 1) it is about **being on Country**, and 2) it is about the **conditions created for the dialogue sequence that is facilitated**, to ensure it aligns with the Anangu way of respectively and constructively discussing sensitive issues.
- ✚ In articulating this approach, the Watiku team members have communicated clearly that according to Anangu ways, this approach of starting with strengths and strengthening relationships through cultural practices on Country **is the pathway** to effectively talking about trauma and violence, and healing from trauma and preventing violence with Anangu men; **it is the pathway to healing**. This is how to engage Anangu men in these conversations while simultaneously strengthening their cultural continuity, intergenerational relationships and supporting their healing. This is not about avoiding talking about violence; **this is about an Anangu way of talking about violence, which is different to mainstream approaches**.

Trauma, ngangkarri [traditional healers] won't fix it. You can't see it. We need Ngurra [home/Country] for that. We got to go and get that Tjukurpa [Creation story/Law] inside. Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project team member (046), 2022

5 Enabling factors, challenges and key learnings

- ✚ The factors that are enabling and supporting the Project's effectiveness and achievements to date are identified as:
 - Strength of NPYWC, Uti Kulintjaku Minymaku Project and the path the women created;
 - Long-term trusting relationships, skills and flexibility of the Project staff team;
 - Privileging Anangu culture and language;
 - Creativity, energy and hope that underpin the Project;
 - Collaboration with other NPYWC projects; and
 - Continuity, leadership and belief in Anangu culture and knowledge.
- ✚ Key challenges experienced by the Project include:
 - Complexity of the context and issues relating to family violence and the related demands on and challenges for the Watiku team members and Project staff team;
 - Access to vehicles for Anangu-led work on Country;
 - Maintaining and supporting the engagement in the Project of senior men as they age; and
 - Engaging health professionals who can work effectively within the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara.
- ✚ Key learnings from the Project relating to innovative Indigenous family violence primary prevention initiatives include:
 - Anangu men want to engage in learning and the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara (way of working) is effectively supporting them to learn and apply their knowledge. They have rich cultural knowledge to draw on to nurture strong, caring men and promote healing from trauma, and through the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project, the Watiku team members are forging a new way forward in family violence primary prevention in their communities.
 - Senior Anangu men's leadership is essential, as is strengthening intergenerational relationships, in promoting positive narratives and creating positive pathways for Anangu men to prevent family violence.
 - Relationships with and leadership from the Uti Kulintjaku Minymaku team is important. It promotes respect and strength in women and men working together to prevent violence.
 - Our learnings are building on the evidence of what works and affirming the cultural determinants of health and wellbeing (Blagg et al., 2018; Blagg et al., 2020; Dockery, 2020; Dudgeon et al., 2016; Dudgeon et al., 2021; McCalman et al., 2014; Olsen & Lovett, 2016; Our Watch, 2018).
 - Strengthening the capacity of Anangu men is essential for sustainability – they are the sustainable primary prevention workforce in their communities because they are embedded in the Anangu domain and they have important and influential roles in their families and communities.
 - This is complex, challenging and demanding systems change work that requires effective leadership, skilful cross-cultural practitioners, resilient Anangu men and good support systems for all actors, as well as a long-term commitment of resources.
 - For the investment in the Project to date to achieve its full potential, it requires ongoing funding in the medium term, consistent with the expected time horizon for progress towards systems change that eliminates family violence (Our Watch & ANROWS, 2017).

6 Conclusion and future considerations

- ✚ More than being role models, the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku team members are forging a new pathway forward in family violence primary prevention in their communities. The Uti Kulintjaku Watiku 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, healing initiative that is aimed at sustainable, transformative change. The evaluation findings, presented in this Report, demonstrate the Project's development, positive contribution and effectiveness in achieving its short to medium-term outcomes to

date. Importantly, the Project is also challenging the assumptions of how a women-led organisation engages with men in relation to family violence.

- ✚ The Project sits within an increasing number of innovative Indigenous initiatives that align with national strategies and principles for family violence primary prevention practice in Indigenous communities (COAG, 2019; Our Watch, 2018). These initiatives are part of a paradigm shift in their approach to violence prevention as they are grounded in Indigenous culture and knowledge (Blagg et al., 2018).
- ✚ A significant Project outcome is the articulation of an Anangu approach to family violence primary prevention. This development demonstrates the increased confidence and capacity of the Watiku team members to work with young men, leading a strengths-based approach grounded in Anangu knowledge and ways of teaching and learning. It will be important for the Watiku team members to continue to develop and strengthen this approach over time and for the evaluation to capture the experience of young men who are engaging in this work with the senior men.
- ✚ Trusting relationships are central to the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project; relationships between the Anangu men, with the Uti Kulintjaku Minymaku Project team members and with the Project staff team. To date continuity within the Watiku team members and the Project staff team has been a strength. However, in 2022 the Project Officer who has had the role since the inception of the Project, resigned, and one of the senior, foundational Watiku team members passed away suddenly. This is significant given the relationships-based nature of the work. These changes will require an investment of time to build and re-form the strong, trusting relationships to continue to effectively support the Watiku team members to lead the Project.
- ✚ Based on the evaluation findings to date, the Project is showing potential to contribute to necessary transformative systems change in a similar way to the Uti Kulintjaku Minymaku Project (Togni, 2018). However, for the investment in the Project to date to be realised, it requires ongoing funding at least in the medium term. NPYWC's challenge is to continue to find funding that supports initiatives like this Project that are implementing the current national strategies related to Indigenous family violence primary prevention. Such funding will ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Project for Anangu families and communities and their future generations.

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