Yuendumu Whole of Community Engagement Initiative Evaluation Report
Yapakurlangu-lirnpa
Engaging the Warlpiri people

Ngurlu (damper seeds), artist Geraldine Napurrurla Dixon

Report prepared by
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DISCLAIMER

This report was written by the stated authors and does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the Whole of Community Engagement (WCE) initiative of the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor - Indigenous Leadership of Charles Darwin University. It provides multiple perspectives and reflections on engagement with a range of stakeholders over time and is not intended to be definitive, comprehensive or imply community consensus with the views expressed.

Warning: Images of deceased persons may appear in this report.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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1.0 Introduction

This report focuses on the Whole of Community Engagement (WCE) activities and actions developed at the remote community of Yuendumu, northwest of Alice Springs. The WCE initiative employed community-based staff of Yuendumu to develop community engagement strategies and implement actions that aimed to strengthen pathways from early childhood to higher education. Yuendumu community-based staff included: Simon Fisher, who performed in the role of Cultural Supervisor and Community Research Leader, Elizabeth Katakarinja and Jimmy Langdon, who performed in the role of Mentor and for a short period, Cedric and Gabrielle Egan, who conducted activities in the role of Youth Leaders. Lisa Watts was based at CDU Alice Springs campus and performed in the role of Community Engagement Leader. Together, both community-based and campus-based staff of CDU formed the Yuendumu Education Engagement Team (YEET).

The unique skill set, acquired through decades of living and participating in Yuendumu community, best-placed the community-based staff to consult with the local community on issues of concern and to navigate the relationships between local stakeholders and respective partners. The Yuendumu community hold community-based staff in high regard for their attained status as Warlpiri leaders and level of cultural authority. The community assigned the YEET team rights to articulate and act on the aspirations of the community. Local knowledge, language, and cultural skills are pre-requisites to strong community engagement. Community-based staff used a grounded approach to connect with the vast network of elders and leaders, utilising Warlpiri leadership styles, by applying their unique skill set to draw on local knowledge.

The Warlpiri translation of ‘Whole of Community Engagement’ is Yapakurlangu-lirnpa, meaning ‘engaging the Warlpiri people’. In relation to the journey to higher education, the WCE staff focussed on developing and implementing actions across three areas to strengthen: (1) Education Governance; (2) Warlpiri Leadership and (3) Learning Spaces. WCE community-based staff connected with elders, parents, and families and built relationships with stakeholders and respective partners to ensure that the whole of community worked together. This was reflected in the key principle ‘jintangka ngalypa-nyina’: we facilitate stakeholders and the community working together as one.

Yapakurlangu-lirnpa (engaging the Yuendumu community) embraces:

1. Recognising the value of local and traditional knowledge systems
2. Integrating the unique management styles of Warlpiri leaders
3. Supporting community-driven processes and local solutions
4. Treating both Western and Indigenous knowledge systems as equals

These distinctive approaches entailed a two-prong process; namely:

1. Talking and listening to elders, parents and families and the youth to gain a Warlpiri perspective on educational needs, strategies and solutions followed by; and
2. Building collaborative relationships with local stakeholders and respective partners through negotiation and agreements on the community’s aspirations and implementing self-determined solutions.

The project design of Yuendumu community supported a bottom-up approach to empower community-based staff to manage collaborative processes to accommodate the myriad of governance structures and

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1 ‘Warlpiri’ refers to a group of Indigenous peoples of North-Central and Central Australia
forms of cultural authority found at the local level. These included key education stakeholders: Boards, leadership networks, community members, parents and families.

The Community Engagement Leader and other CDU campus based staff supported the community-based staff throughout the development of this work. This involved building trustful and equal relationships between community and campus-based staff, holding frank and respectful discussion, which were shared at forums and at WCE team meetings.

Figure 1: Location of Yuendumu Community in the Northern Territory (Hinkson 2016).
2.0 WCE community-based staff at Yuendumu

About Jimmy Langdon

Jimmy Langdon is a Warlpiri leader from the Yuendumu Community and works across a range of fields, including: education, leadership, community safety, youth and community development. At Yuendumu, he serves as Chairperson of the Local Authority Board of Central Desert Shire and focuses on bridging kardiya (non-Indigenous) and yapa (Warlpiri) management styles in relation to employment and service provision. Recently he was re-elected Deputy Chairperson of the Yuendumu School Council. Jimmy is also the Deputy Chairperson of Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC) overseeing a vast range of youth services, including cultural mentoring.

About Simon Fisher

Simon Fisher has been a researcher in his own right since the elders of Pikilyi, (Vaughan Springs of Mt Doreen Pastoral Lease) appointed him in 1997 to conduct research on the significance of Pikilyi to the Warlpiri people. In 2000, Simon Fisher completed the first joint Masters in a University in Australia with co-researcher, Lisa Watts. He has supervised two PhD students at the University of Melbourne and Monash University. Simon is passionate about Indigenous research and has very strong relationships with high profile academics and Universities around Australia. Simon has been working for Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri (PAW) Media and Communications for around 12 years. His main role involves the maintenance of the 26 year old Warlpiri Media Archive, including the critical task of digitising video content onto the digital server.
About Elizabeth Katakarinja

Elizabeth Napaljarri Katakarinja is an Arrente woman from Ntaria with Anmatjere and Warlpiri connections and lives at Yuendumu. Fluent in four Indigenous languages, Elizabeth is also a well-known painter and well-known for her strong interest in both media and education. She works in the position of Community Media Worker in video at PAW Media and is experienced in directing and editing short documentaries and presenting community news bulletins. Currently Elizabeth is a Board member on the Warlpiri Education Board, Chairperson for the Yuendumu School Council, Chairperson for PAW Media, Board member of Imparja Television Pty Ltd and Central Land Council Community Lease Working Group. Her commitments show the level of responsibility that Elizabeth upholds in the region across media and education portfolios.

About Lisa Watts

Dr Lisa Watts (MA (hons), PhD) has worked in the remote Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory for 36 years, specialising in applied research in political ecology, social and emotional wellbeing, film and media. In 2000 at Charles Darwin University, Lisa co-authored, the first joint masters in an Australian University with Simon Fisher, a Warlpiri co-researcher from Yuendumu. In 2009, Lisa completed her doctoral studies at the University of Melbourne in political ecology. Lisa is also an accomplished film producer, writer, director and producer of three films screened nationally and internationally Sammy Butcher: Out of the Shadows, Mer Rrkwer-akert (Brooks Soak Country) and Big Name No Blanket, which attained National Documentary Program status and received a jury award from the FIFO International Documentary Festival, Tahiti.
Our principles

*Jinta mani kala yumi*
We bring everyone together

*Jinta jarri karulu*
We are united as one

*Jinta mirni mirni*
We come together to form one solution

*Jinta ngaltja-juku*
We focus on one vision - education

*Jintangka ngaliypa-nyina*
We facilitate stakeholders and the community working together as one

Through:
- Connecting with elders
- Connecting with parents and families
- Connecting with stakeholders and partners
- Connecting with the whole of community

Our beliefs

- We believe that we need to find and bring our voice back on issues of health and education, mediating between Indigenous and non-Indigenous domains, by filling the gaps and replacing what was taken away in the past.
- For instance, what we see in the work place today in our communities are local people who do not have the level of degrees to take on management positions or CEO positions.
- The question is ‘Why are not my people (Yapa) reaching higher management level when there has been a lot of educational input into Indigenous training and education?’
- Warlpiri leaders are the most experienced in community development in their community, having spent decades teaching and learning - but still have not reached the top level.
- We need to recognise the qualities of our community leaders and value their contribution to development.
- Engaging the community requires spending time developing relationships and implementing actions to work towards the community taking on the roles and responsibilities of training the young and old.
- It is also important that the community takes the very important step of mentoring and role modelling, and that they stand strong to bring about a better understanding of the work required to ensure flexible boundaries of learning in education.
- It is going back to the basics of leadership, ownership, taking responsibility and leading the way.
3.0 The Warlpiri People

The Warlpiri people are one of the largest Indigenous language and family groups of central Australia, inhabiting the northwest region of the Australian continent. The Warlpiri lands are situated in the Tanami Desert expanding across an area of 292,194 kilometres and encompassing a portion of the Great Sandy Desert. Interrelationships occur with most surrounding language groups living in desert areas, especially the Western Desert and Arandic people.

Remote Warlpiri communities include: Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Nyirripi, Willowra and Ale-kerange; however, Yuendumu is the largest Warlpiri community of the region situated approximately 300 kms northwest of Alice Springs. Traditionally, the Warlpiri people held significant interrelationships with the Anmatyerre people through the overlapping of boundaries, social obligations, spiritual and ceremonial ties that are still strong in today’s terms.
4.0 Conceptual Metaphors

Community-based staff of Yuendumu has used conceptual metaphors to express a Warlpiri worldview to highlight parallels between two polarised concepts: western and Indigenous pathways to higher education. Conceptual metaphors have become a practical tool for both campus and community-based staff of the WCE Initiative to develop a shared understanding of the complexities involved in supporting community-driven processes, and solutions to strengthening pathways to higher education. A metaphorical approach ensures that the cultural and conceptual foundations are embedded in engagement strategies for the development of a socially-orientated educational model, in which the ‘model is no more than a metaphor’ (Howitt 2001p, 80). In these reflections, the model is reflected through the meanings of the metaphor, bringing clarity to what is needed and what will make things better. The WCE community-based staff has utilised the Warlpiri concept of *jukurrpa* to make metaphorical references to pathways to higher education.

In the Warlpiri world, people lived strictly in accordance with the laws of *jukurrpa*, which translations into English include ‘dreaming’, ‘the dreamtime’ and ‘dreaming tracks’. English definitions such as ‘myths’, ‘legends’, ‘folklore’, ‘tradition’ and ‘narratives’ are analogous to *jukurrpa*; however, translating customary terms into English terminology, renders simplification or creates a risk of devaluing the significance of *jukurrpa*. Warlpiri epistemology produced a genre of mythological stories that transmits Warlpiri knowledge and conceptions as found in the mythological accounts of *jukurrpa*. The magnitude and complexity of *jukurrpa* is phenomenal, embodying Warlpiri biogeography and ontological thinking about waterscapes and landscapes. The actions of the ancestor and the ordered events of the mythology prompt people to mnemonically remember the sequences building a body of knowledge, which is aided by the role of oral instruction and stylised mapping. Warlpiri cultural authority is embedded in *jukurrpa* and governed by the Warlpiri social organisation.

**The Warlpiri social organisation**

The Warlpiri social organisation comprises three components (1) the kinship system, (2) the system of subsections and (3) the classification of *kirda* and *kurdungurlu*. The Warlpiri kinship system affiliates all members of Warlpiri society that classify kin relations on the basis of descent or marriage, i.e., brother, mother, father, aunt, grandfather etc. The subsection comprises eight subsection groups, in which two subsections are symmetrically linked to form patri-couples that depict father-son (or father-daughter) relationships. This shows that the social organisation of spiritual affiliations and land holding estates are determined by patrilineal descent. Individuals that inherit rights through their father and grandfather acquire the legal status ‘*kirda*’ that translates to “landowner” or “traditional owner”. Warlpiri traditions systematically delegate responsibilities to individuals that have inherited totemic affiliations to their father’s country (patrilineal). Rites to the mother’s country can be pursued once the responsibilities to the father’s country have been fulfilled. The selection of a partner from the opposite moiety naturally forms *kurdungurlu* relationships that we readily understand as in ‘in-laws’, signifying the children of female *kirda* (Watts, 2008).

**The Warlpiri metaphor: the Ngurlu (damper) seed**

The world of plants metaphorically ascribes the accession to land, rights to territories through inheritance, spiritual affiliation or descent. For instance, a Warlpiri person can inherit rights to land through his or her father, through any four groups of grandparents: father’s father (*warringiyi*), mother’s father (*ngamardi*),
father’s mother’s brother *(yaparla)* and mother’s mother’s brother *(jaja)* (Watts 2008). Metaphorically, grandfathers have been described as:

‘Like roots of grass. No matter how far the grass goes and how many suckers it throws up, it can be traced back to one original root.’ (McConvell 1998, p.187).

The metaphor of roots, genealogically depicts how children can be traced back to the one ‘root-stock grandfather’ (McConvell 1998, p.188). McConvell states that ‘plant-seed metaphorical complex may be an incoherent amalgam of patrilineal and matrilineal elements of different origin’ (McConvell 1998, p.189). For instance, plant related metaphors in Yolngu society symbolises the opening of the branch as the revealing of knowledge and the ‘roots’ symbolise secret knowledge. McConvell explains the analogous relationships between the *Ngurlu* metaphor and the rights and traditions of female children:

In this metaphor children of women of the agnatic lineage are likened to seeds, leaving the plant, perhaps in contrast to the children of the male members who are the branches attached to the father and grandfather trunk. The *kurdungurlu*, the matrilateral guardian or ‘worker’ for sites and ritual, prototypically a child of a female patrilineal owner, is a *kurrdu-ngurlu*, a ‘seed-child’ at least etymologically (McConvell 1998 p, 189).

Jimmy Langdon, community based staff is *kurdurngurlu* for this story. He has inherited rights to speak for this story through his wife’s (Napurrurla) family. In the Warlpiri world, the subsections associated with the *Ngurlu* dreaming, include: *Napurrurla/Jupurrurla* and *Nakamarra/Jakamarra* showing both individual and collective rights to one’s grandfather’s country. Langdon purports that myths reflect Warlpiri heritage and their contemporary use helps young people understand the analogies to seeds, trunks, roots and branches. From a Warlpiri perspective, the seeds represent the children, the roots represent the grandfathers and grandmothers, the trunk represents language and culture and the branches represent clans and families. Drawing parallels to the new world, family branches put out shoots, forming new branches and buds sprout green leaves, representing Warlpiri people stepping into a new dimension of learning. The journey and growth of education requires a better understanding of both *Yapa* and *Kardiya* ways of learning. Building confidence in Warlpiri people to continue the journey onwards by creating flexible pathways from early childhood to tertiary education will lead to more Indigenous qualified teachers, lecturers and managers. Critically, community engagement is the essence to supporting people to complete this journey.

Metaphorical and critical approaches plant the seed and form deep roots but the understanding rests in the effects of the regulatory systems that Indigenous communities ‘inhere and the conditions under which knowledges and practices become part of alternative development’ (Robbins 2004p, 13). The Warlpiri metaphor used here unveils the alternative development journey that, first, requires a responsive approach and, second, addresses the educational needs of the community through supporting community-driven processes. *Ngurlu* relates to the metaphorical world of plants but also means ‘seed’, referring to grass seeds of the Tanami Desert, mainly spinifex. Langdon describes that unlike trees and plants, seeds are not rooted in the ground but are loosely scattered, dispersed, tossed, thrown according to its journey of germination.

The desert wind comes and blows the sand, which spreads the *Ngurlu* seed onto the earth’s surface: sunlight, fire and water germinate the seed to grow into spinifex. Women gather the seeds and crush it with stone to make damper. The damper cake feeds everyone in the family. Women also ground the seed and mix it with water to make a sweet cool drink: *Ngurlu* seeds are naturally sweetened when grounded. Pertinently, in times of severe drought in the semi-arid and arid zones, the use of seeds was critical to the survival of the Warlpiri people. Jimmy likens the *Ngurlu* metaphor to education being critical to the survival of the Warlpiri people today.
The paintings below are both entitled ‘Ngurlu’ (damper seed) illustrated by Geraldine Napurrurla Dixon of Yuendumu. Both paintings depict germination of seeds into plant life after rain. When the soils of the desert are wet, seeds soak in the flooding of water. In accordance with the seasons, the desert breeze stirred and dried out the seeds, reducing the moisture in the ground, in which to sprout new grasses. The sprouting of new grasses is a metaphorical reference for new dimensions of learning, referring to the alternate education journey between kardiya (non-Indigenous) and yapa (Indigenous) knowledge systems. The alternate knowledge system is a Warlpiri initiative that purports a collaborative approach that synthesizes historical, scientific and cultural perspectives, drawn from both the Western and Indigenous system, treated equally by both. This does not entail a rejection of modernism (Robbins 2004) but the reorganization of social processes, in which remote communities form reinvigorated alliances with government and non-government organisations to create new collaborations on matters of concern using a multi-partisan approach. Moreover, its underlying essence gives equal recognition to both knowledge systems: Western and Indigenous.

Figure 7: Ngurlu (damper seeds), artist Geraldine Napurrurla Dixon
This painting was presented to CDU in exchange for implementing the WCE Initiative at Yuendumu
Figure 8: **Ngurlu** (damper seeds), artist Geraldine Napurrurla Dixon
This painting will be displayed in the newly established Warlpiri Research in recognition of the contribution of the WCE Initiative to Yuendumu.
5.0 Yuendumu community

Yuendumu community sits on the edge of the Tanami Desert, and is one of the largest Indigenous communities in central Australia with a fluctuating population of approximately 800 – 1000 people. Yuendumu is located within the Yuendumu Aboriginal Land Trust owned and managed by Warlpiri people.

Missionary days

The Yuendumu Community was established in 1946 as the Yuendumu Native Settlement, a temporary government ration depot. In 1947, the Australian Baptist Home Mission, a missionary arm of the Baptist Church in Australia administered Yuendumu as a Baptist Mission, including the establishment of its first school in 1947. The Baptist Mission delivered education until the Yuendumu Reserve became Indigenous freehold land under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976 Trust and self-government of the Northern Territory was conferred in 1978 under the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth.
Community-driven educational initiatives

The Yuendumu community has a strong record of accomplishment in developing community driven processes, many of which aim to address the social determinants of health and education. Below is a timeline of the community-driven educational initiatives achieved by the Yuendumu community. The first recorded account on educational advocacy shows Harry Nelson, now a senior leader of very high status, travelling to Canberra at age 21 in the 1950s to lobby the Australian government for Indigenous teacher training.

![Image](https://example.com/image.jpg)

Figure 11: Source: Warlpiri Media Association, researched by Simon Japangardi Fisher (Warlpiri Media Association n.d.).

3. 1990: Development of the Tanami Network, which linked Warlpiri secondary students studying under the then Northern Territory Correspondence School through satellite videoconferencing.
4. 1990: Production of the ‘Manyu-Wana’ video series, known as the Warlpiri Sesame Street.
5. 1990: Establishment of Mt Theo Substance Abuse program, which tackled chronic petrol sniffing.
6. 2000: Simon Fisher, a Warlpiri leader completed the first joint masters co-authored with Lisa Watts under the then Northern Territory University.
7. 2000: Successful completion of Degree of Batchelor of Education under the then Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE), Batchelor Institute qualifying approximately 20 Yapa (Indigenous) teachers.
8. 2007: Establishment of Warlpiri Education Board which advocates for an independent Warlpiri Secondary College.
9. 2014, the Department of Education (NT) announced the closure of bilingual education. In response, the Yuendumu School worked closely with Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri (PAW) Media & Communications to produce Mangarri Panu and Animating Jukurrpa, an animation series, developed from local Warlpiri readers as well as from Warlpiri myths.
The local governance structure of Yuendumu community

The unique leadership and management styles of Warlpiri people of 50 years have resulted in the establishment of a vast range of community-owned organisations at Yuendumu. Local organisations were set up by Warlpiri leaders to address social, education, economic and health needs as identified by the community (see diagram below). Each organisation comprises its own Board of Directors, drawing on local decision-making processes embedded in cultural authority and the collective vision. The list below includes the organisations that provide social services to the community, including:

1. Warlurkurlangu Aboriginal Artists Association
2. Kurdukurdukurlangu Yuendumu Childcare Centre and Playgroup
3. Warlpiri Media Association/ PAW Media and Communications
4. Yuendumu Aged Care
5. Yuendumu Women Centre Aboriginal Corporation (Safe House)
6. Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC)
7. Yuendumu Adult Learning Centre (Jaru)
8. Yuendumu Mediation Centre
9. Yuendumu Social Club (Big Shop)
10. Yuendumu Regional Health Clinic
11. Mt Theo Workshop
12. Tanami Regional Dialysis Unit
13. Outback Stores auspice by the Yuendumu Women’s Centre
14. Yuendumu Outstation Resource Centre

The key message that rests within this framework of self-determination is that Warlpiri leaders have inherent social responsibility to determine the community-driven processes in collaboration with government and non-government agencies. Local governance structures are borne out of the elder’s vision, aspirations and local solutions, leading to community growth and development.
The diagram below, illustrated by Jimmy Langdon shows the local governance structures of Yuendumu from a Warlpiri perspective.

![Diagram of local governance structures of Yuendumu](image)

**Warlpiri leadership and Youth Leadership**

- **Elders’ needs**
  - Thoughts
  - Vision
  - Solutions
  - Strategies
  - Planning

- **Children’s needs**

- **Health**

- **Community Safety**

- **Language and Culture**

- **Education**

- **Men’s needs**

- **Women’s needs**

**Figure 12: Local governance structures of Yuendumu, illustrated by Jimmy Langdon**

### 6.0 Our actions

The WCE initiative has developed and implemented action-based strategies through partnership development approaches, which aim to shift relationships between stakeholders, government and non-government agencies. This shift is reflected in the principles and practices of the WCE initiatives mentioned above that remedy injustices and inequities through the redistribution of resources and recognition of Indigenous knowledge and skills.

1. Community-based and campus-based staff initially consulted with the CEO of each organisation to seek advice on the correct protocol to gain permission to work with respective local stakeholders and associated community leaders.

2. WCE staff formally approached the Board of Directors of each local organisation with a submission that outlined project objectives and results of early consultations, including: Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC), Yuendumu School Council, Pintupi Anmatjere Warlpiri (PAW) Media & Communications, Yuendumu Women’s Centre and the Yuendumu Mediation Centre.

3. All of the Boards of the above-mentioned organisations endorsed the implementation of the WCE initiative, providing WCE staff to work one-on-one with Warlpiri leaders and develop relationships with local stakeholders.
4. Approaches were also made to the Local Authority Board, Central Desert Shire, Prime Minister and Cabinet and Family and Children Centre to conduct consultations.

5. As the Community Engagement Leader had worked with Simon Fisher at Yuendumu from 1998 – 2000, completing the first joint masters; leaders requested that the Community Engagement Leader continue to work closely with Simon as the WCE initiative rested in the field of higher education. Simon Fisher was recognised by the community as having the most experience in this area.

6. Based on this instruction, Simon Fisher led the consultation with Warlpiri leaders and the community and highlighted key issues of concern, shaping the focus areas. His work was provided as in-kind support to the WCE initiative from Paw Media & Communications.

7. Elizabeth Katakarinja expressed great interest in the program and requested to work on the WCE initiative, providing a wealth of information in relation to education governance. In her role as Chairperson of Yuendumu School Council, Elizabeth Katakarinja requested that all stakeholders come together to discuss their support to the WCE initiative. At this meeting, most CEOs agreed that Warlpiri leadership was a key issue of concern because of the heavy demands currently placed on leaders.

8. Jimmy Langdon was appointed by the Jaru Learning Centre of WYDAC to work on the WCE initiative in addition to Cedric Egan and Gabrielle Egan.

9. Community-based staff consulted with many Warlpiri leaders and families across the communities on issues of concern as identified by Simon Fisher (point 6). These discussions took place in homes, around camp fires, on verandas, mainly in informal settings.

10. As a result of consultation with Warlpiri leaders and families, the WCE community-based staff determined three key focus areas relevant to strengthening pathways from early childhood to higher education as follows:
    1. Educational Governance
    2. Leadership
    3. Learning Spaces

A set of strategic actions were devised to implement the actions and to achieve the overarching objectives of the WCE initiative with a focus on enhancing the educational journeys for all local community members.
6.1 Educational Governance

Aim:
To strengthen the governance of local educational governing bodies through engaging parents and families and collaborating with local stakeholders including:

a. The Yuendumu School Council
b. The Warlpiri Education Board
c. Jaru Learning Centre

Actions:
1. Increase the representation of Warlpiri parents on the Yuendumu School Council through collaborating with the Parents and Community Engagement (PaCE) program, operated by the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC).
2. Review and update the Yuendumu School Council’s constitution to integrate education regulation.
3. Contribute to the review of the Education Act 2015 (NT) through the Yuendumu School lodging a submission that proposes the term ‘parent of a child’ recognises Indigenous customary law and tradition in relation to the responsibility for a child.
4. Reinvigorate the Warlpiri Education Board College through partnership development and community consultation to work towards establishing an independent Warlpiri Secondary College.
5. Facilitate the partnership between the Yuendumu Mediation Centre and the Yuendumu School to develop the Community Safety School Program, which aims to ensure the safety of children at school through the presence of experienced mediators or cultural mentors, who will work with school staff to reduce conflict in the school yards and classrooms.

6.2 Leadership

Aim:
To explore the networks of Warlpiri leadership using both qualitative and quantitative research methods to develop a better understanding of the varied forms of representation and responsibilities that Warlpiri leaders perform and the significance of Warlpiri leadership to self-determination.

Actions:
1. Conduct a Social Network Analysis to examine the leadership network in terms of Warlpiri representation on boards/reference groups and committees of local organisations in Yuendumu.
2. Conduct a Social Network Analysis to examine the employment networks across the various organisations in Yuendumu to determine pathways for Warlpiri leaders to senior management positions.
3. Collect and disseminate qualitative data on Warlpiri leadership through interviewing leaders on camera to understand the key issues of leadership and education from a Warlpiri perspective.
6.3 Learning Spaces

Aim:

To support the development of learning centres by utilising community driven processes that draw on the strengths of Warlpiri culture through building Indigenous research capacity and engaging youth, families and leaders to achieve educational aspirations.

Actions:

1. Support the establishment of a Warlpiri Research Centre based at PAW Media and Communications with a focus on building capacity in Indigenous research.

2. Support the archival digitisation project and the repatriation of the Olive Pink Collection held in Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the National Gallery of Australia.

3. Strengthen partnerships with Universities and institutions to acknowledge Warlpiri research protocols.

4. Conduct two Warlpiri research projects designed by Warlpiri Researchers including:
   a. Education History
   b. Warlpiri leadership

5. Support the ongoing development of Yuendumu community graduation celebrations through partnership development to recognise students who have completed VET, Higher Education courses, and the work of Warlpiri employees of local organisations.

Key partnerships

The WCE community-based staff formed partnerships with the Yuendumu School, Yuendumu Mediation Centre and PAW Media & Communications. Arrangements were formalised through service level agreements to ensure that:

1. Warlpiri leadership and cultural mentoring was auspiced by the Yuendumu Mediation Centre;

2. Building capacity in Indigenous research at the newly established Warlpiri Research Centre was auspiced by PAW Media & Communications.

3. Strengthening the Yuendumu School Council and ensuring the safety of children at school was managed by the Yuendumu School in collaboration with local stakeholders.

Following is a list of achievements resulting from partnership development and relationship building facilitated by the WCE initiative at Yuendumu.
7.0 Our achievements

This section will outline how the actions listed above were implemented. Details will also be provided on the resulting outcomes and an analysis on the educational benefits to the Yuendumu community.

7.1 Educational Governance

The Yuendumu School Council

The Yuendumu School Council has attained a full complement of representation from across the community, reflected in the positions filled below:

1. Principal
2. Chairperson
3. Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. Pre School Representative
6. Teachers Representative x 2
7. Family Representative x 12
8. Secretary Mentor

An extra position was created (secretary mentor). Previously the secretary position had been held by a non-Indigenous person. As a result the governance structure more accurately represents students and families of the community because all official positions are currently held by Warlpiri people. A quorum has been reached at each School Council meeting throughout 2016. It is noted that the Yuendumu School Council had not been able to obtain a quorum for a number of years. The shift came about as a result of a collaboration between the Yuendumu School and the Jintaku Mardani (coming together), PaCE project, auspiced by the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC).

The PaCE project commenced in Yuendumu on 1st June 2014, and aimed to strengthen engagement and participation of parents and community at Yuendumu School and the Jaru Learning Centre. Communication with the Yuendumu School helped strengthen School Council processes by engaging community members in education governance in person, and through text messages, radio campaign and community events. The WCE community based staff were also elected onto the board, alternating the position of Chair at each annual general meeting.

The key finding of this project unveils the importance of developing culturally sound communication strategies within a community engagement framework. It was found that direct interface between Yapa people; in other words, adopting yapa to yapa communication styles through texts, social media, face-to-face conversations and public announcements at cultural events, dramatically enhanced community engagement. Importantly, this work needs to be undertaken by community or youth leaders. One WCE action, which aimed to strengthen the Yuendumu School Council, showed that a quorum could not be reached when kardiya (non-Indigenous) teachers alone approached community representatives requesting their attendance at the Yuendumu School Council meeting. However, when yapa leaders and mentors led the engagement process, the Yuendumu School Council attained full representation. This also suggests the significance of cultural mentoring and the effectiveness of Warlpiri communication styles in community engagement.
The WCE initiative also worked closely with the Yuendumu School Council on forming a partnership with the Council of Government School Organisations (COGSO). WCE staff informed the Yuendumu School Council of the opportunity to contribute to the review of the Education Act (2016) facilitated by COGSO. As a result, the Yuendumu School Council placed a submission that proposed to redefine the term ‘parent’ to accommodate an Indigenous worldview. Legislation passed successfully changed the definition of ‘parent’, to recognise Indigenous customary law and tradition in relation to the responsibility of a child, which came into effect on 1 January 2016 to read:

A parent of an Aboriginal child includes a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal customary law or Aboriginal tradition (Education Act (NT). (Northern Territory Government 2016)

Coinciding with this action, WCE Initiative informed the Yuendumu School Council that its constitution of 1987 was in breach of current education regulation. Since this facilitation, the Yuendumu School Council has worked closely with COGSO and updated its constitution to meet current standards.
The Warlpiri Education Board

The Warlpiri Education Board (WEB) was formed in 2007 through a meeting of Warlpiri Triangle educators for the purpose of developing plans to establish an independent Warlpiri Secondary College. This partnership involved collaboration between the WCE community-based staff prior to and during their engagement in the WCE initiative, Yuendumu community, Educational Transformations and the CLC. In December 2015, WCE staff conducted extensive consultations with approximately 20 identified senior leaders, represented on the Yuendumu Lease Working Group. All leaders expressed great enthusiasm for an on-site secondary college as opposed to sending students away to boarding school. As a result, the Leased Working Group passed a resolution in 2016 to contribute $50,000 towards the operation of WEB to undertake further planning. The consultations shifted relationships between local stakeholders and partners, including the Yuendumu School and CLC. The CLC has also requested the WCE staff to conduct workshops to undertake further planning in support of establishing a Warlpiri Secondary College.

Jaru Learning Centre Steering Committee

In 2015, the WCE community based staff worked with Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) to establish an advisory board, entitled the Yuendumu Learning Centre Steering Committee to oversee the educational activities of the Jaru Learning Centre. Throughout 2016, WCE staff also worked closely with BIITE to ensure the ongoing delivery of structured courses. WCE staff met with key personnel of BIITE from the Alice Springs campus and gained a commitment to deliver accredited training and to continue to negotiate such training with the managers of the Jaru Learning Centre.

Figure 15: The Jaru Learning Centre involves a partnership between WYDAC, WETT and BIITE governed by a Warlpiri steering committee
Community School Safety Program

A community meeting was held at Peace Park in November 2015, which discussed concerns over the link between bullying and low school attendance. Jimmy Langdon, WCE community-based staff member, facilitated the meeting, which was attended by representatives from a broad range of local stakeholders.

![Community meeting held at Peace Park at Yuendumu, which led to the development of the Community School Safety Program, supported by WCE.](image)

Eddie Robertson, Indigenous Engagement Officer, Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM& C) stated, ‘we believe in education as education is vital for our children’s future - but let’s do something for the families to help their children by putting elders in to the school. We need to deliver the message in the community that the school is a safe place for every child.’

At the meeting, representatives agreed that the presence of elders in school would provide the Yuendumu School with extra resources to offer cultural mentoring to troubled youth affected by community unrest. The solution entailed; (1) local stakeholders working together to provide mediation support to the school on a needs basis, and (2) elders having a regular presence in the school grounds to monitor behaviour. On 23 March 2016, Yuendumu Mediation Committee prioritised the importance of the Community School Safety Program.

At this point, the WCE Initiative formalised a partnership through a service agreement between the Yuendumu School, Charles Darwin University (CDU) and the Yuendumu Mediation and Justice Centre (Central Desert Regional Council). Locally trained mediators from the Yuendumu Mediation and Justice Centre provided the following core activities over two to three days a week, throughout the school terms of 2016, including:

- School lunch time duty roster
- Classroom behaviour management assistance;
- One to one student support;
- Mediations among students;
- Mediations involving parents and teachers, where required; and
- Workshops on conflict resolution, building health relationships, bullying, cyber issues.
Total numbers of mediations include:

- School days: 78
- Days attended by mediators: 45
- Classrooms assisted: 45
- Fights resolved: 7
- 1 on 1 Support/Counselling: 11
- Family mediations: 8

The Yuendumu Mediation Centre has reported that the service has built confidence in the pool of mediators working with young people. The flow on effect has resulted in a partnership development with WYDAC, in which mediation is offered on a weekly basis to address the harmful behaviour of youth. This WCE action strengthened community networks of family authority and responsibility and assisted with building harmonious inter-agency collaboration.

7.2 Leadership

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is a methodical study of social networks that examines the linkages between two kinds of actions. This SNA study examined the linkages between:

1. ‘people’ and the boards they are members to better understand the expectations of Warlpiri leaders through their formal representation.

This SNA study then examined the linkages between:

2. ‘people’ and the employment positions they hold in the same local organisation to better understand inequities in employment and education and to develop pathways for local Warlpiri people to fill senior management positions.

Leadership networks

Two SNA diagrams were created on the formal representation of leaders serving on Boards in 16 incorporated organisations. We used the term ‘boards’ to describe the unpaid governing body of a not-for-profit organisation, referring to committees, boards, reference groups and councils that are responsible for the governance of organisations that operate in Yuendumu. This helped us determine the level of voluntary or unpaid work expected of Warlpiri leaders in the Yuendumu community.

Diagram 1 (see below) shows a significant network of multiple local boards and committees operating at Yuendumu. The Community Engagement Leader engaged each local organisation in the study to obtain data on the names and numbers of Warlpiri leaders represented on board/committee members of the following 16 organisations: Warlpiri Media Aboriginal Corporation, Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation, Yuendumu Women’s Centre Aboriginal Corporation, Warlukurlangu Artists Aboriginal Association, Salt Church Yuendumu Indigenous Corporation, Yuendumu Magpies Football Aboriginal Corporation, The Living Water United Pentecostal Church, Mampu-Maninja-Kurlangu Jarlu Patu-Ku Aboriginal Corporation (Yuendumu Old People’s Program), Warlpiri Education Board, Yuendumu Health Advisory Committee, Yuendumu Mediation and Justice Committee, Yuendumu Social Club, Southern Tanami Indigenous Protected Areas Management Region Committee, Local Authority Board of Central Desert Regional Shire, Child & Family Centre and Warlpiri Education Training & Trust.
Diagram 1 (see below) shows that Warlpiri leaders perform on multiple boards and this high level expectation does not include their representation on a myriad of regional committees for instance: the Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation (GMAAAC). Features of the Yuendumu Board diagram include the following data sets:

Size of network: 16 boards, 125 people

Number of Warlpiri people: 118

Average number of boards a person is connected to: 1.624

Board with least members: Living Water (3)

Board with most members: WYDAC (25)

Most number of boards an individual is on: 17 (node 18)
Diagram 2 draws from the same data; however depicts the connections of individuals who sit on three or more boards. The red circles are individual people and the green circles represent the boards or committees as listed above. Features of the Yuendumu SNA diagram of people who are on three or more boards include:

- 19 people on 3 or more boards (all Warlpiri people)
- 5 people on 5 or more boards

Qualitative data was also collected through interviewing prominent Warlpiri leaders on camera, who highlighted the barriers to strengthening pathways to higher education. These barriers are referred to in the recommendation section of this report. These interviews were compiled into a twenty minute video, serving as an appendix to this report. The conclusion drawn is that this high-level responsibility and voluntary commitment that Indigenous leaders make to their community would not be found or expected in urban settings and is seemingly a trend across most remote Indigenous communities.

**Employment networks**

The second aspect of this SNA study examined the linkages between ‘people’ and the employment positions they hold in the same local organisation to determine pathways to senior management positions. Each organisation provided data to the Community Engagement Leader on the numbers of non-Indigenous and Indigenous (local) people employed in the following positions, including:
A **Senior Management:** constitute CEO positions, General Manager, and identified by the community as the boss of the organisation.

B **Middle Management:** constitute Program Manager and qualified employee positions, for instance: doctors, teachers and positions requiring degree level qualifications to perform duties.

C **Low work bees:** assistants, developers, health workers,

Graph 1 shows the total employment by Board-run organisations in Yuendumu according to position type: senior, middle, worker. The graph also shows the breakdown of the employment of senior level positions in board run organisations, which are all non-Indigenous. The second is employment of middle level positions and the third is ‘worker bee’ level positions.

Of the 22 senior management positions in Yuendumu organisations controlled by Indigenous organisation boards, no positions are held by Warlpiri people. As of 2016, 11 middle management positions are held by Warlpiri people, compared with 49 held by non-Warlpiri people. The lowest level positions are overwhelmingly held by Warlpiri people, with most 120 people employed in these position, compared to less than 10 non-Warlpiri people. Having no Warlpiri leader employed at a senior management position shows a lack of equitable representation in local management across the broad range of sectors: health, education, arts and local government. The underdevelopment of pathways makes progress to equity slower as current structures do not accommodate local people driven styles of management that bring cultural dimensions to community management. Simon Fisher, WCE community based staff member suggests that this current model of management draws parallels to African management styles that had been mainly associated with apartheid ideology until Nelson Mandela became the first democratic elected president in 1994.

Evidence suggests to date that the contrast between board level responsibilities and levels of employment is stark suggesting that pathways to senior management positions are greatly in need. As part of this action, WCE staff consulted with Warlpiri leaders, who advised that co-management pathways needs
to be developed within each local organisation. This has resulted in the Chairperson of WYDAC leading discussion with its Board members to employ a Warlpiri person at a senior position, with the aim for other local organisations indicated in this study to follow suit.

7.3 Learning spaces

Establishment of the Warlpiri Research Centre

A service agreement between CDU and Warlpiri Media Association (WMA) trading as PAW Media & Communications was executed in June 2015.

A space was identified, renovated and equipped for the purpose of building capacity in Indigenous research through Warlpiri researchers (1) designing and conducting relevant research projects and (2) digitising archival and repatriating significant research material from relevant institutions.

Figure 17: WCE works in partnership with PAW Media and Communications to establish a Warlpiri Research Centre.

PAW Media & Communications assigned three spaces: a large room, an office space and an archival storage space. This room has been renovated and refurbished, lined with sound proof padding and equipped with office furniture. Recording equipment has been purchased and set up to record interviews on camera to build capacity in Indigenous research.

This facility will provide a platform for ongoing research development and build capacity in Indigenous research to strengthen pathways to higher education. It will also provide a platform for establishing a Warlpiri Research Ethics Committee, enabling the community greater control over research activities conducted in the community by universities and other agencies.

Figure 18: The Warlpiri Research Centre is up and running
Archival digitisation project

While the Warlpiri Research Centre was being renovated, WCE staff collaborated with Warlpiri Media Association (WMA) trading as PAW Media and Communications to acquire funds from Granites Mines Affected Areas Aboriginal Corporation (GMAAAC) to repatriate the Olive Pink Collection from AIATSIS and the National Museum of Australia. The aim of this activity was to generate Warlpiri research activity through acquiring access to closed files comprising Warlpiri knowledge of cultural significance.

The Community Engagement Leader commenced negotiations with AIATSIS and the National Museum of Australia in June 2015 over the repatriation of the Olive Pink Collection comprising 800 photos, 12,000 pages of anthropological records. Negotiations also took place with the National Museum of Australia over its Olive Pink artefact collection. For the next eight months, the Community Engagement Leader facilitated access applications and processes in collaboration with WMA. In March 2016, AIATSIS granted permission to WMA through formal agreement with AIATSIS under the Copyright Act 1968, the AIATSIS Act 1989 (Cth) and the AIATSIS Collections Access and Use Policy.

The Olive Pink collection is one of the largest archival collections in AIATSIS and contains sensitive data relating to both Warlpiri and Arrernte culture recorded in the 1930s. For this reason, the Community Engagement Leader was required to collaborate with Lhere Artepe Indigenous Organisation based in Alice Springs to appoint Arrernte senior custodians to work closely with senior Warlpiri leaders of Yuendumu in classifying the material. In April 2016, a group of three Warlpiri and three Arrernte researchers in collaboration with WCE staff visited AIATSIS and the National Museum of Australia in Canberra to examine the Olive Pink Collection and prepare for repatriation.

Figure 19: Arrernte and Warlpiri representatives with WCE staff collaborate on the repatriation of Olive Pink’s Collection. From left to right: Russell Taylor, AM, Chief Executive Office of AIATSIS, Simon Fisher Junior, Baydon Williams, Peter Wallace, Mick Campbell, Harry Jones and Simon Fisher Senior.
Figure 20: Simon Fisher supervising research at the National Gallery of Australia

Figure 21: Indigenous researchers examine the significance of Olive Pink’s Papers to Warlpiri and Arrernte culture supported by Lisa Watts, WCE Community Engagement Leader and Liam Campbell, Researcher.
All material has been digitised and repatriated to the Warlpiri Research Centre. Over the long term, Simon Fisher will collaborate with Warlpiri researchers, marking sensitive material and to collect knowledge on unmarked material: all items contained in the photographic and artefact collection have little or no information recorded. It is intended to provide feedback to AIATSIS and the National Museum of Australia, which partnership development will benefit the community for subsequent research projects.

This action was facilitated by the WCE staff to build Indigenous research capacity in the Warlpiri Research Centre, in which GMAAAC also contributed funds. The Yuendumu community is now able to promote the Warlpiri Research Centre to gain ongoing support. For instance, towards the end of this initiative, WCE community-based staff submitted applications to GMAAAC to purchase computers for the Warlpiri Research Centre to assist with sustaining research activities.

**A Warlpiri research project**

WCE community-based staff designed a research project on Warlpiri leadership to demonstrate how Indigenous research builds capacity and strengthen pathways to higher education. This research project involved the WCE staff interviewing a vast range of leaders on camera to collect qualitative data on the link between Warlpiri leadership and higher education. This took place in the Warlpiri Research Centre. At the beginning of this project, WCE staff conducted 11 interviews; some were incomplete or dampened by technical difficulties. Subsequently, WCE Initiative employed Liam Campbell to assist WCE staff to conduct further interviews, in which key issues of concern were highlighted. Warlpiri leaders referred to three major themes:

1. Literacy, Language and Learning
2. Bi-lingual/Bicultural education
3. Warlpiri leadership and self-determination
The production was screened at the Indigenous Leadership Conference at CDU on Thursday 10 November and at the Yuendumu Graduation Ceremony on 8 December 2016. The video can be viewed on vimeo link https://vimeo.com/189525925. Password is ‘cdu’.

**Strengthening partnerships with Universities**

At the Warlpiri Research Centre, Indigenous researchers will use the space to negotiate research protocols to ensure that Universities and institutions adopt culturally acceptable ways of doing research and ensure that Indigenous participation and decision-making underpins all research activities undertaken in Yuendumu. In 2016, a collaboration developed between Warlpiri researchers and Professor Linda Barwick, musicologist, Sydney Conservatorium of Music University of Sydney, musicologist to conduct the ‘Supporting Vitality in Warlpiri Songs’ project, which aims to analyse the maintenance of cultural practices in a rapidly changing world. This research involves the employment of both Simon Fisher and Valerie Martin, formalised in a three year contract. Commencing in 2017, research activity will be conducted at the Warlpiri Research Centre to utilise the archival material that has been digitised under the archival digitisation project. WCE has facilitated some of these negotiations, particularly in relation to ethics.

**Yuendumu Community Graduation Celebration**

The WCE Initiative participated in the 2015 Yuendumu Careers Expo and Graduation Celebration hosted by Yuendumu School on 19 November 2015. The WCE Initiative worked closely with Batchelor Institute (BI) to provide careers advice to students, who showed an interest in further studying. This event began with the Careers Expo at 1pm, followed by the Yuendumu Graduation Celebration held from 3pm to 8pm.
Figure 24: 2015 Yuendumu Graduation Celebration

Figure 25: CDU and BIITE representatives and Warlpiri students at the Jaru Learning Centre, Yuendumu.
Figure 26: The Yuendumu community held its first graduation celebration of over 70 students completing a VET certificate. This required all registered training organisations to collaborate on the event.

Figure 27: Warlpiri esteemed leaders, from left, Lotte and Eddie Robertson presented certificates with Mike Crowe, BIITE.
Figure 28: Families and children of Yuendumu all turn out to celebrate the graduates and awardees.

The events of the day engaged the entire community of approximately 500-600 members. A number of educational activities entertained children and youth, including a Careers Expo, and games and activities that involved visiting almost every organisation in Yuendumu. The event led into an evening barbeque with a live band as entertainment. During the graduation celebration, parents and families watched on with pride as their family members were awarded a VET certificate or recognised for their work in the community.

The 2015 event saw such a high level of engagement that the Yuendumu School proceeded to organise a second graduation celebration for the subsequent year, on 8th December 2016. A visiting representative from the Office of Pro-Vice Chancellor-Indigenous Leadership awarded certificates to CDU graduates and Simon Fisher for his honorary appointment of University Fellow. The occasion allowed WCE community-based staff to provide feedback to the Yuendumu community on WCE actions. It is events like these that inspire children, youth, parents & families to undertake further studies to higher education.
8.0 Key lessons learned and recommendations

1. Implement effective community engagement that adopts a bottom-up approach supported by government and non-government agencies.

2. Integrate Warlpiri ways of doing, seeing and thinking in a two way learning approach from early childhood to higher education.

3. Recognise the key imperatives of Yapakurlangu–lirnpa (engaging the Yuendumu community) encompassing:
   - Warlpiri leadership
   - Warlpiri language and culture
   - Warlpiri literacy and numeracy
   - English language, literacy and numeracy
   - Warlpiri pedagogy
   - Warlpiri metaphors
   - Yapa research
   - Bi-lingual / Bi-cultural education
   - Cultural mentoring
   - Warlpiri and Western knowledge systems
   - Elders, families, parents and the local community
   - Warlpiri governance
   - Warlpiri management styles
   - Local governance structures
   - Warlpiri methodologies
   - Community-driven processes
   - Governing bodies and committees
   - Building and shifting relationships
   - Partnership development

4. Develop a network of local Indigenous research centres and organisations to build capacity in Indigenous research.

5. Provide training to Indigenous researchers to build relevant pathways to education.

6. Develop Language, Literacy and Numeracy programs both in language and English for primary and secondary schools and tertiary programs.

7. Integrate and meld Indigenous knowledge systems into the academy, courses and in academic research.
8. Re-instate Remote Australia Teacher Education pathways.

9. Implement community school safety programs to address bullying and cyber-bullying in remote schools and to ensure the safety of children in school.

10. Implement cultural mentoring and leadership programs in remote schools.

11. Train non-Indigenous teachers in Indigenous history to increase awareness about past and contemporary struggles of injustice.

12. Encourage greater collaboration between governments, community and local organisations that acknowledges the important role of Indigenous leaders.

13. Adopt an intergenerational approach in schools by employing Indigenous staff to work directly with Indigenous learners in schools, learning centres and research centres.

14. Establish co-management positions in employment sectors: both government and non-government agencies

15. Provide ongoing support to the development of bilingual/bicultural education.
Appendix

Please view the video designed and directed by the WCE Community based staff at Yuendumu titled ‘Warlpiri Research: a journey to higher education’ on https://remotengagetoedu.com.au/communities/yuendumu/learning-spaces/
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Whole of Community Engagement Initiative

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