

SUE MCGINTY

WARUNGA IRENE JIMBIDIE

WANGKAYLALA GAIL SMILER

KAYLALA GAIL SMILER



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*Karrayili: adult education in a remote Australian community* tells the story of the Karrayili Adult Education Centre from its early days to the present, and the challenge of meeting the educational needs of a group of people who live a fourth world existence in one of the world's richest economies. Through the voices of the participants you will learn of the struggles and successes of Karrayili, including the Wangkiyupurnanupurru Radio Station broadcasting in at least six Aboriginal languages, the nationally recognised Mangkaja Arts Centre, and training and employment in the tourism and mining industries. At the heart of Karrayili is the group of senior people who wanted to learn to read and write and understand the white person.

Karrayili is a Walmajarri word for 'middle-aged'. In the context of the Karrayili Adult Education Centre it means a place for middle-aged people to meet for educational purposes. Karrayili was established after continuous lobbying in the 1970s, by the Walmajarri people of Fitzroy Crossing. Whether just learning to count from one to ten and to print their own names properly, or wanting to read, write and speak English fluently enough to conduct their own business with government and non-government agencies, the Walmajarri people showed remarkable strength in their resolve to be educated against the odds.

*It's time to start talking together and start working together. I think that's what Karrayili is, making communication better with kartiya and blackfellas.*

Ivan McPhee  
Chairperson, Kimberley Land Council



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# KARRAYILI

Adult education in a remote  
Australian community

SUE MCGINTY

TARUNGKA IRENE JIMBIDIE

PANGKAYLALA GAIL SMILER



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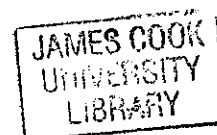
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WARNING

This book contains photographs and names of  
deceased persons

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Sue McGinty was born in Kalgoorlie. She lived and worked in Western Australia as a teacher and adult educator until 1989, when she went to the United States of America to complete her doctorate in educational psychology. In 1993 she returned to Australia to work at James Cook University where she is now Director of Research in the School of Indigenous Australian Studies. She teaches in Higher Education Studies and Qualitative Research Methods. Sue has also taught in Sweden and Russia on exchange programs. She has published in the area of education in remote communities, tertiary teaching and international issues in educational research. Her latest books include *Resilience, Gender and Success at School* (1999) and the *Politics and machinations of educational research: International case studies* (2000).

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Tarungka Irene Jimbidie is a Walmajarri woman. She was born in Fitzroy Crossing and has lived there most of her life. In 1987 Irene began working as a teacher assistant at the Karrayili Adult Education Centre. From 1991-93 she studied and completed her Diploma in Education (Adult) at Batchelor College (now known as Batchelor Institute of Tertiary Education) in the Northern Territory.

Irene continued working at Karrayili as an adult educator. During this time she was on several boards and committees in Fitzroy Crossing. From October 1996-98 she served as Principal of Karrayili. Irene has published several articles on Aboriginal education and is also an accredited interpreter. She is also a singer/songwriter and has recorded several songs with her brother Ronnie. Since 1999 she has taken time out from teaching to spend more time with her six children and granddaughter. Irene and her husband now live in Halls Creek.

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Pangakaylala Gail Smiler is a Walmajarri woman from Fitzroy Crossing. She is currently the Women's Cultural Project Officer with the Kimberly Aboriginal Law and Culture Committee. She is a Council member of the Bidjil Community, a committee member of the Cultural Health Program, Wangki Radio Chairperson, and is on 24-hour call for interpreting service for the Fitzroy Valley communities and agencies. She is currently developing a cultural awareness training program on health. In the past Gail was an Aboriginal Education Worker at Bayulu State School for seven years and has worked as a health worker in Fitzroy Crossing. She has certificates in early childhood education, translating and interpreting.

## FOREWORD

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Ivan McPhee (1997)

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I remember when the Karrayili Adult Education Centre started off in the 1980s. I was working for the Marra Worra Worra Resource Agency and I got involved. We were trying to invite all the Gooniyian, Bunuba mob to get more involved because most people at Karrayili were Walmajarri.

So I began my study with Communication I and II through correspondence. I think Karrayili was good for the old people, but most of the old people that used to be there are gone now. Karrayili made them learn to count from one to ten, and made them learn how to write their name or print their name properly. That's how Karrayili was there for them.

After those early times I found out that more young people were getting involved, and more things were happening, so Karrayili is growing now. We've got the Department of Sports and Recreation involved, the local school, the hospital, and an interpreting centre. Karrayili's been teaching a lot of people about communication in the Fitzroy Valley area. We've got five or six different Aboriginal languages, and we've got *kartiya* [white person] English and Kriol. People are learning to translate and interpret in those languages. That's why we want Karrayili to grow and extend. Even though they've got new buildings now, that school area is not enough, the way things are going we need to expand further. I see lots of young people starting to get involved.

What I think about the future of Karrayili is that there should be more pilot training for planes, and heavy machinery training, and work with mining on knowing how to do mining exploration of our country. I think local people should study all about this mining business instead of getting someone else doing the mining exploration. Aboriginal people understand one another better. If Aboriginal people know what *kartiya* does, they will then be able to run the businesses in Fitzroy. One day we'll probably own this Fitzroy town. It'll be an Aboriginal town if Karrayili trains more young people and they become involved.

Somewhere along the line, young people have to realise they can't be relying on old people all the time. Young people have to get up and start doing something too, even though the old people started Karrayili. I believe in

Ivan McPhee.



Karrayili—it has done a lot for us. I'd also like to see Karrayili grow to include more training in outstation business, buying cattle and the issues around Native Title. Native Title gave Aboriginal people more power. Now we have to sit down with *kartiya* and make agreements about land business and enterprises, about mining or reserve land, pastoral leases, and many other things that have to do with *kartiya* and blackfellas. There needs to be more involvement in language at the school.

Karrayili was there also to do introductions for new teachers that came in, and also for new hospital staff. Karrayili is there to explain to them what Fitzroy is all about—how many language groups and how far and wide they are spread. It also plays a role in facilitating communication between the community and government departments, including the police. Karrayili could also take on a role of training new staff at the Fitzroy Crossing Lodge. So Karrayili has a very important role in the future of the town and the region.

It's time to start talking together and start working together. I think that's what Karrayili is, making communication better with *kartiya* and blackfellas.

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Ivan McPhee is Chairperson, Kimberley Land Council and a former student and founding member of Karrayili Adult Education Centre.

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Kurtlil Peter Goodjee.



Luwurn Willie Kew.



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## PREFACE

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**Sue McGinty**

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The suggestion that this book be written was first made by Mr Ngarralja Tommy May, second Chairman of the Karrayili Adult Education Centre Council when he attended the First National Adult Aboriginal Education Conference held in Perth in 1988. He realised that the Karrayili experience should be known by others engaged in adult Aboriginal education and was keen that the story of how Karrayili started, be told to a wider audience. It was the Council who approved the grant application to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra in 1994. The book was five years in the making. When Irene Jimbidie became Principal of Karrayili in 1996 the progress of the book was speeded up and it is due to her efficiency and management skills that it has been brought to completion. She conducted many of the interviews and has contributed two chapters. Gail Smiler [working with Eirlys Richards] did the Walmajarri and Kriol interviews and translations. Sue McGinty coordinated the project and conducted some of the interviews.

At a Council meeting in 1995 it was decided that the book would be a record of the proud achievements of those involved in the setting up of Karrayili. It would be something that their grandchildren would read so that they would understand the efforts of those involved. The structure of the book was discussed at several meetings of the Council and it was regarded as essential that the story be told from the voices of the participants, and that it should be useful to other communities and educators who might want to set up a similar project. The decision to base the book on interviews and pictures without heavy academic language was intended to make the text accessible to the local as well as the wider community.

The interviews were carried out in Fitzroy Crossing in 1995 and 1997. Past teachers who were contactable were surveyed in 1995 for reflections on their contribution to Karrayili. There were many discussions about the languages to use and what editing of English would be done. It was decided by the Council that standard English should be used when the contributors said they wanted their words in English. When they spoke in Kriol or Walmajarri this would be transcribed and translated into standard English. Hence the use of three

Sue McGinty, Tarungka Irene Jimbidie,  
Pangkayala Gail Smiler.



languages in the book. The people of Karrayili are well aware of the differences in different types of English because of their linguistic training. They already had a well developed sense of how they wanted their voices represented to a wider *kartiya* [white person] audience. This, of course, may change over time, but in 1997 this was the position that they adopted. The dynamic nature of cultures requires that books are created and read in a time and a space that is captured by the contributing voices at that time. It is acknowledged that change is always taking place and what this book represents is a moment from that story.

The history of adult education in Fitzroy Crossing has been a long struggle on the part of the Walmajarri people, but the focusing of efforts into an independent adult education centre brought rewards as well as problems with continuity of funding and the demands of a changing education and training agenda on the part of governments. The challenge of meeting the educational needs of a group who live a fourth world existence in one of the world's richest economies has not been easy. The strength of the people's resolve to be educated against the odds is the remarkable story of this book.



Literacy and numeracy class (1992).