

MILPIRRI

A CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION

20 YEARS IN THE MAKING

This presentation is about a 20-year working and friendship relationship between Tim Newth and David McMicken, (Co-Artistic Directors of Tracks dance company), and the people of Lajamanu, specifically the family owners of the northern Tanami segment of the Ngapa Jukurrpa, or rainstorm dreaming, particularly around a place known as Kurlpurlurnu, of which Steve is a member.

This relationship slowly evolves as we develop ways of being with each other through visits, sitting and talking about the big and the small stories, visiting each other's country, caring for each other, painting, making banners and murals, making shows, touring and performing, eating and shopping. Like the Milpirri cloud forming when two opposites come into contact, the hot and the cold, together we have had to deal with many issues resulting from two strong cultures coming into contact with each other. Historic contact resulted in a big and angry storm, (eg. relocations, massacres, removal of families, enforced religious, social, financial and legal systems), however, our relationship has developed through respect, trust and family. We now look towards an horizon and at what the power of the storm can create.

Milpirri was developed by Steve as a perfect metaphor for these two strong forces appearing to clash and yet holding the promise of goodness, health, growth and celebration. Milpirri now shapes much of how we talk to each other. It allows for two different things (races, ages, sexes, systems, beliefs etc) to come together and fight it out and "become something that is the strength inherent to both. The Milpirri way is being used to influence education, health, celebrations, land care and other aspects of living.

Milpirri-thinking makes both Yapa and Katiya stop and think about what their cultures' core values are, and what are the best ways of together walking forwards towards the goodness that comes after the storm. Many Australians have a problem with feeling like they have any culture, let alone one of value. In reverse there is a long history of denouncing Warlpiri culture as having little to contribute to a future Australia. This is obviously a place of ignorance that Milpirri makes us reflect upon.

It is not a simple one-off lesson that can be taught and walked away from, or pointed at from a distance. It requires the ongoing commitment that relationship demands in its journey towards connection.

There are many other influences on this journey, in many other communities such as (Angurugu and Umbakumba Groote Eylandt, Tiwi Islands, Janganpa Dancers and Yipirinya communities Alice Springs, and various Southern Indigenous organisations and language groups. However, in order to deepen the understanding of our connection to this work, we have chosen personally to focus on Lajamanu first, other Warlpiri second, and then expanding further. For this presentation we are focussing solely on the relationship between us and Lajamanu

We will refer to 5 terms: Land, Law, Language, Kinship and Ceremony. We also use alternatives: Place, Responsibilities, giving voice, relationship, and performance.

For ease we have unconnected them, but it is the sense of being connected to oneself through these things, to a sense of wholeness, of Ngurra-kurlu, to which Milpirri aspires. We are here today to talk about how we are learning to feel it and use it. How we found ways to straighten things out and get ready (Jardi-Warnpa Ceremony – Milpirri 1), then to let the childishness die and the adult to emerge (Kurdiji Ceremony – Milpirri 2,) and then how to knuckle-down and learn the law, the responsibilities and ethics that bind us together as human beings (Juntu Ceremony – Milpirri 3)

What we are about is becoming more Australian – together

LAND PLACE

Becoming More Australian, Understanding Country

Working across Western and Warlpiri cultures is not as simple as a standard Cross-cultural collaboration. The maps of land overlap in very different ways. To say “I am Australian” or “where’s your country” means something different. To understand being a guest at someone else’s place takes on new meanings.

When first being introduced to Lajamanu the place both Tim and David talk about a strong sense of disruption, (... Am I still in Australia? Why was I unaware of this in “My” country? How do I survive/exist here? Who am I in relationship to this land? ...) of feeling like many things no longer make sense, that established ways of thinking might not work there. In this case, you could say that our search for meaning as artists can also be paralleled by our search for a sense belonging to place. We have both re-evaluated what it means to be an Australian, and what our own sense of culture and development really is. You could say we have had to learn new ways to reconnect to our old. As westerners it may be easier to wipe the blackboard clean and rebuild. For Yapa it is harder because the notion of ‘wiping clean’ that is needed “to engage with Western European Institutions ... require a relinquishing of Warlpiri Values and this is a choice that causes confusion and apathy”¹.

This is the same in reverse: When Tim first engaged with Lajamanu he felt he had to give up everything and go and live there for several years in order to understand it. Living in their conditions on an outstation, eating what they ate, not eating when they had no food, to be in 48 degree heat, questioning things such as teeth cleaning and toilet paper – in short to become the other. However this led to him becoming unwell and in reality he had to choose to remove himself from that place and return to his own country to recover. David in turn would visit the community during business time (Summer school break) and he also would become sick with stomach things, boils, head lice and conjunctivitis, and need to return to his own place to become healthy again. There are countless stories of researchers, teachers, anthropologists etc, who find themselves in similar situations.

¹ Steve Jampijinpa Patrick

However, Tim and I were guests in their country and relationship was extended as an honour and privilege.?

About Lajamanu²

It is hard to imagine a community more remote than the Lajamanu Community (originally named Hooker Creek). Situated in the semi-arid country, with its spinifex grasses and acacias, is on the edge of the Tanami Desert, in the traditional country of the Gurindji people. In Northern Territory terms, it is very much in the bush, the nearest service town (Katherine) is 645k away by road.

Lajamanu is not situated on traditional homelands but was established in 1949 by the Native Affairs branch of the federal government with 25 Warlpiri people trucked there from Yuendumu (founded in 1946). This was said to have been done to alleviate overcrowding and the risk of disease.

In 1951, totally against their will, a further 150 Warlpiri were trucked there from Yuendumu. Unable to live away from their Dreaming sites, they all walked back to Yuendumu, a distance of some 600km across the inhospitable Tanami Desert. The notion of being removed from close relatives and from sources of spiritual power was abhorrent to them. Two further resettlements and walk-backs in 1958 and 1968 to Yuendumu occurred before the Warlpiri residents were prepared to accept the new community at Hooker Creek. Lajamanu is now home to some 700 Warlpiri with a strong sense of culture identity, helped by the settlement's remoteness, linguistic stability and its own Aboriginal Town Council.

[In 1948 the Native Affairs Branch of the Federal Government decided to establish a settlement at Lajamanu (then Hooker Creek) to provide a home for the families of Aboriginal workers on cattle stations to the north. The settlement was (and is) on the land of the Gurindji people. Contrary to the original vision, the settlement was used to relieve population pressure in the Warlpiri settlement of Yuendumu many kilometres to the south. In 1951, 150 Warlpiri were trucked to the new settlement. Many people walked the 600 kilometres back across country to Yuendumu. They were then removed again, and walked home again. The third time they were removed, most people stayed. The fact that Lajamanu is a Warlpiri settlement on Gurindji land continues to be a source of conflict and emotional pain for both tribes.³]

Tim and David live in Darwin, away from their respective countries of Wangaratta and Melbourne. With the deserts to the south and SouthEast Asia

² Paraphrased from a document found in the old art centre. I don't know who wrote this but if you know could you let me know please.

³ Ngurra-Kurlu: A Way Of Working With Warlpiri People. Wanta Jampijinpa Pawu-Kurlpurlurnu, Miles Holmes (Lance) Alan Box

to the North, this is where they now call home, where they gain knowledge and inspiration from the relationships they build.

An understanding of each other's "country has developed over several projects.

LAW RESPONSIBILITIES

The policeman is your friend
Better get yourself and Attorney
It's illegal to do that

Tracks:

Gives voice to Northern Territory culture

Creates dynamic and contemporary performances

Shapes the future of Australian dance

Tracks values:

Australia's arts and dance history, encompassing western, Australian Indigenous, South East Asian and Pacific cultural heritages

Contemporary and traditional forms of movement as a tool to create new work

The cultural richness and diversity of the Northern Territory

The individual's own truth and story

The pursuit of excellence

For Westerners it is often seen that the law is a set of rules and regulations with consequences for breaking them. We do accept that people can become more versed in the law through study. But generally law is something that as long as you do not break it, just guides us along.

Religion and particularly Christianity, has provided the basis of many of our laws, as well as our weekly structures of work and rest, of holidays, and even what is considered a lawful relationship.

When creating a show, one rarely looks at the law except for maybe insurance and culpability issues that are becoming more and more. When we say we are

working through legal structures (boards, councils, etc) it does not mean the same thing as working through Warlpiri legal structures.

But when creating a show with the people of Lajamanu, law constantly comes into it. Their Law appears to encapsulate a lot more: Knowledge, beliefs, customs, practices, rules, regulations, and more importantly, how being connected to this creates a whole or healthy member of the "tribe". It is beneficial for us to look at how our own law includes these things, and not separate it out. Part of our unhealthiness seems to be our abdication of moral and ethical rights to the police and courts.

During our work we have at times used the notion of a higher authority who gives us orders – "We too have a boss who makes us follow certain rules". Once an agreed understanding of following "law" or legal guidelines has been established, through an understanding of Boss and Policeman/Manager, disagreements pass more quickly. Now we are becoming our own Boss, we have to fall back on greater concepts – our own sense of moral values.

We have to deal with ideas of copyright in different ways. Whose story are we telling? Whose Values are we representing? Who has the right to perform what.

We have a job to do, we are one of a few triennially funded dance companies funded by the Australia Council and the Northern Territory government. We are often referred to as the territories Premier performing arts company. Our job is to make excellent performances, that is just as important as an Australian work as a piece by Adelaide's Australian Dance Theatre, or Melbourne's Chunky moves. We talk about what an audience will see, performance qualities, terms like front or concepts such as "rehearsal" are new and foreign to the majority of the 250 strong cast. Often when a dance is performed all we see are people's backs, the reason being that the dance travels East, so the dancers must also, we must work with that. We have been in heated debates with old men - "Why do you bring us here each day". We already know our dances." It appears that in ceremony the rehearsal and the performance happens at once, and it is fine for the owner to stop everything and yell at everyone to get it right. But the Milpirri show is not a ceremony, it is a performance, with two strong laws both operating side by side.

Working on Milpirri uplifts Warlpiri values into the spotlight. We have to follow strict laws (protocols and observances, procedures) at the same time creating something that works in two worlds running parallel. We have to respect the senior law men because like our lawyers and judges, they have spent many years learning and testing their law, and dispensing it. At times it feels like we

are challenging different ideas of law, but it could be seen like two attorneys battling it out in court except not looking for the win/lose but the new win/win. In the journey it has been two cultures meeting and trying to sort it out. We have had to question who leads what? And what where we are at the moment is finding ways to respect that there is Yapa stuff and that Yapa lead this, that there is Kartiya stuff and we lead that, and then there is this Milpirri stuff, which is the two together, and we need to find ways that the two can lead this. In simple terms: there is black stuff, white stuff, and black & white stuff.

We work through the school because law is knowledge and school imparts knowledge, but there is also the “bush school” where senior law men and women impart law in different ways.

This sense of being connected to the law, and it being a pathway that all can follow. There is always a choice, to follow in the right/strong pathway, or not – and there are social consequences.

Moments of understanding Warlpiri law

David and murder/sorry stuff

Ngapa - law and teaching of it =knowledge, and how one gains this

Big boss concept

Working through legal structures

CEREMONY PERFORMANCE

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⁴ 20 years of over 25 shared performances and events

- **1988 – Living in Isolation – tour of a set of 1 act plays to Lajamanu including one bilingual play written by Lajamanu CEC senior students. First Lajamanu Contact. Had to learn some Warlpiri for the play. The cast stayed extra time as the senior women wanted to dance for them.**
- **1989 – first Lajamanu residency – flying ant. Also tour to Darwin as part of Fire on the Water.**
- **1989 – Tim Newth visual arts residency – banners and murals**
- **1990 – New Ways Old Ways. Tour to Lajamanu with Warlpiri play**
- **1990 – Lajamanu residency 2 – Goanna, included a tour to NT communities (also Yipirinya School which started another chain of events over the years.)**
- **1991 – North of the Border – tour of contemporary dance to Lajamanu**
- **1992 – Lajamanu Kurra Karna Yani – full length dance performance devised in Darwin and a 1 week season in Brown’s Mart Theatre**
- **1994 – Sacred Space – performance work devised by DM and SC about white contact into Indigenous communities. Yawalyu women performed as part of Darwin Season.**
- **1995 – Boundaries and Beyond tour. Including taking Sacred Space to Lajamanu, and workshops through school**
- **1996 – opportunity of distance tour – Wangaratta and Melbourne – Yawulyu and Steve came with us – them seeing our country**
- **1996 Ngapa Project completed (4 years) – two cultures – one country. Research field trip to Ngapa country – creation of show in Lajamanu, performance in Darwin festival. (Field trip was when we began to be told stories by one old man about Mij Ping, as we were at the site of her tent (Pirdi Pirdi or Thompson’s Rockhole) which is an important place for the Ngapa Jukurrpa**
- **1997 – festival of the Dreaming – took Yawulyu to Sydney**
- **1998 – Lajamanu residency (meet artist gay Hawkes)**
- **1999 – Shades of Pink – research in Lajamanu and Alice Springs – contacts with people with early contacts with Olive Pink)**
- **2001 – Fierce, the story of Olive Pink – performed with Yawulyu – first contact people. (Also first time Yawalyu worked with interstate guest dancer Trevor Patrick)**

Tracks produces quality, original, contemporary dance performances, recognised as large scale, outdoor, visually spectacular and site specific. They are Territorian in theme and bring together participants from diverse cultures, ages and artistic disciplines. They utilise community and cultural relationships as its creative foundation.

Milpirri is a long term project that has evolved from this long history of collaborative celebration, with over 25 projects in 20 years, between Warlpiri Lajamanu people and Tracks artists. Collaborations have at times explored Black fella business, and white fella business, but mostly they have focussed on the black and white fella business together.

This began in 1988 where Tim was a part of a youth theatre company who toured a play onto Lajamanu. Equipped with little more than a swag, a few

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- **2002 – Fierce, The Meeting of Olive Pink – refined show to more strongly reflect the Warlpiri women’s experience of Olive Pink. Performed with the Yawulyu, including a tour to Alice Springs**
 - 2003 – Local – a celebration of 10 years of talking the name Tracks – Yawulyu perform in Darwin
 - **2003 – completion of Between Foot and voice research paper – research on traditional and contemporary dance as found in Lajamanu and the Tiwi Islands. Devised to convince funding bodies of the contemporary nature of traditional indigenous dance – ie a living not museum culture**
 - 2005 – Angels of Gravity – Yawulyu perform in Darwin as guest performers
 - 2005 – **Milpirri 1 – jardi Warnpa**
 - 2006 – Australian youth Dance Festival – Horsham – took two young men from Lajamanu to
 - 2006 Lajamanu residency – Nick Power and Erwin Fenis – break and hip hop dance in the school, in preparation for auditions for youth show for Darwin Festival Mr Big
 - 2006 – Mr Big – Caleb and Gerard perform in Mr Big – 6 week rehearsal/performance 2 week season
 - **2007 – Milpirri 2 – Kuridji**
 - 2008 Struck – Caleb in Darwin
 - 2008 – Lipstick and Ochre – Darwin Festival – Yawulyu perform with Darwin senior women dancers (The Grey Panthers – Celebration of 20 years exchanges with these two senior women’s groups.
 - **2009 – Milpirri 3 -**

basic props, and some very poor Warlpiri language skills, the small team of artists set out along the Tanami Track. The destination was to perform the Lajamanu school's winning entry 'Manangkarawardingki Malju' in their remote desert community. They returned to Darwin inspired by the potential of the Northern Territory's rich cultural landscape and the eagerness of Territorians, both 'whitefella' and 'blackfella' alike, to share their stories. Here lay the first 'tracks' of a unique journey.

This continued with artists being invited by the school council to return to the community. This became two three month residencies over the next few years, both resulting in a group of young Warlpiri people performing and touring to neighbouring Warlpiri communities, but also getting as far North as Darwin, or South to Alice Springs.

In 1992, Lajamanu Kurra Karna Yani was developed as a full length show. This was a direct result of the Youth performers asking if they could create a theatre show with higher values. The final cast (including supporting elders, predominantly the women) worked up the show in Darwin and presented as part of the Darwin Festival.

The Nagpa Trip (completed in 1996) where Steve, Tim and David went back to and travelled along the Ngapa Jukurrpa pathways as owned by Steve's family. We went with a senior owner, a group of women elders from the country, and an oral historian from the NT archives. This was a trip onto traditional lands and needed to have traditional knowledge that only comes from many years of experience. This trip led to the Nagpa performance for Darwin Festival.

That year we also toured the **Opportunity of Distance** to Wangaratta and Melbourne, designed as a tour back to David and Tim's countries of birth. We took a white cast, Steve and a group of women. The season included a piece called Sacred Space, about white people coming to terms with the inclusion of remote Indigenous communities into their world view and the resulting sense of dislocation. This view of the Warunga Kartiya (or mad white-people) was amusing when performed in Lajamanu. The reverse would be extremely disturbing. On this tour the Yawulyu women performed dances from their country.

Tarlinkjirra - the Meeting of Olive Pink. This project took place over several years, visits, and incarnations. Initial interest came from being on site at Pirdi Pirdi or Thompson's rock-hole – where Miss Pink set up her camp. For several of the people on the Ngapa journey Miss Pink, who they call Tarlinkjirra, was the first white contact they had. The Yawulyu ceremonial women created a

contemporary song and dance cycle based on their experiences of Miss Pink on that land. The final show used both Western and Indigenous perspectives and performance/ceremonial structures.

This sense of ceremony is extended into kinship and family responsibilities which include trips to country, funerals, hospital visits, home and school visits for boarding school students, attending ceremonies, learning songs, dances, stories, and morals. Other ways of extending the understanding of land, place and connection to it was by Tim's parents going to Lajamanu, Steve going to Wangaratta, and David's Melbourne relatives meeting their hitherto unknown Yapa relatives while on tour. When youths are in Darwin or here for school, David and Tim can act as intermediaries between difficulty dealing with City ways, and the school's difficulty in accepting the communities ways. Family visits are an important way for keeping a sense of belonging alive.

At one point this also included the 1000K drive to Lajamanu simply to get an Australia Council Grant form signed at a time where there was no telephone, let alone fax, contact with anyone in the community except the town council. Communication was difficult as it was through VJ radio. (How odd that at the same time was a video link up set up in a room connecting Lajamanu, Yuendumu, and New York.)

LANGUAGE GIVING VOICE

Language is the way we communicate through these different aspects and encapsulate our world view. There are not many Warlpiri speakers in the world, only about 3,000 and so the encapsulated information is indeed quite rare and not dissimilar to a rare ecosystem that exists and has evolved in a particular environment, and encodes all the important things about that environment.

As in other languages, Warlpiri has different forms of language, one which Steve talks about is the language of the land – “Speak to the land and the land will speak back to you”.

As a fundamental – Tracks says that it gives voice to Northern Territory Culture. When we say this what we are meaning is that we provide an avenue for culture to be perceived. We mostly use performance and so we have developed highly refined and complex performance language that encapsulates the diversity of the NT, including the Warlpiri of Lajamanu and beyond

When working with Lajamanu we predominantly work through celebration (Performance and ceremony) and so the Language we are learning is around that – so it does include the other aspects of Land law etc. We have found the language of dance speaks to many people. Using the themes inherent in certain ceremonies, (ie in Milpirri one the theme from the Japanangka Napanangka, Napangardi Japangardi skin groups came from a goanna dreaming (wadapi) and the moral or ethical theme was Purami or following the right way. The elders had song and dance (Ceremony) that encapsulated their long time developed world view of this. We created new male and female dances that looked at how younger Lajamanu people saw this concept. The view was the same, the language (dance/music) was different. The elders saw that the youth got the concept – the youth saw the elders version in a celebration context. We all found something that was new, not a fusion of old and new, but a language that came from things being side by side together

Language needs to be learnt, and so school was an important place to have concentrated people and learn things together. But so was the after school daily song and dance sessions where older people reconnected with their specific ceremonial languages, sharing this in a public way with the rest of the community including youth, and Katiya etc.

Tracks builds work on extended histories of trusted relationships, developing a dance idiom that values the diversity of practice and beliefs while celebrating an important aspect of Australian dance/culture, as a frontier company. At times the language is rough and tough, at others so refined that it can only exist in the smallest of places. Talk talk – small talk on the ground at the end of the day while scratching on the dust and looking at the sun set, is often the place where gradually language comes to a meeting point. If we remain in English, the elders and other Warlpiri are disadvantaged and the level of conversation comes down to a frustrating almost child level where deeper understanding cannot exist. If left to Warlpiri then the youths and Kartiya are disadvantaged for the same reasons. Both sides have deeper levels of understanding in their own language.

Milpirri attempts to act as an intermediary, using performance and celebration to ridge the divide. Both sides of the conversation are highly refined in their own forms. Together we are finding the emerging language of performance/ceremony that comes from both Traditional ceremonies, men and women's business, and western methods of creating performance, particularly youth focussed, and a shared language that contains movement, design, visual arts and ritual objects, music, song and story. All of this encapsulating over themes, content, and structures that progress and develop over longer time frames.

Developing artistic language: Specific Performance language:

Budgeting, timetabling, costuming, developmental time, production, creative personnel, production personnel, management, liaising, designing, lighting, sound engineering, programming, promotions, advertising, logistics, construction, monitoring, iterative evaluation cycles, training, rehearsals, dress rehearsals, technical rehearsals, showtime, stage directions, documentation, filming, DVD production, website, grants, acquittals

Janganpa – language of evolution. Small steps to reach mount improbable. If the fruit falls too far away from the tree it dies.

Dress rehearsal, technical production, and performance happen all at once in ceremony – the working out happens in the process. The difference between ceremony and performance

Still don't understand the process that Warlpiri are going through to get to a point of getting up and "performing" – what were the old men doing

KINSHIP RELATIONSHIP

We all come from someone and somewhere. We share this. SO some relationships are set through birth and blood. But other relationships are formed through invitation and time. So, if the whole struggle to live is about the struggle to feel connected, then kinship/relationships provide a constant stage to explore and build these feelings of belonging.

In Warlpiri, The skin or kinship system is not just about blood, it is about a set of obligations and responsibilities that are intrinsically a part of the system. It is not just about blood, but also about the other elements: a relationship to law, land, Language, Ceremony and people. It can and does extend to people who might not have originally seen themselves as part of that system.

If one way of relating to the world is through kinship, then in that world view, all things are related, and this includes Katiya, or all non-yapa. so in order to make sense, Yapa have to establish where non-yapa fit into this system. And Katiya have to learn what the roles and responsibilities come with that system.

But in simple terms, this is also inherent in other cultures, (westernised Australia included). Skin is about knowing where you come from. Who is your mother and father, who are your four grandparents. It gives us all a common sense of belonging

Activities that nurture and grow the relationship:

Staying at outstations, visiting sacred sites, holding newly born nephews and nieces, going to ceremonies, hunting, watching people die, watching children grow into adults, maturing - from young man towards elder, painting together, carving a #7 boomerang, teaching someone to drive your car, shopping, people staying in your house at town, watching football, sexy dancing at the disco,

David's first contact was via a family that were staying with Tim and he in a small flat in Darwin. Tim was already an established member of that family and so the family spent three days working out what my relation ship was. They observed my behaviour with Tim, with Desmond, his wife, and their two children, one male and one female. At the conclusion, I was placed in relationship to Tim and the family in a way that has affected all of my work with Warlpiri since, whether in Lajamanu, Alice Springs Yipirinya, with Janganpa dancers, with Warlpiri visiting or living in Darwin, or with other Katiya already

in the system. As a result Tim and I are seen as cousins who share responsibilities of similar things. He might be owner and I might be manager. It keeps us looking after each other. It also places us in particular relationship to the entire Milpirri project.

I may see myself in a state of being a guest within the system, but it at times seems more than that when "family" call me by my relationship. As in any relationship, boundaries are tested and respect earned. Influences flow both ways. From simple starting points of trying to see where you fit in, relationship and kinship over 20 years is multigenerational. Many students at the education centre are the children of the youths that we originally worked with. Our recent Darwin Festival show had a grandmother and two of her grandchildren performing. Milpirri music has come from the son and daughter of the man who originally seemed to get Lajamanu contemporary music on the map through the North Tanami Band.

From Josie daw – PhD Candidate quoting from Graham Harvey
Tim and David are "visitors but treated differently from both being a native or an observer. There is active participation in some aspects of ceremonial life and important cultural activities on invitation. Guesthood is not available from a distance or to those that demand entry, but to those who acknowledge and respect the prestige of their hosts.

“Our law and our ceremonies are still important to us, it is the law of walyjarra the people who lived and died thousands of years ago and we cannot change that.

...

Now Lajamanu community is a modern place. It has a shop, police station, school, recreation hall, art centre, women centre, health clinic, council office, CDEP (Community development project), CEC (Community Education Centre) where the Batchelor College students work, work shop, power station and Lajamanu Air.

...

If you come to work in Lajamanu, there are some rules you need to follow. Speak quietly and politely to local people. Don't ask too many questions. People will tell you what they want you to know.

Remember you are learning a new culture, are not an expert. Don't stare at people in the eye, this is considered rude. If a funeral or ceremony is happening, please stay away unless you are invited.

If there is any fighting going on, please don't get involved. If you come new to Lajamanu, don't try to change things quickly, be patient. Lajamanu is a dry community. Alcohol is not allowed unless you have a permit.

Most important please listen and learn before you try to change things. Lajamanu belongs to the Warlpiri people.”⁵

Abstract:⁶

Children in Lajamanu community grow up in a complex linguistic environment in which people around them talk in several languages and code-switch between them. They learn two Indigenous languages in the home – Light Warlpiri, which they use on a daily basis from when they first start to talk, and Warlpiri, which they begin to produce between the ages of 4 and 6 years. Light Warlpiri and Warlpiri share a lot of vocabulary and grammatical patterns. They differ mainly in the use of verb systems, and in the distribution of certain types of suffixes on nouns. The similarities and differences in the two languages lead to intriguing questions about how the children in the community deal with such complex and variable input. In this paper I discuss the

⁵ Ashley Watson 2000 – ABC Heywire

⁶ Carmel O'Shannessy has published "Children's production of their heritage language and a new mixed language" In Simpson, Jane and Gillian Wigglesworth (eds) Children's Language and Multilingualism. London / New York: Continuum International Press

children's development in speaking each language, by examining their production of a set of stories told in both Light Warlpiri and Warlpiri. Analysis shows that they can identify and reproduce quite finely differentiated patterns within and between languages.

Education - Lajamanu⁷

The classroom environment remains almost absurdly removed from the community outside with it's own well established ways of teaching and learning. I believe our most valuable exchanges and mutual learning experiences occurred in the evenings sitting on the front step, or under the shade of a tree, speaking some English/ some Warlpiri, sharing stories about our lives and events in the community.

⁷ Eloise Mitchell, 2000 - myspace