

**WANGKA
WALYTJA**

THE LIFE AND
TIMES OF THE
PAPUNYA LITERATURE
PRODUCTION CENTRE

**Library &
Archives NT**

**24 March 2025 –
16 September 2025**

MEDIA RELEASE

Wangka Walytja – the Life and Times of the Papunya Literature Production Centre

Touring the NT

Library & Archives NT, Darwin – 24 March 2025

Opening hours: Monday – Friday 10am – 5pm

Papunya Tjupi Arts, Papunya - November 2025 (TBC)

Available for national touring

2026-2028

Wangka Walytja is an exhibition celebrating the rich legacy of the Papunya Literature Production Centre. Between 1979 and 1990, a collective of writers and artists, literacy workers and elders from Papunya produced hundreds of beautifully illustrated books in Pintupi-Luritja as part of the school's bilingual program. This exhibition will showcase original drawings, storybooks, community newsletters, handwritten manuscripts, photographs, and audio-recordings from the archive alongside new animations of selected books, talking books, and a documentary where creators and their descendants reflect on this pivotal period in history.

Papunya's first literate generation accomplished the revolutionary transposition of an oral tradition of storytelling into the medium of alphabetic literacy and representational imagery. Hundreds of books were created in an upwelling of creativity and collective intellectual endeavour entirely comparable with their parents' contemporaneous painting movement, for which Papunya is internationally famous. Papunya's writers and illustrators documented their community's history, culture, and everyday life for subsequent generations with at times brutal honesty, producing the first Pintupi-Luritja literature.

"We learnt from the old people – the artists doing the dot paintings back then – and we thought, 'Oh we'll do a bit different than that one. We'll draw a picture.' That's how we came to put the books out." - **Douglas Multa**

"It was really wonderful how they illustrated all those traditional cultural stories with such fantastic authenticity and creativity. And we focused on the collecting and recording process of the stories and the transcriptions. So that was our working life." - **Charlotte Phillipus**

"We created all these books together with the old people in Papunya, many of whom have now passed on, those dear things. We devoted a great many years to this work – more than ten years – a lifetime." - **Dennis Kuḷaṭa Nelson**

"We really did some significant work there." - **Priscilla Brown**

For media inquiries, please contact:

Juran Timu-Adams

Marketing and Communications Manager, Artback NT
communications@artbacknt.com.au | 08 8941 1444

For Exhibition touring inquiries, please contact:

Roni Judge

Visual Arts Manager, Artback NT | 08 8953 5941
art@artbacknt.com.au

For Exhibition Prospectus and updated information on public programs visit:
www.artbacknt.com.au

Acknowledgement

Artback NT is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body and Proudly Sponsored by Arts NT. This exhibition has been made possible by Arts NT - Arts Projects and CBF - Minor Community Grants funding through Northern Territory Government.

Wangka Walytja is a collaboration between the University of Queensland and Papunya Tjupi Arts, funded by the Australian Research Council, Creative Australia, and the Regional Arts Fund.

Curators:

Dennis Nelson Tjakamarra

Dennis Nelson (Kuḷaṭa), son of Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula, founding artist of the Papunya painting movement, and Gladys (Yawitji) Napanangka, one of the first women to paint for Papunya Tula Artists. Dennis contributed to the production of over 100 bilingual storybooks at the Papunya Literacy Production Centre in the 1980s. He takes pride in painting meticulously in the style his father taught him. His participation in **Wangka Walytja** rekindles his passion for drawing in the style perfected by his father.

Charlotte Phillipus Napurrula

Born in Haasts Bluff/Ikuntji, Charlotte is the eldest daughter of the founding Papunya Tula artist Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra. Over the years painting at Papunya Tjupi, Charlotte developed her own meticulous version of his Kalipinyapa *Kapi Tjukurrpa*. She also paints unique children's stories harking back to the over 50 storybooks she wrote as a literacy worker at Papunya Literature Production Centre in the '80s. A fully qualified teacher and strong advocate for bilingual education, she worked for decades in the classrooms of Papunya School and chaired the project's Steering Committee from its inception.

Karen McDonald

Karen was born in Papunya and grew up at Blackwater Outstation attending school in Papunya and later Yirara College Alice Springs. A skilled translator and linguist, she worked at Papunya school as an assistant teacher for many years. Karen paints her grandmother's story, Kungka Tjukurrpa at Ilpilli. Her artwork continues to evolve in new directions and has incorporated poems, text, and images. She is a strong voice in curatorial decision making for Wangka Walytja.

Roslyn Dixon

Roslyn is the daughter of Colin and Mary Dixon, both painters for Papunya Tula Artists. Roslyn came to Papunya when she was young and attended Papunya school and later Yirara College Alice Springs. Back in Papunya she worked for World Vision and currently works at Papunya School. Roslyn first painted with Warumpi Arts and at Warlukurlangu Artists Yuendumu before Tjupi Arts opened in Papunya. Roslyn is married to Watson Corby and has four children. She is an enthusiastic contributor to curatorial decisions for **Wangka Walytja**.

Vivien Johnson

Vivien Johnson is a writer, teacher, researcher, and curator, who has contributed to Aboriginal art scholarship and advocacy over many decades. Her monographs on Western Desert artists were foundational and her work on Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights recognised nationally and internationally. In 2019, after a decade working with Charlotte Phillipus and Dr Samantha Disbray to preserve, protect and restore to circulation the Pintupi-Luritja Bilingual Collection at Papunya School, she was awarded a National Library of Australia fellowship to research its collection of Papunya readers. The library has since digitised all 350 books, available on Trove following the exhibition.

Samantha Disbray

Samantha is a linguist, researcher, and Senior Lecturer at the University of Queensland. Since 1999, she has worked with Central Australian communities, focusing on Indigenous languages in education. She has published on the Northern Territory Bilingual Education Program and contributed to language revitalisation projects, including Ankkinyi Apparr, Ankkinyi Mangurr with Warumungu speakers and **Wangka Walytja** with Pintupi-Luritja people from Papunya. Samantha also convenes the Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Language Revitalisation at the University of Queensland.

END