Incorporating archival cultural heritage materials into contemporary Warlpiri women’s yawulyu spaces

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Abstract
National archives house a rich legacy of materials that document many intangible aspects of Indigenous cultural heritage. It is the moral right of Indigenous people to have access to these materials, but their reintroduction back into present-day worlds is not without impact. Here, I analyse contemporary spaces in which Warlpiri women have engaged with archival cultural heritage materials and incorporated them into present-day contexts for the performance of yawulyu. These include the production of song books, dance camps at bush locations, and broader community arts performances. These cases illustrate that for proper engagement with these legacy materials knowledgeable Indigenous people must lead activities which are supported as part of the repatriation process.

Keywords: Warlpiri, cultural heritage, performance, women’s songs, community development

Introduction
Early in 2018, 13 Warlpiri women and I huddled together in a small listening room at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), eagerly anticipating what we were about to hear. The group had travelled from the Tanami Desert settlement of Yuendumu to Canberra, along with three men, who sat in the room next door, presumably going through a similar process. We had contacted the access manager at the sound archive several weeks earlier, requesting that particular materials be available for the group’s visit. Narrowing this down had been a daunting task – the broad array of Warlpiri materials in the archive seemed almost endless and details of each item were not readily displayed in the catalogue. Unable to identify individual recordings, we asked for access to several large collections made by prominent researchers whom Warlpiri people remembered, and some of whom were still in contact with Warlpiri people today. These ethnographers, anthropologists, musicologists, and linguists, who have lived in and travelled through Warlpiri country over the last century, had diligently archived their recordings here, and, content aside, they provide
a fascinating overview of the breadth of intercultural interactions between Indigenous peoples and visitors to their country during this time.

As I clicked play on the computer screen, crackles of a recording from another era filled the room. Made by musicologist Stephen Wild, who had lived in the settlement of Lajamanu in the early 1970s, this recorded session of Warlpiri song was just one of many Wild had done. The unison voices of close female relatives of my companions filled the room. The thudding of feet hitting the earth as they danced was clearly audible. Looking up, I saw that Nampijinpa was crying. After listening to similar archival recordings with these women over many years, I had become used to this kind of emotive response to hearing the voices of dearly loved relatives who had passed away. I reached out to comfort her and asked if she wanted me to turn the recording off, something no one had ever desired but which I continued to offer nonetheless. She emphatically insisted that I keep it on, as she was crying “in a happy way.”

“We don’t do yawulyu like that anymore,” Nampijinpa stated as explanation for her tears. “There were so many people dancing, now we just have a few.” While Nampijinpa and others listened nostalgically, I was left with thoughts of the frailty of this genre of Warlpiri women’s song in the contemporary world and the very different contexts in which it is held today. These recordings clearly had immense cultural heritage value, but were they also affecting present-day contexts? Was the richness evident in these legacy recordings resulting in the downplaying of the contexts in which Warlpiri women carry out performances today, working hard, in the face of many challenges, to hold on to their musical knowledge and practices? Or were they providing stimulation and inspiration for these contexts? Either way, present-day engagement with these legacy recordings was not without impact.

In this chapter, I address the issues surrounding the return of legacy cultural heritage materials to the generations of Warlpiri people living in Yuendumu, an Aboriginal community in the Tanami Desert region of Central Australia. I focus particularly on a broad genre of Warlpiri women’s song, yawulyu. Today, Warlpiri women are actively engaged in new and creative ways of ensuring that yawulyu continue to be held into the future. In this chapter I describe several contemporary contexts that illustrate ways in which archival sound recordings and photographs have been reincorporated into present-day performances. The impact of returning legacy recordings into these contexts is the central topic of this chapter. I begin by delineating the Yuendumu-specific context within the Australia-wide effort of researchers to return materials of cultural heritage significance to their communities of origin. I then give an overview of the many recordings of Warlpiri women’s yawulyu that are held in national and local archives and that for the most part are inaccessible in any real way to the current generation of Warlpiri women who carry this tradition forward. I then go on to describe some recent contexts in which Warlpiri women have utilised archival cultural materials in contemporary performance spaces.

Firstly I discuss the use of old recordings and photographs in a song documentation project that resulted in the book and CD collection Yurntumu-wardingki juju-ngaliya-kurlangu yawulyu: Warlpiri women’s songs from Yuendumu (Warlpiri Women from Yuendumu 2017a & b). Secondly I discuss the biannual Southern Ngaliya girls’ dance camps that have been held for the last 10 years at outstation sites around Yuendumu. And thirdly I reflect on Unbroken Land, a community arts event produced by Incite Arts that was held in Alice Springs in September
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2018, at which a group of Warlpiri women from Yuendumu were invited to perform yawulyu, alongside a number of other theatrical contributions to a broader event. With reflection on these contemporary contexts, I argue that efforts to repatriate archival cultural materials must also include support for community-led activities that provide spaces for Indigenous people to engage with these legacy materials.

Repatriation and the return of Indigenous cultural heritage materials

Human remains and objects of significance stolen from Indigenous families in the past have become a focus of many repatriation efforts in Australia today. In some instances, although many more remain, these tangible, material components of Indigenous persons have been returned to the descendants of these families. The songs, dances, designs, stories, and photographs documented over the course of the 20th century are records of intangible components of Indigenous cultural heritage that powerfully connect Indigenous persons across generations. These recorded materials are thus also the owned cultural property of Indigenous groups, and present-day descendants have moral rights as well as responsibilities to pass on associated knowledge and practices to future generations (Curran et al. 2019). Within a Central Australian context, the intrinsic importance of song to Indigenous identity is paramount, with songs connecting people to their inherited country, cosmological beliefs, and kinship networks. Legacy sound recordings and other materials are thus of enormous cultural heritage value.

The repatriation of digitised versions of photographs and video and sound recordings to Indigenous communities is, without a doubt, the proper ethical path to follow.1 As such, efforts by researchers to return materials from archives or individual collections back to communities are now widespread. As Treloyn & Charles observe:

In Australia, the return and dissemination of audio and video recordings from archival and personal collections to cultural heritage communities has emerged as a primary, and almost ubiquitous, fieldwork method. (2015: 163)

These efforts, however, have multifaceted effects within present-day contexts and on the ways in which Aboriginal people remember and continue to maintain songs and associated knowledge. As Anderson reminds us with respect to the return of stolen objects of significance to Indigenous peoples:

‘Repatriation’ ... [is] strictly speaking an impossibility. An object of cultural significance, left long out of its original context, cannot be put back. The context changes, the significance of the object changes, original meanings are forgotten or transformed. (This is not to say that the objects become meaningless or unimportant.) (Anderson 1995: 9)

1 Many institutions, including AIATSIS, that hold these archives have undertaken large-scale efforts to digitise recordings made on older sound-recording technology. These efforts recognise the national significance of these materials.
Therefore ‘repatriation’, if this is to be done in its true sense, must be more than a simple return of material to a community archive or the provision of copied materials to interested individuals, although these are clearly important too.2

Later in this chapter, I discuss some examples of Yuendumu-centred activities that focus on developing community-led activities to reincorporate these materials responsibly within present-day contexts.

The body of documentation of Indigenous ceremonial practices and songs for archival purposes, although sometimes pejoratively labelled as the result of salvage ethnography,3 must be acknowledged as producing a highly significant legacy of cultural heritage materials. In Yuendumu, and likely in other Warlpiri communities, people never tire of watching archival films of the spectacular conflict resolution ceremonies for which Warlpiri people are famous. One of the most popular films requested for group screenings in Yuendumu is the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) film of a 1967 Ngajakula ceremony (Sandall 1977), with spoken analytical commentary by much-loved anthropologist Nicolas Peterson. Also of immense interest is the Lander & Perkins (1993) film of the counterpart ceremony Jardiwarpa – a Warlpiri fire ceremony, a brighter and more spectacular production. With the beginnings of Warlpiri Media Association in the 1980s, Yuendumu has been at the forefront of documenting many aspects of local cultural life and houses a large on-country archive of this material. Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri (PAW) Media and Communications (previously Warlpiri Media Association) has for several decades produced films that Warlpiri people owned and produced in collaboration with the many non-Indigenous media workers they have employed over the years.4 In a recent film, Yarrripiri’s journey (Daw & Cadden 2017), made by young Warlpiri directors Simon Japanangka Fisher Jnr and Jason Japaljarri Woods, and produced by long-term community media workers Anna Cadden and Jonathan Daw, Warlpiri elders tell the ancestral Jardiwanpa story as it moves from south to north through Warlpiri country. The film incorporates ceremonial footage from the 1993 Lander & Perkins film, artistically embedding the latter within footage of landscape taken more recently during the current film’s production. This use of archival footage echoes the ways that Indigenous peoples worldwide have incorporated historical photographs into their own media, asserting cultural identity in a modern world (see Ginsburg 1995 for examples).

2 As an anonymous reviewer has pointed out, the word ‘repatriation’ is increasingly used to refer to objects or materials that are handed back permanently. As the materials discussed in this chapter are all recordings of intangible aspects of culture, ‘repatriation’ is used here to refer more to archival return, the re-incorporation of recorded materials into the cultural worlds where they were made, even though other copies and often original recordings may be housed permanently elsewhere.

3 ‘Salvage ethnography’ refers to a form of early 20th century anthropology in which recordings of languages and ceremonial practices were made with the assumption that the documented traditions were ‘disappearing’ and would not survive in the future.

4 Hinkson (2002) has illustrated the “long and complex history of intercultural engagement at Yuendumu” (2002: 160), noting that it is “intercultural in terms of who was participating and driving the projects, intercultural in terms of the traditions being engaged, intercultural in terms of the meanings produced” (2002: 164–165). She argues that this was not acknowledged in Michaels’ earlier works, though certainly it was a factor in the 1980s and is increasingly so as PAW workers engage with new forms of media in the present day.
In the 1980s, Eric Michaels (1986, 1987) examined Warlpiri people’s engagement with then-new media (television and audiovisual recording technology), focusing in part on the impact of recording technology on forms of orally transmitted knowledge, and finding that Warlpiri knowledge transmission is negotiated in the moment, such that audiovisual recordings sat at odds with traditional ‘face-to-face transmission’. Several decades later, however, Barwick et al. (2013) found that younger generations in other Central Australian communities preferred to supplement traditional teaching and learning modes with the use of writing and audiovisual media. Warlpiri people have embraced literacy over the last 50 years, and while this was not applied to the writing of ceremonial texts, there have been recent community publications of written ceremonial texts, one of which will be discussed later in this chapter (Warlpiri Women from Yuendumu 2017a & b). Warlpiri people are nowadays embracing all types of archival materials, incorporating not only audiovisual media and photographs but also written documentation into contemporary contexts for holding and nurturing valued musical traditions and associated cultural knowledge.

**Yawulyu**, the Warlpiri word for a genre of song performed by Aboriginal women across Central Australia, was originally sung by ancestors in a creational moment known in Warlpiri as *jukurrpa*. The songs follow ancestral travels across Warlpiri country and evoke the landscape features and activities of these ancestral beings. Song words are often esoteric or cryptic, requiring explanation from knowledgeable elders. Warlpiri women take a lifetime to learn to sing *yawulyu*, but participate in ceremonies from a young age, dancing and being painted up with ochred designs. Traditionally, *yawulyu* were held as part of larger ceremonial activities to nurture the identity of specific women who related to the focal *jukurrpa* and country. Today, *yawulyu* continue to nurture the patrilineally inherited connections of women to country, but do so in significantly changed performance contexts. Dussart has argued that:

> the modified functionality of Aboriginal ceremony, by virtue of its dramatic evolution both in purpose and structure, offers tremendous insight into the dynamic construction of indigenous social identity in a context of extended colonial pressures. (2004: 253)

Dussart’s work (2000, 2004) illustrates some of the dramatic changes to ritual forms that took place in the 10-year period from 1990 to 2000. Opportunities to hold *yawulyu* have further declined in the decades since Dussart’s analysis, yet the strength of a collective of senior Warlpiri women means that *yawulyu* finds a place in the contemporary world, often being held for openings of buildings, community programs and art exhibitions, as part of organised bush trips, and during school events and visits to country. In preparation for *yawulyu* events held today, it is common for women to request photographs and sound and video recordings as memory aids, often just to get the tune right or remember a body design. Fortunately for Warlpiri women in these contexts, a large body of such materials exists, but less fortunately these materials are unorganised and efforts to enhance accessibility take significant time.
A brief review of the archives of Warlpiri women’s yawulyu

As outlined elsewhere (Curran et al. 2018), Warlpiri culture is one of the most widely researched and recorded among Aboriginal groups in Central Australia. While the musical lives of Warlpiri people have not received as much focused attention as other areas of Warlpiri culture, there are several key older works that include song texts and stories (see Wild 1987; R Moyle 1997; Morais [Dail-Jones] 1992), as well as some more recent publications (Gallagher et al. 2014; Laughren et al. 2010; Turpin & Laughren 2013; Warlpiri Women from Yuendumu 2017a & b). This research has been undertaken across Warlpiri communities that span a broad area of the central desert including the communities of Lajamanu, Alekerenge, Willowra, Nyirrpi, and Yuendumu. Since Warlpiri women frequently travel between these communities, and have intimate family connections across them, with many living in different communities over the course of their lifetime, many Warlpiri women have been and continue to be involved in yawulyu events right across this broad area of Central Australia. Recordings that researchers have made in other communities over the last five decades, and circulating CD and USB copies of these, also have significant impact on Warlpiri women’s engagement with archives. Although I review here the materials that have been recorded across Warlpiri communities, due to these broad geographical and social interconnections the focus of this chapter is particularly on yawulyu performance contexts in Yuendumu.

Many researchers travelling through Warlpiri country in the earlier half of the 20th century made recordings with early forms of sound technology including wax cylinders (Basedow 1926; Tindale 1931, 1932) and cassette tape recorders (Elkin 1953a, 1953b, 1953c; Barrett 1954, 1955, 1956, 1962, 1963, 1964; Holmes 1964; Lewis 1964; West 1961). These mostly focused on men’s songs, due largely to the gendered positions of the predominantly male researchers but also due to widespread misunderstandings that dominated the early 20th century, whereby the ritual lives of Indigenous Australian women were understood to be simplistic and profane (Kaberry 1939). There are a few rare early recordings of yawulyu and other women’s song genres (see Table 1).

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5 Elkin transferred these to discs with 12 inch (standard groove), 33½ RPM.
6 An exception to this is the female researcher Sandra Le Brun Holmes, who made recordings with both men and women from various Aboriginal groups (1964), although she only recorded Warlpiri men singing during her time at Lajamanu.
Table 1. Pre-1966 recordings of Warlpiri women’s songs (taken from A Moyle 1966)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place recorded</th>
<th>Year recorded</th>
<th>Recorder</th>
<th>Description in archive deposit, with my comments (in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phillip Creek</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>AP Elkin</td>
<td>‘Women’s secret Yowalyu ceremony – Wailbri and Waramunga (Waramanga) tribes’ Linda Barwick has also documented further details from Elkin’s sound recordings, fieldnotes, and photos (Barwick 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuendumu</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Murray Barrett</td>
<td>Sanba bui sanba (sung by women) These songs have recently been identified as being an older style of purlapa (a genre of Warlpiri song sung by men and women) (Curran et al. 2018). Rara rara – lullaby song (sung by women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuendumu</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Murray Barrett</td>
<td>Curl curl (sung by girls) Widiwid dogulbana (by women) Bogul bogul (by women) Also identified as being an older style of purlapa sung by both men and women in performance context, but here elicited by Barrett only from women.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Large and comprehensive collections of sound recordings of yawulyu begin from the 1970s as increasing numbers of female researchers and workers began living in and travelling through Warlpiri communities. Table 2 outlines the collections of yawulyu currently housed at the sound archive at AIATSIS. Other collections of yawulyu also exist but have been archived elsewhere (notably those of Ros Peterson, Françoise Dussart, and Carmel O’Shannessy). AIATSIS and individuals who have worked in Warlpiri community organisations also hold significant video footage of Warlpiri women performing yawulyu for various community-based events over the last four decades. Much of this is also archived in the Warlpiri Media Archive at PAW Media and Communications, although details of its content is yet to be documented. It is therefore difficult to estimate the scale of the collections of audiovisual materials on Warlpiri women’s yawulyu.
Table 2. Collections of Warlpiri women’s yawulyu deposited in the AIATSIS sound archive (based on their catalogue)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Recorder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Phillip Creek</td>
<td>AP Elkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Yuendumu, Alice Springs, Ernabella</td>
<td>Alice Moyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969–1979</td>
<td>Lajamanu, Yuendumu</td>
<td>Stephen Wild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973–1987</td>
<td>Yuendumu, Lajamanu</td>
<td>Mary Laughren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Alekerenge</td>
<td>James Horne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Lajamanu</td>
<td>Barbara Glowczewski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981–1982</td>
<td>Willowra</td>
<td>Megan Dail-Jones (Morais), Petronella Vaarzon-Morel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987–1988</td>
<td>Tennant Creek and Alekerenge</td>
<td>Gertrude Stotz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989–1990</td>
<td>Lajamanu</td>
<td>Jennifer Biddle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996–1997</td>
<td>Alekerenge</td>
<td>Linda Barwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000–2001</td>
<td>Balgo, Kununurra, Halls Creek</td>
<td>Lee Cataldi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–2008</td>
<td>Yuendumu</td>
<td>Georgia Curran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of these recordings have now been digitised and deposited at community organisations and archives, and are thus much more easily shared among Warlpiri people (via CDs and USBs). Recently, I have been involved in projects that have seen the return of many of these major collections to the Warlpiri Media Archive in Yuendumu. Significant engagement with these collections is, however, still to occur.

Contemporary yawulyu spaces and the use of archival materials

Although the contexts for holding yawulyu have declined in recent decades, nowadays there are a number of opportunities for women across the Central Australian region to hold and share their ceremonies (examples include annual week-long camps held separately by the Central Land Council and the NPY Women’s Council). Due to the dedicated commitment and efforts of Warlpiri women, Yuendumu-based community organisations also provide support for yawulyu events, and there are now several locally based forums for holding and performing yawulyu. Significant among these are the Southern Ngaliya girls’ dance camps that have been held twice a year since 2010.\footnote{Incite Arts sought funding and provided support for these camps from 2010 to 2017, partnering with Yuendumu-based Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC). For the last two years, WYDAC has obtained funding and run these camps without this external assistance.} Set-up and supported spaces such as these are the main contexts...
today in which large groups of Warlpiri women come together to hold yawulyu, although some women may continue to sing yawulyu in groups within their family camps. Here, I outline three recent projects explicitly focused on supporting the contemporary vitality of Warlpiri yawulyu. Yawulyu has considerable vibrancy compared to Warlpiri songs sung by men, which do not have the same level of support, mostly because no group of men exists of comparable numbers or collective strength.

Making yawulyu song books

Two yawulyu song books, together featuring five different sets of yawulyu songs, have been published in recent years. Jardiwanpa yawulyu (Gallagher et al. 2014) documents songs relating to an ancestral Inland Taipan snake, Yarripiri, in his travels northwards through Warlpiri country. Yurntumu-wardingki juju-ŋaliya-kurlangu yawulyu (Warlpiri Women from Yuendumu 2017a & b) features four different song sets: Minamina yawulyu ‘Songs of the travelling ancestral women’, Watiyawarnu yawulyu ‘Acacia seed Dreaming songs’, Warlukurlangu yawulyu ‘Songs of the place belonging to fire’, and Ngapa yawulyu ‘Rain Dreaming songs’. Both these books are based on recordings that I made with Warlpiri women between 2005 and 2008 while I was undertaking PhD fieldwork as part of the ‘Warlpiri Songlines’ project. Many different genres of Warlpiri song were recorded for this project, but due to the gendered segregation dominating Warlpiri ceremonial life and my own positioning as a woman, yawulyu is the most prominent genre in this collection. This project was carried out in an era of digital recording where solid-state sound recording devices were easily transportable for fieldwork, and I was able to deposit these recordings regularly at the Warlpiri Media Archive, based at PAW Media and Communications in central Yuendumu. Here, I discuss a yawulyu book project in which some of these recordings are featured, through textual documentation of the songs’ words and rhythms as well as through audio-links (sound pens and QR links). While Warlpiri women could have had access to these sound recordings through their community-based archive, and I regularly gave CD copies to individuals upon request, it was not until these books were being produced that Warlpiri women fully engaged with these archived recorded materials.

From 2013, I began to work with Warlpiri women to revisit these recordings. Many workshops have been held over the last five years, aimed at collectively listening to these recordings, writing down the words of the songs, and recording stories and reflections to

8 A notable exception to this are the yawulyu that are sung in the late afternoon surrounding Kurdiji ceremonies, held several times in Yuendumu and other Central Australian communities over the summer months. While nowadays the Warlpiri people utilise their royalty money from mining activities on their country to support these events, there is no support provided from community organisations, which are often closed at this time of year.

9 The project ‘Warlpiri Songlines: Anthropological, linguistic and Indigenous perspectives’ was a partnership between the Australian National University, the University of Queensland, the Central Land Council, and the Warlpiri Janganpa Association (Australian Research Council Linkage Project).
include in the book. Following the enthusiasm generated around the first book, *Jardiwanpa yawulyu* (Gallagher et al. 2014), in 2016 we began community workshops to compile the second volume containing four *yawulyu* song sets. The group decided that they wanted this book to be dedicated to Warlpiri women from the past, present, and future, as it drew together the voices of women who had long passed away and present-day generations, and was a way to pass this on for the future. In this way, the book combined the voices of multiple generations of Warlpiri women, many of whom would have had little contemporaneous interaction with each other during their lives. Additionally, Mary Laughren, who worked as a linguist at the Yuendumu school during the 1970s and 1980s, contributed her photographs from this period in which large groups of women were captured dancing and singing *yawulyu* and being painted up near the Yuendumu Women’s Museum when it was opened in 1981. Interest in the use of these photographs in the books reflects shifting attitudes towards the use of photographic materials, which is also occurring elsewhere in Australia. In Jennifer Deger’s eloquent reflection on the presence of photographs in Yolngu grieving rituals, she notes:

> the inseparability of such images from the potent affective charges they generate, and the ways such indelible, inhering images mark and transform our inner landscapes and thence our relationships with the world and others. (2008: 292)

The photographs make the printed *yawulyu* books cherished community resources and for some individuals these are the only photographs they have of family members who are now deceased.

In all the workshops held for the production of these *yawulyu* song books, there were opportunities for Warlpiri women to sing, dance, and paint up. Towards the end of the project, we hired a filmmaker to produce four short films of the *yawulyu*, which feature on a DVD insert in the 2017 book. This opportunity for filming resulted in another afternoon and evening of *yawulyu* dancing (see Figure 1). Two related book launch events, held off Warlpiri country in Alice Springs for the Northern Territory Writers Festival (May 2017) and at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (August 2017), gave Warlpiri women an opportunity to perform *yawulyu* and share these songs outside the Warlpiri world. The *yawulyu* performances at all these events were directly influenced by the book content. At each event, *Minamina yawulyu* and *Ngapa yawulyu* were performed; these are owned respectively by Barbara Napanangka Martin and Enid Nangala Gallagher, two key women crucial to the documentary aspects of this project. These performances were a way for a generation of Warlpiri women, who had missed out on opportunities to learn *yawulyu* in more traditionalised contexts, to assert

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10 The first book project, *Jardiwanpa yawulyu* (Gallagher et al. 2014), was undertaken with the support of Batchelor Institute’s Centre for Aboriginal Languages and Linguistics, and the project was managed by Margaret Carew. Due to the enthusiasm shown by the core group of Warlpiri women involved in this project, I was able to obtain funding through the University of Sydney to support a Yuendumu-based project to make another book.

11 The Yuendumu Women’s Museum has not been used for more than two decades but there are current plans to revamp this space.
their ownership, learn from more senior women, and utilise literacy skills to document the performance, while also engaging the generation below them.

These yawulyu song books and CD products have provided contemporary contexts for Warlpiri women to engage with archival sound recordings and photographic materials, and have created resources that Warlpiri people can genuinely use in educational contexts, including yawulyu events. Most importantly, however, these projects set up spaces in which Warlpiri women can reflect on, nurture, and hold yawulyu. Establishing such spaces is significant because fewer contexts for yawulyu exist in the contemporary Warlpiri world.

Southern Ngaliya girls’ dance camps

Until 2017, the Southern Ngaliya girls’ dance camps were organised by Alice Springs-based community arts organisation Incite Arts, in collaboration with the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC, the Yuendumu-based youth program previously named Mount Theo program) and a core group of senior Warlpiri women. The Incite Arts website describes the project objectives as:

build[ing] a platform to collectively focus on: achieving stronger links with traditional song and dance; creating new generations fluent in the ceremonial and cultural knowledge of their parents/grandparents; strengthening of Warlpiri culture; showcasing within and beyond the region.¹²

¹² https://incitearts.org.au/sn/
In 2017, WYDAC took over the organisation and funding of these events. The Southern Ngaliya dance camps are held twice yearly, in the first weekend of the school holidays in April and October. Large groups of women travel to outstations near Yuendumu where they camp for several days. These camps are strictly women-only: even though men may assist with transport, they must stop at a distance away from the camp as female drivers transfer the women to the site of the dance camp. Such strictness about gender segregation reflects the female-only contexts of the yawulyu associated with men’s initiation events (these yawulyu often take place while women are not allowed to move from their camp, to avoid the risk of running into men en route for ceremonial business). At the Southern Ngaliya dance camps, groups of women often travel to nearby sites during the daytime and share stories about country. In the afternoons, the women paint up for several hours while singing yawulyu and then dance just prior to and after sunset. For Warlpiri women, the Southern Ngaliya dance camps have become an important time for nurturing jukurrpa and sharing songs and dances with younger women. Often Warlpiri women from other communities such as Lajamanu, Willowra and Nyirrpi will travel to attend these camps, drawing in their own regionally focused yawulyu. These camps, held in remote bush locations, require enormous logistical support. All food, water, and bedding needs to be pre-organised, as does transport for the many women who attend. A significant commitment of funding is required for these events, as they also involve payments for Warlpiri women to attend, a practice now standard across Central Australia.

While these dance camps have now been held for eight years, it is only more recently that archival resources have been incorporated into these events. In April 2017, during a dance camp at Mirjirnparnta, and during the same period that the 2017 yawulyu book described above was being made, many women began to request copies of the photographs of yawulyu body designs for use during their painting-up sessions (see Figure 2). In more recent times there has been a trend for the designs used in these painting-up sessions to be less complex and for the same designs to be painted up on many women. Furthermore, while in past decades different yawulyu verses would have unique designs, more recently all women were painted with a standard design for each jukurrpa. In 2017, archival photographs were used as a way to break with this trend, so that women who had associations with particular country were painted with individualised designs to reflect this. Interestingly, children do not seem to be included in this practice, with all children being painted with the same design, perhaps because at that stage in life they do not have the maturity to hold their yawulyu properly.

Additionally, the women expressed an interest in watching archival films during the late evening. At this particular camp they watched Jardiwarnpa – a Warlpiri fire ceremony (Lander & Perkins 1993). At the dance camp held the following October at Jurlpungu, a screen was not available, and the Warlpiri women instead chose as their evening entertainment to listen to sound recordings I had made in 2006, including some that had not been published with the 2017 book. By April 2018, at a dance camp at Yuwali (Bean Tree), PAW Media and

13 Interestingly, these events are regarded as being for ‘fun’ yawulyu, and are not used as an opportunity to hold very serious ‘finishing up’ yawulyu following the deaths of loved Warlpiri women. This may be due to the time and logistical restrictions put in place by the supporting organisations.

14 An anonymous reviewer noted that children have always had simpler designs and that it would be good to compare contemporary photographs with earlier ones to see the extent to which this has changed.
Communications staff transported a large portable screen out to the bush site. Not all requests for viewings of archival footage at these events could be met. While this is by no means the first time that Warlpiri women have shown an interest in using archival materials within performance spaces, it was certainly the beginning of this being technologically possible, with portable screens and iPads with digitised photographs and audiovisual recordings available to support these performance contexts.

**Unbroken Land, 2018**

In September 2018, the community arts event Unbroken Land was held for the third time at the Alice Springs Desert Park (after previous events in 2015 and 2016). Although, through their connections with Warlpiri women’s dance camps, Incite Arts had invited the Southern Ngaliya dancers from Yuendumu to participate in previous years, logistics and other personal circumstances had meant that 2018 was the first time they were able to travel into Alice Springs to participate. In the words of Jenine Mackay, Incite Arts’ CEO and artistic director of Unbroken Land, as a community arts event it focused on “drawing together different sectors of the community which normally don’t have a chance to interact.” Within a western creative framework, elements drawn from Greek theatre (including a chorus leader and chorus in an epic narrative structure) formed the basis of a promenade performance through the Alice Springs Desert Park; the audience walked a kilometre through four stage spaces, each at a different location in the park. The various parts of the event were drawn together around the theme of water – a particularly poignant theme in this desert context. Part 3 of this broader...
production had a focus on ‘traditional song’, and the Southern Ngaliya dancers performed several verses of *Ngapa* ‘Rain’ *yawulyu*, followed by performances from a contemporary dance troupe, a Pitjantjatjara Arrernte woman, and a Western Arrernte woman. The audience then moved on to the next staged section of the performance. These performances were done twice a night over three consecutive nights.

Several months beforehand, in preparation for this event, Enid Nangala Gallagher had expressed an interest in centring the performance around a recording of a *Ngapa* *yawulyu* song set that I had made with senior women over a decade earlier and that had recently featured as part of the boxed set of four CDs (Warlpiri Women from Yuendumu 2017b). Many women in these recordings had since passed away, and Enid, although only in her 50s, is now a senior owner for these *yawulyu*. One track from the CD set, which centred on Jukajuka, a site close to Yuendumu and central to the westward travels of the *Ngapa jukurrpa*, was chosen for the performance.

For the performance a large photo of this site was projected onto several transparent muslin cloth panels as a background for the dancers. The panels had *ngapa* ‘water’ designs printed along the sides, and the Warlpiri women all wore skirts on which these designs had been digitally printed. While constraints of the westernised theatre context and timings made it difficult for the Warlpiri women to use the performance to hold *yawulyu* as they would in a more traditional setting, they embraced this new context in which to share the values of their musical traditions. For several hours each afternoon, prior to the performance, they were given a space and external support to paint up properly, rehearse songs, and chat with other groups of Aboriginal women. On each of the three evenings, the Warlpiri performers chose to perform different dances associated with the *Ngapa* *yawulyu* (see Figure 3). During the performance they did not play the actual recording, because there were senior women present to sing, but it was used to structure the performance such that it could be controlled within the tight requirements of the theatre context, and it allowed the Warlpiri women to plan flexibly and fit in with the technical aspects of the overall event.

**Figure 3.** Warlpiri women dance *Ngapa* *yawulyu* as part of Unbroken Land, September 2018, led by Pamela Nangala Sampson (front left) and Maisy Napurrurla Wayne (front right).
Following the Southern Ngaliya dancers, a group of contemporary dancers performed a ‘coolamon dance’ to the recording of Ngapa yawulyu (see Figure 4). This performance was choreographed by Katie Leslie, an Aboriginal dancer from NSW who knew the Warlpiri women through having previously assisted with the Southern Ngaliya dance camps. The Warlpiri women enjoyed watching this tastefully done performance and hearing the voices of their deceased relatives dominating the auditory component of the performance space. Enid reflected that it would be good for younger Warlpiri girls to do dances like this to older recordings, revealing a vision for a future where younger generations engage with yawulyu in new and creative ways while still being guided by the voices of knowledgeable elders.

**Conclusion**

In remote Indigenous communities across Central Australia, recent decades have seen large-scale shifts in the structures of Indigenous social lives. These factors have had enormous impacts on the contexts in which land-based genres of music like yawulyu are being performed. While yawulyu and other genres of song intrinsic to Aboriginal identities were once performed frequently and passed on orally through generations, today support is required from community organisations to set up the time and space, and to assist with logistical aspects. As has been demonstrated, in Yuendumu Warlpiri women actively seek out support for opportunities to perform yawulyu and more recently have expressed an increasing desire to incorporate the documentary efforts of previous generations into these performances. Nampijinpa has now asked me to bring her a CD copy of the yawulyu recordings that made her cry at AIATSIS in 2018. She wants to sit with a big group of women and listen to them all together, “just to feel happy.” She also thinks that her granddaughters will come to sit down
and listen to these songs if she has the recordings. These are precisely the kinds of contexts that can be set up for multiple generations to engage properly with legacy cultural materials.

I have argued in this chapter that the meaningful repatriation of archival materials must involve these kinds of community-led contexts for engagement. These do not have to be grand but must be sensitively led by knowledgeable Indigenous people who understand the value and power of these intangible aspects of Indigenous persons and can properly negotiate their impact on present-day contexts. Alongside this, as attitudes towards images and recordings of the deceased rapidly shift, these cultural heritage materials are more easily incorporated into public spaces, and many more contexts may open up for engagement with archival materials.

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