

Kakutungutanta to Warrie Outcamp

40,000 years in Nyiyaparli country

The Nyiyaparli Community
with Caroline Bird and Edward McDonald

Acknowledgements

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WARNING: This book contains images of deceased people. The Nyiyaparli have allowed these to be published for educational purposes.

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Fortescue



Australian Government
Department of the Environment

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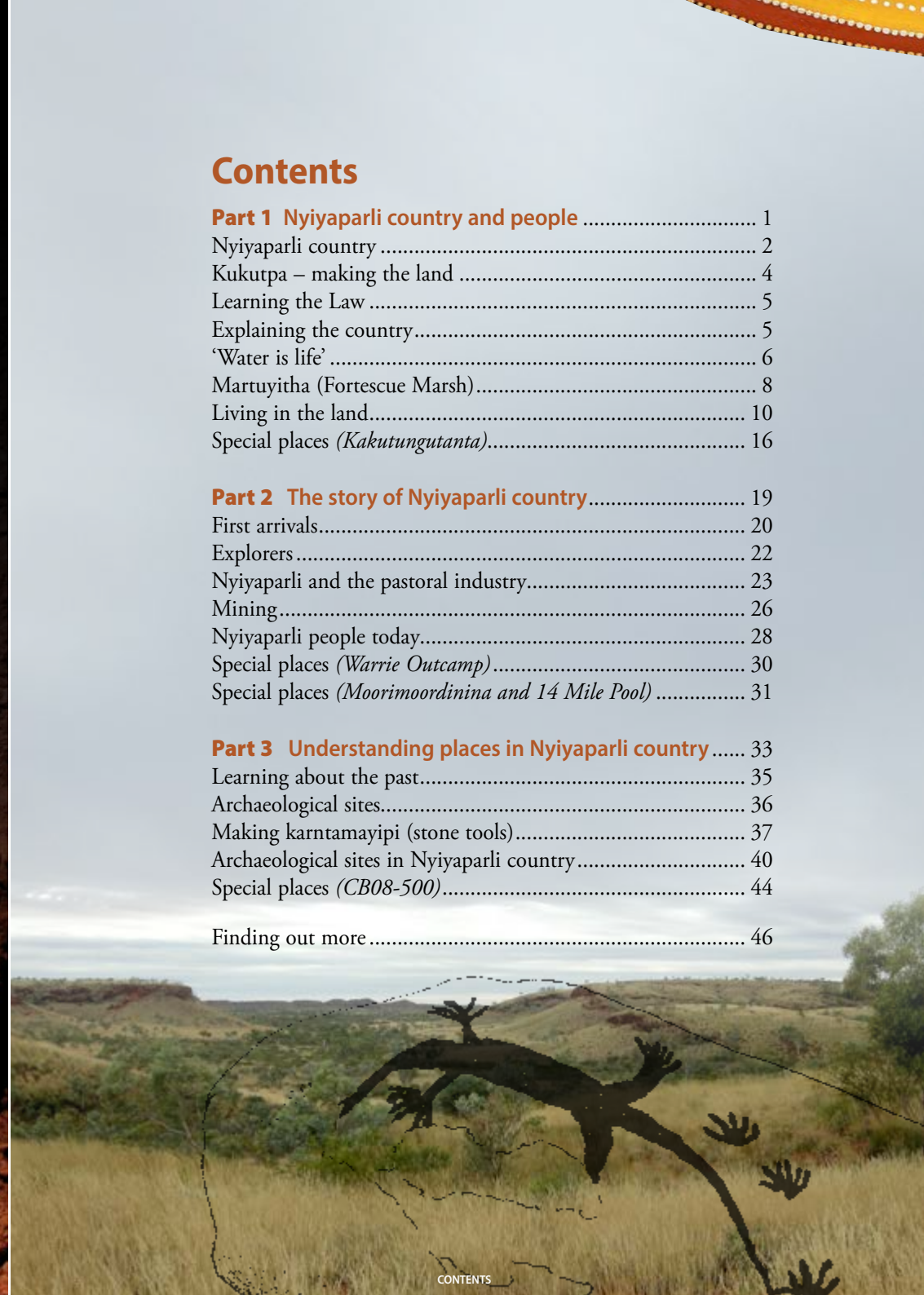
Louis Warren: p.5 (top)

Michael Stream: p.1

FMG/Sarah Geall: p.35 (top left)

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PART 1

Niyaparli country and people



Niyaparli country

Niyaparli country is around the headwaters of the Fortescue River. It includes pastoral stations Roy Hill, Marillana, Balfour Downs and Ethel Creek, and the present day town of Newman.

The Niyaparli, like all Aboriginal people (Marlba) in the Pilbara region, were hunters and gatherers for thousands of years. For at least 40,000 years they moved from one water source to the next within their own territory hunting animals and gathering plant foods.

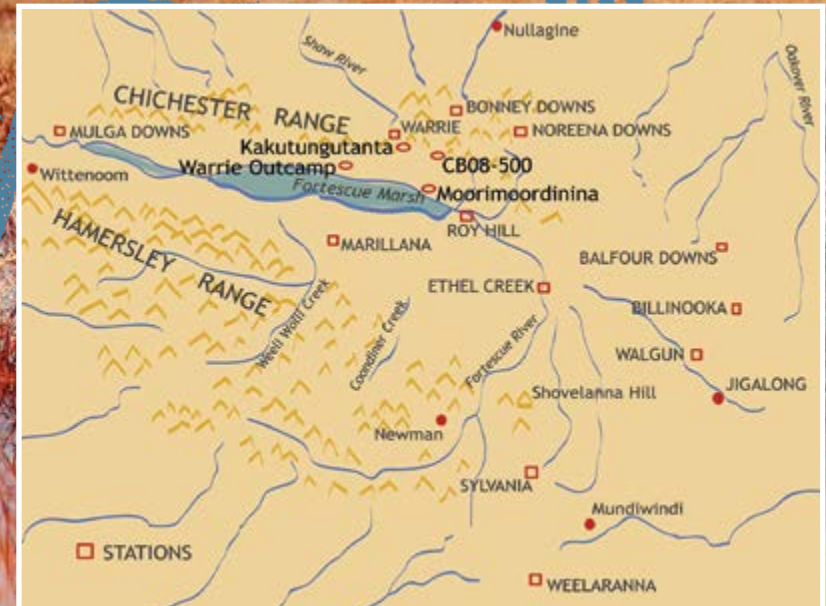
Niyaparli people know all about their own country and its resources. Camping places were carefully chosen to take advantage of a wide range of food resources. When food and water were abundant, people held large gatherings to perform ceremonies. At other times, they dispersed across their land in smaller groups.

As they moved the Niyaparli looked after the land. They kept waterholes clean and burned the vegetation to encourage new growth. They performed ceremonies to ensure abundance of particular resources.

There are many special places in Niyaparli country. Some are places which show how the creation ancestors made the land and the water. Some are ceremonial places. Other places have archaeological evidence of how the Niyaparli people lived in this land for more than 40,000 years.

This book is about some of the special places in Niyaparli country around the Eastern Chichester Range and the Fortescue Marsh (Martuyitha) and what they can tell us about how Niyaparli people lived there for tens of thousands of years.

*There are many special places
in Niyaparli country.*





Kukutpa – making the land

In the Kukutpa (the Dreamtime) when the earth was soft and featureless, the ancestral spirits travelled through the country creating everything, the hills and plains, rivers and waterholes, the plants, animals and humans.

They laid down the Mangun (Law) which explains why things are the way they are and tells how people and the animals should live.

The ancestral spirits put Nyiyaparli and other languages in the land. The Nyiyaparli language and the people who speak it belong to Nyiyaparli country (nguurrara).

When they finished their travels the ancestral spirits sometimes went up to the sky and became stars like Kurikuri, the Seven Sisters, or turned into hills and other places in the landscape where they continue to be.

At other places (rocks, trees, pools) they made 'spirits-homes' (nurka) for children, rain, plants and animals. These sites are sacred and sometimes dangerous.

Rituals performed at 'spirits-homes' (nurka) increase the numbers of plants and animals or bring rain (yintilypa). A rainmaker is a Wartinyjirpa.

The travels and actions of the ancestral spirits are told in stories and songs. Some of these are very sacred and secret (kuntu) and only Lawmen (Karntamarri) can sing them. The stories and songs connect the Nyiyaparli people with their neighbours and other country.

Learning the Law

Children start to learn the Law as they grow up by listening to and watching what their parents, grandparents and other relations do.

They learn, for example, the places that are safe for them to be and the places that are dangerous because of their connection with the Dreamtime and the Law.

When a young boy (marlulu) is old enough, he'll be taken at ceremony time (nyintikarra) as a warlipi (a young man ready for initiation) to go through the Law. At this time the elders teach him the secrets handed down in the Dreamtime. After the ceremonies he becomes a man (ngayartayimpa). He can learn more about the Law from his elders as time goes by. Girls learn women's business from their grannies, mothers and aunts.

Explaining the country

The Dreaming stories and songs give important information about living on country: they record where water can be found, and where places to gather food, campsites and other significant places are located.

As Brian Tucker once explained: *"The stories tell the people about the water, where to find the water and where to get food that is attracted to the water. By following the stories, we know where we can dig for water when the country is dry".* Another Pilbara elder once said: *"it's like a map that shows you where to go. It's like a whitefella's GPS".*

*The ancestral spirits put
Nyiyaparli and other languages
in the land.*

'Water is life'

Water (papa), including surface and groundwater, is very important to the Nyiyaparli people, who often say 'water is life'. When talking about water Nyiyaparli people often think of water and its flow as working like blood flowing through the veins and arteries of a person's body.

Some of the yinta (waterhole or pool) and piranpa (spring) were created by the Yurtupa (snake from the Kukutpa), who still lives there. These places are called 'living waters'.

When people approach 'living waters' they have to call out to the Yurtupa, letting him know that they are a nguurraji (countryman) and squirt out water (wirrpilithunpa) in a ritual for the Yurtupa.

Trevor Oliver performs the wirrpilithunpa ritual at a yinta near Shovelanna Hill.



Nyiyaparli people say 'water is life.'

A yinta on the Fortescue River where it flows into the Fortescue Marsh.



The Nyiyaparli have to look after rivers and other water sources for themselves and their neighbours, especially those living downstream.

Martuyitha (Fortescue Marsh)

For the Nyiyaparli people Martuyitha (Fortescue Marsh), from Mulga Downs to Ethel Creek on the Fortescue River (Mangkurtu) is the 'heart' of the region's water system. From here the Fortescue River runs underground to Millstream.

To interfere with Martuyitha risks damaging the natural water system on which all life depends.

Martuyitha is a unique ecosystem and a wetland of national significance. Most of the time, this extensive wetland is in fact dry, with a salt-encrusted surface and a hazy sea of samphire bushes. These shrubby plants can tolerate dry conditions and salty soils by keeping water in their tissues.

In some years, usually after a cyclone brings torrential rains, massive floods find their way to the Marsh through the many gorges and creeks dissecting the surrounding ranges and create an immense lake. The Marsh bursts into life, as aquatic animals boom in numbers on the inundated floodplains, and thousands of waterbirds come to breed and take advantage of this plentiful food source.

These extreme rainfall events are both destructive and life regenerating for arid environments. Cycles of extended drought punctuated by large floods shape much of the ecology of the Pilbara, and of Martuyitha.



David Stock (Yandi) & Brian Tucker during a heritage survey on the Fortescue Marsh.



*To interfere with Martuyitha
risks damaging the natural water
system on which all life depends.*





Living in the land

Niyaparli country is rich in plants and animals, that are good to eat or for kuyu (medicine) or that can be used for all sorts of tasks.

For thousands of years Niyaparli people lived on their land and learned where to find different foods and other resources. They also knew what time of year different foods were available. People sometimes say that the country is like a supermarket.

Usually it was men who hunted large game, like kangaroos, wallabies (warntira) and emus (yalyaparra), but they caught smaller animals too. Women hunted smaller animals and collected plant foods (marta) as well.

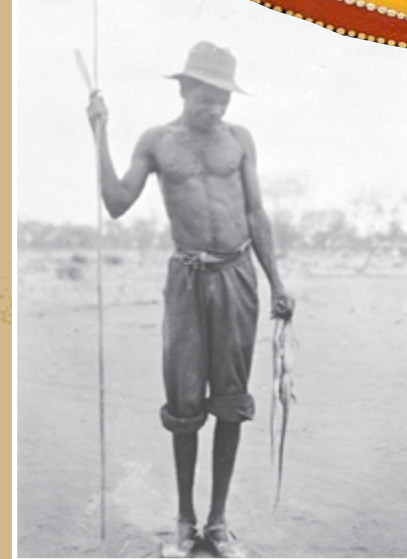
Today, Niyaparli people still enjoy bush tucker, though they are more likely to hunt with rifles than spears.

It is important to look after the land and the water as all life depends on it.

Hunting and fishing

Niyaparli hunt all sorts of animals and birds for food.

Warntipulpu or warntirra (rock wallaby), marlu (plains kangaroo), jalinirri (grey kangaroo) and jartunmarra (hills kangaroo) are all favourites, but lots of different kinds of animals and birds are good to eat as well as fish and turtles (yakuli). Mirrumayi (freshwater fish) can be caught in waterholes by spearing or by using spinifex nets.



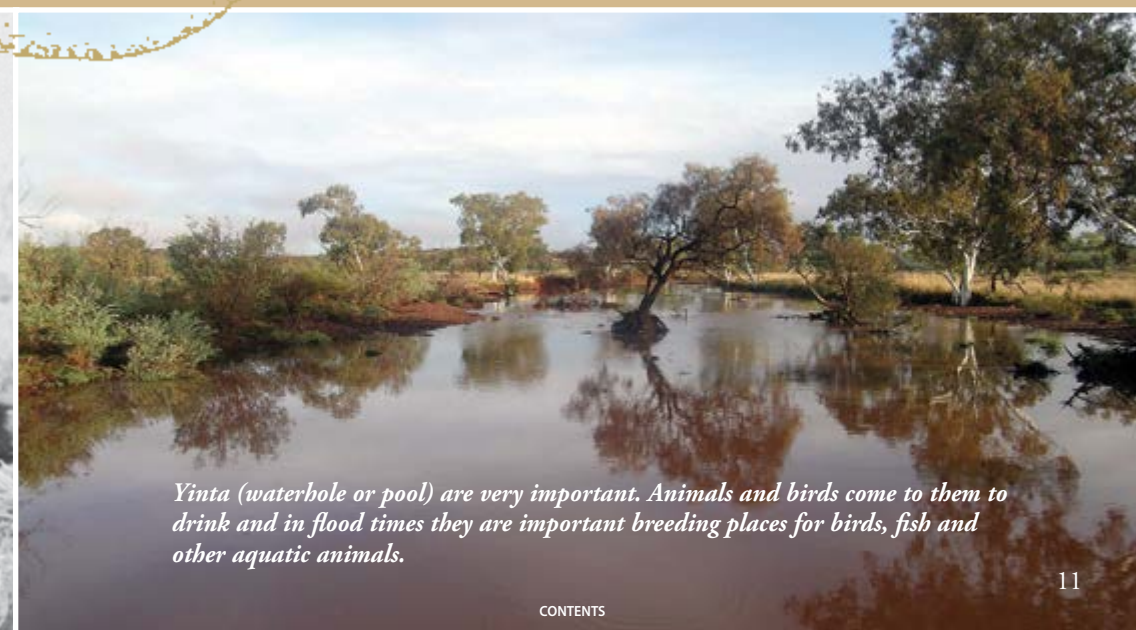
Returning from the hunt.



Cooking a goanna.



Cooking a marningarra (bush turkey).



Yinta (waterhole or pool) are very important. Animals and birds come to them to drink and in flood times they are important breeding places for birds, fish and other aquatic animals.

Some good marta (plant foods)

Marta means vegetable food. It is also the word for a type of sweet potato. The top runners have white flowers which bloom in August.

There are many different types of plants that are good to eat. Ngarlku (bush onion) grows all year round in soft sandy places, especially dry riverbanks. It has green stems like an onion and small brown bulbs. You can eat them raw or cook them in the ashes. Kakula (wild pear) grows as a creeper along the ground in spinifex country. Patharra (wild plum) is a green, orange coloured tree with round leaves and small black berries. You can often find it near rocky outcrops or along creek lines.



Bush orange is a tasty fruit.

Murnturru (kanji tree) is a yellow flowering round-leaved spiky bush with lemon-tasting resin. You can also eat the seeds raw or cooked. The red inner bark can be pounded and soaked in water. This makes a liquid that can be used to clean wounds and bathe sores and cuts.

Parlkarri is the gall of the bloodwood tree. It looks a bit like a coconut and has a milky sap inside.

Parrkala (mulga seeds) can be ground into flour to make damper.



Jantaaru (honey) is a favourite food

Niyaparli people cut holes in trees to find where the murrumurrura (native bees) have made their nests.



Niyaparli people sometimes cut a branch off to get at the jantaaru (honey) inside more easily.



They use pointed sticks to get the honey.

Another sweet food is waranu, or lerp. It is a sweet substance, made by insects, found on the leaves of gum trees. Some blossoms are good to suck the nectar from.

If you look carefully, sometimes you can find trees with scars like this. Perhaps this is an old honey tree.



Spinifex is a very useful plant

There are two different sorts of spinifex in Nyiyaparli country – patinyu, or soft spinifex, and kurankuran, or hard spinifex.

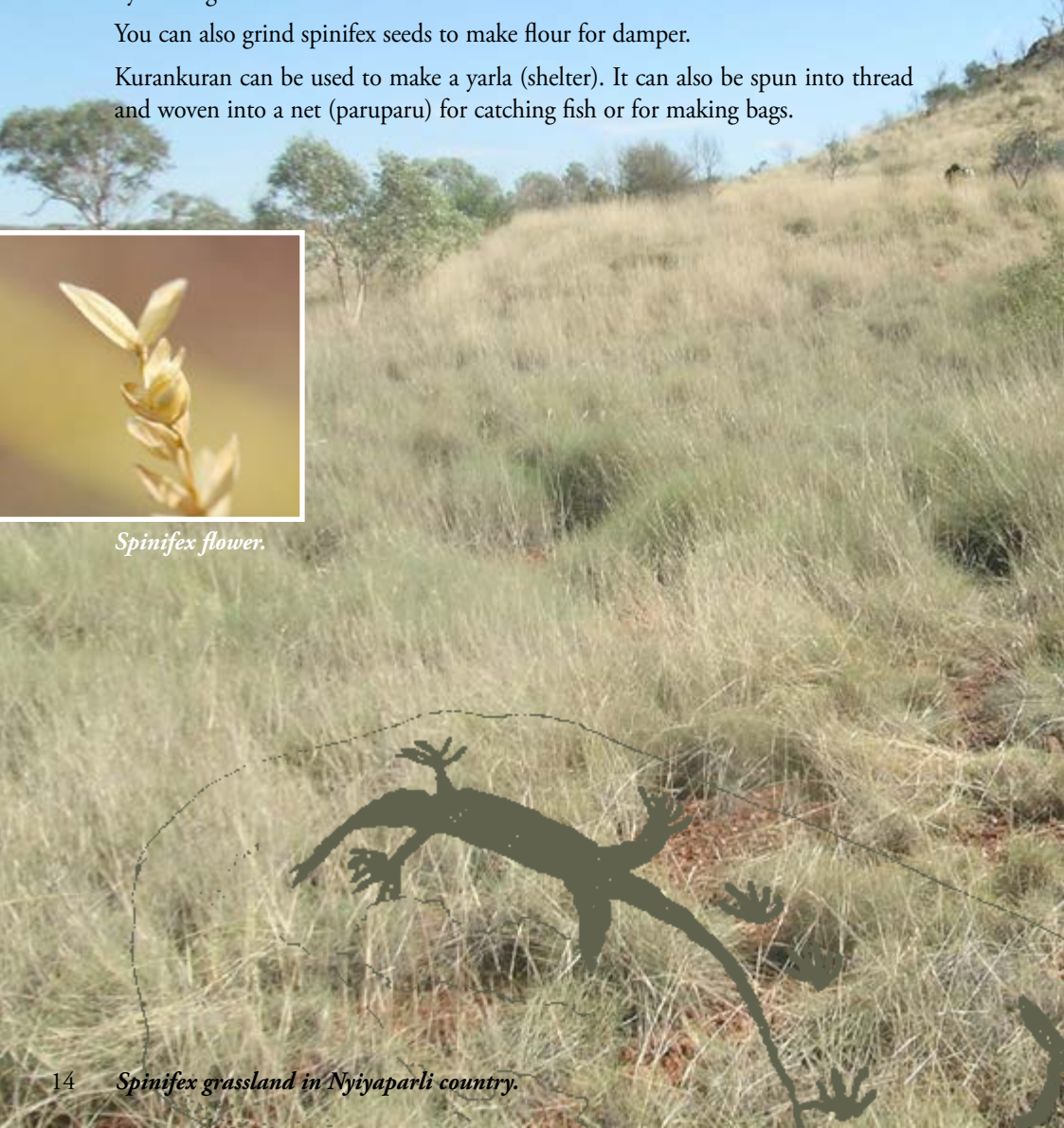
Milipa is wax or resin that comes from different types of spinifex. It is used as glue for many purposes, such as attaching spearheads to their shafts. Milipa collects at the base of plants. You can collect it very easily after a fire. The milipa is softened by heating and made into cakes.

You can also grind spinifex seeds to make flour for damper.

Kurankuran can be used to make a yarla (shelter). It can also be spun into thread and woven into a net (paruparu) for catching fish or for making bags.



Spinifex flower.



Spinifex grassland in Nyiyaparli country.



Yandy found hidden in a rock shelter.



Making tools

Nyiyaparli use the wood of many different trees to make tools and weapons. The wirntamarra (mulga tree) is good for making tools such as juuna (throwing sticks), warna (women's digging sticks), spears and spearthrowers. The wood is very hard and tough.

Parrkali (sweet-scented minni ritchi) is also good for making tools.

Snappy gum is another tree used for making tools, such as shields and digging sticks. The wood is deep red and very hard. The mirtutu, or ngarl, is cut out using an axe and used to make a yandy.

Snakewood is also used for tools and weapons. These trees are especially good for firewood. The gum can be used as glue and you can eat the seeds too.

The old people used stone for many different tasks, such as wood working, or cutting plants, or butchering animals. Today, Nyiyaparli people usually use metal tools for these tasks.



Special places

Kakutungutanta

Kakutungutanta is a small rock shelter in the Chichester Range. It is one of the oldest sites ever discovered in the Pilbara.

Archaeologists and Nyiyaparli identified this place during a survey for Fortescue Metals Group to find out about Aboriginal heritage in the Chichesters. They called it CB10-93, but when they realised how important it was they asked the elders what they should call it. The elders said that Kakutungutanta was the name of the nearby creek and that would be a good name for the shelter. Kakutungutanta was found in an area originally proposed for mining, but as the significance of the place became known, Fortescue agreed with the Nyiyaparli that the place should be protected.

Nyiyaparli people and the archaeologists did an archaeological excavation to learn more about the site and how people used it in the past. They carefully dug the soil out in thin layers. All the soil was sieved to make sure the tiniest artefacts were collected.



Sites as old as Kakutungutanta are very rare in Australia.

"We have to keep the caves to show the young people how the old people used to live. It is very important we protect these places and we are able to go there and teach the young ones."

– Elder Gordon Yuline.



Only a few artefacts were found in the excavation. This probably means that only small groups of people used Kakutungutanta. Perhaps they camped here to shelter from the weather on hunting trips into the Chichester Range.

Pieces of charcoal from the excavation were sent to a laboratory for radiocarbon dating. This showed that people first camped at Kakutungutanta more than 40,000 years ago. This means that Kakutungutanta is the oldest site found so far in the Chichester Range.

Sites as old as Kakutungutanta are very rare in Australia. Nyiyaparli people are proud that such an old and important site will be protected and have invited the archaeologists to find out more about the site. David Stock says "This kind of work shows Australians that our heritage is very important".



PART 2

The story of Nyiyaparli country

The story of Nyiyaparli country

First Arrivals

Nyiyaparli people believe that their ancestors have always lived in their country since it was created in the Kukatpa.

Archaeologists believe that people first came to Australia more than 50,000 years ago as part of the spread of modern humans out of Africa. This was at the time of the most recent glacial cycle, or ice age, when sea levels were lower and the world's climate was much cooler.

To get here these First Australians made the first ever open sea voyage. They arrived in a strange land where giant animals, or megafauna, still roamed and where the climate and environment were different from today.

Nevertheless they spread rapidly throughout the whole continent and archaeologists have found evidence of their way of life all over Australia within a few thousand years of that first landfall.

Several archaeological sites show that people were living in the Pilbara more than 40,000 years ago. Kakutungutanta, in Nyiyaparli country, is one of the oldest sites in the region. The Fortescue River was probably an important corridor allowing people to move easily from the coast to the inland desert.



Stone blade.

Baler shell (used to carry water).

Worn out stone adze.

From about 30,000 years ago the climate in Australia became much colder and drier as the ice age intensified. Conditions were at their worst about 20,000 years ago and people seem to have retreated to well-watered refuge areas. No doubt the Fortescue Marsh was one of these refuges.

The climate started to improve from about 13,000 years ago and by about 10,000 years ago conditions were generally warmer and wetter than today. As the population grew, people could spread out and reoccupy territory that they had abandoned during the height of the ice age. Archaeologists have found evidence of new sites in many areas at this period including the Chichester Range.



Excavating a rock shelter in Nyiyaparli country.

Australia's climate stabilised about 5000 years ago. This seems to have been a time of change when new tools were invented and new ways of doing things were introduced.

In the last few hundred years, the arrival of outsiders from Europe brought new ways of life to Nyiyaparli country. This affected Nyiyaparli people in many ways.



Explorers

Frank Gregory was the first European to explore the Fortescue River and the Chichester Range in 1861. He described in his journal the country around the Fortescue as:

... beautiful open grassy plain, in many parts the kangaroo-grass reaching over the horses' backs; the soil being of the richest clay-loam ...

A few days later Gregory met a group of Nyiyaparli at Martuyitha (Fortescue Marsh).

... we came suddenly on a party of natives, digging roots. One woman, with a child of about five years of age, hid close to our line of march, and did not move until she was afraid of being run over by the pack-horses, when she ran away, leaving the child gazing upon the monster intruders with a look of passive wonder.

Seeing Gregory's men with their strange animals must have been a frightening experience.

Gregory's reports of the rich grazing land along the Fortescue River quickly encouraged the government to begin developing the pastoral industry in the Pilbara. The first land grants were issued in the region in 1863 and over the next 70 years pastoral stations slowly spread throughout the area.

Marlba at Mundabullangana Station.



Aboriginal stockmen at Roy Hill.

Nyiyaparli and the Pastoral Industry

The pastoral industry was developed in the Pilbara after the WA Government started to give out land grants in 1863 and stations gradually spread over most of the Pilbara in the following 70 years.

Pastoralists did not think that the Nyiyaparli and other Marlba (Aboriginal people) owned their land and thought that the country was an uninhabited wilderness, which the pastoralists had to tame. At the same time, pastoralists claimed all the Aborigines living on their lease were theirs to use as workers.

The pastoral industry had a huge impact on the Nyiyaparli and other Marlba. The pastoralists took their lands and disrupted their traditional way of life. Sheep and cattle often damaged precious water sources. The trampling of their hooves caused other damage to the country and the native plants and animals.

Conflict soon developed between pastoralists and Marlba, as they tried to defend their lands. In about 1890, a three day fight took place at Battle Hill on Roy Hill Station between Nyiyaparli and Donald McKay, the pastoralist.

"Bush natives are numerous out here. When cattle were first put on the country [Roy Hill Station] some two years ago a good number were killed & others speared by these people. Several natives were arrested and tried in Roebourne. They were sentenced to various periods of imprisonment. Since that time no cattle have been killed ... & the bushmen have given no trouble." – C.M. Straker, 1893





Station hands at Roy Hill.

McKay also owned Mundabullangana Station (Munda) near Port Hedland, where he had about 400 Aboriginal men working. Some of these men and their families also worked at Roy Hill. Nyiyaparli people also went to work at Munda.

In time, many Marlba went to work on the pastoral stations and came to identify with them. Men worked as stockmen and women worked as domestics, water-carters, stock riders, shepherds, wool scourers and general station hands on Roy Hill (Marnta Pantarranypa), Ethel Creek (Kurtuwa) and on other stations in and around Nyiyaparli country. Many people were born on stations in their traditional country.

In the early days a system of indentured or bonded labour was introduced to control Aboriginal people. They were not free to leave a station whenever they wanted. If they did the police could force them to return, put in jail or fined.

Aboriginal workers mainly lived in camps away from the homestead. Most of them worked for rations with little or no pay. Life was hard but at least the people were able to live on their country. During quiet times on the station, Nyiyaparli could spend time looking after country and performing ceremonies.



Hickey in the breaking yard at Roy Hill.

Aboriginal workers were extremely important to the pastoralists. The pastoral industry in the Pilbara could not have existed without them.



Hickey, a station hand at Roy Hill.



The housegirls at Roy Hill.

In May 1946 more than 700 Aboriginal station workers went on strike demanding pay and better conditions.

Most of the Marlba went back to work on the Stations in 1948, but others continued the strike. In 1951 they bought Yandeyarra and a number of other pastoral stations with money made from mining. The Western Australian Government took back the lease for Yandeyarra in 1953.



Carting water at Munda.

Aboriginal people continued to work mainly on stations until the 1960s. In 1968 the Pastoral Award meant that Aboriginal stockmen had to get paid equal wages with other station hands. After this there was less work available for Marlba workers and many families had to move off the stations to towns like Marble Bar, Port Hedland, Roebourne and Onslow.

Aboriginal people continued to work mainly on stations until the 1960s.



Aboriginal miners' camp at Moolyella.

Mining

The discovery of gold at Nullagine in 1878 sparked a gold rush in the Pilbara and brought many people.

Aboriginal people became involved in mining in the 1890s following the discovery of alluvial tin. Aboriginal women traditionally winnowed seed using a yandy and this technique could be used for separating tin and other minerals from soil.

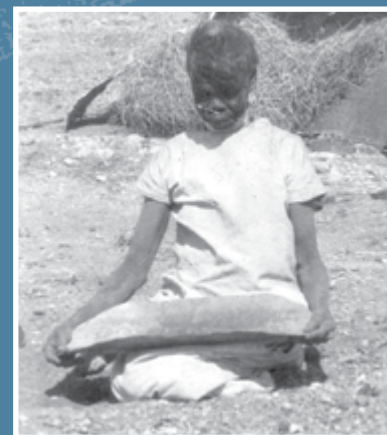
The income from mining became especially important during the Pilbara strike of Aboriginal pastoral workers that started in 1946. The strikers lived on money they earned from mining metals such as beryllium, wolfram and manganese.

With their detailed knowledge of the country and their ingenious adaptation of the yandy, many Aboriginal people successfully competed with European prospectors.

The income from mining became



Aboriginal miners.



Using a yandy to separate tin and other minerals from soil.



especially important.

Processing tin at Moolyella.





Butchering a kangaroo.



Finding stone tools.



Preparing a goanna for cooking.

Niyaparli people today

Maintaining culture

The Niyaparli community has about 300 members who live on and around their traditional country, including in the towns of Newman, Marble Bar, Nullagine, Tom Price, Port Hedland and South Hedland.

Many Niyaparli people are married into other communities, including the Martu who have been given permission to live in Niyaparli country at Jigalong, Newman and so on.

The Niyaparli language is spoken by around 200 people but many more understand it. The Niyaparli elders have worked to keep the Niyaparli language and culture alive. They have contributed to the recording of the Niyaparli language for almost 50 years working with linguists from universities and Wangka Maya, with whom they have produced a number of Niyaparli language books. They also contribute cross cultural training to help white fellas from government departments, mining companies and others understand Niyaparli culture and values, including caring for country.

Explaining the country.



Niyaparli elders have worked to keep the Niyaparli language and culture alive.

Native title and heritage

The Niyaparli community have lodged a Native Title Claim over their country to have their connection to country recognised by the Federal Court and have over a number of years worked to record their rights and interests in the country and their traditional Laws (Mangun) and customs (manguntharnu).

The community also works with government agencies, mining companies and other developers to help them comply with the Aboriginal Heritage Act and to make sure that Aboriginal sites and other places significant to the Niyaparli are not damaged.

As part of this process community members take part in heritage surveys. The elders work with anthropologists on ethnographic surveys (talking surveys) to record sacred sites, story places, waterholes (yinta) and other places of significance to that they can be protected.

Younger people work with archaeologists on archaeological surveys (walking surveys) to find and record artefact scatters, where the old people left behind karntama (stone knives), karntu and matharra (upper grinding stones and millstones), as well as quarry sites, rock shelters, stone arrangements, rock art and scarred trees.

The Niyaparli want to protect their significant sites. The elders say that one reason why these places are important is that they can be used to teach the young people how the old people lived and used the country.

Working on an archaeological survey in Niyaparli country.





Special places

Warrie Outcamp

Warrie Outcamp, on the edge of Fortescue Marsh, belongs to Hillside Station. Today it is no longer used, but Nyiyaparli people working on Hillside Station used to live here.

Nyiyaparli station workers built many of the old buildings, stockyards and fences on pastoral stations, such as Hillside, Roy Hill, Ethel Creek and other stations in Nyiyaparli country.

Places like Warrie Outcamp are special to Nyiyaparli people. They are a reminder of living on country during the pastoral era. The buildings and other structures are evidence of the important contribution that Aboriginal workers made to the development of the pastoral industry.

Michael Stream (left) who lived at Warrie with his parents when he was a child, with Elder Brian Tucker.



Moorimoordinina and 14 Mile Pool

Moorimoordinina and 14 Mile Pool are important yinta (permanent pools) on the Fortescue Marsh. Water stays here for a long time when other pools dry up. These must have been important places for thousands of years.

The water at these yinta was important for Roy Hill Station. Nyiyaparli stockmen and their families camped here during the mustering season. The old stockyards nearby were built by Nyiyaparli workers.

Today these are still favourite places to camp and Nyiyaparli people enjoy visiting.

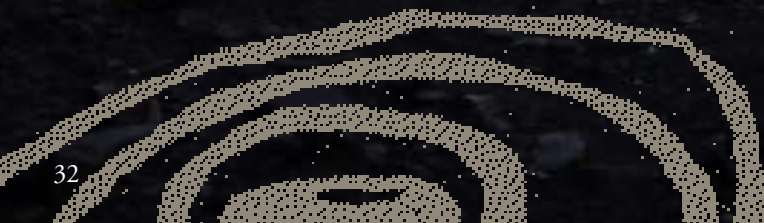
... an important place for thousands of years.





PART 3

Understanding places
in Nyiyaparli country



Understanding places in Nyiyaparli country



Niyaparli country is full of the signs of the Kukatpa when the ancestral spirits created the land. These places are very important to Nyiyaparli and many are very special and sacred.

Over forty thousand years Aboriginal people have also left their mark on the landscape. All over Nyiyaparli country there are places with evidence of past human activity. These places are special to the Nyiyaparli because they show how their ancestors lived in the land for many thousands of years.

Many Nyiyaparli work in the mining industry looking after heritage sites. Looking after these places gives the Nyiyaparli the chance to keep in contact with their country even though many of them live in towns like Port Hedland. Nyiyaparli often work with archaeologists and anthropologists to make sure their sites are recorded.

'Nyiyaparli country is full of the signs of the Kukatpa.'



Learning about the past

We can learn about the past in many different ways. Nyiyaparli people pass down stories about what happened in the past. Elders share stories with their children and especially grandchildren. Sometimes they work with anthropologists to record their stories.

Historians mainly study written documents to learn about the past. All sorts of documents can give clues about how people lived in the past, including diaries, letters, photographs, film and sound recordings, newspapers and maps.

Archaeologists study the past through the physical objects that people left behind them. Sometimes they excavate to study how people's way of life has changed through time, but they also study the distribution of sites and their landscape settings.

Environmental scientists study soils and sediments, and the fossil remains of plants and animals to understand how the environment has changed through time.

Often we understand the past better when all these different people work together.





These are the remains of an old wooden humpy. In a few years the wood will disappear and the only trace left behind will be tools of stone or metal.

Archaeological sites

Many archaeological sites are scatters of stone artefacts. Over thousands of years wood, string, meat, bone and other organic materials decay and often only tools made of stone survive.

Large scatters of stone artefacts show where people often camped. Permanent water sources, such as yinta and piranpa, would have been very important to Nyiyaparli people in the past, just as they are today. These places often have large numbers of stone artefacts. Larger sites were visited more often. They have many more artefacts made of different types of stone. Heavy grinding stones were often left at these sites to save carrying them around.

There are many small scatters as well. These are places where people camped for only a short time, or perhaps just stopped to replace a tool that was broken or lost.

In Nyiyaparli country finds of bone or shell are very rare. Pieces of worked wood are sometimes found on ledges in rockshelters.

Waste from making stone tools and a grindstone mark an old camping site.



Scatters of stone flakes show where a toolmaker once worked.

Making karntamayipi (stone tools)

There are two ways of making stone tools – by flaking and by grinding.

To make stone tools by flaking, the toolmaker first had to choose the right sort of stone. The best stones are fine grained silica based rocks which break easily in a predictable way. Rocks of this type are common in Nyiyaparli country.

Then a piece of stone was picked out to use as a core. The toolmaker then struck the core with a hammer stone to chip off small thin flakes. These thin flakes are very sharp and can be used straightaway as karntama (knives) for cutting soft materials if they are a convenient size and shape. Or they can be shaped by more flaking to make strong edges for wood working.

Sometimes, the core was flaked to make a tool. Making flaked stone tools produces many waste pieces of stone, or stone artefacts, including unused flakes, shatter fragments, and worn out cores. Studying the tools and the waste can tell archaeologists a lot about how people lived.

Sometimes flakes can be fitted back on to the core. This shows how the stone was worked.





Pulpu, or axes, were looked after very carefully so it is unusual to find them in sites.

Pulpu (stone axes)

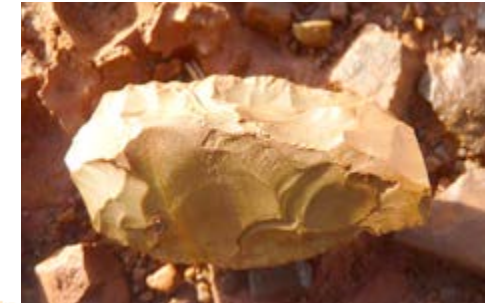
Pulpu (stone axes) were made by a combination of flaking and grinding.

The toolmakers chose tough volcanic rocks for making axes. They shaped them roughly by flaking and then finished them off by grinding to make a tough cutting edge. Grinding does not leave as much waste as flaking so it is much more common to find evidence of flaking than grinding.



Flaked stone adzes

The flaked stone adze was an important tool in the Pilbara and throughout the desert region.



They were made on thick flakes and mounted on the end of a walparra (spearthrower) using spinifex resin. They were mainly used as chisels for making wooden tools, such as wakurnti (boomerangs), spear-throwers, yandies. The sharp edge also made a convenient knife.

As the edge wore down, the stone flake was resharpened and remounted in its handle many times until the worn out slug was finally thrown away.

Adzes are especially good for working mulga and other desert hardwoods. They seem to have been invented somewhere in the desert and spread throughout central Australia and into the Pilbara around about 3000 years ago.

Matharra and karntu

Grindstones were important tools. Women used them for grinding spinifex and other seeds into flour to make damper.

They were also used for pounding up animal bones and for grinding ochre to make paint. Archaeologists can study the wear patterns and microscopic traces left behind to understand how these tools were used in the past.

Matharra are very heavy so they were left at the sites where Nyiyaparli often camped.



Matharra – millstone.



Karntu – upper grinding stone or muller.



A rock shelter.

Archaeological sites in Nyiyaparli country

Rock shelters and caves

Sometimes people camped in rock shelters or caves – perhaps as shelter from the rain, or for shade on hot days. Rock shelters are often especially interesting sites to study because they sometimes preserve charcoal, animal bones, plant remains, shells, ochre or even wooden tools—all materials which usually decay very quickly.

Archaeologists can excavate rock shelters to find out more about how people lived in the past. Charcoal from old campfires can be dated using scientific dating. Animal bones tell us about the food people ate. Plant remains can tell us more about the environment of the site.

Sites that were used thousands of years ago can tell us how people lived when the environment was very different from today. They help us understand how their way of life changed over time.

Rock shelters sometimes have small secondary chambers, or niches, in them that are too small for people to camp in. Sometimes there are artefacts in them. People also put artefacts or other objects in crevices or on ledges. Niches sometimes have walls built to close off the entrance. This might have been to make a safe place to store objects. Sometimes the old people blocked off parts of caves to catch kangaroos and wallabies.



A walled niche.



Quarries can be recognised by the very large quantities of waste material left over.

Sites that were used thousands of years ago can tell us how people lived.

Quarries

Stone was very important to Aboriginal people in the past. They relied on stone to make many of their tools.

Good sources of stone were quarried—these are the oldest mines in the Pilbara. Quarries can be recognised by the very large quantities of waste material left over from making stone tools. Aboriginal people also quarried ochre, which they used for painting.

Stone is still important to Nyiyaparli today. Dreamtime stories explain how different stone quarries were created and whether the stone from them should be used for a karntama (knife) or a jimarri (blade) to use in ceremony time (nyintikarra).

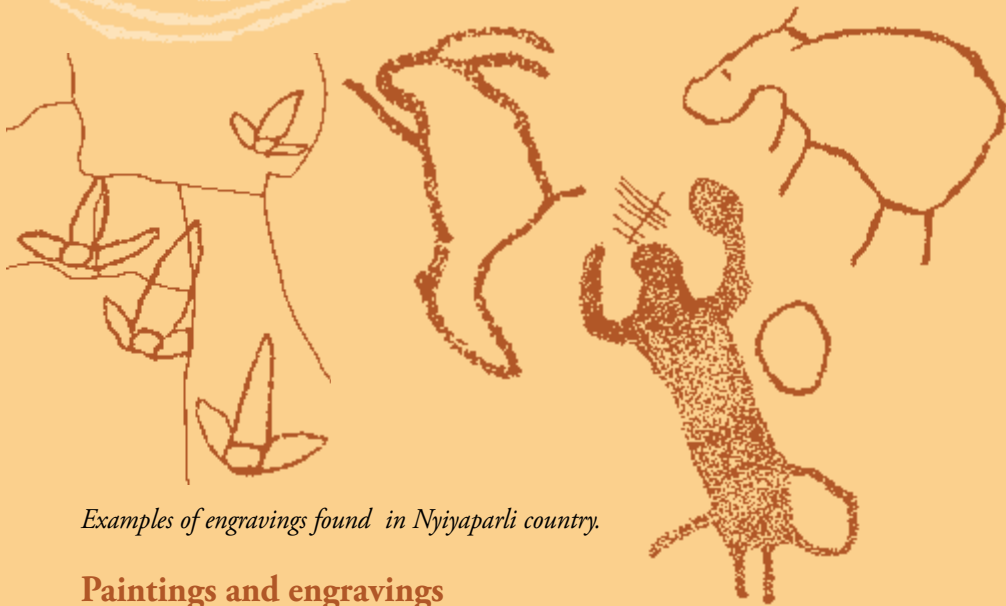
Scarred trees

Collecting wood and bark to make various tools and weapons leaves distinctive marks on trees.

Scars on trees can also show where people found honey.

Someone probably cut bark to make a yandy from this tree.





Examples of engravings found in Nyiyaparli country.

Paintings and engravings

Images can be made on rock surfaces by painting or drawing with paint made of ochre or charcoal.

They can also be made by engraving the rock surfaces. Rock art is very rare in the Chichester Range.

Stone arrangements

In some places, people made patterns and shapes on the ground using stones.

Sometimes stones would be placed upright and partly buried to hold them in place. These sites usually mark places where ceremonies were held. They are very rare.



People made patterns and shapes on the ground using stones.



Station hand at Roy Hill station.

Historic sites

Many Nyiyaparli people worked in the pastoral industry and remains of buildings, fences and stockyards built by Nyiyaparli station workers can be seen in many places today.

Many Nyiyaparli people worked in the pastoral industry.





There were rock holes full of water close by.

More than 300 artefacts were found in the excavation. Most of these were the waste flakes from making stone tools. The deposits were carefully sieved to find even the tiniest flakes. Finding many very tiny flakes shows that people spent time at the site making stone tools.

The team found two worn out wood working adzes in the same level at the site. One of the adzes was made from grey chert. Close by were several grey chert flakes which could have come from resharpening the adze. Finding finished stone tools rather than waste is unusual in excavations in the Pilbara.

There were only a few fragments of unidentified bone found in the excavation. Like other rock shelters in the Chichester Range, the deposits were very acid and so bone and other organic material was not preserved.

We can imagine a family camping at the shelter about 200 years ago. As they rested around the camp fire, some of the men spent their time wood working. One of the men resharpened the stone blade of his adze, but found that it was too worn to stay in its handle. Perhaps he carried a spare adze flake with him or perhaps he made a new one on the spot. He then replaced the stone blade and threw away the worn out adze flake.

Places like CB08-500 are special to the Nyiyaparli because they show how their ancestors once lived in the land.

Special places

CB08-500

In 2008, archaeologists and Nyiyaparli conducting a heritage survey in the Chichester Range found a large and spacious rock shelter, which they called CB08-500.

There were rock holes full of water close by and snappy gums provided extra shade outside the shelter. They found stone artefacts on the floor of the shelter, including part of a broken millstone (matharra).

When the team excavated the floor deposits they discovered the remains of a fireplace (karla). They sent pieces of charcoal from the fire for radiocarbon dating. This showed that people had camped in the shelter sometime in the 1800s. Maybe the Nyiyaparli who camped here saw Gregory's exploring party passing through their country in 1861.



Grey chert adze excavated at CB08-500.



Some of the stone artefacts found in the excavation.

Finding out more

You can find an electronic version of this book and more about Niyaparli heritage on the Archae-aus website: www.archae-aus.com.au

Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre has information about Niyaparli language, including a dictionary and stories in Niyaparli, as well as information about other Pilbara Aboriginal groups: www.wangkamaya.org.au/about-wangka-maya.

To find out more about Aboriginal culture in the Pilbara, you can explore these websites:

www.gumala.com.au

www.icampfire.tv

To find out more about Aboriginal history and archaeology, you can explore these websites:

www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians

www.abc.net.au/tv/firstfootprints

www.nma.gov.au/history/aboriginal_and_torres_strait_islander_cultures_and_histories

... or you can read:

Cane, S. 2013 *First footprints: the epic story of the first Australians*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Protecting Aboriginal heritage in Niyaparli country

This book is part of a wider cultural, community and research project focused on heritage knowledge gathered in Niyaparli country during development at Fortescue Metals Group's Christmas Creek and Cloudbreak iron ore mines.

Fortescue have provided funding to support research into heritage places and sites beyond the minimum required by law. The project is intended to provide information to the wider community about sites in Niyaparli country, including Kakutungtanta and other special places. Fortescue's partnership with Niyaparli people and support for public education about heritage have made this book possible.

The information in this book is based on nearly a decade of archaeological field surveys and excavations, and ethnographic surveys within Niyaparli country to identify heritage places and sites on Fortescue's Christmas Creek and Cloudbreak iron ore mines. The Fortescue heritage team continues to work closely with Niyaparli people, as well as archaeologists and anthropologists, to make sure places important to Niyaparli people are recorded and protected throughout the life of the mines.

To find out more about heritage protection at Fortescue and the company's relationship with the Niyaparli and other Aboriginal people in the Pilbara, visit Fortescue's website: www.fmgl.com.au/community.

Aboriginal sites are protected by law. To find out more about the protection of Aboriginal sites in Western Australia, visit the Department of Aboriginal Affairs website www.daa.wa.gov.au.







Kakutungutanta to Warrie Outcamp; 40,000 years in Nyiyaparli country tells the story of Nyiyaparli people in the eastern Chichester Range and around the Fortescue Marsh.

The book brings together Nyiyaparli traditional knowledge with information from archaeology and history. Stories about some of the special places in Nyiyaparli country explain how Nyiyaparli people have lived and looked after their country for thousands of years.

In 2010, Nyiyaparli people working with archaeologists found Kakutungutanta in the eastern Chichester Range. They were excited to discover that people first camped in this small rockshelter more than 40,000 years ago. Kakutungutanta is one of thousands of archaeological sites which have been recorded in the area. These help tell the story of Nyiyaparli country and people. Places like Warrie Outcamp, where Nyiyaparli families working in the pastoral industry lived, bring the story to the present.

Today, Nyiyaparli people work with mining companies, and with anthropologists and archaeologists, to look after special places like these.

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