

Mabel Juli, Jiregewoorrarrem — All Kinds of Birds

Exhibition 25th July to 22 August 2015, The Cross Art Projects

Opening Talk, Cate Massola, of Ground Up: Community Support Network launches the catalogue Mabel Juli, Jiregewoorrarrem — All kinds of birds, text by Mabel Juli.

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Cate Massola

Mabel grew up on Springvale cattle station, which lies on her traditional country Barlinyin in the east Kimberley region of Western Australia. On Springvale station she worked around the homestead doing domestic duties.

As a young woman, she moved to Bedford Downs Station and Bow River Station where she lived and worked with her husband.

In the 1960s the cattle industry underwent major changes. In 1965 amendments to the Federal Pastoral Industry Award were outlined by the Federal Court and became operative from 1st December 1968. However, the changes to the Federal Pastoral Industry Award did not take effect in the Kimberley until 1969 and into the

1970s, even though they had begun in the Northern Territory. When the legislation passed, many pastoralists couldn't manage the sudden financial burden of paying their entire work force, and so Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers were expelled from their jobs and homes. Mabel was one of these workers, and so she moved Turkey Creek (soon to become the Warmun Community) where she has lived since.

Mabel is very outspoken about the recent changes and potential shut down of remote Aboriginal communities proposed by Western Australian premier, Colin Barnett because the Warmun Community is her home now. She has been attending meetings and protests in Warmun against the closures. The Abbott federal government set in place significant reform in the Indigenous Affairs department in 2014. It offered states and territories a 'one-off payment to transfer their responsibility of Aboriginal communities to states and territories and also created the 'Indigenous Advancement Strategy' which focuses its funding on five broad program areas: Jobs, Land and Economy, Children and Schooling, Safety and Wellbeing, Culture and Capability (<http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/nitv-news/article/2014/05/13/government-dramatically-reduce-indigenous-programs>; <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/about/indigenous-advancement-strategy>; <http://minister.indigenous.gov.au/media/2015-05-12/government-continues-significant-reforms-indigenous-affairs>).

The Western Australian government accepted the federal payment and later announced one hundred and fifty communities would be closed down (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-13/budget-2014-534-cut-to-indigenous-programs-and-health/5451144>). The 'Indigenous Advancement Strategy' has meant that many Indigenous services and programs in the Warmun community, and other Aboriginal communities in Western Australia, have not received vital funding. This has included Warmun Community Council and the Warmun Art Centre.

As a consequence, the Warmun Community Council and the Warmun Art Centre have had to look elsewhere for financial support. The organisation Ground Up, a registered charity, has provided independent financial assistance for Indigenous led projects in Warmun for a number of years now (<http://groundupcommunity.org/>) and it continues to do so. Most recently, Ground Up had a successful crowd funding Pozible campaign to support the weedy language program at the Warmun Art Centre. Ground Up raised over \$10,000 and Pozible matched the amount, so it was a total of just over \$20,000 (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-06/warmun-community-turn-to-crowdfunding-for-language-classes/6430110>). The activities that Ground Up supports in the language program include:

- Weekly intensive Gija classes
- Trips to country
- The collaborative development of culturally appropriate language teaching and maintenance methods and techniques
- The creation of language teaching resources using video and new media.

People of all ages in Warmun are very outspoken about the need for their cultural knowledge, language and practices to be passed on. Artworks are one way to retain this knowledge and assist in knowledge transference. Supporting organisations like Ground Up, is another. If you are interested in learning more about Ground Up or donating, please look at their website and Facebook pages:

<http://groundupcommunity.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/groundupcommunity>

By Cate Massola



THE CROSS
ART PROJECTS

