BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

ILLUME

STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Bangarra Dance Theatre pays respect and acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, create, and perform. We wish also to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples whose customs and cultures inspire our work.

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (ICIP)

Bangarra acknowledges the industry standards and protocols set by the Australia Council Protocols for Working with Indigenous artists. These protocols have been widely adopted across the Australian arts communities to respect ICIP and to develop practices and processes for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultural heritage. Bangarra incorporates ICIP into the very heart of our projects, form storytelling, to dance, to set design, language, and music.

WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait readers are advised that the study guide contains the names and images of people who have passed away.

Front Cover photo by Daniel Boud

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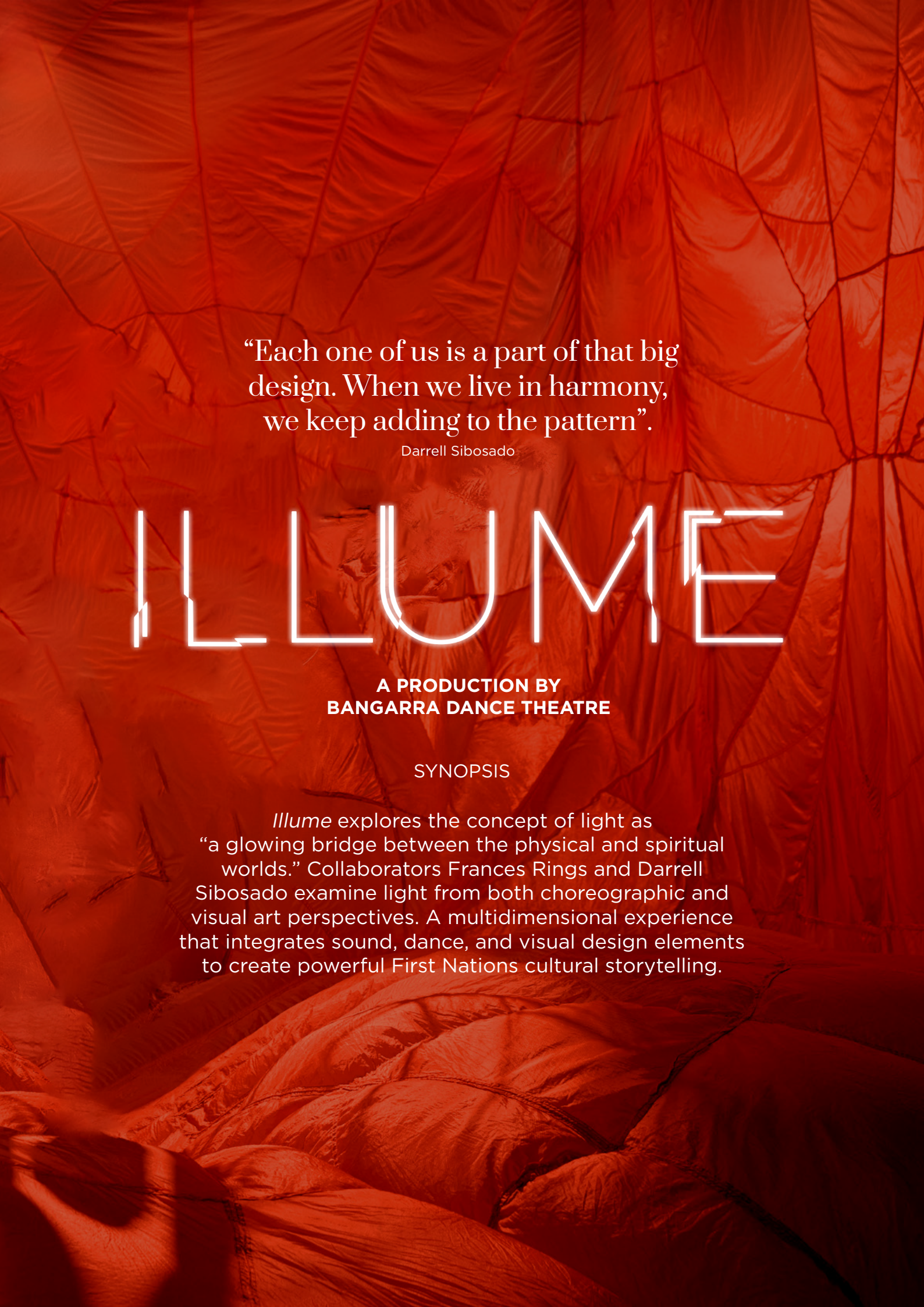


"Each one of us is a part of that big design. When we live in harmony, we keep adding to the pattern".

Darrell Sibosado

ILLUME

A PRODUCTION BY
BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

SYNOPSIS

Illume explores the concept of light as "a glowing bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds." Collaborators Frances Rings and Darrell Sibosado examine light from both choreographic and visual art perspectives. A multidimensional experience that integrates sound, dance, and visual design elements to create powerful First Nations cultural storytelling.

1.
USING THIS STUDY GUIDE

This study guide provides contextual background to the stories that have inspired the creation of *Illume*. The research phase for *Illume* was conducted On Country in the area of the Ardi/Dampier Peninsula in Western Australia and involved conducting numerous interviews with Cultural Consultants as well as the sourcing of images, maps and other visual information. This study guide spotlights some of the key areas in the research phase.

It is important to note, the study guide is not an analysis of the work, nor a literal explanation of the work's nine sections. Instead, it aims to illustrate some of the main pathways that the creative team explored in their development stages, which in turn fuelled their creative journey in bringing the work to the stage.

We hope this information will support and encourage teachers and students to think critically about their experience of *Illume* and be inspired to consider the multiple approaches and perspectives involved in learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, while reflecting on their own social and cultural background and its relevance to the stories of the place we call Australia.

CURRICULUM LINKS

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures.

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

Intercultural understanding

Ethical understanding

Critical and creative thinking

Personal and social capability

LEARNING AREAS

Humanities and Social Sciences: History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, Philosophy.

Arts: Drama, Dance, Music, Visual Arts, Media Arts

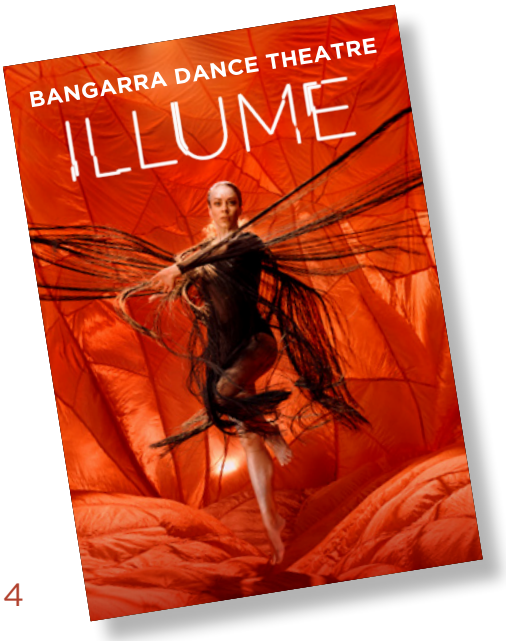
Science: Biology, Earth science, Astronomy.

Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

Health and Physical Education

TOPICS/THEMES

Indigenous perspectives
First Knowledges
Environment protection
Cultural Rights
Historical Inquiry
Colonisation
Sustainability
Human Rights
Concept of Place
Adaptation
Innovation
Worldview
Creative Storytelling
Decolonisation
Contemporary art



Further information about the works and the creative teams can be found in the *Illume* program.

1.
A LANGUAGE OF LIGHT

From darkness, the physical world is awakened through light.

Light carries a rhythm and a frequency that gives shape to form – landscape, skyscape, waters and life – creating an environment of relationships connected by stories that evolve as a continuum, bringing past, present and future together.

Within the starlight of the night sky, constellations hold vast troves of Cultural knowledge, providing information for navigation, when to seed and harvest food, and when it is the best time to fish. The sky country forecasts weather, announces seasonal change, provides social and spiritual guidance through Story, and serves as a permanent documentation of this knowledge.

In the same way that landscapes are impacted by human exploitation, the skyscape also experiences pollution through urban and industrial light spillage, mostly due to blue rich LED (light emitting diode) lighting, used in homes, businesses, streetlights, and car headlamps, as well the large flares that occur with coal-seam gas (fracking). Light pollution is an assault on the land as well as the sky and is the result of humans changing the world to suit themselves as opposed to finding the means to live on Earth in a way that does not harm the planet.

Light pollution actively destroys our ability to see the stars. Many Indigenous traditions and knowledge systems around the world are based on the stars and peoples' ability to observe and interpret stellar positions in order to sustain life and cultural continuity. The fading of light in the night sky negatively impacts Indigenous connection to the stars, acting as a gradual form of ongoing cultural and ecological genocide, sometimes referred to as a 'slow genocide'.

Solutions to this issue are being sought, such as the designation of Dark Sky Parks. replacing the blue light LEDS with low-impact amber LEDs, covering the tops of streetlights and generally trying to reduce overall light scatter. However, these measures are quite small and in order to address the issue at scale, policies and incentives will be required.

The issue of light pollution is both factual and metaphorical for the way First Nations people and their Cultures have been forced, through colonisation, into situations that have caused immense harm.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

Consider the concept of colonisation of the night sky. How is this similar, and how is this different to the colonisation of land?

Research the causes and impact of light pollution on the natural world and explore possible strategies to mitigate the damage of light pollution, such as covering the tops of streetlights, use of amber LEDs and the establishment of Dark Sky Parks.

2.
WALKING INTO COUNTRY

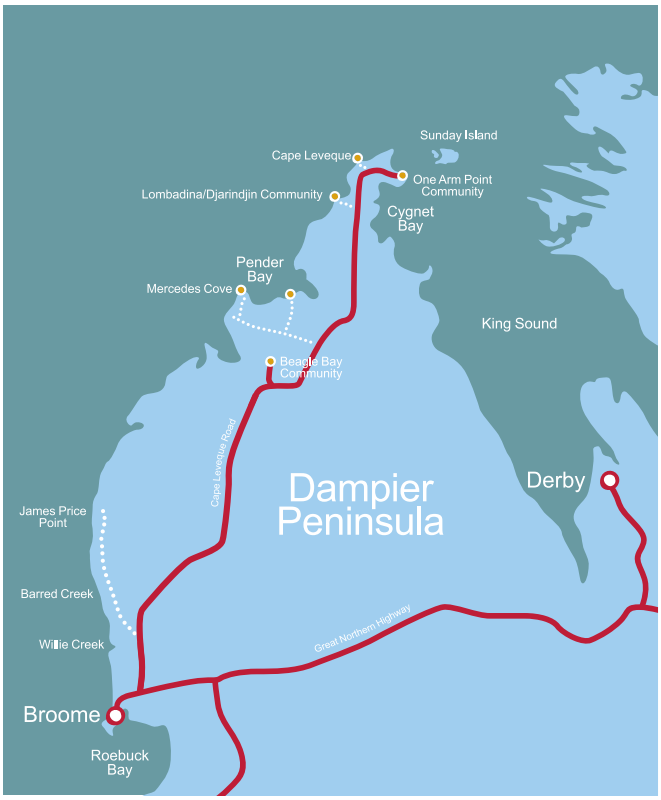
Walking into Country. What do you see? What do you really see?

The ‘act of looking’ is more than simply taking note what is seen visually. The true ‘act of looking’ at and into Country ignites feelings that are palpable - a heightened sense of the ‘ancient’ and the ‘now’ existing simultaneously.

When walking into Country, ask yourself how you are experiencing that Country, and how are you becoming part of that Country’s experience. All of the seven human senses are activated - touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste, as well as intuition and imagination.

Walking into the Country of the Badi Jawi we meet the manawan trees (known commonly as woolybutts) with their blackened trunks, the result of cool weather burning practices. We see the brilliant deep red of the pindan soil and rocks, the white luminous quartz sand, and the iridescent blue waters.

If you arrive in the wet season from December to March, you’ll experience rain, storms, sometimes cyclones – and relentless humidity. In the dry season, April to November, you will find comfort in the warm days and cool nights.



With kind permission of Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC).

Photo. Darrell Sibosado

THE MANAWAN

Manawan (*woollybutt - Eucalyptus miniata*) trees have a rough bark at the trunk base which becomes smooth and white higher towards the leafy crown. With bright orange or scarlet blossom, the seeds and chaff can be shaken from the pods and eaten raw. The nectar in the flowers feed the natives bees which in turn provide honey, wax and resin. The branches are used to build shelters, make hunting and digging sticks, boomerangs, spears, and containers for gathering food and water. The traditional practice of burning country in the cool months of the year results in lower parts of the Manawan being coloured with black ash. This burning is part of an ancient practice in environmental management and sustainability, and most importantly an act of care for Country.

THE PINDAN

Pindan is the principal soil type across Ardi / Dampier Peninsula developed during the Quaternary period two million years ago. Its brilliant red brown appearance is created by the quartz sand grains being coated with high levels of iron oxides (rust). When pindan dries out, it becomes rock hard with a dusty surface, and when wet it becomes greasy.

Amboorin amboonoo angallala jard booroo
People, together let's look after Country good.
Bardi Jawi Gaarra Marine Park joint management plan, 2022.

SEAS
The iridescent blue of the sea on the West Kimberley coast is a result of the quartz particles of white sands extending to the sea and being continually stirred up by extreme tides, which can be up to eleven metres and travel at five kilometres per hour. The light from the sun and moon interacts with the water, the sea absorbing the red light leaving the blue light to be reflected.

TRUMPET SHELL
The trumpet shell *(Charonia Tritonis) hus* holds an important place in Bardi Jawi culture. It is used for communication as a way to summon people to meetings and give warnings. It is also used for ceremony, art making, gathering of food and water. The mollusc or sea snail that inhabits the shell is one of the largest in the world.

WHALES
Miinimbi (whales) journey into the waters of the Bardi Jawi between June and November each year. After months feeding on krill and small fish in the waters of the Antarctic, that arrive in Bardi Jawi Sea Country to give birth their young calves.

CLIMATE
While the distinction between wet and dry seasons on the Dampier Peninsula appears dramatic, the Bardi Jawi seasonality is more complex, and recognises six seasons based on wind and rainfall direction and intensity, ripening of fruits, and the change in fatness of fish and animals.

Climate change is considered the greatest emerging pressure on the health of the ecological, cultural and social health of people who live on coastal areas. Sea surface temperature in the Kimberley is predicted to rise by 2.2 to 4 degrees celcius over the next six decades, which is likely to exacerbate heat stress and seriously threaten the persistence of intertidal communities. Sea levels are also predicted to rise a few centimetres per decade.

OLD COUNTRY
The oldest land formation still seen on Ardi / Dampier Peninsula is the Jarlemai Siltstome dating from upper Jurassic period 150-200 million years ago, and is where numerous marine fossils have been found. More recently, around 17,000 years ago, sea levels fell to about 150 metres below what they are presently, exposing large areas of the continental shelf. As glaciers melted, sea levels rose and by 7,000 years ago the current levels were reached, and the King Sound on the east of the peninsula was formed, giving Ardi / Dampier Peninsula its north, east and west coastlines. Footprints of various dinosaur species, large and small, bipedal and quadrupedal have been found along the Broome coastline in Western Kimberley.

DISCUSSION STARTER AND ACTIVITY
In 1995, David Mowaljarlai OAM (1925–1997) of the Ngarinyin people of Western Kimberley, spoke the words: *'We have a gift we want to give you. We keep getting blocked from giving you this gift: the culture, which is the blood of the country... it's the gift of ecology, of the land itself'.*

1. Consider the information and descriptions of walking into Bardi Jawi Country.
2. Consider the words of David Mowaljariai.
3. Plan a visit to a place, you are familiar with. Take time to view this place with all your senses. Write a reflection on this experience.

3.
BARDI JAWI


Photo: Daniel Boud

LAND / SEA / PEOPLE

Originally, Bard people were recognised as the people of the land, while Jawi were the people of the islands. Together, they share systems of kinship, lore and social organisation. Bardi and Jawi country is divided into seven clan areas, Ollongon, Gullarrgon, Ardiol, Iwanyland inalabulu, Jawi, Banararr and Buniol. Referring to the Bardi Jawi together aligns the communities to the 2005 Bardi Jawi Native Title Claim, confirming the Bardi and Jawi people's exclusive possession of over 1000 square kilometres of land, and non-exclusive possession of intertidal and reef zones. Following an appeal in 2010, this native title land and intertidal areas were tripled to over 3000 square kilometres.

GALALOONG

Many Bardi and Jawi creation stories involve the cultural hero *Galaloong*, who travelled down Ardi / Dampier Peninsula naming places and giving law to the people. Connecting the spiritual and terrestrial place with people and story ensures intergenerational and cultural knowledge has a central belief and value system that lays a foundation for continued evolution and adaptation. For the Bardi and Jawi people, the story of *Galaloong* represents the genesis of life, a creation story that provides people with a sense of connection to Country and a compass for their own personal journey.

The strong cultural identities of the Bardi Jawi people of today are very much due to traditional lore and protocols being followed and practiced through time, despite of the destructive impacts of colonisation and exploitation, including removal of children, restrictions on cultural practices, forced labour, mining, and other commercial interests. Today's Bardi Jawi hybrid economy of traditional practices and job and business opportunities focuses on efforts to balance change while ensuring survival.

This is what has been passed down to me to continue and take it where its going. Its an ever-changing thing … Its about taking these traditional practices and traditional languages into the contemporary space and trying to make people realise that is doesn't belong way back 1000 years ago, it belongs here, because I'm here now, and it is me.
Darrell Sibisado, Goolarrgon Bard 2022.

MIDDENS

Aboriginal shell middens are found in many parts of Australia both in salt water and freshwater environs. They contain evidence of Aboriginal life before colonisation, including discarded shell and bone, plant remains, ash and coal. Midden sites can be small areas of scattered material to quite deep and extensive coverage, and occasionally take the form of raised mounds as seen in parts of the Kimberley.

4.
PEARL SHELL STORIES

Pearl oyster shell (Pinctada) fossils suggest the molluscan form has been around for over 13 million years. The oldest evidence of Aboriginal people's use of the pearl shell is from about 22,000 years ago, after a fossil discovery in a rock shelter in the Kimberley.

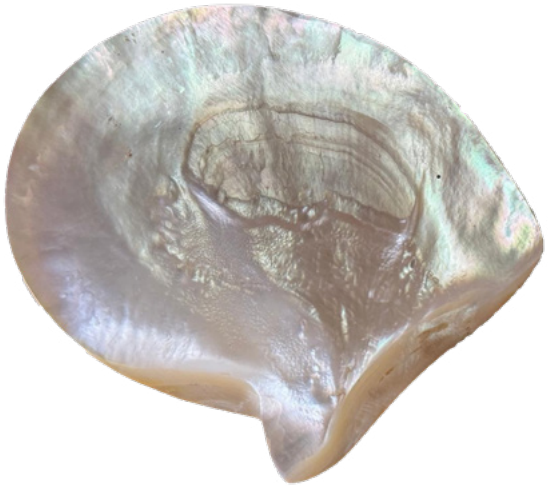
The shell is highly valued for its cultural associations with land, sea and ancestral stories and was traded between First Nations clans across about two thirds of the Australian continent. As such it was one of the most traded of commodities on the continent. Aboriginal people of the West Kimberley collected the beautiful luminous pearl shell for use in ceremony, as acknowledgement of initiation, or as decorative necklaces or hair ornaments. From around the 16th century pearl shells are known to have been collected and traded with fishermen from Macassar in South Sulawesi.

The first European to report finding pearl shells on the western coastline of the Australian continent was in 1699 by the British explorer, naturalist, author and pirate, William Dampier. News spread steadily. By 1850, European pearlers were collecting pearl shells by the tonnage to supply the world with buttons and buckles, and natural pearls for the making of necklaces, earrings, bracelets and other bejewelled garments for European aristocracy.

When the world's largest pearl oyster shell was discovered in Roebuck Bay in 1861, people arrived from all over the world to capitalise on the growing industry. By 1870, the pearling industry was well established and by 1910, the Kimberley coast was the largest pearling centre in the world.

The pearling industry was mostly driven by Chinese and Japanese industrialists, with Filipino and Malaysian pearl fishers also contributing alongside Aboriginal people who worked as free divers collecting shells and processing them for trade. This has resulted in the very multicultural demographic of the West Kimberley we see today.

By the 1950s the pearl shell supply was almost extinguished. Then when plastics started to replace pearl shell buttons and accessories, demand all but disappeared. However, pearls and pearl shell did retain some value in jewellery and ornaments, motivating pearling companies to draw on techniques originating in Japan, to develop ways to cultivate the pearl shell and to ensure the industry's sustainability.



MOTHER OF PEARL / GUAN AND RIJI

It was the pearl shell – not the pearl itself – that was and continues to be highly prized and treasured by Aboriginal people, including the Bardi Jawi. Mother of pearl (or nacre) is the name given to the inner side of the shells of certain molluscs – abalone, oysters, or mussels. It is made of aragonite, (a calcium carbonate) and while it appears quite delicate it is extremely strong due to the aragonite crystals acting as bricks and the organic biopolymer conchiolin acting as the glue. Thin layers of these molecular substances are deposited by the mollusc. These layers diffract light, creating the mother of pearl's iridescent colours and unique beauty.

Pearl shell engraving is synonymous with the people of the northwest Kimberley. It is their canvas. Collecting the shell on the king tides, people shape and engrave pearl shell to not only express their Culture but to preserve the stories they have learned from previous generations, as well as create new stories for future generations.

Guan is the name given to the undecorated shell and *riji* is the name given to the engraved shell.

The *guan* (undecorated pearl shell) is cleaned and shaped, before the carvers incise *ramu* (lines forming special designs) onto the *guan*, sometimes also rubbing ochre into the designs. *Guan*, when carved, becomes *riji*. The powerful brilliance and shimmer of the mother of pearl resembles the manifestation of water, and therefore of life. The designs carved into the pearl shells link their carvers with their ancestors, their culture, their country and their stories.

Pearlshell carving has become an important contemporary artistic practice telling the story of Country and experiences within Country. The works of renowned pearl shell artists such as Darrell Sibosado, Garry Sibosado, and Bruce Wiggan are found in art collections across Australia and around the world.

5.
NGARRGIDJ MORR – proper path to follow


Photo: Daniel Boud

"In Aboriginal thinking, Country is not just land, it is a worldview"

Margo Neale, Editor, Sky Country, First Knowledges series, Thames & Hudson, 2022.

Aboriginal philosophical pathways, or 'ways of being' take in the living environment as well as the spiritual realm – what can be seen and what cannot be seen, every living thing and every non-living thing. This interconnected worldview provides a foundation for deep knowledge.

Colonisation, and all the disruptions it has wrought, has created immense challenges to the people of this Land to hold on to and keep alive their deep knowledge, traditional practices, languages, and economic and social systems. Western ways of heritage preservation usually involve rigid processes of written documentation and various forms of institutional collecting and is not location dependent, whereas Aboriginal Knowledge keeping is held in song, dance, ceremony, story, mark making and other person-to-person communication that is ideally conducted on Country. Being on Country gives people a way of looking, of feeling, of knowing and of acting, in order to uphold the principles of their worldview and know the paths to follow.

For the Bardi and Jawi people, this is called Ngarrgidj Morr (the proper path to follow). Ngarrgidj Morr is about the living systems being symbiotically connected in harmony, with relationships and support systems being the connective tissue for sharing knowledge. Western practices to categorise and share knowledge as facts, can bypass this philosophical continuum of a 'true way' or proper path.

The proper path is personal, it requires effort, focus and deep reflection. The proper path is a cultural compass. It necessitates the individual to be aware of the rhythms and frequencies of Country, of the seas and waterways and also the celestial realm. It is about adapting to Country not making Country adapt to you. You change your behaviours to fit into Country, not try and change Country. Language to describe Country is contextualised to where you are, and evolves as a continuum where past, present and future are conflated. It's about your personal journey.

'Country isn't just the land you walk on, it's the waves, it's the animals that live there, it's the trees, it's the noises you hear in the wind, and the ocean whispering all the time, and sometimes shouting and screaming. If you sit there, you'll hear it.'
Darrell Sibosado – Goolarrgon Bard

6.
ARRIVALS / RELIGION / IMPACT

Inside Christ the King Church, Lombadina.
Photo: State Library of Western Australia 144020PD

From the late 19th century up until the 1960s, a steady stream of Catholic missionaries arrived in the remote area of Ardi / Dampier Peninsula in various places including Lombadina, Beagle Bay, and La Grange to pursue their vocational mission to bring the Christian faith to Aboriginal people of the land. They perceived the people as being 'needing' of what they had to offer. They came from many European nations, to share their beliefs and encourage conversion to the Catholic faith. Irish, French, Italian, Spanish and German priests, nuns and brothers worked hard to deliver what many felt was a divine calling to 'uplift' the people who were being colonised.

It started in 1890, when Irish Catholic missionary Father Matthew Gibney secured 10,000 acres of free-hold land from the West Australian government, and with the assistance of some French Trappist monks, he established a mission at Lombadina two years later. Around 1902, the French monks left Lombadina and the Italian Pallotine order (though these particular monks were actually German) took over. Around the same time a large lease was purchased in the area by Manila man Thomas Puertollano to run his grazing property. When Spanish priest Nicklas Emo, and two St John of God nuns from Ireland arrived to take over from the Pallotines, the Puertollano family provided them with housing and resources. In 1932, German missionary Brother Joseph Tautz arrived in Lombadina from the Beagle Bay mission. Brother Joseph oversaw the building of the Lombadina church that stands to this current day, and from that time up until 1968, various Catholic religious ran the mission, which also included a school.

These were times of mixed feelings. On the one hand, there was displacement, separation and forced labour, on the other, different relationships were being cultivated that would become part of each person's ongoing Story.

Brother Joseph with his working boys started to clean up a bushy area in order to build the Church. It didn't take long to build. Bishop Otto Raible came with some of the Pallottine Priests and St John of God nuns for the blessing and opening and naming it the 'Church of Christ the King'. Today it is the oldest building in the Mission.
Lotti Daylight, Lombadina, 1982

The Lombadina Church was built in the early 1930's. Br (sic) Joseph, could not speak English. For timber, they used donkey wagons, iron wheels, and sledges. Br Joe, Malachy, Sandy, Paddy, Vincent, Joseph Albert used gum for floors, cut with big cross cut saw, dug hole, big frame used saw to cut through from top to bottom. In those days in the garden they grew peanuts, beans, sweet potatoes, and watermelons.
Malachy Sampi, Lombadina, 1982.

‘Country isn’t just the land you walk on, it’s the waves, it’s the animals that live there, it’s the trees, it’s the noises you hear in the wind, and the ocean whispering all the time, and sometimes shouting and screaming. If you sit there, you’ll hear it.’

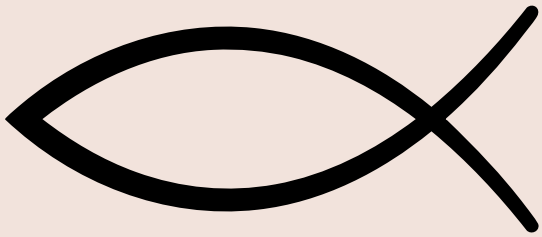
Darrell Sibosado – Goolarrgon Bard

Lombadina Mission 1950s.
Photos: State Library of Western Wustralia 149504PD,

The missionaries worked in and around government policies of the day, sometimes in the effort of mitigate, sometimes actively supporting the powers imposed by police, government inspectors, and the so-called ‘Protectors’, who all pursued their aims under the unjustified assumption of white superiority. The impact was significant – dispossession, segregation of community and family groups, cultural disempowerment, loss of language, and for many, the diminishment of pride and identity. From the latter part of the 19th century till the mid 20th century, missionaries from all over the world spread throughout colonised lands, professing to be driven by well-intended motives that were proclaimed by their faith. However, this mindset neither recognised or respected the deep knowledge and highly developed sophisticated cultural, social and economic systems of Indigenous people. The missionaries were either blind to, or ignored the deep connection that Aboriginal people have to Country – where land and spirit are one, where the concept of proprietary ownership is egregious, but the responsibility to care for Country for Country to sustain people is paramount.

Despite acting on what the missionaries regarded as a good cause, many played an instrumental role in administering some of the most damaging elements of the colonisation process. Removal of children from their families without the consent of their parents, discouragement or in many cases forbidding the speaking of Language or conducting ceremony effectively destroyed people’s pride, severing many generational chains of cultural knowledge.

As missionary activities subsided over the latter part of the 20th century, and mind sets started to change, much reflection has occurred. In the submission to the 1997 Bringing them Home report, the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Darwin stated, *“with the wisdom of hindsight we can only wonder how as a nation, and as a Church, we failed to see the violence of what we were doing, Hopefully, today we are more vigilant regarding the values we espouse”.*
Chapter 19, ‘Bringing them Home report’, Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997.



ICHTHYS

The two intersecting arcs of the fish symbol, also known as the “Jesus Fish,” has a rich history in Christianity. Dating back to the second century CE, the symbol’s Greek term “ICHTHYS” is an acronym for “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour”. Fish, fishermen and fisheries are recurring themes in the Bible texts. In the modern era, the symbol encapsulates the essence of Christianity’s enduring narrative.

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