



AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL
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Media Release

SHARING KNOWLEDGE ON MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) through its digitisation program has unearthed the historically and culturally relevant Gurindji language recordings in time for International Mother Language Day.

Dr Patrick McConvell, ANU Research Fellow and AIATSIS Member, worked with Gurindji elder Jimmy Manngayarri (Kurrajnginyi) to create the recordings forty years ago during the time of the Gurindji walk-off and subsequent native title claims.

“During the land claims and native title era Kurrajnginyi became very important in helping other people put together their stories, as he was a really knowledgeable person,” said Dr McConvell.

“He worked with not only me but a number of people in that era and everybody remembers him very fondly.”

The Gurindji walk-off, or Wave Hill walk-off, has become known as the landmark event of 1966 which precipitated the equal wages case in the pastoral industry and the establishment of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976*.

These recordings are important because Gurindji elders believe it is vital to continue passing on their language and cultural knowledge to future generations of Gurindji children. Gurindji country is located in the southern Victoria River District in the Northern Territory (Australia).

“He certainly had a lot of knowledge every time there would be a discussion he would come along and contribute even if it wasn’t on his country,” said Dr McConvell.

“Sometimes people are touchy about that but with him it was different, everybody would accept that he was an expert and he was welcome in any discussion.”

Our video on the Gurindji language recordings generated by our collection items can be found on the AIATSIS Vimeo channel <https://vimeo.com/120025570>.

Media enquiries: Marie Ferris, Mob 0427 104 176

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