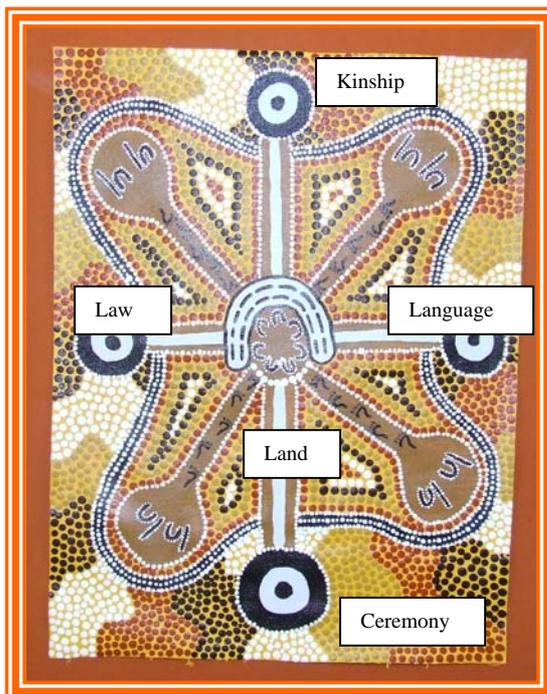


Warlpiri Ngurra-kurlu

There are five elements that stand as pillars of Warlpiri Culture. These five elements are: Walya (Land), Kuruwarri (Law), Jaru (Language), Warlalja [Kinship (Skin)] and Juju/Manyuwana (Ceremony). All five elements are intimately connected with each of the other elements, and not one of the elements can be teased out and considered in isolation from any of the other elements. Any one of the elements can be considered as a focus of consideration, but in so doing, all of the other elements, by necessity, will also be included in the discussion.

In addition to the five elements of Warlpiri Culture, there are other aspects of consideration. From the Warlpiri Milpirri Festival¹, inaugurated in 2005, five essential Warlpiri values have been distilled. These values are: Manyuwana (Celebration), Purami (Following the Right Way), Mardarni (Protection of those things that are important), Jintangka (Unity in Diversity) and Jarda-warnpa (Atonement and Reconciliation). Further, there are five important Warlpiri communities: to the north (Lajamanu- incorporating Warlpiri-ngurra in Katherine, and the Long Grass People in Darwin), to the south (Yurntumu- incorporating the Alice Springs Town Camps), to the west (Nyirrpi) and to the east (Willowra – incorporating Ali-Kurung).



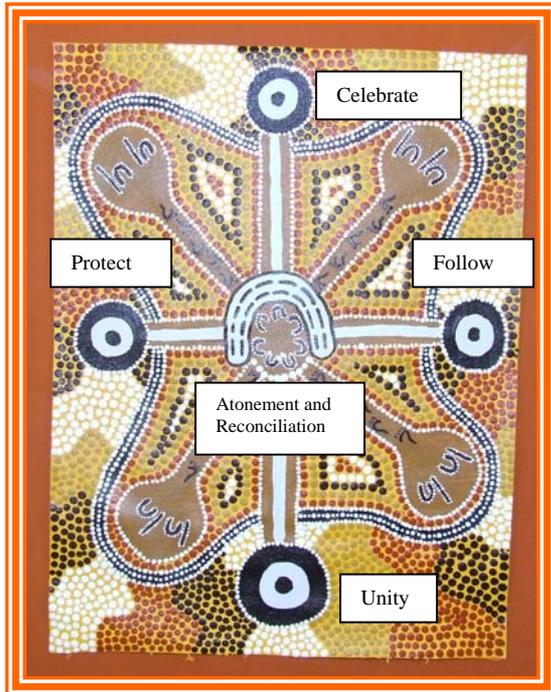
A painting has been developed to provide a template to give insight to the link between the several layers of interrelationship that exist between these elements, values and communities.

If, for instance, we were to place Land as the central issue of our consideration, then we would also have to consider the Law that applies in the context of the Land. This would also require a consideration of the Kinship that applies in that Land, the Language that is necessary to enable proper interaction between Skin relationships and also the Language that is necessary to talk to, about and in the Land. There would also need to

be a consideration of the Ceremony or Ceremonies that are tied to the specific Land being referred to. On the other hand, if Language became the central focus of consideration, then it has to be considered in the context of the other four elements, in the same way. Same goes with Law, Ceremony

¹ The Milpirri Festival is described in detail in Appendix I. It is a Warlpiri Cultural Festival that seeks to explain and apply Traditional Warlpiri values in a contemporary context.

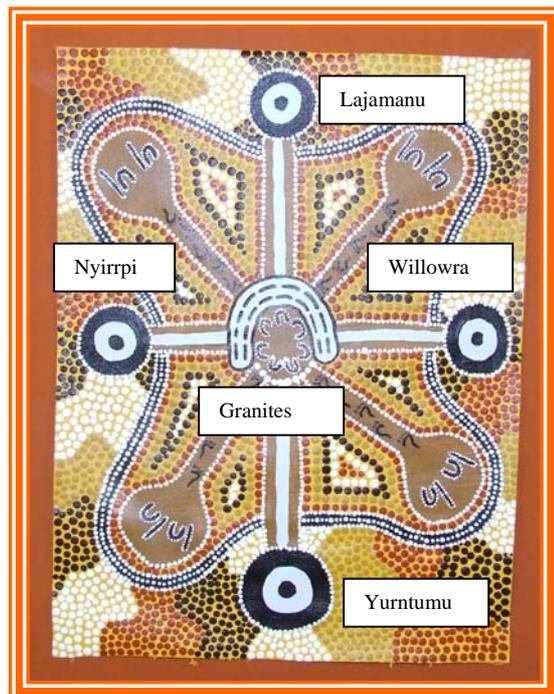
and Skin as the focus of consideration and/or discussion. None of these elements can be discussed or considered in isolation of the other four elements without violently corrupting the perspective being examined.



However, at another level, the Land in its elemental context is impinged upon by essential Warlpiri values. So Land, with all of its elemental context, is a place where Warlpiri Celebrate; Land is a place where life is lived in a proper way; Land is an essential part of Warlpiri life and must be cared for and preserved as an inviolable trust; Land is where life is lived together in unity, but with the richness of diversity that comes from respect for difference; and finally, there are processes of Atonement and Reconciliation that enable things to be put right when things go wrong in the Land. Furthermore, Language in all of its elemental context, likewise is enriched by these Warlpiri

values. We need to know rich Warlpiri Language to be able to celebrate in a truly Warlpiri way; Warlpiri Language elaborates on the proper way to follow and live; Language needs to be protected, and competence in Language facilitates the process of protecting other important Warlpiri elements; strong Warlpiri Language unifies the community; and the many layers of Warlpiri Language facilitate the processes of Atonement and Reconciliation. And so the same can be written of Law, Skin and Ceremony.

And equally importantly, when discussing a particularly defined Land, there are interests in that Land in each of the Warlpiri communities to the north, south, east and west, and both Kirda (Trustees) and Kurdungurlu (Appointors) have responsibilities to keep land for the Beneficiaries (the Warlpiri Nation). This is why there needs to be a regular Warlpiri convergence (say every five years), so that Atonement and Reconciliation can be made in relation to the Land, and issues that have caused pain can be dealt with and healing of the Land facilitated. Language drifts when a nation is scattered. This has been happening to the Warlpiri nation, as a



Designed by Daniel Jupurrurla Rockman, painted by (Lance) Alan Box Jangala with permission from Jerry Jangala Patrick. Original painting held by Jerry Jangala Patrick. Painting must acknowledge intellectual ownership and must NOT be reproduced without permission from Traditional Owner.

direct consequence of herding the Warlpiri into communities in the Welfare days. In Lajamanu, the younger generation have developed a totally new language, either called: "Lajamanu Way," or "Light Warlpiri." This language has been analysed by Carmel O'Shannesey, and has been developed to a point where younger Lajamanu Warlpiri have been heard to say things like: "I don't talk to my grandmother any more. I don't understand her when she speaks.