

Two Brothers Walking



Press Kit

A Rainbow Serpent Dreaming Journey
in Pitjantjatjara and English
with English Subtitles

Produced By:

John Hartley

Murray George

David Salomon

Short Synopsis

In the heart of Australia the old people live their Ancestral values, beliefs and practices handed down from the beginning. Daily pressures and the scarcity of resources endanger traditional ways. Two brothers stand together in the certainty that the strongest response in challenging times is a cultural one.

Medium Synopsis

Life for traditional Aboriginal people is governed by law. Pitjantjatjara call it Tjukurpa, Kuku Yalanji say Ngujukurra. All Aboriginal languages have a word for it. Traditional law holds the knowledge of where to find food, how to act towards others, when to continue cultural learning and why it is important to live a good life. It governs the privileges and responsibilities of each person that together make up society, ensuring that family and community are cared for and the health and well being of country is maintained.

Two men from different parts of Australia come together as brothers and follow a Rainbow Serpent Dreaming journey. Rainbow Serpent, or Wanampi to Pitjantjatjara and Yarru to Kuku Yalanji, is the regenerative power that makes country stand up alive. It is the power source that brings fertility and abundance to all living things, plants, animal, people and country.

The brothers are on a quest to revitalise and maintain knowledge of Tjukurpa for the next generation. Their meeting with senior lawmen with responsibility for Wanampi Tjukurpa, in the heart of Australia culminates at a sacred waterhole, home of Wanampi to this day. Wanampi moves about country across cities and suburbs, aware not only of Aboriginal people but of white people too. Wanampi is the spiritual power that permeates country even where people have no knowledge of its existence.

As the journey moves to the Laura Dance Festival in North Queensland it becomes a rallying point for cultural regeneration for all Australians.

Long Synopsis

What would it take to keep the earth's oldest living culture going? How can an Aboriginal person who grew up away from their country reconnect with their spiritual and cultural traditions? The documentary "Two Brothers Walking" follows two Aboriginal men as they reflect on these questions revealing pivotal experiences in their journey.

The premise of the film is straight forward; Australia's first people developed a sophisticated law and culture for maintaining the well-being of country and people through an interconnected system of story, kinship, language and ceremony. Not only is that system still intact today, in some places, such as the Australian central desert, that tradition was never interrupted.

Now there is a sense of urgency for cultural resurgence to ensure that culture is passed on to future generations. The old people see that there are simply not enough young people following in their footsteps to carry on the vast storehouse of knowledge, and so their solution is to "put their memory in the picture", to create new forms of cultural transmission using digital media. Anangu Pitjantjatjara lawman, Murray George says: *We need to tell the world that our culture is still alive. We still have all the stories, the songs and ceremonies from the beginning. We need to put it on the Internet so that everyone will know it is still here.*

Murray goes on to say that this culture belongs to all people born in Australia, it arises out of country and is the power that keeps everything standing up alive. *White people should*

be proud of this culture too because it belongs to them and their children, even if they don't know it.

The documentary takes us to Murray's mothers country. He and other senior men and women, each with custodial responsibilities for sections of country, recount the Tjukurpa of two men and their wives, also sisters, as they travel across country. The men have supernatural powers and can transform into any animal at will. We visit a waterhole where the brothers and their wives live today in the form of Wanampi, the powerful and dangerous Rainbow Serpent who moves about the country, revitalising it and maintaining plants and animals as food and sustenance for the people.

The community which lives on this country comes together to perform the inma (*songs and dances*) that maintain this Tjukurpa and the spirit of this country.

For John Hartley, the second brother, the journey is a reconnection to ceremony and tradition. The documentary gives us an indication of how kinship is based not only on biological family but spiritual relationship to country as well. In this way, these two come together as brothers even though their country is separated by thousand of kilometres and come from different language groups. They are united by culture and story that transcend variations in country and language and revive ancient traditions of cultural exchange. Something a bit more personal, it doesn't quite capture the intense bond that is pivotal in the story.

John's journey passes through uncertainty and confusion brought on by being stripped of identity at an early age and alienated from his roots to eventually arrive at a profound and moving reconnection with the ancestors who give guidance to turn his life around and return to his people.

The brothers carry the message that for Aboriginal people to prosper it is neither a matter of opting out of the modern world to live the old ways nor is it to turn their back on culture and live as white people, but rather it is a matter of leveling up the two cultures and drawing on the strength and resources that each has to offer.

Two Brothers Walking is a Rainbow Serpent Dreaming journey, a spiritual quest to realise what it means to become a full human being, free to live ones life connected to the source of all that is, taking on responsibilities for family and community in a spirit of ngapartji ngapartji.

The documentary is an introduction to the life of the people of the central desert, once shared by people all over Australia, from their own perspective. It is an opportunity to sit down with old men and women to learn what has been lost to the western world for centuries perhaps millennia. We spend time in the company of people still able to navigate their way through country by story and song and bring it up alive in the process. It is a story of spiritual people in spiritual country who are striving to maintain their culture in the modern world and inviting us to share the journey, a Rainbow Serpent Dreaming journey towards becoming free human beings.

People



**FRONT ROW L TO R: MRS BROWN, MRS NORRIS, KANGINY GEORGE,
BACK ROW: DAVID SALOMON, JOHN HARTLEY, MURRAY GEORGE, WITJITI GEORGE,
GINGER WIKILYIRI, KEITH STEPHENS AND JOCELYN NORRIS**



Murray George

Co-Producer, Lead Story-teller, Story

photo by David Salomon

I was born at the Ernabella mission in the mission days. When we went to school we learnt in Pitjantjatjara, that's my language. Learning in my language brought me a lot of things, as I learned from my grandmother, grandfather, aunties and uncles. They taught me everything as we travelled around in the country in the APY lands and I learned a lot of things. I thought it was good to learn English but it was hard.

Our tjukurpa covers everything in our culture but there's only a few of us left alive today that still have all that culture. So we've got to support our tjukurpa and keep our tjukurpa strong for everybody. I know a little bit of English, but we have to think about the future. Which is better for us? There's no doubt that our culture is better for us.

When I finished school my father took me everywhere. My father, my mother and me travelled around in the APY lands and saw another world. And I learnt very well from my family and my extended family about tjukurpa because tjukurpa is very important for us. When I grew up we did station work, fruit picking, we went to Western Australia for study, and work and that was good. At that time I wasn't really looking at the clear picture. At that time I should have been working for our people.

When I came to middle age I spent a lot of time on the land, and that became my life. I spend a lot of time doing business on country. Today I am here with a plan for tjukurpa for the future.

Making this picture was important because our language is going to go away. We want the language to come back and for people to get interested in it when they see me and my brother from Kuku Yalanji and me a Pitjantjatjara person in the documentary. So people will be able to get back on the line, back on the track because if we have no language we are nowhere.

I went in and out of government organisations and we wrote millions of letters, but it never worked because they didn't want to hear about our tjukurpa, though a few did. I got sick of it, and I thought, I'm going leave this government business it's just a game. It can see politicians on the TV and in the newspapers and all that, but they don't listen. For them it's just a game.

So, we're very lucky. We have this documentary and have set up a corporation that everybody can support so that we came keep our culture going. It's our life even today.

Some white fellas born in Australia play politics, but they have to act on our behalf too, because they are our brothers and sisters and they are part of Australia. Men and women should all help prevent the law that originated overseas taking over our life completely.



John Hartley

Co-Producer, Lead Story-teller, Story

The first time I stepped into my grandfathers and grandmothers country I was eight years old. That was the first time I met my mother's people the Kuku Yalanji people. Back then the language was really strong and is alive today. Since that time I've always been very interested in my culture, especially when others asked questions about culture. That set me on a long search to the present day and is still continuing. It has led me through many places throughout Australia and overseas travelling with first Nations people and coming to realise the vital importance of culture as the lifeblood of the people and the true spirit of the country.

It was while travelling overseas in Canada with first Nations people that I realised the importance of technology in retaining various aboriginal culture.

If you go across Australia many stories have been made dormant they are sleeping. But there are still pockets in this country where a full body of knowledge is still alive, still enacted and still continuing today, but in a very threatened state. It's in crisis and I think the film and the technology involved in sharing the everyday life of people is vitally important so that brothers and sisters in other aboriginal communities can share and raise awareness of the value and the precious gift we have in relation to Aboriginal Heritage and having the oldest continuing culture on the face of the planet here, is a source of value, pride and identity for everybody across Australia. We trust that our work in making the film supports this message. We can no longer allow the full heritage of this country that belongs to everybody to be continually dismantled and made redundant.

I organised logistics in the cultures coming together for the film by talking with the elders in South Australia APY lands, and in Kuku Yalanji country in far north Queensland in developing the storyline based on rainbow serpent. The rainbow serpent is a central story in many many locations in Australia. whilst our cultural expressions vary across geographical environments our law runs through the entirety of the country. It is the law that people have consented to for 1000s and thousands of years. It is a law that is still very much alive today though under serious threat of extinction.

I worked together with David Salomon and Murray George in developing a storyline around that and to show how the storyline can travel from one country to another country and though it varies and has different cultural expressions it is essentially the same. And while there are variations in the stories across the country it is our law that keeps us together. And it is that same law that we want to invigorate and enliven. I filled roles such as gofer, logistics, producer and took part in certain sections of the film.



David Salomon

Photo by Gertrude Ygosse

Director, Producer, Cinematographer, Editor, Publicist.

I come from the Darling Downs in South East Queensland. From time to time axe heads and other implements were unearthed in the wheat fields, but very little was known of the people who used them.

There was always the sense of another story just beneath the surface. I was greatly impacted and inspired by the Government Film Office films from the 50's and 60's occasionally shown at school and the radio plays and book readings (before TV) that carried a sense of the mysterious, of magical power and a culture with which I had nothing in common except the earth beneath my feet.

My first contact with traditional people in a remote community left me shocked. I discovered an Australia I didn't know existed. A place where no one spoke English, in a country that white fellas couldn't survive and with a sophisticated culture many times older than my own.

As long service leave from school teaching was coming due and I decided to change careers. The digital video revolution was just starting and made independent filmmaking possible. I had always been interested in photography, and learnt as much as I could about filmmaking from the internet and master classes organised by the South Australian Film Corporation got me on my way.

Two Brothers Walking is a culmination of many hours spent with John Hartley and Murray George. They are great and generous teachers. We travelled around the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, north to Mututjulu, Alice Springs, as well as far north Queensland and in the Adelaide region. Murray and the women call me their cameraman, though with Pitjantjatjara accent it sounds more like camel man, which caused an eruption of laughter on many occasions.

Filmmaking as a one man band is a demanding and exhilarating experience. With camera and laptop we travelled to various communities, often drawing a crowd to see the dailies. I am always struck by what different audiences see in the work. Aboriginal audiences are moved by different scenes to white fellas, reflecting their knowledge of bush foods and medicine and the personal relationship to the country itself. I learnt a different way to make films, where the old men and women are great story tellers with presence and awareness of their audience. It is a great privilege to be invited to learn from a culture based on poetry, song, and storytelling. We've only just begun to record a few stories of the tens of thousands that travel across the whole country.

Directors Statement

Making *Two Brothers Walking* presented some unique filmmaking challenges. The first part of the film was shot in the APY lands of South Australia where Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and other central desert languages are spoken rather than English particularly by senior people. The choice of locations, the stories told and who would appear in the film followed traditional protocol with final decisions made at the time of shooting. It was up to the camera to follow the action as the story unfolded.

With only a smattering of Pitjantjatjara I frequently didn't know what was being said. I had to wait until I got to the edit desk and had time to work it out often with the help of others. Rarely were there written schedules or second takes. Nevertheless, the tjilpis (senior men) knew exactly the stories they wanted to tell and they planned and discussed everything in detail beforehand.

Discussions invariably revolved around traditional life and Tjukurpa. Tjukurpa encompasses the holistic world view which includes all life forms connected to country, bound together by songs, stories, family relationships and cultural practices.

The film took over four years to complete. Essentially the camera followed John and Murray as they went about meeting with people in communities, talking to senior people about the need to maintain law and culture for future generations.

There had never been a body to represent traditional people before. There had been no need. Tjukurpa filled that role. There's a word for it in every Aboriginal Australian language. Only with the coming of Europeans was a body representative of Aboriginal people necessary.

What we see of Aboriginal culture from the outside is observed through our European cultural lens. *Two Brothers Walking* attempts to get a glimpse of how Anangu tjuta (Aboriginal people of the APY Lands) see themselves and the world they live in.

As director I was always aware of the context of filming. There I belonged to a minority group of uneducated people who couldn't speak the language. Occasionally my usual norms of behaviour came across as rude and abrupt in this context and generous allowances were made for me. I had no idea of even the simplest etiquette.

Yet there were many times that these differences were transcended by finding places of shared humour, timeless moments of numinous wonder and opportunities for sharing practical things.

When the film had been locked down we showed it to the senior people for their approval. After the screening Murray, his wife Kanginy and a mob of kids travelled the 1,270 kms back to Adelaide with me. We left Fregon quite early in the morning but as always we stopped off at significant sites along the way scouting for a future film or for Murray to show me some Tjukurpa. In this culture knowing about something counts for nothing. What matters is your relationship to it and being accountable in your actions towards it.

It was one of those spectacular summer afternoons. Cool by local standards, with thunderheads forming in all quadrants. As we traversed the Kokotha plains between Coober Pedy and Glendambo we passed through shower after shower. The golden afternoon sun was to our back and double rainbows kept forming and fading in front of us. Murray explained how the rainbow and its reflection is equivalent to one of the kinship avoidance relationships, always there together but never touch.

Just before sunset Murray took over driving. As I dozed the completed film flicked through my mind in a half asleep, half awake state. The sunlight, the huge sky, the thunderstorms, the rainbows, the completion of the film, everything had filled me up. My kurunpa (spirit) was in a state of excitement.

Then as twilight fell Kanginy started to sing some Christian hymns in Pitjantjatjara that I recognised from my childhood and as the stars started come out Murray joined in and they sang Silent Night in their language. I felt awash with a sensation like the flickering firelight experienced by so many before me. I was at home in this vast country, itself a mere speck on this planet, a planet in a universe of stars. My heart beat gave sense to what I had often heard spoken of in relationship to country; Standing Up Alive.

Two Brothers Walking is about spiritual people in spiritual country.

Post Production

Cat Johns

In recognition of traditional owners

Sound Editor

Tommy George (Kuku Thaiypan)

Composer

Ginger Wikilyiri

Robert Stevens

Keith Stevens

End Credit Roll

Witjiti George

Manta nganampa

Murray George

Tjukurpa nganampa wanka

Angkuna Tjitayi

Mrs Norris

Murray George

Mrs Brown

John Hartley

Kanginy George

Ginger Wikilyiri

Danny O'Shane

Angkuna Tjitayi

Raymond Buchanan

Keith Stevens

Phillip Missionary

Raymond Buchanan

Graham Brady

Danny O'Shane

Kuwanji Brady

Graham Brady

William Brady

Neville Ryan

Dancers

Lawrence Morgan

Manta Nganampa Dance Group

John Hartley

Murray George

John Hartley

Narration - David Salomon

Mrs Norris

Camera and Edit - David Salomon

Singers

Interpreters

Kanginy George

Murray George

Mrs Brown

Kanginy George,

Mrs Norris

Karina Lester - MLT, University of Adelaide

Subtitles - David Salomon

Traditional Music:

Pitjantjatjara Inma (Songs):

Kalaya Inma

Ngin̄taka Inma

Manta Nganampa Inma

Mamu Inma

Waṅampi Inma

Audio Post Production

Cat Johns

Music

Cat Johns – XPM Studio

Locations:

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

Nyapari Community, APY Lands, South Australia

Goobidi Bamaga Community Advance Co-Operative, Mossman FNQ

Ang-Gnarra Festival Grounds

Laura Dance Festival

Sunrise and Sunset Ku Ku Yalanji Bama FNQ

Archival Footage

John Dalwitz - Ara Iritja Project, South Australian Museum

Irene AllanKokum Julia Kehwin and Kehwin Family – Kanata

Frank and Mary Bennett Collection

Suzanne Bryce

Noel and Phil Wallace

Max Hart

Travel and Accommodation

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The Romero's - Adelaide Day Centre

Demi View Motel, Mossman FNQ

Cairns Bus Charters

Skysafari Australia

EarthSong SA,

Jane Pennington, Bill Kirtland, Carol Omer,

Sue Gilbey

Special Thanks:

Tommy George

Custodian of Laura Dance Festival

and last surviving Ku Ku Thaiypan Speaker

Vera Hartley, Kate Hartley, Danny

O'Shane, Neville Ryan, Lawrence Morgan,

Helen Adams, Gail Gorman, Joanne Else,

Ginger Wikilyiri , Keith Stephens & family,

Witjiti George

Victor & Olga Gostin

Janet Giles

Martin O'Malley

Post Production, Launch Events

Wallace McKitrick, Davina Egege,

Office for the Arts - Indigenous Cultural Support

Qualifiers

Exact Runtime

00 hr : 48 min : 55 sec

Date of Completion

May 2013

Country of Production

Australia