

## Defining Moments in a young Yolngu man's life Video Transcript

*Narrator:* We're in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia.

It's a beautiful place, land of sweeping beaches, freshwater swamps, dense bushland and crocodiles.

And in the rainy season, lots of water.

Aunty Djapirri is a friend of mine and her family have lived on this land for thousands of years.

Her people are the Yolngu people.

They still live in the old ways but they also live in the modern ways as well.

So, Djapirri's a great person to help us understand what life was like in the past and how we can find out more about unique, Aboriginal lifestyles.

Let's visit with Djapirri as she shares her wisdom and knowledge with her nephew, Gabirri.

Gabirri, we are now standing in a place called (speaking in Yolngu language) where Yolngu food is found.

A food that Yolngu have lived for many thousands of years for survival.

*Narrator:* Djapirri explains there's much to learn about the trees, the plants, and bush creatures.

And how Gabirri's people survived in this harsh environment for more than 60,000 years.

She begins by showing him plants used to make tools for gathering food.

It's called iron wood.

In the olden times, thousands of years when metal wasn't yet seen amongst Yolngu people, this tree was used as a tool for digging, the most hard part of the soil.

*Narrator:* And for hunting.

(speaking in Yolngu language) is mainly used for spear making by the men and because it's very light, when they throw it towards the fish, the whole spear floats.

*Narrator:* In another part of the bush Djapirri points out the kurrajong tree that is a source of food, as well as materials for making tools.

Actually, nut that comes out of it that we eat straight away.

The stem itself is then used by women to make stringy bags and fishing nets and grass skirts.

*Narrator:* Djappiri shows her nephew one of the many native fruit trees.

And when you open it's a bit like a jelly in it but very beautiful like (speaking in Yolngu language). Just eat 'em straight.

*Narrator:* And explains that another tree has fruit that is very rich in vitamin C.

This one's called (speaking in Yolngu language). You know those lollies M&M's?

They're the size of that but rich in vitamin C.

*Narrator:* But the bush provides more than food and tools.

Trees and plants are also an important source of medicine.

And their leaves, fruit, and roots have cured the Yolngu of many sicknesses over the years.

For example, a (speaking in Yolngu language) or in English we call it the rotten cheese fruit tree.

It's used to ease colds and sore throats.

But the most important tree of all for the Yolngu people is the cycad tree.

It's the source of all knowledge and meaning.

It is their tree of life.

Why this is so special, Gabirri?

This plant takes us to the root of who we are as a Yolngu person.

That's where your wisdom and knowledge about the song lines, about the nature, comes from.

*Narrator:* It's almost the end of a long day of learning for Gabirri.

His Aunty has taught him about the strong relationship that his people have with the land and the sea.

He's learned which plants provide nourishing food.

Which may be used to make tools, baskets, and fishnets.

And most important of all, which plants can be used for healing.

It's now time for Gabirri to undertake a healing ceremony and during the day, all of the special ingredients have been gathered to make this happen.

Reeds have been collected from the swamp.

Paper bark has been gathered to form soft bedding for the person to lie on.

The fire has been prepared.

Pandanus nuts have been collected and placed on the coals, producing natural oil that soaks into the body of the person being healed.

Stringy bark from a eucalyptus tree is strewn on top of the fire and then the reeds are added, causing the steam to rise through holes that have been punched into the bark.

Finally, Gabirri is covered with bark and the healing process begins.

All the while, Djapirri massages his body and talks quietly to him.

(didgeridoo droning)

Gabirri is cleansed with warm water and leaves.

Bush medicine that gets rid of colds and headaches and helps relax the muscles.

He then breathes in the strong smell of the freshly crushed stringy bark.

His mind is now clear.

He will remember what he has learned.

And he now has the confidence and discipline to become a strong leader.