

Mr Jack Green, with Dr Seán Kerins

Glencore's McArthur River Mine and its impact on Gudanji, Garrwa, Marra and Yanyuwa peoples' sacred sites, customary Laws and institutions, and lands and waters.

Submission to Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia inquiry into the destruction of Indigenous heritage sites at Juukan Gorge.

April 2021

Statement from Mr Jack Green to the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Development, inquiry into the destruction of Indigenous heritage sites at Juukan Gorge.

I was taught our Law by my grandfathers, father, uncles and other senior kin from the Garrwa, Gudanji, Marra and Yanyuwa peoples. Knowledge came to me through our ceremonies, songs, stories, hunting, fishing and gathering and travelling through country with the old people visiting sacred sites, as well as the places where our people were massacred by settlers when they invaded our country. We sing the country.

All my life I have fought hard for our country, culture and our Law. For the last 40 years I have been working with Aboriginal people of the southwest Gulf region of the Northern Territory fighting to get country back in our ownership and to protect and care for it. There are lots of important sacred sites and song-lines throughout our country. Many of them are powerful places that have to be cared for, looked after in the proper way, under our Law. When these places are damaged it hurts us. We feel cut open.

In 2005, I started the Garrwa and Waanyi/Garrwa ranger groups. I did this because many Waanyi and Garrwa people who were once living on their homelands were forced to move off their ancestral country when government cut service delivery to the homelands. We worked hard to set up ranger groups and Indigenous Protected Areas to care for country, to ensure sacred and cultural sites were protected, and to create employment and learning opportunities for our people.

I have been a director of the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation in Queensland, where I represented Garrwa people. I am a current council member for the Borroloola/Barkly region on the Northern Land Council. I am also a current board member of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA). The AAPA is responsible for overseeing the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites on land and sea across the whole of the Northern Territory.

I wish to submit my paintings to the Committee because over the past decade I have been documenting what mining companies, like Glencore, have been doing in the Gulf country. Many of my paintings document how poorly Glencore treats us Aboriginal people, and how they work to undermine our Law and decision-making processes so they can dig our country and harm our sacred sites. I have done this because Glencore, with their power and money, want to be the ones that tell the story and make everything look good. But it's not good. Things are bad and many sacred sites are at great risk.

When I was young there was no whitefella schooling for us Aboriginal kids. My school was the bridle and the blanket, learning on the pastoral stations and country where my father worked. This is the reason I don't read and write. I'm not ashamed of this. I started painting to record what was happening to us. With each painting I record its story so that people clearly understand what is going on here. My paintings show what is happening to our country and to us Aboriginal people. No one is listening to us, how we want to live, or how we want to look after our country and build a strong future for our young ones to care for country. It's for these reasons that I started to paint. I want government to listen to Aboriginal people, to respect our culture and Law and our rights as Indigenous peoples. I want people everywhere to know what's been happening to us and our country, and how mining companies like Glencore work to undermine our Law, divide our people, dig up our sacred sites and contaminate our lands, waters and bodies. I also want people to know how much it hurts us to see Australian governments' help the mining companies do harm to our sacred sites, our country, our people, and our Law.

I look forward to the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Development visiting Borroloola soon.

Mr Jack Green with Dr Seán Kerins, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, The Australian National University, Canberra, ACT.



Mr Jack Green, *Cut Open*, photograph Therese Ritchie, from *Open Cut* 2017.

Impact on Sacred Sites and Cultural Sites



McArthur River Mine Site 2012

McArthur River mine is on Gudjanji country about 60 km southwest of Borroloola. It's been operated by a few companies, Mt Isa Mines, Xstrata and now the mining giant Glencore. The company expanded the mine from an underground operation to an open pit against our wishes. To do this they had to divert McArthur River along a 5 km diversion so they could get to the zinc, lead and silver deposit under the river right at the place of an important Snake Dreaming. The tree in the painting represents the sacred site where the Rainbow Serpent came up. This is a very powerful ancestral being. The diversion has destroyed the back of the Rainbow Serpent.

The Aboriginal people under the boomerang represent the bosses for that Rainbow Serpent. They are just standing there watching because that's all they can do under whitefella law. They feel powerless. They worry. The spear represents the force of the river coming down in the wet season. The mining company, they reckon they got everything under control but they don't have the spiritual stuff under control. We should have full control of our sacred sites.



McArthur River Mine 2013.

Mount Isa Mines Limited was the company that first owned the McArthur River Mining lease from the 1950s to 2003. When they first came to the Gulf they were doing tests and drilling to see if they could make an underground mine. The traditional owners of the place wasn't happy with it, but they said alright because they are going to do it underneath the ground and not damage the sacred sites on top of it, so they let it happen. But when Xstrata Mining Company took over the lease in 2003 they didn't respect the agreement that we had with the mining company.

This painting tells the story of our fight with Xstrata Mining Company and how they expanded McArthur River mine from an underground to an open cut mine making it one of largest lead-zinc-silver mines in the world. The mine is built right on the resting place of The Rainbow Serpent. It's a spiritually powerful place, real powerful.

The men standing at the bottom of the painting represent the Junggayi (Boss for Country) and the Minggirringi (Owner of Country). Together, these are the people who have responsibility for protecting country. They are powerless, just staring at what is happening to their country, to the animals and sacred sites. They are afraid the land is being poisoned. They have to stand on the outside of the mine lease, they can't walk freely on their own country because the mine has restrictions and we can't enter unless they say so.

Near the airport you can see a tree. This is the place where the Turtle rests. The Turtle is an ancestral being and part of The Rainbow Serpent story. The tree is a powerful place and only the Junggayi can go there. Women, children and young boys can't go near the tree because it's too powerful. If anything like kangaroo, stone, fish, turtle or sugarbag is in the area it can only be touched by the Junggayi. But now the miners are there, not the Junggayi. That's not right.



Desecrating the Rainbow Serpent 2014

At the top of the painting, guarded by the *Junggayi* (Boss for Country) and *Minggirringi* (Owner of Country), are the eyes of The Rainbow Serpent. The *Junggayi* and *Minggirringi* are worried that The Snake is being desecrated. The Rainbow Serpent is one of our spiritually powerful ancestral beings. It rests under McArthur River in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria. Under our Law we hold responsibility for protecting its resting place from disturbance, and responsibility for nurturing its spirit with ceremony and song—just as our ancestors have done for eons.

The left of the painting represents a time when we had authority over country. We lived on country, hunted, fished and gathered our food. We used fire to care for country, and most importantly, we protected our sacred places within it. By protecting and nurturing our sacred sites we protect and nurture our spirituality and our wellbeing as Gudanji, Garrwa, Mara and Yanyuwa peoples.

The right of the painting represents the present time (2014) when we still have no authority over all of our ancestral country. The artwork illustrates how the resting place of The Rainbow Serpent looks now. It's been smashed by McArthur River Mine. Country, torn open to make way for one of the largest lead, zinc and silver mines the world has ever seen. To do this they cut the back of our ancestor—The Rainbow Serpent—by severing McArthur River and diverting it through a 5.5 kilometre diversion cut into our country.

A lot of people have died because of the desecration of our sacred places. Interfering with these powerful places, it pulls people down. The stress of seeing our land suffer means we suffer. Men tried to fight but got pulled down. I might be the next one, or the *Junggayi* will go down. The mining executive might go too. All this pressure, it's no good.



Our Dreamings, Our Life 2019

The old man, claps his boomerangs and sings the song that travels with the Dreaming track of the Old Snake that travelled from the east to the west, before turning south east and going into the ground.

Old Snake went right into the ground, right where McArthur River Mine is now digging him up. Nearby are other sacred sites, the Garbula tree and the Turtle. Not too far away is the Barramundi Dreaming and the Jabiru Dreaming. These Dreamings are powerful, they give us life, we come from them when we born and go back to them.

Today whitefellas have trapped them all in the lease of McArthur River Mine where the mining company keeps digging and digging down in to the Old Snake and leaving behind a toxic waste rock pile.

Once this Country at McArthur River was full of food, easy for families to go hunting bringing back wallaby, goanna, and good food like that. But not today because, the mine is destroying our Country, its food and sacred places.



Sacred Country 2020

In 2006, Whitefella miners, with the support of their governments, diverted McArthur River and dug a huge open cut pit in the bed of our river. Then they started building a massive waste rock dump to hide their deadly waste in our Country. The miners waste will be here for thousands of years. They did this to us right in the middle of Sacred Country, right where the Snake Dreamings are, where the Jabiru, the Barramundi, Dingo and Turtle Dreamings are. They cut our Dreaming tracks and threaten our culture and our futures as Aboriginal people. How do we sing the sacred songs when the Dreaming tracks have been destroyed? We feel no good, heavy in our hearts but we keep fighting.



Our Country is Alive and Whitefellas Don't Want to Know 2020

Glencore, the company that owns McArthur River Mine, talk about the mine being in the middle of nowhere, at great distances from the places the whitefellas fly in from to work there. But it's not in the middle of nowhere. McArthur River Mine sits in our country, right amongst a network of sacred sites and cultural places that give us life.

Miners are always trying to get up close to our people, pick them off one by one. They like to get photos of their people shaking Aboriginal people's hands. They are always busy trying to make things look good while they poison our land and damage our sacred places. They use our people and leave behind a toxic waste rock dump that will haunt our grandchildren for generations.



Nggirridji Gunindjba—the Devil that Fiddles and Digs in Our Country 2020

This painting represents the McArthur River region where Glencore, the devil that fiddles and digs in our country, operates one of the world's biggest lead, zinc and silver mines. The McArthur River region is a powerful place, it's full of sacred sites that give us life.

The red circles represent the sacred sites. At the tail of the Rainbow Serpent rests the *Damangani* Dreaming, in the top right is the *Jerrimini* Dreaming. The *Garbula* tree and the Turtle Dreaming are other sacred sites right at the place where they cut the Snake to create the massive open cut pit in our land when they diverted McArthur River. After they diverted the river a lot of the senior *Minggirringi* (traditional owners) and *Junggayi* (Boss or policeman) for that place died.

The blue circles represent the Dreaming track of another Snake, they show the way he came in before he went down into the ground. That Snake's another powerful ancestral being that can make winds and cyclones.

The mining company have never made a comprehensive agreement with us Aboriginal people. They just throw little scraps to us, trying to make some of us happy. While they're busy throwing their scraps they keep destroying or land and desecrating our sacred sites. All the *Minggirringi* and *Junggayi* for that Country been fighting for an agreement to protect our sacred sites, our waters and lands from being damaged by the mine, but they not listening to us. Government doesn't care either as they are busy inviting frackers to come into our Country and drill for gas. We are all real worried about all of the damage they doing, and the toxic waste they are leaving behind that will slowly get into our water and into our children's bodies.



Red Country 2017

Right across the McArthur River region are The Dreaming tracks of the ancestral beings. The barramundi, the two snakes who travelled together and the one that come up from the south. The Rainbow Snake and the Stinking Turtle. They all there. So too are the places where they coiled or rested, or went down under the earth like at the place I have marked in the river. Big name places, important and sacred places, they are right across the region and they tie people to places and people together. Right in the middle of this sacred country is a torn-up place, right where the Sacred Tree is that forms part of the Rainbow Snake story. It's a big name place, right where the massive open cut pit now is. The black represents the hole that keeps getting bigger and bigger and the brown represents how the mining company is now talking about stuffing all the toxic waste rock back in the hole before they take-off with their money and leave us and generations to come with their toxic mess.



Diggin' a Hole in Our Heart 2018

This painting is about *Jerrimini*, in the southwest Gulf Country of the Northern Territory. It's a powerful place and a very important place for us Gudanji, Garrwa, Marra and Yanyuwa people. This is where Glencore operate McArthur River Mine, one of the world's largest lead, zinc and silver mines. They cut McArthur River and diverted its waters to get to the ore under the riverbed, right at the place the Rainbow Serpent has been resting for eons, nurtured by our songs and ceremonies.

Watching the miners destroy our country and release toxic waste in our waters are spirit birds, they looking on, feeling our hurt as we all been dug. Looking across the landscape at *Damangani* (the Barramundi Dreaming), the long hill in the background, is the spirit of the senior man for the Country. He said that the waste rock pile from the mine should never be higher than the Dreaming ancestor, but this is what the miners are doing, digging deeper and deeper into our country opening up our ancestors, and building a bigger and bigger waste rock pile that will spew powerful toxins from the Rainbow Serpent's guts right into the air, into the country and into the waters.

They diggin' a hole in our heart and we all hurtin' deep inside.

Impact on Customary Laws, Institutions and Indigenous Governance



Lots of Money Moving around over Aboriginal People's Heads 2012

This painting represents how we feel about the mining activity in the southwest Gulf country. The man on the left, in yellow with the thumbs up represents the mining company. There's a drilling rig above his head. The crocodile represents me. I am the crocodile. I want to slow 'em down just like a crocodile can slow you down when it has a go at you.

The man in the white shirt is the government man. He knows he's going to get a lot of money from the mining company. The paper he's holdin' is the agreement the government has with the mining company. In the middle is an Aboriginal man. He's Junggayi (manager) for that country and he's worried about his country, his bush tucker and his song-lines. He doesn't know what's going on with the miners and the government. He's just watching his country get destroyed. The road-train with the dollar signs represents the wealth being taken away from us, from our country.



Birds of Prey 2016

This painting is about how mining companies work in the Gulf region. They work out who they think the main traditional owners are for an area and then they swoop down like birds of prey, and grab them, and take them away to their nest. There they give them money to keep quiet and give the 'OK' for sacred sites to be damaged. The boomerang represents Law in the country that's being disrespected. The bird with his tongue out is like the boss of the mine, he's laughing saying "I got them, I got them and I'm bringing them now". The other one says, "Great I got the money ready". The people standing on the hills and the plains represent our families who are worried because their fathers and brothers have been taken away. The miners are trying to smash our Law and how we want to organise and represent ourselves. They take our people away from our culture to make it easier for them to take our resources inside Country.



Whitefellas Work like White Ants 2014

The whitefella bulldozer is pushing over what he thinks is just a tree. But it's not. It's a sacred site tied in with the song lines that run through our country. Above the bulldozer is a white ant. White ants destroy things. On the right of the painting I show how white ants attack and kill healthy trees. The white ants find the weak spot, like a decaying root, they get in there and slowly start eating the tree from the inside out until they kill it.

This is what whitefellas do to us Aboriginal people when they want to get us to agree to one of their mining projects. They find the weak ones in our cultural groups. They look after them. They use them to sell their plans, and to tell us there will be jobs and goods things from the mine.

This way of working always causes conflict amongst our people. It starts to eat away at our cultural groups and our Law, from the inside, just like white ants do. When they pick us Aboriginal people off and separate the weak ones from our cultural groups they killing them and our culture. I symbolise this in my painting by the body hung by the neck in the tree. The person is separated and isolated from our cultural group, might as well be dead.

Whitefellas they just work like white ants.



Like an Ice Cream in the Sun 2014

This painting is about how Glencore work in Borroloola. Glencore won't let us organise under our own Law. Instead, they pick off one or two of our people. They say to them, "If you can work for us we'll get you a motorcar, we'll give you tucker. You'll be well looked after, and you'll have money and everything. So if you want this, you help us get an agreement. You talk for us to your family".

They want these people to say to the families, "Look if you work with the mining company you will get money, you'll get motorcar, and you'll get everything you need". But in the back of Aboriginal people's minds we worried about our land, our song lines, and our sacred sites. We worried about our bush tucker. We worried about our future.

Three men under the dollar signs represent the Aboriginal fellas that have been picked off by the mining company. The mining company man is standing behind the Aboriginal fella, patting his back and saying to him, "You talk up for me old man".

The ice cream, lollies on a plate and cake symbolise the absurdity of what's being offered to us. Things that have little long-term value to us. Things that won't last. Here now, but quickly gone, just like an ice cream in the sun.

Glencore throw down scraps like this while they destroy our sacred sites and contaminate our land and water, while the government watches.

There's no way we should be played off like this. We want people in the cities to know what's happening to us. They have to know how their governments work with mining companies to do us over and destroy our land.



The Christmas Father 2017

The blue, green, yellow and red areas represent the four clan groups of the southwest Gulf Country, the Gudanji, Garrwa, Marra and Yanyuwa. In the middle sit The Dreaming ancestors, the Rainbow Snake and the Stinking Turtle. We all tied into this powerful place through our sacred songs, our ceremony and our Law. This place is right where Glencore have dug their massive open cut pit at McArthur River Mine. On the left of the painting, sitting in the hills looking out are spirit people. They can see some people tryin' to stay on their country, tryin' to keep their culture and Law strong and protect their country. But they can also see how the miners work like the Christmas Father throwing out Toyota motorcars, just like lollies, in front of people with the aim of gettin' them to agree to damaging our sacred places and contaminating our country. Some of our people run with their arms open wide and their eyes closed tight shut to get to the shit that the miners throw down. But while they are running to get a little they can't see how the miners are ripping our people apart and contaminating our country with the toxic waste they make.



Falling Star 2019

Mining companies control the government. The company boss, dressed up in his hi-vis shirt and hat drives in to town in his company car to meet a government representative. The government fella bows down to the mining fella. The company man says to the government fella 'We paid your bond, we done what you want. Now sign here and let's get on with things'.

Mining company and government make deals about our land and our lives without talking to us. It's like we are invisible. Their agreements fall down on us Aboriginal people like a falling star.



Lying Miners 2019

Mining companies write reports to government saying us Aboriginal people real happy with how they do business. But that's just bullshit.

The mining company send in their people to work us over. They swoop in like birds and pick us off one by one. They pull people way from their cultural groups and drop them down a deep hole where they can't escape and feed them chicken shit. "Look what we do for you", they say, a little bit of fuckin' food here, another promise there, to keep them quite. That's how they work.

We hold the Law, the songs and the ceremonies for Country but government comes in over the top of us Aboriginal people. Government holds hands with the miners and makes an agreement with them about how they going to take the wealth from our Country and ship it out in trucks while they dump their toxic waste into our grandkids' futures.



It's Raining Motorcars 2017

In the sky, close to the ground an evil cloud forms. He's smiling, teeth showin' and he rains motorcars down on our people.

Sitting on the side are two miner blokes, they sitting under their umbrellas laughin'.

They laughin' because they reckon they can just throw a few motorcars around and people will agree to our country being contaminated with toxic waste from Glencore's mine at McArthur River.

While some of our mob might have their eyes shut tight and arms open wide and will take a motorcar, plenty of us won't. We going to keep fightin' that mine until it closes and they clean up the mess they made and make the country safe again.



This Land is Ours, Four Clans 2019

Garrwa, GudANJI, Marra and Yanyuwa been here forever. We all tied in to the place where the mine sits through ceremony and Dreaming tracks. Marra (top left) are saltwater people hunting turtle, dugong. They dance the Buffalo dance. Yanyuwa (top right) are saltwater people too, huntin' turtle and dugong out around the islands and got the port on their country. GudANJI (bottom left) and Garrwa (bottom right) tied in to the Dreaming Track that runs from Garrwa Country in to GudANJI Country. There're a lot of powerful sacred sites that need to be looked after by us with song and ceremony. We gotta keep em safe.

We all got spirit people in our Countries. They watching, lookin' out, and seeing what's happening. This land is ours, it's not for whitefellas to destroy while they tryin' to make a buck. Us four clans, we gotta stand together to be strong.



FIFO 2012

I call this painting Fly In and Fuck Off. It tells the story how the government mob and mining mob fly into our country to talk at us. They fly in and tell us one thing and then they say they will be comin' back but we never see them again. They fly in, use complicated words and then fly right back out, real quick. The people sitting on the ground in the painting are us Aboriginal people. We all focused on the government people standing with their whiteboard. But we not really understandin' what they sayin'. Many of us don't read and write so the words on the board mean nothing. It's really hard, getting our heads around what it really means. That's why some of them just sittin', scratchin' their heads and others they got their hands up wantin' to ask questions. Why they here in our country? The government story doesn't go through to us properly. Their paperwork and their story always two different things. They just put something in front of us and when they think they got it right they outta here real quick and we don't know what they really meant. This top-down way of talking with us been going on too long. Things gotta change. We want things to be explained to us proper way so we can sit and talk about it amongst ourselves. We be switched on then and make our own decision to say yes or no. None of this gotta hurry up 'cos our aeroplane is leavin'. They gotta give us time. No more of this Fly In and Fuck Off stuff.



Blowfly at the Shops 2016

As Aboriginal people we got the right to organise and decide who speaks for Country. That's our Law.

Even though the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says this, and that the Australian Government agreed when it signed-up to it, we find it real hard to do this around Borrooloola.

Here, we got some companies who got their people to pick us off, one-by-one. They tryin' to smash our voice, smash our Law.

That's what this painting is about. Under a smoke-filled sky a person hovers around the shops; pulling people aside, a little meeting here, a bag-full of tucker there, money under the table perhaps.

They real busy working to break our Law. They line us blackfellas up, one-by-one, and wear us down, put our name on their lists so they can get access to our Country and its resources.

They always there at the shop, buzzing round, just like a blowfly.



Us Blackfellas are like a Rusty Nail 2015

On the right you can see a line of five people, three whitefellas and two blackfellas. This represents how mining companies are choosing our people as their representatives. They take our people away from us.

The mining company is playin' with our Law and custom. They playing with the things that are at the heart of our native title. Things that are very important to us as Aboriginal people of this land.

Next to the blackfella on the right is a tree. It's got no life in it. That tree, its dead just like the blackfella standing next to it. He's been taken away from his people by the mining company. Told he's got talk for them, say what a good thing the mining company doing. But he's dead. He got no Law, no ceremony. He just as well be dead now.

Below the blackfellas who sold out, there're a group of Aboriginal people. Standing together, strong with their Law and custom. Above them there's another tree. This one's alive and next to it is a waterhole with a creek that flows out from it around the feet of Aboriginal people. This represents how the land nurtures us when we look after it though our Law and ceremony. It gives us life.

On the left you can see a fella hammering a nail in. One of the nails is white and the other one, is black. The black on represents us. It doesn't matter how hard you hammer us blackfellas down you can never hold blackfellas down, he always be comin' back up like a rusty nail. We'll always be back. It doesn't matter what white people try to do to us to take our Law and culture we'll be back. We might stay down for a while but we'll be back.



The Aliens have Landed 2015

This painting is about how McArthur River Mine Community Relations Officers work. They been rounding-up Gudanji people, putting them on a bus and driving them out of town. They take them away from the wider group and work on them to get them to agree to everything the mine wants.

I painted aliens landing in a space ship cos the mine people (Community Relations Officers) work like aliens, they fly in decked out in McArthur River Mine gear and they talk money. It's like they control people's minds just like I seen on TV the way some aliens control human minds with their special powers. "ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ, we are in control". Then they got everyone lined up and under their control, just like them aliens.

Some people are starting to realise they being used, but a lot of others aren't. MacArthur River Mine mob have taken over Borroloola. They know Aboriginal people worried about money, how to get food on the table to feed their kids. This makes us mob easy targets for the mine mob to work on. What they don't realise is they losing out in a big way by playing with that company who are poisoning our country.

Impact on Lands and Waters



Heart of Country 2014

The heart represents the life of the country. It's the heart of Aboriginal people and the country, together, as one. Through the heart runs McArthur River. Rivers are really important places for us. In the middle of the heart are the four clan groups of the Borroloola region. Lined-up are four people sittin' down. They are the singers. In red are Yanyuwa, black and red Mara, Yellow one Gudanji and brown Garrwa. Above them in the heart are their dancers. It's though our song and dance that we all pass the knowledge of the country. Above the heart is what the country used to be like. Beautiful, with everything there for us, lots of bush-tucker and water. On the left-hand side at the top are four people. This is the mining company and government. They work together, lookin' out for each other. Below them are the drilling rig, grader and dozer belonging to the mining companies who are comin' into to our country and damaging it with all their machinery. People and bush-tucker get pushed aside having to move somewhere else, sometimes dyin'. You can see the area around the miners is empty—no bush-tucker and no Aboriginal people. No good.

How can Junggayi (Boss for Country) and Minggirringi (Owner of Country) do their job looking after sacred sites when their land, water and food been poisoned?



Hunting Ground to Big Black Hole 2015

This painting is about McArthur River region in the Gulf of Carpentaria about 60 kilometres southwest of Borroloola in the Northern Territory.

It used to be a really good hunting place. In the 1970s there were about 36 Aboriginal camps in the region, some had people living there all the time cos the huntin' and fishin' was so good. I represent this time with the people in the background huntin', kangaroo, turtle, bush turkey, goanna and crocodile. There were plenty brumbies running about too. It was a really important place for women who did a lot of hunting in the McArthur area.

In the foreground is the big black hole. This is where the river used to flow before the diversion. It's the place where the Rainbow Serpent rests. Miners are here now, they are digging up the Snake's guts and damaging our sacred site. It makes us Aboriginal people feel no good. Some of our old people got sick and died when they disturbed the Rainbow Serpent. He's a powerful thing that we gotta look after and nurture with song and ceremony. They keep taking the water and this impacts on the sacred sites, especially the Garbula tree as the water table drops.

Two Aboriginal blokes are looking into the hole wondering when it's all going to stop. Wondering if we ever be able to hunt and fish in the region again.

The miners with their trucks they just worried about money and how to get more minerals out of our country.

The big black hole keeps getting bigger and bigger and soon we'll have nothing left.



Poison Mine, Poison Cattle 2015

The painting is about how cattle been poisoned by McArthur River Mine in the Gulf Country and how Aboriginal mob gotta do work at the mine.

The back of the Rainbow Serpent's been cut when they diverted McArthur River. You can see how it's been cut and now flows in a channel to the northeast.

The cattle been poisoned from that mine.

The cattle were around the mine site drinking the water. The lead in the water poisoned the cattle. They ended up shootin' 400 cattle in the area. The two blokes with the rifles are Department of Primary Industry (DPI) mob and the other two from the mine site. The bloke in the middle he's making sure they're dead.

The Aboriginal mob just doing the raking, sweeping-up and washing the motorcar, or growing trees there's no proper job for Aboriginal people with the mine. It's all whitefella work.

The chopper's landed to fuel-up to go and find more cattle to kill. The light yellow at the edges means that it's good country away the mine, where the food's still good to eat.

McArthur River mob and government mob tried to cover up the killing of the cattle. They tried to hide it from us, but we knew something not right. The country's not safe now they dug up The Snake.

In the left corner you got Aboriginal mob dressed up in mine clothes growing trees for the mine. They really don't like doing what they doing, they hurt inside as Aboriginal people. They doing what they doing cos they gotta put food on the table for their kids and their missus. They not got much choice. Just how it is these days.



Bing Bong 2017

Bing Bong is a famous place. It was very important as a place for hunting turtles and dugong for Yanyuwa people. Not long ago in the 1970s, there were big mobs of people camped there using the sea, fishing and gathering shellfish and crabs from the rich coastline.

Today, it's a different place. McArthur River Mine dug a channel that they bring a barge in and out to ship the minerals away from our country. There's often a heavy smell around the place.

Other miners came to use the port, like Western Desert Resources who started shipping iron ore from the Roper river way. These fellas were just like McArthur River Mine, they don't care about us Aboriginal people and they don't care how they pollute our country with their iron ore dust turning everything red.

Bing Bong, once like a big supermarket now it's a smelly place that's been all messed up by whitefellas making money for themselves.



Lead in the water, Just like Bullets from the Past 2020

When the whitefellas first invaded our country they came with big guns. Whitefellas shot lots of our people to make way for their cattle. They put lead in our bodies with those bullets. Now Glencore, the big mining company that owns McArthur River Mine, is doing the same thing. Lead from the Mine has been found in our fish. Lead flows into the water, into the fish and into our bodies. The lead in the water is just like the bullets they used to kill us with.

