CONNECTION TO COUNTRY

The old people always say, the land don’t belong to us, we belong to the land.

SCREENING KIT
RESOURCES TO SUPPORT FILM SCREENINGS
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ABOUT THE FILM

SYNOPSIS

In the heart of Western Australia, the Burrup Peninsula, or Murujuga as it’s known to the Traditional Owners, hosts the oldest and largest concentration of rock art in the world; a dramatic, ancient landscape so sacred that it shouldn’t be looked upon at all except by its Traditional Owners. This site of incalculable historic, aesthetic and continuing cultural value is now being threatened by industrialisation and development.

Since colonisation the Burrup has become home to salt mines, iron ore port facilities and one of Australia’s largest gas plants. But the First Peoples of the Pilbara are fighting back on behalf of this most sacred of places and other important sites on their Country – documenting the rock art, recording sacred sites and battling to get their unique cultural heritage recognised, ‘digitised’ and celebrated.

CREDITS

Production Company
Weerianna Street Media

Writer and Director
Tyson Mowarin

Producer
Robyn Marais

Executive Producer
John Moore

Editor
Chris Broadhurst

Cinematography
Torstein Dyrting ACS

Composer
David Bridie

Sound Recordist
Glenn Martin
The old people always say, the land don’t belong to us, we belong to the land.

Your screening event of Connection To Country is an opportunity to increase understanding of the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage so that it can be respected, treasured and protected by all Australians into the future.

In the Pilbara, the Burrup Peninsula, or Murujuga as the Traditional Owners call it, is a sacred place that is home to the largest outdoor gallery of petroglyphs in the world. More importantly, Australia is the only place in the world where Aboriginal peoples of today maintain a direct ancestral connection to the creators of ancient rock art, and an ongoing cultural connection to the rock art itself.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage has all too often been threatened at will by colonial authorities and resource companies, without respect and or any heartfelt consideration for Australia’s First Peoples and cultures and Spirit of the Land that’s older than time.

Resiliently working to protect what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples know as their places of significance goes hand in hand with their very existence. Respecting and protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage is a matter of importance for all of Australia.

Hosting a screening of Connection To Country is a great way to bring community together to engage them in a conversation about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ deep connections to Country and the need to protect sites of significance such as the Murujuga rock art for future generations.

The Connection To Country Screening Kit provides a set of resources that will help support your screening and make it a great event.
HOW TO HOST A SCREENING

We are thrilled that you’ve decided to host a screening of Connection To Country. Here are a few tips to help make your screening a success.

PLANNING THE EVENT

• Find a space: screenings can be held anywhere where there is a digital projector and speakers. Best-case scenario is a cinema, but community spaces, school halls or boardrooms can work too. Consider working with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to see if there may be any appropriate opportunities to host an outdoor, on-Country screening.
• Give yourself about six weeks to plan the event.
• Get a team together to help with publicity, catering and technical logistics. Consider opportunities to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses for these purposes. Supply Nation’s Indigenous Business Direct search tool can be a great starting place for investigating these opportunities.
• Are you raising money for a charity or to support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives tied to respecting and protecting Country, and people’s connections to it? If so, consider negotiating sponsorships, fee reductions or other in-kind support from event partners such as your venue provider.
• Consider opportunities for including an Acknowledgement of Country and/or Welcome to Country as part of the event.
• Set up an online ticketing system. Here are a few suggestions:
  - eventbrite.com.au
  - fliktu.com
  - trybooking.com
• Make sure the invite sets out the running order of the event. The film runs for 63 minutes.

PUBLICITY

• Start publicising your event as soon as possible.
• Set up a Facebook event page (make sure it has the RSVP or ticketing link!) and include the trailer.
• Tweet using the hashtag #ConnectionToCountry – include the trailer.
• Distribute marketing materials – send an email, put up posters in strategic areas.
• Write a one page press release and let your local newspaper and radio station know. Follow up on the phone.

TECHNICAL CHECKLIST

• Get access to a good projector.
• Do a sound and vision check (also called a technical or ‘tech’ check) as soon as you receive the DVD or online link to Connection To Country.
• Check that the aspect ratio for the projector is set correctly (the picture shouldn’t look too wide or too tall).
• Check that the colours are as they should be (the picture should not look too dark or light, or too blue, green or red).
• Check that the space where you are doing the tech check and screening is dark.
• When you’re doing a tech check, sit in different seats in the audience area – try the back row and the sides to test whether everyone can see and hear the film adequately.
• If you have time play the whole film at the tech check. If you don’t, play the film at various random scenes (beginning, middle and end). Can you understand the words? Hear the music? Is the sound coming out of all speakers? Is the sound clear and constant?
SUGGESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY OR CORPORATE SCREENING EVENTS

• Hosting a screening of *Connection To Country* in your community or workplace is an opportunity to create greater understanding of Aboriginal peoples’ deep connections to Country and why Aboriginal cultural heritage needs to be respected, treasured and protected.

• Make sure you have a skilled and informed facilitator to lead any discussions (see Resources For Screening Discussions section, page 9).

• You might want to use your screening event to fundraise for a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation working to protect cultural heritage or an organisation working to protect the Murujuga Rock Art such as Friends of Australian Rock Art.

• Project the post screening slide provided immediately following your screening so people know where to take action. If you’re hosting a fundraiser for an organisation, make sure to let them know about your screening so they can help spread the word.

• You can host an event any time that suits your calendar. However you might consider aligning your event with a significant date such as during National Reconciliation Week which occurs from 27 May and 3 June (3 June is Mabo Day) each year or NAIDOC Week, held each July to celebrate the histories, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

• Screenings can be an opportunity to engage professionals/educators working in cultural heritage protection to have a deeper conversation on best practice in the protection of Aboriginal heritage sites.

• Consider partnering with a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation, Aboriginal Land Council, Elders Council or Local Government Council to host your screening.

RECRUITING A SKILLED FACILITATOR

• Key characteristics of a good facilitator should include:
  • Active listening skills.
  • Ability to acknowledge and be responsive to the diverse experiences of people in the room.
  • Ability to manage sensitive information.
  • Ability to foster a culturally safe and respectful listening, questioning and sharing environment.

• Ability to foster a culturally safe and respectful listening, questioning and sharing environment. Doing so includes actively recognising, and being sensitive to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s personal and cultural prerogatives, and understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need not be expected or obliged to share details of their personal experiences and cultural knowledges.

• Ability to re-focus the discussion if it goes off topic.

• Ideally they should be provided with an opportunity to view the film prior to the screening and background information on the issue they will speak to after the screening.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SPEAKERS OR PANEL MEMBERS

• You may decide to invite a speaker or have a panel discussion following your screening. Speakers should have expertise or strong experience in addressing Aboriginal cultural heritage issues.

• Choose someone who is skilled at sensitively talking about the material in the film. Consider inviting appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders in the first instance.

SUGGESTIONS FOR POST SCREENING DISCUSSIONS

• Use the *Connection To Country* discussion questions as a starting point for the post-screening discussions with speakers and encourage audience questions as well. Set aside at least half an hour for a discussion to allow for audience participation.

WHAT YOU CAN ACHIEVE

• Raise awareness of the importance of protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. Raise money for or an organisation of your choice that is working to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage.

• Project the digital slide included in the screening kit at the end of the screening to share information on how audiences can take further action towards supporting the preservation and celebration of Country, and peoples’ invaluable connections to it.
SCREENING TIMELINE

Here is a suggested timeline with tips to help you plan a successful screening.

SIX WEEKS TO GO
- Request a copy of the film and purchase a screening license
- Set time and date
- Book venue
- Compile invitation list
- Design marketing materials or adapt from templates in the screening kit you’ve received from us.
- Get your event team together
- Do you intend to have a Q&A? If so, book speakers and an MC/moderator
- Are you providing catering? If so, consider engaging an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander food supplier or catering service. Consider also opportunities for learning about how connecting to Country can play into important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and practices around sustainable food production.

FIVE WEEKS TO GO
- Set up online ticketing system
- Send out invites and let invitees know if this will be a catered event or not
- Set up a Facebook event page with a ticketing link
- Start sharing on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

FOUR WEEKS TO GO
- Visit the venue and do a technical check, including testing the DVD or video file (see technical checklist).
- If you have a Q&A, do you need a microphone for your MC/moderator?

THREE WEEKS TO GO
- Distribute posters
- Write press release to local media
- Continue sharing your event on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

TWO WEEKS TO GO
- Contact your local newspaper and radio stations by phone.

ONE WEEK TO GO
- Send out an email/Facebook reminder of your event one week and one day before
- Follow up with local media

DAY OF SCREENING
- Set Up
- Final tech checks (make sure everything still works!)
- Once everyone arrives, consider formally opening the event with an Acknowledgement of Country and/or Welcome to Country before then introducing the film
- Project the take action slide on screen as soon as the film finishes

THE DAY AFTER
- Thank the audience and your event team in person and on social media
- If you hosted your event as part of a fundraiser, send out an email/Facebook message to let everyone know how much funds were raised; what those funds will go towards; and what any immediate outcomes of your screening and fundraising have been.
PROMOTING YOUR EVENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media makes it easy to alert your community about your screening.

CREATE A FACEBOOK EVENT

When creating a Facebook Event you can choose between setting it as a private or public.

A private event is only visible to the people who are invited. You can choose to allow guests to invite their friends. A public event is visible to anyone on or off Facebook.

Step 1
On the left side of your Facebook page, click on ‘Events’.

Step 2
Click on ‘Create an Event’ and fill out the form. Don’t forget to include the trailer and your ticketing website URL.

Step 3
Click ‘Create’ and you’re set. You’re now ready to invite your Facebook friends to your screening.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS: FACEBOOK

If there were eight wonders of the world, this would arguably be the eighth. Come and watch a powerful film about the First Peoples of the Pilbara’s fight to protect their Country and cultural heritage – including the oldest rock art in the world. #ConnectionToCountry showing one night only. [insert venue and time or add ticketing website URL]

Let’s start a community discussion about protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. Come and watch the film #ConnectionToCountry [insert venue and time or add ticketing URL]

A sacred site, known as Murujuga, is home to the largest and oldest collection of rock art in the world but is under threat from the mining industry. Connection To Country, an award-nominated documentary highlights the resilient push made by the Traditional Owners of Western Australia’s Pilbara region to protect the Burrup Peninsula. #ConnectionToCountry screening one night only [insert venue and time or add ticketing URL]

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS: TWITTER

Let’s start a conversation about protecting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. Come & see #ConnectionToCountry [insert venue and time or add ticketing URL]

I’m hosting a screening of #ConnectionToCountry at [insert venue and time and add ticketing URL] to help protect the #Burrup. Free snacks provided. Buy tickets here [add your ticketing website URL]

Come & see #ConnectionToCountry to join the conversation about protecting Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. [insert event website or Facebook event link]
SENDING AN EMAIL TO YOUR NETWORKS

MailChimp is an App that helps you to create email campaigns. If you use MailChimp, we’ve created a template you can adapt. Just click here and add it to your template folder. Alternatively, here is a suggested email invitation.

Subject: Invitation to a screening of Connection To Country

Dear [insert name]

Connection to Country by filmmaker Tyson Mowarin follows a group of Aboriginal people from the Burrup Peninsula in the Pilbara - home to the oldest and largest collection of rock art in the world - as they resiliently push to preserve Australia’s unique cultural heritage from the ravages of a booming mining industry.

We invite you to to a special screening of the film at [insert place] on [insert date].

The screening will be followed by a discussion with [insert speaker's/speakers' name if you have one or more].

In the heart of Western Australia, the Burrup Peninsula, or Murujuga as it's known to the Traditional Owners, is a site of incalculable historic, aesthetic and continuing cultural value which is now being threatened by industrialisation and development.

Since colonisation, the Burrup has become home to salt mines, iron ore port facilities and one of Australia's largest gas plants. But the people of the Pilbara are fighting back on behalf of this most sacred of places and other important sites on their Country – documenting the rock art, recording their sacred sites and resiliently championing the importance of getting their unique cultural heritage recognised and celebrated.

Come and join us to see this inspiring and powerful film that highlights why respecting and protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage is a matter of importance for all Australians.

You can purchase tickets here [insert web address or email address – be sure to let people know if any of your ticket sales are being used to fundraise for a cause]

For any questions please contact the event organisers at [insert email address]

We hope to see you at the screening.

[insert name of individual or organisation]
DO YOUR RESEARCH FIRST

Do some critical research before you begin to help you prepare for a group discussion.

*Connection To Country* may raise themes that could be sensitive to audience members, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It’s important to recognise, and be sensitive to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be at your screening discussion to ensure that their engagement with your event is met with cultural safety and respect. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attendees may be interested in playing an active role in the event’s planning and discussion sessions, note that they should not be expected or obliged to share their personal or cultural knowledges. Check out the links to resources in the next section on creating a culturally safe, respectful and inclusive screening event.

At the very least, engage with appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations to get their perspectives on the concept of connection to Country to ensure you set up a respectful and meaningful dialogue.

Building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members should be built on trust, mutual respect and inclusiveness. Communication, collaboration and consultation are also key to sustaining successful partnerships with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and to developing a deeper understanding of Australia’s First Peoples.

It is also important not to put too much pressure on community members to be involved, as they may have other more pressing priorities.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

These questions can be used as a starting point for a facilitated discussion in a small or large group setting.

We encourage you to use this discussion guide to generate positive and meaningful dialogue about the film and the issues it explores.

RESOURCES FOR SCREENING DISCUSSIONS

These resources from Reconciliation Australia can help you to create a culturally safe, respectful and inclusive screening event.

- [A Guide to Using Respectful and Inclusive Language in communicating about Reconciliation](#)
- [A Guide To Facilitating Culturally Safe and Respectful Reconciliation Screenings and Discussions](#)

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Q. How did you feel as you watched the film *Connection To Country* and why?

Q. What were your first reactions and what personal assumptions or experiences do you feel triggered this response? Did the film strengthen and/or challenge any of your prior attitudes or understandings?

IMPACT OF INDUSTRY

Consider the impacts of inequitable relationships between resource companies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as echoed though the line, “We negotiated an agreement to build the (gas) plant away from our sacred sites, but the resource companies went ahead anyway…”

Q. Why is it important to acknowledge the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures in the context of these histories? How might a stronger understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ connection to Country help to support reconciliation in Australia?
In the film, Tyson Mowarin says, “Do they really want to destroy what’s been here for over 40,000 years?!” Many of the world’s most famous monuments – Stonehenge, the Pyramids and the Great Wall of China – are comparatively recent compared to the rock art sites of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Q. What are some strong arguments for why these rock art sites should be considered sites of protection and pride for all Australians?

Q. Why is it important to acknowledge Country and the Elders and Traditional Owners of your local area, and to respect and protect local sites of significance?

SACRED SITES

Q. Why do you think it is important to foster genuine two-way relationships between people and Country, as well as between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? What are some of the elements or “ingredients” of a meaningful two-way relationship?

The Spirit of the Country represents one of the key characters in Connection to Country.

Q. How does this filmic technique help to highlight that, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Country is understood to be a sentient (living and feeling) entity with which one can actively extend important, interpersonal relationships?

In the film, Tyson Mowarin says, in reference to sites of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, “We believe a lot of these things are something non-Indigenous Australia should be proud of too.”

Q. How and why is it important to recognise and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sites of significance, and the respectful relationships that people share with these sites, as part of Australia’s reconciliation journey?

Q. In the context of thinking about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage sites, why is it important to appreciate the significance of these sites to past, present and future cultural and community alike?

In the film, there’s a scene of a heritage listed sewage pipe, ironically opposite the Western Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs building. Tyson Mowarin says during this scene, “This is listed as a heritage site, but all it is is an air vent from the old sewage system. It’s street furniture, but this street furniture has got more protection than Aboriginal heritage sites... this thing here is protected by State heritage and, funnily enough, it’s right here next to the Department of Indigenous Affairs.” Other comments during this scene such as “It’s got no song” further build the sentiments of this sequence.

Q. What are some of the many ironies highlighted here? What do these ironies indicate about some of the inequalities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in relation to the protection of Country and cultural heritage? Why is acknowledging and working towards ameliorating these kinds of inequalities important to reconciliation in Australia.

EXPLORE MORE

Interested in engaging in further learning and discussion of relevance? Consider engaging with the professional learning resources listed on the following Narragunnawali Actions pages:

- Acknowledgement of Country
- Welcome to Country
- Local Sites, Events and Excursions

Are you hosting your screening event in conjunction with a local school or early learning service, or wider educational community? If so, consider downloading the Connection to Country Teacher Notes, produced in collaboration with Reconciliation Australia, from the SBS Learn website.

HERITAGE PROTECTION

The term ‘heritage’ is generally used to refer to something that has been handed down from the past.