

# BANGARRA DANCE THEATRE

SandSong: Stories from the Great Sandy Desert

## A TIMELINE OF THE KIMBERLEY REGION



Geological origins reach back nearly 2000 million years. The Kimberley region was a separate land mass which collided with the Pilbara and Yilgram lands. The Wunaamin Miliwundi Ranges (formerly known as The King Leopold Ranges) are the point where this impact occurred.

### PRE-HISTORY



Alexander Forrest and party.  
State Library WA

Surveyor Alexander Forrest sent to look for fertile land and gold. His party included two Aboriginal men, Tommy Pierre and Tommy Dower, recruited as trackers and horsemen. Forrest named the whole region 'the Kimberley' after the Secretary for the Colonies, the Earl of Kimberley.

1879



Pastoralist Joseph Bradshaw was the first European to view artwork of the Gwion Gwion people, who had decorated many sites around 12,000 Before Present.

1891



The WA Aborigines Act 1905 controlled all aspects of Aboriginal peoples lives. The Chief Protector of Aborigines was central to the implementation of the Act.

1905



1620-1730

A mega-tsunami crashed into the Kimberley coast. Waves travelled as far as the Great Sandy Desert. Noted as an event of the powerful Wandjina spirits, reflected in stories, cave paintings and oral traditions of the Worrora, Wunumbul and Ngarrinyin people. White explorers first saw the paintings in the 1930s.

Moseley Royal Commission into the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines released, regarding living condition of pastoral workers: 'woeful spectacle, buildings over-crowded, buildings and clothing vermin ridden.'

1934

Commonwealth Government lifts iron ore embargo (in place since 1938) opening up trade to Asia and heralding the surge in WA's mining industry. By the 1970s, 2.5M acres of pastoral land was abandoned for mining development.

1960



Mid 1600s-1700s

Timorese trading with Aboriginal people. Dutch and Portuguese explorers visited the west coast before 1699 when William Dampier, British explorer, landed at Shark Bay. He described Aboriginal people as 'the most miserable people in the world'.

Legislation allowing for removal of Aboriginal children from their families under the policy of 'protection' repealed in all states.

1969

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pours soil into hand of traditional land owner Vincent Lingiari, Northern Territory, 1975. Courtesy: National Indigenous Australians Agency, Mr Henry Bishop and Garrings Corporation and National Indigenous Australian Agency.

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pours a handful of soil into the hands of Gurindji man, Vincent Lingiari. 'Vincent Lingiari I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof in Australian law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji People.'

1975



1883

51 million acres of land in the Kimberley under lease hold to pastoral and mining interests.

1887-1898

Aborigines Protection Board, WA government department established to deal with advancement into the Kimberley area and the 'native' problem.

1906-1910

Alfred Canning commissioned to survey the building of a stock route from Halls Creek to Wiluna, the longest in the world. Canning accused of employing brutal tactics to coerce Aboriginal guides to show the location of sacred underground waterholes. Charges were brought to bear, then dismissed, after Alexander Forrest appeared before Royal Commission as a witness for Canning.



18 pastoral stations in the Kimberley/Pilbara regions completely owned and managed by Aboriginal corporations. Another 21 jointly run through partnerships.

2018

WA earned \$140.7 billion from mining and agriculture exports. The largest cattle station in WA - Home Valley - owned by the Indigenous Land Corporation, covers a total area of 1,400,000 hectares.

2019

1950

Station owners reluctantly agreed with Commissioner of Native Affairs to pay Aboriginal stockmen £1 per month, and 'yardmen' and women employees 10 shillings per month, well below award rates for white workers.

1965

The Wage Decision. Aboriginal workers brought under the Pastoral Act entitling them to equal wages. Station owners react by hiring white labour and sending Aboriginal people off the stations.

1974

Passing of the Aboriginal Land Fund Act, allowing Indigenous Peoples to claim land title if they could prove a traditional relationship to Country.



1985

Commissioning of the largest diamond producing mine in the world, the Argyle. (Decommissioned 2020).

1996

Ngurrara Canvas is presented to Parliament as part of the Ngurrara peoples' Native Title claim. Successful outcome achieved in 2007 with the Ngurrara recognised as title holders for an area of the 76,000 sq kms.

2020

Kimberley mining brings \$537M to the national economy. Class action initiated against WA government to claim compensation for lost earnings of unpaid labour forced upon Aboriginal people.



"SandSong is a glimpse into the world of the Walmajarri & Wangkatjungka people from the Great Sandy Desert, who survived incredible disadvantage to keep strong a lasting cultural bedrock for future generations."

STEPHEN PAGE & FRANCES RINGS

