

Cultural ways lead to good ideas and a strong spirit

Stories from the Men's Tjilirra Movement



Martin Jugadai and Elder Bundi spoke to CASSE Aboriginal language interpreter Nathan Brown about how the Tjilirra Men's Movement started and what it means to community.

For over ten years Martin Jugadai dreamed about starting a program like the Tjilirra Men's Movement. After teaming up with CASSE program manager Jamie Tjupurulla Millier and Royal Flying Doctors mental health nurse David Beveridge the Tjilirra Men's Movement (MTM) became a reality, with the first program sessions in March 2015.

"Drugs, grog, people going out and having an accident, and people getting locked up" are some of the problems men face says Martin.

The answer, he argues, to address these issues is a focus on men's mental health. Young men now learn how to make tjilirra, which is the Pintupi word for tools, whilst gathering to discuss issues that affect them.

"In the past the old men made tools like this [Punu – spears, shields and boomerangs] and the boys would watch while it was being made," he explains. "They were made with rocks."

“Now, [it’s a] bit different. We’ve got axes, and carving tools, but we’re still making these things well. Old men are still making [traditional tools].”

Martin believes that through the men’s group the young men have an opportunity to examine their lives and begin to build good ways for a better life through learning ‘cultural ways’. “They’ll have good ideas and will take some of our spirit; and they become a little bit strong,” he says.

“Our old ways are slowly disappearing,” Martin warns. “So we’re coming together with men of all ages to make boomerangs and spears.”

During an MTM meeting Lurritja elder, Bundi, draws several circles in the sand on the ground with a line that cuts through. It’s a story, one side represents the good and the other side represents the bad.

“On the bad side, are things like grog, petrol (that was a problem in the past) and these days marijuana,” says Bundi. He echoes a sentiment shared by Martin and other leaders in community: “[When] you lose culture, you become a different person, a worse person.”

Help Martin and Bundi get more men involved in the Tjilirra Men’s Movement, [donate today.](#)