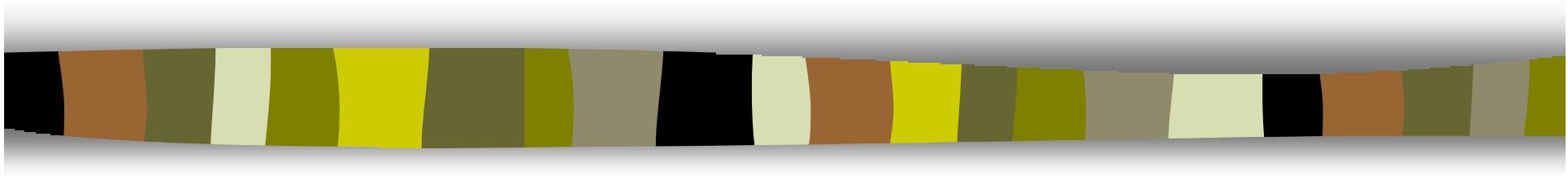


# Argyle Diamonds and Wirnan

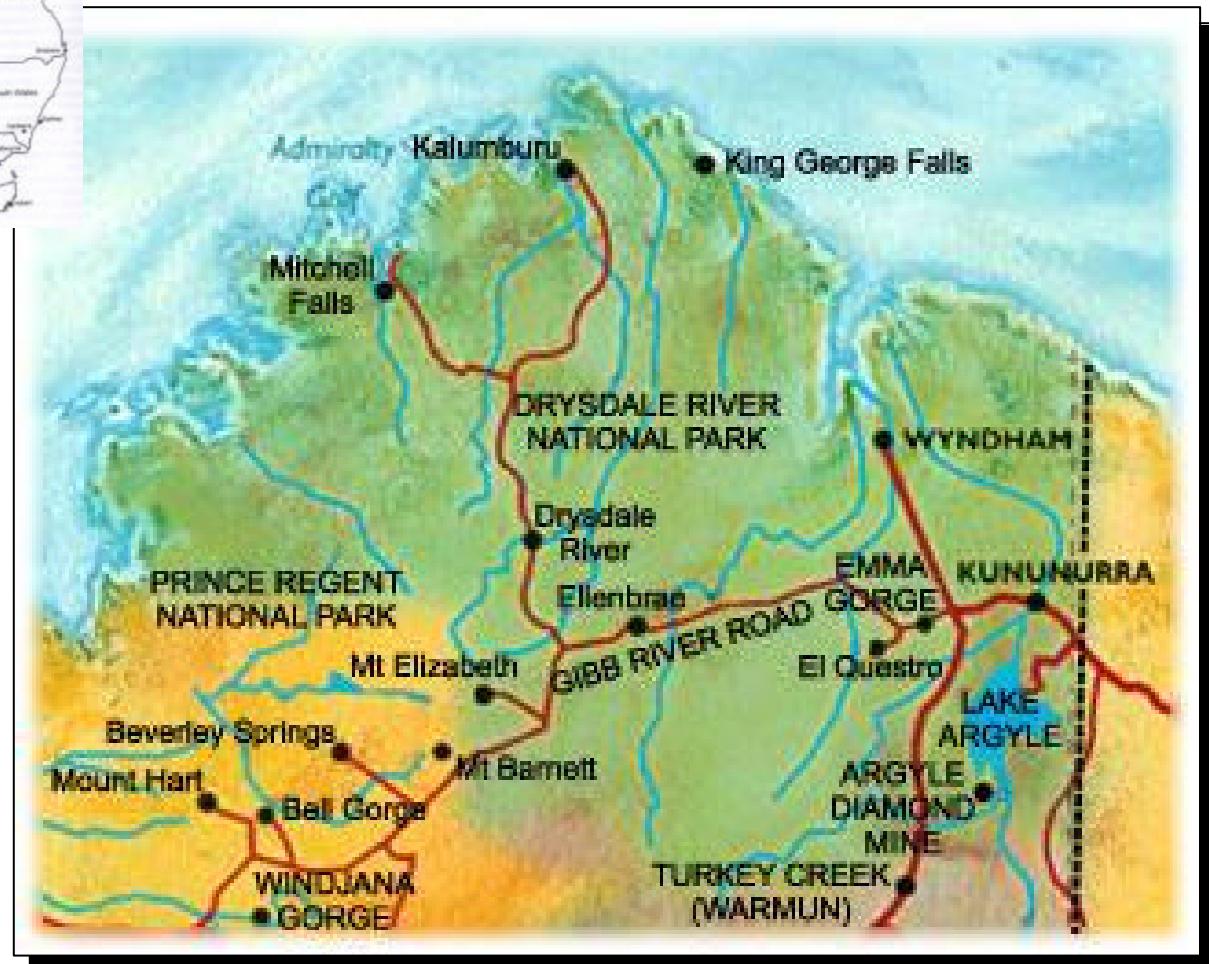


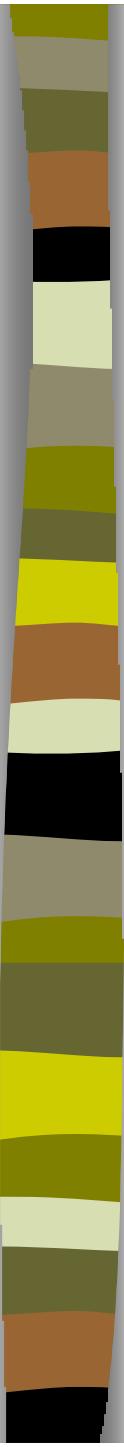
A Process of Incorporation and  
(Re)Negotiating Relationships in the  
East Kimberley

Prepared by Kim Doohan

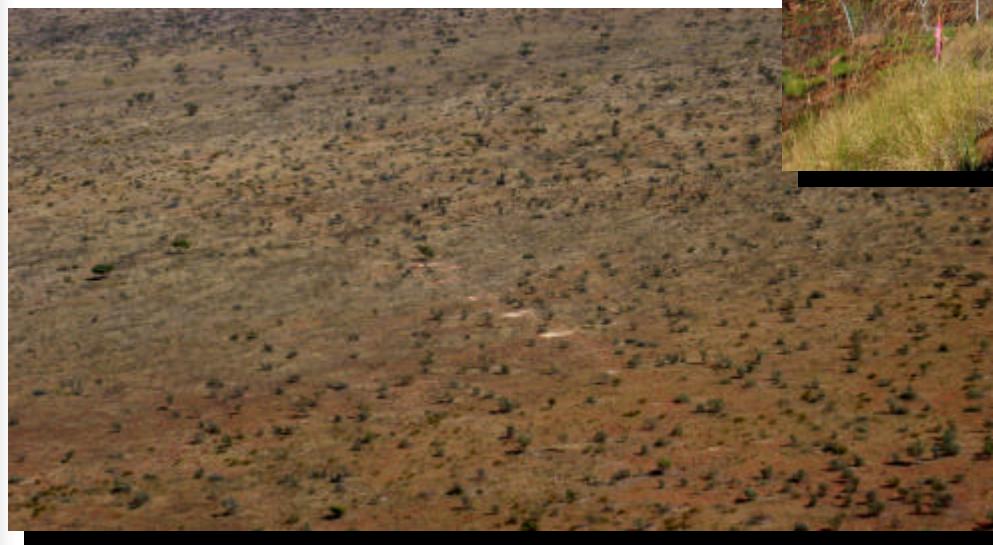
PhD student, Dept of Human Geography,  
Macquarie University – September 2003

# Kimberley Region



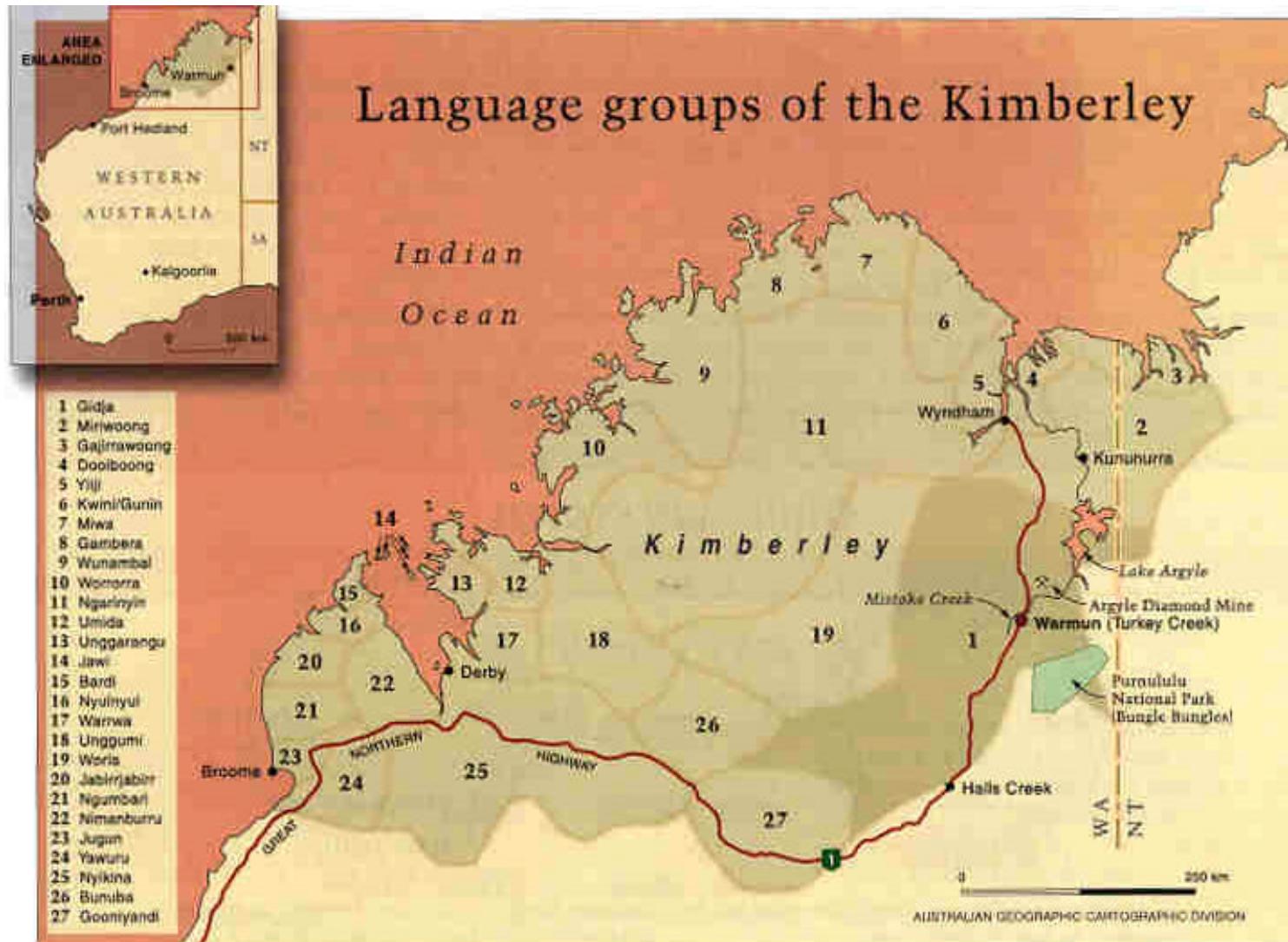


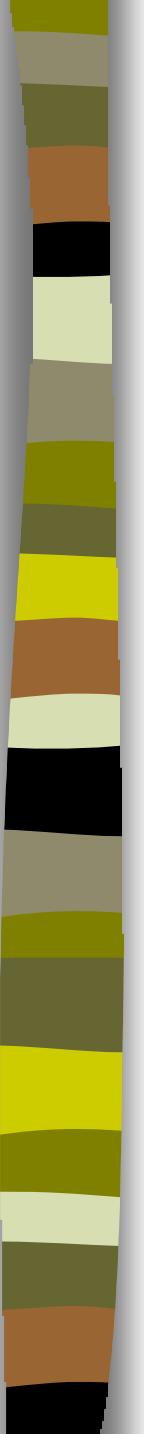
# Kimberley Landscapes



Photographs by Kim Doohan  
2002

# Cultural Diversity of the Kimberley





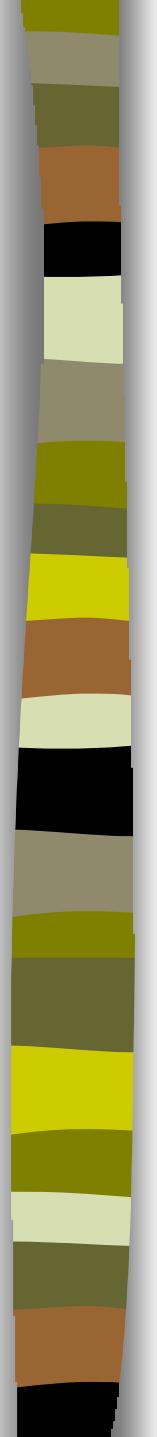
# Indigenous Presence in the Kimberley

- The Kimberley remains a region with a predominantly Aboriginal population and continuing cultural presence and as such has a rich and diverse indigenous economic and cultural life
- The Aboriginal population is around 46% of the regions population
- Aboriginal people continue to assert their traditional connections to, and 'ownership' of, their country including the Argyle Diamond Mine

# Argyle Diamond Mine



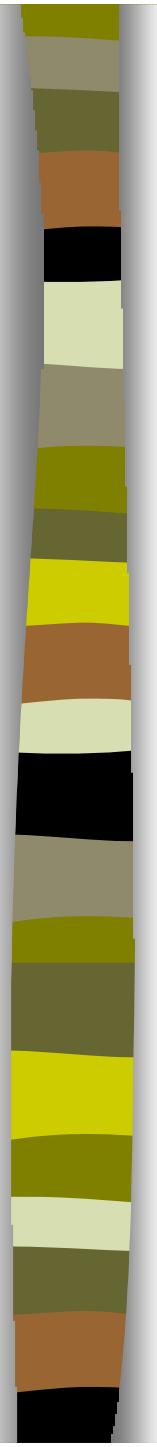
The Argyle Diamond Mine lease sits within indigenous country that has been identified as Miriuwung, and Gija/Miriuwung mixed as well as Malganin



# Pre mining Landscape Barramundi Gap

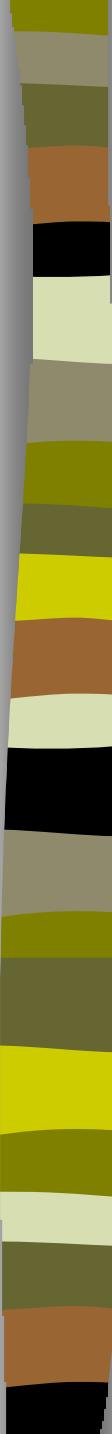


Photograph Courtesy ADM 1980



# Cultural Geography ADM Lease

- There are sites of particular significance to men and to women within the lease area that are indirectly impacted by the mining activity
- The lamporite pipe that is the source of the diamonds, AK1, and the location of the current open cut mine is a site of particular significance to Aboriginal women
- This is the site of the Barramundi Dreaming and the diamonds are her scales

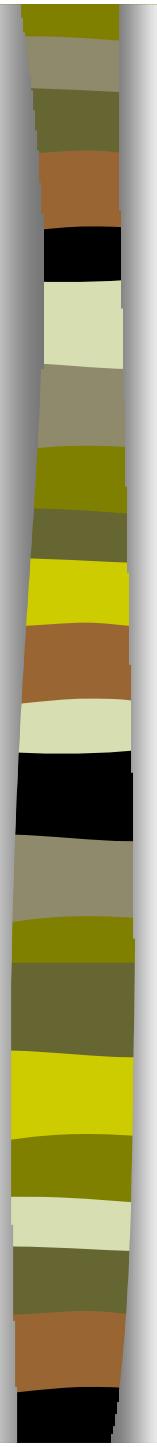


# Post Mining Landscape Argyle Diamond Mine

Photograph Courtesy ADM - 2001

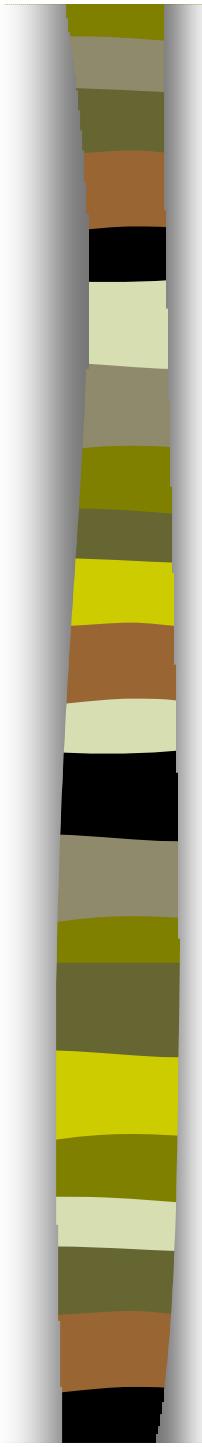


Photograph by Kim  
Doohan 2002



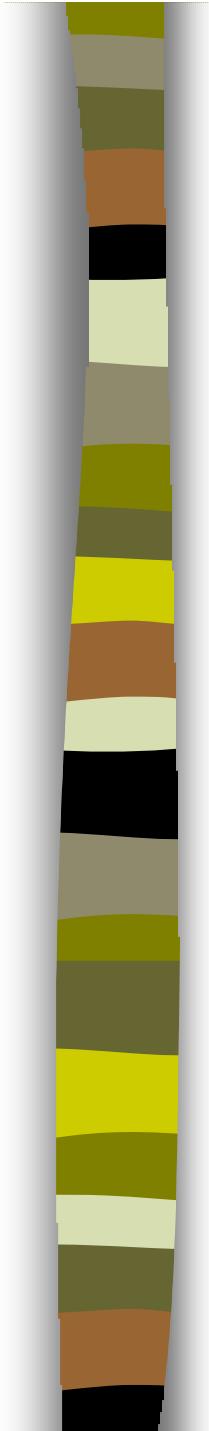
# An Agreement to Mine

- The Good Neighbour Agreement (July 1980) – for capital works only
  - 4 Aboriginal signatories agree to mining activities within lease and not to object to mining activities
  - ADM agrees to pay initial funds for capital works and funds per annum (indexed) thereafter to Glen Hill community for life of mine
  - ADM agrees to employment of, and consultation with, Glen Hill community residents
- The GNA was intended to be a once and forever agreement to secure the mine and establish a relationship with the local (indigenous) population



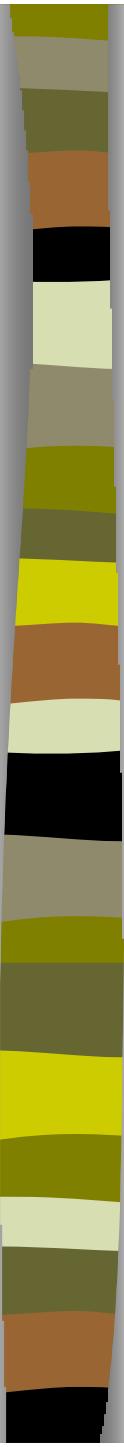
# More Agreements Between Aboriginal People and ADM

- Aboriginal people continued to informally re-negotiate and other agreements for capital works and benefits resulted eg.
- The Good Neighbour Programme (July 1981)
  - Between ADM and two nearby Aboriginal Communities
  - “To foster harmonious relations”;
  - Offering financial assistance; and
  - On the condition that ADM “...remains free to conduct its mining operations throughout its Argyle tenements”
- The Signatories Fund (1995)
  - unconditional cash payment to the four signatories of the GNA



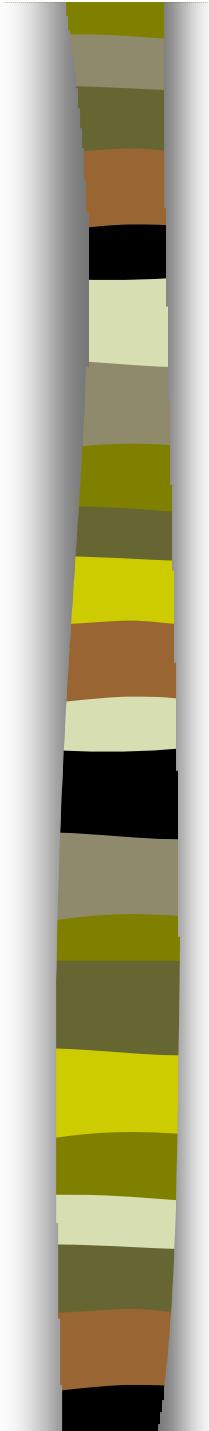
# Process of Agreement Making

- Agreements were signed by Aboriginal people without properly briefed legal representation in a hostile political environment
  - They were unilateral offers, not negotiated agreements
  - The relationships were couched in negative terms, that is Aboriginal people will receive benefit in the exchange for not objecting to the mine's operations



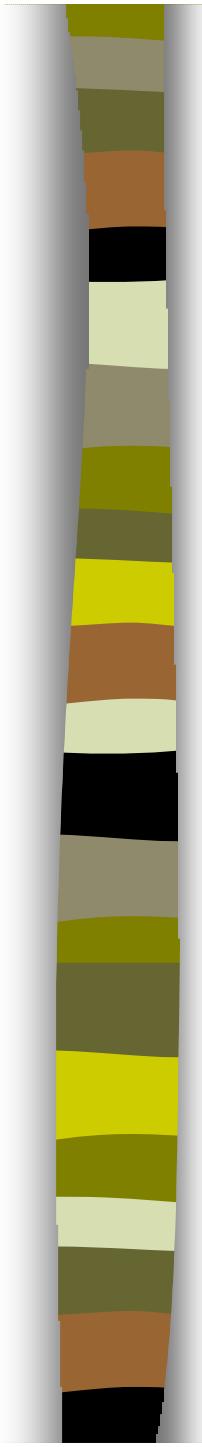
# Basis of Relationship

- It was generally considered that there was an unequal power relationship between Aboriginal people and ADM
- There was no agreed criteria to measure or assess the outcomes of the relationships between ADM and Aboriginal people
- The only measurement of the current relationship is the absence of objection and the continuing payment of monies by Argyle
- Aboriginal people were unable to formally assert their cultural criteria on the process or the outcomes



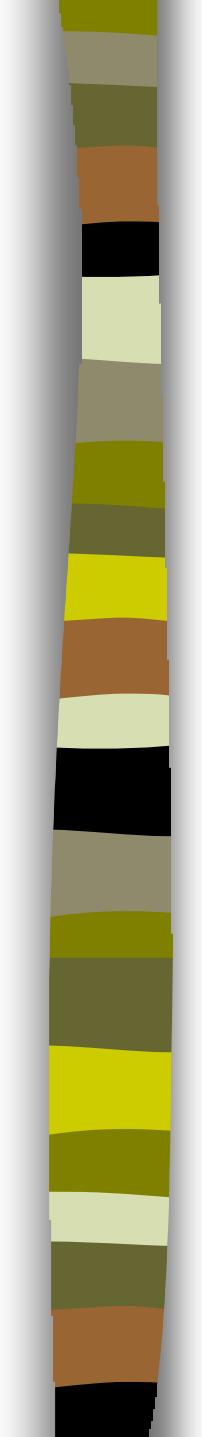
# Indigenous Response to Agreements

- The agreements met some of the Aboriginal people's demands for recognition as land owners
  - The process has been inadequate and people have continued to work towards "making it come good" in their own cultural terms
  - Aboriginal people inserted their cultural forms and presence onto the mine site in a number of ways
  - Aboriginal people consider that the current re-negotiation process is a result of their cultural efforts and by 'teaching' the miners "proper behaviour"



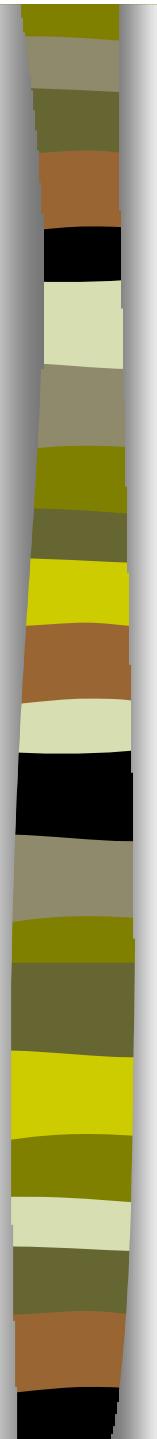
# Wirnan as an Indigenous System

- Wirnan is a social and cultural system creating binding social and land-based economic, ritual and social obligations including exchange of objects (sacred and secular), marriage arrangements and permissions for land use
- Wirnan re-inforces kinship within and beyond the community
- Wirnan finds particular expressions between individual personalities creating relationships of respect and reciprocity



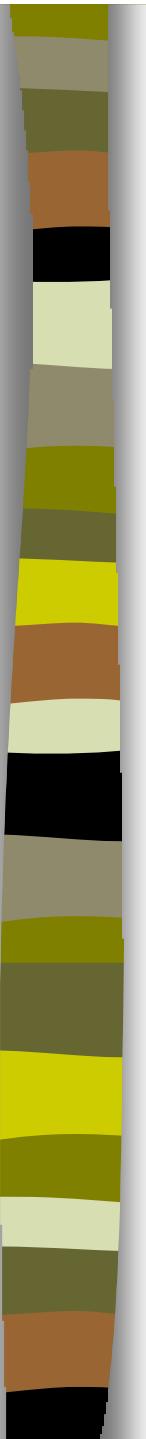
# Joe Thomas

"That money *kartiya* call royalties, we call *winan*. The royalty that they are giving now is like *winan* ... Say that you came to my place ... and you ask for something valuable from us - it might be good soil, it might be valuable stones or something like that ... we'll *winan* that to you. We'll give you *winan* and you give us back something for using our land ..." (in Dixon and Dillon 1990)



# ADM is in the Wirnan relationship

- ADM, in the Aboriginal worldview is in a reciprocal relationship with the traditional owners as owners of the land
- Manthe is a ritual expression of the relationship of (indigenous) host - (miner) guest
- Aboriginal people give 'skins' (or a relationship category name) as a form of incorporating miners into their cultural domain
- These relationships demand reciprocal demonstrations of respect and (financial) reciprocity



# Manthe – the Welcoming Ceremony

- Is a demonstration of ownership, and belonging to, the county
- As a duty of care Aboriginal people are obliged, within their own system, to provide protection from the malevolent impacts of dangerous places and spiritual beings
- It is a form of indigenous occupational health and safety in providing safe passage for workers within the mine site
- Aboriginal people now provide weekly manthe on site as part of induction to new employees and official guests to the mine

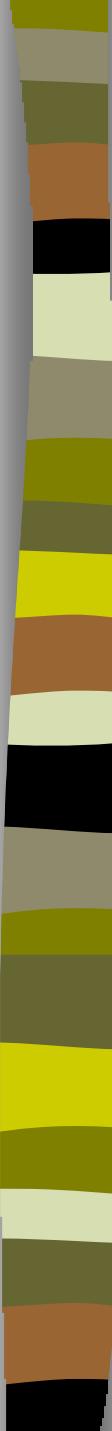
# Ceremonial Granting of Safe Passage



Photograph by Kim Doohan 2003



Photographs Courtesy Fred Murray



# Cross Cultural Induction and Incorporation

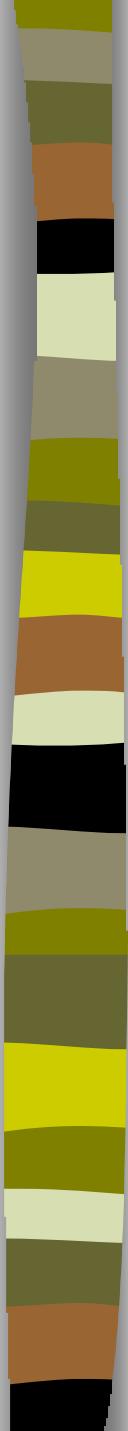
September 2002 (Kim Doohan)



Courtesy ADM

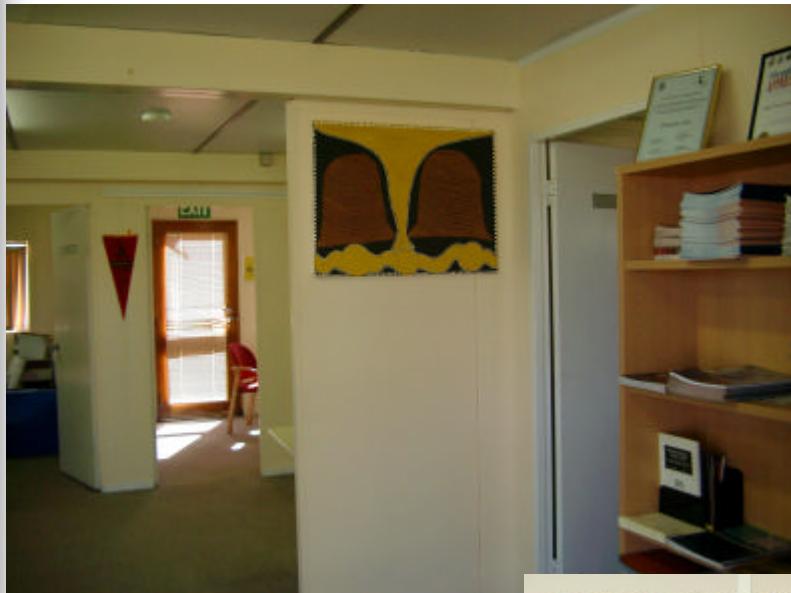


**Culture**  
Daiwul Gidja  
Cross Cultural Course  
Argyle Diamond Mines  
Western Australia



# Contemporary Indigenous Presence at the Argyle Diamond Mine

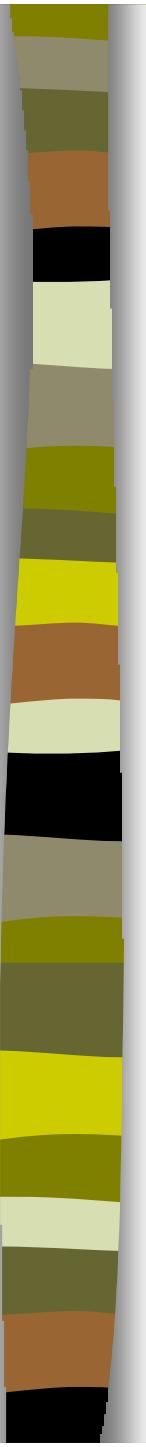
Site Community Relations Office



Site Administration Office

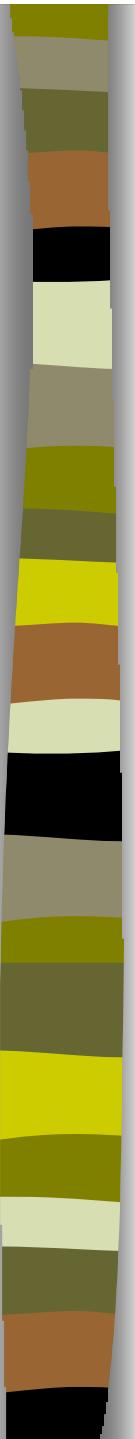


Perth Office



# Social Incorporation

- Both manthe and the giving of skins requires acknowledgement and respectful interactions between the mine workers and Aboriginal owners
- For example the General Manager of the mine was given the skin name Juwudu, this is same 'skin' as one of the senior traditional owners for the mine site area. Thus the "boss" for country and the "boss" for the mining operation are "brothers" - the most equal of all relationships within the system
- Demonstrates the continuing presence of active Aboriginal culture within the context of an operating diamond mine



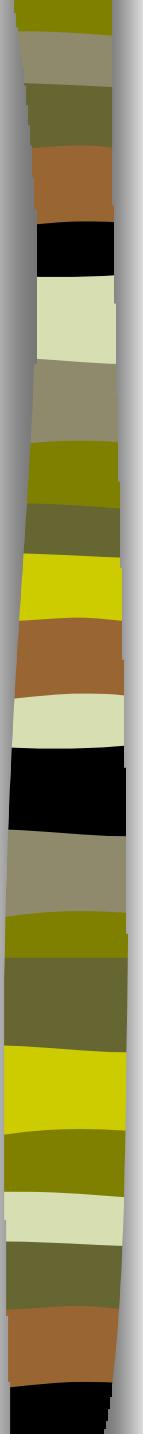
# The Formal Re-negotiation

- In Sept 2001 a formal process of re-negotiation commenced with the signing of a MOU between the KLC and ADM
- The current process is guided by requirements of the Native Title Act (1993) and is more structured and legalistic than previous engagements
- Indigenous processes of incorporation continue to be directed to the mine
- With formal re-negotiation much of the indigenous (cultural) participation remains outside this formal process

# KLC and ADM Signing the MOU

(Sept 2001)





# In Summary

- At ADM a formal relationship, created between agents of the mine and some traditional owners over twenty years ago, has seen continual informal cultural 'renegotiation' by Aboriginal people
- This processes of 'renegotiation' was unrecognised as such by the miners even though they are incorporated into indigenous processes in significant ways
- The challenge will be to see if the indigenous systems are granted equivalent recognition as the more formal processes and if there can be a meeting between wirnan and mining