



OAC Mural completed in 2022 by OAC students with guidance from Cedric Varcoe, a proud Ngarindjeri and Narangga man.

Open Access College's two campuses at Marden and Port Augusta covers more than Twenty-five Indigenous Nations. In the spirit of reconciliation, Open Access College acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Uluru

A Place of Multifaceted Significance



The following slides
contain images of
deceased
individuals.

What does this image mean to you?

Take a moment to think about this before we continue on.



20th & 21st Century Uluru-Kata Tjuta Journey

- In **1950** Uluru was declared a national park by the Australian Government.
 - In **1958** Uluru and Kata Tjuta were amalgamated into one. With the significance of this land to the Anangu Peoples, this caused backlash from those who believed the land should be returned.
 - In **1976** the Aboriginal Land Rights Act was passed in the Northern Territory. This provided an opportunity for Aboriginal Peoples in the state to claim land rights if a traditional association could be established. The first of its kind.
 - In the **early 80's** fierce negotiations were taking place to make changes to the above act to allow expansion of its scope to include federally managed lands. The National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1975 also needed to be amended to allow changes to the management of the park.
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Handing Uluru Back

- On the **26th of October in 1985** a ceremony was held. At the base of Uluru the title deeds of Uluru–Kata Tjuta were handed over to the Anangu traditional owners.

See below for some first hand reflections on the experience from Anangu peoples, and Elders.

“The land was being returned to its original owners, so we were happy. Long ago Anangu were afraid because they were pushed out of their lands. And because of that Anangu left. But now a lot of people want to come back. That’s good. It’s our place, our land.” – Reggie Uluru

“We were so happy that after all that struggle, all the talking, the fight to get it back – that it was finally going to be given back” – Pamela Taylor

“All the important people came and we were happy. We realised we had our land back, it was finally ours. We were here, and we could work. This place has important law and stories. It’s significant culturally and spiritually. Getting the land back was the right thing for all Anangu. - Malya Teamay

“We got the land back. Everybody came together. All our extended families, we stood together and got the land.” - Johnny Jingo

Handing Uluru Back

The repatriation of Uluru to its traditional custodians held a deep significance for the Anangu community, and the ongoing movement for reconciliation within Australia as a globally recognised natural wonder.

Continued:

"It was a pretty emotional day, many people coming to support us. And all the people dancing, this was in Mutitjulu community that was doing the dance and the singing, and all the dust and the dogs and the everything, was all there. And a lot of people was singing and some people were crying, and overjoyed, emotional.

Later that night the fire, the smoke, more dust, more dogs. Then bands came out. The smell of steak and onions all over the place. It was a big thing handing back a major icon for all Australians. And when you're handing it to one group of people, that made it awkward for the new Australians to come to grips with.

They thought "Oh this is supposed to be for everybody. Not just for Anangu, Yankunytjatjara, and the western desert mob Pitjantjatjara mob, this is for everybody." So it became a bit of a political speak. Our struggle did not only involve Anangu, local Anangu people. We had many many Anangu friends, all the lawyers, all managers, politicians. I'd just like to acknowledge those people because that's what helped us shift." – Leroy Lester

Significant People – Traditional Owners and Elders

- **Nipper Winmarti** – A traditional owner and Uluru tracker. Was also involved as a tracker in the Azaria Chamberlain case. Giving evidence of the dingo attack in court. When taking ownership he handed this to his grandson Kiatipi symbolizing ancestral links.
- **Barbara Tjirkadu/Winmarti** – Wife of Nipper Winmarti: “My family were here for Handback. They really felt strongly about not leaving their country. It’s grandfather’s and the ancestors’ land.”
- **Tiku Uluru (Captain), and Nancy Wongoma:** Also traditional owners.



Mr Holding returns from a bush walk with traditional owners (from the left) Tiku Captain, Nipper Winmarti, Barbara Tjirkadu and Nancy Wongoma.

Significant People – Traditional Owner and Advocate.

- **Yami Lester** - a Yankunytjatjara man, fought for 20 years to return Uluru to the Anangu people.
- He often translated for the Anangu people's, was a cultural advisor and was heavily involved in advocacy and legal proceedings over the years.
- When the deeds were handed over to Anangu elders he was able to address the crowd.
- He also became the first chairman of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta Board of Management.



Significant People - Government

- **Sir Ninian Stephen** - Was the Governor-General of Australia at the time. He physically handed the title deeds over to the Anangu Elders on behalf of the Government.
- This was significant as the Governor General acts as the representative of the British monarch in Australia.
- The person in this role has the power to dismiss the Prime Minister, call and dismiss the Parliament, and give royal approval to legislation (which is needed for a bill to become law).



Significant People

- **Clyde Holding** - Was the Aboriginal Affairs Minister for the Labor Party in 1985.
- He may have been a strong supporter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait land rights during this time.
- Unfortunately, two years post the handing back of Uluru, Holding was forced by the then Prime Minister (Hawke) to drop his pursuit of a land rights proposal he was working on.



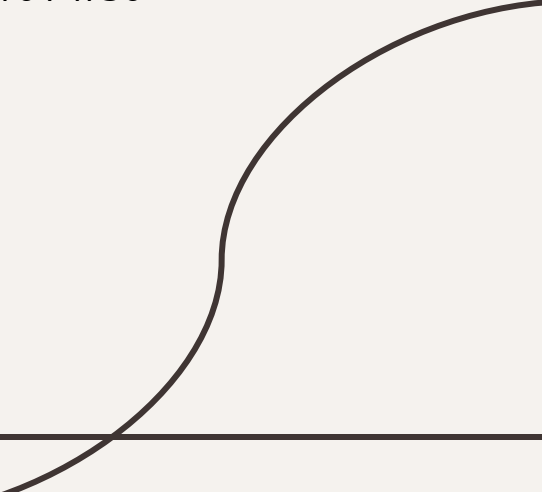
Mr Holding returns from a bush walk with traditional owners (from the left) Tiku Captain, Nilper Wimmart, Barbara Tjihadu and Nancy Wongoma.

Why talk about this now?

Restoring land ownership to First Nations peoples acknowledges their deep connections and marks a vital step in reconciliation.

Key events like the Uluru handover and Statement have empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait voices.

Remembering events like this allows us all to actively support First Nations identity, rights, and ongoing reconciliatory efforts.



Before we continue:

Did anything surprise you about what you may have learned?

Have your thoughts and feelings about Uluru changed from the beginning of the session?

What questions do you have that you want to keep exploring?



Upcoming Commemorative Date

- On 26th of October 2024 Australians will mark the 39th anniversary of the handing back of Uluru.
 - This presents an important opportunity to reflect on its significance, to educate ourselves about our shared history, and to consider how we can support reconciliation in our schools.
 - Given that next year is the 40th anniversary, we also have an opportunity prepare and think about how we can use this knowledge over 2025.
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How Can Students Get Involved?

- Learn about how to be an Allie.
 - One of our students has provided some excellent Allyship resources including videos, articles and quizzes. Please see the additional resources in the slide notes below. Keep an eye out for the official Gazette printing later in the year.
- Reach out to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (using the Tindale map) to learn more and find ways to collaborate.
- Encourage students to research the event, its origins, and its ongoing impact.
- Facilitate discussions about the handing back of Uluru and its implications for reconciliation and Indigenous rights.

***See slide notes for links and more



Contact Us

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