

Chapter 1 : The Wave Hill 'walk-off' - Fact sheet – National Archives of Australia, Australian Government

Wattie Creek is an episode from the series Australia's Heritage - National Treasures with Chris Taylor, produced in Series Synopsis Take a voyage of discovery with Chris Taylor as he reveals the secrets behind a fascinating mix of treasures from Australia's National Heritage List.

This had the immediate effect of challenging the Australian labour movement to address its attitudes on the rights and conditions of Aborigines, attitudes which until then had been often indifferent and sometimes openly hostile. Members of the Communist Party of Australia played a critical role, particularly in efforts to mobilise trade union support and build a solidarity movement. The last recorded massacre of Aborigines took place in the Northern Territory in the s, in living memory. Just stealing the land. The white man been coming here stealing the land from blackfellows Wasting blackfellows, shooting blackfellows from land. Having secured the land, and lost cheap convict labour, they turned to the newly landless Aborigines for labour as colonisation spread north. On stations like Wave Hill, Aborigines laboured for minimal sustenance under the practice, threat and memory of terror. According to Bird Rose, "Death, servitude, flogging and banishment were all means of exercising power". It was considered a waste of money to pay more than bare sustenance to Aborigines, as there was an almost unlimited supply of replacements in the bush. In the mids a Northern Territory government inquiry, the Brackenregg-Sheperd Committee, investigated conditions on cattle leases. Early strikes World War II and advances in communication broke the isolation of the north. Aborigines entered a range of occupations left open by whites joining the armed forces, with a consequent improvement in cultural understanding. Wartime construction projects also linked black and white labour. A strike for improved wages and conditions erupted amongst Aborigines employed in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, a district in the far north of the wool growing area. Though unsuccessful, the strike remains a model of organisation, solidarity and determination for black and white unionists. Similar actions were attempted in the Victoria River Downs region, including abortive strikes in and He used to go down to Canberra, talk with them Waterside Union. Sneaking without no permit He used to come out telling us: It began to pressure the labour movement, lobbying the Australian Council of Trade Unions congresses of , and In , the ACTU finally adopted a policy calling for an end to all discrimination against Aboriginal labour. The commission decided that "there must be one industrial law, similarly applied to all Australians, Aboriginal or not". However, arguing for the pastoralists, John Kerr later Sir John convinced the commissioners to accept a "slow worker" clause under which pastoralists could seek to classify certain Aboriginal workers inefficient and gain an exemption from the award. A further limitation gave pastoralists until for the new rates to be introduced. Unwilling to wait three years for an indefinite outcome, Aborigines of the Victoria River Downs stations walked off the job and away from a century of white domination. Hardy achieves a formal history of the strike through a personal journal of his experiences working with the Gurindji and organising support. Bird Rose offers her views on the roots of the strike: This is the chronology of European perceptions, but it seems to miss the underlying logic The desire to find powerful allies was based on the desire to regain control – of lives and of land Newcastle Waters also employed a number of Gurindji, among them Lupgna Giari – called "Captain Major" by his white employers – who was a key figure throughout the campaign. Daniels was also to play a pivotal role, coordinating support for the Gurindji from Darwin. Those people know how to wait, but they are not enough. And I told him the Aboriginal stockmen were waiting for me everywhere While Gurindji at Wave Hill joined the action immediately, efforts to broaden the strike to other stations were thwarted until much later. On August 22, , against the explicit instructions of the NAWU, the Gurindji employed at Wave Hill and their families, together more than people, collected their few belongings and left the squalid humpies the station called accommodation. They walked several kilometres to the local Welfare settlement, where they made a camp on the banks of the Victoria River and began a strike which was to last nine years. Welfare, the Commonwealth government agency responsible for Aboriginal welfare at this time, was still enacting the policy of assimilation. The Welfare officer stationed at Wave Hill, however, was known to be sympathetic. Bill Jeffrey, together with his wife Anne and daughter Sue, provided crucial material and moral support

throughout the campaign. The strike had initially taken pastoralists by surprise, but they soon rallied. A steady stream of direct and indirect intimidation followed. Senior staff of Vestey's, Welfare officials and police all made visits to the camp. Quite a lot of offers to the Aborigines. The NAWU, initially opposed, came behind the strike as it became clear the action would go ahead regardless. Broader union support was being steadily mobilised. In October of , Giari and Daniels travelled through the southern capitals raising funds and support. This tour was organised principally by the Communist Party with funding from Actors Equity. Sensing a crisis, the NT government pushed through a new award in late 1966. Giari recounts a meeting with stockmen from Banka Banka station: Everything better for Aboriginal people now since this strike. They get better living, better treatment, better condition, better house. Better money, too, maybe not proper equal money but better than before. In March , they took their historic decision to raise the stakes. In two groups, they packed up their camp at the Welfare settlement and moved to the centre of their dreaming, Wattie Creek, naming the new settlement Daguragu. With the help of Hardy and the Jeffreys, the Gurindji drafted a petition to the governor general seeking the excision of square miles comprising most of the Wave Hill lease and the remainder of Victoria River Downs. The petition included a map of sacred places on the land claimed, and detailed the evolution of Gurindji cultural myths and dreaming associated with these sites. Minister-in-charge of Aboriginal Affairs W. Wentworth travelled to Wattie Creek in April and returned with a proposal to excise eight square miles for a settlement. Even this token effort was opposed by the Liberal cabinet. Instead, it approved an alternative proposal for a township development at a site called Drovers Common, a dry and desolate area of no use to Vestey's. In his book *Kulinma*, H. Coombs refers to the site as a "pound". In Coombs was called on, as chair of the recently formed Council for Aboriginal Affairs, to investigate options for resolving the dispute. His frustration with government intransigence is obvious in *Kulinma*, where he reflects on the official response to the Gurindji petition: Cabinet feared that to provide land from an area already under lease would lead to a succession of similar claims which would be the more embarrassing if any acknowledgment of traditional rights were implied. Hardy reported that the campaign in support of the Gurindji had dwindled and the press and the public were losing interest. The Gurindji were standing firm, however, with the young stockmen working on the other stations at the new award rates and the elders and some women and children maintaining the settlement at Wattie Creek. It was becoming obvious that protest actions in Australia and elsewhere were affecting Vestey's. Coombs comments, "They were willing to collaborate in any government policy directed to meeting Aboriginal demands for land, even if this meant surrendering substantial areas from their Wave Hill lease". This view was confirmed, Coombs adds, in a conversation he had with Lord Vestey in 1967. In a last ditch attempt to quell the protests, the Liberals legislated for "general purpose leases", under which Aborigines who could prove a "long association" with an area of land might apply for an excision. At the time of the Labor government taking office in December 1967, not one of these leases had been granted. This poor effort was received with predictable anger by Aborigines. Immediately following its announcement, a group established the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawn of Parliament House, which was to attract international attention. Throughout the strike, white support "financial, material and political" was critical to protecting the Gurindji from isolation and physical intimidation. Without the exposure and public attention white supporters were able to mobilise, more ruthless efforts to break the strike would undoubtedly have been used, as they were in earlier strikes. The Gurindji action broke through the racist barriers in the labour movement. The success of fundraising and protest actions around the country, led by workers alongside students, was a victory for class-conscious unionism. This dramatic shift in opinions would not have been possible without the efforts of a highly motivated and organised group. The Communist Party of Australia used its considerable influence to mobilise and educate a broad and active support base for the Gurindji. Denouncing the White Australia Policy, which had deep support in the labour movement, the CPA established a firm platform of opposition to all forms of racism. An early policy statement, a pamphlet published in 1967, *A New Deal for Aborigines* by Tom Wright, marked a big step forward in progressive attitudes. It reflected the thinking of the time, however, and was criticised in later material as paternalistic, concentrating on tribal societies. Further ground was broken by the leadership role of CPA member Don McLeod in the Pilbara strike, the only white to hold such a position. Along with the black

leadership, Dooley and Clancy McKenna, McLeod was imprisoned during the strike, his charge being "inciting Aborigines to leave their place of lawful employment". The militancy of this celebrated strike inspired more political action as Aborigines employed by the Northern Territory administration and Department of Native Affairs struck in December and January. The leadership this time was all Aboriginal, and community-wide meetings were a feature of the action. Among the savage efforts to break these strikes, the Northern Territory government banished one of the leaders, Fred Waters, to Haasts Bluff, a thousand miles from Darwin. This led to the most vigorous protests from the white community yet seen, particularly the now actively involved union movement, with the Darwin CPA branch at the forefront. Unions shift Aboriginal rights organisations were springing up around the country. These groups were no longer predominantly middle class, increasingly drawing members from the working class through union participation. After years of hedging, the congress of the ACTU was finally forced to adopt a basic policy on Aboriginal rights. The policy was strengthened at subsequent congresses, in large part through the sustained efforts of Communist union officials. Though it did not specifically exclude Aborigines from membership, it did insist they were inherently inferior to white workers. However, it was finally won round on this issue, mainly by Aboriginal activists within its own ranks and Communists within the wider union movement. Analysing the links between Aborigines and the working class, the document says: This is emphasised, not contradicted, by the fact that the great majority of them are poverty-ridden labourers. It has a major responsibility towards the Aborigines and Islanders.

Chapter 2 : Vincent Lingiari & Gough Whitlam: the story behind the image | NITV

The Gurindji established a settlement near by at Wattie Creek, which Gurindji have always called Daguragu. These were hard years, but they held strong to their belief in their right to the land. Gurindji efforts during the strike years [edit].

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are warned that the following article contains images of deceased persons. It also meant the Gurindji became the first Aboriginal community to have land returned to them by the Commonwealth Government and would be a turning point - the start of the Aboriginal land rights movement for the rest of Indigenous Australia, that continues even today. In response, Vincent Lingiari said this: We want to live in a better way together, Aboriginals and white men, let us not fight over anything, let us be mates. Wave Hill station was a cattle station run by Vestey's, a British pastoral company, which employed the local Aboriginal people from the area. Vincent Lingiari had noticed for quite some time that the working and living conditions for Aboriginal people were very bad, they were treated differently and were not paid equally compared to the non-Aboriginal employees. Even Lingiari, who was a head stockman, initially received no cash payment. Vincent Lingiari, who was the Gurindji spokesman, and his fellow strong protesters - stockmen, house servants, and their families, walked along a fence line to Gordy Creek before setting up camp on the Victoria River near the Wave Hill Welfare Station. They camped on higher ground during the wet season and in early moved to Wattie Creek, where they established the community of Daguragu. The protesters petitioned the Governor General in and the leaders toured Australia to raise awareness about their cause. In , Prime Minister Whitlam announced that funds would be made available for the purchase of properties that were not on reserves, and Lord Vestey, from Vestey's pastoral company, surrendered the land in question to the Gurindji people. The Gurindji walk-off would be the longest protest in Australian history. The Gurindji campaign was an important influence on the events leading to passing the Aboriginal Land Rights Act Northern Territory Who was Vincent Lingiari? Vincent Lingiari was a proud, hard-working, respected and dignified Gurindji man born in at Victoria River Gorge, Northern Territory. Both his parents were Gurindji and he was named after his father. Vincent Lingiari started working on stations at approximately 12 years of age. His traditional Aboriginal wife was named Blanche Nangi and they had six sons and two daughters. He died on 21 January at Daguragu and was buried with traditional honours. The Lingiari Foundation was formed in to promote reconciliation and Indigenous rights and to develop Aboriginal leadership.

Chapter 3 : Gurindji language - Wikipedia

The Gurindji were standing firm, however, with the young stockmen working on the other stations at the new award rates and the elders and some women and children maintaining the settlement at Wattie Creek.

Wave Hill Walk-Off National Library of Australia vn On 23 August , Gurindji stockmen, domestic workers and their families initiated strike action at Wave Hill station in the Northern Territory. Negotiations with the station owners, the international food company Vestey Brothers, broke down, leading to a seven-year dispute. This eventually led to the return of a portion of their homelands to the Gurindji people in , and the passing of the first legislation that allowed for Indigenous people to claim land title if they could prove a traditional relationship to the country. We bin here longa time before them Vestey mob. Vincent Lingiari beside a plaque marking the handing over of the lease, in Wattie Creek, Northern Territory, 16 August National Archives of Australia: In , cattle were moved onto the land and ten years later there were 15, cattle and bullocks. This put incredible pressure on the environment, and the system of land management the Gurindji had developed over many millennia started to break down. This pattern was repeated across Australia as pastoralists took possession of Aboriginal lands and stocked them with cattle and sheep. Traditional ways of life came under intense pressure in this clash between western and Aboriginal land usage. This necessity to stay played into the hands of pastoralists as the cattle and sheep stations required cheap labour, and over the next 70 years Aboriginal people became an intrinsic but exploited part of the cattle industry across Northern Australia. Exploitation From , legislation required that in return for their work, Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory should receive food, clothes, tea and tobacco. However, a report by RM and CH Berndt in showed that Aboriginal children under twelve were working illegally, that accommodation and rations were inadequate, that there was sexual abuse of Aboriginal women, and prostitution for rations and clothing was taking place. No sanitation or rubbish removal facilities were provided, nor was there safe drinking water. In , all Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory were made wards of the state and in the Wards Employment Regulations set out a scale of wages, rations and conditions applicable to wards employed in various industries. Strike action The Buchanan family had sold what was then called Wave Hill station to the international meat-packing company Vestey Brothers in Through no progress was made in negotiations and the Gurindji community led by Vincent Lingiari walked off the station on 23 August. Consultations went on through the rest of the year amongst the Gurindji, members of the North Australian Workers Union and the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights, but no agreement was reached and the Aboriginal workers did not return to work. The change demonstrated a fundamental difference between the view of the Gurindji and that of their white supporters on the purpose of the strike. The Gurindji were focused on reclaiming their land while the unionists believed the dispute was solely about wages and work conditions. Shortly afterwards, the Gurindji drafted a petition to Governor-General Lord Casey asking him to grant a lease of square kilometres around Daguragu to be run cooperatively by them as a mining and cattle lease. In June , the Governor-General replied that he was unwilling to grant the lease. The Gurindji stayed on at Daguragu even though under Australian law they were illegally occupying a portion of the 15, square kilometres leased to Vestey Brothers. Over the next seven years petitions and requests moved back and forth between the Gurindji, the Northern Territory Administration and the Australian Government in Canberra but nothing was resolved. Recognition The coming to power of the Labor Party in changed the political landscape. In March , the original Wave Hill lease was surrendered and two new leases were issued: The Gurindji strike was instrumental in heightening the understanding of Indigenous land ownership in Australia and was a catalyst for the passing of the Aboriginal Land Rights Northern Territory Act , the first legislation allowing for a claim of title if the Indigenous claimants could provide evidence for their traditional relationship to the land.

Chapter 4 : The Gurindji strike and land claim | Green Left Weekly

From Wattie Creek to Wattie Creek: an oral historical approach to the Gurindji walk-off Minoru Hokari *The Gurindji walk-off was a symbolic historic event in Australian race relations, particu-*

Gurindji first encountered Europeans in the 1840s, when explorer Augustus Gregory crossed into their territory. Several other explorers traversed the area over the following decades until the early 1860s, when large pastoral operations were established. Gurindji and the pastoralists Wave Hill cattle station, which included the Kalkaringi and Daguragu area, was first stocked in 1867 along with all Aboriginal groups in this predicament – found their waterholes and soakages fenced off or fouled by cattle, which also ate or trampled fragile desert plant life, such as bush tomato. Gurindji suffered lethal "reprisals" for any attempt to eat the cattle – anything from a skirmish to a massacre. The last recorded massacre in the area occurred at Coniston in 1869. There was little choice to stay alive but to move onto the cattle stations, receive rations, adopt a more sedentary life and, where possible, take work as stockmen and domestic help. In 1870, Wave Hill Station was bought by Vestey's, a British pastoral company comprising a large conglomerate of cattle companies owned by Baron Vestey. Pastoralists were able to make use of the now landless Aboriginal people as extremely cheap labour. On stations across the north, Aboriginal people became the backbone of the cattle industry, working for little or no money, minimal food and appalling housing. Conditions on the station There had been complaints from Indigenous employees about conditions over many years. A Northern Territory government inquiry held in the 1880s said of Vestey's: It was obvious that they had been However, little was done over the decades leading up to the strike. While it was illegal up until to pay Aboriginal workers more than a specified amount in goods and money, an inquiry found Vestey's was not even paying Aboriginal workers the 5 shillings a day minimum wage set up for Aborigines under an Ordinance. Gurindji lived in corrugated iron humpies without floors, lighting, sanitation, furniture or cooking facilities. We were lucky to get paid the 50 quid a month we were due, and we lived in tin humpies you had to crawl in and out on your knees. There was no running water. The food was bad – just flour, tea, sugar and bits of beef like the head or feet of a bullock. The Vestey's mob were hard men. Gurindji who received minimal government benefits had these paid into pastoral company accounts over which they had no control. In contrast, non-Aboriginal workers enjoyed minimum wage security with no legal limit on the maximum they could be paid. They were housed in comfortable homes with gardens and had full control over their finances. The walk off On 23 August 1966, led by spokesman Vincent Lingiari, the workers and their families walked off Wave Hill and began their ten-year strike. Initially, the action was interpreted as purely a strike against work and living conditions. However, it soon became apparent that it was not just – or even primarily – improved conditions Gurindji were campaigning for. Their primary demand was for return of their land. Novelist Frank Hardy was one of the many non-Indigenous Australians who supported the Gurindji struggle through the strike years as was Darwin based trade unionist Brian Manning. While Hardy records Pincher Manguari as saying: We want them Vestey mob all go away from here. Wave Hill Aboriginal people bin called Gurindji. We bin here long time before them Vestey mob. This is our country, all this bin Gurindji country. Wave Hill bin our country. We want this land; we strike for that. The Gurindji strike was not the first or the only demand by Aborigines for the return of their lands – but it was the first one to attract wide public support within Australia for Land Rights. These were hard years, but they held strong to their belief in their right to the land. Gurindji efforts during the strike years " Vincent, May " Vincent Lingiari; charcoal on paper, by Frank Hardy, drawn while researching his book, *The Unlucky Australians*. While living at Daguragu, Gurindji drew up maps showing areas they wanted excised from pastoralist land and returned to them. Their claim was rejected. While Daguragu would eventually become the first cattle station to be owned and managed by an Aboriginal community, today known as the Murrumulla Gurindji Company, it would be many years before the Gurindji achieved this. The donor – who said he had never before met an Aboriginal person – was a young Dr Fred Hollows, the eye surgeon and Communist activist. Attempts to entice and stymie Gurindji Billy Bunter Jampijinpa was 16 at the time of the walk-off: The Vestey's mob came and said they would get two killers slaughtered beasts and raise

our wages if we came back. Then in early we walked to our new promised land, we call it Daguragu Wattie Creek , back to our sacred places and our country, our new homeland. In late the Northern Territory government offered a compromise pay rise of per cent, but the strikers still demanded wages equal to those of white stockmen and return of their land. The Government also made moves to cut off means of Gurindji obtaining food supplies and threatened evictions. Offers of houses, which the Government had built for them at Wave Hill Welfare settlement, were resisted. The Gurindji persisted with their protest and stayed at Daguragu. In the Liberal - National Country Coalition government was given a proposal to give eight square kilometres back to the Gurindji. Cabinet refused even to discuss the issue. Support for the Gurindji grows However, the tide of public opinion was beginning to turn in Australia. There were demonstrations and arrests in southern Australia in support of the walk-off, and many church , student and trade union groups gave practical and fundraising support to the Gurindji struggle. Several significant events marked the change in opinion in Australia. Aboriginal land rights was an issue high on its agenda, and it was quick to set up an Inquiry, and subsequently draft legislation, to this end. The Commission recommended government financial support for the creation of reserves and incorporated land trusts, administered by traditional owners or land councils. Coupled with the ongoing Gurindji strike, this case highlighted the very real need for Aboriginal land rights in Australia. The subsequent Fraser government passed effectively similar legislation " the Aboriginal Land Rights Act " on 9 December This was a landmark in the land rights movement in Australia for Indigenous Australians. The handback took place on 16 August at Kalkaringi. Gough Whitlam addressed Vincent Lingiari and the Gurindji people, saying: On this great day, I, Prime Minister of Australia, speak to you on behalf of all Australian people " all those who honour and love this land we live in. For them I want to say to you: I want this to acknowledge that we Australians have still much to do to redress the injustice and oppression that has for so long been the lot of Black Australians. Vincent Lingiari, I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof, in Australian law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji people and I put into your hands part of the earth itself as a sign that this land will be the possession of you and your children forever. The walk-off and strike were landmark events in the struggle for Aboriginal land rights in Australia. For the first time recognition was given of Indigenous people, their rights and responsibilities for the land, and their ability to practise their law, language and culture. In August every year, a large celebration is held at Kalkaringi to mark the anniversary of the strike and walk-off. Known as Freedom Day, people gather from many parts of Australia to celebrate and re-enact the walk-off. In an Australian Senate report looked into the matter of underpayment of indigenous workers in the past. A group of those involved in the Wave Hill walk-off have said that they would be prepared to make a reparation claim for underpaid and stolen wages as a test case. The words to the first verse are: Poor Bugger Me, Gurindji Me bin sit down this country Long before no Lord Vesty All about land belong to we In the song was recorded by Galarrwuy Yunupingu , a Yolngu man actively involved in land rights for his own people through the bark petition and Gove land rights case. Ted Egan says he was moved to write "Gurindji Blues" after he heard Peter Nixon , then Minister for the Interior, say in parliament that if the Gurindji wanted land, they should save up and buy it, like any other Australian. Gather round people let me tell you a story An eight year-long story of power and pride British Lord Vestey and Vincent Lingiari Were opposite men on opposite sides The words to the last verse are: That was the story of Vincent Lingiari But this is the story of something much more How power and privilege can not move a people Who know where they stand and stand in the law. In the year of Lord Jesus nineteen and sixty six, A great rumbling sound came from up in the sticks, All these gentle black warriors they dreamed of a Bill, And enough was enough, so they walked off Wave Hill. The words to the last verse are: See also Vincent Lingiari References "Aborigines walk off jobs". National Library of Australia. Retrieved 2 June

Chapter 5 : Gurindji strike - The Wave Hill walk-off - 80 Days That Changed Our Lives - ABC Archives

The Gurindji move their camp 20 kilometres to Daguragu (Wattie Creek). This is a symbolic shift away from the cattle station and closer to the community's sacred sites.

Not known Repressive Violence: The police violently took down the Aboriginal Embassy umbrella that was set outside the Parliament House. The workers felt oppressed by the low wages, poor working and living conditions they received at the Wave Hill Station. The Vestey family was a rich British family that owned many acres of land and companies in Australia. Throughout the next year, Lingiari and his followers decided to leave Wave Hill completely and settled in Wattie Creek, also known as Daguragu. This place was sacred to the Gurindji Tribe and is a piece of land that was originally discovered by their ancestors. The Vestey family owned this piece of land, making it illegal for the Gurindji people to camp on this land. As a result, the Gurindji engaged in civil disobedience by refusing to leave. Returning to this sacred and traditional land encouraged the Aboriginal people to demand ownership of square miles of land. Frank Hardy wrote on behalf of: The Governor-General, using the current Australian land ownership laws as justification, rejected the petition. From onwards, the Gurindji Strike gained many supporters such as church leaders, students, anthropologists, select cabinet members and many organizations in favor of Indigenous rights. The strike became well known throughout Australia through the use of protests, marches, public meetings, written academic journals and the newspaper reports. Gurindji leader Mick Rangiari travelled around Australia voicing the campaign at public meeting. Vincent Lingiari collaborated and wrote a song to raise awareness and money to support the campaign. During this time the Gurindji Tribe made use of and lived off the Wattie Creek land, demonstrating to the public that they were fully capable of sustaining the land. This action sent the message out to the public that the Aboriginal people were landless, that their embassy was set under an umbrella. This action portrayed poverty, temporariness and attracted supporters. The Government reacted by ordering police to violently dismantle the tents. The media illuminated the violence, which led to public outrage against the Government. Later in the year a change in governance occurred and Edward Whitlam, leader of the Labor Party, came into power. Prime Minister Whitlam granted funds to the Gurindji people for the purchase of properties and the Vestey family relinquished a portion of their land. By , the Gurindji people signed a leased square kilometers of land. Whitlam visited Wattie Creek and handed soil to Vincent Lingiari, a symbolic action to represent the transfer of leasehold. This law allowed Indigenous people to claim land with proof that they hold a traditional and spiritual connection with. Research Notes Not known Sources: Collaborating for Indigenous Rights. National Museum of Australia, National Archives of Australia. Original website design and artwork created by Daniel Hunter. Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://> Registered users can login to the website.

Chapter 6 : Watch Australia's Heritage: National Treasures: Wattie Creek | EnhanceTV

The Gurindji rose to national prominence in when, led by stockman Vincent Lingiari, Aboriginal employees quit slave-labour conditions at Wave Hill cattle station and walked the now National Heritage-listed Wave Hill Walk-off Route to set up a community at Wattie Creek, which they renamed Daguragu.

Gurindji and the pastoralists[edit] Wave Hill cattle station, which included the Kalkaringi and Daguragu area, was first stocked in Gurindji " along with all Aboriginal groups in this predicament " found their waterholes and soakages fenced off or fouled by cattle, which also ate or trampled fragile desert plant life , such as bush tomato. Gurindji suffered lethal " reprisals " for any attempt to eat the cattle " anything from a skirmish to a massacre. The last recorded massacre in the area occurred at Coniston in There was little choice to stay alive but to move onto the cattle stations, receive rations , adopt a more sedentary life and, where possible, take work as stockmen and domestic help. In , Wave Hill Station was bought by Vestey's , a British pastoral company comprising a large conglomerate of cattle companies owned by Baron Vestey. Pastoralists were able to make use of the now landless Aboriginal people as extremely cheap labour. On stations across the north, Aboriginal people became the backbone of the cattle industry, working for little or no money, minimal food and appalling housing. Conditions on the station[edit] There had been complaints from Indigenous employees about conditions over many years. A Northern Territory government inquiry held in the s said of Vestey's: It was obvious that they had been However, little was done over the decades leading up to the strike. While it was illegal up until to pay Aboriginal workers more than a specified amount in goods and money, a inquiry found Vestey's was not even paying Aboriginal workers the 5 shillings a day minimum wage set up for Aborigines under a Ordinance. Gurindji lived in corrugated iron humpies without floors, lighting, sanitation, furniture or cooking facilities. We were lucky to get paid the 50 quid a month we were due, and we lived in tin humpies you had to crawl in and out on your knees. There was no running water. The food was bad " just flour, tea, sugar and bits of beef like the head or feet of a bullock. The Vestey's mob were hard men. Gurindji who received minimal government benefits had these paid into pastoral company accounts over which they had no control. In contrast, non-Aboriginal workers enjoyed minimum wage security with no legal limit on the maximum they could be paid. They were housed in comfortable homes with gardens and had full control over their finances. The walk off[edit] On 23 August , led by spokesman Vincent Lingiari , the workers and their families walked off Wave Hill and began their ten-year strike. Initially, the action was interpreted as purely a strike against work and living conditions. However, it soon became apparent that it was not just " or even primarily " improved conditions Gurindji were campaigning for. Their primary demand was for return of their land. Novelist Frank Hardy was one of the many non-Indigenous Australians who supported the Gurindji struggle through the strike years as was Darwin based trade unionist Brian Manning. While Hardy records Pincher Manguari as saying: We want them Vestey mob all go away from here. Wave Hill Aboriginal people bin called Gurindji. We bin here long time before them Vestey mob. This is our country, all this bin Gurindji country. Wave Hill bin our country. We want this land; we strike for that. The Gurindji strike was not the first or the only demand by Aborigines for the return of their lands " but it was the first one to attract wide public support within Australia for Land Rights. These were hard years, but they held strong to their belief in their right to the land. Gurindji efforts during the strike years[edit] " Vincent , May " Vincent Lingiari ; charcoal on paper, by Frank Hardy , drawn while researching his book, The Unlucky Australians. While living at Daguragu, Gurindji drew up maps showing areas they wanted excised from pastoralist land and returned to them. Their claim was rejected. While Daguragu would eventually become the first cattle station to be owned and managed by an Aboriginal community, today known as the Murrumulla Gurindji Company, it would be many years before the Gurindji achieved this. The donor " who said he had never before met an Aboriginal person " was a young Dr Fred Hollows , the eye surgeon and Communist activist. Attempts to entice and stymie Gurindji[edit] Billy Bunter Jampijinpa was 16 at the time of the walk-off: The Vestey's mob came and said they would get two killers slaughtered beasts and raise our wages if we came back. Then in early we walked to our new promised land, we call it Daguragu Wattie Creek , back to our sacred places and our

country, our new homeland. In late the Northern Territory government offered a compromise pay rise of per cent, but the strikers still demanded wages equal to those of white stockmen and return of their land. The Government also made moves to cut off means of Gurindji obtaining food supplies and threatened evictions. Offers of houses, which the Government had built for them at Wave Hill Welfare settlement, were resisted. The Gurindji persisted with their protest and stayed at Daguragu. In the Liberal - National Country Coalition government was given a proposal to give eight square kilometres back to the Gurindji. Cabinet refused even to discuss the issue. Support for the Gurindji grows[edit] However, the tide of public opinion was beginning to turn in Australia. There were demonstrations and arrests in southern Australia in support of the walk-off, and many church , student and trade union groups gave practical and fundraising support to the Gurindji struggle. Several significant events marked the change in opinion in Australia.

Use search terms such as 'wattie creek', 'wave hill', 'gurindji', and 'lingiari'. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that records in the National Archives collection may include the names and images of Indigenous Australians, some of whom are now deceased.

Wishing you knew more about Aboriginal culture? Get key foundational knowledge about Aboriginal culture in a fun and engaging way. This is no ordinary resource: It includes a fictional story, quizzes, crosswords and even a treasure hunt. Stop feeling bad about not knowing. Make it fun to know better. Show me how No, thank you Background of the walk-off The Wave Hill Walk-off followed more than 80 years of massacres and killings, stolen children and other abuses by early colonists. Pastoralists who were moving into Gurindji homelands considered the blacksoil plains of the Victoria River District to be prime grazing land. In fact, it was illegal up until to pay Aboriginal workers more than a specified amount in goods and money. An attempt to introduce equal wages in failed because pastoralists argued that equal wages would ruin the industry if paid immediately. It was decided to defer a decision for three years. The strike focused national attention on the entitlements of workers on pastoral properties across the NT. Although they lost the strike, they started a groundswell of resistance to the appalling working standards imposed on Aboriginal people. It was a catalyst for the Wave Hill walk-off. In January Union Camp was recognised as a site of historical significance [3]. On 23 August , Aboriginal stockmen of the Gurindji people and their families walked off Wave Hill pastoral station, kms south of Darwin in the Northern Territory, owned by a British aristocrat Lord Vestey. Led by Vincent Lingiari, a community elder and head stockman at the station, they set up camp in the bed of Victoria River. The camp moved before the wet season of that year and in the Gurindji Aboriginal people settled some 30 kilometres from Wave Hill Station at Wattie Creek Daguragu , in the heart of their traditional land, near a site of cultural significance. One of the first things the Gurindji did after the walk-off was to take the bones of those massacred at Blackfellows Knob around and accord them with the respect of a traditional burial, by interring them in the caves of the Seale Gorge Warluck. Unionists Brian Manning, a Darwin waterfront worker and fervent unionist, organised a strike fund with fellow unionists and Aboriginal actor Robert Tudawali and Roper River man and Union organiser Dexter Daniels. Manning loaded his truck with supplies and made the first of up to fifteen 1, kilometre round-trips from Darwin to Wave Hill. The strike made headlines all over Australia. While the initial strike was about wages and living conditions it soon spread to include the more fundamental issue about their traditional lands. The Wave Hill walk-off had morphed into a land claim. Aboriginal leaders petitioned the Governor-General in , requesting a lease of square miles to be run cooperatively as a mining lease and cattle station [5], and toured Australia to raise awareness about their cause. This was the first claim for traditional Aboriginal land in Australia. The strike went on for 9 years until Prime Minister Gough Whitlam visited the site of the strike and made history with a symbolic gesture. In the NT government heritage listed the route of the walk-off [2]. A track to share the historic journey with visitors via interpretive signage and specially designed shelters was opened on 19 August , the 50th anniversary of the walk-off. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pours soil into the hand of Aboriginal elder Vincent Lingiari at the purchase ceremony of the pastoral lease. Mervyn Bishop, National Gallery of Australia. Nationally many people resisted the idea of handing back land to its traditional owners. Five years later the government had changed too , on 16 August , Prime Minister Gough Whitlam Labor handed over title to the land to the Gurindji Aboriginal people—the first act of restitution to Aboriginal people and the start of the land rights movement. In the Gurindji people bought the pastoral lease. After the NT government threatened to resume the lease, the Gurindji lodged a land rights claim. In they gained freehold title to the waterhole on Wattie Creek known as Daguragu, which is located in the Victoria River Region of the Northern Territory. Finally, to give back to you formally in Aboriginal and Australian law ownership of this land of your fathers. Vincent Lingiari, I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof, in Australian law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji people and I put into your hands this piece of the earth itself as a sign that we restore them to you and your children forever. The big question is: Was the walk-off and strike successful? Are Aboriginal workers

better off? His findings are not encouraging. But has the situation really improved? In Aboriginal people could walk-off in protest, but today their choices are more limited, there is less freedom. Back then it was the Vestey's Groups, a privately owned UK group of companies that was mistreating Aboriginal labour, today it is the Australian state. The celebration saw three different posters designed for the occasion. Freedom Day Festival poster The circular inset replicates the famous photo above. Main images in poster from Mumkurla-nginyi-ma Parrngalinyparla "Out of the Darkness into the light, a collection of banners and accompanying catalogue celebrating the Wave Hill Walk Off May-Aug Birth of Aboriginal land rights, retrieved 9 November Join more than 11, Smart Owls who know more! Did you enjoy this content? Join a new generation of Australians! Now check your email to confirm your subscription. There was an error submitting your subscription.

Chapter 8 : Walk-off at Wave Hill: Birth of Aboriginal land rights - Creative Spirits

Wattie Creek entered Australian folklore as the birthplace of the Aboriginal land-rights movement when Prime Minister Gough Whitlam visited the Gurindji people to grant them deeds to their land.

On 22 August Vincent Lingiari, a Gurindji spokesman, led a walkout of Aboriginal stockmen, house servants, and their families from Wave Hill cattle station as a protest against the atrocious work and pay conditions they had endured for years. The Gurindji people had lived on their homelands in the Victoria River area of the Northern Territory for tens of thousands of years. By the late s, however, white settlers had introduced thousands of head of cattle into the area, putting pressure on the environment and threatening Gurindji land management systems established over thousands of years. In the international meat-packing company, Vestey Brothers, purchased Wave Hill station and employed local Aboriginal people to work on the property. In former Wave Hill stockman Mr Jampijinpa recalled: The Wave Hill walk off was the culmination of years of simmering tension. Throughout the rest of the striking workers held consultations; with other Gurindji members, with members of the North Australian Workers Union, and with the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal rights. No agreement was reached and the workers did not return to Wave Hill. Move to Daguragu In April the group moved their camp 20 kilometres away to Wattie Creek, which they called Daguragu, a significant place for the Gurindji people. They enlisted the help of author Frank Hardy, a major supporter of their cause. Unions played an increasingly important role in supporting the strikers – ensuring they had a food supply and use of a vehicle. The camp became a settlement, with structures and fences erected. Vincent Lingiari at his home at Wattie Creek. They requested a lease of square miles, to be run cooperatively as a mining lease and cattle station. Federal Cabinet rejected the interpretation of land rights contained in the petition, and Governor-General refused the request for the lease of land. The Gurindji remained at Daguragu for the next eight years, although under Australian law they were illegally occupying a portion of the land leased to Vestey Brothers. They circulated petitions and requests between the Northern Territory Administration and the federal government, with no resolution of their claims. Unions, the Communist Party and many others continued to support the Gurindji during this long period. The handback The election of the Whitlam government in brought new hope to the Gurindji. In the original Wave Hill lease was surrendered and two new leases were issued: MoAD collection and Mervyn Bishop. Today, approximately Gurindji live in the communities of Daguragu, on the banks of Wattie Creek, and Kalkarinji, formerly known as Wave Hill. Gather round people let me tell you a story An eight year-long story of power and pride British Lord Vestey and Vincent Lingiari Were opposite men on opposite sides.

Chapter 9 : Wave Hill Walk-Off | National Museum of Australia

The next year the group moved to Wattie Creek, a place of significance to the Gurindji people. They asked Frank Hardy to 'make a sign' which included the word 'Gurindji', their own name for themselves.

The day Prime Minister Gough Whitlam poured a handful of sand into the palm of Aboriginal land rights leader Vincent Lingiari was the culmination of decades of events. Look back at the key moments before and after that historic day. Gurindji land is ceded The Gurindji people had lived on their homelands in what is now the Victoria River area of the Northern Territory for tens of thousands of years. The colonial government grants almost 3, square kilometres of Gurindji country to explorer and pastoralist Nathaniel Buchanan. Cattle figures rapidly multiply The 15, cattle and 8, bullocks roaming Gurindji land puts pressure on the environment, and the system of traditional land management the Gurindji people had developed over many millennia. Aboriginal people want to stay on their land, and became an intrinsic part of the cattle industry across Northern Australia for the next 70 years. Pastoralists exploit their labour to maintain their cattle and sheep stations. Rations enter into law Legislation requires that in return for their work, Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory should receive food, clothes, tea and tobacco. Report exposes worker conditions A report by anthropologists who lived and worked with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory exposes the conditions faced by Aboriginal workers. Despite legislation, Aboriginal children under 12 are working illegally, accommodation and rations are inadequate, there is sexual abuse of Aboriginal women, and prostitution for rations and clothing takes place. No sanitation or rubbish removal facilities are provided, nor is there safe drinking water. Wards of the state Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are made wards of the state. The Wards Employment Regulations Photo: Lord Vestey sits for an interview with the ABC in ABC The Wards Employment Regulations set out a scale of wages, rations and conditions applicable to wards employed in various industries. The ward rates are up to 50 per cent lower than those of non-Aboriginal people employed in similar occupations and some companies even refuse to pay their Aboriginal labourers anything. Workers walk off Wave Hill station August 23, Photo: Wave Hill and Hooker Creek stockman, Supplied Around Gurindji stockmen, house servants and their families initiate strike action at Wave Hill station. The Gurindji community, led by Vincent Lingiari, walk off the station as a protest against the work and pay conditions, and land rights. The strike is supported by several non-Indigenous people, including unionists. The Aboriginal workers do not return to work on Wave Hill station for the rest of the year, while negotiations continue. No agreement is reached. The change demonstrates a fundamental difference between the view of the Gurindji and that of their white supporters on the purpose of the strike. The Gurindji are focused on reclaiming their land while the unionists believe the dispute was solely about wages and work conditions. The community seeks the return of some of their traditional lands to develop a cattle station. The Gurindji draft a petition to governor-general Lord Casey asking him to grant a lease of 1, square kilometres around Daguragu to be run cooperatively by them as a mining and cattle lease. Governor-General says no to lease June, The governor-general replies that he is unwilling to grant the lease. Gurindji illegally occupy Daguragu The Gurindji stay on at Daguragu from until even though under Australian law they are illegally occupying a portion of the 15, square kilometres leased to Vestey Brothers. From petitions and requests move back and forth between the Gurindji, the Northern Territory Administration and the Australian Government in Canberra but nothing is resolved. Labor vows to resolve land rights December 2, The Labor Party comes to power. This changes the political landscape. Original lease overturned March, The original Wave Hill lease is surrendered and two new leases are issued: Whitlam meets with Vincent Lingiari 16 August, Photo: Vincent Lingiari addresses the media, August Land rights enter law The Aboriginal Land Rights Northern Territory Act is passed, the first legislation allowing for a claim of land title if the Indigenous claimants can provide evidence of their traditional relationship to the land. The Gurindji strike is instrumental in heightening the understanding of Indigenous land ownership in Australia, and is a catalyst for the passing of the Land Rights Act. Recommendation to add land The Aboriginal Land Commissioner recommends that an application by the Central Land Council on behalf of the Gurindji for traditional land comprising the Daguragu pastoral lease and

some adjacent un-alienated crown land should be granted. Adjacent land is granted.