

Kimberley Girl

By Dr Anne Poelina

Anne's journey from a child, hunting and fishing in the Broome mangroves, to completing her PhD has taught her many things about being a resilient black woman in contemporary Australia. As a self-described actionist, she is working to develop a process for genuine dialogue and action between all people in the Kimberley including governments, agriculturalists, pastoralists and traditional owners for effective, responsible and sustainable livelihood strategies. In particular she recognises the need for women's voices to be a part of that process.

I was born in Broome in 1957; my father was a 'hard hat' pearl diver from Timor and my mother a Nyikina woman from the Fitzroy River. I had eight brothers, three sisters and heaps of family and friends who filled our house and our lives near the beach in China Town.

After spending a year on the streets in Perth when I was 13, I moved into a boarding hostel and attended Applecross Senior High School, then a TAFE pre-nursing program when I was 16. I've had several careers from being a remote area nurse, Sister in Charge of a surgical ward, Aboriginal Healthworker educator, Senior Academic and now Managing Director of Madjulla Inc, an Indigenous not-for-profit non-government community development organisation I established in 2002.



Anne Poelina
RIRDC Rural Women's Award 2010
WA finalist

My partner, Ian Perdrisat, has provided love and support in our professional and family lives throughout the past 20 years. My son Mark is studying a master's degree in traditional knowledge and is a performing artist. He is in a recent TV series and a feature film soon to be released. My daughter Marlikka is studying a commerce degree and is a photographic model.



Anne after receiving her PhD

I strongly believe in the power of education and have continued to study throughout my career. My Doctor of Philosophy thesis describes my family's experience of colonisation in the pastoral industry and the strategies I am implementing to build the social, cultural and economic sustainability of Indigenous and other Australians in remote northern communities.

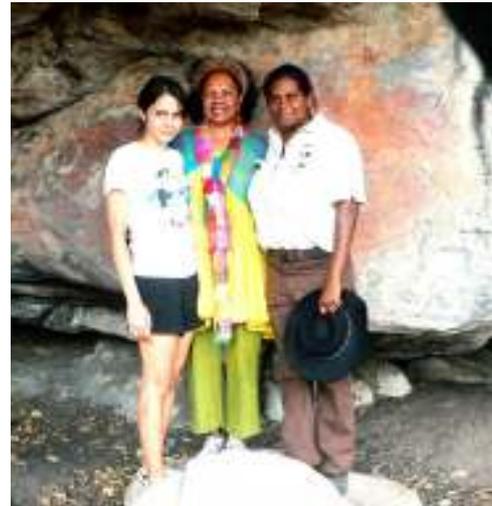
As a social entrepreneur I have taken an active leadership role to create genuine practical solutions to improve the quality and continuity of life and a prosperous shared future for all citizens in northern Australia. My work with Madjulla has involved community development projects in employment and training, governance and leadership, Nyikina language and culture, family and community violence, and justice and youth.

I broker community action and participation programs for government, philanthropic and Indigenous communities in an effort to promote a prosperous shared future for northern residents and reducing the impact of Indigenous disadvantage, violence and injustice.

Most recently, my committee work has been facilitating dialogue between pastoralists, irrigators, government, research and education institutions and traditional owners to generate constructive dialogue about appropriate development in Northern Australia.

Northern Australia needs the voices of women to promote developments that build family and community resilience and wellbeing for living and working in isolated regions.

I appreciate the opportunities that have come my way and shaped my journey from a child, playing and fishing in the Broome mangroves, to completing my PhD. I have learnt many things about being a resilient black woman in contemporary Australia. My message is one of hope, of reconciliation, and how families and communities need to work together.



Anne visiting Kakadu

There are many levels of the empowerment of women in the bush and pathways to overcoming disadvantage. I support and encourage other women, particularly young Indigenous women, to embrace life with a passion, to negotiate their way around barriers and pursue their dreams.

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