

## ***June Walkutjukurr Richards***

**Language: Ngaanyatjarra**

June Walkutjukurr Richards was born in Mirlirtjarra (Warburton Ranges) in 1951. She lives and works in Warburton, Western Australia.

“I was born in the bush at the Kaltjiti, the claypan on the other side where the powerhouse is now in the community. I remember always when I’m walking around in the bush with blue flowers, purples flowers and I feel good, when it was like that in the mission time. How we had all the flowers everywhere.

Every time when it was raining, where there’s no prickles, we had flowers everywhere. We pick all the flowers together and bring them home and give it to the missionary lady so they can put it in a vase. Everything was pretty, really pretty. The missionary lady told me so.

My parents put me in the Home. It was good there but it was locked. There was a big yard right around. I went to school in Warburton and grew up speaking Ngaanyatjarra and English. They must have thought we stopped using our language but we always speak it and in English when we need to.”

Richards has been an active participant in the Warburton Arts Project since its inception in 1990. The focus of this broad-based community project is the maintenance and strengthening of the cultural life of the Warburton community and the Ngaanyatjarra people.

Richards has been a major contributor to the Ngaanyatjarra Dictionary Project, and her strong interest in communication, language, its meaning and the written word features in her visual art. Her paintings often combine images and text to tell the stories of visitors to the Ngaanyatjarra lands – explorers, government people, tourists, art dealers and strangers. Her most recent works feature single words or short phrases, revealing one of the first Indigenous voices working outside urban Australia to bring a critical perspective to the making and marketing of Indigenous art. Her works address potent subjects and confront the sensitive issues that arise in Indigenous communities surrounding the production and sale of art. She has described the ideas behind her work as being “for people to think about why we are painting. We put new ideas so they can see how words like Carpetbagger and Mirrka price and Gimme, make you think about our work.”

Richards has shown paintings in group exhibitions at Tjulyuru Regional Arts Gallery, Warburton (2006) and at Mori Gallery, Sydney (2008). Her work is represented in the Warburton Collection and the Cruthers Collection, Perth.

(Author: Gary Dufour)