

First Nations people are advised that this resource and external links may contain images, voices and names of people who have died.

**Janice's
Story**
Australia

**Primary (3-6)
Case Study and
Activities**



JANICE'S STORY

AUSTRALIA



Janice is a traditional dancer who tells her family's stories through movements which have been handed down over generations. She is 44 years old and a proud Wagilak woman. She moved to a remote community in the Northern Territory of Australia when she was a young girl.

When she was 5, Janice began to learn how to dance her father's culture and her mother's culture. When Janice dances, she feels strong and connected to her parents and grandparents before her.

"When I dance, I feel strong in my heart. It's like my grandfather and my grandmother are here with me," Janice says.

Janice knows that, as elders in her community grow older and pass away, she must share her knowledge with the younger generation. She and her family must help keep their culture strong.

But like many remote communities, Janice's faces a range of challenges. There aren't many jobs, opportunities for education are limited and First Nations people have lower life expectancy and poorer health than others in Australia.¹ Loss of land, language and culture and the ongoing effects of colonisation also add to the problems for young people living in remote communities. Many leave their homes in search of work, moving to towns and cities where they may be more vulnerable.

Djilpin Arts Aboriginal Corporation is playing a big part in helping keep Janice's community and culture strong.

Janice poses for a photograph near Djilpin Arts in Northern Territory, Australia.

Photo: Richard Wainwright

JANICE'S STORY

AUSTRALIA



It established a contemporary arts and culture centre in 2002. With the support of Caritas Australia, Djilpin Arts provides training and employment for young people who work in the art museum and shop. The museum features a permanent showcase of culturally significant West Arnhem Land artworks, while the shop sells traditional wood carvings, fibre art, prints and jewellery.

Elders run pandanus weaving and printmaking workshops, inspired by the colours of the environment, with designs featuring water lilies, turtles and fish. They share their knowledge with younger generations and visitors to the centre. Local guides run bush cultural tours and architect-designed tourist accommodation is available for visitors.

Djilpin Arts now also has a shed! It is in the main town of Katherine and opened in 2021, with help from Caritas Australia. The shed is used to display and store artworks for shipping to online customers. During COVID times, this has helped the Djilpin Arts community continue to make an income, even when there were few visitors.

Janice loves Djilpin Arts.

“This is a safe place, a place we come with family and get away from problems. We, here in the art centre, work as a family,” Janice says. “It’s important to me because me and my brother, we got knowledge from our great grandfather, he told us to take care of your culture. It’s even more important for us to work here because we hold our culture here and we love this place.”

Janice has been a Djilpin Artsworker since 2015, performing traditional dances and working as a host for performances and tour guide in the art museum. It is a special place for her whole family. Not only is her grandfather’s painting on display, but her brother runs cultural tours, her son plays the didgeridoo for cultural performances and her two daughters work in the shop too!

Together with her community, Janice is taking care of her culture, for all future generations.



1 [Australian Government, 'Closing the Gap Report 2020'](#)

JANICE'S STORY

LEARNING TASKS



Read or watch [Janice's Story](#) and '[A Day in the Life](#)' film

TASK 1: Discussion

- Why is dance so important to Janice?
- What are some of the challenges Janice faces?
- What kinds of activities happen at the Djilpin Arts centre?
- Why is it important to the local community?
- Why does Janice love Djilpin Arts so much?
- How did Caritas Australia help?
- How do stories help keep cultures alive?
- How will you share Janice's story with others?

Curriculum links: English, HASS, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

TASK 2: Listen Up!

Listening is an important part of how we learn and share meaning, understanding and wisdom. In Australia, listening to Janice and other First Nations peoples' voices and stories is especially important.

a. Listening Meditation

Sit comfortably. Gently close your eyes. Notice your breath. Listen to the air flow in and out. Listen. Can you hear the breath of others in the room? Notice what else you can hear. Take a deep breath in. And out. After a minute or two, finish with another deep breath in and out, then gently open your eyes.

For more on deep listening, see Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann's '[dadirri](#)' reflection on the [Miriam Rose Foundation website](#).

b. Now, Hear This!

Choose a song by or featuring a First Nations artist/s. (**Find a list of suggestions attached**). Listen to the song. When the song is finished, allow a minute of quiet. Then have students write down any words that describe how this song makes them feel, and any questions they have for the singer/songwriter.

Curriculum link: Music, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

TASK 3: Story Keepers

First Nations perspectives are fundamental to learning more about caring for each other and our common home. Story Sharing is one important part of this, along with others outlined in the pedagogical approach called [Eight Aboriginal Ways of Learning](#). This approach is about "relational responsiveness, a protocol of attending to relational obligations in the field you're working in, relating and responding holistically to people, land, culture, language, spirit and the relationships between these with integrity and intellectual rigour." [Source](#)

a. Brainstorm

Name all the different ways you can communicate a story. Write them on the board. (Prompts might include ways to communicate stories using **words, images, gestures** and **sounds**.) Can you think of any other storytelling traditions in countries and cultures around the world?

JANICE'S STORY

LEARNING TASKS



b. Class Yarn

Go back to Janice's Story. Remember how "Janice is a traditional dancer who tells her family's stories through movements which have been handed down over generations"? Stories are important. Why? And, how do stories help keep cultures alive? Are there any special or important stories that are loved and told (or sung or danced or performed) again and again by: you, your family, your church, school or other local community group?

Curriculum links: English, HASS, The Arts, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

TASK 4: Dance Story

Watch this [Bangarra Dance Company](#) performance of [Brolga \(2001\)](#). Ask students:

- What does this dance tell us about the Brolga?
- What other ideas or feelings are being expressed?
- What is your opinion of the work?

Curriculum links: English, HASS, The Arts, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

TASK 5: CST Link

The CST principle of Subsidiarity and Participation reminds us that all people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Refer to the [CST Toolkit](#) for further activities. Ask students:

- How is the principle of Subsidiarity and Participation at work in Janice's story?
- Who should be involved in decision-making in the Djilpin Arts community? Why?

TASK 6: RE Link

Consider doing this task outside. You might even invite students to remove their shoes to better feel the connection to the earth.

In the Bible, when Moses was in the wilderness looking after his flock and he came across a burning bush, God spoke to him and said: "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5) Janice and her community at Djilpin Arts make art that celebrates and shows respect for Country. They know how important it is to culture and to human survival and wellbeing. Spend a moment of quiet thinking about what you love or value about the place where you live. Finish with this prayer:

Holy God,
you meet us in quiet gardens and wild places,
in busy streets and wide-open spaces;
all creation hums with life.
May Janice and Djilpin Arts continue to thrive,
and – having remembered the sacred earth again –
may we too grow in love and harmony
with the people and places we call home,
for the sake of all future generations,
Amen.

NOW HEAR THIS!

Song Suggestions



Balang T. E. Lewis [‘Café del Wulgular’](#), *Sunshine After Rain* (2005)

Luke Stevens [Digeridoo Music](#) (multiple tracks)

Shellie Morris and the Borroloola Songwomen [‘Waliwaliyangu Li-Anthawirriyarra A-Kurija’](#) (Saltwater People Song), *Together We Are Strong* (2013)

www.shelliemorris.net

Gurrumul [‘Jesu’](#), *The Gospel Album* (2015)

www.gurrumul.com

Jessica Mauboy [‘My Island Home’](#) for Indigenous Literacy Foundation (2020)

www.jessicamauboy.com.au

Baker Boy [‘Somewhere Deep’](#) (featuring Yirmal) or [‘Meditjin’](#) (featuring Jess B.), *Gela* (2021) www.bakerboyofficial.com

Emily Wurramara [‘Black Smoke’](#), *Milyakburra* (2018)

www.emilywurramara.com.au

THANK YOU

PHOTO CREDITS

Janice's Story (Australia) – Richard Wainwright

PRIMARY STUDENTS

Learning about people not having what they need to live a healthy and safe life can be hard. If you are feeling worried or upset about anything you have learnt about through this resource, make sure you talk to your teacher or a trusted adult. They can share your concerns via our [website](#).

Do you have an idea for how Caritas Australia can improve our school resources? We would love to hear it! Please email education@caritas.org.au

TEACHERS

For more school resources, please visit: caritas.org.au/resources/school-resources/

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