



# The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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**RED OCHRE AWARD HONOURS ABORIGINAL DESERT  
PAINTER MICK NAMARARI TJAPALTJARRI**

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One of the founding members of the famous Papunya desert artists, Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, was announced the winner of the prestigious Red Ochre Award at the presentation ceremony of Australia's major arts awards at Parliament House, Canberra on the 17th of October 1994.

The award pays tribute to Mick Tjapaltjarri's contribution to the recognition of Aboriginal art in the wider community at both national and international level.

Born around 1926 in the Northern Territory, Tjapaltjarri spent his young life at Hermannsburg Mission, Mt Liebig and Haasts Bluff, where he was initiated. He moved to Papunya in 1960 where he later became one of the founding artists of the now famous Papunya Tula art movement in the western desert.

Tjapaltjarri is one of the surviving artists from the group who in 1971 began to transfer traditional ground and body painting designs into acrylic paint on board and eventually onto canvas.

He stayed at Papunya until the mid 1980's when he moved to the Pintupi community of Kintore where he established an outstation. However, Tjapaltjarri has continued to support the Papunya Tula artists by nurturing the careers of many other artists.

His work is a leading example of the contemporary nature of Aboriginal art, illustrating how artists work within age-old artistic traditions while at the same time reflecting and responding to the modern world in which they live. His paintings have been exhibited in major galleries in Australia and around the world, are held in many major collections and reproduced in several leading publications on the art of Aboriginal Australia and desert art. In 1991 Tjapaltjarri won the National Aboriginal Art Award.

The Red Ochre Award was presented by the Minister for Communications and the Arts, the Hon. Michael Lee, at the ceremony in the Great hall of Parliament House along with the Australia Council's other major awards. The Prime Minister, the Hon Paul Keating, presented the Australian Artists Creative Fellowships at the same ceremony.

The award was established last year during the International Year for the World's Indigenous People to pay tribute to artists who have made outstanding contributions to the recognition of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander arts and culture in the wider community at both national and international level.

The Red Ochre Award is presented to individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists whose contribution to their respective art form deserves public recognition and who has inspired other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. It is also intended to help them achieve the highest

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potential in their particular artform. The award means Tjapaltjarri will be able to devote much more time to his work without the hindrance of economic disadvantage.

Established by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, this award is valued at \$50,000. The winner also receives a brass plaque designed by Melbourne Aboriginal graphic artist and designer Clive Atkinson.

