

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1181

Oldfield, Alice Warrika

(1885 - 1978)

Nationality Australian

Born 1 January, 1885, Callanna Station South Australia

Died 31 December, 1978, Australia

Occupation Aboriginal traditional dancer, Linguist, Traditional Aboriginal custodian

Summary

Alice Warrika Oldfield, of Kuyani descent, was born on Callanna station in South Australia. She grew up on Millers Creek station where her parents worked. As a very small child, she was attacked and nearly killed there by the station geese. Though she was badly injured, it was the geese who were all mysteriously found dead the next morning.

Alice married Sandy Dinta Oldfield, the famous last Ngamini rainmaker. They lived and worked on stations on the Strzelecki and the Birdsville Track, mainly Etadunna. In the 1950s they retired to Marree, where Sandy died in 1964.

Alice was devoted to traditions and was a rainmaker in her own right, though this was ignored by people who came to visit Sandy. She kept traditions alive by organising the Wandji-Wandji corroboree at Stuart Creek in the early 1930s; she knew the karlapa, the Arabana women's dance; and she made rain at a ceremony she organised in 1969, when she was almost totally blind. She was a speaker of Arabana, and most of what has been preserved of the Kuyani language is due to her.

Published resources

Edited Book

The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Horton, David, 1994

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

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