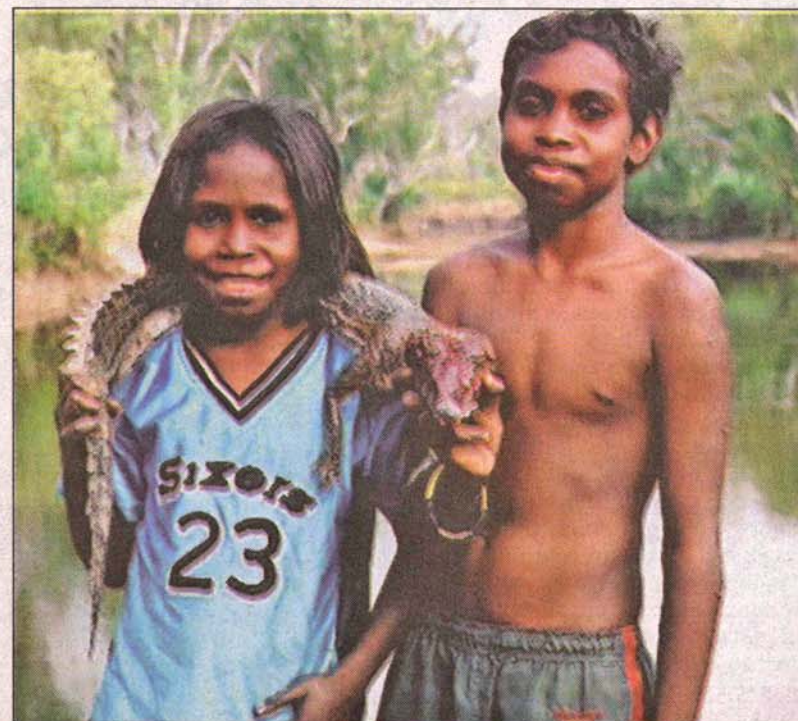
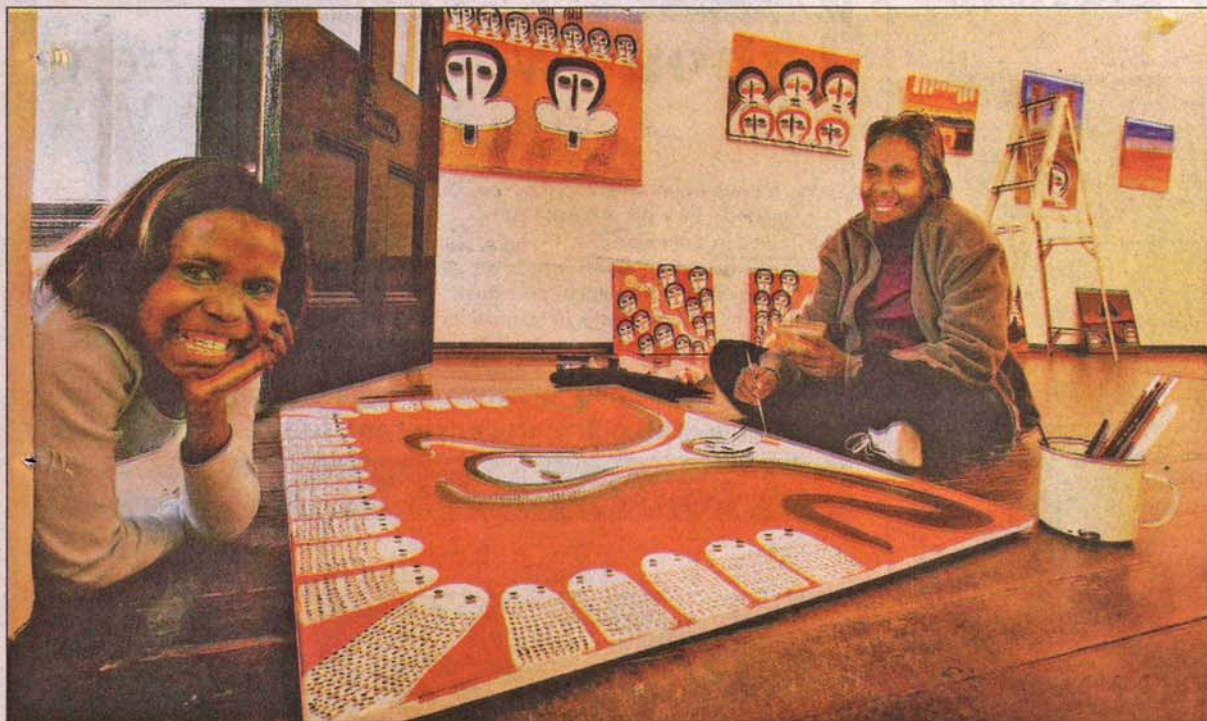


It's a race against time for paintings to raise enough money to buy a vehicle for a remote station community

Artist at work for the big wet



Community link: Rebecca Wunggundun, 9, with her grandmother Yvonne Burgu in Perth, left, and at Gibb River Station with her cousin Reggie Tataya Jr. Pictures: Nic Ellis and Kathy Charlesworth

ELOISE DORTCH

It is raining every afternoon now at Gibb River Station, north of Derby, and soon the real wet will begin, cutting off the community.

For its 70 members to survive until February, when the water recedes and roads reopen allowing access to the nearest store two hours away, they will need to eat crocodiles, turtles, goannas and fish.

It is all delicious food, says Gibb

local Yvonne Burgu. But to get to the hunting grounds, they will need a four-wheel-drive. The two vehicles they have now — one with engine problems and other two-wheel-drive — are useless in the conditions.

Burgu is an artist whose work, featuring bold images of the Wandjina spirits of the Ngarinyin people, is internationally recognised. One of her pictures hangs in the Australian Embassy in Paris.

For the past month, she has been

in Perth, painting 13 pictures from which she hopes to raise enough money to buy a second-hand four-wheel-drive vehicle for the community, which she will then drive back to Gibb River Station.

Friend Kathy Charlesworth said Burgu last year performed a clapstick ceremony at the closing ceremony of the United Nation's Decade of World Indigenous Cultures in Geneva. Some of Burgu's work was also hung in the UN.

She said Burgu, who had bought high-quality Belgian canvas and acrylics out of her own pocket for the latest exhibition, was a true community leader.

"Yvonne's prime concern is the welfare of her community and handing down law and culture — particularly the young women, showing them how to get their economic independence through doing their art," Ms Charlesworth said.

Members of the women's organi-

sation Zonta Perth, who formed a relationship with the Ngarinyin women after a visit to Gibb last year, helped organise the exhibition.

The works will be on show at The Gallery, 18 Princess Road, Claremont, from 5pm today. They will be on view all weekend and by appointment on weekdays until November 4.

Ms Burgu can be contacted on 0417 904 310.