

Papunya Native Settlement

1958 – 1978

Details

Papunya Native Settlement was officially opened by the government in 1959. It was established to accommodate Aboriginal people moved away from the Haasts Bluff Native Settlement and others brought in by the government from desert areas. A school was built but no dormitories were established. A Lutheran missionary sent out from the Hermannsburg Mission was resident at the Settlement. In 1978 the Papunya Council was formed and Aboriginal people took control of the community.

Papunya Native Settlement was officially opened by the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration in March 1959. The site for the settlement was chosen by the government as a solution to overcrowding and the lack of water at the Haast's Bluff Native Settlement, 40 kilometres away. Building began in 1956 with Aboriginal people contributing a large part of the labour force. By 1959, more than 700 people, many of whom had been living at Haast's Bluff, were living at Papunya. The government also worked at bringing Pintupi people into the settlement from the surrounding desert areas.

A government school was opened in 1960 and approximately 112 children attended. The school was described as follows in an award winning history book for children, The Papunya School Book of Country and History:

In those days children had to have a shower and change into school uniforms when they came to school. They lined up and went into their classrooms. At the end of the day, children put their camp clothes on again. At this time children were not allowed to speak their own language at school. They were meant to learn only the whitefella way of doing things. Teachers were very strict.

No dormitories were built and children continued to live in family groups. The Lutheran Hermannsburg Mission sent a resident missionary to the Papunya Settlement to provide church services and some welfare services. As an outpost of the Hermannsburg Mission, Papunya was often referred to as the Finke River Mission.

During the 1960s and 1970s many people moved away from Papunya to outstations.

The Papunya Art movement began in 1972 and Papunya continues to be world renowned for its Aboriginal art.

In 1978 the Papunya Council was formed and Aboriginal people gradually took control of their own community. In 1999 the land was handed back to its traditional owners after a successful land claim.

Gallery



Papunya Aboriginal reserve, NT

Description: This image shows a building at Papunya Aboriginal reserve. The purpose of this building and whether or not it would have housed children in care at the Reserve is not known.

More info

Related Entries

Run by

- [Welfare Branch, Northern Territory Administration, Australian Government \(1955 - 1970\)](#)
- [Welfare Division, Northern Territory Administration, Australian Government \(1970 - 1972\)](#)
- [Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Territory Division, Australian Government \(1972 - 1990\)](#)

Related Organisations

- [Hermannsburg Mission \(1877 - 1982\)](#)
Missionaries from the Hermannsburg Mission provided church and welfare services at Papunya Native Settlement. Hermannsburg Mission and its outposts at Haast's Bluff, Areyonga and Papunya Native Settlements were often referred to as the Finke River Mission.
- [Haasts Bluff Native Settlement \(1940s - 1959\)](#)
Many Aboriginal people from Haast's Bluff Native Settlement were moved to the new Papunya Native Settlement in the late 1950s
- [The Lutheran Church of Australia \(1838 - current\)](#)
The Lutheran Church of Australia sent resident missionaries to Papunya Native Settlement

Records

Records

- [Records held by the Lutheran Archives \(1838 - current\)](#)
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