



# Short St. Gallery



## Isa Yubuyu McDinny

Born 1952  
Language  
Region Manangoora, NT

Isa is the eldest daughter of Dinny McDinny. Born in 1952 at Manangoora, across the river from the station, Isa grew up enjoying the bush life, hunting, dancing, and singing with the old people. Isa recalls vivid memories from the old days, travelling through the bush and likes to capture these in her art. Isa's paintings come to her in her dreams, specific colours and evocative images, a powerful expression of her father's voice.

"I didn't have any school, I was taught by my grandmother and grandfather, learning the names of the country and plants. My father's mother was Marburamunya... My family and I, we all lived off the land eating bush foods."

In 1963 when Isa was still just a child, the welfare came to pick her and her siblings up from Manangoora and took them to Borroloola to attend school. Isa however preferred the traditional life her parents and grandparents had lived and taught her when she was young.

"Welfare came to Manangoora and asked me, 'are you coming down to Borroloola for school?'...I said, 'no I'm not going, I'm staying here with my great grandmother.' Mum and Dad told me Nanna passed away, but I still wanted to stay. I was crying and crying for her. Dad said, 'you kiss Nanna now (his mum, Molly), goodbye and you won't see her anymore.' They grabbed me and held me...take me away from Nanna to the car...big truck...and then I went with them to Borroloola and mum sneaked away from Borroloola to Robinson Crossing with all the kids... I used to run away from school because I wasn't happy with the school. Instead, I used to go hunting with mum and dad around Borroloola and down the river to do fishing as well. I love the river to do fishing as well... I used to go with my uncle Isaac and Annie Karakin to the Seven Emu Crossing at Robinson River called Dungana... I used to go with them in the canoe. He was sick that old fella, paddling the canoe and he saw barramundi beside the bank. He got the spear and speared right through. He was sick old fella and he lift him up the side... anyway, we went to have lunch at Crab Hole (edge of Robinson River). With that barramundi...oooh lovely. We were hungry too! He taught me how to fish - they always call me the Black Pelican... I love the bush life because it reminds me of when I used to live in Manangoora. That was a good life then." Isa later went back to Mardarini where she stayed until 1972. "Bark humpy house... it's all gone now. We would go on a special trip around Christmas time.

Sometimes to Seven Emu. One time we went to Vanderlin Island with the canoe from Robinson River...with the old man to get good bush medicine. The canoe had sails and went



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fast. Went there with my sister Irene Isaac Gunjuyu... We grew up everywhere in this country... We stayed there for one month and welfare came back... 'come on Eileen McDinny with all your children, go to school at Borrooloola'. We all went back to Borrooloola. My Dad was at Seven Emu Station. We lived at Old Malamdirri Camp...used to be a mission and we used to have a good time - fun with all different tribes...all mixed up right there in Malamdirri camp. Garwa, GudANJI, Yanyuwa and Marra... Four Clans."

When Isa grew older in Borrooloola, she got picked up and taken to live in Darwin. While in Darwin, Isa worked for a community, helping with housing. She then went on to work in a kitchen making lunches for all the workers. Shortly after, Isa moved out to Wadawadala outstation with her parents, as the tribes there got their land back.

"When I finished, I went out to Wadawadala outstation with my parents cause my father finally got his land back. My mum Eileen and I used to take kids out bush hunting for bush tucker, and teach them language, and cultural dancing... For the last 33 years, I worked at Borrooloola school teaching culture, dancing, telling story and hunting. Now I'm painting for Karen Brown Fine Art Gallery."

## Statement

"My name is Isa McDinny. I was born in Manangoora on 22/04/1952. I lived with my families at Manangoora. My family and I, we all lived off the land eating bush foods... Before they moved us to Borrooloola. The welfare came to pick us up from Manangoora around 1963. They take us to Borrooloola so that we can attend school to learn education. I used to run away from school because I wasn't happy with the school. I used to go hunting with mum and dad around Borrooloola and down the river to do fishing as well. I love the river to do fishing as well. I love the bush life because it reminds me when I used to live in Manangoora. That was a good life then. Mum and dad left me in Borrooloola. They both went to the station to work. Then there were people came from Darwin to pick me up to go to Darwin to live there. When I finished working at school, I then worked for a community helping out with housing for about one year. I also worked in a kitchen making lunches for the workers and doing kitchen hand as well I worked there for about one year. When I finished, I went out to Wadawadala outstation with my parents cause my father got his land back. My mum Eileen and I used to take kids out bush hunting for bush tucker, and teach them language, cultural dancing. I went to Doomadgee and that's where I met my husband, Neil Sherrin. We both had our first daughter Fiona, Vanessa, our second daughter, we had Bryson our third son, and we had Katie our fourth child. Then Margaret Rory... she was my youngest daughter to another man his name was Steven Rory. I got involved in a film call two law it was a documentary. I then went to Sydney to edit the film, was there about two weeks. The film was made in 1979. I went to Batchelor College to do sewing course for about a year then went back home to Borrooloola. In 2017 I got involved in documentary called Journey West. I used to teach kids cultural dancing, telling story and hunting. For the last 33 years I worked at Borrooloola school teaching culture. Now I'm painting and showing at Karen Brown Fine Art Gallery."