



**Speech to United Nations
Josie Alec– Save Our Songlines**

My name is Josie Alec, and I am a Traditional Custodian of the Kuruma Marthudunera people.

I am a custodian of the Seven Sisters Dreaming story on our lands in the Pilbara, Western Australia.

My intention, today, is to bring awareness of the destruction and desecration that industry has already, and is intending to, inflict on Murujuga and the sacred rock art. I use the word "inflict" as it best describes the way I feel about the impact of industry on the area - it is an attack on our culture, the plants, animals, water and air of Ngurra (Mother Earth).

We are the custodians of the star, earth and water lore.

With this comes an obligation to protect, practice, preserve and respect its ancient history.

In my culture men and women have separate responsibilities, knowledge and cultural practices around sacred sites, to the extent men and women do not even know the details of each other's stories. Female participation in the heritage surveying and approval processes, is vital to ensure the women's cultural sites are identified and recorded prior to approvals being considered. This has not happened at Murujuga (and other sacred sites in Australia) and resulted in approvals for massive industrial projects over significant women's sacred sites.

Our stories are not being heard, our voices silenced. The process allows the government and corporations to form unhealthy relationships with individuals in Traditional Owner organisations to get the results they want. This completely invalidates the purpose of the Heritage Approvals Process in Australia.

The principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent in the UN Declaration is not being upheld - not on the Burrup and not anywhere in Western Australia. This is despite industry claiming that it is 'guided by the UN Declaration' in their own policy.

As our cultural heritage safety is a fundamental human right,

I would like to make a recommendation that the United Nations, under the Rights of *Indigenous* Peoples, hold the governments of Australia and corporations to account, and move forward on The World Heritage listing in Murujuga so we can protect this globally significant cultural site for current and future generations.