**Aboriginal Symbols/Icons**

There is no written language for Australian Aboriginal People so in order to convey their important cultural stories through the generations it is portrayed by symbols/icons through their artwork.

It is imperative to pass on information to preserve their culture.  These vary from region to region, they are generally understood and form an important part of Australian Indigenous art.

Symbols are traditionally used as an important part of contemporary Aboriginal art.

The Aboriginal people have for thousands of years used artistic designs and symbols to convey stories and messages which are incredibly important in their culture.

The iconography used when applied to any surface – body or object then covert it to having religious or time honoured meaning.

Most of the symbols used in Aboriginal iconography are relatively simple but to tell a more complex story they are used in more elaborate combinations.

In a Water Dreaming painting to give an example, a U shape symbol is used for a man but if he is sitting next to a water hole, concentric circles would be incorporated and spiral lines showing running water. The artist is telling a story that the man by the waterhole “the waterman” is summoning rain to come.

Artists today will denote the “outside” story which they prepare for their non-indigenous audience whilst the full “inside” story can be understood only to those with the appropriate level of knowledge.

Traditional aboriginal dot paintings represent a story, generally regarding hunting or food gathering and usually have traditional aboriginal symbols imbedded throughout the painting. These symbols, when explained, give a completely whole new meaning to the painting.

The paintings consist of thousands of “Dots” and executed the traditional way, takes the artist hundreds of hours of committed attentiveness just to “fill in the background.”

Western Desert art is given its unique character by the use of dots.  Dots symbolise stars, sparks, burnt ground etc. as the base of an Aboriginal painting is the organisation of the earth and the ancestral connection with it.

**Reference List**

Artlandish (2001). Symbols in Aboriginal Art. Retrieved on May 30, 2016 from <http://www.aboriginal-art-australia.com/aboriginal-art-library/symbolism-in-australian-indigenous-art/>