



NORTHERN  
LAND COUNCIL

*Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life*

# COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

*Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation  
Final Report - May 2022*

## *Research facilitation*

Nyomba Gandaru (Galiwin'ku), Emmanuel Yunupingu (Gapuwiyak) and  
Gwendoline White (Malak Malak)

## *Report compiled by*

Michaela Spencer and Michael Christie,  
Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University



NORTHERN  
INSTITUTE

People. Policy. Place.



**Copyright © 2022 Northern Land Council**

The publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

**Research facilitation:**

Nyomba Ganđanju (Galiwin'ku), Emmanuel Yunupinju (Gapuwiyak) and Gwendoline White (Malak Malak)

**Authors:**

Michaela Spencer and Michael Christie, Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University

**Acknowledgements:**

Northern Institute (NI) is a regional leader in high quality social and public policy research. NI's research aims to develop an understanding of regional development and provide robust evidence to inform policy development, facilitate capacity building and respond to the needs of governments and communities. With research teams led by internationally and nationally recognised human geographers, NI develops research in the areas of demography and growth planning, transdisciplinary methodologies and knowledge-making processes, social inclusion and community engagement, remote workforce development and pathways for training, and social sustainability across Northern, Central Australia and the nations to our north. Find out more [www.cdu.edu.au/northern-institute](http://www.cdu.edu.au/northern-institute)

**Subjects:**

Participatory monitoring  
Community based researchers

**Suggested Citation:**

Northern Land Council (2022) Community Planning and Development Program: Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation, Final Report. Report prepared by Michaela Spencer and Michael Christie, Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University, May 2022

**This publication is available for download from:**

[www.nlc.org.au](http://www.nlc.org.au)

**Photographic credits:**

Michaela Spencer, Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University

**Contact:**

Northern Land Council, Community Planning and Development Program  
Phone: 08 8920 5100  
Email: [cpd@nlc.org.au](mailto:cpd@nlc.org.au)

## Contents

Overall Project Insights .....	4
Executive Summary.....	6
Stage 3 Community Reports.....	9
Galiwin’ku Report .....	10
CP&D in Galiwin’ku.....	10
Local Researcher: Nyomba Gandarju.....	10
Nyomba’s M&E research .....	11
Yolnju M&E Concepts .....	11
Other community reports.....	14
Final reflections from Nyomba .....	16
Gapuwiyak Report.....	17
CP&D in Gapuwiyak.....	17
Local Researcher: Emmanuel Yunupinju .....	17
Emmanuel’s M&E Research.....	18
Voices of Senior Leaders.....	19
M&E Stories and Evaluative Themes.....	21
Meeting Commentary: A new research method from Emmanuel.....	25
Malak Malak Report.....	29
CP&D with Malak Malak .....	29
Local Researcher: Gwen White.....	29
Gwendoline’s M&E Research .....	30
Voices of Senior Leaders.....	31
Local review of Malak Malak CP&D projects.....	32
Ethnographic insights .....	33
Conclusion: Overall learnings and next steps.....	35

### Abbreviations:

M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation

CP&D – Community Planning and Development

NLC – Northern Land Council

# Overall Project Insights

---

- There are always practices of local Indigenous Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) that are present in the context of Community Planning and Development (CP&D) work. These practices are very different to forms of M&E arising within a Western knowledge tradition and so are often not visible to Charles Darwin University (CDU), Northern Land Council (NLC) or other external staff.
- Work with local researchers can help CP&D staff and project activities to become sensitised to local practices of M&E, and better able to align their practices with ways of generating healthy vibrant communities under elder authority.
- Research at each project site – Galiwin’ku, Gapuwiyak and on Malak Malak country – brought together quite different configurations of senior local authority, local researchers and research technologies. Ground Up M&E sees these difference as important to the local specificity and efficacy of M&E.
- While the configurations of M&E research were different in each place, there were key themes that recurred and can be seen as in common:
  - The first has to do with rethinking the notion of ‘community’. Community is conventionally understood as a given in most development work; that is as a site that can be visited and/or collective unit whose character can be improved. But under the guidance of their elders, the local researchers made clear that ‘community’ does not pre-exist the relations which constitute it. What is at issue in community development work is how community may emerge under elder authority in ways that are consistent with ancestral imperatives and right relations of people-place. It is these practices that are important to monitor and evaluate.
  - Secondly, the researchers all led the M&E practice to also rethink the notion of *development*. Conventional notions of development prioritise notions of progress, improvement and change into the future. However, the local researchers constantly reiterated that they were not looking to emerge into a bright (Balanda) future, but to recover their alignment with ancestral and elder imperatives in the context of contemporary life. And that this work is the true focus of development.
- Each of the local researchers, in collaboration with their elders, made clear that outside organisations like the NLC are able to participate in practices of care and accountability to assist in(re)producing and preserving ancestral networks of kin and place, and indeed this is how community is built.
- Working with the above understandings of ‘community’ and ‘development’ can reveal specific insights which can be actioned in project sites. For example:
  - There was an insistence in Galiwin’ku that there are clear differences between public/general services (e.g. where all children are mixed together and learn to adopt identities associated with categories like vulnerability or naughtiness), and specific activities such as *raypirri’* which require strict observance of clan leadership and land

ownership if they are to be efficacious in invigorating the lives of young people the homelands to which they are connected.

- In Gapuwiyak it became understood that attending to the visibility of the corporation wherever possible (through logos, ceremony, promotional materials, etc) is work that is considered valuable by the Traditional Owner group because it makes apparent to others the true story of Gapuwiyak.
- It is emerging in work with Malak Malak that clarity around clan membership enables this group to show generosity to others and enact good decision making.
- Ground Up M&E allows participants from outside organisations to reflect upon their practice in terms of insights gleaned and made visible by local researchers, and to subtly change their practices, and interpretations to better support the always ongoing work of elders and landowners who supervise the flourishing of new generations of strong young people and their places. Structures and processes within the institutions (including the university) can be brought into alignment with local practices of governance.
- The concepts and practices brought to the M&E work by the local researchers changed over the months. They are not to be taken so much as fundamental guides, but rather as examples of ways in which ancestral ideas can be brought to bear monitoring and evaluating a variety of projects. In each new setting or situation, it is likely that different specific concerns will become the basis of M&E work and the focal points for changed practices.
- The work of the outside researcher, and of the NLC staff is to continue to sensitise themselves to the underlying understandings of history, of place, of identity, of community and of development which inform the work of elders in various different ways in different times and places. Awareness of these differences can always be gleaned within the situation in which work is happening through a commitment to listening to elders, and being aware that the relational needs through which one group wants to assess and pursue its activities will be different to another, and by supporting senior leadership to enact and grow their rightful authority in the context of CP&D collaborations.

# Executive Summary

---

In 2019, Ground Up Researchers from Charles Darwin University (CDU) were invited by the Northern Land (NLC) Council Community Planning and Development (CP&D) Program to contribute to their 3-year Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. The work of the Ground Up team has been associated with Subproject 2 of the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy: Participatory monitoring in Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak and Daly River.

Working in each of these places, we have mobilised Ground Up research methods, taking seriously the authority and sovereignty of Aboriginal knowledge authorities and elders and their various places. Most importantly, this involved working collaboratively with local researchers appointed by the Traditional Owners to design and implement agreed processes for monitoring and evaluating service delivery.

Details of the first two stages of the Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation work are provided in the Stage 1 and Stage 2 interim reports.

- Stage 1 Community Planning and Development M&E project: Interim Report <http://groundup.cdu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NLC-report-2019-.pdf>
- Stage 2 Community Planning and Development M&E project: Interim Report [http://groundup.cdu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CDU\\_Stage-2-report\\_Feb-2021\\_FINAL.pdf](http://groundup.cdu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CDU_Stage-2-report_Feb-2021_FINAL.pdf)

This project has uniquely benefited from the conceptual input of Nyomba Gandanju a senior Yolŋu Traditional Owner and experienced researcher. Nyomba guided the work of the project by providing an initial insistence that Monitoring and Evaluation was not a practice exclusive to outside observers. Rather there are vibrant Yolŋu practices of M&E which are always already at work within CP&D projects. Senior people are checking and guiding the activities of the NLC, just as they guide young generations of children growing up, and support them to know who they are, where they are and how to act.

In Galiwin'ku, the CP&D projects nominated by Traditional Owners all tended to focus on supporting and growing up young people. Here monitoring and evaluation research pointed to the importance of finding ways for these young people to be engaged on the basis of their unique Yolŋu identities – as networks of kin and place – in supporting the emergence of healthy Yolŋu communities. In relation to the projects of law and justice education, *raypirri'* camps, youth diversion and a new school playground, this entailed quite specific commitments to resisting identification of children as 'good/bad' or 'vulnerable' as the basis of their involvement in Traditional Owner funded programs, and the involvement of non-Yolŋu organisations in ways aligned with Yolŋu kinship. As the Ground Up M&E progressed Nyomba introduced some key *gurrunŋay* (ancestral language) concepts from Yolŋu philosophy to help guide the judgements and decisions made by the NLC and outside parties. These included *gakal* and *mununukkunhamirr*.

In Gapuwiyak the project was led by the enthusiasm of a young researcher, Emmanuel Yunupiju, who developed a range of techniques to help his grandfather outline the essence of good community development, and how it could be monitored and evaluated. This work centred on retelling and making visible the creation history of the Gapuwiyak area as a protocol for M&E of local CP&D

projects. Here, the focus of Traditional Owner-led CP&D projects was on the nurturing of business, employment and industry opportunities. Here monitoring and evaluation pointed to the need for these projects to continue enacting and helping Yolŋu to remember the creation story of Gapuwiyak if they were to also assist the emergence of community in ways aligned with ancestral imperatives, and proper relations of land ownership. Over the 3 years of the project, Emmanuel generated a number of digital research methods which allowed the sharing of Elder stories and M&E insights with both CDU researchers and the NLC.

M&E research work on Malak Malak country, was led by Gwendoline White who already had a long-term interest in cultural documentation. When she came into this project working with the Ground Up team, she could see how this ongoing documentation and archiving work was contributing to ways in which older generations were able to bring younger generations into better understandings of their place and history, particularly through the efforts of Malak Malak Traditional Owners to build a culture centre. Here monitoring and evaluation research was seen as an important contributor to the work of recalling and re-making Elder authority in the work of collecting and curating Malak Malak histories in the present. The activities of doing M&E and working on the maintenance of heritage were entwined with each other in mutually reinforcing ways.

The work of these local researchers has helped demonstrate and articulate specific understandings of both Monitoring and Evaluation and Community Development. In all cases, it was revealed that for Traditional Owners 'value' was produced when program work supported and aligned with ancestral concepts and practices of authority through which Indigenous people-places may remain strong. Therefore, the purpose of M&E research has been to make evident to CDU and NLC staff the ancestral and historical imperatives through which healthy community may emerge, and vibrant Aboriginal people-places may be sustained. It is in becoming sensitive to ways of seeing these imperatives that NLC practices can change and better align with *how* collaborative work may be done under the sovereign authority of particular Traditional Owner groups in enabling valued networks of community to emerge out of development work.

Within these local configurations, what counts as good monitoring and evaluation has emerged in relation to what counts as appropriate processes of community development. Standard approaches to research tend to assume that the researcher is a judging observer, standing outside the field of action, authorised to make claims and assessments about the activity of others. However, this has not been the approach expressed by local Indigenous researchers, who instead have shown us ways to work within the fabric of their collective life, looking for ways to undo, rather than reinforce, the colonial categories of standard government and development practice.

In the context of the NLC CP&D Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy Project, this Ground Up research has sat alongside other forms of M&E practice with their own methods and outcomes. The data and insights emerging from that work have their own means for engaging with, and reporting on, CP&D projects.

The outcome of the Ground Up work has been the articulation of differing local commitments to M&E practice and the configurations within which these occur; the nurturing of iterative learning between NLC/CDU staff and local researchers; and, the identification of concepts and practices within ongoing CP&D activities that if done slightly differently would make the life of CP&D staff easier, and the practice of making CP&D more enriching for Traditional Owners. Through this work, CP&D staff have

offered excellent support to local researchers and have embedded in their practices ways of encouraging, supporting and making visible their work, and the potential for it to continue in the future.

### The purpose of this report

The main purpose of this report is to make clear to NLC CP&D staff ways in which aligning their work to the vision and practices of local elders can produce the best kinds of community planning and development.

A second purpose is to outline and explain some of the local M&E approaches which have been developed in this project in order to assist CP&D staff align their ongoing planning and development work, and their monitoring and evaluation to the vision of the elders.

Beginning with the commitment that local M&E is always at work in the context of CP&D projects, a further purpose of this report is to support local researchers in their efforts to make these practices evident to CDU, CP&D staff and other relevant parties.

In Stages 1-2 of the project, we worked with a significantly collaborative M&E research approach where the CDU research team and local researchers have worked together gathering stories and identifying 'community development outcomes' and 'CP&D program considerations' for each site.

In Stage 3, the local researchers all have established relationships with the NLC and CDU. They have been actively pursuing their own processes of working with Traditional Owners and CDU to support iterative learning within the CP&D projects in their places. In each case, their work proposes particular ways that CP&D staff may continue supporting this M&E work in locally suitable ways. This may be by continuing and affirming good practices already being enacted by CP&D staff, as well as by allowing shifts and changes to happen in the context of projects and meetings as becomes important. We provide further details for the CP&D team in the conclusion of this report.

CP&D staff may also find it beneficial to see this report as a companion piece to the Ground Up M&E Manual. Responding to request by the CP&D team for such a document, this manual provides details of ways in which continued collaborations with local researchers can be nurtured, and local practices of M&E already at work within CP&D can be valued and offered an opportunity to breathe.

## Stage 3 Community Reports

---

The purpose of Subproject 2 of the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy: Participatory Monitoring in Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak and with Malak Malak people, has been to work with Traditional Owner groups and local researchers to design and implement Ground Up monitoring and evaluation processes. This entailed articulating how work between Traditional Owners and the NLC can better support local networks of kin, country and authority as the outcome of collaborative work on community development projects. And to support the articulation of a specific CP&D M&E approach as an outcome of the broader Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy Project.

Stages 1<sup>1</sup> and 2<sup>2</sup> of the Ground Up project involved a series of site visits whereby local Aboriginal and CDU researchers worked collaboratively designing M&E techniques, listening to Elders and Traditional Owners, and generating research insights to support NLC activities.

In Stage 3 the on-ground involvement of CDU researchers has been scaled back while local researchers have continued to drive Ground Up M&E in their places, working in ways that were suitable to their particular skills and authority through methods and approaches that have arisen in their collaborations with CDU.

In the report that follows, we present portfolios of the CP&D M&E research undertaken by each of the local researchers. These showcase the quite different and locally specific work of each of these researchers, and points to how different methods can be co-constituted in particular relationships of researcher, their places and their NLC/CDU collaborators.

This includes:

- A theoretical contribution from Nyomba, adding to her previous contributions around Yolŋu understandings of monitoring and evaluation, and community development.
- Interview and video material provided by Emmanuel as he has continued checking in with members of the TO group about their feedback on CP&D projects, and his work developing a new video M&E technique
- A report and details of M&E archival activities initiated by Gwendoline White working with her family and other Malak Malak Traditional Owners.

These portfolios both present new insights around CP&D and M&E work in each site, and also serve to demonstrate a variety of approaches which have emerged as effective and important in the configurations of kin and authority in the three project sites.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Stage 1 Report <http://groundup.cdu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NLC-report-2019-.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See Stage 2 Report [http://groundup.cdu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CDU\\_Stage-2-report\\_Feb-2021\\_FINAL.pdf](http://groundup.cdu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CDU_Stage-2-report_Feb-2021_FINAL.pdf)

# Galiwin'ku Report

---

## CP&D in Galiwin'ku

In Galiwin'ku, income for community development is derived from lease agreements for the Top and Bottom takeaway shops. These leases embed community benefit clauses, which provide TOs with a funding stream to be used for community benefit purposes only.

Over the course of our work with the Galiwin'ku Community Gungayunamirr Mala Working Group, their focus has been on a set of 5 projects, four of which are ongoing, and one which is complete.

- Law and Justice Project
- Raypirri Camps – Galiwin'ku
- Raypirri Camps – Murrunga
- Youth Diversion and Engagement Project
- School Playground (complete)

There are a number of different clan groups who are all recognised as having connection to different areas within Galiwin'ku community. For this reason, work within the group also requires ongoing negotiation around productive ways of working together both within and across each of the Traditional Owner clan groups.

## Local Researcher: Nyomba Gandanju

In Galiwin'ku, on-ground research continues to be led by Nyomba Gandanju, a senior Yolŋu woman and key member of the Galiwin'ku Community Gungayunamirr Mala Working Group (see her research profile here:

<https://iri.cdu.edu.au/nyomba-gandangu/>).

During Stage 3 Nyomba continued to build on her past work on this project. This has involved reporting on activities associated with CP&D in Galiwin'ku, development of academic contributions assisting the understanding and practice of Yolŋu M&E. She worked with CDU and NLC staff to deliver a presentation on Yolŋu-led M&E to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies conference in Adelaide (May 2021). She also worked with CDU and the Gapuwiyak local researcher to develop a presentation and deliver a workshop to all NLC community development officers in the CP&D program in December 2021

Given her many cultural and workplace commitments Nyomba has placed her Diploma of Indigenous Research studies temporarily on hold. However, through her work on this project she has successfully attained a Senior Indigenous Community-based researcher micro-credential, and assembled a number of research outputs listed on her research profile.



Nyomba Gandanju, Galiwin'ku community-based researcher

## Nyomba's M&E research

Throughout the earlier stages of this project, Nyomba's focus has been the articulation of theoretical contributions detailing the philosophy of Yolŋu M&E. These contributions have proved crucial in guiding our understanding and practice of Yolŋu M&E as a means for guiding our (and the NLC's) understanding of healthy community development

During stage 3, Nyomba worked with Michael and Michaela in generating another academic contribution, this time focussed on the concept of 'mununukkunhamirr'. This is a concept Nyomba sees as crucial to community development that proceeds according to ancestral imperatives, and enacts the proper healing and strengthening of Yolŋu society.

Reflecting on some events happening in Galiwin'ku, Nyomba initially called Michaela to share this concept of 'mununukkunhamirr'. Later she recorded a small description of this concept in Yolŋu matha and English, so that this concept would become accessible to others as a grounding principle of M&E and community development.

Throughout this period of work, Nyomba has also refined her description of community-based M&E research during a workshop with NLC staff, and also generated a set of reflections on community development in Gapuwiyak, which speaks to possible connections of M&E work across different CP&D sites, and researchers.

## Yolŋu M&E Concepts

As a senior clan leader, Traditional Owner and experienced researcher, Nyomba has the authority and experience to articulate a clear philosophy of Yolŋu M&E and community development practice.

Her philosophy has grounded much of our work in this project and provided intellectual guidance which has been beneficial in interpreting the stories and responses of Traditional Owners in Galiwin'ku, as well as in understanding the M&E work in other project sites.

Nyomba's previous theoretical contributions include:

- Discussion of '[What is Monitoring and Evaluation Yolŋu-way](#)' where Nyomba insists that Monitoring and Evaluation practices are *always already* occurring within everyday Yolŋu life as senior people assess and guide how young people grow up, and how collective life emerges in the right ways.
- A short essay on '[What is community development?](#)' where Nyomba describes development as needing to start on Yolŋu ground – as Yolŋu dialects, ceremonies and education – so that funding supports the emergence of community as, and under, sovereign Yolŋu authority in place.

In this final stage of the project, Nyomba has continued her work articulating Yolŋu concepts which are helpful in pushing the NLC to re-imagine the concept of 'community'. as something which is always emerging, and doing so in better and worse ways. Nyomba details a specific concept which shows how non-Yolŋu individuals and organisations can participate in developing healthy Yolŋu community under Yolŋu authority. Relations between Yolŋu and Balanda as established in the school and other programs can tend to create a gap between Yolŋu children and the Balanda services designed to help them, alienating them from the guidance and authority of their elders. By untying

these relations, and retying them according to Yolŋu ancestral understandings, this gap can be dissolved and valuable community development will have occurred.

**Mununukkunhamirr<sup>3</sup> – a mindset and a concept of coming together to sort things out the proper way**  
from an audio recording Galiwin'ku September 2021.

Discussion in Yolŋu matha, translated by Michael Christie and Yasunori Hayashi

*Yow. Dhuwal ŋarra ga rulaŋdhun yäku wangany limurrŋ dharanaraw Yolŋuw walalaŋ, ga nhaltjan limurr dhu balandany walalany marŋgi-gurrupan ŋunhi nhä ŋayi dhuwali mayali'. Dhuwal ŋayi yäku gurraŋay, dhiyaku dhuwal mununukkunhamirr.*

Okay, Here I'm going to record one name (or concept) which is for all us Yolŋu to understand how we can teach the balanda the meaning of this. This word is an ancient, ancestral term, this word mununukkunhamirr.

*Ŋunhi ŋayi dhuwaliyi yäku limurr ŋuli wangany-manapanmirr ŋamaŋamayunmirri nhaku malaŋu yätjkurru bakmaranharaw rulwaŋdhun ŋunhi yätjkurruny ŋamakulilil ga ŋamakuliny rulaŋdhun ga ŋamakulilil yän. Dhuwali ŋayi mayali' dhuwali yäku mununukkunhamirr ŋayi yäku gurraŋay.*

This name refers to us coming together to produce something, to break up whatever is bad, and put that bad thing in a good situation, put it down well, to stay only good. So, the meaning of that word 'mununuk' is an ancient, ancestral meaning.

*Limurrŋgal ŋalapaŋmirri gan dhuwali bäki yäku. Walal ŋunhi rom-bakmaranha yätjkurru rulwaŋdhuna ŋamakuli'lil romlil ga dhukarrlil. Ga dhuwali ŋarra ga rulwaŋdhun limurrŋ marŋgithinyaraw. Ga limurr dhu marŋgi-gurrupan ŋunha Balandany walalany dhiyakiyi yäkuw märr walal dhu marŋgithirr ŋunhi ŋayi dhuwal gurraŋay. Yäku limurrŋgal gan ŋalalapaŋmirriy bäki. Ga balanya*

Our old people used to use that name. They used to break up that bad way, and put it right, in practices and in ways forward. So that's what I'm putting down for us to learn. And we can teach those Balanda that word, so that they will learn this practice is an ancestral totemic practice. A word that our old people held. That's it.

**Mununukkunhamirr' – a mindset and a concept of coming together to sort things out the proper way**

Discussion in English, transcribed by Michaela Spencer

It is important to teach our Yolŋu children about this word *mununukkunhamirr'*. The teaching and the understanding of this word needs to come to our Yolŋu children so they will know

---

<sup>3</sup> Mununuk (adjective) *straight, correct, sorted, right* + -kunha (verb) – *to make* + -mirr (reflexive) – *ourselves, each other*.  
Mununukkunhamirr' - *working together to sort things out in the proper way*.

about this name, and how they have to act in that name and to put that into action, bring them into an action.

That name gathers up all the knowledge and perspective of Yolŋu elements, Yolŋu values, that has to bring everything into one. That happens in Yolŋu ground, in ceremony areas, like Dhapi (initiation) ceremony, Bāpurru (funeral) ceremony, Njārra (sacred) ceremony, even in the family, and it will also happen in those two education – Yolŋu and balanda education.

From Yolŋu perspective and from Balanda perspective of government, they are not getting the message to each other. There, a very good understanding has to happen with our Elderly people. Needs to be really clarified our Yolŋu education values, and brought into space where the balanda and Yolŋu perspectives are talking to each other so we can move on and close out gaps that aren't really coming together and building up.

The distance is already there waiting, but you have to have that *mununukkunhamirr'* concept within yourself, within your clan within your family, within your perspective, within your own ground. That is the story for Yolŋu children. It can easily make a small pathway to show that concept to balanda, then can make that path a bit wider, wider, wider. Then we can walk from there to here. That wording brings the people into one, peacefully.

In ceremony people bring their spirit, their thoughts their words into one for that family. It is something that has to be solved, solving issue. When there is a big fight, one of the leader will say – this fight has been going for too long. We need to have a big talk, so we can't keep onto this. We can't keep doing this all the time. We need to put it into a space where we can forgive and forget.

Bring what happened, bring them into one, then don't think about it all the time. Just finish up. Bring us into a good relationship, building up relationship. Untie the knots that have been tied really tight. If you untie the knots, you are free. If the family comes together, we have to untie this knot, and all be free. It also goes for any other issues, for example if we get a funding from the government.

We have to take all that is out there, bring what is hidden, and bring those children all in one. Looking at the space where children are missing out, even parents, or mums or elders or clan missing out, and we need to bring into one. Also, like getting all the dirt from each corner and put into one and collect up all the rubbish in a dustpan and put it in the bin.

If get the funding, then bring all the services, different, different groups and say we need to relate here for this funding for our children. Arrangement around and through Yolŋu values.

Like that NLC djama, we talk about what needs to be solved in our community, and how we can bring that to solve that problem and put it into a good space. That is what we do, the NLC is the same – *mununukkunhamirr'*. Like that Gunga'yunamirr (mutual support) mala, that is that name of the TO group.

*Mununukkunhamirr'* – it happens in different space, in council meeting, clan meeting, family meeting, COVID meeting, solving this problem. It is all the same. But *mununukkunhamirr'* is that ancestral concept for Yolŋu.

Everyone in family group has to come together and solve what is best for that particular Yolŋu, for health, education. Need to twist from disrespect, to respect. Or from vulnerable,

change into a manymak person. Or heavy drug, change into manymak. That person has all the threads holding them in that arrangement that is not good for them. Have to untie, and re-tie new threads so they become into better space, tied in a way that is sustainable and good for them.

### **CDU researcher interpretation: *Mununukkunhamirr'* as a Yolŋu M&E concept**

Nyomba describes *mununukkunhamirr'* as an ancestral totemic practice. As an M&E concept, *mununukkunhamirr'* expresses a Yolŋu process for effecting healthy transformation.

She uses the word *gurraŋay* to describe the concept *mununuk*. *Gurraŋay* provides an ancestral or totemic identity for what might be happening in the governance of land, or families, or ceremonies. Everyday sorting out of articles or issues may be called, for example, *dhunupayam* – making straight. But sorting things out according to and in line with the activities and protocols of the ancestral creators takes such practices to the next level – one in which development is seen as alignment with the ways the world of the emerging generations must become.

To Nyomba this is just as relevant to doing community development, where the seeing and untying of certain knotted ways of relating to each other – as Yolŋu, or between Yolŋu and Balanda – is part of a process which also re-ties these relations in the right frame – *mununuk*.

When seeing community development as the work of remembering and re-enacting ancestral imperatives in current partnerships, this concept may help attune the NLC, and other external collaborators to Yolŋu processes of healing and development. For Yolŋu the term *Mununukkunhamirr'* signals mobilising strong ancestral concepts in working out of right relations for going on together. As such, the concept *Mununukkunhamirr'* is not easily accessible or actionable for the NLC. Rather, it signals the possibility of taking seriously negotiation practices of elders in guiding relationships and allowing them the time and space to do this.

With further elaboration from Nyomba, it's possible this concept could be worked with in planning and designing future project work. It allows questions to be asked about how programs may be designed or softened and reshaped to give more space for Yolŋu children to live their clan connections and relationships to country as identity.

## **Other community reports**

In this section, Nyomba uses her authority and kin connections to reflect upon work undertaken by Emmanuel at Gapuwiyak, demonstrating possibilities for collaborations between researchers at different sites. The following was noted down during a phone conversation between Nyomba and Michaela, while Nyomba was visiting Gapuwiyak mid-November 2021. (It is interesting to note that in making this report, Nyomba is modelling good Yolŋu M&E: starting with making clear her connection to Gapuwiyak and its owners, then focussing on the good outcomes which need to be made visible and encouraged).

While they are not directly related to CP&D projects in Galiwin'ku, we include them here as providing useful insight into Yolŋu visions for seeing, tracking and supporting community development, and suggest there is potential for useful reflection across communities.

## Nyomba commenting on community development in Gapuwiyak

- *Gapuwiyak is my märi land. Clancy's father, I call him Märi, or Clancy's father my grandmothers and my two grandfathers they have 3 mothers and two fathers. He is bit related closely with us. That is own connection for Clancy's father mother, my grandmothers mother are sisters.*
- *Here at Gapuwiyak are many children going to school. Not even one child age of 1 to 16, 17, 18 who is out of school. They all go to FAFT, childcare, preschool, or to school. These Yolŋu here, after they finish their work they are walking around giving commitment to support children. Go around card area, school area, oval area, driving the kids to be at home for the next day. Every, every night. Manymak program, I can see that*
- *I could positively see all the strengthening and the communication with these Yolŋu workers and the children. They listen to them and go back home to have a good sleep and go next day to attend the school. Manymak to see different skills on people working with children. There is no sniffing around. Before used to be couple of children sniffing petrol. Now don't see this. Only hear from people when work with children, only home brew that is showing up. Nothing else. Are changes happening in community*
- *I am working at monitoring and evaluating people here in Gapuwiyak – it's really manymak. I see the differences here. Many Yolŋu when walk around the camp, are picking up rubbish. Not for money, just making community clean. Voluntary work, looking after community. What amazing people they are. Happy community, manymak community. Wish could see at Galiwin'ku. You do see this at Ramingining.*
- *Margaret showed me the logo. It is happening the work they are doing, Lindsay and Margaret. Everything going manymak. They support each other. Also, just seen the TO from Milindji come around. Showed us plan – that big billabong, other side. I've seen that plan already. They are doing that plan to put on some houses, build houses for the children. Accommodation for staff. I've seen the plan already*
- *In Gapuwiyak they have one group, in Galiwin'ku we have [more than one] group but are trying to make it one. Don't do much talking when something coming up for eastern side of Galiwin'ku because we have understanding of how to make everything into one thing that Yolŋu and Balanda can see – not clashing. Also, clan divisions, we don't have to show this to young people or the NLC. Bring Yolŋu into one. Important for TOs bring community into one, not just talk about money, money – but see how community involved. TOs have to see that to become community. It is important to keep telling this story as Traditional Owners.*

Nyomba's comments in the final dot point, directly address the significance of M&E for CP&D work. A vision focussed only on clan relationships and 'pocket' money tends to ignore, or have little faith in, the possibility for working relationships with the NLC that can build community through relations which are meaningful to Yolŋu. By insisting on the possibility of achieving good working relations for the benefit of young generations, Nyomba is affirming the value of CP&D as well as showing faith in the strength of the elder leadership crucial for such work. Continued NLC support for Nyomba as she guides leaders around how to come together for the benefit of Galiwin'ku is likely to yield good community development outcomes beyond the life of the CP&D programs alone.

## Final reflections from Nyomba

In looking back over her Monitoring and Evaluation, Nyomba offered the following summation:

*Monitoring and Evaluation is the same as raypirri'. The outcome of my M&E is [will soon be] that there are two homelands running raypirri'.*

*Now I need to add a dura dhawu [make a book]. From my M&E, I will try to explain to the TOs and see if someone [a new researcher] has to go through them, because my outcome has already been approved. There are those two homelands running raypirri' this is the outcome. This shows my M&E.*

*For the Youth Diversion project, Peter is the boss there now. Helping other children to be as one. Negotiating with other families the work they have been doing. Mununukkunhamirr'. I have to give the story out so government can see the pathway for Yolŋu children and how balanda is supporting.*

*There has been three raypirri' camps in those homeland areas now. There has been one at the Crocodile Islands, one at Dhambala and one at Galawarra. The ones at Dhambala and Galawarra, these are my evaluation, this is where the outcome is achieved and has been approved.*

Nyomba is now looking towards who else might work as a M&E researcher for CP&D in Galiwin'ku. She is interested in working with the study hub to make a book that shows what she has done - sharing the success of her M&E work where there are now *raypirri'* camps running on homelands as they should, and where balanda are working to support Yolŋu children to come together as one while recognising their unique Yolŋu identities.

Here the success of Nyomba's M&E is evidenced in the existence of young people learning who and where they are in enacting *raypirri'* in right ways on country. It is also evidenced by the changed practices of CP&D as NLC staff are listening and learning from Traditional Owners, and have themselves grown the trusted collaborations through which Yolŋu can maintain their sovereign identities. That is, their changed practices evidence the development of community where Traditional Owners and the NLC are both contributing in their respective ways to the raising of healthy new generations of Yolŋu.

# Gapuwiyak Report

---

## CP&D in Gapuwiyak

In Gapuwiyak, community development funds have been primarily invested in a local corporation, and activities associated with its development and functioning through 3 core projects:

- Project 1 – Milindji Developments Governance Support Project - in partnership with Matrix On Board Consulting and Training who are supporting business development and training
- Project 2 – Painting Crew Project, in partnership with ALPA, and their CDP program
- Project 3 – Logo project, in partnership with the NLC

The Milindji Developments Pty Ltd (Milindji), has become increasingly well-established over the life of the CP&D project. There continues to be enthusiasm for the partnership between Milindji and Matrix On Board, the consultancy assisting with governance and business development. The painting crew project had been occurring successfully, and discussions are continuing around whether this should be a longer term investment for the Traditional Owner group or Milindji. The logo project design aspect is now complete, with a final design being agreed on by the Traditional Owner group. There is however an ongoing project with the logo being embroidered on various items – uniforms for Directors, caps, shorts and talk of masks also.

## Local Researcher: Emmanuel Yunupingu



Emmanuel Yunupingu, Gapuwiyak community-based researcher

Emmanuel was authorised by senior members of the Traditional Owner group to work as a community-based researcher early in the project. Since then, he has continued to drive all M&E research in Gapuwiyak.

During Stage 1 of the project, Emmanuel was awarded a CDU Indigenous Community-based Researcher micro-credential. He also developed his own online research profile (<https://iri.cdu.edu.au/emmanuel-yunupingu/>), which he has continued to keep updated with his work history and achievements.

During Stage 2, Emmanuel was proactive in developing new methods and processes for sharing data and remaining in touch during COVID-19. He developed a technique which he has termed ‘selfie stories’ whereby he makes video recordings reporting on recent comments from senior Traditional Owners, which he can then share with CDU.

During Stage 3, he has continued to develop innovative approaches to M&E work, and for remaining in contact with CDU. At his request, Emmanuel was provided with a laptop which he has used to further develop M&E methods using video recording (e.g. generating and interpreting recordings of Traditional Owner group meetings and conversations with Elders). In this most recent phase of work, he has also formed connections with Nyomba, and worked with her on delivering a workshop on Yolŋu M&E to NLC staff in late 2021.

## Emmanuel's M&E Research

In this latest stage of work, Emmanuel has led all aspects of the Gapuwiyak M&E research. He has continued to speak with Elders and the Traditional Owner group in Gapuwiyak, listening to their stories and experiences of the CP&D work, and has remained in contact with CDU to share stories and video recordings. Emmanuel's research has included:

- *Regular verbal updates:* Emmanuel would call Michaela after meetings or on other occasions (Mar 2021 – Feb 2022) to provide verbal feedback reports on ongoing CP&D activities, and the experiences and feelings of members of the TO group.
- *Elder video interviews:* Emmanuel created a series of short video recordings of Elders sharing stories and speaking about the CP&D work. These were taken on Emmanuel's phone and proved very difficult to share with CDU because of their file size. Unfortunately, the recordings were lost when Emmanuel's phone became broken.
- *Interpretation of meeting recordings:* Emmanuel sought permission from the NLC Community Development Officer to video record a meeting with the Gapuwiyak Traditional Owner group. On a trip to Darwin, he then sat with Michaela and pointed out important parts of the meeting that were worth noting and celebrating as good practice, and as significant to further development of the CP&D work.

Alongside these activities, Emmanuel also spent considerable time sitting with Elder clan leaders and under their guidance making video recordings of their stories and ceremonial activities. He has described this as M&E work which is continuing to support the emergence of ancestral stories in working with contemporary methods and technologies. This seems an interesting and important element of research that Emmanuel is exploring, but we don't detail it at length here as it falls somewhat out of scope of the CP&E M&E project.

Michaela gathered together all the M&E research material provided by Emmanuel during this stage of the project, and kept it stored on her computer. In writing this report, she went through these materials, and excerpted small discrete stories that elders had shared with Emmanuel. She presented these as 'Voices of Senior Leaders' below, coupling each with a picture of the speaker so that Traditional Owners would be easily able to find themselves when looking at the report later. In cases where she didn't have a photo of the speaker, she asked Emmanuel to take one and send it to her.

For the remaining materials, she looked for the key issues being spoken about by Emmanuel when he shared stories of the CP&D work and presented these as lightly edited excerpts. In offering a CDU interpretation of these excerpts, she worked with Michael Christie to see how Emmanuel's stories related to some of or all of the key M&E themes identified in Stage 1. The purpose of the interpretations was to make evident for the NLC how these themes were being, or could be, enacted by CP&D activities.

In developing a way to work with Emmanuel's video material, Michaela asked Emmanuel to point to key parts of the recording where something important happened (this was to prevent having to watch a full 2 hour meeting in real time). Emmanuel was happy to do this, and Michaela and Michael again worked on a set of interpretations which made evident to the NLC how the practices in the room were exemplifying the key evaluation themes/ Yolŋu governance practices.

## Voices of Senior Leaders

These vignettes have been created from short verbal reports that Emmanuel provided after speaking with individual members of the Traditional Owner group. They therefore appear in his voice, rather than the voice of the named speaker.

### Mavis Marrkula speaking (with Joy) about her involvement in CP&D and supporting young people to learn new skills



*Her concern is about Milindji corporation, she has been involved in Milindji for many years. This is why she has decided to bring up more ideas for Milindji. She always listens, and sometimes she talks. She wants more members to come to meeting every day, to talk about how we can develop our business. She normally doesn't talk in front of too many people. She is also trying hard to including young members like her granddaughters and daughters and niece. She really wants them to be involved in that situation, because it's going to take so many years, so once old people*

*getting sick the young people can look after it. So, we need more others to be part of Milindji business. Last she was mentioning she wants young people to be very careful to be getting skills. These people, new members for Milindji they need to step into board and get skills and qualification.*

### Joy Marrkula speaking (with Mavis) on drawing other family members into Milindji in ways which strengthen the kinship network which is made safe through the true story of Gapuwiyak at work in its corporation.



*Same as Mavis, she was also thinking about Milindji corporation. She isn't really sure about business; this is her first time. She is trying to do her best to know all the background for business, how she can provide ideas and plans. She is wondering, who will be involved in the next couple of years? Who will be part of Milindji team members?*

*Other story she was mentioning she has got three daughters, but they don't really go to meeting help her out for what she is doing right now. She is worried about her daughters, how they can get support. She's thinking get family together and put one plan, get all the stories from everyone to put them into one and start sharing. Hearing from daughters what they are thinking about for the future, and also trying to push them so they get proper job and be part of Milindji. At the moment, they are not very interested but she is trying to support and push them in the right way to get a job so they can be a part of Milindji members for the future as well.*

**Andrew and Thomas Marrkula on teamwork and solving the problem of young people seeing the modelling of bad behaviour through attention to Milindji.**



*I was sitting with Andrew and Thomas, and they told me everything about Milindji. Every time when the meeting is coming, people are involved and attend the meeting. After meeting they just go back home and communicate with each other about how to bring support and new ideas. Helping other people from Gapuwiyak, how they can be a good role model for their community. They have been doing this teamwork and both were giving*

*story about how they can solve other people from doing bad things, sniffing petrol and other things. It's not manymak (good) for community to see them all the time doing bad things, they really want to help young people and teach them traditional laws and values and hear the story about old people's footsteps, and going through the environment, like looking outstation side, they are the one who told us to go hunting and all that. Also, Yolŋu law and western education and law. They can all get one story. It's not for the traditional land owners, it's for the whole community, the young people as well.*

**Thomas Marrkula on partnerships for Milindji through kinship and networks of organisations.**



*Thomas mentioned he wants Milindji to be strong and helping others know about Milindji too. Must stay focussed and following the right track and following the idea for how we can help balanda and Yolŋu together through this process. Whether we can find more support on other organisation, like rangers and army's and police. There are other organisations to be involved. He mentioned about that idea for his future, because once the tourists hit our community we can talk about how we can get all these things together and load up whole community for*

*tourists. Milindji will be leading tourists, whether they are looking for good place for tourist resort or something. Is the way they are thinking other business, help Yolŋu people teach balanda people, help their understanding.*

**Jason Marrkula on how to step into leadership roles through Milindji**



*Because he had never been involved with any other meeting, he was just listening about story of how Milindji is going. I spoke with him, and he was thinking about when he has got the right time to help Milindji, and to talk with father and uncle in family meeting. I was asking whether he might help Milindji soon, maybe he will decide whether he is not feeling well, or feeling to come and talk to Yolŋu people for Milindji. He has been sharing some other story. If he wants to become a leader for Milindji. He will try to decide whether he can support his community. He was asking Milindji for workshop for arts centre. So he was mentioning arts centre so he can work there, and trying getting more*

*of his family to get onboard with home. Trying to help community and also balanda people know how Yolŋu people live. How can support Yolŋu and balanda people on their own story, and background and history for this community. And the painting and art, and whether they will decide to put hollow log and some sort of these things, if they will be made in the art centre.*

### Clancy Guthitjpuuy on the current status of the corporation and his vision for the future.



*Clancy is still working with Milindji and still part of that program and the business. He is very alert and very active. He is pushing himself to become a better person and better role model for his business. Other main problem, Clancy thought it's very important how he can care about his grandsons and granddaughters. The way they can be part of the business, when Clancy is passed away or something happens to him. They need help from Clancy now, and he is willing and hopeful for his families to get on board and start working and get to learn about what Milindji is doing right now, and the next future for us. This is where he is thinking right now.*

### Clancy Guthitjpuuy on Emmanuel's role as both an M&E researcher and a leader as Milindji grows



*Other thing from Clancy, he keeps wanting me to keep working on this project and helping Milindji members, and through this process become a good role model. He is happy for me to be working with them for a long time. He wants me to go with them [Clancy and other senior leaders] when we are leaving Gapuwiyak to talk to other corporations in central [Australia]. The main thing, we are trying to get story from them. We are going to tell them about our corporation, and they will tell us about their corporation. Witnessing everything, how they can give us more support. Maybe one day we will be a part of everything, and we need help from other organisation. If everything is manymak (good), these corporations might be working with each other. If I talk with them, maybe we can connect with Yolngu corporation and maybe can talk about where to get help and how these things can be happening in next couple of years.*

## M&E Stories and Evaluative Themes

After CP&D and stakeholder meetings in Gapuwiyak, Emmanuel would call Michaela and share stories about what the TO group were thinking.

Emmanuel is telling these stories as a way to help the NLC discern the ancestral imperatives at work in various CP&D activities, sharing these so the NLC can become more attuned to the Traditional Owner's visions and how they want the NLC to work. As such, Emmanuel's reflections continue to be consistent with the evaluation themes identified in the Gapuwiyak recording by Clancy (Stage 1 report, pg. 25).

These themes were:

- *Knowing the origins of the land and its peoples in the Milindji area*
- *Working locally/ learning skills in place*
- *Remembering which things belong to which people*
- *Making the true story visible*

The stories Emmanuel told in the Stage 3 work, tended to be clustered around a few key areas which are indicative of how CP&D activities are currently, supporting the Gapuwiyak story and/or have the potential to do so in the future.

### **Possible tourism venture**

Local researcher comments:

*We all know tourist business if big one, we have to be careful, not just jump in and pick this business straight away, because we haven't got much items. And need equipment and insurance. Outback have own vehicle, need Milindji vehicle, boat.*

*Tourism business is about cultural business, people on country, financial business. We're letting them [Outback Spirit] come to Gapuwiyak and know they are very welcome, and that they will be listening and getting story with Milindji. Milindji thought and had an idea about what we need. If they do some of a business for 3 months, then wait for another year and do a trip walking out on country. Do marketing this year, then wait for next year when service providers come in.*

*Others they need to know human wellbeing, economic wellbeing and community wellbeing and knowledge wellbeing, country wellbeing... those are the program they are going to be involved in that project. Thinking what sort of things they want to do and ideas they are picking up and what they are thinking right now. How they can accept people who are already talented.*

*Mavis is going to help old people, showing how they weave basket, put colour in that basket. Terrence and Thomas were going to help tourist to walk on the country and show bush tucker and what Yolŋu own*

*Clancy mentioned that he is active and strong, he's trying to provide more projects and more programs for tourist business. When they are going to come here Clancy will explain everything that is happening in this community, just Gapuwiyak. Looking at the location other side of the lake. Clancy is very careful, some of this place is secret place. Clancy is picking up someone from Milindji who is going to run and do that work for tourist business and run in right way. They will be doing the bookings, but also keeping places safe.*

CDU interpretation: As the CP&D program pursues the objectives of the Traditional Owners, there can be consideration given to how this work maintains Yolŋu ancestral relationships at the same time as it develops new business initiatives. The suggestion here is that any future tourism business should work to re-inscribe the relations of land ownership and control detailed in the Gapuwiyak story. The business would work with interconnected skills and relations of people-place where there are certain people responsible for certain ancestral practices, and have the right and responsibility to share these with others as part of keeping Gapuwiyak strong.

### **Thinking about new possible industries**

Local researcher comments:

*Fishing industry is still coming, and we are good, and looking forward to this and helping other people in this position, just looking for someone, part of Milindji people, we want them to get the job straight away. This is what Milindji offer Yolŋu people, and maybe balanda we can get from other organisation. Maybe one of the teachers, or police officer wife, or clinic nurses,*

*maybe someone who is going to come forward and see Milindji and see if they need to be employed, want work, we will talk to those people and get them on the board straight away. Because we need someone for booking and these things. The Milindji member, we're looking at you, you are the right person.*

*Terrence, Thomas and Andrew, they were all very happy bringing up more ideas about how they can run this business. We are full of knowledge, we are full of economic, looking at countries, working with Milindji making sure everyone is equal and agreeing is something have to keep doing.*

CDU interpretation: New industries for Gapuwiyak will work as hubs or nexus points through which certain distributions of employment and power will be generated. The effect of this needs to be jobs going to the right people and partnerships with Balanda who can be trusted and relied upon to respect Yolŋu sovereignty as leadership through kin and clan relations.

### **How other people and organisations can be linked into Milindji**

Local researcher comments:

*We need to help Milindji people go on country and how they feel about people coming in and onto country and how they experience that, and what they will think about others coming into our community. Everyone is taking this serious, and this is when we have to stand strong.*

*Some of the service providers are going to come here and share with Milindji how they want to become a part of Yolŋu history, and they will learn too. This is just the first coming in, and people are witnessing how this project and this business will grow and grow and grow. We want to bring more people so they will learn.*

*Mavis was thinking whether she can get support from other organisation to help Milindji, just for support and encouragement. She was mentioning and wanting, trying to think of other ways (not just Gorŋ-Däl) that can give support. We already have so many other organisations, but what about from Yirrkala – there are two Aboriginal corporation there: Gumatj and Rirratjiŋu. Was thinking about whether to get support from them*

*Gordon mentioned that the Yalu' project happening in Galiwin'ku. Clancy decided to support Yalu' to come and visit and talk face to face in next couple of months. So they can have Yalu' business in Gapuwiyak, just to educate young ones and some boys are doing bad things like stealing petrol, sniffing petrol in community. So Gordon decided to bring those people from Galiwin'ku so they can come and talk to Milindji about how they run Yalu' and how to keep children safe. They will decide and Gordon and my mum Edna will organise meeting to happen this year, and maybe Miwatj will come and Yalu' staff<sup>4</sup>.*

*They looking at Paul Marrkula, he is going to be representing on behalf of Clancy or Jimmy when they are away. Paul is going to be senior for Milindji if those two senior people are away. He is going to be helping Milindji to let them know, to just cover this position. Molthu 'Paul' Marrkula – brother for Mavis Marrkula. Came back from Mäpuru outstation for couple of years. Clancy and Jimmy rang him and said he has to come back and help the project and*

---

<sup>4</sup> Plans may have changed since Emmanuel provided these details, and this event may no longer go ahead. However, we've retained the text to show the interest and intentions of the Traditional Owner group to work with other Yolŋu organisations as a trusted process for growing their projects.

*business. Now he is back. He is a good man, pretty understandable, and willing to make things better. Everyone agrees he is a good one for this, everyone agrees.*

CDU interpretation: When generating new connections and partnerships, either with new Yolŋu Traditional Owners joining the group, or other organisations, it is important that connections are made through kin relations. This keeps Yolŋu society and relations straight, and it also generates strong and appropriate foundations for non-Yolŋu organisations connecting into the continuation of Yolŋu history.

### **How Milindji can facilitate the flow of money**

Local researcher comments:

*Milindji only gave that [paint crew] work for Yolŋu people so they can have real work. They just doing this because of Yolŋu heart. Trying to provide any other work, for example when they are doing in Milingimbi Manapan furniture. Clancy decided to change that painting work to furniture.*

*Need more others to be part of Milindji business. We want young people to be very careful to be getting skills. They were mentioning, these people, new members for Milindji they need to step into board and get skills and qualification. Some boys took some of the skill last year, and one of them boys they moved to [construction] with us. Got proper job, just one bloke. 2 of them are still in buffalo crew [CDP]. Sometimes they do activity in the morning, then come back and do paints.*

*Clancy decided to take money out from painting crew and put in Milindji trust bucket. Might put money from that painting crew to other bucket, furniture. No-one has got sad about this, agree with everything. When they were talking about other projects, making furniture and all that. Said we will wait, we will wait for ALPA to give us more information about what they are doing right now and wait for the financial report.*

*The big result report from ALPA is going to be happening soon. They already had little report from ALPA but still want bigger result coming from next year. Milindji will know everything, the amount they got last year, and this year, and who is responsible for that money. Will have that result from ALPA, and once have the result NLC will release the result and contract for other business.*

*Sarah, explained the different way for money story and also the money is already sitting there in account, in the Milindji document and some money went out for business. We will talk about again next meeting for money story.*

CDU interpretation: The outcome of real jobs and skilled Yolŋu workers living and working in Gapuwiyak is a lived and visible sign of the strength of Milindji. Facilitating ongoing flows of money is a way to keep remembering the true landowners of Gapuwiyak, and seeing the outcomes of their leadership.

### **The visible front of Milindji**

Local researcher comments:

*Everything has come through – the hats are here, 6 uniforms for directors and members. Logo won't change now. Got result from Sarah. We are very excited now. NLC trying to get shirt*

*printed out. Clancy doesn't like the polo shirt like they had before. Wanted just printed shirt for Clancy and Jimmy.*

*They selected only one logo and the rest of them were different colours and that. They decided to pick one of them, just Yolŋu colour. One on top out of 5 paper, selected one logo and will go into shirt. Men's and ladies. Everyone is happy now, very excited.*

*Sarah brought uniforms back home for members and directors. I got my hat now. Everyone happy. They mentioned little bit story, ALPA providing new uniform for painting crew, they will get design from Milindji symbol. We spoke to them we organised t-shirts and uniforms with ALPA symbol and Milindji symbol. Big banner on side of fence any department for everyone to see. Maybe people talking behind Milindji member, but manyamak we don't care just doing our best.*

*Sarah listening very carefully to what people are saying. She is saying this is what you guys are doing, I will give report back to NLC.*

CDU interpretation: When the Milindji Trust and the true Gapuwiyak story are visible through the logo on uniforms and banners, the Traditional Owner group know they are fulfilling their responsibilities in making their story visible. It is then up to other Yolŋu to recognise and respect this story and the roles and ownership it designates.

## Meeting Commentary: A new research method from Emmanuel

Towards the end of this stage of work, Emmanuel experimented with a new method which involved recording the CP&D meeting in Gapuwiyak, and then sitting with Michaela afterwards to point out important points in the proceedings. Emmanuel told the CDU researcher he had sought permission to record the meeting was sought beforehand from Sarah, the community development officer facilitating the meeting<sup>5</sup>.

Below we provide some samples of this work. They include a still from the video accompanied by a summary of the particular part of the meeting, Emmanuel's commentary about this moment of significance, then CDU's interpretation of this significance.

This method is not intended to record and assess NLC procedure, but to learn from what Yolŋu see as formative moments in the meeting, so these may be better understood or supported by NLC staff.

---

<sup>5</sup> If this practice is to continue, protocols for seeking permission from the CP&D officer and wider group should be established.

**CLIP 1:**  
**Clancy demonstrating  
Elder leadership**



*Summary:* Clancy [not visible in shot] is standing at the front of the room, speaking to the TO group regarding the paint crew project.

*Local researcher commentary:* Clancy is explaining to them he had experience painting in Galiwin'ku when he was employed by Balanda doing painting and carpentry. Explaining how they are going to run painting. Paint crew know he, Clancy, is the boss. Boys are listening to him when he is explaining how are going to run painting proper way.

*CDU researcher interpretation:* Clancy is demonstrating his leadership as part of the work of Milindji Trust and the CP&D work of respecting Elder leadership and reiterating practices of Yolŋu governance.

**CLIP 2:**  
**Paint crew being seen  
and encouraged by TO  
group**



*Summary:* The paint crew report to present to the rest of the Traditional Owner group about their activities and experience in the program.

*Local researcher commentary:* Painting boys speak, and the Traditional Owners show they appreciate. Say what a good job they are doing. Traditional Owners say still keeping them for djama (work), might give more money for painting crew because everything is going manymak.

*CDU researcher interpretation:* As in a ceremony, the performers are recognised and able to feel proud because of the way they are encouraged in their performance by other Yolŋu who are watching and guiding them so they can learn the right way to do their work, and to enact their specific roles and identities. When Clancy compares his old work painting for Balanda with the new arrangements working through the corporation, the difference is that the new arrangements allow the painting work to align and support Milindji's work of keeping Gapuwiyak on the right ancestral track.

**CLIP 3:**  
**Caring for Milindji through gurrutu**



*Summary:* Leslie (Joy's husband) presents to the group about his work in other Yolŋu organisations.

*Local researcher commentary:* Leslie is djungaya<sup>6</sup> [for Marrkula]. He is explaining a lot of project back Ramingining. He has experience and can step up to help everyone understand. Joy spoke to him, maybe he can help Joy go through this project business.

*CDU researcher interpretation:* Leslie is enacting his responsibilities as a djungaya at the same time as sharing his knowledge of business development. In this way, new processes of business development are also affirming Yolŋu relationships of governance and authority.

---

<sup>6</sup> Every important Yolŋu thing (ceremony, clan group, place, etc) has an owner as well as a manager from a different clan Group – who call it mother. The manager is the djungaya, and nothing can be done without the djungaya's supervision and agreement.

**CLIP 4:**  
**Hearing the clear money story**



*Summary:* Sarah stands at the front of the meeting and presents the money story for the CP&D project.

*Local researcher commentary:* The finance discussion, that was all clear. Manymak. Really clear.

*CDU researcher interpretation:* There is respect being shown for the funds and resources of rightful Gapuwiyak landowners because the use and circulation of royalty funds is made visible to the Traditional Owner group in ways that facilitate their ongoing decision-making role.

# Malak Malak Report

---

## CP&D with Malak Malak

The Malak Malak Traditional Owner group guide Community Planning and Development activities in Daly River. This group is connected to the Malak Malak Land Trust at Wooliana, with members often moving between this site and Darwin. Work is closely associated with the Malak Malak Ranger group, and funds are derived from an Intertidal Fishing Access Agreement with the NT government.

CP&D project work to date has focussed on maintenance of language and culture, including the installation of interpretive signs detailing important sites, features, animals and language names along the stretch of river owned by Malak Malak Traditional Owners, and the development of a language app for use on phones, and restricted to Malak Malak language learners. The most recent planning has focussed on the development of a Malak Malak Culture Centre, as well as the ongoing administration of a funeral fund, providing support to Traditional Owner families for funeral and attendance costs.

Traditional Owner planning of the CP&D projects occurs through the Malak Malak Working Group. This group works closely with NLC staff, and then reports back to larger Traditional Owner group to receive approval and guidance from senior Elders and communicate with the broader group. Sadly, several very significant senior Malak Malak leaders have recently passed away which has had a significant effect on the group and finding ways to recover and keep going beyond this remains a priority.

## Local Researcher: Gwen White

We have been fortunate to have the continuing leadership of Gwendoline White as a researcher who has been endorsed by senior Malak Malak Traditional Owners as the right person to be involved in the research aspect of the CP&D work.

As part of her involvement in the project, Gwen has been supported to develop a research profile on the Indigenous Researchers Initiative Website (here: <https://iri.cdu.edu.au/gwendoline-white/>) and to enrol in the Diploma of Indigenous Research at CDU.

Gwen has a long term interest in research, particularly around collecting family stories and histories associated with Bagot Community and Malak Malak people. She sees the M&E work for the CP&D project as integral to the development of a Malak Malak Culture Centre, and to ongoing questions around how the Traditional Owner group may maintain appropriate governance practices as senior Elders pass away.

Gwen commenced her Diploma studies in Semester 1 2021, and has completed 3 units of study which have all been closely integrated with her M&E research activities on the CP&D project.



Gwen White, Malak Malak community-based researcher

## Gwendoline's M&E Research

In this latest stage of work, Gwendoline has taken a lead role in designing and undertaking M&E research activities.

Activities have tended to fall into three parts:

- *Ongoing review of CP&D activities:* Gwen has worked with NLC staff to retrieve copies of all newsletters detailing CP&D activities with Malak Malak. She has carried out a close review of these newsletters and generated a list of key areas to focus on and report back to the working group so they can keep reviewing past interests and decisions as they move forward.
- *Negotiation of Traditional Owner governance arrangements:* As a Traditional Owner and emerging leader and M&E researcher, Gwen has seen it as her unique role to speak with Elders and review archive material to learn from their precise words about appropriate governance of the Malak Malak Land Trust and CP&D project. She has informed herself about past commitments of Elders and initiated a number of family meetings and broader discussions regarding appropriate membership of the Malak Malak Traditional Owner group.
- *Listening to Elders:* Alongside Gwen's paper-based research, and her private M&E work with family members, Gwen and Michaela have worked together to continue listening to Elder stories. The Malak Malak ranger base have supported these efforts by supplying Gwen with a voice recorder suitable for creating high-quality recordings in outdoor settings. Gwen and Michaela visited the Land Trust to meet with Elders on 2-3 September 2021, and Gwen has an ongoing commitment to this work. (*Note:* This work has been impacted by the passing of several Elders, and the need for senior people to stay isolated during COVID).

Here Gwendoline details her research approach for the ongoing review of CP&D activities:

*My idea started at the Ranger Base on the Land Trust. We need to find out if the projects should continue, or should we end them. Then I collaborated with Michaela at CDU to start putting things together, and I had the idea of doing research on CP&D. Now I am actually doing it and it is going to continue. I'm reading all the minutes and newsletters (from 1-9). That's where I am getting all my information from. I made notes in my notebook to ask questions about the beginning of CP&D from Sarah (NLC project officer). Sarah replied and I went back to get some of the answers to the questions. I also got my and my Dad's genealogy from Edward (NLC anthropologist)*

*I am finding answers to my questions from Sarah and Edward, going back and reporting to Malak Malak community development group, and reporting to TOs. In this project, my go-to person was Rob Lindsay. He has lived there for more than 40 years and is married to my Aunty. He can show me guidelines for how to work and corrects me if I am wrong. The old ladies gave me permission to do this work. The purpose of monitoring and evaluating is we can find out how to start community development projects, continue them or end them. It is for the TOs information. It started back in 2016 (May 2017 was the first newsletter). Now they can review stuff that started at the beginning, to help make decisions about ending or continuing and the things happening on our own land trust.*

*This is helping the TOs. They asked for accommodation, job opportunities, business ventures. So, we're finding out how to keep doing these. I would like the work to continue and to have another young bloke involved, so he can be looking at the materials for the culture centre that I can't look at. This is keeping strong Malak Malak ways of doing things – Gwendoline White, Sept 2021*

## Voices of Senior Leaders

The following are stories collected by Gwen and Michaela 2-3 September 2022 by sitting and listening to Elders.

### **Betty Sullivan talking about the Culture Centre as a way to keep calling out to country and teaching young people**

*People used to come here, and when they came along they would sing out [to the country]. Now they don't sing out or anything. But this is important, and what we have to do and learn. You've got to stand back and ask if you can come in.*

*That picture Amos brought from the office, of the canoe along the river [archival image], we need kids re-enacting, pushing themselves along, go to the meeting place where they did the bargaining and trade.*

*I'm a dreamer first, then storyteller, then actor. This is the way that you pass knowledge and make it real for young people. When I was a schoolteacher, I would gather the kids together to work this way, tell story and re-enact. If I go into mythology, that comes from my ancestor, dreamtime, been handed down to us through the years by various relatives. We know that each has their own role.*



Betty Sullivan (Malak Malak TO) and Gwendoline Whilte (Malak Malak TO and researcher)

### **Rob Lindsay talking about the challenge of keeping clear who owns what land, without keeping people out.**

*Sites and boundaries were not an issue in the past, but now these things are an issue. How to recognise ownership [of land] but still share. It used to be that people were clear and visible and vocal about what place was theirs, and when they were off their country. When the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) didgeridoo video was made, the men being filmed while they were making a didgeridoo, they said straight away that they were not on their own land. They made this clear, so they could be comfortable being filmed. Now there are signs up all over the place talking about Malak Malak sacred sites.*

### **Rob Lindsay talking about the ongoing challenges of running the culture camps**

*When we started in 2017, I became the default coordinator. But then Old Man passed away in May 2018 so there was no camp. Then I had a stroke, and it didn't happen again in August. In 2019, I had another stroke and so it didn't happen again. Then we said the rangers would conduct the camps in Sept-Oct but was too late and so too hot. Didn't really go camping out, just went and did some activities then back to the pool. There are some challenges around keeping the camps going*

## Local review of Malak Malak CP&D projects

I have been studying for the Diploma of Indigenous Research at CDU with Michaela. I have been doing Monitoring and Evaluation for the land trust through CP&D with Sarah. I started researching old newsletters and minutes, that started in 2016 and is continuing.

I went into the NLC and collected old newsletters and minutes. Then reviewed them at home in my own time and found big mob questions. Then going back to the NLC to get answers. And now I want to share my answers with the other TOs and committee members.

This is to remind TOs about what they have been talking about in the beginning, and if they want to continue or if they want to end it.

### Accommodation

- Coming back to country
- We talked about a place to visit for TOs and families short and long term (not at the ranger base). For family coming in so can spend more time out bush. We're talking about this, but conversation has moved on now.

### Office space

- Information hub/ tourist booth – to give visitors information about where to go fishing, and how to avoid sacred sites. People are still talking about this. Thinking about this for employment.
- Maddingya Association Office – where will the location of the office be? If we have one, where will we put it? Some want to get this up and running very quickly so we can earn funding through the corporation, but its important to go slowly.

### Exploring ways to make money

- Is this through the association, or other ways?
- Employ business advisors? How do we go about doing stuff like this, setting up and helping the business run?
- Culture centre – talked a lot about this. We are looking at the demountable and where it will be situated. Haven't talked about what to put in it yet. We found the location that is best because of high ground (the ranger block), now just looking for building.

### Other

- Culture camps: looking back and organising camp and logistics. Have families bringing their children for culture camp, so there are questions: where is it? Will the rangers be running it?
- Developing a junior ranger program – only saw this when was looking back and checking minutes, so don't know what is happening with this. Probably big mob of kids at Daly Mission will like to go.
- Women's camp idea – this has just come up recently as a good idea

Gwendoline White, December 2021  
To be shared with Malak Malak Working Group

## Ethnographic insights

In the last report, some findings from the M&E work with Malak Malak were reported as ethnographic insights and clustered around a number of key themes (Stage 2 report, p.35). Here we maintain this approach, while noting that most M&E work for Stage 3 was carried out as document review and engagements with the Traditional Owner group by Gwendoline, and so it was only a small number of conversations with Traditional Owner group members that inform the comments below.

### Ground Up M&E as place-based Malak Malak heritage work

There has been continued insistence by Gwendoline, and other Malak Malak Traditional Owners, that looking back to the past and the voice of Elders will ensure the right things happen in the future. This sensibility is spoken about as important in relation to the way children are raised, decisions are made, how technologies work, and how the NLC is involved in Malak Malak business, to name a few.

In discussion, there have been aspects of NLC practice which have been valued because they allow Traditional Owner group members to articulate to others and themselves what is already known. For example, through the 'star diagram' (as used in CP&D planning activities). And when old people and their authority is recognised in the pages of the Healthy Country Plan (NLC, 2020) and in discussions about the culture centre. Amongst members of the Traditional Owner group, both the Malak Malak Land Claim Report (Toohey, 1982) and the recent Malak Malak Healthy Country plan (NLC, 2020) are referred to as very valuable documents recording connections of people and country that can be relied on in making and evidencing decisions.

Gwendoline has also begun relying heavily on both of these texts and has also sought to broaden her access to other archives that can support CP&D and culture centre work. In particular, through research into genealogical records held by the NLC, and by educating herself around anthropological terms to do with kinship mapping and succession (e.g. patrilineal and matrilineal) so as to better understand how Malak Malak have been represented in these records.

### Right stories, right people, right separations

There has been some discussion around a logo for the CP&D group, and what should be represented through the logo design. In M&E discussion (which may be replicating wider CP&D discussions), a very high level of specificity in the logo has been expressed as important. For example, using as a basis the historical image of a Malak Malak man standing on a canoe in the river.

*Malak Malak were foot canoe people. The picture of the man standing in the canoe, shows a stretch of the river where Kunbuk's place/land can be seen at the bend in the river. If you are doing a logo, important to have something that relates specifically to Malak Malak people. Everyone has the barramundi or turtle, but the foot canoe is specific to Malak Malak.*

The image of the logo needs to be directly connected to and representative of a specific Malak Malak place and practice to avoid misappropriation, or mis-reading. As a mark of land ownership, the logo needs to do the work of visually demonstrating what is specifically Malak Malak. This would support the group to be able to reach out and connect with other groups, while their true ownership can remain recognised.

### Different stories, different places

Particularly around the issue of the placement of the culture centre, there is a sense that people who are familiar with the river and the lands around the Malak Malak Land Trust have different

understandings of good and proper placement of the centre, than those who have not, or do not, live in the area. Differences of opinion on planning decisions are seen as differences in authority and rightful ownership, only able to be managed through also solving fundamental questions of clan leadership and Traditional Owner group membership and through good and clear relationships with relevant NLC departments.

As reflected in the last report (Stage 2, p. 36) it remains important to be able to keep visible and separate the way in which different people have known quite different Malak Malak places. At the same time, as suggested by Betty Sullivan, finding ways for new generations to be able re-live old practices in the present, so the stories and knowledges of the past can be cared for by many different people and organisations in the present is a key to moving beyond the current disrupted period to more secure and better supported ways of caring for Malak Malak heritage and futures.

### **Malak Malak lands – governance and ownership**

There is significant M&E work that Gwen has undertaken with her family, initiating meetings between key people to address questions of governance and succession within the TO group. These have remained opaque to the CDU researchers, as it was not our place to be present or involved in these activities but it is a sign that through the project she is increasingly enabled to mobilise the culture centre and the networks of families which relate to it, as well as developing her own leadership under supervision. Gwendoline has spoken about the need for this work:

*We need peaceful meetings, don't want the NLC to feel scared coming. Malak Malak are the most generous tribe. We have been letting things go about ownership and what land is ours, but to we need to respect the rightful owners so we can make good decisions.*

In addressing this issue, Gwen initially informed herself by reading the Malak Malak Land Claim Report and visiting the NLC to get a copy of the Malak Malak genealogy prepared some years ago by an NLC anthropologist<sup>7</sup>. She then worked with family to understand their position on questions of succession and raised these at a Traditional Owner meeting. The outcome of this work has been noticeable to NLC staff when these issues have surfaced at Traditional Owner group meetings and have provoked some difficult but important conversations.

CDU sees this work initiated by Gwendoline as a quite profound commitment to M&E as actively checking and guiding practices in the present, so they can better align with local and ancestral imperatives. Such in-practice work is difficult to document and can produce disruption. However, we see it as of great importance in addressing fundamental issues which have always been present within the group, and which have the aspiration to better support CP&D work and working relationships with the NLC.

---

<sup>7</sup> These additional details have been included at the request of Rob Lindsay: The Land Rights Act refers to both Traditional Owners and affected people. Previously, the NLC anthropologist has stated that Malak Malak follow a patrilineal line of inheritance. This means that Traditional Ownership is passed through the father line, but there are not many of these decedents left. Then there are also 'affected people' who are connected to the Malak Malak clan group who do not have a say in decision making.

## Conclusion: Overall learnings and next steps...

---

Each of the community reports just presented shows active and considered work by different local researchers working in their places under elder authority. There are both notable similarities and differences between these approaches, and we suggest that drawing these out will offer helpful guidance for CP&D staff, and potentially other organisations, interested in aligning their activities with the ongoing work of Traditional Owners maintaining their places.

### **Galiwin'ku:**

In carrying out her M&E research, Nyomba has been working to make evident particular working concepts through which it becomes possible to understand the means by which healthy Yolŋu community can constitute itself. Making visible these concepts does not necessarily enable them to be 'implemented' by others, but it does allow external collaborators to appreciate they are already present and at work in Nyomba's activities, and that she may be able to offer continuing guidance around how these can be nurtured withing CP&D and in supporting the Traditional Owners.

Her latest contribution, in the form of a discussion of *mununukkunhamirr'* suggests that the work of CP&D can productively be understood as a 'straightening up' of relations of Yolŋu people-places and Yolŋu collective life as community development. It is an endorsement and a commitment to the CP&D project that she would raise this term as relevant to this work. She notes, for example, that often this community building in the right way is not possible at the school.

As an ethos of working that could be nurtured within the CP&D group, this term helps to make explicit for both Traditional Owners and CP&D staff how a 'straightening up' of Yolŋu life is being effected through CP&D work, and that this is an outcome that can be more actively nurtured by all – Yolŋu and balanda alike. We saw this previously in the work done by Jonathon Roy conducting *Raypirri'* camps at Murrunga where children being able to collect the right clay for their rightful ceremony, made both children and country strong, and also supported to straighten out the town through reactivating connections with homelands.

### Actions for the NLC:

- Design CP&D project from a Yolŋu perspective, e.g. in the ways Nyomba and Jonathon have been showing. This will naturally support the possibility of these Yolŋu practices to be more easily and actively pursued in collaborative work within meetings and project design.
- Continue to support Nyomba's efforts to articulate such concepts through the journal she wants to write, and through supporting her active discussion and explanation of community development in meetings.
- See the work of *mununukkunhamirr'* as going on and needing support in the context of leader's relations to each other and their lands. Provide flexibility within coming together to straighten things out, that is not present within the Land Rights Act and its designation of traditional Aboriginal owner status.
- Work with Nyomba and the Traditional Owner group to identify a possible new researcher who may like to be mentored by Nyomba to take over her role.

## Gapuwiyak:

In carrying out his M&E research, Emmanuel has been connecting with his senior elders in working to make evident their commitments and practices within the CP&D program so they can be more actively engaged by the NLC.

This has happened through his work of collecting stories and creating video documentation of the work of elders as they do, and teach, relations of people and country in remembering the Gapuwiyak story in the context of community and business development.

The kinds of stories he gathers, point to particular relational practices that are present within the ordinary activities of meetings and project design, but which would not necessarily be explicitly attended to. Some of these insights have already been picked up by the CP&D staff and productively integrated into everyday conduct of projects. These include: the need for active work making Milindji visible to others as important to the functioning of a corporation that will be recognised for who and what it is, and correctly constituted within itself; an understanding of money as only doing work when it is moving, and the need to keep flows of money visible and working for the corporation; means by which the value of certain activities can be understood as related to the extent they maintain ancestral responsibilities to homelands and relations through totems; the ongoing satisfaction and commitment of the Traditional Owner group and their commitment to supporting the emergence of skilled young people working on country.

In the context of this latest stage of work such recognisable insights are:

- The importance of learning from and showing yourself within networks of other Yolŋu businesses and organisations. This enhances the way in which Milindji can make its authority and efforts public to the right networks of Yolŋu, as well as foreshadows an agenda of regional connections between Yolŋu organisations in a developing region.
- The continuing dual feature of business development: where growing prosperity is only relevant in so much as it also involves allocating ancestrally correct jobs to correct people
- The appropriateness of enabling people/groups to be able to step forward and show themselves in the context of senior authority as a ways of affirming recognisable practices of learning and achievement (e.g. presentation by the paint crew)
- The demonstrated long term commitment of the Traditional Owner group to working with CP&D to affirm clan leadership hierarchies already present in Yolŋu life, and the commitment to ensuring Milindji Trust is made strong through stable and correct leadership (e.g. the drawing in of Paul Molthu).

Actions for the NLC:

- Continue to support Emmanuel or other young researchers to be moving between elders and the NLC to learn practices of leadership under authority, and to make visible practices of authority in meetings and CP&D projects.
- Continue processes for sharing and reporting on money and expenditure
- Nurture space for discussions around Yolŋu-Yolŋu relationships between different organisations that would be considered valuable for the group in learning about business and becoming part of these slowly connecting networks.
- Recognise how ceremonial practices for teaching, learning and acknowledging authority can be important for growing and strengthening the working group (e.g. when the paint crew 'show themselves' to the Traditional Owner group and are encouraged by senior leaders).

And support further opportunities for these moments in the context of meetings or CP&D more generally.

### **Malak Malak:**

In carrying out her M&E research, Gwendoline has been very carefully producing methodical processes for keeping track of CP&D commitments, and for sharing these with other members of the working group so they can be well supported in their decision making. She has wanted to 'make evident' to Malak Malak the imperatives through which they want to generate strong community and Malak Malak clan life out of work with CP&D and the wider NLC.

Different to the other sites, this inquiry does not assume a stable foundation from which Malak Malak speak, but is engaged in the process of recovering this foundation at the same time as seeking to be guided by it. This is difficult work which sees Gwendoline working to bring herself into being as a confident new leader and also finding ways to best support the group in bringing to the surface elder stories and archive material.

This is work that it is difficult for CDU and the NLC to directly be a part of, as it involves negotiations amongst Malak Malak themselves. However, the NLC can keep offering support for Gwendoline – and any other project researchers – as needed and requested.

Actions for the NLC:

- To appreciate the challenging situation that Gwendoline is in as she undertakes this work with a serious commitment to supporting the ongoing life of Malak Malak
- To acknowledge that these challenges are significantly interwoven with relationships between Malak Malak and other parts of the NLC and to take an active role in advocating for good and supportive relationships with these other areas of NLC (including resolving issues around Gwendoline's ongoing employment with the Ranger Group)
- To appreciate the urgency around the work of the culture centre in collecting stories from elders, and to continue nurturing support for her work (potentially including through the engagement of new co-researchers), at the same time as acknowledging very little further storytelling work may be able to occur.

Finally, in supporting continuing efforts for CP&D to be working with local researchers, and actioning the insights emerging in their practices, we return to two of the key insights flagged in the opening pages of this report.

As guides to how to support local Indigenous practices of M&E and community development, these insights have been invaluable to the CDU team.

- Noticing that 'community' is conventionally understood as a given in most development work, and that standard practices of bureaucratic management will generally try to recreate community in the image of government, often presenting local people as at a deficit in the process. The understanding that community may emerge under elder authority in ways that are consistent with ancestral imperatives and right relations of people-place has been important to this work, and become the focus of locally led M&E.
- Also noticing that conventional notions of development prioritise notions of progress, improvement and change into the future. However, the local researchers constantly reiterated that they were not looking to emerge into a bright (Balanda) future, but to recover

their alignment with ancestral and elder imperatives. And that this work is the true focus of development.

It has been working with the dual lens of these insights that we've worked to better understand, and help make evident to others, what has been considered valuable and important in CP&D work in the sites where we have worked.



**NLC Head Office**

45 Mitchell Street  
Darwin NT 0801

Tel (08) 8920 5100  
Fax (08) 8920 5255

GPO Box 1222  
Darwin NT 0801

[www.nlc.org.au](http://www.nlc.org.au)



**NORTHERN  
LAND COUNCIL**

*Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life*