

# Indigenous Governance and Leadership Development Strategy

## Quarterly Report

November 2013 – February 2014



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## Key Points

Michael Christie and Ruth Wallace

As predicted, work in the Arnhem Land sites is well advanced because we were already involved there in similar work and were well known and accepted in the communities. In Ntaria and Wurrumiyanga people have been very careful that the project should be negotiated carefully and with correct protocols.

In Ntaria and Wurrumiyanga people were mostly unaware of the project and had a lot of questions (Where did it come from? How is this project different from all the others? Who is it for? Who has been contacted about it?). We are working to address these questions of communication.

We are interested in discussing with the Steering committee ways of improving community awareness of government commitment to the project, and their feedback on progress. It has been suggested that one way for this to begin is for the SC members to identify themselves personally, their roles and hopes to people on the ground.

We suggest that the ways in which the SC reports to the 3 levels of government (and their feedback) would be of interest and significance to community leaders, and ask if the SC feels this might be possible.

We are also interested in working with the SC to develop ways to enhance understanding of the changing policies and structures in all levels of government that are relevant to governance and leadership.

Community members are mostly very happy to contribute their ideas and opinions and have them included in reports and plans. Many of their ideas are politically sensitive, very provisional, and still under intense discussion. We work carefully to avoid exacerbating confusion and conflict. The community representatives seek assurance that the SC understands their concerns about confidentiality and due process.

### Next steps...

- SC to provide feedback on this report
- Summarised reports and report on SC meeting provided to local groups
- Stage 1 report and Stage 2 plan available to SC by end of March
- Feedback from SC and community interests
- Stage 2 plans ratified by community groups and returned to SC by 14 April 2013 .

## Introduction

The ***Indigenous Leadership and Development Strategy (IGLDS)*** project is funded and managed by the NT Department of Community Services through an MOU with the Australian Government. This funding was provided to the GroundUp team of the Northern Institute (NI) of Charles Darwin University (CDU) to work with local people and decision-making groups on governance and leadership in the five NT towns of Milingimbi, Gapuwiyak, Ramingining, Warrumiyanga and Ntaria.

The main goals of the IGLDS project are to:

1. Improve understanding of Aboriginal and Western governance systems and arrangements
2. Support and grow knowledge and skills in governance and leadership
3. Find ways for Aboriginal and Western governance systems and arrangements to work better together

### Two Stages

In theory, the IGLDS project has two distinct stages. In practice or reality, Stage 1 and Stage 2 will overlap and the boundary between them will be blurry. Stage 2 will slowly emerge out of Stage 1 when enough work has been done.

### Stage One - Planning with Communities

The Stage 1 objectives are to:

1. Build relationships with key community members and decision-making groups
2. Identify local Aboriginal people to work with us in the project
3. Find out the existing Aboriginal and Western governance and leadership systems and arrangements and how they are working: What governance and leadership systems, arrangements and practices are currently operating? What is working well, and are there problems? How do they work together? What changes can be made?
4. Find out the governance needs and aspirations (ideas and hopes) of people in each town
  - What would people like to know more about?
  - What skills would they like to develop?
5. Make a Plan for Stage 2 for each town and for the whole project

### Stage Two – Working with Communities

In Stage 2 we will continue to work in each community following the plan we make together in Stage 1. This may involve working as mentors with individuals or groups; running workshops; helping with meetings, planning or evaluating; developing resources and documenting what happens. We will continue to report to the Steering Committee and stakeholders and participants via Quarterly Reports throughout Stage 2.

### Quarterly Report 1

This is the first IGLDS Quarterly Report in Stage 1. Prior to this report we submitted two comprehensive Monthly Updates for September and October 2013. This QR reports on the work done in Stage 1 from November 2013 – February 2014.

### IGLDS Managers and Facilitators

The IGLDS managers and facilitators are all experienced in doing research, managing and facilitating projects and working with Aboriginal people and organisations. Michael Christie (Principal Scientist, ) of the NI will oversee and advise the work of researchers/ facilitators, supported by Ruth Wallace (NI Director).

Facilitators will be working in the following towns:

- *Ramingining, Milingimbi, Gapuwiyak*: Trevor van Weeren, Juli Cathcart, Anthea Nicholls
- *Ntaria*: Matthew Campbell
- *Wurrumiyanga*: Tanyah Nasir

## Method

The project draws on research and facilitation methods developed by *GroundUp* and *Rise Up*. The *GroundUp* and *Rise Up* approaches work respectfully with Aboriginal people and organisations to identify existing experience, knowledge and skills and then to find ways to strengthen, enhance and build on these. This requires the careful negotiation and generation of new understanding, knowledge and skills by working together through a combination of both ways adult learning and action research.

The **GroundUp** method (developed by members of the NI Transdisciplinary Research and Indigenous Knowledge Systems theme and Merri Creek Productions):

- Is committed to Aboriginal authority and governance
- Negotiates collaborations that are situated in remote Aboriginal communities and tailored to meet the specific needs of individuals, groups, organisations and government
- Works from the 'ground up' building on what people already know and do to generate innovative, local solutions
- Uses 'both-ways learning' to ensure all are understanding, and working respectfully and productively with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of knowing, practices and systems
- Works 'both-ways' to improve intercultural communication and enhance engagement and participation of government, industry and NGOs with Aboriginal communities

The **Rise Up** program (developed by *Tanyah Nasir Consulting Service*) encourages and empowers participants to strengthen:

- Belief in self
- Self confidence and self worth
- A positive attitude to be your best and to own your future
- Informed decision making
- Resilience
- Management of choices and change

## Report on IGLDS Team Meeting Two

Team Meeting 2 was held at NI, CDU from Wednesday 4 – Friday 6 December 2013. All facilitators met to discuss and evaluate what had happened so far, to plan for 2014 and to undertake relevant professional development together. Following is a summary of the main points of the full Team Meeting Report.

<b>Community reports</b>	Work is progressing in each community but has been slow for a variety of reasons. These were reported in the October update.
<b>Documentation</b>	Documenting meetings, interviews, incidental conversations etc is important. It is useful to take notes and write these up as stories or narratives and important to include ourselves and our reflections. It is important to document all the things you face when you are doing engagement/research/facilitation properly with Indigenous communities (for the SC and others). What are the difficulties and issues? Where possible, and within bounds of privacy legislation, collect demographic information: names, age-groups, male-female, clan groups, clan status, leadership role (Western/Indigenous), employed/unemployed/Centrelink etc.
<b>Google Drive</b>	We will use Google Drive to help manage the project, share documents etc. Although we have allowed time to read and write, managing this remains a struggle for all researchers, as other field work and project demands encroach on this time. At the moment we are focusing our writing on documenting our interactions with community members and others.
<b>Website / Publicity</b>	We will not make a website as a public face at this stage. A reminder to use CDU Talent Release Forms for images, photographs, video etc and to use required logos and branding on reports and other publications.
<b>Evaluation strategy</b>	<p>We spent a significant amount of time discussing and reviewing the project evaluation framework and strategy.</p> <p><i>Why are we evaluating?</i> To inform and improve our practice and the project along the way, to check how we are going in relation to the project objectives / outcomes, as a vehicle for people to tell other things – emerging outcomes , to provide an opportunity for people to say what they are doing and valuing in governance and leadership</p> <p><i>What are we evaluating?</i> Individual projects in each community, the overall project across communities, project objectives and outcomes, the way the team works together, the method, how the team works with structures and processes of government / LRG etc</p> <p><i>Who is the evaluation for?</i> Ourselves, Steering Committee, LRG, other stakeholders in government and communities</p> <p><i>Who is doing the evaluation?</i> Researchers and facilitators, participating community members and organisations</p> <p><i>How are we evaluating? How are we collecting evidence: What? How?</i> Evidence needs to be collected at both an individual level and group level.</p> <p><u>Individual level:</u> stories, journal writing, artefacts and objects, ‘little things’ – flotsam and jetsam, photographs, video, statistics (e.g. participation), feedback,</p> <p><u>Group level:</u> phone/Skype conferences, team meetings, Blog</p> <p>We discussed leadership and governance as an empirical question (meaning it is based on, concerned with and verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic). How do we ‘make visible’ the experience and practice of governance and leadership’ in communities, especially Indigenous governance and leadership? How do we make visible the GroundUp method? We also need to recognise and manage different expectations and values of the different stakeholders. We also need to remember that when looking at governance we</p>

usually think of people but we are talking about objects as much as about people. Society is an association of all the *people and things* that work together (to enable us to go on) (Latour).

We drafted an IGLDS Evaluation Framework and Strategy (see below).

**Budget and financial management**

We are working well to the Stage 1 budget. Part of Stage 1 is to find out how the costs of the project compare across communities and between research/facilitation arrangements so we can plan equitable budgets for each community for Stage 2. Any money not spent in Stage 1 will return to the pool to be reallocated in Stage 2.

**Timelines**

We confirmed the timelines as per the IGLDS Grant Agreement (p. 8)

**Quarterly Reports**

We are required to submit a Quarterly Report describing progress made, findings, challenges and plans for the next quarter to the IGLDS Steering Committee and, if possible, the LRG (Grant Agreement p. 9). Up until this point we had been under the impression that in Stage 1 we would submit Monthly Updates and begin submitting Quarterly Reports in Stage 2. So far we have submitted 2 comprehensive monthly updates in September and October. We will cease submitting Monthly Updates and begin submitting Quarterly Reports – the first being November 2013 – February 2014. We drafted a format for the Quarterly Report.

**Meeting with Peter Gamlin**

Peter Gamlin is managing the project for the NT government and the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is responsible for informing the 3 levels of government about the project. We discussed the size and composition of the SC as in the initial project discussions it was agreed that the SC would be small and representative (3 or 4 members). The SC has become very large and seems weighted towards the Australian Government. Peter explained things that the SC would like to see in the Quarterly Reports and confirmed Project Timelines with us. We also discussed some of the challenges of working carefully and well with Indigenous communities and Peter encouraged us to write about these in our research. We explained that the SC had agreed the best way for them to engage with us and the project was through questions directed at the SC in the Monthly Updates. We asked why we had not yet received any response to questions in the September or October Monthly Updates. We will discuss the effectiveness of this approach at the next SC meeting.

**Professional Development**

Team Meetings are a good opportunity for the IGLDS team to engage in some professional development to improve our knowledge and skills in relation to the IGLDS project. We discussed PD areas the team would like to work on together in the future.

**Connections with other projects**

We met with the Northern Futures Collaborative Research Network (CRN) team, also based at the NI to discuss ways in which our work is similar and how we might inform and enrich each others work.

## DRAFT IGLDS Evaluation Framework and Strategy

The IGLDS evaluation framework and strategy was refined during the second team meeting in December 2013. It comprises three phases that run through the two stages:

1. *Preliminary (or Front-end) evaluation* takes place during Stage 1 of the project and informs the planning of Stage 2
2. *Formative Evaluation* takes place during Stages 1 and 2 of the project. It is systematic, ongoing, cyclical and adjusts and improves the project as it goes along
3. *Summative evaluation* happens at the end of Stage 2. It evaluates the whole project against its objectives.

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
<p><b>Preliminary Evaluation</b> <b>IGLDS STAGE 1</b></p>	<p><b>Formative Evaluation</b> <b>IGLDS STAGE 1 and 2</b></p>	<p><b>Summative Evaluation</b> <b>IGLDS STAGE 2</b></p>
<p><i>Happens during Stage 1</i> <i>Informs planning and objectives for Stage 2.</i> <i>Helps to design method and evaluation.</i></p>	<p><i>Happens along the way during both Stages 1 and 2.</i> <i>Systematic, ongoing and cyclical</i> <i>Adjusts and improves the project as it is implemented.</i></p>	<p><i>Happens at the end of / after Stage 2.</i> <i>Evaluates against objectives determined in the planning stage</i> <i>Evaluates overall project.</i></p>
<p><b>COLLECTING EVIDENCE</b> What? How?</p>	<p><b>COLLECTING EVIDENCE</b> What? How?</p>	<p><b>COLLECTING EVIDENCE</b> What? How?</p>
<p><b>Qualitative and Quantitative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of existing documentation</li> <li>• Review of current situation</li> <li>• Stakeholder analysis</li> <li>• Set Stage 2 Objectives</li> </ul>	<p><b>Qualitative</b></p> <p>Individual and group/collaborative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories</li> <li>• Journal writing</li> <li>• Objects and artefacts - things that are created/made/emerge out of the process/project</li> <li>• ‘Little things’ – flotsam and jetsam</li> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Videos</li> <li>• Mapping/diagrams/drawings</li> <li>• Feedback from stakeholders</li> <li>• Blog</li> <li>• Phone/Skype conferences</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Surveys</li> </ul> <p><b>Quantitative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Statistics e.g. participation</li> <li>• Feedback sheets (e.g. Likert scale)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Qualitative and Qualitative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant feedback</li> <li>• Stakeholder feedback</li> <li>• Collation of Formative evaluation</li> </ul>



# Report for Ntaria

Matthew Campbell

## 1. Building relationships with key community members and decision-making groups

When the project began, I was employed by CDU. At the end of 2013 I moved to the Tangentyere Council in Alice Springs to head up their research hub (the TCRH). I negotiated an MOU between CDU and Tangentyere, and for the Ntaria project to be undertaken by the Indigenous researchers from Tangentyere. Tangentyere Council has its own research protocols, which govern the participation of the TCRH in research projects. In order for the TCRH to participate in this Project we first needed to gain approval from the Tangentyere Executive.

Three researchers from TCRH have strong links to Ntaria – Audrey McCormack, Vanessa Davis and Denise Foster. All speak Western Arrarnta and two of the three have lived in Ntaria for periods of time.

The first step in this process was for the TCRH researchers to learn about the proposed project so that we could develop a formal proposal to present at an Executive meeting. We invited Professor Christie of CDU to Tangentyere to provide information about the project and answer researchers' questions. Following this the Research team put together a proposal to present at a Tangentyere Executive meeting who approved the participation of the TCRH in the GLDS research on 25 November 2013.

Our primary strategy was using our knowledge and networks to start to flesh out a picture of the governance, leadership, organisations, day to day functioning and aspirations of people in (and connected to) Ntaria. This *'snowball sampling'* is particularly useful in difficult to reach populations, or in situations in which the research is directed toward gathering particular types of information (both of these are relevant in our research).

We have been particularly careful in our research process to ensure that our ongoing participation is welcomed by the Ntaria community and its members. This is particularly important to the TCRH Aboriginal researchers who agreed to participate in the research with the proviso that their involvement was sanctioned by senior members of the Ntaria community. This approach to working under authority and through negotiation is a key aspect of TRCH research methodology. One of the TCRH researchers, Audrey McCormack, is a senior Aboriginal woman who lives on Nyewente (Trucking Yards) town Camp in Alice Springs. As a researcher she is keen to be involved, but only if invited to do so by senior people from Ntaria who know her. At the same time, in order to be formally invited to participate in the research, the Research team needs to present the proposal to the Wurla Nyinta so that they can consider it and make their decision. However to maximize the chances that such a presentation is able to be thoughtfully considered, the TCRH held 'unofficial' meetings with a number of people, to discuss the concept, provide information and to gauge the level of interest in our proposal.

There have been two steps to this process thus far. First, as the coordinator of the TCRH, I first discussed the project with two senior members of significant Ntaria families, who agreed that the project sounded interesting and supported TCRH presenting formally to Wurla Nyinta. They were very keen to know the source of funding, the purpose, and who was being informed about the project and through what authority.

Following this and at their suggestion, I liaised with Anne Morrill (whitefella Ntaria Government Engagement Coordinator (GEC)). Anne was supportive of the research and agreed that it would make sense for the TCRH to next meet with the Indigenous Engagement Officer (IEO) Edward Rontji. In my previous work with Charles Darwin University, I provided training for IEOs and met Edward while doing this work so Edward was happy to meet with me and three members of the TCRH (whom he already knows). So as a result we have held five unofficial meetings with various members of the Ntaria community, providing them with information about the proposed project and answering any questions they have. In turn they have agreed to talk with other members of the Ntaria community about the project.

Researchers from TCRH have held a number of informal meetings with people connected to Ntaria. Some of these people are community residents, some are Traditional Owners, and others are members of organisations that are connected to Ntaria in some way. Some of these people wish not at this point to be

identified as they are mindful that the Wurla Nyinta governance group has not yet had an opportunity to formally discuss the project.

Our next step is to present formally at the Wurla Nyinta at Ntaria on 13 March. This will be the first time that many of the members of Wurla Nyinta will have heard about the research. Thus it has been a slow process, but because of the emphasis placed on *'doing things the right way'* by the Aboriginal TCRH researchers our method has had to slow down in order to comply with Aboriginal governance practices.

## **2. Identify local Aboriginal people to work with us in the project**

A small number of people have been identified who may be interested in working with us directly on the project in addition to the researchers from within the TCRH team. At the moment there is one man and one woman who have been mentioned. We are yet to follow up with them as we are waiting for Wurla Nyinta to formally consider the project.

At our meeting with the IEO, Edward Rontji, a great deal of emphasis was placed upon employing local people within a project like this. The IEO and the TCRH researchers all saw their job as assisting the people of Ntaria to take ownership of this project, and that this would be most effectively achieved through both broad and deep participation. Broad in the sense getting a wide range of people participating in the project would help to make it relevant and responsive to people's issues and concerns (and local people are the ones who know what is going on better than anyone). And deep in the sense that Edward and the researchers identified that there should be some people who took on a substantive role in coordinating the project at the local level, so as to ensure that the linking work connecting potentially disparate parts of the project was undertaken.

## **3. Finding out about the existing Aboriginal and Western governance and leadership systems and arrangements and how they are working**

Ntaria, like many communities has a number of community level boards and groups who focus on particular areas of interest. We have not had an opportunity to work with any of these groups formally due to the project not yet having formal approval.

All the people we have spoken to thus far have all stated that we must first gain approval from Wurla Nyinta. This indicates that people within Ntaria recognise Wurla Nyinta as a legitimate *community level* representative body, however we do not yet know how the Wurla Nyinta relates to other bodies within Ntaria or the role it plays in relation to the interface between Aboriginal and western governance systems within the community.

## **4. Finding out the governance needs and aspirations (ideas and hopes) of people**

From the discussions we have had people are very keen on local involvement, not only in decision making, but in the day to day work that this decision making oversees. They are particularly keen to see young people meaningfully engaged in the building of Ntaria, through participating in decision making forums as well as doing work to build the community.

## **5. Plan for Stage 2**

We are not yet at a point where we can negotiate plans for Stage 2. We anticipate that should Wurla Nyinta give us the go-ahead for the project, they will also be quite explicit about which organisations and which skills they would like to see addressed. The plan for stage 2, to be ratified by both the Steering Committee and Wurla Nyinta will detail both the target groups and individuals, and the target skills and understandings to be focused upon.

## **6. Next steps...**

Our first step is to present at the next Wurla Nyinta meeting and ascertain from them their vision for the future of Ntaria and the role we could play in governance and leadership development. If our project is approved we will then start liaising with members of the main local boards in Ntaria, following the snowball sampling technique. We are interested in approaching the governance of these bodies from the perspective of local Aboriginal people, but in doing that to also ensure that we canvass opinions and participation from all significant interests, including government workers and service provider staff.

## **7. Questions for the Local Reference Group**

We will ask people (assuming we are approved to conduct the project) if the Wurla Nyinta is the appropriate body to play the role of the local reference group for this project. We assume this will be the case but feel it is important to ensure this is how local people feel.

## **8. Questions for IGLDS Steering Committee**

We have no specific questions for the IGLDS Government Reference Group at this point.

# Report for Wurrumiyanga

Tanyah Nasir

## 1. Building relationships with key community members and decision-making groups

I was invited to be the IGLDS facilitator on the ground at Wurrumiyanga due to my long experience working with Indigenous individuals and organisations, and with Tiwi people, in the past. I have worked with Indigenous people and Tiwi people across the Northern Territory over the past 30 years with an education, employment and training context. Recently I have worked with Tiwi people whilst delivering the TNCS Rise Up Program, Be Your Best, Own your Future, in Darwin at Wurrumiyanga.

Over the past three months I have been reconnecting and building relationships and trust with key community members and decision-making groups. Even though I have family and cultural connections to some families at Tiwi, I undertake this project as an outsider. However, I understand that my relationships will impact and influence how people respond to me.

I have been intentionally very broad in whom I talk to, as well as what I talk to them about, as this provides people with the opportunity to connect, participate and feel valued and listened to. They are able to share their thoughts without judgment or repercussions. Because the topic is not specific or contained the discussions have reflected this and they have been broad and far reaching. So I have taken a *'Tell Us the Story from your perspective ... as a worker and as a community member'* approach to allow people to choose what they wish to discuss regarding governance and leadership from their perspective.

During the initial consultation period there have been seven deaths and as of yesterday (10 March 2014) another. Tiwi people at Wurrumiyanga have been and continue to be grieving and experiencing a significant amount of pain and loss and an overwhelming amount of sorry business.

Over the period of December to late January Tiwi people have had Christmas, been on bush and school holidays and then the beginning of the calendar business year has seen the surge of service provider visitors to the community with ensuing meetings.

*'A number of people expressed a view that many visitors are (government tourists), taking up community time because the wet season has locked them out of other tropical communities'*. Wurrumiyanga Governance and Engagement Map 2011 p 5

One of the members of the LRG recently passed away and the next LRG meeting has been cancelled. The water table is high, making it hard to bury people and lay them to rest, so there is now a backlog of funerals and people to be buried.

Due to this consultative meetings and workshops at Wurrumiyanga have been postponed and I am awaiting advice from the relevant agencies and authorities.

In attempting to manage the above I continue to have meetings according to people's availability i.e. over the phone, via email and when people have free time whilst attending other meetings in Darwin. Please see attached list of 'Summary of visits and meetings' to date.

## 2. Identify local Aboriginal people to work with us in the project

Everyone that has participated has done so willingly and has generously given their time to share their knowledge and perspectives. People are generally interested and see it as a way of improving the current structures and ways of doing.

Organisations that have been very collaborative to date are the following:

- Red Cross
- Tiwi Islands Youth Diversion
- Corrections Service
- Child Protection (NTG)
- TITEB – Tiwi Island Training Education Board

- Tiwi Island Shire Council and
- Prime Minister and Cabinet

The local Tiwi people within these organisations are Therese Puruntatameri, Mavis Kerinaiaua, Nelson Mungatopi, Crystal Johnson and Claudia Kantilla. All of these people have expressed an interest in participating in the project to build up their knowledge and capacities about leadership and governance.

Non Tiwi people include:

- Kevin Doolan – Corrections Service
- Jay Lumsden – Red Cross
- Peter Penley – Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Norm Buchan – TITEB
- Daniel Lesperance – TITEB

### **3. Finding out about the existing Aboriginal and Western governance and leadership system and arrangements and how they are working**

#### Aboriginal Governance and Leadership

When talking about Aboriginal Governance the Tiwi people use terms such as '*old way, Tiwi Way, Tiwi law, traditional way and cultural way*'.

#### Ponki Mediation process

*This information is from initial discussions and needs further investigation and validation.*

Ponki – is a ceremonial term meaning peace and it is a Tiwi cultural mediation process to work through and resolve conflicts. Ponki mediators come from each of the four skin groups and all Tiwi people are encouraged to be Ponki mediators and work towards peace.

*Skin group is the way we govern. Everything we do is through Tiwi. Tiwi Governance is about the skin group process.*

There are about 17 Ponki mediators at Wurrimiyanga and 6 have nationally accredited qualifications. They have gained these qualifications through the Community Justice Centre.

This Ponki mediation process is being used at community courts and within mainstream departments such as the Youth Justice department, police and NAAJA. The Ponki mediation process is also used within and around the community to resolve conflict and disputes however the service and the mediators are not funded.

For example:

An issue had been brewing with the local Tiwi people. And local people were arguing around the shop and it was heard down the street by some Ponki mediators. They immediately drove to the shop to see what was happening and if they could help in any way. Ponki is about the right people coming together, the right people waiting and participating, you cannot participate if you are not the right person from the right skin group. People only participate according to their relationship to the people arguing. You only intervene if you are part of the same skin group and you are the right person.

*It is about letting people have their say, encourage them to talk ... peaceful way*

*The best way is the quiet way*

*Allow them to be heard*

*Listen to them and allow them to listen to each other.*

*And at the right time ... the right person intervenes.*

*'Well we need to do something now ...'*

*The 2 main people come together to talk*

*Say sorry and shake hands  
Then everyone walks away.*

*We (the Ponki team) have to follow up after to see how everyone and everything is going.*

This traditional mediation process is used automatically but informally in support of the western community court and when working with family and children issues.

The Ponki mediation process appears to be well known by Tiwi people and by some of the government service providers i.e. Community Justice Centre, NAAJA, Youth Diversion and Family and Children services as well as Prime Minister and Cabinet.

This process is used informally and anecdotally and the Tiwi respect and look for this mediation and intervention process however there is no current formal acknowledgement or remuneration for this skill and service in the current governance structures.

### Skin Groups Meetings

The skin group meetings are in the process of being re-established.

A new position of Governance Manager within the Tiwi Islands Shire Council structure has been recently created. It is hoped that the Skin Groups will work closely with the Governance Manager (currently a non-Tiwi man) and the Local Authority (previously known as Local Advisory Board or Local Board, which are the same as the Community Advisory Boards (CABs) in other communities) to influence and impact the policies and programs being offered by service providers.

The Skin Groups want to make a link between themselves, the local authority the Tiwi Island Shire Council and the service providers to enhance local Tiwi involvement and participation in any decision making. They see the new Governance Manager to be a critical position in assisting them to do this.

I am still in the process of discussing and clarifying these developments.

### *Milimika*

(This information is from initial discussions and needs further investigation and validation)

Milimika – knowing your position i.e. roles and responsibilities

Milimika came from ceremony and law and this gives the structure. One interviewee said that it should be in the framework of governance and transferred into the workplace.

There is a Milimika Festival held at Wurrimiyanga each year. However, funds have been ceased for 2014.

### Western style Governance systems

The Tiwi Land Council, Tiwi Island Shire Council and the Mantiyupwi Land Trust are the largest governing structures at Wurrumiyanga.

*Community based and regional organisations include:*

- Nguiu Ullintjinni Association Incorporated
- Nguiu Club
- Tiwi Enterprises Pty Ltd
- Bima Wear
- Tiwi Design
- Patakijiyali Museum
- Bathurst Island Housing Association
- Tiwi Bombers Football Club
- Ngaruwanajirri Incorporated – the Keeping House
- Health Related Services – Wurrumiyanga Primary Health Care (Clinic)
- Catholic Church and Catholic Care
- Australian Red Cross

- Job Services Australia
- Centrelink
- Housing Reference Group
- Safe Houses and Safety Plan
- Policing and Night Patrol
- Courts
- Tiwi Youth Diversion and Development Unit
- Mantiyupwi Clan Land Trust
- Tiwi Land Council
- Tiwi Islands Shire Council
- Local Advisory Boards (Local Authority)
- Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board
- Wurrumiyanga Schools
- Local Reference Group

The above existing governance systems are employ different mechanisms, some of these include:

- Each has board and committee members from the 4 Skin Groups.
- Not all community based and regional organisations have boards
- NT Police at Wurrumiyanga do not have a community committee.
- Wurrumiyanga Primary Health Care only meets when funds are available to pay sitting fees.
- Not all board members are paid sitting fees, dependent on funding.
- Red Cross employ 27 Tiwi and they provide direction for their programs

Numerous Tiwi people sit on a number of western governance boards throughout the year.

The impact on the individual's family, social, cultural and community responsibilities and the toll on their quality of life, their health and wellbeing, relationships and time away from home would sufficiently impactful.

For example, one of the Tiwi community members, as documented in the Wurrumiyanga Governance and Engagement Map 2011 attends the following meetings.

- 12 meetings per year for the LRG (Local Reference Group)
- 12 meetings per year for Shire Councillors – Paid sitting fees
- 12 meetings per year for Health Advisory Committee – Paid sitting fees only when funds are available
- 12 meetings per year Nguuu Ullintjinni Association Incorporated – Paid sitting fees \$200/meeting
- 12 meetings per year Tiwi Island Land Council – Paid sitting fees

*'These people have the heaviest load: generally, each committee or board would meet at least monthly; if they meet for ten months a year, this would mean thirty meetings a year for these individuals. Six people are on five to eight committees, and thus the annual number of meetings is significantly higher for them. In addition, the majority of the people listed above are heads of clans, and so have to juggle traditional leadership responsibilities with government meeting duties (see Section 2.1 Table on Skin Group Leaders).*

(Wurrumiyanga Governance and Engagement Map, 2011 p. 5)

People from the following organisations and government departments in Wurrumiyanga have shown interest:

- Red Cross
- Tiwi Islands Youth Diversion
- Corrections Service
- Child Protection (NTG)
- TITEB – Tiwi Island Training Education Board

- Tiwi Island Shire Council and
- GEC and IEO

#### 4. Finding out the governance needs and aspirations (ideas and hopes) of people

The needs and aspirations most commonly expressed to me in my preliminary discussions with individual and groups, fall into five categories:

1. How can we better understand the structures, systems and roles we are expected to take up?
2. How do we work the western and the Tiwi systems together so that each is equally valued?
3. How do we get the various agencies and service providers to work better together to minimize the duplication and overlap?
4. How do we facilitate better communication between government agencies, non-government organisations and the community to ensure the Tiwi voice is heard and understood?
5. How do we help each other get past the 'jealousy' which prevents people from working effectively together?

To date, these are some of the documented comments from Tiwi people:

- *Tiwi are one people ...*
- *Tiwi Ways and Western Ways ... how do we work the two to benefit the Tiwi*
- *Tiwi Shire and Tiwi Land Council make all big decisions.*
- *Inclusion of a Cultural Governance Model – 4 Separate Skin Groups into the existing western governance mechanisms.*
- *We need to have 'Tiwi way and Western way side by side, we need to lift up Tiwi way so they are equal'*
- *There is no collaboration of agencies.*
- *People on Boards and Committees don't understand their role and responsibility, they don't represent their community – their clan, family and skin group, they don't talk to the community – share info and tell people what happened, don't take info to ... family, skin and clan groups and they don't understand how the boards all interconnected and intertwined.*
- *RJCP is not working for Tiwi.*
- *There is two different ways of doing one is the Aboriginal and the other the Western governance.*
- *Councillors do not understand their role. Example – The Shire and CEO work for councillors ... they don't understand their role.*
- *Not really sure about reading financial statements, contracts, minutes, etc*
- *I went to school with some of the board members and I know they will be struggling with the literacy and numeracy*
- *People are struggling with literacy and numeracy – they don't have the basics*
- *Too much concentration on numeracy and literacy – got to break it down*
- *Jealousy, anger, envy and violence is very high – this influences people's response, involvement, participation, decision, etc*
- *Ponki mediators need to dismantle and break down the jealousy, anger, envy and violence*
- *Training and learning needed – love, respect and healing*
- *It can be overwhelming – lot of people visit in community all the time, lots of service providers*
- *Many things are versus each other e.g. western way vs Tiwi way, Tiwi law and governance vs western way, skin group vs board membership, Tiwi language/modern Tiwi vs old Tiwi.*
- *Tiwi mob have the perception that ... whiteman is on the top ... and us mob are on the bottom.*
- *Tiwi say the whiteman is the boss and they think the same.*
- *There is a lot of anti-white (the system) ... Not white people but the white system.*



## **5. Plan for Stage 2**

Once information has been compiled the Data and information will be shared with the LRG, Tiwi Islands Shire Council, elders and community members from the initial consultation for shared knowledge and understanding and to determine the future directions and any suggestions for the project. Possible initiatives are beginning to emerge.

## **6. Next Steps ...**

- Meet with Elders and Land Owners
- Meet with the local LRG to be organized by Mavis Kerinauia
- Meet with the housing reference group and the Tiwi Health Advisory committee
- Meet with Tiwi Island Shire Council CEO and Governance Manager, Bruce Moller
- Conduct workshops for Tiwi people. This will be organized by Therese Puruntatameri, Red Cross.

## **7. Questions for Local Reference Group**

1. How can we work together to ensure that the initiatives (work started) be sustained?

## **8. Questions for IGLDS Steering Committee**

1. People want to know more about the steering committee, who they are and what they are expecting from this project.
2. People in the community continue to ask why the Wurrumiyanga community has been selected for this project.

# Report for East Arnhem – Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi and Ramingining

## Working as a team across the three communities

Juli, Trevor and Anthea are working in the three East Arnhem communities of Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi and Ramingining. Although we are each respectively responsible for overseeing the work done in each of these communities, we have found that it to be more effective and efficient to work across the communities as a team. Thus far we have worked individually, in pairs or as a whole team in the three communities, based on what suited the situation and timeframe best. This enables us to pool our individual experience and strengths for the benefit of the project and towns. It also enables us to learn from and work with a wide range of Yolŋu and service providers; to link and compare what people are saying and thinking, and what is happening across the towns; and to work more effectively with regional changes and programs e.g. local government reforms and the RJCP program. It also makes good sense from a Yolŋu perspective as Yolŋu people are closely related and share governance and leadership responsibilities across these and other Arnhemland communities.

Gapuwiyak: 2013: Juli and Trevor – 8 days over 2 visits  
2014: Juli and Trevor – 4 days over 1 visit

Milingimbi: 2013: Juli and Trevor – 4 days over 1 visit  
2013: Anthea, Juli and Trevor – 4 days over 1 visit  
2014: Juli and Trevor – 4 days over 1 visit

Ramingining: 2013: Anthea, Juli and Trevor – around 12 days over extended period of time (based in Ramingining and working on other, related, projects in between time)  
2014: Anthea – 8 days over 1 visit

## 1. Building relationships with key community members and decision-making groups

### Overview

In accordance with Yolŋu protocol, in all three towns we began our research by visiting Yolŋu people we already know and have relationships with, and the designated Traditional Owners to introduce ourselves and the project, talk about the research and work we hope to do and to ascertain if they were happy for us to be there. In each town, the TO's made special time for us to sit with them. They all see governance and leadership as key issues in their communities and expressed interest in the project – to be involved and kept informed – and suggested other people we should talk to.

We then made appointments to visit other key Yolŋu leaders and community members, and peak organisations in the towns, starting with the Indigenous Engagement Officer (IEO), Government Engagement Coordinator (GEC), Local Reference Group (LRG) and Community Advisory Board (CAB), Shire Services Manager (SSM) and Community Liaison Officer (CLO). From there we visited the Police and other organisations with governing Boards or Councils, leadership programs and training responsibilities including the School, Art Centre, Resource Centres and Rangers groups, the ALPA store, Remote Jobs Community Project (RJCP) providers, Health Clinic, Youth Sport and Recreation and other representatives from other groups and programs like Families as First Teachers (FaFT), LCAP programs, the Strong Womens' group and other local initiatives.

As we have each lived and worked in Arnhemland for between 12 and 30 years, we are adopted into Yolŋu families and Clans and have established relationships with several key people and leaders in each of the communities we visit. We find that once Yolŋu people realise we speak some Yolŋu matha and we have established our gurruṯu connections, conversations open up and flow. Most people are very willing to speak openly with us about issues related to governance and leadership. Yolŋu are keen to share information about and explain Yolŋu governance and leadership structures and processes, what is working, where there are problems and their perceptions of the reasons for these, and we are very keen to learn more.

## Gapuwiyak

Over the three visits to Gapuwiyak in 2013 and 2014, we visited and connected with most Yolŋu Clan leaders and all of the organisations and service providers. Most were receptive about the project and keen to work with us in some form or another. Since 2013, the community has experienced several changes related to governance and leadership. The previous GEC, Anne Enchong was unexpectedly replaced by Francine Chinn from Milingimbi, and a new Shire Services Manager, Andrew Walsh has recently been appointed. Each time we visit, we try to see people we have missed previously and to touch base again with those we have already worked with. The IEO, Watha Wunungmurra is encouraging and helpful.

## Milingimbi

Thus far we have had two visits to Milingimbi in 2013 and one in 2014. In the first visit, reported in the October Monthly Update, Juli and Trevor focused on introducing ourselves and the project to the main community organisations and governance groups including the Shire Services Manager and Community Liaison Officer, School, Art Centre, Health Clinic, Youth, Sport and Recreation, the Government Engagement Coordinator and Indigenous Engagement Officer; and we began meeting with Elders and key Yolŋu authorities. However, many key people were involved in a funeral ceremony occurring at the time of the visit and many people in the community were in mourning. Our second visit to Milingimbi coincided with a Yolŋu Nations Assembly (Makarr Dhuni) meeting and the Gatjirrk Cultural Festival.

Through connections with other work and our relationships with some Makarr Dhuni Yolŋu Nations Assembly members, Anthea, Juli and Trevor were invited to observe and participate in the Makarr Dhuni meeting, which took place over three days. This gave the opportunity to get to know 15 Yolŋu leaders and authorities from Milingimbi, Ramingining, Gapuwiyak, Galiwin'ku and Yirrkala who are of their own initiative, exploring an alternative model of regional governance across East Arnhemland. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss and act on issues of regional significance, and finalise decisions about the name, membership, directors, office bearers and the objectives for the Rule Book (constitution) in preparation for registration as an Aboriginal Corporation. These goals were all achieved amidst rich, open, probing and often difficult dialogue as the group struggled and strove to understand and find ways in which the requirements of both Yolŋu and Western governance structures and processes could be honoured and met. In the evenings we took the opportunity to join with the Milingimbi township to celebrate Yolŋu culture in the Gatjirrk Cultural Festival held at the school, and build connections informally with both Yolŋu and Balanda community members.

In 2014 Juli and Trevor revisited Milingimbi, spoke further with several key community members and introduced the project to Yolŋu and Balanda who were previously unavailable or new in the community. We also participated in a CAB meeting.

## Ramingining

During this reporting period Anthea, Juli and Trevor were resident in Ramingining for extended periods (Anthea 10 weeks, Juli and Trevor both 8 weeks) involved in a range of work including this project. Being present in the community enabled engagement on both formal and informal levels. Because we lived close to the ALPA store and the Shire Offices and maintained an open and inviting meeting place on our veranda, many people visited us. Several elders, with significant roles in local governance, met with us frequently. These included Matthew Dhulumburrk, Albert Djiwada, Yambal Durrurrŋa, Norman Daymirriŋu and Richard Bandalil. The conversations we had always revolved around governance issues important to the community: housing, changes in government, the possibility of a new Ramingining Aboriginal Corporation, what was happening at the school or at the police station, the emergence of the *Yolŋuw Makarr Dhuni* (Yolŋu Nations Assembly), and so on. It was always also an opportunity for us to ask questions and to continue to learn about Yolŋu culture and language.

These invaluable, unscheduled conversations all contributed to the 'governance story' in Ramingining, but because we were there and also engaged in other projects which had direct governance implications (including the feasibility study for a new Ramingining Aboriginal Corporations) we were also able to attend

LRG meetings. We attended in a number of ways, either invited as observers or as presenters. This gave us the opportunity to explain our roles and also to report on specific work, ie. the RAC Feasibility Study.

Issues arising out of these meetings then informed the ongoing discussions on our veranda and on one occasion lead to an invitation to Juli to run a small workshop on *Levels of Participation and Decision-Making in Community Engagement* for several elders and the IEO and GEC. This lead to further dialogue about ways we might work together, building both-ways, ground-up understandings of western and Yolŋu ways of 'doing governance'.

## **2. Identify local Aboriginal people to work with us in the project**

### Overview

In all communities we have identified local people to work with us on the project and spoken at length with key Yolŋu leaders and non-Indigenous people in leadership positions about governance and leadership arrangements and issues. There is general support and interest in the project and scope to work with Mala Leaders, CABs, LRGs, the new Local Authorities and local boards in all communities, as well as with women and emerging aboriginal corporations. We have identified people in each community who we could work with in Stage 2. These people have been in past, are now or are likely to be in future leadership or governance positions in either or both Yolŋu and Western systems. They include male and female cultural authorities, Mala Leaders, directors or councillors on one or more boards or councils and younger, emerging leaders.

### Gapuwiyak

We have arranged for Gawura Wanambi, a cultural leader and EA Shire Councillor to work closely with us on the project, together with Shirley Nirrpuranydji, past School Principal, who is currently studying her Masters Degree. AIS Interpreter, Lesley Champion has also indicated his willingness to support us as needed. We are still in the process of identifying people who we feel we could work with on the project.

### Milingimbi

We have an ongoing relationship with YACI consultant and trained Interpreter, Mark Nākarrma (Yiŋiya) Guyula, who is a cultural leader and authority at Milingimbi, and working closely with us on the project. Through Nākarrma we arrange meetings with Traditional Land Owners, ceremonial leaders and male and female cultural authorities to talk about the project and discuss governance and leadership structures, processes, issues and concerns. Almost every Yolŋu person we have spoken to in Milingimbi has invited us to work with them or to talk further.

### Ramingining

During the Feasibility Study re a new Aboriginal Corporation in Ramingining, we were able to engage several key people to work with us, viz. Tommy Munyarryun, Dorothy Wiliyawuy and Daphne Banyawarra. Their involvement was a crucial aspect of the thoroughness and authenticity of that study. Anthea has also undertaken work on the LCAP project with Matthew Dhulumburrk, Albert Djiwada, Yambal Durrurrŋa and Faye Mätjarra. In each case the project funding included payment for this work. *We see that these* relationships and the experiences we have of working together will be invaluable in the ongoing work of the IGLD project. We have interviewed over 20 people so far.

### 3. Finding out about the existing Aboriginal and Western governance and leadership system and arrangements and how they are working

### 4. Finding out the governance needs and aspirations (ideas and hopes) of people

#### Overview

We have combined questions 3 and 4 as this seemed to make better sense.

#### *Yolŋu governance*

Yolŋu leadership and governance structures and processes underpin all aspects of community life, and are critical to successful community governance.

The foundation of the Yolŋu social system and system of governance is *gurrutu* – the highly sophisticated and complex networks of kinship that link individuals and groups (clans) to each other and to their land and sea estates – and *rom*, often translated as ‘law’ (Morphy, p. 144, in Hunt, Smith, Garling and Sanders, 2008).

Clans, people, land and sea estates connect and relate through two main systems within *gurrutu* – Märi-Gutharra and Yothu-Yindi. These systems are central to Yolŋu governance across Arnhemland and within each town. They determine land and sea ownership and custodianship – where people live, how people marry, who is involved in decision-making, how decisions are made, and how disputes resolved.

#### *Yolŋu governance and towns*

The idea that each land or sea estate has one particular ‘Traditional Owner’ is challenging for Yolŋu who identify several different clans and leaders from different clans as having specific responsibilities for that land as are inherited or bestowed through *rom* and *gurrutu*. With many clans living in each township, land tenure in the towns is very complex and who are the TO’s is often contested. This is partly because different groups have different kinds of connections and responsibilities for an area of land or sea (all of which re custodial in nature) based on their relationship to that area through *gurrutu* and *rom* and depending on the nature of the situation or issue. This complexity is not fully reflected in the enactment of the Land Rights Act in the towns. This impacts on the distribution of power in relation to housing, infrastructure and town leases and income received through rental and royalties.

Despite these difficulties, Yolŋu governance and law exists and is working strongly in communities to govern and maintain law and order. Leaders are continually in communication through mobile phones and physically moving within and between towns and Homeland Centres, for example, to mediate, resolve disputes, enforce disciplinary measures, negotiate business, organise ceremonial business including *Bäpurru* (mortuary and funeral ceremonies), *Dhapi* (initiation ceremony), *Gunupipi* and *Ŋarra* (high level men’s and women’s business often equated to university and/or parliament).

All Yolŋu adults we spoke with were concerned that Western law, in particular policing and sentencing processes and practices that are seen as often ‘*running over Yolŋu law*’ and making it harder and harder for Yolŋu leaders to govern and maintain law and order under their jurisdiction. Yolŋu law works on a system of ‘*restorative justice*’, which gets disrupted by police ‘intervention’. Yolŋu recognise that police have to enact Western law but insist that this often causes as many if not more problems than it fixes by placing a temporary ‘*lid on the hornets nest*’, thereby escalating the problem. People also report inappropriate and unlawful (according to Yolŋu law) police behaviour and actions and these are of great concern, seriously affecting people’s perception of their safety and security. Some actions police think they are taking to protect the community are in fact making people more vulnerable.

In the time we have been working on this project we have witnessed several Yolŋu leaders traveling to and from communities (even from Darwin) to mediate serious disputes and resolve conflict. Many Yolŋu leaders spend much of their lives maintaining governance, leadership, law and order in their communities. None of this work is paid or recognised by the Western system but is recognised and paid through Yolŋu systems.

Over the years there have been several attempts made by Yolŋu to have their governance and law recognised by Western systems and these have met with varying success. Many Yolŋu leaders and lawmen are intensely interested in working closely with Balanda legal institutions such as the Department of Justice

and Indigenous legal organisations such as NAAJA to develop better arrangements, especially for minor crimes. This has included inviting ministers and legal personnel to witness aspects of *Gunupipi* and *Njërra* ceremonies and discuss their role in Yolŋu law and possibilities for Yolŋu law to work alongside Western law with respect to determining sentencing and consequences of unlawful behaviour. Yolŋu leaders feel that in many cases, Yolŋu law is more appropriate and more effective and are keen to enter into dialogue with Western lawmakers about possibilities for creating a better legal and correctional system for Yolŋu people and offenders. This is clearly articulated in a paper written by James Gaykamaŋu and edited by Dania Kelly (September, 2012), *'Njërra Law: Aboriginal customary law from Arnhem Land'*, published in the Northern Territory Law Journal and Reports. This paper discusses the clash of Njërra law and Australian law, and legal education in remote Arnhemland communities, and calls for dialogue.

With Yolŋu researchers, advisors and mala leaders, we are discussing the issues and merits of making Yolŋu governance systems more visible and understood by Balanda-based organisations and programs, to assist Yolŋu and Western systems of governance to engage with each other in more meaningful, influential and accountable ways. We are seeing if we can find ways to describe, explain and map how Yolŋu governance is arranged and working in each town. A good start has been made but this work is complex and involves careful and extensive dialogue in each community, and will continue throughout Stage 2. There is also concern as to whether governments can be trusted to use this information for or against Yolŋu people.

#### *'Western' governance in towns*

People feel *'slammed'* by the combined impact of the NT Emergency Response (the Intervention) and creation of the super shires, and are confused by continual changes in government, policy, funding, and other initiatives.

Many Yolŋu leaders are extremely frustrated by their lack of authority and ability to make decisions through the CABs and LRGs, and want to see the current 'advisory bodies' and 'reference groups' replaced by bodies that enable them to have real decision-making power in their communities. The interest in reviving representative local Aboriginal Corporations in all communities is perhaps one way Yolŋu feel they may be able to achieve a degree of autonomy and to run their own affairs.

It is possible that the NT Local Government Reforms that are rolling out in all communities, in which Local Authorities in each major town will replace the CABs, may address some of these concerns. Among Council employees and Board members, and CAB members there is a range of responses from outright scepticism (*'it's just an expensive re-branding exercise'*) to interest, guarded hope and excitement.

Nominations for Local Authorities (LA's) in each major town (to replace the CABs) are currently being received by the Shire Councils. The LAs for each community will be finalised in the Ordinary Council Meeting on 26 March and will be official from 1 July 2013. LA's can have between 6 and 14 members per community, and additional members with Ministerial approval, plus the two EA Council representatives per community as ex officio LA members. LA's are appointed from the list of nominees by a special working party of the EA Regional Council.

In addition to their Yolŋu leadership positions, many people are on several governance groups and boards. Most of these groups don't include sitting fees and apart from the Regional Councils, none pay for community consultation work done outside meetings, nor is this work recognised by Centrelink or the RJCP.

#### *The impact on the community and people's lives of current and changing policies*

Many conversations come around in the end to issues associated with the impact of government policies, especially the ever-changing nature of imposed policies, on Yolŋu life. This includes recent discussions re the prospect of township year leases.

#### *The Yolŋuw Makarr Dhuni*

These issues (the status of Yolŋu governance and law in a modern Yolŋu life and the impact of ever changing government policies) are finding expression in the formation of the *Yolŋu Nations Assembly: Yolŋuw Makarr Dhuni* – a group of Yolŋu leaders with representatives from towns and Homelands across

East Arnhem that is endeavouring to find a way for Yolŋu traditional governance structures and western governance to work together, particularly with the purpose of empowering Yolŋu to have their own regional voice on issues and to be a regional consultative group for government and other organisations on policy and other matters.

### *Yolŋu leadership*

We are working with Yolŋu leaders to understand how Yolŋu leadership works and how leaders are chosen or come about. In every community, Yolŋu adults express concern about the need to support young people to step up into both Yolŋu and 'Westernised' leadership and governance roles in the community. It can be difficult for young people who are not recognised as having leadership 'gifts' or potential to step into this role or these positions. Yolŋu authorities actively watch for signs of leadership gifts from birth, and carefully support, nourish and cultivate these as opportunities present themselves and through formal education in ceremony.

### *Housing, overcrowding and governance*

Yolŋu express a great deal of dissatisfaction and concern about Territory Housing and the Shire especially around the issues of over-crowding, housing repairs and maintenance. The recent building and refurbishment of houses in Milingimbi and Gapuwiyak have done nothing to ease overcrowding, with less bedrooms than there were. It is difficult for people to engage with and focus on governance and leadership issues when basic human needs are not able to be met and people are under the intense pressure.

Overcrowding seriously compromises people's physical, emotional and mental health, their security and safety. Two and 3 bedroom houses can have over 15 people living in them with people sleeping in the kitchens, dining rooms and living rooms. This diminishes peoples ability to look after their children and send them to school, and the children's ability to learn. People are forced to turn others away, which causes conflict and anxiety. This situation is exacerbated in the wet season when people are unable to sleep outside their houses and in tents as they do in the dry, placing families under even more pressure. In Milingimbi some people are not cutting the grass around their houses, which is waist high, as the long grass deters people from coming to visit and wanting to stay.

### *Personal governance*

Personal governance is seen as important and directly related to family, organisational and community governance by both Yolŋu and Balanda.

For Yolŋu, understanding and respecting Yolŋu gurruṯu and rom is fundamental for personal governance. Your gurruṯu is the proof of your identity and existence. At the most basic level, you are born out of and into gurruṯu and rom, and know who you are through gurruṯu and rom. You can't look after (govern) yourself or your family if you don't know, respect and live by gurruṯu and rom.

Personal governance is also a major focus of schools, police and health programs. In Western society your birth certificate is fundamental proof of your existence. Many Yolŋu people don't have a birth certificate and it can be very complicated to get one. The new Arnhem Police Engagement Officer has identified a plausible link between people not having birth certificates and ending up in jail. The Western world identifies us through systems of numbers – tax file numbers, Centrelink numbers, bank account numbers, phone numbers, and by usernames and passwords. We rely on these to access services and entitlements. Computer literacy and internet access are increasingly important to our ability to govern ourselves, to have choices and influence our lives.

### *Education, lifelong-learning and health*

Recent cuts in government spending, especially in education and health are causing particular concern. Many Yolŋu people spoke openly about the push to send secondary-aged students to boarding school as creating another stolen generation. This should be a choice, not mandatory. There is enormous support for bilingual education and good secondary education in communities. Leaders and parents we spoke to are

very concerned that the education of Yolŋu children and youth is far broader than school can provide, and that they are actively teaching language, gurrutu and rom from the moment a child is born – in the home, in daily life and cultural activities, through ceremony and on country. This Yolŋu education is fundamental to personal and community governance and leadership, and cannot happen if children are removed from their teachers – their families, Elders, community and the land.

Balanda and Yolŋu in communities are very concerned that there are not securely funded and appropriate pathways from school to further education and employment. Yolŋu view learning as life-long and formal Yolŋu education continues throughout adult life. Many people feel the training model is not adequate. Trainers often have no background in supporting EADL (English as an Additional Language or Dialect) learners and training becomes reduced to a *'tick and flick'* exercise. This leads to situations where people have certificates but struggle to do the work. There are many examples where Yolŋu have certificates but cannot get a job over FiFo's (Fly-in, Fly-out contractors) or a balanda person living in their community, or conversely they have many years of previous experience and can do the work well but no qualifications, (usually because of their age or the literacy and numeracy demands of the training are too high) and can't be employed under regulations.

Several balanda managers have acknowledged that 'non-accredited training' in the form of in-services, professional development, adult learning, workshops, and on-the-job mentoring, is very often far better than 'accredited training' but cannot always be counted when it comes to employment. Several Yolŋu people have spoken to us about the need to support life-long learning through proper adult education and higher education in communities, not just training. Many young people drop out of school in their later teenage years only to realise the consequence of this when they *'get through those silly years'*, however there are few opportunities for them to *'have another go'* when they are ready and motivated. The Gupuwiyak School is running a Year 13 and 14 but this is stretching their teaching resources and none of the schools in the communities we are working with have the capacity to fully undertake adult education. Highly successful secondary programs and VET seem to be going unrecognised and have been cut despite high attendance and successful outcomes.

Several people spoke to us about wanting community-based adult and higher education that would support life-long learning like the old adult education and Batchelor College RATE programs where lecturers lived and worked in communities, as well as training. This is seen as particularly important in supporting 'personal governance', for example through providing adults with computer and internet access and computer literacy development and IT support.

Although many Yolŋu people have participated in 'governance and board training', this has had limited success in terms of increased understanding of board roles and responsibilities, or of changing and improving board or governance behaviour or practices (from a Western perspective). There is evidence to suggest that ongoing in-situ mentoring of boards is more effective than top-down one-off board training that may even take place outside the community.

### *Cultural awareness and engagement*

The large range of experience, knowledge, skills, understanding, attitude and opinion amongst Balanda in leadership positions about Yolŋu culture, governance and leadership, and about ways to work with Yolŋu employees and directors, coupled with continual turn-over, is viewed by Yolŋu as problematic and a barrier to the effective leadership and governance of these towns. Many Yolŋu stress the importance of the 'right Balanda' working with them, meaning non-Indigenous people who want to work alongside and mentor Yolŋu people, and who respect and want to learn about Yolŋu gurrutu and rom, and to speak Yolŋu matha (language).

Some Balanda spoke about the Local Community Awareness Programs (LCAP) being very useful in helping them to understand more about the local Yolŋu community, while Yolŋu LCAP presenters highlighted the supported participation of Balanda in cultural activities (experiential learning through observation and participation) as being the most effective way of engaging with and learning about Yolŋu culture.



### *Substance use and gambling*

Substance use and gambling are widespread and the issues around these activities are complex. Most people see them as a problem: 'Can we use one gunda (stone) for four things: kava, gandja, alcohol and cards?' The cause and effect of addiction to substances and gambling is circular. Some people argue that the return of a kava license to places like Ramingining could create revenue for Aboriginal Corporations, which could be used to benefit the community and decrease the large number of court cases to do with drugs, alcohol and kava.

### *School attendance*

People are engaging in this conversation, both privately and in meetings such as the LRG. One elder recently wrote a letter in which he acknowledged the fundamental disinterest in education which many of the families are demonstrating by not sending their kids to school. On the other hand the recent success of the 'Yellow Shirts' and 'Walking Bus' program has demonstrated widespread community support for addressing this issue.

### Gapuwiyak

For greater efficiency, in Gapuwiyak the CAB, LRG and HRG are amalgamated into one representative community group called the Mala Leaders Group, which is comprised of leaders from each of the 15 clans in the community. The IEO and GEC have an additional informal gathering of any Mala Leaders on Friday afternoons to enable concerns or issues to be discussed as they arise. and everyone in the community knows who is on the Mala Leaders group. People are generally happy with the concept of the Mala Leaders group but not happy that the status of this group is advisory only. We are yet to meet formerly with the Mala Leaders Group as our visits have not coincided with any meetings despite attempts to arrange this.

There has been growing interest for quite some time in '*waking up*' and reforming the Nadjungay Homeland Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation as a local Yolŋu-controlled decision-making body that can maybe provide services, support and grow local enterprise, employment and training in Gapuwiyak and Homelands. This would mean some constitutional changes and ongoing support for the Board. We have spoken to several people about this and there seems to be scope for the project to be involved. We have also been invited to work with the School Council and the Art Centre Board. There was no SSM in Gapuwiyak for second half of 2013 and Andrew Walsh has only recently been appointed and is being mentored in this position by Owen Fitowski (Yirrkala SSM). We have agreed to continue discussions with him about opportunities to work with the new Local Authority. It is unclear as to whether the Mala Leaders will reform as the LA or maintain the same configuration.

Under the leadership of Acting Principal of the Gapuwiyak School is tackling governance and leadership in innovative and creative ways, and working closely with the school board to build a strong leadership and work ethos in the school staff and students through a 'teams' approach. '*Strong schools are made up of strong teams and strong teams are made up of strong individuals*'. The school is now employing over 70 adults with people on waiting lists for work. There is also a leadership program for students and we are keen to learn more about this and find ways to involve the school.

### Milingimbi

Since the end of 2013, several major changes in Milingimbi governance and leadership have occurred. The recent, unexpected death of the past School Principal who was a highly respected senior Yolŋu woman, cultural authority and leader is a great loss to the community. Her husband, the IEO, is on extended sick leave and the GEC position held by Francine Chinn has been removed. Tony O'Leary, the Ramingining GEC is now covering also Milingimbi, Francine Chinn has moved to Gapuwiyak and there is no IEO working in Milingimbi at present.

In Milingimbi the Gulbagadi Advisory Board (CAB) and LRG comprise the same people and hold combined meetings that are jointly minuted. The SSM feels this makes sense and works well seeing that there was overlap between the members and business of both groups. By the end of this reporting period we had

spoken with the managers of most organisations within the community and were developing understandings with regard to governance arrangements. The Strong Women's group coordinator is keen for us to meet with women and we have arranged to follow this up in our next visit. We also want to meet further with the Rangers, Art Centre manager and new School Principal.

Through Nākarrma, we have met many of the Clan Leaders, building our relationship with them and talking about the IGLDS project, about our ground-up method and about governance and leadership in Milingimbi. We then work with Nākarrma to make sure we understand what they are saying and how the gurruṯu system works at Milingimbi. The town is made up of five camps divided by clan boundaries. It is strange and even dangerous for people to walk through another group's area unless they carefully observe Yolŋu protocols. Out of respect we are also careful to learn about and observe these and all other Yolŋu protocols. People are keen to talk with us but cautious about how this information might be shared through the project.

### Ramingining

Anthea, Trevor and Juli have been engaged in both formal and informal exchanges with key local people, aimed at building understanding across these interfaces. Anthea undertook a number of interviews and discussions focusing on the roles of the key governance groups in the town: the LRG, HRG, CAB and the School Council. These talks will continue in the new year, as part of the conclusion to Stage I.

### *The CAB, LRG and HRG*

In Ramingining the CAB, LRG (and HRG) are separate groups and this causes confusion and duplication. Elders are often confused about these groups and their roles. *'They run forwards and backwards between the CAB and LRG but call themselves Mala Leaders. (IEO)'*. There are 20 people on the CAB and while this is representative, it is often hard to get a quorum and meetings become informal; having proxies hasn't helped this. Although there are LRG members, meetings are generally an open forum, with all community members welcome. The GEC and IEO compile an agenda prior to the meeting. The SSM feels that although the CAB is an 'advisory board' in fact they do make decisions on a whole range of things and that there will be little difference when they change to a Local Authority.

There is acknowledgement that there are too many groups and a general feeling that they would be more successful if they were aligned. Again the biggest issues are the level of decision-making power that these groups have in relation to Ramingining (Western governance), how decision-making processes in these groups relate to Yolŋu decision-making processes (Yolŋu governance) and leadership succession. To ensure Yolŋu governance processes are followed, there is a great reliance on the involvement of older people. Although people recognise the need for younger people to step up and be mentored into leadership positions on Councils and Boards and some attempts have been made, this is hard to achieve without strong community support, policy and resourcing. From a Yolŋu perspective, where bodies haven't negotiated properly with leaders through the CAB, LRG and HRG, there are problems e.g. the rollout of housing under SIHIP.

In CAB and LRG meetings we have attended, we have observed non-Indigenous representatives from different levels of government and other organisations pitching projects, programs and initiatives and asking for community buy-in. It is very often unclear as to the background of the project – what it is about, where it has come from – and what level of decision-making, participation and engagement is actually required of the community. Underlying issues, reasons and ideas are often complex requiring specialised language and concepts that are not familiar to Yolŋu so that even with interpreters the community members are struggling to work out what people are talking about. Information in brochures and charts is often badly worded and confusing, for people for whom English is an additional language (EAL speakers), assuming people know how to read graphs, flow charts, tables and diagrams. This leads to confusion frustration, distress, anger and disengagement. There is an assumption that the LRG and CAB are a representative and consultative body but people are not paid for meetings or for consultative work. On the other hand, people are happy with the way the IEO sits with families and talks with them and other Elders.

### *Advantage of living in Ramingining for extended time*

Living in the community has meant we have been privy not just to public meetings but also conversations between elders. The conversations and discussions referred to above, between local elders and other community members and ourselves, which took place on our veranda (or in our small air-conditioned donga as the weather got hotter) were important means for becoming aware of the ideas and hopes people held re governance at a community level in Ramingining. However because we were living in the town, our daily routines also continually brought us into contact with people and their needs and aspirations re personal and family governance.

### *Personal governance issues*

These often revolved around management of money or the negotiation of governance processes, the filling in of forms, the interpretation of an official letter or the need to send an official letter, for example, re an up-coming court hearing. We were often asked to help with IT: to get an iPad or mobile phone set up, to do internet banking or to resolve issues re lost passwords. Although the Shire had worked hard to set up a Money Management team in their office, they were having trouble keeping it staffed, and even when it was staffed there was still a large uncharted 'non-comfort zone' which people found themselves in, populated by governance objects that were in some way daunting. The Centrelink office was also implicated in this problem. Staffed by local people and visited by Balanda staff it created a locus around which people waited, with their Centrelink letters and forms in hand. The waiting place is outside a window in a breezeway that collects the exhaust air from three or four air conditioners being used by adjacent offices. There are no seats. Clients often have to wait on the phone made available through the window for long periods.

These are just some of the many personal governance issues which engage and sometimes engross people, about which we are frequently asked for advice or help.

### *The status of Yolŋu Law*

This issue comes up often in conversations. At one stage Albert Djiwada brought a hand written list of points he wanted to make (and wanted Anthea to type and print) regarding the relationship between Yolŋu Law and the current way trouble making is dealt with. He has been engaged as a mentor for a young offender who has been allowed to return to his community under the care of Elders. He is required to do something very unfamiliar to him (but typical of balanda protocols) in making a written report about each visit he makes with the young man, and so has been thinking about these issues. After talking with him we arranged to video him in his homeland where he spoke in Yolŋu matha to camera about his ideas. We are planning to work further with him to add English subtitles. It is an endorsement of this project and value of the 'open house' we are able to maintain in the donga rented by CDU, that elders like Djiwada bring these issues to discuss with us.

### *New Ramingining Aboriginal Corporations*

There is a lot happening in Ramingining on this front. In 2013 we conducted a Feasibility Study for a new Ramingining Aboriginal Corporation (RAC) with the community. At the time ALPA were taking steps to establish a new company (Dinybulu Regional Services) which has subsequently taken on the Homelands contract – along with some of the old Resource Centre activities. This also coincided with ALPA taking over the local RJCP contract. Through dialogue created by the Feasibility Study, ALPA encouraged the LRG to create a new Aboriginal Corporation which could act as a steering committee to Dinybulu and one day take it over. People are still getting their heads around these developments. One Yolŋu came recently and asked, 'What is happening about the Homelands? Did Dinybulu get the Homeland's contract? If they got money why are they asking Homelands to pay something towards services?' Being present enables us to be a part of these conversations.

## 5. Plan for Stage 2

All the Yolŋu we have spoken to in each community are happy for us to continue this work (talking about the project, exploring the parameters). We feel that the main reason for this are the established relationships we have built over the years and our *gurrutu*; people are very comfortable working from the ground up and both ways. Western governance creates so many issues and problems for Yolŋu communities and most people believe that the towns should be under Yolŋu leadership and control, with Balanda working in partnership as Yolŋu require and negotiate.

One Elder spoke about the process of planning and the project in this way: *'at the moment we don't know what we are aiming for – what that fish is. [So] we don't know what spear we need to use'*.

Nākarrma gave a similar analogy in which he spoke of 'shaping the project' and that the shape has not fully revealed itself yet. He brought out 3 objects to further illustrate this: an unfinished carving of a bird, an unfinished set of *bilma* (clapsticks) and an unfinished *galpu* (woomera). He then explained each had a different purpose and was made from a different kind of wood to suit that purpose: the bird from light wood that was easy to carve, the bilma from iron wood that makes a sharp clear sound, the galpu from wood that was strong enough to break a spear and defend you, but that was matched to the kind of spear that you wanted to throw.

In other words, we don't yet know what shape the project will take, we are still negotiating or learning about what wood we will need and therefore what tree we need to find and where we need to go to find the tree. We are stepping back and back so we can see the big picture of governance before we decide together what we will be trying to aim for or make. We are sizing each other up, building trust. Everyone wants to move the talk into action but people want to make sure it is the right action. We are also cautious of being part of yet another project or program that raises false expectations and hopes.

The work so far has raised interesting questions and challenges that we feel need to be met creatively and collaboratively.

## 6. Next Steps...

We will work through our Stage 1 research together during the Team Meeting and begin identifying possible 'fish', 'spears' and 'trees' in each community. We will then return for a final round of visits to decide the next steps with community members.

## 7. Questions for Local Reference Group

## 8. Questions for IGLDS Steering Committee