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Understanding the Northern Lands Council

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*The research for these Radio Programs was undertaken by Yolŋu co-producers in their home communities. These Yolŋu co-producers were also the very Yolŋu people who usually fill the role of interpreters in government meetings and community court sessions. Their level of confusion around many of the academic English words and contemporary issues is deeply concerning and shows why most government programs fail due to poor communication and lack of access to information for these First Australians.*

### Yolŋu Researchers/Co-Producers:

### Mainstream English First Language

#### Producers:

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| - Maratja Dhamarandji | - Richard Trudgen |
| - Nikunu Yunupingu    | - Timothy Trudgen |
| - Dianna Gondarra     |                   |
| - Djiniyini Gondarra  |                   |

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It's important to understand that Yolŋu people speak English as a fifth or sixth language and English is still an uncharted language for them. Consequently, many questions that come from the community will revolve around the confusion Yolŋu people have about understanding academic/intangible English words and concepts, together with their very traumatic interface experience with the broader Australian community. This reality leaves most Yolŋu feeling as though their culture, language and way of life is inferior to mainstream dominant Australian people and culture.

The radio program/podcasts below reflect this lived reality and offers mainstream readers a rare opportunity to glimpse some of the real issues facing Yolŋu people. The production of these radio programs has also offered the Yolŋu researchers/co-producers, and their community, the first in a lifetime opportunity to gain answers and clarity regarding many of the subjects raised, in their own language.

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INTRODUCTION

Even though I have spent over 40 years working with Yolŋu exploring many subjects I was still shocked to see the depth of the confusion that emerged for my Yolŋu colleagues as we discussed potential topics for these radio programs/podcasts. When the levels of confusion

become apparent it's little wonder that the Gap is not closing. Little is achieved through most government programs, despite all the money and effort that goes towards them. How can it be expected that Yolŋu people will respond like others in the mainstream when they have no access to information in a language they can understand? Information is power so the lack of information has to be powerlessness.

At last they are now able to get real information in a consistent way, allowing some of the veil of confusion to be lifted across the Yolŋu lands.

Programs produced around these subject headings go to air on Yolŋu Radio and on

<https://www.djambatjmarram.com/>

Richard Trudgen,

Full transcript

(RT: Richard Trudgen), NY: Nikunu Yunipingu)

Podcasts number 1 Role of the NLC. History to Land Rights. 276

NY: Wamut one thing that I want ask you?

RT: Yeah

NY: the Northern Lands Council is it working for us Yolŋu or who are they working for, for the government? I've been thinking about this as they're supposed to be working for us Yolŋu. So how do they fit in with the government?

RT: Yes... that's a big question

NY: yes, it's a big question. Us Yolŋu are very confused. Who is the northern lands Council for? Or the body called the northern lands Council, who is it for? Yolŋu?

RT: okay- I'm looking for the best way to answer this. I'm thinking the best way to answer this. I think I might come back to the history little bit. In about the 1970s you could say it started roundabout that time. We know that Balanda have never recognised Yolŋu law. (NY:

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yes) RT: we all know this. Captain Cook and Capt Philip came to Australia and they brought with them all the law and ways of government from Britain. They made acts of law in their government structure. They grew up in a big community in Sydney and Melbourne in other places like that, later on in Darwin. Never did they understand your Yolngu law or any of the traditional law of other Aboriginal people across Australia. They never recognised their law either. And they thought that you had no law and were lawless, and they still think that.

NY: Yeah I see

RT: this was the state of the thinking. So they made up lots laws, in their government system, they even made laws in relation to the land across Australia. In their mind all the land belonged to the King, Crown land. Because continuously Balanda were thinking that Yolngu were lawless and that you weren't owners of your land or your estates.

Even today you will have a lot of Balanda saying that you never owned the land. Even though your language and your law, talks about estate owners and it talks about landowner and about all those other things. So Balanda saw that Yolngu thought about Wanarr the great Creator spirit, and you understood spiritual things. Your spiritual association with the land and all that. But they didn't think you had any traditional acts of law, or laws, or systems of governance. No traditional law systems in your hands.

NY: yeah

RT: This is what they were thinking. So, right across Australia, right across Australia, how do I say it, they put their law, their Acts of law,

NY: their Acts of law

RT: over the land and estates and everything. They use this name Crown Land the Kings land, and then from the Kings land the King sold his land to different foreigners. Selling or giving leases to different foreigners.

NY: giving them to the Balanda ah?

RT: yeah to Balanda or Chinese or whoever had money to buy it or lease it. British people or American people or later on Chinese people or whoever. So the authority over the land went from the King or the Queen to whoever received a special document at law or lease. Or another system of law call "freehold title", freehold title. Which means they are the they are the owners, landowners over that land or estate.

NY: okay then.

RT: but they never recognised your law. Now Arnhem land, what they called Arnhem Land from those Dutch Balanda, they proclaimed law over it as a reserve.

NY: Mmm

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RT: that Balanda government proclaimed Arnhem land. Balanda government proclaimed it as a special place, for Yolŋu people, for Aboriginal people.

NY: okay I see

RT: mainly because in the past Yolŋu were extremely good fighters.

NY: Yah?

RT: Balanda originally went to Roper River and they tried to move (north) into Arnhem land, like when they moved into Murwangi (to set up a cattle station). All the Djinang and Ganalbingu (clans around Ramingining in the Ten Canoes Movie) people were extremely good fighters and they killed many of the cattle station workers in a big war at and around Murwangi. (This was after the pastoralists massacred many of the people). And those Balanda at Murwangi had a lease in their hands that covered most of Arnhem land.

RT: They had a pastoral lease for almost all of Arnhem Land.

NY: yes

RT: called a pastoral lease like a cattle lease, like a Stockman lease, cattle station lease which is called in English a Pastoral Lease.

NY: here at Murwangi?

RT: yeah here at Murwangi. But that lease they had in their hands from that Balanda law, from that British law, and it give them the authority and power over all the lands in Arnhem Land and all the islands, even over Galiwinku and all the islands. All of it was in their hands. But for the lease to have authority they had to stay there and breed/produce cattle.

NY: yeah

RT: that was one legal requirement in the lease. It was called a pastoral lease. And they had to stay there and produce/breed cattle.

NY: they had to be breed produce cattle there at that place.

RT: that was a legal requirement in the lease in their hand that they got from the Balanda government. But those extremely good fighting Ganalbingu and Djinang soldiers and all those (other Yolŋu) who joined them, defeated those foreigners Balanda on their land at Murwangi. They won that war. Yolŋu won that war. And those Balanda fled south to the Roper River. And they didn't come back into Arnhem land again. They fled with leases in their hands. Two different Balanda groups tried. And two times these Yolŋu threw them out of Arnhem land.

NY: Yo, they chased them away not to come back.

RT: but nephew let's come back and talk about this a bit more.

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### Podcasts number 2 What is the role of the NLC

NY: Wamut you were telling us about how the Yolŋu stopped the pastoralists coming into Arnhem land at the Murwangi site when they try to come into Arnhem Land. And how they chased them out telling them this is our country and not to come back again. So, where do the Northern lands Council come in, where does this entity called the Northern lands Council come in?

RT: well I need to tell you a bit more of this history. We will come to that NLC later on.

NY: yeah okay that's good

RT: so when you look across Arnhem Land, Australia, or right across Australia, to the south of the Roper River, you will see lots of cattle station

NY: yeah go on

RT: and when you are travelling up to Darwin you will see a lot more cattle stations. No Yolŋu land. And right down into New South Wales and Victoria everywhere across central Australia there are lots of cattle stations that have pastoral leases. But in Arnhem Land there were no leases because the Yolŋu won that war and forced the stockman out of Arnhem Land.

NY: Hm Yeah

RT: some of those stockmen even with down south of the Roper River, they built a home there looking back towards Murwangi. They hoped they were going to be able to return again.

NY: yea I see

RT:, at Elsie station

NY: yeah Elsie station.

RT: yeah yeah that main home at Elsie station is looking directly north. And they were thinking that they would go back in later on. But they didn't go back. And there is more history we could talk about there but the main picture is that there were no Balanda with a lease in their hands in Arnhem Land. None, see.

RT: In Queensland Cape York it was the same. And some in the north of Western Australia there was a little bit. But in the Northern Territory there is lots of desert country that had no cattle leases because it was too dry. In Arnhem land there was no active leases under Balanda law. So aboriginal people were asking, "When are you going to recognise us? We don't just want to sit on a reserve in the hands of the Welfare Department".

NY: yeah yeah.

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RT: because in this time there was a reserve over Arnhem Land. There was no lease in Arnhem Land. According to the Balanda law Arnhem Land was a reserve.

NY: a place the name Reserve over it ay?

RT: yes they had placed the Reserve name over it.

RT: And Welfare Department had a statutory responsibility for this reserve. And that's why back then when Yolŋu people went to Darwin, walking overland to Darwin, that the Welfare Department would say to Yolŋu, "Hey, you have to go back to the Reserve. To Milingimbi, to Galiwinku, to Yirrkala, to Maningrida, to Goulburn or Croker." This is what the reserve patrol officers said.

NY: The welfare officers, the Balanda, returned the Yolŋu, did they?

RT: yeah yeah. Because those welfare officers had a statutory responsibility not just for the Reserve lands but they also had a statutory responsibility for the Yolŋu people themselves. They were treating Yolŋu like... like children.

NY: Hmm

RT: you had no authority. You see this was back then. Before the 1970s. Before 1968 actually, at that time. So a lot of Yolŋu had Balanda friends. There were a lot. Some trade unions and churches and other groups like this. They are always protesting to government. When are you going to really recognise Yolŋu in a real way? When are you really going to give back their lands into their hands?

NY: Hm, yo Ah

RT: so the government was looking everywhere for a win-win way. But they were still completely ignorant about your Traditional Law. Even those friends of Yolŋu, the trade unions and church groups and other groups like that. They were also ignorant of your real Traditional Law.

NY: yeah, I see, yeah

RT: because that's when I arrived in Arnhem land in about 1973. I know the Balanda then were completely ignorant of your Traditional Law. Even those Balanda friends of Yolŋu.

NY: people like the ministers that came into Arnhem land and lived with Yolŋu. People like that ha?

RT: yeah all those ministers, they were still ignorant. Some had a little bit of your law like Reverend TT Web. He started to sort through different bits of your law. And other anthropologists came and followed his understanding. Like the kinship system

NY: yo-yo ah, ah

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RT: but nephew we're running out of time a bit and we need to go to a break, and we will come back and talk some more about the subject.

NY: Ma –okay, let's do that.

### **Podcasts number 3 History of Land Rights. 277**

NY: Yo Wamut

RT: come in nephew

NY: Ah.... when the missionaries came to Arnhem Land to live with Yolŋu, when was this, when it happened? They, the Balanda, missionaries, came into Arnhem land. They lived and worked with Yolŋu right through. But when did they recognise all our different yirralka estates, was it just in contemporary times or back in times when missionaries were here? When did they recognise our yirralka estates? What year? Back in the times when missionaries came in?

Note:[yirralka is a area of land and sea that is owned by a particular Bāpurru, paternal tribe, equivalent to the English word estate. Yolŋu use it all the time to talk about whose estate they are referring to, but it's little understood in the English speaking world.]

RT: nephew there were different things that Balanda thought about your law and your language and about your culture. There was not one thought or understanding. Like in early 1970s Balanda were still very confused about what Bāpurru, paternal clan or tribe, meant. They didn't understand what it meant. They used to call Yolŋu Matha 'mala' (tongue language-group).

NY: what do you mean matha?

RT: they could see that there were separate language groups.

NY: Oh I see

RT: but they couldn't see separate, private individual clan, law, and rights.

NY: Yo

RT: and they couldn't see all your separate yirralka estates. Like that word yirralka, estates, and Ringitj alliance. Even anthropologists were ignorant of their meaning. Maybe now they understand what they mean. Like when I 1<sup>st</sup> started talking about Ringitj alliance, and I was in ARDS. And I got a letter from the CEO of the NLC saying that I was crazy, because all the anthropologist said there is no such thing as Ringitj alliances in Arnhem land. I would still have that letter if I had that filing cabinet, but I haven't got that filing cabinet. I don't know where it is now.

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NY: Hmm

RT: So yes Balanda could see a little bit, little bit, little bit, little bit. Just like Yolŋu looking at Balanda Law.

NY: theirs, Balanda and their law.

RT: yeah, yeah yeah. Still you're very confused and mystified about it.

NY: yes Hmm

RT: little bit you can see, little bit little bit, but not the whole thing.

NY: yeah not the whole foundational understanding of it.

RT: and it was the same with Balanda looking at Yolŋu. A lot of Balanda still today when they come to places like Milingimbi they think there is just one group of people there. When they come to Galiwinku they think there is just one group.

NY: they don't see that there are lots of different Bāpurru (tribes and clans) sitting here?

RT: no, they don't understand that.

NY: different different Bāpurru (tribes and clans).

RT: yeah, yeah, lots of Balanda, government and different groups are very ignorant of the true situation. When I say to them look it's not just one group at Galiwinku or Milingimbi, but maybe 13 different Bāpurru (tribes and clans) groups and there are some Riŋgitj alliances. They go Yo, are there? They say are there? But back to that history story.

NY: yeah Hmm

RT: lots of those ministers and other missionary groups they petitioned government and they humbug government, you see. They kept the pressure up on government saying "when are you going to recognise that Yolŋu are the true landowners for their lands and Estates. For their own land. They would say in English "when you going to give land rights to Aboriginal people"? "When you going to recognise their authority over their lands in Arnhem land"?"

NY: Yo

RT: and some different things happened like the bark petition from Yirrkala. Before that there was the Gurindji mob.

NY: the walk off.

RT: the walk off of Wave Hill station. Now Wave Hill station was a lease in the hands of Balanda. British owners, they had British owners, they were sitting in Britain but they had a lease on Wave Hill station. And they were using the Gurindji mob for Stockman work. And that walk off of Wave Hill created a big surprise to the Federal Parliament and lots of

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different Balanda groups across Australia. Then came the bark petition at Yirrkala and gave them another shock. They said what? Are Yolŋu not just like, excuse me if I speak straight, they are just not like animals running around? They've got separate owners on separate estates or what? What, what, they were still mystified but they were starting to ask questions.

NY: those Balanda you mean?

RT: yeah the Balanda

NY: Yeah I see

RT: then after that bark petition they sent Justice Woodward. He came to Yirrkala and Milingimbi and everywhere. The government sent him, telling him to search out all the information about Yolŋu and who are the owners of the separate estates. And Justice Woodward he worked with Wamuttjan Beulah Lowe

NY:Yo, Yo, Yo. Yes yes yes

RT: she was a good interpreter, translator. They went from Milingimbi to Galawin'ku and Yirrkala. And they used another missionary translator at Goulburn Island and they went to Maningrida. And his report for Justice Woodward went the Federal government, that was Whitlam government, and they started to make an act of law called the Aboriginal Land Rights act Northern Territory act 1976 act. They started to make that act of law in the Canberra Federal government.

NY: In 1976?

RT: they started before that in the 1970s, in 1975, 1974, 75 in that time

NY: Right

RT: first they made a bill in Canberra and they started to talk about it. However, there were still very confused about your Traditional Law. So they had a problem. How can we recognise their authority at Traditional Law while we are still confused completely confused about their laws and ways of interacting at law.

NY:Yo yes

RT: but Waku nephew. We need to come back and talk about this some more. Come back again in a minute NY:Ma, sure thing.

**Podcasts number 4**

**History of Land Rights. 278**

NY: Yo Wamut

RT: Yo Waku

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NY: at that time when the missionaries came into Arnhem land to be with Yolŋu. And they started to sit down with the leaders of different clans and tribes. And they started to learn and at the same time they started to tell the government that Yolŋu were “just like us”. “They have lots of laws. They have laws covering economic, political, social and religious laws. Yolŋu laws in their systems and structures exist. They have all the different language words for these legal systems”.

What did the government say back to the missionaries in relation to this? This is one (of my) questions.

RT: they said a lot of things back, including that’s not correct. They were using those words, Balanda words that Balanda use (for aboriginal people), they are Balanda words. Trouble is today a lot of Aboriginal people are using the same derogatory words. They were saying. Aboriginal people are just hunter gatherers, they just walk around, nomads, no estates, they just look around for food, they don’t reproduce anything, and they don’t do any farming activities or anything like that.

NY:Hm.. Just moving around, hey.

RT: just moving around like animals.

NY: Yo, yo.

RT: and that’s still what a lot of Balanda think. And as I say a lot of Aboriginal people and even some Yolŋu are now using those silly Balanda words. Like, hunter gatherers, like primitive people, like nomads just wondering around, hey. And so a lot were thinking that. Some as you say, no Yolŋu are like us, human being. Really Yolŋu Yolŋu, human humans.

NY: Hm hm.

RT: and we should be using their authority they have that comes from their law, from their Traditional Law; what they (Balanda) call Traditional Law. And that name Traditional Law means your original law from the foundation of time. The tried and tested law from the beginning of time, used by the people back through tens of thousands of years, that is represented in the black charcoal in the shell midden all across Yolŋu estates. That is the meaning of traditional.

NY: Yolŋu Yolŋu

RT: not the new law that is applied by many contemporary dictators of their people but that original Yolŋu law. NY:Hm, hm

Note: Many Yolŋu and other Aboriginal people were institutionalised during the welfare area of Australia, before 1968. Today many Yolŋu and other Aboriginal people still believe that the political system of law in Australia is a form of autocratic dictatorship. Just like superintendents were appointed over missions and welfare settlements all across Australia from outside authorities. Yolŋu people had no rights

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*or say who had life-and-death authority over them. So today many people believe that the mainstream dominant culture appoints leaders over their people. Elections are poorly understood and there is much competition between Aboriginal leaders to be appointed/selected by the mainstream community to be tyrants over their own people. Their Traditional Law on the other hand is a very democratic system where leaders are selected from the people to lead their people. It's much like the American Indian chief system. There's still massive confusion on many Aboriginal communities today in relation to this.*

RT: and a lot of Balanda were starting to recognise Yolŋu, saying look they speak good languages and their languages are sophisticated and very powerful. Incredible intelligent languages.

NY: Hm

RT: and we get the education department and all that, they don't use your language in a real way, they're still thinking your language is a bit primitive. They think it's got no grammar structure.

NY: yeah I see, yo

RT: they thought your language is a bit like flying fox language, because their ear doesn't recognise the sounds in your language. It's a bit the same when Yolŋu are listening to English, your ears are not accustomed to the sounds. It has a different phonic system.

NY: Yo, Yo

RT: and so it's easy when new Balanda come, and I have lots of Balanda say to me, even a lot of other Aboriginal people say to me, I can't learn Yolŋu Matha. Well I just say that's a silly excuse, silly excuse. If you start to learn language you start to learn the syllabic phonics and the different rhythms in the language. So nephew some Balanda were thinking as we should be recognising them but others were really totally ignorant of your law and ways of life. They didn't even understand the language of your Law. And even now not many understand your law/legal language. Your academic language and so on. Though at the same time they wanted to understand and that Whitlam government, the Labour government, they tried to make up that act of law.

NY: yeah I see

RT: but they had to make an act of law that would fit into their law structure.

NY: yeah okay I see

RT: this is the main point. They had to make an act of law that would fit into their system of law. Balanda Act of law, that would fit into a Balanda government that would fit into, what we call, the Balanda legislative system. Because, the Balanda understand that system and the courts would recognise that system, they understand the language and all that.

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NY: yeah, I see yeah

RT: so they start to shape up this body that would sit between 2 systems of law that was called the aboriginal lands Councils.

NY: yeah, is that its original name, Wamut? Is this the real name for it, "Aboriginal" what?

RT: Lands Council.

NY: "Lands Council"

RT: yeah, Lands Council.

NY: Yo

RT: because they weren't thinking back then about all the separate councils, like the Northern Lands Council the Central Lands Council, they weren't thinking of all those separate councils.

NY: yeah yeah.

RT: They were just thinking, we will have a number of Aboriginal land councils in the Northern Territory.

RT: But then that Labour government, they lost government, and they had to wait for the next government the Liberal government, Malcolm Fraser's, his government. And Malcolm Fraser he was thinking like a lot of the church groups and union groups. We are going to do this we are going to give that authority back to Aboriginal people. However, it will have to be done through our Balanda law.

NY: yeah, I see, but how, but how Wamut?

RT: well, let me say it like this. And then we are running out of time this morning. And we will have to come back another day and continue this story. Talk about again on another day.

NY: Hm Yo

RT: let me say just like this. They had to make up law, that was consistent with their system of law back to their foundation of law. For Balanda. They couldn't make up that law that was consistent with your system of law back to your foundation of law because they were totally ignorant of that system. So had to make up that other in between body, called, The Aboriginal Lands Council. And later there was a separate NLC, Northern Lands Council.

NY: Tiwi Lands Council. Central Lands Council. And that one for Groote Eylandt. Anindilyakwa Lands Council.

RT: so, there are four in the Northern Territory now covering separate areas. So those lands Councils now have a statutory responsibility for the authority (the government want to give Aboriginal people), that that parliament in Canberra, not from the Northern Territory, in

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Canberra , Commonwealth government, Federal Government, Australian government, 3 names but one government in Canberra. They produce this Act of Law and all the Federal police, the Army-Navy and Air Force, and courts across Australia now recognise this Act of Law. And the Lands Councils have a statutory responsibility in relation to this Act of Law. So, we have to come back and look at that. What is this Act? They have a statutory responsibility in relation to it. So what is their liability in relation to the Act. What is their role and work in relation to the Act, and what is their authority?

NY: Yo Yo

RT: let's come back another day and we will keep talking about this one, ha.

NY: Ma

RT: tomorrow will come back and speak some more.

NY: Yo

RT: djutjutj keep on going; goodbye.

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Glossary

CKB - Cultural Knowledge Base

Balanda: Balanda comes from the word “Hollander”, from the Yolŋu contacts with people from former Dutch colonies in Asia; and is used to refer to European or English-speaking “Western” person or people.

Balanydja: Balanydja was a payment for goods or service rendered under djugu contract. The payment received at the completion of a contract is called 'balanydja'. All the goods that Yolŋu received as payment from the Macassans were called balanydja.

dhäruk- bakmaram Talk around the Law (Madayin Law) issues, not our own thoughts, ideas or desires, but only the legal position according to the Madayin Law.

Djaka measurement

Djuŋgaya: traditional police, master of ceremonies, lawyer, public servant, manager. Nurruruŋu Djuŋgaya is the head Djuŋgaya, similar to the CEO of an organization.

gakal the way something presents itself, the life cycle, its characteristics, persona.

ganydjarr power strength. Authority

liya Njarramirri mala political leaders

Madayin [ma – day – in]. The underlined d is the d sound made with the tongue curled back in the mouth.

The Madayin is the name for our complete system of Law including all the laws, legal processes and practices, plus legal objects, law chambers and the places that have been proclaimed through the processes of Madayin law. Even animal or fish production sites can be called a Madayin wäŋa – Madayin place/home.

It is not easy to translate Madayin into English as English does not seem to have a word like Madayin. The closest to it is when we say, “The Westminster system of law”. “The Westminster system of law” includes all the laws, legal processes and practices of the Westminster system.

Madjapala An instrument of order that is used to formalise a formal contract to initiate marradjiri. (Called mayawala' in North East Arnhem Land.)

Mägaya peace, tranquillity, harmony, completeness, health, peace, prosperity, fullness, perfectness, rest, safety and absence of agitation or trouble, protection for all.

mägaya - dhukarr (peace, security, serenity –road, process, way of life) that come from the Madayin Law and the Madayin dhukarr processes given to us by Waŋarr.

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**midikirri** do badly, do wrong, go wrong.

**ṅurru-dakthun** compete against, vie with. Compete eagerly with someone in order to do or achieve something.

**Wamut** - Wedge Tail Eagle is the skin name for Richard Trudgen. See skin names in “Yolṅu Names” <https://www.whywarriors.com.au/shop/>

**Märr:** (spiritual power, strength) The spiritual power or force of strength that is imparted to an article of primary produce, a manufactured product, or a service provided. In all cases märr is enacted where sweat is produced. It is a person's 'sweat' that transmits the worker's spiritual power, or force of strength into the article or service. Per quote "This märr will increase to dangerous levels if not discharged through reciprocal trade or payments".

**Ringitj** alliance

**rom midikuman** (makes the law putrid).

**Rom waṭaṅu walala** – Rom- Law, waṭaṅu- denotes ownership, walala- they (3 or more). The extended citizens of a yirralka estate. The larger group of interconnecting tribes and clans that have a right under Madayin law to monitor, protect and to discipline or past judgement on an offenders if necessary. And to support the wäṅa waṭaṅu - landowners, yirralka waṭaṅu - estate owners in decisions over their property and estates.

**Wäṅa waṭaṅu:** Land or property owners

**yirralka waṭaṅu:** estate owners.

**Yolṅu:** Yolṅu traditionally means human or humans, person or people. It also now means an Aboriginal person or people from northeast Arnhem Land, usually used by outsiders. However, if you asking a Yolṅu person if they are Yolṅu you really asking if they are a human being.

**Yuwalk:** true; truly.

Richard Trudgen  
Why Warriors Pty 2019.