

First Nations Cultural Governance and Research for Local Decision Making

Ian Mongunu Gumbula

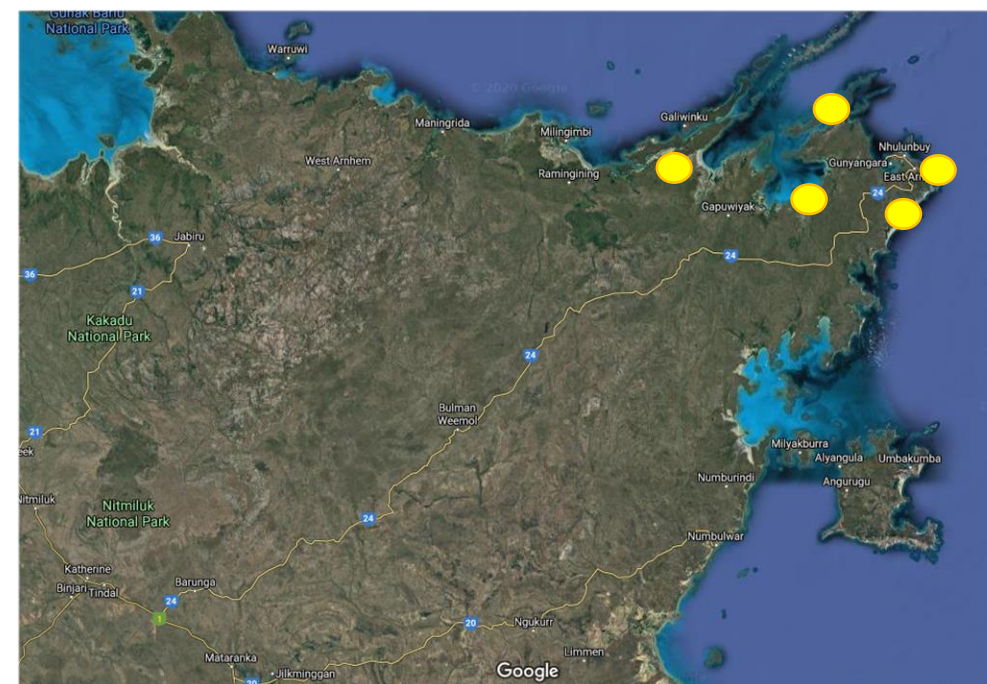
First Nations Sovereignty and Diplomacy Centre
College of Indigenous Futures, Education and Arts

6 October 2022

Engaging Governance Work

Ian Mongunu Gumbula

- Tribe - Daygurrurr Gupapuyngu
- Skin name - Buḷany
- Homeland – Djiliwirri
- Great-grandmother - Rirratjinu (Yalanbara)
- Grandmother – Lamamirr (Nanydjaka)
- Mother – Golumala (Barrkira)
- Great-great-grandmother – Wangurri (Dhāliny)

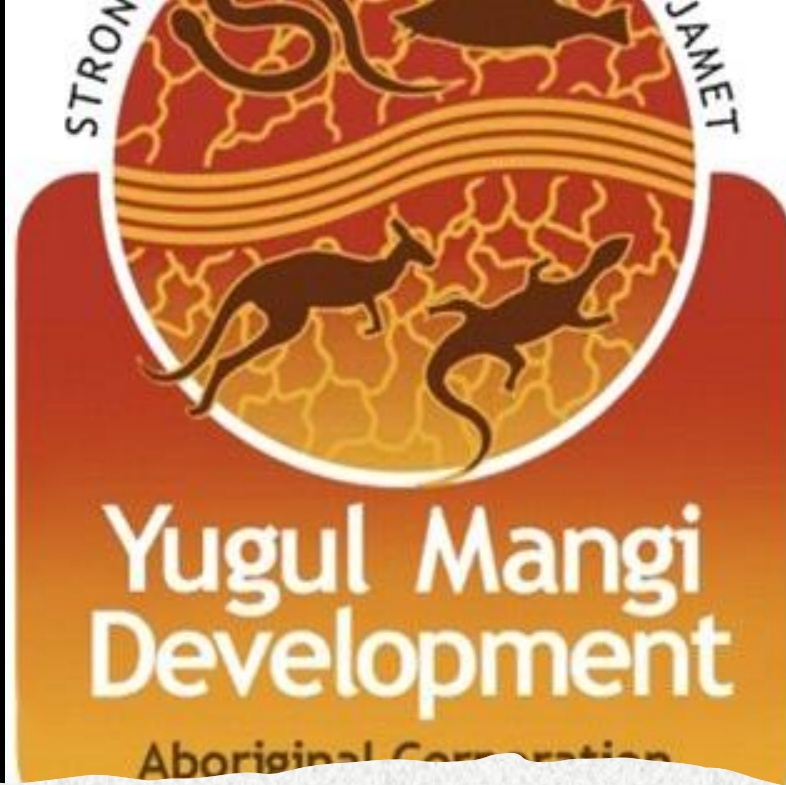


"I can clearly see the pathway how community research work and governance practice need to be discussed in my community."



You still remain who you are...
But you are featuring in other
environments

Bring my gakal into every area...
Bring to government area and its policy and
practices cultural values that belong to Yolngu
Nations Assembly



You still remain who you are...
But you are featuring in other
environments

Bring my gahal into every area...
Bring to board area and its policy and practices
cultural values that belong to clan nations



You still remain who you are...
But you are featuring in other
environments

Bring my gakal into every area...
In CDU work try to bring a reflection of work in
other areas to help and support the previous
areas – community, government and boards

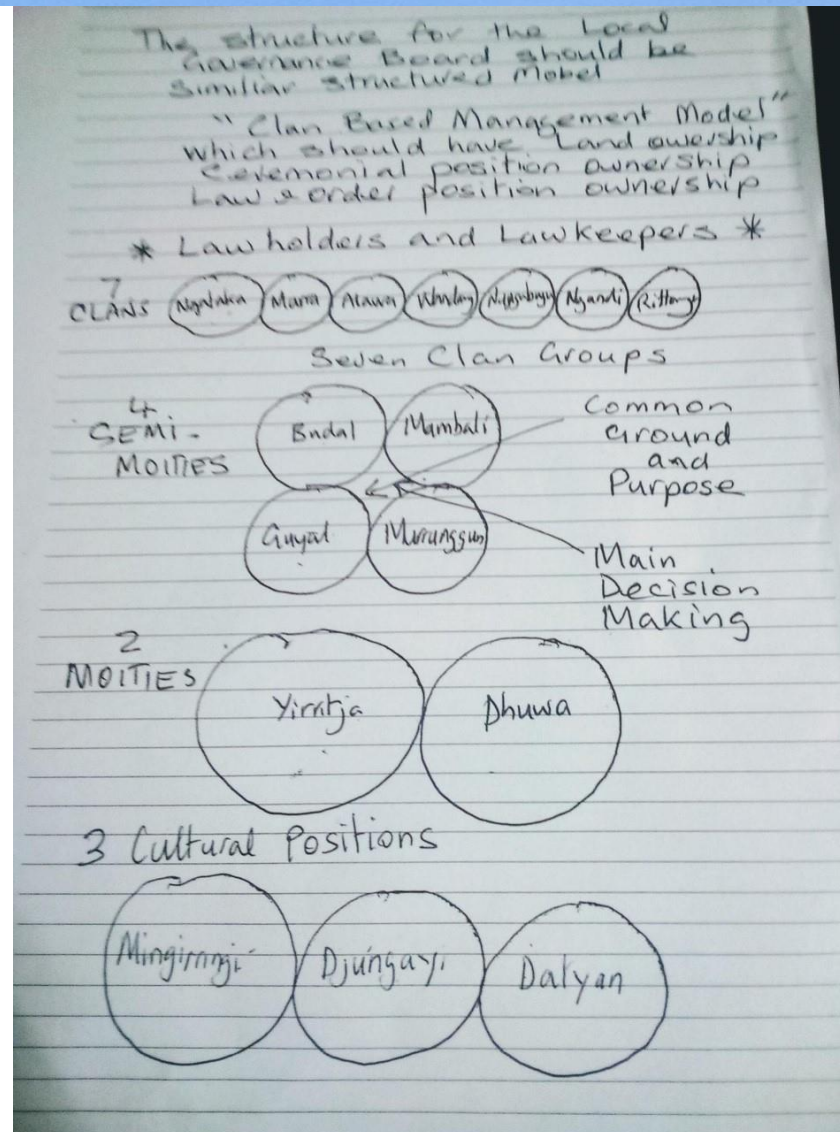
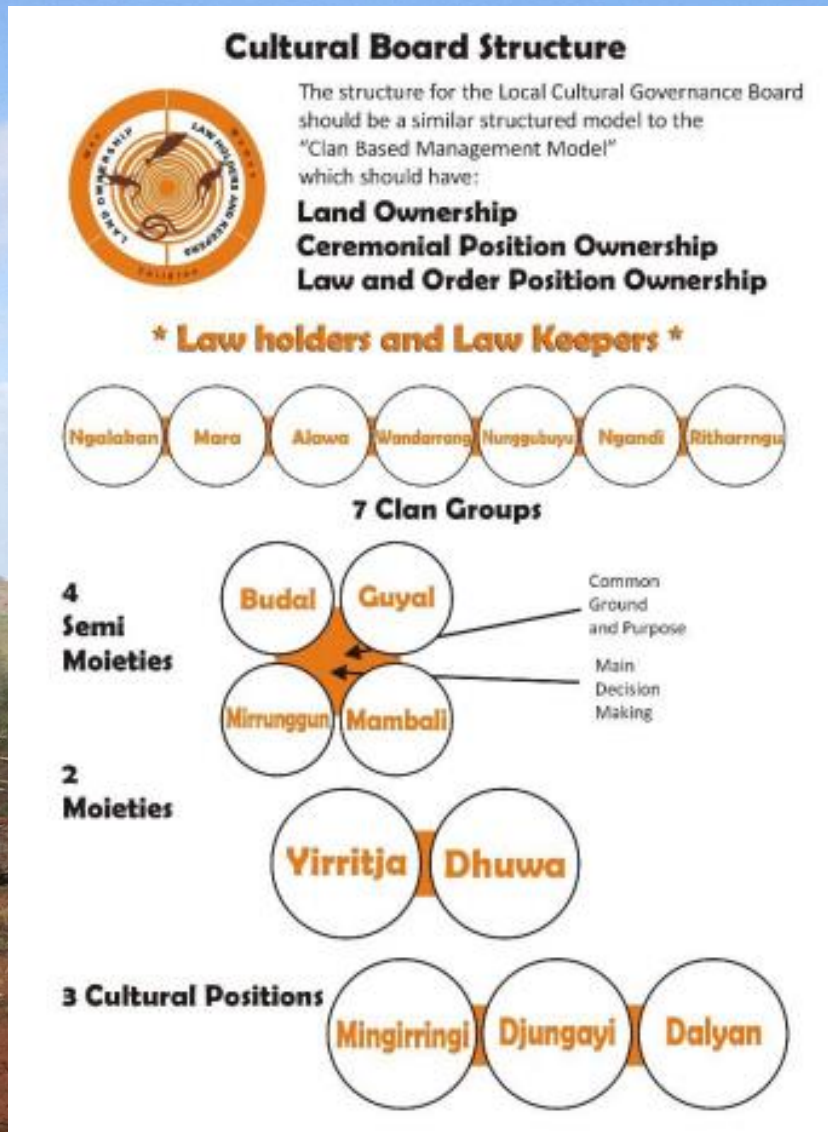
Cultural governance model in Yolngu structure



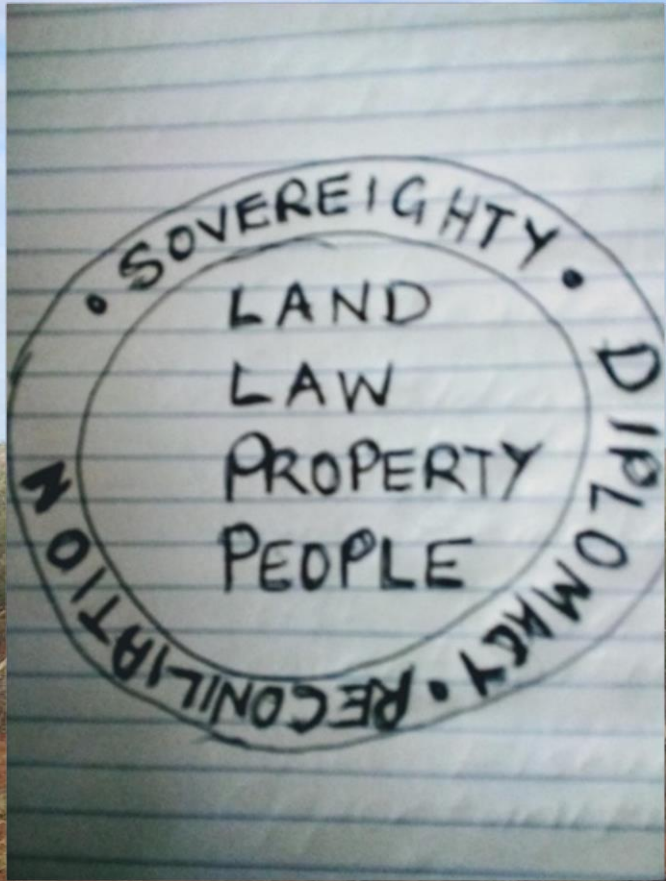
Cultural Governance of Djiliwirri



Establishing the cultural platform - groups and roles



Creating that area for Yolŋu decision making



Sovereignty is our land and country to which we have a long connection. Land has given us the rights.

Diplomacy is the process in which an authoritative person acts according to the law that comes from the land.

Reconciliation is about honouring and respecting. Land itself gives us everything as a safeguard for generations to come.



Research and policy work



Electoral engagement research work

- Local researchers working in their own community
- Ground up research, not someone from outside coming in
- What people saw was the main purpose of voting, or not



NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Ground Up Monitoring and Evaluation

Final Report – August 2022



LDM in Ngukurr

The community of Ngukurr was originally established as a mission station in 1908, and so has experienced a long history of colonisation and the need for various clan and language groups to co-exist. When talking about Local Decision Making, the elders often refer back to the origin stories of the community: remembering the time when traditional clan and land ownership relations were acknowledged in making an agreement about new ways of living together (as a community) and brokering safer ways of living with the Australian state (see the local leaders' statements below).

Three specific moments of agreement making were seen as important to the ongoing life of Ngukurr – the original agreement of the land in which people are constituted as clan and kin relations; the subsequent agreement that was made as different clans came together to live in the Roper River Mission (now Ngukurr); and now the agreement currently being made and ongoingly reviewed with the NT Government. These agreements take different forms, and work with different governmentalities – i.e., different kinds of relationship between people, places and government. The previous contract made between clan groups was not written down, nor was government explicitly a party to the agreement.

Current LDM agreements made with the NT government are seen as another iteration in this history of agreement making in Ngukurr. As such, they are a continuation of the practices through which traditional governance seeks to strengthen and maintain itself through good and respectful ways of working closely with government.

In reflecting on the LDM agreement and its associated activities, many local leaders saw the creation of a local Aboriginal organisation as a way to become visible to government, and to have some control over ways in which government funding and support could be channelled in productive ways on the ground. The functioning of this group is therefore to maintain appropriate relations between local clan estates through traditional

governance arrangements, while also being able to connect well enough to government agencies and western governance practices.

The Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation (YMDAC) was established in 2008. It had been running for 10 years when its board decided to initiate an LDM agreement with the NT government. YMDAC is guided by a board of 14 directors who represent the 7 local clan groups. The Strongbala Pipul Wanbala Bois Komiti (SPWBK) is a subcommittee appointed by the YMDAC. The committee consults broadly and provides recommendations to the YMDAC Local Decision Making Board. This is a valuable consultation and decision making mechanism that informs strong locally based decisions on foundations of local knowledge and needs.

The YMDAC supports, and is guided by, a Cultural Governance Group. The Cultural Governance group have generated a 'clan based management model' which represents 7 clans (Ngalakani, Mara, Alawa, Wandarrang, Nunggubuyu, Ngandi and Ritharmgu), 4 semi moieties (Budal, Guyal, Mirrunggun and Mambali), 2 moieties (Yirritja and Dhuwa) and 3 cultural positions (Minggirringi, Djungayi and Dalyan). The work of shaping appropriate processes for clan governance to guide YMDAC and LDM is ongoing, and is seen as vital to the respectful and sustainable development of businesses, services and organisations.



Researcher Marlene Andrews (left) and research mentoree Sharon Rogers (right) speaking with Kevin Rogers, Wuyagiba Study Hub Chairman.

Capturing the importance of how people see the Yolngu worldview



Languages work

How leaders are feeling about their languages

Clans
School
Language centre
Canberra




Impact

What is the change from our involvement? The impact of doing things within ourself, our organisations, the communities?

Seeing the importance of key area of responsibility of togetherness, organisations and community



A scenic photograph of a sunset. The sun is a bright, glowing orb positioned low on the horizon, partially obscured by the dark silhouette of a large, leafy tree on the right side of the frame. The sky is a deep blue, filled with numerous small, wispy white clouds that catch the light from the setting sun. The foreground is dark and silhouetted, showing the outlines of trees and a distant horizon line.

Thank you
Any questions...