

Mununukkunhamirr¹ – a mindset and a concept of coming together to sort things out the proper way
from an audio recording by Nyomba Gaṇḍaṇu, September 2021.

Yow. Dhuwal ṅarra ga rulaṇḍhun yäku waṅgany limurruṅ dharanaraw Yolṅu walalaṅ,	Okay, Here I'm going to record one concept which is for all us Yolṅu to understand
ga nhaltjan limurr dhu balandany walalany marṅgi-gurruṅpan ṅunhi nhä ṅayi dhuwali mayali'.	and how we can teach the balanda the meaning of this.
Dhuwal ṅayi yäku gurraṅay, dhiyaku dhuwal mununukkunhamirr	This word is an ancient, ancestral term, this word mununukkunhamirr.
ṅunhi ṅayi dhuwaliyi yäkuy limurr ṅuli waṅgany-manapanmirr ṅamaṅamayunmirri nhaku malaṅu yätjkurru bakmaranharaw	This name refers to us coming together to produce something, to break up whatever is bad,
rulwaṇḍhun ṅunhi yätjkurruṅ ṅamakulilil ga ṅamakuliny rulaṇḍhun ga ṅamakulilil yän.	and put that bad thing in a good situation, put it down well, to stay only good.
Dhuwali ṅayi mayali' dhuwali yäku mununukkunhamirr ṅayi yäku gurraṅay.	So, the meaning of that word 'mununuk' is an ancient, ancestral meaning.
Limurruṅgal ṅalapaṅmirri gan dhuwali bäki yäku.	Our old people used to hold that concept.
Walal ṅunhi rom-bakmaranha yätjkurru rulwaṇḍhuna ṅamakuli'lil romlil ga dhukarrilil.	They used to break up that bad way, and put it right, in practices and in ways forward.
Ga dhuwali ṅarra ga rulwaṇḍhun limurruṅ marṅgithinyaraw.	So that's what I'm putting down for us to learn.
Ga limurr dhu marṅgi-gurruṅpan ṅunha Balandany walalany dhiyakiyi yäkuw märr walal dhu marṅgithirr ṅunhi ṅayi dhuwal gurraṅay	And we can teach those Balanda that word, so that they will learn this practice is an ancestral totemic practice.
Yäku limurruṅgal gan ṅalapaṅmirriy bäki.	A word that our old people held.
Ga balanya	That's it.

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Discussion in English, transcribed by Michaela Spencer

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

¹ Mununuk (adjective) *straight, correct, sorted, right* + -kunha (verb) – *to make* + -mirr (reflexive) – *ourselves, each other*.
Mununukkunhamirr - *working together to sort things out in the proper way*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When community development is remembering and re-enacting ancestral imperatives in current partnerships, this concept helps sensitise NLC, and other external collaborators, to Yolŋu processes of healing enabling strong communities to emerge. This is not necessarily through tracking improvements by external measures, but in working with Yolŋu authorities who know how to enact ancestral and totemic practices caring for children and supporting local projects, and in seeing the benefits as right relations of people-places being enacted in the context of contemporary issues.