

# 'Community Development – Yolŋu Way'

by Nyomba Gaṅḍaṅu, October, 2020

*Background: The text below was completed by Nyomba as an assignment within the Diploma of Indigenous Research. In a previous assignment, Nyomba had talked about 'what is monitoring and evaluation, Yolŋu way'. In this assignment, Yolŋu discusses what is 'Community Development' Yolŋu-way.*

It is my hope, my vision, for my community that we Yolŋu has to give a true story to our clan leaders, to our families, to our relatives.

Because there are many things that we need to sort and bring it into a very good life, health, education, learning, understanding to connect our life to where we belong.

There are many stories that has to be told to our children, to lift their life and to be our future leaders.

To stand on our common ground in our own space, to bring our cultural knowledge our cultural education our cultural law; an ethics to make ourselves strong and to lay a good foundation for our future. So the balanda has to see that we are people of culture, strong in our dialects, strong in our ceremonies and in our knowledgeable Yolŋu education. And we are looking forward to meet the other work that Balanda, western side are doing. But first be strong in our own ground. That's my hope, my vision, my aim. To talk with my own people to show and to lift up our own people. To lift up our own thoughts, our own sorts to stand firm and see what is coming. Children must understand.

What I was saying, I am just focus on the children. They need to know more to connect with the services, but they need to know more back in their own space, and from there will meet with the Balanda, whoever is located in our community. There are many services happening here.

## **Community development**

This is what I have been saying before. Start your education back with your family, start your development within your family, within your clan, within your ceremonies. This has to be with the Yolŋu community.

I know community is a place, but in Yolŋu terms community is Yolŋu who are living, and we need to development.

What is development of Yolŋu your own life, your own family your own clan to bring this *yindi* (big) development together in clan. We see this in funeral, initiation ceremony. This is why I'm talking about. Community from Yolŋu understanding is Yolŋu people.

From my understanding I see community as people. That's my layers, that's how I understand. Development is like – as we develop our own farm.

That story of social distance at the funeral, shows health development<sup>1</sup>. We heard about that, there was big news coming through about the social distancing. We Yolŋu understood about that, how to manage in the way for our own health. Everything in the ceremony, and at the end was manymak.

### **TO group**

When I was talking to the TO group, when we had that CD project meeting with all the TOs and I did my presentation, I spoke in ways to make ourselves understand this funding organisation. How it is to support and to employ our own people to stand, and to work with balanda. That is our aim, our concern and our hope and our thoughts to employ our own people to work along with balanda. Because we Yolŋu we are really trying hard to understand the two parts, the two ways to understand development. This is really important to understand about this strategy, this collaboration and this collective. This is more, more important for us.

From how I see as a Yolŋu, that specific word development, it is a development of a life and the spirit of a people in many ways. In ceremonies, hunting, gathering, songline, bark paintings, njarra (major ceremony specially for men and boys). Development in Yolŋu terms. Development of going out hunting, talking with the children, development of the life and the spirit inside that the child, person, leader has to understand – develop their leadership to be strong and to lead what we need to achieve on our journey. That's how I see the development.

Bringing the family into a good health, into a good stage where will learn about the services what are locating in the community that we need to work together, balanda and Yolngu through health ga education.

Even development of baby when it is born and how that baby has to get more development, it is within the family. It is communication, learning, understanding, that's where we develop how to connect from the immediate to the extended family. Development of the language, how that child has to understand further.

My community development is the children.

I share with TO group how we have to focus and to see our population, Yolŋu people to support them as our people for any services of project that is happening or located in our community. That is very important, that is how I say to the TOs, these Yolŋu living in this community has opened the door for the funding that is coming through from our land. They are the key, that open that door for that money – is the community. Without them I wouldn't have any money. As my own as a TO, standing on my own, I wouldn't achieve something to develop my land, without the population.

Yolngu are the resources and the educators, that brought the missionaries to this place. Because Yolŋu knows where you will build a house, where is good ground that you can build your house, where is the place where you will find a good area, a safe area Yolŋu has the knowledge, Yolŋu knows. We are the educators, we are the resources to Yolngu people

Yolngu are the knowledge and the educators. We have the knowledge and understanding of our place. Sovereignty.

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<sup>1</sup> Story of how an important funeral at Galiwin'ku was held during the early COVID period. The funeral was held and the all the dances happened, but everyone did them 1.5 metres apart. The funeral worked as a ceremony *and* medical health advice was followed.

When the government resources come in they need to go in the right way. This is what the TO group is doing. Yaka go all over the place.

We TOs has to understand we need to support our own people and all the project that is happening and developing here in our community have to support with the projects.

### **Conclusion**

We need to develop our own people. The layers of our development is to develop our own understanding, develop our own understanding, learning, education, knowledge, everything that we need to put in place. That's where we Yolju people has to have that strength. Our strength, our journey that we need to develop for our future. That's how I see.

Development is many in Yolju perspective, many, many. As you will see the journey of a child going step by step until it is time to go to school. In school develop own skill and understanding in balanda education, this is the development.

That development is in two ways, Yolju development and balanda development. In balanda way this is learning to get literacy and numeracy. In Yolngu term is learning about your history, learning who he or she is, and Yolju side education.