

The History of the Yirrkala School.

Yoiŋu Thinking about
Education
in the
Laynha and Yirrkala
Areas.

Yirrkala Literature Production Centre 1990

The History of the Yirrkala Community School¹: Yolŋu² thinking about education in the Laynha and Yirrkala area³.

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Yalmay Yunupin⁴.

* Yirrkala Community School is sustaining and developing a community based approach in delineating education programs which meet the articulated needs of the communities in the area.

* Community centred and research orientated workshops are the core feature of Yirrkala Community School's Program. Workshops 'drive' the curriculum and staff development program.

* The Yirrkala Community School's program and mode of delivery of educational services provides a model for extension of such education to other groups and communities.

* The developments that have occurred at Yirrkala have happened because the community through the operation of the School Council gained control of the decision-making processes in the School.

* This paper elaborates the history which lies under the present situation we have at the Yirrkala Community School.

¹ Paper presented at the AIATSIS 1990 Conference "Remote Aboriginal Community Futures", Townsville, Qld., 14th July, 1990.

² "Yolŋu" is a term we, the people in the Laynha Region of the N.T., call ourselves in our local languages.

³ See attached map for geographical location of communities this paper mentions.

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Summary

This paper has been prepared on behalf of the Yirrkala Community School Action Group. The following extracts from the paper give an indication of the focus of each part of the paper and the issues and developments that each deals with:

Part 1 - Yolŋu Gain Control of Education at Yirrkala.

... the community was pushing us to work to improve education as much as we possibly could. They didn't want to see us continue for ever working under or for balanda but to see us achieve our yolŋu goals of:

- Self-Determination, • Self-Reliance, • Self-Sufficiency.

They saw that it is important for yolŋu in our community to see us run our own affairs, by seeing our Yolŋu Schools become ABORIGINALIZED. They believed that us Yolŋu can identify our own capabilities and responsibilities in doing this and running our own affairs.

Part 2 - The Balanda view of History

... Balanda who came to Yirrkala thought that they did not have to pay any attention to Yolŋu background and ideas about history, and Yolŋu ideas of the future. The Balanda controlled education at Yirrkala and therefore played an important part in setting its goals into practice - implementation of the policy of assimilation.

Part 3 - Yolŋu Understandings of History

... we identified some specific ways that the educational work we do should develop. We knew that we had to do this so that we can cater more adequately for the needs of our Yolŋu students through curriculum development in our community. We realised that we had to have programs of study for our communities' children that actively respected our Yolŋu heritage. We wanted our School's programs based in our community and centred around research that our community saw as important for the future generations to grow up as knowledgeable Yolŋu.

Part 4 - Yolŋu working to help Balanda develop a more long-term view of history; Balanda beginning to change their view of history

... another example of Yolŋu and Balanda working together in Garma ways. This benefits Yolŋu. In developing a garma curriculum, those working in Yolŋu Schools in N. E. Arnhemland are seeking to develop practices and conceptual frameworks which will firmly establish and maintain Yolŋu schools within contemporary Yolŋu life. It is our belief that a garma curriculum can be negotiated, and that it will maintain a balance between the Yolŋu and Balanda traditions. A garma curriculum will find ways to integrate these two traditions and the diverse ways of knowing within each tradition.

Part 1 - Yolŋu Gain Control of Education at Yirrkala.

Very good reasons exist for why the Action Group wants this story to be told and published. One of the main reasons that this history of the recent developments of education at Yirrkala must be publicised is so that this story is shared with other communities about the way that Yirrkala Community School has come under Yolŋu control. This paper will tell of the development of the Action Group, that was the main vehicle that steered the recent developments in curriculum and education at Yirrkala, and some of the issues and concerns that have been faced in the process. This is a story of increased awareness of the importance of Yolŋu views of history and of the problems that occur through the acceptance of a Balanda⁵ view of history when discussing the development of education at Yirrkala.

The recent history of education at Yirrkala (ie last forty years of education in the region) is really the story of the interaction of two views of what history is. The Balanda view of history and the Yolŋu view of history. Both Balanda and Yolŋu have been making the future according to the ways that they understand the past. For most of those forty years Balanda and Yolŋu have held to quite different ways of understanding both the past and the future. It is only recently that this has become starkly obvious. It only became obvious when Yolŋu gained control of the school administration. The view of history that we have is really the view that we have of the future. It is also the ways we understand how we are making the future now, and the ways we understand our history and how it made what we are now.

When the Action Group first started in 1984, as we were still struggling to be recognised as decision makers within the school, the principal had all the power to make all the decisions. The Action Group was made up of all of the Yolŋu staff in the school. It didn't matter what position you had, whether you were the gardener or the cleaner or a teacher. In 1984 the School operated in an unsatisfactory way with no Yolŋu or Balanda staff able to over-ride the non-Aboriginal Principal's decisions. Some Yolŋu were even asked to report back to the Principal on matters discussed by the Action Group. In fact the Principal wanted to know everything. We

⁵ Balanda" is the word Yolŋu use to refer to non-Aboriginal Australians. It derives from the word "Hollander" which we Yolŋu borrowed from our Macassan trading partners probably early last century.

encouraged each other to have our say. Changes slowly happened⁶ and from a small locally recognised group, we have come to be recognised by the N.T. Education Department as a strong decision-making body.

The Yirrkala Community School Council started to operate at about this time in 1984. This was the first time that decisions about the school were made by Yolŋu at Yirrkala together with representatives of all of the clans living in Homeland centres in our Laynha Region. The School Council was made up of our community leaders, our mala⁷ leaders, our Dilaks. They and the community were pushing us to work to improve education as much as we possibly could. They didn't want to see us continue for ever working under or for balanda but to see us achieve our yolŋu goals of:

• Self-Determination, • Self-Reliance, • Self-Sufficiency.

They saw that it is important for yolŋu in our community to see us run our own affairs, by seeing our Yolŋu Schools become ABORIGINALIZED. They believed that us Yolŋu can identify our own capabilities and responsibilities in doing this and running our own affairs.

Dramatic changes have occurred since 1984. In 1986 an Interim School Council was formally established with the N.T. Minister's agreement. The Yirrkala Community School is known as "The Nambara Council". The N.T. Minister for Education gazetted formal acceptance of the Nambarra Council Constitution on 14th August, 1988 in the Northern Territory Government Gazette. The Nambara Council is made up of representatives of all Homeland Centre and Clan groups in the Laynha Region. This Council is responsible for making all educational decisions for the Yirrkala Community School which includes the Homeland Centre Schools in the Laynha Region.

There was a great struggle to not only get Yolŋu control of the processes and activities within the school, but also over ownership of the 'school' and its relationship with many areas of the Education Department. And we are still struggling to keep this control. (e.g. the staffing section of the Department on selection of

⁶ This process of change and gaining control is documented in Wearne, G. (1986) Towards 'Bothways' Schooling: An Exploration of the Role of Non-Aboriginal Educators in Aboriginal Schools in the Context of Self Determination and Management. Unpublished research paper.

⁷ "Mala" is a term we use to describe a group of Yolŋu, a clan group is a mala'.

new staff and senior staff.) Despite support at the highest levels of the Department there has always appeared to be others who don't seem to want to support this School's plans for development. The main struggle has been conducted by the Action Group, with support from community leaders. The Action Group from its earliest days made a commitment not "just to talk" but that it was there to "act" that's why they named it the Yirrkala Community School Action Group. The Action Group is made up of all of the Yolngu members of the school staff, this includes administrative, clerical, ancillary, linguistic and teaching staff.

As the work of the Action Group got going the hierarchical structure of the school had to start changing. The Action Group identified problem areas and looked for ways to start exerting control. As a sub-committee of the School Council the Action Group was the mechanism through which the School Council achieved control over everyday matters: the power, opportunities and ability to control our school because we are now able to make all decisions, plan, evaluate, raise important issues and make recommendations for our school - the way we want it to be. Together we have been struggling for our ultimate goal of improving the education for the Yolngu students of the schools and communities in the Laynha Region.

However, we still have to ensure that we continue to improve the way that we work. We must also show that we are responsible to our community and develop closer links with our communities and the families of the students in the schools of our region. An example of a way that we do this is that at the end of every workshop, or other appropriate times, we hold a session which is open to all interested members of the community for the students to demonstrate their learning. As some of us wrote in 1988:

Our community also sees it as important that it is only yolngu leaders who are in charge of everything in our community. By making sure that we report to our community leaders what we are doing, especially ... we show them that we are working under their control.⁸

⁸ Yalmay Yunupingu, Wurrthalminy Maymuru, Badangdhun Munyarryun, Dhumudal Bromot, Stage 2 RATE contributions to the Development of Education at Yirrkala, presented at UNESCO Conference, Batchelor College, August 1988.

Part 2 - The Balanda view of History

In the past, Balanda that Yolngu at Yirrkala have known, have viewed history as progress along one track. For us Yolngu this has meant in practice that it is the track that Balanda in positions of power have told people to travel down and used every means at their disposal to try to force them to do so. Balanda came to this land thinking that they leave history behind them. That history recedes and disappears over the horizon of memory, and leaves them to make the future in whatever way they like. Balanda who came to Yirrkala thought that they did not have to pay any attention to Yolngu background and ideas about history, and Yolngu ideas of their future. The Balanda controlled education at Yirrkala and therefore played an important part in setting its goals in practice - implementation of the policy of assimilation. This can be seen in the following extracts from some Balanda writing about Yirrkala and about education at Yirrkala:

In 1935 Reverend's Webb and Chaseling selected the site for the mission station they named Yirrkala, they certainly chose a most beautiful spot. ... With the establishment of the mission, people from throughout North East Arnhem Land came to Yirrkala, returning frequently to their own traditional lands⁹.

There was continuous talk of the possibility of mining the deposits, by the late 1960's, Yolngu people began to appreciate the threat to their ownership of their traditional lands, and began to move back to demonstrate their possession of the land. The historic 1970 Land Claim established the rights of the various Yolngu clans around Yirrkala to their traditional lands¹⁰.

Synod was the annual business and planning meeting of the mission. In the early years it was held each November at a different mission station. This gave everyone a chance of seeing each other every few years. Missionaries who lived lonely lives thoroughly enjoyed this great time of fellowship. Problems of the past were discussed and plans for the future were made. The first was held at Yirrkala in 1936.¹¹

In the Yirrkala area bauxite was discovered and it turned out to be the richest deposit of the metal in Australia. In 1969 Nabalco started mining, this changed the whole life of the Yirrkala people.¹²

⁹ Thornell, H., (1986) A Bridge over Time, St Edmundsberry Press, Suffolk, England.

¹⁰ Shepherdson, E., (1981) Half a Century in Arnhemland, Pan Print, Torrens Park, S.A.

¹¹ ibid

¹² ibid

The whole purpose of teaching the Aborigines agriculture and other white man's skills was to prepare them for the transition from their ancient primitive and traditional way of life into the European style of living¹³.

The missions recognised that, if the Aborigines were to survive as a people, they must make that transition, no matter how difficult it would be. The time had come when they could no longer simply follow the old ways.

All kinds of farming were foreign to them, and that produced another problem, another facet of the white man's way that was difficult for them to understand or accept.¹⁴

In the early days of the mission there was no school building, and classes were held under the trees if the weather was fine or under the missions house when it was raining. Teachers were usually the wives of missionaries, and the missionaries provided the only education available¹⁵.

The Yirrkala School of these earlier times worked in a way that denied the existence of a Yolŋu education process in the community. Mandawuy Yunupingu, in a recent article, describes this in this way:

Before the Balanda arrived:

- we had only Yolŋu education.
- taught by elders.
- old men had power to teach ... from the sacred language they knew.

After the Balanda arrived:

- power in education taken away from Yolŋu.
- the missionaries built schools and the English language was introduced.
- the missionaries didn't realise that when they stopped us speaking Yolŋu language in the school, they were stopping our way of thinking.
- school was a Balanda idea and we had to use English for everything ...
- the school curriculum was completely Balanda ... maybe this had the effect of rubbishing Yolŋu language and ideas. The Yolŋu way was irrelevant to the school. This helped the Balanda maintain power.¹⁶

¹³ibid

¹⁴ibid

¹⁵ Thornell, H., (1986) p 167

¹⁶ Yunupingu, M. (1989) Language and Power: The Yolŋu rise to Power at Yirrkala School, Ngoonjook, Batchelor Journal of Aboriginal Education, September.

As Mandawuy has pointed out the curriculum taught in the classrooms was all in English. This happened until the Bilingual program was introduced in 1974. Yirrkala Community School is now a fully accredited Bilingual school. In 1973 the community and mala leaders decided that Yirrkala should have a Bilingual program to maintain and not lose our language. But that was not the only reason. There are other reasons e.g. using our first language in the classroom as our first language is more effective to help the children learn than using our second language, English. The Bilingual program caused some good changes because it started people talking in the school and in the community about the two cultures as well as the two languages.

However, despite Yolŋu staff being involved in some little ways, Balanda used to make all the important decisions and have all the important discussions about the way how curriculum should be taught in the school. Balanda used to make the plans and do timetables, weekly plans or monthly plans without a proper form of consultation with the Yolŋu teachers or community and parents. It was all done according to Balanda ideas and showed their aspects of how to run a Western Curriculum. At this time, there were Yolŋu staff employed, as Teaching Assistants, but their role was working in the classrooms but under the influence and direction of Balanda teachers. It was expected for the Yolŋu teachers to teach the curriculum in the classroom without an awareness that Yolŋu had their own fervent aspirations about curriculum for their communities' children's education. The Yolŋu teachers working in the classroom were being used as "offsiders" just to help Balanda teachers in organising Yolŋu curriculum. During that time there was not enough negotiation between Yolŋu and Balanda teachers to make decisions about how to make plans for what should be taught. Yolŋu always found problems in communication with Balanda. Mandawuy Yunupingu highlighted these and other aspects of this period:

- The Yolŋu teachers started doing proper teaching.
- some Yolŋu content introduced - crafts, hunting, dancing, etc.
- now the Yolŋu had some power inside the classroom

But outside the classroom, the curriculum, the staff meetings and all school decisions were still under the control of Balanda.

Why? Because the Balanda still set the agenda for meetings, and the meetings were held in English. The Yolŋu were often too shy or too frightened to say what they really felt.

So - it was still really a balanda school¹⁷.

¹⁷ibid

Part 3 - Yolŋu Understandings of History

The past, present and future of Yolŋu Community life at Yirrkala is not a linear story. There is an aspect of our life that reflects **bala-lili; ebb and flow; reciprocity, give and receive**. This can be seen in the ways that Yolŋu thinking about education has flowed in the period from 1974. Basically our view of history is not a movement away from the present towards a distant future. History stays in the place where it has been made. It stays and becomes the foundation of the present and the future. The way that there is this movement to and fro without losing sight of longterm goals can be seen in the way that thinking and action to develop Homeland Centre education has gone. The main Homeland movement around Yirrkala took place between 1972-73 although there had been Homeland communities like Gurrmurru and Garrthalala in regular use from before the Second World War. The Dilaks' knowledge guided the development of the Homelands because our Dilaks didn't like living in the settlement at Yirrkala as it was. They saw the effect it was having on Yolŋu culture. They saw that living at Yirrkala was a distorting and socially damaging process¹⁸, that's why our Dilaks had the motives to move out and to move back to their land, their foundation. Even though we moved out to our own tribal land in our own Homelands, we didn't move back to a nomadic lifestyle but we took with us our new knowledge of settlement systems, needs for services and facilities.

After settling in our own homelands, with support from the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs (D.A.A.) funding, we managed to build sheds out of corrugated iron and some out of bark, using bush materials. Our next concern was to ask for support to do something about our childrens' education to start off schools in our own communities. In June, 1974 a request was looked into by Aboriginal and non Aboriginal school staff from the Yirrkala School, plus Dr. Maria Brandl¹⁹ with Daymbalipu Munungurr and Wali Wunungmurra. Our communities requests eventually were met and accepted with an indication of support from the Education Department through advice and services when requested. During the research conducted by Maria, Daymbalipu

¹⁸ See Downing, J., (1988) Country of my Spirit- Ngurra Walytja, A.N.U. Press, Canberra, ACT. page 97 for discussion about this.

¹⁹ Brandl, M.M., (1974) Report on Homeland Centres Education: 'Visits to outstations in the Yirrkala area 4-22 June, 1974', N.T. Department of Education, Darwin, N.T.

and Wöli about Homeland Centre Education, the Dilaks put out rules that the teachers-to-be would be expected to carry out and abide by. As well, the Dilak through their questions and answers provided a picture of the style of education that they wanted.

The Dilak, when discussing the nature of their aspirations for education, stated "First of all, we want Aboriginal teachers..." and that they did not want "education to go over or against the ideas or desires of the Aboriginal people." These discussions led to the creation of several advisory teacher positions to assist Homeland Centre communities establish their schools. These teachers, referred to as 'visiting teachers', were seen by both the respective Yolŋu communities and the N.T. Department of Education primarily as 'teacher trainers'. The provision of teacher education was seen by the leaders to be crucial as a means of improving the education that children in Homeland Centre communities received. Through the groundwork of the Dilak at Yirrkala, the Aboriginal Teacher Education Centre, at Batchelor, established an Onsite Teacher Education program at Yirrkala in 1976. The Yirrkala Onsite program established some important principles :

- that accredited teacher education should be provided and made available to Homeland Centre teachers ;
- that this training should be provided through use of the facilities of the central community school ;
- that the development and progress of this program was a community concern and therefore community decision-makers required regular opportunities to have input;
- that the implementation of this program relied on all non-Aboriginal staff in the central school accepting some responsibility in assisting in the delivery of this program²⁰ as "teacher trainers".
- that the Homeland Communities wanted to be in control of all aspects of the operation of the Homeland schools

²⁰ See Northern Territory Department of Education- Education Statement Number Six: Aboriginal Education , Darwin, N.T. (1983) In particular, attention is drawn to reference to dual role of Non-Aboriginal staff in Aboriginal schools. In a paper to First Australian UNESCO Workshop Spring, G.,(1987) Rural and Remote Schooling in Australia: The Challenge facing Teacher Educators, explains N.T. Dept. of Ed. agreement to Visiting Teachers undertaking RATE tutors' role, an agreement that has allowed for the commencement of a very innovatory approach to Homeland Centre Teacher Education in North East Arnhem.

including the selection process for the appointment of all Visiting Teachers

The following extracts²¹ from the notes on the discussions as translated by Wäli Wunurmurra provide a glimpse of the deep thought and inspired thinking that was guiding the community development plans of the Dilak at that time.

- The school will include education for adults to learn a little English. Adult people also need some school. Adult education will include Aboriginal Culture and ideas. There is very little education now here like this.

- The language or languages wanted to use in the school are both languages, English and Yolngu Matha. We want to communicate in both Balanda and Yolngu. All matters concerning school matters will be run only by local people, but we will appreciate the ideas and help of Europeans when we ask them. All responsibility will lie with parents.

- The old people want this, but over here (at Yirrkala) there is a lot of outside influence which destroys the ideas of Aboriginal people. The Dilaks ideas and rules about this is ongoing so as to see a better place to live in for local people.

- We would like to have the support from European teachers supporting Yolngu homeland teachers.

- The European teacher is the one the Yolngu homeland teacher will turn to if they run into trouble or difficulty.

- If the European teacher is prepared to help the homeland teacher as well as the children the people will make them feel welcome and build up good relationships.

- Everything will depend on his/her ideas on teaching and their experiences in teaching Aborigines and their qualifications.

- The European should listen to local Yolngu people. He/she should be careful how they approach people and how they teach them, any mistakes will make it difficult for European teachers in the future.

The flow of these ideas guided the development of all the Homeland schools. They all started at different dates as their communities were ready, but in the same way - under a bark hut or shed, under a paperbark shade or under a shady tree, - real open air teaching. As communities got their schools running, the flow from the leaders steadied as they waited for the next time direction was needed - like the next tide. This direction came with the establishment of the Yirrkala Community School Council -

²¹ Brandl, M.M., (1974)

the Nambara Council, and as has been mentioned earlier this has provided a new direction to education in this area.

Some of Raymattja's recent writing develops a picture of the way that interactions in Yolngu education should work:

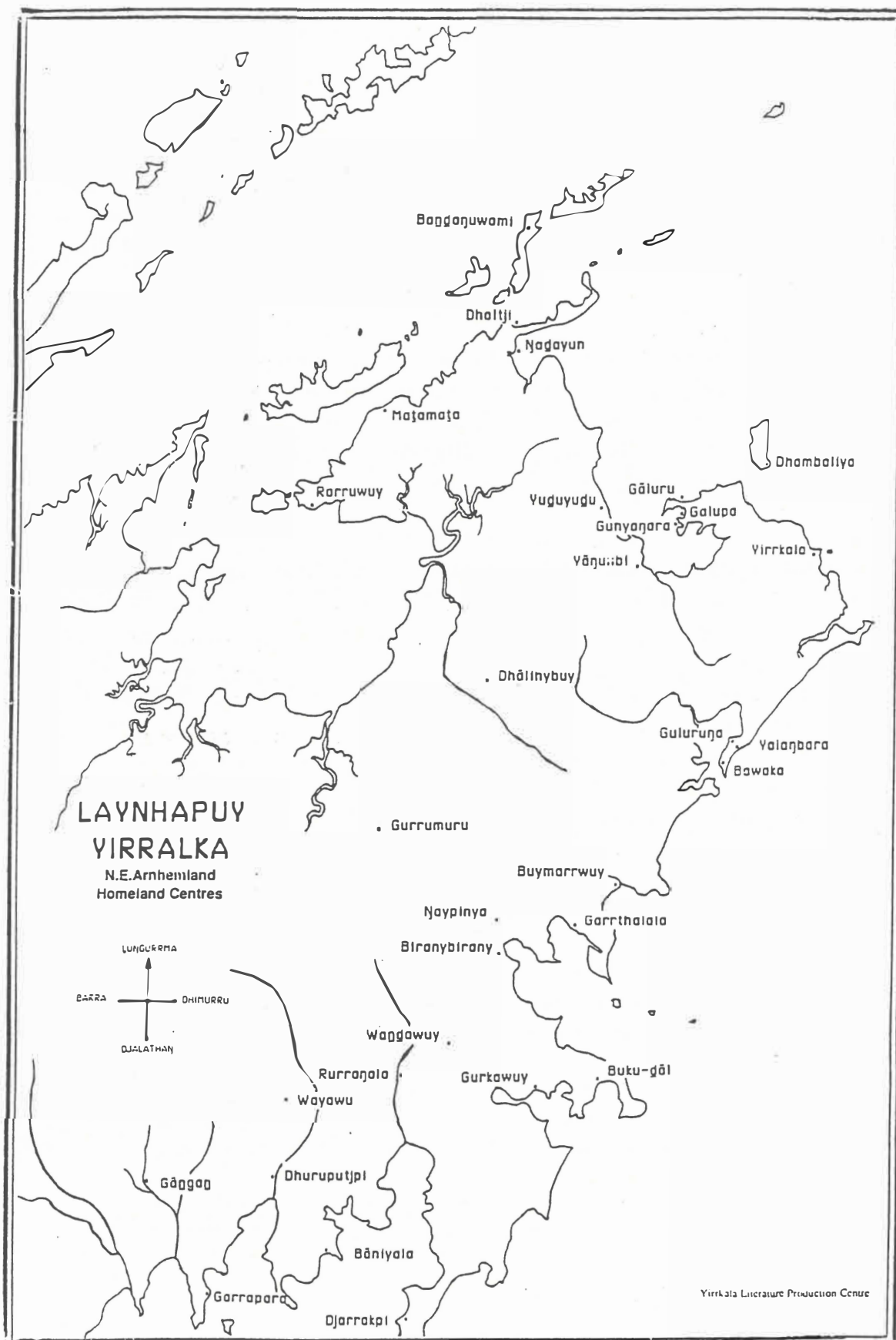
There is always a dynamic interaction of knowledge traditions. Fresh water from the land, bubbling up in fresh water springs to make waterholes, and salt water from the sea are interacting with each other with the energy of the tide and the energy of the bubbling spring. When the tide is high the water rises to its full. When the tide goes out the water reduces its capacity. In the same way *Milngurr* ebbs and flows. In this way the Dhuwa and Yirritja sides of Yolngu life work together. And in this way Balanda and Yolngu traditions can work together. There must be balance, if not either one will be stronger and will harm the other. The *Ganma* Theory is Yirritja, the *Milngurr* Theory is Dhuwa.²²

One of the most important elements in setting the context for this balanced interaction is the Action Group control of all aspects of the Yirrkala Community School. If it hadn't been that the Action Group and the School Council gained control of the school, we would not even have what we have today. In working to develop our plans for action we identified some specific ways that the educational work we do should develop. We knew that we had to do this so that we can cater more adequately for the needs of our Yolngu students through curriculum development in our community. We realised that we had to have programs of study for our communities' children that actively respected our Yolngu heritage, we wanted our School's programs based in our community and centred around research that our community saw as important for the future generations to grow up as knowledgeable Yolngu. We knew from our own research that this way of working would create a place of learning where negotiation is accepted as a legitimate basis for participation in the learning program²³. The next part of our paper will show the way that we have come to understand many of these things. The next part of

²² Mununggiritj, R., (1990) Workshops as Teaching Learning Environments, Paper presented to Yirrkala Action Group, Yirrkala Community School, N.T. March.

²³ The importance of this framework is explained in Report on Yirrkala Practicum: Evaluation of Yirrkala School Community Education Centre and Primary Workshops, by Yirrkala participants, Stage Three Teacher Education students, Batchelor College, Batchelor, March, 1990. p.17. Related ideas are discussed in White, L. (1988) Community-based Teacher Education, Paper presented to the Second Australian UNESCO Workshop on Training Primary Education Personnel Working in Difficult Educational Contexts. Report on proceedings in press, and McTaggart, R. (1988) Pedagogical Principles for Aboriginal Teacher Education, Ngoonjook: Batchelor College Journal of Aboriginal Education, Batchelor College, N.T.

our paper also will serve to give an understanding of the directions our future work will have to go.



Part 4 - Yolŋu working to help Balanda develop a more long-term view of history; Balanda beginning to change their view of history

Recently the Balanda who Yolŋu have chosen to work with, have learned to work with the Yolŋu view of history. When Yolŋu gained political power in the school they were in a position to get Balanda to listen, learn and act.

Because Balanda have started to understand and accept something of the Yolŋu view of history, so too they have been able to understand something of the Yolŋu view of the present and the future, and put their efforts behind Yolŋu making their future in their way. Balanda have begun to see that history stays in the place that it is made.

The history of the Action Group, that was detailed in Part 1 of this paper, also shows Balanda learning to work within our Yolŋu understandings. The operation of the community based and centred teacher education programs at Yirrkala have been important parts of the story of the recent development of education at Yirrkala.

Teacher Education Based and Centred at Yirrkala:

Community-based Teacher Education at Yirrkala has been the aspiration of the Dilak for a long time now. They made clear their views on the need for all 'training' to be based in the Yirrkala community in the early 1970's. These requests included representations to the Uniting Church in Australia Commission²⁴ in 1973; statements made to Brandl as part of the research into the development of Homeland Centre education in 1974²⁵; and views expressed in 1975 to Sommerlad and Duke²⁶ during their research and preparation of their report on the TAFE needs of N.T. Aborigines.

Community centred Teacher Education is important to us because it is the only way we know will ensure that teacher education programs actively include Aboriginal community members and opinion. Being able to work in your home community means that some potential students are not excluded from the course or

²⁴ "Free to Decide" (1974) Report of the Commission of Enquiry, Arnhem Land, for the United Church in North Australia, ARDS, Uniting Church, Darwin, N.T.

²⁵ Brandl, M.M., (1974)

²⁶ Duke, C. and Sommerlad, E., (1976) Design for Diversity, Education Research Unit, Research School of Social Sciences, ANU.

program because of geographical remoteness by locating all of the program at a Tertiary Institution like Batchelor College, in the N.T. Working in a community based and centred way means that the program can be responsive to the individuals' and their communities' needs. The program then can recognize the impact that non-educational factors have on achievement in the courses. In addition to the educational arguments which support community-based study there are other important questions about the tremendous social and human cost of study in institutions located away from the student's community. Yirrkala community leaders have clearly stated that the maintenance of the wholeness of each individual's wellbeing is of great importance. Study away from the cultural and other support systems of our community and family threatens this wholeness and wellbeing.

Community centred Teacher Education gives the program the opportunity to actively respect the local Yolŋu culture and contemporary perspectives. This is important for us as we realise that new understandings and knowledge come from the knowledge of our Yolŋu people's struggles for social and educational justice around Australia. These struggles are going on today as they have in the past and they all provide us with knowledge to confront the struggles ahead if we are to achieve the goals our Dilak have set for us. This process will mean that the program will promote action by all its participants in acceptance and support for our Dilaks' aims of our community for self-determination. These things will all be able to occur in a productive environment that recognises that negotiation forms the starting point for involvement in our formal Yolŋu education processes. Institutions, at school or tertiary level, that claim to actively respect our heritage would accept such forms of negotiation as rightfully placed in their curriculum. Stephen Kemmis²⁷ explains:

Because ... Aboriginal teachers and communities have central roles in deciding what should be taught and learned, and over how it should be taught and learned, it requires continuous negotiation and renegotiation (and the possibility of conflict) between Aboriginal people within communities, and the broader context of the administration of Aboriginal education, between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Thus Aboriginal ...teacher education must be accredited and controlled under the

²⁷ Kemmis, S. (1988) A Study of the Batchelor College Remote Area Teacher Education Program 1976-1988. Deakin Institute for Studies in Education, Deakin University, August.

jointly-negotiated authority of the ... [institutions of] Australian ... teacher education ... and particular Aboriginal communities ...

Gandalal establishes some important points that flow from his participation in a Teacher Education program that tried to work in the way we have detailed above:

When we say COMMUNITY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION we say this because it is better to stay in the communities rather than go somewhere else, because we are where our resources are; the material and the supportive people we need are the MALA LEADERS; DILAK; our COUNCILS; they tell, feed, guide and direct us to do what we must do and how we should do it in their style, they model our ways of thinking and doing. That's why our COMMUNITY LEADERS, our MALA LEADERS, our DILAK and our COUNCIL MEMBERS and whoever-else is concerned about education is pushing us to get as much education as we possibly can get and there's only one area that is offering that type of education and that is RATE²⁸ community based.

Through RATE, we yolngu see our chance of getting loose and getting rid of the harness and bridle that the Balanda has long used to steer us in the direction they wanted us to go and that is the way of Balanda. Through this type of teacher training we have a chance of getting educational skills so that we can work in our communities and put our qualification and what we've learnt into use in our own Homeland communities. We yolngu would like to gather enough understanding and knowledge about balanda law and system so as to understand and live with both laws and worlds. While community based education still operates I think yolngu teachers should take up this chance by getting themselves enrolled and being prepared to take up their time studying and training for the good of their homelands and people. Working in a community based program is important for us because of the obvious reasons, to be able to live, share, talk and cope with the ever increasing demands of the society of today's world - we need to be educated. We need to be educated to a certain level of understanding and knowledge. This will also make communication better between YOLNGU and BALANDA.²⁹

²⁸ RATE is the acronym for the Batchelor College operated Remote Area Teacher Education program. Currently this term is not used to describe this program in recognition of Batchelor College's "remoteness" and the current "community orientation" of the entire Teacher Education program.

²⁹ Ngurruwutthun, G., in Donald, J., et al (1989) Evaluation Report on the Remote Area Teacher Education Program implementation of Stage Two of the Batchelor College Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) in 1989. Batchelor College School of Education Studies Working Paper, Batchelor, N.T. Vol 3.

Some important events in the development of community based teacher education at Yirrkala:

YEAR	Events related to Community based Teacher Education at Yirrkala:
1953	First Aboriginal Teaching Assistants employed in the N.T.
1960	Short term courses commenced for Aboriginal Teaching Assistants. Courses located in Darwin.
1968	Full-time one year course for Teaching Assistants commenced at Kormilda College located in Darwin..
1970	Second Year full-time course commences at Kormilda College.
1972	Welfare Branch establishes the Vocational Training Centre at Batchelor (V.T.C.). The Aboriginal Teacher Education Centre starts as part of V.T.C. (ATEC)
1974	Maria Brandl reports on the decentralisation/outstation movement in the Yirrkala area. Reports need to make Teacher Education available in the local community. Mala leaders appoint first Visiting teachers in Yirrkala area. Priority established for Teacher Training for the identified H.L.C. teachers.
1975	Discussions at Yirrkala about A.T.E.C. (centred in Batchelor) commencing Onsite program at Yirrkala.
1976	Onsite program commences at Yirrkala, John Bonney as lecturer. Yalmay Yunupingu and Daynawa Nurruwutthun first graduates of an Onsite program.
1980	ATEC becomes known as Batchelor College. Peter Plummer appointed as first Principal of Batchelor College.
1983	Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) accredited with D.C.C. as the awarding institution only available oncampus at Batchelor College. Deakin University staff (John Henry and Stephen Kemmis) and B.C. staff commence B.C.self-evaluation project. Deakin University staff visit Yirrkala and commence discussions with community leaders about appropriate forms of Teacher Education for Yirrkala. Yirrkala Yolngu educators begin Action Research projects as part of RATE program activities.
1984	Yirrkala Community School Action group commences working without support of School Principal. Yirrkala Action Group provides input into Batchelor College Reaccreditation proposal for Batchelor College Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools).
1985	Reaccreditation proposal for Batchelor College Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) is approved.
1986	Pilot Batchelor College Stage One RATE program for Homeland Centre teachers commences at Yirrkala. Research conducted by Batchelor College to assist development of Stage One RATE program for HLC teachers in North East Arnhem Region.
	Deakin University and Batchelor College commence cooperative implementation of the Batchelor of Arts (in Education) program or as it was known the DBATE program. .i.e. the Deakin - Batchelor Aboriginal Teacher Education program.

	<p>Mandawuy Yunupingu completes course requirements for B.A. (Ed.) through the DBATE program.</p> <p>Minister for Education N.T. visits Yirrkala and agrees to implementation of "Yirrkala School Development Plan". This plan formally recognises the role of the Action Group as the day to day decision-making group for the School.</p>
1987	<p>Batchelor College Stage One RATE program for Homeland Centre teachers in the Yirrkala, Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining areas commences.</p> <p>Research conducted by Batchelor College to assist development of Stage Two RATE program for teachers in Northern Territory communities.</p>
1988	<p>Pilot Batchelor College Stage Two RATE program conducted at Yirrkala, including a student from a Homeland Centre in the Laynha area. Four graduates of this RATE program. Participatory Action Research used to prepare an evaluation report that recommended continuation and extension of the program to other N.T. communities.</p> <p>Daynawa Nurruwutthun completes course requirements for B.A. (Ed.) through the DBATE program.</p> <p>Development and approval of Batchelor College Accreditation proposal for Diploma of Teaching program.</p>
1989	<p>Commencement of Batchelor College Diploma of Teaching program</p> <p>Pilot Batchelor College Stage Two RATE program conducted in several N.T. communities, including a student from a Homeland Centre in the Laynha area.</p> <p>Discussions at Batchelor College about strategies for 1990 to implement all three stages of the Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) in a community centred way.</p>
1990	<p>Implementation of the Batchelor College Stage Three program in a community based and community centred way at Yirrkala and fifteen other N.T. communities..</p>

Our Community as a Community of Researchers:

Balangana³⁰ Research was an important milestone for Balanda and Yolngu working together with reciprocity³¹ as they worked to develop ideas about the nature and content of an appropriate Yolngu curriculum. We recognise that there is an important relationship between curriculum development and implementation of an appropriate curriculum and the continuing active research by Yolngu educators at Yirrkala. Participatory research at Yirrkala of the flavour we now see it, has its genesis around 1985:

Yolngu educationists at Yirrkala have been actively researching into the development of a curriculum and a pedagogy for "both ways" education since 1985. When we talk of "both ways" we ... view "both ways" in terms of the Yolngu word "*garma*". This is an open word used by both Yirritja and Dhuwa clans describing the format where a Yolngu learning environment begins. *Garma*³² implies negotiation between the two moieties - the Yirritja and the Dhuwa, and the coming to agreement about what will happen in the teaching and learning in the *garma* episode. Some Balandas still deny that this sort "both ways" education is possible³³.

For those who find it difficult to understand and support this idea of Garma Curriculum we can show how we are already working and applying it. In working with this concept we are refining and finding better ways to describe it. This research³⁴ has taken

³⁰ Mununggurr, D., Wunungmurra, W., Yunupingu, B. Educational needs of the Homeland centres of the Laynhapuy region of North East Arnhem Land : Report on the Balangana Project to the Australian Schools Commission, (1987) This research was funded by the Australian Schools Commission as a Project of National Significance.

³¹ See a fine example of this work in Maymuru, W., Munyarryun, B., Yunupingu, Y. and Bromot, D., Child Study Report. Learning about the Yolngu Child Learning through Language, Batchelor College, Batchelor, N.T. For an Action Research report by Balanda participants in this process see McMahon, K. (1988) Research in Ganma Curriculum Development: Mathematics Education for Yolngu Teachers, and Cathcart, J. (1988) Action Research and Ganma Research in Homeland Schools, both are reported in the Interim Report on the Project "Towards a Ganma Curriculum in Yolngu Schools", Report prepared by the Action Group, Yirrkala Community School, Yirrkala, N.T.

³² This word *garma* was first given to us by Wukaka Marika, deceased elder, Guduwurru leader, Rirratjinu Clan, Yirrkala, in 1986.

³³ Mununggiritj, R., (1990)

³⁴ This research has received support from several funding bodies and educational institutions. The Department of Education in the Northern Territory has continued its support of Yirrkala Community School and Homeland Centre Schools. The Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training has supported all

many differing forms as this brief description shows:

1986	<p>Yolŋu educators Daymbalipu Mununggurr, Mandawuy Yunupingu and Wäli Wunumurra carried out a Schools Commission Project of National Significance: "Educational Needs of Homeland Centre Schools". This project known as the Balangana Project was supported by Deakin University through the assistance of Stephen Kemmis and Helen Watson.</p> <p>Mandawuy Yunupingu commenced work on the notion of "Both Ways" education as a DBATE student. He used many Dilak in the Yirrkala area as his advisors and resources. Deakin University and Batchelor College supported this research.</p>
1987	<p>"Towards a Ganma Curriculum", funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and supported by Deakin University and Melbourne University. Stage One Homeland Centre RATE students and Batchelor College were involved in assisting with this research. Many Dilak in the Yirrkala area were used as our advisors and resources for this research.</p>
1988	<p>"'Growing up' Homeland Centre Schools - Curriculum Development Beyond Year 4", funded by the Schools Commission to assist the Homeland communities and schools in all of North East Arnhemland develop and explore the notion of Yolŋu Curriculum. This latter research work was organised and conducted mainly by Barayuwa Mununggurr and Dundiway Wunumurra. Dilak in the Yirrkala, Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi and Ramingining areas were used as advisors and resources for this Yolŋu curriculum development research. This project was assisted by Deakin University, Melbourne University and Batchelor College.</p> <p>The 1988 Stage Two RATE students based at Yirrkala conducted research into Yolŋu pedagogy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •experimenting with organisation of "workshops" and •conducting a series of child studies •undertaking personal development projects to explore the Ganma theory <p>Daynawa as a DBATE student conducted research into the nature of Yolŋu Pedagogy as part of the National Aboriginal Pedagogy Project.</p> <p>Reports on these research projects were given at a meeting at Yirrkala (at Ganarrimirri) in October, 1988. This meeting established that the term "Galtha Rom" would be used to describe the workshop based Yolŋu curriculum we</p>

of these research activities through Special Course funding for the Batchelor College operated N.E. Arnhem Homeland Centre Stage One RATE program. In addition all Yirrkala participants in other Batchelor and Deakin Teacher Education programs have been assisted by DEET with funding for travel as part of their research work as required aspects of their studies.

1989	<p>were developing.</p> <p>"Galtha Rom: The Beginning of Formal Knowledge" attracted funding from the Schools Commission for continuation on the foundations of the work up to that time. This research has been supported by Melbourne University and Batchelor College.</p>
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These projects establish a very strong foundation for us as Yolŋu researchers being accepted as researchers in our own right. The research we have undertaken so far has identified the nature of our Yolŋu people's educational concerns and directions to go. Using our research findings we have been able to start to correct the past absence of curriculum material and approaches which recognise our Yolŋu knowledge and values. We have noted the advice of our Dilak as reported by Daymbalipu, Wäli and Mandawuy:

Children in our schools must progress along two '*raki*' (lines of conceptual development). This is particularly important in the abstract conceptual areas, such as those covered by mathematics in the conventional *Balanda* School curriculum. Children in our schools must learn to use dual systems of abstract understanding: those of the *Yolngu* world and those of the *Balanda* world³⁵.

Garma research and the use of the word *Ganma*³⁶ was important in allowing Balanda to understand better, for in English there are not words that have the complexity and subtlety of meaning as *ganma* or *milŋurr*. It was important to use these words so that Balanda could be properly educated. Galtha workshops and curriculum development are also an example of Yolŋu and Balanda working together in Garma ways. In developing a *garma* curriculum, those working in Yolŋu Schools in N. E. Arnhemland are seeking to develop practices and conceptual frameworks which will firmly establish and maintain Yolŋu schools within contemporary Yolŋu life. This benefits Yolŋu. It is our belief that a *garma* curriculum can be negotiated, and that it will maintain a balance between the Yolŋu and Balanda traditions. A *garma*

³⁵Mununggurr, D., Wunungmurra, W., Yunupingu, B. Educational needs of the Homeland centres of the Laynhapuy region of North East Arnhem Land : Report on the Balangana Project to the Australian Schools Commission, (1987)

³⁶ See the Action Group of Yirrkala Community School (1989) Interim Report on the project "Towards a Ganma Curriculum in Yolngu Schools" (a report to the Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, the Deakin institute for Studies in Education, the History and Philosophy of Science Department of Melbourne University, and the Education Department of the Northern Territory) Yirrkala Community School, Yirrkala, N.T.

curriculum will find ways to integrate these two traditions and the diverse ways of knowing within each tradition.

The starting point for us then - the Galtha - was our research which directed the work towards GALTHA ROM as the way to best describe the working of the fundamental Yolŋu foundations of the curriculum in the school.

The Galtha Rom Workshops started in February 1989 with both Community Education Centre and Primary workshops³⁷. The participants in these workshops were community representatives from each Homelands, mala leaders, Yolŋu, Balanda, students both from Homeland Schools and Yirrkala Central School. These early workshops considered mathematical form in Yolŋu and Balanda terms, to find a way about how the mathematics system works through relationships, the connection between the Balanda number system and our system of gurrutu relations. Through working in these workshops our children will be able to understand the Yolŋu skills and knowledge and transfer them into Western skills and understanding about how Balanda mathematics system works. These workshops were organised by all Yolŋu teachers (Action Group) with the support from our mala leaders and Balanda from Central School. They were run by all Yolŋu teachers including Balanda teachers - through negotiating, sharing ideas, learning together, working together, planning together. This is what we call "working as a team". It is an important role for Yolŋu teachers to teach children in our own community school all Yolŋu and Balanda aspects of the curriculum.

Galtha Rom Workshops so far have also involved Yirrkala Community School teachers, Laynhapuy Homelands teachers with the Yirrkala based students and staff of the Batchelor College Teacher Education program. Our experience of the Batchelor College RATE program particularly the workshop format they use, set the context for the successful Galtha Rom Workshops that we organised last year.

³⁷ See Mununggiritj, R., (1990) WORKSHOPS AS TEACHING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS, in Evaluation of Yirrkala School C.E.C. and Primary Workshops, by Ngurruwutthun, G., Maymuru, B., Yunupingu, Y., Munyarryun, B., & Mununggurr, M., (1990) Batchelor College, N.T. March.

Looking forward:

In concluding we have some ideas about the way to go.

Firstly, we must all work cooperatively to find strategies for change in our schools that continue to contribute to developing more appropriate forms of curriculum and pedagogy for use in our schools. Working together to get changes in our schools as learners, as Yolŋu educators who can learn from each other by solving our problems together, we are continuing an important journey.

... our work is not just for ourselves, but for all the people in this community and the Homeland Centres. Our work is based here at Yirrkala, so therefore we are opening new paths and marking the way for others to follow us and continue our journey³⁸.

Banbapuy Maymuru, July, 1988.³⁹

This metaphor of the journey serves to indicate that we are moving towards the goal of Yolŋu self-determination, this journey, as this paper demonstrates, has already taken us some ways towards our goals as we have worked together to develop appropriate curriculum for the future and present Yolŋu generations.

Integrated curriculum has made us all (the teachers, community, children) more broad minded. Because of what they are seeing from the workshops, parents are thinking and talking more about the kinds of workshops we are having. Now that they are seeing that it has been very successful the parents are now thinking more and being more broad minded about their children's future⁴⁰.

Secondly, we must keep on developing our ideas about the things that should be done in our schools. We have to make sure that the curriculum of our school draws its strength by having

³⁸ Quoted in Marika, R., Ngurruwutthun D., & White, L. (1989) ALWAYS TOGETHER. YAKA GANA: Participatory Research at Yirrkala as part of the development of a Yolŋu Education. Yirrkala Community School, N.T.

³⁹ Banbapuy Maymuru in an article in the community newspaper "Yuṭana Dhäwu" explaining the nature of her research while a student in the 1988 Stage Two RATE program at Yirrkala. "Yuṭana Dhäwu", Yirrkala Literature Production Centre, Yirrkala, N.T. June, 1988.

⁴⁰ Report on Yirrkala Practicum: Evaluation of Yirrkala School Community Education Centre and Primary Workshops, by Yirrkala participants, Stage Three Teacher Education students, Batchelor College, Batchelor, March, 1990. p.17

important aspects of the curriculum and the community's and our lives and concerns being put under focus:

Focus One - Yolngu Curriculum- Continuation of studies of Formal Yolngu Knowledge. This is a continuation of previous activities that have been funded by the Schools Commission as part of the research and study of Galtha Rom⁴¹ in this area. This is an exploration of the connections between Non-Aboriginal mathematical knowledge and Aboriginal systems of knowledge.

Focus Two - Curriculum Development for Homeland Centre Schools - This activity seeks to develop a form of curriculum and staff development that we have labelled an Integrated "Workshop driven Curriculum"⁴². It is envisaged that this activity would enable exploration of appropriate curriculum forms through a focus on strategies for the teaching of non-Aboriginal knowledge by Yolngu teachers.⁴³. This will enable Yirrkala communities to have access to ideas and knowledge that previously has remained restricted through Balanda control of process and the related trivialisation of content.

Focus Three - Developing strategies to support Yirrkala students participation in Secondary Education. This activity seeks to utilise the learnings from our experience with workshops as a means to explore ways that the content and processes that form part of a formal High School Secondary Education program can be supported for students from Yirrkala.

Thirdly, we must continue to assert our rights to control the development of education at Yirrkala. An important part of this will be continuing to demand that the important research that we are engaged in should be recognised as having important education significance. As part of this ongoing development work our community is developing a detailed request for financial support from the Australian Research Council to provide funding to obtain the necessary resources. The story we have been part of so far demonstrates that we are entitled to this level of recognition.

⁴¹See Draft Introduction to the 1989 Report on the Project "Towards a Garma Curriculum in Yolngu Schools" prepared by the Yirrkala Community School Action Group. pp1-25. (Included in accompanying documentation.)

⁴²See Watson, H., & White, L.,(1990) TOWARDS A "WORKSHOP DRIVEN" CURRICULUM: INTEGRATION OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT : THE WAY FORWARD FOR YIRRKALA HOMELAND EDUCATION, Yirrkala Community School, Yirrkala, N.T.

⁴³See Ngurruwutthun et al (1990)

