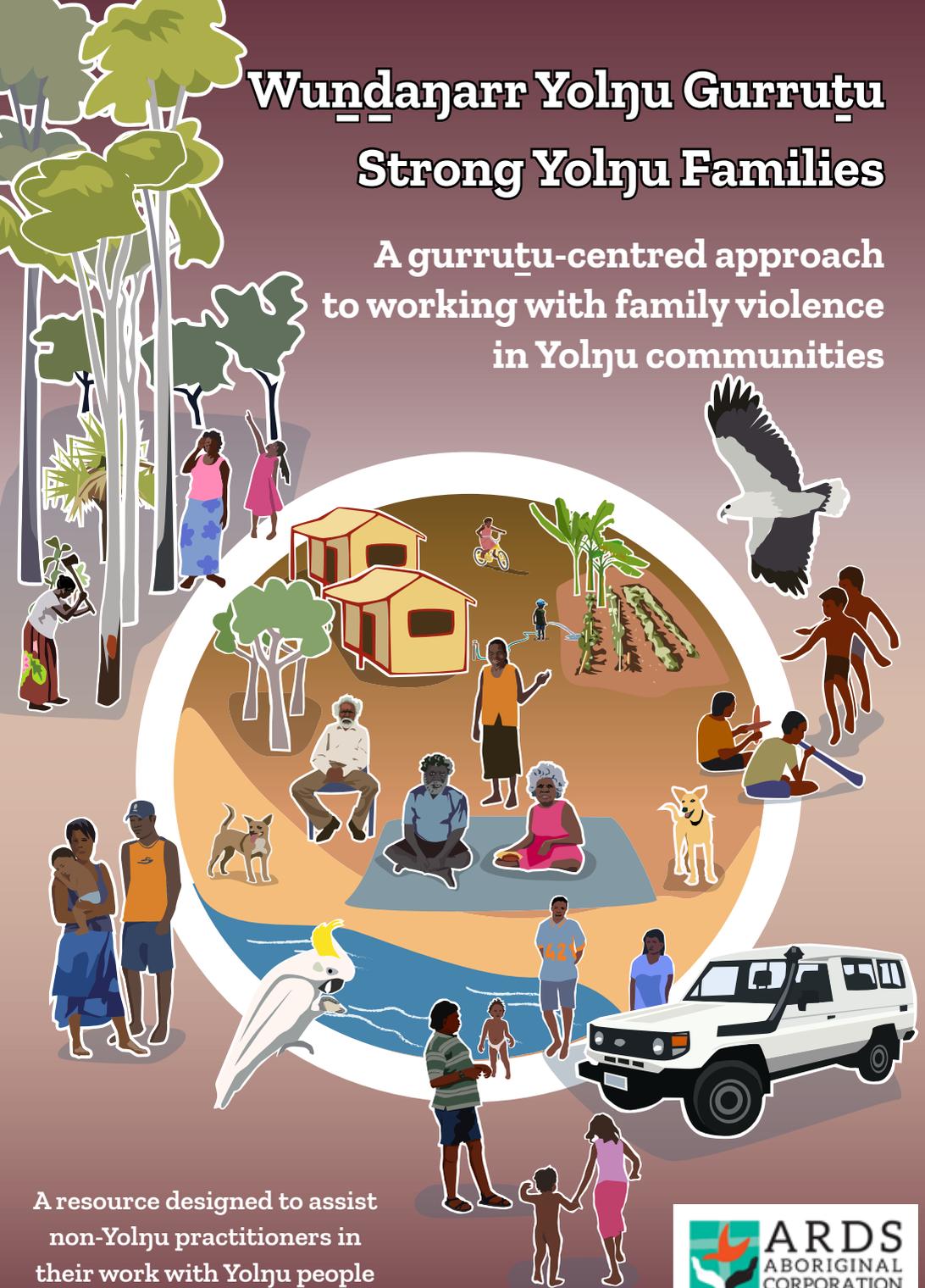


Wundanjarr Yolŋu Gurrutu Strong Yolŋu Families

A gurrutu-centred approach
to working with family violence
in Yolŋu communities



A resource designed to assist
non-Yolŋu practitioners in
their work with Yolŋu people
affected by family violence

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Dhuwal njanapurr djourra djäma märr ga dhu Balanda ga Yolŋu dharanjanmirr bala-räli'yunmirr. Njanapurr Yolŋu ga dhuwal gurruṯuyu dhukarryu nhina dälyu. Gurruṯu njanapurrun yuwalk yän nŋurruṯu gämurru. Milkum nŋayi ga nhaltjan njanapurrun ga bunydjunmirr ga gurrupanmirr. Njanapurr ga mirithirr gatju'yun Balandaw nŋayi dhu mirithirr marŋgithirr dhiyaṅ djourray ṅuli nŋayi dhu ga Yolŋuwalnydja djäma.

We have written this booklet to promote better understanding between Balanda and Yolŋu and better ways of working together. We Yolŋu are living with very strong gurruṯu rom (kinship law). Gurruṯu is our very first priority that opens everything for us, to show who we are, where we are, how we are related. We hope that Balanda will learn from this booklet and use it when working with Yolŋu.

Gawura Waṅambi

Vice-Chairperson
ARDS Aboriginal Corporation



This book is a guide to inform and support non-Yolŋu practitioners in their work with Yolŋu people affected by family violence to work in ways that are culturally safe and socially accountable.

It has come out of the 'ARDS Family Violence Prevention Education Project 2015-18'. This project identified that breaking cycles of violence and finding restorative pathways requires a strengths-based approach centred on gurruṯu (kinship).

A strengths-based approach acknowledges the cultural mismatch between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and dominant Western systems, and seeks ways to work with and build on the strengths of Indigenous cultures.

This booklet attempts to put forward a practical approach to working with family violence in Yolŋu communities by providing:

1. Background information about family violence and gurruṯu
2. A rationale for the gurruṯu-centred approach
3. Key practices or ways of working in a gurruṯu-centred approach
4. A glossary of Yolŋu matha words and terms

Cultural safety is creating an environment that is physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together. (Williams, 1999)

Culturally safe practices include actions which recognise and respect the cultural identities of others, and safely meet their needs, expectations and rights. Alternatively, **culturally unsafe practices** are those that ... 'diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity and well-being of an individual'. (Nursing Council of NZ, 2002)

Practices must be **socially accountable** in **both** Yolŋu and mainstream Australian societies.

Understanding family violence

Family violence affects people across all social and cultural backgrounds. However, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the experience of family violence is more common. Further, for Aboriginal people living in remote and very remote communities, family violence is more common than in urban and major regional areas. Violence is behaviour that hurts someone or makes them feel scared. Family violence is violence between family members in a close or dependent relationship. Types of violence and abuse include:

- » Physical harm
- » Making threats
- » Calling people names or 'putting them down'
- » Constantly taking money or making people pay for things
- » Stalking, constantly calling or texting
- » Harassing or bullying online, e.g. Facebook
- » Controlling who people see and what they do
- » Not letting people be involved in culture or religion
- » Making people do sexual things when they don't want to



Underlying this issue for many Indigenous people are high levels of social disadvantage and social stresses that are known risk factors for family violence, including poverty, financial stress, unemployment, low educational attainment and crowded housing.

In addition to this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have also experienced the social, political and economic effects of colonisation. This institutionally racist and often violent recent history has created systemic fear, confusion and disempowerment, which destabilises the social processes traditionally used to maintain social cohesion.

Further, there is often a mainstream and deficit framing of the experiences of Indigenous people that positions them, their culture, and a perceived 'failure' to engage with mainstream systems and services as the 'problem'.

Family violence is considered both a cause and effect of disadvantage and intergenerational trauma (AIHW, 2018).

The ARDS Family Violence Prevention Education Project

In this project, 37 workshops involving over 400 Yolŋu participants were held in the six major North East Arnhem Land towns of Milinjibi, Ramanginj, Gapuwiyak, Galiwin'ku, Yirrkala and Gunyajarra between 2015 and 2018.

The workshops utilised the 'Cycle of Family Violence' poster and accompanying radio plays to stimulate dialogue and discussion around the topic of family violence in a safe, non-threatening way that built on the extensive strengths of Yolŋu systems of law, and used this as a foundation on which to explore possibilities for resolving difficulties and conflict.

The resources were developed entirely in Yolŋu matha (first language) through a collaboration of Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu colleagues, and

discussions for the project were conducted in the same way.

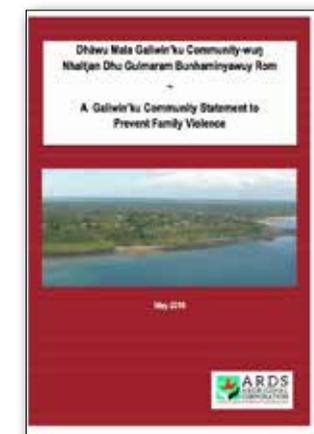


A Yolŋu facilitator and non-Yolŋu facilitator worked closely together to plan, facilitate and document the workshops.

Workshop participants were able to discuss their

understandings of family violence, and to put forward suggestions about ways to prevent and address family violence and its causes from a Yolŋu viewpoint.

Another resource that gives voice to a related Yolŋu perspective on family violence is the 'Dh w  Mala Galiwin'ku Community-wurj Nhaltjan Dhu Gulmaram Bunhaminyawuy Rom – A Galiwin'ku Community Statement to Prevent Family Violence' (May, 2016). This is available on the ARDS website.



A gurrutu-centred approach

What is a gurrutu-centred approach?

Gurrutu describes the kinship relationships that are preordained for every Yolŋu child before they are born. It is also the social fabric of Yolŋu culture, and the framework for understanding the connections between all people, which extends to every element of the Yolŋu worldview. All social issues in a Yolŋu community are intrinsically embedded in the gurrutu system and family violence is no exception (see pages 19 - 26).

Gurrutu is the intricate system that frames the Yolŋu worldview and underpins all aspects of Yolŋu culture. It follows that a strengths-based approach in Yolŋu communities is one that is gurrutu-centred.

A gurrutu-centred approach requires non-Yolŋu practitioners working with family violence to actively develop a basic understanding of Yolŋu culture and the gurrutu (kinship) system. To enable this important learning, and to support non-Yolŋu practitioners to navigate and work well within this complex system, we suggest working closely with a suitable 'Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator'.

This book is not a complete guide to working with Yolŋu people and communities. The contexts of every community, every person and every issue are unique, complex and diverse. What we can do is share some of our learnings from working with family violence in Yolŋu communities and put forward the case for a gurrutu-centred approach as well as the fundamental practical steps to putting this approach into practice.

For Yolŋu people who relate to each other through gurrutu, family connections extend well beyond a mainstream Australian idea of a family network. Through gurrutu every Yolŋu person is able to relate to everyone else as family.

A gurrutu-centred approach both leverages and reinforces the inherent strengths that Yolŋu culture brings to the context.

Why a gurrutu-centred approach?

A gurrutu-centred approach recognises and works through the existing Yolŋu system of relatedness, care and responsibility through which family violence issues can be better understood and addressed.

The gurrutu system provides mechanisms to prevent disputes and conflict, as well as socially accountable pathways for addressing and managing these if they do occur.

A gurrutu-centred approach therefore supports practitioners to find culturally appropriate, meaningful and effective ways to work with clients about family violence issues, while also reinforcing and validating Yolŋu people and culture.

A gurrutu-centred approach will:

- » Improve cultural safety
- » Improve social accountability
- » Enhance community cohesion
- » Empower Yolŋu clients to get the most out of your service

How do you apply a gurrutu-centred approach?

In the following pages we explain eight key practices of a gurrutu-centred approach:

1. Employ a Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator
2. Find a Yolŋu Bămara
3. Work and learn together – both-ways
4. Promote Yolŋu-led conversation
5. Work in Yolŋu matha – first language
6. Unpack key English terms – use Plain English
7. Work through gurrutu
8. Respect cultural protocols

On pages 28 -29 we suggest: 'Steps in a gurrutu-centred approach'.

1. Employ a Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator

Employ a Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator to support the non-Yolŋu practitioner

It is clear that in the area of family violence work, non-Yolŋu practitioners should work closely with a suitably experienced 'Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator' to ensure your work is effective and culturally safe for both clients and practitioners. This should be thought of as a professional position that is essential to a gurrutu-centred approach and therefore, as formally paid work.



The role of a Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator

The role of a Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator in family violence work is that of guide, cultural mentor, advisor and colleague. They will help you to develop respectful relationships with Yolŋu people, to learn about Yolŋu culture and language, and interpret and translate as needed. The working relationship between the non-Yolŋu practitioner and the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator should be based on mutual respect and both-ways working and learning (see pages 12 - 14).

While we strongly advocate for a gurrutu-centred approach, we also acknowledge this presents significant challenges, one of which is identifying a 'Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator' and developing a common understanding of this person's role. Despite the broadly recognised need for this highly skilled work across many areas, no professional qualification or standards for this work currently exist. This means that Aboriginal people working in these roles are not able to be 'accredited', and we must use existing professional and local networks to find Yolŋu people who are experienced and suitable for this work. We hope that in the future this work will be more formally recognised, providing career pathways for Aboriginal workers and consistency for service providers and clients.

Differences between a Cultural Facilitator and an Interpreter

While policy in some areas is to use an Interpreter, the role of a Cultural Facilitator is quite different. Interpreters are trained to remain impartial, while interpreting accurately, which means Interpreters enable communication

between other people and do not themselves participate in the discussion or give advice. In other words, there is no place for kinship (gurrutu) in an Interpreter's work. In contrast, a skilled Cultural Facilitator works through the kinship system, helps explain things, and facilitates dialogue and discussion.

Who is suitable to be a Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator?

A suitable Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator is a mature person with gurrutu expertise, credibility and authority within the Yolŋu community. They will have confident communication skills, experience working interculturally and understand the importance of confidentiality. If possible, they will also have experience or training in family violence and/or cultural mentoring, and may also have Interpreting qualifications.

Finding and engaging a Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator

Ideally, you will establish relationships in the community over time that will enable you to find some good candidates for this role. If you are working with the community for a short time, try to organise a Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator **before** your visit so they have time to prepare themselves, and you can make the best use of your time in the community. Suitable cultural facilitators may be found both inside and outside the community.

ARDS has worked for many years with Yolŋu people in different communities to build capacity for cultural facilitation. This role takes experience and intercultural knowledge. ARDS may be able to recommend suitable people to work with. You could also ask to meet with Traditional Owners and other Yolŋu authorities, contact leadership groups, local Aboriginal Corporations or other organisations with positive community relationships. If you do require an Interpreter, you should contact the Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS).

There may also be times when it could be inappropriate for the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator to work with particular clients for cultural or other reasons. Ask them if they have suggestions about who would be appropriate instead. It is also important to check that the client is happy to work with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator.



2. Find a Yolŋu Bāmara

Developing a strong working relationship

You will work closely with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator, and over time aim to develop a strong professional partnership and mutual trust.

Planning together

Spend time together planning how to best communicate with each client. Ask the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator for advice regarding language, social or cultural / worldview issues you might need to know about and how to explain mainstream concepts that are foreign to Yolŋu. Your particular work together will be unique, so discuss how you both see the roles working – what you're both trying to do and why – and revisit this as you go along. This shared understanding is needed for you to be able to work together towards common goals.

Working together

Involve the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator in discussions with clients and give them opportunities to lead the discussion. The Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator will provide important insight and advice regarding the client's specific context, as well as noticing when something is not understood by you or the client.

Reflecting and debriefing together

Always make time to reflect, share and debrief together. Work together to analyse what did and didn't work as well as you hoped, and why. Try to find opportunities to improve your practice, strengthen communication and understanding, and to create more meaningful outcomes for the client.

Working in the area of family violence can be stressful. Monitor and support the well-being of the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator.

The following sections give more information about working with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator, with a summary of suggested 'Steps for a gurruṯu-centred approach' on pages 28 - 29.



Find a Yolŋu Bāmara to support the client

It is also important to encourage clients to reach out to Yolŋu gurruṯumirr (people with an appropriate kinship relationship to the client who are also 'close' family) to find a suitable 'Yolŋu Bāmara' who will accompany and support them through the process of engaging with services and dealing with harm caused by family violence.



A 'bāmara' is a companion, helper or supporter.

Having a suitable Yolŋu Bāmara will also increase the client's social accountability and cultural safety, and ultimately improve outcomes for them, other parties and the community. The Yolŋu Bāmara role is intended to enable family members to support each other through gurruṯu. The Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator will be valuable in helping the client find the right Yolŋu Bāmara.

The role of a Yolŋu Bāmara

A Yolŋu Bāmara provides support, guidance and advocacy through what will be an emotionally challenging process. For Yolŋu people today, the challenges created by family violence are compounded because these issues are ordinarily handled through a mulkuru (foreign or unfamiliar) system that relies heavily on a thorough understanding of English and a familiarity with mainstream institutions.

A Yolŋu Bāmara will use their existing relationship with the client to support them, help them to understand the process, feel more confident and not go through it alone. They will be able to discuss relevant issues together, establish a mutual understanding and come up with questions they need to ask.

Having a Yolŋu Bāmara will also bring about direct family engagement with the issue, thus enabling greater community accountability because they will also be aware of any decisions, obligations or goals of the client.



Who is suitable to be a Yolŋu Bāmara?

A suitable Yolŋu Bāmara will be mature, well respected, willing and able to be a sounding board, mentor and companion. They should have a well-developed trusting relationship with the client, and a clear interest in both their wellbeing and the safest long-term resolution to the issue. Usually they will be 'close' family (gurrutūmirr) and older – perhaps of the client's grandparent's generation (māri, ŋathi, momu, mari'mu) or of their parent's generation (bāpa, mukul-bāpa, ŋāṅḍi, ŋapipi). Although it is highly likely these people are already providing informal support, intentionally including a Yolŋu Bāmara in your approach reinforces and adds value to this support system rather than excluding or contradicting it. The Yolŋu Bāmara should have the approval of senior members of the family, for example the māri. In following sections of this booklet, we discuss these gurrutū relationships in more detail (see pages 19 - 27 and pages 30 - 36).



Finding a suitable Yolŋu Bāmara

It is a good idea to wait until you are in the community to help the client to find a Yolŋu Bāmara. The Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator will be able to assist and advise about this process. They will know clients and their family, understand available options, ensure the Yolŋu Bāmara can provide the right level of support, and explain the nature of this important unpaid work. Some gurrutū relationships are more appropriate to this role than others and the choice of Yolŋu Bāmara will be informed by the client's particular social context as well as the family violence issue.

Also check if the Yolŋu Bāmara has employment, CDP, ceremonial or family responsibilities. They may need your help to negotiate these with their employer or supervisor, or they may only be available outside work hours.



Different Yolŋu Bāmara for different situations – some scenarios

Below are three scenarios. These suggestions are not prescriptive, and there may be other gurrutūmirr with relationships to the client not listed here that are more appropriate in their case. Again, the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator and the client will be able to inform the final choice. See pages 31 - 36 for a full list of gurrutū relationship terms.

Scenario 1: Mediating

If you are engaging with the client to support mediation, you might look for someone who is close family for both parties. This person might be able to play a role as a 'Ŋapungga'wuy Yolŋu' or 'Burapuy Yolŋu' (middle person) as they have a stake in both parties and in the final outcome. This person would be an older person with 'close' kinship to both parties. If the issue is between a dhuway and galay (husband and wife), an appropriate Yolŋu Bāmara may be the husband's māri, ŋathi, momu, ŋāṅḍi or ŋapipi, or perhaps one of the wife's mari'mu, bāpa or mukul-bāpa. Or in both cases, an older waku or gāthu.

Scenario 2: Working with a Domestic Violence Order (DVO)

If you're engaging with a client around anger management issues or supporting them to comply with a DVO, you might look for an authority figure to help communicate to the client their obligations and take a role in delivering raypirri (education or discipline). For a male client, this would be an older man, perhaps a māri, ŋathi, mari'mu or bāpa. For a female client, this would be an older woman, perhaps a ŋāṅḍi, mukul-bāpa, mari'mu, māri or momu. Or in both cases, an older waku or gāthu.

Scenario 3: Working with someone in crisis

If working with someone in crisis, who needs reassurance and support, a close relative who is clearly an ally for your client would be necessary. For a male client, this would usually be another man, perhaps a wāwa, māri, ŋathi, mari'mu, bāpa, ŋapipi, or older waku or gāthu. For a female client, this would usually be another woman, perhaps a yapa, ŋāṅḍi, mukul-bāpa, mari'mu, māri, momu, older waku or gāthu.

3. Work and learn together – both-ways

What do we mean by working and learning both-ways?

In both-ways learning, Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges, concepts and practices work alongside each other, and through careful and respectful dialogue, are used to inform and enrich each other.

Working and learning together both-ways allows people from different cultures to appreciate and begin to understand each other's worldview. This both empowers Yolŋu to better realise their potential in dominant culture spaces and to utilise Western knowledge in ways that they choose; and enables non-Yolŋu practitioners to work in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner with intrinsically meaningful outcomes for clients and the community. This practice will enable you to develop and strengthen your professional relationship with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator, and it will inform the way you interact with your clients, their Yolŋu Bāmara and the broader Yolŋu community.

Positioning yourself as a learner

Working both-ways requires a commitment to make time to learn with and from each other, and to develop the skills and knowledge to work productively together. This helps to understand, and work respectfully with, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing, practices and systems. Positioning yourself as a learner and working both-ways also shows clients you're there to listen and you don't think you know all the answers. This empowers them to think that they might be able to come up with solutions themselves. This is especially important in a intercultural setting where you are unlikely to know what the right solutions are.

Two very different worldviews

At the heart of a gurrutu-centred approach is understanding that Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu worldviews are fundamentally different. Simply put, the Western worldview is underpinned by a Western scientific logic system that relies for example on quantifying almost everything using a (mainly base-ten) number system; while the Yolŋu worldview is underpinned by the Yolŋu gurrutu logic



system that relies on understanding the reciprocal gurrutu relationships that link everything together. Each worldview gives rise to very different knowledge and governance traditions – different ways of knowing and understanding of how the world works, and making decisions about what to do, who will do it, under who's authority etc. There is a general lack of understanding between Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu people about each other's worldviews. To work effectively with Yolŋu people and communities, we must accept that these different logic systems, worldviews and knowledge traditions are equally true and equally valid.

Worldview and culture

Worldview is closely related to culture. Things people first identify as 'culture' often include music, food, dress or religious activities. However, there are deeper cultural factors that are often unconscious or harder to see in ourselves and in others such as:

- » How we think, communicate and learn
- » Our values and ethics
- » How we act / interact with others and the meaning we place on behaviours
- » How we classify, categorise, interpret and understand information
- » How we make decisions and what gives meaning / purpose to existence

The deeper aspects of culture that we describe as worldview include:

- » The overall way a person sees and interprets the world
- » A theory of the world that is used for living in the world
- » A mental model of reality – a framework of ideas and attitudes about the world, ourselves and life incorporating a comprehensive system of beliefs

Working interculturally

When Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews, cultures and knowledge traditions come together, we find ourselves working in a unique intercultural space, with often contested (or competing) knowledges. When working in this contested intercultural space, family violence practitioners need to appreciate and be open to different ways of knowing and learning in order to develop mutual understanding and new knowledge, while at the same time respecting both knowledge traditions. We do this by working and learning both-ways.

4. Promote Yolŋu-led conversation

Unpack cultural assumptions

In intercultural work there are always unknown and invisible cultural assumptions that are not necessarily understood by either party. It is very important to deliberately and sensitively investigate and 'unpack' these cultural assumptions and allow space for both Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu practitioners to learn about each other's worldviews.

Working in this way with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator will allow you both to develop a meaningful and practical understanding of fundamental Yolŋu concepts, for example; mägaya rom, raypirri and gurruṯu on the one hand; and the Western adversarial legal system, Domestic Violence Orders and mandatory reporting on the other hand.

The social dominance of Western cultural systems disadvantages Yolŋu people

Many non-Yolŋu people enjoy learning about Yolŋu culture and worldview. However, because non-Yolŋu people often come from and live in the dominant Western culture, they are not disadvantaged in everyday life if they choose not to learn about Yolŋu ways of knowing and being.

In contrast, for Yolŋu people, Western systems such as health care, education, legal systems, governance and economic structures, are a daily reality which they don't have a choice about. These systems are formed and operate from deeply-rooted Western cultural values and understandings, many of which are foreign to Yolŋu. This places Yolŋu at a significant disadvantage when trying to interact with and benefit from these services. It is essential to acknowledge the social context of your work and the Western social dominance in this context.

Working and learning together both-ways allows people from different cultures to appreciate and begin to understand each other's worldviews. This both empowers Yolŋu to fully realise their potential in dominant culture spaces and to utilise Western governance in ways that they choose; and enables non-Yolŋu practitioners to work in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner with intrinsically meaningful outcomes for clients and the community.



Continually build your understanding of important aspects of Yolŋu matha (Yolŋu language), relationships, society and worldview through conversations with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator, and through active listening and learning.

Ask the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator if there is anything you need to know about a particular topic, or whether there is something that they would like to understand better. Try to learn through the Yolŋu way of careful observation and active listening, before asking questions, and take your lead from the Yolŋu Facilitator when working with your client. Asking too many questions, or speaking too directly or bluntly can be seen as intrusive or rude.

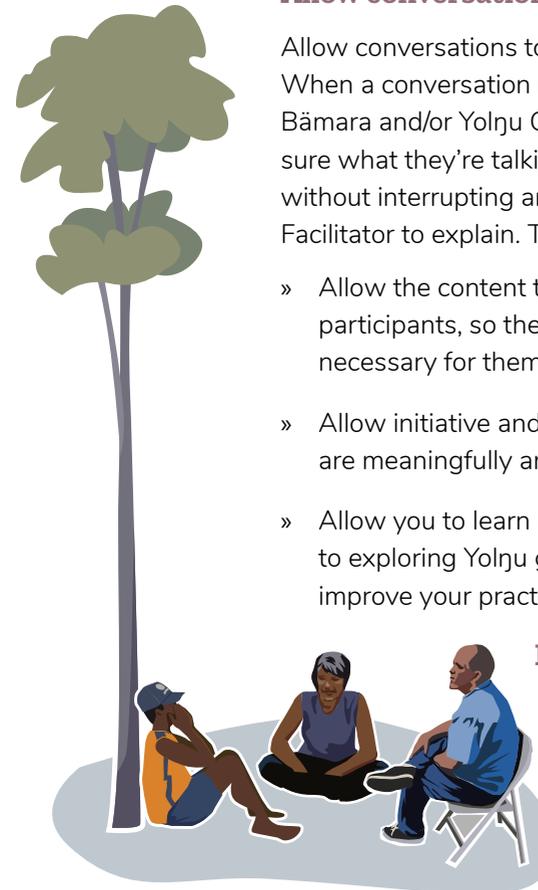
Allow conversations in Yolŋu matha to continue

Allow conversations to focus on Yolŋu priorities and concerns. When a conversation is happening between the client, Yolŋu Bāmara and/or Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator, you might not be sure what they're talking about. Let the conversation continue without interrupting and later, you can ask the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator to explain. This will:

- » Allow the content to be directed and owned by Yolŋu participants, so they can follow relevant pathways as necessary for them
- » Allow initiative and leadership to emerge because they are meaningfully and directly involved in the process
- » Allow you to learn new words, concepts and approaches to exploring Yolŋu gurruṯu and systems of law which will improve your practice in the future.

Respect silence

Learn to be comfortable with silence. Silence is important and polite in Yolŋu conversation. It allows time for people to gather their thoughts and respects cultural protocols. People will speak when they are ready.



5. Work in Yolŋu matha – first language

Yolŋu culture is rich in metaphor and stories, and these are often used to convey conceptual meaning, cultural or complex concepts.

Language and worldview

Learning and using another language also offers a means to learn about and engage with another culture. It is no surprise that the languages of cultures with very different worldviews are also very different.

Given that mainstream Western worldview concepts are conveyed through English language and Yolŋu worldview concepts are conveyed through Yolŋu matha (language) – it follows that ‘worldview work’ cannot be separated from ‘language work’. In other words, worldview differences between Western and Yolŋu cultures are reflected in the differences between English and Yolŋu matha, and this adds complexity to communicating and understanding other.

Most Yolŋu adults speak several Yolŋu languages, so it is likely that English is their third, fourth or fifth language. Most information and education aimed at Yolŋu about Western culture, comes through the ‘foreign’ language of English. This means that Yolŋu must try to comprehend the language component as well as relate the new and often foreign information to their own worldview.

English is a foreign language – particularly formal English

While many Yolŋu comfortably speak ‘day-to-day’ English in informal settings, such as at the store or talking about casual topics, this can mask the fact that for most Yolŋu, English is a foreign language.

The English that is spoken in more formal settings such as those associated with law, health, education, business or government, is often very foreign and far more difficult. These contexts frequently include English terms that are academic or heavily laden with specific meaning from a mainstream worldview, and involve concepts that aren’t present within Yolŋu worldview. It is these terms and concepts that are harder to translate, often because the words that are used do not have direct equivalents in Yolŋu languages, making it extremely hard for Yolŋu to access and understand the meaning that is being communicated.

It is often important and helpful to be able to frame ideas in your first language before trying to speak them in another language. Clients may need time to gather their thoughts and to talk with their Yolŋu Bāmara or the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator in Yolŋu matha before speaking in English.

Miscommunication between Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu is pervasive

This means that we can generally expect that the ‘message sent’ doesn’t equal the ‘message received’. This works both ways. Non-Yolŋu people are often completely ‘at a loss’ in Yolŋu-dominated contexts such as during a Yolŋu funeral ceremony. Similarly, Yolŋu people are severely disadvantaged in those contexts where the English language and/or worldview dominates, which is much of the time and particularly the case in formal settings.

Gently check for understanding through the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator. Yolŋu may nod or say ‘Yow’ (Yes) or ‘ma’ (OK or ‘go on’) during a conversation – not necessarily because they agree or understand – but because it is polite. Sometimes ‘yes’ means ‘I’m listening’ rather than ‘I understand’ or ‘I agree’.

Try to learn some key Yolŋu matha terms

Many people believe they don’t have the time or ability to learn an Aboriginal language (or any language). However there are some practical things you can do that will really make a difference:

- » Actively listen for words and phrases that keep coming up in conversations
- » Carry a notebook and record new words and their meanings
- » Make time to talk about these with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator
- » Learn how to say gurrutu terms and key words, and show that you’re trying
- » Look on the ARDS website for language learning resources and/or enrol in a CDU Yolŋu Studies unit or course

Making the effort to consciously learn, use and work with Yolŋu matha – no matter how little – will:

- » Signal to Yolŋu that you take them and their culture seriously
- » Demonstrate your respect for Yolŋu culture
- » Significantly increase mutual understanding and trust
- » Help you form relationships with Yolŋu people
- » Put you in the ‘learner’s seat’ in your interactions with Yolŋu
- » Provide a ‘window’ or ‘door’ into Yolŋu culture and worldview
- » Promote stronger and more meaningful outcomes for everyone



6. Unpack English terms – use Plain English

Another critical aspect of intercultural communication involves ‘unpacking’ key English terms and ‘big words’, and translating them into Plain English so that the conceptual information is not ‘hidden’ in the word/s but rather, clearly and simply explained in detail.

It is important to identify specific and difficult English words and terms and discuss the meaning of these with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator before you engage with the client. This will ensure they understand as much as possible what you’re talking about and are in a position to help the client understand.

Example: Unpacking ‘DVO’ – Domestic Violence Order

The term ‘DVO’ contains a huge amount of hidden information and can be very confusing. Some Yolŋu have reported understanding ‘DVO’ as synonymous with ‘domestic violence’ on the one hand, and ‘divorce’ on the other.

First you need to unpack the acronym to reveal the words ‘Domestic’, ‘Violence’ and ‘Order’ and discuss the meaning of each of these terms separately:

Domestic – refers to the home or the family

Violence – refers to the use of physical force that might cause injury

Order – refers to an instruction or command

Importantly however, in English, when the words ‘Domestic’ and ‘Violence’ come together, there is a new meaning which now relates to physical, economic, emotional and other types of controlling abuse against someone who is in a close family relationship or living in the same house.

When ‘Order’ is added, the meaning again changes in an important way. A ‘Domestic Violence Order’ (DVO) is now a legal instruction to a person who will face penalties if they don’t comply. It is now absolutely crucial for that person to understand completely who is commanding they do something, what they are commanding, for how long, and what the consequences are if the person does not comply. Circumstances are further complicated because a DVO might be given by the court, or by Police; and it might be initiated because the protected person asked for a DVO, or the Police might have issued it without the protected person asking for it. Without unpacking the full meaning of these kinds of terms, there is a very real danger of a confusing outcome that could have serious consequences for the client.



7. Work through gurrutu

Gurrutu is the framework that underlies the Yolŋu worldview, culture and society. It is the primary way relationships are organised in Yolŋu society, and presents a set of kinship roles and responsibilities that can be drawn on to find ways to manage family violence and related issues.

Using gurrutu to find restorative pathways

Despite the complexities of the contemporary world, Yolŋu usually prefer to use traditional gurrutu-based roles, responsibilities and values to work through contemporary problems of family violence. The purpose of these traditional values is to establish and maintain a state of māgaya (peace, balance and social harmony). To do this properly, it is important to draw from the djalkiri (ancestral footprints and foundational values) which manifest these principles. There is often a reluctance to involve mainstream legal processes, at least early on, as they are generally seen to override this complex social and governance that is performed through gurrutu rom (law).

In this section, we explain some of the foundational principles of gurrutu, and how it acts to maintain social stability. We also talk about some of the complicating factors in a modern world in relation to gurrutu. These days not everyone has the whole repertoire of gurrutu (kin) support, especially in the case of some ‘love-marriages’, and this is discussed later. To learn more, talk to your Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator. Resources for further learning are also available through ARDS and Yolŋu Studies at Charles Darwin University. It should be noted that relationships that are important to Yolŋu will not be the same as those that are important to non-Yolŋu people or necessarily expressed in the same ways.

Gurrutu and moiety

At the most fundamental level, the Yolŋu world is divided into two moieties – Yirritja and Dhuwa. Everything and everyone in the world belongs either to the Yirritja or the Dhuwa moiety. ‘Gurrutu’ is the intricate cyclical system of Yolŋu logic by which everything in the world and moieties are organised, connected and named across Arnhem Land. Gurrutu is a fundamental component of the Yolŋu system of law (rom). The foundational principles and patterns of gurrutu extend to encompass and organise all elements of the Yolŋu world.



Yothu-yindi and märi-gutharra

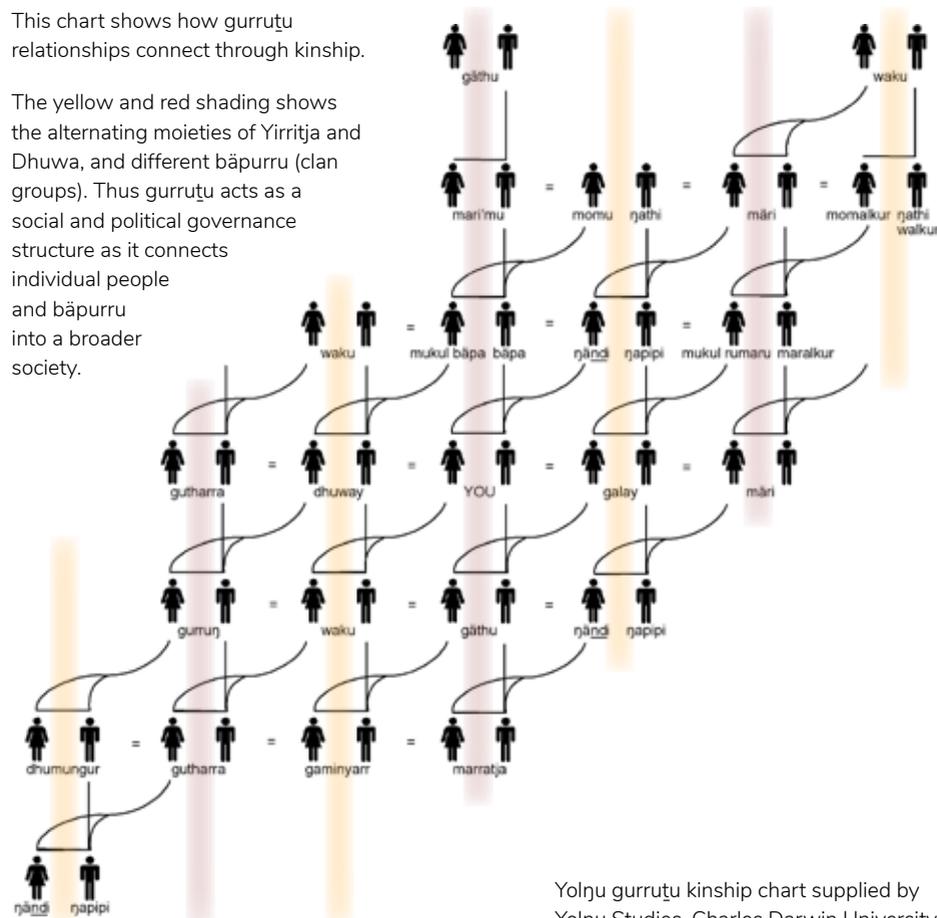
Yothu-yindi means mother-child relationship. The two moieties are in a mother-child (yothu-yindi) relationship with each other. Yothu-yindi relates everything Yirritja to everything Dhuwa and vice versa.

Märi-gutharra means maternal grandmother and grandchild relationship. Through märi-gutharra, things in the same moiety are related to each other. Märi-gutharra relates Dhuwa to Dhuwa and Yirritja to Yirritja.

Gurruṭu kinship chart

This chart shows how gurruṭu relationships connect through kinship.

The yellow and red shading shows the alternating moieties of Yirritja and Dhuwa, and different bäpurru (clan groups). Thus gurruṭu acts as a social and political governance structure as it connects individual people and bäpurru into a broader society.



Yolṅu gurruṭu kinship chart supplied by Yolṅu Studies, Charles Darwin University.

Gurruṭu, kinship and bäpurru (clan)

Gurruṭu describes the pattern of kinship relationships that are preordained for every Yolṅu child before they are born. **Gurruṭu** relationships are reciprocal and they are taught from birth. You are born into the same moiety and bäpurru (clan group) as your father, and the opposite moiety to your mother.

Gurruṭu relationships connect each person with their own bäpurru (clan and clan's ancestors) through the paternal or male line of descent (yarraṭa), while through the female or maternal line (yindipulu), that person is connected with their mothers' clan (ṛändipulu), grandmothers' clan (märipulu), great grandmothers' clan (wakupulu) and great great grandmothers' clan (yapapulu). Gurruṭu also directly informs all elements of Yolṅu social, political and legal governance including land tenure, ceremonial practice, as well as the roles and responsibilities of all people to each other in all contexts.

Gurruṭu, bäpurru and the traditional promise marriage system

In the traditional 'promise-marriage system' (milmarra), the man and woman should be in a specific dhuway-galay relationship. This keeps the gurruṭu pattern and paternal and maternal lines 'straight' or correct (dhunupa).

The man's mother's brother (his maternal uncle or ṛapipi), is also the father of his galay (his future wife). The man's mother-in-law (mukul-rumaru) is in a strong avoidance relationship with that man (who is her gurrur or son-in-law). This 'rumaru relationship' is also a relationship of great respect. The young man would give gifts to a potential mother-in-law, demonstrating his worth as a marriage partner for her daughter who would be 'marked' as a promised galay for this man. Therefore traditionally, the man was usually quite a bit older than his wife, which meant he was well able to protect and provide for his family.

The man also plays the role of Djungaya for his ṛapipi, which means he plays a crucial role in managing the legal and ceremonial business for the whole of his mother's clan (ṛändipulu), which also includes his mother (ṛändi), mother's brother (ṛapipi) and his wife (galay). He therefore has an important role in protecting and looking after the people and ceremony of his ṛändipulu through the foundational relationship logic of yothu-yindi.

Gurrutu and raypirri (discipline)

Gurrutu relationships, particularly of those close family members, also dictate responsibilities for teaching and giving discipline (raypirri), in order to ensure that their kin and descendants, shall follow in the same, respectful, law abiding pathway (rom) and ancestral footprints (djalkiri), as those who have gone before. Necessarily these same close kin are responsible for supporting the married couple, troubleshooting, problem solving, smoothing relations, arranging time apart during conflict, negotiating a smooth pathway forward, and sometimes even imposing separation.

Märi and märipulu

The woman's maternal grandparents (her märi and märipulu) hold much of the important knowledge of family, ancestors, and clan alliances that will inform the choices for future relationships between the clan groups, the future marriage and subsequent children. The woman's mother (i.e. the man's mother-in-law) is part of the man's maternal grandmother's clan (märipulu) and will be the daughter of his mother's mother's brother (märi). His märi calls the man 'gutharra' (maternal grandchild). This märi-gutharra reciprocal relationship is very close. The two clans are from the same moiety and often share some ceremonial business. Very often, the man is even named after his märi.

A person's märi is often a good person to provide raypirri, and to be a role model and mentor. This can therefore be a good place to start looking for a Yolŋu Bämara for your client.

For both men and women, their märi is often important in the Yolŋu Bämara role because of the shared aspects of their ceremonial business and identity that means they have a direct stake in their personal wellbeing and the maintenance of each other's law. This relationship is also important in issues related to the husband and wife because their märi acts as a bridge between the two individuals and their two clans. This is because they are usually closely related to both parties, but part of a third clan.

Refer to the Glossary on pages 31 - 35 for definitions of gurrutu terms and page 36 for a list of gurrutu reciprocal pairs.



Mälk (skin) names

Mälk is the system of skin names that are determined through matrilineal cycles. Yolŋu will often use mälk (skin) names to refer to each other and will reference the mälk system when talking about marriage and relationships.

Gurrutu is always the most significant way relationships and connections are organised in Yolŋu society. Mälk is a separate, secondary system that 'overlays' and 'agrees with' the logic of gurrutu.

A description of how mälk is determined and how it relates to marriage and relationships can be found on pages 24 - 25.

Gurrutu, mälk and marriage in a contemporary context

Today, even though many Yolŋu see any relationship that is Dhuwa-Yirritja as acceptable, those that fit traditional patterns are vastly preferred, especially by older and more traditional Yolŋu who will strongly encourage young people to marry someone of the correct gurrutu (dhuway-galay relationship) and mälk. Babies may be 'promised' by parents or grandparents who support them to get to know each other as they grow up, and to marry when they are the right age.

'Love marriages'



Girlfriend / boyfriend or potential 'marriage' relationships between individuals that don't match the gurrutu and mälk ideal can add tension to the relationships between families. From stories we have been told, family violence may happen more often in marriages that are not well supported by the extended networks of kin. These are often 'love-marriages' made by young people.

'Love marriages' are relationships that don't follow the gurrutu system, and are based only on 'love'. Love is also a feature of relationships that do follow the gurrutu system, but the term 'love marriages' is used for those relationships that are based only on love between couples who are not in the ideal dhuway-galay relationship and who are therefore the 'wrong mälk or skin'.



Continued on page 26...

People are often called or referred to by mälk, especially if their name is similar to that of a deceased person or there is an avoidance relationship.

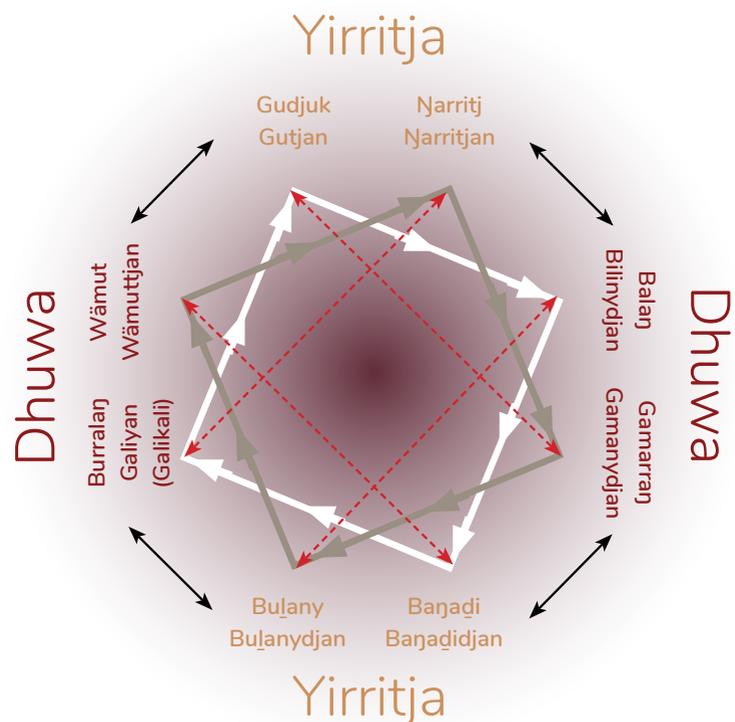


Diagram adapted from Graves, 2000

How you get your mälk

A person's mälk is always determined by their mother's mälk, and will be of the opposite moiety to the mälk of their mother.

These diagrams show two ways of representing the mälk system.

There are 16 mälk categories – eight Dhuwa and eight Yirritja, each of which has four sets of female and male names that are in 'brother-sister' pairs. For example, in the mälk brother-sister pair, Gudjuk-Gutjan, Gudjuk is the mälk name for a boy and Gutjan is the mälk name for a girl.

Yirritja Mälk

Dhuwa Mälk

| | | | |
|--------|------------|---|--------------------|
| male | Gudjuk | ↔ | Wämüt |
| female | Gutjan | ↔ | Wämuttjan |
| male | Baḡaḡi | ↔ | Gamarraḡ |
| female | Baḡaḡidjan | ↔ | Gamanydjan |
| male | Narritj | ↔ | Balaḡ |
| female | Narritjan | ↔ | Bilinydjan |
| male | Buḡany | ↔ | Burralaḡ |
| female | Buḡanydjan | ↔ | Galiyan (Galikali) |

The circular diagram shows there are two distinct mälk cycles. Following the white arrows (one mälk cycle) a Yirritja woman, whose mälk is Gutjan will have a Dhuwa daughter whose mälk is Bilinydjan (or son, Balaḡ), Bilinydjan will have a Yirritja daughter, Baḡaḡidjan (or son, Baḡaḡi). Baḡaḡidjan will have a Dhuwa daughter Galiyan, also known as Galikali (or son, Burralaḡ). Galiyan/Galikali will have a Yirritja daughter Gutjan, starting the cycle over again. And similarly for the other mälk cycle (grey arrows). On the table above, this is shown by grey and white cells.

Mälk and marriage

In the gurruṭu and mälk systems, marriages are made to the opposite moiety and from one mälk cycle into the other cycle. In both diagrams, the solid black arrows show preferred 'first choice' marriage partners, and the broken red arrows show the acceptable 'second choice' option. For example, Wämuttjan would be the first choice for Gudjuk as a marriage partner but Gamanydjan would be an acceptable second choice.



'Love marriages' ... continued from page 23

Carefully find out, with the help of the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator, whether the relationship is 'djarrpi' (crooked, wrong, incorrect). It's relevant to ask about both gurrutu and mälk in relation to this.

The context for each person will be different. It can be problematic to discuss these matters openly with or in front of individuals or family members. You will need to carefully talk with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator about the client's relationship with their partner, and whether this is causing tension.

'Love-marriages' are becoming more and more common and are placing huge stresses on the gurrutu system and Yolŋu society. For example, 'love marriages' can be between a man and his classificatory waku or ŋäŋdi or dhuway which complicates that extended kin network upon which they will need to depend. The degree of social pressure could be extremely strong if the couple are both of the same moiety i.e. they are both Dhuwa or both Yirritja. This relationship interrupts the foundational principle of yothu-yindi, and would have been unthinkable in traditional Yolŋu culture. This can also complicate the way the couple's extended families relate and interact through gurrutu, which can lead to scenarios where it is not clear who should take on particular roles and responsibilities. Often unhappy (young) couples are experiencing violence partly because they are in a precarious relationship with their extended kin.

Although it is hard to provide solutions in cases where this is an concern, it is valuable to identify issues underlying the problems people are experiencing. At least this gives you a chance of supporting people to come to terms with their situation and their place in a rapidly changing society under a lot of pressure. You can also work with the Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator and Yolŋu Bämara to help them to find a restorative pathway and alternative, acceptable ways for the client to manage their behaviour and difficult situations in the future.

Your work with Yolŋu people to address family violence will be more effective if you actively recognise the pathways that are grounded in the social structures of gurrutu. By engaging the right people to work with, you can aim for solutions that draw on and reinforce the relationships that are important to your clients and the community more broadly.

8. Respect cultural protocols

There are important cultural protocols that must be understood and respected to permit meaningful success when working with Yolŋu people. Ask the Yolŋu Cultural Advisor if there are any cultural rules or protocols you need to be aware of. Support and follow their suggestions.

Gender

Generally, it is safest to conduct your work in gendered groups. There are some cultural protocols that mean men must avoid women who hold a particular kinship position in the gurrutu system or when discussing certain topics. Two very strong protocols that you must respect are discussed below.

Mirriri

Mirriri is a very strong social force that compels a man to respectfully avoid his sister. Don't try to talk to a brother about family violence or personal issues if his sister is in the room or close by, and vice versa. Mirriri decrees that a man should not refer to his sister by her name, but rather by the gurrutu term of 'yapa' or 'miḍiku'. A Yolŋu man will feel extremely uncomfortable if issues regarding his sister or his sister's relationship are accidentally discussed in his presence, and is likely to feel personally affronted if the subject is deliberately raised. A woman cannot sit too close to her brother and personal topics of conversation should be avoided. A woman may not be able to use the bathroom if her brother is nearby.

Rumaru

A Yolŋu person has an avoidance relationship with his or her rumaru. 'Rum'rumdhun' is the respectful avoidance behavior around rumaru. Always accommodate rumaru avoidance relationships. This law is particularly strict for sons-in-law. Rumaru are mukul-rumaru (mother-in-law), maralkur / gälä (mother-in-law's brother), momalkur (grandmother-in-law) and ŋathiwalkur (grandmother-in-law's brother). A Yolŋu man must strictly avoid his female rumaru. A man cannot speak the name of his mukul-rumaru or momalkur and must refer to her by the correct gurrutu term. He must not look at his mukul-rumaru or momalkur, talk to her or be in close proximity. Similarly, a woman must avoid her son-in-law and refer to him by the gurrutu term of 'gurrung' or by his mälk.

Steps in a gurrutu-centred approach

The following suggested steps give a general idea of how a gurrutu-centred approach might be put into practice. They are by no means prescriptive.

Before visiting the community

- » Find out about your client's situation, the community you are visiting, and where you will be working.
- » Try to organise a Yolŋu Cultural Facilitator (YCF) to work with.
- » Ask trusted contacts for names of people who could be suitable Yolŋu Cultural Facilitators in the community you are visiting.
- » Secure funding for the YCF and organise payment processes.
- » Try to contact possible YCFs. Talk to them about each client and the work you will be doing. Arrange to meet with them when you arrive in the community.

After you arrive and before talking to each client

- » Meet with the potential YCF and plan your approach together.
- » Talk with them about your client, the work you will be doing, managing professional expectations such as privacy and confidentiality, and payment.
- » Identify their gurrutu relationship to the client and make sure they are comfortable to work with you and the client. If they don't want to do the work, see if they can help you find another suitable person.
- » Work with YCF to find a family member who can be a suitable Yolŋu Bāmara for the client. Unless you have organised payment for the Yolŋu Bāmara, you will need to make sure the YCF understands if there is no payment for the Yolŋu Bāmara in their support role so they can help you to explain this.
- » Ask about other family members and their gurrutu and how they might be able to help the client.
- » Work with the YCF on ways to explain to people in the community what you are there for.
- » Find out about the gurrutu between the client and other party. Are there avoidance relationships with anyone present or any other social, cultural or gurrutu-related factors to be aware of e.g. 'love marriages'.
- » Spend time with the YCF unpacking the key mainstream or legal ideas and

processes you will need to work through, and any specific English language or terms or 'big words'. Make sure these are understood.

- » Check if there is anything the YCF is unsure of, or would like to know more about, or if there is anything else they think you should know about.

While working with the client

- » With the help of the YCF, explain everyone's role – you, YCF, Bāmara, client.
- » Try to build a professional relationship of understanding and trust with the YCF, Yolŋu Bāmara and client.
- » Look for cultural assumptions, English words and legal terms or processes that are causing confusion, and take time to work with the YCF to unpack them for the Yolŋu Bāmara and client.
- » Note and/or ask about any Yolŋu words that seem to be, or are important.
- » Try to learn, speak and use some gurrutu terms and Yolŋu matha words.
- » Promote Yolŋu-led conversation – actively listen, be comfortable with silence, allow time and space for Yolŋu conversations to continue.
- » Take your lead from the YCF. If you are unsure or uncomfortable about why something is not being discussed, or whether it is appropriate to ask or discuss something, it is probably best to ask the YCF about this privately.
- » Try to make sure that everyone is clear about what is happening and why, every step of the way.
- » When you think the conversation is finished, stop talking, wait patiently, and try to discern whether the client and Yolŋu Bāmara are comfortable with and understand what has been discussed. The YCF may be able to sense whether there is anything that needs further explanation.

After you have finished working with the client

- » Take time to reflect, share and debrief with the YCF.
- » Analyse what did and didn't work well and why, what you learnt and how to improve things next time. Talk about Yolŋu matha words, terms and ideas.
- » Monitor how the YCF is feeling and support them as needed.
- » Organise payment and finalise any paperwork.

General terms (used in this book)

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Balanda | A white person, European. |
| Bāmara | A companion, friend, helper. |
| Bäpurru | A clan or whole clan group. Also the name for a funeral ceremony. |
| Dhunupa | Straight, correct, true, proper or right. |
| Dhuwa | One of the two moieties in the Yolŋu worldview. Every bäpurru, person, tree, animal, area of land etc. is either Dhuwa or Yirritja. |
| Djalkiri | Foot, footprint, root. The foundation from which social values emerge and the ancestral footprints that show the way. |
| Djarrpi | Crooked, wrong or incorrect. |
| Gurruṯu | The kinship relationships preordained for every Yolŋu child before they are born. It is also the social fabric of Yolŋu culture, and the framework for understanding the connections between all elements of a Yolŋu worldview. Gurruṯumirr are ‘close’ family. |
| Mägaya | A state of peace, balance, social harmony. Cessation of hostilities. |
| Märi-gutharra | This term refers to the connection between the mother’s mother and grandchild, and by extension, between the mother’s mother’s bäpurru (clan) and the grandchild’s bäpurru (clan). This is the primary system that connects Dhuwa to Dhuwa and Yirritja to Yirritja people and clan groups together into a broader society. |
| Milmarra | The traditional marriage system, organised to follow the logic of gurruṯu and maintain connections between bäpurru (clan groups). |
| Mirriiri | Avoidance relationship of a brother and sister, the behavioural rules a man must follow where his sisters are concerned. |
| Mulkuru | Stranger, foreigner, distant, foreign, strange or unfamiliar. |
| Napun̄ga’wuy | Middle or in between (syn: Burapuy). |
| Raypirri | A teaching of discipline. The practice of following the core principles and values of Yolŋu society. |
| Rom | Fundamental principles, values, laws, way of life for Yolŋu society. |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Rumaru | Strict avoidance relationships of your mukul-rumaru (mother-in-law) and your gurrurŋ (son-in-law). As well as your maralkur or gäl̄a (mother-in-law’s brother), your momalkur (grandmother-in-law), and your ṅathiwalkur (grandmother-in-law’s brother). |
| Rum’rumdhun | Avoid, keep clear of. These are the actions and behaviours related to observing taboos required by the law of avoidance relationships. |
| Walkur | Your own bäpurru is also called your ‘walkur’, which connects you to your land, language, songlines etc. through the male line of descent. |
| Wun̄ḁan̄arr | Strong (it can also mean hard or complicated). |
| Yarraṯa | The male line of descent (c.f. yindipulu). |
| Yindipulu | The clan of your mother and all its members (cf: yarraṯa). |
| Yirritja | One of the two moieties in the Yolŋu worldview. Every bäpurru, person, tree, animal, area of land etc. is either Dhuwa or Yirritja. |
| Yolŋu | Person or people and Aboriginal people of NE Arnhemland. |
| Yothu-yindi | Literally meaning child-big, this term refers to the connection between child (yothu) mother and mother (yindi), and by extension, between the mother’s bäpurru (clan) and the child’s bäpurru (clan). This is the primary system that connects all Dhuwa and Yirritja people and bäpurru (clan groups) together into a broader society. |

Gurruṯu terms

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| Bäpa | Your bäpa is your father. All of your father’s brothers are also your bäpas. You belong to the same bäpurru (clan) and moiety as your father. You are his gäthu. Through your bäpa, you will inherit your land, language, songs, ceremonies and art designs. |
| Dhumungur | Your dhumungur is dhuway for your gutharra. Your female gutharra may marry your male dhumungur. He is your gurrurŋ’s waku. For men: You are their ṅathiwalkur. You are friendly with your male dhumungur and avoid your female dhumungur. For women: You are their momalkur. Your male dhumungur may marry your daughter’s daughter (gutharra), which makes him your grandson-in-law. You are friendly with your female dhumungur, but your male dhumungur will be careful to rum’rumdhun. |

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| Dhuway | <p>Your dhuways are the children of your mukul-bäpa (your father's sister). Your dhuways will call you galay.</p> <p>For women: Your husband is your dhuway (as are all of his brothers and sisters). Your dhuway is the opposite moiety to you.</p> <p>For men: Your sister's husband is your dhuway. You must treat him with respect.</p> |
| Gäla | See maralkur. |
| Galay | <p>Your galays are the sons and daughters of your ñapipi (mother's brother). Your galays are the opposite moiety to you.</p> <p>For men: Your wife will be your galay (as will all of her brothers and sisters).</p> <p>For women: Your brothers will marry your galays.</p> |
| Gaminyarr | <p>The children of your male waku are your gaminyarr. They are also the children of your female gäthu. They are always the opposite moiety to yourself.</p> <p>For men: You are their ñathi. For women: You are their momu.</p> |
| Gäthu | <p>For men: Your own children are your gäthu. You are their bäpa.</p> <p>For women: Your brother's children are your gäthu. You are their mukul-bäpa. Your gäthu are always the same moiety as yourself.</p> <p>The cyclical nature of gurrutu means that you also call your father's father's father your gäthu.</p> |
| Gurrurj | <p>Your gurrurj is your waku's dhuway and your gutharra's father and father's sister.</p> <p>For women: You must stay well away from your male gurrurj as you are their mukul-rumaru. You should not look at them, sit or stand near them, or talk directly to them.</p> <p>For men: Your male gurrurj will be the father of your gutharra. You are his maralkur. You can have a friendly but respectful relationship. Do not call your gurrurj by his name.</p> |
| Gutharra | <p>Your waku's waku are your gutharra. You are their märi. They are of the same moiety as yourself and have strong ceremonial connections with your clan.</p> <p>For women: Your daughter's children are your gutharra.</p> <p>For men: Your sister's daughter's children are your gutharra.</p> |

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| Maralkur (Gäla) | <p>Your mukul-rumaru's brother is your maralkur (poison cousin). You are his gurrurj.</p> <p>This is an avoidance relationship; however it is also a respectful and friendly relationship. The term 'gäla' is used by males to or about each other and by female gurrurj to refer to her maralkur.</p> |
| Märi | <p>Your mother's mother and her brothers and sisters are all your märi. You are their gutharra.</p> <p>You are the same moiety as your märi and share some totems and ceremonies. Often, you will be named after one of your märis.</p> |
| Mari'mu | Your mari'mu are your father's father and his brothers and sisters. They are the same bäpurru (clan) and same moiety as you. You are their marratja. |
| Märipulu | Your märipulu is your mother's mother's bäpurru. Your märi, mukul-rumaru and maralkur are all part of your märipulu. Your märipulu is very closely connected with your own bäpurru (clan), and share ceremonies, songs, ancestral beings etc. |
| Marratja | <p>Your male gäthu's children are your marratja. They are the same bäpurru (clan) and same moiety as you. You are their mari'mu.</p> <p>For men: Your marratja are your son's children.</p> <p>For women: Your marratja are your brothers' son's children.</p> |
| Momalkur | <p>Your mother's mother's brother (male märi) is married to your momalkur. You must be polite to your momalkur. You are her dhumungur.</p> <p>For men: Your momalkur is your wife's märi, and your mother-in-law's mother. She is therefore your grandmother-in-law and you will be careful to rum'rumdhun.</p> |
| Momu | Your father's mother is your momu. Her brother is your ñathi. She is the opposite moiety from you and her husband is your mari'mu. You are her gaminyarr. |
| Mukul-bäpa | <p>Your mukul-bäpa is your father's sister. As such, she will belong to the same clan and share the same moiety, language, songs, ceremonies and designs. She will call you gäthu.</p> <p>For women: You will marry your mukul-bäpa's son. Your relationship with her should be very close and supportive.</p> |

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| Mukul-rumaru | <p>Your māri's female gāthu is your mukul-rumaru. You are her gurrūŋ.</p> <p>For men: You must strictly avoid your mukul-rumaru as she is your potential mother-in-law (her children are your galays). This is a very respectful relationship and you must be careful to rum'rumdhun, i.e. you must not look at her, talk to her or be in close proximity etc.</p> <p>She may be married to your ŋapipi. As well as avoiding your mukul-rumaru, you must ensure that she is well provided for.</p> <p>For women: It is acceptable to associate with your mukul-rumaru.</p> |
| Ŋāŋdi | <p>Your mother is your ŋāŋdi and you are her waku (child). Your mother's sisters are also your ŋāŋdi and you also relate to them like your mother.</p> <p>For mothers that you are very close to, you might call them 'ŋamala or ŋama' (mum).</p> <p>Your ŋāŋdi is the opposite moiety to you.</p> |
| Ŋāŋdipulu | <p>Your ŋāŋdipulu is your mother's bāpurru (clan).</p> <p>Your ŋāŋdi and ŋapipi, your ŋathi and momu, and your galay are all part of your ŋāŋdipulu. The land, ancestral beings, designs, songs and ceremonies belonging to these people will all be called your ŋāŋdi – your mother. (See also yindipulu).</p> |
| Ŋapipi | <p>Your mother's brother is your ŋapipi and you are his waku. Your ŋapipi is the opposite moiety to you.</p> <p>For men: You will marry your ŋapipi's daughter, who will be your galay. This marriage affiliation is intrinsically connected with your role as djungaya (or manager) of your ŋapipi's business (ceremony, country etc.).</p> <p>You will have a very respectful relationship with your ŋapipi.</p> |
| Ŋathi | <p>Your mother's father is your ŋathi. His sister is your momu. He is the opposite moiety from you, and his wife is your māri. You are his gaminyarr.</p> |
| Ŋathiwalkur | <p>Your ŋathiwalkur is your momalkur's brother and your galay's māri. He is the opposite moiety from you. You must be friendly, generous and polite to your ŋathiwalkur.</p> <p>You are his dhumungur.</p> |

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| Waku | <p>For women: Your own children are your waku, as are your sisters' children. You are their ŋāŋdi.</p> <p>For men: Your sisters' children are your waku and you are their ŋapipi.</p> <p>Your waku belong to the opposite moiety to you.</p> |
| Wakupulu | <p>The wakupulu refers to your mother's mother's mother's bāpurru; a woman's child's bāpurru or a man's sister's child's bāpurru. Your wakupulu act as Djungaya, with many rights and responsibilities including acting as major custodians and caretakers of your ceremonies, land and sacred law. Your waku, dhuway, gaminyarr, momalkur and ŋathiwalkur are all members of your wakupulu.</p> <p>For men: The womenfolk of your bāpurru (your mari'mu, mukul-bāpa, gāthu, marratja) marry into your wakupulu.</p> <p>For women: The whole bāpurru into which you marry is called your wakupulu. Your children (waku) belong to your wakupulu.</p> |
| Wāwa | <p>Your older brother is your wāwa.</p> |
| (Yukuyuku) | <p>Your wāwas include all of your father's brother's sons and your mother's sister's sons, who are older than you. They will call you 'yukuyuku', as will your older sisters. All of your brothers and sisters will belong to the same bāpurru (and same moiety) as you.</p> |
| Yapa | <p>Your older sister is your yapa. You are her yukuyuku. This includes all of your father's brother's daughters and your mother's sister's daughters, who are older than you.</p> <p>For men: You must abide by certain avoidance customs (known as mirriri), with your yapas. That is to say, for a man, you should behave respectfully (following certain behavioural rules known as mirriri) with any of your sisters. A man will often refer to his sister by the term 'miḡiku' rather than yapa.</p> <p>For women: Your closest social circle will often be a group of your yapas and their dhuways.</p> |
| Yapapulu | <p>The yapapulu is the whole bāpurru of your mother's mother's mother's mother.</p> |
| Yukuyuku | <p>Your younger siblings are your yukuyuku. You are their wāwa or yapa.</p> <p>For men: You must abide by mirriri avoidance customs if your yukuyuku is female, the same as for your yapa.</p> |

Reciprocal gurrutu relationships

Gurrutu relationships are in reciprocal pairs. These are shown in the list below.

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| wäwa | — | wäwa |
| yapa | — | yapa |
| yapa | — | wäwa |
| bäpa | — | gäthu |
| mukul-bäpa | — | gäthu |
| ṇäṇḍi | — | waku |
| ṇapipi | — | waku |
| märi | — | gutharra |
| mari'mu | — | marratja |
| ṇathi | — | gaminyarr |
| momu | — | gaminyarr |
| galay | — | dhuway |
| mukul-rumaru | — | gurrun |
| maralkur / gala | — | gurrun |
| momalkur | — | dhumungur |
| ṇathiwalkur | — | dhumungur |

Example:

If someone calls you märi – you call them gutharra. If someone calls you gutharra, you call them märi.

If a woman calls you waku (daughter/son) – you call her ṇäṇḍi (mother). If a man calls you waku – you call him 'ṇapipi' (uncle or mother's brother). If someone calls you ṇäṇḍi or ṇapipi – you call them waku.

If a man or boy calls you yapa or miḍiku (sister) – you call him wäwa (brother) and vice versa. You might also call him yukuyuku if he is younger than you.

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Further information

Aboriginal Interpreter Service: <http://nt.gov.au/community/interpreting-and-translating-services/aboriginal-interpreter-service>

ARDS website and resources: www.ards.com.au

CDU online dictionary: <http://yolngudictionary.cdu.edu.au>

CDU Yolṇu Studies: www.learnline.cdu.edu.au/yolngustudies

