

Educating the Future Leaders of Aboriginal Australia

Page Index

[Description](#)
[Participants](#)
[Findings](#)
[Outcomes](#)
[Impact](#)
[Related Documents](#)

Quick Links

[Download Infosheet](#)
[Download Report](#)
[Visit Website](#)

Project Title	Educating the Future Leaders of Aboriginal Australia. Traditional Aboriginal Understandings of Gifted and Talented Children
Project Team	Associate Professor Michael Christie (SiMERR NT), John Greatorex (Charles Darwin University), Helen Verran (University of Melbourne)
Period	May 2008
Funding Agency	SiMERR
Organisational Base	SiMERR NT

Description

[↑ Top](#)

Yolŋu elders can often identify very special young people who will grow up to be leaders in ceremony, in clan groups, in the community or in politics. But the school system does not understand Yolŋu points of view on what it means for a young person to be seen as 'gifted' or 'talented'.

This project brought together Yolŋu elders and educators to work as a 'focus group' to talk about:

- How can we tell which Yolŋu children are the leaders of the future?
- What Yolŋu words are used to describe these people and what do they mean?
- What do these children need to learn to be a leader?
- What role will they fill as leaders?
- Who, how and where does the family and community work to grow them up?
- What should school teachers and Education Departments know about these young people?
- What should school teachers and Education Departments do to help these young people?

The consultants met over two days to discuss the issues together in their own languages, and then to make personal representations to camera about their own perspectives. The discussions were transcribed and translated, and a report has been prepared which will be published under the website www.cdu.edu.au/yaci when its contents have been approved.

Participants

[↑ Top](#)

The consultants were: Dhāṅgal Gurruwiwi, from Gäluru community, Gothadjaka, from Gäwa homeland centre, Elcho Island, Waymamba Gaykamaŋu – lecturer, Yolŋu studies, CDU, Yirŋiya Guyula, Milingimbi community, Ian Gumbula, from Ngukurr, Gwen Rami, from Ngukurr, Lawurpa, from Galiwin'ku, and Garngulkpuy, from Galiwin'ku

Findings

[↑ Top](#)

Three main points ran through the entire discussion. First: giftedness and talentedness in the Yolŋu world are associated with leadership. People do not have gifts by themselves or for themselves. Their giftedness is for their people – their own clan groups, but important also their mothers' and the mother's mothers and their (sisters') daughter.

Young people are born with their gifts and talents, derived from their embodiment of ancestral connections. The Yolŋu word for this embodiment is gaka. One's gaka could be defined as one's demeanour, or deportment, but it is also understood to be the manifestation of the properly activities of the ancestors (hunting, negotiating, ceremonial work, peacemaking etc) as manifest in today's people.

Third, giftedness is neither a head thing (mulkurr) or a guts thing (ŋayaŋu) but an effect of the two coming together. The consultants emphasised the danger of the head running away without attachment to land, history, kin, identity, emotion and respect.

Outcomes

[↑ Top](#)

Outcomes include a full description of what happened, the key ideas which emerged, key implications for teaching policy

and practice, Yolŋu concepts which are key to an understanding of Yolŋu perspectives on gifted and talented children.

Impact

 [Top](#)

There is considerable interest in this topic from the NTDEET, and we will prepare a presentation for their curriculum managers and planners once the information for the website has been checked thoroughly with the consultants and some publicity material has been approved.

Related documents

 [Top](#)

Click [here](#) to download this infosheet.

Click [here](#) to download the report on this project.

Click [here](#) to visit this project's website.

 [Top](#)