

## Mari\githinyaraw Yalu Story

Through a two year research project (Indigenous Health and Education: Exploring the Connections) with the Co-operative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health and the Galiwin' ku community we came up with a project called Mar\githinyaraw Yalu..... this means Nurturing nest.

This project reflects Yol\u learning procedures that Yol\u use in everyday life. The topics are based on Yol\u nutrition, discipline, lifestyle, history, medicine, genealogy, animal life cycles and other areas of education. Another important area for the Yalu is to help Yol\u community with the problem of adolescents using petrol and other drugs.

The project commenced May 2000 as a six pilot and was funded by the Cooperative Research Centre Aboriginal Tropical Health. The Yalu project has since secured 2 years funding through the Department of Family and Community Services and continues to be supported by the CRCATH

### ***This is our story of the development of the Mari\githinyaraw Yalu.***

For the first three months, we were not sure what our goals were and where we were going. There were many difficulties ahead of us and we were doing our best talking to people and introducing the new approach for implementing it. As we walked around the Community we reflected that Yol\u Health and education and nurturing is about caring and sharing ideas with each other with greater respect.

We went to visit the Health Clinic, Women's Centre (where there are three groups of jobs operating - Strong Women, Strong Culture, Strong Babies and Women's forum) the Child Care Centre and the school. These departments supported this project.. We also introduced the project to the Councillors and they were keen and supportive. Now that we have explained carefully about the aims and the goals and Yol\u are keen to support the Yalu group. People are now very happy and encouraging to the Yalu.

We have our own structure and management committee (with representatives from all the clans at Galiwin' ku) and that has made a difference with other organisations - they can see we have strong people supporting us and that the project continues to develop. The difference is that Yalu Mar\githinyaraw is a project from research done by Yol\u whereas other department projects have been done by Balanda.

We are becoming more confident about the work we are doing and the project is getting stronger. People are asking more about the project and supporting us and telling us "this is the right way to do it". People can see how we are working and we are communicating with Yol\u even after hours. We are happier too because we are achieving something.

Now people come and talk to us about the project and they ask us to do activities. Even the Yol\u police have come and talked to us about working together in the future helping Yol\u, for example, petrol sniffers to

learn about raypirri (the Yo\u system of behavioural education and control). We have also been working with the disability worker trainees, Strong Women Workers and Child Care staff.

At the moment we are working as a team - there are two-part time workers and two casual workers. We have been delegating the tasks set for us and we are seeing the oral presentations from Yo\u being formed into diagrams and written work. We have been worked on guku (wild honey) and its use as medicine for ringworm, scabies, sores and constipation - we started by recorded women singing the traditional songs and their stories which pass on traditional knowledge about guku: Yo\u manikay, bu\u, dhawu and lukugamunu\u (songs, dances, stories and painting) One project worker is working on guku from one moiety - Yirritja songs, dances, stories and painting and the other project worker is working on Dhuwa guku.

The project workers are also learning higher levels of language only known by Yo\u (with grey hair)- like the Balanda language of science and technology - for example, I (~awurrpa) am at the Certificate level in Yo\u learning and Bepuka is at the Diploma level - we still have to go through the degree, masters and PhD levels of Yo\u understanding. We have made audio recordings and video of songs and dancing and written down the stories in Yo\u matha. We have also videotaped the preparation of the bark for the paintings and we will take video of the painting being done.

One activity we have been asked to do is to work with other organisations like Strong Women and Women's Centre collecting Yo\u food for old people - this was one of the actions people asked for during our last project. The school and clinic have also invited us to work with them on a project in October, camping for three days in the bush. This project will involve students, older Yo\u and people with diabetes in learning about traditional Yo\u food (particularly cycad) and looking at the effect of eating this food on blood sugar levels.

Elaine ~awurrpa  
Dorothy Bepuka  
Joanne Gar\ukulpuy  
Dorothy Yu\ugirr\u

\*\*\*These Yalu researchers have had experience with participatory action research and know the formula for proper community consultation. Facilitating research for these women is known to be complex and obviously involves more than what the non-indigenous researcher perhaps observes or appreciates. It involves not just facilitating the research itself, but facilitating the introduction and acceptance of the researchers into the community, becoming the researcher's mentors, guides and teachers.