

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Bush Professor



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Edited by Margie West



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Orthography
Spelling is based upon the Wardaman draft dictionary from Diwurruwurru-jaru Aboriginal Corporation 2008 Compiled Colleen Moerkerken.
Titles of artwork, the names of sites and other names that have been given alternative spelling have been changed in accordance with current Wardaman orthography.

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*We can justify everything you know, what we can see in front of us: bush
medicine, rock formations and all that. Their professor is reading that in a book.
We’re bush professors.*

*We all got it from a song and a story from the creation and it’s still there today
and we’re passing that information to the young ones from word-of-mouth.*

(Bill Harney, *Message Stick ABC Summer Series: Before Galileo*, 2010)



Contents

Foreword	Joe Morrison	vii
Introduction	Cath Bowdler	1
Two-way fella	Cath Bowdler	5
Yidumduma – Eagle Hawk Guardian	Margie West	13
Artwork		37
Map		74
Appendix A		75
Appendix B		77
Appendix C		84
Glossary		88
Biography		93
Bibliography		96
Contributors		99
Acknowledgements		100



Chips Mackinolty
Yidumduma 2015
 screen print on paper
 99.5 x 69.5 cm
 a Namawajirkiwajirka poster
 based on a photo by Gail Shive

Foreword

Every once in a while, we meet an individual who makes a profound impact on our lives, and typically the realisation of that comes after they have passed. This is not the case with Yidumduma Bill Harney.

My early memories of Yidumduma were as a child growing up in the town of Katherine during the 1980s. He was, and remains, a central character in the physical presence of the town; and, moreover, in the social and cultural fabric of the entire district that the town services.

He was of a generation that is now, sadly, almost gone. He has experienced the best and worst of the colonisation of the region; he remains authentically embedded in his ancestry but continues to have an eye on the future.

Those early memories include his taking visitors in a ‘stretched’ troop carrier to Wardaman country west of Katherine on his Jankangyina tours, and hosting the inaugural meeting of the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance at Wynbarr on the Menngen Aboriginal Land Trust.

At this meeting, Yidumduma three times welcomed visitors, who included 200 Indigenous people from across northern Australia. They were very impressed

by his prowess, intellect and deep knowledge of his country and its rock art, of astronomy and of the customs of the people who have belonged to that land since time began.

He has been a significant contributor to land rights, having been a member of the Northern Land Council for many years. At NLC meetings he is the master at picking up the microphone and contributing to a wide range of topics in the causes of supporting inherent rights and doing justice for Aboriginal people.

Like his father, Bill Harney, the white patrol officer and protector of Aborigines, Yidumduma is a master at sharing his experiences and knowledge through song, art, dance and in books such as this. This publication and exhibition, *Bill Harney Bush Professor*, celebrates a remarkable individual who has contributed enormously to making Australia a better place for all of our children. I trust you will all enjoy learning a little about Yidumduma.

Joe Morrison
 Dagoman
 Chief Executive Officer
 Northern Land Council



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Wangga 2009
 synthetic polymer paint on canvas
 120 x 120 cm
 courtesy Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre

This is a contact one. These are the first two explorers coming into the country when Aboriginal people were here around the country. They came across Red-backed Kangaroo Yunumburrgu. He saw the two people on the horse and the mule and he said, 'What are you doing here?' They said, 'We've come to look around'. And the old kangaroo look hard at him and said, 'Well, you're coming into my land and I welcome you here and we can all come together. You can stay here for good if you want to'. And the bloke said, 'All right, give me your hand', and they both shook hands together. Then they heard a bloke blowing the didjeridu, a bloke singing, all dancing another; one dancing another got a boomerang (clap sticks). They call it Wangga. That's a Wangga song. They had all these different fruit, different yams in their ceremony and these old white people couldn't work out what they were eating; different way, he'd never seen this bush tucker before. (Bill Harney 2015)

Introduction

Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre opened on 14 July 2012 with a day of festivities that included the launch of the exhibition *Big River Country*. That exhibition featured a painting entitled *Wanggar Dreaming* by Yidumduma Bill Harney. Bill recorded the story for the painting:

When the people singing and dancing with the didgeridoo and clapstick, they were showing skill and tricks they could do. Then the first white men arrive with the horse. Saw the kangaroo standing up. That kangaroo welcome him and say that white man can stay in Australia. Then they shook hands together. Old roo said 'We stay on in peace together ...' The white men rode away and left them in peace. That's the Wanggar story in my country, Wardaman country. It's in the rock paintings too, in my country, still today.

It is a story of cross-cultural encounter on the frontier. Not one of violence and dispossession, as was so often the case in the Katherine region, but rather one of curiosity, welcome and respect. The painting and the story exemplified the mission and values of the brand new Cultural Centre in Katherine, which is itself a 'two-way' reconciliation project whose aim is to enhance cross-cultural understanding in the region through art.

Bill's painting eloquently expressed this aspiration and the centre decided to buy the painting for semi-permanent display. It was the first art acquisition – an artwork by a senior Aboriginal man who has had a huge impact in the region and is also a founding board member of Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre.

About a month after the opening a group of people who had been recording rock art sites and stories in Wardaman country with Bill arrived at the centre. They were excited to see the *Wanggar Dreaming* painting in the exhibition and showed me an image of the rock art site that had inspired it – *Wynbarr* – a contact site depicting the 'kangaroo people' shaking hands with the first explorers. It was fascinating to see Bill's interpretation of the site and his elaboration of this frontier story. It became clear that he is a unique conduit of knowledge and that there was a deep connection between his contemporary paintings and the ancient Wardaman rock art tradition. The idea for this exhibition was germinated on that day. It was a no-brainer.

Bill has a unique ability to engage and articulate his culture to others. He is a great storyteller and a natural communicator across the cultural divide. Those people who came to the centre in August 2012 included educator and performer Paul Taylor, who has worked with Bill making videos in Wardaman country for over a decade, resulting in the *Yubulyawan Dreaming Project* web site¹ – an exhaustive record of stories, country, ceremony and rock art sites. Paul is one of a number of people who have worked consistently with Bill over many years, fulfilling his desire to share and preserve his cultural knowledge.

Bill has inspired others such as David Lee, an American rock art enthusiast who has travelled with his wife to Australia every year for a decade to record Wardaman sites. Bill has also co-authored two books with Hugh Cairns over a number of years, including *Dark Sparklers*², a study of Indigenous astronomy. Other long-term associates include Jan Wositzky, who co-authored Bill’s autobiography, *Born Under the Paperbark Tree: A Man’s Life*³, in 1996 and Mick Pierce, with whom Bill worked at the Wardaman Association. The commitment and enthusiasm of Bill’s collaborators is a testament to his sincerity and generosity, and all of this accumulated knowledge has fed into the exhibition, along with the dedicated work of curator Margie West.

Bill’s ability to work in two worlds and his determined drive to record and communicate his culture have created a major legacy for his descendants, his people and for us all. Bill has inspired a number of firsts for Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre. Not only the first art acquisition, but the first curated solo show by an Indigenous artist and the first exhibition to tour nationally. We are proud to have worked with Bill to present his art and culture to a wider audience.

Cath Bowdler, PhD
Inaugural Director
Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre

1 <http://ydproject.com/index.php/blog/>
2 Cairns, H, & Yidumduma Harney, B, 2003, *Dark Sparklers: Yidumduma’s Wardaman Aboriginal Astronomy–Northern Australia*, published privately by Hugh Cairns
3 Wositzky, J, 1996, *Born Under the Paperbark Tree: A Man’s Life*, JB Books, South Australia



Contact painting at Wynbarr of the ‘first explorer’ being welcomed by the Red-backed Kangaroo. The painting *Wanggar* was based on this rock art image but the guns are noticeably absent. (Photo M West)



Bill and Dixie with their three dogs, Buddy, Mitzie and One Eye, at Yunumburrgu-ya, 2015. (Photo M West)

Two-way fella¹

Well, from the beginning, I was born in the bush and growing up in the bush. First was the blackfella way. I was grown up with the story, right through till the time I moved into the European camp ... Now today I put the Aboriginal lifestyle and the European lifestyle together, and I know both laws.²

Bill Yidumduma Harney was born at Brandy Bottle Creek on Willeroo Station in 1936.³ In 1933 his father WE (Bill) Harney started a relationship with Bill’s mother, a Wardaman woman, Ludi Yibuluyma, while working on roads in the Victoria River District. Ludi worked with Bill Sr for the next four years before he moved on to explore other parts of the Territory. Young Bill and Ludi stayed on at Willeroo on Wardaman country and took the name Harney from that time.

Bill Harney was ‘grown up’ by his mother and his Aboriginal stepfather, Joe Jomornji. Bill describes how Aboriginal people like his mum worked hard on the stations in the dry season – cutting wood, cooking and cleaning – but would go bush in the wet season, living off the land and carrying out business and ceremony.

I remember our home in the wet season in the overhang on Old Willeroo. It was Mulluya. We were listening to Ludi and the others there.⁴

During these times Joe Jomornji and Bill’s Aboriginal grandfather, Pluto, taught him about living on country – bush foods, tool making, hunting and fishing, the

seasons, the birds, insects and animals. He learned culture, language and stories.

I haven’t been to school, but I went to university in the bush, under the tree, beneath the stars.⁵

When Bill was about 12 he was initiated into Wardaman ceremony by Joe Jomornji and other Wardaman elders. He was given his Wedge-tailed Eagle totem, taught songs, Dreamings and the Law at the Yimulun (Law) site on Willeroo. Full initiation happened four years later when he was 16.⁶

Actually I was happy it was happening – real happy ... I was being made. I was being accepted as one Fully Initiated Black. Yeah! Not everyone was, you see; but it mattered to me.⁷

Two years before this Bill had been initiated into the other world of the stock camp under the mentorship of Clarrie Wilkinson.⁸ Bill was always up for knowledge and he became a skilled horseman and cattleman, as well as learning to mend fences, break horses and muster cattle.

I learned a lot during the years after joining the stock camp, but we began to understand the world of our Elders ... and the whites’ ways. Whenever I was with them, I was learning ... Seeing these Elders at home and work on the stations, their Law’s always in my mind.⁹



Contact scene at Gunjiwunji shelter. Bill relates this to an actual incident involving mounted police (on left) and Wardaman they suspected of cattle killing. The smaller figure in the middle is the police tracker with a team of packhorses. The handprint is close to a painting of a handcuff. (Photo M West)



Blucher and Bill at Willeroo. (Photo Jackie Wilmington)

Bill spent much of his working life on pastoral stations on Wardaman country, including Willeroo, Delamere, Innesvale, and other pastoral leases further afield.

I was working all over ... on the big station runs from Hall's Creek, Victoria River, the Kimberley, over to Borroloola on the Gulf.¹⁰

He was a natural leader and progressed to head stockman and supervisor of the stock camp. In his autobiography Bill reminisces about those good old days recounting colourful characters and bush lore. He cites examples of casual cruelty, tough men and drunken sprees, poddy dodging, drinking 'metho' and plenty of hard work in testing times – similar stories to those his father, WE Harney, immortalised in his popular books detailing his adventures in the Territory.¹¹

The relationship between Bill and his father sheds light on cross-cultural relations in the first half of the twentieth century. WE Harney did not openly acknowledge young Bill as his son. He denied his

paternity in public but privately acknowledged Bill and was kind towards him. Liaisons between black and white men and women were illegal at the time and, as a 'half-caste' child, young Bill could be taken away by the Aborigines Welfare Board. Both Bill and his father had a great fear of this and Bill recounts the tale of an officer, Ted Evans, going to great lengths to track him down. He tells how Ludi rubbed black plum on his face to darken his skin and how they stayed at a place called Mullawa in the wet, where patrol officers could not find them.¹² In fact Bill's sister Dulcie was taken away to Croker Island, which Bill referred to as 'a prison'.¹³

Interestingly WE Harney had a stint as a patrol officer in the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch and was made Protector of Aborigines in 1940.¹⁴ He was a staunch supporter of Aboriginal people and wrote a number of reports on the deplorable conditions they endured. He was a well-known and charismatic storyteller – something he has in common with Bill Jr – and the author of a number of books¹⁵, poems and ballads about his life in the Top End. He was also the first ranger at Uluru National Park, Ayres Rock.¹⁶ Bill Jr last saw his father in 1961 in Mataranka. Bill Sr died in Queensland in 1962.

In the 1960s the pastoral way of life in the Northern Territory was in a period of upheaval. Road trains were taking over from drovers and helicopters were being used for mustering. In August 1966 Aboriginal pastoral workers walked off the job on Vestey's cattle station at Wave Hill. Vincent Lingiari, a Gurindji spokesman, led the walk-off of Aboriginal stockmen and their families from Wave Hill to Wattie Creek as a protest against the unfair work and pay conditions.¹⁷ The walk-off was a watershed moment for Aboriginal people in Australia and ultimately led to the campaign for land rights; however, in the short term it had unintended



Elsie Raymond, Tarpot and Bill at Yirwalalay during the filming of the *Land of the Lightning Brothers* documentary, 1987. (Photo George Chaloupka)

consequences. The introduction of award wages in 1968 resulted in many people on cattle stations being thrown off their land and not allowed to access their sacred sites.

We had walk-off; big companies beginning nearby, business threw us off our land. Helicopters take the horses, horsemen. Now town living. Aborigines weren't wanted for work. Grog, unemployment ... Too much fighting, young losing it too. We needed our land back.¹⁸

From 1967, as a result of the referendum, Aboriginal people were legally allowed to drink alcohol and by 1968 many people had moved from the stations to the towns. However, Bill stayed on the land at that time and turned his hand to other jobs. He had developed many skills over the years and at that time worked as a saddler, windmill man, croc shooter and fencer in numerous locations across the Territory. 'I was working round the stations; lucky they still needed me.'¹⁹

In 1962 Bill married Ida, his promised wife, in the traditional way. He followed this up with a ceremony at the Catholic Church in Katherine, in true two-way style. Their two children, Billy and Roderick, were born in 1971 and 1972. Ida died in 1979 and Bill moved back to Katherine, where he married his second wife, Dixie. They had one son, Hedrick.

Always entrepreneurial, Bill took off to work in the Ord River farms as a tractor driver for a period and then moved to Barunga, where he learned mechanics and ran the workshop in the community. In 1986 he started a successful fencing business, Colmara Pty Ltd, in Katherine with his wife Dixie. The business was responsible for some big jobs at that time including the fencing of the Tindal airbase.



Dixie and Bill on their wedding day with Father Cooper. (Photo Arthur Palmer)

Rock art specialist George Chaloupka and others convinced Bill that there was interest in the rock art sites on his country. In 1987 Bill was involved in the documentary *The Land of the Lightning Brothers* made by Film Australia on Wardaman country. Bill went to Sydney for the launch and to promote the film. He is a natural communicator with an encyclopaedic knowledge and he realised at that time just how interested the outside world was in Indigenous culture and stories from his country. He met with Wardaman Elders in 1988 and was given permission to start a tourism business, Jankangyna Tours, which would conduct bush safaris to Wardaman sites on Willeroo station.²⁰ Bill sought help from the NT Tourist Commission and other organisations to build a bush camp near Yingalarri waterhole and for money for a bus. He travelled to London and the United States with the support of the Commission to market the tour. Bill still runs rock art tours to this day.



Bill, Dixie and children with his new Jankangyina Tours truck, 1988. (Photo Arthur Palmer)

Now on my tours, lots of people ask me, ‘Why did you start this?’ I told them, ‘Well, if I didn’t start this tourism business all of the history and the heritage wouldn’t have been there. No one would know about it. I started this tourism to give youse a good history of Aboriginal culture.’²¹

Bill now lives on Menngen Station, the site of the Innesvale pastoral lease, which was granted to Wardaman Traditional Owners in 1999 in their successful claim under the *Land Rights Act (Northern Territory)*. The title took a mere 18 months to settle as the Land Commissioner only needed to visit the site twice as Bill had so much knowledge and a

clear unbroken connection to the land.²² Innesvale was subsequently bought by the Indigenous Land Commission as unalienable freehold land and is owned by the Wardaman.

Today, we’re back on the cattle station, the country I grew up in!²³ ... great big family at Menngen, dozen houses, fifty more people, sharing what we need – like the old station days.’²⁴

Bill now spends his time managing the property, guiding rock art tours, painting and carving. It was late in his life that Bill discovered art as another vehicle to record and share his cultural knowledge.

I think that’s the best business, a good job ... If I’d known that I could get \$4000 for a painting I wouldn’t have been running around picking up beer cans ... The first exhibition we had in Darwin and the second one coming up again in Darwin and the next one going to be in Melbourne. Should be alright then.’²⁵

Bill Harney has been painting since the late 1980s and has exhibited in numerous exhibitions across Australia. He has been a finalist in the *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* in Darwin 11 times. He has won awards and is represented in many important collections including those of the National Gallery of Australia, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Bond University and the University of Sydney. He is still painting and carving today.

There’s only a few old fellas like me now. We are the ones that have the knowledge that was passed from the old people. We are the leader for the Wardaman and have control of ceremony.’²⁶

Bill has risen to leadership of the Wardaman through attrition but also because of his connection to important old men such as Tarpot and Pluto and through his indomitable spirit and energy. Not only is he a respected Wardaman Elder but he is on the boards of the Northern Land Council, Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre, Katherine West Health, Gregory National Park and the Katherine Water Committee. Bill and his wife Dixie have also supported a large number of Aboriginal kids in trouble through his unofficial diversionary program out at Menngen.

Bill Yidumduma Harney is a legend in the Katherine region and beyond. He is a living national treasure who continues to record and share his culture.

Cath Bowdler

1 The quotes in this biography are Bill Harney’s words largely derived from his autobiography by Jan Wositzky and Bill Harney (1998), and Hugh Cairns and Bill Harney, 2014.
2 Wositzky, J, 1998,p. 96–7. This book was compiled from a series of tapes Bill recorded in 1979 at the encouragement of Toni Bauman.
3 There is some debate about the birth date of Bill Harney, with other dates recorded in other sources. The date recorded in Jan Wositzky (1998) is used here.
4 Cairns, H, and Yidumduma Harney, Bill, 2014, p. 41
5 Wositzky, op. cit., p. 179
6 Cairns, op. cit., p. 61
7 ibid., p. 62
8 Wositzky, op. cit., p. 98
9 Cairns, op. cit., p. 2–4
10 ibid., p. 9
11 McGregor, R, ‘Bill Harney’s Yarns’, 1999, pp. 25–28. McGregor characterises WE Harney’s popular writing as bush yarns, with the exception of works such as *Songs for the Songmen: Aboriginal Myths Retold* co-authored by AP Elkin.
12 Bill Harney, personal communication
13 Wositzky, op. cit., p. 74
14 ibid., p. 37
15 WE Harney’s books include *Taboo* (1943), *North of 23°* (1946), *Life Among the Aborigines* (1957) and *Grief, Gaiety and Aborigines* (1961).
16 Wositzky, op. cit., p. 156
17 <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs224.aspx>
18 Cairns, op. cit., p. 144
19 ibid., p. 147
20 Wositzky, op. cit., p. 189
21 ibid., p. 192
22 Mick Pierce, personal communication
23 Cairns, op. cit., p. 40
24 ibid., p. 49
25 Wositzky, op. cit., p. 194
26 Bill Harney, personal communication



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Bulyan Eagle Hawk 2000
 natural pigments on canvas
 200 x 130 cm
 exhibited in *17th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award* 2000

Bulyan is in the middle and one on the right-hand side is another Hawk – Goshawk. It’s a very strong bird with large wings we call Mardird. Bulyan is a very strong bird too. The other one is a Little Falcon Garrgayn from my mother’s side; the three work together. The Bulyan has always been a watchman. He’s got a country named after him called Yabulyawan and that’s my Dreaming at the Flora River. He made sure during the Creation time people did the right thing making weaving, singing the Creation song and making the song line. But old Bush Turkey Jegban went out of hand at a place called Gongonmeya in Yabulyawan country. He was up there singing so Bulyan told him not to sing with a big voice because there were a lot of women around. Bulyan said, ‘You can’t do that, it’s a sacred song; you can’t do that’. But old Bush Turkey never took any notice and they had a fight and he killed old Bush Turkey and left him lying there and a lot of Crabs Murrarda came along and started eating his flesh from the bone. There were millions of Crabs piling up. They travelled from the western side and they formed that high mountain we call Mt Hogarth today at Barnangga. It’s like a big ant bed – termite mound – tall one, they built it up and made it. Then all the Crab People made a tunnel underneath and came out at another painting place called Gordol-ya. They made a tunnel and they were dragging out this flesh to feed all these Butcher Birds that came out from Muy Muy [estate] Willeroo side during ceremony time and old Night Owl called Guyarru was singing. He came from the country called Wujarr [estate]. They all came in for ceremony. They were all like cannibals eating one another, which is why Eagle Hawk can still eat Bush Turkey today, that’s his food. (Bill Harney 2015)

Yidumduma – Eagle Hawk Guardian

*I haven’t been to school, but I went to the university in the bush, under the tree, under the stars. The lifestyle I went through I reckon it’s fantastic.*¹

Yidumduma Bill Harney is never afraid of a challenge. As he says, ‘If I want to do something, oh Christ! Straight away, press a button there and away we go!’²

Bill’s remarkable drive and self-confidence go back to his childhood days growing up at Willeroo. It was a tough life yet he recalls it as a wonderful time when he learnt so much from his Wardaman family as well as from empathetic station workers. The seasonal nature of pastoral work allowed people to resume their customary pursuits as best they could, so with the onset of the wet season they handed in their clothes and ‘took off bush’ until the next dry.³

*When we first lived in the bush we were learning all about the art and all sorts of things growing up in the bush, young ones. They were teaching us just drawing in the dirt, on the rock, onto bark of the gum tree, all that sort of thing. Then we became a stockman we were getting motivated to be good smart workers on the white man side in the cattle work and horse work. But when we got back to our side we were very interested how to make our own spears to go hunting ... That’s what motivated me all the way.*⁴

Bill ‘foot walked’ around Wardaman land and was taught how to survive in the bush, about the taxonomy of plants and animals, how to hunt and gather, and to

map and navigate by the stars. He underwent successive ceremonial instruction learning about significant sites, the interrelationship between people and their land and the mythic and artistic traditions of the hundreds of rock art sites scattered across his country. Not only is Bill now a major repository of Wardaman culture he is also the first and only ceremonially authoritative Wardaman producing art commercially. The survey exhibition of Yidumduma’s work is a long overdue acknowledgement of his unique status as an interlocutor for Wardaman culture. It will hopefully illuminate the wealth of interconnected knowledge about the people, country and the Law expressed through his artwork and the various artistic influences that have shaped his distinctive way of configuring the Dreaming.

*I’ve got lots of Dreaming songs and the secret songs. I’ve got a song from all the animals and we’ve got songs for sweethearts, and songs for making the rain come and songs for making it stop.*⁵

The Dreaming and Wardaman Estates

The majority of Bill’s art is about the Buwarraja (Dreamings) who created the Wardaman universe out of a featureless muddy earth. The ancestors sang and danced, fought, loved and died during their travels, and their actions are inscribed in the landscape today as natural features and most explicitly as the myriad rock paintings and engravings scattered through the numerous sandstone galleries.

Wardaman land is a matrix of the Dreaming tracks that crisscross and define the boundaries of their country. There are travelling Dreamings that originate in the east and link the Wardaman to their neighbouring groups, such as the Law-bringers Red Kangaroo, Emu and Dog, along with the Black-headed Python and Rainbow Serpent.

There are also more personal localised Dreamings originating in the individual estates or *laglan* (camp, uterus, i.e. birthplace) that make up Wardaman country.

A few of Bill’s principal Dreamings from his father’s estate are Wedge-tailed Eagle (his conception totem), Grasshoppers, Yams, Grass, Baby Lightnings, Black and White Catfish and his initiation Dreaming, the Blue-crested Pigeon. The social identity of each Dreaming is manifest in a distinctive headdress – the heart-shaped headdress of the Demdemen Grasshopper, the horned headdress of the Lidi, the lopsided headdress of the Moon, and so on. Bill says each estate also has its own guardian or ‘watchman’ to look after the land and ensure social and ceremonial protocols are observed. His Dreaming Bulyan the Eagle Hawk (Wedge-tailed Eagle) is the watchman for his Yubulyawan group.

*Straightaway they tell you all your Dreamings! They tell you Wedge-tail’s your Dreaming, Grasshopper’s your Dreaming, Black and White Catfish’s your Dreaming ... you get all you Dreamings from your father ... my mother don’t give me my totem.*⁶

Bill is extremely knowledgeable about the different estates and while he respects their individual autonomy he likes to emphasise their interconnectedness through the pathways and actions of particular Dreamings. In this way he meshes the individual estates into the wider collective drama of Wardaman creation.

*We got a tribal land group laglan. It’s part of their totem area ... different estates but we’re all Wardaman. The leader, say from Jiggaigarn estate, they start off singing to us and then we all get together and take over. Then we go over to Mumendadguni mob and they’re going to take over all the way, see. That way we’re making a big song line going in a ring all the way round. We all come together because we recognise we can’t just all sing about my Yubulyawan group, my Eagle Hawk song. When they get to Mumendadguni – another clan group right there – we stop and they sing about their own Whistling Kite and all different totems there. Then they stop and Muy Muy mob sing about Butcher Bird and Long-tailed Pheasant and all the other little animals and that mob stops and goes to Barnangga mob and they stop. And this goes to my mother’s mob and they sing about the Lightning and all that sort of thing. That’s how it works. Lightning belongs to my mother’s side but I can help my cousin brother because I’ve got rights there too. But I can’t take the lead to the song; my cousin brother has got to take the lead and I just can help.*⁷

I had several discussions with Bill where he listed 12 different estates along with as many of their Dreamings as he could recall at the time (Appendix A).⁸ This list is not definitive but is more comprehensive for his father’s and his mother’s estates where his rights are most heavily invested. Identical listings of many of these totemic Beings by Baldwin Spencer show these have remained constant for at least a century.⁹

People inherit rights to their estate country in many different ways. According to Toni Bauman (pers. comm.) these include but are not limited to descent via the father and increasingly via the grandparents. Bill has multiple affiliations that determine the subjects he’s allowed to paint. He belongs to the Yubulyawan estate group through his adopted stepfather, Jo Jomornji, which was recognised in the Upper Daly River

Yubulyawan Land Claim.¹⁰ His claim to his mother’s father Pluto Yulinjabandin’s Wurrghleni country at Menngen, where he now has his outstation, was granted by outright agreement with the Northern Territory Government during the Innesvale Claim.¹¹ It includes rights to the well-known Lightning Brothers site at Yirwalalay that he says borders on the Barnangga estate boundary. He also claims rights to his father’s mother Mowandji’s Mumendadguni clan estate that encompasses a number of significant art sites including Gandawagja, Muning and Garnawala and the lush Yingalarri waterhole, an important permanent water source where he once based his tourist camp.

He’s also affiliated with Wujarr because its leader, Jack Gilimirri, was the same skin group as his father and therefore his classificatory father. He says he is also ‘half Jiggaigarn’ via his classificatory grandfather Sambo, he is related to Giliny Giliny via his grandmother Naguna (Mowanji’s sister), and Wurooloola via Toby, another grandfather (Pluto’s half-brother). He says everyone is linked together so today he ‘controls whole lot’.

Through a complex matrix of birth, adoption, residency, kinship and succession, Bill is now one of the most knowledgeable men about the various estates and even of regions beyond Wardaman land. It gives him a certain perspective or overview of Wardaman culture that is put forward in his major creation narrative. He has recounted this story on many occasions to outside visitors and variations of the story have been published elsewhere by Paul Taylor and Julie Drew.¹² The version given to me in the hallowed atmosphere of the famous Muning site, close to the hole the Kangaroo jumped through and where the Willy Wagtail held up the earth, is published in full in Appendix B because it is fundamental to understanding the philosophy behind his art.

Creation Story Summary

The main progenitors Bill emphasises in his story are the Burrowing Frog Ancestress, Dungdung, who had water-dwelling children with Gorrondolmi the Rainbow Serpent and Lightning children with Nardi the Sky Ancestor. Central to the story is the Rainbow’s flooding of the land and its restoration by other Beings including the Lightning Brothers who created rain and bushfires necessary for regenerating life. Other travelling Beings introduced the Law by performing ceremonies in different estates. The *Yurrbari* (p. 32) and *Song Lines* (p. 73) paintings are among the most comprehensive paintings Bill has done on this major drama.

In the final episode, the Dog who was chasing people into their respective countries had his ear split (referring to the practice of sub-incision) with a stone knife. Everything changed with this cataclysmic act. Most of the humans transformed into birds and animals, leaving their shadows imprinted as rock painting while their spirits flew up into the sky to become stars and other celestial features. In this moment the social ceremonial and natural order of Wardaman life was established. Since this time, Bill mentions how certain ceremonies introduced by the Buwarraja help to regulate the seasons by pacifying the Rainbow and protecting initiates from his dangerous power.

The Wardaman tend to differ in their interpretations of the creation drama depending upon their own Buwarraja affiliations and social authority. Julie Drew, who worked with Bill and other senior Wardaman mapping the Dreaming sites, mentions that Bill’s aunty Elsie Raymond considered the Lightning Figures to belong solely to her Yirwalalay estate.¹³ Bill has a more holistic view of the Lightnings based on his wide-ranging knowledge of Wardaman sites that has probably been fine-tuned over years of interaction with external researchers and tourists

to his land. He is also a gifted raconteur and I doubt if any senior Wardaman would deliver the story in such a comprehensive way. His personal identity is emotionally connected to the Baby Lightnings in his father’s country as well as his mother’s Lightning Dreamings:

*My name is Yidumduma because my mother’s Dreaming is the Lightning. It makes a big thunder Yi-Dum-Dum-a, Dum! – makes a noise like a big thunder, it goes Dum!*¹⁴

His further emphasis on the Lightning children of Nardi and Dungdung extrapolates his personal Lightning connection across all estates with the Yirwalalay Gecko Lightning Brothers, Jabirringgi and Yagjagbula, being the major players in the creation drama. They ‘connect together’ with other lizards who flicker their tongues or thump their tails to create forked and sheet lightning.

*Lightning men were the first men in the country ... we call this country Jankangyina country – that means we have Lightning Brothers paintings everywhere, all over the country.*¹⁵ *You can call this, all the area, Land of the Lightning Brothers; the rock paintings are all around there. Yingalarri is at Mumendadguni estate. The little Baby Lightnings are in my country – Lirrmingingin and all the Grasshoppers are in my country. Well, everybody’s got a little Lightning [ancestor] each. Some of the little creatures are part of the Lightning [children of Nardi and Dungdung]. Each different one they dress in a different way, in the headdress.*¹⁶

Wardaman Rock Art

*We didn’t paint the rock to start with – all the paintings are just the many animals who put themselves into the rock in the Dreaming time Buwarraja, and today we just touch the paintings up every now and again to keep them going.*¹⁷

The creation story explains the rock paintings and engravings as the imprints of the Dreaming’s shadows. They are also the oldest, most insightful records of Wardaman creative expression and continue to be a vital and influential aspect of contemporary cultural life. Bill acknowledges the profound influence of the rock art on his own contemporary painting because the imagery is indelibly imprinted on his mind. The most iconic and aesthetically powerful representations often featured in his work are the imposing paired figures with striped internal decorations and distinctive headdresses such as the Lightning Brothers that characterise the largely figurative tradition of the Victoria River District.¹⁸

*We were taken to sites with rock art in them when I was young, then again when I was learning, in the initiation years. The Lawman training often took place at the most important sites, so that’s why I remember the images so well. We were painting ourselves up, fixing the feather decorations, singing the song. We were sleeping among them places, dreaming the stories, finding Spirituals travelling in the stars. That’s how I paint, they’re in my mind all the time, I see them! So I can paint the Law!*¹⁹

The most arresting galleries have attracted an impressive genealogy of archaeologists over the years and their research indicates that the conventionalised engravings mainly of grooves, animal and bird tracks are at least 5,000 years old. Between 1,000 and 100 years ago there was a marked change in the rock art and stone tool technology, which lasted up to the recent present when most of the large iconic striped figures are believed to have been painted.²⁰ The post-contact date for some paintings is confirmed by Wally Arndt who visited the Yirwalalay site in the 1960s and was told by Kulumbut, Joe Jomornji’s brother-in-law,



The Lightning Brothers site at Yiwarlalay with (left to right) Tarpot, Joe Morgan (standing), Joe’s son, David Harney, Skeeta Harney and Gary Manbulloo, 1979. (Photo Arthur Palmer)

that the Lightning Brothers had been painted before the wartime by a man called Emu Jack.²¹

The relatively recent origins of these ancestral paintings and their attribution to human artists by archaeologists, however, is an anathema to Bill who believes the archaeologists have confused the acceptable convention of retouching with the original creation of the works.

*We said to them [archaeologists] ‘Look 5,000 years ago or 2,000 years ago people have been coming along upgrading [retouching] the paint and that’s when you’re picking up. But the original, this one here, is beginning from the creation time, straight from the creation time, from Buwarraja we call it’.*²²

Bill also has his own version of Arndt’s account. He was told that Gunanyin or Pannikin (not Emu Jack) was influenced possibly by Davidson during his visit in the 1930s to scrub out and repaint the existing Lightning Brothers figures. Pannikin was later killed at Delamere sometime in the 1930s or ‘40s because ‘you should never touch the spiritual stuff’.²³ This is a cautionary tale for Bill who was told on many occasions by his father not to copy the Buwarraja. So, while there is an obvious schematic and thematic relationship between Bill’s art and the rock imagery, he never reproduces them in exactly the same way.

Bill’s authority and knowledge of the rock art reflects the unique situation here in the north of Australia where cultural traditions have adapted and survived for perhaps millennia. He can identify hundreds of individual images, irrespective of their disparate formal characteristics, based on this extensive knowledge of the Buwarraja and its linkages to people and the land. The Wardaman recognise two categories of rock art: the sacred Buwarraja Dreaming images and

those that are not Buwarraja but ordinary man-made paintings called *bulawula*.²⁴ Bill tends to privilege the Dreaming interpretation of most rock art based upon his impressive scholarship, although he acknowledges the obvious *bulawula* or man-made status of certain images – mostly of cattle and men on horses with guns – that document the often violent settlement of the district in the late 1880s. The indiscriminate punishment for perceived offences such as cattle stealing impacted on Wardaman like Bill, whose grandmother (Ludi’s mother) was shot dead by police troopers.²⁵ Maybe it’s because of these dark experiences that Bill has adopted a conciliatory outlook to race relations. His painting *Wangarr* (p. viii), based upon one of his art sites at Wynbarr, emphasises the Kangaroo Ancestor shaking hands with the white explorer. The guns depicted in the original rock painting are noticeably absent.

In 1987 Yidumduma channeled his energies into setting up his own rock art tourism venture Jankangyina [sic] (Lightning Brothers) Tours with the help of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. At the same time he was deeply involved in site mapping for the Upper Daly River Land Claim and starred in Film Australia’s *Land of the Lightning Brothers* rock art documentary. These complementary activities were driven by his wish to teach the children about their ‘history and heritage in the country’²⁶ as well as bringing Wardaman culture to a wider audience. The rock art sites he takes most researchers and tourists to are among the most culturally significant, well researched and visually spectacular of the rock art located on his custodial lands. Some sites are briefly described here to evoke a sense of their significance to Bill and his scholarly way of linking the discontinuous images into the overall creation drama. More importantly it reveals the aesthetic and conceptual inspiration for much of his contemporary artwork.

Yirwalalay

The Lightning Brothers, Jabirringgi and Yagjagbula, in Bill’s mother’s Wurrghleni estate at Delamere Station are by far the largest and most researched of any of the iconic striped figures associated with Wardaman art. The Lightnings here are striped Geckos Janginyina, which is the name Bill adopted for his tourism business. They are important protagonists in Bill’s creation story, being the ones who created rain with the assistance of the Garmayu Grasshopper People. Jabirringgi is the oldest Brother associated with sheet ‘splash’ lightning and thunder while Yagjagbula creates the forked lightning with his axes, which can ignite bushfires by striking trees.

Yingalarri

Yingalarri on Willeroo Station is part of Bill’s grandmother Mawanji’s Mumendadguni estate that he refers to as Lightning Country. The dominant striped figures here at the Nimji site are known as Gulirrida Peewee Lightnings though Bill sometimes calls them Peewee and Butcher Bird, two of the Dreamings featured in his creation story. These Beings are also rainmakers and are conceptually and iconically similar to the Yirwalalay Lightning Brothers.²⁷ The red Peewee figure Bill calls the ‘bushfire one’ carries a firestick and axes to create lightning while the larger figure is distinguished as a Lawmaker by the prominent scars on his shoulders and the ceremonial board in his headdress.

Further on at the ceremonially significant Muning site (named after the Emus bending down – *munma*) are many of the ancestors featured in Bill’s creation drama and artwork: Emu, Dog, Meereebena riding the Red Kangaroo, Peewee, Pheasant Coucal and



Peewee and Butcher Bird Lightning Ancestors at the Nimji site Wurrghleni estate. (Photo M West)

Butcher Bird dancing together, and an impressive red painting of the Dog Mudborrongo with the Grey and Brown Falcons beneath.²⁸ Bill says it’s here at Muning that the Dog screamed out and everything in the Wardaman universe changed. In the same complex at Yunumburrgu-ya the Grey Falcon is depicted with his spear aimed directly at the head of Gorrondolmi before his decapitation.

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Gorrondolmi (Rainbow Serpent) Dreaming 2004
synthetic polymer paint and natural pigments
on linen
127.5 x 184 cm
courtesy Art Mob and the artist

When the Grey Falcon fatally speared Gorrondolmi to release the floodwaters, the Rainbow Serpent proceeded to Wirlin.gunyan at Price Creek in the Wurrgleni clan estate. Here he went into the rock in the form of paired male and female Rainbow Serpents who flicked their tongues and flashed lightning that was seen in the distance by the Lightning Brothers at Yiwarlalay (Delamere), who flashed lightning back at them.

Those two paintings they're at a place called Wirlin.gunyan at Yingalarri. They're about four metres long and one's three and a half metres long, maybe more. They're there head-to-head like this, but because of the small frame I just curled them round for the exhibition. They've got the forked lightning, these two. These two put the lightning up and another two from Delamere they put the lightning up – this one at Wirlin.gunyan, Yingalarri. They all answer together with the lightning, that one flash then this one flash and made the rain. Ngayungayug. ban, those two children, those two Lightnings in the rainy season when a big storm's coming, they made the water come up and decided to put the forked lightning out, the seed lightning. They put the lightning out and those other two answer. They made a big rain; the rain cloud meets them half way and down comes the rain. The land flooded and when the rain stopped the water goes down. There is a magnificent spring at Wirlin.gunyan way over in a cave. (Bill Harney 2015)



The Two Lightnings at Wirlin.gunyan at Yingalarri. (Photo David Lee)

Wirlin.gunyang

Powerful evidence of the Rainbow’s fatal spearing by Grey Falcon is manifest in the landscape where his massive stone head Gorrondolmi Yida lies some distance away from his body transformed into an impressive two-kilometre-long stony ridge. The place is called Ganben-ya (Flying Fox Dreaming) because Rainbow’s Flying Fox children are clinging all along the side of the ridge. Rainbow’s shredded flesh became the scattered rock formations alongside the ridge and his tail a single monolithic rock at Mordorl-ya. Rainbow travelled on, finally reaching Wirlin.gunyang at Price Creek in the Wurrgleni clan estate where ‘he put his shadow in the rock’ and can be seen as majestic paired

male and female Rainbow Serpents Gorrondolmi-wuya who cover the entire length of this 20-metre shelter. They flicked their tongues and flashed sheet lightning was seen in the distance by the Lightning Brothers at Yirwalalay (Delamere) who flashed lightning back at them. Bill’s *Gorrondolmi* painting (p. 20) was inspired by the twin Rainbows at Wirlin.gunyang.

Garnawala

Not far from Muning is the Garnawala region of Mt Hogarth centred on Bill’s outstation at Menngen. The area is shared by Bill’s Yabulyawan, Mumendadguni and Wujarr groups and is considered to be one of the most extensively painted and ceremonially



The Little Lightnings Lirrmingining and Kite Ancestors at Gornbun-ya, Garnawala area. (Photo M West)

important site complexes found within a kilometre-long outcrop.²⁹ Garnawala refers to the way the Little Lightning Ancestors Lirrmingining are standing up in rows like *garnin*, spears, in the Lirrmingining shelter. This spectacular 32-metre-long site is arguably the largest and most uniform compositional scene in north Australia and features Baby Lightnings who came here for a major ceremony from Muy Muy country. The two striped figures dominating the tableau are the Gornbun Kite Hawk (left) and Galbun Whistling Kite (right) Dreamings. The rows of Little Lightnings at this site inspired Bill’s sculpture (p. 57).

Wurlbun-ya Body Paint Dreaming

Wurlbun-ya is another important painting group in the Garnambemang shelter at Mt Hogarth near Bamboo Spring in Bill’s Yabulyawan country. One of his main Dreamings here is the various species of Grasshopper People. They travelled to this site to perform a rainmaking ceremony with the Goanna Malbardajgu depicted with a forked tongue indicative of lightning. His striped fibre and feathered body decorations are made by Lidi Grasshopper, the smaller figure with the pronged headdress, and Garmayu, with the rayed

headdress, who are also associated with lightning and rain. The little stick Grasshoppers Demdemen are the small red figures flying around. Bill based his painting *Lightning Lawman* (p. 59) on this painting.

Gandawaja Moon Dreaming

The principal Moon Dreamings are centred on Jiggaigarn estate on Innesvale Station on the boundary of Flora River and Waterbag Creek. The Moon committed incest with his mother-in-law at Jalibang while his wives were out hunting and some distance away Moon and his two wives appear as rocky outcrops at Barangan (Gap Dreaming) (p. 23). The most striking painting of the Moon is in the Gandawaja complex (an area shared with Mumendadguni and Giling Giling) where he’s depicted with the characteristic lopsided half-moon headdress shown in Bill’s *Yurrbari* paintings (p. 32). Moon was condemned to die so he fled to Bill’s Yabulyawan estate where the Lidi Grasshoppers fed him the toxic yam and he died at Garnmarnmarlin-ya (Yam Dreaming) not far from Noon Springs on the Flora River. Bill’s detailed story about the Moon is included in Appendix C.



The Moon on left and his Two Wives at Barangan. (Photo M West)



The Moon at Gandawag-ya site in Jiggaigarn estate. (Photo M West)

Artistic Influences

Bill’s artistic training was informed by the stylistic conventions of the rock art but his principal education occurred in the ceremonial realm. He learnt the configuration and meaning of Dreaming designs that when applied to the body and ritual paraphernalia become potent embodiments of ancestral power during performances.

I learned watching how they put these lines up; they’d paint whatever animal they’ve got in their Dreaming – might be some bird, some kangaroo, some goanna, lizard, or flying fox. That’s what they put on to wear when they’re dancing among themselves.

*The most magnificent power is with the song line and the tribal marks they design. There is powerful story that goes with the different designs, like the hair belt and all those decorations that have the power.*³⁰

Ritual activity was largely attenuated after the 1960s with the dramatic movement of the Wardaman into Katherine after the introduction of equal wages.³¹ The Gujingga and Bandimi initiation ceremonies Bill often refers to in his paintings are still occasionally held today, yet not a lot is known about associated artistic practices. It makes Bill’s knowledge about these things so valuable. The Wardaman for example didn’t paint onto bark per se, but used decorated headboards cut from timber mounted on forked sticks for holding behind the neck. There were two different headboards used in the performance of public Warranggin ceremonies: a larger one with red and white stripes of applied kapok and another painted with ochre designs. An image of these appears in the Muning rock art shelter, which is one of the few surviving records of their existence (p. 24).



Figure holding a ceremonial headboard on the shoulders (centre image) at Muning shelter. The striped image above is the larger Warranggin board. (Photo M West)

*We used to make [carving] for dancing that’s all small ones we used. Women could see those headboards for Warranggin. They carved them and carried at [behind] the neck, make it just like a Rainbow, painted up with red ochre. We call them garrardada [chest harness] labang [carry on the shoulder] painting for Warranggin song. But people don’t use them any more.*³²

The Wardaman also had a tradition of woodcarving principally of weaponry and other material items including ceremonial boards. Bill talks about tall sculptures being carved for ceremonies although again there is very little information about them. Most were stored in shelters and either abandoned or stolen over the years. When Bill staged his first solo exhibition in Darwin in 1990 he drew upon these ceremonial traditions, carving the very first commercial version of this wooden type of Nardi figure (p. 26) along with headboard-style ochre paintings on wood (p. 27).

*We made little carvings for Warranggin dance. It’s a little Nardi; all our figures are Nardi, tall figures. They just stand it up and you dance to keep them happy in a spiritual way. The way they painted and designed it they say they’re a part of the people [Dreamings] who created all the song in the early days and you’re dancing to keep them happy – not only the wood [carvings] but the Spirituals [Buwarraja] can see what’s going on.*³³

Stylistically the Wardaman are on the intersection of figurative traditions from the west via Arnhem Land and the conventionalised desert iconography from the south. It is easy to see this in the variety of Yidumduma’s artwork, which alternates between figuration and desert-style abstraction using decorative dots, internal cross-hatching (he says was ‘traded’ from the Jawoyn) and his distinctive style of diagonal parallel hatching cutting across linear motifs to create an optical vibration across the surface – the ‘white highlight makes it really glowing’.³⁴ The most powerful decorative motifs in Wardaman art though are the parallel lines *minanga* that characterise the striped body decorations of the major rock art figures Buwarraja. They can represent natural phenomena like the cloud formations of the Lightning Brothers headdresses or their body decorations given by the Ridge-tailed Goanna. *Minanga* are also engraved into wooden utensils and ceremonial boards, and are cut into the skin to form raised scarification marks.

*We do a lot of stripes called minanga now. All different drawing; straight down, winding around. If you engraved a boomerang you could hear it like a jet flying with the noise; he goes fast. But if I didn’t have the minanga on it you throw it and it won’t run; he’ll just bounce and fall over – it makes it go more fast. Even on the coolamon they engrave it with the minanga and with the spiritual singing in that minanga it raises that kid strong so he doesn’t get chalky bones – they all join together straight. Kids today they are losing their bones, that’s what the old people said: ‘You got to leave it to the minanga’. Minanga is very powerful.*³⁵

Bill’s distinctive style is an imaginative interpretation of all of these artistic conventions. He is obviously inspired by visualisation of the Buwarraja in the ceremonial realm and in the rock art described previously in this chapter, although he was instructed to use his own imagination to portray his Dreamings.

*All my heritage was given to us by my old man Jo Jomornji, to me and my brothers. Dad gave it to us so we can use that. We don’t design what’s exactly in the rock [painting] but do it a different way. He put to us, ‘If you’re painting you can do this way – a little bit of cross-hatching, a little bit of dot and maybe running all around with a thin line or a thick line’.*³⁶



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Nardi 1990
 natural pigments on wood
 196 x 24 x 20 cm
 courtesy Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

This is the first sculpture Yidumduma ever made for his first solo exhibition in 1990. It represents Nardi, one of the major Creation beings who had children (Lightning People) with Dungdung, the ancestral Frog Woman.

Nardi, that's the first one I made, when all the art thing was coming in – I said I'll make one sculpture called Nardi. Nardi is still there today in the Southern Cross. He's a Sky Boss, the boss for all the stars, the Star People Milijurn. He's the boss for the Emu in the stars, the Crocodile and all that. He's the boss for everybody, for all of us anyway. White man calls it God; well, he's probably the same one. (Bill Harney, 2015)

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Walanung Yam Dreaming 1990
 natural pigments on wood (*Gyrocarpus americanus*)
 154.5 x 30.5 cm
 courtesy Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Garnmarnmarlin Yam Dreaming 1990
 natural pigments on wood (*Gyrocarpus americanus*)
 155.5 x 29 cm
 courtesy Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

These two yams are Bill's Dreamings from his Yabulyawan clan estate. In one Wardaman story the Moon dies after eating the Garnmarnmarlin as punishment for having relations with his mother-in-law.

The Walanung Yam Dreaming is all over on the eastern side of Willeroo and west towards Yilgerr near Yingalarri. A lot of them in the rock painting. Now the Garnmarnmarlin was made by the green Grasshopper. Demdemen is a little clapping one, millions of them flying around clapping. He invented them both, the Walanung and the Garnmarnmarlin. He sang the Garnmarnmarlin to make it a really hot, a spicy one, and one normal one, he made those two. One is like caustic, very strong. He made them there for people to eat during the ceremony. They said, 'To make it through the Law everyone can eat these.' (Bill Harney 2015)



Becoming an Artist

Bill has a talent for being in the right place at the right time and his move to Barunga in 1979 coincided fortuitously with the foundation of Mimi Arts and Crafts by adult educator Toni Bauman. He was already an accomplished traditional artist who could make the full complement of ceremonial and everyday material items. He'd also been a saddler, honing his skills as a representational artist with images of cows and horses applied to his leatherwork. He decided then to start making decorated didjeridus, boomerangs, clap sticks and other artefacts for Mimi along with a small group of older men including George Jangawanga.

*They were happy then, I started making it for Mimi – the carving; all that wood. Before we used to use an axe but I found a chain, so I went with the chainsaw, the modern way [chuckles]. It's faster I reckon.*³⁷

It was the beginning of Bill's intermittent engagement with the commercial art world although he was absorbed in his land claim work through the first half of the 1980s. It wasn't until he founded his tourism business in 1987 that he seriously tapped into the burgeoning market for didjeridus by setting up a small production line, often employing backpackers to fashion the didjeridu 'blancs'. He was also assisting rock art researchers at the time including his friend George Chaloupka, Curator of Rock Art at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), who encouraged Bill to start painting seriously.

Anyway George Chaloupka came along and he said, 'Could you make any bark [painting]?' But I said, 'No we don't have bark painting but we can make it out of flat wood. I've got a chainsaw so I can go and cut this shitwood'. So that's what I did. I cut all this

shitwood tree and stripped it down, cleaned it up and I went on ahead painting and George came down and said, 'All right, we'll organise an exhibition for you in Darwin'. And he collected them all and took them to the museum and organised it. After that George keep encouraging me to do painting and I said, 'Okay'.

*We didn't know what sort of canvas we could get so I'd just used tablecloths to start off. I stopped painting on wood around then; too much work on wood. I said, 'Bugger it, I'll go with the canvas'. I started getting canvas myself from Jacksons in Darwin. That's what I stared off with and I painted a big one now that went to Parliament House [p. 32]. From there on I went all the way. It built up in my mind to go ahead and do this painting now.*³⁸

The MAGNT exhibition *Lidjari Paintings* in 1990 was named after the *lijarri* timber from the shitwood tree (also known as the coolamon tree – *Gyrocarpus americanus*) Bill used as the medium for his paintings. It was an historic occasion, because it was the very first exhibition of Wardaman art with paintings and carvings similar to those once used in traditional public ceremony. It was also the beginning of Bill's career as a visual artist. The following year he painted his very first and most ambitious canvas *Yurrbari* (p. 32), which at over four metres long is still his most definitive ancestral painting about the various events of Wardaman creation. He painted it specifically to show his Law to the Aboriginal Land Rights Tribunal who awarded Bill his Yabulyawan clan land in that year.³⁹ The painting was entered into the 1991 *8th National Aboriginal Art Award* (now the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award* – NATSIAA) and after this Yidumduma became one of the Award's most consistent exhibitors. I recall his familiar figure at the busy openings with his battered cowboy hat and



Bill at the 9th Aboriginal Art Award with his *Blue-tongue Lizard* painting, 1992. (Photo courtesy MAGNT)

cheerful grin, occasionally clutching a didjeridu because he said, with characteristic optimism, 'Well, you never know, I just might win!'

Bill's artistic career has parallels with a number of other high profile Katherine artists like Lorna Fencer Napurrurla (1920–2006) and Paddy Fordham Wainburranga (1932–2006) who exercised a considerable degree of autonomy and entrepreneurship in marketing their work. Bill still sells his artwork through the Mimi community art centre and a number of other commercial art galleries in the town as well as in Darwin. He's also sold directly to private collectors and the many researchers and tourists he's hosted over the years. Since 2002 he's been represented by Art Mob in Tasmania, which now holds the most comprehensive archive of Bill's work from this time due to the unfortunate loss of the Mimi archive, including two decades of Bill's records, in the 1998 flood.

Surviving records show the depth and breadth of Bill's skills as a craftsman. He is one of the last senior men who can actually make the range of Wardaman weapons, tools, musical instruments and ceremonial items including weaving. He even made some elaborate billy carts and a range of miniature beeswax figures for the MAGNT Open Day display on children's toys in 1994. His repertoire of painted subjects is just as dazzling; illustrating a broad pantheon of travelling and estate-related Buwarraja, the region's flora and fauna, bush medicines, astronomy, ceremonial practices and material culture. Once he decides what to paint he applies his vision directly to the canvas without the benefit of prior sketching.

*As soon as you touch the paint [he taps the canvas] then the Spiritual tells you what to do. You're picking it up all the way when you're working. It's in your mind. You don't think what you're going to draw. Your mind guides your hand; it follows the line; it just takes off and the brush just mows along all the way, non-stop. You just do whatever the Dreaming that's been given to my brother and me. I can do that or my mother's country. I can paint that.*⁴⁰

In the past decade Yidumduma has created some of his most impressive work, notably the two five-metre paintings *Gorrondolmi* (p. 44) and *Rockhole* (p. 34) commissioned for the University of Sydney's Institute of Sustainable Solutions as a result of his involvement with Sebastian Pfautsch's study of Indigenous land management. Personal tragedy also generated a number of powerful artistic responses after one of his grandsons was killed when the car driven by his brother Leon crashed near Menngen. To honour his memory Bill transfigured the ceremonial body paint worn for 'sorry business' into a magnificent large

two-dimensional panel entitled *Wurne (Bone)* (p. 53) that he subsequently entered into the NATSIAA. The following year Leon was released by the court into Bill's custody for ritual punishment and instruction. According to Euan Hills (pers. comm.), this was the impetus for the impressive *Yimulun Law* painting (p. 67) Bill created with Leon's assistance at the 2016 Art Mob artist-in-residency. Hugh Cairns later bought the painting and explores its complex metaphysical significance in his collaborative publication with Bill, *Four Circles*. The work generated considerable interest and in 2009 Bill was commissioned to paint another equally complex *Yimulun* work (p. 69) during a residency at the Law Faculty, Bond University.

Yidumduma is now 80 years old by his own estimation and his energy levels and enthusiasm for life are extraordinary. He still carves and paints, oversees the running of Gelidji (Haywood Waterhole) cattle station and sits on numerous committees and boards, including the Menngen Land Trust, while looking after his large extended family and occasionally hosting tourists on his land. He continues to work with researchers on a diverse range of subjects from land management to bush medicines and is currently working to set up an Indigenous Ranger Program. He's undertaken extensive cultural mapping projects with archaeologists and anthropologists from the Northern Land Council and Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and has collaborated for over a decade with Paul Taylor developing a major archive based on his Indigenous knowledge.

Other long-term partnerships involve American rock art researcher David Lee who has been systematically recording thousands of images in the Wardaman galleries for over a decade. Another ongoing collaboration with theologian Hugh Cairns has resulted



Yidumduma with the then PM Julia Gillard with his Gorrondolmi painting at the Centre for Carbon, Water and Food, University of Sydney, 2013. (Photo Jayne Ion)

in two co-authored publications, one on Wardaman astronomy, *Dark Sparklers*, and the other on customary Law, *Four Circles*. Bill's knowledge continues to enthrall different audiences and he's undertaken a number of lecture tours on Wardaman astronomy including *The First Astronomers* show with astrophysicist Ray Norris, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies exhibition and symposium *Things Belonging to the Sky* and has appeared in the ABC TV *Message Stick* program on Aboriginal astronomy.

Yidumduma's impressive legacy is driven by his diverse education and desire to pass his knowledge on to his Wardaman family and interested outsiders. He is often characterised as a man 'walking between two worlds' rather than someone who is actively engaged in the complex social realities of his time. He is a masterful inter-cultural negotiator who has applied his considerable talents as a raconteur, didjeridu player, singer, author and visual artist to advocate for Wardaman rights and culture for most of his adult life. He is now the last surviving authority on many aspects of Wardaman Law, which places a considerable

responsibility on his shoulders, although it's a mantle he's more than capable and happy to wear. For all of his achievements though, Yidumduma remains a charmingly humble man whose greatest happiness is seeing his children and grandchildren, some of whom are now artists in their own right, lead fulfilling lives.

Might be some others the same age as me, they had the knowledge but they died too, see. I'm the only one, the last Wardaman to have the knowledge. Lily [Gin. gina] died, all others died, all gone. Me and Blucher [July] worked together when we were growing up in the country together but Blucher died not long ago, poor bugger. I'm one of the last ones so when I go nobody's going to know.

But for me I want to show my respect, to show people my artwork. What I do I picked up from my family growing up and this way I show what we have in Wardaman country, to notify there are some sacred places, and normal places. That's why we do this painting now. We don't hide it away. If we don't show it everything might get lost and if someone finds it they'll want to know the story, that's the first thing they ask. That's why we paint, not like in the rock painting but painting differently. They're very interested to do this all the young ones and the other Wardaman. They like doing that, they're very interested and want to know the story so they can get a good understanding about what the culture means in the paintings. So we've been giving the story out about what the Dreaming is. That's what motivated me all the way, so that's why I got it in my head to do this painting. Oh well, I've got to show all this in my painting before I finish.⁴¹

Margie West

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Yurrbari 1991
natural pigments on canvas
177 x 424 cm
courtesy Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Yurrbari was one of the first and largest canvas paintings Yidumduma ever produced and depicts major elements of the Wardaman Creation story discussed elsewhere in the text. Yurrbari is a major boundary site in Yidumduma's grandmother's Jiggaigarn clan estate, shared with Wujarr, Mumendadguni and Giliyn Giliyn estates. Yurrbari, which literally means standing up, refers to Gorrondolmi the Rainbow Serpent who stood up and transformed into a rock formation as he looked towards Yiwarlalay at Yingalarri.

Yurrbari [Yirrbarri], it's a big story ... At the bottom is old Lightning Jabarringgi, who speared the old Rainbow and never killed him. And when old Rainbow died the Lightning went on ahead and made water. He made the Flora River, see, called Giwining, all the belleren gum tree they're representing all the snakes painted up. See the fork in the river there, that's where Rainbow got killed. Then the Lightning went back and said, 'We'll make this place where we got to stand'. Well, that's a coolamon [two black oval shapes], when they carried all these tools to make all the ceremony and they got another little lijarri again [yellow oval shapes]. This one is for Jabarringgi and the other one is for Yagjagbula; they're the two Lightning Brothers [rock paintings] in Delamere, those two there. And there's all the little rain stones, jagalyalyirr, a hailstone or a rain stone, shiny quartz [small white circles].

Then there's the Murruna [Goanna] People. He makes the wind and also he hits the ground and makes the big thunder like Jabarringgi. They work together. When you hear the lightning putting the big light up, before it cracks, he hits the ground with his tail, 'boon, boon!' They work together. This one [Yagjagbula] strikes the trees; you call it forked lightning. He goes 'keeoow!' One goes boon and the other one goes keeoow! And underneath him here ['X' shape] is the whirlwind made by the Grasshopper Demdemen. You can see this Grasshopper with the two forks like a straw he's got in front [antennae]. This one fans [with his wings] and this other one makes the big whirlwind. It's a Grasshopper called Gamuyu [stick mantis] that made the design for this one like a coolamon [ceremonial board]; he designed it with Water Snake design [oval with yellow and white stripes] that keeps the water spring going all the way and not to go dry. It's something like a coolamon but it's a flat one like a board, a [ceremonial] board with the design for that Rainbow Snake.

That song was being thrown from here by Murruna to Yagjagbula who passed it on to Jabarringgi and the message goes across to Wirlin. gunyan [where the two Rainbows are] and they all answer together, 'We're going to make the big rain'. Then he came back to Jabalyi [skin name] the Moon and he said, 'Sit there underwater and go up like this'. All the little stripes represent the new moon going up to make a big rain and Gandawag [Moon] said, 'I'll start from the full moon, and I'll make rain all the way and when the full moon stops the rain stops'. The big rain is tipping this, when you see the tipping like that of the moon, it's the new moon coming up. You see the full moon and the half-moon; he's got the half-moon headdress there. That's at a place called Gandawagja behind Innesvale; that's why we call that place today Moon Dreaming ... He died when the rain stopped. He now shines for us in the sky right where he is alongside Gumurrinji the Emu foot [Southern Cross], Mundarla the Scorpion, and the bright star Yunumburru the Red-backed Kangaroo [shape right of Moon].

Then there's Black-headed Python, old Walijabi, now that created the river [rocky ridge at Ganben-ya]. The Janginyina Lightning Gecko Brothers used this [digging stick] to dig up a soak, singing songs and throwing the spit. When he was singing, the spit becomes the hailstone; see those two there? One becomes the cloud flashing the light. And when it rained it made many bush tucker growing called magulu, little woolly yam, and also all these little white fruit, that's a white currant julamarran. The black shapes above Walijabi are representing old Rainbow where his body became the rocky ridge at Ganben-ya. Now over here it's a little coolamon the Grasshopper People carried all the water. And this one here up in the [far top] right hand side is garnbij the clap stick to make the sound for the ceremony [Gujingga], and make happiness to the land 'cause with the sound everything can grow all around. This one is garnbij and this one [oval with slanting stripes], each one has a different design for the water to come up. That's all the clan group for my mother's father [Pluto] Yidarrdaba. His clan now, that's the one makes the rain. They're boss for the water because its part of the Lightning Dreaming.) (Bill Harney 2015)





Yidumduma Bill Harney
Law Man 2012
 natural pigments, feathers and grass on wood
 136 x 23 x 10 cm
 courtesy Simon and Barbara Overland



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Jawarrin (Rockhole) 2013
 synthetic polymer paint on linen
 210 x 500 cm
 courtesy Centre for Carbon, Water
 and Food Faculty of Agriculture and
 Environment, University of Sydney

The work was one of two commissioned as part of traditional land management study undertaken with Bill Harney and the Wardaman by the University of Sydney's Institute of Sustainable Solutions. The painting refers to the major Wardaman narrative about the creation of freshwater and the general productivity of the land. The linear framing designs symbolise the waves made by Gorrondolmi when he flooded the country and are now often seen in the rippled rock formation around fresh waterholes. The ovals with small inner circles refer to a major rockhole created by the Diamond Doves at Golorog-ya in Bill's mothers' Wurrngleni country, after the floodwater subsided. Their dancing (ovals with dotted parallel lines) created the rain and the waterholes filled up with freshwater. The Spinifex Pigeon is shown dancing in the central top circle watching the water come up. The Gecko Lightning Brothers Jabarringgi and Yagjagbula at Yiwarlalay created the rain with the help of the Demdemen and Gamuyu Grasshopper People. They created the wind that distributed the rain clouds across the country while Jabarringgi flicked out his tongue to create lightning in concert with the Lightning Murruna (Goanna) People who made the forked lightning. After the rain fell, all the waterways were filled, nourishing the land and all its life forms.

- 1 Bill Harney 1999, p. 197
- 2 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), Katherine, 10 April 2015
- 3 The Wardaman were severely impacted by the intrusion onto their land; however, their resilience in adapting to changed circumstances was remarkable. Historian Lyn Riddett (1990, p. 75) observed that they maintained a continuing and forceful Aboriginal presence where customary Law, Indigenous languages and strong vestiges of traditional modes of production remained and continue to be evident today.
- 4 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), Katherine, 8 April 2015
- 5 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), 5 October 2015
- 6 Cairns and Harney 2003, p. 15
- 7 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), 5 October 2015
- 8 The number and even the names of the estates have varied over time because different criteria are often used to describe them. For example, Bill calls his mother's estate Wurrngleni, which incorporates the important rainmaking sites of Yirwalalay and Ngalanjerri previously used as alternative estate names by Franchesca Merlan and Julie Drew (Drew 2004, p. 85). In many but not all cases, as this suggests, the estate name is derived from one significant site, like Bill's Yabulyawan estate named after his primary Dreaming the Wedge-tailed Eagle.
- 9 Spencer 1914, p. 194, records totemic species including Bill's Lidi, Barramundi and Eagle Hawk along with the travelling Rainbow Serpent, Emu and Antipoline Kangaroo.
- 10 The Wardaman had varied success in regaining control of their lands from the 1970s onwards due to opposition from pastoralists and then the Northern Territory Government. However, they were vindicated with the granting of title to the Upper Daly River (Yubulyawan) claim in 1993.
- 11 The out-of-court settlement with the Northern Territory Government of the Innesvale Claim means there is no formal Land Claim document apart from an anthropologist's report submitted to the Northern Land Council
- 12 See Drew 2004 and the Yubulyawan Dreaming Project website by Paul Taylor.
- 13 *ibid.*, p. 197
- 14 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), Katherine, April 2015
- 15 *ibid.*
- 16 Harney 1999, p.82
- 17 *ibid.*, p. 85
- 18 Flood, 2004, p. 196. Ironically these dominating anthropomorphs have come to define the Wardaman–Victoria River District style although they are not that common in the rock art record. They are usually the central feature in a major art complex and can often be seen from a distance as visual markers for the site.
- 19 Cairns and Harney 2015, p. 125

- 20 The first researcher was Davidson (1936) followed by Mulvaney (1963), the Earthwatch Project headed by Josephine Flood (1988–1992) and continued by Bruno David's Monash University Wardaman Archaeology Project, plus David Lee's ongoing documentation work. Flood 1997, p. 302 provides the dates mentioned here.
- 21 Arndt 1962, p. 169
- 22 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), Katherine, April 2015
- 23 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), Katherine, 8 December 2015
- 24 Merlan (1989, p. 16) provides fascinating insight into the factors that influence Wardaman thinking about the meaning and significance for the rock art and what is a Dreaming image and what is not.
- 25 Julie Drew 2001, p. 27
- 26 Bill Harney 1999, p. 179
- 27 The iconic and conceptual similarities between the Nimji and Delamere rainmaking figures was commented on by George Chaloupka in 1979. Bill equates the Pee-wee Lawmaker with what he calls the lightning-maker, the Grassy-tailed Goanna (Ridge-tailed Monitor) Larraja. This agrees with information recorded by Wally Arndt who was told the Delamere Jabarringgi and Yagjagbula body decorations represented the colourful striped markings of the same Larraja.
- 28 Flood 2004, p. 196, says Muning is one of three major art sites that have been subject to excavation and intensive analysis by the Earthwatch team.
- 29 *ibid.*
- 30 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West, (unpublished), Katherine, 8 April 2015
- 31 Aboriginal stockmen in the Northern Territory were awarded equal pay with white workers in 1968 following the Wave Hill walk-off headed by Vincent Lingiari. Bill says he wasn't in favour of it at the time because he anticipated the consequences of people being thrown off country. It did, however, contribute to the land rights struggle that resulted in the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.
- 32 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), Katherine, 5 October 2015
- 33 *ibid.*
- 34 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), Katherine, 6 October 2015
- 35 *ibid.*
- 36 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), Katherine, 10 April 2015
- 37 *ibid.*
- 38 *ibid.*
- 39 See Cairns 2015, p. 158, for more information to the background of this work.
- 40 Bill Harney, interview with Margie West (unpublished), Katherine, 6 October 2015
- 41 *ibid.*

Yidumduma Bill Harney
*Egret Jarnarran and the
Grey Falcon Barnangga*
didjeridu 1995
natural pigments on wood
129 x 19 cm
courtesy Joc Schmiechen

Yidumduma Bill Harney
*Blue-tongue Lizard Yarlnga
and Taipan Yarrimanbu*
didjeridu 1995
natural pigments on wood
136 x 7 cm
courtesy Joc Schmiechen

Yidumduma Bill Harney
*Ballingballing (unidentified bird)
and Bush Rice Mangurlu*
didjeridu 1995
natural pigments on wood
137 x 7 cm
courtesy Joc Schmiechen



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Bush Food and Shooting Star Dreaming 1991
 natural pigments on canvas
 135 x 205 cm
 courtesy Art Mob and the artist

The painting illustrates the creation of many bush foods for the performance of Bandimi and Gujingga initiation ceremonies (2 circles on right). Walijabi the Black-headed Python, who carved out the rivers and gorges in Bill's country, is shown at the top left meeting King Brown Yirlorloban (right) at Gelidji where he sang over a long yam to make it poisonous. *He said, 'You put that yam in your mouth, that wayida and gawkawili here, you bite it hard and I'll sing'. And he sang that song called yarrirndi and all the milk off the yam went into his teeth and became poison.*

Meanwhile Marling the Shooting Star (wavy motif) discussed the Moon story (p. 23) and illuminated the activities of many other creatures such as Gawalyan the Echidna who was out looking for termites and their eggs. At Gijinggiyn-ya (Johnstone Waterhole) the Whimbrel Jarnbaljarnbal threw spears at Gawalyan, creating the spines all over his body. Diwana the White-breasted Sea Eagle is also depicted, dropping bush food such as native figs and *marldulg* (bush cucumbers) into the springs to lure fish to the surface. He also dropped off paddy melons along the black soil plains for the emus to eat. Yidumduma's mothers' Dreaming Golorog the Diamond Dove (white bird) and Godjogodjog the Bar-shouldered Dove created the waterhole at Golorog-ya (central circle) as well as other bush foods, including the swamp yam *walanung*, paddy melon *gaynbala*, the yam *wayida*, green plum *gulid* and the billy goat plum. *The Doves gathered up the bush foods in their coolamons and cooked them in a bush oven [top circle] in preparation for a ceremony. They're very clever, the Diamond Dove and Bar-shouldered Pigeon; they created the bush tucker. Birds are the creators for everything. They sang so they [plants] could regenerate; grow the food all the way. They're all the Lightning children of Nardi and Dungdung.* (Bill Harney 2015)



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Barragbarrag Kidney Fat Man 2002
natural pigments on canvas
119 x 113 cm
courtesy Hugh and Hilary Cairns

Barragbarrag is the Diver Duck (Little Pied Cormorant) who worked together with Willy Wagtail and made all the stone tools. They call him the Kidney Fat Man carrying his tools. He's dressed up like this on the front of his chest [striped body paint]. They're all the pointy flints they carry and they're stuck all around him [his head]. In the Creation time when he travels, see those two on either side [three leafed branches]. They're called warwark [turkey feather switch]. Warwark means he hypnotised people [waves the feathered switch in front of them] to go to sleep. And when they go to sleep he used the different tools he's got on his side: the cutting tools and stitching tools [spikes on either side of the striped body]. He takes the kidney fat out if he's a troublemaker. That scared everyone, frightened people not to get out of hand. If he takes the kidney fat off he stores it in the kidney fat bag [two shapes with squares]; no one can go in there and have a look because he's got all these little spikes folded up over it. They're likely to get a dig in the hand. That's called ginan the kidney fat bag.

See this? We call that a bulbul [bottom three leafed branches]. It's like the warwark. He drags it when he walking, to brush his footprints off so no one can see where he's travelled. And over here there's a place where they made a little ground oven. He's got a little flat round rock [bottom circles], he gets a lot of heat in it with a song ... when it's warm he gets the green algae; he makes people sit down on it in the Law place. Well, the steam comes out and goes onto his system to cure from the cuts [scarification]. The hot rock seals the cut. (Bill Harney 2015)



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Flying Fox Fire Dreaming 1993
natural pigments on linen
123 x 123 cm
courtesy Joc Schmiechen

The two circles [on right] are representing the ceremony place where everybody's dressed up. It's part of my mother's Dreaming from Wurrgheni, not far from the Lightning Brothers at Yingalarri Willeroo. It's the place where this Warlang Ghost Bat made the fire stick. It's my mother's Dreaming and my uncle's Dreaming.

The story is also connected to the Bat and Rainbow story from further east around Wadeye / Daly River. In Bill's version the Rainbow, who is actually the father of the Bat, woos Bat's wives, the Rainbow Lorikeet and the Red-winged Parrot at a big ceremony at Welejban. But their husband Ngalaminyimiyn the Bat followed them and started dancing, coming closer and closer while concealing a spear with his toes. He then hypnotised everyone by singing and fanning the special smoke over them. He then fatally speared the Rainbow who was lifted up by the floodwaters to become a bar of rock across the river. Bat chased his wives to the head of the Flora River where they managed to drown him and not far from here you can see the two wives on either side of Bat at a place called Twin Peaks at Gordol-ya. (Bill Harney 2015)



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Gorrondolmi 2013
synthetic polymer paint on linen
210 x 500 cm
courtesy Centre for Carbon, Water and Food
Faculty of Agriculture and Environment,
University of Sydney

This masterwork by Yidumduma was commissioned as part of traditional land management study undertaken by the University of Sydney’s Institute of Sustainable Solutions. Gorrondolmi the Rainbow Serpent is a pivotal Creation being for the Wardaman associated with the regenerative as well as the destructive forces of the wet season. This particular work relates to a rock painting of Gorrondolmi with two arms and ears at Yunumburrgu-ya shelter near the Lightning Brothers art site at Yingalarri.

The story related by Yidumduma includes different elements of the Wardaman Creation story (p. 77). It refers to Gorrondolmi’s creation of the sea and the water-dwelling children he had with the Frog Woman Dungdung. Dungdung is a Burrowing Frog and the circle below the Rainbow’s two arms indicates her dwelling underground. Dungdung also created many different Lightning People with her second husband, Nardi, and they both proceeded to teach the girls and boys about Wardaman Law and how to respect and regulate the forces of nature. The women performed their own ceremonies depicted by the various circular motifs under the tail of the Rainbow, while those at the top refer to the men’s ceremonies. Yidumduma also explains how young decorated initiates go into the rivers to pacify the Rainbow:

They make a didjeridu sound that represents the floodwater sound, to make the Rainbow happy and he gives him clearance to swim anytime. Didjeridu keeps the Rainbow happy because the floodwater sounds like the didjeridu ... Then the Falcon threw the spear to kill the Rainbow and the circle [above his neck] represents Rainbow’s head being cut off and all the power of the Rainbow to hold up the water, gone, and no more water on the land. His eyeball flew off to Rainbow Eye waterhole at Yimum-ya on the Flora River [circle above the neck]. This is why he only has one eye. The stripes are representing all the waves in the water as he’s travelling, moving his body up and down. This is the Gorrondolmi Dreaming caring for the land. The Sky Boss Nardi and Dungdung are happy: ‘You people must care for the country, care for it properly; don’t destroy it otherwise everything will go dry again’.
(Bill Harney 2015)



Yidumduma Bill Harney
The Devil Wurrguru who Steals Children 1991
natural pigments on cotton
120 x 119.5 cm
courtesy Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

This particular narrative about the child-stealing Wurrguru comes from Bill's Yabulyawan estate. In the *Land of the Lightning Brothers* film Bill performs the Mamundaigani group's version of this story disguised as the Devil with a decorated paperbark mask and body costume. The star in the painting refers to the one sent up by the Grey Falcon discussed elsewhere in the text.

On top is an initiation place where they initiated all the young ones and here is the punishment place ['U' shape] where they initiate the young ones who go through the ceremony. See that young fella? He's been initiated – see those maburn scars on his chest [white and yellow stripes]. Then old Wurrguru comes along with the dilly bag to pick him up and put him in the bag and he put Jalarrin the Centipede on top of him and the Echidna on top of him along with other bush food to hold him down, and he wanted to walk away with him. But old Marluga – he's a watchman called Marluga – saw Wurrguru taking the young boy away and putting him in his bag. So Marluga threw the spear to kill him because he's taken the young boy into the cave. But before he did that, the Crow reported him, 'Look out, Wurrguru coming to take that little boy!' But before he got there this bloke there speared him. Then the Shooting Star – the old man sang it, to go over and kill him. 'Wurrguru was coming to take that young one away, but I speared him.' This happened at Willeroo country. Well, you'll see this one at a few different places in Willeroo country at Yingalarri, or Mt Hogarth or Moon Dreaming [Gandawagja]. You see it all over, the image in the rock art. This one is at Delamere too, near the Lightning Brothers [art site]; it's back this side at a place called Jirribilinya. (Bill Harney 2015)



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Yi-neglen, Married 1999
natural pigments on canvas
150 x 100 cm
courtesy Alex Ariston

The Spirit Women Merrerrebena are found throughout the rock shelters of Wardaman estates. There are many different stories about Merrerrebena who are generally connected with sexuality and fertility.

This is Diliwud. Here he is walking around with his boomerang, little nulla nulla [club] and carrying them in his little coolamon. Anyway what happened, he took a liking to Merrerrebena and he went up and sat down and sang a song – a love magic song wuduju ... these white shapes are a song wuduju. Men use the wuduju and women use the jarrada [love charm]; they sing and man comes, and man sing the wuduju to make the women come. And the song went over and put her to sleep and she was dreaming about Diliwud, ‘Oh yeah, I want him!’ She got up, grabbed him by the hand, ‘I’m going with you’. He put his arm around her and they’re in love together. Today Merrerrebena is still living in the cave. They’re all over. Well, we tell the kids, ‘Look out, Merrerrebena in the cave, she might take you away’, and they get scared. They call them Merrerrebena here, Mungamunga Wave Hill way and other place. They’re the same. They’re in the rock paintings all over.



Merrerrebena and Dilawud at Gordol-ya. (Photo M West)



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Bumulgnara 2004
synthetic polymer paint on linen
130 x181cm
courtesy Mimi Arts and Crafts

When people passed away they buried them. But before they're buried they dig up the ground and take them over there with a wooden rail around it [platform] with paperbark underneath. Then they pick up all the bones and roll them in the paperbark and take them to a special place, the Bumulgnara place. They can use both paperbark or kurrajong bark. And every year they used to go down and visit the graveyard and soon as it was dried out they pull all the bone out and wrap them up and have a big ceremony. Then early in the morning before breaking dawn two people collect that paperbark with the bone and away they go, so nobody knows where they've taken it. There are many bones there in that Bumulgnara place. They take it and store it in the right spot and come back. Then everybody goes there and they start singing and when their voice goes out all these Bumulgnara, all these bones, start waking up. When they get close up to them they start to sing amongst those bones. Those bone people are singing too in a spiritual way. They're singing too, keeping them happy. The little faces are the dubuluj like a little dilly bag hanging there in the bone place.
(Bill Harney 2004)





Yidumduma Bill Harney
Bark Coffin Barnnga Jarlarla 2008
 synthetic polymer paint on bark
 200 x 45 x 50 cms
 courtesy Mimi Arts and Crafts

The Dreaming of the Barnnga Jalarla was designed in the creation time to store in the fork of a tree. You peel the bark of the kurrajong and tie it with string of either kapok or kurrajong. After several years the bark coffin is taken across to a cave and we have a ceremony in the cave. During that time they rub the coffin with red ochre and put white ochre on the coffin. The white represents the ghost in the cave. They put the black that represents the darkness of the cave. (Bill Harney 2015)

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Wurne (Bone) 2005
 bark, natural pigments, feathers and plant material
 200 x 154 cm
 courtesy Tasmanian Education Department

This artwork has special significance for Yidumduma who made it following the death of one of his grandsons. It refers to traditional Wardaman mortuary decoration made out of the chopped feathers of the Bush Turkey, one of Bill's Yabulyawan Dreamings.

This one here's a [body] decoration. Wurne is a painting on paperbark with a kurrajong frame laced together with kurrajong bush string. The paperbark is called dangirndi. The artwork has been decorated with bush straw wurlbun mixed with bush turkey feathers glued on with gum from the rosewood tree yerrerren. A spiritual figure Wurne [Bone People] stands in the middle of the bark with a headdress of bush turkey feathers. Wurne is a memorial sorry day painting. Wurne is original Dreamtime painting, like a bone, dead bone – that's the biggest Creator. It's wrapped around [applied to the body], but I just put it flat here for the picture. The Lightning [Ancestors] brought that. I did this for Leon's brother, one of the twins. I made it straight after [I made] the coffin [p.52]. (Bill Harney)





Yidumduma Bill Harney
Willy Wagtails, Jigirrija 2009
 natural pigments on wood
 80 x 7 x 3 cm and 78 x 8 x 3 cm
 courtesy Mimi Arts and Crafts

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Garang Bush Doctor 2002
 natural pigments on linen
 109 x 124cm
 courtesy Di and John England

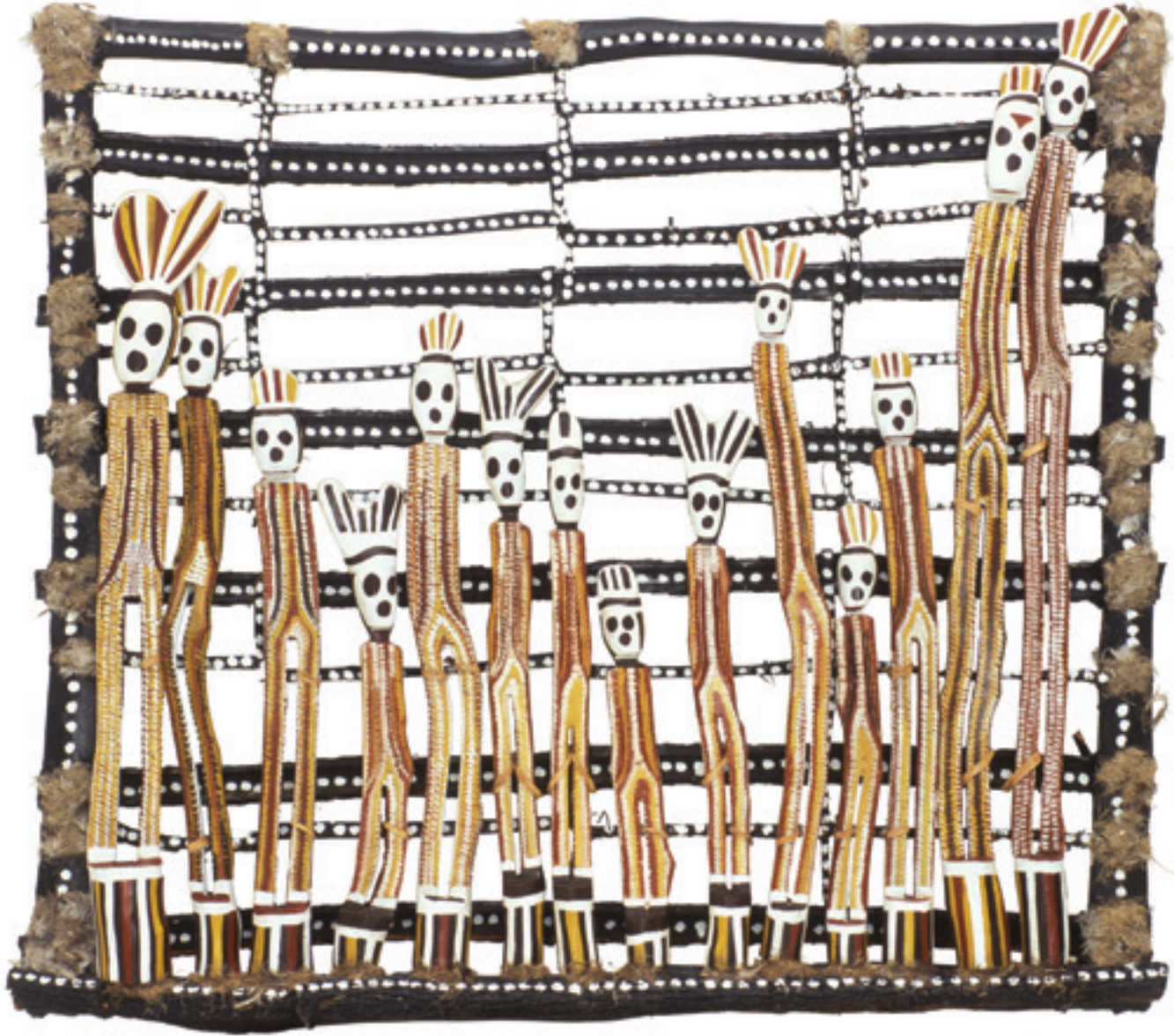
On the left you've got old Brolga making the sound, Freshwater Turtle, Water Goanna Judja, and Garang. This old doctor man goes around and always carries a coolamon [two bottom oval shapes] like this with all his different tools. It's got a strong spiritual song that Garang uses right through his body. He's like an electrician going around and fixing those people up and after that he gives them bush food. He always has that woomera, the spear, the boomerang and that's his dilly bag under his arm – this one is a medicine bag full of medicine. This one again [round black shapes] it's designed to hold the medicine inside and the song. The medicine bag under his arm [on left] it's different gilirringa [yellow ochre]; it's medicine. He pulls all the different yucky stuff, like fluid: green one, poison one [pus] he pulls that one out; reddish colour, green one mixed with blood, he pulls that out; and when the white one comes out clean then he's fixed. This [cross-hatching] tells you its poisonous [yellow stripe], this is still poisonous [red stripes] and this comes good [white stripe]. He's got a song in there that brings everything out like a sweat. Yiwaneh is the shape of the dilly bag he carries with two sticks; it's like a medicine bag that pulls everything out in a spiritual way. He's got medicine from all different trees; he puts it together in a spiritual way; he sinks it into the mind like giving someone a needle. It relieves your pain. (Bill Harney 2015)



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Lirringining Grasshopper Man 2007
bark, natural pigment, vegetable fibre and feathers on wood
142 x 7 x 128 cm
courtesy Stephen Roseman and Rosa Saladino

The Lidi Grasshopper is one of Bill's main Dreamings from his Yabulyawan clan estate. Grasshoppers emerge during the wet season and are intimately connected to the Lightning Dreaming that features prominently in his narratives. The carvings refer directly to the paintings at Garnawala, a 32-metre-long gallery with one of the largest compositions in Wardaman country.

This is the Lirringining People, the Grasshopper People. They are the Grasshopper people from the Dreaming time, what other people might call the Creation time. They're all still around today helping, guiding, you know. In the Dreamtime they travel around in groups doing ceremony, dancing and weaving and they used the straw of the grass to make things. They taught people decoration for the body and really special one for the headdress. They're all Wardaman but the way they wear the headdress, that tells you which different community [estate group], which totem, which people, but they're all Wardaman. [Left to right] That's our totem [Yabulyawan] clan, it's a heart-shaped one, that's a Grasshopper one, underneath there's Eagle Hawk Dreaming for us again, all Cheeky Yam Dreaming for all us mob again. That's Muy Muy [clan], Willeroo mob representing Butcher Bird, this one representing Long-tailed Pheasant and this one representing clap stick, and we stop there with a different mob. Then this one is Lightning [Wurrghleni clan] and this one represents Lightning's wife. This one again, women's ceremony place for Lightning Gananda, this one again White Cockatoo Dreaming – they have a yellow crest – and this one here Diamond Dove, this one's the lone Peaceful Dove, that one there is Bar-shouldered Pigeon and this one is Willy Wagtail carrying all his stone knives on his head. That's all the different headdresses, see. It's is part of the Grasshopper Dreaming when the little crawling Grasshoppers were travelling in a group singing, dancing, naming the country, plants and soil and all the different pigment – white, red and yellow and black – naming decorations and costumes of straw and grass for body painting in country. This story belongs to Wardaman country, Wardaman people. (Bill Harney 2015)





Wurlbun-ya Site with the Sand Goanna painted in textured body paint meeting with various Grasshopper people to undertake a Rain-making Ceremony. The small red figures are the Demdeman ‘clapping’ grasshoppers. (Photo M West)

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Lightning Law Man 2005
 synthetic polymer paint on canvas
 120 x 60 cm
 courtesy Rosalind Cairns

The painting’s imagery is based on a rock painting at Wurlbun-ya, named after the textured feather body decoration used in important Wardaman ceremonies.

That’s [the rock painting] at Mt Hogarth at a place called Wurlbun-ya. This is a goanna and he’s got the body decoration wurlbun, made with the straw and then [mixed with] white pigment. And then Cormorant, we call him Barragbarrag, came along and sang the song, and there’s the Grasshopper People [figure with headdress] called Lidi. Over here old Brolga, we see him too. He’s called Bornorron. They all got together for a ceremony. They said, ‘We’ll make a sound and bring everyone in to do this dance’, and they danced there at a place called Wurlbun-ya. It’s in Wardaman country, my clan country.

Lidi is my Dreaming connected to Lightning. That Lidi were human first, walking around in the country early part, and he’s the one who invented all the grass. All those little weeds, you see all those little branches? It’s the weeds growing all around to make it stable, keep the soil happy from soil erosion. That little bird [bottom left] is called Bulagaw Nankeen Night Heron and over there [bottom right] it’s a little water goanna that lives also in the water. (Bill Harney 2015)





Yidumduma Bill Harney
Wune (Bone) Law Man 2012
 natural pigments, feathers and vegetable fibre on wood
 187 x 22 x 21 cm
 courtesy Heather Milton and Kevin Rennie

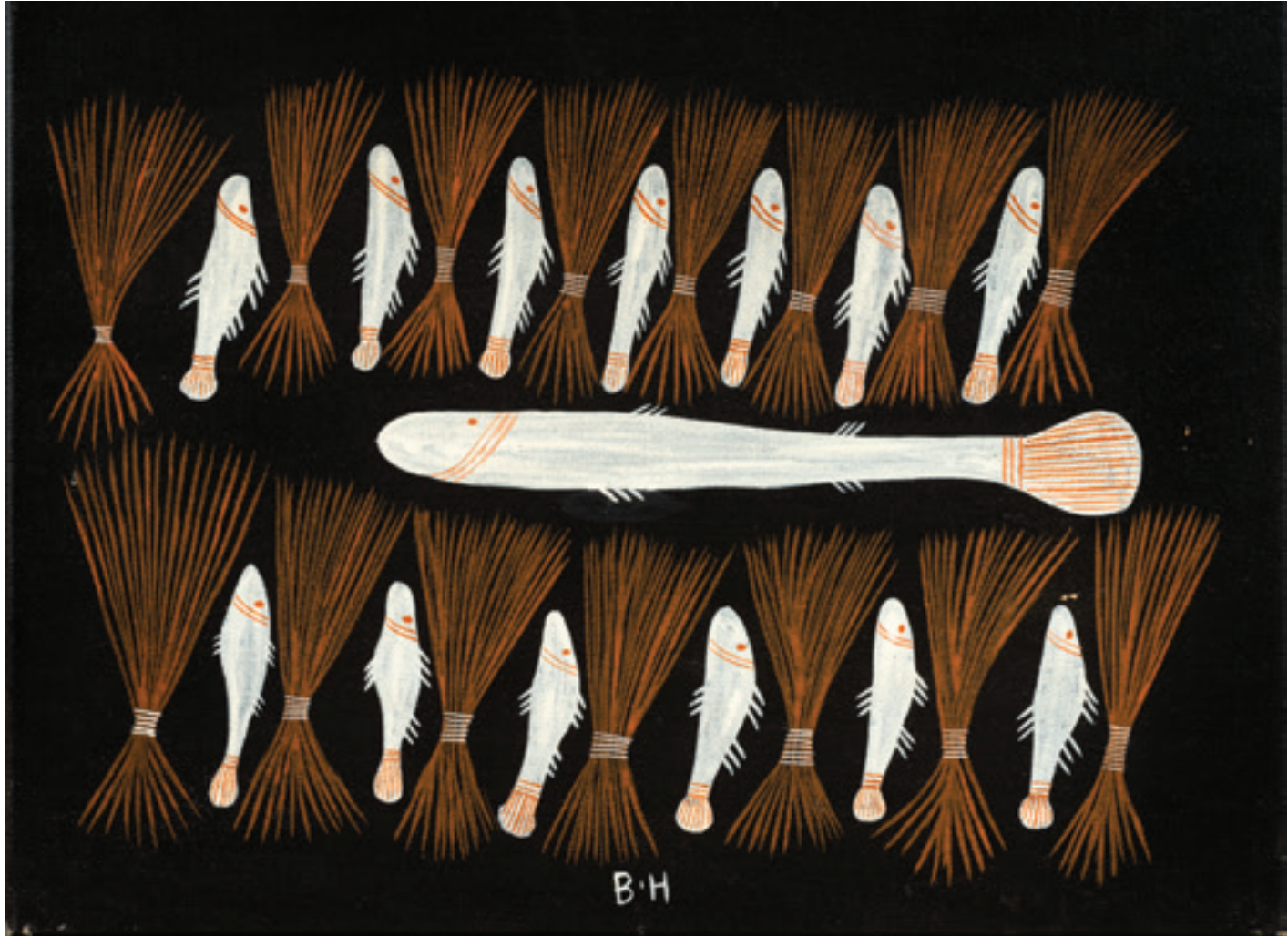
Wune [Bone] is the highest big Lawman who came along in the Creation time. A proper big boss man who holds the Law. That forehead mark, it must be a headband, called garlamband and underneath is gilirringa, the yellow ochre to represent when it rains. That represents the rainbow, the blue and yellow and reddish colour that's representing the water coming into the country. He's got a nose but no mouth. They go silent wurdum, talking is with finger talk [sign language]: come here, walk, sleep, get up, where, over there and all that. (Bill Harney 2015)

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Warling, Young Initiate 2012
 natural pigments and feathers on wood
 108 x 16 x 10 cm
 courtesy Ross Bonthorne

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Warranggin (Ceremonial) Law Man 2012
 natural pigments and feathers on wood
 137 x 14 x 10 cm
 courtesy Ross Bonthorne

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Gujingga (Law Man) 2012
 natural pigments and feathers on wood
 130 x 16 x 10 cm
 courtesy Ross Bonthorne





Yidumduma Bill Harney
Wolon 2003
 natural pigments on canvas
 45 x 65 cm
 courtesy Mark Townsend

Wolon [Grass] Dreaming was made by the Grasshopper [Lidi]. He traded him to the fish to keep him in the water. The grass sang a song and made the green weed that grows inside [the water] and he told the fish, 'That's your home, that's where you'll sleep'. And the grasshopper made the grass so people could use it for shelter and their own food and everyone used it for decoration [textured body painting]. So you get the Grasshopper Dreaming today. You get that grass, wrap it up, make a little tunnel and put a little bone in there and leave it overnight. Early in the morning you pick up the grass and throw it [onto the bank], should get big fish, crayfish all inside. We make it from taller grass; the biggest one we make from the gamanggirr. It's like a cane grass. You get the strap [for binding] from the kurrajong, and you wrap around it [the grass bundle] and it never breaks. You can get the mullet, all sorts. They all go into the grass [trap]. You get a crayfish in there too; it goes into the net and goes to sleep. (Bill Harney 2015)



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Detention Home 2003
 natural pigments on linen
 50 x 100 cm
 courtesy David and Heather Rogers

This was the first of a series Yidumduma has done on Wardaman ceremonial Law and its equivalence to the Western legal system in terms of instruction and punishment meted out to wrongdoers.

This is for naughty boys who get out of hand. They get hauled up and served there and rigged up [dressed] – to show he's on detention with the hair belt warliwun [top right circular shape]. They put it around their waist and then they give him the forehead band [middle right] called galambang and daman is an armband, then warburr the loincloth [bottom right]. The Law is made by the Emu and Kangaroo People [footprints bottom centre]. Yunumburrugu is the Red-backed Kangaroo who made the Law. He said, 'These boys got into trouble, must be punished for breaking the Law'. They sit down beneath the bough shelter ['H' shape, top centre] and then they go across to another shelter [to the left] and under that they give him initiation; they give him marking [scarification] on the chest, in the belly and the shoulder [multiple 'U' shapes]. Then the old lady one underneath [bottom left circle] is giving the young ladies a serve for being a naughty girl getting out of hand. She also gets all the initiation [marking]. 'If you get out of hand you'll get a spear in the leg.' That's what they said. It's like a little harpoon, like a spear point [oblong shape bottom centre] it digs into the leg. (Bill Harney)

Bill Yidumduma Harney
Bush School 2007
natural pigments on canvas
120 x 190 cm
courtesy Paul Taylor

This is one of a series Yidumduma has painted about Wardaman Law that was founded by the major Creation beings Gorrondolmi, Nardi and Dungdung. It depicts children sitting in four different camps (orange circles). The emu print shapes symbolise the message sticks calling them to the initiation ground, as well as the ancestral Emu Gumurrinji, who is an important song man. The central motif is the main camp with the young men in the middle, surrounded by the Elders (red shapes) who are all encircled by a hair belt *warliwun* to denote their initiation status. The crossed boomerangs above signify the teaching of ceremonial songs and the small background crescent shapes represent the initiation scars and the scarification knives used to create them.

This circle [bottom left] and two round circles [bottom and top right] are [Elders] telling the young ones to sit still and listen to the story. Another round one [top left circle] has different footprints of the Lidi Grasshoppers at a place called Butbutjar. Other middle aged people all sitting around in the circle and they're telling the young ones, 'We're going to sing the song and you'll dance, stampeding [stamping the feet]'. And after stampeding they left all the marks behind, all the footprints in there [marks inside the circles]. They put all the young ones all around with the two teachers, Law man – those two there in the middle, they're called yijad, which means very big. And those two there [signify] you must listen to the two Laws, the men and women Laws. Then they all go down to the swimming hole [shape with inner stripes]; after the dance ceremony they all have a swim. But there's a boundary in between so they never get near to one another, they stay apart ... the old people [white shape far right] that's the Wurne [Bone] People who make this Law and this Law must stand to teach the young ones, all young girls on one side, young boys on the other. You mustn't break the Law ... this [instruction] also includes all the travelling song lines.
(Bill Harney 2015)





The Yimulun cave at Dubulya where initiates like Bill were once secluded during ceremonies. (Photo M West)

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Yimulun 2006
 synthetic polymer paint on canvas
 130 x 285 cm
 courtesy Hugh and Hilary Cairns
 (photo courtesy Ann Cairns)

Yimulun is one of a number of Yidumduma’s symbolic paintings about both traditional men’s Law Yimulun and women’s Law Murdu that usually precedes their participation in initiation rituals. Yidumduma describes Yimulun as including the blindfolding of women with a special type of head cover as the sacred bullroarer is swung. The sound (of the Emu Ancestor Gumurrinji) summons initiates to the ceremonial ground and when it stops the mothers of the male initiates sing out and release their sons into what he calls the ‘bush university’. The painting alludes to the ritual instruction that conveys and enforces the basic tenets of Wardaman society including marriage and kinship regulations. *It’s got everything in it ... the Spirituals, all the discipline, people, the lot! Moon’s Law, Emu’s – but you can’t see them except in your mind!*

The circles and surrounding ‘U’ shapes indicate men and women sitting in their respective ceremonial camps. The important ritual decorations worn by the men and women are illustrated, such as the men’s hair belt warliwun, the conical bag ginan, which indicates the need for silence, the hair-string neck ornament with the quartz pendant and the women’s pubic apron. Other items of material culture include scarification tools and scars (background ‘U’ shapes), clap sticks and disciplinary weapons including punishment spears, the spiked club and the three-pronged bindjawindja, which according to Yidumduma can be sung to fly across and strike a victim down. Dungdung moulded the women’s Law out of a ball of soft mud and Nardi and Rainbow moulded theirs for the men. They sang over the mud till it became extremely hard and they put the two together – to create the strong Law. *That’s the two Lorrda, that’s what makes the Law. That’s the Yimulun power now, those two little balls they hold the power and if you hit them like this and they break, that’s breaking the Law. If they don’t break that’s the proper strength Law!* (Bill Harney 2015)





Yidumduma Bill Harney
Yibiyan (Elder) 2009
 natural pigments on wood
 188 x 11 x 4 cm high
 courtesy Mimi Arts and Crafts

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Demdemen Grasshopper 2009
 natural pigments on wood
 134 x 7 x 4 cm
 courtesy Godinyamayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre



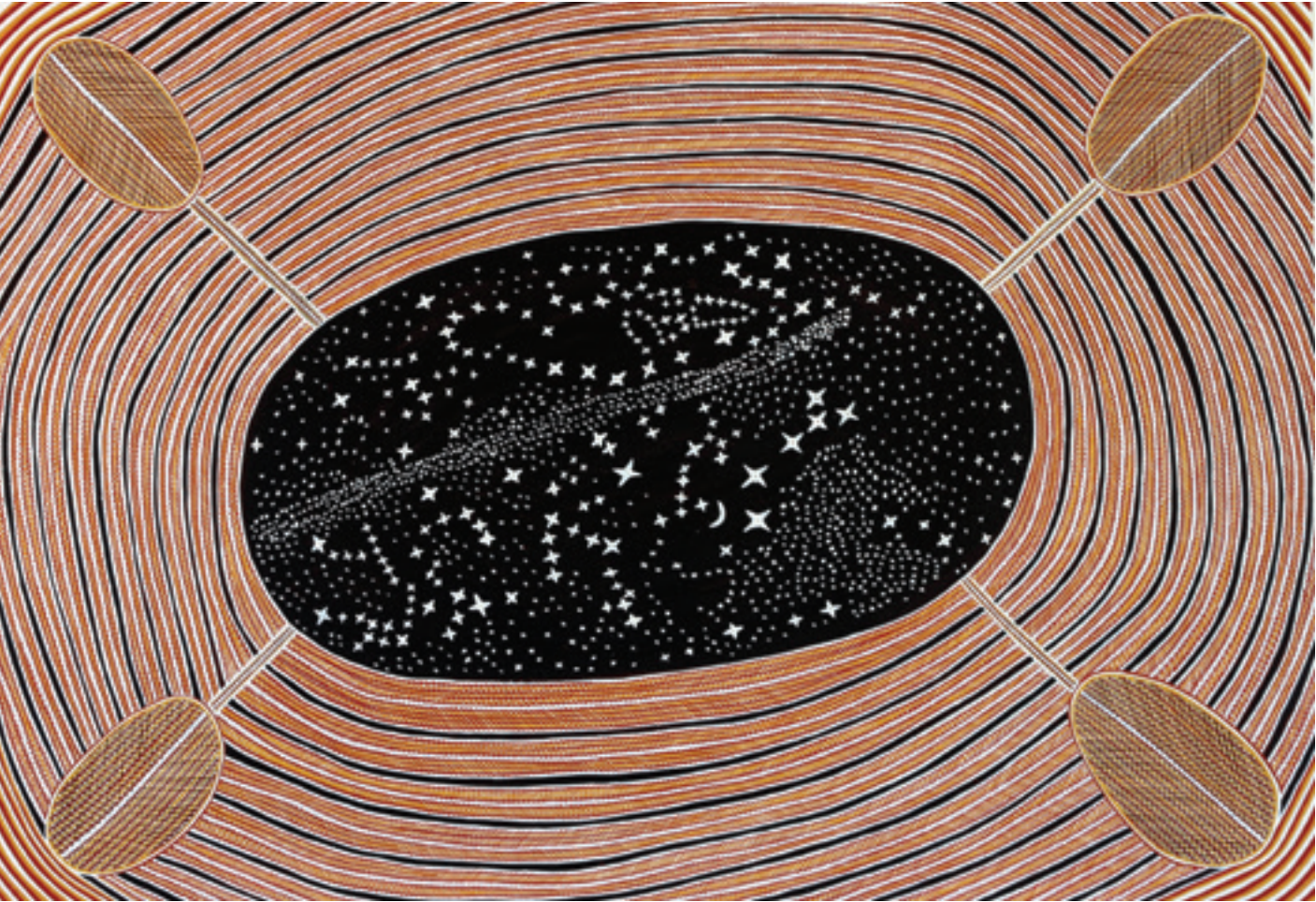
Yidumduma Bill Harney
Yimulun 2009
 synthetic polymer paint on canvas
 140 x 290 cm
 courtesy Bond University, Gold Coast
 (photo courtesy Susan McCartie)

This *Yimulun* work is similar to the one previously painted in 2006 and was commissioned by the Law Faculty of Bond University in celebration of the university's 20th anniversary.

Yidumduma Bill Harney
Wume Night Sky 2001
natural pigments on canvas
127 x 180 cm
courtesy Hugh and Hilary Cairns

In Wardaman cosmology Nardi the Sky Ancestor was one of the major progenitors and in the final act of Creation, when the Dog's ear was cut, all the earthly Ancestral Beings flew up into the heavens to become stars.

Wolon is the grass all around the edges [wavy lines]. The grass is from Flora River, all around; that's where the Dreaming is, all the Grasshopper People. Then that's north, west, south, east; that's the balance, all the sky in the top of the roof, all the round shapes [in the opposite corners]. That's the balance, holds all the earth in the balance. And that's all the star you can see there: Old Emu, Southern Cross there and the Ground Oven. The clouds should be there, Milky Way and Crocodile there. You got women's ceremony Bandimi, then you got Morning Star, Evening Star, Southern Cross, Mardborronggo the big Dog when he rose, then you've got the Little Pointer, the Saucepan. Nadir he's there right in the middle; Nardi and Dungdung are the Two Pointers. They're [Ancestral Beings] all connected together from the bottom [earth] up to the top [sky]. Old Dungdung was married to Nardi the Sky Boss so that's why they're [in the sky] and also Dungdung still the Earth Boss, was with the Rainbow underground. Bonin the Milky Way was made by Nardi, and Nardi made a cloud of smoke gabarru like a fog so he could walk across so nobody could see him walking. That's all his family; they were human, Star People were the human. When they became still [when the boy cut the Dog's ear] the people who were walking around and their shadow went in there [became rock paintings] and all these Star People went up there [into the sky] when everything became still. They stop and they're still there today. (Bill Harney 2015)



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Song lines 2015
natural pigments on linen
203 x 132 cm
courtesy Art Mob and the artist

Yidumduma conveys the complex creative journeys of important Ancestral beings through a stylised set of animal tracks and artefacts that are also frequently found in the rock art. Here he includes some of the key animals involved in the major Creation narrative: the Antilopine (Red-backed) Kangaroos (two left and circles) along with the Emu, Kangaroos and Birds (centre panel), who performed the male Gujingga and female Bandimi ceremonies respectively. The right-hand circles represent the Pied Butcher Bird and the Pheasant Coucal who performed the public Wanggar ceremony where everyone joins in together.

This song line on the left-hand side is Gujingga, made by the Red-backed Kangaroo in the Creation time. He travelled with the song, zigzagged all over, naming all the country. Then on your left-hand side [two left-hand circles] they [male and female Kangaroo] travelled together, far apart, say kilometres apart. Women's Dreaming went across too, that's called Bandimi ... one was called Yunumburrgu [male] the other [female] was called Kunjalbin ... Red Kangaroo came from Dorisvale way ... they started off being a Wagaman – he was a didjeridu player and when they came to Wardaman and changed name, 'now we're Wardaman' ... they started from the first beginning of the Wardaman boundary from the head of the Flora called Gerdan and Wujarr estate and then on the left hand on the Jiggaigarn estate. While they were travelling they had the headdress called gumurdunga and ginan, little dilly bag over the neck. They walk along, put it down and name it, like you're pegging something like a surveyor. This is flood plain, this is high mount, this is a low mount, open plain, a spring, a little swamp, and all that, they put it on ... All these little footprints [centre top] you see, that's all the Little (Bush Stone) Curlew come across making sound all the way singing in the night. Curlew, called Wiliwuga, a little bird you can hear him singing all night. That's a song line put together in place from the Creation time.

Also these two here [two right-hand circles], here it's a normal song Wanggar ... Jorlbormman was a singer who created the didjeridu, who's blown by the Long-tailed Pheasant, and Butcher Bird was singing [with clap sticks], and the sound of the didjeridu was making happiness to the country and the clap stick from the Butcher Bird made happiness to the night sky, the land and all that ... and the little Wallaby was taking the road, travelling together with the Emu. Little Grass (Agile) Wallaby called Garndarrin and Spinifex (Rock) Wallaby called Dugurlgurl and the little bigger Kangaroo called Galumanggan [Nail-tailed Kangaroo] ... Now the female [Kangaroo] came along with the Bandimi women's song, travelled across the country and made it happy [regenerated]



Engraved emu, kangaroo, bird and human tracks at Gandawagja in Jiggaigarn estate. (Photo M West)

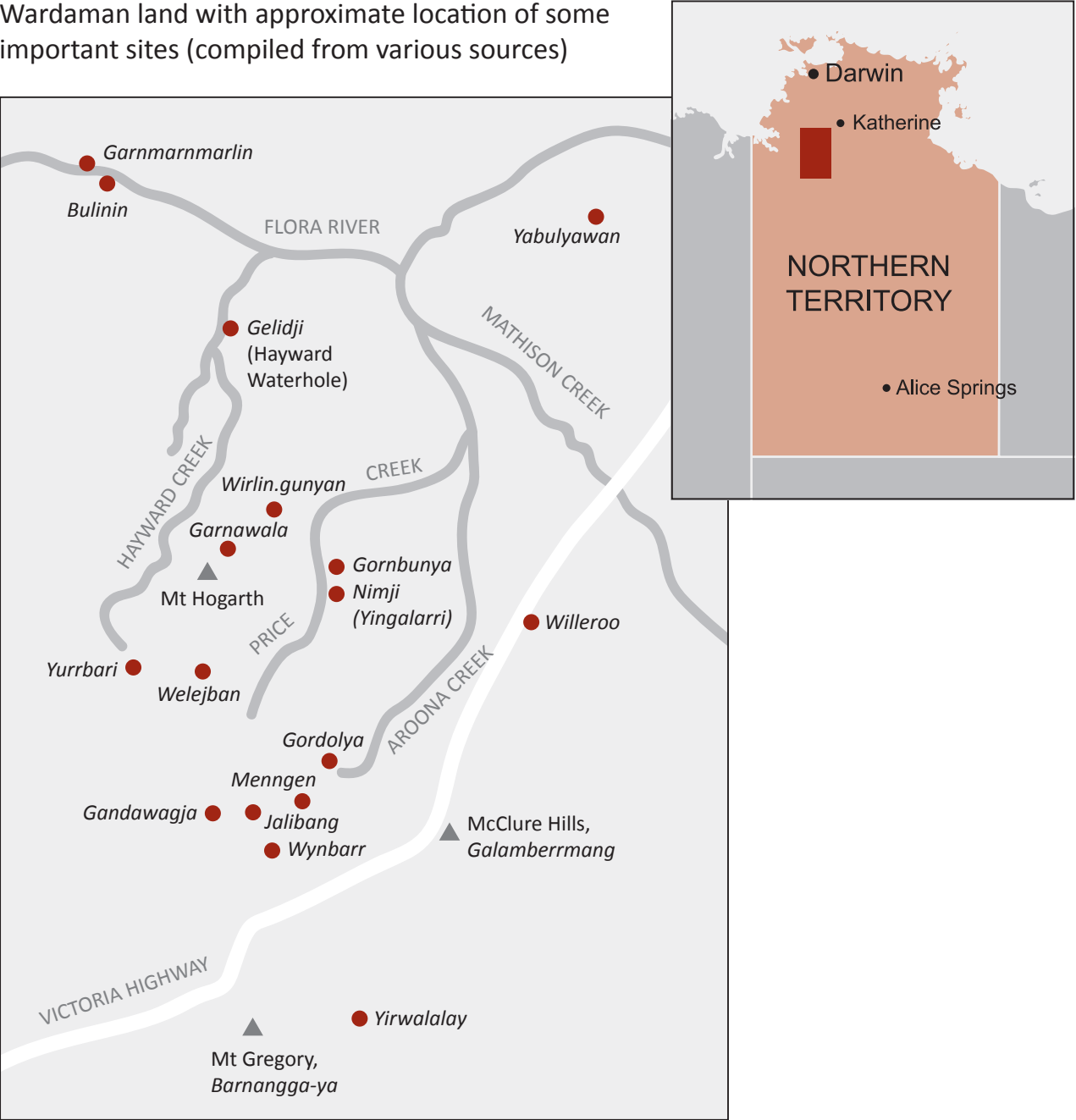
the country. The little Birds, all the little Kangaroos, the Grass Wallaby, the Kangaroo Dugurlgurl and the Gumirrinji old Emu were making a sound all the way. They're making the sound to match with the women's sound.

It's normal [public] song and ceremony called Wanggar Warranggin. Both sides of the party made a wonderful sound. The didjeridu and clap stick was on this side and the [male] Kangaroo's boomerang and the sound was going that side [Gujingga], and Kangaroo women with their clap sticks [Bandimi] shouting a lot, making a lot of sound again. They were carrying small coolamons for their stone tools and wearing neck bags darmen, initiation hair-string belts warliwun and forehead bands garlangband. They were given scarification marks to show they were going through the Law ... Then they come up to here now and [Yunumburrgu] said, 'This is where we've got to store all the ceremony and song here now in this boundary of Wardaman land, put it together and bury it here. Leave this for people to hear, to pick up and pass on to generations' ... we got others like Mudbara people from the eastern side, they can take over all the song line now. This is as far as the Wardaman come. The boundary's at Dry River, it's where the Wardaman land finishes. (Bill Harney 2015)



Map

Wardaman land with approximate location of some important sites (compiled from various sources)



Appendix A
Estates and their Dreamings

<p>Barnangga</p> <p>Barnangga Grey Falcon, Garrgayny Brown Falcon, Ginydan Stone-tipped Spear, Marling Shooting Star and Falling Star, Warrija Freshwater Crocodile, Jandal Striped Skink, Garnangarrin Frill-necked Lizard, Garramandan Ta-ta Dragon, Lilmurlilmum Firefly / Glow Beetle</p>	<p>Jiggaigarn</p> <p>Mardborronggo Dog, Gandawag Moon (shared), Goduru Fighting Stick, Jalmin Clay, Jirrdith Quail, Bandimi Ceremony, Murdu (Women’s Law Ceremony), Lirdbirdbi Bloodwood Tree, Dolyan Sugarleaf Bloodwood Tree, Bininyin Sandpaper-leaf Tree</p>
<p>Beregumaya</p> <p>Ngarrajananggu Dingo, Galina Silver Wattle (Mimosa), Yongordin White Clay/Soil, Jarrulu / Ngardan Termite Mound, Gulinyin Spirit People who live in jungle, Gelerrnga Gutta-percha / Fish Poison Tree</p>	<p>Mumendadguni</p> <p>Gornbun Whistling Kite, Mardird Black Kite, Gulirrida Peewee, Gurndirndin Ibis, Dirriyn Jabiru, Bonorong Brolga, Dering Crane, Janaran Egret, Bulagaw Heron, Gorrgorrmann Kookaburra, Mordan Swamp Yam, Gulbinji Silver-leafed Paperbark Tree, Mungalu Wild Rice, Gardi Lily, Jalgi Lily Bulb, Gilirringa Yellow Ochre, Gamanyjin Cane Grass</p>
<p>Dilinya</p> <p>Gumurrinji Emu, Mullada Freshwater Crab, Galyji White Clay, Bern.gijin Black Soil Plain, Mirrijbuj Yam, Garnawunin Lancewood, Jorijjorij Great Bowerbird, Wirlin Soap Tree, Manamurran Emu Berry, White-browed Tree Creeper</p>	<p>Muy Muy</p> <p>Girribug Pheasant Coucal, Jolborrmann Butcher Bird, Garnbidj Clap Stick, Marlugbarr Didjeridu, Gulirrida Peewee (also Mumendadguni), Wayida Bush Potato, Bawujin Watery Yam, Mardug Bush Cucumber, Gaynbala Paddy Melon, Wumorrong Black Pigment, Dangirndi Paperbark Tree, Giliwinin Tea Tree, Warlgingin Bush Fly, Yarrimanbu Taipan, Yirlorloban King Brown Snake, Gornorrong Long-necked Turtle, Dilji River Rush</p>
<p>Giliyn Giliyn (Belerinyin/Langgai)</p> <p>Wurrin Birthing Place, Gandwag Moon (shared), Murrarda Freshwater Crabs, Gunudjarri Olive Python, Gengen Lizard, Jandal Ground Skink, Lunggura Blue-tongue Lizard, Dimalan River Gum, Belleren Ghost Gum (fine leafed), Warrija Freshwater Crocodile, Warman Short-eared Wallaby</p>	

Wu-Nuajawung

Bagabaga Conkerberry, Warrag Black Catfish, Worong Perch, Lawarra Archer Fish, Wudba Nail Fish, Bambidi Freshwater Turtle, Guwarlambarla Short-necked Turtle, Garndarrin Agile Wallaby, Garlirlin Mosquito, Deede Nit, Mabiling Nail-tailed Wallaby, Nguwamin Euro, Yirrgulu Riverine Kangaroo, Yunumburrgu Antilopine (Red-backed) Kangaroo male, Garndalwu Plains Kangaroo

Wujarr

Guyarru Barking Owl, Judiyina Tawny Frogmouth, Fish Trap, Barragbarrag Pied Cormorant, Yurrbari where Rainbow Stood Up, Ginydan Quartzite (for making flints), Bin.Gan Bream sp., Ballabala Bony Bream, Bunggurrun Woollybutt, Wullurun Freshwater Mangrove Tree, Mordon Swamp Yam, Dorridorrid Banded Grunter

Wurooloola (Mooloola)

Yimulyurra Budgerigar, Woyolong Whip Snake, Girlibi Bush Banana, Gajawurla Headdress, Liwin Red Ochre, Tree Sugarbag, Jerrjerrman Northern Fantail, Wirriwuna Cockatiel, Mandarraji Dragon Lizard, Burariman Blue-tongue Lizard, Buran Boomerang, Wiliwuga Curlew, Bulwaddi Tree, Bandarlan Sugarleaf, Bilawa Red Meat Ant, Gijagija Black Bull Ant

Wurrgleni (Yiwarlalay/Ngalanjerri)

Warlang Ghost Bat, Judja Water Monitor, Gorrondolmi Rainbow Serpent, Jabarringgi and Yagjagbula Lightning Brothers, Munin Freshwater Cod, Bongorr Spotted Tree Goanna, Golorog Diamond Dove and Peaceful Dove, Menngen White Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Ngalaminyimiyn Bat, Ganben Flying Fox, Gawalyan Echidna, Nilngman Gouldian Finch, Bambidi Red-faced Turtle, Jarnbaljarnbal Whimbrel, Spinifex, Golorog-Ya Rockhole Doves Created, Jila Spring, Bondoyorrton River Pandanus, Murrujunma Ornate Burrowing Sand Frog, Gulwayin Tadpole , Nardi Sky Ancestor, Merrerrebena and Diliwud Spirit People, Warning Golden Tree Snake, Jelin Freshwater Prawn, Gorlongongon Blue Bottle Fly, Nadbor Dark Honey, Yarramalgor Clear Honey

Yabulyawan

Bulyan Eagle Hawk, Wolon Grass, Dangan Algae, Lidi Grasshopper, Lirrmingingining Baby Lightnings, Galambunga Black and White Catfish, Mardbiyn Barramundi, Megerrman Long Yam, Garnmarnmarlin Cheeky Yam, Magulu Woolly Yam, Ganbarlarla Blue-crested Pigeon, Buda Black Plumb, Julamarran White Currant, Galidji (Haywood Waterhole) Flat Stone (Grindstone), Walijabi Black-headed Python, Jigirrija Willy Wagtail, Galyji White Ochre, Wakwak Crow, Belerren White Gum, Guwarlambarla Short-necked Turtle, Juwarin Long Tom, Dangirndi Paperbark, Liwarrga Ground Sugarbag (Honey), Jegban Bush Turkey, Yunumburrgu Antilopline Kangaroo, Warliwun Hair Belt, Daman Armband, Warlburr Loincloth, Headband Galambang

Appendix B
Wardaman Creation Story

In the past this country didn’t have any trees, any rock or grass, hills, just an open flood plain – bare land all over. There were three people first in the country: one we call Nardi, the other one is Dungdung the Frog Lady, then old Rainbow Gorrondolmi who made the water in the sea. While he was floating around in the water old Frog Lady Dungdung, mother of the earth, she made the earth called gonjon. She came out of the gonjon through luwun – big hole where she was based – walked out and saw Gorrondolmi. She went across and sat down and talked to old Rainbow. ‘Where do you come from?’ ‘I come from outside, from the earth.’ ‘Oh well,’ said Dungdung, and they talked and they took a liking to one another and got married up. After they got married up, they had many children all underwater – all the Fish People, the Turtle People, Crayfish People, Crocodile People; everything under the water. All those animals in the water, they’re our people. Then old Dungdung walked inland in the dry land and was sitting down when Nardi saw her. So Nardi came down [from the sky] and landed beside her, winding himself down on the spider’s web and sat down beside Dungdung. She asked, ‘Where you come from?’ and he said, ‘I come from the top, from the wume sky’. Nardi asked Dungdung, ‘Where you come from?’ ‘I come from the earth, dirt, from the cave.’ ‘Well, all right!’ And they sat down talking about it and they took a liking to each other again.

Then Dungdung got married up to Nardi, so she had two husbands: Rainbow in the water and Nardi in the dry land. They had many kids. They were the Lightning People who struck the country and when they grew up Dungdung said, ‘We’ll make three Laws. Men’s strong song and ceremonial Law, no woman go there, and we’ll make strong women’s Law, no men come there, and we’ll make normal Law, everyone can come together and everyone happy. We’ll sing and dance together. We’ll make all sorts of ceremonies and name it’. Nardi said the same. Then they decide to make some ochre. They gathered all different ochre and sang it and it became the red pigment and they sang it to become white ochre and sang it again to become yellow ochre and morrong, the black of a tree – we can sing the bark of the tree to make black mud. Dungdung took all the girls out and teach them all the women’s ceremony and Nardi took all the male ones out and taught them to make all the different [ceremonial] designs, all the different tools. Nardi was teaching Willy Wagtail how to make stone spears, stone axes and things like that from the earth and old Dungdung was doing the same thing, making all these little nulla nullas [clubs], coolamons [dishes] with mud again, but they sang it to become hard. Then they started singing and dancing – they started with two separate lots, Dungdung singing and dancing with young ones.

They were happy with all the young ladies and Nardi was at the other end with the young boys singing and dancing. They were all happy travelling along separate – women one side, men on the other. Then they all came together for the public song [ceremony] called Warranggin. Warranggin’s got a didjeridu. All happiness, they all come together; that’s a public one. Then some of the young ones went on ahead. Girribug Long-tailed Pheasant went ahead to make the didjeridu out of mud and was blowing it. Old Butcher Bird went ahead and made the clap stick called garnbij out of the mud and Peewee designed it, the dance for all the Wangga song. Then the Red-backed Kangaroo People designed the Gujingga song and the other lot we call Biyawiyag the Cuckoo they decided, the female one, they decide to make all the women’s song called Bandimi separate way from the male. Well, we’ve got to make another song all happy to come together, for men, women and kid to come together called the Warranggin song. They made all that; they went ahead all singing and dancing. Everybody had their Dreaming; they decided during that time they invented all the different Dreaming for each one. They painted the name of the different countries what we have all around here including the rock, the sand, the earth, different coloured soil. ‘It’s a tradition – the name for that is all of your Dreaming for each one of you.’ That’s what they said. They were teaching all of the young ones how to recognise their Dreamings. ‘You can paint your own Dreaming. You can’t steal another Dreaming, it’s against the law; you’ll get into trouble.’ Anyway they went ahead, put on the decoration. The girls went ahead with the decoration for Bandimi. With the Gujingga song they made the different decoration on their body. They made the costume on all around. The feathered thing with the straw [fibre-based body decoration] they made after but before then everything was sacred. The normal white pigment [ochre-painted

design] they used for normal song on the didjeridu [Wangga]. They were doing dancing men and women; they were all dancing happy together.

Everybody was shouting out how they were the best dancers in the country, making a lot of noise and Rainbow could hear them from the bottom and got up from the middle of the sea and he could see many people walking around inland. He went over to see Dungdung and he comes up straight, told Dungdung, ‘Look, why you doing this, having all these children inland? Everybody’s supposed to be underwater’. Dungdung said, ‘No! We’ve got to have two separate lots: one lot in the water and one inland’. But Rainbow reckoned, ‘No! I want everybody underwater. I’m going to bring the water across’. And he goes back and sang a big spiritual song called Yarrirndi and when he sang that the water came up. The water rose, came up all over the country and flooded the whole world. This country was in a big flood and all the little Lightning People that belong to Nardi went up into the high mountains sitting and looking. Nardi was a huge, tall man and he came down helping all these children; he goes across picking up the children, carrying them up and putting them on the high mountain. Two of the places they escaped to were Galamberrmang [McClure Hills] and Barnangga-ya Mt Gregory and all these little Lightning People were sitting looking and the water was rising. Old Rainbow was floating there; he had [his children] Rock Cod Fish, he had Groper Fish. He told them to suck those people in from up the top of the mountains into the water. Rock Cod went over and he sucked some of the people in, some of them got sucked in, some didn’t.



Yidumduma Bill Harney
Gorrndolmi the Rainbow Serpent 2015
 synthetic polymer paint and natural ochres on linen
 126 x 248 cm
 courtesy Art Mob and the artist

Old Rainbow was still floating and these others were designing the tools. Willy Wagtail made a lot of spear points. He sang them from the mud and made them hard like rock. He rolled up the mud and made it like a spear and put on the end of it a point. The water was still rising then Willy Wagtail thought about it: ‘Look, might be what we can do is spear that old Rainbow, get rid of that Rainbow. Might be that water might go, I don’t know but we might try’. Well, two Lightnings were there – Jabarringgi and Yagjagbula – and Willy Wagtail said, ‘I’ve got some spear points here and some spears’. ‘Well, righto,’ they said. ‘Give it to old Lightning.’ He gave that spear to old Lightning, old Jabarringgi. ‘Look, if we leave that Rainbow in the water we’ll all be underwater; we want to live inland. Can you kill that old Rainbow?’ Jabarringgi picked it up and said, ‘Look, I’ll try my best’. He put it in his woomera and threw his spear and hit old Rainbow and cut his tail right off. It became Rainbow Rock Mordorl-ya standing up there but never killed him. Rainbow got very cranky and sang that water very fast to go up top to put everybody underwater. Anyway, Jabarringgi couldn’t kill old Rainbow but Willie Wagtail picked up a spear point.

There was another couple sitting down – one was called Grey Falcon, another one called Brown Falcon. One was called Barnangga and the other Garrgayn. That Barnangga spearpoint [rock] can be seen today at Mt Gregory at Barnangga-ya. That’s where he was. ‘Give Grey Falcon the spear for the job,’ he said, ‘because you’ve got the most fabulous song given to you to make this go fast, like you did to make the Shooting Star. Can you kill that old Rainbow?’ ‘Righto.’ He got the spear off Willy Wagtail and saw the Rainbow floating and he threw the spear. It went fast and straight and he hit the old Rainbow, chopped his head right off and the head of Rainbow fell down and the tail end was over there. There was no more



Bill at the severed Rainbow Serpent Head site. (Photo M West)

power for Rainbow to hold the water up and the water disappeared right back to the whirlpool that Rainbow made to come up and it all disappeared there. This country was all muddy and people all came down and they said, ‘Well, water all gone back, we’ll have to look for our tools we left behind’. They walked around in the mud everywhere. Even today you can look around in the rock shelter and see human footprints [engraved or painted] in the rock now, but they were in the mud first and became rock after.

When they were looking around in the mud there were a huge number of creation dogs called Mardborronggo; later on the Mardborronggo became a dingo, later. The Mardborronggo Dog said, ‘We don’t want any of these people anywhere near us’. The Mardborronggo Dog was one the children of Dungdung as well, but from a different area. ‘Well, we’ll chase them – get rid of all these Janginyina Lightning People here.’ Mardborronggo started chasing all these Kangaroo Lightning People from the western side right through this country, through the desert and finishing up on the eastern side – ended up at the salt water [sea]. When

they travelled they made a big song line in the country naming all the different areas where they zigzagged all around in Wardaman country but the song continues on to the next door [group’s] boundary. It’s where the Wardaman song line stops and other people took over from the eastern side.

The Mardborronggo started chasing the Red-backed Kangaroo Yunumburrngu and there was a couple sitting down making many tools just in case old Rainbow brings the water back into the country. They had a spear ready for him to spear him. Old Willy Wagtail and Diver Duck [Cormorant] were making those inside the soft high mountain when the Kangaroo came right up through this little hole, hit the side, broke the earth and the soft earth comes down. That’s at Yingalarri. They frightened Old Diver Duck and Willy Wagtail. They were frightened the earth was falling down. He said, ‘You hang onto it and sing, hold the earth up’. He went on ahead singing and Willy Wagtail raced around, got a big hunk of mud and he sang it and made it hard and he raced up and put that little prop [support] in there. That prop’s still there today and those two, Willy Wagtail and Diver Duck the Shag, are there in the paintings today where the hole is in the rock at Yunumburrngu-ya. ‘That’s good,’ they said. Then the Kangaroo continued, the Mardborronggo chasing them. When he chased him the Kangaroo saw another little hole and he said, ‘I might beat that Mardborronggo Dog over there’. He went flat out and behind there was a lady called Meereebena, one of the first children from the Frog Lady Dungdung and she’s a clever lady still there today in the country in the cave. She was sitting down there when the Kangaroo jumped right over the hole in the high mountain. But Meereebena already had a song in that hole and she pushed the hole up to stop the Mardborronggo from jumping over. Then old Meereebena jumped on the Kangaroo’s back



Meereebena riding on the Kangaroo’s back at Muning shelter. (Photo M West)

and rode it all the way and sang his two legs to give him all the strength to run faster. The Kangaroo continued running. Then Mardborronggo Dog said, ‘I’ll go around this soft high mountain. I might meet the Kangaroo People on that side and get them over there’.

As he was going along there was a little boy sitting on top of the high mount watching all these Kangaroo People being chased by these Dogs and the little boy called Jerijorman – he goes ‘gow gadjer-it ... gow gow gow!’ He’s a little white and black bird today, only comes in the wet, said ‘I’ll follow this Dog trail. He must have killed a lot of Kangaroos on that side’. He followed the track right over and saw the Dog trail swing off, so decided to follow the trail. But by this time the Dog went over and lay inside the soft high mountain

to cool himself down because he was knocked up. All these Lightning People already had many spear points and lots of spears, throwing them at the Dog to try and kill him. Spears, hundreds of spears were coming down trying to kill that old Mardborronggo but that Mardborronggo who's the dingo today had the most powerful spiritual song in his body so when they were throwing the spears, the spears were going straight but landing all around him. Even today with a dingo, if you pull up with a bare hand and get a stick, dingo won't take any notice. But if you pick up a gun, they know, they take off; they've got a very clever what's-a-name in their body and that's what happened with the Mardborronggo.

Anyway the little boy walked along following the Dog trail when Black-headed Python headed right past the little boy. He said to the Lightning People, 'Look, if you don't want everyone to perish make some rain, and try make some water'. And Lightning said, 'How are we going to stop the water from running away?' Anyway the Black-headed Python said, 'Well, we can make some rivers to stop the water from getting away'. Lightning said, 'All right, just go ahead and I'll wait'. Between Walijabi the Black-headed Python and Gunudjarri the Water Python those two created many big rivers in the country, cut up the big gorges, made many channels all over the world. And after that they said to old Lightning, 'Well, there we've made everything pretty bare, you can go ahead and make the rain'. Lightning said, 'Ok, I'll go ahead now and make the rain'. Before he started to sing he's digging a hole in the ground and a little Grasshopper Gamuyu [Praying Mantis] wobbly one, came along and said, 'When you're going to sing that rain the smoke [vapour from his spit] will go up into the air just like a cloud. How're you going to move those clouds from the top?' And old Lightning said 'I don't know'. 'Well,' Grasshopper

said, 'I can make a song after we sing together; I'll make a big whirlwind'. And Lightning said, 'That's a good idea'. Lightning started digging a little hole in the ground and while he was digging he started to sing and spitting into the hole the spit itself changed, became all smoky and started to vaporise, became like ice and the smoke came up from the bottom up into the sky and became a cloud. Lightning kept on singing and the clouds started to build up getting bigger and bigger. Grasshopper was singing and made a big whirlwind that went up and picked up all the clouds and spread it all over the country. Then Lightning picked up a mighty boomerang, threw it up into the air and hit the clouds; the big thunder went bang and down came the rain. Jabarringgi made the big thunder but he doesn't strike any trees; all he does he just lifts up all the trees within the country – barrawunda means cyclone or tornado. Yagjagbula takes the lead. He has the forked lightning. He flicks the two stones [axes] together and he has this forked lightning – it goes bang and cuts the tree to pieces. He also hits the grass and starts a big bushfire; that's why he's all in red [rock painting at Yiwarlalay]. Jabarringgi, he's got black and yellow and white stripes – the white line representing the clouds that are floating across the country. It rained and a big flood went everywhere and soon as the rain stopped the water was full. They said, 'Wow, we're all happy now, everybody can get a drink'.

While they were talking the little boy walked along and sang out to the Dog, but the Dog never moved; he was still fast asleep. He saw all these flints lying on the ground and picked one up and he sang out to the Dog but the Dog never moved. 'I might dig this Dog, it might wake him up, or I'll cut his ears.' But before he split the dog's ears all the Lightning People were walking around all painted up. All around there were no rocks, no grass, no trees in the country. When the

little boy split the Dog's ears – the Dog is the one with the most powerful sound to make things become still in the country – it changed the whole world and his sound [cry] made the earth become still, become all rock, and all the trees stood up and humans changed [into different animals]. And when the little boy dig the Dog's ears at Muning, the Dog sang out again, to shout out to all the people to go into the rock – put themselves, their shadow in there and that's where they are today [as rock art]. Nobody painted them; their shadow put them there. We say that right back at the beginning of Creation that's how the land was put in. Right back to the Creation time the Buwarraja [Dreaming] made it and they made all these song the same time when the Dog was travelling. They made a big song line right across naming the different hills, floodplains, waterholes, springs, desert land, made all this pool of water that never goes dry – they sang the earth underneath so it never goes dry. The Dog had a bag full of songs in his mouth as he's going along all that Gujingga song and the female again carrying their song. Anyway, they created the song and story. All other story came together, linked to that Creation story. Kangaroo and all others came and made the song line but the Dog's the main one. Even today we say, 'Don't hit that dog when he sleeps; he might sing out and you might turn into a pandanus, a rock or anything!' The dog still got that little split [cutaneous marginal pouch] on his ear today. Mardborronggo then changed into a dingo; then Mardborronggo got a straight tail and dingo got a ringtail.

The Buwarraja Dreaming put their shadows into the rock. When the Dog sang out their shadow went in there and all the maburn [cicatrices] come off their shoulders, their backs and bellies and went onto the rock also. The Lightnings who made the rain are all over at Yingalarri, Delamere, everywhere. Those two [Lightning] Brothers, the older ones, the two Geckos at Delamere, and two at Willeroo, the Butcher Bird and Peewee one, and all the Lirringining smaller [Lightning] ones at Mt Hogarth, well, they're everywhere anyway. They're all the same.

(Bill Harney 2015)

Appendix C

Gandawag Moon Story

Well, this is what happened. Old Moon was married to two girls and he had a mother-in-law. He was called Jabalyi [subsection], he was a human first and his wives were Nimira [subsection]. Anyway, Moon went out hunting for food, gathered some and came back and he told his two wives, ‘I left some food over there; you two go over there and get it’. So they went over and picked up some food and came back. But Moon did the wrong thing. He took a liking to [had sexual relations with] his mother-in-law Nanagu [subsection]. He was no good and when those girls came back they caught him. They squealed and told everyone, ‘He’s having relations with his mother-in-law; he shouldn’t do that’. Everybody made complaint and straight away they were going to kill him for breaking the law. So Moon took off from the area where Moon Dreaming is now at Gandawagja, right on my mother’s Wurrghleni boundary with Jiggaigarn mob [estate]. Anyway, he took off north to Bulinin. Upstream from there were all the Lidi [Grasshopper] People, millions of them, Yabulyawan mob. They turned up to welcome him; they were happy to have him there. The next few days a message was sent from Gandawag area from Jalibang. Then next the Falcon took off and followed old Moon to where he was with the Grasshopper People at Bulinin and he delivered his message stick to everyone. The letter stick told them, ‘Look, this is what he’s done, he’s broken the law with his mother-in-law; we got to kill him’. All the Grasshoppers looked at one another and they said, ‘We can’t kill him; we feel sorry for him’. They were a bit scared if they killed him might be another mob would

come along and kill them. Those little Grasshoppers Demdemen said, ‘Well, we’ll go down here and get some cheeky yam called garnmarnmarlin’. It’s really hot like ginger. They got some of that, brought it back, cooked it up and give it to old Moon to eat. When he ate that cheeky yam he was full but later on the garnmarnmarlin start burning inside and his belly was blown up. He was groaning and carrying on and others went over there to try and help him. Anyway, he died and his shadow came back, landed here, up here [rock painting at Gandawagja]. The message went out then to Jiggaigarn [estate group] and others: ‘Moon’s dead’. They were happy. All these little Grasshopper People started crying; they felt sorry for him. They took him down and buried him at Noon Springs at a place called Garnmarnmarlin-ya in Yabulyawan estate. In that place where they buried him, today, in the morning, you’ll see the water going down and afternoon at sunset you see the water starts to bubble up. There’s a big spring bubbling up. It’s up and down all the time like the moon. Full moon comes up and the water comes up, little moon and the water stays low. You can hear the water running like floodwater because of where they buried old Moon.

Anyway one of the Grasshopper People took the message, went back to Jalibang, to Jiggaigarn and other mob, ‘Oh well, we killed old Moon, now we’ll have to give ourselves up now for banjabanja’. This means standing up for the many spears for the payback. The Grasshopper People stood dressed up in all the

different coloured ochre running up in the open plain to get speared. Anyway, they started running and came back like this, narru narru means he’s got to dodge all the spears when they coming. Then another mob, Night Owl People, Tawny Frogmouth People, and the Cockatoo People all said, ‘No, he’s right, we can’t spear you. He’s [Moon] broken the Law, and you done the right thing by the message send up to you; you’ve done it. Anyway that’s good he’s finished now’. Then they waited for a bit. The place where they were breaking the Law is called Jalibang. Moon’s shadow, it went from Noon Spring across and stood up there. They were sitting around at Jalibang and one afternoon somebody said, ‘We’ve got a bit of a shade here, I wonder what’s that?’ Well, they looked up and saw a little half-moon come up, the shadow of the moon when he died at Bulinin come back there to Jalibang and he become a little [half] moon. ‘Oh,’ they said, ‘he’s Gandawag, because he’s wearing a lopsided headdress like this’. That’s why the moon you see today has a lopsided headdress. They said, ‘Oh, old Jabalyi’ – he was called Jabalyi first, that’s his skin name – ‘that old Jabalyi died, now he’s come back. Look that little Gandawag’. The place where his painting is, it’s called Gandawagja with the lopsided headdress. It’s the country of my aunty called Daisy Giminy; that one’s Jiggaigarn up close with Menngen White Cockatoo Dreaming, my mother’s country, they’re close up together. Then everyone said, ‘Well, what we got to do? Old Moon was dead but now he’s come back alive, he’s a new moon’. They said, ‘Well, everybody got to die now and all come back as people again like Moon did. Well, let’s try!’ Then Night Owl and Tawny Frogmouth they said, ‘Well, we’ll try and get these two and see what they can do’. They picked one Sand Goanna Murrana, they picked him first. They took him over and buried him and went away for quite a long while, maybe four weeks; they come back, dug the hole and up comes the Goanna



The Possum at the Dilygun Dreaming site is part of the Moon story. (Photo M West)

– he was still alive. They said, ‘Oh, that’s good this Goanna comes up, the Moon comes back – it means we die and going to come back alive again. Righto, we’ll try a Possum’. They buried the Possum gawiyan and everybody walked away.

Then a Little Falcon Barnangga said to them, ‘I’ve got a funny feeling, something must have happened to that little Possum’. But they said, ‘No, he’ll be all right; he’ll come back like Sand Goanna did’. But Falcon said, ‘No, I’ve got a very funny feeling, I think he’s finished’. ‘Oh well,’ Falcon said, ‘this is how to do it, to know if he’s died or still alive. Well, I’ve got a song to make a Shooting Star’. He picked up a lot of mud put it together and he sang over it. And he pulled out some hair from his head and put it in there and went away and put it in an open area. He told everyone, ‘Wait till sunset and listen, have a look and you’ll see that big star go directly’. They sat down and waited and at sunset everybody stopped, silent. They all listened and when it got dark the Shooting Star took off; it

went right up to where the Possum was dead. When it landed there his [Possum's] stomach exploded. They heard it – the thunder went. 'There you are, he's finished! Oh well, let's go and have a look.' Everybody was walking back all really sad feeling. They heard a lot of little Blowfly People all crying and they said, 'Oh well, he must be dead'. And when they got over there, there was a lot of Blowfly People crying; they were sorry for old Possum who died and everyone sat down after a ceremony. They had a special type ceremony because Possum was the one who invented the sugarleaf lerp, bandarlan from the tree. 'Well, he made up this one that we can eat.' They sat down in a meeting: 'Well, old Moon died and come back alive, Sand Goanna died and he came back alive and Possum died and he's gone for good. That means when we got to die we got to go for good'.

Then an old lady called Marnden [ghost] come along and she said, 'Now, what I'll do I'll get that heart and the spirit, take it up to luwun up top'. Luwun means hole there in the sky where the Milky Way is. She took that heart up there, the Spirit for dingaraja [rebirth]. Then those other two Rock Cod Fish called Munin and Water Goanna Judja they were in the water, in the spring. So Rock Cod went and picked up the Spirit, brought him back and gave it to Judja. Look, you keep this Spirit and give it food, it's got a song already and he'll come back again and be born a child. They had it [food] because Rock Cod went across and saw the Lidi Grasshopper People. They invented all the weeds, all the algae under the water. They used them for decoration; all the different Turtle People they still got those weeds on their backs today. So they started feeding that little one underwater. That's the food they gave him – the green slime, algae – and any kid that's born today got that green slime on him. 'Well, we've got to let that kid go and look around to find its mum.'

Even us today and time before, what they said to us, 'If you see a little turtle or a little bird walking around the fireplace don't kill them'. We say, 'What for?' 'Oh that's a little kid looking for its mother'. We took notice of them, then the next thing the little turtle or bird disappears. So they look around to see what woman gets pregnant. Well, they see a lady get pregnant. 'Oh yeah, that's one.' They sit there and when the kid ready to be born the doctor lady and other ladies go to the ladies' business place – they had a proper sacred place, no men go to those place. That woman's birthing place is a really sacred place; nobody's get near it. Have to keep two, three kilometres away from that area. Because they say to us with all the different songs they have, a fly can pick up a little dirt and land and put it on you. And that little dirt, that earth – because it's got the most powerful spiritual song – if it's put on you it could destroy you probably if you go close up. Anyway that doctor lady that had a lot of black termite, ant bed crushed up like flour, keep it ready for the kid. Soon as the kid's born – my missus used to tell me this – another one come along with a stone knife, cut the cord off and pick up this fine earth and rub it all over the kid to dry 'im out and put it in a coolamon straight away. Then they have a fireplace and special type of termite bed they put it on; the heat crush it all up and get a different type of grass, very soft one they put that. Then they wet that Ngardan ant bed and the big steam comes up and missus says then they lie flat and its curing all the hurt and wound or whatever they have around the belly or the back. That way they got fixed up. [The baby is said to be 'cooked' after also being laid on the ant bed.] Then they look to see if there's a birthmark on that little kid because Possum had a mark, a little spot on his back. Then they notify everyone, 'If you're family has lost him he's back here'. They call that dingaraja; white people call it reincarnation. Well, you can come and look but you

can't lift him. If you lift that kid the little kid will get a shock and die. That's why you've got to stay away till he's grow up and later they respect him as part of their family, come back. And later they have a special ceremony and everybody dance; the whole family go over there and put the sweat on him, that little kid, and that why he lives a long time.

(Bill Harney 2015)

Glossary

Animal and Plant Species

Animals

Ballabala	Bony Bream	<i>Nematalosa erebi</i>
Bambidi	Freshwater/Red-faced Turtle	<i>Emydura victoriae</i>
Barnangga	Little Falcon	<i>Falco longipennis</i>
Barnangga	Grey Falcon	<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>
Barragbarrag	Little Pied Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>
Benbening	Gouldian Finch	<i>Erythrura gouldiae</i>
Bilawa	Red Meat Ant	<i>Iridomyrmex spp.</i>
Bin.Gan	Bream (generic)	<i>Hephaestus spp.</i>
Biyawiyag	Cuckoo-Shrike	<i>Coracina spp.</i>
Bongorr	Spotted Tree Goanna	<i>Varanus scalaris</i>
Bornorron/Bonorong	Brolga	<i>Grus rubicunda</i>
Bulagaw	Nankeen Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax caledonicus</i>
Bulyan	Wedge-tailed Eagle /Eagle Hawk	<i>Aquila audax</i>
Burariman	Blue-tongue Lizard	<i>Tiliqua multifasciata</i>
Deeden	Nit	<i>Pediculus spp.</i>
Demdemen	Grasshopper	<i>Subfamily Catantopinae</i>
Dering	Crane	<i>Order Gruiformes</i>
Dilygun	Ringtail Possum	<i>Petropseudes dahli</i>
Dirriyn	Jabiru (Black-necked Stork)	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>
Diwana	White-breasted Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
Dorridorrid	Banded Grunter	<i>Amniataba percoides</i>
Galambunga	Black/White Catfish	<i>Species unknown</i>
Galumanggan	Rock Wallaby	<i>Petrogale brachyotis</i>
Gamuyu	Praying Mantis	<i>Tenodera spp., Orthodera spp.</i>
Ganbarlarla	Crested Pigeon	<i>Ocyphaps lophotes</i>
Ganben	Little Red Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus scapulatus</i>
Garlirlin	Mosquito	<i>Family Culicidae</i>
Garnangarrin	Frill-necked Lizard	<i>Chlamydosaurus kingii</i>
Garndalwu	Plains Kangaroo	<i>Macropus rufus</i>

Garndarrin	Agile Wallaby	<i>Macropus agilis</i>
Garramandan	Ta-ta Dragon	<i>Diporiphora albilabris</i>
Garrgayn	Little Falcon	<i>Alco berigora</i>
Gawalyan	Echidna	<i>Tachyglossus aculeatus acanthion</i>
Gawiyen	Northern Bandicoot	<i>Isoodon macrourus</i>
Gijagija	Black Bull Ant	<i>Myrmecia spp.</i>
Girribug	Long-tailed Pheasant Coucal	<i>Centropus phasianinus</i>
Godjogodjog	Dove (Bar-shouldered)	<i>Geopelia humeralis</i>
Golorog	Dove (Diamond/Peaceful)	<i>Geopelia cuneata</i>
Gorlongongon	Blue Bottle Fly	<i>Calliphora vomitoria</i>
Gornbun	Black-shouldered/Whistling Kite	<i>Elanus notatus</i>
Gornorrong	Long-necked Turtle	<i>Chelodina rugosa</i>
Gorrgorrman	Kookaburra	<i>Dacelo leachii</i>
Gulirrida	Peewee (Magpie Lark)	<i>Grallina cyanoleuca</i>
Gulwayin	Tadpole	<i>Sphenophryne adelphe</i>
Gumurrinji	Emu	<i>Dromaius novaehollandiae</i>
Gunudjarri	Olive Python	<i>Bothrochilus olivaceus</i>
Gurndirndin	Ibis	<i>Threskiornis molucca</i>
Guwarlambarla	Short-necked Turtle	<i>Emydura subglobosa worrelli</i>
Guyarru	Barking/Night Owl	<i>Ninox connivens</i>
Jalarrin	Centipede	<i>Scolopendra morsitans</i>
Jandal	Striped Skink	<i>Ctenotus robustus</i>
Jarnarran/Janaran	Little Egret (Little Crane)	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Jarnbaljarnbal	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Jegban	Bush Turkey (Bustard)	<i>Ardeotis australis</i>
Jelin	Freshwater Prawn or Shrimp	<i>Macrobrachium spp., Caridina spp.</i>
Jerrjerrman	Northern Fantail	<i>Rhipidura rufiventris</i>
Jigirrija	Willy Wagtail	<i>Rhipidura leucophrys</i>
Jirdij	Quail	<i>Turnix spp.</i>
Jorijorij.	Great Bowerbird	<i>Chlamydera nuchalis</i>
Jorlborrman	Butcher Bird	<i>Cracticus nigrogularis</i>
Judiyina	Tawny Frogmouth	<i>Podargus strigoides</i>
Judja	Water Goanna/Monitor	<i>Varanus mertensi</i>
Juwarin	Long Tom	<i>Strongylura krefftii</i>
Kunjalbin	Antilopine Kangaroo female	<i>Macropus antilopinus</i>
Laraja	Ridge-tailed Goanna	<i>Varanus acanthurus</i>
Lawarra	Archer Fish	<i>Toxotes chatareus</i>
Lidi	Grasshopper	<i>Cuprascula spp.</i>

Lilmurlilmum	Firefly (Glow Beetle)	Family Lampyridae
Lunggura	Blue-tongue Lizard	<i>Tiliqua scincoides</i>
Mabiling	Nail-tailed Wallaby	<i>Onychogalea unguifera</i>
Malad	Mullet	<i>Valamugil engeli</i>
Malbardajgu	Sand Goanna	<i>Varanus gouldii</i>
Mandarraj	Dragon Lizard	Family Agamidae
Mardbiyn	Barramundi	<i>Lates calcarifer</i>
Mardird	Whistling/Black Kite	<i>Haliastur sphenurus</i>
Menngen	White Cockatoo (Sulphur-crested)	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>
Mardborronggo	Dog	<i>Canis spp.</i>
Mullada/Murrarda	Freshwater Crab	Species unknown
Mundarla	Scorpion	<i>Liocheles spp.</i>
Munin	Freshwater Cod	<i>Glossogobius spp.</i>
Murrujunma	Ornate Burrowing Sand Frog	<i>Opisthodon ornatus</i>
Murruna	Sand Goanna	<i>Varanus panoptes</i>
Ngalamiynmiyn	Insectivorous Bat (generic)	<i>Myotis sp.</i>
Ngarrajananggu	Dingo	<i>Canis lupus</i>
Nguwamin	Euro	<i>Macropus robustus</i>
Wagwag/Wakwak	Torresian Crow	<i>Corvus orru</i>
Walijabi	Black-headed Python	<i>Aspidites melanocephalus</i>
Warlang	Ghost Bat	<i>Macroderma gigas</i>
WarIngin	Bush Fly	Species unknown
Warman	Short-eared Wallaby	<i>Petrogale brachyotis</i>
Warning	Golden Tree Snake	<i>Boiga irregularis</i>
Warrag	Black Catfish	<i>Neosilurus ater</i>
Warrija	Freshwater Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus johnstoni</i>
Wiliwuga	Bush Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus magnirostris</i>
Wirriwuna	Cockatiel	<i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>
Worong	Perch	<i>Amniataba percoides</i>
Woyolong	Whip Snake	<i>Demansia spp.</i>
Wudba	Nail Fish	Species unknown
YarInga	Blue-tongue Lizard	<i>Tiliqua scincoides</i>
Yarrimanbu	Taipan	<i>Oxyuranus scutellatus</i>
Yimulyurra	Budgerigar	<i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>
Yirlorloban	King Brown Snake	<i>Pseudechis australis</i>
Yirrgulu	Riverine Kangaroo	Species unknown
Yunumburrgu	Antilopine (Red-backed) Kangaroo	<i>Macropus antilopinus</i>

Plants

Bagabaga	Conkerberry	<i>Carissa lanceolata</i>
Bawujin	Watery Yam	<i>Branchystelma glabriflorum</i>
Belleren/Belerren	Ghost Gum (fine leafed)	<i>Eucalyptus papuana</i>
Bininyin	Sandpaper-leaf Tree	Species unknown
Bondoyorron	River Pandanus	<i>Pandanus aquaticus</i>
Buda	Black Plum	<i>Vitex glabrata</i>
Bunggurrun	Woollybutt	<i>Eucalyptus miniata</i>
Dangan	Algae	<i>Chlamydomonas sp.</i>
Dangindi	Paperbark	<i>Melaleuca leucadendra</i>
Dilji	Sedge	<i>Schoenoplectus litoralis</i>
Dimalan	River Gum	<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>
Dolyan	Bloodwood, Sugarleaf	<i>Eucalyptus foelscheana</i>
Galina	Mimosa / Silver Wattle	<i>Acacia dealbata</i>
Gamanggirr (alt)	Spear grass	<i>Phragmites vallatoria</i>
Gamanjin	Bullwaddy	<i>Macropteranthes kekwickii</i>
Ganmanyjin	Cane Grass	<i>Phragmites vallatoria</i>
Gardi	Lily	<i>Nymphaea spp.</i>
Garnawunin	Lancewood	<i>Acacia shirleyi</i>
Garnmarnmarlin	Cheeky Yam	<i>Amorphophallus paeoniifolius</i>
Gayalarrin	Onion Lily	<i>Typhonium lilifolium</i>
Gaynbala	Paddy Melon	<i>Citrullus lanatus</i>
Gelerrnga	Gutta-percha / Fish Poison Tree	<i>Excoecaria parvifolia</i>
Giliwinin	Tea Tree	<i>Melaleuca alternifolia</i>
Girlibi	Bush Banana	<i>Marsdenia australis</i>
Gulbinji	Silver-leafed Paperbark	<i>Melaleuca argentea</i>
Gulid	Green Plum	<i>Buchanania obviata</i>
Gumilan	Fan Palm	<i>Livistona victoriae</i>
Jalgi	Lily Bulb	<i>Nymphaea violacea</i>
Jirdbirdbi/Lirdbirdbi	Bloodwood Tree	<i>Eucalyptus terminalis</i>
Julamarran	White Currant	<i>Flueggea virosa</i>
Lijarri	Shitwood Tree	<i>Gyrocarpus americanus</i>
Liwarrga	Ground Sugarbag	Species unknown
Magulu	Woolly Yam	<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i>
Manamurran	Emu Berry	<i>Grewia retusifolia</i>
Mangurlu/Mungalu	Bush/Wild Rice	<i>Oryza australiensis</i>
Marldulg	Wild Cucumber	<i>Cucumis melo</i> (small leaf)

Megerrman/Gawkawili	Long Yam	Dioscorea transversa
Mirrijbuj	Yam	Calandrinia uniflora
Mogorlgorl	Wild Grape Tree	Ampelocissus acetosa
Mordon	Swamp Yam	Vigna vexillata
Walanung	Yam	Ipomea abrupta
Wayida	Hairy Yam / Bush Potato	Vigna lanceolata
Wirlin	Soap Tree	Alphitonia excelsa
Wolon	Grass spp.	Themeda avenacea
Wullurun	Freshwater Mangrove Tree	Species unknown
Wurlbun	Grass spp.	Alloteropsis semialata
Yerrerren	Rosewood	Terminalia volucris

Biography

Yidumduma Bill Harney

Artist-in-Residence

- 2009 Law Faculty, Bond University, Gold Coast
- 2006 Art Mob, Hobart
- 2004 Art Mob, Hobart
- 2003 Art Mob, Hobart

Awards

- 2013 Rona Tranby Award (with Paul Taylor) for the Yubulyawan Dreaming Project: Indigenous wisdom of a Wardaman Elder, presented at Tranby College, Sydney
- 2004 Brolga Award for Tourism, NT Government

Commissions

- 2013 *Bush Banana* metal screen design for Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre
Gorondolmi Puwarradja [sic] (Rainbow Dreaming) and *Djangnena* Puwarradja [sic] (Lightning Dreaming) paintings for the Centre for Carbon, Water and Food (CCWF) and the Faculty of Agriculture and Environment (FAE), University of Sydney
- 2009 *Yimulun* painting, Bond University Law Faculty, Gold Coast

Collections

- Bond University, Gold Coast, Qld
- Court House, Katherine, NT
- Department of Education, Hobart, Tas.
- Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT
- National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, ACT
- Northern Land Council, Darwin, NT
- University of Sydney, NSW

Exhibitions

Solo

- 2013 *Bill Harney – Wardaman Medicine*, Art Mob, Hobart
- 2009 *Law of the Wardaman People*, Art Mob, Hobart
- 2004 *Sky Boss Nardi*, Art Mob, Hobart
- 1990 *Lidjari Paintings*, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin

Group

- 2015 *Nationality*, Art Mob, Hobart
- 2014 *Heavens Above*, Art Mob, Hobart
- 2011 *Susan & Emily McCulloch’s Critics Choice*, Art Mob, Hobart
Signatures, Art Mob, Hobart
Galleriest’s Choice, Art Mob, Hobart
- 2010 *Out of the Earth*, Art Mob, Hobart
Emma’s Choice, Art Mob, Hobart
- 2009 *The Indigenous Night Sky*, Art Mob, Hobart
26th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- 2008 *25th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- 2007 *Night Colours*, Art Mob, Hobart
Highlights, Art Mob, Hobart
24th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- 2005 *22nd Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- 2004 *Aboriginal Night Sky*, Art Mob, Hobart
21st Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin

- 2003 *Connecting Spirits*, Art Mob, Hobart
- 2001 *18th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- 2000 *17th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
The Art of Place, the Fifth National Indigenous Heritage Art Award, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra
- 1999 *Love Magic: Erotics and Politics in Indigenous Art*, SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney. Part of Australian Perspecta 99.
16th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- 1997 *14th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- 1992 *9th National Aboriginal Art Award*, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin
- 1991 *8th National Aboriginal Art Award*, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin

Subjects (listing not definitive)

Black-headed Python, Blue-tongued Lizard, Boomerang, Bush Banana, Bush Doctor, Bush Mango, Bush Medicine, Bush Plumb, Bush Potato, Ceremonial Belt, Curlew, Cheeky Yam, Circumcision Ceremony, Devil, Desert Goanna, Diamond Dove, Dog, Eagle Hawk (Wedge-tailed Eagle), Echidna, Egret, Emu, Frog, Finch, Fire, Flying Fox, Freshwater Crocodile, Giiny Giliny Children, Gorrondolmi (Rainbow Serpent), Grasshopper, Grass Owl, Ground Sugarbag, Gujingga and Bandimi Ceremony, Hailstone/Rainstone, Hair-string Spindle, Lightning Brothers, Baby Lightning Figure, Long Yam, Mereebena Lady, Moon, Mortuary Coffin, Nardi Sky Boss, Night Owl, Night Sky, Possum, Quail Dreaming, Red-back Kangaroo, Shooting Star, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Termite Mound, Turpentine & Hibiscus, Wangga Dance, Whirly Wind, White Currant, Willy Wagtail, Yimulun Traditional Law.

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Contributors

Dr Cath Bowdler was inaugural Director of Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre in Katherine from 2012 to 2015. She is an arts administrator, curator and academic who has worked extensively with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and artists over the last 20 years. She has been Director of 24HR Art in Darwin, Lecturer at Charles Darwin University, Director of Wagga Wagga Art Gallery and Lecturer at Charles Sturt University. She holds a PhD from the Australian National University in the field of Aboriginal Art and Culture.

Joe Morrison is the Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Land Council. He was born and raised in Katherine and has Dagoman and Torres Strait Islander heritage. He holds a tertiary qualification from the University of Sydney and has over 25 years’ experience working with Indigenous people across northern Australia and internationally on the management and development of traditional lands and waters. His experience includes extensive community development, research and policy creation focused on land and water rights, climate change, Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous ranger employment and Indigenous governance.

Margie West AM has extensive curatorial experience in the field of Australian Indigenous art and holds an MA in anthropology from the Australian National University. Between 1978 and 2005 she was Curator of Aboriginal Art & Material Culture at the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) where she currently holds the title of Emeritus Curator. She also works as a private consultant. She is the founder of the *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, has published extensively and has curated more than 40 exhibitions.

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Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Culture Centre (GYRACC) is deeply indebted to so many people who have generously supported the Yidumduma Bill Harney exhibition. Firstly and most importantly we would like to thank Yidumduma for his enthusiasm and unstinting support of the exhibition that honours him as one of the last senior Wardaman men of knowledge. The show would not have been possible without his help and expertise.

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