

Goŋ Gurtha: Enacting response-abilities as situated co-becoming

EPD: Society and Space

2019, Vol. 37(4) 682–702

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DOI: 10.1177/0263775818799749

journals.sagepub.com/home/epd

Bawaka Country

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Abstract

In this paper, we engage with the Goŋ Gurtha songspiral, shared on/by/with/as Bawaka Country in Yolŋu Northeast Arnhem Land, Australia, to provide a basis for re-thinking responsibility in the context of ongoing Eurocentric colonising processes. Goŋ Gurtha encourages us to consider two key aspects of responsibility – response and ability. We argue that Yolŋu relational ontologies conceive response-abilities as requiring an ability to pay close and careful attention as part of more-than-human worlds, and an imperative to respond as part of these worlds. As such, rather than being responsible to or for others, we seek to respond as, emphasising our emergent

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co-becoming in more-than-human, situated, ethical ways. Goŋ Gurtha guides the paper through four aspects of these response-abilities: response-abilities as songspirals; response-abilities as continuity; response-abilities as academics and response-abilities beyond Bawaka. In doing so, we understand response-abilities as more-than-human co-becomings enacted in contingent ways that none-the-less need to be grounded in deep obligations of more-than-human kinship.

Keywords

Bawaka, Indigenous geographies, co-becoming, Australia, responsibilities, songspirals

Co-becoming response-abilities as the Bawaka Collective

We start with the ethical imperative, an imperative that sits within *Rom* (Yolŋu Law) and many Indigenous legal traditions, of acknowledging the Indigenous people on whose land you are reading today, as well as the Indigenous people of the different places on which we have conceived and written this paper – especially the Yolŋu people of Northeast Arnhem Land, the Gumbaynggirr people of the mid-north coast of New South Wales (NSW), and the Darug and Dharawal people of Sydney, Australia. We acknowledge these First Nations people – their Elders past, present and future – and Country itself in its various forms around the globe. We write here as Bawaka and talk about Bawaka Country, in northern Australia. We respectfully extend a relationship to the Country and people of your places, and acknowledge the laws, stories and histories of your places. We do this because responsibility, as we conceptualise it here, is premised on responding as part of ongoing relationships and an entangled more-than-human world with often problematic histories, presences and futures. Such an acknowledgement attempts to recognise the complex relationships between writers and readers and we offer it with the intention of honouring *Rom*. Our acknowledgement recognises that many places have experienced, and continue to experience, deeply violent processes and that this paper has the potential to both reinforce such colonising processes but also hopefully to challenge and unsettle them. We acknowledge the diversity of colonising experiences for many Indigenous people, their ongoing struggles and their diverse modes of survivance (Vizenor, 1994). As authors, we are not in control of how our words are interpreted but we do need to respond with great care. We do this as part of our responsibilities to acknowledge where this paper is being read, and what impacts it may have, intended and otherwise, on people and places far from Bawaka. This acknowledgement is something which we are attempting to respect in all our writing, but, as elaborated below, as we draw the paper to a close, it holds a special resonance here as we talk directly to issues around responsibility and the need for specific responses to such acknowledgements.

This paper is authored by Bawaka Country. For Yolŋu people, Country means homeland. It means home and land, but it means more than that too. It means the seas, and the waters, the rocks and the soils, the animals and winds and all the beings, including people that come into existence there. It means the connections between these things, and their dreams, their emotions, their languages and their *Rom* (Law). It means the ways we emerge together have always emerged together and will always emerge together (Country et al., 2016). This co-becoming manifests through songspirals, known more commonly as songlines or dreamings. Songspirals are rich and multi-layered articulations, passed down through the generations and sung by Aboriginal peoples in Australia to make and remake the lifegiving connections between people and place (Country et al., 2016; Rose, 1996, 2007). While Yolŋu men sing songspirals, Yolŋu women *milkarri*, or keen the

songspirals – a tremulous form of crying the songspiral verses. Country and songspirals anchor us in infinite cycles of kinship, sharing and responsibility. Indeed, response and responsibility are at the heart of songspirals co-becoming as Country.

In the case of the authorship of this paper, the Bawaka Collective includes four sisters Laklak, Ritjilili, Merrkiyawuy and Banbapuy, their daughter Djawundil and five *ñäpaki* settler-academics¹ living on unceded Gumbayngirr and Darug land in the southern state of NSW, Sandie, Sarah, Kate, Matalena and Jill.² When we say ‘we’, we refer to the more-than-human us. The way the more-than-human us ‘wrote’ this paper is complex; it is based on words, experiences, sounds, tastes and smells. It involved talking, listening, recording, writing specific words on paper, checking, changing and re-writing. It involved much discussion and reflection. The paper is a collaborative effort written in a collective voice.³ Throughout the paper, there are sections when specific humans or groups of humans talk – in these cases we indicate who the contributor is or the ‘we’ refers to. Writing as the Bawaka Collective acknowledges our co-becoming, our co-constitution, the co-construction of knowledge and is part of the way our responsibilities as the Bawaka Collective function as a methodology in our work. It acknowledges the authority and agency of Country in all its more-than-human relationality and co-becoming and highlights the way we heed, as we can, its teachings, its messages and its call (see also Johnson and Larsen, 2013). As the Yolŋu authors say:

That’s the thing with Yolŋu and culture, everything is a whole, everything is one. We do our own *djäma* (work), for the self, but really we are one big living thing. And that’s why everyone goes through that same, sorrow, crying. Together.

Responsibilities are fundamental to these connections. Like many people visiting and working in Yolŋu communities, Sandie, Sarah, Kate and Matalena have been adopted into a Yolŋu family.⁴ This connects them into *gurrutu*, the Yolŋu more-than-human kinship system, and, in particular, the obligations and responsibilities that come with this. This is a powerful Yolŋu assertion of sovereignty and facilitates both the co-production of knowledge in ways underpinned by Yolŋu ontologies and the extension of these ontologies beyond Northeast Arnhem Land. We introduce ourselves in this way as part of these responsibilities, as part of Country, situating who we are in human and more-than-human ways, where we come from and what we aim to do together.

In this paper, we draw on our varied and collective experiences, learnings and responsibilities as Bawaka Country. The paper is led by the Goŋ Gurtha (Keeper of the Fire) songspiral. Goŋ Gurtha emerged at this moment of co-becoming in our shared research as it is one of the songspirals that the Bawaka Collective is currently learning about. We consider Goŋ Gurtha and its teaching as a manifestation of the agency of Country and the lead authorship of Bawaka Country in this paper and within our Collective. That is, the human authors did not so much choose Goŋ Gurtha. Rather, it presented itself.

Goŋ Gurtha encourages us to consider two key aspects of responsibility – response *and* ability. In doing so, we argue that Yolŋu relational ontologies conceive response-abilities as requiring:

- An *ability* to pay close and careful attention, as part of more-than-human worlds and
- An imperative to *respond as*, rather than to be responsible to or responsible for, what is seen/learnt/understood/communicated in more-than-human, situated, ethical ways.

This ability to *respond as* matters. In settler colonial contexts, understanding settler-academic responsibility is a critical, if fraught, aspect of ‘attending to life lived on stolen

Indigenous land' (Rowe and Tuck, 2016: 6), and of doing research in 'spaces of ongoing colonial violence' (De Leeuw, 2017: 316). The academic disciplines we stage our work in have been, and often continue to be, complicit in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the disciplining of lands, peoples and non-humans (De Leeuw, 2017; Wensing and Porter, 2015). This includes a body of scholarship 'about' Indigenous peoples that extracts and repackages knowledges rather than contributing to Indigenous political, social, cultural and economic agendas (Louis, 2007). Work arguing for academics to be 'responsible to/for' their research participants appears to provide a corrective course to hold academics accountable to those they research with and, in doing so, presents an apparently ethical mode of researching. This promulgation of responsibility to/for others may be well-meaning, but, as TallBear (2014) notes, it is nonetheless problematic as it targets the symptoms rather than the disease of unequal and inequitable processes and practices. As such, through this article, we develop the argument that 'responsibility to/for' Others is an insufficient response to the ethical dilemmas of research in that it invokes and embeds colonial logics that position researchers as capable of agency and systematically excludes Others (Chiew, 2014; Meissner, 2017). It is, we suggest, an example of how good intentions fail to displace power imbalances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Snelgrove et al., 2014).

Developing a different form of responsibility requires interrogating a constellation of colonial logics. The apparent permanence of settler colonisation is anxiously maintained through ongoing violence and denials that delineate past, present and future, divide humans and non-humans, and define the subjects and objects of political agency (Moses, 2010; Rowe and Tuck, 2016; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Through a teleological narrative of history, colonisation is presented as a past event and a precursor to a de-/post-colonial present and future where settler colonial authority is assumed (Moses, 2010; Strakosch and Macoun, 2012). This authority is asserted in even apparently progressive or 'post'-colonial policies that circumscribe recognition and inclusion of Indigenous peoples to pre-determined and bound subject positions, and presume colonial authority even in the adjudication of contemporary Indigenous authenticity and the resolution to colonial violences (Moses, 2011; Sidaway et al., 2014; Strakosch and Macoun, 2012; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Yet, official recognition of Indigenous presences is seldom accompanied by serious engagement with Indigenous ontologies that challenge the orders and disciplines of colonial structures (Ahenakew et al., 2014; Hunt, 2013; Sidaway et al., 2014; Strakosch and Macoun, 2012). Therefore, contemplating academic responsibility as a multidirectional and more-than-human concern – rather than as an action to be taken by settler-academics – is an important task. It challenges this settler colonial political order that systematically positions some humans as capable of political agency and action, and 'other' humans and non-humans as invisible, too different, or simply 'not human enough,' to participate, act, or speak – or to bear responsibility (Ahenakew et al., 2014; Chiew, 2014; Meissner, 2017).

The assumed freedom and ability of (some) neoliberalised and individualised humans to act must also be challenged. As Ruddick (2017) explains, the notion of independent human action is sustained by using differences and distances to numb, diminish and disrupt affective connections and relationships among humans and non-humans. Reconfiguring responsibility, then, demands that connections and relationships, these intricate, messy, and dynamic webs of entanglements between/among/across humans and non-humans, are acknowledged and privileged (Haraway, 2015; Howitt, 2011). Put differently, it requires nourishing and mobilising connections that interrupt the colonial and capitalist orders that exclude more-than-human lifeworlds, understanding that we all dwell in these connections and cannot be extricated from them (Nxumalo, 2016).

In this article, we engage with the Goṅ Gurtha songspiral to provide a basis for re-thinking responsibility, and the ways in which we seek to *respond as* part of songspirals and live our *response-abilities as* in this more-than-human Collective. In doing this, Goṅ Gurtha guides the paper through four aspects of these response-abilities: response-abilities as songspirals; response-abilities as continuity; response-abilities as settler-academics and response-abilities beyond Bawaka. The first two aspects are centred on Yolṅu relational understandings of responsibility to enable an explication of *response-ability as*. The last two aspects shift to a focus on responsibilities as settler-academics and how people in other contexts can enact response-abilities as.

Response-abilities as songspirals

Songspirals bring Country, including people, into existence:

Yolṅu law, songs always come with country, through the songlines passed down from our ancestors. The songs have dances and show the relationships between everything: the people, places, animals and plants – everything in the kinship system. When we ‘sing’ a place, we show how that place has an important story, we show our knowledge of that place, and the songs pass on knowledge to younger generations. (Yunupingu and Muller, 2009: 160)

Songspirals bring Country into being. Songspirals are a manifestation of human beings’ abilities to respond not only to Country but as Country, as a part of songspirals. Songspirals are underpinned by, and manifestations of, fundamental patterns and response-abilities. These patterns and order are *Rom*. As songspirals are sung or keened they are the co-becoming of Yolṅu people and Country. However, these patterns and orders are relational and contextual; they depend on responding in, of, and as place. Songspirals connect people as/to place, place as/to place, non-human as/to non-human and so on. They also connect us, our more-than-human Collective, to you and your place, your histories and stories.

Our co-becoming as songspirals and as Country means that our response-abilities must also be understood through co-constitution. The humans care for Country, deeply. Country also cares for the humans. Underpinning this care is an acknowledgement that the humans do not care for something separate from them, and Country does not care for humans as separate beings. Rather, we all care *as* Country (Country et al., 2013). We only exist, can only have the abilities to respond, through an ongoing process of co-becoming that is not static or ever complete, and is never human-centric.

We turn now to the Goṅ Gurtha songspiral to ask what songspirals and Yolṅu relational ontologies can tell us about *response-ability as*. The Goṅ Gurtha songspiral is about Wurramala, a great hunter, and was shared by Rrawun Maymuru and Djali Ganambarr as part of the Collective’s current learning about songspirals. Rrawun is Banbapuy’s son and Djali is the four sisters’ brother. Both were asked by the sisters, who are the songspiral’s caretakers, to share the Goṅ Gurtha songspiral.

The Collective is still transcribing, translating and understanding certain aspects of this songspiral for our book.⁵ As such, we focus on Rrawun’s broad translations and interpretations for this paper and do not include the Gumatj dialect lyrics or direct translations. As the songspiral was performed/recorded, the order, story and top-level interpretation were the first aspects shared and it is these we share with you.⁶ It is important to emphasise that we do not present these translations and interpretations as a static, authentic truth. Indeed, as Christie (2005) argues, Indigenous knowledges should not be abstracted from their context to be presented as facts and consumed by an academic audience who can then claim a

certain ‘knowing’. Further, Rrawun asks that we specifically acknowledge that he only can share his knowledge, from his own position, and indeed, this holds true for all of us in the Collective. Here, we draw attention to some of the ethical work, the ideas, and the social relationships that make Goṇ Gurtha and that Goṇ Gurtha makes. In particular, we focus on how Goṇ Gurtha challenges asymmetrical or unidirectional notions of responsibility, time, space/place and more-than-human worlds. We begin by focusing on Rrawun’s translation and interpretation of Goṇ Gurtha’s first verse that explains what the great hunter, Wurramala, needs to do.

1. We sing about the house that Wurramala’s building there on the beach. Wurramala’s building a shelter from any local tree—coconut tree, bamboo tree. Then after the shelter is finished, he says this is my *barrumbarrum*. When it’s finished it’s called the *barrumbarrum*. (translation)

When they’re singing the land, the wind touches there. . . . [In the] last chapter of the song, the family of that person clicks back to [goes back to, connects with, becomes again with] the land. The singer is looking at the land, goes back 40,000 to 80,000 years. (interpretation)

The Goṇ Gurtha songspiral begins with its foundation: the house that is built on the beach, built from trees of that place. Every person of the Gumatj clan⁷ who is living in a coastal area and who passes away has a special shelter for their body called the *barrumbarrum*. Indeed, the shelter we sat under listening to Rrawun and Djali share the Goṇ Gurtha songspiral was the place of the *barrumbarrum* for Laklak’s husband’s funeral. Response-abilities as songspirals mean responding in ways that nurture the past and the ancestors. The immediacy of nourishing Bawaka on the place of the *barrumbarrum* for Laklak’s husband means singing the *barrumbarrum*, rebuilding the shelter of the one who has recently passed away and rebuilding the shelter of ancestors of all time. The past cannot be consigned to the past. We have response-abilities to it and as it, response-abilities to respond to violences and colonisings that occurred or that may yet occur. These response-abilities challenge colonial narrations of time that foreclose history by ordering and separating past, present and future (Moses, 2010; Strakosch and Macoun, 2012). Response-abilities to nurture Country through and as time and place (Country et al., 2016). This is co-becoming. The family clicks back to the land through the songspiral, is taken there, is there, so that songspirals themselves are agential, and singing Country is an agential practice. We do not sing about the house, the *barrumbarrum*, or the wind, we sing them as we might breathe the air (see also Yunupingu and Muller, 2009). For response-abilities are to our ancestors, are *response-abilities as* our ancestors, entangling time and space – they are not separate from us.

Importantly, this is more-than-human. The wind sings and needs to be sung. Our response-abilities are not just to human ancestors, but as more-than-human worlds that might not even be there anymore. Trees cleared for a mine remain our response-ability to sing and hold and keep alive. Winds and the land, things not seen as sentient within a dominant Western frame, have response-abilities, emerging together as Country.

After building the shelter, Wurramala, the great hunter, considers the best place to go hunting, then carefully checks his canoe. He then makes his harpoon from a special tree and decorates his paddles. Here is Rrawun’s broad translation and interpretation of verse 6, after Wurramala has finished making the paddles:

6. . . . we sing about the water, tide coming in and tide going out. The hunter is now ready and just by the timing of the tides coming in and out. The *gunbilk marrawulwul* – the water. And also he has the feeling— *gatjpu’yun*. Like sitting and hoping. (translation)

We [men] try to re-enact that Wurramala, learn from a young age. If you are like him, have his hope, his ability to hunt and act and feed the family. When we were growing up we have to learn how to catch everything to feed our family. Learn where to get water, where to get kangaroo, emu whatever.

Just the hunter himself can read, he can read everything, like the nature. Now he is reading the sea. He's there, he's waiting for tide. But the canoe's a long way from the sea so he's waiting. That's what we do in the song too—sometimes the people say wait, we have to sing the tides before we head off. Before we go in the right direction. In the right order. So old people or even middle aged or wise men they sit there and listen. Old people sit next to young people when they're singing and listen and they correct them. Make sure they start and stop right, correctly. Time to travel, time to go hunting. (interpretation)

Wurramala needs to attend with great care to know what to do. He then has a responsibility to respond, like young hunters do, which includes the imperative to hunt and kill, but only at the right time after being told by the wind and the tide and the songspirals to do so. The *Rom* must be followed, but all is dependent on the context. The tide must be awaited; sometimes the hunt and the song, both now and when Wurramala did/does/will do it, must wait for the tide. The singing of the tides must be started and stopped correctly. We must learn to pay attention to what we are told by Country. We must listen and attend, held by the *Rom* of place and the messages of place, and we must respond ethically.

Part of responding ethically is recognising that divisions between the everyday and the abstract, the spiritual and the work of life are misleading. For Yolŋu people to learn to sing and hunt, they must sit by their Elders and be corrected. They must know where to get water as a basic day-to-day activity that is their deep response-ability under the Law and in the ceremonies. The everyday must manifest ceremony. Ceremony must manifest in the everyday.

Response-abilities must also keep going. They continue as we write, sing, keen, listen, attend and respond. We do these things not about songspirals, but as them. As Rose (2007: np) points out, 'songs arise from the world and are sung back into the world, creating recursive loops of emotion and sentience.' These are the ongoing, emerging relationships that exist between all things, tangible and intangible, in/as Bawaka.

Response-abilities as continuity

Part of response-abilities as songspirals means response-abilities to nurture and share, both inter-generationally and inter-culturally. Songspirals must be kept alive by being passed along. Ensuring continuance, nourishing songspirals, is an important response-ability. Indeed, as this paper re-thinks responsibility in the context of ongoing Eurocentric colonising processes, it is contributing toward the continuation of the Goŋ Gurtha songspiral in both inter-cultural and inter-generational terms, centring the singing and keening, and the transmission of, songspirals.

Inter-cultural and inter-generational sharing is at the heart of our Collective's work. This is a carefully nurtured space, with many challenges and rewards (see for example, Country et al., 2018; Country et al., forthcoming; Suchet-Pearson et al., 2013). For the Yolŋu members of our Collective, *milkarri*, the important role women play in keening songspirals, is central in making sure the past/present/future is nourished. This is deeply significant and incredibly urgent. Banbapuy talks about how hard it is for Yolŋu women to do *milkarri*, how it is a deeper language, a sign of your *liya* – your harmony and knowledge of the song. She stresses that it is very hard to get it right and to put your knowledge on public display.

She also emphasises how important it is for Yolŋu women to do this, as women's role within songspirals has been repeatedly under-emphasised through gender-biased western academic attention, in popular culture, and even within local archives at the Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Art Centre, a community-owned and run venture in Yirrkala which focusses on supporting local Yolŋu culture. Hence, our Collective's work nurturing *milkarri* is not principally about interpreting songspirals but enacting them, supporting Yolŋu women's confidence in keen-ing them, as we co-become them. Even as we write them together for our book, or share some interpretation with you in this paper, we are nurturing and enacting *milkarri*. This is part of our *response-ability* as.

The importance of inter-generational and more-than-human learning, of young people paying attention, learning, making mistakes, being shown by Elders and non-humans the implications of those mistakes, and being helped to do things the right way, are all highlighted by Wurramala and Rrawun's translation and interpretation of the eighth verse where the hunter and his men have to push the boat into the water. Yolŋu are nurtured and knowledge is shared, but in the right way:

8. Walking. And they stop. And they have to push the boat. Then stop and put the paddle in the boat. (translation)

Coz when in *manikay* [songs], in real *manikay*, when we stop and push the boat without putting the paddle in that old people will say "he's still learning, so we're going to put the paddle in the boat. Can't push the boat while holding paddle". So it's a big boat, they need lots of people to push the boat.

Kate: The importance of doing it the right way, in order.

Rrawun: *Yo* [yes]. Some push and some pull the boat, canoe. Saying ooooooh we, ooooooooooh we. Pulling the boat. [shows us a particular hand movement]. Ooooooooo ooooooh we we. (interpretation)

Indeed, the Yolŋu members of the Collective have been incredibly generous in teaching Sandie, Sarah, Kate and Matalena what obligations and response-abilities come with their adoption into the family, including a response-ability to share in multiple directions and ways. Banbapuy explains this in relation to Sandie, Sarah and Kate:

... we can guide them through things that they must know. At the same time educate them. It's like a story path. You walk in and we are teaching you in a good way, a better way. And it's also establishing a relationship. You have a family and you are comfortable working, you see and we learn from you and you learn from us, because then people can see you are part of the family and they can call you by kin. And responsibility—yeah. When we go to your country you do the same for us. You guide us. When you come here you are part of the community because you are adopted into the family—call you by kin, because they know you who you are adopted by, you are not a stranger.

Songspirals are sung for, by and as Country, including ancestors, spirits and future generations. While we do not dismiss the opportunity or importance of sharing with a non-Indigenous audience, and much of our Collective's work is engaged with trying to do just this, ethically, we need to acknowledge the primacy of the songspirals, and use any academic and intercultural work to nourish songspirals in as many ways as possible. We have tried to

use our Collective's academic and intercultural work to nourish the songspirals through our being together, being on Country, recording, discussing and writing. These all form fragmented and partial but nonetheless integral aspects of songspirals. For the Collective, recording these songspirals and performing aspects of them aims to support and nourish learning across generations, places and times. As Deger (2007) shows, recordings made in this context have the potential to stimulate connections and imaginations as they show (and conceal) tracings of songspirals and knowledges. Recordings, then, can support the nourishment of songspirals by facilitating inter-generational and inter-place sharing and learning among Yolŋu people.

However, despite the urgency, this sharing should not be rushed. The following passage, transcribing our conversation around Rrawun's interpretation, highlights the importance of going slowly and carefully, checking that each step is being done properly. Here, in verse 11, after Wurramala has seen the clouds and been them, brought himself into his power by calling his deep names, felt the motion of the boat and paddled, felt the destination, attended to the winds, and known the destination, he sees something and stops. Wurramala positions the boat to throw the harpoon:

11. Next is clap, stop, slow, he saw something, he must be very careful. Trying to adjust the boat to stop and reverse. Dance is forward and back forward and back. It goes for ages. Clap stick are going one, two, three, four, stop, sneaking to the water. The stop is part of the sneaking to the water.

Clapsticks one, two, three, four, oh-oh stop, sneaking towards it, the dugong gets away, follow the dust inside the water, then you see in the songlines how careful the *djabantj*, the Wurramala is.

Rrawun: [instructional aside and interpretation] sometimes in the dance, day one, the hunter is nervous, he's young. The *djunggaya*, that's the caretaker. He is the child of the land, or custodian, has the responsibility to make the call on the timing of the ceremony. So the *djunggaya* of the clan will say—oh we missed it. Really it's about the timing of the funeral. Last day they get it. This is for the first hunter . . . missed the catch of the day. Has to go back. The songlines, we missed the dugong. And every clan says *yo* [yes]. But according to the songlines from day 1 here in Arnhem Land we have funerals for one week or two weeks because there's five, six, or seven clan estates join to participate in that particular funeral and to give thanks to the person who passed away and to also give that spirit a safe journey to heavens. To get the spirit safe place to go, to ensure the spirit of the person will go the safe way to the spirit world. So goes to rest properly.

Goŋ Gurtha is about this area also up to ocean up to Torres Strait. This is the songline we are talking about.

Banbapuy: That's the second line—remember it's in order. Go back to where it started, the hunter goes out.

Rrawun: The hunter now he's in a stage where he's lucky or he's not sure.

Banbapuy: We're looking at the hidden Yolŋu mathematics and the songline.

Rrawun and Banbapuy's translation and exchange reveal songspirals as more-than-human processes that require from humans an attentiveness and ability to listen carefully to diverse

others to be performed correctly. We try to practice this *response-ability* as by contributing to inter-generational nurturing through songspirals and, in particular, through *milkarri*. For the academics in the collaboration, this posits an important ‘reorientation’ of academic research (Jazeel, 2016), whereby academic journal articles are just a part of the work and our responsibility as songspirals. Our writing work, both academic and popular, reflects listening and learning in ways that foster and celebrate relationships and connections among humans and non-humans and that direct attention to alternative ways of thinking, being and knowing. Importantly, traces and fragments of songspirals are shared here not as ‘facts about the Yolŋu’ to be known, but as a way to theorise together beyond disciplinary or academic boundaries and to place questions of ethics and relationships at the center of our work (rather than identities as academic experts) (Ahenakew et al., 2014; Hunt, 2013; Radcliffe, 2017). As a broad Collective, we focus our efforts on writing more-than-human and ontologically plural worlds in ways that do not reduce Yolŋu theorising to an object to be consumed in Western/colonial knowledge systems, or one that can only be understood in relation to Western identities. Response-abilities as continuity require attentive listening, learning and sharing to nourish songspirals in the various ways that we are able to do so as a Collective and as people who are part of the Collective, including as educators, guides, hosts, parents, grandparents and academics. In the following section, we consider the specific response-abilities of settler-academics working in this context.

Response-abilities as settler-academics

We come into our Collective from different positionalities. The Yolŋu researchers are contributing to a long history of Yolŋu empowerment through assertions of sovereignty, survivance and resistance to colonialism. Their parents and grandparents were part of the first land rights case in Australian history and Yolŋu were successful in having their sovereignty of the sea recognised in 2008 (Morphy and Morphy, 2006). In a range of areas, land rights, politics, education, Yolŋu have been engaging in putting forward their ways of knowing and being (Keen, 1994; Morphy, 1983; Williams, 1986).

One particular strategy was the Yolŋu establishment of a two-way system of equal knowledge exchange in the educational sphere in the 1970s (Christie, 1994). This has since been expanded as Yolŋu nurture both-ways collaborative engagements with *ŋäpaki* in a range of areas including with artists, academics and educators (Blakeman, 2015; Watson-Verran et al., 1989). Our Collective draws inspiration from and builds on these collaborations, nourishing and extending these relational networks and supporting Yolŋu movements.

Yet, we are acutely aware, as Noxolo et al. (2008: 164) observe, that settler-academics and communities, co-researchers and research participants are ‘all connected to structural processes that produce injustice’, but ‘we are not all equally positioned’. Indeed, there is an inherent challenge in making and undertaking ‘ethical behaviour in a knowledge system contaminated by colonialism and racism’ (Battiste, 2008: 503). Responsibility requires owning our ‘moral accountability’ and political accountability for our positioning and complicity in systems that are unjust (Rose, 2007). While, in our Collective, we are all teachers and learners in different ways and all writers and researchers, we are not all Yolŋu and this situates us differently in relation to structural processes. The settler-academics’ responsibility to be morally accountable invokes a range of tensions – intervening without imposing in unjust situations, representing learnings and knowledges without silencing or romancing, engaging with theory while remaining grounded and so on. In this section, Sandie, Kate, Sarah, Matalena and Jill explicitly discuss some of the ways in which they are honing their

response-abilities as settler-academics and undertaking ethical and meaningful behaviour as part of the Bawaka Collective. They talk here as a particular 'we', rather than as the Bawaka Collective, as they have particular response-abilities as settler-academics which require elaboration.⁸

As non-Yolŋu, as settler-academics, as people from 'down south,' we inhabit different roles in our Collective. We are adoptive sister, daughter, granddaughter, niece, drawn into our place and elsewhere in this article we talk in more depth about the ways we live these identities through *responsibility as*. And much of our writing-together, especially our books and articles for non-academic audiences are crafted directly by and with Yolŋu collective members. Yet, the more academic work is often written by the settler-academic collective members. And, even when all our collective words are co-written, as settler-academics we have a different relationship to these stories and different *responsibilities as*. Publishing is an important way of communicating and making academic work accessible to others. It is also a key performance indicator and often embroiled in university ranking battles. As part of our Bawaka Collective efforts, academic publishing is valued by the Yolŋu researchers as an important way of sharing Yolŋu knowledges with non-Indigenous audiences. However, setting stories and learning in English text is fraught. Publishing is an inescapably unidirectional mode of communication that conveys predetermined and fixed knowledge, yet the learning we seek to share as a Collective is fundamentally relational and contextual, and embedded in social relationships (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2016). Representing traces of moments and stories that arise from more-than-human connections in written work risks processing Indigenous knowledge through the conventions of western scholarship (Brigg, 2016) and 'refractive translation' that changes the meaning and logic of what we seek to share (Cole, 2017; Lloyd, 2012; Porr and Bell, 2011). Indeed, writing about more-than-human, more-than-now, affective, literal, abstract, sacred and mundane co-becomings brings a question of how to write and speak without essentialising, without dismissing Country or creating it as a backdrop when it is us.

There is the danger, too, of feeding colonial systems of knowledge production that promulgate binary categorisations of traditional/modern and authentic/inauthentic, and that further anthropocentric ways of being and knowing. In particular, we, as settler-academics, are concerned that our work may not do enough to challenge, or to help to heal, the many, ongoing colonising violences that are felt in very different ways in different places. We feel, and many see, the work we do at Bawaka as something very beautiful. But we are aware that some readers, listeners, students may then privilege this as an 'authentic Aboriginal experience' and, even subconsciously, draw on this knowledge to then denigrate other knowledges, peoples and Countries. For example, the knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples, whose territory has become urbanised, may be seen in opposition as corrupted, lost or in decline, as not as real, valid, legitimate or intact. Some, too, may see Bawaka as situated in a static, spatially contained, remote and romantic past, and contrast this with a more universal, progressive, urban future. Such interpretations are deeply problematic and we want to explicitly refute them; they evince the failure to understand historical contexts and differing technologies of dispossession and erasure, presume an authority to judge the authenticity of Indigenous peoples and to willfully understand certain spaces as emptied of Indigenous sovereignty, and circumscribe Indigenous futurity (Coulthard, 2013; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Wensing and Porter, 2015).

Our response is to emphasise continuity and change, to acknowledge colonial violences and respect Indigenous peoples' diverse responses to ongoing colonisation and to respect more-than-human worlds; to embed response-ability as part of our collaborative co-becoming. We share stories and learning to counter anthropocentric narratives of

relationships and place, to explore knowing and being as relational practices and to challenge the production of knowledge in ways that mute or obscure connections and diverse others, both human and non-human (Ahenakew et al., 2014; Howitt, 2011; Nxumalo, 2016). Indeed, our work is led by the more-than-humanness of the Collective (in the case of this article by Goṅ Gurtha) and acknowledged through the authorship of our work by Bawaka Country. Such sharing is not about producing discrete facts about Indigenous knowledges to be consumed and thus improve western practices. Instead, it seeks to challenge the epistemological and ontological horizons of western knowledge systems, to open up alternative approaches for those vested in western knowledge production systems, while primarily supporting work that fosters Yolṅu ways of knowing and being.

Centring Yolṅu ontologies and more-than-human authorship has required strong and careful responses to reviewers, editors and university leaders and bureaucrats. Responses that seek to categorise Yolṅu as ‘authentic’ or ‘traditional’, or as requiring legitimisation on the basis of western knowledge systems, evince an arrogance that stifles the recognition, attention and response Yolṅu ontologies require. The devastating implications of this arrogance and the need for respect are clearly explained here by Rrawun:

There are people who are teaching/thinking the right way and the wrong way. Now we are in a situation internationally known as global warming. Who did that? People who went to university and came out and did it. Yolṅu is similar but you have to have that respect. That respect that will take you as long as you go. That respect that you will grow your own clan estate to be strong, and that is what Yolṅu people learn, when we learn from childhood right up to the time when we go into men’s ceremony or women’s ceremony. We have that, so all the clans have that and have to be respected and you have to have that respect back to the other clan members. Without respect you are nothing.

Ethical co-becoming and being response-able in this context requires acknowledging the naivety of ‘heroic’ or ‘well-meaning’ responses and the desire to pursue a resolved, static, ethical position (Ahenakew et al., 2014), and instead necessitates a ‘dwelling’ in and as complex and uncertain places (Coddington, 2016; Lloyd, 2012). Paying attention and listening to more-than-human worlds provokes un-learning and re-learning; it draws us into relation with others whose whole – whose essence – we cannot know. Responding as more-than-human collaboratives requires, then, a kind of ‘indefinite uncertainty’ (Coddington, 2016: 318). The absence of resolution to ethical dilemmas and obligations encourages response-ability as a dynamic, contextual and ongoing way of working.

This approach challenges the way that academic literature tends to centre academics as ‘responsible’ to others with whom, or about whom, they do research. Indeed, the possibility of being held responsible to or for others merely repeats and embeds hierarchical and asymmetrical power relationships that position some humans as more capable of action and responsibility than others (Coddington, 2016). Preserving such hierarchies in our understanding of response-ability also risks weakening it to a transaction, a *quid pro quo*, that once again holds distance and difference between researchers and ‘the researched’ (Brayboy, 2013; TallBear, 2014). It also risks repeating, rather than challenging, geographical imaginaries in academic work that separate ‘the field,’ ‘the real world’ and ‘academia,’ and arrange geographies of knowledge production that again centre on academics and render others peripheral (Jazeel, 2012; Radcliffe, 2017). Lastly, focusing on holding academics ‘responsible to/for’ allows and encourages the notion of ‘innocent heroic protagonism’ as a subject position for academics, premised in part on the work of ‘giving voice’ to the marginalised (Ahenakew et al., 2014: 217). While working as a Collective responds to

calls to do research in more participatory ways (Jazeel and McFarlane, 2010), the more fundamental point is that living (and working) as kin, with shared *gurrutu* [kinship], prioritises connections and relationships, challenges separation of the 'field', research, and life, and challenges the notion of universities as the center of knowledge production. While to say this provides guidance, it does not give easy answers.

Gonj Gurtha helps us here. As Wurramala patiently attends to the tides and awaits the right time, he none-the-less does not make the catch the first time. In verse 17, Gonj Gurtha reminds us that part of the response-ability is not to give up, not to stop or assume an end. We must keep going:

17. It's not the last day [of the ceremony] yet—we haven't caught it so let's keep going. This is part of the responsibility. (translation)

As settler-academics, embedded in colonising institutions, we have a response-ability, as part of the discourses, to keep challenge and derail damaging and dangerous discourses, including those of invisibility and authenticity. As in this paper, we are trying to integrate that into the introductions of our articles and presentations, talking directly to our audiences and attempting to build a connection between not only people, but places, politics and discourses. We acknowledge these efforts cannot and do not reduce our responsibilities as people living on land that has been and is still stolen, as beneficiaries of ongoing processes of Eurocentric colonising within the colonial construct of Australia, and we do not suggest this is enough, but as an ethical obligation, and a part of many Indigenous legal traditions, it is none-the-less important, as it seeks to not reinscribe erasure. Like Wilson (2008), we seek to build connections not just to convey knowledge, but because the connection itself is important. It is an effort, perhaps clumsy, to step beyond the unidirectional and static nature of sharing inherent in written articles, and to acknowledge that words travel and become connected to different places and contexts. This is part of the way we live our response-abilities, through acknowledging that, even as we co-become in, by and through our kinship networks, we are differentially positioned with different responsibilities in different spaces. In these final sections, we return to writing as the Collective and how response-abilities flow beyond and through Bawaka.

Response-abilities beyond Bawaka

When the time is right, the clan leader will indicate that today, Wurramala will be lucky in his hunt. After trying and failing, beginning the songspiral anew each day, building the shelter, making the paddle and harpoon, watching the tides, moving the canoe and paddle, searching, harpooning and missing, coming back home and thinking about the day, today the full songspiral will be sung to its end. As Rrawun explains:

18. Now the last day—the same songlines but the last day everything. The 3 that are missed out, have to be on the songlines—first is the same, the second part if definitely going to catch something to satisfy the spiritual journey of his life, the octopus, the sunsets. If the hunter is lucky to get dugong, he knows it is the time of sunset, finishing on the songlines. Full on, the full *manikay*, the songlines giving them back to the person's family. Acknowledging the person who passed away and the family, and saying goodbye to the spirit and taking the spirit back to the spirit world. So everyone has to be satisfied. The clan leader has to be satisfied he's given all his memories, all his life, all his heart, to the person's family and the person. Every *manikay* has that journey from the start to the end. Doesn't happen one day. Can take 1-2 weeks. One song has to

finish every 3 days. Sit and sing that song, at night time. Each cutting the wood and making the shelter – night time *manikay*. If start in the morning – start in the morning, depends on the heat. If very hot start in the morning or evening. (translation and interpretation)

And so, we come to the culmination of our piece, although we frame it not as a conclusion but as a moving on, a spiraling back. We, and here once again ‘we’ are our more-than-human collective, look again through our response-abilities as, and take it further, beyond Bawaka and back to you. For another aspect of response-abilities is recognising that everything is thought about, written about, read about and responded to in radically different contexts (Howitt, 2011), on different peoples’ Country. Wurramala reads the tides and messages of his place, the clan leader responds to the spiritual journey of life, and of a particular family and set of clans. In the introduction, we acknowledged where this paper was conceived, written, reviewed, printed, read and shared. Here, in the conclusion, we are mindful of Chelsea Bond’s powerful reminder to always ‘Know Your Place’ (pers comm. Connecting with Place, Pre-IAG Conference Workshop, 11 July 2017). This includes knowing your place in terms of situating yourself in relation to discourses, processes and practices that (re)produce inequalities and can do great damage to people, non-humans and Country. It also requires attending to when, where and to whom knowledge is shared – in effect, knowing when it is your place to speak. It includes, too, Knowing your Place in terms of carefully responding to the call of Country (Johnson and Larsen, 2013; Johnson and Larsen, 2017) and connecting with and paying close attention to and as place.

We have focused on response-abilities as Bawaka so far in this paper. In this final section, we argue that learnings about response-abilities as Bawaka have resonances beyond Bawaka. As context is critical (Country et al., forthcoming; Wilson, 2008), we are not arguing that lessons from Bawaka can be directly superimposed in new contexts. What we are arguing is that many of the key principles and underlying themes may be relevant in many other contexts.

A key lesson for applying learnings from the Bawaka Collective beyond Bawaka is a reconceptualising of response-abilities as, not responsibility to or for. This refocuses responsibility as a relational act, rather than a response from privileged actors to passive others. Even what may seem like the most isolated acts of research (e.g. sitting in an archive, ruminating over a philosophical question) involve relationships and connections with histories that shaped the moment, futures that it may influence, and relationships with non-human agencies, the air that is breathed, the space made comfortable or uncomfortable, the enabling technologies and networks (e.g. computers, internet, social media).

We argue that all contexts are more-than-human, and therefore that all interactions bring with them ethical imperatives to hone one’s ability to pay attention. Paying close attention to the diverse contexts in which you find yourself is one key aspect of more-than-human ethical response-abilities. This is not a romantic ‘communing with nature’ in ways that make invisible the Indigenous histories/presents/futures/Law in your place – quite the opposite, it must be cognisant of the violences and exclusions which so often enable a western bonding with nature. But recognising our contextualised more-than-humanness is not enough; we also need to respond with great care to what we see, listen, smell, taste, feel, learn in situated, ethical ways.

This act of ‘responding as’ takes time and concerted attention. As Rrawun says, in response to a conversation about a lack of responsibility, care and respect in business, ‘They are scared of listening, they don’t listen to us, they do their own stuff’. Rrawun reminds us that paying attention requires great care:

Yes, yes, not to keep all of the world, but to try and tell some of the world, some of the people to stop, think and maybe come back to where they are. It is like too many people think the other

way around. They always follow the time, they are always on time ... we have to hurry, we have to do it, we have to do it ... You are killing yourself every day. You have to stop and think what you are doing and try and listen to your spirit. The sprit will tell you, the land will tell you. When you always go hunting you don't see things but sometimes you stop and see. That is what happens to the land—for example, the rocks and the black for the tide. Sometimes we don't see that. We just think it is the tide that went up and down, but it is the land telling us what has been happening along the years. And then, all along there, there used to be big trees, *djomula* [casuarina trees]—we didn't take notice of it. We thought, morning, breakfast, let's go fishing. After 20 years we saw something was wrong with the trees, we didn't know what it was. But in the beginning mother earth was telling us something was wrong. All the best trees have gone from the other side. Used to be the biggest one, prettiest tree in this area, so big you could hardly hug it. We have to stop and think and go back to the nature – mother earth is telling us to stop. If you keep following the tide and our own desire—next 50 years or 60 years we will come back and see everything's destroyed. (Rawun, July 20 2017)

Care is a fundamentally relational, situated response, a practice emerging with others and as recognition of a larger whole (Country et al., 2018, Lawson, 2007). Care emerges through shared connection with/as Country. Hence, acknowledging and privileging connections and relationships, through and as space, and through and as time, is essential:

... it's those that are not listening to people that are blinded by their own desires. Those people, it's time for them to stop and listen. Also learn a little bit about the land, about what the nature is telling them, hey? Those little things that they will know will bring the memory back and say aaah I know what I've done wrong and now I'm not doing it. It's not just him that is walking on the earth. There's another 7 billion people. We are not the only ones walking on the earth, breathing the air. More, other people, the same. Need to have the respect as well. (Rawun, 20 July 2017)

There are particular challenges in settler-colonial and other colonial contexts where the difficulties of responding-as align, reflect, reinforce and indeed often emerge out of colonising processes which actively tear apart the human and more-than-human relationships of reciprocity that responding-as seeks to nurture. This raises a range of difficult questions for settlers, how to *respond as* without appropriating the relational ontologies which enable the concept, how to start reciprocating-as when the whole settler project has been – is and will be – to destroy and displace relationships of co-becoming? How to avoid the danger of responding-as and reciprocating-as becoming yet another enabling mechanism for colonisation, this time to appropriate reciprocity itself?

Hence, the ability to respond is crucial. How able are settlers to *respond as*? Learning how to pay attention and how to care in more-than-human becomings are all critical – but so is the concrete work of healing and sustaining the relationships that settler society acts to destroy. This healing and nurturing is a core part of developing the settler ability to *respond as*. This resonates with Gruenewald's (2003) pedagogy of place and his idea of 'reinhabitation' which focuses the hard work of restoring the relationships that have been broken, forgotten and damaged. While specificities of place and history will always lead, there are examples. Larsen and Johnson's (2017) work, for example, speaks to the power of place and the ways that Native and non-Native people have responded to its call through their rich engagements with the Cheslatta Carrier Nation and their fight against Alcan, the Wakarusa Wetlands and place-based justice around the Waitangi Treaty Ground. In doing so, they

elaborate practical examples of how Native and non-Native people have heeded the call of place to defend and heal both themselves, the places and their interconnected more-than-human relationships. In an effort to extend practical thoughts for engagement beyond Bawaka, we have worked some of our learnings into an Intercultural Principles Handbook with a range of prompts and quotes to enable the reader to cultivate these ideas in their specific contexts (see www.bawakacollective.com.au).

Every human is always on Indigenous land, on Country, indeed through intense connectivities every human is always a part of more-than-human worlds (even Antarctica, Sky Country (Country et al., 2018), and every human needs to acknowledge and respond with care with the recognition of this more-than-humanness and the ongoing processes which may harm and or damage its well-being. One way into embracing this is through a recognition that you do not have response-abilities to a place, or for a person or issue, but *as* a place, *as* the person, *as* the issue. This reconfiguring of response-abilities goes beyond the individual, and it demands that connections and relationships are acknowledged and privileged (Haraway, 2015; Howitt, 2011) beyond our Collective, and beyond Bawaka.

And there's another thing—the generation—what's going to happen to them. Are they going to have the same air or same sky or whatever? Will they see the bird flying or kangaroo hopping or what? What if everything dies and we all move to cities? We must stop. Stop the destruction. (Rrawun, 20 July 2017)

Conclusions

In this paper, we discussed some of our *response-abilities as*: our response-abilities as songspirals, our response-abilities nurturing songspirals and enabling continuity, our response-abilities as settler-academics, and our response-abilities beyond Bawaka. These accounts are only partial and do not claim to be a full explication of the deep response-abilities of any of our Collective. Our response-abilities are diverse and multilayered, and they do not end. The Goṇ Gurtha concludes one journey, doing things in the right way and the right order, seeing the signs and 'thinking about things in different ways'. Yet, Wurramala's journey must always be sung, must always begin anew. When Rrawun says we must stop the destruction, and speaks of uncertainty for the future – what will Country be? What will we be? – when he talks about not noticing the trees and their disappearance, he is highlighting the need to deliberately, with intention, knowledge and care, continue singing the future, Country and our intra-relationships into being. So we finish, as does Goṇ Gurtha, with the knowledge that what is done now must be done again to nourish our past/present/future, never finished, never known, never certain, never fully shared. And we begin again. Such are our response-abilities as.

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge Bawaka Country and Yolṇu people both past and present.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project, Grant No. DP140100290.

Notes

1. In using the term ‘settler-academic’ we (Sandie, Sarah, Kate, Matalena and Jill) signal that we are settlers in Australia and we participate in and benefit from the settler colonial state, and that as a Collective we seek to challenge, critique and unsettle the very structures that privilege settlers and erase/subordinate/oppress Indigenous sovereignty and futurity. We do also note that such binaries as *njapaki*/Yolŋu, settler/Indigenous and Indigenous/non-Indigenous all invoke ‘a “premise of purity” on each side’ that does not attend to histories of migration and relation (Olsen, 2018: 212), or complexity of identities, relationships and power. We are not completely comfortable with the term settler – fearing it avoids the tough question of invasion and the ongoing nature of colonising. It also does not adequately allow scope for the settler to be unsettled; however, this is work for a later paper.
2. Sandie, Kate and Sarah have been part of the Bawaka Collective for over 10 years. Matalena and Jill have worked with the collective for over five years as research assistants and co-authors. Matalena has also worked in Galiwin’ku and Yirrkala in Northeast Arnhem Land.
3. See Country et al. (forthcoming) and Fisher et al. (2015) for a fine-tuned discussion of our Collective’s writing process.
4. Adoption is a generous act that draws non-Yolŋu into familial relationships. It allows relationships (brother, sister, poison-cousin, homeland, totem) to be defined, ensures no one is a stranger, draws in skills and resources, pro-actively extends relationality, and designates a particular family to look after and teach the adopted person regarding their role and responsibilities.
5. The Collective is in the process of co-authoring a book about Songspirals and women’s role of *milkarri*, keening the songspirals.
6. Goŋ Gurtha as shared with us included 18 verses. We engage with only some of the verses in this paper. We indicate when we are including a ‘translation’, where Rrawun is paraphrasing the meaning, or order, of the songspiral, and indicate when we are including an ‘interpretation’, where Rrawun shared some of the meanings or surface-layer interpretations of that verse.
7. There are over 20 smaller groups, clans or Yolŋu nations in Northeast Arnhem Land.
8. This section deals with how the Collective’s experiences are communicated outwardly rather than any issues the academics might experience that are more ‘internal’ to the Collective (Country et al., 2018; Country et al., forthcoming; Suchet-Pearson et al., 2013).

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Bawaka Country is a lead Author and an active partner of our research collaboration. Located in Northeast Arnhem Land, Bawaka Country incorporates people, animals, plants, water and land. For Laklak and her family it is what connects them to each other and to multiple spiritual and symbolic realms. It relates to Laws, custom, movement, song, knowledge, relationships, histories, presents, futures and spirit beings. Country can be talked to, it can be known, it can itself communicate, feel and take action.

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Laklak Burarrwanga is a Datiwuy Elder, Caretaker for Gumatj, and eldest sister. As such she has both the right and the cultural obligation to share certain aspects of her knowledge and experiences with others. She established her family-owned tourism business Bawaka Cultural Experiences and through this business she has taken advantage of being able to share her knowledge with tourists, including government staff in cross-cultural programs. This further developed her expertise at cross-cultural communication and made her aware of the knowledge that non-Indigenous people want and need to understand.

Ritjilili Ganambarr is the co-author of two books, *Welcome to My Country* and *Weaving Lives Together* and a book chapter for teachers on sustainability, and an illustrator of Nganapu Nguli Marrtji Diltjiyi (We Go Out to the Bush), a dual-language book written

in Yolŋu Matha and English. Ritjilili works with her family's highly successful Yolŋu owned-and-run Indigenous tourism business (Bawaka Cultural Experiences). She regularly travels to present workshops to non-Indigenous participants on Yolŋu culture and land.

Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubbs is a proud Yolŋu woman and leader from Northeast Arnhem Land. She has written six books. Her most recent book, *Welcome to My Country*, co-authored with her sisters, daughter and granddaughter, was published by Allen and Unwin and has been shortlisted for the Eve Pownall Award, the non-fiction section of the Children's Book Council of Australia. She has played an important role in the bilingual education movement in Arnhem Land working with Yolŋu Elders to develop both-ways learning. She is currently the principal of Yirrkala School.

Banbapuy Ganambarr is from the clan Gapiny and her moiety is Dhuwa. She has a background in education and completed her studies at Bachelor college, has been an ESL Curriculum Officer Coordinator for Arnhem Curriculum Services Branch and now teaches at Yirrkala school. Her work as an author, artist, weaver and teacher has allowed her to influence curriculum and teaching methods, and to stand up and explain community needs and goals to Government Departments and Officers. She also works closely with her family, supporting them in running a cultural tourism business.

Djawundil Maymuru is a co-author of two books, *Welcome to My Country* and *Weaving Lives Together*. Djawundil currently works with Bawaka Cultural Experiences, a highly successful Yolŋu owned-and-run Indigenous tourism business. As a key member of the business, she works with visitors to Bawaka to share life at Bawaka with them, helping them understand and respect Yolŋu culture and land. She is a college graduate and has been on the board of Laynhapuy Homeland Association. Djawundil has also been invited to share Yolŋu knowledge at conferences and seminars in New Zealand, Canberra, Sydney and Newcastle.