

Chapter 8

Ranger djäma? Manymak!

*Banduk Marika, Banul Munyarryun, Buwathay Munyarryun, Napunda Marawili and Wanyubi Marika*¹ facilitated by Seán Kerins

I will not lose my culture and my tribe to your games like a bird moving from place to place, looking for its camp or to sleep in other places, on other people's land that is not our land [...] I am an Aboriginal from mud, red mud. I am black, I am red, I am yellow, and I will not take my people from here to be in these other places [...] I want you to listen to me Government.

Dr Gawirrin Gumana AO²

Across the Laynhapuy Homelands when visitors ask, 'How's ranger work (*djäma*)?' the reply is almost always '*Manymak* (good)'. In this chapter we talk about why this is so.

The Laynhapuy Homelands, our country and its environment

Our homelands are situated in north-east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia, covering some 15,000 square kilometres of land and sea country. They are made up of 26 communities with a population of about 1200 people. The communities vary in size from large settlements of over 100 people to smaller settlements of 20 or so people. Within the homelands almost the entire population is Yolngu, speaking one or more varieties of Yolngu Matha as a first language.

Our country, where our spirituality, our identity, our heritage and our lives originate was created in the time we call *Wangarr*, when ancestral beings created the land, waters, plants and animals and us. These ancestral beings are still present in the landscape. The paths they took on their journeys and their resting places in the land, rivers and sea require our ongoing care and protection. Many of these

- 1 We wish to thank Dave Preece, the Laynhapuy Indigenous Protected Area manager, for facilitating this project with the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University.
- 2 Laynhapuy Homelands Association Inc (2010) Laynhapuy Homelands Information Guide, Laynhapuy Homelands Association, Yirrkala.

This is a preview. Not all pages are shown.