The Ripple Effect of the First All-Women's Band from West Arnhem Land

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or purpose. I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except for the collaborative publications and creative works acknowledged in the author attribution statement. Any assistance received in preparing this thesis and all sources been acknowledged.

Jodie Kell

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Ethics Approval

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of The University of Sydney according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2017/HE000586 "Women and Contemporary Music-Making in Maningrida".

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The creative works which comprise part of this thesis are collaboratively composed and produced with members of Ripple Effect Band. Author attribution (songwriter credits) are listed in Appendix 1.

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Abstract

The thesis examines what happens when women take control of the production and performance of contemporary rock music through an autoethnographic study of the Ripple Effect Band (REB) from Maningrida, a remote Indigenous community of West Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia. Since the 1960s, contemporary rock music has been popular in Arnhem Land, with bands such as Yothu Yindi, King Stingray and Sunrize Band achieving national success both within Indigenous communities and in mainstream Australia. Yet Indigenous female musicians have been all but absent from participating in contemporary rock music-making and REB is the first ever all-women's rock band from West Arnhem land. Popular in both Indigenous communities and in mainstream Australia, they successfully continue the Indigenous rock music tradition, yet they diverge because in addition to singing, the women are instrumentalists, singers, songwriters and producers. Focusing on this innovative group of women, the thesis aims to address how and why women have been sidelined in rock music nationally and in particular, how the gendered role for Indigenous women is even more pronounced in remote Australia, as women musicians must navigate cultural protocols as well as work in the male dominated industry at large.

As a non-Indigenous founding member of the band, the author of this thesis analyses intercultural collaboration using practice-based musical research demonstrating how a variety of perspectives can lead to innovative processes in composing, recording and performance. In addition, the thesis argues that intercultural collaboration has furthered the skills of the women musicians in multiple ways. By using musical and textual analysis of the songs, coupled with an autoethnographic approach that encompasses the voices of Indigenous band members, it examines how the women of REB make music in an all-women intercultural setting. In doing so, this thesis identifies the complexities of navigating gendered protocols and bias in their community and the rock music industry and argues that that the band members are positive role models for social change. It asserts that stepping into the previously male-dominated roles of managing, producing and performing one's own music can be life changing for women. Music provides a forum for negotiating agency and gaining status and this contributes to transforming social relations by elevating the perspectives of women. This thesis also argues that REB has contributed to instilling pride in language, culture and connection to country, fundamental to reversing the loss of endangered languages and cultural knowledge, a struggle that unites Indigenous men and women.

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Acronyms and Symbols

ABC Australian Broadcasting Commission
AFL Australian Football League commonly used to refer to Australian Rules Football
AIATSIS Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
APRA Australasian Performing Right Association Limited
AMCOS Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society
BAC Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation
BMF Bush Music Fund
BOM Bureau of Meteorology
CAAMA Central Australian Media Association
CDP The Community Development Program
EP Extended Play (a musical recording that contains more tracks than a single and less than an album)
MAC Maningrida Arts and Culture
MPA Maningrida Progress Association
NT Northern Territory
NTER Northern Territory Emergency Response
PBR Practice Based Research
PARADISEC Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures
PAW Pintupi Anmatyerre and Warlpiri Media
REB Ripple Effect Band
† Indicates the person is now deceased and care should be taken when reading this name aloud or referring to this person

Field Recordings: Naming conventions and accessibility

The author's fieldwork recordings are archived at the Pacific and Regional archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Languages (PARADISEC). The PARADISEC archive is an online digital archive and the collection of materials relating to thesis is JK1, accessible online at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1.
Files are named using the PARADISEC naming conventions:
Collection identifier – Item title – file number
For example, JK1-DY002-01.

West Arnhem Land language words and their spelling

Words from five different West Arnhem Land language varieties are used throughout this thesis. Such words are italicised followed by a language abbreviation and English translation in parenthesis. For example, *daluk* (K: woman) is the Kune word for woman. The abbreviation, language name and the source of spelling system is given below.

Language variety abbreviations and source of orthography used

B	Burarra	Glasgow, Kathy. 1994, https://www.janguny.com/
K	Kune	https://njamed.com/
N	Na-kara	Eather, Bronwyn. 2005.
Ndj	Ndjébbana	Green, Rebecca. 2007.
Y	Yolŋu	https://yolngudictionary.cdu.edu.au/

Where an Aboriginal language word is common to multiple languages no language abbreviation is given. E.g. *balanda* ('non-Indigenous person')

Some Commonly used West Arnhem land words

Bininj is a West Arnhem term meaning man, person or Aboriginal person and *Daluk* means woman or wife and can be used to refer to Aboriginal woman, or woman in general. *Bininj* is commonly used to refer to 'people' though it has the connotation of 'Aboriginal people' and this reflects the population figures that show Indigenous people make up 91.2% of Maningrida's population in the 2021 census. *Daluk* and *bininj* are used in this thesis to refer to Aboriginal people of West Arnhem Land. Choosing to use these terms acknowledges the *bininj* ownership of the land on which this thesis was researched.

Balanda is used in this thesis to refer specifically to non-Indigenous people connected to Maningrida. This term, originated from Macassan languages, has become standard in Top End Australian English and is commonly used in Maningrida.

In this thesis, the capitalisation of the word 'Country' is used to refer to a clan estate, also commonly called an outstation or homeland. The localised meanings attributed to Country and land ownership are outlined in Chapter 2, and throughout the thesis there is discussion of the importance of Country for Indigenous people.

A note on formatting conventions

This thesis uses different fonts and paragraph spacing to indicate different perspectives and voices.

The main text uses Times New Roman with no indentations.

> Quotes from literature are indented at 1.3 cm.

Ethnographic writing that uses first person pronouns is written in italic Cambria font with slight indentations of 0.5 cm.

> Quotes from Ripple Effect Band members are written in Calibri font and indented at 1.3cm. These are quoted from interviews and discussions.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Just as dropping an object in the water creates waves that spread out from the centre, a ripple effect occurs when one event or action produces effects that spread, subsequently producing other effects (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). This thesis is an autoethnographic study of the Ripple Effect Band (REB) (Figure 1.1), the first ever all-women's rock band from the West Arnhem Land region of the Northern Territory of Australia (Figure 1.2). The principal aim of this thesis is to understand how the process of developing this community-based women's music project has had far-reaching reverberations, empowering women to take control of music-making and in so doing impacting social relations in their community and in the wider Australian music industry. Through analysis of lyrical and musical elements of their songs and the creative processes of the band, it demonstrates how music can be a unifying and inspiring force that has the potential to cause a ripple effect experienced by more than the initial participants.

Figure 1.1 Ripple Effect Band, Sydney, December 2017
The original line-up of the band. L-R: Marita Wilton, Rona Lawrence, Tara Rostron, Jodie Kell, Patricia Gibson, Rachel Thomas, Jolene Lawrence, Stephanie Maxwell James

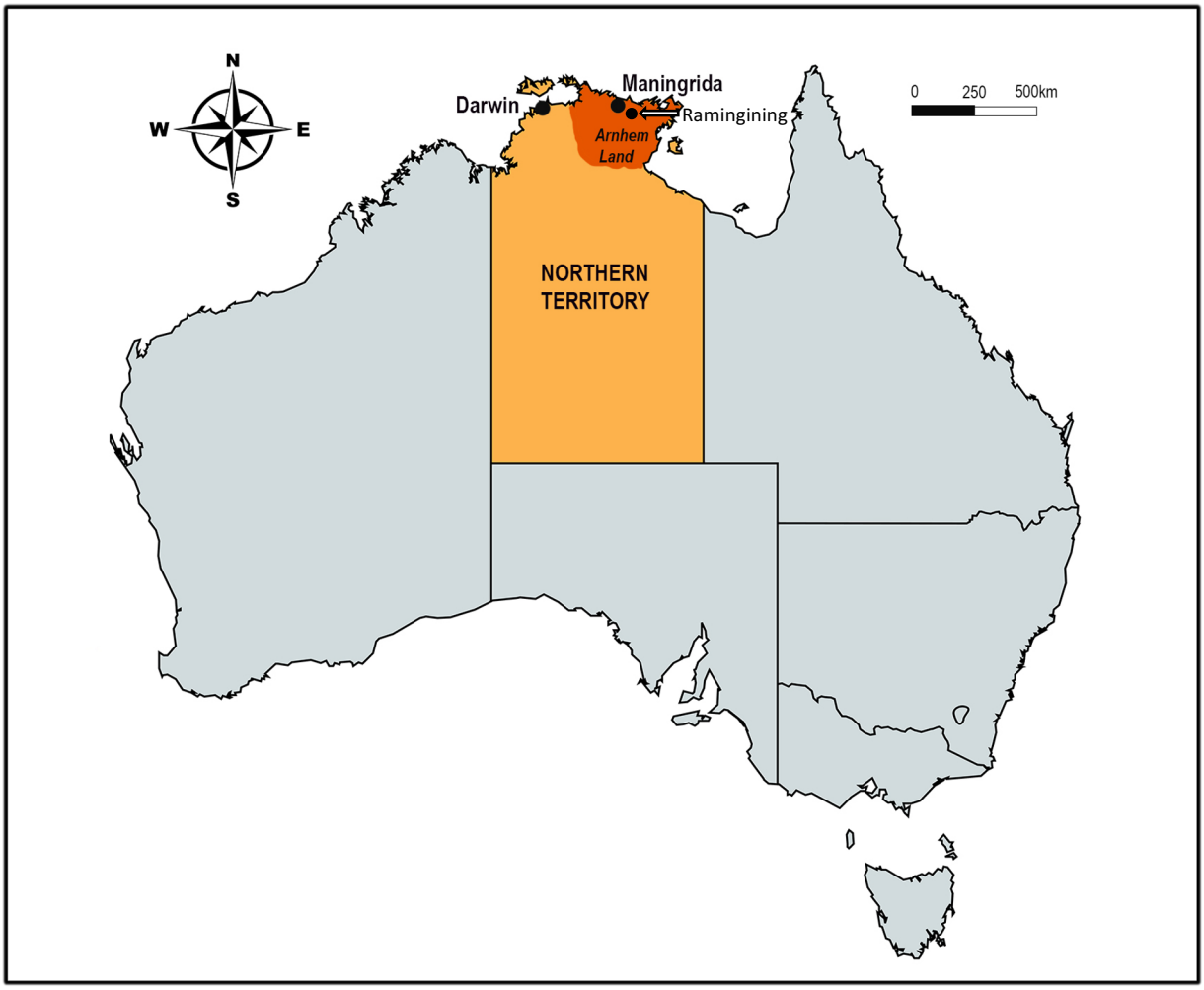

Figure 1.2 Map showing the location of Maningrida, Arnhem Land and Ramingining in the Northern Territory of Australia

REB formed as a community-initiated music project resulting in creative collaboration between myself and a group of Indigenous musicians (Figure 1.1). In this Chapter I describe the aims, socio-political context and methods of the research and conclude by providing an outline of the chapters in this thesis. Section 1.2 describes the context of the research, showing how it was guided by the aspirations and aims of the Indigenous participants. Following a request from the West Arnhem Land women in 2017, I helped form REB, rehearsing, performing, co-writing and co-producing songs with the band and taking on the role of band manager. Whilst the aim of the project was to investigate the role of gender in music-making, working with Indigenous participants necessitated a consideration of intersectionality concerning my role as a non-Indigenous researcher in Australia. We developed a research design that was reflexive and flexible, allowing for cultural safety and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003: 212). Cultural safety occurs where there is no "assault challenge" or denial of identity and is about "shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and

experience of learning together" (Williams, 1999: 213). The research was underpinned by the principles of the Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (AIATSIS, 2020). Flexibility in the participant-led design required the use of a range of methodologies, such as practice-based research, applied ethnomusicology, song analysis and autoethnography, each of which will be discussed further in Section 1.3. Intercultural collaboration forms a key theme of the thesis.

REB's published recordings and public performances constitute a major part of the creative output on which this study is based. These works are collaboratively composed, performed and recorded, as described in the copyright registered with APRA AMCOS (See Appendix 1).[1] The three published song recordings, including their associated film, text and images, comprise the 2018 Extended Play (EP)[2] *Wárrwarra,* the 2020 children's song "Nabárrdja" (released through ABC Kids) and the 2024 album *Mayawa*. This thesis contains hyperlinked song titles and album names that take the reader to the audio on Spotify. In addition the thesis contains other audiovisual material, including audio excerpts and unpublished media. These are listed in the table of contents. My analysis of these outputs, discussed further in Section 1.6, finds that a strong sense of community is engendered by the songs' musical expression of shared identities in language, culture and connection to country. A further reading is that performing the songs at public events has raised the status of the women of REB, providing a powerful means to change attitudes towards women more broadly.

1.1 Research aims

This thesis uses the development of REB to explore the role of Indigenous women in popular music, with a particular focus on rock music, considered a masculinist genre of music (Leonard, 2017, Frith & McRobbie 2000, Evans, 1998, Ottosson, 2016). It explores why Indigenous women have been marginalized in the music industry, and analyses of how REB, as the first all-women's rock band in the region, has managed to overcome this; examining how they navigate gendered protocols specific to their region and contribute to changing gender

[1] APRA and AMCOS register and pay royalties based on copyright of songs. They pay music creators for the use of their music through a licensing system.
[2] An EP (Extended Play) is a musical recording that contains more tracks than a single but fewer than an album.

stereotyping in the wider music industry (Ottosson, 2016, Strong & Raine, 2019, Cooper et al, 2017).

In so doing, this thesis aims to address the underrepresentation and limited documentation of women in the canons and histories of Australian rock music (Strong, 2010, 2015, McCormack, 2020). The lack of coverage of women artists has made it difficult for them to reach audiences, rendering female artists as invisible, or their contribution as mediated by men (Frith & McRobbie 2000, Leonard 2017, Mayhew 1999). This has contributed to a sense that even successful female artists are not good enough, which has influenced industry hiring practices, event curation and media coverage, contributing in turn to women being under-represented in radio airplay, festival line-ups and media reviews (Strong 2010).

There has been very little examination of the political nature of Indigenous women's music. This thesis aims to show that REB's active participation in the male-dominated genre of rock music has been a radical act that has contributed to increasing agency for women and the expression of female perspectives. While some significant studies have shown the political nature of expressions of Country and land rights by Indigenous male artists,[3] they include little mention of the extreme gender bias of Indigenous rock music and what it means to exclude women from this platform. Notable exceptions include anthropologist Åse Ottosson's ethnographic study of contemporary forms of Indigenous manhood in the world of country, rock and reggae music in Central Australia (Ottosson, 2016), which recognises the correspondence between rock music and male identity and how this makes music spaces uncomfortable for women. Clint Bracknell's exploration of the rock band format as an intercultural space for "exchange, experimentation and working things out" also provides more balanced coverage through case studies that include the contribution of female artists in foregrounding Indigenous languages and worldviews (Bracknell, 2019, 2022).

Key writers have focused on Indigenous women's music. This thesis draws heavily upon Katelyn Barney's extensive documentation of the opinions and experiences of Indigenous women musicians in the early 2000s, which demonstrated how Indigenous female musicians and producers like Lexine Solomon and Shellie Morris used music to portray confidence and

[3] See Breen 1987, 1989, Dunbar-Hall & Gibson,2004, Castles, 2016, Corn, 2002, Dunbar-Hall, 1994, 1997, 2004, Stubington & Dunbar-Hall, 2004, Yunupingu, 2004, Bracknell, 2019

social power, negotiate social agency and control the expression of their cultural identity (Barney, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). Barney's close long-term collaborative relationships and co-authorship with female Indigenous musicians influenced my approach in this research. Around the same time, Liz Reed's study of songs written by and about Indigenous women explored musical expressions of identity, and attitudes towards race and gender (Reed, 2002). Over ten years later, Jilli Streit-Warburton's review of the first national Indigenous women's music festival "With Open Eyes", objected to the still apparent "deafening silence" about Indigenous women contemporary musicians (Streit-Warburton, 2015).

This thesis will expand understanding of the political nature of contemporary music created by Indigenous women through a focus on REB in the 2020's. As the first women from their community to play rock music, analysis of their creative processes, motivations, experiences, and the reception of their music contributes to the central question of this thesis: what happens through the development of a project in which women take control of music production, including composing, performing and recording?

In unpacking this question, this dissertation examines four key areas:

- The impact of music-making on Indigenous women's sense of autonomy and agency;
- How the musical elements of REB's music are used to express cultural identity and connection to Country, thus acting as a unifying force between and within cultural groups;
- How a community-led music project can contribute to social change in gender relations in Maningrida, while also influencing other Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory;
- The implications of the musical practices of bands such as REB on the processes and attitudes of the wider music industry, as part of a growing movement pushing for gender equality and diversity.

The musical practices of REB demonstrate innovation because they are the first women to produce rock music in Maningrida. The next section will outline how the band was formed,

describing the background to my involvement with Maningrida community that led to the development of this study.

1.2 Context of the Research

In this section I identify the history and relationships from which the research emerged. As a non-Indigenous woman of Irish Australian heritage from Guringai country in NSW, I am an outsider researcher in the Maningrida community working with West Arnhem land musicians. Working at the "contact zone between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people" is complex, but intercultural collaboration can provide a space to commence dialogue in meaningful ways, enabling the sharing of knowledge and skills between different cultural groups (Barney, 2014: 2). As I started the research, I felt keenly the need for it to be useful for the Indigenous participants and the community, and I brought my skills as a musician, music teacher, audio engineer and composer to share, in exchange for learning about the musical practices of the region. I already had a relationship with Maningrida community that was key to the development of the collaborative research (Barney, 2023:1). The next section outlines how these relationships began and their influence on the focus of the research project.

I lived in Maningrida with my family between 2002-2006, working as a schoolteacher at the secondary school of Maningrida College. 2004 was the first year that students could graduate with their Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) in Maningrida. Unlike the 'post-primary' curriculum implemented up until this point in time, students now studied a range of subjects with more specialized teachers. A key feature was the dynamic music program supported by the Northern Territory Music School. Co-teaching with An-barra musician Djolpa McKenzie and Burarra musician Horace Wala Wala, as well as with non-Indigenous musicians Megan Atfield and Scott Trenwirth, we ran hands-on music classes: learning instruments, forming bands, writing and recording songs, and then touring the resulting albums to Darwin and Garma Festival in East Arnhem Land. It was an exciting time because for the first time, schoolgirls started to learn instruments and were able to form bands on their own. One such band was the Front Street Girls and in 2006, they won Emerging High School Talent of the Year at the NT Music Awards. Members of the Front Street Girls would go on to become key members of the Ripple Effect Band.

At the time, I was living next door to established gospel musicians Rachel Thomas and her husband Jacob James†. They would travel around Arnhem Land attending Christian rallies and funerals, performing gospel songs and songs about the history of Maningrida.[4] They shared their songs with me and we would go hunting and fishing out on Jacob's Country at Ndjúdda and Makóddja. This was the beginning of a long friendship, raising our sons together in Kunibídji Country.

After five years my family left Maningrida to return to NSW and live near our own families. Three years later the community got a mobile phone tower, and with the introduction of smart phone technology, I was able to reconnect with former students and friends and hear news about life in Maningrida. On social media, the young women of the community, including ex-students, described being involved in music events and recordings, such as hip-hop videos and performances at the local Lúrra music festival, primarily as backup singers. None played instruments. I received messages from ex-students saying that they missed being in a band.

In 2016, I returned to Maningrida for two weeks to talk about plans for my PhD research, hoping to put my skills to use and reconnect with the community. I was warmly welcomed back and directed to the local Wíwa Music Studio, an initiative of the local Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC). I found my co-teacher Djolpa Mackenzie working there, along with Anjawartunga Maxwell† from Letterstick Band. I was soon handed a bass guitar, and I settled back into the improvised music jams of the Maningrida music scene. Djolpa had an openness to playing music with women, and he warmly welcomed me back into the music studio. We soon got talking about ex-students, and he encouraged me to find some of them to see if they wanted to play music again. I spent time meeting up with old students and talking about music. We also held a women's music jam with eight women and their children. I talked to them about my ideas for a women's music project where women could meet and play music together again.

Following the direction of these musicians, I approached two Indigenous organisations in Maningrida to see if they would support a women's music project, both of which wrote support letters for my Ethics Application at the University of Sydney. One was the Cultural Research Office of Maningrida Arts and Culture and the other Lúrra Language and Culture Centre at

[4] There are two songs from this category on our recent album, "Walaya" and "Makéddja".

Maningrida College. Both strongly supported my practice-based research focused on women and contemporary music in Maningrida.

I returned to Maningrida in 2017 to commence four months of fieldwork. The aim of my fieldwork was to investigate the role of women in music-making in Maningrida. The research project aimed to engage local people through music. It was based in the Wíwa Music Studio as part of the Community Development Program (CDP).[5] During this time, BAC and Maningrida Arts and Culture (MAC) asked me to run music workshops for women. I soon ran into or looked up ex-students who were interested in playing music again. Jolene Lawrence, Tara Rostron and Patricia Gibson were first, then they invited Rona Lawrence, Jolene's sister. All became members of REB. I searched for my old neighbour Rachel Thomas and found her at a sad time in her life. Her son had taken his own life six months earlier. He was the same age as my son Jakson. Rachel, as a gospel singer, knew about the power of music to heal and inspire, so she also got involved in the project. Stephanie Maxwell James joined, bringing the distinctive An-barra music style and her left-handed drumming, and this is how REB started.

We spent weekdays rehearsing in the Maningrida studio, writing and learning songs. We wrote biographies and took photos, considering what information we wanted to share on social media and our website. We spent the weekends out bush on country, fishing and hunting across coastal areas for shellfish and crabs, camping and cooking on the fire. We bonded, Indigenous insiders and me, a non-Indigenous outsider, as we created shared experiences of being on Country and then expressed them through song writing and performance.

When it came to choosing a name, we wanted to reflect this connection to the natural environment in our creative processes. My son Jakson, who has also known the women in REB since the early 2000s when he was a young boy living in Maningrida, suggested "Ripple Effect" after watching a music video from Maningrida of the same name. Everyone was familiar with the video, produced by Indigenous Hip Hop Projects (IHHP) and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and some band members were involved in the project, appearing in the video. It aimed to raise discussion about legal themes such as "respectful relationships and the ripple effect of domestic violence on the community, including people

[5] The Community Development Program scheme, the Commonwealth Government's remote employment and community development service.

going to jail" (Indigenous Hip Hop Projects, 2015). This video meant the meaning of the term "ripple effect" had already been introduced in the community and we all believed it conveyed ideas we wanted to express. Placing "band" on the end referenced a common practice of local bands such as Letterstick Band, Sunrize Band and Saltwater Band.

After four months, the band was ready to perform, so we organized a gig at the local shop on a Thursday, the day of late-night shopping. We set up out the front and invited local bands to join in. REB band members set up and ran the PA with support from Marshall Campion, from the Wíwa Music Studio. REB performed original rock music, singing in local languages and playing instruments. The audience included Dukúrrdji clan leaders and traditional custodians of Maningrida, who were enthusiastic about women playing music. It was a successful night that led to further opportunities for the band.

The following week I was contacted by the committee of Bak'bididi festival in Ramingining, a community 200km east of Maningrida (See Figure 1.2). They had heard about the women's band and invited us to play at the festival, to be held the following weekend: REB's first performance outside of Maningrida. The band was nervous about the reception of a group of women playing in a rock band, as it had never happened before in the region. We invited Anjawartunga Maxwell, band member Stephanie's father, to sing the "Diyama" *kun-borrk* on stage with us. As a senior songman and established professional rock musician, Anjwatunga's public support for us to perform music increased our confidence that this would be socially acceptable. As we walked off the stage, the other male musicians stood and clapped as we passed in a sign of respect. From that moment, the band was accepted into the Arnhem Land music scene, the only all women's rock band playing at local festivals and events. Like a pebble dropped in the water starting a ripple effect, this was a pivotal moment in solidifying my research project. Collaborating with and supporting the Indigenous women of REB, I would explore how the development of a community based musical project and its creative outputs could contribute to personal growth for the participants and societal change in Maningrida and beyond.

The next sections will consider ethical practices concerning research with and about Australian Indigenous people which contribute to the research design and methodology.

1.3 Ethical Considerations

Indigenous people have the right to control and maintain their cultural heritage and this includes research undertaken with and about them (AIATSIS, 2020: 3). This section will show how the research methodology and design of this thesis has been guided by *The Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research* developed by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS, 2020: 10). The code lists four key principles: Indigenous Leadership, Indigenous Self-determination, Sustainability and Accountability and Impact and Value and the following paragraphs outline ways in which research design has followed ethical and responsible practice.

The principle of Indigenous leadership has been implemented in the way that the research emerged from long-term relationships and was initiated and approved by multiple groups and organisations in the community. The intercultural collaboration at the core of the research reflects the principle of Indigenous Self-Determination. Basing research workflows on models of practical activities is a way of using Indigenous methodologies and skills in academic research (Payi Ford, 2020: 14). The practical processes of composing, performing and recording music have been a way of creating space for these Indigenous participants to engage with and lead the research, influencing the direction and shaping focus subjects and themes. Creative outputs, co-presenting at conferences and co-authorship recognise Indigenous ownership of knowledge and respect the participants as partners in the research.

Over the course of the project, I have demonstrated the principles of Accountability and Sustainability by reporting to the community through information sessions held in Maningrida, involving the Cultural Research Office of Maningrida Arts and Culture and Lúrra Language and Culture Centre, attending community meetings and sharing outputs, including commercial releases of creative works and an archival collection created with permission from participants.[6] This has resulted in a substantial body of work that will remain accessible to community members after the research project ends.

Benefiting the community has been an aim underpinning the research methodology and demonstrating the principles of Impact and Value. As an outsider researcher, I wanted to give

[6] JK1 collection held in the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Languages (PARADISEC)

something back to the community in exchange for the knowledge and academic acknowledgement I would receive. The following section shows how a flexible and intuitive research process combined with creative practice have demonstrated reciprocity and respect through the use of appropriate ways of creating, sharing and disseminating Indigenous knowledge.

1.4 Methodology

Reflection on ethical issues surrounding research with Indigenous participants led to a flexible research design and in this section, I describe the multiple methodologies this required.

1.4.1 Practice Based Research and Applied Ethnomusicology

As described in Section 1.3, the findings of this thesis were born from a practical research project that initiated the development of REB. There are a range of practice-led research methods, including: practice-as-research (in which the research consists entirely of the creative practice) and practice-led-research (which focuses on the nature of creative practice to advance knowledge about or within that practice). Because this study aimed to investigate wider social and cultural issues, the term best describing the approach is **practice-based-research** (PBR), in which "the creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge" and is accompanied by critical discussion on the significance of the creative works to the area of study. The creative act becomes an experiment designed to answer a research question (Skains, 2018: 85-86). This approach is suited to Indigenous contexts because it uses alternative ways of creating, sharing and disseminating knowledge, with a greater recognition of oral and artistic formats to complement or replace academic writing (Swijghuisen Reigersberg & Lloyd, 2019: 383-384). The question of what happens when women take control of music-making is investigated through analysis of the innovative creative processes of REB. The research and practice operate as "interdependent and complementary processes leading to new and original forms of knowledge" (Candy et al, 2022: 27-28), including a range of creative outputs and this written dissertation.

This PBR project is also an example of applied ethnomusicology, defined by ethnomusicologists Svanibor Pettan and Jeff Titon as "a music-centered intervention in a particular community, whose purpose is to benefit that community" through economic advantage, musical benefit, social improvement and/or cultural good (Pettan & Titon, 2016: 4).

They outline three main areas of activity for applied ethnomusicology: cultural policy interventions[7], education and advocacy, and the following paragraphs will outline how these are relevant to the research project.

Encouraging and supporting women to play music in Maningrida is an example of a cultural policy intervention that has contributed to changing the musical culture of West Arnhem Land. While there is some unease about the potential of applied ethnomusicologists in natural processes of musical change (Titon & Pettan, 2016: 21), the risk is counteracted by the fact that the project was initiated by West Arnhem Land female musicians, solidly supported by community leaders and local organisations. Women's musical practices would not have developed in the same way without this support and it has been an opportunity to investigate how the development of a women-centred music project has impacted the musical practices of the region thus drawing conclusions about gender relationships on both a local and national level.

An essential element of the project has been education: to support REB members to develop musical skills and music industry knowledge and share this with other community members and groups. The first years of the project involved me spending time in the Maningrida music studio, teaching instrumental, audio engineering and music production skills. Together we developed songwriting capacity and knowledge of the music industry, and as the band has developed, these skills and understandings have been passed onto others through music workshops, school lessons and informal sharing of knowledge with friends and family.

At the start of the project, I took on the role of band manager, at the request of the West Arnhem Land band members. This involved advocacy such as accessing funding and resources, organising the logistics of touring and recording, as well as building social media and PR campaigns that helped to shape the image the band presents to their audiences. Figure 1.3 illustrates the responsibilities and areas of business I undertook as a band manager, drawing on my experience in the music industry and my understandings of the specific social structures and musical practices of the Maningrida community. I also supported skills training in this area for other band members through organising their attendance at workshops run by music

[7] Titon & Pettan are not referring to government policy, rather they use this term to describe the involvement of ethnomusicologists in the promotion of forms of cultural expression to benefit artists, communities and music traditions (2016: 7).

industry organisations and mentoring sessions at band meetings, which ensured the women were informed as they made decisions about opportunities and planned events, tours and performances.

Figure 1.3 Diagram of the Roles and Responsibilities of Music Managers and Music Artists
This diagram was constructed after a series of band meetings and music industry workshops, aiming to promote better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of music managers in the mainstream music industry. The diagram has been discussed and modified with input from REB band members, and we continue to use and update as our understanding of the roles and responsibilities of music managers increases over time. In this way the diagram is a tool for REB for communication and building balance between artists and myself as an artist manager. It also demonstrates the complex and time-consuming nature of music management.

My work as manager has both helped and hindered my research. It has taken a lot of my time and energy to manage the band, and this has taken away time from working purely on my thesis. On the other hand, it has opened up opportunities for innovative fieldwork methods providing

a range of experiences with the band members that revealed insights into the role of Indigenous women in music making in Maningrida.

My effectiveness as a manager has also been enhanced through my researcher-practitioner role and affiliation with one of the biggest music education institutions in Australia, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, leading to tangible benefits for REB. For example, when I returned from Maningrida, through the encouragement of my supervisor Linda Barwick, I worked with Clint Bracknell to bring the band down to record an EP at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. We enlisted the help of producer and music lecturer Paul Mac and recorded our debut EP *Wárrwarra* featuring four songs in four Indigenous languages.

This EP and surrounding performances are part of an extensive body of creative works arising from the PBR project. The next section will discuss my approach to analysis of the significance and relevance of these works to the aims of the research.

1.4.2 Song Analysis

Song analysis is a process of understanding (Barwick, 1990: 60) that provides insights into how innovative musical elements produce multiple layers of meaning negotiated between listeners and performers (Moore, 2012: 3-5). As discussed in the previous section, focusing on songs collaboratively produced during the research foregrounds the voices of the participants and recognises Indigenous ways of creating, sharing and disseminating knowledge. This section outlines the approach to song analysis used in this dissertation.

The framework for song analysis combines methodology from popular music studies with perspectives from the analysis of traditional Australian Indigenous songs. This approach examines musical text as a fluid artefact with a variety of forms with interrelated musical, performance and production elements. It also draws upon Phillip Tagg's adaptation of semiotics, the linguistic study of signs, connecting music to wider socio-cultural contexts. This includes studying visual, ritual, historical and linguistic aspects as well as performance situations and listening attitudes of audiences (Byron & O'Regan, 2022: 94, Tagg, 1982: 4).

Because it is uncommon for both popular musicians to create or read written scores, popular music studies accepts song recordings as text (Byron & O'Regan, 2022: , Moore, 2016). The

text or “track” can be viewed as the song itself (including structure, lyrics, melody, rhythm) and the performance for a particular recording (including style, tempo, dynamics, instrumentation) (Moore, 2012:). “Hooks” in popular music are musical or lyrical phrases or events that stand out and are memorable (Byron & O’Regan, 2022: 2). Basing analysis on hooks allows for a flexible way of addressing the complexities of contemporary songwriting and recording techniques used in pop music (Byron & O’Regan, 2022: 97). Hooks can be divided into textual (e.g. lyrics, melody, rhythm and harmony) and non-textual performance and production elements. Performance elements include vocal style and tone, instrumentation, tempo and dynamics, and production elements include sound effects, tape editing and looping, and signal distortion such as EQ, reverb and echo (Burns, 1997: 2, Byron & O’Regan, 2022: 90-91)

Analysis of the songs in this thesis also draws upon the concept that Indigenous Australian songs can be a bundle of a number of components (Berndt, 1965: 247, Turpin, 2005: 90, Walsh, 2007: 137). In her analyses of the form and meaning of the Kaytetye women’s Akwelye songs in Central Australia, NT, Myfany Turpin lists ownership, melodic contour, visual design/painting, dance movement, rhythmic pattern, song text, expansion on meaning and lexical content as elements to be considered in analysis of the meaning of songs (Turpin, 2005: 90). Figure 1.4 shows how I have extended this model, amalgamating it with popular music approaches discussed above. Analysis is foregrounded by cultural elements: song ownership and the authority to perform, cultural meaning, connection to Country and *Djang* (Ndj: Dreaming) and song language. The model uses Burn’s elements of song components: lyrics, melody, rhythm and harmony, as well as specific components of song recordings and live performance. The analysis focuses on how these elements contribute to making meaning with and through the song.

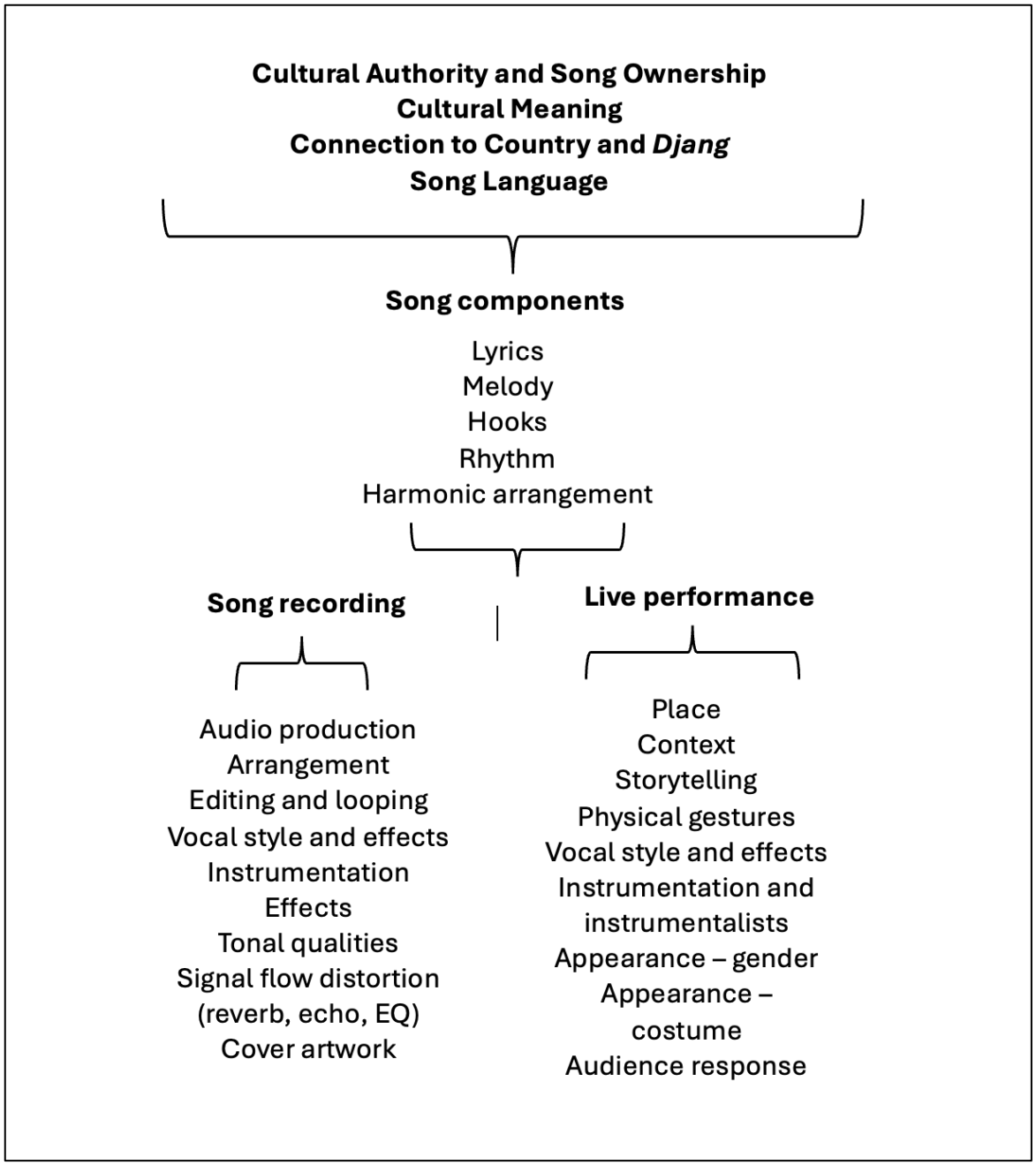

Figure 1.4 Components of song analysis
This figure is adapted from Turpin's diagram of Indigenous song components based on analysis of Kaytetye women's Akwelye songs (Turpin, 2005: 90), introducing elements of contemporary songs

Including components of live performance in musical analysis shows that songs are not static forms but change according to different contexts. Exploring the differences between versions of songs, from initial recordings to final product can lead to insights into the creative processes of musical artists (Tatom, 2000: 166). The next section will discuss the autoethnographic methodology used in this study to examine creative process and forms of expression through song over time and in different contexts, outlining the schedule of fieldwork and how it is incorporated into this thesis.

1.4.3 Autoethnography

Autoethnography is an autobiographical approach that is characterised by a focus on "intimate involvement, engagement, and embodied participation" in the subject matter one is exploring (Ellis and Bochner, 2006, p. 434). For researchers working in cross-cultural contexts, it can provide perspectives on the interconnectedness between personal and cultural, social, and political issues and support relationships between the researcher and participants (Bartleet & Ellis, 2010: 6-7). There is a long history of non-Indigenous people researching Indigenous people, without considering the power imbalance which can lead to exploitation. For this reason, non-Indigenous researchers have tended to discuss their positionality in a range of ways, recognising their privilege and hoping to be able to acknowledge and foreground Indigenous voices in their work (Barney & Solomon, 2009: 212-213).

Using autoethnographic methods has enabled me to navigate my positionality as both an outsider (a non-Indigenous woman from NSW), and an insider (a collaborating artist in REB). I have struggled to incorporate my own perspectives because of my desire to highlight the voices of the Indigenous participants in the research over my own. I have felt that this is **their** story, but I recognise here that it is also **my** story. Section 1.2 outlined the context of the research and how the project emerged from connections made during my time as a school teacher in Maningrida community in the early 2000s. In this section I consider my personal journey as a non-Indigenous Australian, asking how I ended up living and working in Maningrida with such a strong interest in Indigenous music and culture, and how this has affected the aims and methods of this research project.

Music learning and playing has been part of my life since I was young. My mother was a music teacher, teaching piano from home, organising and conducting concert bands in local schools and playing piano for musicals in the community. She taught me and my brothers, and we also took lessons and got involved in school bands and music programs. I learnt piano and brass instruments at this time and music became a part of my life. As I grew up, I started to enjoy contemporary music forms, such as rock, reggae and ska music. My brothers and I were captivated by ska and reggae music from Jamaica and England, such as the Skatalites, Bob Marley and the Special AKA. This music introduced us to the expression of black rights

through music, such as Special AKA song “Free Nelson Mandela” that provided the soundtrack to anti-apartheid protests across the world.

Growing up as a teenager in Sydney in the 1980s, I experienced the vibrant and widespread independent rock music scene at the time, going to pubs and clubs to see live music. When I was 17, in my final year at high school, I went with my friends to see Australian rock band Midnight Oil. They were supported by the Warumpi Band from Papunya, NT and this had a great effect on me. I had not seen Indigenous people singing rock songs in Indigenous languages and seeing this dynamic rock band started my interest in Indigenous rock music.

Between 1987 – 1992, I studied Batchelor of Arts degree at the University of Sydney, moving to Redfern to be near the campus. I learnt a different version of Australian history from Indigenous perspectives, often shocking and eye opening. I attended a course at Tranby College, an Indigenous college in Glebe and heard about the Stolen Generation, meeting people who had been forcibly removed from their families. I witnessed police brutality in the Redfern community and joined protest marches for Indigenous rights. These experiences awakened concerns about social justice in my own country, a desire to learn more about the black history of Australia and contribute to reconciliation. Many of the protests would end up at The Block, the centre of the Indigenous community in the Sydney suburb of Redfern, where Indigenous bands would perform providing the opportunity to see a range of artists such as Tiddas, No Fixed Address, Kev Carmony, Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter. Having seen Warumpi Band and Yothu Yindi, I was particularly attracted to Indigenous rock music of the NT, and this prompted me to head north after I graduated from university as I wanted to experience more of Australia. When I arrived in Alice Springs, I found people speaking Indigenous languages as their first languages. I felt betrayed as I had not been taught that Indigenous languages were living, utilised and vibrant today. I had studied Japanese and French at high school and university and now I discovered there were languages in Australia that I could study and learn. This began my interest in Indigenous languages.

In 1995, I completed a Graduate Diploma of Education at Charles Darwin University with the aim of getting a job in a remote school. During my time in Darwin, venues such as the Workers Club and the Town Hall Ruins hosted bush bands (bands from remote NT communities) such as Yothu Yindi, Sunrize Band and Warumpi Band, as well as a host of locally popular bands such as Wirringya Band, Yugul Band, Saltwater Band and Letterstick Band from Maningrida.

I fell in love with the "top end sound"[8] and I was keen to get out and live in a remote community to find out the foundations of this music. I had met some musicians from the Gulf Region, so I moved to Borroloola, where the Yanyuwa and Garrwa people welcomed me and my partner into their community. During that time, I started my education in Indigenous music practices. The women of Borroloola generously shared their knowledge of Country, language and song with me, taking me through ceremonies and teaching me to dance. In the local rock music scene, I set up a music studio at the school and organised local performances. This led to my acceptance as a musician, and having a partner who also got involved meant that I could spend time in the music studio as a woman, learning the local songs and country blues style of guitar playing. These experiences combined when a group of Yanyuwa women and I formed an all-women's rock band to play at the local festival. We wrote songs and incorporated traditional songs, and we were a great success in the community. This was my first musical collaboration with Indigenous artists, and I became aware of the power of rock music to act as an intercultural space, but also a space for women to work together to express cultural knowledge and connection. The women in the band loved performing, but they had young children, and I was very pregnant, so we did not continue as a band. However, many of the women now work with Shellie Morris and the Borroloola Song Women, performing nationally, as well as becoming leaders in their community and beyond.

Living in Borroloola was formative, strengthening my education and understanding of Indigenous cultures. Working in the school, I learnt cross-cultural communication. Being taken into knowledge circles through music, I learnt to listen deeply. Walking together with my Indigenous colleagues and collaborators, I learnt to reflect on my position and to be careful not to value my education and perspectives over Indigenous knowledge.

Since then, as well as living in Maningrida, I have spent time working for Skinnyfish Music in Wurrumiyanga (Tiwi Islands), Wadeye, Nauiyu and Ltyentye Apurte, as well as in Yuendumu working for the University of Sydney. During this time, I have also upskilled by studying audio production at the Australian Institute of Music, as well as getting involved in local community music projects in NSW and NT. I am a multi-instrumentalist and an audio engineer and producer who manages the Sydney Laboratory of PARADISEC[9], a digital archive. Working at

[8] A localised reggae rock style that I will describe in more detail in Chapter 2.
[9] Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures

PARADISEC has further developed the range of my audio engineering, as well as informing my understanding of ethical considerations when working with Indigenous knowledge and traditions. I have been motivated by the desire to continue to take these useful skills back into community, sharing knowledge and opportunities to collaborate.

After years living and working in remote communities, I consider my education journey to have two branches, one that started in mainstream *balanda* public schools and universities and has resulted in this PhD research and the other that has occurred as I have lived and worked in Indigenous communities. I have been welcomed and taught the complexities of songlines and traditions, of rock styles and blues guitar licks, the ways of song transmission and ownership. I feel fortunate to have been gifted this knowledge, and I continue to learn and honour the rich traditions of Indigenous music that cross this nation. The next section will outline the fieldwork methods, showing how my involvement in a practical music project as a collaborator and educator enabled me to document the project, as well as support the development of women's music in Maningrida.

1.4.4 Fieldwork Methods

This section outlines the approach to ethnographic fieldwork that has contributed in a major way to the data on which this thesis is based. It complements the song analysis methodology described in the previous section, as it documents aspects of the non-static components that make up songs, such as performance place and context, as well as detailing the creative processes in composing. As a REB band member, I have been involved in songwriting, rehearsing, performing and recording music with the West Arnhem musicians as a partner in collaboration. I play lead guitar in the band and sing back-up vocals. My role as manager has also contributed to the ethnographic fieldwork providing perspectives on the wider music industry.

Fieldwork and the associated period of reporting back to the community took place over 8 years as documented in Appendix 2. There were several significant periods of this fieldwork when I stayed in Maningrida for several months at a time. I initially stayed for three months in 2017 when I started my research documenting the establishment of the band leading to debut

performances and an EP recording. In 2019 the band received Creative Australia [10] development funding and I spent three months in and around Maningrida, visiting the Country of band members, rehearsing, songwriting and working with and learning from elders and community members. In 2020 and 2021, I spent two-month periods in Maningrida working on creative projects with band members and in 2023, I spent two months checking on work and reporting back to the community.

I documented the shorter tours and activities outside of Maningrida that occurred between the longer periods spent in Maningrida (listed in Appendix 2). I was influenced by the work of anthropologist, Åse Ottosson whose ethnographic account of traveling with Indigenous rock bands from central Australian was published as I embarked upon my first period of fieldwork (Ottosson, 2017). Much as Ottosson found in her study of male musicians, interacting in different social and cultural settings provided perspectives on how the music was received and how the women presented their identity. Fieldwork was also an opportunity to gather data such as film footage, images, interviews and audio recordings that not only inform the research but have been useful promotional materials for the band and educational resources for the community.

The final years of the research project has been dedicated to sharing a range of outputs: scholarly, commercial and community based. This has involved presentations at Maningrida college, meetings of the Arts and Cultural Subcommittee of Maningrida Arts and Nja-marléya Social Justice Group. It has also included the use of social media to share and promote the music, films, images and articles about REB that are a product of this research, as well as sharing resources using flash drives and file sharing with project participants. The final period I spent in Maningrida in 2023 involved feedback sessions with clan groups, and checking writing with Indigenous knowledge holders as shown in Figures 1.4 and 1.5. One notable feedback session involved Burarra woman Cindy Jinmarabynana who co-authored the book chapter that informs Chapter 6 of this thesis. When I gave Cindy her copy of the book in August 2023, after a small gathering at the Lúrra Language and Culture Centre, we drove around the community visiting three households of An-barra people. We sat and shared the book, with Cindy explaining the content. I noticed that people first scanned the book for photographs, then

[10] Creative Australia (formerly the Australia Council for the Arts) is the Australian Government's principal arts investment and advisory body.

quotes from An-barra participants were read aloud to the group who had gathered. This also raised discussion of a potential book about "Diyama" as a future project.

Figure 1.5 Co-authoring relationships between Jodie Kell and Women from West Arnhem Land
(L) Jodie Kell and Cindy Jinmarabynana celebrating a book chapter in *Music Dance and the Archive* (2022).
(R) Jodie Kell and Tara Rostron checking Chapter 8 of the thesis and preparing it for publication in *Keeping Time: Dialogues on Music and Archives in Honour of Linda Barwick* (2024).

In 2024, REB released its debut album *Mayawa,* a culmination of the creative work and music industry development over the period of the research project. Composed, performed and produced largely by women, the album has garnered national acclaim and is the focus of this thesis and research project. The album was accompanied by a national tour including Maningrida, Darwin and Tennant Creek in the NT, Sydney, South Coast of NSW, Canberra and regional Victoria, as well as Melbourne and Geelong. The process of producing this album, and releasing it with associated performances, has been a way to include Indigenous participants in the research process and has involved complex negotiations regarding copyright, intellectual ownership and cultural authority, operating in Indigenous contexts and the wider music industry.

Drawing upon autoethnography has enabled me to share experiences with the research participants enabling self-reflection on my positioning as a non-Indigenous researcher. I have aimed to prioritise the voices of the Indigenous participants, through focusing on the songs and the performances of the band and I have included ethnographic descriptions indicating my own

experiences in the band emphasised through the use of personal pronouns. In this way, the thesis expresses embodied knowledge gained through experiencing and learnt through doing (Reigersberg & Lloyd, 2019: 387). The next section will outline the themes and focuses of the chapters that comprise the body of this dissertation.

1.5 Synopsis of chapters

Chapter 2 provides the reader with a background to contemporary music in West Arnhem Land. It describes the socio-geographic nature of Maningrida and the historical and social context of contemporary music-making in the region, particularly the development of Arnhem Land rock music. This knowledge is necessary to understand the world view and position of the women of REB in West Arnhem Land, and to grasp the impact of their music-making within Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory.

Chapter 3 considers issues relating to gender and music-making in Australia. Drawing upon the voices of women in the industry, as well as industry reports, it outlines the impact of gender bias in the Australian music industry on Indigenous women artists such as REB. It discusses the specifics of gender for women from West Arnhem Land arguing that the women of REB are impacted by two intersecting cultural systems and that by stepping into male dominated roles, the women of REB are standing up against inequality and contributing to change within their own community and the wider Australian music industry.

Chapters 4—8 focus on particular REB songs to develop the argument of each Chapter. These chapters demonstrate the emanating impact of REB from the band's first songs and first performances that established them as musicians leading to empowerment and opportunities for the women in the band. The widening impact of their actions is apparent in the flow of these chapters, emphasising the ripple effect caused by the actions of the women of REB.

Chapter 4 focuses on the song "Ngúddja" which became one of the earliest hits of the band. It finds that the intercultural space of REB helped navigate gendered protocols, such as finding instrumental solutions in rock bands to the cultural restrictions that preclude women from playing traditional instruments. It explores the role of song in creating allegiances and

expressing individual and social identities in multilingual societies and how this has led to individual empowerment and increased opportunities for the women in the band.

Chapter 5 explores the motivations for composing and singing songs in endangered languages, observing that the ripples of REB spread to through the community by virtue of people's connection to language and song. Focusing on three songs written in the highly endangered Na-kara language, it shows that singing in Indigenous languages is a way of engaging young people with their traditional languages and educating the wider community about the importance of Indigenous languages. For the women of REB, many of whom are educators in Maningrida, highlighting Indigenous languages was an important step in expressing cultural knowledge and authority through song.

Chapter 6 demonstrates that the innovative processes of REB have initiated opportunities to surface women's contributions to musical traditions. The REB version of the "Diyama" song, part of a song tradition of the An-barra clan, prompted recollection and discussion of cultural practices amongst women of the region and provided new knowledge that contests descriptions of the song documented in historical records. Contributing musically to this song tradition shows how REB are expanding their cultural authority, claiming a voice in the musical expression of An-barra connection to ancestral spirits.

Chapter 7 focuses on the song "Cyclone", examining four different versions spanning a range of genres, and three performances in significant sites across Australia, finding that the scope of these works is evidence of the growth of REB's innovative musicianship. and reputation. The song is also part of a growing discourse about the effects of climate change through the arts, contributing to social cohesion and resilience through the expression of shared experiences of the 2006 Cyclone Monica. By recounting the role of the local Maningrida Djómi spirits in protecting the community, "Cyclone" attests to the powers of ancestral spirits and the custodianship of the traditional landowners of Maningrida.

Chapter 8 uses a comparison of two love songs in the REB repertoire, composed 18 years apart, to demonstrate the effects of the growing musical agency of the band. The development of skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to take greater control of music production has increased REB's ability to influence and expand messaging in their music. Their impact has

spread to advocating for social change in how intimate partners relate to each other, addressing important issues relating to domestic violence in their community.

Chapter 9 concludes by showing how REB's expanding innovative musical practices, and subsequent increased agency has influenced attitudes towards gender in the local region and in the wider music industry. It also has given greater control of music production, enabling the band to utilise song as a way of expressing cultural knowledge, and advocate for social change. The chapter refers to the aims of this study, stated in section 1.1, showing there has been gradual changes, like a ripple effect, spreading out from the innovative musical practices of the band, starting with the band members and spreading to their community and the broader music industry.

Chapter 2

Background

2.1 Maningrida Today

In order to understand the ripple effect that started with a pebble in the form of an innovative group of female musicians, it is important to have a picture of the cultural and historical background to this study, the context in which REB was formed and developed. This chapter provides a social history of Maningrida and the background to the musical culture of West Arnhem Land from which REB emerged.

Maningrida is a coastal community in West Arnhem Land situated on the eastern bank of the mouth of the Liverpool River, 367 km east of Darwin. To travel by road, it is 500km via the Arnhem Highway through Kakadu National Park, across the East Alligator River and then 230km of dirt road. During the wet season, the rivers rise, and the road is impassable for months at a time. Access at these times is by air. There is an airport with daily flights as well as a busy schedule of charter planes flying to nearby communities.

The sandy mangrove-fringed beaches of the community face northwest over the Arafura Sea, with two visible islands, Kabalko (Entrance Island) and Ngarraku (Haul Round Island). The surrounding bushland is open forest dominated by eucalyptus, interspersed with flowering wattles and grevillea, sand palms, pandanus and cycads. These provide a rich bounty of bush foods and medicines, and materials for weaving and art. Only 11° south of the equator, the climate is tropical with daytime temperatures rarely falling below 30° Celsius. During the wet season, humidity soars and with the rivers rising, people are restricted in their movements. However, once the dry season comes around, the weather turns to clear sunny days and cool nights, a time of camping, hunting, fishing, and visiting Country.

Figure 2.1 Maningrida from the air

Figure 2.2 The road to Maningrida

Figure 2.3 The view from Maningrida Beach to Kabalko Island
Saltwater crocodiles inhabit the waters around Maningrida making it too dangerous to swim (notice the crocodile in the water between the two stands of mangrove trees).

Maningrida is one of the largest remote towns in the Northern Territory (NT). It has a population of 2500 and is a hub for surrounding outstations, bringing the total population to 4000. Maningrida has two supermarkets and a general store, two take-away food outlets, a bank, three ATMs and two fuel stations, mainly run by two local Aboriginal organisations, Maningrida Progress Association (MPA) and Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC). BAC services 32 outstations of more than 100 clans. Supplies are brought in weekly by barge from Darwin. Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation run a health clinic, wellbeing centre, Rheumatic Heart Program and a Men's Shed. Maningrida college includes the FaFT (Families as First teachers) childcare centre, a preschool, primary school and secondary school from which students can study and graduate with their NTSC. There is a sports oval and a basketball court with strong AFL and basketball competitions. These are run by West Arnhem Regional Council. There is a youth centre run by the Nja-marléya Justice group; an incorporated body set up by the traditional owners of Maningrida. Maningrida also has a thriving Arts and Culture Centre (MCA), the Bábbarra women's centre and the Djómi museum, all run by BAC.

Outstations, small settlements of people living on their traditional homelands, hold importance for people living in Maningrida as they provide hunting grounds and a place to connect with Country and clan.[1] Time spent "out bush", hunting and camping on homelands with families and community brings a sense of wellbeing and is an integral part of the band's process of making music.[2]

2.2 Clan, Country and Kinship: Indigenous Social Structures

The people of Arnhem Land are linked by a complex system of kinship and clan that informs custodianship of Country, connection to sacred sites, languages, music and dance traditions and social relationships.[3] While there have been disruptions to the cultural practices of Indigenous people in the region due to the introduction of colonising policies and institutions, and the subsequent introduction of outside influences and systems, clan and kinship still play a major role in people's lives and in the social structures of Arnhem Land. Knowledge of these systems is essential for understanding the musical practices of the women of REB. Their creative expression through song and performance reflects the significance of Country and clan, and relationships within the band and in the wider community are reciprocally affect the musical practices of REB. This section will firstly describe the *bábburr* (Ndj: clan) system connected to land ownership, language and *djang* (Ndj: sacred sites and totems)[4], and the *kkula* (Ndj: skin/kinship) systems that operate across Arnhem Land.

There is a strong connection between clan, Country and language. *Bábburr* (clan) are small groups of people and all *bininj* people belong to a clan, inherited from their father.[5] Clans own an area of land, a clan estate, *wíba* (Ndj: home, Country), "the place and the clan go together" (Bininj Kunwok Regional Language Centre, n.d_b). The Kunibídji people describe their land ownership system as follows,

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[1] Outstations hold social, cultural and economic significance. See Myers and Peterson, 2016:1, Altman, 2018: 336, Commonwealth of Australia 1987: xiii.

[2] "Out bush" is a phrase common to NT Indigenous English that means spending time in the natural environment. "Bush" refers to the natural environment.

[3] See for example, Berndt & Berndt, 1951, Elkin et al, 1951, Berndt, 1976, Brown, 2016, O'Keeffe , 2016, Garde , 2013, England et al, 2014, Keen, 1987, Hiatt, 1965, https://bininjkunwok.org.au/information/kinship/

[4] The term *djang* will be explained in more detail in the next paragraphs.

[5] In cases where someone's father is a *Balanda*, an outsider, or in cases where a marriage broke kinships rules, often referred to as being "married the wrong way". Inheritance can be claimed in other ways, through a grandfather (mother's father) or through song composition and performance.

Djiya wíba yinjírra njárra-lakarra ká-rama n-bábburr.
Koma mayála nguwurra-bbúrra. Koma ngadja nurru-yángka nurru-mángka.
Nga-náwarla nga-náwarla wíba Bábburr ká-rama ka-yóra.
This, our Aboriginal land, is owned by clans.
We cannot sell it. You may not acquire it.
Different areas of Country are owned by clans.
(Maningrida Community Education Centre, 2000: 4&20).

As explained in the preface, capitalisation of the word 'Country' is used to refer to clan estates that encompass a group of *djang* (Ndj: significant or sacred sites). People inherit *wíba* (Ndj: Country) and their *djang* from their father. There are no clear boundaries between these clan estates, and people move freely across Country accessing hunting and water and good camping areas (Hiatt, 1965), though it is necessary to contact the traditional landowners to ask for permission and to share any bounty gathered from the region. At times Country can be "closed", that is, restricted due to ceremonial events, or the passing away of significant owners.

Clans and different areas around the regions are associated with one of two moieties, referred to in Ndjébbana as *Djówanga* or *Yírriddjanga.* This system of two moeities sets out ownership of, and responsibility for Country. While land ownership is passed down through the father's line, people also hold responsibilities as *djungkay* (K: cultural managers)[6] for the care of their mother's Country, which will be the opposite moiety to themselves. *Djiya wíba yinjírra: This is our Country,* a group-negotiated text written at the Maningrida Community Education Centre in 2001, describes the relationships between moeities and responsibilities to care for Country.

> I am responsible to my Matriline for my mother country. I am a manager. I take care of the land, ceremony, Sacred Sites, fire management, also funerals.
> A Yírriddjanga woman has Djówanga children; and a Djówanga woman has Yírriddjanga children. Thus, a Yírriddjanga person manages Djówanga mother's country. And someone who is Djówanga manages Yírriddjanga

[6] The Ndjébbana term for this role is *ngámanbananga* (manager) but this thesis uses the term *djungkay* because it is the most commonly used word in Maningrida and across Arnhem Land by different language groups, including Ndjébbana speakers. The exception is in Chapter 6, when *junggay,* the Burarra spelling will be used, in respect to the language group of the co-author of that particular chapter.

> mother country. Two managers are the overseers. All the other managers work together (Maningrida Community Education Centre, 2001).

Country is also connected through *djang,* a term often translated into English as "Dreaming" or "Sacred Sites". It refers to the ancestral realm, both a time in the distant past when the world was created as well as ever-present ancestors that continue to influence life. *Djang* covers a range of concepts such as totems, ancestral spirits and sacred sites*,* places where ancestral beings are active. Their physical manifestation can be in the form of biota, such as different types of yam or sea creatures like stingrays and sharks, or environmental phenomena, such as cyclones or darkness*,* which can cause climate events if disturbed. They can also take the form of human physical states such as boils or sickness, which can be the source of afflictions in the human population. People refer to owning or being connected to a Dreaming and express and maintain this attachment by dancing, painting, singing or telling *djang* stories.

Languages are primarily associated with particular places or areas of land. Each language group has a number of smaller clan groups, and each Indigenous person belongs to a clan that owns an estate with a particular language (see Figure 2.5). That gives them authority over that language and responsibility for it, however the language is attached to the land (Vaughn et al, 2023: 86-87). In their discussion of sea rights, residents Peter Cooke and Gowan Armstrong state that language is an important factor in defining rights over resources, saying that speaking the "right" language for a place is "central to the relationship between people and the ancestral spirits of their estates and the land and sea resources within those estates". (Cooke & Armstrong, 2014: 294). The *bábburr* clan system of responsibilities and caring is reinforced through the *kkúla*, skin system.

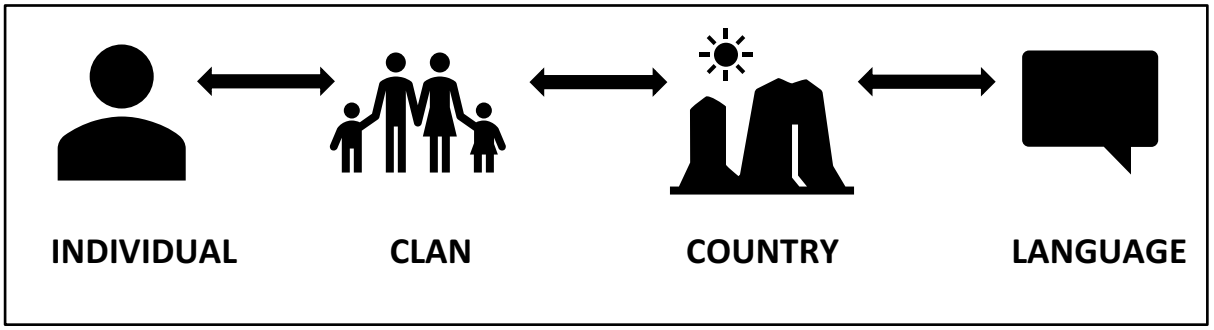

Figure 2.4 Model of relationships between individuals, clan, country and associated language (based on Vaughn et al, 2023: 87)

Kinship is a central aspect of culture in Western Arnhem Land, influencing all interactions with and between Indigenous people in the region. Everyone is connected through a network of classificatory kinship known as *kkúla* (Ndj: skin names) (Figure 2.6). Arnhem Land people, including young children, have detailed genealogical knowledge of kinship connections with both living and deceased family members and an understanding of where they fit in this network. Linguist Margaret Carew said, "People in Maningrida conduct their lives through the idiom of kinship" (Carew, 2016: 289). Kin relationships prescribe behaviour, gender relations and social practices such as reciprocity, the *mirriri* "restraint, social avoidance" and its social converse *mu-japurra* "joking behaviour" (Burbank, 1985, Carew, 2016, Garde, 2013; Hiatt, 1965). The next chapter will discuss how kinship relationships such as the *mirriri* and *mu-japurra* affect women, both contributing to gender inequality as well as creating supportive relationships.

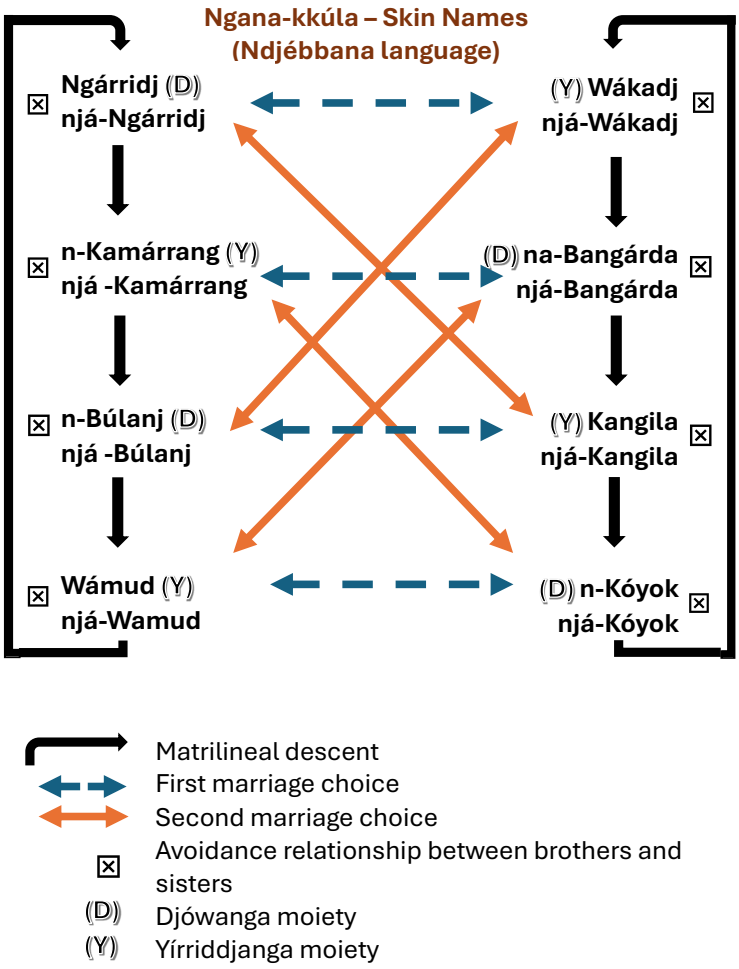

Figure 2.5 The eight classificatory subsections or 'skin names' and their terms in Ndjébbana. Based on the diagram available on the Bininj Kunwok Regional Language and Culture Centre's website, translated into Ndjébbana. A person's skin name is determined from their mother, and it

dictates suitable marriage partners, avoidance relationships and protective obligatory relationships that make up this circular system (Bininj Kunwok Regional Language Centre. (n.d.b).

It is common for outsiders to be adopted into the kinship system. This often occurs through work relationships where the *Bininj* worker will give a new person to the community a skin name so that they can work together successfully. This also requires looking after that person, showing them culture and teaching them about social protocols. I have been adopted into the kinship system and so I call different community members by kinship terms or use skin names as a form of address. Appendix 8 shows the kindship relationships between myself and the members of REB based on my skin name. Including *Balanda* in the kinship system has the effect of pulling outsiders into the reciprocal relationships of the community, and the associated social and financial obligations to certain kinship groups.

Kinship contributes to social cohesion and cross-cultural communication. Maningrida is located in between East and West Arnhem Land, and as such, the community includes speakers from two distinct language families, *Yolŋu* from the east and *Bininj Kunwok* from the west, as well as the smaller *Burarran* language group of the localised region. In addition to language differences, there are distinctive music and dance traditions and instrumental styles that distinguish between East and West. The kinship system is a means of navigating social relationships whilst retaining linguistic and cultural differences, connecting people to Country and clan, but also to wider networks of relatedness. Appendix 7 shows the correlation between different kinship terms of six major language groups of Maningrida spoken by women in REB.

Each member of the Ripple Effect Band operates within this complex social system, and it influences the language different band members use to compose, the Country they sing about and connections to ancestral spirits. It also influences the relationships the band members have with each other and with other community members (Appendices 7&8). Drawing upon clan and kinship, the women of the band have used their social obligations to garner authority and support for their music-making but the protocols surrounding the kinship system can also be problematic for women, contributing to gender inequality. Having some understanding of social structures is important for understanding the positioning of the women of REB and how their musical practice is both supported by - and pushes against - this social system as it is conducted in modern times with the changes caused by the introduction of outside influences.

2.3 Outside influences

This section describes the changes brought about by outsiders coming to the region and the establishment of the permanent settlement of Maningrida. It describes factors that have led to social inequity in Maningrida and proposes that *Bininj* have shown resilience and agency by forging positive relationships and facilitating intercultural communication with outsiders to gain support for their struggle to continue their cultural practices and retain control over their rights and their land (Bond-Sharpe 2013, Armstrong et al, 2023, Elwell, 1982).

The first enduring relationship with outsiders was with the Macassan seafarers from Indonesia who would come on yearly visits to the Arnhem Land coast in search of trepang (sea cucumbers) from at least the 18th century to 1901 when the newly formed Australian Government banned 'trepangers'. The last boat visited in 1907, but stories of these visits have passed down through generations, incorporated into *kun-borrk* and *manikay* song and dance traditions such as "Bongolinj Bongolinj" in West Arnhem Land and the "Red Flag Dances" from East Arnhem Land and in contemporary rock songs such as "Lembana Manimani" by the Sunrize Band or "Djáppana" by Yothu Yindi. Macassans also brought their language, some of which was adopted locally, such as *Balanda,* a term used across Arnhem Land to refer to non-Indigenous people derived from the Macassan term for the Dutch, "Hollander".

Relationships between Macassans and *Bininj* were characterised by curiosity and desire for different material goods and foods they could provide one another. Close and long-term relationships facilitated cultural exchange and a respect for the sovereignty of Aboriginal land. This has had lasting effects. Ethnomusicologist Reuben Brown suggests that the positive relationships between Macassan and *Bininj* has contributed to the way in which western Arnhem Land kinship systems, cultural events and social initiatives can incorporate non-Indigenous people today (Brown, 2016:80).

The arrival of English colonisers, starting in NSW in 1788 and reaching the NT in the 1820s, brought profound and lasting changes, disrupting the lives of Indigenous people, causing social upheaval, the forced removal from their land, disintegrating families and cultural groups, and causing social inequity and oppression (Bennett, 2023, Armstrong et al, 2023, Marett, 2010, Elwell 1982, Gibson, 1998). Because of its remote position and inhospitable terrain, the northern coast of the NT remained relatively isolated, but this changed in 1931 when the

government declared a region of 150,000 square kilometres stretching from the East Alligator River to the gulf of Carpentaria an Aboriginal reserve called Arnhem Land. It was now officially under the jurisdiction of the colonising forces and protectionist policies which aimed to control the land and its resources, sending out exploration parties to conduct surveys looking for ideal places for settlements.

Figure 2.6 Map of Arnhem Land
The border of Arnhem Land is shown on this map adapted from Nigel Malone, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22743427 (accessed 15 September 2024).

Monitoring and controlling the movement of Indigenous people was a mechanism of the colonising state, and Native Patrol Officers and Police Officers regularly visited the region. As non-Indigenous people encroached upon the lives of West Arnhem Land people, there was also a migration of Indigenous people into Darwin (Bond-Sharp, 2013). Once there, living conditions were poor and so the government decided to create a settlement with the aim of repatriating as many "Liverpool River people" as possible back from Darwin, as well as facilitating control over the region (Elwell, 1982, 84-85).

Maningrida was officially established as a government settlement in 1957, with minimal consultation with *Bininj.* At the time, it was one of 13 government settlements, and 14 Christian Mission Stations that were part of the stated government aim to promote assimilation (Bond-Sharp, 2013: 72). This introduced new beliefs into *Bininj* cosmology as well as changing concepts of work, land ownership, education and the English language. Many missions had dormitory-style arrangements for children, breaking up clan groups, and taking over education. In Maningrida, this was not the case, and people were free to live with their families, speak language and practice ceremony. To gain access to the resources of these early settlements, *Bininj* people were required to assimilate to aspects of non-Indigenous lifestyles and social protocols. The *Balanda* managers encouraged people to stay in Maningrida, offering employment and rewarding Western forms of work with rations and other resources. There was no financial incentive to encourage traditional hunting as a means of procuring food and this soon created a dependence on *Balanda* food and substances, such as tobacco leading to health issues which continue to this day (Bond-Sharp, 2013: 52-55). Devaluing traditional practices and the introduction of convenient non-Indigenous options were some of the ways colonisation disrupted and continues to disrupt *Bininj* culture and lifestyle.

Maningrida grew quickly. By the end of 1958, there were 330 *Bininj* living at the settlement permanently (Hiatt, 1965: 11) and there was a school, bakery, communal kitchens, gardens, and building infrastructure such as toilet blocks, water supply and an airstrip (Bond-Sharp, 2013). Prior to the establishment of Maningrida, *Bininj* had lived in clans with limited contact with other clan groups and almost no contact with *Balanda.* Once the community was settled, people who had previously little, or no contact now found themselves living in close proximity, leading to conflict and the disruption of cultural practices and languages.

Bringing different clans and language groups into Maningrida brought unprecedented complications for the Kunibídji landowners and new power relationships at odds with their conceptualisation of land. By 1958, the majority of *Bininj* living in Maningrida were from the surrounding regions, particularly the Burarra people from the east. Even though it was Dhukurrdji Country, they were given positions of responsibility over Kunibídji people and by the 1960s, over half of the paid roles in the settlement were from Burarra/Gunartpa background (Hiatt, 1965: 11). This dominance was reflected in the lingua franca used in the settlement, as the refusal of the Burarra staff to speak a different language meant that everyone had to communicate in Burarra or English (Elwell, 1982). Even today, the 2021 census shows that

42.8% of people in Maningrida speak Burarra as their main language, compared to only 15.4% speaking Ndjébbana (Australian Bureau of Statistics: n.d.). This decrease suggests that the effects of post-colonisation continue to weaken the vitality and diversity of Indigenous languages. Chapter 5 explores how this can lead to adverse impacts on community wellbeing (Bracknell, 2020, Dunbar-Hall 2004:42, Armstrong et al, 2023).

Despite the negative impacts, there were also some positive relationships, meaning that Maningrida did not suffer as much as other regions in Australia. The regions' isolation contributed to a separation from government assimilationist policies and enabled the development of a collaborative approach to managing the community. *Bininj* were able to retain languages and ceremonial practices. Historian Helen Bond describes how ceremonial practices were supported by *Balanda* who showed an interest in documenting and learning about *Bininj* culture. In the 1960s, anthropologist Les Hiatt and teacher and anthropologist Betty Meehan lived in and around Maningrida. During their time in Maningrida, they developed positive long-term research relationships and made valuable recordings and texts that still inform people today about cultural practices, languages and songs from the past. Their research with the An-barra people is explored in more detail in Chapter 6. Their story is part of a long history of researchers who have developed strong relationships, giving back to the community through documenting music and dance traditions, developing language resources and engaging in community projects.[7]

In the 1970s, there were changes occurring in the national political landscape to give greater recognition to the rights of Indigenous people and a growing movement of empowerment. The 1967 referendum heralded a new era of self-determination, reinforced in 1976 when the Federal Parliament passed the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976,* enabling Indigenous peoples to claim land rights for Country where traditional ownership could be proven. The Northern and Central Land Councils formed, with lawyers and anthropologists working together with Indigenous people to manage land claims and develop plans for land management. The NT Government introduced elected local councils and implemented the NT bilingual policy in Arnhem Land schools that integrated local knowledge, values and pedagogy into mainstream schooling (Bond-Sharp, 2013, Tamisari, 2021:119).

[7] For example, Margaret Carew, Carolyn Coleman, Murray Garde and the Bininj Kunwok Language Centre, the Western Arnhem Song Project with Linda Barwick, Murray Garde, Allan Marett, Isabel O'Keeffe, Nick Evans, ROM ceremony (a "ritual of diplomacy") performed in Canberra in 1982 supported by Stephen Wild, Betty Meehan, the National Indigenous recording project with Aaron Corn, Linda Barwick, Allan Marett.

The movement back to traditional homelands started in Maningrida in the early 1970s with the formation of Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC). The homelands, or outstations as they are referred to today, are small settlements of close kin living on homelands of social, cultural and economic significance (Myers & Peterson, 2016:1, Altman, 2018: 336, Commonwealth of Australia, 1987: xiii). The homelands movement was one of the most significant developments in local Indigenous politics, demonstrating the desire of Indigenous people to assert control over their lives and re-occupy their traditional lands, reconnecting after the disruption of colonial processes (Altman, 2018: 343). Indigenous leaders, supported by some *Balanda* staff, demanded control over the hiring of non-Indigenous staff and managers. They also started building houses and infrastructure so people could live on their homelands in smaller clan-based groups (Bond-Sharpe, 2013).

For Dukúrrdji clan members, returning to unoccupied homelands was not an option as their clan estates had become part of the township of Maningrida. They became increasingly unhappy with the governance of local organisations who they believed did not respect their responsibilities for land. In 1977, Don Wéibenanga, the president of the Maningrida Progress Association said, "Kunibídji people, who own the land here, never get a chance to control their own place." (Bond-Sharp, 2013: 255-256).

The federal *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* was a turning point for the Kunibídji people as they developed political skills to collaborate successfully with other clan groups and *Balanda* people and to assert their authority as landowners (Bond, 2013). Today in Maningrida, the Nja-marleya Cultural and Justice Group is a local corporation that represents the Dukúrrdji clan, governed by a board of invited clan leaders from the region. There are also Kunibídji representatives on the boards of all organisations in Maningrida demonstrating a growing agency and influence by the traditional owners of Maningrida.

Despite the efforts to maintain control over governance and custodianship of land by Indigenous people, the effects of colonisation have been severe. Government systems, aimed at assimilating and controlling the Indigenous people of Arnhem Land, are embedded in institutions such as education and childcare, health, law, employment and government and decision making (Armstrong et al, 2023, Bennett, 2023, Trudgen, 2000, Bond, 2015). This contributes to a sense of powerlessness and disengagement, compounded by the increasing

inequality between *Bininj* and *Balanda* (Altman, 2017). In 2020, the average weekly income in Maningrida is less than $320 compared to $900+ for a non-Indigenous person. The systemic disadvantage experienced by Indigenous people in remote communities such as Maningrida contributes to issues such as inadequate housing, poor health outcomes, disproportionate levels of domestic violence, unemployment and low education standards (Carson & Koster, 2012: 110, Sangha et al, 2020: 4-5).

In 2007, the federal government, led by John Howard, attempted to combat these social issues by introducing the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), commonly referred to as 'the intervention'. It was aimed at improving the conditions of Indigenous people in NT communities, but it was enacted with little consultation and included controversial measures, such as sending army troops into communities and suspending the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. This was another instance of the government attempting to control *Bininj* lives.

In 2008 the NT government essentially removed bilingual education from remote Indigenous schools by declaring that the language of instruction for the first four hours of school must be English. Music programs were also deemed unnecessary in schools and community organisations stepped up to cater for changes in the implementation and governance of services. For musicians in Maningrida, this meant they struggled to find spaces and equipment to practice music together. Throughout this thesis, REB and I experienced greater difficulties in practicing and performing music compared to the environment when I was a schoolteacher in the 2000s. Without systemic support, music programs relied on the ingenuity of *Bininj* and *Balanda* situated in Maningrida to find spaces and equipment for music activities. The federally centralised institutions and reporting lines established during the NTER were punitive and time consuming. Economist Jon Altman, in discussing the effect on communities such as Maningrida, commented that after 10 years of this policy, people are more deeply impoverished with a lack of Indigenous led development throughout this time (Altman, 2017).

Organisations and projects that implement ethical practices, with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together respectfully, are the longest running and most successful in Maningrida. Enterprises such as the Bábbarra Women's Centre and Maningrida Arts and Culture (MAC) represent *Bininj* and *Daluk* artists and provide opportunities for capacity building in arts administration. The Djelk Rangers and Maningrida Wild Foods incorporate different knowledge systems and practices in land management, such as researching customary

burning practices and health and wellbeing are serviced through Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation. The school has been a strong supporter of two-way learning, running a bilingual program with a Literature Production Centre between 1974 and 2008. After a break during the NTER, the Lúrra Language and Culture Centre was established as well as Learning on Country in partnership with the Djelk Rangers. The Wíwa Music Project, based at MAC, supported the development of bands such as Ripple Effect Band and Wildfire Munworrk Band, as well as running music events such as the AFL Grand Final entertainment and the BAC 40-year anniversary.

With the move to *Bininj* governance of *Balanda* institutions, one outcome in the region is the growing empowerment of women. Women have more opportunities to step into roles of responsibility. In 2024, Burarra woman Jacquline Phillips was elected the Head of the Board of BAC. Maningrida College has predominately female staff and the Djelk Rangers has a strong women's program. The Bábbarra Women's Centre is one of the most successful enterprises in the community, with a profitable arts business as well as exhibitions and exposure nationally and internationally. At MAC, women have successfully taken up arts practices previously dominated by men, such as bark painting and sculpture. The musicians of REB are a new feature of the musical culture of Maningrida, and their actions resist gender bias and work towards creating new ways of collaborating. In the next section I outline the musical culture of Maningrida, and the changes brought about through outside influences.

2.4 Music traditions in Maningrida

Music is central to the representation of identity and negotiation of social standing in Australian Indigenous cultures. It influences how people view the world, expressing connection to family, clan, community, Country and culture, "a nexus of social and political cohesion and division" (Magowan, 2007: 9, Barwick, 1990, Ottosson, 2016). In Maningrida, music and dance are used to bring different clans and language groups together (Brown 2016, O'Keeffe 2016,). Located between East and West Arnhem Land, the Maningrida community has incorporated different music styles into ceremonial life, facilitating goodwill, communication and understanding. This practice has also been employed as a way of responding to changing social structures caused by colonization, with *Bininj* incorporating new forms of music and dance and associated technologies into their musical practices (Tamisari 2024, Ottosson 2016, Corn 2002, Barney 2022).

In Maningrida the two most common public dance-song traditions are the genres known as *kun-borrk* (used in Central and West Arnhem Land) and *bunggul* (used in East Arnhem Land).[8] *Kun-borrk* are individually owned songs composed or received in dreams that can include gossip and human emotions as well as being concerned with ancestral spirits. (Garde, 2005, O'Keeffe, 2016, Brown, 2016). Eastern Arnhem Land *bunggul* are clan-based songs and associated dances that express the Yolŋu cosmology, grouped in clan-owned series of a number of songs sung in a particular order. The songs follow the journeys of the Dreaming from the east to the west creating Country, landscape features and sacred sites through their actions (Tamisari, 2024). Both styles are associated with particular dance styles and consist of vocalists accompanied by *mako* (K: didjeridu) and *manberlnginj* (K: clapsticks) (Garde, 2005: 59, Brown, 2016, O'Keeffe, 2016).

Kun-borrk and *bunggul* are performed regularly in Arnhem Land for funerals, young men's initiations and exchange ceremonies. Performing groups travel across Arnhem Land, invited by family members and receiving payment of money and other goods such as blankets. These music and dance ceremonies are highly important social occasions, lasting for days, when many people will participate in performance, demonstrating allegiances to clan and kinship. During these events, there is no distinct separation between audience and performer and people will join in dancing or singing according to the context of the song, the timing of its performance and their connections to other performers. The composition of the performing group is fluid and if a musician or dancer cannot attend, they can be replaced by another member of the group. There are no rehearsals and the lead dancer or songman gives directions during the performance much as a conductor does in a Western orchestra.

[8] The term *kun-borrk,* also known as: *manyardi/manjardi* in Kun-barlang, Mawng and Iwaidja, refers to West Arnhem style of song and dance. *Bunggul* refers to an East Arnhem Land combination of songs (*manikay*) and dancing *(burr'yun or girritjirr)* (Tamisari, 2024: 135).

Figure 2.8: Performing *bunggul* at a funeral ceremony, 2020. Photo credit: Jodie Kell

Figure 2.9: Performing bunggul at a gift giving ceremony, 2022. Photo credit: Jodie Kell

Figure 2.10: Performing *bunggul* at Maningrida Lúrra Festival, 2021. Photo credit: Jodie Kell & Jessica Rose.

Ceremonial contexts are important forums for the transmission of cultural knowledge, law and creation stories. They are multilingual events (Brown 2016; Brown et al. 2018; O'Keeffe 2017) and a means of celebrating difference whilst expressing togetherness. Ceremony is also a place where the social standing of songmen and instrumentalists is increased. Singing about Country can only be done with permission from the land-owning clan and the power of song enables people to express connection with ancestral beings and the landscape, which bestows power and authority on them. "Songs of the natural world are extremely valuable since holding song

knowledge and being able to display that knowledge affords status and power" (Magowan, 2007:186).

Arnhem Land songs can be received in dreams or given to musicians by spirits or ancestral beings *(kun-borrk),* or they are inherited through clan *(manikay)*. In order to perform the songs, the performer needs the express permission or authority from the 'owner/s'. Once the songs have entered the social sphere, the sense of ownership and rights over the songs is strongly associated with clan and cultural connections. There are many restrictions surrounding who can sing which songs that depend on a complex social connectiveness and sets of rules and restrictions. (Corn 2007: 82). Significantly, women in West Arnhem Land are not allowed to sing *kun-borrk* or *bunggul* or play *mako* (K: didjeridu) and *manberlnginj* (K: clapsticks) in public. Another gender restriction is that songs associated with dance are only sung by men; women participate as dancers, expressing clan affiliation through their movements, but it is men's voices and musicianship that features.[9] *Kun-borrk* and *bunggul* are an integral part of the social fabric of West Arnhem Land and women participate through dancing and displaying knowledge of song, organizing and managing aspects of the event, and watching and looking after children. But when musical performance at ceremonies is understood to be a forum for the transmission of cultural knowledge and an expression of the power such knowledge holds, gendered restrictions have meant that women must articulate their sense of identity and belonging in musical contexts dominated and controlled by men (Magowan, 2007: 15).

In contrast, new forms of music and technology that have been adopted by West Arnhem Land musicians, have given rise to new musical practices, including a space for women to take up roles previously played only by men. I now turn to discuss these introduced musical genres.

Arnhem Land Gospel Music

Religious missions established across Arnhem Land introduced various forms of church music. From as early as 1924 with the establishment of the Methodist Mission in Milingimbi, to the east of Maningrida, *Yolŋu* people started learning Christian hymns and by the 1950s, there were

[9] See Kell, Thomas, Lawrence, & Wilton. "Ngarra-Ngúddjeya Ngúrra-Mala: Expressions of Identity in the Songs of the Ripple Effect Band", 162, Hiatt, L., & Hiatt, B. Notes on Songs of Arnhem Land. Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1966, 4 and Brown. "Following Footsteps: The *Kun-Borrk/Manyardi* Song Tradition and Its Role in Western Arnhem Land Society, "67-68. Clunies-Ross 1989:

choirs whose members were composing their own devotional songs. In 1979, charismatic revival meetings were held on Milingimbi and Galiwin'ku, introducing a new form of devotional dancing to gospel songs that spread throughout Arnhem Land (Tamisari, 2021: 117). This had a deep and lasting influence on popular music in the region, reflected in the style of artists such as Dr Geffrey Gurrumul, Gawurra Gaykamangu and Manuel Dhurrkay of Saltwater Band. The development of rock music internationally owes a great deal to gospel, particularly Black gospel music of the United States of America (Stephens, 2018). Across Arnhem Land, Christian messages and practices have been appropriated, re-signified and adapted into *Bininj* and *Yolŋu* beliefs and practices, with a religious plurality characterized by the perception of 'two laws', Christian and Indigenous, namely two different socio-political, moral and religious systems articulated in the colonial and postcolonial relations with the missionaries (Magowan 2001, Tamisari 2009).

These days, Arnhem Land has a vibrant gospel music scene, with regular community gatherings for preaching, gospel singing and dance performances. The instrument of choice is the electric keyboard, or software applications like Garage Band, to add beats as well as a harmonic bed for the vocals. Gospel music also has its place in funeral ceremonies, with devotional dancing and tribute songs composed and recorded on phone apps or devices for the person who has passed away. The fusing of styles and ceremony demonstrates how *Bininj* and *Yolŋu* have adapted Christian rituals into their own cultural practices (Tamisari, 2024: 211).

In contrast to *kun-borrk/bunggul* where men control the expression of ancestral knowledge, women have played a more prominent role as gospel musicians, leading the singing, composing and recording songs and playing keyboard. Due to the influence of the church in Arnhem Land, as in other parts of Indigenous Australia, women have been able to hold positions of power in the new social structures as most church positions, elders and leaders, and the bulk of the congregation are women. (Magowan, 2007, Reigersberg, 2013). Women such as REB members Rachel Thomas and Patricia Gibson, who are gospel musicians in Maningrida, developed musical skills and performance experience at funerals, revival meetings and church services.

Indigenous Popular Music in Australia

The introduction of radio to Arnhem Land in the 1960s gave rise to a new form of musical expression. It brought guitar-based rock and country styles and in Galiwin'ku a group of men started experimenting with guitar music and formed Soft Sands in 1979, soon followed by Wirringya Band (Milingimbi), Sunrize Band (Maningrida), Yothu Yindi (Yirrkala) and Yugul Band (Ngukurr) (Corn 2007). These bands were emerging at a time when music was playing an important role in the fight against racism and social inequity for Indigenous people across Australia. Radio and recorded music also brought national and international influences, including Black musicians who were expressing a rising pride in Black culture and speaking out against racism (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004).

Songs played a major role in educating the population about Australia's history of racism and abuse. Archie Roach's album *Charcoal Lane* brought the plight of the Stolen Generation to international public attention. Ruby Hunter's 1994 album *Thoughts Within* provided a women's perspective to the pain and suffering it caused. These artists' successes contributed to a growing awareness of this historical injustice reinforced by the "Bringing Them Home" Report (1997), leading to the Australian National Apology in 2008. The soundtrack to the 1981 film, *Wrong Side of the Road* included the reggae anthem "We Have Survived" by No Fixed Address, calling out the racism encountered by Indigenous people in Australia and defiantly celebrating survival (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004). The political struggle for land rights was promoted through songs such as "Land Rights" (Sunrize Band) and "Treaty" (Yothu Yindi). Mainstream Australians were alerted to the fact that Indigenous people spoke languages other than English first with the release of the Warumpi Band's 1983 single "Jailanguru Pakarni", the first commercially released rock song sung in an Aboriginal language. Its success gained "legitimacy for recording songs in Aboriginal languages" (Homan & Mitchell, 2008: 258).

There were also non-Indigenous artists supportive of Indigenous rights who formed collaborations with Indigenous artists. Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody co-composed the land rights anthem, "From Little Things Big Things Grow" about the Gurindji walk-off and Neil Murray, a non-Indigenous musician who joined the Butcher Brother from Papunya to form the Warumpi Band, penned the classic "Blackfella, Whitefella", promoting a message of solidarity. In 1986, Warumpi Band toured with Midnight Oil, not only supporting them in big southern cities, but across remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. This tour

demonstrated how contemporary rock music was a medium of intercultural exchange as each band toured through different environments, learning from each other (McMillan, 1988, Dunbar-Hall & Gibson: 47). REB have continued this tradition of intercultural exchange, both within the band where members from different cultural and language groups work together to compose, produce and perform rock music, and by sharing this music across Australia.

Music Education, Broadcasting and Recording

Some key organisations supported the development of contemporary Indigenous musicians in Australia, including those in remote communities like Maningrida. The Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM), founded by Catherine Ellis and Ngarrindjeri poet Leila Rankine at the University of Adelaide in 1972, was influential in the way it approached the teaching of and research into Indigenous music. It introduced more culturally inclusive attitudes, conducting programs built on knowledge exchanges with Anangu people, including appointing Pitjantjara musicians as lecturers (Ellis 1974, Bracknell & Barwick, 2020). In the 1980s, CASM contemporary music students began to focus on creating original contemporary music leading to the development of ground-breaking bands, No Fixed Address, Us Mob and Coloured Stone.

Three Indigenous broadcasting and recording organisations were also created during this time. In the Northern Territory, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) started as a radio station in 1982, expanding to a recording studio and record label that released albums by local artists such as Warren H Williams, Coloured Stone and Tjupi Band as well as Maningrida's Letterstick Band. The Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS) was established in the mid-1980's to set up broadcasting units in remote communities across Australia and the Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA) supplied continuing operational support. Their purpose was to give Aboriginal and Islander people access to, and control of, media at community level and they created an alternative Australian distribution network for musicians.

This Indigenous broadcasting network has continued to feed into regional and Indigenous community festivals across the Northern Territory, creating opportunities for visiting artists, and for local bands to perform to larger audiences. It is not unusual to see a new band at a local festival with the audience knowing every word of their songs from listening to the local radio

station. Larger festivals such as Barunga Festival and Garma Festival have been an opportunity for local artists to reach wider audiences nationally. They have also provided a space, not just for a range of music and dance performances but for political discussion and truth telling. These festivals and the sharing of footage from performance events have provided the nation with images of intercultural understanding and communication, and facilitated the development of regional sounds unified in their Indigenous identity.

2.5 The Top End Sound: Rock Music in Arnhem Land

Throughout 1980s–1990s, the guitar-based rock bands of Arnhem Land developed a distinctive style, mixing influences of gospel, country music, reggae, Indigenous popular music with an already diverse and multilingual music tradition. In 1989, Yothu Yindi from East Arnhem Land released their debut album *Homeland Movement* with Mushroom Records. They had already toured with Midnight Oil across North America and the album was a bold and contemporary expression of Indigenous culture with its fusion of *manikay* and rock music created by a collaboration of *Yolŋu* and *Balanda* musicians (Homan & Mitchell, 2008). Their next album, *Tribal Voice*, was released in 1991. It peaked at Number 4 in the ARIA charts and the song "Treaty" won *Song* and *Single of the Year*. Yothu Yindi's success introduced Arnhem Land rock reggae to mainstream audiences nationally and internationally.

During this time, Maningrida had a vibrant music scene centred on the Maningrida Town Hall as a rehearsal and performance space, with three major bands: Sunrize Band (1980s), Letterstick Band (1990s) and Wildwater (2000s). Sunrize Band signed to the national youth radio station, Triple J's record label, to release and nationally tour their album *Lungrrurrma* in 1993 and Letterstick Band released two albums through CAAMA. Wildwater was led by An-barra musician, Djolpa Mackenzie backed up on vocals by Noeletta Mackenzie. They independently released two albums, *Baltpa* (1996) and *Rrawa* (2007).

In 1997, Tony Collins from Triple J produced a compilation album at Maningrida Town Hall with bands from Maningrida and nearby communities. *Meinmuk Mujik: Music from the Top End* was released through EMI. It is a record of the early development of rock music in the Maningrida region, and introduced the distinctive local music style, "The Top End Sound" to

mainstream audiences (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004). Skinnyfish Music was established in Darwin as a record label in 1999 to develop local Indigenous artists and they produced bands such as Saltwater Band (Galiwin'ku), Nabarlek Band (Manmoyi) and The Lonely Boys (Ngukurr). The Top End Sound, a guitar driven fusion of rock and reggae, is foundational to the musical style of REB's songs as band members listened to this music on CDs, local radio and at live performances. This section gives an account of characteristics of this style of music that is useful in understanding how REB both draws upon and differs from Arnhem Land rock bands.

Reimagining traditional songs into popular music forms was pioneered by Eastern Arnhem Yolŋu musicians starting with Soft Sands in the 1960s. Guitar-based bands across Arnhem Land adopted new styles, forms, and instrumentation but continued to express Aboriginal concepts, values and beliefs (Corn, 1999: 3-4). Albums such as Yothu Yindi's *Homelands Movement* contained traditional songs next to rock songs, and traditional songs within rock songs (Stubington & Dunbar-Hall, 1994). Lead singer, Mandawuy Yunupingu referred to the Yolŋu concept of *ganma*, indicating the place where fresh and saltwater mix, each retaining distinct properties but producing something new and fertile through their interaction (Corn, 2022: 43). In Maningrida, Sunrize Band recorded different versions of "Wak Wak" (Black Crow) on their 1993 album *Lungurrma*, with the upbeat blues version followed by the *manikay* (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004: 194) and on Letterstick Band's first album, "An-barra Clan" fuses the *kun-borrk* sung over rock instrumentation and beat. They named their album *Diyama*, and it includes two version of the "Diyama" *kun-borrk* (Letterstick Band, 1998).

Community music festivals commonly include *kun-borrk/bunggul* performances at sunset followed by rock, reggae, and hip-hop bands, gospel song and dance and hip-hop dance competitions into the night. Musicians move between the different genres and performance styles. Ethnomusicologist Reuben Brown commented that many of the performers at Gunbalanya's Stone Country Festival move between different performance styles, taking ancestral song traditions and re-framing them in new ways for popular music performance. He describes Kuninjku singer Crusoe Kurddal performing the "Mimih" song set both on the dance ground and on stage with Maningrida's Sunrize Band (Brown, 2016: 292-294).

Rock Bands started to incorporate *mako* (K: didjeridu) and *manberlnginj* (K: clapsticks) as well as traditional dance styles as part of their performances and at these festivals instrumentalists

perform with traditional and contemporary groups. As the bands were almost entirely made up of male members, they were able to combine this with adopted masculine tropes of rock, country and reggae music. Music was a space for older men to mentor and act as role models and stimulate discussion about social issues as well as bringing a sense of pride and identity for Indigenous men (Corn, 2007: 79, Ottosson, 2016).

For women, the overwhelmingly male culture of music studios and performance spaces, and restrictions about playing instruments have created barriers for women's participation. Masculine behaviours and communication styles make women feel unwelcome and this is exacerbated for Indigenous women who must concern themselves with the perceptions of others and make sure they do not break cultural protocols. Avoidance relationships and the risk of arousing feelings of jealousy result in women staying silent or not entering the space at all (Ottosson, 2007: 91-94). The next chapter will discuss in more detail how gender bias impacts the musical practices of women, both in West Arnhem Land and in the wider Australian music industry, drawing upon the experiences of REB to illustrate ways that women can push back against gender inequality and promote the music expression of their perspectives.

Chapter 3

Gender and Popular Music

As well as the context of West Arnhem Land, it is necessary to understand the relationship between gender and music in the contemporary music industry, as another part of the socio-cultural mix from which REB emerged. This chapter finds that gender bias has impacted and, in turn, been disrupted by the development of women's music practices in Maningrida, with the ripples from early performances spreading out to establish REB as a nationally recognised musical act who are challenging gender stereotypes through their musical practices. The chapter opens here with an auto-ethnographic description of one of the first performances by the band. The experience of Barunga Festival illustrates some of the barriers faced by the band, and ways they overcame them and started their journey as Indigenous female rock musicians.

> In 2018, REB performed at the Barunga Festival, a nationally significant cultural event held annually at Barunga community, 80km southeast of Darwin. The festival attracts over 4000 people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, NT locals and interstate visitors. Running over the June long weekend, it includes political forums, sporting competitions, art markets, traditional music and dance and contemporary music performance. Like many remote community or "bush" bands, we drove 500km over unsealed roads to perform but unlike many of those bands, we stood out as the only women. For this reason, the festival curator, Michael Hohnen of Skinnyfish Music wanted to feature us so he booked us for a 40-minute set on the main stage on Saturday night, a highly prized opportunity.
>
> We were excited and nervous. We got dressed at our campsite, using the car rear vision mirror to do our hair and make-up, and pulling on our stage clothes in our tents. We carried our instruments backstage, a closed-off area guarded by security for performers and crew only. As we approached, the Maningrida women were walking in front of me talking and laughing but as they came to the opening, they pulled back suddenly and looked at me for support. Curious, I stepped forward, and

looked in. No wonder. We could only see men, mainly Indigenous men, including many from Arnhem Land. This created a difficult situation for Arnhem Land women, as it was likely some of these men would be in avoidance relationships for the women in the band.[1] There was a portable toilet, which was used by the men. In Aboriginal communities, women are not allowed to go near men's bathrooms or toilets. There were men getting painted up in ochre ready for their act, and this gave the impression of 'men's business', the part of kun-borrk/bunggul ceremonies performed only by men, another reason for the women to hesitate.

Figure 3.1 Ripple Effect Band members preparing for their performance in the campground of Barunga Festival
L-R Marita Wilton preparing make up
L-R Rona Lawrence, Marita Wilton, Patricia Gibson. Photo Credit: Jodie Kell

We stood there for several minutes, and it really seemed like the Maningrida women might just turn around and leave. Luckily, Skinnyfish sound engineer James Mangohig spotted us and came to the gate. I asked him to escort us across the space to the side of stage where the female stage manager Phaedra Watts welcomed us, and we started to feel more comfortable. Our friend and mentor, drummer Allen Murphy came over, and we stood with James and Allen building our confidence until it was time for us to go on stage. The men in the backstage area subtly watched us, showing an interest but also respectfully not staring, as they too were unsure of how to act around a band of West Arnhem Land women.

[1] These relationships are based on the kinship system explained in Chapter 2 and 3, where there are cultural rules and protocols surrounding contact between men and women of certain skin groups.

When our time came, we got on stage and played our set. I was enlisted to introduce the songs in English as the I was the only band member whose native tongue is English. We played and sang with confidence, with the crowd cheering and clapping. This was the first time an all-women's band from an Indigenous community had played at this festival, and we felt so proud to be up there. After our performance, we left the backstage area quickly and everyone peeled off to join family, laughing and talking excitedly about our performance. For the remainder of the festival, we were approached by people who were in the audience; Indigenous people from across Australia, Northern Territory locals, tourists from down south who all wanted to meet the band and talk about language, women and music, culture, and the story of the band.

Ripple Effect is the all-female Arnhem Land rock band making waves for women in music

By Jesse Thompson

ABC Radio Darwin | Indigenous Music

Wed 13 Jun 2018

Ripple Effect are an eight-piece girl group who want to tour Australia and the world. *(ABC Radio Darwin: Jesse Thompson)*

Figure 3.2 ABC coverage of Ripple Effect Band at Barunga Festival 2018

This story highlights a pivotal moment in REB's pathway to success and illustrates some of the challenges faced by women seeking to change the music industry. For a beginner bush band, REB was given the opportunity to perform on the main stage of a nationally significant festival and was more popular with the media than their profile would suggest; featured on the socials of major streaming service Spotify, appearing on local ABC Radio, online and in printed media such as *The Guardian* and The ABC (Figure 3.2 and Appendix 5). It seems that REB had thrown a pebble in the contemporary music pool and made its first waves in the cultural landscape of Northern Territory music festivals.

Barunga Festival operates in an intercultural space between remote Indigenous community music practice and the mainstream Australian music industry and the gender gap it displays is a defining feature of the creative industries across the nation.[2] Research shows that female musicians earn far less than their male counterparts, receive less airplay on Australian radio and receive fewer billings in festival line-ups than male-led acts (Strong et al 2019, Cooper et al 2017, McCormack, 2020). Contemporary music in Australia is big business and a major driver of the creative economy (Cooper et al, 2017: 3). It receives a significant level of support from federal and state governments, and yet over the past 30 years, gender inequality has been persistent. The gender gap needs to be addressed as "music is everyone's business" (Cooper et al, 2017: 3). Music contributes to a sense of identity and social cohesion in the daily lives of many Australians.

In the contemporary music culture of West Arnhem Land, the gender inequality of the wider music industry is compounded by localised practices. As noted in Chapter 2, women participate only as dancers in public ceremonial contexts, which reflects in popular forms of music. In 1999, Aaron Corn noted that rock bands in Arnhem Land were made up almost entirely of men, reflecting the traditionally divergent roles of men and women in secular life (Corn, 2002: 9-10). Since forming in 2017, REB members have often been the only female artists at local festivals, and the musicians of the band are amongst the only female instrumentalists,

[2] In discussing gender, I note that the focus of this thesis is to examine the particular challenges encountered by artists and music industry workers who identify as women though I acknowledge that issues discussed are also relevant to non-binary, trans, or non-gendered people. I also note that parts of this thesis refer to gender in binary terms, in part because the data and references are presented in this way and because gender restrictions in West Arnhem Land refer to a binary gender system specific to the region.

composers and producers in the region.

This chapter examines the causes and effects of gender inequality in the music industry and how REB are overcoming barriers and contributing to change both within Maningrida community and further afield. I begin by considering the impact of gender inequality in the Australian music landscape, such as the dominance of men in positions of power and influence in the music industry has created a boy's club mentality which I argue in Section 3.1, contributes to the gendering of music industry employment that excludes women from creative and technical decision making. It will also show how this contributes to an environment where sexual harassment and harm are common.

In West Arnhem Land, the intersection of two cultural systems with gender bias compounds the issues faced by female artists. Localised social factors such as kinship protocols, gendered restrictions in ceremonial music contexts and the prevalence of jealousy in relationships create barriers for participation in music-making for women. This leads to a lack of opportunities, mentorships and role models for emerging female artists.

REB is part of a growing movement of artists, producers and managers who are raising their voices questioning the masculine culture of the music industry. By accessing education, composition skills and the control of music production, the women of REB challenge gender inequality and contribute to changes in the musical culture of West Arnhem Land and the wider music industry. In order to hear from these women in the industry and their experiences and perspectives on the impacts of gender bias on the experiences of women in the industry, the chapter draws upon the stories and comments made by women interviewed in two Australian documentaries made 30 years apart. In 1995, established drummer Lindy Morrison produced a documentary called *Sisters are Doing it For Themselves* as a resource for women in the music industry (Morrison, 1995). Thirty years later, filmmakers Claudia Sangiorgi Dalimore and Michelle Grace Hunder produced *Her Sound, Her Story* (Dalimore, 2018). Both films consist of interviews with women in the music industry about their observations of gender inequity in practice. The similarity between the two films highlights how little has changed over this time, showing many recurring themes and issues faced by women in music which have remained unresolved across three decades.

3.1 The Trickle-Down Effect: Causes and Impacts of Gender Inequality in the Music Industry

Since its inception in the 1950s, the Australian contemporary music industry, and rock music in particular, has had a consistently masculine culture displaying deeply entrenched discrimination and systematic gender inequality (Evans 1998, Leonard 2017, Strong 2015, Young 2004). This section examines the causes and impacts of this persistent gender bias focusing on the male-dominated power structures; sexual harassment and abuse; designated gender roles and the undervaluing of women's creativity and abilities.

The Boy's Club

The gender bias in the Australian music industry starts at the top and trickles down because decisions made at high levels influence all facets of music production and performance. In 2017, the *Skipping a Beat* report stated that only 28% of senior and strategic roles in key organisations were held by women (Cooper et al, 2017) and in 2020, Ange McCormack from Triple J's *Hack* program reported that despite some improvements, only 38% of public board members and 38% of senior leadership at independent record labels were held by women (McCormack, 2020). Men have the power to shape creative processes, hire and match up artists and technicians, promote certain images, and use their influence to establish trends. There is a 'boys club' mentality where men hire other men and dictate the conditions of the production and performance of music by women. If women are not in positions to make decisions about who should be invested in, who the labels will, develop, it is inevitable that there will be gendered outcomes. (McCormack, 2020).

Women have been overlooked for positions in the music industry even if they have suitable skills, musical ability and work ethic. This creative gaslighting causes women to lose confidence in their artistic value, their abilities and project management skills (Strong, 2019: 80). In 1995, singer Kate Ceberano described businessmen who took over artistic decisions, worked with male associates in collaborations and eventually "killed" music by assuming ownership of songs (Morrison, 1995: 58:54). The female artist is still involved and the front face of the product, but her rights and creative control are diminished, often by much older and more industry experienced men. Audio engineer and producer Anna Laverty remarks, "I find it really weird that record labels would put, you know, a 17/18-year-old girl in the studio with a 40-year-old man and expect them to relate to each other in some way" (Dalimore, 2018:

14:30). The power inequality in this scenario places the younger woman artist at a disadvantage, making it difficult to assert her creative choices or ideas, and can lead to situations of sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment

The Australian music industry has high rates of sexual harassment, sexual assault and bullying, with 72% of women having experienced sexual harassment and 81% having experienced bullying, compared to 39% and 61% respectively for men (MAPN, 2022). This is the result of male-dominated culture, exacerbated by the nightlife economy of associated with popular music and factors such as the ready availability of alcohol, a highly casualised and isolated workforce and a lack of proper regulation (Haddon & Klein, 2024: 88). Serial perpetrators are not always held to account and formal reporting of harmful behaviours is infrequent as it is viewed as risky for future career prospects. This normalisation of harmful behaviours creates unsafe and unwelcoming environments (MAPN, 2022, Dalimore, 2018, Cooper et al, 2017, Strong, 2019*)*. Lindy Morrison Dallas Frasca and Ecca Vandal describe feeling uncomfortable around technical crew when touring and performing (Dalimore, 2018, Morrison, 1995). This disadvantages women because the technical crew support the artist and are essential to the best possible sound quality. A lack of respectful communication will affect the artist's performance.

Women are expected to dress and perform in certain ways to promote their music and the subsequent 'fetishization' of their bodies can be prioritised over their musical input and if they do not fit in, they can lose out on work and opportunities (Green, 1997, Dalimore, 2018, Ferguson, 1995). The sexualisation of women is perceived as a way of promoting music. For example, the 1991 music video for the Yothu Yindi song 'Treaty'— a political anthem addressing serious land rights issues—features powerful images of men dancing *bunggul*, playing instruments and singing, set against a backdrop of the mining industry. However, women are noticeably absent (Yothu Yindi, 1991a). The only woman in the music video, Sophia Garrkali, is sexualized, dancing in a short tight dress and at one point the camera angle comes from below pointing up her skirt. Media Arts researcher, Phillip Hayward comments that the result is "ultra-sexist" and he asked *Balanda* film director, Stephen Johnson, in a later interview, if Garrkali was happy with her image. Johnson answered no, explaining that he had persuaded her for the sake of the video and his perceptions of what would make a successful mainstream production (Hayward 2015: 39-40).

Another element to be considered is the recent growth of social media. A comprehensive discussion about the influence of media, in particular social media, on gender roles in the music industry is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to recognise this as an issue for women and gender diverse artists in the industry, both as a positive way to express identity, but also a space where negative racist and misogynistic views can be made public and directed at female artists. Used by artists to promote their music and advertise gigs, it can also be an environment hostile to the wellbeing of artists. Social media is a key element of marketing and artist sites provide information about gigs and releases and document the image that the artist, or their marketing team, wants to portray to their followers. While the agency provided to artists by being able to control their own marketing, the medium is also used to bully, sexually harass and make racist comments directed at artists (MAPN, 2022). REB, like many women, dealt with both racial and sexual harassment on social media. Our Facebook page has received 'dick pics' and sexual offers from men, we have had comments about our looks some of which encourage sexual assault, and our images have been taken and manipulated to look like pornography and then reposted online. Online harassment is insidious as it is often impossible to identify the attacker and sometimes the images or comments can be difficult to remove. This leads to sense of disempowerment and shame, and the women of REB have been brave to persevere.

Gender Roles

The music industry has sharply demarcated gender roles which position creative and technical positions such as composer, instrumentalist, audio engineer and producer as masculine. The Skipping A Beat Report summarises information from the Australian Council of the Arts (2017), the Australian Census (2011) and Engineers Australia (2015) to show that only around one third of employed musicians and one quarter of professional composers are female, and that no women reported as working as engineers in Sound Recording and Music Publishing in 2011 (Cooper et al, 2017: 5-6). In examining why these numbers are so low and why roles are so disparate, discriminatory hiring practices due to the boy's club are right at the start. The dominance of men in positions of power with certain perceptions about women's roles and women's value affects practices of signing artists, hiring musicians or technical crew.

There is a perception in parts of the music industry that women do not really know what they are doing in technical roles. Thelma Plum recalls not being allowed onstage as the backstage

crew assumed she was someone's girlfriend (Dalimore, 2018, 9:30) and audio engineer Anna Laverty tells a story about being kicked out of her own studio because Tina Turner's crew thought she was an assistant (Dalimore, 2018, 14:15). Women are frequently excluded from better paid, more career-sustaining creative and technical roles, lose control over creative decisions and are forced out of music spaces (Mayhew 1999, Morrison, 1995).

Female instrumentalists are not as well-known and do not have the same opportunities as their male counterparts because of the assumption that they are not as competent, as skilled or as available (Koskoff, 2014, Strong & Raine, 2019, Green, 1997, Bayton, 1997, Mayhew, 1999). This gender inequality is demonstrated on the Instagram site @lineupswithoutmales that publicises statistics on the lower percentages of artists with at least one non-male member on Australian festival line ups. Digging deeper, the gender divide becomes stronger when considering many "female" acts have majority male members as instrumentalists.

Some instruments, such as the keyboard are more acceptable for women than more masculine ones such as electric guitar and drums. Sociologist and female guitarist, Mavis Bayton, describes the electric guitar and the way it is played as an extension of the male body. She says that for men, "a good performance on electric guitar is simultaneously a good 'performance' of 'masculinity'" (Bayton, 1997: 43). Guitar driven rock music is historically and culturally a male dominated genre, expressive of male sexuality, as opposed to the more feminine pop music (Strong, 2015, Frith & McRobbie, 2000). Women are excluded from the cannon of rock music that is apparent in lists of Greatest Albums of all Time common to radio stations and music magazines and sites (von Appen & Doehring, 2006: 24). This leads to discrimination as women are not considered successful and they are overlooked and denied opportunities to progress as instrumentalists and rock musicians.

Another common perception in the industry is that once a woman has a baby, she is no longer employable, even though it is considered perfectly acceptable for men to spend time away from families when touring and recording (Brunt & Giuffre, 2022: 87)). Singer Linda Bull recounts overhearing record label executives discussing the end of a female artist's career due to her decision to have a child (Dalimore, 2018: 27:50). Arts writer and activist Zoya Patel comments that decisions around who gets to learn and play an instrument, who is framed as a musician and who is encouraged to go on stage, to be in the studio, to produce music is influenced by

“our own attitudes towards where we think a woman's place is, on a stage or in our homes, raising babies or making albums” (Patel, 2016 in Cooper et al, 2017:11).

There is a need for cultural and systemic changes towards a more flexible and inclusive the music industry in which parents and carers, can forge and maintain careers without disadvantage (Brunt & Giuffre, 2022: 83). This is a critical conversation, especially in regard to gender bias. The approach of REB has been to support and celebrate the mothers and carers in the band through flexibility in scheduling, . building in paid roles such as babysitters and allowing children to attend rehearsals and bringing them on tour. This approach has supported the women of REB to build music careers as mothers and carers, thus resisting perceptions of women’s roles.

Undervaluing women’s music

When women participate in the music industry, their contribution, knowledge and abilities are often overlooked, ignored or positioned at the margins (Haddon & Klein, 2024: 88). Female artists have been undervalued, and their stories and music marginalised as niche, while stories and songs by men are seen as universal (Riley, 2016). Radio playlists, festival line-ups, major industry boards and management positions are dominated by men (McCormack, 2018, 2020, Cooper et al. 2017). Data from Triple J’s *Hack* program shows that male artists consistently dominate the top 100 most-played songs on the influential radio station (McCormack, 2018). It is difficult for women to build audiences when their songs are not added to playlists, and they are not given the stage at festivals. Male privilege manifests in the value placed on male artists and the subsequent opportunities they are offered (Riley, 2016). Lack of airplay translates to a lack of sales, less streaming, fewer awards and less chance of female music artists being signed to record labels (Cooper et al, 2017: 9). Rock music, in particular, has a history of defining masculine identity. The rock canon, as defined by male critics, journalists, radio stations, promoters, is not objective, rather it reflects the tastes of powerful groups in society (Strong, 2010: 125).

It is necessary to examine the way the music industry works, power structures and attitudes which manipulate or exclude women, to challenge deeply ingrained hierarchies that inform the way we understand, appreciate and contextualize music. Not only that, straight, White male voices overshadow Indigenous Australians, immigrants and people from different cultural

backgrounds and people of diverse sexual and gender identities. These people and their stories remain marginalised, cementing the centrality of White men and limiting opportunities for the public to appreciate diverse viewpoints and perspectives (Riley, 2016).

3.2 Gender inequality in Western Arnhem Land music spaces

Nationally, the intersection of race and gender has contributed to Indigenous women being largely absent in the Australian music industry (Reed, 2002: 26). This section examines the localised social factors of Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory with a focus on Maningrida and West Arnhem Land, to show how these social elements create further barriers for Indigenous women to participate in music-making there.

Traditional and historical factors

In Arnhem Land, both ceremonial forms of music and contemporary Indigenous rock music, have historically been dominated by men (Corn, 2007, Magowan, 2007). The restrictions that apply to women singing or playing instruments in traditional contexts, discussed in chapter 2, are compounded by a history of gender bias in the Indigenous rock music scene in the Northern Territory (Ottosson, 2016, Corn, 2002). This has led to a situation where there are few women actively participating in music-making to inspire and pass on knowledge and songs to other women.

Lack of Role Models

The lack of role models and mentors for female musicians, particularly instrumentalists, is in part due to women not being able to develop performance experience and build musical communities in ceremonial contexts. This is exacerbated in West Arnhem Land by the cultural protocols that prevent women from performing highly regarded ceremonial music forms in public. It is common for members of local rock bands to also belong to the same clan groups and sing together in *bunggul* (Brown, 2016). The Indigenous rock music scene in Arnhem Land is dominated by men (Corn, 2002), which means that music studios are masculine environments which can be intimidating for women. Without a community of female artists, REB had to forge their own path as women, being the first, often the only female artists,

effecting music education, the transmission of songs and music knowledge and opportunities to join bands and play with older, more experienced musicians.

Music Spaces and Cultural Protocols

REB found rehearsal spaces in Arnhem Land a challenge and this affected their ability to play instruments and run their own music ensembles. Arnhem Land music rooms have their own protocols: primarily that access is granted as 'first come first served', though age and experience also play a role. Groups of men arrive at the space, usually run by a man, and then wait around, talking, smoking cigarettes. After a while when a band feels like their turn is coming up, they will enter the music space and hang around watching the other musicians rehearse, hoping their time will come soon. At some undetermined point, the coordinator, or the men playing, will decide and then the swap-over occurs, with the band members in the room jumping on instruments and calling out to their bandmates. Finally, they can rehearse.

This creates difficulties for women as they juggle caring responsibilities for small children and risk evoking feelings of jealousy by waiting around with men. Kinship protocols are powerfully adhered to, specifically the rules of social behaviour between brothers and sisters in Arnhem Land. A woman must not walk in front of her brothers, including her classificatory brothers, or show any evidence of bodily functions, even walking to the toilet in front of them can be frowned upon. She should not be in the same room, and if her brother enters, it is up to her to leave. If her brother wants something, a woman must provide for him, including handing over musical equipment. If a woman breaks these taboos, she can be physically punished by her brother in sanctioned aggression (Senior, 2003: 207, Burbank, 1994: 78). These avoidance relationships, with real consequences, combined with the haphazard booking system in remote music studios, has made it virtually impossible for women to access a music rehearsal space.

Jealousy

Jealousy is a major force shaping behaviours for both men and women in remote Indigenous Australia. Research into young people's experiences in a remote NT community found that for young people, violence in sexual relations was considered normal (Senior, Helmer & Chenhall,

2017). The normalization of violence against women has deep implications for every aspect of life. One of the key contributing factors is jealousy. A woman's boyfriend or partner can get jealous if his girlfriend goes to work, plays sport. Getting up on stage playing rock music really pushes boundaries. The men are worried their girlfriend will be in situations where they might meet another man, and something could happen between them. Or they fear that the women will focus on their own career and interests, rather than placing the men and their needs first. Subsequent jealousy can lead to domestic violence. Senior and Chenhall report that young women in their research groups describe how it is better to stay single if you want to work. Otherwise, your boyfriend may "bash you from jealousy" (Senior & Chenhall, 2012: 211-212).

REB have experienced issues with jealousy. Band members have missed out on tours at the last minute because their partner has locked them in the room, not allowing them to leave. As a manager, this has been challenging because the women feel ashamed and do not communicate what is happening. I depend on other band members or family members to explain the situation, though nobody can make any change. Another situation involved a man who was stalking some of the band members, becoming violent with jealousy after watching REB perform. Despite reporting this on several occasions to the NT police and the local Aboriginal organisation where he worked, nothing has been done and he continues to stalk and cause trouble for band members. The other side to jealousy is the arguing and accusations coming from other women who believe the women in the band are attracting the attention of their partners. This kind of sexual jealousy initiates many women's fights. On one occasion, we were rehearsing at the school when a jealous girlfriend who perceived her partner had been 'looking at' one of our band members threatened the group and we were locked in for several hours while the police calmed her down outside.

The issues of jealousy and avoidance relationships mean that many women stay away from music-making as they prefer to 'play it safe' to avert conflict in their relationships. REB has navigated this with care and consideration, thinking about songwriting topics, how the band looks and acts and it has been vital to gain community support, including from male musicians. The importance of male allies and music teachers will be discussed in the next section which examines how REB have been contributing to change in the music culture in Maningrida.

3.3 The Ripple Effect: changing music culture from within

Whilst REB faces gender inequality in the local music scene and the wider music industry, in some ways, the unique position of being women musicians in the masculinist rock music culture of West Arnhem Land, and of not fitting into either sphere, liberates the women of REB with the rock band format providing a space to bypass cultural restrictions and mediate social relations (Ottosson, 2016, Bracknell, 2023).

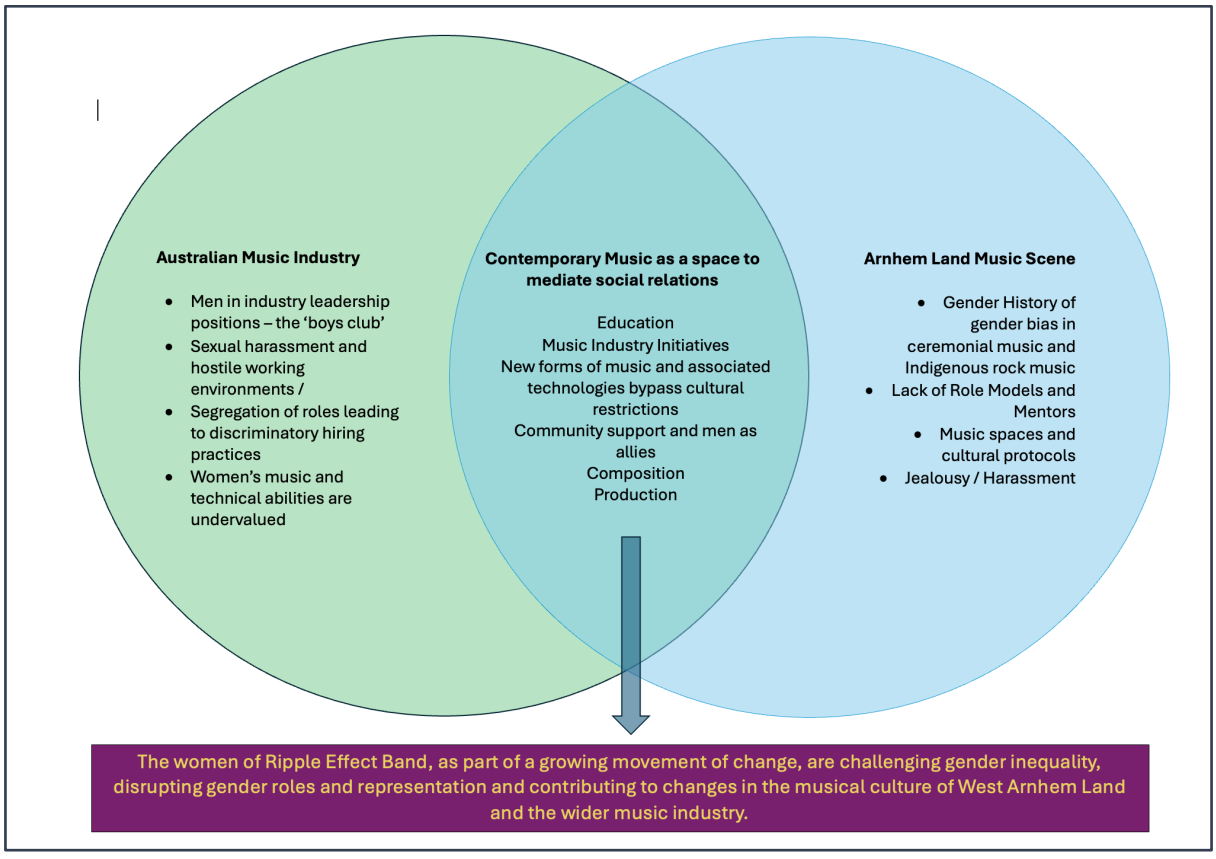

Figure 3.3 Diagram showing the intersecting contexts of music practice for Ripple Effect Band
This diagram aims to outline the context for women musicians in Australia more broadly and specific issues for women in Arnhem Land. There are intersecting and shared experiences, but the points listed on the right have particular localised cultural aspects that add emphasis for women in Arnhem Land. The intersecting section lists areas where women artists, the music industry and community members are challenging gender inequality in contemporary music making. This diagram was created through discussion with the women in REB.

The intersecting contexts of gender bias for REB are shown in Figure 3.3. The two circles represent respectively the Australian music industry and the West Arnhem Land music scene. The intersecting circles provide a space where female musicians in the band can use contemporary music to push against gender bias, disrupt gender roles and contribute to changing the social structures of Arnhem Land and the Australian music industry.

Contemporary music can provide a platform for Indigenous Australian women performers to challenge sexism, racism and bring Indigenous Australian women's experiences, history and topics to the fore (Barney, 2008: 3). Figure 3.3 outlines the ways that REB has manoeuvred through barriers using new forms of music and music technologies to bypass cultural restrictions, relying upon male allies, intercultural collaboration and community support. Taking on masculinist roles of music composition, performance and production, the women in the band have become roles models and mentors of other women. The next section will expand upon these points to argue that the band is using its unique position to disrupt gender roles, representation and promote change in the Australian music industry.

Education

Music education is a key element in developing the confidence and skills of the female musicians of REB. Music education can be a place where women and girls encounter early barriers to participation in the music industry (Strong & Raine, 2019). It is therefore important to ensure music education encourages female students to disrupt gendered stereotypes by playing instruments, composing music and developing the same skills and understanding as male students (Green, 1997).

At Maningrida College, the high school classes were split along gender lines due to cultural protocols coming into play in early adulthood. This resulted in plenty of all-girls' sessions in the music room, a time for experimentation and learning skills without feeling embarrassed or threatened by male students. Having female music teachers was a game changer, because Megan Atfield and myself modelled musical competence. There was also the supportive and gentle presence of local musicians Djolpa Mackenzie and Horace Wala Wala, who respectfully made the girls and women teachers feel comfortable. This was a formative time for REB and the women in the band continue to play instruments.

Since forming REB, band members have been involved in sharing their musical skills and knowledge to young people, as they value the importance of music education. In 2019, we ran Sista Sounds Workshops in Maningrida, an initiative of MusicNT to encourage and support emerging Indigenous female musicians. In 2021, Tara and I worked on Sista Sounds in Yuendumu running music workshops and a performance with local Warlpiri women. We also

worked with Dr Shellie Morris at the Banatjarl Women's Forum in 2022 to inspire strong women. The band is involved at Maningrida College and the Nja-merleya Youth Centre music room, supporting young women to follow in their footsteps, sharing their songs and helping others to perform.

Music Industry, Government and Institutional Initiatives

Whilst women such as the band members of REB can take a personal stand against gender bias, the power structures and cultural attitudes of the music industry need pointing out for consistent and long-lasting change to occur. Earlier in this chapter, I argued that there was a boys' club mentality in the music industry contributing to structural gender inequity. To combat this, women need allies, mentors and institutional support to redress the imbalance and place them on equal footing - a desire and capacity for change in the industry which currently exists (MAPN, 2022).

One of the key recommendations in the *Skipping a Beat* Report is to prioritise inclusivity and representation as core industry values through funding and training programs and using gender equity in hiring and funding. In 2016, Screen NSW introduced a requirement that all their funded drama series must include female key creatives on the team. Within one funding cycle of this decision, the proportion of female directors in NSW increased from 22 % to 56 % and the proportion of female writers increased from 26 % to 53 % and the proportion of female producers increased from 40 % to 64 % (Cooper et al, 2017). This demonstrates that affirmative action can quickly change an industry, and that there is a pool of educated, talented women ready to step up.

REB has benefited from support in the form of funding, opportunities for networking, mentoring that have been crucial in the successful development of the band. The formational support of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music was vital in enabling the collaboration between myself and the Indigenous band members which has been the foundation of REB. Consistent support from Creative Australia has provided vital funds for national touring and recording, as well as creative development which allowed the band to spend time on Country composing and producing music. ARIA award winning producer Michael Hohnen and Skinnyfish Music supported the recording of *Mayawa* in the Dr G Studios. In 2024, the band was selected by the newly formed Bush Music Fund (BMF), a pathway program providing

long-term support for Indigenous musicians living in outer regional and remote Australia through financial support, advocacy and industry advice. BMF has helped push the album to greater recognition by building and paying for public relations (PR), marketing and merchandise, as well as building the capacity of the women in the band. This has led to opportunities to meet with powerful people in the industry, such as the head of Spotify Australia, to discuss the promotion of the music and explore further development opportunities.

Locally in West Arnhem Land, the band was supported by Indigenous organisations, BAC, Nja-Marleya and Mala'la Health with rehearsal spaces, local performance opportunities, and transport and accommodation. These organisations have valued the female members of the band, and at the recent Lúrra Festival offered employment, as well as a headlining spot. MusicNT has supported the development of the band members by employing Tara Rostron as an NT Remote Music Ranger and mentoring her to work on Bush Bands and Maningrida Lúrra Festival. This logistical support increased the band's capacity for promotion and networking.

Community support: Men as Allies

The support of men as allies is vital for Indigenous women such as REB to enter the music industry and overcome gender inequality. When men reject patriarchal assumptions and actively work with women pioneers, sharing ideas, creative processes and opportunities, there is greater power to disrupt and change music cultures (Regan, 2020). This is similar to the processes of intercultural collaboration, when building relationships of mutual respect and trust develop new ways of working. Different perspectives and long-term commitment are essential to change cultural attitudes and practices.

Mudbarra musician, Eleanor Dixon, from country rock band, *Rayella* and the all-female electronic group Kardajala Kirridarra describes how both men and women need to acknowledge the value of women's voices in music:

> Women need to be heard. We carry so much knowledge. We carry so much wisdom. Men need to be like, 'Alright, it's time for these women to stand forward. It's time for my grandmother to be heard. It's time for my mother's struggle to be heard and to be seen' (Dalimore 2018: 42:30).

One of the ways REB has managed cultural protocols which contribute to gender bias has been to focus on contemporary music practice with the support of community elders and key musicians. This approach has been an integral part of the successful development of the band. The band has been encouraged to overcome difficulties and keep playing music by male musicians, family members and community elders. Na-kara leader Don Wilton has been a major supporter of the band, using his nieces' Na-kara songs in films about the fishing industry in Maningrida. Chapter 6 describes how An-barra songman Anjawartunga Maxwell encouraged the band, even performing on stage with the band accompanying him as he sang traditional *kun-borrk*. A renowned musician such as this offered patronage and validation of the band, respect and acknowledgement of its female musicians. Chapter 7 discusses the support of the Dhukurrdji Clan, including community leader Joesph Díddo continues to support the women in the band. This support led to an invitation to headline the 2024 Lúrra festival and the NAIDOC week celebrations earlier that year, when REB supported Indigenous rock legends, *Coloured Stone*. The performance was organised by Nja-marleya and it was remarkable as men and women worked together to set up and run the stage at the MPA shop. It showed that after eight years, the community of musicians in Maningrida had adjusted to women actively participating in the musical culture of the community, accepted as musicians and technicians.

Instrumentalists

> The first time we played at a festival outside of Maningrida, we travelled 100km over a dirt road to Ramingining to play at the annual Bak'bididi Festival in September 2017. Throughout that day, several people asked us what time our choir was performing and so we had to keep stressing we were a rock band. This brought polite smiles, but it was only when we got up and played that people really saw us as a band. As soon as we started playing, the crowd rushed forward and the festival producer Josh Grant asked me afterwards how come everyone was so excited about our first song. He had booked us as a brand-new band as they had heard about this women's band from Maningrida. Grant commented that our reception was unusual, with the audience crowding the stage and cheering so early on in the evening for an unknown band's debut. He wondered if we were playing some local hits, but I explained to him that we were playing our own songs. I believe it was the excitement of seeing women playing instruments and forming their own band that

> created such enthusiasm in the audience. REB were performing against gender norms, and this made us stand out. By the time we came off stage, the male musicians were waiting backstage, standing, and clapping as we walked past. Our mentor, An-barra song man David Maxwell, introduced us to elders and well-known local musicians from nearby communities who lined up to invite us to their community festivals. When we got to our phones, they were full of messages, audience members had streamed the performance on Facebook live and it had gone viral through Arnhem Land. This instant acclaim was in part due to the excitement of seeing women playing instruments and women choosing to play rock music, a genre usually performed by men.

This story shows how REB disrupted the common perception held in Arnhem Land and in the wider music industry that women are not as competent instrumentalists as men. Playing "masculine" instruments such as electric guitar and drum kit, surprised the crowd at Bak'bididi Festival and their reception was exciting and encouraging. After their performance, REB was invited to perform at other regional festivals eager to include West Arnhem female performers, often stating the aim of inspiring the women from their community to form a band.

It is highly unusual to find professional female Indigenous drummers, as there are added gendered perceptions about the similarity of drumsticks to *manberlnginj* (K: clapsticks) which are prohibited instruments for women in West Arnhem Land. REB drummers, Jolene Lawrence and Stephanie Maxwell James, have played since they were school students and over that time they have changed attitudes towards female drummers in Maningrida. There are currently three younger female drummers in Maningrida, two school students and one other woman who learn from and are inspired by REB drummers. As we have not encountered any other professional Indigenous women drummers, I argue that their performance on drums is a radical act challenging stereotypes in the music industry. This is also true of the way I approach lead guitar in the band. Electric guitar is another instrument which has masculine connotations, and through techniques such as using effects pedals for overdrive and Wah to augment the tone of my lead breaks, and throwing the guitar around in a solo, driving the rhythm, sitting in the groove with the bass and drums, I feel empowered as I display prowess in what is typically

seen as a masculine domain. It feels like the very act of playing rock guitar is disrupting stereotypes about women and technology, women and sexuality and women musicians.

The next two sections examine the specific areas of composition and production, asserting that controlling the creative process enables the women of REB to expand their opportunities and develop agency giving them a voice to express their perspectives, contributing to community cohesion and social change through positive actions.

Composing

For the women of REB, composing and singing songs is a compelling way to express identity. The strength in the front row of vocalists in REB, often singing in unison, and the way that we swap around to sing in other languages demonstrates the power of the voice and song. Singing presents an opportunity to express cultural knowledge, strengthen social cohesion and affirm identity.

Yorta Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung woman, Lou Bennet was a member of the internationally acclaimed trio Tiddas. She explains her approach to singing as an Indigenous artist:

> Singing is more than the Western idea of 'making a living'. It is a way of life, a way of being, it is the very air, spirit, and nutrient I breathe, consume, and converse, to keep me healthy and sane. Singing is a fundamental principal of Indigenous epistemological and ontological practices. Our Law came up from the earth and was sung to the Ancestors. Our Ancestors learnt the Laws through the songs (Bennett, 2023: 10-11).

One of the things that makes the singing in REB so powerful is that the women in the band compose their own songs. This means we retain control over song content and style and we can claim songwriter royalties through the Australasian Performing Rights Association (APRA) or sync licensing for film and television, thus adding to economic opportunities for songwriters.

In contemporary music forms, writing and producing original music enhances the perception of the authenticity and in rock music in particular, indicates artistic integrity (Mayhew, 1999:

68). Yet the role of songwriter / composer is even more skewed towards male domination than performers as the idea of women manipulating or controlling music has been seen as unacceptable or undesirable (Green, 1997: 113). Women represent only one-fifth of songwriters and composers registered with the Australasian Performing Rights Association, despite making up 45 percent of qualified musicians and half of those studying music (Cooper et at, 2017: 2). By taking on the role of composer, REB challenges prejudice against female composers and increases the reputation of the band as they add to the rock music canon, including songs in Indigenous languages. This creates a sense of community pride and connection and introduces a female perspective in Indigenous song content. The following chapters analyse songs in detail to examine the meanings held in the lyrics and musical elements to demonstrate how the innovative work of REB is expressing cultural knowledge which both unifies Indigenous women and men and raises the prestige of the musicians in the band.

Producing

This section examines what it means when women take up the role of music producer, as Tara Rostron and I did for the Reb album *Mayawa.* During the recording process, the construction of the final track or take, is a complex collaboration that involves the performers, editors and sound engineers, and producers in decision making processes (Zagorski-Thomas, 2014: 43). The producer plays a vital role, fusing technical, creative and people management skills to coordinate the different personnel and guide the sonic style of the song. Music production, therefore, is one of the "most powerful fields of practice within the music industry" (Wolfe, 2020: 1).

Before the introduction of small affordable Digital Audio Workstations (DAW) linked to laptops or home computers, music production started in the meeting rooms of music businesses dominated by men. The role of the record producer was linked to artist and repertoire (A&R) departments, and production and business practices were entwined. (Zagorski-Thomas, 2014: 45). Within an industry where all facets of music-making (songwriting, composition, musicianship and engineering) were male-dominated, the practices and perceptions surrounding the professional producer have been highly gendered resulting in environments that were problematic for female music producers or artists wanting agency in the music production process (Bennett 2017: 16, Mayhew, 2004: 70, Wolfe, 2020: 1).

Recent developments in technology have opened up access to self-production and this has changed the landscape, allowing for greater freedom by marginalised groups to produce music (Wolfe, 2020: 96, Zagorski-Thomas, 2014: 6). Female producers are using these advances to challenge patriarchal control of music production by actively participating in previously male dominated domains, disrupting the gendering of music industry practices (Wolfe, 2020: 9). In 2007 Katelyn Barney interviewed Indigenous artist-producers Kerrianne Cox, Shellie Morris, Toni Janke and Lexine Solomon about how they assert power, control, and agency through using music technology to record their own music, finding that self-production allows for creative freedom (Barney, 2009: 105-106). Shellie Morris described her independence from record labels:

> I can be who I want to be. I haven't got anyone breathing over my shoulder determining what I should sing about, how I should write it, how I should look. I prefer total independence (Barney, 2019: 110).

Changes in music technology, and the subsequent potential for artists to produce their own music, has also led to a lack of a clear definition of what the role of the music producer entails (Zagorski-Thomas, 2014: 41). For REB, producing *Mayawa* was a way of bringing our vision to fruition, and as producers we felt we were responsible for guiding the sound along the way. Figure 3.4 outlines the roles and responsibilities that Tara and I became aware of as we produced the album, including making creative, technical, and business decisions, while coordinating a team of songwriters, musicians and audio engineers. We also found we were hands-on with a range of roles such as audio mixing and playing instruments, merging producing with performing and technical and management skills.

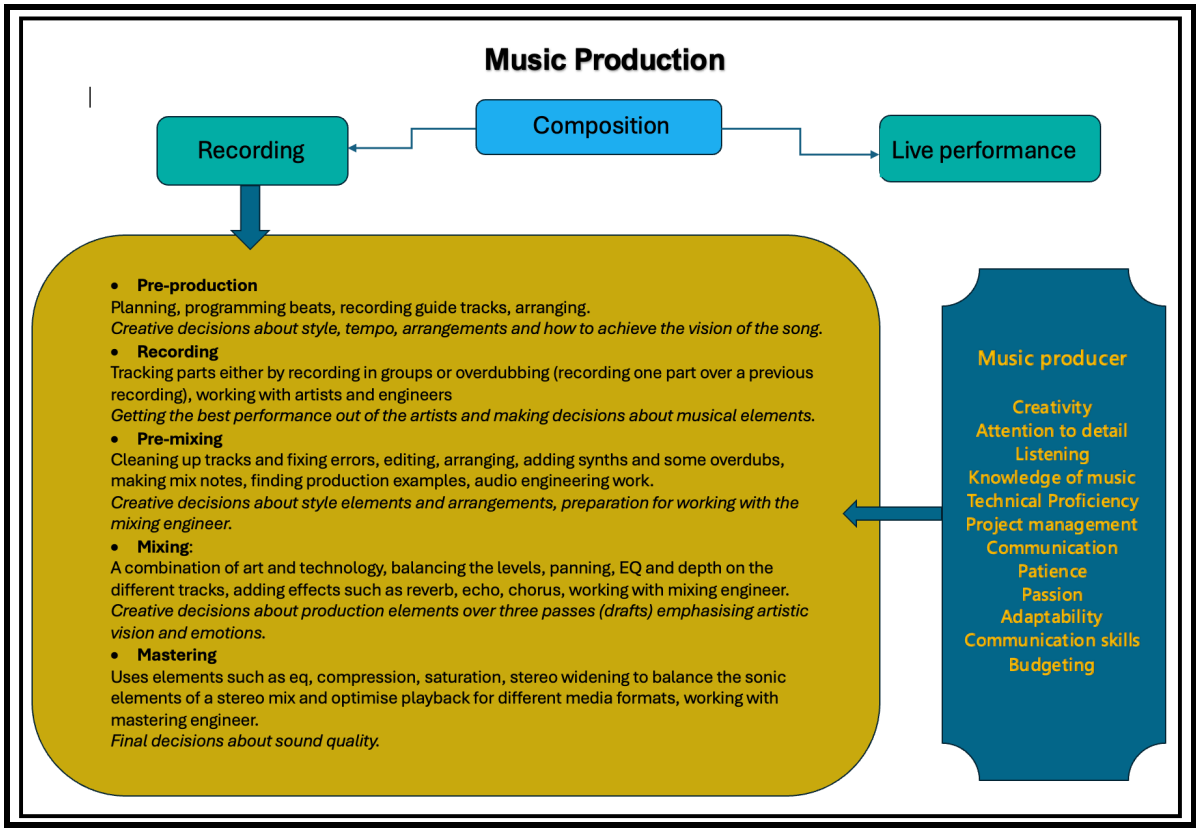

Figure 3.4 Diagram showing the roles and responsibilities of the music producer
This diagram was created with members of REB through discussions to create understanding about the processes that Tara and Jodie experienced in producing the *Mayawa* album and the skills and qualities they needed as album producers.

REB released *Mayawa* on September 13, 2024. It was produced, mixed and mastered by women, with songs composed and performed by women.. Chapter 8 will further discuss the production process and how it demonstrates the power of music to transform people's lives and contribute to social change as part of the expanding ripple effect of women actively participating in music production. The next section in this chapter will illustrate how the live performances of REB have developed and grown, contributing to changes in the wider music industry by inspiring other Indigenous female artists and breaking down gender stereotypes.

3.4 The Result of the Ripple Effect: Marrickville Bowling Club

In October 2023, we were working at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music as visiting artists in residence in the contemporary music department. As well as working with Con students, we were mentoring a group of young female musicians from Kintore in the Western Desert, Northern Territory. It was an inspiring and

emotional week, spent rehearsing, sharing stories and skills, swapping songs and preparing to perform at the end of the week. For the women of REB, it raised our status as we were accorded the respect of being recognized as mentors for the Aboriginal women as well as for the Conservatorium staff students.

We were part of a sold-out show at the Marrickville Bowling Club, performing for a diverse audience of 300 people, including Indigenous people who were in Sydney at the time. The atmosphere was exciting, with the audience dancing, singing and cheering throughout the night. The line-up included Indigenous artists Naya Cook, Lemonise, The Stiff Gins and the Kintore Kungka Band. Jolene, Patricia and I joined the Kintore Kungka Band, singing two songs with them and later, they joined us for our final song "People from Maningrida" (Audiovisual Link 01). The footage of that moment demonstrates the excitement and confidence of the women who, with support and encouragement, performed together.

Performing with the Kintore women was particularly special. We had played at Bush Bands in 2018 when these young women were still teenagers, and they remembered us from that time. Now they were performing on stage with us, and we felt strong mentoring an emerging band. We sold out the Marrickville Bowling Club to an enthusiastic audience of 300 people, including film producers Claudia Karvan and Kelsey Munro, who offered a sync deal to have our song "Ngúddja'" included in the Stan Series BUMP. We had released a lyric video of the song in the weeks leading up to the gig, and that night, as we played the song, the crowd sang along in Ndjébbana language.

Taking control of music production, composition, and curation gave these women a voice and reach audiences in mainstream, capital city, venues. Collaborating with other women musicians led to a sense of solidarity which contributed to a powerful and exciting sold-out show (Figures 3.5, 3.6, 3.7). The innovative performances that night, with female Indigenous musicians presented an alternative to gender stereotypes and societal perceptions and the positive reception shows how women's creative practices are reaching into mainstream and being accepted and celebrated by audiences in the Australian music industry. In 1995, Torres Strait Islander singer songwriter Christine Anu commented that working with other women

musicians puts things into “a different light and a different energy” (Morrison, 1995) and this energy is both exciting to watch and be part of in an all-women’s band such as REB.

Figure 3.5 REB on stage at the Marrickville Bowling Club
L-R: Jolene Lawrence (drums), Patricia Gibson (keys), Rona Lawrence (bass), Rachel Thomas (vocals), Jodie Kell (guitar)

Figure 3.5 The audience at the Marrickville Bowling Club, October 2023

Figure 3.6 Ripple Effect Band and Kintore Kungka Band pre-performance at Marrickville Bowling Club, October 2023
Before every performance, REB take time to gather together and pray, in preparation for performance. This is a grounding and focusing practice the band shared with the younger Warlpiri women from Kintore as well as Balanda women who perform with the band.

REB is part of a growing movement of women artists, producers and managers, and their allies, challenging and disrupting, speaking out about discrimination and inspiring others to feel confidence. Across the industry, Indigenous women are gaining success and receiving recognition. Music can provide a commonality that creates solidarity with other women (Barney, 2008, Moreton-Robinson, 2014, Koskoff, 2014, Ottosson, 2016) and REB draws strength and inspiration from other female Indigenous musicians. Pioneering artists such as Ruby Hunter, Tiddas, The Stiff Gins, Shakaya, Jodie Cockatoo (Yothu Yindi) and from West Arnhem Land, Wildflower, Noeletta Mackenzie (Wildwater) and Dr. Shellie Morris. Wildflower, from Mamadawewerre, an outstation southwest of Maningrida, was the first West Arnhem Land band to feature women as musicians and composers, though apart from keyboard player Salome Nabarlambarl, it was their male relatives who played the instruments. Drawing upon matrilineally inherited knowledge passed on from their aunt Jill Nganjmirra, (Brown, 2016: 67-68), *Wildflower* released an album in 2009, inspiring the women of REB, particularly Tara Rostron who has kinships ties with the lead singer Jean Burrunali.

Through the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, REB has worked with the emerging Kintore Kungkas, Naya Cook, The Stiff Gins and Cianna Walker. At festivals across Australia, we have performed alongside Emily Wurramura, Kee'Ahn, Barkaa and Yolŋu singer Dhapanbal Yunupingu and in 2023, the band was nominated for an Australian women in music award for promoting diversity in music. By performing music, Yunupingu says, "We can open doors for other women, so they don't have to be afraid, you know. They can show their talent. I've got a voice as well. I can stand up" (Dalimore 2018: 52:50).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter asserted that the gender bias in the Australian music industry is found in all levels of the music industry. The dominance of men in position of power and influence leads to discriminatory practices in hiring, the marginalisation of female artists in the media and music charts and unwelcome, unsafe and unsupportive environments for women. There are gendered divisions in the types of work and roles considered suitable for women. Women earn far less and receive less airplay than men and festival line ups and major performance opportunities have been monopolised by male artists. In West Arnhem Land, the gender bias in the music industry is compounded by local social factors such as kinship protocols, gendered restrictions in music-making and the prevalence of jealousy in social relationships. Given contemporary music plays such an important role in forming of our identity and social cohesion, it is crucial that this imbalance is addressed to enable female perspectives to be heard.

This chapter identified how the musical practices of REB have challenged gender inequality and contributed to changes in the musical culture of West Arnhem Land and beyond. REB has used contemporary music and the support of community and music industry allies as a way to safely navigate cultural protocols and disrupting gender roles. In turn, the band became inspiring role models, mentors and teachers encouraging more women in Maningrida and in other remote communities to feel confident to express themselves in the contemporary music industry. In this way REB is part of a growing movement that is challenging the masculinist culture of the music industry, a ripple effect that has spread and grown, transforming social relations and constructions of identity. In the next chapters, song analysis will illustrate the ways REB has used popular music forms to express their perspective as strong Indigenous women and examine what happened as the band developed and their influence spread.

Chapter 4

"Ngúddja": Celebrating Multilingualism in Song

"Ngúddja" [1]

Verse 1

Balawúrrwurr wédda nganda-mángka-yana	*The wind comes across the land*
Balawúrrwurr ngúddja ngarra-kaláya	*Bringing the words and the language*
Balawúrrwurr barrómaya ka-bala-ddjórrkka	*Carrying the spirits of our ancestors*
Ngarra-karráwanga karrakárriba	*As we look out over the land*

Chorus

Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala	*We all call out in our different languages*
Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala	*We all call out in our different languages*
Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala	*We all call out in our different languages*
Djibba wíba ngabayúka-na	*But we sit down on this land here together*

Verse 2

Ngarra-kaláya Ndjébbana, Na-kara,	*We can hear Ndjébbana, Na-kara,*
Kun-barlang,	*Kun-barlang,*
Burarra, Gun-nartpa, Gurr-goni, Kuninjku	*Burarra, Gun-nartpa, Gurr-goni, Kuninjku.*
Rembarrnga, Kune, Djinang, Dalabon	*Rembarrnga, Kune, Djinang, Dalabon*[2]
Ngarra-karráwanga karrakárriba	*As we look out over the land*

Chorus

[1] "Ngúddja" by the Ripple Effect Band, composed by Patricia Gibson and Jodie Kell. The song is on the Wárrwarra EP. The lyrics have been translated and transcribed by linguists Rebecca Green and Carolyn Coleman, Patricia Gibson and Jodie Kell.
https://open.spotify.com/track/6jhDunPRvSyTTGM97cimhs?si=7e93fc1c95c84dc3

[2] The West Arnhem Land words are names of different languages spoken in the Maningrida region.

“Ngúddja” was one of the first songs performed by REB and it is the opening track on the Wárrwarra EP. It was composed by Kunibídji Kuninjku woman Patricia Gibson and myself in 2017. Sung in Ndjébbana, the language spoken by the traditional owners of Maningrida, the song expresses pride in the many different languages spoken in the community. Its guitar-driven rock beat and high energy vocals has made it one of the band’s signature tunes, and like a pebble dropped in the water, it was a factor in establishing REB as a new name in the rock music landscape of the Northern Territory.[3]

Figure 4.1 Songwriter Patricia Gibson collecting firewood with Jolene Lawrence and Dodie Wilson at Rocky Point, September 2017

The rock band format creates a space for negotiating intercultural and gender relationships (Bracknell, 2023, Ottosson 2016, Barney, 2023). Analysis of “Ngúddja” demonstrates how REB are using contemporary rock music to bypass cultural restrictions to music-making and

[3] This chapter is a based on a published book chapter co-authored by Rachel Thomas, Marita Wilton, Rona Lawrence and myself (Kell et all, 2020). The article came about through a presentation at the 41st MSA Conference “Through the Looking Glass” held in Perth, Western Australia in 2019. Through discussion and storytelling, the authors planned and structured the article. I reviewed literature, collated and wrote the text, with the Maningrida based authors checking and approving permissions. The chapter has been altered to focus on the themes of this thesis, but largely remains the same.

performance, using hooks such as singing the names of a range of languages and featuring rock guitar riffs to establish the band in the male-dominated Indigenous music culture of the NT. The chapter argues that in composing, performing and recording "Ngúddja", REB was testing the water, to find ways of expressing cultural identity whilst respecting cultural protocols, such as using drum kit and percussion instead of *manberlnginj* (K: clapsticks), and synthesiser and samples instead of *mako* (K: didjeridu) to get around gendered restrictions.

Intercultural collaboration has been key to developing the innovative practices of REB. In 2017, the band comprised a *Balanda* musician (myself), three Kunibídji women, one Kunibídji/Kuninjku woman, two Na-kara women, one An-barra/Djinang woman and one Kune woman. Since then, we have worked with a range of musicians including Annastasia Lucas and Harriet Fraser-Barbour who are non-Indigenous multi-instrumentalists who regularly play with the band, but the essence of the band remains with the West Arnhem Land women. We sing in all of the languages, and this is a distinctive characteristic of REB, compared to other Indigenous rock bands that sing in one or two Indigenous languages as well as English. Bracknell says REB is "unique in Australia in terms of how they incorporated multilingualism in their music and songwriting practices, singing in six different languages" (Bracknell, 2024: 32). It shows how the band has developed creative processes and musical practices that work across difference, using contemporary music-making to build relationships of trust and use the strengths of musicians from different backgrounds.

Figure 4.2 REB in Sydney in 2017
L-R: Marita Wilton, Rona Lawrence, Tara Rostron, Jodie Kell, Patricia Gibson, Rachel Djíbbama Thomas, Jolene Lawrence, Stephanie Maxwell James

As one of the earliest compositions by REB, an examination of the songwriting processes and performance styles, as well as analysis of lyrical and musical elements of "Ngúddja" provides key insights into the inspiration behind the development of a new corpus of songs composed by women. In 2017, the band members were fashioning their identity as female rock musicians. The song draws upon Indigenous guitar-centred rock, and this associates the women with a music tradition which has expressed cultural identity in postcolonial Indigenous Australia. Rock music has been a source of protest songs, songs about the human condition and in Arnhem Land, songs that fuse *kun-borrk* or *manikay* traditions and content with contemporary music styles. "Ngúddja" established REB as an Indigenous rock band and set the direction of the band to sing in Indigenous languages, to celebrate linguistic and cultural differences and to demonstrate pride in their community.

The chapter investigates the role of song in creating allegiances and negotiating relationships in multi-lingual societies such as Maningrida. It argues that Indigenous languages augmented by localised musical characteristics are used to express diversity and delineate cultural identity. It finds that through this articulation REB has drawn upon both popular and ceremonial musical

traditions to inform their innovative musical practice. Music is tied to language, land, and social identities (Solis 2015, Bracknell 2024, Ottosson 2016, Tamisari 2024) and the popularity of "Ngúddja" suggests that its message of celebrating diversity and togetherness whilst retaining distinct cultural identities resonates with audiences locally in West Arnhem Land, in other NT Indigenous communities and across Australia.

4.1 Multilingualism in Maningrida

The Ndjébbana word *ngúddja* has multiple meanings; story, language, word and talk (Green, 2007). The song "Ngúddja" is about linguistic diversity, a distinctive feature of the Maningrida community. Maningrida has been described by linguist Jill Vaughan as "one of the most multilingual communities in the world" with thirteen different languages currently spoken as well as English and Kriol (Vaughan, 2018: 120).[4] People in Maningrida also frequently use alternate sign systems for communication (Campbell et al, 2021).

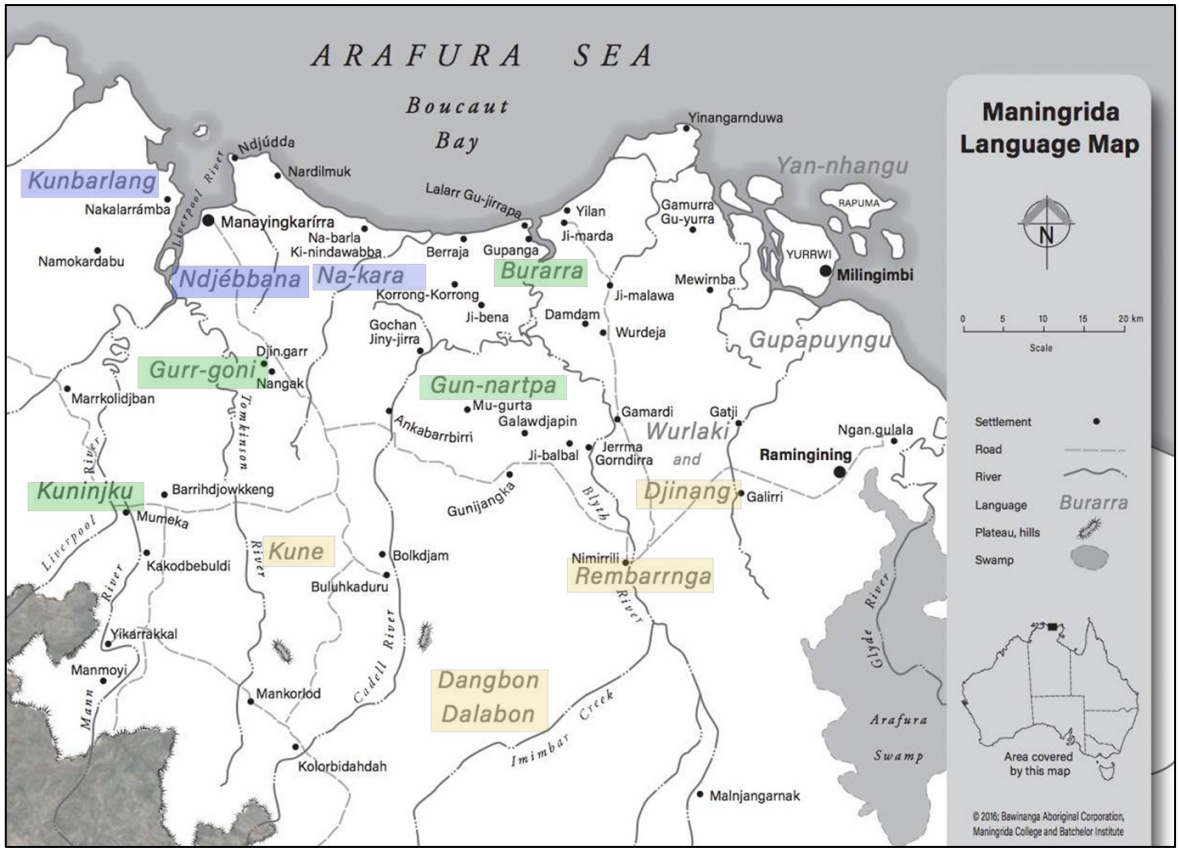

Figure 4.3 Language map of the Manayingkarírra (Maningrida) region
(Map credit: Brenda Thornley). The languages mentioned in "Ngúddja" in verse 2 (V2) are highlighted. Purple denotes V2 Line 1, green denotes V2 Line 2, yellow denotes V2 Line 3.

[4] Kriol is an English-based creole language spoken across northern Australia.

As discussed in Chapter 2, language is more than a system of communication. It is a mark of identity that refers to geographic place and cultural connections. Vaughan describes how in the region there is a direct ideological connection between language and land ownership, where individuals are understood to "own" the language connected to the country they are associated with by virtue of their patrilineally-inherited clan membership (Vaughan, 2018). Foundational band member, Marita Wilton expressed this connection:

> Language and culture have been passed on from our ancestors' spirits and where we are, and where we are connected from – our song lines, our land, our ancestors and our Country. We are connected to our land and our animals through our language. Singing in an Aboriginal language is powerful because it is our first language. It makes us strong and proud and reminds us of our ancestors (Kell et al, 2020: 162).

Composing "Ngúddja" started with the idea of articulating the way people in Maningrida switch between different languages in daily life. "Code switching" —changing between different languages in the same conversation or language situation — is a feature of social interaction in Maningrida, indicating relationships and connections through different social structures and cultural protocols (Meakins 2008, 286; Elwell 1982, 13). Marita Wilton explains how she switches between her language of Ndjébbana to her daughter Simone's language of Kune in conversation. This ensures her daughter will be able to effectively communicate in social situations where she is growing up with her mother, whilst also learning the language inherited from her father:

> I have a daughter; she's fourteen years old. She's Tara's cousin. I speak to her in my language, Ndjébbana and her father's language, Kune. I speak to her in both ways. I switch when I see her, when we talk. For example, if I want to ask her, "Simone where are you going?", I'll ask in Ndjébbana, "Simone karnmawa djérre?" and she might answer in Kune, "Ngare kured", meaning I'm going home. I will

> reply in Kune, "Kamak, karriray kured.", meaning, "Ok let's go home." You see? We switch languages.[5]

In multilingual communities, different languages are tied to domains of social activity, such as home, school or work but they can also be tied to social interactions (McConvell 2008, 240-243). Linguist Vanessa Elwell analysed the multilingualism used in everyday situations in Maningrida in the 1970s (Elwell 1982). She commented that while the major influence on language use is tribal affiliation through the father, code switching was done for social reasons, such as asking for a favour, or to be accommodating as a shop worker (Elwell 1982, 93-100). Today in Maningrida, it only takes going to the shop to experience code-switching as the shop assistants switch from language to language, and people shopping can be heard talking to relatives in a range of languages.

Code switching is a language practice that promotes a sense of belonging to a range of social groups, promoting a multilingual identity and contributing to social cohesion (Meakins 2008, O'Keeffe 2016, Evans 2010). Whilst language is used to delineate social groups, multilingualism shows we are united in accepting diversity; we all accommodate, we all accept everyone's right for their language to persist. Ceremonial events such as cultural exchange and funerals are opportunities to display linguistic diversity and allegiance to a clan group as well as celebrate linguistic and cultural difference. Ethnomusicologist Isabel O'Keeffe has written extensively about multilingualism in song in West Arnhem Land. In her 2016 thesis she describes in detail *manyardi/kun-borrk* song cycles that use a range of song languages including spirit languages. She says that these song traditions manifest the multilingualism and language diversity underpinning the language ideologies of the region (O'Keeffe, 2016). Ethnomusicologist Reuben Brown, in his discussion of West Arnhem Land ceremonial repertoires, discusses with Western Arnhem Land song men the concept of 'complementary difference'. The performers characterize their repertoires as being different even as they are performed together in a shared ceremonial space. Singer James Gulamuwu expressed this with the term "different together" (Brown, 2016: 9).

[5] Marita Wilton, interviewed by Spotify Australia, Barunga Festival, June 2018. (Available as JK1-REB201806-01at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/REB201806/JK1-REB201806-01.mp4), 7:05

In Arnhem Land and across the Northern Territory, community festivals have become important in the movement to sustain, revitalise and reinvent song and dance traditions. They play a significant role in navigating dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on Indigenous land. (O'Keeffe 2016, Laughren & Turpin 2016, Brown 2016, Tamisari, 2024, Phipps, 2010). REB regularly performs at local festivals across the NT such as Milingimbi's Gatjirrk Festival, Maningrida's Lúrra Festival and Gunbalanya's Rock Country Festival, or bigger events that attract NT and interstate audiences, such as Garma, Barunga or Freedom Day Festivals. Cultural anthropologist Franca Tamisari describes the Milingimbi Gatjirrk Cultural Festival as an arena to articulate and negotiate power relations between local groups in the community, including between older and younger generations and between men and women, providing a space to "display differences and strengthen ties between families, groups and generations." (Tamisari, 2024: 94). REB has performed at Gatjirrk Cultural Festival in 2017 and 2019. The band was featured in a documentary produced by First Nation Television, showing the range of activities and performance events at the festival (First Nations TV, 2019). Tamisari quotes festival founder, musician and Yolŋu elder Keith Lapulung, "The Festival, in fact, stands for the possibility of embracing difference through a recognition of a common ground." (Tamisari 2024: 98).

4.2 Intercultural Collaboration

"Ngúddja" was composed in 2017, during the early stages of the band's formation, when the musicians were establishing themselves as song writers. At this time, REB was developing a method of creative collaboration expressed through the composition, performance and recording of a new repertoire of songs coming from women's perspectives. The story of composing and arranging "Ngúddja" illuminates how this was enacted in practice. It sheds a light on how musicians from different cultural and language backgrounds worked together to navigate local protocols and postcolonial social structures and contribute to social identity with pride.

Figure 4.4 Song composers Patricia Gibson and Jodie Kell at the Wíwa music studio in Maningrida in August 2017

Patricia Gibson identifies as both Ndjébbana and Kuninjku speaking, but she associates most strongly with the Ndjébbana speaking community who raised her from when she was a child. On her father's side, she speaks Kuninjku and spent her early childhood years on his Country at Modkorldjban, but when her mother passed away, she moved to Maningrida, raised by Dhukurrdji clan members, who speak Ndjébbana. She speaks Ndjébbana, Kun-barlang and Na-kara from her mother's side and Kuninjku from her father. Her skin name is nja-Wakadj, and her moiety is Yírriddjanga. Gibson is a gospel musician, singing, playing keyboard and composing and recording songs for church services and funerals and she is an active participant in traditional ceremonies, as a dancer and *djungkay* (cultural manager). The difficulties of multilingual collaboration in the process of composing "Ngúddja" are illustrated in my diary from this time:

> It was August 2017, and Patricia and I were at the Wíwa Music Studio at the Maningrida Arts Centre. We were the only women there and some male musicians were practicing in the studio, so we sat outside with an acoustic guitar. We wanted to write a new song, something anthemic, high energy, a song that was catchy and everyone could sing along to, celebrating a particular aspect of life in Maningrida.

We were inspired by songs like “Long Grass Man” (Bininj Band), ‘The Hunter” (Lonely Boys) and “Blackfella Whitefella” by the Warumpi Band, as songs that bring a sense of togetherness and inspire people to feel proud of their culture.

We chatted about our ideas, and I started thinking about how when we drive around town, whoever is in the car will call out to people we pass, asking for tobacco, money, hunting, or finding out where someone is or details of an event. They call out in different languages, sometimes calling to one person one way and then turning around and calling to the next in a different language. We started talking about this and laughing and then decided to write a song about it. This was a characteristic of Maningrida that we could relate to as distinctive and fun, also connected to Country, kinship, and clan.

Commencing song writing with discussions about song topics and aims and taking time to make sure Indigenous and non-Indigenous song writers agree is an integral part of REB song writing processes. We established a vision of the song we wanted to create before we embarked upon musical elements. We started with a concept or idea that we talked about, each bringing our own perspectives to the conversation. I brought influences from outside of the community thinking about the reception of the song topic, as well as my ability to play guitar, to set words to music. Patricia is an active member of the multilingual community of Maningrida, and she outwardly shows great pride and enjoyment in using a range of languages. Her experiences inform the lyrics, and she contributes fluency of language.

I suggested we write a verse about nature, thinking of the seasons as a way to show different languages. Patricia told me in no uncertain terms that she didn’t like my idea. I kept going, trying to find a metaphor for languages. She did not understand what I was trying to do, and I couldn’t explain it to her. I felt frustrated at my inability to express my ideas in Ndjébbana. Rather than insisting upon switching to writing in English, I started to think of the language I did know. Sitting outside of the music studio, we could feel the breeze coming off the ocean, blowing across the community. I remembered the Ndjébbana word for “wind”, *balawúrrwurr*. I mentioned this to Patricia and her tone changed immediately. She could relate to

> the wind as connected to people, to the spirits, to the ancestors. I started strumming chords on the guitar and it wasn't long before we had a verse about the wind and the words and the spirits blowing across the country.
>
> The chorus was challenging because we wanted something that was catchy and memorable. We tried different ideas, but none of them worked. Patricia went to get a cup of tea in the Art Centre next door. I was glad to have a break and was chatting with some of the other musicians when she came back excitedly. She told me that she had been sitting with Doreen Jinggarrabarra in the Art Centre when suddenly she had the chorus in her head, like a dream. She sang it for me, and I could fit the chords C – G – F – C to the melody. Adding the blues 7th gave it a Blues rock feel that we both liked.

Giving Gibson time and space to reflect on the aim of the song allowed her to dream or imagine the chorus, with lyrics fitting to melody and feel. Sitting with other women from the community, chatting with other musicians, immersed in her languages, we were developing and drawing upon relationships to support and inform our songwriting.

This process of composition demonstrates the importance of developing relationships so that it is possible to work through creative disagreements and trust each other in collaboration (Bracknell, 2019, Barney 2023). Sydney musician Toby Martin, in discussing the creation of the collaborative album, *Songs from Northam Avenue*, speaks of the importance of listening to each other's creative choices, cultural backgrounds and lives to achieve an understanding of difference when working together (Martin, 2017: 27-28). Bracknell similarly proposes that "positive interpersonal relationships seem to be at the core of effective musical partnerships." (Bracknell, 2019: 117).

As a non-Indigenous artist working with Indigenous artists, it is important to recognise my position and to enact the principles of intercultural creative arts practice explained by Lou Bennett: respect, reciprocity, relevance, responsibility, and relationality (Bennett, 2023: 11). This requires a focus on the creative process that allows for time to have balance and understanding between artists of different backgrounds (Bennett, 2023: 14-16). REB has developed a process of working together that is based on long term relationships in which I, as

a non-Indigenous band member, reflect on my position, contributing new approaches to music as well as navigating cultural protocols with respect. I also bring alternative perspectives to songwriting with a sense of different stories and different audiences in mind, due to my cultural background and my connections to other regions of Australia.

Working in intercultural arts collaborations can be challenging because being in unfamiliar territory, and its associated sense of fear can be a barrier to communication and connection (Bartleet, 2016: 95). Katelyn Barney draws upon the metaphor of the "third space" to help understand how Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists can operate in this unfamiliar territory (Barney, 2023). The idea of a third space is expressed by Yothu Yindi's singer Manduwuy Yunupingu through metaphor of *ganma* that describes the brackish water where the saltwater from the ocean and freshwater meet. He explains that this is considered a fertile environment and is used to refer to the intercultural space where different groups can reach mutual understanding and participate in creative collaboration (Yunupingu, 1994).The third space is both challenging but can also be a place of creativity, where the fusion of ideas can generate arts practices and products.

In working together, Gibson and I demonstrated a level of trust which enabled us to come up with a concept, try different musical ideas, have different opinions, even disagree at times. We took our time, listening to each other and sharing ideas. The long-term relationship between us stretching back to my time as a schoolteacher in Maningrida 20 years previously, and more recently, time spent together on Country, in community, at cultural events, grounded in family and clan connections - all contribute to our creative processes. For the women of REB, the rock band as a new form of musical practice supports creative risk-taking and the navigation of gendered protocols and is an effective forum for cultural exchange and intercultural collaboration. Bracknell describes REB as embodying the "egalitarian ideals of the rock band, not just in a binary Indigenous/non-Indigenous, but also across many cultures of Arnhem Land" (Bracknell, 2023: 28).

4.3 The Egalitarian Space of the Rock Band

Contemporary music-making is a forum where the women of REB navigate local protocols particularly those concerned with gender. In Maningrida, as discussed in Chapter 2, women are not allowed to use instruments such as *mako* or *bilma*, "sonic markers of Aboriginality"

(Barney 2010, 221-222). However, REB allude to these instruments through their use of percussion. In 2017 when recording "Ngúddja" at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, drummer Stephanie Maxwell James and producer Clint Bracknell experimented with different percussion to create texture through the song. Before each chorus, they use a rattling woodblock to replace the sharp beat of *manberlnginj* (K: clapsticks), resulting in a tonal hook that catches the attention of the listener. For the ending of the song, the band instruments drop out except for a playful cacophony of percussion instruments that works as a call-and-response with the vocals singing the chorus. This works as a "hook stack" (Byron & O'Regan, 2022: 325) in which the strong acapella vocal line contrasts with the crazy frenetic energy of the percussion causing the sentiment of togetherness and difference stand out. These choices about instrumentation also demonstrate how REB was asserting identity as West Arnhem Land musicians while navigating gendered protocols regarding the use of instruments such as clapsticks in a fun and energetic way..

REB is following in the footsteps of Indigenous rock bands before them and analysis of the song "Ngúddja" shows how it alludes to NT Indigenous rock band Warumpi Band, with the country blues rock style and following in their use of Indigenous languages. 'Ngúddja' is strongly influenced by their seminal 1985 single hit, "Blackfella Whitefella", an anthemic song drawing attention to issues of racism in Australia with its lyrics encouraging harmony and cooperation by people all races.

"Ngúddja" opens with a driving rock guitar riff, a continuous hook that is strengthened by the kick drum playing on the beat. The tonal qualities of the guitar, a sparse muted comping using overdrive and reverb, reflect the country rock guitar of Sammy Butcher from the Warumpi Band and sets the style of the song. As the lead guitarist, I have been influenced by early Indigenous rock, and in "Ngúddja" I have emulated the guitar driven sound of Warumpi Band, Yothu Yindi and Sunrize Band of the 1980s and 90s.

In live performances, we introduce the band over a musical introduction, an example of this is shown in the footage of Bush Bands Bash 2018 (13:56 – 16:00). As each woman is introduced, she starts playing her instrument then her language group is announced, revealing the unique multilingual make-up of the band members. The rhythmic guitar hook and the staggered buildup of instrumentation creates momentum, and naming each language group reinforces

Indigenous languages as the focus of the song. This introduction also ensures audiences become familiar with and have the opportunity to applaud the women in the band.

When the vocals finally come in, they are strong and in unison. In performance, the front line of vocalists of four or five vocalists sings together and, in the recording, all of the band joined in on back-up vocals so there are eight voices, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, from different language groups, singing together. Aaron Corn and Joe Gumbula comment on "the importance of unified melody giving the illusion of a single voice" (Corn & Gumbula, 2007: 67). Band members from a range of language groups and cultural backgrounds, singing Ndjébbana language in unison with such energy presents an image of the band as powerful together and proud of who they are and where they come from.

Whilst many male bands in Arnhem Land have members from different language groups, it is unusual for one band to have songs in so many different languages. Figure 4.5 shows the dominant performance language for bands in the Maningrida region, with REB standing out for its multilingualism. The band members switch instruments to allow different women to come forward and sing in their language, and vocalists will sing in languages other than their own to support and strengthen the song.

Letterstick Band	Burarra and English
Sunrize Band	Burarra and English
Liverpool River Sunset Band	Ndjébbana, Kuninjku and English
Black Rock Band	Kunwinjku and English
Nabarlek Band	Kunwinjku and English
Wildwater	Burarra and English
Saltwater Band	Gumatj and English
Wildflower	Kunwinjku and English
Ripple Effect Band	Burarra, Na-kara, Ndjébbana, Kune, Kuninjku and English

Figure 4.5 Song languages of contemporary rock bands of the Maningrida region

This multilingualism is due to a variety of factors. In the early days of Maningrida settlement, anthropologist Les Hiatt noted that women tended to move to their husband's Country when they married and as a result would speak his language and teach it to their children (Hiatt,

1965:31). Today, women still accommodate linguistically, and this is demonstrated in the musical practices of the band. Due to the fact that there are so few women instrumentalists in Maningrida, the band was drawn together from a range of different language and clan groups, united by their desire to form a band and play music. In this way, the rock band has created allegiances for the women, strengthening their relationships across languages and clan. Singing together in a range of languages, has raised the status of the women in the band, as this practice is regarded as being respectful to other social groups and promoting goodwill and acceptance across language groups, across the East and West Arnhem Land divide and across freshwater and saltwater people.

Band Member	**Language**
Rona Lawrence	Na-kara
Jolene Lawrence	Na-kara
Stephanie Maxwell James	An-barra Burarra
Tara Rostron	Kune
Patrician Gibson	Kuninjku/Ndjébbana
Rachel Thomas	Ndjébbana
Marita Wilton	Ndjébbana
Jodie Kell	English

Figure 4.6 The primary language affiliations of the women in REB in 2017

REB members support each other to sing in each woman's language. This creates stronger relationships as it shows mutual respect in recognising and sharing language, and is an egalitarian approach which suits the multilingual make-up of the band, promoting diversity and acceptance. Figure 4.6 outlines the different language affiliations and Figure 4.7 shows the different roles and instrument choice of REB band members. With such a range, but not one dominant language, REB developed fluidity in the physical arrangement of the band in performance. Multi-instrumental band members move around, swapping instruments so that each woman has the opportunity to lead the singing in her language.

Figure 4.7 Multi-instrumentalists in Ripple Effect Band: different combinations of REB musicians at Bustard Town, Darwin, August 2024

4.4 Balawúrrwurr: Creating Allegiances through Song

I made a song about Ngúddja. With Jodie. And Ngúddja is all the different languages. *Balawúrrwurr* is the wind, we can listen and talk to each other. We can listen to the old people and the spirit coming through and we can listen to

> the winds blowing. We can listen to the wind bringing the words. We can just listen. It's what we understand from the wind and the old people.[6]

"Ngúddja" uses the metaphor of *balawúrrwurr* (Ndj: wind) to describe the diversity of languages, and the interconnection between language and the land. Using metaphor supports understanding in intercultural communication (Armstrong et al, 2024: 8). Gibson and I found that the metaphor of the wind helped us to express our different ideas in a cohesive way, bringing focus to the song writing process.

Each line of the first verse starts with the repetitive use of the word *balawúrrwurr*, describing how the wind comes sweeping across the land, bringing the words, and bringing *barrómaya* (Ndj: shadow or dreaming spirits). *Barrómaya* refers to ancestral spirits, the spirits of the old people who bring understanding that you can hear if you listen closely. The use of the wind as a metaphor was a deliberate decision to draw upon a rich tradition both in contemporary rock music,[7] traditional Eastern Arnhem Land manikay-bunggul (Corn, 2002: 107), and the Christian gospel tradition where wind is associated with the Holy Spirit. Theologist John McKinlay considers the metaphor of wind to be "the most frequent of all the metaphors in the Bible since this is integral to the biblical terms translated 'Spirit'" (McKinley, 2015). REB band members Patricia Gibson and Rachel Thomas are gospel musicians in Maningrida, and this influenced the choice of metaphor for "Ngúddja". Thomas has also used the metaphor of wind in the song "Cyclone", which will be discussed in Chapter 7, further suggesting that gospel music influences their song writing.

In contemporary rock music, the use of the wind as a unifying symbol is apparent in the title of the 2005 compilation album *Demurru Hits*, produced by Allen Murphy for Maningrida Media. Demurru [sic: *dhimurru*] is the Yolŋu-matha word for an easterly wind that blows at the end of the wet season (Corn 2002). The album was a compilation recorded at the Maningrida Town Hall by national radio station Triple J. It included local bands Letterstick Band and Sunrize Band, and other bands from across the Top End.

[6] Patricia Gibson, interviewed by Spotify Australia, Barunga Festival, June 2018. (Available as JK1-REB201806-01at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/REB201806/JK1-REB201806-01.mp4), 2:55.
[7] See for example, 'Solid Rock' by Goanna, 'Bow River' by Cold Chisel, 'Candle in the Wind' by Elton John and 'Blowing in the Wind' by Bob Dylan.

More recently, the Ingrid Johnson and Jessica Phillips curated "Jarracharra" (B: dry season wind), a Bábbarra Women's Centre exhibition.

> Jarracharra is the powerful cool wind that blows across Arnhem Land each dry season, signifying the beginning of a period of exchange between clans and an annual ceremonial coming together. Jarracharra, a term in the Burarra language, represents a metaphor for the way the Bábbarra Women's Centre brings together different Aboriginal cultures and stories from across Arnhem Land (Johanson, 2019: 51).

The metaphor of wind connects the language names with places, and with the land. Wind as a natural element is associated with language and a sense of its coming from ancestors and spirits. This suggests at the importance of language in constructing identity, and as a way of delineating different language groups and their connection to specific places, as well as linking them across the region. There is a deeper layer of meaning for the wind metaphor, as it speaks to intercultural collaboration, as artists and musicians from different clans and language groups work together to produce music, compilation recordings, local festivals and ceremonial bunggul.

The second verse of "Ngúddja" names 11 different language groups of the Maningrida region.

Ngarra-kaláya Ndjébbana, Na-kara,	*We can hear Ndjébbana, Na-kara,*
Kun-barlang,	*Kun-barlang,*
Burarra, Gun-nartpa, Gurr-goni, Kuninjku	*Burarra, Gun-nartpa, Gurr-goni, Kuninjku.*
Rembarrnga, Kune, Djinang, Dalabon	*Rembarrnga, Kune, Djinang, Dalabon*[8]
Ngarra-karráwanga karrakárriba	*As we look out over the land*

Naming language groups is a way of acknowledging difference, strengthening social cohesion by showing respect for other languages. This is a trope used in other forms of contemporary musical expression. For example, the 2005 song "Blackfellas" by Local Knowledge lists languages of hip-hop artists (Solis, 2015: 298). The Maningrida community music video

[8] These are the names of different languages spoken in the Maningrida region

"Homelands Calling" (Desert Pea media, 2015) incorporates traditional songs from five separate language groups. In the introduction to the video, Maningrida traditional owner and Dhukurrdji clan leader Joseph Díddo says:

> They came here, to this place. Other peoples, they brought in other stories and languages. They brought their culture and their knowledge. They brought it here to Maningrida. We are sharing our culture and knowledge. No matter where the stories and languages come from, it comes together here in Maningrida. We are sharing all our knowledge because here, in our good, beautiful country, this is very big and very important. (Desert Pea Media, 2015).

This music video is very popular in the Maningrida community, and it points to both a locally established pride in linguistic diversity in the Maningrida region, and a growing appreciation of Aboriginal languages in the wider community of Australia, contributing to a sense of unity and Indigenous identity. In chapter 7 I will discuss how REB uses the singing of place names, in the same way that "Ngúddja" sings the language names, as a means to strengthen social cohesion and inclusivity and an acclamation of West Arnhem multilingualism.

This message of unity is echoed in the chorus of "Ngúddja". The repetitive phrase "Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala" (Ndj: we call out), uses the suffix *-mala* to distinguish between you, me and everybody else.[9] The chorus then ends, "Djíbba wíba ngabayuka-na" (Ndj: we all sit right here in this country) uses the inclusive pronoun *ngabayuka* to signify togetherness (Green, pers comms, 2017). This is an invitation to understand and accept that people will speak different languages, but that we are together on this Country.

Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala	*We all call out in our different languages*
Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala	*We all call out in our different languages*
Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala	*We all call out in our different languages*
Djibba wíba ngabayúka-na	*But we sit down on this land here together*

[9] The suffix –mala is a Ndjébbana pronoun ending that emphasises one thing or person in contrast with something or someone else (Green, 2007: 173).

The repetition in the chorus helps listeners to hear and learn the words and audiences will often join in singing. In song writing, we were influenced by the Warumpi Band song "Blackfella, Whitefella" in which the chorus asks the listeners if they are prepared to mobilise and support Indigenous people with a rousing call, "Are you the one who's going to stand up and be counted?". The verse is in A minor and when the chorus comes in the song changes to Bb major, and the dissonance of moving down a semitone into a major key is a distinctive feature of the song that makes the chorus stand out and increase in energy.

"Ngúddja" imitates this change in key from verse to chorus. Figure 4.8 shows that the verse is in A minor (indicated by blue) moving to the relative C major (indicated by red) in the chorus, adding the dominant seventh to create a blues rock feel. This form of a sectional hook has the effect of raising the energy in the chorus, in a similar way to the Warumpi Band song.

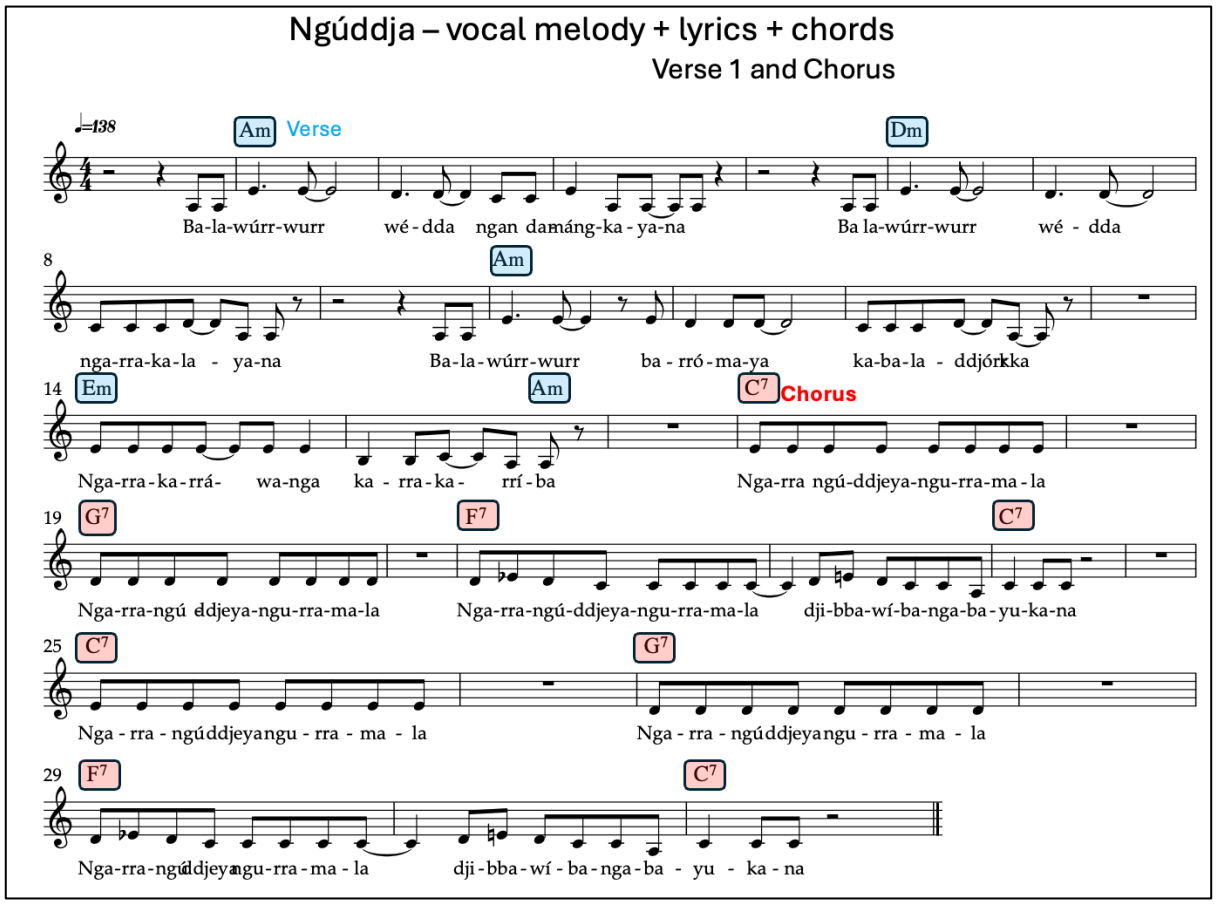

Figure 4.8 Musical transcription of the vocal melody and chords for the first verse and the chorus of "Ngúddja"

In performing “Ngúddja” live, the band drops out for the final chorus and claps their hands over their heads to encourage the audience to join with them. In between each line of the chorus, the drummer plays a solo drum roll. The ending of the song keeps the driving energy but further emphasises the lyrics of the chorus. On the last line, the guitar, bass and drums play together to accent the final words. The ending of the song thus successfully highlights the focus on the celebration of togetherness through diversity. Sung in unison over the country blues feel created by the band, the chorus has the anthemic quality Patricia and I were looking for. The popularity of “Ngúddja” and the energy of its ending is evident in the footage of the performance at the Marrickville Bowling Club six years after its release [Audiovisual Link 2]. A large number of the 400-person audience were singing along in the chorus, and when the band dropped out, with only hand claps for percussion, everyone was singing. We had put out a lyrics video in the weeks leading up to the gig, people had watched it and learnt. It sounded amazing and really increased the energy in the room.

Figure 4.9 Songwriter Patricia Gibson at Marrickville Bowling Club, October 2023
Photo credit: Tanja Bruckner

"Ngúddja" has been received well. It currently has over 40,000 streams on Spotify (February 27, 2025) and has received radio play nationally. The song has featured in film and television, including on the Stan hit series *BUMP* (episode 9, series 4), the SBS show *A Taste of the Territory* (episode 4, season 1) and an ABC Pacific documentary about Papua New Guinean singer Danielle. It is popular because of its energetic feel and the upbeat chorus. Audiences react well to the band introductions at the start, cheering each woman as she is introduced. When REB performs this song at NT community festivals, it stimulates conversation about language, with other Indigenous people sharing knowledge and non-Indigenous people learning about language. This song established REB in the local NT music scene and introduced them nationally, leading to further opportunities and greater agency for the women in the band.

4.5 Conclusion

Composed in 2017, "Ngúddja" has been formative for the construction of identity and the direction of musical style for REB. Emulating the guitar-driven style of bands such as Warumpi Band establishes REB as an Indigenous rock band. The chapter has shown how REB uses contemporary music elements to avoid gendered restrictions, using drum kit and percussion instead of *manberlnginj* (K: clapsticks), synthesiser and samples instead of *mako* (K: didjeridu) and singing in Indigenous languages, a key marker of cultural identity. The diverse, multilingual nature of the band is paralleled in the swapping of instruments and lead singers, singing in each other's languages.

Approaching the rock band format as an egalitarian, inclusive space, REB have developed creative processes and musical practices across difference, using contemporary music-making to build relationships of trust and use the strengths of musicians from different backgrounds. Intercultural collaboration was key to the creative process of writing "Ngúddja" and is a distinctive element of REB's musical practice. The relationship between myself as a *Balanda* and Maningrida song writer Patricia Gibson brought new perspectives to song writing and showed how developed creative processes that allowed for difference. My role in the band has strengthened the position of the Maningrida women, as I have supported them to navigate

gender bias in the music industry, thus starting the ripples of change in musical practices for women in West Arnhem Land.

Writing and performing “Ngúddja” rock songs creates allegiances, relationships and identities in multilingual societies such as Maningrida. Language is a marker of identity and contributes to social cohesion and feelings of mutual respect. Celebrating multilingualism in the song “Ngúddja” accepts difference and supports community cohesion. The song creates allegiance by naming language groups, drawing upon the metaphor of wind. The rousing chorus that ends on the inclusive, “We are all here on this country”, the anthemic call-out we were looking for. The next chapter will further examine the importance of Indigenous languages for the musicians of REB, with a focus on singing in the highly endangered language of Na-kara.

Chapter 5

Na-kara Songs: Singing in Endangered Languages

This chapter focuses on three songs from the REB repertoire composed in the Na-kara language of West Arnhem land. Na-kara has about 55 speakers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021) and so the number of listeners understanding the lyrics are very small. This raises questions about the motivation for composing songs in a language that only a small and declining number of speakers can understand. Through song analysis and discussion of the musical practices in composing, recording and performing songs in Na-kara language, the chapter explores the ways in which singing in Indigenous languages is used by REB to transmit knowledge and cultural identity. The songs aim to engage with their own language groups and to audiences beyond their localised community. It finds that the desire to promote and strengthen Indigenous languages and culture is a major inspiration for composing and performing songs in endangered languages.

In Maningrida, the younger generation who name Na-kara as their language due to their birth right, tend to speak a smattering of Na-kara words and phrases mixed with Burarra (if they are from the eastern parts of Na-kara country) or Ndjébbana (if they are from the western part). Despite so few fluent speakers, the language still holds relevance for a community of people who come from Na-kara country and who name Na-kara as their ancestral language.

Linguist Bronwyn Eather documented the Na-Kara language in the late 1970s, working with speaker Jimmy Kalamirnda. In their co-authored Na-kara learners guide, they write:

> If you believe that language comes to a people from the environment in which they live, millennia after millennia, from ancestral figures of great power and mystery, from the food of the land and the natural changes and events observed in the world, then language, as an extension of the body, is itself is also a product of the land. This is a belief held by many Aboriginal people. Na-Kara people believe that their language is an essential part of their identity and that they have a responsibility to pass it on, traditionally from father to children. Knowledge

> of language is a measure of cultural pride, wisdom, and power." (Eather & Kalamirnda, 2002, pvii-viii)

Jimmy Kalamirnda is *kakak* (N: grandfather, father's father) to two REB band members, kinship sisters Jolene and Rona Lawrence.[1] Jolene and Rona have collaborated to compose three Na-kara language songs, which are amongst the only songs recorded in Na-kara language. In my research, I have not come across traditional *kun-borrk* in Na-kara language, either performed or recorded. Nor are there many recordings in contemporary music styles apart from a gospel song recorded by Allen Murphy and a high school band recording by Djolpa Mackenzie.[2] Jolene speaks about singing in Na-kara, explaining "My family are forcing me. They like the way I sing Na-kara. They got no song",[3] referring both to traditional song forms and more contemporary rock and popular music. She suggests that her family were pushing her to create rock songs as a way of filling this gap.

The next sections will focus on three songs REB perform in Na-kara language: "Hunting Song", "Nabárrdja" and "Na-meyarra". Analysis of the songs and the songwriting process, shows how REB has used the medium of song to inspire pride in Na-kara clan identity and educate people about Na-kara culture, particularly by engaging with children and young adults, a significant part of their audience.

5.1 Endangered Languages and the Transmission of Language through Song

As described in Chapter 2, and subsequent government policies have contributed to a loss of vitality in many Indigenous languages. This is further exacerbated by the effects of globalisation, technological development and the changes in communication including the rise of social media. Australia is home to 159 Indigenous languages, all of which are under threat, even those considered strong. Only 9 languages have over 1000 speakers and 14 are considered strong (AIATSIS, 2020b). Losing language through colonising practices is a traumatic event with adverse impacts on the transmission of Indigenous knowledge and the wellbeing of

[1] Jolene and Rona are sisters through kinship, as their fathers were brothers. This chapter will use their first names to prevent confusion as they share the same family name.
[2] Allen Murphy has played for me a recording of Na-kara gospel song. A copy of the school band recording could not be located but was referred to by Rona Lawrence and Djolpa Mackenzie.
[3] Jolene Lawrence interviewed by Jodie Kell, Wíwa Music Studio in Maningrida, September 19, 2017. (Available as JK1-HS003_JL20170917-02 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/HS003/JK1-HS003-JL20170917_02.mp3), 00:21:30.

Indigenous communities (Bracknell, 2023: 24). This affects spirituality and land-based cultural identity, emotional and physical health creating educational and economic issues (AIATSIS, 2020b). Language loss also has wider implications due to an associated loss of localised ecological knowledge (Bracknell, 2020, Dunbar-Hall 2004, Armstrong et al, 2023, Evans, 2009: 19, Marett, 2010: 255).

Today, colonising practices continue to be deeply embedded in institutions, policies and systems. One aspect of this is the dominance of English in most spheres of Australian life such as social and mass media, shopping, health, employment, the legal system, social services and education. In Arnhem Land, children spend six hours at school on five days each week, learning inside classrooms structured by English language-centred learning and non-Indigenous ways of thinking (Armstrong et al, 2024: 2).

While English is the most powerful language, some Indigenous languages are more widely used than others, such as Burarra in Maningrida. Even with a bi-lingual program running from the late 1980s to 2008, and the currently operating Lúrra Language and Culture Program that teaches four local languages, due to the small number of Na-Kara speakers it has never been possible to run classes in Na-Kara. As a result, students from endangered language groups such as Na-kara are assimilated into other language classes, particularly Burarra and Ndjébbana. Being more commonly used in town, Na-Kara people tend to speak one or both of these languages to socialise, work, study and when they use the conveniences of town, such shops and the bank. This means there is little functional motivation for children to learn to speak Na-kara as very few people will be able to converse with them or understand them and it also low prestige to communicate in these languages.

However, language is valuable beyond function because it is linked to identity and wellbeing, and the transmission of important geographical and ecological knowledge. For Indigenous people in Australia, language brings a sense of pride and social cohesion. It binds people with shared cultural and ancestral connections (Dunbar-Hall, 2004: 43). Jagera and Dulingbara linguist, the late Jeannie Bell†, describes Indigenous people's feelings of sadness, regret and anger at the policies and systems that have contributed to language loss. She says many Indigenous people have "a strong desire to see our traditional languages survive in some way, even if just in a modified, reduced form, along with surviving adapted cultural practices, which we regard as critical to our identity and distinctiveness as Aboriginal people." (Bell, 2013: 408).

To combat the effects of colonisation and the subsequent changes for Indigenous languages, many communities are finding ways to strengthen and revitalise languages, connecting with archives, creating artistic works in language and teaching language to young people through contemporary forms. For example, in Australia, this is demonstrated in contemporary music by Indigenous hip-hop music videos produced through community workshops. They are a medium for young people to engage with positive messages, culture and Indigenous languages. An-barra / Na-kara musician and educator Djolpa Mackenzie has worked on several of these hip-hop projects in Maningrida.[4] He says that in his experience, writing and singing contemporary songs in Indigenous languages is a way of connecting young people to everyone around them.[5]

Since the beginnings of the Indigenous rock music scene in the 1980s, NT Indigenous rock bands have been composing and performing popular songs in local languages, as discussed in Chapter 2. The rock band has been a space for expressing difference and cultural exchange "facilitating the foregrounding of Indigenous languages and worldviews" (Bracknell, 2023: 23). A chief motivation has been to retain endangered languages by increasing young people's engagement and helping them learn and remember through using language (Bracknell, 2023: 29, Echeverria & Sparling, 2024: 3). Singing is a useful tool for educators as it provides an interactive and enjoyable way to support students to remember. Music improves memory and enables us to retain information, thus songs are commonly used in language teaching and can be a significant factor in Indigenous language revitalisation and maintenance (Trinick, 2012: 25, Bracknell, 2023). Singing in language also references language groups and associated cultural knowledge and customary lands, strengthening personal and group identity (Dunbar-Hall: 43).

In oral cultures, songs are utilised to transmit knowledge, much the same as books do in written cultures (Bracknell 2023). The text of songs, both lyrical and musical elements, are deeply embedded with meaning and significances (Turpin & Stebbin, 2010). As discussed in Section 1.4, traditional or ceremonial songs, act as a package or a bundle of components such as

[4] Such as IHHP | NNAJA "Ripple Effect" Maningrida, Indigenous Hip-Hop Projects, 27 August 2015. https://youtu.be/eUgMo7cR0TQ

[5] Djolpa Mackenzie and Noeletta Mackenzie interviewed by Jodie Kell, Wagait Beach, NT, May 27, 2019. (Available as JK1-MCEC003-20190527_DM&NM at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/MCEC003/JK1-MCEC003-20190527_DM&NM.mp3), 00:21:30.

ownership, visual design and dance as well as musical lyrical text (Turpin 2005:90, Walsh, 2007: 137). In contemporary popular music, a shared store of signs common to the musicians and the listeners, comparable to physical gestures, are used to express meaning and emotion (Middleton, 1993: 177). To people familiar with the genre, musical elements, or hooks, such as the use of reverb or the tonal quality of a guitar convey emotion and connotations that can be understood even if the lyrical content is not. For this reason, singing in Indigenous languages can still appeal to an audience beyond the local community. For example, Yolŋu artist Dr. Geoffrey Gurrumul demonstrated the power of singing in language, with his self-titled album, which was awarded triple platinum status, selling half a million records globally. Only one song of the twelve on the album is sung in English, but simple arrangements using double bass and guitar, with the use of reverb, highlighted his captivating yet fragile voice inciting emotion, compassion and a feeling of peacefulness within Australian and international audiences alike (Skinnyfish Music, n.d.).

Throughout the next sections, I will examine three Na-kara songs performed by REB to examine the different ways that songs composed in languages not understood by many people can be widely meaningful all the same. Drawing upon Turpin and Stebbins' discussion of meaning and signification in song as a tool for analysis (REF DATE), I consider the motivations and effects of composing and singing songs in endangered languages focusing on three themes: song as a means of expressing localised ecological knowledge, song as a language learning tool and song as a way to convey connection to place. These songs show how REB are using musical practice to agitate for the acknowledgement of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, thus contributing the important work of strengthening Indigenous languages. The next section considers a Na-kara rock song to show how a song can act as a stimulus for storytelling and the passing on knowledge of cultural practices, in a similar way to West Arnhem Land traditional *kun-borrk.*

5.2 "Hunting Song": Sharing Cultural Knowledge through Song

"Hunting Song" [6]

Verse

Ngi-berrabba ngibi-nana na-bena ki-djina	*We saw the sun rising for the day*
Ngibi-nana kukka n-djirra bawana rdi-yeka	*We saw the saltwater tide going out*
Ngibu-mangaya nángarawa n-kana kabbal kakaya	*We collected mud mussels on the floodplains*
Ngiba-rdiddjana ngibi-nina n-kara mayawa kakaya	*We returned and sat on the beach*

Chorus

Ee na-bena ki-djina	*Ah…the sunrise*
Ee na-bena ki-djina	*Ah…the sunrise*

Songs can act as inspiration for deeper learning of cultural practices such as hunting and environmental awareness. In this way they resemble traditional song forms in that they are not narrative but hint at areas of knowledge, acting as a memory device for learning. Common to many Indigenous songs, specialised cultural knowledge is required to fully appreciate the meaning of text and understanding a song will vary upon one's knowledge and the receivership of further knowledge, through storytelling and discussion elicited by the song. (Turpin & Stebbins 2010, Garde 2005, O'Keeffe 2016, Barwick 2007). "Hunting Song" demonstrates this characteristic, with greater comprehension of the song's meaning coming from associated stories, knowledge of Na-kara language and firsthand experience of hunting, the taste of mud mussels and spending time on Country. REB were able to find ways to express cultural knowledge without breaking gendered restrictions by using contemporary forms of music that allude to elements of *kun-borrk.*

"Hunting Song" was composed by Jolene Lawrence, Na-kara community members and Jodie Kell. Jolene is Na-kara from her father's side. As well as the backing of the community,

[6] "Hunting Song" by the Ripple Effect Band, composed by Jolene Lawrence and Jodie Kell. The song is on the Wárrwarra EP. The lyrics have been translated and transcribed by linguist Bronwyn Eather, and REB members Jolene and Rona Lawrence and Jodie Kell.
https://open.spotify.com/track/5QOIFQCCD5FVP1ehmm3Lmq?si=7b3dfb5d544b49a9

Jolene's background was an essential element for having permission to compose and sing in Na-kara language. Her Country is Na-meyarra, which is located to the east of Maningrida on the mouth of the small Na-meyarra Creek, on Na-kara Country. Her skin name is Njábangarda of Djowanga moiety, and her clan is Binkuruma. Jolene is proud of her ancestry and connection to Na-kara language, culture and Country.

"Hunting Song" was composed after a hunting trip for *nángarawa* (N: mud mussels), a prolific species of shellfish (*Polymesoda Coaxans)* found in the mud around mangroves lining coastal creeks in the top end of the NT. *Nángarawa* are a reliable and bountiful food source, often collected by groups of women. It takes skill to see the lips of the shellfish protruding from the mud and strength to carry the dilly bags back through the tangled mangrove forests without getting lost. To cook these large mussels, they are lined up on their side and sticks are placed across the top as shown in Figures 5.6-5.9. As the fire burns it travels down the line of fuel, cooking the shells that open once they are ready. The taste is an explosion of sensation; salty, juicy filling mouthfuls. *Nángarawa* make up a high proportion of bush foods that supplement the diets of people in Maningrida, providing a mineral-rich nutritious meal which can be transported back to town and kept in damp hessian sacks for days.

Figure 5.1 *Nángarawa* (N: Mud Mussels) hunting trip on Na-kara Country, July 2017
From L-R: Jolene Lawrence, Patricia Gibson, Tara Rostron, Rona Lawrence, Marita Wilton, Marie Wilton, Photo credit: Jodie Kell

Figure 5.2 Jolene Lawrence positioning *nángarawa* for cooking

Figure 5.3 *Nángarawa* cooking in the fire

Figure 5.9: A cooked *nángarawa*

The following ethnographic account describes a hunting trip for *nángarawa* with REB members on Na-kara Country in July 2017 (Figure 5.9).

> During my time in Maningrida, I was struck by the way that cultural knowledge is shared and taught on hunting trips such as the one that inspired "Hunting Song". It was dry season and REB band members and their children drove out from Maningrida, past the outstation at Na-barla ki-nindawabba to the floodplains lining Na-meyarra creek to hunt for *nángarawa* (see Figure 5.10). In the confines of my Toyota Landcruiser, as we slowly navigated the sandy bush track that meanders through the Na-kara estate, the women explained the Country, pointing out places of interest. They discussed custodianship of tracts of land as we passed through and told stories of Dreamtime ancestral beings that walked this way, as well as more modern histories of the area, indicating the place of the bush school where linguist Bronwyn Eather had lived and taught a small group of children under a tin roof near a natural water soak in the 1980s. In this way, hunting trips are a time of learning and sharing of cultural knowledge attached to the landscape.

Figure 5.4 Hunting group walking across the Na-kara floodplains to look for *nángarawa*, July 2017
L-R: Patricia Gibson, Simone Rostron, Dodie Wilson, Marie Wilton, Jolene Lawrence and Rona Lawrence. Photo credit: Jodie Kell

This practice has its beginnings in the time before motor vehicles, when people would walk across Country. Describing the socialisation of young children in Maningrida in the 1960s, Annette Hamilton comments that women played a large part in teaching language and ecological knowledge about Country during trips into the bush. She describes this as the "optimal learning situation" for a young child to be sitting on their mother's shoulders or hips where they can hear relevant information while seeing a particular place. As described in the previous ethnographic account, this is still common today, and women always take children with them on trips out bush, carrying them and looking after them as they hunt. The Lawrence sisters have memories of growing up, walking in the bush and learning about Na-kara country that are consistent with Hamilton's account:

> As they travel, their mothers point out things and places to them, such as where someone chased a kangaroo, the sites of freshwater and trees with bush honey. saying 'see where uncle speared a kangaroo', 'watch that bee, good honey

> somewhere', 'there is sweet water here' and similar comments. The mother's voice takes on a 'singsong caressing tone' as she shares her knowledge of the country (Hamilton, 1981: p59).

Songs about hunting trips like this play an important role in celebrating the skills of the hunters and passing on knowledge about the environment. Hunting and gathering activities require all of a person's senses to listen carefully to the natural world, such as in East Arnhem Land where "Yolŋu see musically by listening and touching the landscape with their eyes," (Magowan, 2013: 105). Songs about the natural environment assist in the transmission of knowledge, and give the composers and singers status through the demonstration of that knowledge (Magowan, 2013: 186). Linguist Murray Garde describes the *Morrdjdjanjno* songs, a series of *kun-borrk* about animals of the West Arnhem Land plateau. He explains that the songs describe particular aspects related to hunting, such as animal tracks and scats, movements and behaviour. The songs are used for sharing cultural knowledge, either held in the song text themselves, or in the discussions they generate, with the songs acting as a prompt for storytelling about aspects of hunting (Garde 2007: 9).

In Arnhem Land, popular songs about hunting can also express a connection to Country, language and a sense of localised identity. "The Hunter" by the Lonely Boys from Ngukurr in Southern Arnhem Land opens with traditional *manikay* (Y: traditional East Arnhem Land song style) sung in Nunggubuyu and then switches to Kriol for the contemporary song. It celebrates the singer's skill as a hunter and how this makes him a "proper bush Blackfella",[7] associating hunting skill with being identified as connected to living in the bush. Another example is Yothu Yindi's song, *Birrkuta*, about finding wild honey. It opens with *manikay* sung in Gumatj language and makes parallels to raising strong children.

As explained in chapter 3, REB cannot sing traditional songs due to gendered protocols, but "Hunting Song" showed that it is possible to sing in language about women's contribution toward food gathering and include knowledge inherited from elders. Writing a hunting song about a carload of women heading out onto the Na-kara estate introduced a new perspective, celebrating a particular hunting activity that is largely conducted by women. The song demonstrates how REB are using the medium of rock music to circumvent cultural protocols.

[7] A term used in Kriol language to describe an Aboriginal person from the bush.

"Hunting Song" also expresses meaning and connects to other Indigenous rock bands, through musical elements, such as the lead guitar riff that opens the song and reoccurs at the start of the verses shown in Figure 5.10. As the lead guitarist in REB, I was influenced by Warumpi Band in the recordings on the *Wárrwarra* EP. I have discussed this in the song "Ngúddja" and likewise in "Hunting Song", I use a similar Indigenous country rock style with overdrive and reverb effects, and the hammer on technique. Hooks, such as the solo guitar riff that opens the song (Figure 5.10), not only draws the audience in, but indicates being "from the bush".[8]

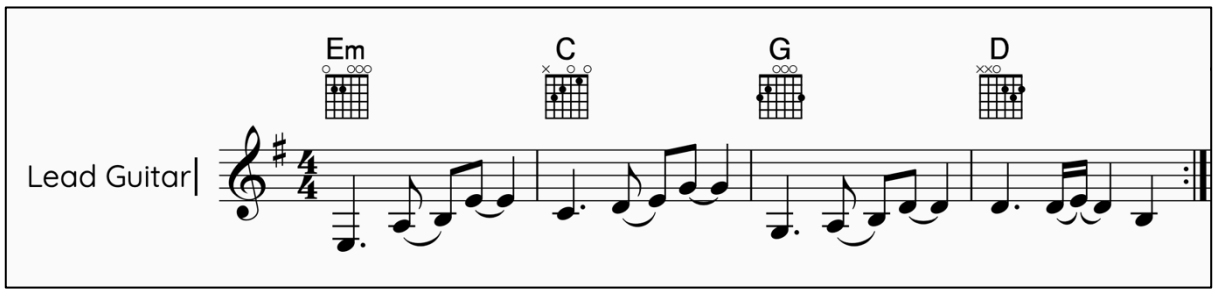

Figure 5.5 Solo guitar riff in the introduction of "Hunting Song": a catchy hook that references Indigenous rock band Warumpi Band.

Within this contemporary musical genre, the song also references traditional forms of music by using a similar organisational structure to *kun-borrk,* that were described in Chapter 2. There are only four loosely connected text lines in the verse, which is repeated in the song. Rather than prescriptive or narrative, the phrases are suggestive, alluding to a more detailed understanding that can be gained by experience or through further discussion prompted by performances of the song. "Hunting Song" also uses of cultural idioms. For example, the second line of the song, about seeing the saltwater tide going out.

Ngibi-nana kukka n-djirra bawana rdi-yeka
We saw the saltwater tide going out

For Maningrida locals, the changing tide acts as a warning for those collecting *nángarawa*. It is vital to know the movement of the tides as the mud flats hide any sign of incoming water. Previously dry areas filled up with water under the surface, and once-safe tracks become treacherous mud for vehicles. This line elicits conversation about the tide and hunting

[8] Warumpi Band made this phrase famous in their song "From the Bush", to refer to Indigenous people from remote communities.

conditions, prompting us to always park on the safe higher edge of the floodplains when we go bush.

The third line introduces the Na-kara word for mud mussels, and it also prompts band members and other Maningrida community members to talk about hunting for mud mussels, and the different language words for this shellfish, and ways of cooking them passed on from elders.

Ngibu-mangaya nángarawa n-kana kabbal kakaya
We collected mud mussels on the flood plains

I argue that the process of composing "Hunting Song" demonstrate how songwriting can also strengthen cultural bonds enabling the passing on of cultural knowledge, including language learning, both within the Na-kara community and to me as an outsider. Singing contributes to social harmony, building community, and helping to develop a safe space for collective learning (Echeverria & Spalding, 2024: 4). The following passage shows how the song was composed in community with elders sharing knowledge to support the expression of the hunting trip:

> When we returned to town, Jolene and I talked about composing a song about this hunting trip and the following week, we took two guitars and went to see her grandmother Agnes Wilton and her aunt Vivienne Wilton, two Na-kara speaking elders are close with Jolene. We set up a mat and some chairs in between the houses where we could catch the evening breeze (see Figure 5.11). With the family group around us, we worked together writing a song in Na-Kara. Jolene played guitar and sang the melody she had come up with, singing it in her head since the hunting trip. We started putting together lyrics based on telling the story of the hunting trip. I was assigned the role of scribe, though the women directed me how to spell the words in the unfamiliar language. I was also expected to sing with Jolene, and this became a source of entertainment as the family gathered to try and teach me how to correctly pronounce the lyrics. We talked about meaning and the correct way to say things in Na-kara balanced with fitting the words to the poetics of the song.

Figure 5.6 'Hunting Song 'Songwriting group, July 2017.
L-R: Agnes Wilton, Jolene Lawrence, Jodie Kell (myself), Bettina Lawrence, Susan Yunupirri, Vivienne Wilton at Don and Vivienne Wilton's house in Maningrida.

Composing with support from the community strengthened the use of contemporary music by women to express cultural practices and demonstrated their, and their female relatives' knowledge. Coming from shared experiences of hunting mud mussels, the focus was on choosing the right Na-kara phrases and words. Familiarity with the subject of the song enhanced the learning and promoting of a highly endangered language as the women in the group were not learning new cultural practices, rather they were working out how best to express their cultural knowledge in Na-kara language. When this song is performed outside of Maningrida community, it is an opportunity to talk about hunting and "bush tucker", food gathered from the natural environment, thus sharing knowledge of the environment and demonstrating traditional hunting skills.

In this section, I have argued that "Hunting Song" acts as a stimulus for the sharing of cultural practices and ecological understanding. Like traditional *kun-borrk,* the song contains signs that hint at specialised knowledge, eliciting conversation and storytelling. The country rock style references other Indigenous rock bands and in so doing signifies the bush setting of the song. Singing in Na-kara language connects the singers and listeners to place, evoking the coastal Na-kara Country and a highly localised sense of identity.

5.3 "Nabárrdja, The Little Crab": Teaching Language Through Song

"Nabárrdja – The Little Crab" [9]

Ooh, ooh, ooh, ngibu-mangaya nabárrdja	*Ooh, ooh, ooh, we were hunting crabs*
Kana mayawa, kana mayawa	*At the beach, at the beach*
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ngibu-mangaya nabárrdja	*Ooh, ooh, ooh we were hunting crabs*
Kana mayawa, kana Mayawa	*At the beach, at the beach*

Nabárrdja kibana, korla nga-mangan	*The crab, she's gone, I couldn't find her*
Nabárrdja kibana korla nga-mangan	*The crab, she's gone, I couldn't find her*
Mernda ki-kakaya ki-kamangka	*She waves her claws up high*
Mernda ki-kakaya ki-kamangka	*She waves her claws up high*

Ooh, ooh, ooh, Can you see the little crab by the water, by the water?
Ooh, ooh, ooh, Can you see the little crab by the water, by the water?
The crab is hiding, we can't find her
The crab is hiding, we can't find her
Claws are clapping, she's waving at us. Claws are clapping, she's waving at us
Claws are clapping, she's waving at us. Claws are clapping, she's waving at us

(Slow down) The sun is setting, she's sleeping, ki-yurda.

Songs are meaningful in a particular social context: this section shows how the context of highly endangered languages, due to forces of colonisation, render a song significant and educational. The original Na-kara version of "Nabárrdja" was composed by Rona Lawrence and Jodie Kell at the Na-kara homeland Rocky Point. In order to understand Rona's motivation for composing this song, it is useful to explain her cultural background. Rona Lawrence is Na-

[9] "Nabárrdja" by the Ripple Effect Band, composed by Rona Lawrence, Jodie Kell, Rachel Thomas and Marita Wilton. The song was produced by Skinnyfish Music and released through ABC Kids. The lyrics have been translated and transcribed by linguists Rona Lawrence, Mary Nabbalangkarra, Jodie Kell and checked by linguist Bronwyn Eather. "Nabárrdja" was released in May 2020 on *The Moon, the Mouse and the Frog* (ABC Kids) streaming audio accessed October 5, 2024, https://open.spotify.com/track/5QOIFQCCD5FVP1ehmm3Lmq?si=5eb8d73b58634661 or online at https://www.abc.net.au/kidslisten/ideas/culture-and-language/new-indigenous-lullabies/12856122

kara on her father's side. Roly Milak was a renowned musician who toured nationally playing bass guitar in the Letterstick Band. Rona is from the Yurrbuka clan, her skin name is Wamutchan, and her moiety is Dhuwa. Rona's Country is Na-kalamandjarda, a coastal site to the east of the Na-kara outstation of Na-barla ki-nindawabba, commonly known as Rocky Point. Rona's mother is Burarra from the An-barra and Martay clans of the Ji-mardi outstation. Rona is a teacher and at the time of composing "Nabárrdja", she was working at the FaFT childcare centre.[10] As an early childhood educator, she is well aware of the value of music and song. She is also a mother of three boys: Harrison, Nemiah and Rayshaun, the youngest of whom has toured with REB both in the NT and interstate. Her sons were young when we wrote the song and they remain proud and excited about the band and their musician mother.

Figure 5.7 Rona Lawrence, bass player and vocalist with REB, at Golden Retriever Studios, Sydney, October 2023
Photo credit: Tanja Bruckner.

Rona plays a pivotal role in the education of her children and other children in the community. Women are the primary caregivers for infants and young children, often caring for children in other family groups. This continues as children grow because there is a prevalence of women working in schools and childcare centres such as the FaFT centre. The women of REB see

[10] FaFT is the Families as First teachers Centre https://education.nt.gov.au/support-for-teachers/faft

music as important for education and a way to pass on knowledge, especially local languages, in an engaging way. This is also true of other women musicians from NT Indigenous communities, such as the women of the Tiwi Women's Choir, who are also teachers and educators. The Tiwi women believe that contemporary songs are more approachable than traditional songs for young people, so they intentionally compose modern songs as an engaging way to pass on ancestral knowledge to Tiwi youth (Campbell, 2013: 234-5).

Figure 5.8 Rona is setting up a microphone for her younger song, Rayshaun at the MusicNT Rehearsal Space, Darwin, December 2022
Rayshaun has toured with us since he was 14 months old. He can sing REB songs, particularly the Na-kara songs. Photo credit: Jodie Kell

Rona explains that as a Na-Kara musician, she felt a responsibility to write a song in Na-Kara language because it's her first language. Being an early childhood teacher, Rona understands that children love singing because it is fun. She wanted to make children's song so that her own sons, and other children, could learn Na-kara language by singing (see Figure 5.2). For Na-kara children, it also reminds them of hunting for crabs at Rocky Point. Rona says that it doesn't matter that her children are not growing up there because they still go hunting. When they grow

up and become teenagers, the song will awaken their memories of Na-kara Country (Rona Lawrence, pers comms, 2017). The following ethnographic account describes writing the song on Country.

> When we sat down to compose "Nabárrdja", we were camping at Rocky Point at the cliffs looking over the ocean on Na-kara Country. Being school holidays, there were many people camped together for the dry season holidays. We brought some guitars along with us and at night we sat around the campfire singing songs. We noticed how the children loved singing songs in different languages. It felt like language learning in action and so much fun. In discussion late at night, we decided to write a song specifically for children in Na-kara language.

Figure 5.9 Crab Hunting Part 1: Rona's sister's son Réquan Lawrence

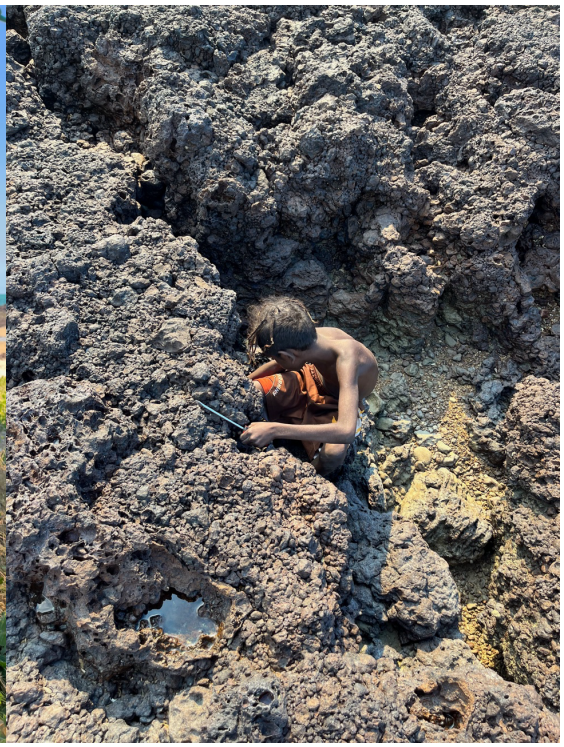

Figure 5.10 Crab Hunting Part 2: Rachel's grandson Ravis Kalakala

Analysis of the Na-kara lyrics demonstrates how the song uses musical and textual elements to reinforce the meanings of the word and convey a sense of fun, thus motivating learning. In addition, repetition of each lyrical section facilitates language learning and retention. The song opens with a vocable of three short "oohs" in a descending melody. These "nonsense" sounds act as a vocal hook engage children, regardless of their understanding of Na-kara.

Ooh, ooh, ooh, ngibu-mangaya nabárrdja
Oh, we were hunting crabs
Kana mayawa, kana mayawa
At the beach, at the beach
[REPEAT]

The second section uses a rising and falling melodic line, descending with 'korla nga-mangan' (I couldn't find her) to express a sense of disappointment.

Nabárrdja kibana, korla nga-mangan
The crab, she's gone, I couldn't find her
[REPEAT]

The final lines use alliteration to express the sound of the crab waving her claws in the air. The humorous and cute connotation of the onomatopoeia contributes to a feeling of playfulness.

Mernda ki-kakaya ki-kamangka
She waves her claws up high
[REPEAT 4 times]

In 2020, Michael Hohnen from Skinnyfish Music asked if we had any children's songs to include on a compilation album of children's lullabies commissioned by ABC Kids as part of the Fresh Start Fund Initiative. *The Moon, The Mouse & the Frog* was produced by Hohnen. It includes artists such as Wildflower, Manuel Dhurrkay and Caiti Baker, and was nominated for an ARIA Award for best children's album in 2021. Working on a collaboration with Skinnyfish Music and the ABC with a range of NT artists opened up new audiences for REB and we decided to take the opportunity to present our Na-kara language song to children across Australia.

Figure 5.11 Recording Nabárrdja at Dr. G studios in Darwin with Skinnyfish Music, August 2020
L-R: Rachel Thomas, Rona Lawrence and Rayshaun Lawrence. Photo Credit: Harriet Fraser-Barbour

When we were recording the song at Dr G studios in Darwin, Hohnen suggested adding English lyrics to the song to appeal to children across Australia. We worked with Marita Wilton and Rachel Thomas to translate the lyrics in English and make them fit. The English version has the same use of repetition and opens with the vocable "Ooh" creating the same fun atmosphere at the start. The final line of the chorus includes alliteration to express the sound of the crab claws, reinforced by the percussive sound of the guiro, recorded by Darwin percussionist Genevieve Meehan.

Ooh, ooh, ooh, Can you see the little crab?
By the water, by the water
The crab is hiding, we can't find her
Claws are clapping, she's waving at us

A further reason why Indigenous languages matter is that they express different world views and values (Echeverria & Sparling, 2024: 2). The cute little crab of the English version is not

the same as the mud crabs in the Na-kara version appealing to children in Maningrida who love hunting and eating locally caught seafood. In the studio, following Hohnen's suggestion, the composing group changed the wording from "we were hunting", to "can you see?", moving the emphasis from hunting (implying killing and eating) and looking for (implying a gentler activity). The group agreed that some *Balanda* (non-Indigenous) children might be upset if they thought about hunting the crab and this would disturb their sleep. Furthermore, the word "little" is introduced in the English version,[1] implying a small hermit crab, rather than the Na-kara word *nabárrdja* that is most commonly used to indicate mud crabs, a popular source of food. The ending uses a common trope of lullabies by singing about sleep and the sunset. In live performance the Na-kara phrase *ki-yurda* (N: she's sleeping) is added and the singers slow down and make snoring sounds to denote the little crab falling asleep. This lyrical, tempo and performance hook has humorous overtones as crabs do not snore, but also aims to encourage listening any children listening to fall asleep.

The popularity of "Nabárrdja" has increased opportunities to pass on language knowledge to children through educational sites, music events and classrooms both in Maningrida and to national audiences, providing an impetus to sing in Na-kara. Starting as a campfire song with Rona's children, the release on ABC Kids website and popular streaming services, is an example of the ripple effect as its reach has spread, enabling families, childcare centres and schools across Australia, or even internationally, to play the song and learn the lyrics. Teachers in Maningrida and across Australia have contacted the band seeking copies of the lyrics. Over 106,000 streams on Spotify (on February 27, 2025) shows that tens of thousands of children have heard the song, raising awareness of Na-kara and sharing language knowledge. In 2023, when REB performed at WOMADelaide Festival, the band was asked to include a performance of "Nabárrdja" at the Kidzone, an area dedicated to children. We choregraphed and rehearsed movements to reinforce the meaning of the lyrics at the hotel [Audiovisual Link 3] and we then taught the audience of children and their families. Afterwards, Rona and Jolene spoke about how so many children and families singing in their language increased their sense of pride by spreading knowledge of Na-kara.

This section explored the reason for writing a children's song in a highly endangered language, and decisions made about the lyrics and English translation, considering cultural differences.

[1] Being "little" is a popular characteristic in children's songs, such as "Incy Wincy Spider" and "Five Little Ducks".

It found that composing and singing in Na-kara shared language knowledge from a small clan outstation to Australia's national broadcaster and the stage of an international festival. The next section will examine how song can express connection to Country through naming places and singing in the language of that particular place, and using musical elements to evoke emotional associations for the performers and listeners.

5.4 'Na-meyarra': Connecting to Country through Song

"Na-meyarra" [2]

Verse 1

Kara n-kukka-n-djirla walanga	*Like the saltwater comes in*
Mirndamiya rdi-yengka	*and the tide takes it out*
Ngardi-yenga kana mayawa	*I walked along the beach*
Nga-nana na-bena ki-djina	*And I saw the sun going down*

Chorus

Kana mayawa noranga na-kayerda Na-meyarra	*At the beach I call my home, Na-meyarra*

Verse 2

Ngarrabba nga-rdi-yenga mayawa	*You and I, we went there together*
Nga-nana kukka-n-barla	*We saw the freshwater*
Wuna-kardawa djina	*In that special waterhole*
Nga-nana na-djola kin-diddjarama	*We saw that bird, the whistle duck*

Chorus

Kana mayawa noranga na-kayerda Na-meyarra	*At the beach I call my home, Na-meyarra*

This section explores how song invokes a chain of connectedness to place, giving rise to a sense of localised identity. The use of musical elements to evoke emotions is a key factor for language sustainability. Music makes people feel connected to their communities, heritages and ancestors, as well as bridging across different cultures (Echeverria & Sparling, 2024: 30). Analysis of "Na-meyarra" as well as discussion of songwriting and performance will

[2] "Nameyarra" by the Ripple Effect Band, composed by Jolene Lawrence, Rona Lawrence and Jodie Kell. The song is on the *Mayawa* album. The lyrics have been translated and transcribed by linguists Bronwyn Eather, Jolene and Rona Lawrence and Jodie Kell.
https://open.spotify.com/track/1BtTqN0FiVG88mCpKhYZXn?si=306f7aca1dc9469b

demonstrate how REB is using song to express deep and emotional connection to Country and the memories it holds.

As explained in Section 5.2, “Na-meyarra” is the name of Jolene’s country at the mouth of the Na-meyarra Creek, a small estuary to the east of Na-barla Ki-nindawabba (Figure 5.13). It is a fertile place where the saltwater mixes with freshwater, leading out to a wide sandbar where you can spear stingrays and fish or pull delicious *nawongara* (N: cockle shells) from the sand. The song connects with Na-kara people but also arouses strong feelings in other listeners, even if they have never been there.

Figure 5.12 Na-meyarra, August 2018
Saltwater mixes with freshwater where Na-meyarra Creek runs out to the ocean. Photo: Jodie Kell

For Jolene, singing about her Country in Na-kara feels apt as it is the language associated with the land, it is “intrinsically local” (Bracknell, 2020: 3). When the country and language are intricately linked, as they are in Indigenous Australia, the poetics in song work to evoke emotion as they speak to memories and lived experience of place. Music, both as creative practice and entertainment, plays a significant role in telling stories, defining and describing place. Artists can use musical elements to evoke memory and emotion, “sharing understanding through a complex set of interactional meanings” (Bennett, 1997: 2-3). To sing about a place is to express personal connection to Country and permission must be granted, either as a landowner or with permission from landowners. Songs of place also express the authority to

sing about a particular place, asserting a sense of identity. Singing in language, singing about Country, naming Country has interactional meanings of identity that can be compared to national anthems for localised Indigenous groups (Turpin and Stebbins, 2010: 11). Peter Dunbar-Hall describes the symbiotic relationship between language, speakers, and land that implies ownership and custodianship of country, lore and of cultural artifacts, including song, such as the way that the use of Indigenous languages in rock songs makes statements about performers as members of particular language groups (Dunbar-Hall, 2004: 43).

When composing in language about Country, it is important to seek support from elders, to impart knowledge and bestow authority. Musician and music historian, Toby Martin suggests that to represent a place through song requires a wholistic approach with careful and long-term listening, especially for an outsider. This includes "listening to stories, listening to the sonic and cultural environment, and listening to local musicians' ways of playing and recording" (Martin, 2018: 29). Na-meyarra was composed by Jolene Lawrence and Jodie Kell. Taking time to refine the song over a considerable period from 2017-2019, allowed us to incorporate a collaborative approach as we spent time on Country together and worked with Na-kara elders, Jimmy Kalamirnda and Mary Nabbalangkarra, Na-kara band member Rona Lawrence and East Arnhem Land musician Manual Dhurrkay. The following account and Figure 5.13 depict the composing of the original song in 2017.

> The initial version of "Na-meyarra" was written in 2017 with Kalamirnda and Nabbalangkarra. Jolene and I had been asked by Maningrida Arts and Culture (MAC) to compose a soundtrack for an art exhibition called "Into the Water". We asked Jimmy and Mary to help out and when we explained the subject of 'water', they started talking about Jolene's country Na-meyarra. As they described the Country, sharing stories and explaining the significance, we started to compose the song with Jimmy and Mary instructing us about Na-kara language.

Figure 5.13 'Na-meyarra' songwriting group, July 2019
Located at Kalamirnda and Nabbalangkarra's house on airport road in Maningrida. Photo: Jodie Kell
L-R: Jolene Lawrence, Jimmy Kalamirnda (grandfather), Mary Nabbalangkarra (grandmother), Réquan Lawrence (nephew). Jolene is holding a copy of the Na-Kara dictionary (Eather & Kalamirnda, 2005).

The lyrics written that day communicate layers of meaning which merge with the listeners' cultural and practical knowledge. For example, the use of *n-kukka-n-djirla* (N: saltwater) and *kukka-n-barla* (N: freshwater) describes the actual place of Na-meyarra, a tidal creek, but also indicates the fertile brackish water. It also indicates the saltwater and freshwater mix of backgrounds of REB members. The opening lines speak of the tidal movement of saltwater, a metaphor commonly used by Maningrida's Letterstick Band, to convey a sense of nostalgia as people are like the tides, coming and going, always returning to their homelands. Jimmy and Mary also chose some words that have fallen out of use, such as *na-djola* (N: Whistling Duck) and *wuna-kardawa* (N: waterhole). By using uncommon words, they are documenting and strengthening language, as well as displaying their specific knowledge of place.

Across Aboriginal Australia, singing place names moves people, signalling something greater than the self (Tamisari, 2009). Naming country in song implies ownership, custodianship and authority and this asserts interactional meanings of identity. The songwriting process described above demonstrates a continuity of this practice in REB. Composing with Na-kara elders gave REB permission to sing the name and express the spirit of Na-kara Country.

Setting these lyrics to music used musical elements to add an emotional atmosphere to the song. The text was used in the exhibition, but over the following year, Jolene and I were not happy with setting them to music. The following story explains how we listened to the advice of a more experienced Arnhem Land musicians, Yolŋu singer Manuel Dhurrkay from the Saltwater Band, a prodigy of Gurrumul:

> The song finally took shape musically when we spent time with East Arnhem musician, Manuel Dhurrkay, demonstrating the value of listening to how local musicians approach music composition. Manuel is the singer of the Saltwater Band from Galiwin'ku, an island to the northeast of Maningrida. This region is famous for its singers whose sweet melodies convey deep emotion, the most famous being Dhurrkay's mentor, Gurrumul. Saltwater Band are influential for REB's music as their albums were on high rotation in the early 2000's when band members were teenagers, and we used to learn their songs in the music room at high school.

> At the Music NT Bush Bands workshops at Ross River in 2018, Dhurrkay shared his perspectives on songwriting with us. One evening, we were sitting and yarning with Dhurrkay, who is a related to some of the women in REB. He spoke about the importance of simplicity in music and how you can 'trick' your listeners by letting the vocal line soar and then fall to evoke emotions. We started playing around with guitars, using a simple repetitive chord pattern, allowing Jolene to try different melodies with Manuel making suggestions. She decided upon a descending melody in the chorus, followed by a high vocable. Rona joined us and helped Jolene adjust the Na-kara lyrics to fit the new melody, whilst still keeping close to the original words written with Jimmy and Mary.

Figure 5.16 shows the descending chorus line that sings the name Na-meyarra, followed by high pitched vocables. The recorded version of the song employs textural elements that amplify the aural depiction of the landscape of Na-meyarra. In production we aimed to replicate the coastal winds and tides that move across the sand flats, and the spirits of the ancestors who inhabit the land and of the custodians, the Na-kara people. Jolene's voice is prominent but behind her a chorus of back-up singers sings together, resulting in a sense of a unified group all singing in Na-kara language. The vocals are treated with reverb to convey an otherworldliness that implies a connection with spirits. The repetitive guitar fingerpicking is augmented by the Alchemy synthesiser pads, one that is based on ambient strings with a very slow attack creating a floating quality and another based on the sound of the wind. We overlaid this with a field recording of a sea eagle from Na-meyarra. When this is heard in the middle section, it is realistic, a direct link to the environment. The song ends with the vocalisation sung over an extended chord played on the synthesiser strings and the eagle is heard again, this time washed with echo and reverb as if the bird is moving into a spiritual realm.

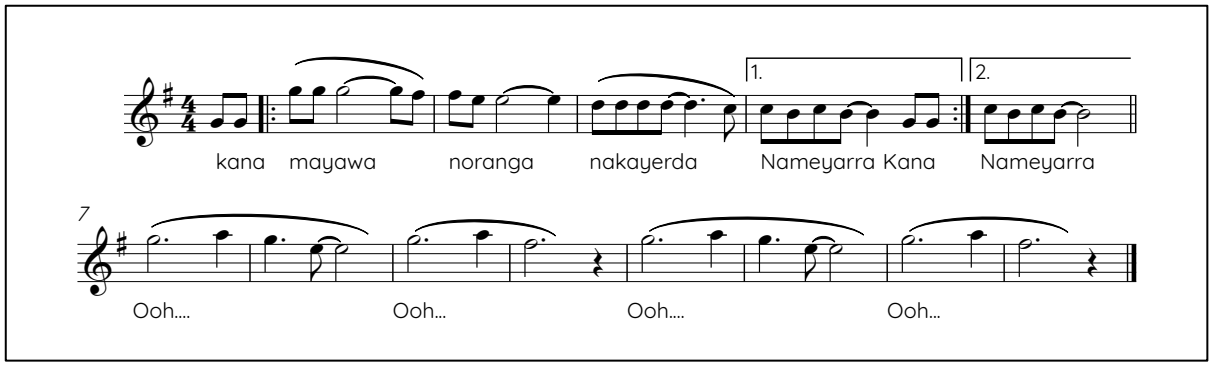

Figure 5.14 Musical transcription of "Na-meyarra" chorus melody
The descending melody of the chorus of "Na-meyarra" is followed by high pitched vocalisations that represent the spiritual realm.

Live performances of the song illustrate how the emotional elements of the song resonate with audiences across the Country. The following description shows how the band uses musical arrangement and delivery to further enhance the lyrics.

> At the performance at Marrickville Bowling Club in 2023, we played "Na-meyarra" at the end of the set as an encore (Figure 5.15). Using pared back instrumentation to highlight the simple soaring melody line, the slower delivery using fingerpicking on the guitar quietened the crowd as they listened closely to the singers. In the chorus, the placename Na-meyarra is repeated at the end of a descending melody, followed by a post chorus verse of high pitch vocalisation. The resulting ethereal quality implies spirit language or the ghostly voices of Na-kara people who have passed away. On the night, the final articulation was sung acapella, and the voices rang out, supplemented by reverb added by the mixing engineer. Jolene dedicated the song to her and Rona's sister who passed away in 2020, and watching the two sisters sing in Na-kara language silenced the crowd and brought many of the audience and band members to tears.

This section has argued that singing in Indigenous languages is a way of expressing localised identity that conveys a sense of connection to place. The naming and description of Country in song, in the language connected to that Country, can evoke emotional responses by conveying memories of the past and of people from that Country. As demonstrated in live performances of "Na-meyarra", this feeling can be shared both with local people and with outsiders who listen to the introduction explaining the importance of Na-kara language, and witness the

emotions of the musicians, thus gain understanding of the affective nature of Country for Indigenous people such as the Na-kara people of West Arnhem Land. For Indigenous people, connection to language and culture is linked to well-being. For the women and their audience, songs about Country and in language provide positive identity which increases well-being.

Figure 5.15 Jolene Lawrence and Patricia Gibson singing 'Na-meyarra' at the Marrickville Bowling Club, October 2023
Photo Credit: Tanja Bruckner.

5.5 Conclusion

In exploring the motivations for composing and singing in a small highly- endangered language, this chapter showed how songs can help the survival of an endangered language through a context of usage, and as a tool for language teaching and learning, as well as creating a record of Na-kara people and places. Language is an important component of cultural identity and group cohesion, as it links people to their land. Many Indigenous communities in Australia have implemented ways of reclaiming, revitalising and strengthening their languages, including writing and singing songs. Jolene explains that these songs are important for the

future when Na-kara elders are gone, there will be a record of their language and of Na-kara people.[3]

Analysis of the composition process and textual and musical components of three REB songs composed in the highly endangered language of Na-kara demonstrates how the band is singing in language to teach and inspire children to speak their languages, to pass on localised ecological and cultural knowledge and to express connection to and custodianship of country and place. With the awareness of language loss and the associated potential loss of cultural identity, singing in one's heritage language evokes emotions for Indigenous people as well as for listeners who are moved by the meaning conveyed through musical elements.

The songs written in Na-kara language are significant for the Na-kara community as they are a record of a highly endangered language. They have become a source of pride increasing the visibility and prestige of Na-kara language. The next chapter moves from the Na-kara clan to their neighbouring clan to the east, the An-barra clan who speak Burarra language. It examines a prominent local song that has been performed and recorded in different styles and genres. and shows how REB is bringing women's perspectives into An-barra musical practice and have gained status by adding their interpretation to a pre-existing song, "Diyama".

[3] Jolene Lawrence interviewed by Jodie Kell, Wíwa Music Studio, Maningrida, Sept 2017. (Available as JK1-HS003_JL20170917-02 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/HS003/JK1-HS003-JL20170917_02.mp3), 21:40.

Chapter 6

“Diyama”: Innovation and Tradition in Arnhem Land Song

"Diyama" [1]

Verse 1

Ana-munya gaba ng-garlmana	*I got up in the morning*
Ngi-jarl ngu-bamana	*I hurried along*
Nga-nana bartpa	*I saw the waves and the saltwater*
Gu-buna gu-jinyja	*The waves were hitting the shore*
Lika warrgugu ngu-ni	*I couldn’t stop thinking about my country*
Nga-nana Lalarr Gu-jirrapa	*While looking at Lalarr Gu-jirrapa*
Gu-nachichiya gu-jinyjirra rrawa, Gupanga	*Facing across from my country, Gupanga*

Chorus

Aa Diyama	*Aa Diyama*

Verse 2

Jungurda a-wena apula	*My grandfather told me*
Awurr-merdawa yerrcha	*About the mermaid spirits*
Ana-munya gu-nirra	*At nighttime*
Jina-beya jina-workiya	*Is when they emerge*
Gala ngu-yinmiya ng-galiya	*I can’t hear them*
Ngu-marngi awurr-gatiya	*But I know they are there*
Ya Gupanga rrawa gun-molamola	*In my beautiful Country of Gupanga*

Chorus

Aa Diyama	*Aa Diyama*

[1] ‘Diyama’ by the Ripple Effect Band, composed by Stephanie Maxwell James and Jodie Kell. The song is on the Wárrwarra EP. The lyrics have been translated and transcribed by linguists Margaret Carew, Stephanie James, Cindy Jinmarabynana and Jodie Kell. Stephanie Maxwell James, “Diyama”, recorded June 2018 on *Wárrwarra* (Ripple Effect Band), streaming audio accessed July 9, 2021, https://open.spotify.com/track/0YZ7618tj3ZZUNfztpC0cT?si=9f9a4194faeb44af

This chapter finds that REB's success and popularity within the community and across Australia is in part due to engaging with traditional cultural values and surfacing female perspectives to oral traditions previously dominated by men.[2] "Diyama" is a song written by Stephanie Maxwell James and Jodie Kell. Sung in the Burarra language, the song is named after the cockle shells found in the coastal regions surrounding Maningrida. The song tells the story of the mermaids inhabiting the waters of the An-barra homeland of Gupanga, 40 km east of Maningrida.

Maxwell James is an An-barra woman of the Ana-wulja clan. Her skin name is Bulanyjan, and her moiety is Yirricha. Stephanie's Country is Gupanga, an important site for An-barra people and a key location in the "Diyama" song and story. Stephanie is part of a lineage of An-barra musicians who have performed versions of this song over three generations, including her biological father, Anjawartunga Maxwell from the Letterstick Band and his father Mulumbuk.[3] This chapter argues that Maxwell James has continued the innovative practices of the An-barra clan and introduced women's perspectives into the interpretations of the song and associated story. In so doing, she has not only strengthened her own birthright as a descendent of important An-barra musicians, she, along with REB members, have started a ripple effect of women claiming a voice and expressing their connection to the mermaid spirits of An-barra Country.

The song title "Diyama" is shared with a song set of the traditional *kun-borrk* genre, an Indigenous song style known across Western Arnhem Land described in Section 2.4. This chapter aims to make sense of two seemingly contradictory origin stories of the song by delving into the historical sources and social context in which the stories were told. It asserts that the innovative musical practices of REB have prompted recollection and discussion of cultural practices amongst women of the region, particularly Stephanie's An-barra family members, providing new knowledge that contests the descriptions of the song documented in archives and historical records.

[2] This chapter is a based on a published book chapter co-authored by Cindy Jinmarabynana and myself (Kell & Jinmarabynana, 2022). Jinmarabynana and I reviewed archival recordings, conducted interviews, discussed the themes of the chapter and documented cultural knowledge of the "Diyama" song and story. I reviewed literature, collated and wrote the text, with Jinmarabynana checking and approving permissions. The chapter has been altered to focus on the themes of this thesis, but largely remains the same.

[3] This chapter refers to different versions of the "Diyama" song. In order to distinguish between them, it; uses "Diyama" to refer generally to all versions of the song; refers to the *kun-borrk* as "Diyama" *kun-borrk* and the REB version as "Diyama" (REB). The Letterstick Band rock version is called "An-barra Clan".

Figure 6.1 Stephanie Maxwell James performing at the Northcote Social Club, Melbourne, November 2024
Photo credit: Ebaad Syed

The *kun-borrk* song set called "Diyama" is attributed to the creative powers of mermaid spirits as received in a dream, typical of *kun-borrk* songs across Western Arnhem Land (Marett, 2005, Brown, 2014: 169-202). In 1960, anthropologist Les Hiatt made the first recording of "Diyama"

sung by Maxwell James's grandfather, Mulumbuk, with a description of how Mulumbuk first received the song.[4] The recordings and liner notes are held in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. In 2017, prompted by the songwriting of the Ripple Effect Band, An-barra elder Mary Dadbalag gave an alternative account of the origins of the "Diyama" *kun-borrk,* explaining that it was her eldest sister, Elizabeth Girrawanga who saw the ancestral spirits come out of the water and sing and dance "Diyama". They instructed Elizabeth to pass the song set to their younger brothers, Harry Mulumbuk and Barney Geridruwanga. The audiovisual recording of this story is archived at the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC), and it provides an alternative viewpoint for the first time.

In the 1960s, it was highly unusual for a woman to receive *kun-borrk* and this may have directed non-Indigenous researchers away from asking women about the song's origins. Men are responsible for singing and playing the musical accompaniment of *kun-borrk* and therefore other aspects of song knowledge discharged by women, such as dance instruction, correcting the singers and providing authoritative accounts of song origins and meanings, were arguably overlooked. It was also a time of social change and there may have been other circumstances that prevented women from claiming ownership of the song. As discussed in Chapter 3, women have been left out of music histories and accounts, so it is not surprising that the views and opinions of the An-barra women were overlooked in the 1960s, only to be recognised as part of the current movement of correcting gender bias in the music industry.

At the time the origins of the "Diyama" song were recorded, social factors contributed to the dominance of the male perspective. Taking into consideration the perspectives of An-barra women, who are responding to and reinterpreting the story of "Diyama" in narrative and in song, women's histories and experiences can now be heard. Whilst not negating the veracity of the men's version, this "new" women's interpretation challenges social practices by identifying their relationship to "Diyama", thus legitimizing the rights of women to compose and perform music, and to perform this song.

[4] The "Diyama" song appears as "Borg Song" performed by Mulumbug on the Vinyl LP, Betty Hiatt and L. R. Hiatt. *Songs from Arnhem Land,* Canberra City, A.C.T: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1966. The story appears in the accompanying booklet, *Notes on the Songs of Arnhem Land*.

In order to understand "Diyama", it was necessary to draw on the cultural knowledge and leadership of An-barra educator Cindy Jinmarabynana, the daughter of Mary Djabalag, the source of the alternative account. It was Jinmarabynana's initiative to record the interview with her mother and write about her alternative perspective. Jinmarabynana's patrilineal clan group is Marrarrich/Anagawbama and her homeland, Ji-bena, stretches across the floodplains to the east of Maningrida. She grew up as a child on the An-barra estate of Gupanga on the mouth of the Blyth River, learning from her elders in a traditional way:

> When I hear the "Diyama" song, it makes me cry. It makes me cry because, the way I see it, I have knowledge from when I was a little kid in Blyth River, in my own mother's country. That's where I got my knowledge by sitting down and listening to the old people. Especially the old man Frank Gurrmanamana, Betty's father. He taught me that knowledge.[5]

Jinmarabynana currently lives in in Maningrida and teaches at Maningrida College. As well as her role as a knowledge bearer for the An-barra people, she is a qualified primary school teacher who has worked in the Lúrra Language Centre creating resources for the dissemination of language and cultural knowledge. Jinmarabynana is also a member of the Bawinanga Aboriginal Council board and a respected community leader. Jinmarabynana believed it was important to record and publish her mother's story of the song's origin, being aware of the power of the written word and archival objects such as the recording of "Diyama" on the 1966 album. As a *junggay* (B: cultural manager), Jinmarabynana wanted to document important knowledge about the "Diyama" story and song for the future of the An-barra clan.

> I want to bring that evidence back. That evidence tells us who we are, what is our clan and where we come from.[6]

[5] Cindy Jinmarabynana, interview by Jodie Kell, Maningrida, May 18, 2020. (Available as JK1-DY006 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY006.) 00:15:12.
[6] Cindy Jinmarabynana, interview by Jodie Kell, Maningrida, May 18, 2020. (Available as JK1-DY006 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY006.)

The resulting recording about the history of the "Diyama" song inspired by REB's song about the mermaids who inhabit the waters of the An-barra homelands sheds a light on the changing social structures of women in relation to *kun-borrk* and music-making in Maningrida. By analysing performances and recordings of this song, I illustrate that the history of "Diyama" is interwoven in REB's rock music performance, and the contemporary versions of the story are both influenced by and depart from the previous version by Maxwell James's grandfather, recorded by Les Hiatt. The development of new perspectives and new song versions demonstrates the negotiation of agency and construction of identity from the standpoint of women.

6.1 An-barra people and Diyama shellfish: the background to the song

To understand the complex history of this song, it is necessary to understand the cultural background of the An-barra clan. The "Diyama" song refers to two sites of the An-barra people, who are part of the Burarra-speaking language group. Their language is closely related to Gun-nartpa from the inland floodplains, and they are close relatives to their western neighbours, the Na-kara, discussed in Chapter 5. There are about a dozen An-barra patrilineal clans, with the Ana-wulja clan central to the story of the "Diyama" song. The Burarra estates lie to the east of Maningrida.[7] The Blyth River, called *An-gatja Wana* (B: big river), runs through the heart of Burarra Country, starting in the sandstone plateau country to the south through Eucalyptus Forest, until it reaches the saltwater fringed by mangroves and many small creeks from the floodplains that exit past the sand spit at Lalarr Gu-jirrapa (Figure 6.2). The An-barra estate is situated along the coast and the mouth of the river, and An-barra people refer to themselves as Saltwater people. Anthropologist Les Hiatt explains that the estate boundaries are not fixed, rather the differentiation of estate land is based around important sites (Hiatt, 1965: 27-28). The "Diyama" song refers to two of these sites, Gupanga on the western bank and Lalarr Gu-jirrapa at the mouth of the river. The mermaids are found in the waters between the two sites at the river mouth, shown in Figure 6.2.

[7] See Figure 4.3, The Language Map of Maningrida to see where the Burarra clan estates lie in relation to other language groups in the region (p76).

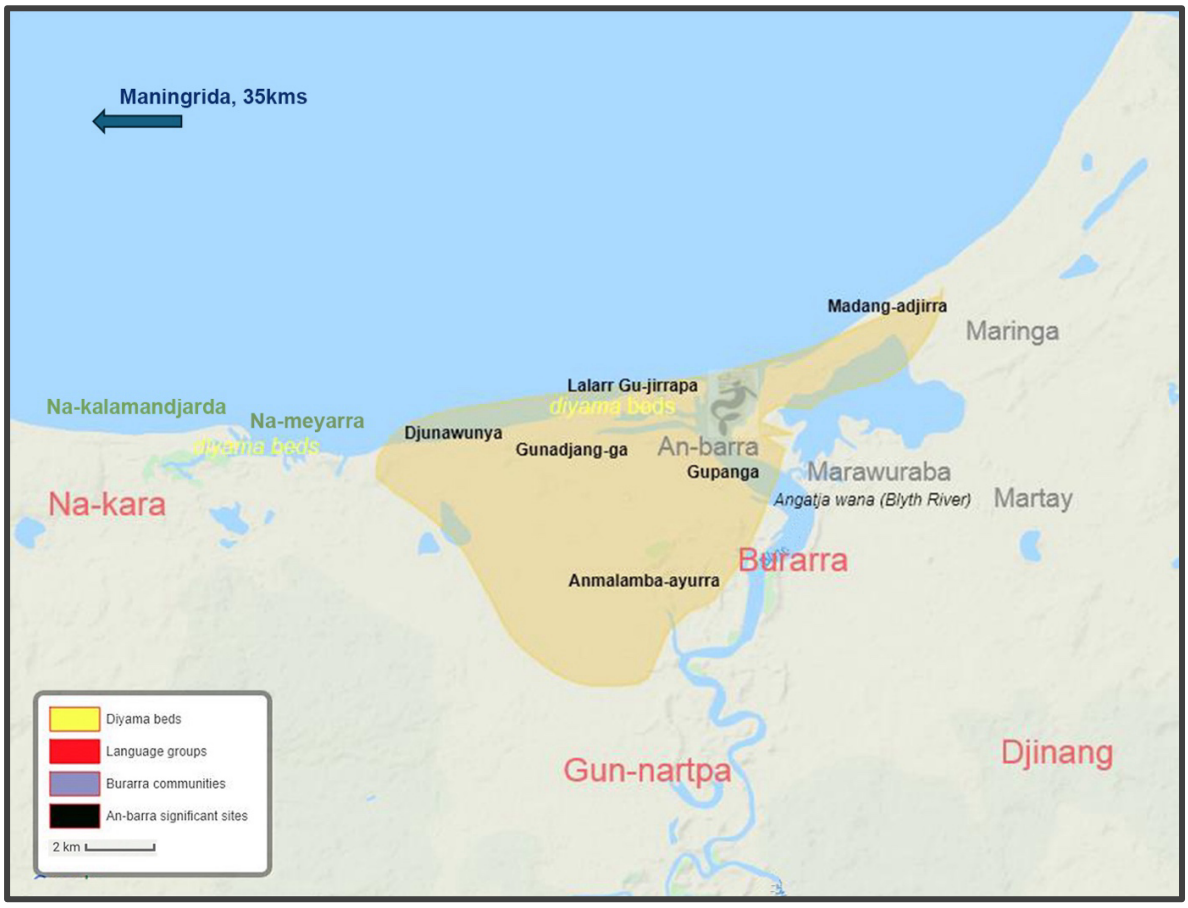

Figure 6.2 Map of An-barra Country and significant sites
This map is based on conversations and travels with Cindy Jinmarabynana and An-barra clan members, as well as maps by Hiatt (1965) and Meehan (1982).

With changing circumstances due to colonizing forces, many An-barra and Burarra people have moved to live in Maningrida, where Burarra is the currently most widely spoken Indigenous language (Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). There is a permanent settlement of six houses at the nearby Burarra estate of Ji-bena, but nobody lives permanently on An-barra clan estates. Living away from their homelands has intensified a sense of longing and nostalgia for their Country that has become a focus for musical expression among An-barra and neighbouring Na-kara musicians. One of the most enduring song topics has been the *diyama* shellfish and the connection with the *werrgapa* (B: mermaids) who live in the waters of the An-barra people. The next section will describe *diyama* and their importance as a food source, with cultural significance.

The song title, “Diyama” refers to the striped cockle shellfish, *Tapes Hiantina*, one of the most prolific food sources for Burarra and other groups of the region, both in quantity and consistency throughout the year. The shellfish are collected in the sandy river mouths along the coast, where hunters stand in the shallow saltwater and dig into the sandy bed to a depth of between 1–15 cm. The *diyama* tend to aggregate, so each dig reveals a handful of the shells. These are then cooked either in coals of a fire or boiled in water, or they can be kept alive in damp cool storage for days.

Figure 6.3 Diyama cockle shells (Tapes Hiantina)
Photo Credit, Jodie Kell, 2019.

Diyama are one of the most frequently consumed shellfish in the Maningrida region. In the 1970s, anthropologist Betty Meehan lived with the An-barra people and documented details of their shellfish harvest between July 1972 and July 1973. She noted that, over the year, the An-barra community of around thirty-four people collected at least 6700 kg of shellfish. Out of the twenty-nine different species collected, Meehan rated *diyama* as the most important because it was collected consistently throughout the year and made just over 60% of the total annual yield

(Meehan, 1982: 69-74). *Diyama* are still a bountiful source of food today with groups of mainly women, visiting the shell beds and hunting for *diyama* at sites along the West Arnhem Land coast.

Figure 6.4 Members of the Ripple Effect Band and families hunting for diyama on the Na-kara estate of Na-meyarra, July 2019
From L–R: Rona Lawrence, Marita Wilton, Zara Wilton and Tara Rostron. Photo: Jodie Kell, 2019.

For the An-barra people, the abundance of the *diyama* shellfish is associated with a unique origin story about *werrgepa* (B; mermaids) who dig underwater *diyama* beds in the mouth of the Blyth River (Hiatt & Hiatt, 1966: 13-14). Their song has the ancestral power to put flesh inside the shells. While *diyama* are not found at Gupanga itself, it is there that the mermaids live and assure a bountiful supply through their song. Jinmarabynana describes how *diyama* are formed through a metaphysical connection to the An-barra estate of Gupanga, where white clay is found. *Andakal* (B: white pipeclay) is used for ritual body paintings and bark paintings. Given by the original ancestors, this substance of ceremonial significance is an intrinsic part of the *diyama* story.

> *Diyama* comes from white clay. They call it *andakal*. It is the *andakal* that *junggay* (B: cultural managers) like me or my sisters, spread out and say the name of the country to form that *diyama*. Towards the end of the dry, when the rain is forming, then the *andakal* spreads and forms into *diyama*. When it forms, we hear this *dilartila* (B: Australian magpie lark). It's a black and white bird dreaming. Our

> totem, *dilartila*, who says '*dill, dill*'. Every year, from the ending of the dry season to the starting of the rain, the *junggay* will get the clay and say the name of the country—for example, Lalarr Gu-jirripa or Djunawunya—and by spreading that clay, they form the *diyama* from the song line.[8]

This story is connected to the practice of *dalkarra,* the practice of singing out of called names of sacred sites by ceremonial leaders of public ceremonies (England et al, 2014). The clay is a physical embodiment of the metaphysical power of creation, where the calling out of names of country causes the proliferation of *diyama* seashells in the underwater beds. It also relates to the story of the mermaids, who appeared in a dream, singing the name of the *diyama* shellfish, ensuring their continued harvest. The next section will explore the original *kun-borrk* song about the *diyama* and the *werrgapa* (B: mermaids).

6.2 Where did the "Diyama" song come from?

The origins of the "Diyama" song date back to the 1950s, when a new *kun-borrk* emerged from the An-barra homelands on the mouth of the Blyth River. The singer was Mulumbuk, also known as Harry Diyama. Les Hiatt described Mulumbuk as a major figure in the establishment of the Maningrida community in the 1950s (Hiatt, 1965: 148-54). He later featured in the 1980 ethnographic film by Hiatt and Mackenzie called *Waiting for Harry* that documented a funeral ceremony on the An-barra estate of Djunawunya (Hiatt & McKenzie, 1980).

In 1960, Hiatt recorded Mulumbuk singing a *kun-borrk* -style song that was later included on the 1966 Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies vinyl record,[9] *Songs from Arnhem Land* (Hiatt & Hiatt, 1966). Side A of the album consists of *manikay* songs from East Arnhem Land and Side B consists of West Arnhem Land *kun-borrk* style songs. The opening *kun-borrk* song is sung by Mulumbuk. As is usual for songs of the *kun-borrk* genre, Mulumbuk told Hiatt that he learnt the songs from the spirits of the deceased:

[8] Cindy Jinmarabynana. Interview by Jodie Kell, October 14, 2017. (Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-DY003-04 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY003). 00:14:39.

[9] Now known as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

> One night during a dream his deceased brother took him to the bottom of the Blyth River, and there they heard spirits of the dead singing it (Hiatt & Hiatt, 1966: 14).

Nearly sixty years later, another version of the origin story emerged. In 2017, Jinmarabynana and I sat in her daughters' yard in Maningrida and recorded her mother, An-barra elder Mary Dadbalag, the last of the generation to have lived at Gupanga when "Diyama" *kun-borrk* was first performed. Unlike the story recorded by Hiatt, she asserts that it was her mother's sister, Elizabeth Girrawanga, instead of Mulumbuk, who learnt the songs from ancestral spirits in a dream.

> One of her [Mary's mother's] eldest sisters, Elizabeth, had a dream. All these people came out from the river, and it was low tide at night. They came up with strings and dilly-bags full of *diyama*, and they were talking to her. They said to her, 'Hey, wake up sister. Wake up. We're full of *diyama* here. We've got *diyama* clay here. You tell our kids that they're the ones who are responsible for this *diyama*. They're the ones who will say the names of the places and spread that *diyama* like *junggay.*[10]

According to this story, rather than the dreamer being taken to the bottom of the river, the mermaids came out of the water wearing ceremonial objects such as *rrawka* (B: ceremonial feathered armbands) and they sang and danced the song for Elizabeth, telling her to pass it onto her younger brothers, Harry Mulumbuk and Barney Geridruwanga. "She had to give [it to] them because, if she would have been a man, she would have been taking over singing this song".[11] As women are not allowed to sing *kun-borrk* songs, Jinmarabynana explained that Elizabeth needed to give the song to her male relatives:

[10] Cindy Jinmarabynana. Interview by Jodie Kell, October 14, 2017. (Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-DY003-04 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY003), 00:06:11. In this interview, Jinmarabynana interpreted the stories and words of Mary Dadbalag who she had just interviewed.

[11] Cindy Jinmarabynana. Interview by Jodie Kell, May 18, 2020. (Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-DY006 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY006), 00:03:41

> She told my two uncles, Anjawartunga Maxwell's father, old man Harry Mulumbuk and my uncle Barney Geridruwanga. She said, 'I'm the eldest sister. You two sit down. I had a dream.' They sat down next to the fire, and she started to sing that song, "Diyama" *[kun-borrk]*. She said, 'Our ancestors of the Ana-wulja clan, An-barra people, I had a dream, and they gave me this song, so I'll pass it on.' That was what they had told her to do. She was singing at the same time she told those two boys to get the clapsticks, and they started to sing, and they were starting to sing what she told them to sing, '*Aa-aa-aa an-diyama*' like that and they picked it up very quickly. They were *aburr-delipa* (B: small children) only ten or eleven years old.[12]

It is significant that a woman describes receiving a song in a dream, as there are very few accounts of the transmission of songs from women to men in this region. One example is the *wangga* song, "Yendili No. 2", received in a dream by *Marri Ngarr* woman Maudie Attaying Dumoo, who gave it to her husband Wagon Dumoo to perform (Marett, Barwick & Ford, 2012, Marett, 2005). Musicologist Allan Marett described the song as "almost unique among the various *wangga* repertoires in that it was composed by a woman" (Marett, 2005: 66).

[12] Cindy Jinmarabynana. Interview by Jodie Kell, October 14, 2017. (Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-DY003-04 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY003), 00:08:43.

Figure 6.5 Mary Dadbalag and her daughter, Cindy Jinmarabynana, discussing the story of 'Diyama', September 2017
Photo credit : Megan Atfield.

Dadbalag's memory of the origin of the song, as told to her, tells a story of women as composers, sharing their dreams and the songs heard in them, so they could be performed in public. Her perspective sheds light on the role of women in the composition and transmission of this region's music in the past and the present. The story documented by Hiatt suggests a sense of the dreamer, Mulumbuk, looking upon the mermaids and hearing their song and then taking it back and singing it himself. Mary's version describes a more active role for the mermaid spirits who came out of the water to wake the dreamer and give her the song, directing her to pass it onto her family members, while also demonstrating and passing on its associated dances:

> The ancestor spirits, they came out from that water, walking on the beach. But that other one she saw is like a mermaid with arm band around her—you know, like traditional costume. In that dream, my mum said to my sisters, 'In dream *dje! Awurr-bony diyama, awurr-banyjinga* (B: they have gone to get Diyama shells under the water). They already put that [flesh inside the] *diyama*, the spirit people, and that slow dance—you know, the one when we dig and dance and then we put

> it on our head swinging. What we are putting on our head is string bags full of *diyama*.[13]

While Mulumbuk is undisputed as the first person to sing this song in public, Dadbalag's version of events raises questions about its origins. Rather than seeing these stories as conflicted, it is useful to explore what these different perspectives tell us about how historical events are remembered and recorded. In Australian Indigenous communities, the transmission of knowledge is enacted orally through songs and stories, and visually through dance and painting. This leads to multiple narratives that shape collective memory, influencing the construction of community and individual identity. This origin story paints a picture of women actively involved in communication with ancestral spirits, and its recent emergence suggests that women are ready to share their stories to strengthen the right of women to compose and perform songs.

Archivist Eric Ketelaar, in questioning the relative fixity of historical understanding, says that new interpretations of history are all valid:

> Many historians are now seeing that 'identity in the past is shaped by common or shared or collective memory animating invented traditions and that such identities, once formed or embraced, are not fixed, but very fluid, contingent on time, space, and circumstances, ever being re-invented to suit the present, continually being re-imagined' (Ketelaar, 2008: 96).

The omission of a women's perspective on the "Diyama" song could be in part because of the status of women at the time. As women did not sing or perform music in public, researchers may not have thought to ask them about this song, or perhaps women themselves did not feel able to tell the story of a woman receiving a men's song in a dream. The 1960s were a time when the recordist was seen as a guardian protecting the static archival object, suggesting at one 'truth'. This dominance of the documented narrative tended to reflect the gender bias embedded in society with archives being "active sites where social power is negotiated, contested and confirmed" (Cook & Schwartz, 2002: 172).

[13] Cindy Jinmarabynana. interview by Jodie Kell, Maningrida, May 18, 2020. (Available at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY006.), 00:09:10

When I asked Jinmarabynana why she thought this story had not surfaced before, she said,

> Well, Betty and Les [Hiatt], they don't know that story. Those women, they hid that story. Les only knew the song and story when Harry sang it. He didn't know the history about the song. Because I heard that story when my grandmother told me, when I was age of six or seven. I took that story in my heart when this old lady told me the story, because she had been carrying that story from her sister.[14]

I asked what Jinmarabynana meant when she used the word "hid" and she explained that the women thought that the researchers weren't ready to listen, and so they did not insist on sharing their story. They kept it to themselves because it was contradictory to the narrative recounted by Mulumbuk. They kept quiet out of respect for the dominant masculine point of view, and because they weren't asked or encouraged to participate. It was only when the women of REB were singing about this story that An-barra women decided it was time to share this additional version.

The approach in this chapter allows for the possibility of multiple narratives and perspectives through recognising a diversity of sources of knowledge, a way of "acknowledging Indigenous frameworks of knowledge, memory and evidence" (Faulkhead et al, 2010: 29). This brings us back to Jinmarabynana's desire to share her mother's story and document it as evidence before it is too late. Her mother had been carrying this story and now it is recorded as part of the history of the "Diyama" song, adding to a rich and complex history documented through oral storytelling and song that continues to this day. Documenting Dadbalag's and Jinmarabynana's stories demonstrates how the musical practices of REB have inspired women to speak out and express their experiences. Creating a space for these stories to be heard is significant, as it contributes to changing social structures and growing agency for women, demonstrated through the re-creation and re-interpretation of the *diyama* story through rock music by REB, thus including women in this song tradition.

[14] Cindy Jinmarabynana. Interview by Jodie Kell, Maningrida, May 17, 2020. (Available as JK1-DY006 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY006).

6.3 Transmission, re-creation and innovation

The impetus for the recording of the "Diyama" origin story came about because of the Ripple Effect Band's new version of the "Diyama" song. When Maxwell James composed her version of "Diyama" (REB) and performed it with the band, it was the first time in living memory that a group of women were singing about the mermaids that live in the waters off Gupanga. Following debut performances at Maningrida, the Bak'bididi Festival in Ramingining and the Milingimbi Gatjirrk Cultural Festival, the band recorded the song as part of the *Wárrwarra* EP. These performances and recordings will be discussed further in Section 6.4.

Figure 6.6 REB performing 'Diyama' at the Darwin Festival in August 2020
L-R: Jodie Kell, Jolene Lawrence, Marita Wilton, Lakita Taylor (Stephanie's daughter) and Stephanie Maxwell James. Photo Credit: Benjamin Warlngundu Bayliss, 2020.

While distinctive, this new version of the song is one of many reinterpretations of the "Diyama" song over three generations as shown in Figure 6.7, including: reiterations of the *kun-borrk* with differences due to individual singers' interpretations; contemporary music versions of the song in different forms; and reinterpretations of the *kun-borrk* in contemporary music forms. Popular bands such as Letterstick Band and Wildwater preceded the Ripple Effect Band with recordings and performances of songs that directly reference the "Diyama" *kun-borrk*. Many of these songs can be found on CDs or online streaming services. As well as this, copies of the

original 1960 recording circulate around the community as people Bluetooth the songs from phone to phone, listening to the *kun-borrk* as readily as its more contemporary versions of the song.

Listening to songs in the form of heritage recordings or popular music releases enables engagement with knowledge held in cultural performance and song, and can lead to innovation in contemporary performance practices. This is apparent in re-creations of the song through an inherited lineage of An-barra musicians and the proliferation of the song in a range of media. Figure 6.7 lists recordings made by An-barra artists that interpret the story of *diyama* (shellfish) and the *werrgapa* (mermaids) of Gupanga, with the multitude of versions in a range of styles and genres demonstrating the importance of this story in the construction of identity and clan cohesion for An-barra people. For Maxwell James, it is notable that the first song she wanted to compose was another expression of the *diyama* story, adding her perspectives to this musical tradition.

Song/Film Title	Singer/performer	Year	Style	Media format (Publisher)
"Diyama"	Mulumbuk	1966	*kun-borrk*	Songs of Arnhem Land (AIAS) vinyl
Waiting for Harry	Mulumbuk	1979	Documentary film	AIAS, film
"An-barra Clan"	Letterstick Band	1994	*kun-borrk* sung over reggae	(CAAMA) CD + youtube film clip[1]
"Rrawa"	Letterstick Band	1995	reggae	*Demurru Hits* CD
"Bartpa"	Letterstick Band	1995		*Demurru Hits* CD
"Diyama"	Anjawartunga Maxwell and others	1997		
"Diyama"	Anjawartunga Maxwell	2004	*kun-borrk*	*Diyama* CD
"Diyama/Mimi"	Anjawartunga Maxwell & Crusoe Kurrtal	2004	*kun-borrk* with samples and synth	*Diyama* CD
"Gupanga"	Letterstick Band	2004	reggae	*Diyama* CD
"Blyth River"	Letterstick Band	2004	country rock	*Diyama* CD
Soundtracks of Maningrida	Letterstick Band	2004	Documentary film	CAAMA, film
"Ngarnji Mamurrung"	Anjawartunga Maxwell and others	2006	*kun-borrk*	*Mamurrung* ceremony, live
"Rrawa"	Wild Water	2007	reggae	*Rrawa* CD
"Maningrida Diyama"	Wild Water	2007	*kun-borrk* sung over reggae	*Rrawa* CD
"Make it Through"	Elston Maxwell, Djolpa Mackenzie, Cindy Jinmarabynana, Marita Wilton, Patricia Gibson	2016	hip-hop	Indigenous HipHop Projects film clip
"Blyth River"	Stephanie Maxwell James and REB	2017	country rock with *kun-borrk*	Live performance at Ramingining Festival
"Diyama"	Stephanie Maxwell James and REB	2017	country rock with *kun-borrk*	*Wárrwarra* EP
"Jarracharra"	Jess Gunjul Phillips, Jodie Kell with Bábbarra Women's Centre and REB	2019	Sound Installation	Exhibition at the Australian Embassy, Paris

Figure 6.7 Documented interpretations of the 'Diyama' song and/or story

The many informal and unrecorded ceremonial performances such as the opening of the local health clinic, school concerts and festivals are not included here.

Musical innovation is an integral aspect of the story of the "Diyama" song, beginning at the emergence of the *kun-borrk* from the An-barra homelands. Betty and Les Hiatt described "Diyama" *kun-borrk* as the "easternmost example of the borg [*kun-borrk*] style" and claim Mulumbuk as the only Burarra person who sings a *kun-borrk* style song (Hiatt & Hiatt, 1966: 14). Usually, the more easterly Burarra speaking groups would own and sing East Arnhem Land *manikay*. They suggest that:

> Because of marriage irregularities in the previous generations, Mulumbuk and several other members of his clan have changed their moiety affiliations in order to bring their own marriages into conformity with the rule of moiety exogamy. This has entailed a serious disturbance of their ritual status, including loss of recognition as joint owners of any mortuary song (Hiatt & Hiatt, 1966: 14).

Mulumbuk was a *Yirrchinga* man. Gupanga is a *Jowunga* estate and so he would not have been able to sing the associated *manakay* due to the rules of exogamous moieties. Using the medium of *kun-borrk,* he was able to compose and take ownership of original songs, claiming that he received them in dreams, and pass them onto his descendants. Expressing direct communication with ancestral spirits, the song strengthened his rights to the Gupanga estate. He subsequently gained status travelling to other clan estates across the region as a *jalakan* (B: song leader) with a ceremonial troupe to perform the "Diyama" *kun-borrk* and associated *bunggul* dances (Corn, 2002: 166).[1]

As well as adopting an atypical song genre, recording the song with Les Hiatt on a battery-powered tape recorder in 1960 demonstrated Mulumbuk's ability to utilise new technologies and extrinsic knowledge to create an enduring record of his singing that can be played again and again. Ethnomusicologist Paul Greene comments that modern recording technologies have opened up "new directions for musical expressions and evolution, inspiring new logics of music creation and empowering local cultural and expressive values" (Greene 2005: 3). The innovative development of creating a permanent audio record of the "Diyama" *kun-borrk* has contributed to the continuation of realisations of the "Diyama" narrative as told in song.

[1] See also Cindy Jinmarabynana. Interview by Jodie Kell, October 14, 2017. (Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-DY003-04 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY003).

Sustained engagement with the "Diyama" *kun-borrk* and the 1960 recording has contributed to a proliferation of the song and its themes among the following generations of An-barra and Na-kara musicians, as demonstrated in Figure 6.7. After Mulumbuk passed away, his sons, Anjawartunga and Jiliburr Maxwell, following in their father's footsteps, took on responsibility for the performance of the "Diyama" ceremony and travelling across Arnhem Land to perform at ceremonial events. Like their father, they also adopted new technologies in the expression of their An-barra identity. They formed the Letterstick Band, playing a distinctive style of rock-reggae, fusing elements of their inherited *kun-borrk* song series with globalised popular music styles.

In her article about music technology at Wadeye, Linda Barwick proposes that the emerging non-traditional musical forms and their dissemination through digital means "continue to develop a strategic assertion of cultural and territorial autonomy and identity through song that was and is also fundamental to traditional musical forms in the area" (Barwick 2017: 156). This "strategic blend of traditionalism and innovation" (Barwick, 2017: 157) was a feature of the Letterstick Band, as they used contemporary music practices and documentary filmmaking to assert clan affiliation and continue the innovative legacy of their father.

The many different versions of this song over time are an example of what is called "intertextuality": "a network of songs, styles, artists and consumers influenced, directly or indirectly, by the music and artists that came before" (Burns & Lacasse, 2018: 4). This can be applied to the intricate network of relationships that link An-barra musicians and their estates to the "Diyama" song and its association with Gupanga. Linguist Ken Hale used the phrase, "the persistence of entities through transformation" (Hale, 1984: 260) in his article on traditional Central Australian song as re-creation. Jinmarabynana comments that the range of styles that encompass performances of "Diyama" have contributed to the lasting popularity of this *kun-borrk:*

> Everybody sings it now. They all enjoy with our young people. This is one other thing we get to see growing, you know. We have passed that song up to our future generations.[2]

[2] Cindy Jinmarabynana, interview by Jodie Kell, Maningrida, May 18, 2020. (Available at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY006), 00:11:34.

This song that was originally accompanied by only two traditional instruments, the *an-gujaparndiya* (B: clapsticks) and *ngorla* (B: didjeridu), can still be heard today in *kun-borrk*, but also alongside contemporary instrumentation and in mixed media. Musicians like Anjawartunga and Jiliburr Maxwell from the Letterstick Band, and now Anjawartunga's daughter Stephanie Maxwell James, have followed in the footsteps of Mulumbuk, adopting new technologies and musical practices to reinterpret the song of the mermaids in different forms. In so doing, they assert their cultural identity in the changing social structures of modernity.

6.4 A New Performance of "Diyama"

> I do a lot of dance: Black Crow, Shark and Crocodile dance, and Diyama. I have traditional and then play in a band. Because my dads,[3] you know, they played in a band, so I am following in their footsteps.[4]
>
> My daughter wrote a song for the mermaids. It's my dreaming. We call it *werrgapa* 'mermaid' (B), the spirit and the land for the An-barra people staying in one place called Gupanga on the Blyth River.[5]

[3] In the Maningrida region kinship systems, a person's father's brother is also called their 'father'.
[4] Stephanie Maxwell James et al. Interview by Spotify at Barunga Festival, June 3, 2018. (Interview and transcript available as JK1-NG003 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/NG003), 00:18:33
[5] Anjawartunga Maxwell. Interview by Jodie Kell, 28 October 2017. (Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-DY002 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY002), 00:02:34

Figure 6.8 Anjawartunga Maxwell on stage with his daughter, Stephanie Maxwell James, at the Bak'bididi Festival in Ramingining in 2017
Behind is Rona Lawrence on bass guitar and Tara Rostron on electric guitar. Photo Credit: Eve Pawley, 2017.

The performance at Bak'bididi Festival in Ramingining in 2017 was the first public performance of the song by the Ripple Effect Band outside of the Maningrida community. We were joined by Anjawartunga Maxwell on stage. This was the first time any *kun-borrk* song had been sung by a man accompanied by a group of women [Audiovisual Link 4]. The contrast between his vocal style and that of his daughter brought great excitement to the crowd and across Arnhem Land, as social media enabled the spread of this historic moment. Through his song, he confirmed his daughter's cultural identity and bestowed authority on the changing social structures that are now allowing women to perform music in public.

Writing about the Letterstick Band's setting of Mulumbuk's "Diyama" *kun-borrk* in the rock song, "An-barra Clan", Aaron Corn says that brothers Anjawartunga and Jiliburr Maxwell were able to balance the "continuity of musical traditions against creative engagement with new musical media and technology" (Corn, 2002: 76). Similarly, the use of contemporary instrumentation by REB bypasses gendered restrictions and allowing women to play instruments and accompany a senior song man singing *kun-borrk*. In this extraordinary moment,

a song re-created and performed by father and daughter was made possible by the context of its contemporary musical setting. The subsequent recording of the REB "Diyama" song by the Ripple Effect Band included the voice of Anjawartunga Maxwell. In the middle of the song and at its ending, he sings the 'Diyama' *kun-borrk*. The original was recorded in the Wíwa music studio in Maningrida on a Zoom H6 recorder when he sang two renditions of this *kun-borrk*, one for the middle section and one for the ending of the recorded song. As will be shown later in our analysis of this song, Anjawartunga based his song on the 1960 recording, re-creating the melodies and phrasing of his father.

The use of spirit language is common to the *kun-borrk* songs of western Arnhem Land (Garde, 2005, Djimarr, 2008, Brown, 2014, O'Keeffe, 2016). In the 1960 recording of "Diyama", Betty and Les Hiatt describe how Mulumbuk sings in the spirit language of the mermaids:

> The only sounds to which Mulumbuk attributes meaning are the initial '*Aa*' suggesting the ebb and flow of the tide, '*andiya mara* [*an-diyama rra*] (shellfish sowing)'—the magical words used by spirits of the dead to put flesh inside the *diyama* shells, '*aa aa aa, ee ee ee*' signifying the movements of the spirits as they rake the shells into localised beds and the final '*Aa*' expressing nostalgia amongst the spirits as they think of their living kinsfolk (Hiatt & Hiatt, 1966: 13-14).

Inherited from his father, Anjawartunga also sang the words of the spirits, both in ceremonial performances and with popular bands accompanied by contemporary instrumentation in songs such as "An-barra Clan". Maxwell James's version of the song has no spirit language in its verses and offers a more narrative perspective than the original *borrk*. There are gendered restrictions regarding actually singing mermaid spirit language, but the chorus infers this by using a sustained '*Aa*' vocable that is a pared back imitation of the prominent feature of the "Diyama" *kun-borrk*. Vocables are units of non-translatable language that are commonly found across different song genres. They convey nostalgia and sorrow for the spirits of the deceased. As part of ritual language, they serve as a means of connection and spirituality (Hinton, 1984). By using rock music style vocables as a vocal hook, Maxwell James navigates protocols to make evident her connection to the 'An-barra lineage and to place herself in the canon of the "Diyama" song.

The sustained "*Aa*" vocable is followed by calling out the name "Diyama". Originally, the song was called "Blyth River" and REB sang this in the chorus at Bak'bididi Festival. After her father's death, Maxwell James changed the chorus and the name of the song in recognition of her father and as a deliberate declaration of her inherited rights to the "Diyama*" kun-borrk*. Singing "*diyama"* is a strong vocal hook that associates the song with the An-barra tradition of calling out the name of the shellfish, *diyama*, in order for the *diyama* ancestors to form themselves across the land, as discussed by Jinmarabynana in Section 6.2.[6]

The following ethnographic account illustrates the importance placed upon this new version of the "Diyama" song by Anjawartunga, and how he felt it was vital to include the *kun-borrk* on REB's recording.

> In planning for a recording of this song, Anjawartunga felt it was imperative that he was included. Once he learnt that we would be travelling to Sydney, he contacted me. Knowing he was not well enough to make the trip, he insisted on recording his part for the song. Using a portable Zoom audio recorder, early one morning before I left Maningrida, I recorded his voice. He played a G chord on a guitar, so he could hear the pitch, and then he sang the two parts he envisioned for the recording, specifying one part for the middle solo section, and one for the ending. At the time, he also recorded a small statement about the song and how proud he was of the women who were playing music, encouraging all of us to "never give up music" and emphatically stating that even if he passed away, he wanted to be on the recording and he wanted his voice to be heard and his music to be played.
>
> Two weeks later, Anjawartunga passed away. The tragedy of losing such an important cultural leader was tempered by the now precious recording we held. We also knew we had a responsibility to record our version of this song. So, one month after his death, a still grieving Stephanie joined us in Sydney and we included "Diyama" in the four songs recorded in the Sydney Conservatorium studios.

[6] Cindy Jinmarabynana. Interview by Jodie Kell, October 14, 2017. (Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-DY003-04 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/DY003), 00:07:46

> Knowing how fresh Stephanie's grief was, we did not play the recording of her father, instead focusing on recording the rock song, but we left space in the middle section for his voice. It was on the final day, we gathered together and followed his instructions, placing his vocals over the solo section. Producer Paul Mac explained that he would insert the vocals, but it may not fit as it had been recorded without reference to our version of the song. However, when we listened, there was not a dry eye in the room, the vocals fitted perfectly in the space we had left [Audiovisual Link 5]. It was as if Anjawartunga had been in the room and had already heard the recording. The spirit of a man who sang the song of mermaids heard in a dream by his ancestors would not have been restricted by notions of time. He knew how the song would go, perhaps he had already been there. Yet it is also the introduction of modern multi-tracking recording that enabled this moment to happen. Anjawartunga, and his daughter Stephanie and the Ripple Effect Band, utilised modern recording techniques in the expression of their cultural identity and ancestral song which had already begun its movement into contemporary music forms. In this way, the production technique of multi-tracking facilitated a solution to the problems of distance and circumstance by enabling Anjawartunga's vocals to be included in the recording, thus creating a legacy of his musicianship to pass on to his daughter and female relatives of whom he was so proud.

The synthesis of different interpretations and styles of this song are apparent in the *kun-borrk* that Anjawartunga sings over the song's middle section and coda. Drawing upon his father's interpretation of the mermaids' song, he reinterprets its melodic phrasing. Figures 6.9 and 6.10 are transcriptions of father (Mulumbuk) and son (Anjawartunga) singing "Diyama" *kun-borrk.* The transcriptions show that, even though Anjawartunga contributed his own slightly differentiated rhythms, he referred his father's rhythmic motif for the REB recording marked in yellow). Both singers started with the "*Aa*" declamatory vocable that calls out to the spirits and announces the singers' presence (marked in red). This intertextuality of songs within songs links three generations of singers as echoes of Mulumbuk's song are heard in the iterations sung by his son and embedded in a recording made by his granddaughter.

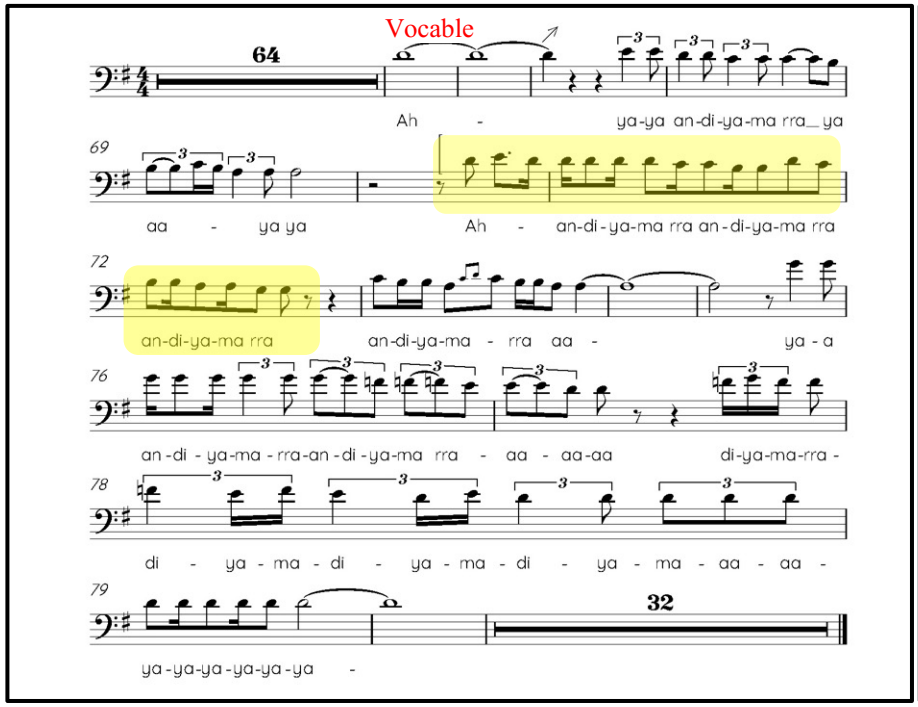

Figure 6.9 Musical transcription of Mulumbuk's original "Diyama" song recorded in 1960 (Hiatt & Hiatt, 1966)
Transcription by Jodie Kell, based on transcription by Aaron Corn (Corn, 2002: 125-126).

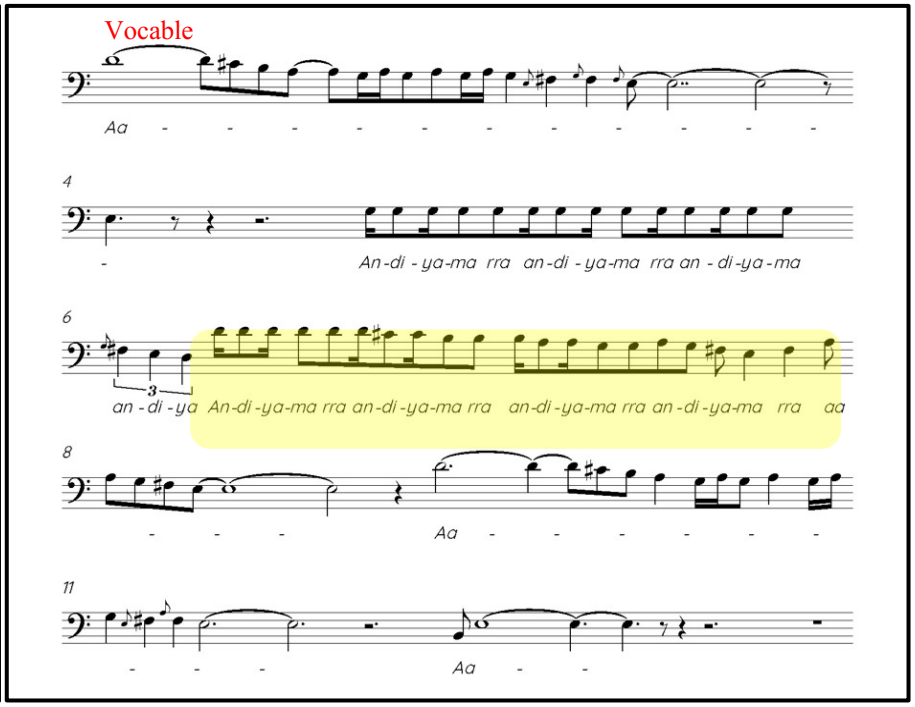

Figure 6.10 Musical transcription of Anjawartunga Maxwell's vocals in the middle section of the Ripple Effect Band's recording of "Diyama" recorded in 2017
Transcription by Jodie Kell.

When Anjawartunga enters singing "Diyama" *kun-borrk* after the second chorus, the intermusicality apparent in the vocal hook of layering of different musical cultures and vigorous traditional singing, intensifies the effect of the song. As Anjawartunga sings the song of the *werrgepa* (B: mermaids), listeners are asked to suspend judgement and believe we are hearing the mermaids' voices. His powerful evocative vocals enhance the surprise audiences feel when they first hear a women's band accompanying his expression of their ancestral beings.

Production elements of the song reinforce this effect with hooks such as long organ chords and backing vocalists intensifying the texture into the chorus. Throughout the song, Maxwell James's vocals have been doubled with the original combined with a track using production effects such as eq and chorus. The result implies the vocal quality of spirits singing [audiovisual link 6]. As the song draws to a close, the rhythmic pulse drops out, leaving only a sustained organ note and vocals singing the "Diyama" *kun-borrk* song. This change in rhythmic density and musical timbre creates an intensification that combines with the intermusicality of the incorporation of the *kun-borrk* song to evoke emotional response, "taking it to another level" (Monson 1996: 39). Over the tremulous organ elongated through a slow delay and extended sustain, Anjawartunga Maxwell sings his last *kun-borrk*. His vocals convey a sense of longing for the past, for people and place, directly referencing the song recorded by his father Mulumbuk in 1960 but also marking his and his daughter's place in the history of the "Diyama" song.

Figure 6.11 Anjawartunga Maxwell, 2017
Photo credit: Allen Murphy.

Anjawartunga passed away before he could hear the final recording of the song. However, by including his voice in both live and recorded performances of the REB song, he reinforced his daughter's legitimacy, endorsing a new modality of women's singing. This was as innovative as the Letterstick Band was in the 1990s, or Mulumbuk's 1960s recording. REB's version of "Diyama" enables a new voice, a female voice, and a new expression of tradition, joining generations of musical creation and innovation. It challenges the very social order it emerges from as the first women to express their take on "Diyama". By taking on the stories of the ancestors and the themes of a song cycle until now sung only by men, Maxwell James is redefining her rights to the hereditary musical tradition of her father. By including his voice both in live and recorded performances of the song, Anjawartunga demonstrated his approval of REB's legitimacy and rights to perform songs, and in so doing supported the beginnings of new musical practices for women. This innovative musical collaboration between father and daughter enabled the development of a new female voice, in the musical expression of Anbarra identity.

6.5 Conclusion

The story of REB's version of the "Diyama" song illustrates how one action by an individual or small group of individuals (Maxwell James and REB) can lead to further activity and contribute to changing musical traditions and the documentation of cultural knowledge, much like a ripple effect. Analysis of the "Diyama" song and its associated musical practices demonstrated how musical innovation enables song custodians to respond to changing contexts. The chapter found that three generations of An-barra musicians and knowledge holders have transformed the expression of ancestral spirits using new musical forms and technology and reinterpretations of the "Diyama" song points to innovation that both reflects and influences changing social structures. Furthermore, through the act of composing and performing their own interpretation of the "Diyama" song as female musicians, REB has rekindled interest in the origins of the song, surfacing women's perspectives in the expression of An-barra culture, and archiving these stories for future generations.

Figure 6.12 REB performing 'Diyama' at Bustard Town in Darwin, August 2024
L-R: Lakita Prudence (Stephanie's daughter), (Stephanie's niece) and Stephanie Maxwell James. This shows Stephanie encouraging the next generation of young girls to feel confident to be musicians, continuing singing the 'Diyama' (REB) song. Photo Credit: Chiranth Wodeyar

REB has also continued to inspire other women and girls in the expression of cultural knowledge through song, as shown in Figure 6.12, in which Maxwell James is seen to be encouraging younger girls, such as her own daughter and other relatives, to be confident and join in singing “Diyama”. This suggests the REB have begun a new tradition of “Diyama” coming from a female perspective, that will continue into the future, in the same way that male musicians have passed down the song from one generation to the next. The next chapter will examine how REB’s agency continued to expand and exert influence locally, nationally and even internationally as they were entrusted to express the story of a major weather event and include important ecological knowledge from the perspective of the Indigenous custodians of Maningrida.

Chapter 7

“Cyclone”: The Power of Country and Song

“Cyclone” [1]

Verse 1

Nja-kamárrang wíba ya-wolobena	*Cyclone Monica came here to this country*
Wárrwarra ya-wolomiba njanda-merrbaya	*She came from the east to the west*
Wíba wédda ka-mánga ya-wolo-bena	*She passed over the country, she went to*

Pre-chorus 1

Berraja, Na-kalamandjarda, Nardilmuk,	*Berraja, Nakalamandjarda, Nardilmuk,*
Ndjúdda, ya-labina Ngárraku	*Ndjúdda and Ngarraku.*

Chorus

Ya-rlawíyina dila-ngaya ya-karráwarra	*The eye stopped and looked out*
Wíba ka-nana Mábarnad	*Over the country of the Mábarnad clans*
Wíba ka-nana Mábarnad	*Over the country of the Mábarnad clans*

Verse 2

Barra-kábburbliba barra-yawarlbibba	*Old and young people*
barra-wareyemanga	*They all were frightened*
Barra-lakalaya barrawurlwurl	*They heard the wind*
ka-bbona ya-wolo-bena	*Coming their way*
Ka-bbona kána-ngardorrdjanga kurla djadjórla	*She came and took the houses and the trees*

Pre-chorus 2

Ya-labina Nakalarramba, Mirrákala,	*She went to Nakalarramba, Mirrákala*
Kabalko, Malabunuwa, Karra-ka-búbbu	*Kabalko, Malabunuwa, Karra-ka-búbbu*

Chorus
Guitar Solo (verse)

Pre-chorus 3

Djómi barra-njínjdjana barra-kana	*The Djómi spirits were crying*
Wíba barra-lawáyana barra-kana	*Crying for the country*

Chorus

[1] “Cyclone” by the Ripple Effect Band, composed by Rachel Thomas, Monica Wilton and Jodie Kell. The song is on *Mayawa*, released on September 13, 2024. The lyrics have been translated and transcribed by linguists Monica Wilton, Rachel Thomas, linguist Carolyn Coleman and Jodie Kell. https://open.spotify.com/track/2DdnTCwc2Gmjha6CCX5ad1?si=bf0cde43eaf34683

"Cyclone", sung in the Ndjébbana language, tells the story of Tropical Cyclone Monica, a Category 5 cyclone that crossed the coast of Australia in April 2006 at Junction Bay, 35km west of Maningrida. Composed in 2017 by Rachel Djíbbama Thomas, Monica Wilton, and Jodie Kell, it was released on the *Mayawa* album on September 13, 2024. The style is cinematic, using reverb-laden guitar and stirring ensemble vocals to capture the dramatic mood and the resulting song is an audience favourite when REB plays live and one of the most popular songs on the album.[2]

"Cyclone" has been reimagined into four different genres: a rock version on *Mayawa;* a classical piece called "Barra-róddjiba", composed in collaboration with Alex Turley and Maningrida elders for the Darwin Symphony Orchestra; an arrangement for string ensemble, piano and choir by David-Cockatoo Collins and Andrew Kell for the NSW Department of Education Cantabile Festival; and a remix collaboration with dance music duo Stereogamous, featuring Sydney producer Paul Mac.[3] These collaborative works spanning a range of genres point to the growth of REB's innovative musicianship, and reputation as the band's songwriting crossed over into new modes of music making.

Central to the success of these different intercultural and cross-genre collaborations is the relationship between REB member Rachel Thomas and me (encapsulated in the onstage photograph in Figure 7.1). Thomas is a Ndjébbana speaker from the Na-djórdjarra clan. Her skin name is Nja-wamud and her moiety is Yírriddjanga. She is not only a vocalist in REB, but also provides cultural management for the band, negotiating with community members for permissions and support when necessary. As explained in Section 1.2, Thomas and I started making music together in the early 2000s. This long-term friendship formed the basis for "Cyclone" and the subsequent projects that displayed diverse musical styles and involved a wide range of people outside of the REB. It also enabled us to navigate the cultural protocols and permissions necessary so that important cultural knowledge and connection to ancestral spirits could be included in the song. This process will be described later in the chapter.

[2] From its release on September 13 2024, Cyclone has over 43,700 streams on Spotify, 27, 041 streams on Apple Music and 321 radio plays in Australia as of 23 February, 2025.
[3] As well as the original rock song, the first two adaptions will be discussed in this chapter. However, the dance music remix is outside of the scope of this study because it was only created in 2024. It is included in this introduction to illustrate the diverse range of genres and creative projects connected to "Cyclone".

Figure 7.1 "Cyclone" songwriters Jodie Kell and Rachel Thomas on stage together at Bustard Town, Darwin, August 2024
Photo Credit: Chiranth Wodeyar.

Thomas has a special connection to the story of Cyclone Monica, both through her mother Lena Djabíbba, a *djungkay* (cultural manager) for Maningrida (who will be introduced further in Section 7.1), and because the cyclone crossed the coast very near to Thomas's Country Malabunuwa, west of Maningrida. Her cousin, Monica Wilton, has a connection to Cyclone Monica because she shares the same English name. This led to the adoption of Monica's skin name, njá-Kamárrang, to refer to the cyclone in the song. Monica is also a Ndjébbana speaker and her home, situated on the cliffs looking out to sea in Maningrida, bore the full brunt of the storm. Both women are gospel singers and community leaders who use music as a way of healing and supporting people through times of grief, and this influenced their decision to write about Cyclone Monica, to acknowledge the trauma of such a severe weather event.

Figure 7.2 Songwriter Monica Wilton outside her home in Maningrida, 2024

This chapter finds that memorialising a cyclone event that struck Maningrida in song, shows how REB's influence is expanding because their community has now entrusted them as spokespeople to communicate the stories of their community to broader society. At a time when there is growing awareness of the risk of severe weather events due to the effects of climate change, "Cyclone" contributes to social cohesion and resilience by engaging with the shared experiences of people who were in Maningrida during Cyclone Monica, and those who have lived through cyclones and other severe weather events elsewhere.

Incorporating Indigenous knowledge and storytelling into the events surrounding Cyclone Monica has also increased awareness of the Dukúrrdji clan, the traditional owners of Maningrida and garnered local support for a social movement acknowledging their right to make decisions regarding what happens on their Country. "Cyclone", and its versions, is highly innovative and powerful because it is the first song to express cultural knowledge about one of the most important Dreaming spirits for Maningrida, the Djómi, which will be explained in Section 7.1.

The chapter will start by outlining the cultural background necessary to understand the context of the song, and the events that unfolded as Cyclone Monica threatened Maningrida. Through analysis of the song, I show how the band approached the expression of these dramatic events, followed by a discussion of the impacts of the song on the Maningrida community, including the band members. The chapter will then outline three performances at significant events– Darwin Festival in 2021, Cantabile Festival at Sydney Opera House in 2022 and the Maningrida AFL Grand Final in 2023 – to illustrate how contemporary music is a means for women to innovate new song traditions that that attest to the power of ancestral spirits in everyday life, thus reminding people of their ever-present formidable ancestors, and crossover into new genres and performance sites, thus expanding the ripples of their musical practices.

7.1 Background to the Song

Wíba Mábarnad: Indigenous Custodianship of Maningrida

Because "Cyclone" refers to an important *djang* (Dreaming) of the Kunibídji clans, and thus the significance of the song requires some understanding of the social groupings in Maningrida, and their associated lands. As explained in Section 2.2, *Bininj* people of Maningrida believe that land cannot be bought or sold, or owned individually. The ownership of Country is passed on from your father, and shared with others, connected through *bábburr* (clan), *djang* (Dreaming), language and one of two moieties. Land ownership does not mean that Country is cut off from others, rather it is expected that clans will welcome others onto their land to share hunting and resources after permissions have been given.

A key role regarding the custodianship of land, is that of the *djungkay* (cultural manager), also discussed previously in Section 2.2. A *djungkay* holds responsibility for the care of their mother's Country, including looking after the land, the associated ceremonies and its sacred sites. Because of the way kinship system works, the *djungkay* must be in the opposite moiety to that of the Country for which they are responsible. For each Country, there are many *djungkay,* but a small leadership group is deferred to for important decisions and actions. To take on this role requires a sense of responsibility, authority that comes with age and acceptance from other clan members. This can be strengthened by connection with the *djang*, the sacred sites and ancestral beings associated with that Country.

"Cyclone" refers to Maningrida as Mábarnad, a name for the group of three coastal clans — Dukúrrdji, Manbábarn and Nabbánda — who are the traditional landowners of the Maningrida area. Of these, the Dukúrrdji clan are the owners of Maningrida township itself (Figure 7.3). These three clans are part of the larger Ndjébbana language group, also referred to as Kunibídji.

Figure 7.3 Clan estates of the Kunibídji people who speak Ndjébbana language, the traditional owners of the Maningrida region

In Figure 7.3 the blue and yellow names are the 14 clan estates (or 'Countries') of the Kunibídji people. Yellow signifies a Country of Yírriddjanga moiety and blue signifies one if Djowanga moiety. The white text names established outstations or homelands with some kind of infrastructure so that people may visit, such as roads and phone towers. The ownership and management of land is based on clan affiliation. Dukúrrdji Country is Yírriddjanga, so potential *djungkay* (manager) for Dukúrrdji Country are the Djowanga moiety clans, such as Wurnal, Malanjdjárridj, and others written in blue text.

Each Country contains *djang* or sacred sites, and the song text of "Cyclone" names one of the major *djang* of the Dukúrrdji clan, the sacred Djómi water spirits. Referencing these spirits is an innovative and powerful act, as REB are the first people to sing about Djómi. Gaining permission to sing about Djómi has required extended discussion and negotiations, achieved by working with two key Kunibídji elders: Joy Garlbin of the Dukúrrdji clan and Lena Djabíbba of the Wurnal clan (Figure 7.4). Because Lena's mother was a Dukúrrdji landowner, she is *djungkay* for Maningrida and the Djómi. The next section will describe the Djómi and their significance for the people of Maningrida, and the close connection that these two elders have with these ancestral spirits.

Figure 7.4 Dukúrrdji and Wúrnal clan elders with REB members, Maningrida beach, 2021
L-R: Rachel Thomas, Joy Garlbin, Jodie Kell, Lena Djabíbba

Djómi

Djómi are sacred child-like water spirits who inhabit a freshwater spring tucked in under the cliffs at the beach in Maningrida called Djómi and a freshwater billabong near Maningrida airport called Bábbarra. These springs are women's *djáng* (Ndj: sacred sites) and powerful

fertility symbols. If you visit the springs, a Djómi spirit baby can enter or grab hold of you, resulting in pregnancy. Babies who are conceived in this way are referred to as Djómi babies. Even though they are small and childlike, Djómi are so powerful they can make men pregnant, which is why men stay away from these sacred sites. The Kunibídji people believe that the use of the Djómi spring for drinking water when Maningrida was settled by White people caused a population explosion leading to the expansion of the community (Maningrida Community Education Centre, 2001: 25).

Figure 7.5 Djómi freshwater spring (hidden by monsoonal forest) on Maningrida beach
Walking on the beach, L-R: Jodie Kell, Lena Djabíbba and Rachel Djíbbama Thomas. Photo credit: Natalia Laska, 2021.

As local Dreaming spirits, Djómi hold special significance and emotional association for not only the Kunibídji people but for all the different clans and non-Indigenous people who live in Maningrida. For example, the local museum was named Djómi, and the women's centre was named Bábbarra (the name of a place where Djómi reside) in recognition the importance of this Dreaming for all women who live in Maningrida. People are very fond of these small gentle childlike spirits and Rona Lawrence explains that even if it is not your Country, when you live in Maningrida — grow up there, spend time there — Djómi get inside you, and you become part of Djómi, and they become part of you.

> We all know Dreaming of Djómi. That's how, when we go away, well, you've seen us being worried. Because we feel that connection from Djómi, even

> when we sit down for a long time, like three, four months in another community, we feel homesick, we want to go back home. We feel Djómi are crying for us, we need to go back to Maningrida. It's true, they call us back because we have a connection to them.[4]

This sense of being connected to everyone who has lived in Maningrida has led to the depiction of Djómi as a potent motif for established artist Garlbin, an integral member of the Bábbarra Women's Centre and Maningrida Arts and Culture. As an elder of the Dukúrrdji clan and a traditional owner for Maningrida, Garlbin is allowed to represent Djómi in her artistic practice, carving and painting distinctive wooden sculptures and printing fabric designs thus bringing them to national and international attention. This is part of her political stance to protect and claim control of her Country. Through her art, she shows how the Djómi can appear in different forms, representing them as human children, slugs and mermaid-like creatures with fishtails.

Despite the significance of the Djómi, and their expression in visual arts, REB are the first to sing about Djómi. This may be in part due to the historical dominance of other language groups in Maningrida who have monopolised opportunities to record and document music. The innovative musical practice of REB has been supported and encouraged by Kunibídji elders such as Garlbin and Djabíbba, because they want people to know about the Djómi and understand the importance of their presence in Maningrida. Garlbin describes how the sentimentality of the Djómi's weeping is also a nostalgic reminder of the past and the generations before who also heard the spirits cry.

> We can't see them. That's what the old people said. Like when I sat down with my dad. It's true my daughter, I can tell you. Djómi is real. Djómi, they cry in the swamp and Djómi makes our tears drop. We think about the old people when they were alive.[5]

Because they are not commonly visible, as Garlbin explained, hearing, seeing or

[4] Rona Lawrence, interviewed by Jodie Kell, Rapid Creek, NT, September 2020. (Available as JK1-CY002-20200901A) 12:15-:12:45.
[5] Joy Garlbin, interviewed by Jodie Kell, Maningrida, NT, August 2021. (Available as JK1-BR004-A) at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/BR004 1:46

communicating with ancestral spirits demonstrates significant cultural authority and spiritual power. Djabíbba, a language and culture consultant and experienced educator in Maningrida, explained that when she inherited the responsibilities of *djungkay* from her mother, she also learnt "how to call the Djómi" (Pers comms, 2021). The ability to communicate with spirits bestows power and prestige and the singer must have a degree of supernatural ability (O'Keeffe, 2016: 104). For this reason, Djabíbba is a highly respected elder in Maningrida, who was called upon by Dukúrrdji clan members when Cyclone Monica was approaching Maningrida. The next section will explain what happened during Cyclone Monica, and how Djabíbba played a vital role in protecting the people of Maningrida due to her special abilities and connection to the Djómi.

Cyclone Monica and the Djómi

With wind gusts estimated to reach 350 km/h, Cyclone Monica was the most intense tropical cyclone observed in Australia (Australian Bureau of Meteorology, 2006, Geoscience Australia, 2024). Figure 7. 5 shows how the cyclone built up strength in the Gulf of Carpentaria before tracking along northern coast of Arnhem Land as a Category 5 system.

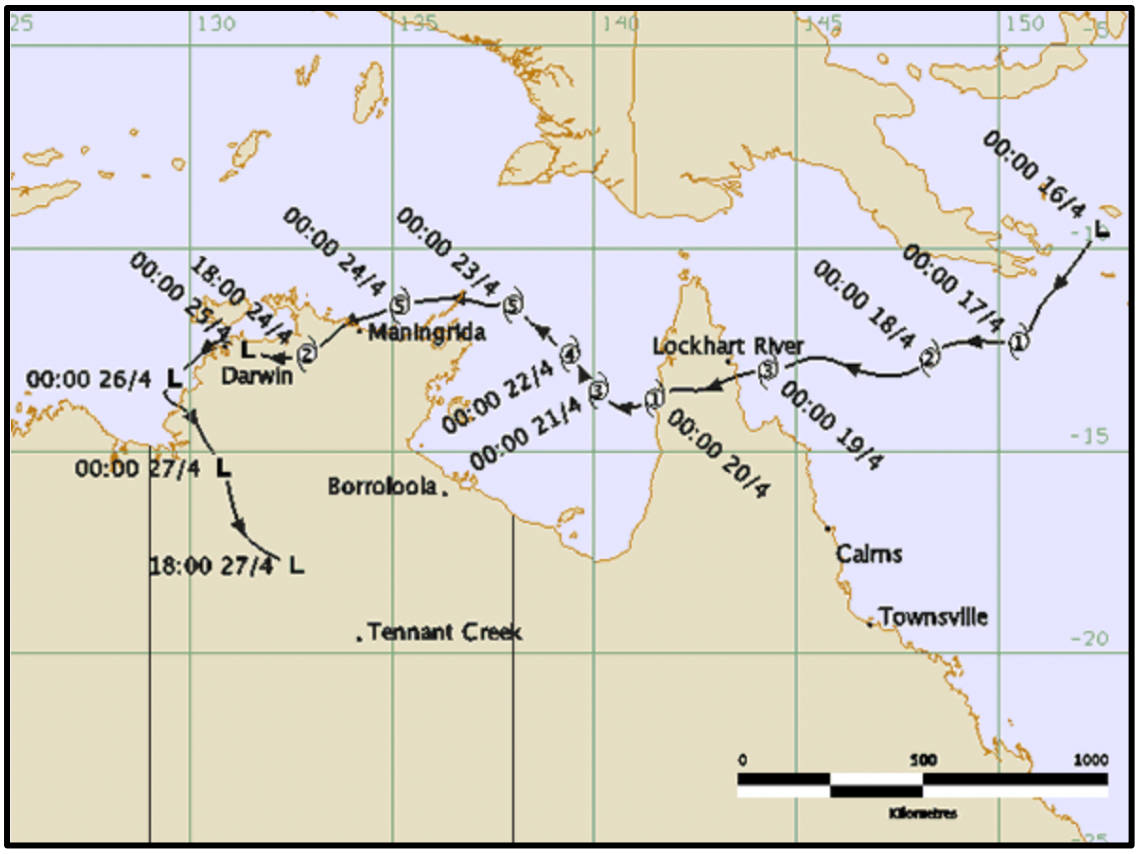

Figure 7.6 Tracking map of Cyclone Monica, 17-25 April 2006 (Australian Bureau of Meteorology, 2006)

Rachel Thomas explained what happened as it approached Maningrida:[6]

> We heard she was coming closer, passing Berraja, Nakalamandjarda, to Nardilmuk, Ndjúdda, Ngarraku. She stopped there. When she saw the lights, Monica Cyclone said, 'I think this is the place called Maningrida'. So, she came towards Maningrida. She went to Nardilmuk and my mum's country, Ndjúdda. Then she found a place, the little Island Ngarraku where she stopped. She opened her eye, and she saw Maningrida.[7]

There was no way out of the community, and so everyone waited nervously, watching the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) live cyclone tracking map, updated every four hours. It suggested that the eye of the mighty storm could pass directly over Maningrida. However, just before it would have hit Maningrida, Cyclone Monica turned northwest, passing by Kabalko Island at the mouth of the Liverpool River mouth and crossing the coast at Karrabba (Junction Bay) before travelling inland towards Jabiru and losing strength. While Cyclone Monica caused extensive damage in Maningrida, damaging buildings and destroying vegetation, crossing to the west over uninhabited land saved the community from the most intense winds and the 5-6m storm surge, which would most certainly have caused even greater damage and possibly taken lives.

Central to the story of Cyclone Monica are the Djómi water spirits. Local people of Maningrida believe they played a role in deflecting the course of the cyclone to the west. Many people in Maningrida reported hearing the Djómi crying on the day the cyclone approached and then saw them swimming out towards the mouth of the Liverpool River, their bodies dark in the water forming a line across the ocean. Rona Lawrence's family home is along the airstrip and has a clear view of the ocean and she recounted what the Djómi did that day in a 2020 interview:

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[6] In Ndjébbana, the gender of *balawúrrwurr* is *djíya* (Ndj: male), however Rachel refers to this cyclone as *njáya* (Ndj: female), using the pronouns she/her. This has come about because of the name, Monica, chosen by BOM using their naming convention, using list of approved names, in alphabetical order by the first letter, alternating male and female names. This thesis also uses the pronouns she/her when referring to Cyclone Monica.

[7] Rachel Thomas, interviewed by Jodie Kell, Rapid Creek, NT, August 2020. (Available as JK1-CY002-20200813) at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/CY002 2:10

> You know when the waves come, and then water turns to white? They [Djómi] were all lining up in the water, they were going that way. We could see, we could see that. There was black and there was white water, like the wake of a boat. They were moving forward and there was a group going out. We could see all the black shadows, like their heads. I could see it. Everyone was standing and watching. I asked my grandmother "What's that one there?" She said to me, "That's the Dreaming of children, the Djómi, they are all going out." And I knew, they're going to try and protect us, stop the cyclone from entering this area, this town. And they did. They went right up to Ndjúdda, and they separated. We could see a line and the other end went to Mirrekala, over near Rachel's outstation. We could see they were making a line blocking the cyclone.[8]

It was a brave act for the small childlike Djómi to stand up to the cyclone, but by swimming together in a large group, they were able to push the mighty wind away, saving the people of Maningrida. Figure 7.6 outlines key sites in the story of the Djómi and Cyclone Monica. The red line shows the path of the Cyclone from east to west along the coast, stopping at Ngarraku Island and turning her eye on Maningrida, as Rachel recounted above. The yellow line shows where the Djómi swam, starting from their waterhole on Maningrida Beach out to the mouth of the Liverpool River, forming a protective line from Ndjúdda on the eastern side to Mirrekala on the west. The cyclone then turned to the west, passed Thomas' Country of Malabunuwa and crossed the coast at Karrabbu (Junction Bay), as shown by the red lines.

[8] Rona Lawrence, interviewed by Jodie Kell, Rapid Creek, NT, September 2020. (Available as JK1-CY002-20200901A) as 34:15

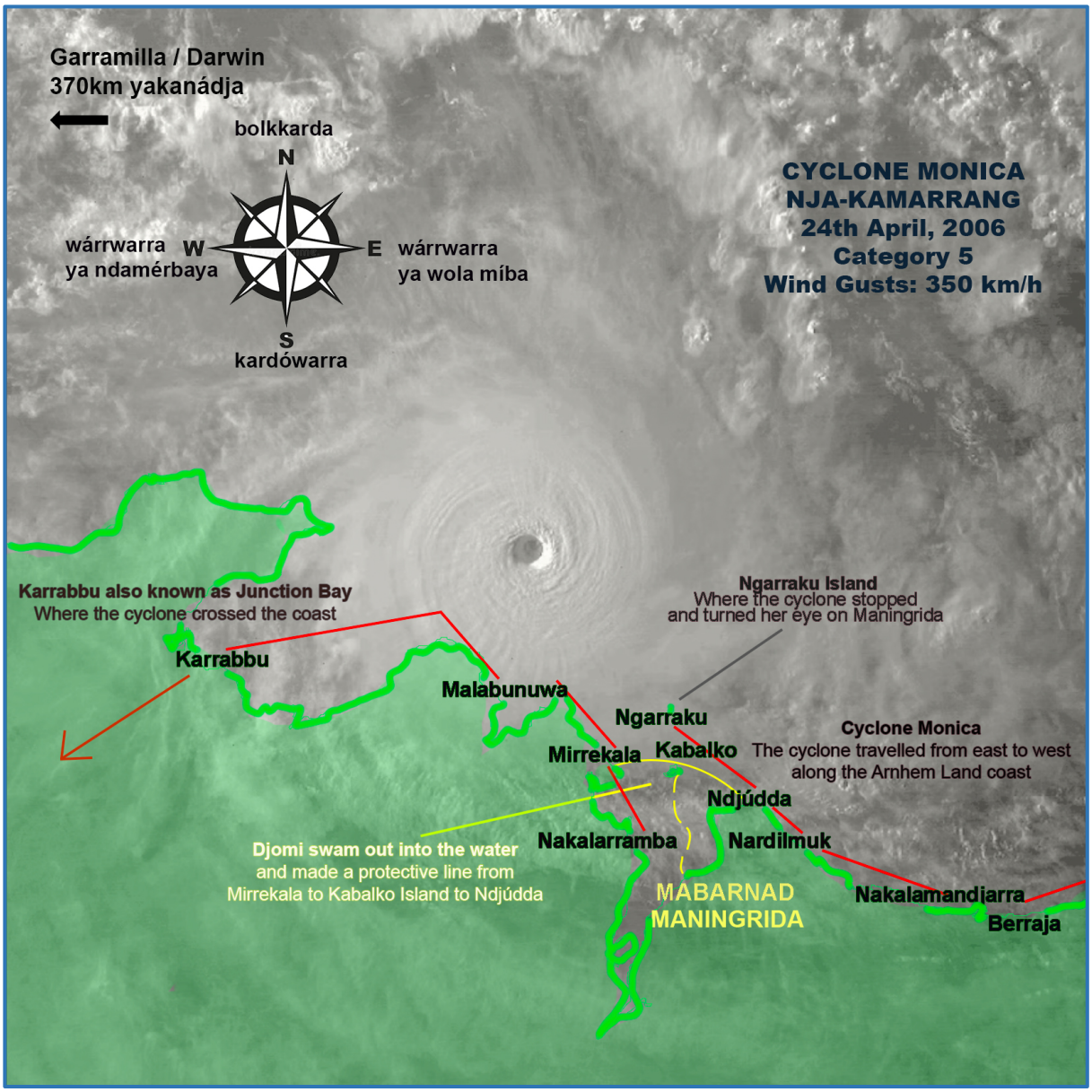

Figure 7.7 Map showing key sites in the story of Cyclone Monica
The background is the MTSAT satellite image 24/04/2006 3pm (Australian Bureau of Meteorology, 2006)

A further aspect of this story is the role Djabíbba played as the *djungkay* (cultural manager) for Maningrida. She felt responsible, and she was asked by Dukúrrdji clan members, including Garlbin, to protect the Djómi by going down to the spring and calling out to let them know about the approaching storm and asking them for their help.

> When the cyclone comes, traditional owners come and get me. When you're the *djungkay*, you have to come and call for them to help push that cyclone away. People believe what I do because of my knowledge from the old people, my grandpa, my grandma, and my mother. They told me all these

> stories and I thought... well that's what I have to do. When the cyclone was coming, I went and called out. Not here but right down there near the spring where they can hear clearly, and they called back. They cried for help, and they cried for the people. Then all of a sudden that cyclone went back, and everyone asked me, 'How did you do it?' And I said, 'Well, my mother told me all about the storm and what to do, how to call the Djómi'. That's what I did when the cyclone came.[9]

By galvanising the support of the Djómi, Djabíbba demonstrated the co-dependence of humans and spirit beings, and the importance of localised cultural knowledge and Indigenous custodianship when faced with natural disasters.

In writing about the events of Cyclone Monica as it threatened Maningrida, it was necessary to refer to the involvement of the Djómi. The next section will discuss how REB went about composing and producing a song that would express the significance of the Djómi and the shared experiences of people in Maningrida who lived through Cyclone Monica.

7.2 Memorialising Cyclone Monica in Song

In composing and recording "Cyclone", REB are acting as the voice of Maningrida community and memorialising the story of the cyclone, and documenting this for national audiences and for the future. Analysis of the recording of "Cyclone" on the *Mayawa* album shows how REB use a range of musical elements, or hooks, to eloquently express the dramatic events that happened when Cyclone Monica threatened Maningrida. This section will outline how the song acknowledges the shared experiences of people from Maningrida and their sense of fear and danger, and expresses the significance of the ancestral Djómi spirits.

The song uses a standard ballad structure with a verse, pre-chorus and chorus repeated throughout the song (Figure 7.8). This commonly used style of musical repetition leads to shareability as people find familiarity within the song, contributing to a feeling of connection

[9] Lena Djabíbba, interviewed by Jodie Kell, Maningrida, NT, August 2021. (Available as JK1-BR004-A) at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/BR004 1:18

and social cohesion (Hellmuth Margulis, 2013: 6). Similar to the gospel history songs of the Maningrida region, and to folk songs such as sea shanties, the verses are narrative and the story is reinforced by strong unison vocals and rhythmic melodic lines. The pre-chorus refers to the people and the spirits impacted by the cyclone by naming the places that Cyclone Monica passed from east to west along the Arnhem Land coast, and by naming the Djómi spirits. The next section will discuss further the impact of naming places and how this makes the song culturally inclusive by acknowledging the different Countries and associated clans that were affected by the cyclone.

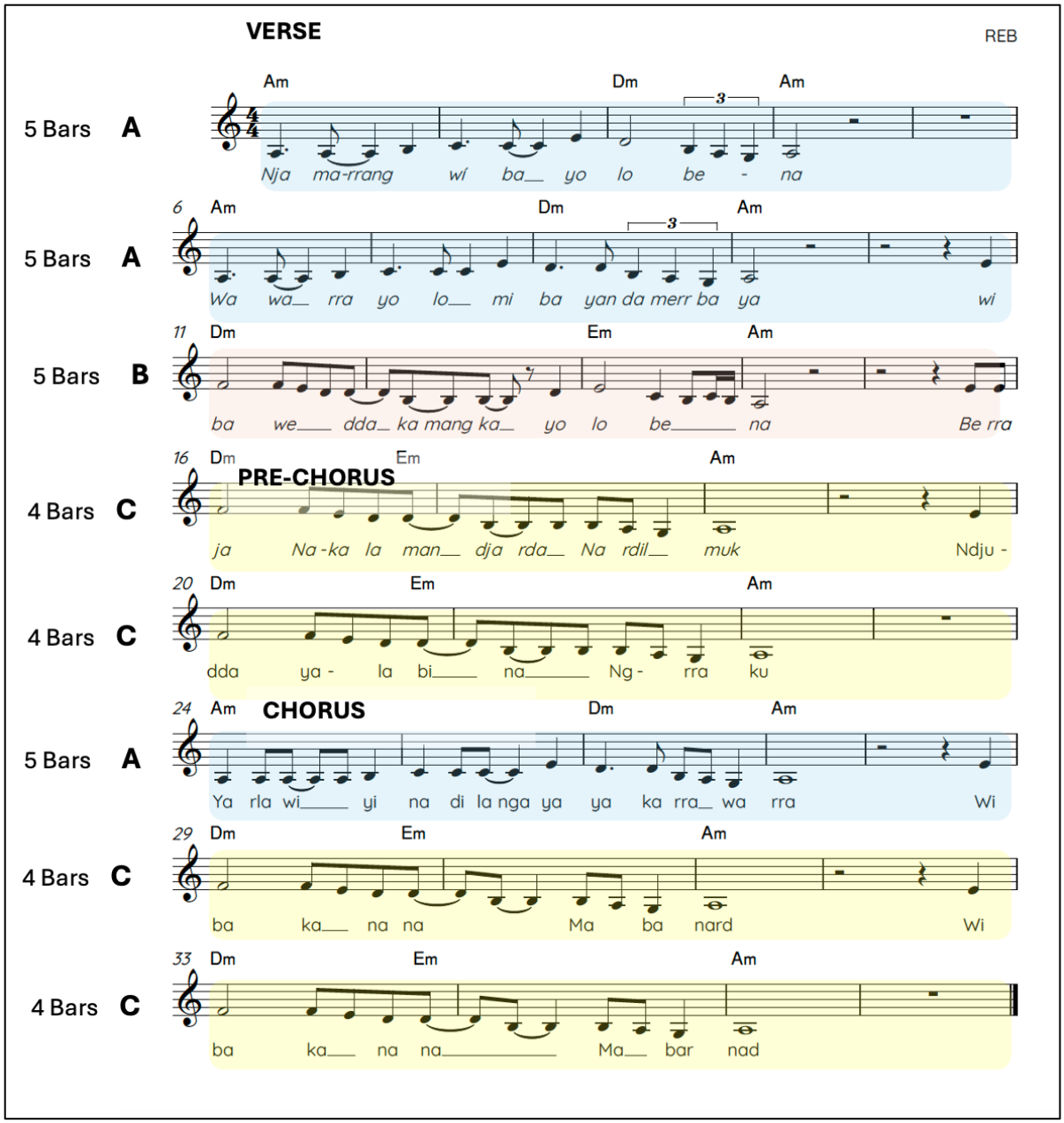

Figure 7.8 Transcription of the main vocal melody of 'Cyclone' highlighting structural elements of the song

The song structure also incorporates a section hook (Harding & Sloan, 2020: 72), in the form of an idiosyncratic approach to repetition and length of the lyrical phrases. This structural hook is not overtly obvious to the listener, but changes the feeling of how the song narrative develops. "Cyclone" uses a form of parallelism in its structure, which is illustrated in Figure 7.8. There are essentially only three melodic phrases in the song, highlighted in different colours, that are distributed between the different sections of the song. Phrase A, highlighted in blue, starts with a repeat in the verses, and is used once in the start of the chorus. Phrase B only occurs once in the verse. Phrase C, highlighted in yellow, is repeated twice in the pre-chorus, and again in the chorus to end the song structure. Using repeated phrases across the verse, pre-chorus, chorus arrangement, creates a circular quality to the song.

Secondly, looking more closely at Figure 7.8 shows that there is an inconsistency in the number of bars or measures in the melodic lines. The text to the left of the transcription indicates that each line of the verse is set over 5 bars but each line of the pre-chorus is set over only 4 bars. The chorus then uses a combination of both, 5 bars then 4 bars for the last two lines. The effect of this is unsettling as the song moves between longer and shorter phrases. The two sectional hooks described here contribute to structural complexity and allude to the unnerving effect of the strong swirling winds of a cyclone.

The song's production uses a cinematic style, reminiscent of Italian film composer Enrio Morricone to enhance the narrative of the cyclone. With big reverbs connected to wide open spaces in Country songs, reverb is used to create a sense of space and atmosphere (Doyle, 2005). The lead guitar in "Cyclone" works with rich tones and reverb-laden guitar riffs in low register to refer to a style of music, and to the sound of the wind. The driving four-on-the-floor beat of the drums creates an atmosphere of impending drama that cuts suddenly in the last chorus, implying the quiet of the eye of the storm, before coming back in for one more round at full volume. In live performances, the audience often starts applauding as the unexpected re-entry raises the energy, as shown in this footage from Marrickville Bowling Club in 2023 [Audiovisual Link 7]. These musical elements act as hooks to create a dramatic atmosphere that enhances the storytelling and evokes feelings of doom and drama even if the listener cannot understand the Ndjébbana language of the lyrics.

The connection to Djómi is highlighted in the recording of the song by including the voice

of *djungkay* Djabíbba. Section 7.4 will describe the moment, during the collaboration with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra in 2021, when Djabíbba was recorded reproducing the sounds of the Djómi during the cyclone, as she remembered them. In 2022, as we were mixing the song for *Mayawa,* we decided to incorporate this recording to strengthen the narrative by recreating the cries of the Djómi that day. After the guitar solo, the vocals return to sing about the Djómi.

Djómi barra-njínjdjana barra-kana	*The Djómi spirits were crying*
Wíba barra-lawáyana barra-kana	*Crying for the country*

In a form of call and response, each line is echoed by Djabíbba's voice singing in spirit language, in a high-pitched descending melody shown in Figure 7.9. To increase the otherworldliness of this section, Lena's voice is washed with reverb, adding an ethereal tone to the song.

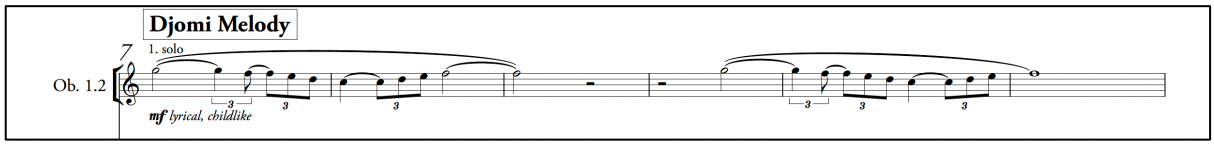

Figure 7.9 The descending melody representative of the Djómi, as sung by Lena Djabíbba
Transcribed by Alex Turley in the "Barra-roddjiba" orchestral composition [Audiovisual Link 8]

Including the voice of a highly respected woman singing in spirit language is a powerful act. For the first time, people are singing about Djómi, and for the first time in West Arnhem Land, women are singing as Dreaming spirits. The next section explores the significance of "Cyclone" for REB, for the Dukúrrdji clan and the Kunibídji people and for the community of Maningrida.

7.3 The Significance of "Cyclone"

"Cyclone" has significance at local, national and international level as part of a growing discourse about climate change through the arts. The song can be seen as a "disaster song", the "intangible equivalent of vernacular memorials" (Sparling 2022:4). It is one that attests to the powers of ancestral spirits to thwart disaster, and the skills of elder Djabíbba to call upon them, thus validating the socio-religious structure and its relevance in contemporary society. "Cyclone", in all its versions, demonstrates how the reach of REB's musical practices

has spread. This section will explore how the band is contributing to social cohesion by memorialising the shared experiences of a major weather event in song and thus representing the voices of their community. It will also examine how singing about the Djómi for the first time has gained traction for, and raised awareness of the Dukúrrdji clan and the Kunibídji people's connection to and rightful custodianship of the land where Maningrida stands.

There is a growing appreciation of the increasing risk posed by natural disasters due to the effects of climate change and the subsequent importance of identifying ways of building individual and community resilience. Since colonisation and the introduction of different forms of land use, Indigenous people have adapted to changing environmental conditions by drawing upon social capital and cultural knowledge (Hanson-Easey & Hansen, 2016). In Maningrida, this was evident as the community banded together to deal with the hardships and inconvenience caused by Cyclone Monica, with social networks providing support alongside local organisations.[10]

In many cultures, songs are seen as having intrinsic power which can influence natural phenomena, or they can speak to ways of coping through sharing knowledge and experience, both for those who have gone through a disaster and as a record for the future (Sutton et al, 2021). Memories and stories of Cyclone Monica loom large in the popular imagination of people of Maningrida. Composing, recording and performing "Cyclone" has been means of recognising the extent of the trauma caused by such severe weather events.

"Cyclone" also uses place names, in the pre-chorus, to acknowledge the different clans whose Country was affected by the storm. Singing place names is commonly used in ceremonial music in Arnhem Land as a way of signifying connections and differences between groups (Clunies-Ross 1989, Clunies-Ross & Wild 1984, Tamisari, 1998). Place is also a common motif in Indigenous popular music. Songs about certain places are a means of articulating social structures that reflect land ownership and land-based beliefs and express personal identification with place (Furlan 2005, Dunbar-Hall & Gibson 2000). Naming sites can strengthen the Country, enhancing the power that resides there (Furlan, 2005: 231). Place is also a significant element of disaster songs (Sparling 2022:23). Acknowledging the Countries of the different

[10] This can be seen in the community videos posted by a school teacher who was there at the time. Available at https://www.youtube.com/@wakadj2yirrichanga234

clan groups who were affected by the cyclone expresses solidarity in the face of a natural disaster, recognises the shared experience of different groups from West Arnhem Land and contributes to social inclusiveness. According to songwriter Thomas, it also makes the Country strong, by strengthening the bonds between people, land and the spirits (Thomas, pers comms, 2018).

"Cyclone" and the associated storytelling, also highlights Indigenous perspectives on natural disasters, in which social and environmental responsibilities are considered vital components for maintaining a capacity to respond to severe weather events (Veland et al, 2010: 203). The people of Maningrida showed resilience during Cyclone Monica, and reports even commented that the Indigenous members of the community were "largely unaffected by the cyclone" (Hanson-Easey & Hansen, 2016: 3). This resilience may have stemmed in part from their belief that spiritual beings were looking after them and their confidence in the management of the relationships with Djómi by the Dukúrrdji clan and their *djungkay* from neighbouring clans.

REB's song about Cyclone Monica, and its story of how the Djómi were called upon to save the people of Maningrida, has been leveraged by the Dukúrrdji clan and the Kunibídji people to help combat their loss of agency when Maningrida was established on their traditional lands, and the subsequent introduction of competing power structures controlling land use in the area. As explained in Section 2.3, the power of the Dukúrrdji clan to make decisions over their custodial lands has diminished since Maningrida was established, as they are no longer in the majority of this town with upward of 2500 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021).
In response, in 2013, the traditional landowners established the Dhukurrdji Development Corporation and more recently the Nja-marleya Cultural Leaders and Justice Group (Morse, 2024). These groups form a new expression of authority for the Kunibídji people, who are taking on leadership in negotiations with the groups that make up the Maningrida community.

Popular music has been used by contemporary Indigenous musicians in Australia as a means of mediating localised perceptions of land ownership to the wider Australian population (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2000: 47). It has also been used to navigate the changing power structures due to colonisation by creating new spaces for the expression of identity (Ibid: 214). Songs about place and events, such as "Cyclone" reaffirm the connections between people and Country and when these songs are shared at significant events, or performed outside of the community, they act as "'a gathering power of place', a power to emotionally and physically

move and transform people and their sense of belonging to a particular place." (Ottosson, 2016: 129-131). The next section illustrates how three key performances of songs about Cyclone Monica have benefited the desire of the Kunibídji people for recognition by providing opportunities to share cultural knowledge and acknowledge the deep and sacred connection they have to the Country on which Maningrida stands. For the women of REB, being entrusted with this responsibility to express important cultural information and sing about ancestral spirits, has raised their status and broadened their musicianship, and the scope of topics that women can now sing about.

7.4 Finding Space to Express Cultural Knowledge as Women

Performance 1: Wavelengths Concert with Darwin Symphony Orchestra
Darwin Entertainment Centre, Darwin Festival, August 2021.

In 2021, members of REB and Kunibídji elders performed "Barra-roddjiba", the orchestral companion piece to "Cyclone" that tells the story of Cyclone Monica from the perspective the Djómi.

Before we started composing, Garlbin and Djabíbba escorted REB members Rachel Thomas, Rona Lawrence and me to get permission from the six main Dukúrrdji clan leaders to represent the Djómi in song. Without exception they gave their support and encouragement, exemplified by the reaction of Dukúrrdji leader David Jones described in the following ethnographic account:

> We arrived at David's house and the group gestured that I should go in and speak with him on my own. They waited in the car. As I stood in David's garden, I told him our plans. He repeated my words, checking he had understood correctly that we wanted to compose a piece about the Djómi and perform it with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. I nodded, and as I looked over, I could see a tear running down his face. I realised the depth of his emotion that we would honour his people and his Dreaming in such a significant musical project.

When it came to composing, we worked with Melbourne composer Alex Turley, but we could not meet in person due to Covid-19 travel restrictions. We communicated through a multitude

of electronic means: Zoom meetings, group phone calls, text messages and the exchange of audio files. For example, Turley sent links to educational videos about orchestral instruments as well as some audio files so that the group, who were unfamiliar with the instrumentation, could understand the tonal qualities and choose instruments for different parts. In return, we sent field recordings of the Djómi freshwater spring so that Turley could hear the Maningrida environment.

In one session over Zoom, Turley asked Djabíbba what the Djómi sound like. The group had already decided the oboe was the most suitable instrument. But Djabíbba asked me to record as she closed her eyes and sang the Djómi song as she had heard it. It was eerie and felt spiritual to hear her sing. We sent the audio file to Alex and he quickly returned a short motif played on the oboe. The group was so excited, and this established their trust in Turley as a composer.[11] Audiovisual Link 9 is a short excerpt of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra playing the piece in rehearsal, to demonstrate the portrayal of the Djómi by the oboe. The footage shows Djabíbba, Thomas and Kell at the beach near the Djómi spring.

When it came to the Darwin Festival performance, we travelled into Darwin and rehearsed with the orchestra led by conductor Jonathon Tooby. I recall seeing the excitement on the faces of the West Arnhem women as they heard the song performed by a live orchestra for the first time. The group had to learn the protocols associated with Western classical music, such as reading written scores and the role of the conductor. It felt ceremonial from the perspective of the West Arnhem Land musicians, even the way the audience sat quietly in numbered seats, waiting until the end to react by applauding. In response, the group incorporated aspects of West Arnhem protocols, with traditional owner Garlbin accompanying the performers on stage, but not allowed to sing (Figure 7.10) and Djábbiba, as the *djungkay*, was required to call out to the Djómi before the performance started to let them know we would be performing their song (Figure 7.11).

[11] This is the audio that was later used in the recording of "Cyclone" on the *Mayawa* album, as discussed in the previous section.

Figure 7.10 REB, Kunibídji elders and Darwin Symphony Orchestra performing "Barra-roddjiba" at Darwin Festival, August 2021
Dukúrrdji clan leader Joy Garlbin is sitting on stage to the left, with Tara Rostron standing behind her. Credit: Tim Nicol.

Figure 7.11 Lena Djabíbba calling out to the Djómi spirits to inform them about performing the orchestral piece "Barra-roddjiba" at the Darwin Festival in 2021
L-R: Rachel Thomas, Wendy Doolan, Lena Djabíbba, Jodie Kell, conductor Jonathan Tooby and Darwin Symphony Orchestra. Credit: Tim Nicol.

During rehearsals, the group decided to introduce some improvisation in the section where the storm is approaching, in which we would act as Djómi — calling out in terror, and crying in descending wailing notes — directed by Djábbiba (Figure 7.12). Chapter 6 described how REB were the first women in West Arnhem Land to sing about ancestral spirits in the song "Diyama". Now women were singing and acting **as** ancestral spirits for the first time. This radical act demonstrated the elevated status of the group and the trust and belief imparted by the Kunibídji elders.

Figure 7.12 REB and Kunibídji elders acting as Djómi at Darwin Festival, August 2024
L-R: Rachel Thomas, Wendy Doolan, Lena Djabíbba, Jodie Kell. Credit: Tim Nicol.

When we performed this section at the Darwin Entertainment Centre, we could hear a baby crying in the audience, and the West Arnhem women were sure this was an embodiment of the Djómi. This was reinforced by a dream experienced by one of the performing group the previous night. Djabíbba's sister Wendy Doolan (a younger *djungkay* for Djómi), who had never been to the Darwin Entertainment Centre, dreamt that she saw the Djómi on stage with us and the orchestra. The West Arnhem Land group believed that these visions were evidence that the Djómi had accompanied us to witness our performance.

Being commissioned by the Darwin Symphony Orchestra shows the developing reputation of REB as we expanded our musicianship into new modalities. It brought gravitas to the story of Cyclone Monica and the Djómi, as the REB performers and their families moved from rock music to a different genre of music practice with cultural protocols specific to Western classical forms. It also brought greater recognition for the Dukúrrdji clan and the Kunibídji people and their connection to ancestral spirits of their Country.

Performance 2: Cantabile Choir Festival, NSW Department of Education Arts Unit Sydney Opera House, August, 2022.

The second performance of the song I will discuss was at the Cantabile Music Festival held at the Sydney Opera House in August 2022 [Audiovisual Link 10]. As explained at the start of this chapter, REB was commissioned by the NSW Department of Education to arrange "Cyclone" for a mass choir, string ensemble and piano, working with Andrew Kell and David Collins-White. The result was performed by a mass choir consisting of 400 primary school students from the western Sydney region. The Sydney Opera House is a highly significant site in the cultural landscape of Australia and this performance gave compelling national recognition to Ndjébbana language and their cultural stories.

Children across Sydney spent weeks leading up to the event learning the song from recordings REB had made, using a notated score and support from their schoolteachers. The verses were translated into English to make it achievable to learn, but the chorus and pre-chorus were still sung in Ndjébbana. REB created additional recorded resources such pronunciation guides, cultural explanations, and guide tracks. All participants gathered for a full rehearsal before the evening performance. The following ethnographic account describes the moment Rachel and I appeared on stage at the Sydney Opera House in 2022:

> On the night, Rachel was asked to give the Acknowledgement of Country. I accompanied her. We were the first people on the stage, which was lit up behind us like stars in the night. We painted the *warrkala* (Ndj: yam) design on our faces (though it does not show up on my white skin very well), and each carried a Maningrida woven basket. Walking out on stage was reverential, the crowd was blacked out, and with the stars around us it felt ethereal. We had written the

speech during the day we spent with Aunty Deb Daley, a Gamilaroi woman and experienced educational officer with the Department of Education. Talking with Aunty Deb and the Aboriginal students at Marrickville Public School inspired us to consider what it meant to be on this land, the land of the Eora Nation, and what it meant coming from Kunibídji land so far away.

Figure 7.13 Rachel Thomas and Jodie Kell on stage at the Cantabile Music Festival, Sydney Opera House, August 2022
Credit: NSW Department of Education Arts Unit

In her speech, Rachel reflected on the function of music and dance for Indigenous people:

> In my community, we have ceremonies that bring everyone together. We dance *Bunggul* for different songs from different tribes in different languages. Music brings us all together. We know that Aboriginal people have been dancing and singing here on this Country in the same way for a long time. We know they continue keeping culture strong and looking after the land. I will call out to the

> Djómi spirits in my language of Ndjébbana. I will tell them that the children will sing this song and tell their story. They will sing in Ndjébbana language (Appendix 9).

This was a notable occasion for the Kunibídji people. Rachel's Acknowledgement of Country and the performance of the song on the stage of the Sydney Opera House signified to the people of Maningrida that the Ndjébbana language and cultural stories are of national importance. The Maningrida community responded by holding a performance of this version of the song at the Maningrida College end of year concert in December, with children of different language groups all singing Ndjébbana together. In this way, the song has raised awareness of the localised knowledge and language of the Mábarnad clans and its performance by a diverse group of children both in Maningrida and Sydney speaks to a growing respect for the traditional custodians and the growing reputation of the musicians of REB.

Performance 3: Maningrida AFL Grand Final with Liverpool River Sunset Band Maningrida Sports Ground, July, 2023.

The power of music to inspire a sense of pride in localised identity was further demonstrated at a performance by REB at the 2023 Maningrida AFL Grand Final.[12] It was a special event because it was the first Grand Final to include women's teams. Distinctive for a remote community football event, the entertainment also included women: the all-female REB opened the day with the pre-game entertainment and performed again in the breaks between the quarters of the men's game. Pre-game and half-time entertainment are a feature of sports grand finals, part of the ritual of the day. It gives the crowd a break from the intensity of the game but keeps them interested and excited as the players prepare or plan with their coaches. The following ethnographic account demonstrates the power of song and 'Cyclone' in particular as espoused by the views and actions of community members:

> The bands set up on a flatbed truck next to the scoreboard (Figure 7.14) and

[12] Australian Football, commonly known as AFL or Aussie Rules, is a code of football played only in Australia. The game is played on an oval field with twenty-minute quarters. Each team has 18 players on the field. It is the most popular football code in the NT with 44,730 registered players in 2017, over 25% of the total NT population. Maningrida has a strong local competition played over the dry season with eight regular teams and a junior program run in conjunction with Maningrida College.

performances were timed to fit into the match schedule. It was an emotional moment as the community proudly watched the women's teams run on the field. Many players had close relatives, brothers, husbands, cousins, playing in the corresponding men's team and their supporters were so excited. The teams stood face to face as members of the Dukúrrdji clan talked about playing fairly with no violence and blessed the game.

Figure 7.14 REB on the back of a flatbed truck doing soundcheck for the Maningrida AFL Grand Final in 2023

Before the men's game, Joy Garlbin walked over to speak with me and she asked if REB could play "Cyclone" as the men's team ran on the field, as this would strengthen the team and help them to win. As the men's team ran on and we played the song, we could see Joy, dressed in a flowing long white and blue shirt dancing with her arm in the air as in celebration, with other Kunibídji women around her also dressed in blue and white. The Seagull team, coached by the two Dukúrrdji clan leaders dominated the game, and won easily. After the game, both men thanked me for playing, commenting that when they heard "Cyclone', they felt excited believing the song would help spur their team on and would bring them luck.

This ethnographic account shows how elders of the Dukúrrdji clan used "Cyclone" to strengthen social cohesion and inspire pride in Kunibídji identity, by allowing and encouraging REB to enter spaces previously dominated by men, such as the football field, and the rock music stage. Setting the story of Cyclone Monica in song and singing about Djómi for the first time, has created a special connection between REB, the Dukúrrdji clan and the wider Kunibídji community, and enhanced the status of the women in the band.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that contemporary music can be a forum for innovation in music. Here, one innovation is that women in REB are the first to sing about specific ancestral spirits. Working within the cultural system by collaborating with elders and talking to land custodians, the fact the REB has received permission to sing about Djómi is evidence of how highly the band is now regarded in the community. Figure 7.13 is a visual representation of what this means for band member and songwriter Rachel Thomas, as her gestures on stage demonstrate her confidence and her sense of power, enhancing her authority to share cultural knowledge.

Figure 7.15 The powerful gestures of Rachel DjÍbbama Thomas on stage at the Northcote Social Club, October 2022
Photo Credit: Nomepics

The chapter has shown how memorialising Cyclone Monica in song contributes to a sense of social cohesion by tapping into the shared experiences of the community. Sparling states that such songs 'suggest something about how people form affinities across both place and time' (2022: 5) A range of musical hooks contribute to the atmosphere of fear and drama, drawing in audiences to connect with the story, the spirits and with each other. The process of composing and performing the songs has included collaboration and negotiation with Maningrida elders and the respect for the female musicians of REB by the Dukúrrdji clan and their *djungkay* is evident in the reception at events such as the Maningrida AFL Grand Final. Performing "Cyclone" at a range of significant sites and events across Australia, as well as reimagining it into different genres demonstrates that REB's musicianship has developed and expanded, and that the scope of their influence has spread.

The next chapter will examine how REB has taken advantage of their enhanced repute to contribute to changing perceptions about women in rock music by taking control of music production. These developments have led to increased opportunities for band members to build skills and knowledge, enabling them to grow musically and professionally. REB is also using these openings to contribute to social change by presenting women's perspectives and advice for young people.

Chapter 8

"Loving and Caring": Popular Love Songs of West Arnhem Land

"Loving and Caring" [1]

Intro

Daluk bininj karri-djarkdi	*Lovers (men and women), let's talk*

Verse 1

Njale yi-njilng warreminj kangurdul-me.	*Why are you feeling so upset? I can hear the thunder rolling.*
[When you're angry at me show me how you feel, tell me what you mean]	
Kan-marnime baa nga-bengkan	*Tell me, so I know*
Njale man-karre yi-karrme kure ku-kange	*What reason are you holding in your heart?*
Marrek muyh yi-karrme	*Don't hold it inside for too long*
Munguyh yi-karrme na-warre	*If you hold it inside for too long, it's no good*
[Don't hold back]	

Chorus

Daluk Bininj, our love is true	
Our love, makes us strong	
Ngayih marne-djare nguddah	*I want you*
Yimri konda nuk	*Come here now*
Ngarri-djarrkni, ngarri-djarrkni	*We'll sit down together*

Spoken word

Yimri Konda yi-yol-yolme ban ga-bengkan nuk
Come here and talk about this, so I know what you are worried about

Verse 2

Yekke man-wurrk karri-wurlhke kundulk karrowen	*In the dry season we burn bushfires, and the trees are dying.*
Ngarri-durren ngarri-burren nganalk-bun	*We argue, we fight, and I cry*
Kudjewk kangurdulme mandjewk kamankan	*In the wet season the thunder rolls and it starts pouring down rain.*

[Don't worry if we argue sometimes, 'cause the rain will come and our love will grow]

Kundulk ka-djordmen ngarri marne-djaremerren	*And just like the trees re-grow, we start loving each other again.*

Chorus

[1] "Loving and Caring" by the Ripple Effect Band, composed by Tara Rostron and Jodie Kell. The song was released as a single in July 2023 leading up to its inclusion on the *Mayawa* album in 2024. The lyrics have been translated and transcribed by Tara Rostron and Jodie Kell. 'Loving and Caring' is dedicated to Tara's sister, Simika Rostron† who took her own life in June 2023.
https://open.spotify.com/track/0wQh1Ewqp0ZVpJxbFPmirX?si=58fa9d1bc3214ce6

Spoken word

Nguddah yibeng-kan nabu ngayih marinmeng	*You should know what I told you*
Korroko marnimeng ngayih marne-djare nguddah bulkkidj duninjh	*I already told you that I love you so much.*
Ngadjare ngarrini kamakrok	*I want to sit down with you all good*
Kunkirn kunrit ngaleh njale ngarribawon	*Problems like jealousy, leave it all behind*
Kayo nokkonj nawarre balehbe ngarrire	*Leave it, it's no good*
Baleh balehbo ngarrire ngarri-nah narren ngarrire	*Wherever we go, we look after each other*

Final Chorus

Daluk Bininj, our love is true.	*[Women and men/lovers]*
Our love makes us strong.	
Ngayih marne-djare nguddah	*I want you.*
Yimri konda nuk [We'll sit down together]	*Come here now*
Ngarri-djarrkni [Karri-njilng rayek-men]	*We'll sit down together [Let's be strong]*
Ngarri-djarrkni	*We'll sit down together.*

Outro

Ngarri-djarrkni	*We'll sit down together*
Hey, hey all you lovers out there, I got a story to share with you.	
Ngarri-djarrkni	*We'll sit down together*
Listen up, why don't you listen to each other cause we're in this together.	
Ngarri-djarrkni	*We'll sit down together*
When my man is caring for me, make me crazy for his love	
Ngarri-djarrkni	*We'll sit down together*
Crazy for his love	

My love, what's on your mind?
I can hear the thunder rolling
Tell me, so I know,
We can walk together in our love.

"Loving and Caring" was composed by Tara Rostron and me. It was released as a single in August 2023 and is included on the album *Mayawa*. Sung in Kune and English languages, it is a heartfelt song in which the singer asks her partner to sit down and talk together, promoting the importance of communication in relationships. It is one of two love songs that are commonly part of REB's repertoire, the other being "Love Song" (2203) composed by Maningrida High School girls (Cooper et al., 2003). Analyses of these songs composed twenty years apart and the differences between them demonstrate that it is possible to change musical cultures when women take control of music production in composing and recording love songs.[2]

[2] To avoid confusion between the two songs due to their similar titles, "Love Song" will be referred to as "Love Song" (2003).

This chapter finds that the development of skills and the level of control over aspects of music production is a powerful act that has opened up opportunities for the women of REB to move into more strategic positions and manage the messaging in music. As experienced female artists, the members of REB navigate the male-dominated music scene with confidence, giving them power over song topics and what they want to convey through music. This is particularly pertinent to love songs as they concern the very nature of intimate and familial relationships between men and women, and have the potential to upset the power balance of social structures.

Working with music as a way to broach social issues also provides a safe space for women to speak up, with songs initiating discussion and providing new ways of thinking about love. Rostron sees music as a way to send positive messages and encourage women to speak out and express their views:

> When I play music, I want to encourage and inspire other people, especially young people. I hope to be a role model for women to stand up, speak out and be confident in who they are.[3]

Rostron co-authored the previously published book chapter that forms the basis of this thesis chapter.[4] Her input into the research, recorded interviews and discussion, are signified through the use of different font and indented paragraphs as above. Rostron is a Kune woman from Korlobidahdah in the freshwater escarpment country south of Maningrida. Her skin name is Bangardijan, and her moiety is Yirritja. Music is strong in Rostron's family. Her father, Victor Rostron, is a well-known singer and musician in traditional and contemporary styles. He sings with her brothers in the heavy rock band Wildfire Munwurrk as well as in the traditional *kun-borrk* song series called "Mimih", about the tall spirit beings of the rocky escarpment country of the Kune people. Her mother and her grandmother taught her how to dance for this ceremony,

[3] Tara Rostron. Interview by Jodie Kell, 24 June 2022. Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-LS003-01 at http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/LS003.

[4] This chapter is a based on a published book chapter co-authored by Tara Rostron and myself (Kell & Rostron, 2024). Rostron and I discussed the themes of the chapter and the processes of composing and producing music, recording two of these discussions in 2022 and 2023. I reviewed literature, collated and wrote the text, with Rostron checking and adding her comments and ideas. Tara is quoted extensively in the book chapter as well as in this dissertation to ensure her opinions and perspectives are included.

and the stories and meanings of the songs. Throughout her youth, Rostron also attended school, starting at an outstation school until her family moved to Maningrida where she attended Maningrida High School, learning to play guitar, bass guitar and drums in the music program.

Educated in two ways, *Bininj* and *Balanda,* Kune culture, Rostron is versatile at moving between different cultural spaces. She was a strong collaborator in this research project playing an active role in both performing with and producing music in REB. Figures 8.1 & 8.2 show her on stage in Sydney and on Country at Dhukulujarrang, moving confidently between highly urbanised national performing venues and remote and wild bush environments.

Figure 8.1 Tara Rostron, Northcote Social Club, October 2022
Photo credit: Nomepics

Figure 8.2 Tara Rostron and Jodie Kell at Dhukulujarrang, July 2019

Before I explore the two love songs from Maningrida, it is necessary to understand the context in which Rostron and I composed "Loving and Caring". The chapter will start by examining perceptions of love songs in popular music, finding that they have a role in constructing and influencing notions of social relations. The following Section 8.2 will focus on the history of love songs in West Arnhem Land before considering the significance of the first love song composed by female musicians in Maningrida, "Love Song" (2003). It will then analyse the song "Loving and Caring" to explore the changes in women's music-making in West Arnhem Land over twenty years, and the impact of the developing skills and growing agency of REB. It argues that, without being overtly political, music, and the use of metaphors to incorporate Indigenous ecological knowledge , can be used as a medium to push for social change

8.1 Popular music: reflecting and constructing notions of love

Love and relationships are central to social structures, and love songs have been a key force in music-making throughout history. This is still true today, with love songs dominating music

charts and evident in many localised popular music styles (Scheff, 2011:14, Arrow, 2017:285).[5] Love songs, being at the heart of intimate relations, can be radical and disruptive, challenging societal rules and patriarchal institutions (Gioia, 2015: x-xi). For example, Electronic Dance Music (EDM) that developed from the 1980s, provided a safe place for the LGBQTI community to discover and create an alternative reality (Mac, 2021: 113). Love songs in this genre by popular artists such as Kylie Minogue's "All the Lovers" (2010) and Madonna's "Justify My Love" (1990), contributed to changes in the way society perceives and accepts LGBQTI diversity. In this way, love songs can be seen as political because they possess the power to influence social structures and how we perceive social relationships.

Making popular music is an active way of indicating social connection and expressing social relations. By creating an image of people's lives, it has the potential to empower them into action (Breen, 1987: 4). Socio-musicologist Simon Frith suggests that the power in popular music lies in its ability to evoke emotions that influence the experiences of the listeners. Rather than examining how a song reflects society, he asks how it constructs meaning and provides opportunities for us to experience ourselves in a different way (Frith 2017). In Australia, the expression of love in popular culture has contributed to the construction of social and cultural identity, on both a personal and a national level, fashioning an impression of how we relate to and treat each other (Teo, 2017: x). Love itself is a force we can use as a way of working with others that can underpin and inform musical collaborations, developing and promoting relationships that allow for trust and deep communication (Bartleet, 2016: 91).

In the history of Australian popular music, most of the historians have been men, and they have tended to focus on rock music made by men as the canon of Australian popular music (Arrow, 2017: 286, Haddon & Klein, 2024: 88, Strong 2010: 2015). An example was the 6-part ABC television Documentary, *A Long Way to the Top*, released in 2001 alongside a corresponding book by James Cockington, which focused almost entirely on rock music made by men. This shows that despite the huge success of Australian pop music artists overseas, only the raucous masculinity of rock music, or "pub rock" with its mix of sexual aggression and sentimental mateship, is perceived as authentic (Stratton, 2004: 1-3, Arrow, 2017: 302). Love songs in the Australian rock music canon tend to focus on non-romantic types of love, There are some exceptions, such as Lionel Rose's 1969 hit "I Thank You" and Nick Cave's "Into My Arms" (1997). But more commonly Australian rock songs, such as the Hunters and Collectors "Throw

[5] For statistics on Australian music charts, see ARIA n.d.

Your Arms Around Me" or the Angels "Am I Ever Going to See Your Face Again",: express "Love gone wrong, homosocial love, love of nation, sentiment, and increasingly love steeped in irony" (Arrow, 2017: 310). .[6]

Analyses of Australian Indigenous popular music commonly highlight socio-political themes such as place, identity, language and racism, but writing about intimate relationships or gender issues such as sexual harassment and domestic violence is rareHowever, women's perspectives are often overlooked, or if they are written about, they can be misrepresented. For example, Dunbar-Hall and Gibson's (2004) analysis of the influence of transnational Black culture on the RnB music of the Indigenous duo Shakaya surprisingly overlooked the highly political stance of their biggest hit "Stop Callin' Me" (Nicastro, Stacey and Wenitong, 2002). Shakaya were a trailblazing RnB duo from Cairns who reached international success with this song, which peaked at number 5 and then spent 17 weeks in the top 50 ARIA singles charts, reaching platinum status and scoring the duo a support for RnB superstars Destiny's Child's tour of Australia (Jordan, 2022). Using the medium of pop music as a safe space for a critique of social relationships, the duo of Simone Stacey and Naomi Wenitong call out a man for stalking, a form of predatory sexual harassment. I question why Dunbar-Hall and Gibson would overlook such a powerful and radical statement about the treatment of women in relationships, writing off Shakaya as non-political, when the success of the song, and its powerful performance and lyrical meaning, was clearly resonating with a large audience. Shakaya was a major influence on the members of the Ripple Effect Band, and this song in particular was very popular in Maningrida in the 2000s when REB members were learning music and songwriting at school.

"Stop Callin' Me" demonstrates how popular music can provide a medium for mediating gender relations, with song lyrics becoming a safe and neutral space to raise issues and teach appropriate behaviour (Reed, 2002: 28, Ottosson, 2016: 3-4). Other Indigenous female artists were starting to articulate their autonomy as independent women from the 1990s, speaking out against racism but also commenting on the treatment of women. Ngarrindjeri woman Ruby Hunter sang about the plight of Indigenous women and issues of domestic violence in her 1994 album, *Thoughts Within,* proposing that while relationships can be difficult, it is possible to work things out with reason (Reed, 2002: 36). It is noteworthy that Hunter insisted on choosing a female producer for this album (Jen Anderson).

[6] See, e.g., Bracknell 2019b, 2023; M. Breen 1987: Castles 2016; Dunbar-Hall and Gibson 2004; Ottosson 2016.

The next section outlines a well-documented tradition of love songs in West Arnhem Land. However, it also shows that whilst women have enjoyed listening to and discussing these love songs, there are none written from the perspective of women, because they ordinarily do not participate in music-making. The following section will demonstrate how this genre of traditional songs influenced the first love song to be composed by women in the region.

8.2 Love songs in West Arnhem Land

In Maningrida, *Jurtbirrk* is used to refer to a genre of *kun-borrk* specifically concerned with love or social relations, sometimes referred to as "Gossip Songs". These are didjeridu-accompanied songs that are individually composed and owned and usually deal with romantic or emotional topics (Berndt 1979, O'Keeffe, 2016, Barwick, Birch & Evans, 2007). Research on *Jurtbirrk* started with ethnomusicologists, Ronald and Catherine Berndt, with Berndt releasing a book about the love songs of Arnhem Land, including a song cycle from Goulburn Island in Western Arnhem Land (Berndt 1976). Research on *Jurtbirrk* continued with the recordings of the *Jurtbirrk* songs of the Iwaidja language group, released on a CD in 2005 (Arrmunika et al, 2005) and analysed by ethnomusicologists (Barwick et al, 2007, O'Keeffe, 2016).

These songs, like all *kun-borrk,* are written and performed by men:

> There are no known instances of a woman composing or performing a *jurtbirrk* song, although women very much enjoy listening to, and talking about, the songs and the events portrayed in them, and also compose dances for and dance to *jurtbirrk*" (Barwick, Birch & Evans, 2007: 11).

Rostron and I have experienced this countless times, sitting down with groups of women listening to recordings of *Jurtbirrk* that become a stimulus for laughter, discussion, and "women's talk", but despite this interest, the composition and performance of love songs has remained a male pursuit.

In popular music styles, many local rock bands have one or two love songs that usually depict a form of heartbreak, in a similar vein to Australian rock songs. Songs such as "Gama Jin-ngardipa (Broken Love)" (Letterstick Band, 2004d) and "Mararradj" (Wildfire Munwurrk, 2022) express the inevitability that a woman will eventually break your heart. There are no

rock songs of the region portraying happiness or joy in love, rather love is portrayed as something lost or a form of betrayal, setting up relationships as destined for failure and celebrating forlorn love lost. This may be in part due to the perception of masculinity in Australian rock music that does not allow for romanticism, which would be seen as soft or inauthentic (Stratton, 2004).

For women, it is even more difficult to write or perform love songs, and they must consider perceptions of their music and lyrics carefully. Music performance is a public presentation and love is a private emotion concerning intimate relations that can make it dangerous for women to publicly sing about such matters. As discussed in Chapter 3, in Arnhem Land communities there are cultural protocols concerning a woman's brothers and uncles that prevent her talking publicly about personal matters, and this raises issues about how women can safely express concepts of love without causing trouble or even violence between them and their partners or families. Chapter 2 explained how jealousy is a major issue in Maningrida, as it is in many remote communities (Senior et al 2017: 206–207). Rostron explains the difficulties for women to sing about love and relationships:

> If I sing as a young woman, if I sing love songs in public on the stage, my boyfriend could get jealous or other women can get jealous. For example, if a woman has a boyfriend with her and I'm a single woman, I'm singing on the stage and she gets jealous, she tends to turn around and argue with her boyfriend. That's part of jealousy. It's a big problem, jealousy. Mainly lovers and young people. That's how suicide is happening a lot around community here, because of that jealousy.[7]

Despite the dangers of being misinterpreted and arousing jealousy, women in Maningrida have been writing and performing love songs. In chapter 3 we discussed the barriers many women face in the Australian music industry and how in Maningrida there are extra layers of cultural barriers making any song and any performance a powerful act of resistance. The performance of love songs by REB is an act that emanates as a ripple effect moving toward normalising the rights of women to express their needs and concerns in relationships. The first love song written

[7] Tara Rostron. Interview by Jodie Kell, 24 June 2022. Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-LS003-01 at http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/LS003.

by women in West Arnhem Land arose out of the Maningrida High School music program, where the young women felt safe in the environment to open up to the possibility of expressing their ideas about love and relationships. The next section will examine the context of composing this song and explore why it has had such a long-lasting popularity among audiences, arguing that for the first time, women were expressing their perspectives on love in contemporary song. Coming from a female point of view, the song continues to resonate with the experiences of women in Maningrida.

8.3 "Love Song" (2003): A new form of expression for young women in Maningrida

"Love Song" [8] **[Audiovisual Link 11]**

Verse 1
Sitting on the beach feeling bad
Walking on the beach feeling lonely and sad
Sitting on the beach feeling bad
Walking on the beach feeling lonely and sad

Verse 2

An-wurra a-bona Darwin	*My boyfriend has gone to Darwin*
Gala marngi ngu-ni barra ani-jakabarra	*I don't know when he will return*
An-wurra a-bona Darwin	*My boyfriend has gone to Darwin*
Gala marngi ngu-ni barra ani-jakabarra	*I don't know when he will return*

Bridge

Verse 3
He called me on the telephone
Said I'm coming back tomorrow
He called me on the telephone
Said I'm coming back tomorrow

[8] "Love Song" is composed by Jodie Cooper, Rowena Cooper, Pamela Gibson, Thomasina Hayes-Bohme & Charlynna Roy. The song will be released as a single by REB in 2025. The lyrics have been translated and transcribed by Margaret Carew, Stephanie Maxwell James and Jodie Kell. The original version of "Love Song" is available as JK1-LS001 at https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/LS001.

Bridge

Outro

Ngaypa jal ngu-nirra nula wa	I love only him
Ngaypa jal ngu-nirra nula wa	I love only him

[repeat and fade]

"Love Song" (2003) was the first love song written by women in West Arnhem Land. It was written in 2003 by a group of high school students, Jodie Cooper, Rowena Cooper, Pamela Gibson, Thomasina Hayes-Bohme and Charlynna Roy (Cooper et al, 2003). It has brought new perspectives to musical expression in the region, contributing to the development of women's participation in music performance and production in Maningrida. The transmission of this song from older girls to younger girls, and from women to other women over many years, shows how songs directly related to the experience of women in the community are valued. This is why REB still performs "Love Song" (2003) as part of their repertoire.

In 2003, the senior girls' class at Maningrida High School formed a band called MGB (Maningrida Girls' Band) with my encouragement and support as their music teacher. Visiting artists Byron Williams from Australian hip-hop band, The Herd, and Darwin-based producer Justin Moon ran a music workshop over three weeks at the school. MGB attended several sessions, workshopping songwriting ideas and learning how to record audio tracks over sampled beats (Figures 8.3 & 8.4). After a brainstorming session, with much laughter and discussion, the group decided to write a song about their own experiences of relationships. At the time, some of the girls' boyfriends were away in Darwin and they wanted to express their feelings as they waited for them to come home.

The result is a song about a girl in Maningrida whose boyfriend is in Darwin. The sparse lyrics, sung in the local language Burarra as well as English, expresses a feeling of loneliness and concern as she waits for his return. It is common in remote NT communities for people's partners to travel to Darwin for different reasons and get stuck without the means or finances to return home. This can be a stressful time for a woman or girl, waiting for her partner to return, not knowing when that might be, and if he is safe in Darwin.

In 2003, young people in Maningrida were accessing music through CDs, often bought from the local shop, and the *So Fresh* compilations of current pop music were a major source of local listening. The compilations released in 2003 included several love songs in pop, hip-hop

and R&B styles. The male artists celebrate romantic love (Usher: "U Got It Bad") or sexy love (Nelly: "Hot in Herre"). Female artists have a tough, sexy sound (Pink: "Get the Party Started") but also include songs about relationships (Alicia Keys: "Girlfriend"; Shakaya: "Cinderella" and "Stop Callin' Me"; Destiny's Child: "Emotion"). The global nature of the *So Fresh* compilations is an example of popular music's "transnational spaces within which cultural exchanges and borrowings occur." (Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, 2004: 120). The confidence of these Black women singing about their views on relationships was influential on the group as they approached writing and recording a song.

Figure 8.3 Thomasina Hayes-Bohme and Jodie Kell workshopping and recording "Love Song" at Maningrida CEC in 2003

Figure 8.4 Thomasine Hayes-Bohme, Pamela Gibson and Rowena Cooper recording "Love Song" (2003) at Maningrida CEC in 2003

The song was written up on a whiteboard in the classroom (see Figure 8.3) and the group worked out simple chords, achievable for the students to play, to accompany the lyrics (Figure 8.4). The visiting artists produced a backing track, with sampled beats and guitar rhythms and one student, Pamela, played keys. All of these parts were looped to create a bed for the vocals.

To support the students, I participated in recording vocals, edited and mixed by the workshop team, with a modern RnB feel.

When it came to performing the song live, MGB replaced the sampled beats with rock music instruments, playing the chords on keyboards, bass guitar and electric guitar and the rhythm on drums. In order to create some atmosphere in the song, the band came up with the idea of a rhythmic hook between sections that would raise the energy with all the instruments playing the same rhythm as they moved through the chord progression (see Figure 8.5).

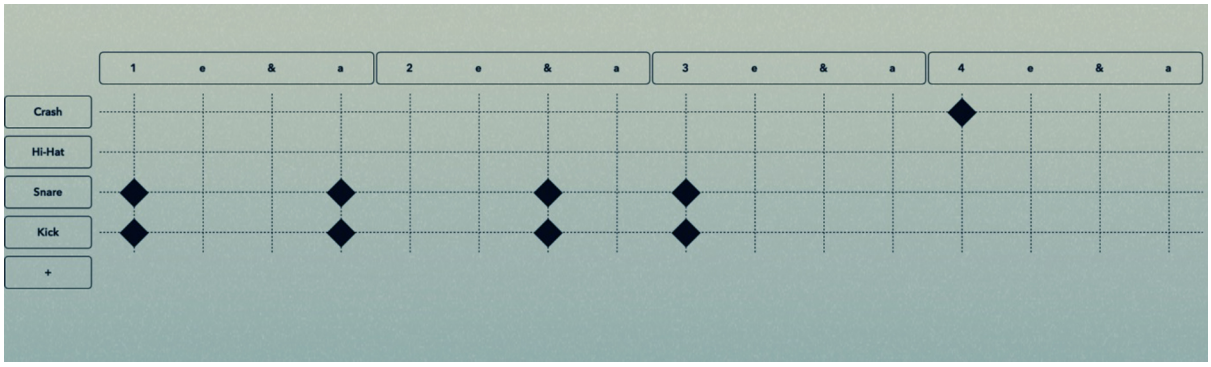

Figure 8.5 Rhythmic hook acting as a chorus in "Love Song" (2003)
The rhythmic hook is repeated on each chord by all of the instruments as they follow the harmonic progression twice, creating a rhythmic hook in the place of a more traditional chorus. More recently, REB has added a vocal lines over this break adding an emotional call, "You drive me crazy, My heart is breaking", as shown in an excerpt of the 2024 version of the song recorded by REB (unreleased) [Audiovisual Link 12]

Since it was composed, "Love Song" (2003) has become an enduring local pop song performed with rock band instrumentation. In the 2000s, Maningrida school bands such as MGB, Ocean Band, and the Front Street Girls performed this song in Maningrida, as well as on tour at Garma Festival and in Darwin. It was one of the first songs in REB's repertoire and is still regularly performed by the band, often as the opening number. In 2021 a group of Maningrida College female students, mentored by REB, played "Love Song" (Love Song) at the Maningrida Lúrra Festival, nearly 20 years after it was first composed. It is commonly heard at informal music sessions involving women in Maningrida, accompanied by acoustic guitar, or played in community music rooms. The transmission of this song from older women to younger women and girls, and its shared sentiment, have made women feel comfortable and confident to play it.

In West Arnhem Land, songs are commonly passed on from one family or clan member to another. There are complex permissions regarding the performance of songs, related to kinship and *bábburr* (Ndj: clan). Because songs are owned and performed by men, songs tend to be passed onto other men. Composing "Love Song" (2003) gave the women and girls in the community a song they could pass down and teach each other. It has contributed to the developing women's musical scene in Maningrida, serving as a rite of passage for young women and girls aiming to become musicians who share in the transmission of this song and become one of many female musicians who have joined in playing it (see Figure 8.6).

Figure 8.6 REB band members teaching "Love Song" (2003) to high school students at Maningrida College in August 2024
Photo credit: Clarence Playford

Rostron explains how this encourages girls to feel confident to play music.

> We're still playing "Love Song" (2003). Why are we still playing it? Because we want to show current students in Maningrida that's the first song we learned to play, that's why. We want to pass it on, like we helped the young girls perform in Maningrida festival in 2021.
>
> Do you know why they feel comfortable playing "Love Song" (2003) from school? Because of us, because we are still playing that "Love Song" (2003)

wherever we perform on stage. Those young women in Maningrida school, they feel comfortable because of us and because we passed them that song.[9]

Another element of the song that encourages teaching and learning is its simple repetitive chord structure (Figure 8.7). The progression, from the 1st chord of the musical key up to the 2nd, the 3rd and then back down to the 2nd and the 1st, repeats throughout the song. It does not change chords in the chorus, using a rhythmic hook

Em	D	C	D	Em	D	C	D
I	II	III	II	I	II	III	II

Figure 8.7 Harmonic chord progression of "Love Song" (2003)

As shown in Figure 8.5, the song does not have a chord change in the chorus but uses a rhythmic change as a break between verses. The simplicity of the harmonic structure makes "Love Song" (2003) accessible to learn. This is illustrated in Audiovisual Link 12.

"Love Song" (2003) also shows similarities to the structure and content of *Jurtbirrk*, which are composed about aspects of everyday life and consist of "brief, evocative statements in accessible language, usually consisting of two lines of text, repeated in predictable combinations" (Barwick, Birch and Williams, 2005: 9-10). As discussed previously, the original version of "Love Song" (2003) did not have a chorus but consisted of a series of short repeated poetic statements such as the second verse, translated here from Burarra.

An-wurra a-bona Darwin
My boyfriend has gone to Darwin
Gala marngi ngu-ni barra ani-jakabarra
I don't know when he will return
(repeat)

This simple statement, with its sense of uncertainty about returning from Darwin, resonates with shared experiences and emotions of anyone who has lived in Maningrida or other remote

[9] Tara Rostron Interview, 2022, 13:39–15:00. Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-LS003-01 at http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/LS003.

communities in Arnhem Land. The economy of expression follows the allusive nature of traditional music of the region, in which the literal meaning is clear but contextual meanings are often vague. This is perhaps intentional, so that reference can only be inferred by those who are familiar with the particular event, incident or emotion described, or may even only be fully known by the original composer (Garde, 2005: 66-70, O'Keeffe, 2016: 111). Section 5.4 shows how understanding of the deeper meanings of the lyrics of "Na-meyarra" is reliant on previously held knowledge about the local environment. The understanding of "Love Song" (2003) is enhanced by the fact that many women in Maningrida, or any remote community, can relate to the feeling of worry and distress when their lover or partner is away in bigger cities, as they wait back in community for their safe return.

I have shown how this song was innovative in that it constituted the first-time women had been able to express their perspectives on intimate relations in song. It was also shaped by the context in which it was produced. Visiting male artists produced the song, and it was composed within the institutional context of the school classroom. Both factors affected the extent to which the girls had control over the way the song was shaped. Section 3.3 outlines the importance of the role of the producer in creating music. The next section will explore this further, showing that REB have developed the skills and confidence necessary to take control of music production. This has been facilitated by changes in the music culture of Maningrida. Ever since the first schoolgirls formed rock bands, women have been playing a more prominent part in contemporary music. As more experienced musicians, REB have taken on the roles of instrumentalists and producers, as well as composers, and this has enabled them to take more control over the creative process and compose with intent to advocate for social change.

8.4 "Loving and Caring": the power of music to influence change

Eighteen years after MGB wrote "Love Song" (2003), Rostron and I composed "Loving and Caring". The creative processes of composing, recording, and producing this song demonstrate changes in musical practices for female musicians in Maningrida over time. The composition process was very different from the impromptu workshopping that produced the earlier love song; it was more intentional and took place over a longer time, leading to opportunities to shape the song production and manage the message it contains.

The original idea was to compose a song about love and relationships in West Arnhem Land,

aiming to address social issues. Gender based violence occurs across Australia, with one in four women, and one in fourteen men experiencing violence from an intimate partner. People living in remote and regional areas are 1.5 times more likely to experience partner violence (Campbell et al, 2024: 26). Indigenous women are thirty-two times more likely to be hospitalised and seven times more likely to be killed through partner violence than the general population (Hill, 2025: 6). Aware of these statistics, we wanted to contribute to discussion about the realities of experiences for people in Maningrida and add some positive messaging about the potential of love.

Figure 8.8 Composers of "Loving and Caring", Jodie Kell and Tara Rostron, Momo's Café, Newcastle, NSW, March 2022
Photo Credit: Paul Dear

Family violence in Indigenous communities occurs in the context of the effects of colonisation and the subsequent forced assimilation, violent dispossession and disempowerment. This has led to intergenerational trauma with damaging outcomes including the misuse of alcohol and other drugs, financial stress and physical distress (Astbury et al, 2000: 429). Family violence displaces people from their supports, education and employment, and in so doing weakens the

community. Yet, Indigenous women are less likely to report assault or seek medical help. This is in part due to the history of violent interactions with police, deaths in custody and the forcible removal of Indigenous children. It also stems from a system of government services and policies that perpetrate the violence by undermining families and community groups that are central to the community's strength, culture and social structure. (Cheers et al, 2006: 56-57)

We were mindful, when approaching a song about love and relationships, to be positive and gentle. Through song, we aimed to elevate a caring kind of love and in so doing provide inspiration for young people to relate to each other with respect. The song is a call for change, portraying an ideal image of an intimate partner and promoting the importance of communication in conflict resolution as an alternative to fighting. Singing about a gentle approach involving yarning and connection with the natural seasons of Country, incorporates Indigenous knowledge and practices, with Rostron taking the lead for cultural awareness and protocols. Engaging with all stages of music production enabled her to take control of the agenda and to safely challenge social norms using "the defiant force of the love song" (Gioia 2015:xii), The next section will analyse "Loving and Caring" to show how songs can advocate for social change through providing alternative realities and ways of relating to each other.

Advocating for Social Change

In writing a love song, Rostron explains how she wanted to present a positive image of relationships, moving on from the emotions of "Love Song" (2003), in which the woman is powerless, waiting in community, feeling lonely and worried.

> I want to make people to stay more positive than before. Not like "Love Song" (2003), you know, sitting around and wondering, too much thinking and worrying, they need to push themselves forward and think straight. Instead of just going around and around in cycles and keeping it inside. That's not good. Sometimes you need to let it out. I think this is a new, good message for everyone.[10]

[10] Tara Rostron. Interview by Jodie Kell, 24 June 2022, 13:39–15:00, 02:26. Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-LS003-01 at http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/LS003.

In his analysis of US Top 40 hits over two decades, American sociologist Thomas Scheff questioned why so many popular love songs legitimised and helped to generate flawed responses to our emotions and dysfunctional types of relationships. He asked what the implications for interpersonal and societal relationships were when people connected to these songs, calling for love songs that celebrate positive love relationships and promote a degree of connectedness and balance through communication and mutual understanding (Scheff, 2011: 21–23). Rostron proposes that 'Loving and Caring' is such a song,

> "Loving and Caring", it's like family, friends and lovers, how to look after each other and communicate with each other and how to love and care.[11]

We were aware of the toll of domestic violence in Maningrida. We have both personally experienced physical violence and the threat of violence, and have both supported family members, friends, and their children through traumatic situations. We wanted to use music as a way of sending a message of hope, and some practical advice about how to approach relationships. In this way, we were approaching the song as a means of enacting social change, hoping to break the cycle of jealousy, arguing, and domestic violence.

> Songs can give people ideas and sometimes make them change a little bit such as inspiring them to stop thinking about the past. Like a new voice that when they hear it, they will say, "Oh, okay. I know this gives me an idea about how I can look after my family or friends or someone that I love and that I want to be with".[12]

One of the main messages of 'Loving and Caring' is the importance of communication in relationships. Throughout the song, the singer directly addresses her partner, such as in the first verse below that shows a sense of confidence in which the singer is in control, negotiating the terms of the relationship.

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[11] Tara Rostron. Interview by Jodie Kell, 24 June 2022, 00:38. Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-LS003-01 at http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/LS003.

[12] Tara Rostron. Interview by Jodie Kell, 24 June 2022, 00:38. Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-LS003-01 at http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/LS003.

Njale yi-njilng warreminj kangurdulme
Hey, why are you so upset?
Kan-marnime ba ngabengkan
Tell me so I know.
Njale mankarre yikarrme kure kukange
What message are you holding onto in your heart?

Verse 1 (above) promotes talking and yarning as a way to solve problems someone in a relationship may feel. Yarning is "a conversational process that involves the sharing of stories and the development of knowledge" that is increasingly recognised in research and health programs as a way of centring Indigenous values and communication methods (Walker, 2014: 1216). The singer is asking her partner to sit down and talk things through, to share his pain, to open his heart, to yarn about what is troubling him, rather than resorting to violence, which can be perceived as an accepted part of sexual relationships by young people in the NT (Senior et al, 2017: 204). Considering the normalisation of violence in relationships by young people in Indigenous communities, performing "Loving and Caring" can be seen as a radical act offering an alternative vision of intimacy demonstrated by the lyrics at the end of the song:

When my man is caring for me, it makes me crazy for his love
Crazy for his love

Referencing the metaphor of love driving someone crazy commonly used in rock music, we wanted to express a feeling of longing, of wild and passionate love, emphasised by repetition, but also explain that the attraction is to caring love.

The second verse uses a cultural metaphor of the replenishing cycles of the seasons in West Arnhem Land. Seasonal calendars have been developed with language groups in Indigenous communities as a tool for monitoring the health of Country. They are also a useful point of focus that promotes cross-cultural understanding by illustrating "a vast web of connections and relationships that contribute to a systems understanding of land, sea and freshwater places" (Woodward, 2019: 31). Incorporating Indigenous ecological knowledge helps to maintain positive health-promoting approaches to social issues by reflecting ways in which Indigenous

people regard and act out their relationships with each other, with their lands and the environment, and with their ancestors. (Woodward, 2019: 27-28).

In 2021, REB attended the Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun's Forum led by the Jawoyn Association, a week long gathering of women on Country at the Banatjarl homelands. The forum incorporates traditional Indigenous healing and wellbeing practices, to empower women to voice their own solutions to social issues including domestic and family violence. The workshop, with its theme of "Country is Medicine" (Jawoyn Association, n.d.), inspired our song writing and it became a priority for Rostron to reference cultural knowledge in a song about loving relationships because she perceived it as a way to aid understanding and support the message of the song with through connection to Country. Listening to Rostron, I understood it was a way of navigating social and cultural protocols by alluding to situations rather than describing details, thus avoiding misunderstandings and feelings of jealousy. As demonstrated in Chapters 4, metaphors based on Indigenous ecological knowledge aid cross-cultural communication by providing deeper levels of mutual understanding. Rostron explains how metaphor works in "Loving and Caring".

> Yekke is the dry season like this time now. When we burn grass and the trees. Everything's burned and that's how everyone feels, bad and depressed. Everybody's starting to fight, even lovers feel no good, it's because the trees are burning. Kudjewk is the wet season. That's in November and December when it starts raining. When it starts raining, all the trees and grass start growing. The rain and thunder rolls. That's how we feel, like it's our heart beating. When the thunder rolls, it hits the ground, like it hits your feeling and that's where you're starting to love someone. The trees and leaves are growing and everything, is starting to show love. But especially lovers. That's the main thing.[13]

This metaphor suggests that it is possible end the violence, like the seasons change, ending the dry season and bringing the thunder and rain of the wet season. In this way, the song contains hope for stronger relationships with a love like thunder that brings restorative rain for the land.

[13] Tara Rostron. Interview by Jodie Kell, 24 June 2022. Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-LS003-01 at http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/LS003.

Removing children, breaking up families, encouraging self-sufficiency are not always the optimal solution in for Indigenous women and children. The lack of services, poverty and close connections between people small remote communities make it logistically difficult to make a clean break from a relationship. Calls for social change need to look at ways of interrupting the transmission of violence and supporting families to heal and resolve issues (Hill, 2025: 102-106). By connecting healthy relationships to the seasons the song recognises Indigenous perspectives that draw upon community and connection to Country for ways to overcome family violence. Through a lengthy creative process, we were able to guide the song production to express this. The next section discusses the production of the recording of 'Loving and Caring', arguing that self-production of music is a powerful act.

Power in Music Production

Producer and academic Paula Wolfe argued that the creative practice of self-production, where artists produce their own music for commercial release, has challenged the gender bias of the music recording industry. Rather than relying on studios, the "burgeoning access to digital recording technology" has changed the positioning of female producers and allowed them greater control (2020: 93). In a similar way, Linda Barwick, in her discussion of contemporary funeral songs in Wadeye, commented that music technologies have allowed a democratisation of the means of making music, leading to "a fundamental shift in musical practices around funerals in Wadeye", including a greater prominence of women in composing and leading songs (2017: 166–167). Rostron speaks about how she feels producing music,

> When we are writing and producing music, I feel closer to the music. I can feel something is holding me and telling me I am doing fine. It is positive. It gives me a power. A power to make this love song and give advice to people about relationships, about change.[14]

If we consider how music is a forum for social mediation, then taking control over the stages of music production becomes a powerful act. Franca Tamisari describes music as "a construction site", a creative space enabling the creation of new ideas, experiences and visions (Tamisari, 2021: 115). I argue that controlling contemporary music production and distribution

[14] Tara Rostron Interview, 2022. Audio interview and transcript available as JK1-LS003-01 at http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/JK1/items/LS003.

is a means of shaping a sense of confidence and forging new forms of social interaction.

As composers, producers and members of Ripple Effect Band, we have felt in control of 'Loving and Caring'. The resulting song exhibits elements of transnational musical cultures, which have been localised through the use of Kune language. By addressing the fabric of society, romantic love, it is a political statement about the rights of women to express their perspectives on love, and about a vision for the mediation of social relationships. The following ethnographic description outlines the creative processes in composing and producing the song that demonstrates the intent in our songwriting and how this was further shaped by our control of music production.

> In writing 'Loving and Caring', Tara and I spent a lot of time together both in Darwin and on the road in 2021, performing, running workshops, and producing the album, and we often talked about including a love song. We both ended up in Darwin during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and over that year, we travelled to Yuendumu in central Australia. In early 2022, once travel restrictions lifted, Tara accompanied me back to NSW. We spent a lot of time together and this gave us the opportunity to compose songs and finish producing the album we had started in August 2020.
>
> We started talking about what we wanted to express and we listened to other love songs for inspiration, including "Love Song" (2003) and "Gama Jin-ngardapa (Broken Love)" (Letterstick Band), as well as RnB classics on Tara's playlist on her phone featuring 1990's artists such as Mariah Carey and Shakaya (see Figure 8.8). We talked a lot about love and relationships and what made a good relationship (road trips are great for talking). We wanted our song to have a positive slant, with a strong message, and we focused on the importance of communication.

‘Reference playlist for Loving and Caring’	
Despacito	Luis Fonsi, Daddy Yankee
We Belong Together	Mariah Carey
Stop Callin’ Me	Shakaya
Praying	Kesha
Follow	Ruby Mae
Gama Jin-ngardapa (Broken Love)	Letterstick Band
Mr La Di Da Di	Baker Boy
King Brown	Barkaa
Clumsy Love	Thelma Plum
Love Song (2003)	MGB

Figure 8.8: Reference playlist for “Loving and Caring”. This is the playlist created by Tara Rostron and Jodie Kell to share with Antonia Gauci during the mixing process.

Writing the song took time. We wrote the main verses and chorus with guitar accompaniment, jamming on the sound and the style. We took this song to Skinnyfish Music in 2020 and met with Michael Hohnen and James Mangohig to show them our songs and set up guide rhythm tracks and song arrangements. Tara worked closely with James on the beats, including setting up a guide version of “Loving and Caring”. This was the basis to the recorded version of the song.

The song was recorded over a one-and-a-half-year period in a range of locations. This gave us the time and space to control all aspects of production. We copied the Logic (DAW) sessions onto our hard drive so that we could work on the songs independently of commercial studios. While we were working in Yuendumu as part of Music NT’s Sista Sounds music workshops, we spent a day in the PAW Media studios, recording the bass and rhythm guitar tracks.

In December 2021, we spent a week with Jolene Lawrence at the Dr. G. Studios at Skinnyfish Music, and she recorded all of the drum parts for the songs on the album. She would listen to the guide version on headphones and drum along to the beat.

‘Loving and Caring’ was a new song and she was unfamiliar with it, having only performed it once or twice before. When we came around to editing and mixing the song, we cut her drum track into loops, creating samples from her live drums. While we were at the studio, we also recorded Tara’s main vocals and Rachel’s back-up vocals.

The song was finished, edited and premixed in my studio in Newcastle in 2023, when Tara spent three months staying at my home. We pre-mixed the song in preparation for sending the tracks to Antonia Gauci, the mixing engineer. During this time, we edited the songs, creating arrangements by mixing the different recorded tracks together, removing parts and highlighting sections. We added percussion, guitar parts and synthesisers and keyboards, and we wrote extra vocals and recorded harmonies to add interest to the song. Tara composed the middle section, in which she raps in her language of Kune, influenced by Baker Boy, from Milingimbi, Northeast Arnhem Land, who raps in Yolŋu Matha and English. She drew inspiration from other Indigenous women rappers such as Naomi Wenitong from Shakaya, and Barkaa, a Malyangapa, Barkindji woman from Western NSW, whose debut release in 2020 “For My Tittas” reached national success with lyrics that call for Black Women to feel proud and strong. Listening to Aboriginal woman rappers gave Tara the confidence, as an Indigenous woman, to try this more rhythmic form of vocals to send out a message to her community about social relationships.

This account highlights the different stages of music production and demonstrates how Rostron and I were central to managing the recording project. Being able to work on the recording sessions on my laptop meant that we were not confined to one music studio, giving us the freedom and opportunity to work with a range of technicians and do some of the technical work ourselves, as shown in Figure 8.9. It also suited our lifestyles, in which we were moving around quite a lot, so having a studio that moved with us was liberating. Self-production is challenging gender bias in the music industry by allowing women to make choices as to who they work with, how they schedule their time and have hands on control of music projects. We made a conscious decision to employ female mixing and mastering engineers on the album because we wanted to give opportunities for female artists and technicians.

Taking our time in producing the song also enabled us to negotiate cultural differences. Our positioning as female-identifying musicians, one Kune *Daluk* "Woman, Indigenous Woman" (K) and one *Balanda* "non-Indigenous" woman, brought particular perspectives to the expression of love in song. Having time together to converse deeply about our beliefs and aspirations, as well as listening to other artists for inspiration shaped the song. Yorta Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung composer Lou Bennett identified the management of time and space as one of the key challenges in Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaborations: "I believe that a story/song has its own agency and having agency means having the right to time, space, and stillness" (Bennett, 2022: 14–16). David Byrne, from the band Talking Heads, said that "collaborating is a vital part of music's essence and an aid to creativity" that includes interpretation, realisation, and the sharing of musical references (Byrne, 2012: 138–151). In composing "Loving and Caring", these discussions about the motivation behind the song were formative, and our different perspectives gave us the freedom to step back and see a bigger picture of what we wanted to say about relationships.

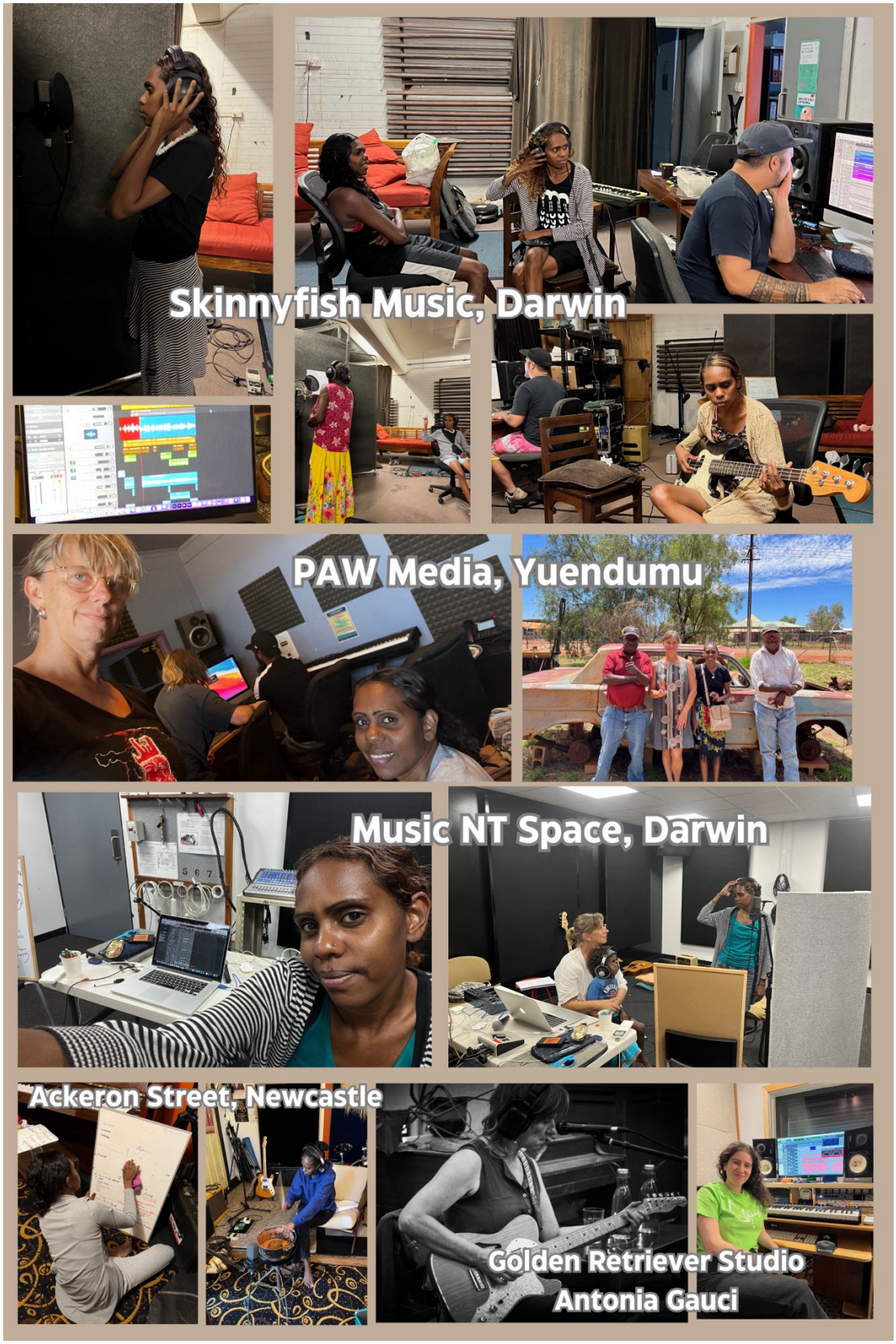

Figure 8.9 Recording 'Mayawa' in different locations

The Logic session of the song recording demonstrates the range of influences and how current music software supported our creative processes that occurred over a long period in a range of locations. The musical elements and production aesthetic of ‘Loving and Caring’ show influence from RnB, hip-hop, and pop music, incorporating electronic beats mixed with sampled drums, synthesisers, sampled sounds, dense lyrical content, the use of spoken words, and the inclusion of rapping. All of the tracks are edited into loops, creating samples of the live recording, a “track and hook” method of production (Byron & O’Regan, 2022: 13). This meant that the arrangement of the song was developed in a different way to songs performed live, and during production, Rostron and I experimented with different ideas and sounds, as shown in Figures 8.10 and 8.11.

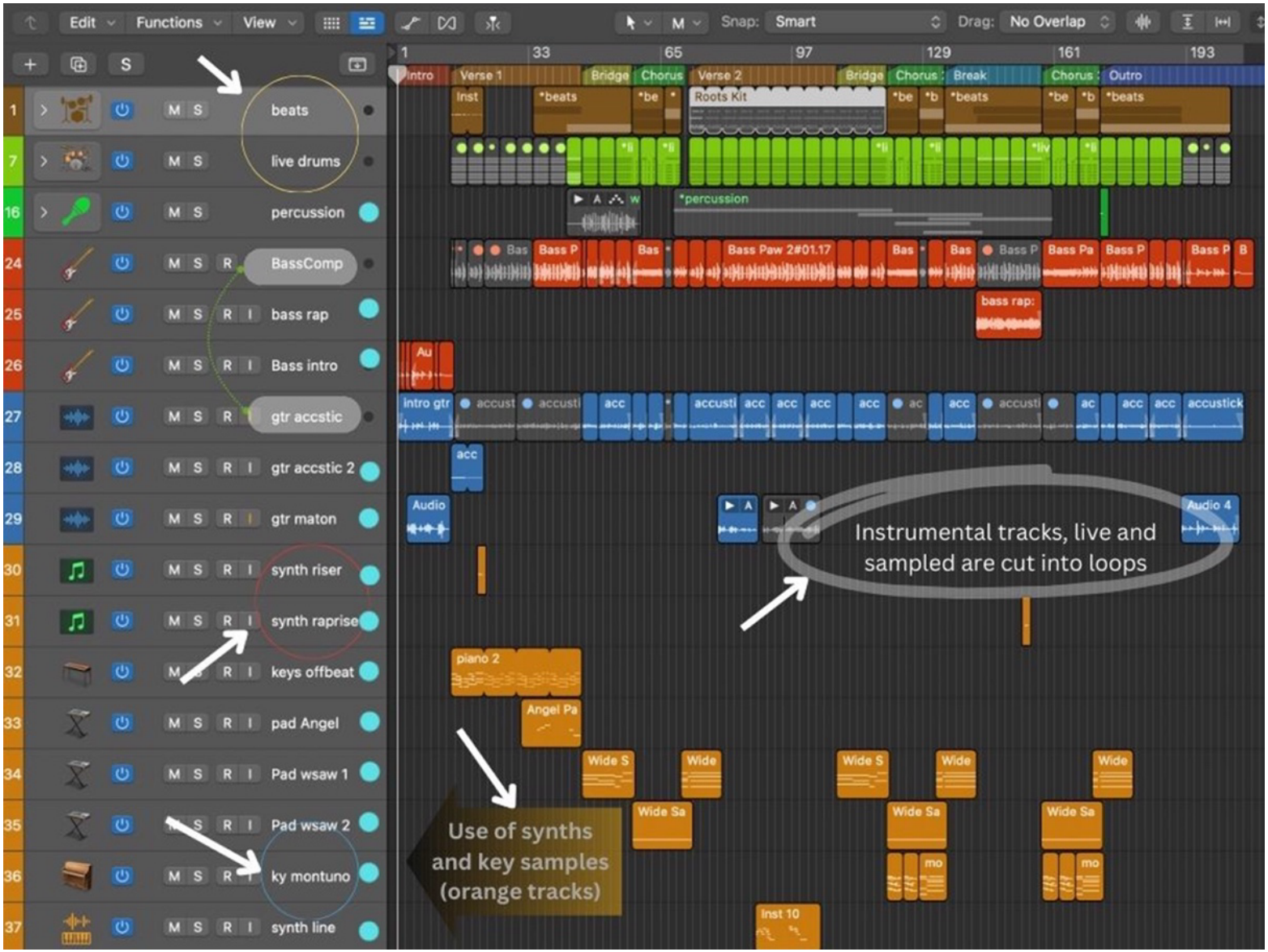

Figure 8.10 Logic session used in the recording of 'Loving and Caring'

This highlights elements of pop and RnB electronic music styles used in the song: live drums are supplemented by electronic beats, audio tracks are cut and looped, 8 tracks of synthesiser and sampled keys, the common trope in electronic music of a synth riser in the introduction use of the piano Latin riff in the chorus is reminiscent of feels used in hip-hop music, such as Barkaa's 2021 song 'King Brown'.

Figure 8.11 Rhythm tracks in the Logic session used in the recording of 'Loving and Caring'

The green segments are Jolene's drums, cut into loops after she recorded. The brown tracks are electronic beats, some from the original guide track created by Tara and the Skinnyfish engineer James Mangohig. The aim is to strengthen the drum sound and energy to the beat.

Producing and releasing this song has resulted in positive feedback for the band and for the co-producers, Rostron and myself. The song has been well received as part of the 'Mayawa' album with music magazine *Rolling Stone* listing it as a "song you need to know" in 2024, commenting:

> You don't need to understand either the Aboriginal Australian language Kune or English to feel the emotion of the song (Lochrie, July 2024).

The accompanying music video featured Sethalia Olsen from Maningrida Dance. Collaborating with the local youth dance group validated the importance of the song as a message going out for young people. The video and the song are available on a range of streaming platforms, which has allowed for thousands of listens and views with Spotify currently sitting at 13,668 listens and Youtube views at 12,900 (February 28, 2025). This song has generated income for REB through royalty payments as well as song sales. It has also led to greater exposure for Rostron, who is currently working as a Music NT Remote Area Ranger, supporting the development of music programs and events in Maningrida. She recently attended Bush Bands in Alice Springs, working on the production team. Over the time of producing the album, Rostron developed confidence and is now able to work in the music industry using the skills and understandings she has gained through the production process.

The song has also been part of a healing process for Rostron and her family because her sister took her own life in July 2023. Whilst this meant we delayed the release of the album; Rostron dedicated the release of 'Loving and Caring' in August 2023 to her sister. The band uses the song to raise awareness of suicide and the importance of talking about your feelings and checking in on loved ones. In this way, the aspiration of the song has widened to include all social relationships as well as those of intimate partners, sending out a message of love and care, calling upon family, friends and lovers to listen to each other.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that writing love songs is a political act because these songs have the power to influence social relationships and how we interact with our intimate partners (Gioia, 2015). Women's perspectives on love and the songs they compose have been overlooked, as

was shown in histories of Australian popular music that focus on rock music made by men that has tended to express non-romantic types of love such as heartbreak and betrayal, or sexualised attraction, despite the commercial success of female pop artists (Arrow, 2017: 310). Likewise, in the history of love songs of West Arnhem Land, traditional *Jurtbirrk* were solely composed and performed by men and prior to REB, the few love songs in the local rock music genre were also composed by men and expressed heartbreak and a mistrust of women.

When a group of schoolgirls wrote "Love Song" in 2003, it was the first time that a female point of view was expressed in song. Inspired by transnational influences available through exposure to new technologies such as CDs and the contemporary music program at the school, young women sang about their feelings. The lasting popularity of this song, still performed by REB 20 years after it was composed, emanates from the sentiments expressed in the song, which resonate with other women. Passing on song knowledge and permissions to perform the song from older girls to younger girls and more recently from women to girls has led to an increasing sense of song ownership amongst women of different generations. The increasing ripple effect of musical transmission has contributed to the development of women's music in the region because women and girls have had a local song they feel comfortable playing.

The more recent song, "Loving and Caring" approaches love from a different angle that views communication as central to healing relationships and promoting community wellbeing. Understanding that family violence occurs in the context of the effects of colonisation, dispossession and disempowerment on Indigenous communities, the song incorporates Indigenous ecological knowledge with a powerful metaphor of the arrival of the west season that brings restorative rain. By promoting a more loving image of relationships, in which the singer is crazy for caring love, the song can be seen as a radical call for developing new ways of connection and communication.

The creative processes in composing and recording REB's song 'Loving and Caring' demonstrates further growth in the strength of women's music practices in Maningrida, The differences in content and production between the two love songs, composed 18 years apart, shows how taking control of music production has enabled the women of REB, such as songwriter Tara Rostron, to move into more strategic positions and develop agency, allowing greater control over messaging in music. This has led to opportunities for the women in the band, discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, resulting in a love song providing a more positive slant to love with the intent of influencing social change by promoting the

importance of communication in relationships. The strength and empowerment apparent in the composition and production processes, and in the lyrical content and musicianship demonstrates the growing ripple effect of female musicians in Maningrida. REB is using music-making to mediate Maningrida women's social positioning and acting as role models for other women to feel confidence to ask for new ways of loving, and new values in relationships.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

The release of the *Mayawa* album in September 2024 and the accompanying national tour demonstrated how far REB has come in the eight years since its formation. The album *Mayawa* (Figure 9.1) was "Album of the Week" on radio stations in Sydney, Melbourne, Alice Springs and Perth; appeared in 31 media articles including a feature in *The Guardian* and a review in *The Australian*, and eight radio interviews (see Appendix 10). The accompanying album tour included four states/territories with sold-out shows in Darwin, Sydney, Castlemaine and Melbourne. The tour was promoted through an extensive social media campaign, which included clips of hunting and touring in Indigenous languages with English subtitles, contributing to high attendance and in some cases sold-out shows.

Figure 9.1 Mayawa album cover designed by Harriet Fraser-Barbour, Joy Garlbin and Mary Nabbalangkarra

As well as this successful release and tour, the process of composing, recording and performing the songs on the album changed the lives of the women in the band. For the first time in West Arnhem Land, women are able to publicly express their connection to Country, clan and language through music. This has had positive effects on the lives of the women in the band. These effects have also spread out and influenced gender relations and social structures in the Maningrida community and is part of a movement of change in the wider Australian music industry. In this conclusion, I consider the impact on each of these areas, relating back to the central question of this thesis which is to investigate how the process of developing a community-based women's music project can have far-reaching positive effects and contribute to social change.

A key theme of this thesis is intercultural collaboration, present in the relationship between myself as a *Balanda* woman and the West Arnhem *Daluk* (K: women) musicians, and in the multilingual make-up of REB. The applied ethnomusicology research methodology recognises many benefits of a collaborative approach to the creation of music. Intercultural collaboration has played a role in enabling the women to enter the male-dominated spaces of the NT Indigenous music scene. The thesis demonstrates how music can be a means to navigate difference, finding that contemporary Indigenous rock music, as a more recent form incorporating both Indigenous and non-Indigenous elements, operates as a "third space" of interculturality. Rock music has provided the musicians of REB the opportunity to innovate a new sound and a new approach to music-making that, at the same time, builds on traditions of earlier contemporary musicians of West Arnhem Land. The intercultural collaboration at the core of this music project has provided the means to find new ways for women to express cultural knowledge and social identity through song.

While establishing direct links between cause and effect in social change is difficult, the following sections outline the positive impacts of REB. These impacts occurred at four levels: a) on the REB members; b) on local cultural practices; c) on local musical practices; and on the Australian music industry. The expanding scope of these impacts echoes the title of this thesis and the name of the band, showing how a music project can start a ripple effect that contributes to transformations personally, in the local community and as part of a national movement for social change.

Figure 9.2 Ripple Effect Band, 2024
L-R Tara Rostron, Stephanie Maxwell James, Jodie Kell, Rachel Thomas, Annastasia Lucas, Patricia Gibson, Harriet Fraser-Barbour, Jolene Lawrence, Ronas Lawrence. Photo: Silly Goose Inc.

9.1 Increased agency and opportunities for the REB band members

Over the eight years since REB formed, the band members have developed greater agency and autonomy. Chapter four demonstrated how the early recordings of REB released on the *Wárrwarra* EP, such as "Ngúddja", enabled the band to develop ways of circumventing gender restrictions and establish their reputation of the band as a new force in the NT music scene. Following on from the success of the EP, touring and releasing music has opened up new social and economic opportunities with band members receiving income from performance and rehearsal payments as well as copyright held in their songs. Touring and performing nationally has enabled the women to experience and gain understanding of different places, histories and cultures across Australia (see Appendix 6 for details of performances). Such opportunities are extremely rare for Maningrida residents, for a multitude of reasons.

The achievements of the band and the development of skills has led to employment opportunities, either directly related to the music industry, as in the example of Tara Rostron

who is currently employed as a Music NT Remote Music Ranger to support the development of music in communities, or in other employment, such as Patricia Gibson who works as a community liaison worker at Malal'a Health Board. In 2024, she spoke at the International Union Against Sexually Transmitted Infections (IUSTI) conference in Sydney. Gibson commented that being a band member helps her to engage with young women and increased her confidence to speak in front of people from across the world (Gibson, pers. Comms., 2024). Rachel Thomas is employed as a cultural consultant at Maningrida Arts and Culture and the manager of MAC has stated that Rachel's work in REB , with her wealth of travel experience, makes her invaluable in accompanying artists to important arts events.

On a more personal level, being in the band has also created a support network to help navigate the challenges of forging social change, strengthening the bonds between the women, including myself. We have attended funerals together and written and performed songs to help in processing grief. We have also shared the care of children and I even attended the birth of Jolene's baby Yohnaz in 2022. My son now lives in Maningrida and works as the band tour manager. These relationships, based on trust and the sharing of positive experiences in making and touring music, have helped us all deal with the complex health and socio-economic situation in Maningrida. These positive life-affirming experiences make the women stronger in their lives, and have become role models for social change. In summary, REB has opened up opportunities to have an independent income, develop musical skills, travel and gain new experiences, leading to a degree of status and becoming positive role models in their community.

9.2 Promotion of local cultural practices and increased awareness of culture, language

Contemporary rock music has opened up new ways of promoting and passing on Indigenous knowledge for the women of REB. Whilst unable to follow other Indigenous rock bands of the top end of the NT and incorporate *kun-borrk* or *manikay* and traditional instruments, REB has innovated ways to include cultural elements in their music. In Chapters 4 and 5, I demonstrated that REB uses song to raise awareness of and strengthen Indigenous languages which are key to cultural identity, creating allegiances amongst different groups through celebrating diversity and creating motivation for learning language.

Chapters 4 and 7 demonstrated the power of music as a unifying force for cultural groups. The lyrical practice of naming different social groups or places, apparent in "Ngúddja" and "Cyclone" strengthens kinship bonds between the women in the band and within people of the region. The celebration of multilingualism and Indigenous languages in "Ngúddja" has appealed to audiences nationally bringing pride in Australia's Indigenous languages.

The use of song to express cultural stories and connection to Country and ancestral spirits in West Arnhem Land has been largely confined to men, with women participating through dance and movement rather than musically. Through contemporary rock music, the women of REB have presented new perspectives on *djang* (Ndj: Dreamings). In so doing, they continue the tradition of their fathers and uncles but do so by bringing women's perspectives to music for the first time. Chapter 6 showed how REB has joined a contested tradition of the "Diyama" song, an expression of the ancestral mermaids in the An-barra homeland of Gupanga. Their innovative musical practices in composing their own version of "Diyama" inspired other women to speak out present their perspectives on the origins of the original *kun*-borrk, thus indicating cultural authority and rights over the Country of Gupanga. Chapter 7 argued that the women of REB have used song to raise awareness of and increase the status of the local land owning Dhukurrdji clan and the Kunibídji people, redressing the imbalance of power structures in Maningrida which were upset with colonisation and the establishment of a settlement. In a culture where music is a major way of asserting land rights and cultural authority, this expression by female musicians is a powerful act which raises the question whether REB might be changing assumptions about male authority in relation to land rights.

9.3 Impact on the local music industry

When REB first started performing in 2017, they were often the only all-female band playing at local Indigenous festivals. The ethnographic account in Chapter 3 illustrated the barriers for the women as they performed at Barunga festival. Seven years later, the festival announced an Indigenous female headline act for the first time, with Thelma Plum at the upcoming 2025 festival. In 2024, REB headlined Maningrida's Lúrra Festival, showing their popularity with the local community. Travelling around NT festivals, the band has noticed improvements in catering for female performers, with consideration in backstage set up, including bathrooms

and dressing rooms for women. This suggests that arts workers are listening to the opinion of the band and other women in the industry and making changes to create safer and more diverse environments.

Programs such as Music NT's Sista Sounds, established in 2011, have contributed to developing and supporting female artists and REB has both benefited from and contributed to this program , for example by facilitating workshops, the use of their image and songs in resources and participating in strategic planning for NT women in music. In 2023 REB was approached by Music NT and PAW Media to mentor a young NT female band, the Kintore Kungka Band. The resulting workshop at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and performance at the Marrickville Bowling Club in Sydney were described in Chapter 3. Starting in 2019 with Sista Sounds workshops at Maningrida College, REB has mentored schoolgirl bands in Maningrida, supporting them to perform at local events and the opportunity to perform in Sydney in 2024. As described in Chapter 3, such female mentorship was not readily available for REB and it has been an important aim of REB members to offer this support to other emerging Indigenous female artists.

In other changes, rehearsal rooms in Maningrida, and other communities where we have visited, now include more inclusive practices of booking and running music rooms, making it easier and more supportive for female artists to gain access to rehearsal spaces. For example, PAW Media in Yuendumu created a women's-only space where Rostron and I worked in 2022. Maningrida Lúrra festival hired a female coordinator who set rehearsal times, making sure women and girls could gain access to rooms and equipment. In Maningrida, the increasing impact of REB was apparent in the description in Chapter 3 of the 2024 NAIDOC Week event featuring Coloured Stone and REB. At this event, women and men worked together to set up and run the technical equipment and stage management, which is highly unusual in these remote Indigenous communities, and shows how the actions and growing skills of REB change gendered roles in the local music scene. Chapter 8 asserted that developing skills to take control of music production and challenging perceptions of gender roles in music making enabled REB to promote positive messaging in music and present female viewpoints through contemporary music.

The band has also brought opportunities for the community through their networks. This research project was the impetus for the establishment of a partnership between the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Maningrida College, which now extends to Nja-Marleya Justice and Social Group. It involves exchange programs and the sharing of knowledge and resources to support the development of music programs in the community, and to open up opportunities for university students to gain practical experience and cultural competency. In this way, REB is using their increased agency to agitate for opportunities for their community, and the socially engaged methodology of the research project supports this, aiming for long term effects. The band, though not overtly political, are "an example of radical change" which aims to encourage a social shift in Maningrida creativity and musical expression (Nguyen, 2024).

9.4 Impact on the Australian Music Industry

REB are part of a growing movement changing perceptions of women's roles in the Australian music industry. Playing instruments, composing and producing an album, employing women engineers, speaking about the value of female role models in interviews: all these actions contribute to creating ripples of growing awareness of gender inequality in music and pushing for change. Through their actions, and the actions of their allies, these female artists demonstrate that women can do anything that men can - and sing about topics of interest to women, from women's perspectives.

Indigenous women are moving into industry roles previously dominated by men. In 2024, Warnindhilyagwa singer-songwriter Emily Wurramara co-produced her album *Nara*, winning an ARIA award and national success. In the same year, REB toured with live sound engineer Letitia Firth, a Lama Lama and Kuku Thaypan woman as well as releasing our own album co-produced by Kune woman and REB member Tara Rostron. Whilst Indigenous artists such as Shellie Morris and Lexine Solomon were producing music from the 1990s, the recent media recognition and commercial success of music produced by Indigenous women points to increasing changes in female agency and acceptance nationally.

REB has also been supported by music industry organisations. In 2024 the Bush Music Fund was set up, which has led to Industry giants such as Spotify and Apple Music including remote Indigenous bands such as REB on their playlists. REB songs have been featured in film and

television, and the recent inclusion of “Ngúddja” in the popular Stan series BUMP in 2023 showed this music moving into mainstream acceptance. This is no mean feat for a song sung in rare Indigenous languages and performed by Indigenous women.

These points show how REB are contributing to changes in the Australian music industry through performing, composing, playing instruments and producing music as women. They are part of a growing number of Indigenous female artists, many of whom are receiving industry accolades and popular success.

9.5 Future Directions: How Far Can the Ripple Effect Spread?

As this research project draws to a close it is relevant to reflect on what has been accomplished by the women of REB and other female artists, and also to question what has not changed in the Maningrida community and the wider music industry. Sadly, gender inequality still permeates all aspects of the music industry. Further to this, the social situation in Maningrida and other remote communities in the NT exhibits disadvantage and social inequity for Indigenous women.

In the Northern Territory, there are significant issues regarding women’s safety and wellbeing. Some of the underlying reasons were discussed in Chapter 3, including jealousy as well as issues of poverty and social disparity. The loss of culture in the Northern Territory is escalating as poverty and systemic discrimination has led to a lack of empowerment impacting people’s lives in Maningrida and Indigenous communities across Australia. In November 2024 NITV reported that eight women have died in the NT from domestic violence since June. These alarming figures are backed by the NT Coroner’s report which stated that there have been at least 87 domestic violence deaths in the NT of women over the past 24 years, and most of them were Indigenous women (Maxwell, R. & Kellaway, M. 2024). These figures suggest that the situation is not improving and possibly worsening for women in the NT.

The band deals with the trauma and fallout from domestic violence and other issues which have been caused or exacerbated by the effects of colonization. It is part of daily life, and this makes it difficult to see a way through. This research has demonstrated that music-centred practice-based-research projects, such as the development of REB, create positive experiences and

promote Indigenous languages, culture and Country. There is a need for carefully planned music and arts programs with on-going funding to encourage social cohesion and community pride, as well as strengthening language and culture. Recording music, releasing video clips and running social media campaigns have been new ways for Indigenous musicians in the NT to stand up to changes and promote and strengthen local cultural practices and languages. Any further research in this area would benefit from Indigenous led applied ethnographic project-based approaches supporting community development.

Whilst on tour in 2024, REB expressed a desire to record a second album and we will continue to tour and perform in Maningrida. I will be managing the band for the foreseeable future. However, I aim to work with the band members supported by Bush Music Fund to build a local team to manage REB, providing stronger governance into the future. The success of REB shows how organisations such as Music NT and BMF can play a key role in artist development. It would be useful to investigate how they could also play a role in developing music managers of remote bands.

In the wider music industry, questions remain about how far visible, grassroots changes coming from female artists can change the wider industry. As described in Chapter 3, gender bias in the music industry starts at the top and men continue to dominate positions of influence over hiring, artist selection and promotion. This affects working environments, contributes to discrimination and sexual harassment and reduced opportunities for women, particularly in technical fields and production. Industry programs aiming at rectifying gender inequality (such as increased funding for female and gender diverse artists, the promotion of gender equality in the boards of government and NGO organisations and radio playlists reflecting gender diversity) have contributed to changes in the industry, leading to better opportunities and representation of women. However, major music companies with great influence over musical tastes, are still dominated by men and this contributes to the continuing lack of opportunities for women to make creative decisions, such as producers, composers and instrumentalists. Any further research into gender inequality in the industry needs to examine all aspects of the industry and bring these perspectives into consideration.

Figure 9.3 Ripple Effect Band, Darwin, NT, 2024

The applied ethnographic research project based on the development of REB on which this thesis is based, has examined what happens when women take control of music making. It has looked at the effects on the lives of the women in the band, on their local community and the wider music industry, finding that Indigenous-led collaborative research projects with female artists contribute to social and musical change. When the band started in 2017, they really did throw a pebble in the water, and the ripples have spread, not only for themselves, but locally in West Arnhem Land and across Australia. The raw creativity, sheer enjoyment and national visibility of this new band from Maningrida establishes a powerful precedent for ongoing change in remote Australia and the Australian music industry.

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Sunrize Band (1993c). Lembana Mani Mani [song]. On *Lunggurruma.* Triple J, ABC Music.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ripple Effect Band songs and listed composers

Songs directly referenced in the thesis are shaded in grey.
Song titles lead to links for online access. Download from REB Bandcamp (Appendix 2).

Title	Album	Composers (APRA registered)	Language	Chapter
Diyama	Wárrwarra	Stephanie Maxwell James, Jodie Kell	Burarra	6
Hunting Song	Wárrwarra	Jolene Lawrence, Jodie Kell, Rona Lawrence	Na-kara	5
Madjarndemed	Wárrwarra	Tara Rostron	Kune	NA
Ngúddja	Wárrwarra	Patricia Gibson, Jodie Kell	Ndjébbana	4
Nabárrdja	ABC Kids	Rona Lawrence, Jodie Kell, Rachel Thomas, Marita Wilton	Na-kara, English	5
Banatjarl	Mayawa	Tara Rostron, Jodie Kell, Patricia Gibson, Rachel Thomas, Rona Lawrence	Mixed	NA
Cyclone	Mayawa	Rachel Thomas, Jodie Kell, Monica Wilton	Ndjébbana	7
Loving and Caring Music Video	Mayawa	Tara Rostron, Jodie Kell	Kune, English	8
Makéddja	Mayawa	Rachel Thomas	Ndjébbana	NA
Na-kalamandjarda Music Video	Mayawa	Rona Lawrence, Jodie Kell, Harriet Fraser-Barbour	English, Na-kara	NA
Na-meyarra	Mayawa	Jolene Lawrence, Jodie Kell, Rona Lawrence	Na-kara	5
People from Maningrida	Mayawa	Unknown	Kuninjku, English	3
Waláya Music Video	Mayawa	Rachel Thomas	Ndjébbana	NA
Wamud	Mayawa	Tara Rostron, Jodie Kell	Kune, English	NA
Cyclone Stereogamous Remix	Single	Rachel Thomas, Jodie Kell, Monica Wilton, Paul Mac, Stereogamous	Ndjébbana	7
Love Song	Single – to be released in 2025	Thomasina Hayes-Bohme, Charlynna Roy, Jodie Cooper, Rowena Wilton	Burarra, English	8
Barra-roddjiba	NA	Rachel Thomas, Lena Djábbiba, Joy Garlbin, Wendy Doolan. Jodie Kell, Rona Lawrence	Ndjébbana	7

Appendix 2: Ripple Effect Band's Online Presence

Social media	Websites	Music streaming
Instagram	https://www.rippleeffectband.com.au/	Bandcamp
Facebook	Linktree	Spotify
TikTok	Bush Music Fund	Apple music
Youtube	PARADISEC	Amazon

Appendix 3: Schedule of Fieldwork

Year	Date	Location	Details	
2017	July-Oct	Maningrida	Fieldwork including performance at MPA store in Maningrida and Bak'bididi Festival in Ramingining (Sept)	4 months
2017	Oct 30	Milingimbi	Gatjirrk Festival	1 week
2017	Dec	Sydney	Recording Wárrwarra EP at Sydney Conservatorium of Music	10 days
2018	May	Release Wárrwarra		
2018	June	Maningrida – Barunga – Darwin - Maningrida	Maningrida rehearsals for performances at Barunga Festival and Darwin Fringe Festival	3 weeks
2018	July	Sydney	Tara, Patricia & Jolene attend Wingara Mura Winter Program at Sydney Con	1 week
2018	Aug	Maningrida – Gulkula – Maningrida	Garma Festival, rehearsals and performance	3 weeks
2018	Aug	Alice Springs	Bush Bands workshops and performance	1 week
2018	Oct	Adelaide	Tarnanthi	1 week
2018	Dec	Perth	MSA Conference	1 week
2019	Feb	Nannup, WA	Nannup Festival	
2019	July-Oct	Maningrida, Korlobidahdah, Nakalamandjarda, Nardilmuk, Milingimbi	Fieldwork and Creative development work funded by Creative Australia Sista Sounds workshops Songwriting	4 months
2020	Jan	Melbourne, Launceston - Hobart	Mona FOMA Festival, Mona performance and self-promoted shows at the Gaso & Thornbury Bowling Club	2 weeks
2020	Aug	Darwin	Darwin Festival Opening night Started recording with Skinnyfish Music at Dr G. Studio	2 weeks

2020	Aug	Darwin	Recording Nabárrdja Planning for Orchestral Project	2 weeks
2020	Aug-Oct	Maningrida	Fieldwork School projects – Rheumatic Heart Project	3 months
2021	March – June	Newcastle & Sydney	Tara staying with me and working on the album	3 months
2021	April	Hunter Valley	Gum Ball festival with Yabok	1 week
2021	May	Banatjarl	Banatjarl Wimins' Forum	2 weeks
2021	May	Maningrida	Fieldwork	2 months
2021	June	Barunga	Barunga festival	2 weeks
2022	Aug	Sydney	Rachel and Ravis travel for the performance of 'Cyclone' at Cantabile Music festival at Sydney Opera House	2 weeks
2022	Aug	Kalkarindji	Freedom day Festival	1 week
2022	Sept-Oct	Grafton, Newcastle, Sydney, Wagga, Castlemaine, Melbourne	Kabba Kabbura Tour	3 weeks
RESEARCH ETHICS COMPLETED – RESEARCH OUTPUTS				
2023	March	Release Walaya Single		
2023	March	Adelaide	WOMADelaide	1 week
2023	July - Aug	Maningrida	Checking on research and reporting to community AFL Grand Final performance Sydney Con exchange visit	2 months
2023	Aug	Release Loving and Caring Single		
2023	Aug	Darwin	Darwin Festival performance at the Railway Club	1 week
2023	Oct	Sydney - Melbourne	Sydney Con workshops with Kintore Kungka Band at Marrickville Bowling Club Half Strange Festival at Thornbury Bowling Club	10 days
2024	July	Release Na-kalamandjarda Single		
2024	July - Aug	Maningrida, Darwin, Daminmin, Tennant creek	Mayawa Album tour part 1	5 weeks
2024	Sept	Release Mayawa album		
2024	Nov-Oct	Sydney, Merimbula, Ulladulla (NSW), Canberra (ACT), Wangaratta, Castlemaine, Main Ridge, Melbourne, Geelong (Victoria)	Mayawa album tour part 2	3 weeks

Appendix 4: List of Interviews conducted by the author

Date	Description	File name	People	Location	Where to access
20200813	Barra roddjiba Films	JK1-BR004	Rachel Thomas (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewee) Natalia Laska (recorder) Joy Garlbin (interviewee)	Maningrida, NT	https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/BR004
	Cyclone song with Rona and Rachel				
20170930	Interview with Mary Djabalag and her daughter Cindy Jinmarabynana regarding the origins of the Diyama Kun-borrk	JK1-DY003	Mary Djabalag (interviewee) Cindy Jinmarabynana (interviewee, translator) Jodie Kell (interviewer) Megan Atfield (Recorder)	Maningrida, NT	https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/DY003
20200914	Interview with Rachel Thomas about cyclone Song	JK1-CY002	Rachel Thomas (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewer) Genevieve Meehan (recorder)	Nightcliff, NT	https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/CY002
20171030	Interview with Anjawartunga Maxwell about Diyama, as well as singing	JK1-DY002	Anjawartunga Maxwell (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewer and recorder)	Wíwa music studio, Maningrida, NT	https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/DY002
20190430	Interview with Jessica Phillips about the Diyama Song	JK1-DY005	Jessica Phillipa (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewer and recorder)	Telephone, Maningrida and Newcastle	https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/DY005
20190415	Telephone interview with Cindy Jinmarabynana regarding the Diyama song and story	JK1-DY006	Cindy Jinmarabynana (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewer and recorder)	Telephone, Maningrida and Newcastle	https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/DY006
20170812	Interview with Jolene Lawrence regarding Hunting Song	JK1-HS003	Jolene Lawrence (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewer and recorder)	Wíwa music studio, Maningrida, NT	https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/HS003
20201105	Interview with Tara Rostron regarding love songs	JK1-LS003	Tara Rostron (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewer and recorder)	Telephone, Maningrida and Newcastle	

Appendix 5: List of Media Interviews referred to in the Thesis

Audio Visual Media					
Date	**Description**	**File name**	**People**	**Location**	**Where to access**
20180608	Ngúddja - interview at Barunga festival 2018, Interview conducted by Spotify Music regarding the Ngúddja song and the languages of the Maningrida region	JK1-NG003	Stephanie Maxwell James (interviewee) Patricia Gibson (interviewee) Jolene Lawrence (interviewee) Marita Wilton (interviewee) Tara Rostron (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewee) Rachel Thomas (interviewee) Rona Lawrence (interviewee) James Henry (recorder)	Barunga Festival, NT	https://catalog.paradisec.org.au/repository/JK1/NG003
20180920	'That's deadly!': Aboriginal women centre stage at Bush Bands Bash		Marita Wilton (interviewee)	Bush Bands Bash, Mparntwe	https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/thats-deadly-aboriginal-women-centre-stage-at-bush-bands-bash/99sy6uy9s
20191219	The Ripple Effect Band Documentary, produced by First Nation Television. Filmed at the Milingimbi Gatjirrk Festival.		Stephanie Maxwell James (interviewee) Patricia Gibson (interviewee) Jolene Lawrence (interviewee) Marita Wilton (interviewee) Tara Rostron (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewee) Rachel Thomas (interviewee) Rona Lawrence (interviewee) First Nation TV (interviewer and recorder)	Milingimbi Gattjirrk Cultural Festival	https://youtu.be/G4xO5kmeGig?si=AwIMXw7OCcii-2Xb
20230909	The Ripple Effect Band are creating waves: Awaye, ABC Radio National		Tara Rostron (interviewee) Jolene Lawrence (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewee) Rudi Bremer (producer & interviewer)	Darwin ABC Studio	https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/awaye/ripple-effect-band/102828432
20240807	Arnhem Land band inspiring women back home		Rona Lawrence (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewee) Patricia Karvelas (interviewer) Luke Siddham Dundon (Producer) Kimberley Price (Producer)	Darwin ABC Studio	https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/radionational-breakfast/ripple-effect/104193042?utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared

20240826	Ripple Effect Band Feature 2024 - VAMP EP 178		Jolene Lawrence (interviewee) Tara Rostron (interviewee) Jodie Kell (interviewee) Rona Lawrence (interviewee) Patricia Gibson (interviewee) Courtney Bailey (interviewer) Rod Bailaam (Producer, recorder) Todd Williams (Producer, recorder)	Bustard Town, Darwin NT	https://youtu.be/iDdcrlVdePk?si=zICFspUKGGiQMvKG
20240803	Ripple Effect Band on The CAAMA Music Show			Tennant Creek, NT	https://youtu.be/MK_BxaUYpOo?si=EcW0i9WA8KvzPTAu

Written Media					
Date	**Description**		**Author and publication**	**Online/Print**	**Where to access**
20180615	It's a blackout': Barunga festival packed with music and meaning: All-Indigenous mainstage lineup features Dr G tributes, sons of Northern Territory music legends		Kate Hennessy: The Guardian	Online	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/jun/15/its-a-blackout-barunga-festival-packed-with-music-and-meaning
20210812	Calling the Djómi spirits in new Indigenous-classical music collaboration, Barra-róddjiba		Steven Dow, Limelight magazine	Online	https://limelight-arts.com.au/features/calling-the-djomi-spirits-in-barra-roddjiba-a-new-indigenous-classical-music-collaboration/
20240711	Song You Need to Know: Ripple Effect Band, 'Loving and Caring': The all-women's band from Maningrida, Arnhem Land have just been given a major career boost		Conor Lochrie: Rolling Stone	Online	https://au.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/ripple-effect-band-loving-and-caring-song-you-need-to-know-63513/

20240724	Ripple Effect Band announces debut album Mayawa		Joseph Guenzler: National Indigenous Times	Online	https://nit.com.au/24-07-2024/12682/ripple-effect-band-announces-debut-album-mayawa
20230908	More than Music: How Ripple Effect Band Continues Culture and Celebrates Difference		Australian Mosaic	Print and online	https://fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Australian-Mosaic-Issue-58.pdf

Appendix 6: List of performances and recordings of performances

Year	Date	Event Name	Venue	Place and state	Media	PDSC Archive
2017	Aug 17	Balmarrk late night shopping	BAC Balmarrk Supermarket	Maningrida, NT	NA	JK1-REB20170817
2017		Maningrida College Pool Party	Maningrida Pool	Maningrida, NT	NA	NA
2017		Maningrida College Family Day	Maningrida college	Maningrida, NT	NA	NA
2017	Sept 7	MPA Late Night Shopping	MPA Shop	Maningrida, NT	NA	JK1-REB20170907
2017	Sept 15-16	Bak'bididi Festival	Ramingining Sports Ground	Ramingining, NT	Bak'bididi Showreel	NA
2017	Oct 15-16	Gatjirrk Festival	Milingimbi School	Milingimbi, NT	Gatjirrk Festival Highlights	REB201710
2017	Dec	Ripple Effect Band & Lulu Liu	The Laundromat	Gadigal / Annandale, Sydney, NSW	NA	NA
2018	June 8-10	Barunga Festival	Barunga Community	Barunga, NT	facebook_Spotify	
2018	July 8-10	Garma Festival	Garma Festival Site	Gulkula, East Arnhem Land, NT	NA	JK1-REB201808
2018	July 17	Darwin Fringe Festival	Browns Mart	Darwin NT	Browns Mart	
2018	Sept 16	Bush Bands Bash	Telegraph Station	Mparntwe / Alice Springs, NT	youtube	JK1-REB201809
2018		Tarnanthi	Art Gallery of South Australia	Tarndanya / Adelaide, South Australia	Tarnanthi_ICTV	NA
2019		Nannup Festival		Nannup, WA	NA	NA
2019	July 20	AFL Grand Final	Maningrida Sports Ground	Maningrida NT	NA	JK1-REB20190720
2019		Territory Day	Maningrida Sports Ground	Maningrida NT	NA	
2019		Gatjirrk Festival	Milingimbi College	Milingimbi, NT	REB Documentary_First Nations TV	JK1-REB20191007
2019		Mahbilil Festival	Jabiru	Jabiru, NT	NA	JK1-REB201909

2019		Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation 40-year Celebration	Maningrida Arts Centre	Maningrida, NT	NA	JK1-REB20191107
2020	Jan 15	From North to South Tour	Thornbury Bowling Club	Naarm / Thornbury, Melbourne Victoria	NA	JK1-REB202001a
2020	Jan 16	From North to South Tour & Lexine Solomon & Lil Kootsie	The Gasometer	Naarm / Collingwood, Victoria	NA	JK1-REB202001a
2020	Jan 18	From North to South Tour Mona FOMA	Mona FOMA Festival Main Stage	Launceston, Lutruwita/Tasmania	NA	JK1-REB202001b
2020	Jan 20	From North to South Tour MONA Summer Festival	MONA	Hobart, Lutruwita/Tasmania	NA	NA
2020	April 25	Gumball Festival_Covid 20	Online	Online	NA	JK1-REB20200425
2020	Aug 16	Darwin Festival Opening Night	Festival Park	Garramilla / Darwin, NT	NA	REB202008
2021	May 12-14	Banatjarl Strong Women's Forum	Opening night stage	Banatjarl, Katherine, NT	Banatjarl Showreel	NA
2021	June 9	Barunga Festival	Main stage	Barunga , NT	NA	NA
2021	June 10	Barunga Festival & Darwin Symphony Orchestra	Main stage	Barunga, NT	NA	JK1-BR001
2021	Aug 2	Garma Festival	Garma Festival	Gulkula, East Arnhem Land, NT	NA	NA
2021		Wavelengths Introduction & Darwin Symphony Orchestra	Lucky Bat Café	Garramilla / Darwin, NT Rapid Creek	NA	NA
2021	Aug 12	Wavelengths Darwin Festival & Darwin Symphony Orchestra	Darwin Entertainment Centre	Garramilla / Darwin, NT	NA	JK1-BR005
2021	Oct 25-27	Lúrra Festival	Maningrida Sports ground	Maningrida, NT	NA	JK1-REB1025
2021		Ripple Effect Band unplugged	Lucky Bat Café	Garramilla / Darwin, NT Rapid Creek	NA	NA
2021		Ripple Effect Band	Dinah Beach Yacht Club	Garramilla / Darwin, NT Dinah Beach	NA	NA
2022	May 8	International Women's Day	Maningrida Youth Centre	Maningrida, NT	NA	NA

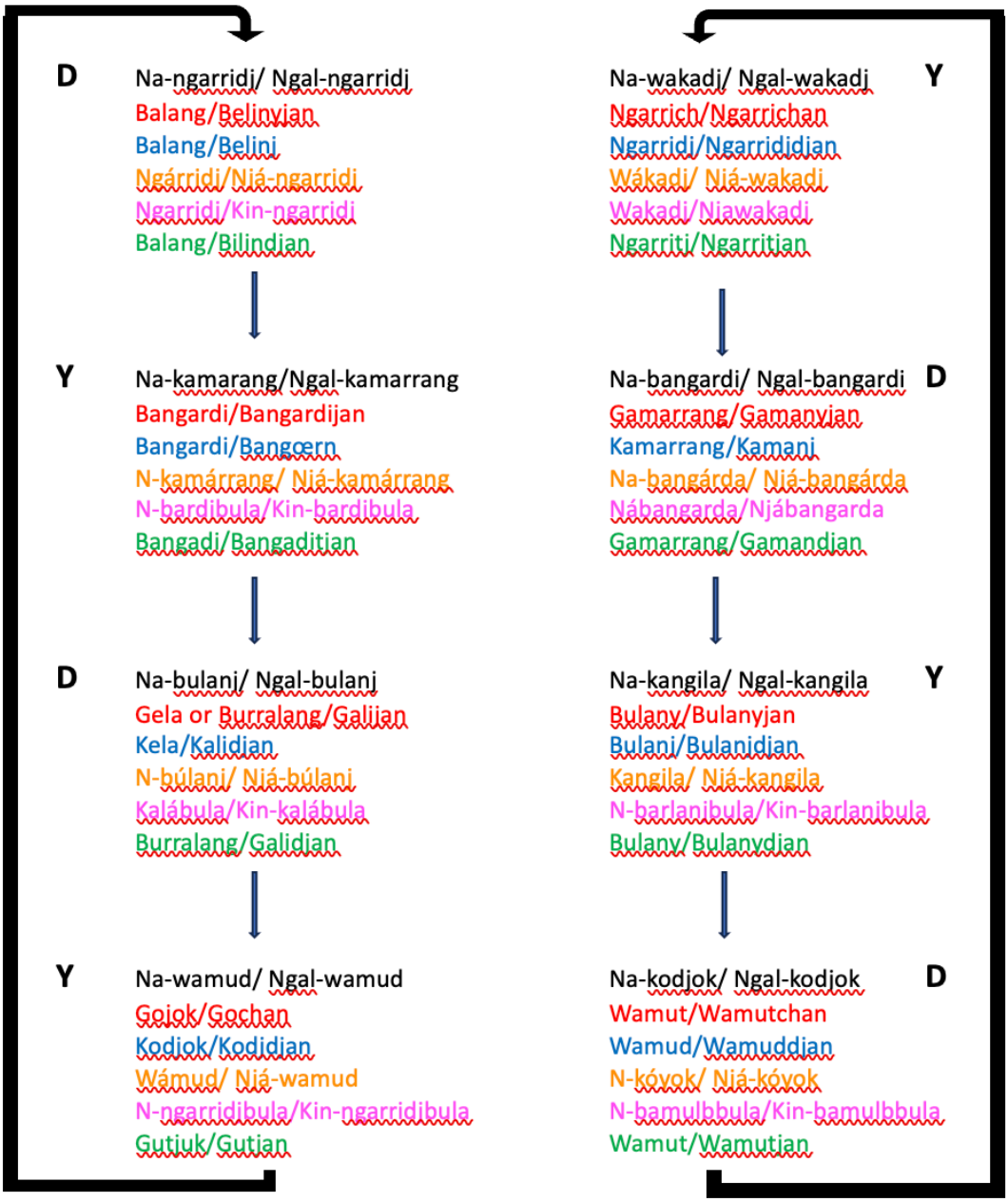
2022	May 16	Sydney Conservatorium Library	Sydney Conservatorium of Music	Gadigal / Sydney, NSW	Sydney Con Library	NA
2022	Aug 15	Cantabile Festival	Sydney Opera House	Gadigal / Sydney, NSW	Cantabile Arts Unit, NSW	JK1-REBCY004
2022	Aug 26-28	Freedom Day Festival		Kalkarindji, NT	NA	NA
2022	Sept 23-25	Kappa Kabbura Tour	Tanamon Valley Festival	Gumbayngirr / Pillar Valley, NSW	NA	JK1-REB20220923
2022	Sept 25	Kappa Kabbura Tour	The Colony Bee	Bundjalung / Lennox Head	NA	JK1-REB202225
2022	Sept 29	Kappa Kabbura Tour & Ena Malibu	Watt Street	Mulubinba / Newcastle, NSW	NA	JK1-REB20220929
2022	Oct 1	Kappa Kabbura Tour & Ena Malibu	Earp Distillery	Mulubinba / Newcastle, NSW	NA	JK1-REB20221001
2022	Oct 2	Kappa Kabbura Tour & FRMGs	Petersham Bowling Club	Gadigal / Petersham, Sydney, NSW	NA	JK1-REB1002
2022	Oct 7	Kappa Kabbura Tour	Bridge Hotel	Dja Dja Wurrung / Castlemaine, Victoria	NA	JK1-REB20221008
2022	Oct 8	Kappa Kabbura Tour & Ta'sia	Mama Chen's	Naarm / Footscray, Melbourne Victoria	NA	JK1-REB20221009
2022	Oct 9	Kappa Kabbura Tour & Gut Ache	Northcote Social Club	Naarm / Northcote, Melbourne Victoria	NA	
2023	Mar 11-13	WOMADelaide	Adelaide Botanic Gardens	Tarndanya, Adelaide South Australia	Official Showreel featuring "Ngúddja" WOMADelaide Friday night	NA
2023	Aug 12	AFL Grand Final	Maningrida Sports Ground	Maningrida, NT	NA	JK1-REB20230812
2023	Aug 17	Maningrida College Concert	Maningrida College Stage	Maningrida, NT	NA	NA
2023	Aug 18	Darwin Festival & Serina Pech	Darwin Railway Club	Garramilla / Darwin, NT Parap	NA	JK1-20230817
2023	Sept 30-Oct 2	East Arnhem Live	Nhulunbuy Sports Ground	Nhulunbuy, NT	NA	NA
2023	Oct 12	Lunchtime Concert & Karnta Kungka	Sydney Conservatorium of Music	Gadigal / Sydney, NSW	NA	JK1-REB20231012

2023	Oct 12	Ripple Effect Band & Kintore Kungkas, Stiff Gins, Lemonise and Naya Cook	Marrickville Bowling Club	Gadigal / Marrickville, Sydney, NSW	NA	JK1-REB20231012
2023	Oct 14	Half Strange Festival	Thornbury Bowling Club	Melbourne, Victoria (Thornbury)	NA	NA
2024	July 20	Mayawa Tour NAIDOC 2024 with Coloured Stone Ripple Effect Band Sunrize Band Djolpa Mackenzie & Gather Girls	MPA Shop	Maningrida, NT	NA	JK1-REB20240720
2024	July 25-27	Mayawa Tour	Daminmin Festival	Humpty Doo, NT	REB Social Media	
2024	Aug 1	Mayawa Tour & Jahquavis	Bustard Town	Garramilla / Darwin, NT	NA	JK1-REB20240801
2024	Aug 3-4	Mayawa Tour	Desert Harmony Festival	Jurnkkurakurr / Tennant, Creek, NT	Desert Harmony_CAAMA	NA
2024	Sept 20-22	Lúrra Festival	Sports Oval	Maningrida, NT	NLC	JK1-REB20240920
2024	Nov 6	Mayawa tour	Phoenix Central	Gadigal / Chippendale, Sydney, NSW	Phoenix YouTube Phoenix_insta	NA
2024	Nov 7	Mayawa tour & Lemonise	Marrickville Bowling Club	Gadigal / Marrickville, Sydney, NSW	NA	JK1-2024
2024	Nov 9	Mayawa tour	Giiyong Festival	Eden, NSW	NA	NA
2024	Nov 15	Mayawa tour & Lemonise	Marlin Hotel	Ulladulla, NSW	NA	NA
2024	Nov 16	Mayawa tour	Gang Gang Café	Ngambri / Canberra, ACT	NA	NA
2024	Nov 21	Mayawa tour	Live to Air, Triple R Radio	Naarm / Melbourne, Victoria	Youtube RRR Full Audio at RRR	NA
2024	Nov 22	Mayawa tour & Amos Roach	The Bridge Hotel	Dja Dja Wurrung / Castlemaine, Victoria	NA	NA
2024	Nov 23	Mayawa tour & Amos Roach	The Pig and Whistle	Bunwurrung / Main Ridge, Victoria	NA	NA
2024	Nov 24	Mayawa tour & Amos Roach	Northcote Social Club	Naarm / Northcote, Melbourne Victoria	NA	NA

2024	Nov 25	Mayawa tour & Amos Roach	Murrun Indigenous Hub	Djilang / Geelong, Victoria	NA	NA

Appendix 7: *Malk* / Skin Name Conversion Chart

Names of the eight different subsections (skin names) in the six main languages referred to in this thesis which are spoken by REB members.



Languages

Kune *Burarra/Gun-nartpa* *Kuninjku* *Kunwinjku/Kun-barlang* *Ndjébbana* *Na-kara*

D skin names are of Dhuwa moiety and Y skin names are of Yirrchinga moiety.
The black arrows are matrilineal descent, for example, on the right-hand side, a ngal-Wakadj woman will have na-Bangardi and ngal-Bangardi children. Ngal-Bangardi women will have na-Kangila and ngal-Kangila children.

This table is based on the *North-central Arnhem Land Subsection Conversion Table* accessed through the Bininj Kunwok website (no longer available) and the *Kunwinjku Subsection System (Skin Names)* accessed from https://www.bininjkunwok.org.au/pages/kinship

Appendix 8: *Malk* (Skin names) of Ripple Effect Band

Band member	Skin name (Ndjébbana)	Relationship to the author	The author calls by this name
Author	njá-búlanj	I, me	ngayábba (Ndj)
Rachel Thomas	njá-wamud	Daughter (reciprocal caring)	ngákarda (Ndj)
Tara Rostron	njá-kamárrang	Mother (reciprocal caring/learning)	karrang (Kune)
Rona Lawrence	njá-kóyok	daughter-in-law, poison cousin (avoidance / obligation)	djongok (N)
Jolene Lawrence	njá-kóyok	daughter-in-law, poison cousin (avoidance / obligation)	djongok (N)
Patricia Gibson	nja-wakadj	great aunt mother's father's sister (learning)	mámam (Ndj)
Stephanie Maxwell James	njá-kangila	sister-in-law, (friendship)	Galikali (B)
Marita Wilton	nja- wakadj	great aunt mother's father's sister (learning)	mámam (Ndj)

Appendix 9: Acknowledgement of Country by Rachel Djíbbama Thomas at the Cantabile Festival, Sydney Opera House, September 2022

Ngayappa nga-wala Rachel Djíbbama Thomas. I'm from Maningrida, Arnhem Land, in the top end of the Northern Territory. My people are the Kunibídji people, and my clan is Nadjordjara.

My skin is nja-wamut and my friend here, Jodie, her skin is nja-bulany. She calls me daughter. My grandson is here tonight. His skin is N-kamarrang.

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners and djunggay of this land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation.

We pay our respects to elders past and present and thank them for welcoming us onto this beautiful country.

We acknowledge all the First Nation People here tonight.

We are gathered here to celebrate music, song and these wonderful children.

In my Country, we have ceremonies that bring everyone together. We dance Bunggul for different songs from different tribes in different languages, but music brings us all together.

We know that Aboriginal people have been dancing and singing here on this Country in the same way for a long time.

We know they continue keeping culture strong and looking after the land.

Tonight, the children will sing many songs. One song is called 'Cyclone'.

I wrote this song with Jodie and Monica about the 2006 Cyclone Monica that came to Maningrida. It was very powerful and that was very dangerous.

But the Djómi water spirits swam out in the ocean to fight the big wind. They saved Maningrida and no people were hurt.

I will call out to the Djómi spirits in my language Ndjébbana. I will tell them that the children will sing this song and tell their story.

Thank you to David who translated the song into English and arranged it for the strings.

Thank you to the amazing young music players.

And thank you to all the children and their teachers for learning my song.

I am so excited to hear it.

Appendix 10: Coverage Tracker Report for *Mayawa* compiled by Thinking Loud PR

This report shows the extent of media coverage of *Mayawa* in 2024.

FEEDBACK			
			(Rescheduled for 2025) *I'm really interested in hearing more about the Ripple Effect Band – I'd love to set up an interview with one of the girls from the band to talk about the path they're setting for women from Arnhem Land and their story of being the first all-female rock group from Maningrida.* *It would be great to do this interview done on Friday if possible? Additionally we'd need to do the interview in English so whichever one of the women you think would be best / is most confident would be ideal for this.*
BBC World Service	04/12/2024	Interview	
JOY 94.9	19/11/2024	Interview	*Interview scheduled, band missed phone call*
			(No response from outlet)
			Thanks so much for this pitch! I love it.
NITV	30/10/2024	Interview	*Let me chat with NITV and get this approved and I'll be back to you asap.*
PBS	19/09/2024	AOTW	*Is the album only out digitally? Do you have any physical stock for our member giveaways per chance? No issue if not. I would just need 3 individual Bandcamp download codes if it's only digital.*
			(Interview completed, feature to run in April 2025) *Juliette here from Gusher Magazine. Shari from Common State passed along your email. I'm reaching out as we'd love to feature Ripple Effect in our next issue, due out around April next year. Would we be able to line up an interview and (low key) photoshoot while they're in Melbourne for Always Live?* *We'd need around 40 mins for an interview.*
Gusher Magazine	10/09/2024	Interview & Photoshoot	*Regarding the shoot, would it be possible to see any press photos you have on file before I look further into that?*
			(No response from outlet)
			Hi Emily,
10 Magazine	22/08/2024	10 Questions	*Would love to! They're amazing. I'll send over some questions this week x*
			(Interview held for live at RRR performance)
RRR	22/07/2024	Interview	*Amazing, thanks Emily! love this - we'll get it around to everyone and look into an interview*
			(Couldn't align with on-ground availability)
			We're adding to rotation tomorrow :)
FBI Radio	25/07/2024	Rotation	*Any chance the band will be in Sydney this year? Would love to tee up an in-studio chat.*
RUSSH	13/09/2024	Feature	*Thanks so much, will put in Monthly wrap and next print review.*
PUBLISHED			
OUTLET	**DATE**	**TYPE (E.G., ANNOUNCE, REVIEW, FEATURE)**	**URL**
MAYAWA			
Aus Music Scene	13/09/2024	Tour Announcement	https://www.ausmusicscene.com.au/news/ripple-effect-band-announces-forthcoming-tour-dates
Aus Music Scene	13/09/2024	Playlist Addition	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3qnDzWns6sKbvp6DwlgAmT?si=a78b657881eb4139

National Indigenous Times	13/09/2024	Feature	https://nit.com.au/13-09-2024/13689/ripple-effect-band-releases-debut-album-mayawa
Forte Magazine	13/09/2024	Tour Announcement	https://fortemag.com.au/ripple-effect-band-bring-new-album-across-victoria-this-november/
Double J	16/09/2024	Playlist Addition	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3eVaP90RyWrOKu6Gejw5Eg?si=b986eae4e6634c49
RRR	16/09/2024	Playlist Addition	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2FMLapEEW3AjJlmlyAdCIo?si=159646e7218a4b2f
Australian Music Scene	16/09/2024	Playlist Addition	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3qnDzWns6sKbvp6DwlgAmT?si=8f21bb07b0634126
Rolling Stone Australia	17/09/2024	Best Australian Music	https://au.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/best-australian-music-september-9th-15h-67033/l/ripple-effect-band--mayawa/
Amplify	20/09/2024	Playlist Addition	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2qUKMBnqs63ejmswHkqY0w?si=L7wsdlkFSJGfEVaNwvl6sg&nd=1&dlsi=0730b8f454ff49f3
The Australian	01/10/2024	Feature	https://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/music/ripple-effect-band-tours-debut-album-mayawa-as-arnhem-sisters-do-it-for-themselves/news-story/e7b7f51fd4169eb06aa67c6c7ba1da27
Double J	07/11/2024	Interview	https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/doublej-arvos/arnhem-lands-ripple-effect-band-double-j/104573928
The Guardian	20/11/2024	Interview	https://www.theguardian.com/music/2024/nov/20/ripple-effect-band-the-all-female-rock-group-first-nations-languages
AWAYE	23/11/2024	Interview	https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/awaye/ripple-effect-band/104629646
NA-KALAMANDJARDA			
The Music	24/07/2024	Announcement	https://themusic.com.au/news/ripple-effect-band-announce-debut-album-mayawa/Rvr0WFtaXVw/24-07-24
National Indigenous Times	24/07/2024	Announcement	https://nit.com.au/24-07-2024/12682/ripple-effect-band-announces-debut-album-mayawa
auspOp now!	24/07/2024	Playlist Addition	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0QUsgpmuSAtjzKQffY1Coe?si=f371272b58bb41ed
RTRfm	25/07/2024	Interview	https://rtrfm.com.au/show-episode/breakfast-2024-07-25/
Aus Music Scene	25/07/2024	Playlist Addition	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3qnDzWns6sKbvp6DwlgAmT?si=a1fd28d75b5a4afa
Aus Music Scene	25/07/2024	Interview	https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9046oVS2_y/
FBi Radio	26/07/2024	Playlist Addition	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3AQJTEV98XaptAILSho9bF?si=d1bded61f4394a0f
Amnplify	30/07/2024	Playlist Addition	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2qUKMBnqs63ejmswHkqY0w?si=L7wsdlkFSJGfEVaNwvl6sg&nd=1&dlsi=0730b8f454ff49f3
2SER	01/08/2024	Interview	https://2ser.com/jodie-kell-on-ripple-effect-bands-debut-album-mayawa/
ABC Radio National	07/08/2024	Interview	https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/radionational-breakfast/ripple-effect/104193042
ABC Radio National	07/08/2024	Socials Post - Interview	https://www.instagram.com/abcnews_au/reel/C-ggL-Hy6fs/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D
LOVING AND CARING MV			
National Indigenous Times	2/7/2024	Announcement	https://nit.com.au/02-07-2024/12292/ripple-effect-band-inspires-with-new-loving-and-caring-music-video

Happy Mag	2/7/2024	Announcement	https://happymag.tv/watch-ripple-effect-band-drop-music-video-for-loving-and-caring/
AAA Backstage	2/7/2024	Announcement	https://aaabackstage.com/ripple-effect-band-releases-moving-music-video-for-loving-and-caring/
Aus Music Scene	2/7/2024	Announcement	https://www.ausmusicscene.com.au/news/ripple-effect-band-announce-forthcoming-northern-territory-tour
Rolling Sone	11/7/2024	Announcement	https://au.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/ripple-effect-band-loving-and-caring-song-you-need-to-know-63513/
NT News	23/7/2024	Announcement	https://www.ntnews.com.au/news/ripple-effect-band-lunch-music-video-for-loving-and-caring-announce-territory-tour/news-story/eaa2cd08651d29d17b45bae64705bc61?btr=2d5473c1e1482bf1884b94f9db5da69d
NT News (print)	23/7/2024	Announcement	https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/co2zbzv78nhxooovfnhol/Ripple-Effect-Band-NT-News-Loving-and-Caring.pdf?rlkey=8c2zd5v07pm8ofvn6s0ztwxn1&st=2i8zxvtp&dl=0

RADIO	DATE	NAME	RESPONSE / FEEDBACK
MAYAWA			
2SER	13/09/2024	Lachlan	Added to Rotation
RRR	13/09/2024	Simon	AOTW
Triple J Unearthed	16/09/2024	DRH	Added to Rotation
Double J	16/09/2024	Dot	Added to Rotation
PBS	19/09/2024	Firas	AOTW
FBi Radio	19/09/2024	Lindsay	AOTW
RTR	30/09/2024	Matt	Feature Release
CYCLONE			
2SER	18/09/2024	Lachlan	Spun 3x so far
RRR	18/09/2024	Simon	Spun 3x so far
FBi Radio	18/09/2024	Lindsay	Spun 1x so far
RTR	18/09/2024	Matt	Spun 3x so far
Double J	19/09/2024	Dot	Spun 2x so far
SYN	23/09/2024	Team	Spun 1x so far
2SER	25/09/2024	Lachlan	Spun 5x so far
Edge Radio	25/09/2024	Team	Spun 2x so far
RTR	26/09/2024	Matt	Spun 4x so far
Double J	26/09/2024	Dot	Spun 4x so far

RRR	26/09/2024	Simon	Spun 4x so far
FBi Radio	26/09/2024	Lindsay	Spun 9x so far
PBS	26/09/2024	Firas	Spun 2x so far
3MDR	11/11/2024	Team	Spun 1x so far
RRR	23/11/2024	Simon	Spun 13x so far
Edge Radio	25/11/2024	Team	Spun 3x so far
FBi Radio	04/12/2024	Lindsay	Spun 13x so far
PBS	09/12/2024	Firas	Spun 3x so far
RTR	11/11/2024	Matt	Spun 10x so far
Triple J	15/12/2024	Nick	Spun 1x so far
2SER	15/12/2024	Lachlan	Spun 16x so far
Double J	15/12/2024	Dot	Spun 28x so far
NA-KALAMANDJARDA			
FBi Radio	24/07/2024	Lindsay	Spin on Wednesday Mornings with Ben Hanson
Double J	24/07/2024	Dot	Spin on Arvos with Stacy Gougoulis
RTR	25/07/2024	Matt	Spun 2x so far
2SER	25/07/2024	Lachlan	Spun 1x so far
FBi Radio	26/07/2024	Lindsay	Spun 3x so far
2SER	26/07/2024	Lachlan	Added to rotation
FBi Radio	26/07/2024	Lindsay	Added to rotation
2SER	05/08/2024	Lachlan	Spun 11x so far
RTR	05/08/2024	Matt	Spun 11x so far
FBi Radio	05/08/2024	Lindsay	Spun 8x so far
RTR	20/08/2024	Matt	Spun 17x so far
FBi Radio	13/09/2024	Lindsay	Spun 25x so far
RTR	13/09/2024	Matt	Spun 20x so far
2SER	13/09/2024	Lachlan	Spun 20x so far
4ZZZ	16/09/2024	Team	Spun 3x so far
RRR	17/09/2024	Simon	Spun 9x so far
FBi Radio	18/09/2024	Lindsay	Spun 28x so far
Triple J Unearthed	18/09/2024	DRH	Spun 2x so far

RTR	19/09/2024	Matt	Spun 21x so far
PBS	23/09/2024	Firas	Spun 1x so far
2SER	23/09/2024	Lachlan	Spun 21x so far
Triple J Unearthed	25/09/2024	DRH	Spun 5x so far
RTR	26/09/2024	Matt	Spun 23x so far
FBi Radio	26/09/2024	Lindsay	Spun 31x so far
RRR	26/09/2024	Simon	Spun 10x so far
Double J	07/11/2024	Dot	Spun 3x so far
Edge Radio	08/11/2024	Team	Spun 8x so far
3MDR	11/11/2024	Team	Spun 4x so far
FBi Radio	13/11/2024	Lindsay	Spun 37x so far
3NNN	19/11/2024	Team	Spun 1x so far
2SER	23/11/2024	Lachlan	Spun 22x so far
4ZZZ	06/12/2024	Team	Spun 4x so far
RRR	12/12/2024	Simon	Spun 17x so far
RTR	12/12/2024	Matt	Spun 29x so far
triple j Unearthed	15/12/2024	DRH	Spun 33x so far

Appendix 11: Song lyrics of Ripple Effect Band songs

1. Banatjarl
2. Barra-róddjiba
3. Cyclone
4. Diyama
5. Hunting Song
6. Love Song
7. Loving and Caring
8. Madjarndemed
9. Makéddja
10. Nabárrdja – The Little Crab
11. Na-kalamandjarda
12. Na-meyarra
13. Ngúddja
14. People from Maningrida
15. Waláya
16. Wamud

1. Banatjarl

By Tara Rostron, Jodie Kell, Rachel Thomas, Patricia Gibson, Rona Lawrence
English and mixed languages

Banatjarl is a Healing Place on Jawoyn country managed by the Banatjarl Strongbala Wumins Grup. Ripple Effect Band was invited to attend their forum in 2021. The verses sing the word for 'women' in the languages of the different groups in attendance.

Verse 1
All the ngalmuka and the binjipa
All the gama, barra-ngarripa
All the ngarrama, daluk, miyalk
Bink and girriji
Yimre Yimre stand strong *(Come here! Come here! – Kune language)*
Yimre Yimre stand strong

Chorus
We are Country, we are sisters
Come together, telling stories
Ooh all the women
We are healthy, we are strong at Banatjarl

Verse 2
Karnta karnta and the minyma
Kungka palngun arr-kucha

All the arrele, karrikat ngila
Strongbala wimun
Kuwa kuwa stand strong (*(Come here! Come here! – Burarra language)*
Kuwa kuwa stand strong

Chorus
We are Country, we are sisters
Come together, telling stories
Ooh all the women
We are healthy, we are strong at Banatjarl
Rise up rise up yeah
Rise up rise up yeah

Languages in This Song
Ngalmuka: Jawoyn
Gama: Burarra
Daluk: Bininj Kunwok
Miyalk: Yolngu
Ngarráma: Ndjébbana
Barra-ngarripa: Na-kara
Kungka: Luritja/Pintupi
Karnta Karnta: Warlpiri
Minyma: Pitjantjatjara
Ngila: Yanyuwa
Girriji: Waramungu
Arelhe: Arrernte
Palngun: Murrinh Patha
Karrikat: Rembarrnga
Strongbala wimun: Kriol

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2. Barra-róddjiba
By Rachel Thomas, Lena Djabíbba, Joy Garlbin, Jodie Kell, Wendy Doolan, Rona Lawrence
Ndjébbana language

Djómi warábba-na ka-lakaláya Nja-kamarrang ya-wolo-béna
Balawúrrwurr ka-rlarrabína
One djómi, he saw that the Cyclone Monica was coming this way,
The wind had come up, started to blow stronger.

Yálawa ka-wákkana ka-ngadjína yibérra ngana barra-róddjiba
Yálawa barra-béna ngana wíba Kabulyarra

So, he went back and told the other djómi spirit children,
Some of them went inland to Kabulyarra.

Kurrula karlábaya ki-yirríya ngana Kabalko
Barra-nganjónganja barra-nabíyana
The other djómi dived into the ocean and swam out to Kabalko,
They turned the water black (with their bodies).

Kurrula ka-balála djómi barra-balaka ngana wíba
Barra-lawéyana wíba barra-balákkana
The tide came back in bringing the djómi back to their home,
Worrying about their home, they came back.

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3. Cyclone
By Rachel Thomas, Monica Wilton and Jodie Kell
Ndjébbana language

Cyclone Monica was a Severe Category 5 cyclone that crossed the coast west of Maningrida in 2006.

Verse 1
Nja-kamárrang wíba ya-wolo-béna
Cyclone Monica, she came across the Country.
Wárrwarra ya-wolo-míba njanda-mérbaya
She came from the East where the sun rises, coming straight for us
Wíba wédda ka-mánga ya-wolo-bena
A long time ago, she came this way,
Berraja, Nakalamandjarda, Nardilmuk, Ndjúdda, ya-labina Ngarraku
Descending upon Berraja, Nakalamandjarda, Nardilmuk, Ndjúdda and Ngarraku

Chorus
Ya-rlawíyina dila-ngaya ya-karráwarra
She stopped and turned her gaze
Wíba ka-nana Mábarnad*
Onto the Land of the Mábarnad
Wíba ka-nana Mábarnad
She saw the Land of the Mábarnad

Verse 2
Barra-kábburbliba barra-yawarlbibba barra-wareyemanga
All of the old people and the young people were scared
Barra-lakalaya kulkul ka-bbona ya-wolo-bena

They could hear the wind coming
Ka-bbona kána-ngardorrdjanga kurla djadjórla
Destroying trees and houses
Ya-labina Nakalaranba, Mirrekala, Anamukuna, Malabunuwa, Karrabbu
She descended upon Nakalaranba, Mirrekala, Anamukuna, Malabunuwa and Karrabbu

Chorus
Ya-rlawíyina dila-ngaya ya-karráwarra
She stopped and turned her gaze
Wíba ka-nana Mábarnad*
Onto the Land of the Mábarnad
Wíba ka-nana Mábarnad
She saw the Land of the Mábarnad

Guitar Solo

Verse 3
Barra-lakarra barra-njínjdjana barra-kana
The Djómi Spirit children were crying
Wíba barra-lawáyana barra-kana
Crying for their Country

Chorus
Ya-rlawíyina dila-ngaya ya-karráwarra
She stopped and turned her gaze
Wíba ka-nana Mábarnad*
Onto the Land of the Mábarnad
Wíba ka-nana Mábarnad
She saw the Land of the Mábarnad
Wíba ka-nana Mábarnad
She saw the Land of the Mábarnad

The use of the Nja-kamárrang skin name refers to song writer Monica Wilton who shares the same Balanda name as Cyclone Monica. This is how the cyclone came to be called Nja-kamárrang and why the pronouns are she/her.

***Mábarnad*
Name of a group of three Yírriddjanga coastal clans, Dukúrrdji, Manbábarn and Nabbánda, which share the Djawánjdji dreaming *and own the land where Maningrida is situated.*

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4. Diyama
By Stephanie James Maxwell and Jodie Kell
Burarra language

Verse 1

Ana-munya gaba ng-garlmana	*I got up in the morning*
Ngi-jarl ngu-bamana	*I hurried along*
Nga-nana bartpa	*I saw the waves and the saltwater*
Gu-buna gu-jinyja	*The waves were hitting the shore*
Lika warrgugu ngu-ni	*I couldn't stop thinking about my country*
Nga-nana Lalarr Gu-jirrapa	*While looking at Lalarr Gu-jirrapa*
Gu-nachichiya gu-jinyjirra rrawa, Gupanga	*Facing across from my country, Gupanga*

Chorus

Aa Diyama	*Aa Diyama*

Verse 2

Jungurda a-wena apula	*My grandfather told me*
Awurr-merdawa yerrcha	*About the mermaid spirits*
Ana-munya gu-nirra	*At nighttime*
Jina-beya jina-workiya	*Is when they emerge*
Gala ngu-yinmiya ng-galiya	*I can't hear them*
Ngu-marngi awurr-gatiya	*But I know they are there*
Ya Gupanga rrawa gun-molamola	*In my beautiful Country of Gupanga*

Chorus

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5. Hunting Song
By Jolene Lawrence, Rona Lawrence and Jodie Kell
Na-kara language

Verse

Ngi-berrabba ngibi-nana na-bena ki-djina	*We saw the sun rising for the day*
Ngibi-nana kukka n-djirra bawana rdi-yeka	*We saw the saltwater tide going out*
Ngibu-mangaya nángarawa n-kana kabbal kakaya	*We collected mud mussels on the flood plains*
Ngiba-rdiddjana ngibi-nina n-kara mayawa kakaya	*We returned and sat on the beach*

Chorus

Ee na-bena ki-djina	*Ah…the sun rose across the sky*
Ee na-bena ki-djina	*Ah…the sun rose across the sky*

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6. Love Song
Thomasina Hayes, Rowena Cooper, Charlynna Roy
Burarra and English languages

Chords
E minor D major C major D major

Intro

Verse 1
Sitting on the beach feeling bad
Walking on the beach feeling lonely and sad
[repeat]

Verse 2
A-nurra a-bona Darwin
My boyfriend has gone to Darwin
Gala marngi gin-barra ani-jakabarra
I don't know when I will see him again
[repeat]

Chorus
You drive me crazy
My heart is breaking

Verse 3
He called me on the telephone
Said "I'm coming back tomorrow"
[repeat]

Chorus
You drive me crazy
My heart is breaking
Guitar Solo

Verse 4
Ngaypa jal ngirri kuluwa
I love you
[repeat 8 times]

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7. Loving and Caring
Tara Rostron and Jodie Kell
Kune and English languages

Intro
Daluk Bininj karri-djarkdi *Women and men / lovers let's talk.*

Verse 1
Njale yi-njilng warreminj kangurdul-me. [When you're angry at me show me how you feel, tell me what you mean]
Why are you feeling so upset? I can hear the thunder rolling.
Kan-marnime baa nga-bengkan
Tell me, so I know.
Njale man-karre yi-karrme kure ku-kange
What reason do you have in your heart? (What are you holding in your heart?)
Marrek muyh yi-karrme
Don't hold it inside for too long,
Munguyh yi-karrme na-warre [Don't hold back]
If you hold it inside for too long, it's no good.

Chorus
Daluk Bininj, our love is true.
[Women and men]
Our love makes us strong.
Ngayih marne-djare nguddah
I want you.
Yimri konda nuk
Come here now.
Ngarri-djarrkni, ngarri-djarrkni
We'll sit down together.

Spoken word
Yimri Konda yi-yol-yolme ban ga-bengkan nuk
Come here and talk about this, so I know what you are worried about

Verse 2
Yekke man-wurrk karri-wurlhke kundulk karrowen
In the dry season we burn bushfires, and the trees are dying.
Ngarri-durren ngarri-burren nganalk-bun
We argue, we fight, and I cry.
Kudjewk kangurdulme mandjewk kamankan
In the wet season the thunder rolls and it starts pouring down rain.
[Don't worry if we argue sometimes, 'cause the rain will come and our love will grow]
Kundulk ka-djordmen ngarri marne-djaremerren

And just like the trees re-grow, we start loving each other again.

Chorus
Daluk Bininj, our love is true.
Our love, makes us strong
Ngayih marne djare nguddah
Yimri Konda nuk [We'll sit down together]
Ngarri-djarrkni, ngarri-djarrkni

Spoken word
Nguddah yibeng-kan nabu ngayih marinmeng
You should know what I told you.
Korroko marnimeng ngayih marne-djare nguddah bulkkidj duninjh
I already told you that I love you so much.
Ngadjare ngarrini kamakrok
I want to sit down with you all good
Kunkirn kunrit ngaleh njale ngarribawon
Problems like jealousy, leave it all behind
Kayo nokkonj nawarre balehbe ngarrire
Leave it, it's no good.
Baleh balehbo ngarrire ngarri-nah narren ngarrire
Wherever we go, we look after each other.

Chorus
Daluk Bininj, our love is true.
Our love, makes us strong
Ngayih marne djare nguddah
Yimri Konda nuk [We'll sit down together]
Ngarri-djarrkni [Karri-njilng rayek-men]
We'll sit down together [Let's be strong]
Ngarri-djarrkni
We'll sit down together.

Outro
Hey, hey all you lovers out there, I got a story to share with you.
Listen up, why don't you listen to each other cause we're in this together.
When my man is caring for me, make me crazy for his love
Crazy for his love.

My love, what's on your mind?
I can hear the thunder rolling
Tell me, so I know,
We can walk together in our love.

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8. Madjarndemed
By Tara Rostron
Kune and English languages

Madjarndemed is a type of lizard found in the West Arnhem Land rocky escarpments. Its English name is the Gilbert's Dragon, a small lizard with a distinctive characteristic of waving its front leg after it runs.

Here escarpment country
Madjarndemed running
Running kawayudwayudme (*and waving)*

Madjarndemed Madjarndemed Madjarndemed Madjarndemed
Madjarndemed Madjarndemed Madjarndemed Madjarndemed

Kabidbun kuwardde kawohbarndi
Madjarndemed Madjarndemed Madjarndemed Madjarndemed

Kawayudwayudme kawayudwayudme kawayudwayudme *(he is waving)*
Madjarndemed
Kawayudwayudme kawayudwayudme kawayudwayudme
Madjarndemed

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9. Makéddja
Rachel Thomas and Jacob James
Language: Ndjébbana

Verse
Marlandjárri Wúrnal Karddúrra
Wíba barra-kóna ngána Kabálko
Marlandjarri Wulna Kardduna, whose Country surrounds Kabalko Island

Kamarrang ka-ngádjina yinjírra
"Ngába-yarra, makéddja ngaba-karráwa"
Kamarrang, he said to us,"Let's go look around for turtle"

Njarra-karráwa, kóma njan-ddjéna
Koma njan-djéna, makkéddja kóma
We went hunting but we had no luck, we couldn't find any turtle.

Kamarrang ka-bbóna makéddja
Njarra-wálanga, njarra-ddjórrbana njarruka-na
Then Kamarrang, he speared a turtle, so we went ashore and cooked it straight away.

Njarruka-na ngana Nardilmuk
Nganéyabba Kanduwúlka wíba
We were sitting at Nardilmuk, the beautiful Country of Kanduwúlka clan.

Njarruka-na, njarra-nana wárrwarra
Ya-béna, ya-rlabína ya-béna
We sat and watched the sun sinking down.

Chorus
Nganéyabba wíba Kabálko
Right there, that Country Kabalko
Nganéyabba wíba Ngarraku
Right there, that Country Ngarraku
Nganéyabba wíba Nardilmuk
Right there, that Country Nardilmuk
Nganéyabba wíba Ndjúdda
Right there, that Country Ndjúdda
Nganéyabba wíba Makórrdja
Right there, that Country Makórrda

The song ends with Rachel's Grandfather Bundubundu singing the Turtle Song from Míddjarn, a traditional song and dance cycle of the Ndjébbana people. This recording was released by Maningrida Arts and Culture (MAC) in 1986.

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10. Nabárrdja – The Little Crab
By Rona Lawrence and Jodie Kell
Na-kara language

Ooh, ooh, ooh, ngibu-mangaya nabárrdja
Oh, we were hunting crabs
Kana mayawa, kana mayawa
At the beach, at the beach
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ngibu-mangaya nabárrdja
Oh, we were hunting crabs
Kana mayawa, kana Mayawa
At the beach, at the beach

Nabárrdja kibana, korla nga-mangan
The crab, she's gone, I couldn't find her
Nabárrdja kibana korla nga-mangan
The crab, she's gone, I couldn't find her
Mernda ki-kakaya ki-kamangka
She waves her claws up high
Mernda ki-kakaya ki-kamangka
She waves her claws up high
Mernda ki-kakaya ki-kamangka
She waves her claws up high
Mernda ki-kakaya ki-kamangka
She waves her claws up high

Ooh, ooh, ooh, Can you see the little crab by the water, by the water?
Ooh, ooh, ooh, Can you see the little crab by the water, by the water?
The crab is hiding, we can't find her
The crab is hiding, we can't find her
Claws are clapping, she's waving at us. Claws are clapping, she's waving at us
Claws are clapping, she's waving at us. Claws are clapping, she's waving at us

.....(slow down) The sun is setting, she's sleeping, ki-yurda.

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11. Na-kalamandjarda
Rona Lawrence, Jodie Kell and Harriet Fraser-Barbour
English and Na-kara languages

Na-kalamandjarda is a place east of Maningrida which is part of the Na-kara people's homelands, known as Navy Landing. Songwriter Rona Lawrence is a traditional custodian for this country.

Verse 1
I stand by the cliff
And I see the birds flying
Across the ocean
Na-kalamandjarda yeah yeah yeah
When I sit down under the shade
Thinking about my homeland
Na-kara people
Na-kalamandjarda yeah yeah yeah

Chorus
My country is my life Oh oh oh
My country is my heart oh oh oh
My country is my future and my past
Na-kalamandjarda yeah yeah yeah

Verse 2
When I stand in the water
With my hands in the sand
Na-wangara **Na-wangara means cockle shellfish (Diyama)*
Na-kalamandjarda yeah yeah yeah
When I see the sun
Glowing on the water
Yellow and gold
Na-kalamandjarda yeah yeah yeah

Chorus
My country is my life Oh oh oh
My country is my heart oh oh oh
My country is my future and my past
Na-kalamandjarda yeah yeah yeah

Solo
Chorus

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12. Na-meyarra
Jolene Lawrence, Rona Lawrence, Jodie Kell
Na-kara language

Na-meyarra is a creek running out to the ocean east of Maningrida which is part of the Na-kara people's homelands. Songwriter Jolene Lawrence is a traditional custodian for this Country.

Verse 1
Kara n-kukka-n-djirla walanga
Like the saltwater comes in
Mirndamiya rdi-yengka
And the tide takes it out
Ngardi-yenga kana mayawa
I walked along the beach
Nga-nana na-bena ki-djina
And I saw the sun going down

Chorus
Kana mayawa noranga na-kayerda Na-meyarra
At the beach, I call my home, Na-meyarra
Kana mayawa no-ranga Na-kayerda Na-meyarra
At the beach, I call my home, Na-meyarra

Verse 2
Ngarrabba nga-rdi-yenga mayawa
You and I, we went there together
Nga-nana kukka-n-barla
We saw the freshwater
Wuna-kardawa djina
And in that special waterhole
Nga-nana na-djola kin-diddjarama
We saw that bird, the whistle duck

Chorus
Kana mayawa noranga na-kayerda Na-meyarra
At the beach, I call my home, Na-meyarra
Kana mayawa no-ranga Na-kayerda Na-meyarra
At the beach, I call my home, Na-meyarra

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13. Ngúddja
by Patricia Gibson and Jodie Kell
Ndjébbana language

Verse 1
Balawúrrwurr wédda nganda-mángka-yana
The wind comes across the land
Balawúrrwurr ngúddja ngarra-kaláya
Bringing the words and the language
Balawúrrwurr ka-bala-ddjórrkka barrómaya
Carrying the spirits of our ancestors
Ngarra-karráwanga karrakárriba
As we look out over the land

Chorus
Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala
You and me and everybody, we call out in our different languages
Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala
You and me and everybody, we call out in our different languages

Ngarra-ngúddjeya ngúrra-mala
You and me and everybody, we call out in our different languages
Djibba wíba ngabayúka-na
But we sit down on this land here together

Verse 2
Ngarra-kaláya Ndjébbana, Na-kara, Kun-barlang
We can hear Ndjébbana, Na-kara, Kun-barlang,
Burarra, Gun-nartpa, Gurr-goni, Kuninjku
Rembarrnga, Kune, Djinang, Dalabon
*Burarra, Gun-nartpa, Gurr-goni, Kuninjku, Rembarrnga, Kune, Djinang, Dalabon***
Ngarra-karráwanga karrakárriba
As we look out over the land

*** These are languages of the Maningrida region*

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14. People from Maningrida
Composer: unknown
English and Kune languages

I saw the people [I saw the people]
They were looking at [They were looking at me]
Some people looking at me
I saw the people [I saw the people]
They were looking at [They were looking at me]
Some people looking at me
People, people from Maningrida
People, people from Maningrida

Nabenang Bininj	[Nabenang Bininj]	*(I saw the people)*
Ngarndikuknanang	[Ngarndikuknanang]	*(They were looking at me)*
Nabenang Bininj Ngarndikuknanang		*(I saw the people looking at me)*
Nabenang Bininj	[Nabenang Bininj]	*(I saw the people)*
Ngarndikuknanang	[Ngarndikuknanang]	*(They were looking at me)*
Nabenang Bininj Ngarndikuknanang		*(I saw the people looking at me)*

Bininj, Bininj birrikang Manawukan
Bininj, Bininj birrikang Manawukan

I saw the people [I saw the people]
They were looking at [They were looking at me]
Some people looking at me

I saw the people [I saw the people]
They were looking at [They were looking at me]
Some people looking at me
People, people from Maningrida
People, people from Maningrida

---

15. Waláya
Rachel Thomas and Jacob James
Ndjébbana language

Waláya means cliff, and it refers to a place in Maningrida on a beautiful ochre cliff looking over the mouth of the Liverpool River. It is an area where traditional custodians and their djungay (cultural managers) live.

Nga-lawáya nga-kóna
Warábba nga-nóra
Ngana Waláya
I went down to the beach,
Sat down on my own
At the cliffs

Nga-nana kurrula
Kabbala ka-wolo-bena
Nga-nana Kabalko ka-renjdjeya
I saw the saltwater
And a boat heading to Kabalko Island (An island visible from Maningrida)
I was looking over to Kabalko Island

Nga-nana kabbala
Ka-bena ngana Ndjúdda
I watched as the boat
Headed across to Ndjúdda Point (The easterly point of the mouth of the Liverpool River)

Nga-nana warrawarra
Ya-rlabína ya-wolo-bena
Nga-lawáya nga-kona
I saw the sun going down
It was going down
As I watched

Nga-nana bolkárda
Ka-mangkíba ka-rénjdjeya

Maloya ka-wolo-bena
I saw the deep blue ocean on the horizon
Lightning strikes
As the dark storm clouds rolled in

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16. Wamud
Tara Rostron & Jodie Kell
Kune and English languages

Wamud refers to a male subsection of Dhuwa patrimoiety. In this case Wamud refers to songwriter Tara's young cousin, though it could also be understood as referring to any boy or man in the Wamud kinship group.

Verse 1
He woke up with the rising sun
Grabbed his spear and the day begun
Walking to the south to his country, Dhumakerre, where he grew up
Walking along the Cadell River
He saw too many fish in the water
"Bolkki nga-bun djenj naweng (*Today I will catch some fish)*
Ngadurndeng kured ngakinje ngangung" (*and take them home to cook for dinner.)*

Bokorn, bikkurr, yad bom nawen
Bokorn, bikkurr, yad bom nawen
(*He caught spangled grunter fish, eel tailed catfish, freshwater prawn)*

Chorus
Wamud, wamud namayhmak
Wamud, wamud namayhmak
(*Wamud, Wamud, the mighty hunter)*

Verse 2
When he was only 4 years old
He sat down next to his father
Asked him to make him a spear
"Ngadjare ngabun yad nawen. *(I want to catch myself some of those freshwater prawns)*
I want to be just like my father
He names the country, plants and animals
Nabengkan ngabba kunwok nuyeh *(My father knows all the names for the plants and animals)*
Namarneyime ngayi ngabengkan" *(He can tell me, so I know)*

Namarnkol, burarr, molerl bom nawen
Namarnkol, burarr, molerl bom nawen
(*He caught Barramundi, water goanna, blue tongue lizard)*

Chorus
Wamud, wamud namayhmak
Wamud, wamud namayhmak
(*Wamud, Wamud, the mighty hunter)*

Central Section
Namarnkol, namarnkol *[Barramundi, barramundi)*
Kakurlahbarme kare *(She moves with glistening skin, brilliant in colour)*
Kakuknjonnarren kare (*She looks at herself, showing off)*
Kaborledme, kaborledme *(Turning around as she swims)*
Kaborledme, kaborledme *(Turning around as she swims)*

Verse 3
He walks 'till he comes to his special place
Stands on the rock at Dukurrlajarrang *(a Kune traditional site southeast of Maningrida)*
He calls out to his ancestors
Kun-waral mawah kanwol djenj (*Hey grandfather, let me catch some fish) **
When the sun goes down, he goes back to the camp.
Carries all the fish that he delivers
Bin-won namud nuye njonj *(He gave his family all that he had caught)*
Birri-djurrkme birri-kineng birri-ngune *(They cooked and ate it straight away)*

Komrdawh, ngalng, bekka bom na-wen
Komrdawh, ngalng, bekka bom na-wen
(He caught northern snake neck turtle, yabby, file snake)

Chorus
Wamud, wamud namayhmak
Wamud, wamud namayhmak
(*Wamud, Wamud, the mighty hunter)*

It is an important part of Kune cultural protocol to call out to the spirits of ancestors to let them know you are in their country and ask that they will provide for