



Artback NT

Numburindi Festival Artistic Report

13 - 15 September 2018





Red Flag dancers performing



Jangu Nundhirribala performing for Friday's Wungubul

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Connecting people and place through arts development and touring



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Front cover:
Jeff Nunggarrgalu
performing with
young dancers

Back cover:
Preparing young Red Flag
Dancers for performing

Overview

Numburindi Festival is a unique community driven event for local audiences which celebrates traditional and contemporary arts and cultural practices from remote Arnhem Land community, Numbulwar, on the western coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, Northern Territory (NT). The festival at its core aims to support community capacity development and cross cultural exchange between Indigenous clan groups across the NT.

The festival is a continuation of the inaugural Numburindi Festival 2016 and is embedded in Artback NT's Indigenous Traditional Dance Program (ITDP). Until now the Festival had been a local community based event with a focus on providing mentoring and support to Numbulwar clan groups and local arts workers. The 2018 Festival was the first delivered under a three year funding program with Arts NT to support audience growth.

The ITDP was established to support artistic and cultural practices through intergenerational learning, strengthening relationships between elders and young people and encouraging cultural leadership. The ITDP program has delivered festival events in Alice Springs (2009) and Tennant Creek (2010 – 2012). Currently ITDP is working with the communities of Numbulwar (2016 – present) and Borroloola (2013 – present) to develop a distinct engagement model in response to their specific needs.

This year's Numburindi Festival was held over three days 13–15 September and had a core focus on intergenerational exchange with clan Elders supporting and empowering youth arts practice. The Festival saw incredible attendance from visiting music and dance groups travelling from Bickerton Island, Groote Eylandt, Ngukurr, Katherine, Beswick and Darwin. The program celebrated growth in the young peoples' programming with a greater number of performing groups and strong young peoples' Wungubul performances on the opening night. Since its inception in 2016, Numburindi Festival has gone from strength to strength and this year was a vibrant and successful whole-of-community event.

The aims of ITDP are:

- To assist in the coordination of an annual event that celebrates the diversity of traditional Indigenous dance in the Northern Territory, providing an exciting cross-cultural platform for audience and performance development
- To deliver remote community support that facilitates opportunities for arts and cultural performance and skills development within the region through a series of projects, rehearsals, workshops and events each year
- To provide further Territory, national and international performance opportunities where appropriate for the hosting community to establish business and professional development pathways

The objectives of ITDP are:

- Sustainability of an annual event in the hosting community and its uptake in the region
- An improved overall understanding in remote Indigenous communities of the integral relationships between cultural maintenance and professional performing arts opportunities through participation in local, regional and national showcase events
- An increased awareness of the value of traditional Indigenous dance as an integral strategy in community wellbeing and a pathway to improved employment and further education and training for individuals, particularly disengaged youth
- The preservation of culture by traditional intergenerational learning methods that strengthen the relationships between Elders and youth and encourages cultural leadership
- The creation of pathways for cultural understanding, appreciation and respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia
- Undertake independent evaluation through
 - Data collection
 - Qualitative and rich media
 - Structured feedback and review
 - Critical reflection
 - Regular, rich reporting



White Cockatoo performing



Morgan Wurramara leading the Wurramara dancers



Planning at the Festival site with Grant Nundhirribala, Eve Pawlik and Hilda Ngalmi



Jumping Castle youth activities from Darwin Castles

“ Culture is really important for kids. Their culture is important for them, for their future. Dancing everything, in their own country, so they know their story, where their country is, their song line, the kids follow their song line, they are singing and dancing in the right place.”

Grant Nundhirribala, Numburindi Festival Director

Staffing

Artback NT prioritises fostering strong and embedded relationships and employment in remote communities. In Numbulwar, we are lucky to have wide community support and to engage the diverse skill sets of the community under the direction of Artistic Director Grant Nundhirribala.

Grant Nundhirribala is a significant cultural leader and songman in Numbulwar from the Nundhirribala clan group. He is the winner of six music awards, lead singer of the band Yilila and the Red Flag dancers and featured as guest artist with the Australian Ballet Company and Bangarra Dance Theatre. Grant sings in Wubuy, Anindilyakwa, Creole, English and Bahasa Makasar. As the Numburindi Festival Artistic Director and advisor on cultural protocols, his vision continues to ground the festival locally, showcasing content that reflects the community. This year Grant was vital in coordinating Murrungun, Red Flag dancers, Ngalmi and Nunggarralu - the four clans performing their traditional dance and song practices and integral in the preparation of bush tucker catering, coordinating local staff, supporting and managing production including the Emcee, visiting bands and dance groups.

Ella Geia, a Torres Strait Islander woman, has been based in Numbulwar as a media officer, Community Development Program (CDP) women's mentor and arts practitioner for nine years and has strong community relationships. Ella is the manager of the renowned band Yilila and the Red Flag dancers. She has vast experience working in remote community settings delivering high level arts and program management. Her media and arts programming background, in particular, is a

vital asset for the Festival. This year whilst she supported the planning of Numburindi Festival as Festival Director, Ella was unable to participate in the delivery of the event due to Sorry Business and family circumstances which took her away from the community for the duration of the festival.

Eve Pawlik Project Manager, Artback NT worked alongside Numbulwar community to develop and deliver the Numburindi Festival for 2018. Having been involved with the ITDP program and the DanceSite Festival events in both Borroloola (Malandarri) and Numbulwar (Numburindi) over the last few years, Eve has built strong relationships in the region. Working remotely from the Darwin office, Eve further developed stakeholder relationships, managed logistics and funding alongside the community. On the ground, Eve assisted the Technical Manager, Josh Grant, run the production elements for the event and coordinate the artistic program with Grant Nundhirribala.

Josh Grant was the versatile and highly skilled Technical Manager for the Festival. He hails from an extensive background in visual arts, live and recorded sound engineering and music. With a particular strength and passion for remote Indigenous community festivals and arts programs, Josh has ongoing relationships with a number of Arnhem Land communities delivering workshop programs and festival activities. As Artback NT's go-to production guru, he has been engaged with numerous projects through ITDP and the Performing Arts Program. Josh has been key in the production of DanceSite in Borroloola, and its transition to Malandarri Festival and Numbulwar's Numburindi Festival in 2016 and 2017.

Alongside this core team, Numburindi Festival employed more than 200 local staff as musicians, performers, cleaners, caterers and production staff. This is an important aspect of the ITDP model to ensure the festival empowers community members to be active makers in the event. Local staffing also provides a large injection of funds into a remote and isolated community where opportunities for employment are limited, particularly for those in the arts.



Nunggarrgalu preparing young dancers for performing

This year Numburindi Festival supported the development of the strategic Remote Indigenous Arts Workers and Festival Directors exchange project, which saw an invitation extended to Marlene Timothy, Festival Director of Malandarri Festival (Borrooloola). This was the first stage in the Festivals in Dialogue initiative managed by Artback NT, which connected the Festival Directors of Numburindi Festival and Malandarri Festival, sparking new ideas and conversations for future collaborations between the communities.

“Teaching the kids how to dance, how to sing. Show them how to dance, keeping the culture up. In the future they need to be the next ones.”

Neysa Nundhirribala, community member

Pre-festival activity

In the lead up to the Numburindi Festival, the creative design and set up of the festival site was heavily supported by Neysa and Rosabelle Nundhirribala and the Roper Gulf Regional Council CDP Women's Group. This involved the painting of rubbish bins, marquee art, painted flags and fabric banners. Roper Gulf Regional Council staff including Municipal staff and the CDP Men's Group installed the shipping container/ projector screen, stage, flag poles and sand and supported bump-in including installing the stage, site design and production set up. They were invaluable and their input was an important way for the community to share in the creation and ownership of the Festival.

The Numbulwar School focused the week before the event on a range of festival programs with daily music rehearsals for the school music groups and preparations for the Community Market Place. This was the first year the Remote Op Shop operated, receiving an overwhelming amount of donations, with money supporting future school programs. In the weeks leading up to the Festival, staff and students began organising the donated goods and set up an op shop residence at the school. Christopher O'Neill,

Senior Teacher Numbulwar School, continued his work with the Numbulwar School Band and rehearsals for new choir and music groups.

Program

For 2018, Numburindi Festival ran across three-nights with diverse programming of clan groups from Numbulwar as well as external dance groups from Bickerton Island and Beswick. The program also hosted local youth dance groups, youth and adult bands from Numbulwar, Ngukurr, Katherine and Tongan and Fijian performances. Day time activities included a youth program, Community Market Place, men and womens basketball competition, bush tucker feed and an awards ceremony. The diversity in programming enhanced this year's festival and continued the model of cultural exchange and music collaboration.

Opening night

The Festival opened with a Youth Night, and diverse content from across the community ranged from music, dance and art. Leading through the evening (as well as each night following) were the fantastic Emcee duo Grant Nundhirribala, Festival Director, and Cerice Farrell, community member. The evening began with the young people's Wungubul and throughout the day each Numbulwar clan prepared their young dancers for performance. This enabled beautiful exchange and teaching moments in the festival where young people were given an opportunity to celebrate their culture and be strong Numbulwar peoples.

Following the Wungubul were a range of performances from the Numbulwar School. New performances included primary and senior choirs as well as a fantastic set from the Numbulwar School Band. In the past year the band has had incredible success, most recently performing at Katherine Beat in June. This year for their performance of 'This is the Truth', forty primary students supported their peers as a choir – an absolute highlight of opening night!



Mambali Band performing



Numbulwar School Band performing



Song men from Ngalmi, Mangurra and Murrungun performing together



Bradwyn Murrungun dancing with Yilila Band

Second night

For Friday the focus of the festival turned to dance with ten vibrant acts showcased in the full Wungubul, with Numbulwar dance groups Red Flag dancers, Murrungun, Nunggarrgalu and Ngalmi / Mangurra. The Festival this year was privileged to have two visiting dance groups from Bickerton Island (Wurramara) and Beswick (White Cockatoo). This was a fantastic exchange, and celebrated by audiences as both groups have family relationships in Numbulwar.

Following the Wungubul was an incredible performance from Numbulwar’s John Terepo and Christine Smith alongside Tulekina Malafu and Lusianne Malafu from Tonga. The four performed five dance compositions from Tonga, Fiji and Kiribas. Closing the evening were youth dance groups MCGheez and Lipstick as well as visiting Elcho dancer, B-fella. The diversity of cultural practice celebrated on the Friday evening was a demonstration of how the festival continues to evolve and grow.

Closing night

Saturday’s programming included day time youth activities, the Numbulwar School Fete, Community Market Place, a free community bush tucker feed and was topped off by a Darwin Castles jumping castle and waterslide program! Numbulwar School set up a range of stalls such as a Remote Op Shop, youth activity hub, café, BBQ and stalls selling art and craft. It was fantastic to see the school represented and engaged in this way.

Happening offsite was the inaugural men and womens Numburindi Festival Basketball Competition. Amanda Ngalmi and Cerice Farrell, with Roper Gulf Regional Council Sports and Recreation staff managed the competition. It was a buzz of activity, with visiting basketball teams from Ngukurr joining the competition.

Opening the Saturday night festival programming was the awards ceremony for both the youth Wungubul and the Basketball Competition. Thank you to the secret judges and those who presented the awards! Hon Selena Uibo's office generously sponsored the trophies and donations for second place were received from the Numburindi Store.

Six bands performed from Numbulwar, Ngukurr and Katherine – Numbulwar School Band, Yilila, Mambali Band, NT Express, Numburindi Reggae Band and T-Lynx. The bands showcased a unique contemporary sound that drew together reggae, funk and rock and roll, with lyrics in English, Anindilyakwa, Wubuy and Creole. The DanceSite was alive with dancing, kicking-up sand and tunes!

Awards

Award Category	Winner
Best Youth Performer (female)	Mangurra / Ngalmi 1) Kattisha Ngalmi 2) Meralda Daniels
First and Second Place	Red Flag 1) Janice Nundhirribala 2) Marylina Nundhirribala Murrungun / Numamurdirdi 1) Marsha Ngalmi 2) Rikanni Nunggumadjbarr Nunggarrgalu 1) Vinnisha Rami 2) Sedonia Mirniyowan
Best Youth Performer (male)	Mangurra / Ngalmi 1) Brendon Ngalmi 2) Keith Kerr Ngalmi
First and Second Place	Red Flag 1) Duwayne Nundhirribala 2) Ian Wurramara Murrungun / Numamurdirdi 1) Fabio Nundhirribala 2) Trixon Nunggumadjbar Nunggarrgalu 1) Jamarcus Nunggarrgalu 2) Leydon Nunggarrgalu
Overall Best Youth Performer	Devandro Nunggarrgalu

Basketball Competition - Results	Winner
Women’s Competition	Lightning
Men’s Competition	Smokeys



Youth Wungubul on Thursday evening,
Ngalmi performing Gudarrgu (Brolga)

Statistics

Participants	Total 2018	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Performers	271	99%	1%
Production incl. Directors, Coordinators, Photographer and Videographers	12	66.67%	33.33%
Committee	8	100%	0%
Staffing incl. Emcee, Security, Bus Drivers, Cleaners, Stage Managers, Caterers	22	100%	0%
Audience	1000	85%	15%

Dance groups and performers

Language Group	Dance Group / Band	Community	Performers
Nundhirribala	Red Flag Dancers	Numbulwar	50
Murrungun	Dhambulg Dancers	Numbulwar	38
Ngalmi / Mangurra	Gudarrgu and Morning Star Dancers	Numbulwar	26
Nunggarragalu	Nunggarragalu Dancers	Numbulwar	28
Wurramara	Wurramara Dancers	Bickerton Island	24
Myali / Dalabon	White Cockatoo Dancers	Beswick / Numbulwar	16
Kiribati / Fijian / Tongan	John Terepo, Christine Smith, Lusianne Malafu and Tulekina Malafu	Numbulwar	4
Yolngu	B-Fella	Elcho Island (Galiwin'ku)	2
Mangurra	McGheez	Numbulwar	4
Yolngu	Lipstick	Elcho Island	2
Nundhirribala	Yilila Band	Numbulwar	9
Murrungun	NT Express	Numbulwar	4
Numamurdirdi	Mambali Band	Numbulwar	8
Nunggarragalu	Numburindi Reggae Band	Numbulwar / Katherine	5
Ngalakgan	T-LYNX	Ngukurr / Numbulwar	6
Various	Numbulwar School Band	Numbulwar	12
Various	Primary School Group Choir	Numbulwar	33
TOTAL			271



Tulekina Malafu
performing Hala Vuna



John Terepo serving up the Community Feed

“It’s important to keep our culture, we need to be here [Numbulwar] you know, it can’t be changed in a different way, because you can’t change it or let it go, keep it going the way old people left it, it needs to stay strong..Culture is still there, it is everywhere.”

Cerice Farrell, community member

Funding

The 2018 Numburindi Festival was in the fortunate position to be delivering the first festival of its three year funding agreement with Arts NT. This has allowed sustainable forward planning for Numburindi Festival. There were however, limitations due to unsuccessful smaller grants that would have supported a number of projects such as a specialised printmaking program and increased tourism development.

Funding for the event was secured from Artback NT, Arts NT’s Community Festivals, Member for Arnhem – Hon Selena Uibo, Tim Fairfax Family Foundation and Roper Gulf Regional Council Community Grants. Artback NT is proudly sponsored by the Northern Territory Government.

Catering

During the first two evenings of the Festival John Terepo and Christine Smith, along with family members, ran a food market stall that sold a range of slow cooked pork, salads, desert, laksa and fried rice and noodle dishes. On the Saturday afternoon, John Terepo and Christine Smith and family provided a bush tucker feed cooked in their home Umu (ground oven). Earlier in the week, beef and turtle were hunted that John then cooked in the Umu with sweet potato, cabbage, carrot and potato. Numbulwar School ran a BBQ and café during the Saturday community market place which offered a range of treats during the day! We were incredibly fortunate to receive Numburindi Store’s generous sponsorship through the provision of an impressive amount of donated meat, vegetables, fruit boxes and water for the event.

Partnerships

Organisation	Type of Support
Roper Gulf Regional Council – Katherine Office/ Numbulwar Office, Night Patrol, Sports and Recreation and CDP.	Site production installation, stage, catering, staff, office resources, cleaners, Night Patrol security staff, decoration and site design/making and tables and chairs. Funding for children’s program. Sport program Basketball competition and awards ceremony.
Numbulwar School	Marquees, music equipment, accommodation, Wubuy Language Program videos, music program, production support staffing, Market Day content and Numburindi Festival art workshops.
Numbulwar Homelands	Generators
ALPA Numburindi Store	Donation of meat, vegetable and fruit boxes and water for Community Feed and Youth Day. Donation of award prizes for the young people’s Wungubul.
Yugul Mangi Corporation - Ngukurr	Marquees, tables, chairs and PA equipment.
AiRemote	Promotion and film documentation of Numburindi Festival.

Media and marketing

Being in a remote and isolated community the value of social media platforms is significant. Pre-event marketing saw Artback NT and Roper Gulf Regional Council run a series of on line stories through the website and social media platforms, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to promote the Festival. Kate Rendell, Communications Manager, Artback NT worked remotely from the Darwin office to support the Festival. The Numburindi Festival is not an open event for the public, the marketing strategy prioritised general awareness of the Festival rather than attendance. An official Numburindi Festival flyer was designed by Artback NT Graphic Designer Oscar Waugh and was distributed across the Northern Territory. The lead up to the event was documented through social media channels with behind-the-scene action shots giving the public a taste of Numburindi Festival magic.

During the event there were two external media operators. Benjamin Bayliss, ITDP's photographer documented the Festival and screened a photo montage of the previous two years. Sherita Nundhirribala, Rudolph Wurragwagwa, Kaheb Ngalmi, Kyanne Nundhirribala and Tony Grey from Numbulwar Culture and Media project, run by AiRemote staff, documented the three days of the Festival. This will become a fantastic cultural and educational archive for the community that not only promotes the festival but becomes a linguistic, social and historical resource and record of cultural practices from the region.

Highlights

The delivery of the 2018 Numburindi Festival benefitted greatly from strong community commitment and ensured community ownership and local development of the Festival continued to grow. The Numburindi Festival program celebrated a diverse range of cultures that came together throughout the Festival to exchange cultural practice, ideas and stories. This meeting place and teaching platform for young people and their Elders is central to the Festival ethos. It was important to see the Festival support other cultural practices from those living in Numbulwar, through the Tongan, Fijian and Kiribati performances from John Terepo, Christine Smith

and family. The Saturday community market place grew significantly this year with concurrent youth activities, Numbulwar School stalls and basketball competitions. The 2018 Festival program included its first men and womens basketball competition, with teams travelling from Ngukurr to compete. The continued commitment, collaboration and generosity of the Numbulwar community in shaping this event was inspiring.

“So good to see the young kids hungry for dancing and to see all other clan groups all jump in and help each other dance...It was the highlight for me all the young fellas singing and taking over the songs...that generation stepping up.”

Marlene Timothy, Malandarri Festival Director

Challenges

This year our core challenge were staffing changes in the lead up to the festival delivery and delayed funding announcements. This impacted planning timelines and consultation periods. Ella Geia was unable to attend, resulting in initial uncertainty about the festival delivery. The broader community rallied around the event more strongly with new staffing opportunities for members such as Amanda Ngalmi, Cerice Farrell and Rebecca Love and production, security, cleaning and catering teams. Numbulwar has had a number of people passing away recently and with the unrest on Groote Eylandt and Milingimbi this impacted on people travelling to the event including those in Sorry Business.

Forward Planning

Planning is underway for the 2019 program including conversations with Yugul Mangi Aboriginal Corporation about potential tourism ventures to connect the Ngukurr Festival and the Numburindi Festival in the future. Invitations have been extended to Beswick and other dance groups to participate in the 2019 Festival. Artback NT is committed to the sustainability of an annual event in collaboration with the Numbulwar community to support opening the Festival to external audiences and increase participation from neighbouring communities.



Numbulwar School Band performing with primary years' choir for 'This is the Truth'



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