



**Artback NT**

## **Malandarri Festival Artistic Report**

14 - 15 June 2019





Nuholani and Heilani Productions  
workshop outcome with Borroloola School



Reggie O'Riley from Barkly  
Drifters performing

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**Connecting people and place through  
arts development and touring**



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Benjamin Warlangu Bayliss  
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Front cover:  
Painting up preparations with  
Gangalidda dancers, Doomadgee

Back cover:  
Mara dancers  
painting up



## Introduction

Malandarri Festival is a special community-led event celebrating both traditional and contemporary arts and cultural practices from the four clan groups living in Borroloola: the Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Gurdanji and Mara people. This event has grown over its seven-year history to be a festival for local and external audiences that supports the cultural and artistic capacity and growth of the region. The emphasis for this year's event was on traditional Indigenous languages and cultural exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous dance and music groups.

The Malandarri Festival, formerly known as DanceSite, is a part of Artback NT's Indigenous Traditional Dance Program (ITDP). ITDP was established to support the NT's artistic and cultural practices through inter-generational learning, strengthening relationships between Elders and young people and encouraging cultural leadership. The annual Malandarri Festival event is part of a range of ongoing artistic, mentorship and professional development opportunities throughout the year based in Borroloola and the wider Gulf of Carpentaria region.

The ITDP program has delivered DanceSite events in Alice Springs (2009) and Tennant Creek (2010 – 2012). ITDP is currently working with the communities of Numbulwar (2016 – present) and Borroloola (2013 – present), with each community developing a distinct engagement model in response to specific needs.

The 2019 Malandarri Festival was held over 14 – 15 June and had a strong emphasis on cultural and artistic exchange between Borroloola and the visiting dance and music groups from Beswick, Numbulwar, Tennant Creek, Doomadgee, Samoa and Hawaii. There was strengthened local capacity growth and new community-led aspects of the Festival with a strong production training program, youth workshops and participation from local stakeholders. Over two nights of performance and one day of market place activity, the Festival was a vibrant celebration of arts and cultural practices.

### 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; and
- 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; and
- Undertake independent evaluation through:
  - Data collection
  - Qualitative and rich media
  - Structured feedback and review
  - Critical reflection
  - Regular, rich reporting



Borroloola School dance workshops facilitated by Nuholani and Heilani Productions



Malandarri Festival production team





Borroloola School choir



Yanyuwa songwomen Mavis Timothy, Dinah Norman, Jemima Miller and Marjorie Keighran

### ITDP staffing

Engagement of local staff and growing opportunities for community members continues to be at the core of Malandarri Festival. Artback NT recognises the importance of nurturing individuals and relationships as part of its engagement in remote communities. This year had additional support from a strong volunteer team with special acknowledgement of the hard work put in by Sue Drury, Meg Pawlik and Ed Pawlik. In 2019 the Festival engaged over 100 community members as project officers, performers, production crew, front of house, security, caterers, bus drivers, cleaners and youth program facilitators.

### Festival Director

Marlene Timothy is a local Yanyuwa/Garrwa woman from Borroloola who works for Artback NT and Waralungku Arts Centre. Marlene is representing her region as a Councillor with Roper Gulf Regional Council and has been vital to ITDP's development and delivery in the region. She is an active leader within the Borroloola community and her presence on the ground reinforces the program's local commitment, ensuring that the program is community driven, of high cultural value, and delivered at a high production level. Marlene is now the Festival Director of Malandarri Festival, and leads all community engagement in Borroloola to deliver the programs and projects developed by the ITDP team.

### Project Officer

As part of planning for Malandarri Festival's program future, Marlene Timothy identified Mara man Barnabas Timothy to be trained to work alongside her and support her in the delivery of locally based arts activities such as workshop programs, festival management, music development and cultural learning activities. For the 2019 Festival, Barnabas took a key role working with the production team, managing the training participants and crew throughout the festival delivery as well as performing as a musician and songman for Mara clan group.

### Project Coordinator

Having worked with the Malandarri Festival since 2014 and Numburindi Festival since 2016, Eve Pawlik has expanded her role within Artback NT and is working alongside Marlene Timothy to deliver the extended ITDP program under the Remote Community Arts Program for Borroloola over the next three years. Coming from a background of Artist Run initiatives, collaborative art practice and Indigenous Australian mentoring, Eve is passionate about connecting education and arts through sustainable engagement.

### Technical Manager and Team

Joshua Grant hails from an extensive background in visual arts, live and recorded sound engineering and music. As Artback NT's go-to production guru, he has engaged with us on numerous projects through the ITDP and the Performing Arts Program. Josh has been key in the production of DanceSite in Borroloola and its transition to Malandarri Festival as well as Numburindi Festival. Since 2016, his role has grown to manage the pre-festival production training program in Borroloola. For 2019, Michael Vernau was contracted to assist Joshua during the production of the two-day event. This allowed more space for Joshua to mentor and work closely with the Borroloola team, Barnabas Timothy and the production training crew - Dwight Raggett, Mervin Simon, Scott Anderson, William Charlie, Troyce Mawson and Leon Timothy. The team worked tirelessly during the two weeks leading to the event, learning the key production and technical elements of the Malandarri Festival.

“Malandarri Festival is about bringing people together, sharing culture through music, song, dance.”

- Marlene Timothy,  
Malandarri Festival Director





Painting up with  
Gangalidda dancers



### Pre-festival activity

In the lead up to this year's Malandarri Festival there were a number of activities that engaged the youth and Elders of the community.

In April this year, Liam Maza ran an upcycling furniture making workshop program for two weeks using discarded tyres, wooden pallets and materials with Borrooloola community members. From this a suite of funky, colourful and unique furniture pieces were developed that have become part of the Malandarri Festival site design. These were finalised in the lead up to the Festival and then became a central part of the display around the Festival site!

Joshua Grant, Technical Manager, ran two weeks of production training to ensure everyone was festival ready. Barnabas Timothy, Project Officer, nominated a number of local Borrooloola young men for the program. The crew now have had continuity in training from the 2018 Festival and the following refresher production training run in December 2018. The training explored setting up the technical elements of the festival such as production gear, managing a rehearsal space, mixing live sound, site design, prepping/ maintaining music gear and stage management. The team were also responsible for painting a range of festival furniture and sculptures that were integral to the site. During the two weeks, the art centre became a vibrant, live rehearsal space for local musicians to prepare for the Festival and the crew were invaluable throughout the Festival period.

While this training occurred, the song women from Yanyuwa, Mara, Garrwa and Wandangula were preparing their dance groups costumes, dancing boards, clap sticks and song rehearsals on the other side of Waralungku Arts. This is an important element of the Festival, where the young people come to learn and participate in their cultural practices. Rehearsals from Indi Kindi were hosted throughout the two weeks at Waralungku Arts.

This year's Festival hosted an inaugural performance that was devised by Andrea Vargas and the Indi Kindi team titled 'When the wet season starts'. Eve Pawlik worked

with the team and young people to develop the soundscape, costumes and stage props for the play. Rehearsals for this ran in the lead up to the Festival at the Tamarind Tree Park, Borrooloola School and Waralungku Arts with Indi Kindi's young people and parents.

Borrooloola School once again developed two choir performances singing 'My Island Home' and 'Kulagi, Ngaba, Muji, Buki, Nukami' (Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes) in Garrwa with the Early Childhood groups in Borrooloola (FaFT, Indi Kindi, Wunala Crèche). They also hosted visiting performers Fipe Preuss and Noelani Le Nevez from Nuholani and Lelani Tahiatia and Waiana Karepa-Tagata from Heilani Productions. The performers ran a series of workshops with Borrooloola School young people, supported the school rehearsals of 'My Island Home' as well as running an Indi Kindi session prior to the Festival.

### New content

The 2019 Festival continued with the pop-up exhibition space at the festival site. This year's show was called 'From my eyes', an exhibition which displayed eight (8) photographs taken by Borrooloola School students during workshops conducted by official Festival photographer Benjamin WarlNgundu Ellis Bayliss in 2018. This was on display for the duration of the Festival with two out of eight works selling up fast on the first night! The exhibition featured work from students Allan Johnston, Zakira Lansen, Peter Lansen, Lloyd Johnston Jnr, Cedrina Anderson, Aleira Johnston, Deckoden Daniels and Antonia Tehatu.

Borrooloola School senior classes launched the second year of the Pop-Up Op Shop at the festival site, which was a fantastic success. The classes had been collecting donations for a number of weeks before the event. The senior classes also made a range of tie-dye clothes, bush medicine and clap sticks leading up to the Festival to sell.

Indi Kindi and John Moriarty Football ran new activities at the Festival this year with a special Indigenous languages story time and reading space for young people and families to gather. Part of this included a series of books that were translated into Yanyuwa for the space.



Wandangula dancers performing



Indi Kindi play 'When the wet season starts'





Yanyuwa dancers performing



Mara dancers performing

John Moriarty Football also ran youth games and sports activities as a part of the Community Marketplace on the Saturday of the Festival.

This year's key visiting dance groups were Bongiliny Bongiliny - White Cockatoo Dancers from Beswick and Gangalidda Dancers from Doomadgee. The key visiting musical groups were Yilila Band from Numbulwar and Barkly Drifters from Tennant Creek. Our headline act for the 2019 Festival was a special collaboration between four performers from Polynesian dance companies Nuholani and Heilani Productions based in Melbourne and Brisbane. Fipe Keanu from Nuholani, worked on the Malandarri Festival in 2017 with Marlene Timothy. It was an important aspect of the Festival this year to bring her back to Borrooloola as a performer and support her to continue sharing her practice with the community!

### Dance groups and performers

Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Mara and Wandangula dance groups from Borrooloola and Robinson River performed at this year's Festival. Due to the passing of significant family for Gurdanji, the clan group had a continued respect year from the Festival. To acknowledge this significant loss as well as that of a significant Garrwa / Yanyuwa songwoman, there were moments of silence in respect for the impact of their passing. As in the past, each clan group supported one another in their performances singing, dancing and preparing the performers in the days leading to the main event nights.

Friday evening focused on celebrating the young people of Borrooloola with opening performances from the Early Childhood organisations and Borrooloola School Choir. The Indi Kindi play 'When the wet season starts' was a beautiful way to open the Festival with family joining in as the young ones performed as frogs calling for the rain to start and mark the beginning of the Borrooloola wet season. Friday's local dance performances emphasised young people from Yanyuwa and Garrwa, which is an important element for the continuity of cultural learning and exchange between Elders and young people.

Saturday night had traditional dance performances from Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Wandangula and was opened by a powerful performance from Mara.

The engagement from both visiting dance groups, Bongiliny Bongiliny and Gangalidda Dancers, was fantastic with strong diverse performances that on both Friday and Saturday had the audience up dancing and laughing with them or enthralled by the performing groups mixture of storytelling, humour and cultural teaching.

The Nuholani and Heilani Productions collaboration had two distinct programs each evening. Friday emphasised the young people's workshop outcomes they had been developing during the week and then included short sets throughout the night between the traditional dance groups. On Saturday evening they performed two full sets with an array of costume changes, fire twirling and instrument and movement performances. They were a highlight with incredible audience interaction which took Borrooloola on a journey through their cultural dance performances from the Pacific - in particular from Samoa and Hawaii.

There was a full program of bands for this year's Festival with performances from Malandarri Band, Barnabas Timothy solo, Sandridge Band and a special revival of Borrooloola band High Tide. Visiting bands this year closed the Saturday night of the Festival starting with Barkly Drifters, that even got our Festival Director up grooving in the front row and closed with an incredible performance from Yilila Band. Yilila combines Red Flag dance and song practice with contemporary music, led by clan leader Grant Nundhirribala. For Borrooloola, there are family relationships between the communities which was very important, making their performance even more significant.

“The Mana and aloha from the Borrooloola community filled our hearts and we felt like we were home.”

- Fipe Preuss,  
Nuholani Co-Director





Yilila Band performing



Dance groups and performers

Language Group	Dance Group / Band	Location	Performers
Garrwa / Yanyuwa	Wandangula Dancers	Sandridge Outstation	28
Garrwa	Blind Mermaid Dancers	Robinson River/ Borrooloola	20
Yanyuwa	Ngardiji Dancers	Borrooloola	28
Mara	Mara Dancers	Borrooloola	25
Gangalidda	Gangalidda Dancers	Doomadgee	22
Myali / Dalabon	Bongiliny Bongiliny - White Cockatoo Dancers	Beswick	10
Samoaan / Hawaiian / Tahitian / Maori	Nuholani / Heilani Productions	Melbourne and Brisbane	4
Garrwa / Yanyuwa / Gurdanji / Mara	Early Childhood Choir (FaFT, Indi Kindi, Wunala Crèche)	Borrooloola	20
Garrwa / Yanyuwa / Gurdanji / Mara	Indi Kindi Play	Borrooloola	10
Garrwa / Yanyuwa / Gurdanji / Mara	Borrooloola Choir	Borrooloola	15
Yanyuwa / Mara	Malandarri Band	Borrooloola	4
Garrwa / Yanyuwa	The Sandridge Band	Sandridge Outstation	5
Mara	Barnabas Timothy	Borrooloola	1
Mara / Yanyuwa	High Tide	Borrooloola/ Katherine	4
Gurdanji / Wambaya / Yanyuwa / Garrwa / Jaytetye	Barkly Drifters	Tennant Creek	4
Nundhirirbala	Yilila	Numbulwar	10
TOTAL			210

Statistics

Participants	Total 2019	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Performers	210	97%	3%
Production including Film, Photography and Technical / Sound Engineers	12	75%	25%
Committee	10	100%	0%
Staffing including Front of House, Security, Bus Drivers, Workshop Facilitators, Cleaners and Caterers	22	91%	9%
Volunteers	6	0%	100%
Audience	1000	80%	20%

Partnerships

Organisation	Type of Support
Waralungku Arts Centre	Office space, rehearsal venue, marquees, artist support and logistical support
Roper Gulf Regional Council	Funding, venue support, media support, staffing support, rubbish collection and drinking water. CDP program support
Mawurli Wirriwangkuma Aboriginal Corporation (MAWA)	Funding, venue support, equipment, security lighting and vehicle
Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Association	Vehicle, office space, staffing support and resources and equipment. Support from Safe House, Wunala Crèche, Li-anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers and Workshop / Nursery team
Borrooloola School and Family as First Teachers program (FAFT)	Workshop hosts, venue support, staffing support, accommodation, artistic and youth program content
Indi Kindi (The Nangala Project)	Workshop facilitators, staffing support and artistic and youth program content
Barkly Regional Arts	Artistic and logistical support for Barkly Drifters
Djilpin Arts	Artistic and logistical support for Bongiliny Bongiliny, White Cockatoo Dancers



Bongiliny Bongiliny - White Cockatoo Dancers performing





Preparing community bush food



Barnabas Timothy singing for Mara dancers

### Media documentation

This year's Malandarri Festival partnered with filmographer Samuel Frederick to document the full scope of activities happening throughout the weekend. This involved interviews with key members of the artistic community, young people and Elders as well as workshop and preparation activities. Benjamin Warlanguidu Ellis Bayliss was the official Festival photographer for the sixth year running. Now living back in Borroloola, Ben also supported the Pop-Up Exhibition for this year's event.

The marketing campaign for Malandarri Festival primarily utilised the social media platforms of Instagram, Facebook and Twitter as well as Artback NT and NT Tourism/ Lonely Planet and broader event listing websites to engage audiences on a local, regional and national level. This focus was in direct response to the remoteness of the Festival's location, while making the most of the significant uptake of social media by people in Borroloola and surrounding communities. All media content was produced by Marlene Timothy with support from Artback NT's Project Manager Eve Pawlik and Rebecca Renshaw, Artback NT's Communications Manager. Throughout the event the 'live' updates on Instagram and Facebook were developed by Eve Pawlik, keeping the buzz around the Festival. We produced 11 Twitter posts, 25 Instagram posts and live story feeds and 18 Facebook posts across the Artback NT and ITDP pages leading up and during the Festival period.

The marketing campaign also included the e-distribution of flyers and posters, e-invites, media releases, 'behind the scenes' posts of images and videos, live content updates and photo galleries. Festival coverage was picked up by a number of media outlets, with features in Katherine Times, Off the Leash, Arts Hub and radio interviews with ABC Radio Darwin. Content was shared through partner organisations on the websites of Nuholani, Heilani Productions, Mabunji Aboriginal Corporation, Moriarty Foundation and Roper Gulf Regional Council. The Festival will be featured in Airnorth's inflight magazine issue for August.

### Catering

There were a number of catering options available over the Festival weekend. The key catering available for both evenings was managed by local food business Kapu-Ai who work on a number of NAIDOC, Borroloola Show and Borroloola Rodeo events in the local region. We also had Peggy Mawson hosting a bush tucker and bush medicine stall on both nights where fresh damper and bush medicine was available. Saturday evening continued the festival tradition of the free community feed for the performing dance and music groups, which was facilitated by Elizabeth Hogan and her team. During Saturday, the catering team cooked the delicious feast in ground and bush ovens offering a range of dugong, beef, turtle, kangaroo tail stews and roasted vegetables.

### Funding

Malandarri Festival was made possible due to the generous ongoing support from our funders. Monies were successfully secured from NT Government's Department of Health – Alcohol Action, Harm Minimisation Unit (2018 – 2019), Arts NT – Community Festivals and Northern Territory Major Events Company (NTMEC). Sponsorship was received from Mawurli Wirriwangkuma Aboriginal Corporation (MAWA), Roper Gulf Regional Council – Community Grants and Airnorth. Artback NT also secured triennial funding from McArthur River Mine – Community Benefit Trust in 2017 to support the ongoing role of Marlene Timothy and the facilitation of a diverse art and cultural program within the Borroloola region.

Strong community cohesion and positive capacity building was at the forefront of our planning. The increase in engagement of young people leading up to the event has been an important element of this. Festival planning also ensured we continued to be an alcohol-free event and that local alcohol vendors limited the amount of alcohol sales around the event period.



## Challenges

There have been a number of significant losses of Elders and community members over the last couple of months, which resulted in Gurdanji taking a rest year from performing at the Festival for a second year. Moments of silence were held on both evenings for Wandangula, who also have experienced the loss of significant clan members this year. It has been a disruptive year in Borrooloola with community upheaval earlier on followed by Cyclone Trevor in March. This made consistency in planning complex as well as significantly reducing the number of young people and community members in Borrooloola, with many people still transient post these events. What has resounded from this year's festival is that despite these complexities, the community support rallying around the event was incredibly strong, with many acknowledging how important this cultural and community activity is to bring people together during difficult times.

“The Festival make me feel so excited, really happy about it, make me so proud working with Artback NT and getting to sing for my clan Mara and for everyone.”

Working with the young fellas, standing along them and putting them into that area to learn, really good for me to help be teaching. I reckon it was really good.”

- Barnabas Timothy,  
Malandarri Festival Project Officer

## Forward planning

With the team always thinking to the future, conversations have begun on where the Malandarri Festival will evolve to for 2020 and beyond. This has been a big consideration for the team around succession planning and support for the current festival staff to ensure there will be support into the future. To support this, strong, year-round arts activities and workshop programs will keep the momentum as well as broaden the opportunities for community members to be creatively engaged.

The Malandarri Festival has continued for its second year in the new site location at the Borrooloola Sports Ground in collaboration with Roper Gulf Regional Council. We are looking forward to further developing the new grounds with a permanent stage and performance sand, seating and landscaping over the next five years. After this year's event we have seen Roper Gulf Regional Council begin the vegetation of the grounds and installing bollards to mark out the permanent sand stage area.

Collaborations and future opportunities have emerged from the Festival between visiting bands and dance groups. Borrooloola Rodeo Committee members plan to invite Barkly Drifters back to perform in their 2019 August event. Bonginliny Bongiliny - White Cockatoo Dancers, as a result of being with Grant Nundhirribala (Yilila Band leader and clan leader for Red Flag) during the Festival, invited Red Flag to perform at the Djarmalak Concerts on country on 22 June and have also extended invitations to the Gangalidda Dancers from Doomadgee for future festival events in Beswick.



Malandarri Festival team! L-R: Mervin Simon, Benjamin WarIngundu Ellis Bayliss, Barnabas Timothy, William Charlie, Joshua Grant, Samuel Frederick, Eve Pawlik, Marlene Timothy and Mike Vernau



Marlene Timothy  
Malandarri Festival Director



Barnabas Timothy  
Malandarri Festival Project Officer



Eve Pawlik  
Malandarri Festival Project Manager



Joshua Grant  
Malandarri Festival Technical Manager



Mike Vernau  
Malandarri Festival Technical Assistant



Mervin Simon  
Malandarri Festival production team



Dwight Raggett  
Malandarri Festival production team



Troyce Mawson  
Malandarri Festival production team





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