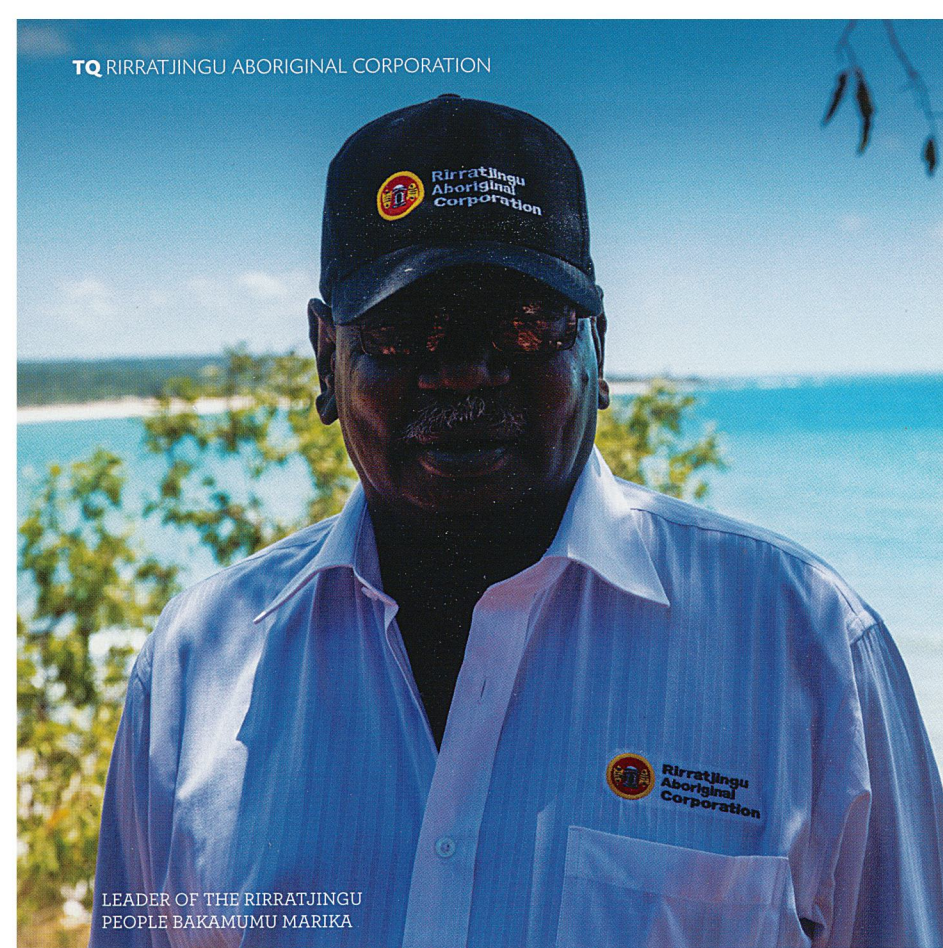


# BORN OUT OF LAND RIGHTS

WE CARE FOR OUR PEOPLE AND FOR OUR CORPORATION AND FOR OUR COMMUNITY. WE FEEL PRIDE IN IT. A LOT OF PRIDE. IT'S IN OUR HEARTS AND OUR MINDS, ALWAYS.

THE FATHER OF LAND RIGHTS, DADAYNGA "ROY" MARJKA, LEADS A RIRRAJINGU CEREMONY AT YIRRKALA CIRCA 1970





LEADER OF THE RIRRATJINGU  
PEOPLE BAKAMUMU MARIKA

### *Chair and Traditional Owner Bakamumu Marika discusses the success of the Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation*

**The Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation has seen a lot of success in recent years. You must be proud! What do you attribute your success to?**

I am very proud of what we have achieved and what we continue to achieve. We have a good board and good staff, who are all dedicated to progressing our corporation and the community. We all work well as a team. Our board members give me great support, they are always there when we need them and we all work very hard. And we care. We care for our people and for our corporation and for our community. We feel pride in it. A lot of pride. It's in our hearts and our minds, always.

**The Corporation was born out of the Land Rights movement, which your father and his brothers were part of. What were the origins of the organisation?**

My father Roy Marika MBE, the Father of Land Rights, registered the company in 1984. He was the youngest brother of the previous generation, who we call the five fathers; Mawalan, Mathaman, Milirrpum and Dhunggala.

My father worked closely with his brothers and he was the last one left after the great land rights case Milirrpum Marika v Nabalco 1971.

I was with him when he registered the company all those years ago. I have been the Chairman since that time and I work to fulfil his legacy and his brother's legacy. Like he and his brothers did, I work closely with my family, Milirrpum's son, Wanyubi Marika, is our Vice Chairman and our board is made up of the descendants of those great Land Rights warriors. I'm really proud to have their strong support and to work with them to achieve great things. That's how we do it in our way, the traditional way for Yolngu people, is to work together with their family and support each other. Especially through hard times and struggles, to advance our rights and to create a future for our people.

**What do you enjoy the most from the work that you do? What are the things that keep you interested and keep you motivated?**

I love seeing the kids doing well. My grand daughter recently won the best school attendance award at Yirrkala, for 2016. You should have seen her smile with that award. She was there everyday. I made sure she was there, she is really good, really 'maynmuk' (good). She always goes to school. I'm proud of



YIRRMALIA WINS THE SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE AWARD FOR 2016

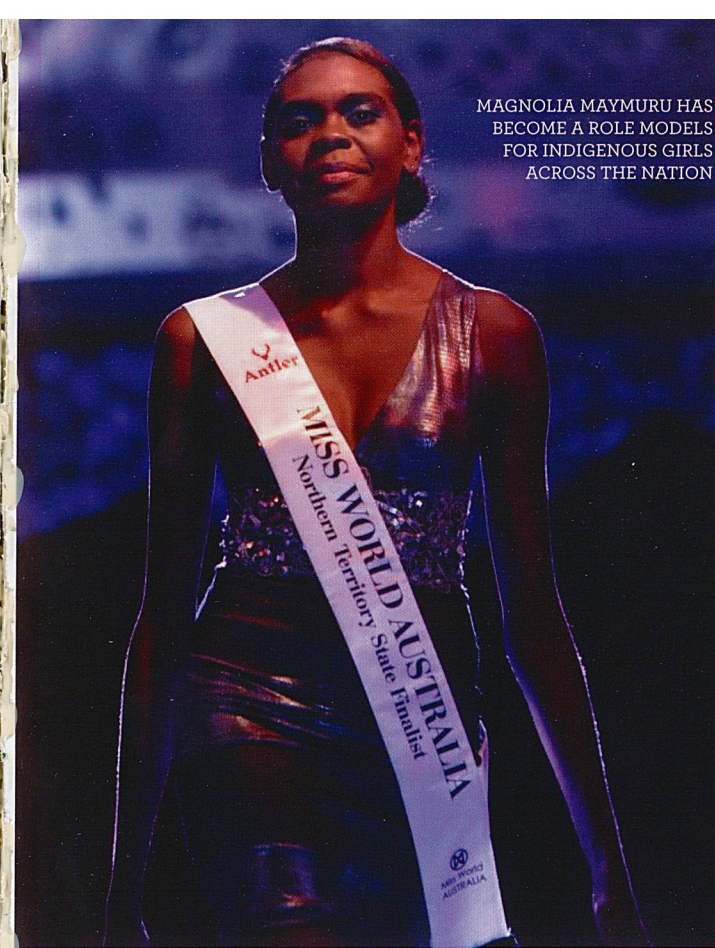


YOUNG RIRRATJINGU DANCERS PERFORM  
AT YARRAPAY FESTIVAL IN YIRRKALA

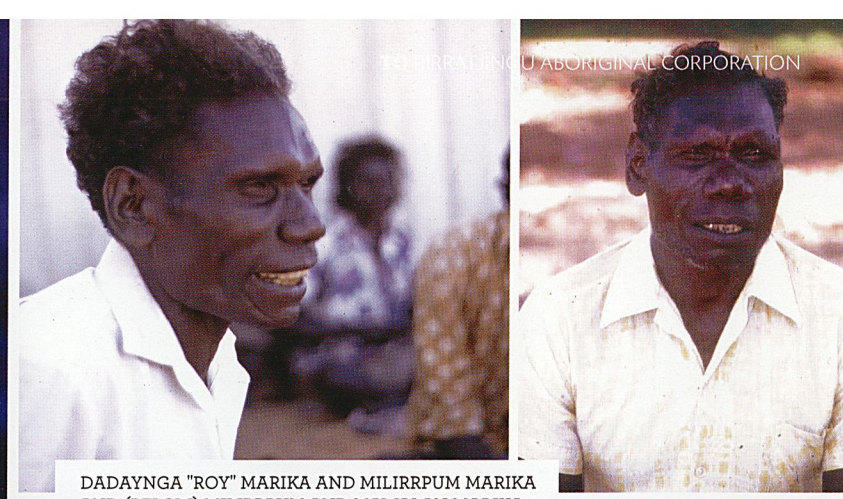
her, she's going to have a strong future.

We do a lot with our corporation to support the kids in sport and education and also to keep our culture strong in the next generation. My sister, I cant say her name (LakLak Marika), our oldest family member, a very senior cultural elder of the Rirratjingu, recently led a program with Dhimurru Rangers and the Yirrkala School. She was teaching our culture, a ceremony called Merri Galtha Rom. She made the Merri String and the Rirratjingu clan were there to teach the ceremony, as a way for our people to keep our culture strong in the next generation. We were all there. All the Rirratjingu. We have over 200 students coming next week to Yirrkala, from schools across the region, for the Arnhem School Sports carnival and new football leagues for the girls and junior starting at Yirrkala.

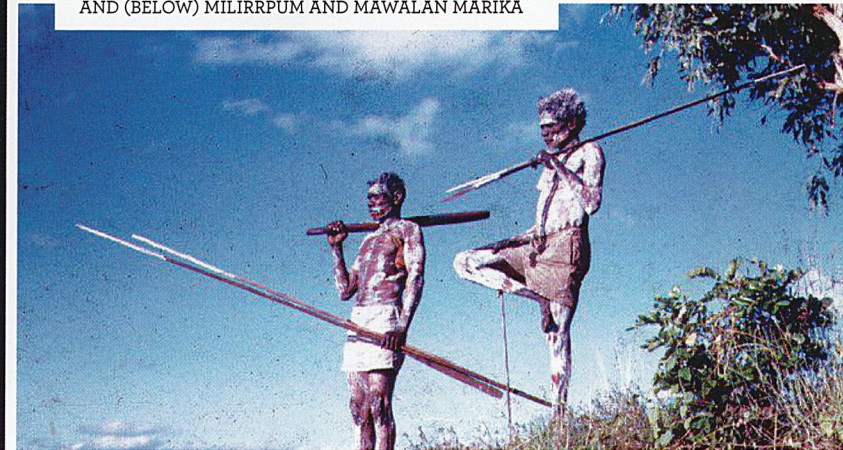
We are providing great support for our girls and the women in our community at the moment. That's important. We need to do that. My granddaughter Magnolia was very brave and showed great leadership for aboriginal girls, as a model, on the national stage. She gave strong positive messages to aboriginal girls, to all girls really, about self-esteem and believing in yourself. I was very proud of her. And we went to Parliament House to do the Djan'kawu ceremony, the sacred Djan'kawu ceremony of



MAGNOLIA MAYMURU HAS  
BECOME A ROLE MODELS  
FOR INDIGENOUS GIRLS  
ACROSS THE NATION



DADAYNGA "ROY" MARIKA AND MILIRRPUM MARIKA  
AND (BELOW) MILIRRPUM AND MAWALAN MARIKA



the two sisters. All of us Rirratjingu people went there, to stop family and domestic violence. We can't have that in our community or anywhere. We have done good work with that, reducing it and making people aware of it. The Prime Minister could see that, the good work that we did, he spoke about it at Parliament House.

I enjoy all of those things. Lots of things keep me motivated. My land, my people, progressing our rights for aboriginal people and doing well in business and helping people. It's all important. It's our life really.

**You mentioned the girls and juniors football, at Yirrkala. You're known for your love of football. Tell us about that.**

Our local team is Djarrak, which is Hawthorne colours. Rirratjingu people are Hawthorne supporters. We won the Grand final, the year before last, and some other ones. We have a program, the Rirratjingu Aboriginal Corporation Football program, which has a partnership with Darwin Buffaloes. It is based around social outcomes. Some of our players from Djarrak have the opportunity to play at the next level, in the NTFL, if they are doing the right thing with work or training, and doing a healthy life style program and going to football training. Then they have the opportunity to join the squad, for the

Darwin Buffaloes. It's working. A lot of them have gone into employment and they are training hard and keeping healthy. Djarrak are doing well this year, we are on top of the ladder.

**You also mentioned your visit to Parliament House earlier, for which you were mentioned in the Australian Government's Closing the Gap Report. What do we need to do as a nation to Close the Gap?**

Land Tenure. Our fathers fought for that. For land Rights. When the mining company came and the government came, our fathers took a stand so they could be involved in decision making about their land. They were scared of what would happen and what did happen and they wanted to be involved, not excluded. So they could have a say about their land and have access to decision making and control. We are still struggling for that. All these years later, I'm still fighting for that and my family is fighting for that. We have a system where a commonwealth statutory authority controls that land and they wont listen to traditional owners, they obstruct our ability to do anything on our land, our have input into it. It can take years and years, many years, to try and do anything. Build something or invest in our land. And if the Land Council, a bureaucrat, makes a decision about our land, give it away or use it for themselves, there is no way

to intervene or to stop it. Aboriginal people are ignored and the courts don't have a good way to deal with those decisions effectively. It takes a very long time and a lot of effort. There must be a better way. There needs to be change, so those issues can be dealt with efficiently and effectively and so aboriginal people have proper rights and the ability to make decisions and be included in how their communities develop. That's the only way to close the gap. The community must be involved and have input and control over decision making.

**You've been a Chairman for many years. What are your key recommendations for good corporate governance?**

We have a really strong board of good people who work well together and we are all dedicated to progressing our organisation and making decisions in the best interests of our corporation. We keep up with our governance training and always learning something new. Your never too old to learn something new. New technology or new areas of business. We are all very proud of our organisation and dedicated to seeing it grow and succeed, so we work hard together and cooperate well together to make sure it is strong. **TQ**