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A message about child protection and caring - Yothuw Guṅgayunaraw

From Rhoda Dhurrkay, and input from Lulu Guyula and Nyomba Gandangu

They didn't come from the sky from another country, or down the river from another state. They are our djāmarrkuli (children). They have Gurruṭu (Yolḷu kinship).

Yolḷu rom (law) never changes - it is still the same, today and forever, and that law is Peace, that is Love.

Gurruṭu rom (the law and culture of Yolḷu kinship) is our main priority. It comes from the land itself.

The Yothu (child) is born with Gurruṭu (kinship), with connections to bāpurru (clans), songlines and family. The Yothu (child) that is born is not alone. Through Gurruṭu we are all connected, and we nurture them.

If the parents cannot look after the child, we make decisions and agreements to send them to other Gurruṭumirr (family). A Yothu (child) grows with many carers, many teachers and many connections.

The power of Gurruṭu (Yolḷu kinship) means that a baby has many Guṅgayunaraw (carers). Not only one nāndi ga bāpa (mother and father), but many, and the extended family of all of these - the Māri (maternal grandparents), momu (paternal grandmothers), ṅāthi (maternal grandparents) and onwards.

Gurruṭumirr are Guṅgayunaraw (carers), looking after a person that is yothu (child), rerrimirr (sick), warrwurmirr (trauma, worried, grieving), and women escaping violence. We care, share and love. We use these three words. It is not just a job for people who run programs, it is for the Gurruṭumirr (Yolḷu family) - we do a lot of djāma (work).

We have shared our knowledge for a long time, but the systems are not listening to us.

As Yolḷu people, we understand through feeling, relationship and responsibility. For balanda, we don't know what your feelings are. How do you feel when you do something to Yolḷu djāmarrkuli?

Too often, systems do not understand or value Yolḷu ways of caring for children.

Yolḷu people don't talk from a book. The governance is in us. We don't have a book to read, we carry the information in our memory and speak in our way. Yolḷu rule is in our mind and our heart.

We all learn from our mistakes, just like:

- The Stolen Generation

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- The Stolen Wages
- Restoration of our cultural that has been taken away from Yolŋu
- Reconciliation where there has been discrimination in the life of Yolŋu: workplaces, family, clans and ceremony.

We are still experiencing discrimination - people dehumanise Aboriginal people.

All we want is reconciliation and unity. We want governments to listen, understand Gurrutu, and work with Yolŋu families to keep children safe and strong in culture, family and community.