

## **Yalu'Marnggithinyaraw and the Yolnguy Walngakum Yolngu life project**

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Young people are growing up in two worlds, where choices are available that did not exist in the past. These choices are taking young people on a different journey to their parents and to the people of their past. The structures that have been maintained over thousands of years to guide choice are being challenged in contemporary society like never before. These structures guard the fundamentals of health: Gurrutu (family), Rom (law) and Wanga (land and country) and are pivotal to our present and future health. Within the steadfastness of these structures there are opportunities and ways to nurture, guide and encourage choice to ensure better health. We will tell our story and provide stories of how choice is and can be supported within Yolngu structures.

These stories centre around an Indigenous organisation called Yalu'Marnggithinyaraw. Yalu means nest and marnggithinyaraw means to learn. Yalu'marnggithinyaraw currently supports a backyard garden project, a healing program and a Building Healthy Communities initiative to support healthy eating and physical activity. These activities have developed over the 7 years since Yalu was established in 2000. Key to the growth and sustainability of these activities has been the drawing on strengths in the community, the commitment to building a Yolngu workforce, the commitment of community members to their children's future health, grounding activities in a cultural framework, the support and participation of community elders and the long-term commitment and support from external organisations. These activities are supporting our children to make healthy choices for their future and for their children's future.