

Year 9 Geography

Assignment 3

Australian

Communities

(Yirrkala, NT)

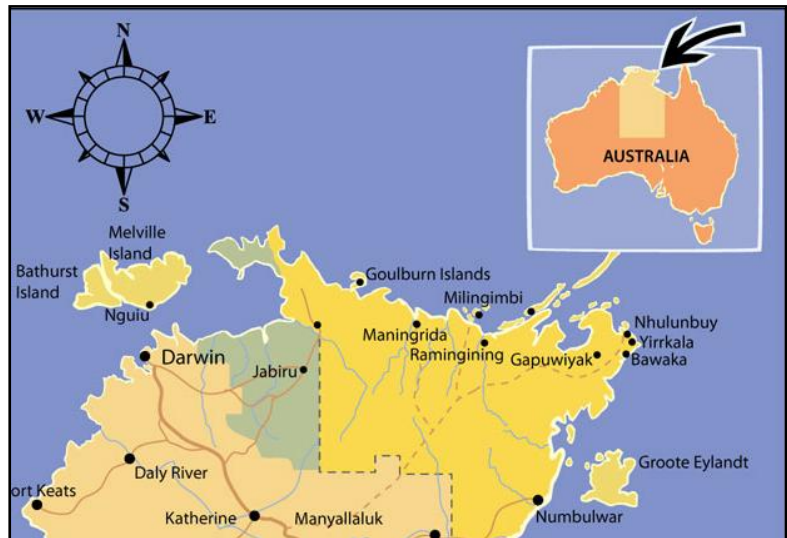
Michael McKenna

Table of Contents		
Name	Source type and number	Location
<i>Introduction</i>		<i>Page 3</i>
Map of Yirrkala and Surrounding Areas	Map 1	Page 3
<i>Factors Causing Change</i>		<i>Pages 3-4</i>
Changes in Yirrkala in the last 20 years		Page 3
Yirrkalan Gallery of Aboriginal Art	Figure 1	Page 3
Beyond Price: Value in Culture, Economics and the Arts.	Written Source 1	Page 3
Analysis of the impact change has had in Yirrkala		Pages 3-4
Indigenous ways for ordinary things (rainwater catching)	Figure 2	Page 4
People of Yirrkala – White, black, and every shade in between.	Figure 3	Page 4
Aboriginal guide with Caucasian tourist, in cave	Figure 4	Page 4
Aboriginal guide with Caucasian tourist, in gallery	Figure 5	Page 4
The Unique community of Yirrkala		Page 5
<i>Community Response</i>		<i>Page 5-6</i>
Attendance comparison of Yirrkala, overall Aboriginal and All Australian Schools.	Graph 1	Page 5
A practical ethos	Written Source 2	Page 6
ESL Resources	Written Source 3	Page 6
Engaging with the community	Figure 6	Page 6
Participation encourages engagement	Figure 7	Page 6

Yirrkala Community

Introduction

The Yirrkala community is a predominantly composed of Indigenous Yolngu Australians that, as a tribe, live nearby or within Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. It is part one of the oldest cultures on earth, but the community itself is fairly new, founded by missionaries in 1935. After the missionaries left, the Yolngu people in general (including Yirrkala) had little contact with the Europeans until the intrusion of service personnel in World War 2 and until the exploitation of bauxite mines on Yolngu traditional land, creating such mining towns as Nhulunbuy.



Map 1 – Map of Yirrkala and surrounding areas

The community of the Yirrkala is based on shared space and to a lesser degree social organisation. The shared space of the Yirrkala community is, according to Google Maps, about 5 km², located in

North-East Arnhem Land, and under the East Arnhem shire council. Despite this largely non-Aboriginal governing body, the social organisation of Yirrkala has a large element of Aboriginal characteristics, with family groups and miniature tribes still a major facet of life in the Yirrkala community.

Factors causing change:

Changes in the Yirrkala in the last 20 years

“During the past...decades, society in Yirrkala has undergone great change brought about by engagement with non-Aboriginal religion, law, economy and culture.” [Written source 1] Indeed, in the last twenty years, the growth of largely European mining town Nhulunbuy (very close to Yirrkala) set off by bauxite findings (which provide jobs for Yirrkalans) has meant greater and greater access to European goods, including sale of liquor, the media and “A full range of Western cultural models, that has led to significant change in social life.” [Written source 1] In the case study of Yirrkala, residents now have access to unthinkable technologies for the Aboriginals of decades ago, such as cars and air transportation. The installment of government schools has increased opportunities for Yolngu Australians, and the whole community is progressing alarmingly fast, but this has the simultaneous effect of increasing emigration for Yolngu people, with very little Australian Aboriginal immigration in comparison.

Analysis of the impact change has had in Yirrkala

The impact on the community that this had is enormous. ‘From 2000 to 2006, the employed population has increased almost by 40% and the unemployed population has decreased by almost 50%; just in 6 years’ [Written source 2]. Although the impact on this community has been generally good, unavoidable side-effects like introduction of alcohol and drugs into society and restriction of certain Aboriginal law policies such as rape as punishment for serious transgressions. A much more basic but important but social change has occurred – Aboriginals are seeing more and more of people not of their own race around [see figures 1 and 3], and are fast becoming alienated from their

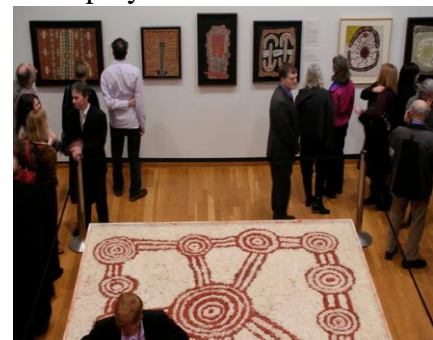


Figure 1 – Yirrkala Gallery of Aboriginal Art

own culture – something which has major impact on this Aboriginal community. From the non-Aboriginal Yirrkalan perspective, there has also been significant impact. During the last 20 years Yirrkala has become a major tourist attraction for thousands of Australians and overseas visitors each year, partaking of Yirrkalan culture and resorts in nearby Nhulunbuy. Although this means heightened awareness for the Yirrkalan culture (see figures 1,2,4 and 5), it also means the gradual degradation of the rock paintings, for tour groups are allowed into the caves to see them, and the reduction of authenticity for Aboriginal art – meaning that the Aboriginal painters are painting their native art for a mainly European audience (see figures 1,4 and 5) which will and has corrupted the art. Although this may seem minor to some, it is symptomatic of a wider problem in many Australian communities, including Yirrkala.



Figure 2 – Indigenous ways for ordinary things (rainwater catching)

Figure 3 – People of Yirrkala – White, black, and every shade in between.



Figure 4 - Aboriginal guide with Caucasian tourist, in gallery



Figure 5 – Aboriginal guide with Caucasian tourist, in cave

The Unique Community of Yirrkala

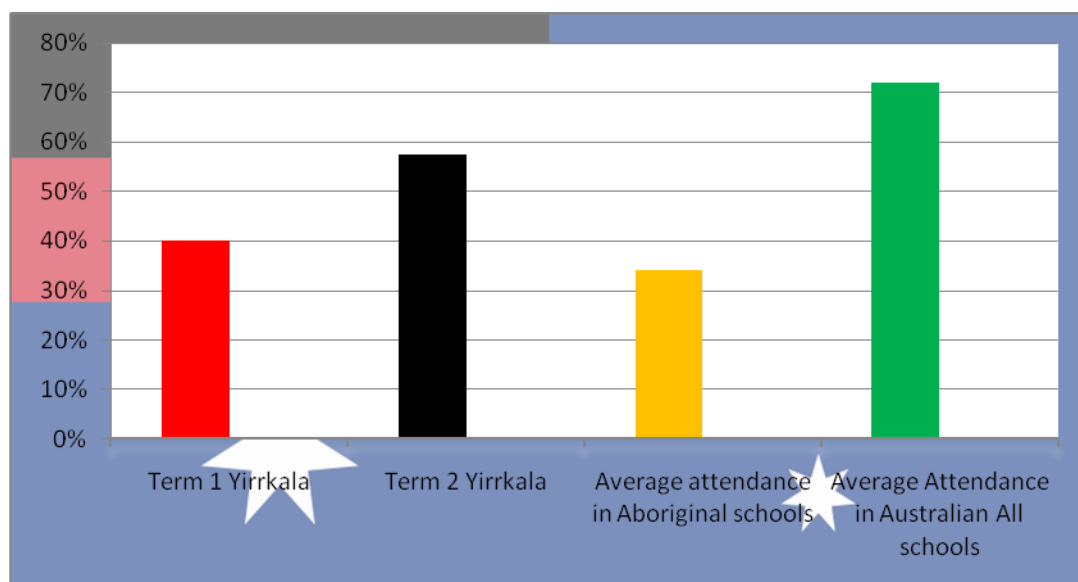
At the present time period, there is no other community in Australia quite like Yirrkala, except for other Yolngu communities in the same region of Arnhem Land, however, even among them, Yirrkala is the largest and most prosperous. It is the best example today of an original Aboriginal community, and we are seeing it become Anglicised before our very eyes, which is fascinating. It's art, dance and culture have been consolidated over thousands of years and there is nothing quite like it in Australia. The community has an overwhelming sense of common identity and even non-Aboriginals living in the area have somewhat been integrated into the Indigenous community, learning many of the Indigenous crafts of the area. The Indigenous contingent still use traditional methods openly to go about their daily lives, as illustrated by figure 2, and these methods will probably survive longer here than anywhere else. Overall, Yirrkala is one of the most Aboriginal communities around.

Community Response – Yirrkala Community Education Centre

One of the main groups responsible for new education in the Yirrkala community is the Yirrkala Community Education Centre. The Yirrkala Community Education Centre is a school that caters specifically for Yolngu speaking students of all ages (300 students in all), and is one of the main reasons that the employment and education rate of the Yirrkalan population is increasing as rapidly as it is. It is a landmark school that teaches firstly in Yolngu Matha, and then English, giving children the choice whether to stay in Yirrkala or go. English is not the first language of any of the students at the school,

and, all 40 members of the Secondary school were ESL learners.

This centre has also led much correspondence with the elders of the tribe, and several universities and colleges, including Bachelor College, Melbourne University and Deakin University, which have contributed to several initiatives at the centre.



Graph 1 - Attendance comparison of Yirrkala, overall Aboriginal and All Australian Schools.

Attendance is a big problem and one of the changes that this

community group needed to and has (at least mostly) overcome. For example, 9 years ago, the lowest attendance for the year was 33% in one class, and just under 50% on average [see graph 1]. For this reason, after the input of Deakin University, a woman called Rosemary Gillespie was brought in to do her Master of Teaching Internship in Yirrkala, trying to fix the attendance problem by bringing in an impartial and almost expert observer, who taught in many classes. Originally the school started out with rote learning, but with the help of Gillespie, the members of the school

managed to compromise and change their aim to teaching, as shown.

"THINGS THAT WOULD DEVELOP THEIR ACADEMIC SKILLS, BUT ALSO ENGAGE THEM IN THINKING ABOUT THEIR FUTURE LIVES, THEIR ABILITY TO WORK AND THEIR MOTIVATION AND INTEREST IN WORKING FOR THEIR COMMUNITY[see figure 6 and 7] ... ONE WAY WOULD BE TO HAVE THE CHILDREN DOING MUCH MORE RESEARCH SORT OF THINGS IN THE COMMUNITY. THE STUDENTS SHOULD GO OUT A LOT MORE TALKING WITH PEOPLE ABOUT THESE THINGS" [Written Source 3]

This was written in 2000, and by 2006, the attendance has improved immensely, and the school had grown from about 300 students in 2000, to in 2006 most of the school-aged Aboriginal population in the area.

Another major problem faced by many, many Indigenous schools is catering for such a large proportion of ESL students. Nicholina McKenna, a teacher's aide for special needs High School children (including ESL) in Kellyville High School states that "the resources required to teach an ESL student English is 3 times as great as a normal student" [Written resource 4]. All these resources must be shipped and maintained by the Australian government in conjunction with the community group, in one of the most rural communities in Australia, which is an incredible logistical feat. As a school, by assisting students to change and get the best of both their own world and the Western world, they assist the community to change and adapt.

By all reports and against all odds, the Yirrkala Community Education Centre has managed to do this and create a sustainable, living, breathing Indigenous Educational centre which not only educates through the "Western" or the "Aboriginal" way but through both, allowing students to make their own choices and educating enough so that they can make those choices properly.



Figure 6 – Engaging with the community



Figure 7 – Participation encourages engagement

Source list

NB: The sources are arranged in the following order: Maps; Graphs; Figures; Written sources

Maps

Map 1:

Yolngu Tourism. mapNT_YolnguTourism. Map. 1 September 2009
<http://www.yolngutourism.com/images/mapNT_YolnguTourism.jpg

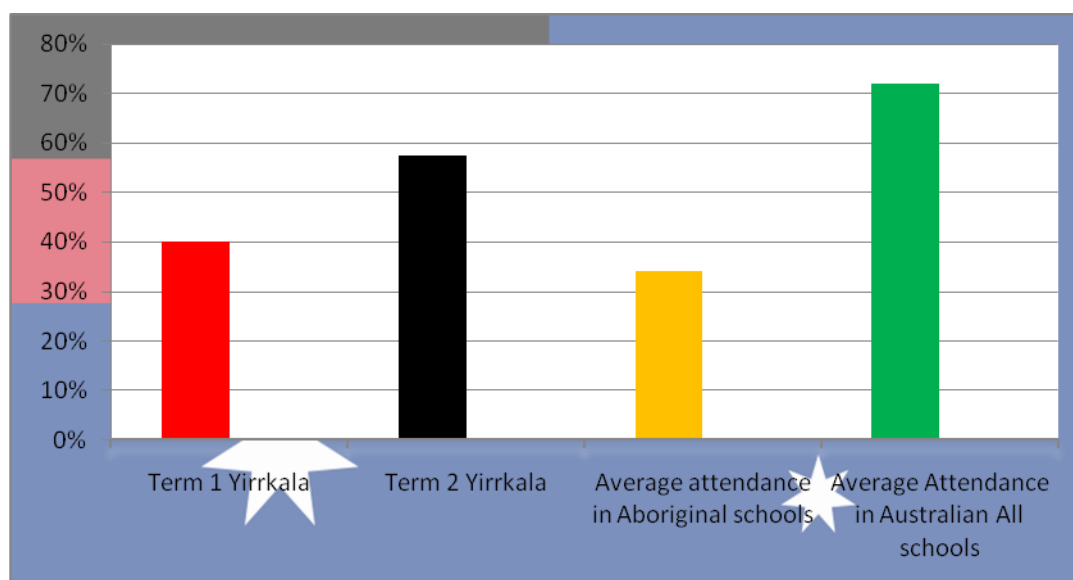
Note: This picture was cropped, and therefore there is only part of the original picture in my work. Beside is the cropped version.



Charts

Chart 1:

This chart was created by me, using data extracted from <http://alex.edfac.usyd.edu.au/archived%20conferences/conference2000/gillespie.html> and <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/C6A56799E3D43B07CA25743900149F78?opendocument>, both viewed 1st September 2009. The picture in the background with the Aboriginal and



Australian flag is from http://geoffreport.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/800px-flag_of_australia_with_aboriginal_flag_replacing_union_flagsvg.png.

Figures

Figure 1:

McKenna, Michael M. "Gallery.jpg." Ed. Michael M. McKenna. 28 Aug. 2009. 3 Sep. 2009 <<http://mcsrock2.ueuo.com/gallery.mht>>.



Figure 2:

Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art. "244V1651.jpg." 3 Sep. 2009 <<http://www.yirrkala.com/prints/images/244V1651.jpg>>.



Figure 3

"Scabies_day_Yirrkala_staff.jpg." Yirrkala Staff. 1 Sep. 2009 <http://www.crcnh.org.au/communication/Enews/newsletter/intranews_05_files/images/Scabies_day_Yirrkala_staff.jpg>.



Figure 4

Yirrkala Bark Painting.jpg. 1 Sep. 2009 <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/44/Yirrkala_Bark_Painting.jpg>.



Figure 5

Flickr. 1 Sep. 2009 <http://farm1.static.flickr.com/145/387848253_dffc120481.jpg?v=0>.

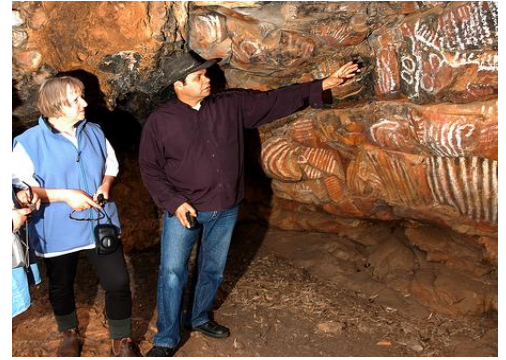


Figure 6

NAPCAN. 1 Sep. 2009
<<http://www.childfriendly.org.au/images/NT/yirrkala02.jpg>>.



Figure 7

McKenna, Michael M. "Community.jpg." Ed. Michael M. McKenna. 28 Aug. 2009. 3 Sep. 2009
<<http://mcspock2.ueuo.com/communitypic.mht>>



Written Sources

Written Source 1:

“During the past...decades, society in Yirrkala has undergone great change brought about by engagement with non-Aboriginal religion, law, economy and culture.”

“A full range of Western cultural models, that has led to significant change in social life.”

Hutter, Michael, and C D. Throsby. Beyond price: value in culture, economics and the arts.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 133, Google Books. 1 Sep. 2009

<<http://books.google.com/books?id=g3H924NyIIUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=beyond+price#v=onepage&q=&f=false>>.

Written Source 2

‘From 2000 to 2006, the employed population has increased almost by 40% and the unemployed population has decreased by almost 50%; just in 6 years’

(This source was written by me, but the percentages were taken from a comparison of

<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/LocationSearch?locationLastSearchTerm=yirrkala&locationSearchTerm=yirrkala&newarea=IARE34011&submitbutton=View+QuickStats+%3E&mapdisplay=on&collection=Census&period=2006&areacode=IARE34011&geography=&method=Place+of+Usual+Residence&productlabel=&producttype=QuickStats&topic=&navmapdisplayed=true&javascript=true&breadcrumb=PL&topholder=0&leftholder=0¤taction=104&action=401&textversion=false&subaction=1>

and

<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/ABSNavigation/prenav/ProductSelect?newproducttype=QuickStats&btnSelectProduct=View+QuickStats+%3E&collection=Census&period=2001&areacode=IARE34030&geography=&method=&productlabel=&producttype=&topic=&navmapdisplayed=true&javascript=true&breadcrumb=LP&topholder=0&leftholder=0¤taction=201&action=401&textversion=false>.

Written Source 3:

"THINGS THAT WOULD DEVELOP THEIR ACADEMIC SKILLS, BUT ALSO ENGAGE THEM IN THINKING ABOUT THEIR FUTURE LIVES, THEIR ABILITY TO WORK AND THEIR MOTIVATION AND INTEREST IN WORKING FOR THEIR COMMUNITY... ONE WAY WOULD BE TO HAVE THE CHILDREN DOING MUCH MORE RESEARCH SORT OF THINGS IN THE COMMUNITY. THE STUDENTS SHOULD GO OUT A LOT MORE TALKING WITH PEOPLE ABOUT THESE THINGS"

Gillespie, Rosemary. "Addressing the issue of secondary students' attendance at Yirrkala Community Education Centre, North East Arnhem Land." WHY AREN'T THEY AT SCHOOL? Uni of Sydney. 1 Sep. 2009

<<http://alex.edfac.usyd.edu.au/archived%20conferences/conference2000/gillespie.html>>.

Written Source 4:

...“the resources required to teach an ESL student English is 3 times as great as a normal student”
Conversation with Nicholina McKenna, 1 Sep. 2009
