

SOLVE VACCINE HESITANCY IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

PROPOSAL COVID-19 COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM



Richard Trudgen running a workshop with ALPA CDP in Galiwink'u on "What is in the vaccines?" Following this session, all attendees willingly received the Pfizer vaccine.

**MEDIA RESOURCES IN LANGUAGE
+ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

NOV 2021 / PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY

RICHARD TRUDGEN, WHY WARRIORS CEO
REV DR DJINIYINI GONDARRA, SENIOR YOLNGU CLAN LEADER
DR. KERRY MILLS, MICROBIOLOGIST, CANBERRA UNIVERSITY

WHY WARRIORS COMMUNITY EDUCATION



Meeting community where they are at and listening to their questions to eradicate misinformation.



Night screenings - producing resources around questions asked by the community and making them accessible 24/7

Methodology:

- 1 Identify people's concerns and questions**
- 2 Map their knowledge gaps**
- 3 Investigate subjects, noting any contradictions**
- 4 Produce resources to answer questions in local language**
- 5 Enable the community to drive the curriculum**
- 6 Facilitate face-to-face community education through traditional social/political structures.**

Why Warriors cross-cultural and bilingual team has operated for 15 years, producing education resources in Yolngu Matha language for Yolngu communities of north-east Arnhem Land.

The organisation was founded by Richard Trudgen, author of the seminal book, *Why Warriors Lie Down and Die*, and community educator for the past four decades. Why Warriors production team comprises a highly skilled Yolngu leadership team, including Rev. Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra OAM (Chairman of ALPA), Rev Maratja Dhamarrandji (linguist and translator), and Dianne Biritjalawuy Gondarra, as well as other notable Yolngu elders.

Dr. Kerry Mills, a leading microbiologist from the University of Canberra, joined the team as a professional subject consultant to fact-check and co-produce the Covid-19 video series.

Why Warriors has produced over 500 podcasts, 44 concept videos and a large selection of English learning materials. These are available in Yolngu Matha for radio, and online via a new Yolngu learning platform: (www.djambatjmararam.com).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In March 2020 it was obvious that Yolngu people in Arnhem Land were going to suffer catastrophic deaths from COVID-19 if they were not empowered with information in language to make informed decisions.

Why Warriors cross-cultural research and production team began producing podcasts and videos to answer Yolngu people's questions and concerns around the evolving pandemic.

Over the past 18 months, with support from ALPA (Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation), Why Warriors has developed a video series on COVID-19 in Yolngu Matha language.

The video series answers questions from Yolngu people to allow them to make informed decisions around vaccines and how to protect themselves and their families.

Yolngu traditional worldview dictates that people want in-depth, science-based information in order to understand new topics; what Yolngu call the "dhugi-dhawu" – the deep evidential information.

It is impossible for Yolngu people to understand top-down government messages about Covid-19 that are simply translated directly from English into Yolngu Matha, as these literal translations lack meaning and context.

In contrast, Why Warriors resources answer Yolngu questions from within their unique worldview, using local knowledge. For example, "social distancing" can be explained in relation to Yolngu "goŋ-wukundi" law – a law where you are restricted in what you can do and where you can go. And using the phrase "buwayak warrakan mala" (invisible group of animals and birds) when referring to live disease agents like bacteria and viruses so people can picture in their minds how a virus spreads and reproduces. You need to tap into local knowledge to do this effective translation of universal information.



Royal Flying Doctor Service COVID-19 vaccination team with Rev. Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra, receiving his second Pfizer injection. Dr Gondarra was the main co-producer on the Why Warriors team to produce the COVID video series.



Some of these media resources are being accessed by Yolngu people. However, First Nations people in remote communities do not have reliable access to technology. Nor are they media savvy like many mainstream Australians. Traditional communication methods through the political family/ clan leaders are still essential for the delivery of this vital information.

A community education program is required immediately on the ground, with IT assistance, in each Yolngu community, in order to fully utilise these resources. And to answer any other questions people have, in order to achieve real results.

Rev. Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM (pictured above) is a senior Yolngu elder from Elcho Island, who is worried about the borders reopening. He has instructed Richard Trudgen and the Why Warriors team to visit Yolngu communities, one by one, to sit down with the Senior Council of Elders in each community, and take them through the whole story of Covid-19.

"Wamut (Richard Trudgen's skin name) is trained by us (Yolngu elders) in the right cultural protocol to do this. And this information about Covid-19 must come from a Balanda person (mainstream Australian) because we don't understand it enough to answer all the questions our communities have. Once we have the knowledge we can help to educate our people."

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Our goal is to empower all Yolngu people with enough knowledge around Covid-19 to make informed decisions to protect themselves, their clan, and their families.

With well designed community education resources, as well as face-to-face dialogue in order to answer questions and responses, Yolngu people can understand the story of Covid-19 from their worldview, in their language.

It is not just about getting vaccinated but having a well-rounded understanding of the whole subject in order to deal with new developments and health issues in the future.

With our complete Covid-19 video series, four decades of experience in cross-cultural education, and strong relationships forged between senior elders in remote communities, the Why Warriors team is ready.

Why Warriors is proposing to provide community education in all Yolngu communities to help health workers and the Australian government increase vaccination rates as borders reopen.

Health workers in Yolngu communities need access to information in both Yolngu and mainstream worldview. Yolngu health workers are currently in a precarious position as they cannot "tell our elders about these things," as that is not the correct cultural method of doing things. But they can support and answer questions if they have the same education and resources.

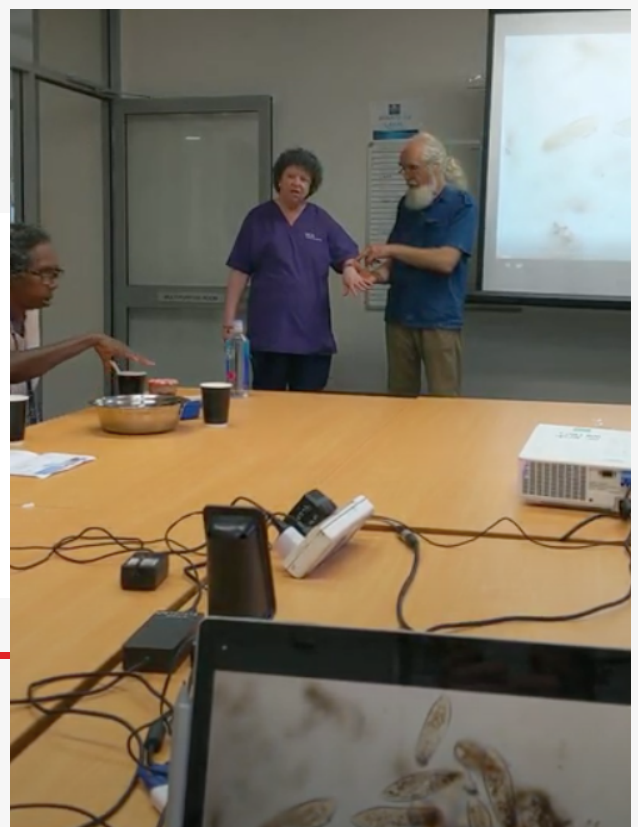
Richard Trudgen and Rev. Dr Gondarra, have successfully run community education programs across north-east Arnhem land, including HIV, STI, and melioidosis campaigns. They have produced podcasts on scabies, hepatitis, diabetes, renal failure, rheumatic heart disease and many other health issues faced by Yolngu people. The Why Warriors team played a significant role in reducing petrol-sniffing across north-east Arnhem land, before the federal government intervention in 2007.

HIV education included a need to change centuries-old Yolngu ceremonial practices. Why Warriors staff understand that working with local people through their traditional structures empowers them and enables them to create their own interventions so issues like vaccine hesitancy will disappear.

Video #29 in the Covid-19 series warns that "Delta is coming" and time is short.

Without improved vaccine uptake, the Delta strain will decimate remote Yolngu communities in Arnhem Land.

Empowering local people is the only way to solve this problem. Information is power, but you can only get information when it is in a language you understand.



RESOURCES IN LANGUAGE

VIDEOS

Why Warriors COVID-19 videos are a vital education resource, produced in Yolngu Matha language, with English subtitles. The videos are designed for Yolngu Matha speakers, or those who work with Yolngu people, to promote more informed dialogue.

The videos could also be used by other community educators in other First Nations languages. The Why Warriors team would be happy to help apply our community education skills in other communities facing similar communication issues. The videos provide a base story for Covid-19, and Why Warriors have additional knowledge around the subject to answer follow-up questions, as well as capabilities to work in Aboriginal-English and with other First Nations language interpreters.

The videos are available on our new [Yolngu Matha YouTube channel](#), our Yolngu Matha learning platform, [Djambatjmararam](#), or via the [Why Warriors website](#). Please contact us at Info@whywarriors.com.au or 08 8987 1664 to discuss how we can work together to conduct outreach around these resources, or for more information on how to download and screen them for your optimal use.



Videos playing in the ALPA grocery store in Galiwin'ku. This is a hub visited daily by the community, and provides an excellent opportunity for sharing Covid-19 information. This could be done across all Yolngu communities.

PODCASTS

Our Covid-19 podcasts are available via [Soundcloud](#) or on our Yolngu Matha learning platform, [Djambatjmarram](#). These podcasts are recorded as conversations in both English and Yolngu Matha. The dialogue format and the questions that arise are driven by Why Warriors Yolngu co-producers who have conducted the research in their own communities in north-east Arnhem Land, NT.

In Galiwin'ku, Glenda was suffering badly from scabies so a Why Warriors volunteer helped treat her, and showed her our podcast on causes, treatments and prevention. She downloaded it to her phone to listen in her own time. When the volunteer returned a few days later, Glenda had washed all of her bedding and distanced herself from the rest of the family to prevent the spread of scabies to others.



"When COVID-19 first came, Why Warriors resources were the only real tools we had. We had their podcasts on bluetooth speakers out the front, in the waiting area so people could come and listen. They were really interested, and they would come in and ask questions about COVID and then we could get more in depth about it. They work better than anything else - why? It's very simple, they're in language! Talking their language. We're never going to close the gap if we're not speaking Yolngu Matha. There's always going to be a misinterpretation of information."

Stacey Nachos, Laynhapuy Health worker, Yirrkala

ONLINE LEARNING

Why Warriors has plenty of **free online learning material** on our [website](#) to help deliver practical cross-cultural solutions. Our [100 Question and Answer video series](#) tackles ordinary, intriguing, and uncomfortable questions that are often asked about First Nations Peoples and their culture. Introducing good information into the reconciliation dialogue.

Djambatjmarram online learning platform has a '[hard words](#)' section that helps Yolngu to decipher the meaning and concepts of many difficult English words. The level of confusion most Yolngu have around academic English words and contemporary issues is largely due to a lack of culturally appropriate information in a language they can understand.

Our resources are designed to fill the information gaps that contribute to the marginalisation of Yolngu communities. Our resources can be used by Yolngu and also mainstream Balanda educators, medical staff and community workers in their appointments, classrooms or everyday life.



PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

Thanks to additional funding from ALPA, Why Warriors was able to spend 2 weeks in Galiwink'u in October 2021, working with Yolngu on Elcho Island. Our education sessions targeted approximately 14 Yolngu health workers, 6 clan leaders, and subsequently 180 people from family and related community groups. Vaccine rates went from 30 per day to 80 per day. We also did several night sessions at the Galiwin'ku Festival where 800 to 1000 people attended. Vaccines have continued at a rate of 50 per day since then. Unfortunately we are unable to get exact vaccination percentage rates from anyone across the region. But with clan leaders now having acquired answers to their questions and resources in language to continue to alleviate misinformation, vaccine rates of Yolngu will continue to rise.

We propose \$100,000 of further funding is required for our team to spend an additional 8 weeks in Galiwin'ku, and in three other communities affected by low vaccination rates: Gapuwiyak, Milingimbi and Ramingining. This community education model gives Yolngu people information down to a biomedical level in their language, which in turn provides them the freedom to make their own decisions around their own health. Once vaccine hesitancy consequently disappears, this will create safer communities for Yolngu people and their families.

Read more about how Why Warriors works with remote communities, and our collaboration with other organisations, in an [independent evaluation](#) of our resources by PriceWaterhouseCoopers' Indigenous Consulting business (PIC), carried out in October 2020.

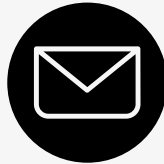
We would like to continue this work with like-minded organisations and community groups connected to Yolngu and other First Nations communities across Australia.

Partnership and collaboration is central to our ethos, whether it is with clan nation groups, individuals or other organisations. We look forward to working together with you.



JOIN US IN WORKING TO EMPOWER FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES ACROSS AUSTRALIA.

CONTACT US



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