

## An epic journey! The Maningrida Bible Translation Centre

By Louise Macdonald



Maningrida now has a translation centre and it has been an epic journey! The Kunibídjí whose name for this place is Manayingkarírra are the traditional owners. They gave enthusiastic permission for the building of a new Bible Translation Centre down near the beach next to the Church House. There are eleven languages spoken in Maningrida and it is time to have a space where language work can happen. The West Arnhem Area Council of Northern Regional Council of Congress, the UCA church elders of Western Arnhemland, were also enthusiastic supporters of the project.

Mobile Mission Maintenance (MMM) were brought on board to help with designing and building. Their experience in creating prefabricated buildings for the Pacific Region that are steel framed and cyclone coded was invaluable. MMM's volunteer workforce of retired tradies, engineers and architects constructed the frame in Melbourne, packed it into a container and shipped it to Darwin. Meanwhile the challenges of a late wet season led to a nail biting wait for the slab to happen in Maningrida, but thanks to local Aboriginal contractors the slab was poured and cured just in time for the arrival of the building team.



Due to cyclone coding and the beach front location the frame was what some described as 'over engineered' and this meant that the container from Melbourne was too heavy for the barge trip from Darwin to Maningrida. So everything had to be repacked into two containers and delivered in time for construction to begin.



**A PROJECT OF THE NORTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS AND THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA NORTHERN SYNOD**



# Maningrida Bible Translation Centre cont.



The advance team in their eagerness to get to Maningrida managed to drown a four wheel drive half way to their destination, a misfortune that was to be repeated later in the project. The team of twenty two safely arrived and set up camp at the site. The project involved more than just the Translation Centre. The housing shortage in Maningrida is at crisis point, so it had been decided that some renovations at the Church House needed to happen alongside the new building. This led to installing cupboards in the upstairs kitchen and turning a storage room downstairs into a more comfortable living space for the Burarra community minister and family living there.



The frame was raised quickly and the roof went on with assistance from the local Bininj CDP crew. Walls, banks of louvres, security screens, bathrooms, kitchenettes and doors all happened over a six week period. The only leftover tasks to complete were the painting of the concrete floor and mounting the impressive sign on the building. Thanks to a generous donation from Ian Graham of MMM we were able to furnish the workshop space and the attached twin bed unit. There is now a shiny workshop space and staff accommodation dedicated to the work of God.

As we find funds we will install air conditioning to supplement the fans, and data projection facilities along with landscaping the surrounding area. Unfortunately Rex's lovingly tended garden was sacrificed to the build and we need to help him recreate it.





# An Epic Journey



Karen cuts the ribbon

Karen, Monica and Carolyn  
Discuss the sign

In September there was a joyous celebration to open and dedicate the new space. Arrarrkpi and Yolŋu representatives were there. The Rev Tony Goodluck Moderator of the Northern Synod was present along with representatives from Bible Society Australia, AuSIL, Bining Kunwok Language Resource Centre and Nungalinga College. The evening started with traditional song and dance. Karen Wordjol as the Traditional owner representative led the dancing and cut the ribbon to open the building. Speeches were made telling of the history of Bible Translation in the various language groups. Karen Wordjol and Monica Wilton spoke for the

Kunibídjí, Sheila Karnbaladj who was later commissioned as a Pastor prayed. Renee Dempsey spoke for the Burarra language group. Rev. Lindsay Parkhill spoke of the original vision for this project which began with the Arrarrkpi at Goulburn Island.

The final celebration for the night was the commissioning of three women into the Ministry of Bible Translation. This is the first time the ministry has been formally recognised and they each were presented with a red stole. Monica Wilton was recognised as an Ndjébbana translator, Delia Namundja as a Kuninjku translator and Katie Cooper as a senior Burrarra translator. A feast put on by the Maningrida Progress Association was then enjoyed by all.

It is now time to put this new building to work. Applications to rent the space can be accessed through the Coordinate website [Welcome to Coordinate | Coordinate](#) We pray that this building will be a long lasting gift for the work of God and the people and languages of Arnhemland.

Monica, Delia and Katie

Renee Dempsey speaking of the  
Burarra translation project history



# Pitjantjatjara Children's Art Bible

By Dave Barnett

Nami



After a church service in Adelaide a few years ago, Pitjantjatjara Bible translator Nami Kulyuru noticed all the different kinds of children's Bibles available – in English – in this particular church. On our way home, she said to me in the car, "Those children's Bibles, they have really nice pictures. But they're different from the way we tell stories with our paintings. I wonder if we could make a Bible for our children that tells the stories in the way anangu do their paintings?" From this conversation came the idea to produce a Pitjantjatjara children's Bible containing depictions of stories from the Old and New Testament, using traditional artwork by anangu artists and Bible translators.

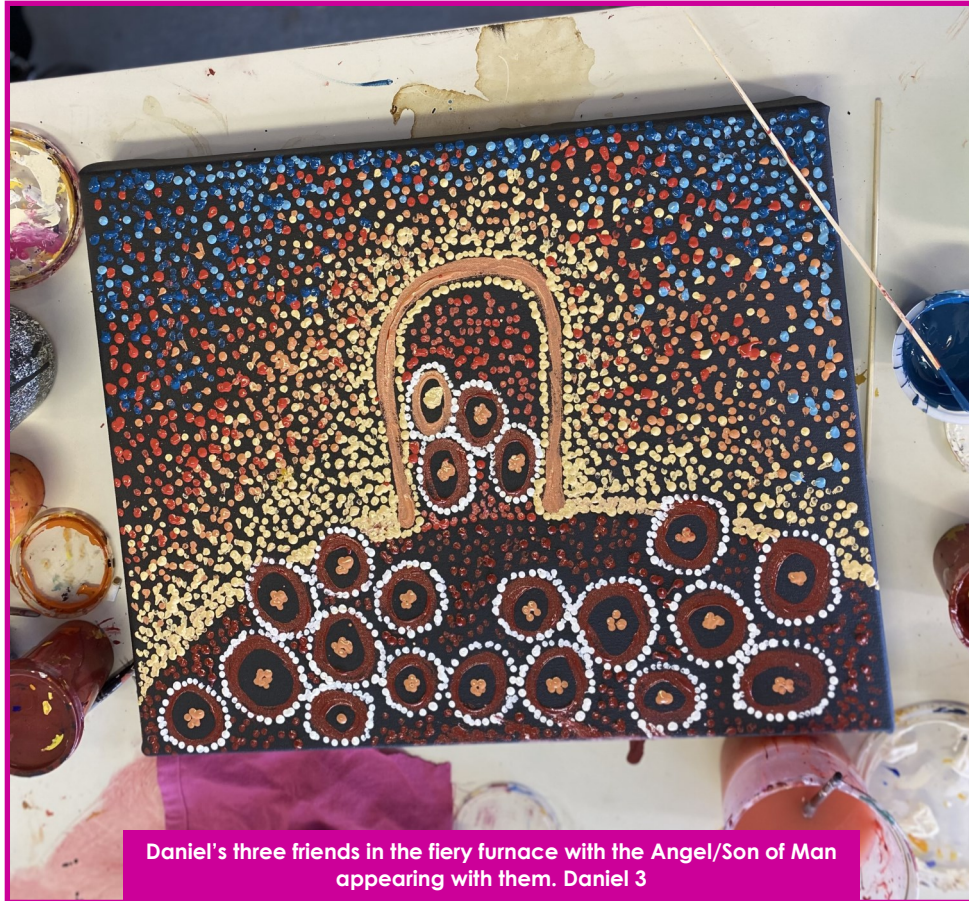
Pitjantjatjara society was traditionally an oral culture: customs, laws and tales were passed down from one generation to the next by older people telling stories to their children and grandchildren. It was common for important moral lessons or information about the location of water holes or where certain foods were sourced to be illustrated in lengthy narratives which often involved the travels and adventures of various characters across the land. Through these stories, children would have a visual map in their minds about the environment around them, even if they'd never visited those places. Children would grow up, therefore, knowing 'whole' stories, including where they began and where they ended. In the mission days, after the art centre was established in Ernabella, this way of telling stories was transferred to the canvas. Anangu began visually depicting with the paint brush the stories they had heard only by the words of their parents and grandparents

On the way home after church that day, Nami told me that Pitjantjatjara people can tell a whole story on their canvas, representing all the important locations, as well as the order of the events of the narrative. In contrast, she noticed that all the English children's Bibles depicted only a single scene from the story, so that it was impossible to tell the story to a child if you only had access to the picture. Therefore it was her dream to produce a children's Bible that told the same Bible stories she had heard from her parents around the campfire as a child – only, these stories would be told through anangu-style paintings, paintings that illustrate the entirety of the story.





## Children's Bible, continued.



Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace with the Angel/Son of Man appearing with them. Daniel 3

Shortly after first telling me this idea, Nami was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour. She was determined, however, to spend whatever remaining time and strength the Lord gave her to work on this project, and so she took up her brush and started painting. She began *In the beginning*, with God's creation of the world by His Word. Since then, many other Pitjantjatjara artists and Bible translators have jumped on board, keen to see Nami's dream become a reality.

Sadly, a little over a year ago, Nami lost her battle with illness and passed away, to the great sorrow of all her family and friends. But by God's grace, before she died she was given the strength to complete a number of paintings to be included in the book.

The desire to see Nami's legacy honoured and her grandchildren receive God's Word through the Children's Art Bible spurred on the translators and artists. Over 50 canvases have subsequently been completed. Stories from Abraham offering Isaac on Mount Moriah, to Joseph and the betrayal of his brothers, to God the Father offering his Son on the cross at Calvary, to the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, have now been represented on canvas in the style of traditional *anangu* story-telling. At the time of writing, the paintings are being professionally photographed in preparation for publication in the book Nami dreamed she would one day hold.





# God's Timing is Perfect—Gupapuyngu Workshop

By Glenys Waters

It was time for another Gupapuyngu translation work session. Dalambirra had three books drafted, ready to read through and get advice. And there were new people ready to train on Adapt It. Coordinating schedules between five people, across time zones, remote places, and different cultures, with little or no phone contact, is fraught with difficulties. Add to that the caring responsibilities each of us have, family health appointments and other needs. Frustrations can easily set in. And did.

Things just weren't working out for us to get together with the translators, even though the ladies were keen. Things came up to prevent their participation. One had to go to a funeral and then got quite sick. Venues and times were adjusted. But there were still too many no's! Perhaps it was not to be at this time. Solution: Let's have our long overdue holiday instead. But just as we (Glenys and Bruce) had the campervan all packed and about to head out the door, Dalambirra rang on a borrowed phone and insisted that we go back to plan C of working in Darwin at Nugalinya College from 25th Sept to 8 October. We quickly checked: Was the accommodation still available at the college? Were there still reasonably priced tickets on each person's airlines? Was there a room to work in? All answers came back yes! So things were booked and paid for by 2 different people in 2 different states within the hour, and we headed off for half of our planned holiday. A week later we returned, unpacked the camper, put it in storage, washed everything, packed suitcases and flew to Darwin.

The next day it was lovely to finally greet my yapa (sister) and the companion, Elizabeth Djarmun, whom she had brought as they stepped off their plane. Ah...four of us had made it.

We shared a dorm unit on the grounds of the college (in the background), and ate together in the lovely, covered breezeway between the bedrooms. Friends loaned us camping gear and two trusty butane burners. The shops were 7 minutes walk away, church 4 mins walk, and we were worked in the College art room for the 2 weeks. It was such a lovely creative space. We were surrounded by students' artwork done as a result of meditating on scriptures.



Glenys Dalambirra & Bruce



# God's Timing is Perfect, continued.

The college gardens are being transformed over time. The latest addition is The Way of the Cross. It's a pathway in one part of the gardens. It reminded us daily, as we moved from dorm to work space, of the amazing journey Christ took to the cross on our behalf; that the tomb is indeed empty, he has risen and is interceding for us. The ladies, Judy Dalambirra and Elizabeth Djarrmun were right at home here, having been involved in courses at the college before. We have been here a number of times too. The facilities are excellent as a place of work and learning and we were quickly into that.



This was the first time Djarrmun had worked with us. Dalambirra and Bruce showed her how to use the computer program to adapt the Djambarrpuyngu scriptures into Gupapuyngu. She took to it straight away and was running independently very quickly. She was able to complete 1 & 2 John while we were in Darwin and was

obviously really enjoying it.

Dalambirra has now first-drafted over 52% of the Gupapuyngu New Testament which is amazing. Pray for her continuing good health and protection. She just keeps plodding away on it at home and we have trouble keeping up with her. While together this time she and Bruce did the read through check of 1 Corinthians and Colossians. They didn't get time to do 2 Corinthians but did check a few noted problems and fixed them.

When doing a read through of the draft adaptation, one of the key things that we spent time on, is finding equivalences for words which are not in the vocabulary of the Gupapuyngu translators. An example comes from Colossians 1:23. The Djambarrpuyngu word *ḏaḏawuyurr* was not in the Gupapuyngu translator's vocabulary. Bruce went back to the greek interlinear and a discussion ensued. Often there is a phone call to a knowledgeable elder to help bring the needed word to light. In this case it was *gulyurru* 'stop'.

Sometimes Bruce thinks the full meaning of the Greek has not been captured in a verse so discussions about the finer points of meanings ensue. Sometimes things are changed, other times it becomes clearer that the original draft is accurate, and no change is made. While Bruce and Ngalandambirra were working together they came across a difficult verse involving the word for 'spirit'. That verse talks about the first Adam, a living being; and the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. They talked together, and then changed that last part to: "he, that other Adam, was born a from-heaven spirit." That captured the Greek meaning a little more clearly.



Elizabeth, Dalambirra & Bruce



# God's Timing is Perfect, continued.



When discussing word choices and phrases we get into all kinds of discussions of theological concepts and make connections to other verses in scripture. The discussions are quite enriching and often leads to deeper understandings for all of us.

Another issue encountered was the spelling of Greek names for people and places.

The Greek has Laodicea, what to do in Gupapuyngu? The people in the Milingimbi area prefer English pronunciation of names since these days they are more familiar with key Bible names in English, than when they see them in language. But when they come to less familiar names that they don't know how to pronounce, reading halts. So we agreed that with some names we would need to use English-like spellings to make such words easier to say. So Laodicea became Layodisia. And the Greek name Nympha, became Nimfa. Many readers would not know that Greek 'ph' is the same sound as English 'f'? And that the 'Ny' should be like English 'Ni'. Quite a few changes of this kind were needed so that reading would proceed fluently, especially where Paul writes greetings to people in other locations.

By working together on these types of things, we are able to improve the drafts and make them easier to read out loud which is important for the use of the scriptures in fellowship and church meetings. We notice that the translators also often adjust word endings or revise word choices along the way as their focus is now purely on the Gupapuyngu text and on sentences and paragraphs rather than word for word.



At the end of our two weeks we were all very satisfied with our time in Darwin and we all kept healthy. The ladies took home checking copies of Mark, 1 & 2 Corinthians and Colossians. We are so very thankful that God put it all together at the right time.





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# THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BIBLE TRANSLATION COLLABORATION

## Being Christ-like by working together By Louise Sherman

*Scripture encourages us in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."*

The task of translating the Bible into the more than 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages still spoken across Australia today is a huge one. No single Mission organisation or church can achieve this on their own as the verse from Ecclesiastes reminds us. By working together in collaboration we are able to achieve far more. God himself models collaboration to us, the Trinity is the ultimate in perfect collaboration and unity. God also chooses to work in collaboration with his church and shares his mission with us. With all of this in mind, an Australian National Collaboration for the purpose of Bible Translation has formed over the past 12 months. After an initial commitment by key Australian organisations to 'work together' at a Regional Gathering in Sydney in July 2022 a move toward a better collaboration process was underway.

This was followed up by an Australian National Gathering of Mission organisations and churches at Nungalinga College in Darwin in February 2023. This significant event saw 92 attendees from across Australia representing 17 different organisations, with 46 Indigenous leaders from 24 different language groups. This 3 day event commenced with an Indigenous Leaders day in which these key leaders were given the opportunity to speak into the program, offering both their wisdom and cultural expertise. This day revealed the strong desire among Indigenous folk to commit to the task of translating the Bible into their heart languages and their commitment to working with Mission organisations and local churches to see this happen. There were many insightful presentations given over the next two days including a passionate sharing about the healing that comes through Bible Translation of 'sleeping' languages through language revitalisation. A case study on collaboration involving an Oral Bible Translation workshop for the Ndjébbana language from Maningrida in West Arnhem Land was presented. This highlighted the different organisations working together to enable this workshop to occur, which included AuSIL Fieldworker/linguist Rachel Shipp, with assistance from Melody and Paul Kube (AuSIL and Bible Society); Bible Society consultant Dr Sam Freney, with logistics from Uniting Church Northern Synod and Pioneers as well as audio assistance from GRN (Global Recordings Network). There was further agreement from those present to work together collaboratively and at a follow up meeting in Alice Springs in May 2023 a National Collaboration Vision document was agreed upon along with the formation of an Australian National Collaboration Committee. This committee comprises representatives from YWAM, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Bible Society Australia, AuSIL and Nungalinga College.

Since May the committee has met on several occasions and have identified 5 key focus areas to further support Bible Translation into the future, these are: Language Survey work; Distribution; Recruitment; Training and Literacy. It will be exciting to see the fruits of this collaborative approach over the next few years.







Rachel, Sandra and Nancy working on Mawng

AuSIL and Bible Society jointly ran a workshop at Nungalinga College in Darwin, for Indigenous languages that have very little published Scripture. A couple of languages present have one whole gospel, but several others have less than 10 verses so far. There were 9 language groups represented, including 7 that Coordinate supports from across Arnhem land (Mawng, Kunbarlang, Ndjébbana, Gupapuyngu, Dhuwaya, Dhuwa Dhanu'mi and Wangurri).

On the first day of the workshop everyone spent time considering what Bible passage would be helpful for their communities, as well as being short enough to achieve a published product within a week! All the groups eventually settled on Acts 1:8-11, Jesus' Ascension, which includes the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of Jesus' return one day. At the end of the week, each language group was able to leave with a picture book style booklet of the story, and most languages were able to record audio so that an animation can be put on YouTube.

Malcolm attended the workshop from Maningrida, in West Arnhem. He came with experienced Bible teacher Monica, to learn about translation work for the first time. Monica has held onto a vision for Ndjébbana Bible translation for many years, and is looking to develop a team of Ndjébbana translators.

### **Malcolm shared these thoughts about the workshop:**

*It's really good [to be here], very exciting, interesting and helpful to grow. From this story we learn about the Holy Spirit and about Jesus. I think it's good for people to have the Bible in Ndjébbana. It's good language for the elders to read and children and young people. I like the pictures and animation, it's good [for people] to see the pictures to give them more learning [about the Bible story]. It will be good to take [these books] out for the community in Language, instead of English.*

Also present from West Arnhem were Nancy, Rosemary and Sandra from Waruwi Goulburn Island. Between the 3 of them, they translated into Mawng and Kunbarlang. Mawng is a big language at Goulburn Island, and Kunbarlang is very small.

### **Nancy shared these thoughts about her involvement:**

*It is very important for us to have the Bible in our own language so people can read it back home in the community.*

*Why I'm here is because I want to help my people back home, I want to continue on working and I will teach my families and maybe one day they can take over my place. And also the books that we make, Rosemary and I, the people in our families, and friends and whatever, they will read it to their families. I'm very happy to be doing this work. This was my aim when I was a kid, to do translating. Rosemary is my mentor, she teaches me. I have been doing translation for a long time. We were both a teacher-linguists in the '80s.*

*This story is good, very helpful. When the disciples went with Jesus to the mount of olives, and then God took him up, and the disciples were standing there looking at the sky, and the two men came down dressed in white and they told them, why are you still looking – he'll be back. That's the good part.*



# Punctuation Fun! By Mally McLellan



Nungalingya College has been short staffed for the Certificate II in Translation this year, so I was asked if I could volunteer for a day of teaching. The topic? Punctuation in Djambarrpuyṁu! Yes, a whole day of it!

How do you know where to put full stops and commas?

How do you know where to use question marks and exclamation marks?

Where do quotation marks go?

There were a class of 20 students from various Yolṁu clan languages, but the dominant, and most widely understood language was Djambarrpuyṁu, so that's the language we used. Thankfully, there were two assistant teachers with me, Djawuṯ and Rriwiṯ (formerly Yurranydjil), a husband and wife team.

Well, the day went quickly. For some participants it was the first time they understood why we use punctuation marks. (Ever tried to read a passage that has NO punctuation marks?) Others were reinforced in the knowledge they already had.

It was very satisfying for me when Yurranydjil prayed in Djambarrpuyṁu at the end of the day, thanking the Lord that they had such fun learning about punctuation!

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