

## **Dear Garma Friends,**

On behalf of the Yothu Yindi Foundation in cooperation with the traditional Land owners of north east Arnhem Land you are invited to attend the 6th annual Garma Festival of Traditional Culture and Yidaki

Master Class with Djalu Gurruwiwi August 6-9, 2004.

[http://www.garma.telstra.com/yidaki/y\\_mclass.htm](http://www.garma.telstra.com/yidaki/y_mclass.htm)

The festival is held at Gulkula, 40 kilometers outside of the town of Nhulunbuy on the Gove peninsula in Arnhem Land within the Northern Territory of Australia. This is a very special cultural travel invitation that provides access to Aboriginal Reserve land and the opportunity to observe Yolngu song, dance and ceremonies that have been performed for thousands of years. For information and registration in Europe and North America please e-mail [garmafest@yirdaki.org](mailto:garmafest@yirdaki.org)

Enclosed is a packet of information and a registration form for Garma 2004. If you are planning to attend, in order to avoid disappointment, please return the enclosed registration form as soon as possible and before April 15, 2004 as space is limited.

Warm Regards,

Fred Tietjen

[garmafest@yirdaki.org](mailto:garmafest@yirdaki.org)

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# Garma Festival Information & Registration

## ABOUT GARMA

### ***What is Garma?***

The ancient sound of the yidaki (didjeridu) is a call to all people to come together in unity. From August 6-9 2004, this call will announce the fifth annual Garma Festival, the largest and most vibrant celebration of Yolngu (Aboriginal people of north east Arnhem Land) culture in recent memory. Regarded as one of Australia's most significant Indigenous festivals, the Garma Festival will attract around 20 clan groups from north east Arnhem Land, as well as representatives from clan groups and neighboring Indigenous peoples throughout Arnhem Land and the Northern Territory.

### ***Purpose of Garma***

Yolngu culture in north-east Arnhem Land < a heartland of Aboriginal culture and land rights < is among the oldest living cultures on earth, stretching back more than 40,000 years. The Garma Festival is a celebration of the Yolngu cultural inheritance. The Garma ceremony is aimed at sharing knowledge and culture, and opening people's hearts to the message of the land at Gulkula. The festival is designed to encourage the practice, preservation and maintenance of traditional dance (bunggul), song (manikay), art and ceremony on Yolngu lands in North East Arnhem Land. The festival is an important step in the establishment of the Garma Cultural Studies Institute, to be built on the site at Gulkula.

### ***Yolngu People***

It is only since 1935 that the Yolngu people of the region have had sustained contact with the Balanda (Europeans), firstly through Methodist missions, then through contact with service personnel during World War Two and, more recently, with the imposition of multi-national mines on their tribal lands. Yolngu people speak a dozen dialects of a language group known as Yolngu matha. English is very much a second (or thirteenth) language.

Since the 1960s Yolngu leaders have been conspicuous in the struggle for Aboriginal land rights. In 1963, provoked by a unilateral government decision to excise a part of their land for a bauxite mine, Yolngu people at Yirrkala in north east Arnhem land sent to the House of Representatives a petition on bark (the traditional medium for visual art representation). The bark petition attracted national and international attention and now hangs in the national parliament as a testament to the Yolngu role in the birth of the land rights movement. Yolngu artists and performers have been at the forefront of global recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Yolngu artists, renowned for their fine cross-hatching paintings on bark have international reputations and Yolngu traditional dancers and musicians have performed widely throughout the world and had profound influence on contemporary performance troupes. Yothu Yindi, the band, are Australia's most successful and widely recognized contemporary Indigenous music group.

### ***Who will be there?***

The festival will involve clan groups from the region in a series of cultural workshops and ceremonial activities that will be open to both indigenous and non-indigenous people. The festival will also attract at least 50 indigenous scholars from universities around Australia.

### ***Yidaki Master class***

The Garma Yidaki Master classes have been highly successful in providing an opportunity for experienced Yolngu yidaki players to share their knowledge and skills in accomplishing the finer points of this ancient instrument.

Students of the instrument have a unique opportunity to learn from Yolngu Master Players.

Master class sessions are held for all four days of the Garma festival. Many esteemed yidaki players will be involved with performing and/or teaching during those days. One of these, Yidaki master Djalu Gurruwiwi, renowned for his teachings as well as for his ability in making the yidaki, will be sharing his knowledge with students from around the world. The quality of his yidakis are internationally recognised and Indigenous band Yothu Yindi continue to use his yidakis in their music.

A field trip will be conducted similar to previous years when students were taken into the bush and shown the process of yidaki locating and construction. In 2001 Djalu conducted a workshop with experienced students on the playing of the yidaki. Djalu said that the ability to play the yidaki is a gift. He has been provided with that gift, but that the spirits could take that gift from him at any time. Djalu believes it his duty to pass on his knowledge of the yidaki.

There was a touching moment in the workshop where Djalu invited his students to sit before him while he demonstrated the healing properties of the instrument by playing the yidaki against their backs. It was a symbolic gesture in passing on his power and ability to the student

### ***Women's Program***

A number of shelters on the edge of the ceremony ground are dedicated to women's activities. One is devoted principally to preparation of natural fibres (pandanus and tree barks) for weaving baskets, mats, armbands, string making for bags and ceremonial objects, and the use and preparation of natural dyes. Another is used for Nuku Dhulang (bark painting using traditional ochres painted with a brush made of human hair).

Demonstrations involve painting traditional, public, clan designs on bark, board and canvas, and also woodcarving. At these locations, guests are instructed not only in the crafting of traditional items, but also in the ancient law and historical stories associated with them. Guests are encouraged to watch, listen and then begin 'hands-on' experience.

### ***Field excursions***

At the direction of senior Yolngu women, excursions are held in different inland and coastal locations and have specific links to the ongoing activities in the shelters. Trips are made into the forests to locate and obtain materials for dyes, string-making and weaving. Collections are then brought to the shelters and their uses demonstrated accordingly throughout the festival. Bush tucker trips are made into the stringy-bark forests to find wild honey and into mangroves and tidal estuaries to find shellfish and mudcrabs. Most food collections are prepared in the traditional manner and eaten 'on-site'. Trips are also made into the rainforest and stringy-bark forest to collect medicines with particular attention to the tree or plant to be used. Medicine plant collections are taken to the shelters. There, senior women conduct seminars on their classifications; uses, preparations, associated rituals and other associated desirable or compatible treatments. This is followed by some practical demonstrations of particular medicinal preparation and usage.

All workshop participants are engaged in a flexible learning process conducted in a very positive atmosphere. The teaching, both formal and informal, follows traditional methods of instruction by expert senior and middle-aged knowledge women.

### ***Workshops***

Educational workshops exploring Yolngu approaches to health, bush medicine, land management, bilingual education, eco tourism and women's business are conducted by representatives from the Yirrkala Community Education Centre, Dhimirru Land Management and the Northern Territory University's Centre for Indigenous Studies, Natural and Cultural Resource Management (CINCRM) and Faculty of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies (FATSIS).

Previous workshops have explored fire management; Yolngu knowledge on-line; intellectual copyright; bilingual education; turtle and marine management; language maintenance; the yidaki - understanding, authenticity and marketing issues related to this icon of Indigenous culture; and collaborative research into land & resource management.

## **Yolngu Matha Ga Rom (language and culture) Tent**

The Language Tent is set up as an information centre for people keen to understand more fully the aspects of Yolngu languages or culture they come across at the festival. The tent has a display of maps of central and eastern Arnhem Land and of indigenous Australia, books and CDs for reference, and specially prepared notes on languages and language groups, conversation, kinship and 'skin names', pronunciation, and aspects of culture. The tent is organized and staffed by the Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, NTU, and the Yirrkala Community Education Center. Information sessions and videos are shown at night, and informal classes are available during the day.

Trips to Buku Larrnggay Mulka Arts Centre, to Nhulunbuy and Nandyjaka (Cape Arnhem) Buses will be travelling to and from Nhulunbuy and the Yirrkala Arts Center during the festival. Special trips by 4 wheel drive will also be made down to the beach at Nandyjaka (Cape Arnhem). Arrangements for both can be made at the festival site.

## **Afternoon and evening program**

The practice of ceremony each afternoon and evening by the participating clan groups will provide the cultural focus of the Garma Festival. Each clan group has song and dance specific to their country that is interrelated to other clan groups. These inter clan relationships form a rich interconnected ceremonial practice including the painting of totems and other sacred objects and the performance of related traditional song and dance.

The bunggul (dancing) is narrated by elders and cultural interpreters, providing a unique experience for visitors who will hear descriptions of ceremonies that have been performed by Yolngu clan groups for almost 40,000 years. These descriptions will be supplemented by creation stories about the area - including that of the spirit man Ganbulabula who, among other things, brought forth the yidaki among the Gumatj people.

## **Visitor feedback- Garma**

"A heart felt thank you to the various leaders and clan members of North East Arnhem land, for such a wonderful experience at Garma. It is an experience that will reside deep in my being for the rest of my life. The sharing of workshops, activities and living arrangements and the participation in the Garma community has given me deeper understanding and insight into your culture, your way of life and a appreciation for the deepness and richness of Yolgnu knowledge. Thank you for your willingness and preparedness to be open, to actively share and for your hospitality. I hope that I live up to the challenge and responsibility to assist in the work that is required to reach a point of real reconciliation, respect and recognition. Here is to a shared vision of the 21st Century Australia that has actively recognized the role of and uniqueness of your people." - Lindley Edwards - Sydney, Australia

"There was a powerful feeling of connection that everyone there, black or white, felt. It was exchanged in looks, smiles and conversations...between that and the dynamite field trips you concocted made a definite difference in my enjoyment of the festival, the enrichment I got out of it, and the memories of one of the most special weeks of my life that I will take with me into the future." - Rio Olesky - California, U.S.A.

"I already got so many things from GARMA, turtle eggs, fish, honey..... and yidaki and friends. Yidaki, I'm trying very hard to learn the Yolngu style, and I almost got it. I must come back to see you and DJALU very soon, to show how I can do it." - Hide Asaoka - Japan

"I arrived home in Sydney last night from the Garma Festival. For me it was a superb experience, start to finish. I really find it hard to put words to the magnificence of that time" - H Dauncey

"Thank you so much for the opportunity to spend a wonderful week on your country, and with your kind a generous people. As a head of jurisdiction I do have the chance to implement some of the ideas the debate at the Ngaarra Forum generated, and I came away with a notebook full of such ideas" - Roger Dive Senior Childrens' Magistrate

"I would like to thank the Yothu Yindi Foundation for providing such an outstanding opportunity to share in culture and learning with Yolngu people; thank you once again for the work the Yothu Yindi Foundation is doing in providing us with such incredibly important learning experiences" - R. Heras

"The Garma Festival was one of those events in my life that opened my eyes and my heart to people from a different culture and environment from the one I know. I marveled at and appreciated the skills of the women who painted bark etc;..From talking with the women and participating in the women's business and the women's campfire, I reaffirmed that women have many universal interests and feelings." - B Iwan - New York

## **Festival Guide**

### ***As a guest you will be:***

- Met and welcomed at the Nhulunbuy airport by friendly Festival staff, who will explain the history and achievements of the Foundation and Festival, whilst you are privately transported to the Festival site.
- At registration be provided with your Garma Festival pass, a tent site and a spacious 2 person tent. You are welcome to bring your own camping equipment. It is recommended that you bring your own sheet or sleeping bag and pillow.
- Provided with 3 appetizing meals a day (vegetarian and non-vegetarian) prepared with fresh ingredients. All our food is prepared by excellent cooks who ensure high standards of hygiene. Water, coffee and tea will be available at all times.
- Entitled to entry to the Festival, all workshops and events. The Yidaki Master class is separate but open to observers.
- Assisted by Balanda (non-Aboriginal) and Yolngu Festival staff in the participation and observation of Festival events and workshops.
- Provided with a private bus service to visit the local town and the acclaimed community art & crafts centre at Yirrkala.
- Returned to the airport to meet your connecting flight. Guests are responsible for booking their own airfares. Complete travel assistance will be provided upon request.
- Festival Fee \$1,650. Australian Dollars per person . Payment instructions of your festival fee will be sent upon receipt of the questionnaire below.

### ***Day at the Festival***

The highlight of every Festival is the opportunity to interact with Yolngu people. Our delightful Festival staff will ensure you enjoy your day to the fullest including, as a guide only:

- Waking to a leisurely breakfast - including cereal, fruit and cooked fare
- Workshops from 10am till noon including; arts and crafts, interpretive walks, cultural practices, field trips, bush foods, bush medicine, spear making and story telling.
- relaxed lunch break noon to 2pm including sandwiches, salads and cold meats,
- continued workshops from 2pm to 4pm
- spectacular and awe-inspiring bunggul (ceremonial dancing) 5pm
- 3 course evening meal served in the large kitchen, eating and meeting area situated on the edge of the escarpment from 6pm onwards
- After dinner, guests will have the opportunity to sit around the camp fire discussing the days events or watching film documentaries concerning Indigenous Aboriginal issues.

# Garma Festival 2004 Questionnaire and Registration

## Please return to

garmafest @yirdaki.org before March 15, 2004

### 1. Your contact details:

Name:

Company (if appropriate):

Occupation:

Address

Suburb / Town:

State / Postcode:

Phone(w)

Phone (mobile):

Fax:

Email:

**2. Will you be attending the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture? Yes / No**

**3. Will you be bringing a partner, friend or family? Yes / No**

If Yes, how many adults, including yourself?

How many children?

Will you be staying with us at the Festival site? Yes / No

Do you play didjeridu (yidaki)? Yes / No

Would you like to be admitted to the Yidaki Master Class with Djalu Gurruwiwi?  
(Please note this is limited to 40 participants) Yes / No

How did you get interested in Yidaki?

How did you hear about Garma?

Meanwhile, If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me at I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm Regards,

Fred Tietjen

garmafest@yirdaki.org