

70 YEARS OF DHAPIRRK WÄKA MUNUNGURR AND 50 YEARS OF DEADLY NAIDOC WEEK 2026



1970s

The homelands movement begun. Clan leaders led a self-determined return to their land, by determining their own future through Yolŋu law and building self-sufficient homelands

1976

Wäka was a student attending Yirralka Homelands School.

Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act passed into law - Arnhem Land became Aboriginal freehold land

1988

The Barunga Statement was presented to Prime Minister Bob Hawke - calling for treaty and Indigenous self-management, echoing the NAIDOC theme of "Recognise and Share the Survival of the Oldest Culture in the World"

1996

Wäka discovered the illegal fishing camp hidden in the mangroves near Baniyala Homeland and a severed baru (crocodile) head, triggering a Sea Rights claim

1997

Wäka was the Chairperson of Laynhapuy Homelands Association (now Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation)

2008

High Court Blue Mud Bay decision - Landmark Sea Rights

2012

Wäka received national cultural recognition appearing in the 'Yirralka drawings' with the Art Gallery of NSW

2012

The 50th Anniversary of the Yirralka Bark Petitions. The original 1963 Näku Dhäruk: The Bark Petitions were the first traditional Indigenous documents officially recognised and tabled by the Australian Parliament

2013

Wäka wrote the preface for the 2013 'Yirralka Drawings' book which is now stored in the AIATSIS Rare Book and Research Collection

2016 - 2022

Wäka worked with the Department of Education, with his passion lying in Laynhapuy Homelands Schools

2018

Wäka met Prince Charles at Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre in Yirralka and asked him to act as a diplomatic bridge to the Australian Prime Minister, aiming to advocate for the acknowledgement of Yolŋu sovereignty and promote a pathway to Treaty

2020

Wäka is the founder and chairperson of the newly established Djalkiripuyngu Aboriginal Corporation (DAC)

2022

Wäka had a leadership role in 'Madayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting'

2022

Wäka is a signatory to the Local Decision Making (LDM) Agreement between Djalkiripuyngu Aboriginal Corporation and Northern Territory Government

2022 - 2024

Wäka was the Strategic Cultural Advisor with the Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet

2023

Wäka was awarded a Yolŋu Hero Award at Garma Festival

2024

Wäka was a guest speaker at the Australian Sea Country Conference at Darwin Convention Centre

2024

Djalkiripuyngu Aboriginal Corporation became a Prescribed Body Corporate holding Native Title Rights determined in the Blue Mud Bay case

2025

Wäka spoke on the Stonefront Broadcasts podcast with Anthropologist Marcus Barber about Indigenous relationships to Land and Sea.

2024 - 2026

Wäka is currently the Cultural Advisor within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development

Wäka was born into the Djapu clan of the Yolŋu people from Northeast Arnhem Land, 20 years before NAIDOC officially began

Son of Wonggu Mununggurr, a highly influential Yolŋu leader and artist.

Wäka Mununggurr is recognised as a senior cultural leader responsible for law, ceremony, songs and clan knowledge



Wäka Mununggurr

Youtube:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HV6r9UzAMS8>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klxOvzcQpdA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7LtWZqQ41I>

Podcast:

- <https://storefront.nyc/program-type/exhibition/page/12/?sort=newest&item=broadcasts-s2-ep3-fugitive-terrain-id-8307>

Articles and documents:

- <https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/tag/waka-mununggurr/>
- <https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/author/lauren/>
- <https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/tag/yirrkala/>
- <https://magazine.arts.virginia.edu/stories/kluge-ruhe-mayadin>
- https://djalkiripuyngu.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Blue-Mud-Bay-Prospectus-2024_Final-low-res.pdf
- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-24/bark-petition-artefact-truth-telling-returned-to-yolngu-people/101678052>
- <https://www.creativecowboyfilms.tv/water/how-the-baru-saved-the-sea>
- <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/yolngu-art-holds-secret-historical-code-20131215-2zf34.html>
- <https://venturenorth.com.au/northern-territory-tourism-blog/2014/11/24/east-arnhem-land-tour-report/>
- <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/yirrkala-drawings-displayed-for-the-first-time-in-sydney/neg9e1rrt>
- <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/committees/previous/PAC-14th-Assembly/LDM/hearings/Finalised-Transcript-Darwin-2-December-2022.pdf>
- <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/547ddb06-f933-4095-930e-072e5c413c93/content>
- https://calendar.colgate.edu/event/symposium_on_the_role_of_museums_and_galleries_in_reconciliation_repatriation_and_reparation