



# ‘Lucy Ngarbal Marshall Oration by the Nulungu Chair of Indigenous Studies’

In honour of  
Ruby Nangala Thoorrybeliny

## Beyond the Land of Promises: The long Road to Self Determination

Date: Friday 3rd May 2024

Venue: NDB10 The Hall

The University of Notre Dame Australia

88 Guy Street Broome

(light lunch & refreshments to start)

Time: 12:00pm – 2:00pm



Art by Maxine Charlie

**Presenter:** Assoc Prof Stephen Kinnane

### Biography:

Steve Kinnane has been an active researcher and writer for more than 30 years. He has worked on community-based cultural heritage and development projects and lectured in Indigenous Studies, Sustainability and Australian History. His outputs encompass creative non-fiction and academic analysis published as books, book chapters, journal articles, literary non-fiction and audiovisual documentaries. Steve is a Marda Marda from Miriwoong country in the East Kimberley, and retains strong personal, familial, and professional connections between the Kimberley, and Noongar country in the South West of WA. Common themes of this work have included multi-layered narratives of diverse individual and collective community experience, cultural governance as a foundation of social capital for collective community development, and, the resonance of history in contemporary and evolving narratives of peoplehood. He has completed numerous evidence-based research reports for community non-government organisations, government and statutory authorities. Steve is currently Chair of Indigenous Studies and Engagement at the University of Notre Dame Australia; a director of Magabala Books; an Editorial Board Member of the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB) ANU, an AIATSIS Foundation Board Member, and a PhD Scholar with the Research School of Social Sciences, ANU.

## Abstract:



In the second Lucy Ngarbal Marshall Oration, Chair of Indigenous Studies, Steve Kinnane, will explore the historical context leading up to the Crocodile Hole Meeting in 1991 at Rugan in the East Kimberley, and intervening historical arc of self-determination over the past 30 plus years. Following the 1967 referendum and the resultant 1972 Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act, Kimberley Aboriginal leaders pivoted to Canberra as they sought a regional voice beyond the colonial frame of Western Australia.

These hopeful beginnings of speaking as a region beyond the often-empty promises of bilateral entanglements that characterised the Kimberley's relationship with the nation state have shifted and changed across 'fronts' of action, sometimes responsive, sometimes strategic, but always regionally grounded.

In 1989 Nugget H.C. Coombs' (et al) book, Land of Promises, quoted Miriwoong Elder, Pearly Gordon's statement that, 'The Aboriginal people in Western Australia think this is the promised land because we have promises and broken promises. That's all we have.' Interweaving personal, historical and political narratives, Steve will reflect on the long Kimberley journey to move Beyond the Land of Promises, set against the need to recognise, value and generate outcomes based on community assets of cultural governance, cultural authority and Indigenous Knowledge, and the outcome of the 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice Referendum.

## 'This year we honour Ruby Thoorbelyny'

(Written by Frances Kofod from interviews with David Newry)

Ruby Thoorbelyny was a senior elder of Miriwoong, Gajirrawoong and Jaminjung descent. She was born in the bush to the north of present day Kununurra before the town existed. Her name and the names of her younger sisters came from the place in Ngamar country near the mouth of the Victoria River where the waves hit the bank. She was Nangala skin.

She spent much of her early life walking by foot in the bush with family including her first husband Joe Nooroongany. She had an impressive knowledge of country and the stories belonging to the country gained from spending so much time on the land with her elders. She lived on Legune and Carlton Stations and visited Ivanhoe and Argyle Stations when walking with family before moving to Kununurra after the 1967 referendum when everyone was forced off the stations.



Photo courtesy of Mirima Language Centre, Kununurra.

Photo below courtesy of Stephen Kinnane - Ord River



David Newry on 17/4/24 said:

"From what I know so far, that she was the one that took language to school in the 1969 and right throughout the 1970s. During recess hour when they used to have a break for playlunch she used to gather all the kids around a tree there and teach Miriwoong language to them. A lot of my sisters went through that. This Language Centre wouldn't have been here without her input. That's why we had to give that room over there, meeting place (new additional language centre building), name after her, because of all this reason now. Warany."

## About the Oration of the Chair of Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Knowledges

In 2023, Nulungu introduced to our events program the Oration of the Chair of Indigenous Studies.

Each year, this annual lecture will be delivered by one of our Chairs to honour the intellectual generosity of many senior Kimberley Aboriginal people who have worked with countless researchers across multiple decades with oft minimal recognition.

Celebrating their honesty, drive and research endeavours, the event will be held on the first Friday in May each year. Coinciding with the birthday of our first honorarium, Lucy Ngarbal Marshall AM, Nulungu staff are proud to provide a forum to showcase and celebrate the wisdom, authority and agency of Kimberley Aboriginal people.



Lucy (Ngarbal) Marshall AM  
5th May 1933 – 18th March 2021