

Yalmay's Speech on behalf of Dr. M Yunupingu

I would first like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal Nation who are the Keepers and Custodians of this land, both past and present elders on whose land we are celebrating today.

It's now seven months, three weeks and four days since the passing of my husband Dr M Yunupingu. The tribute today marks a very special day for Mr Yunupingu, a tribute to his memorable time on this planet.

My husband was a dreamer, a gifted world teacher who gained university degrees. He was a gifted musician and song writer. He had wisdom and truth and he fought for freedom.

He was a husband, father and a grandfather, a community leader, a politician, a poet, and a philosopher, a human rights fighter and above all a man of balance.

He was passionate about Indigenous self-management and self-determination. He spoke two languages Yolŋu and Balanda. He came from the Yolŋu world where Yirritja and Dhuwa worlds are balanced. He spoke truth that came from his heart, talking from a Yolŋu orientation to Balanda orientation.

I would always listen to him talk about all these issues. He did not want the Western Law to cripple Yolŋu people - that's what he always loved talking about. He always dealt with problems in a proper manner and spoke to the right people through the right processes. He always carried balance, he was a strong believer in balance, he would always get something back because of the balance in him even though it did not happen overnight.

The music of Yothu Yindi put Australia on the map. Yothu Yindi illustrates the meaning of "Double Power". Yothu Yindi brought together music, ceremony, bilingual lyrics and technology, living at the cultural interface of two very different cultures.

Through his music different threads are woven together and put out into the world as a finished product because everything in our world is woven like a mat. He wanted to weave the two cultures together from Yirritja and Dhuwa to Yolŋu and Balanda worlds - that was his passion.

Through his music he was building bridges to help minimize foreign diseases in health. His vision for Indigenous Education was to deliver better sustainable education in a proper manner, not to poison us. The bridge he was building is still unfinished; the gap is getting wider and wider. We should build the unfinished bridge as an Australian Nation. He went away with lots of hopes, dreams and unfinished business; his life was too short.

The name Yunupingu means a Rock, the rock Yunupingu stands in the middle of the ocean. The rock was his strength "A rock that stands against time." His formal identity is Maralitja, Dhukulul, Ngunbungunbu, Barrupa, Rarrkararrka. These are his very important names identifying who he was and where he comes from.

Fire is his life symbol, fire is his life force.

The song Treaty was released in 1991 it peaked at No 11 on the Australian single chart and went on to become a timeless protest song in the campaign for Indigenous rights reform. It was an anthem for change to make people understand that we are culture of diversity and to ask for respect for cultural differences.

Key lyric: "Well I heard it on the radio, and I saw it on the television.

Back in 1998 all those talking Politicians. Words are easy words are cheap,

Much cheaper than the priceless land, But promises can disappear just like writing in the sand”

Treaty Yeah, Treaty Now, Treaty Ma!

“I’m still waiting for that treaty to come along for my grandsons”,

Yunupingu said, in 2008. Even if it’s not there in the days that I am living, it might come in the days that I am not living”.

Every promise that is made verbally, it gets blown away by the wind and every promise that is written on the paper gets thrown away or burnt, just like writing in the sand. This year 2014 let’s make Australia a better country to live in.

Every New Year we celebrate happy New Year. This year 2014 what does New Year mean to us? If we are all listen to his ‘World Turning’ song we want Yolngu (Indigenous) and Ngapakai (non-indigenous) to respect two worlds, we want the world to turn to positive and transparent and to have good dialogue between us.

I am urging the NT and federal Government to take this into consideration.

My last word is to say thank you to the Australia Day Council for bringing me and my family to celebrate with you Dr Yunupingu’s life - he left behind a massive legacy. We will miss him forever but we can continue his fight for a better Australia where all people are treated with dignity and respect.

Thank you