

Yolŋu Wisdom and Design

Barŋpuy Dhäwu (Story about healing ourselves)



Artwork by Prof Yalmay Yunupingu

Barŋ is a Yolŋu practice that we use to heal people. In this picture you can see a gurtha (fire) with images of spirits coming out of the gurtha. Barŋ is a very significant method of healing that we use to draw bad spirits out of our body. This is a special ceremony that we do using the gurtha and firesticks to cleanse the body of any illness and to strengthen and heal ourselves. The gurtha generates healing properties through the smoke. The bad spirits can control your body, mind and soul in a bad way and we need to have a way to cleanse ourselves to be free again. The gurtha chases these bad spirits away.

We want to try and help young people to be able to cleanse their body, mind and soul of these bad spirits through Barŋ healing process so they can live a better and happier life. In the YARNhem App we are hoping to share this message to young people about how they can use their cultural knowledge to engage in this healing process. We want to help them bring their own strong and healthy Yolŋu spirit back.

It is good to bring their own spirit back as the bad spirits can control their whole being and change them into a different person with unhealthy attitudes. Their own strong spirit is pure and healthy and we want to help them to be able to reach it. Once these bad spirits are removed they will feel closer to family and culture and realise that they are special and loved and people care about them.