



Adelaide
Film
Festival
Winner 2022
Change Award

PRESS KIT

LUKU NGÄRRA

THE LAW OF THE LAND

AN INDEPENDENT FILM BY
OUR GENERATION MEDIA

tel: +61 424 722 705 email: sinem@ourgenerationmedia.org
www.ourgenerationmedia.org

Production Notes

Director and Producer	Sinem Saban
Co-Producer	Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM
Production Company	Our Generation Media Pty Ltd
Genre	Independent Documentary
Language	English and Yolngu (First Nations language)
Aspect Ratio	16:9 FHD
Duration	95 minutes
Sound	5:1 and Stereo
Delivery	DCP or Pro Res Quicktime

Short Synopsis

One remarkable Indigenous elder's 45 year battle for the political and spiritual freedom of his people. Unflinching in its delivery, *Luku Ngärra: The Law of the Land* asks the big questions around what law and freedom mean, compelling audiences to question the dominant paradigm whilst presenting an illuminating message for all humanity.

Long Synopsis

Winner of the 'Change Award' at the Adelaide Film Festival 2022, this independent Indigenous funded film is an unflinching presentation of how the dominant paradigm has forced itself upon the lives of Australia's First Nations people, creating chaos and devastation to their everyday lives, their culture and their law.

Luku Ngärra: The Law of the Land is set in the Yolngu Nation of Northeast Arnhem Land and is driven by one of the country's most respected Indigenous elders, Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM, who has been a tireless beacon for freedom and justice for his people for the last 45 years.

The film will deeply challenge audiences' understanding of the Yolngu world, their history, culture and their highly sophisticated but often misrepresented Maḏayin System of traditional law. Featuring rare footage of law ceremonies that have been in practise for over 60,000 years as well as an intimate lens into the harsh reality currently facing remote communities in Arnhem Land today, audiences will be compelled to question their own world and the views and structures that come with it.

Combined with his well-known directness, his wisdom as a spiritual teacher as well as his authority as a senior initiated law man, Dr Gondarra insists that we finally look at the big questions around law and freedom, whilst offering an illuminating message for all of humanity.

Link to watch trailer: <https://youtu.be/38pTKNcq438>

Link to film website: www.lukungarrafilm.com

Director's Statement

Both Dr Gondarra and myself as co-Producers have taken great pride in presenting something of the highest quality possible despite being a low budget production. We first met over 16 years ago whilst making my first documentary about the human rights abuses of the Northern Territory Intervention laws titled, 'Our Generation'. I had been working in N.E Arnhem Land as a teacher for 5 years prior to this, and have had a strong relationship with the Yolngu people for over 22 years.

As the years passed and our friendship and our mutual respect and trust in each other deepened, Dr Gondarra began to share with me some of the deep knowledge of their traditional law, their culture, the richness of their history, his vision for the future of his people and his many frustrations. The person I was getting to know had such a deep spirituality, an incredible humility, and an unending fighting spirit.

All the while, I was also learning about the long list of his achievements, his studies and his roles over the last 40 years and very quickly began to see that this man is Australia's own living Gandhi, Mandela, Desmond Tutu and Martin Luther King.

In 2018 I sensed that Dr Gondarra's health was waning and his time left in the physical world was limited, but yet he still had so much to share with me, and I was still having so many 'aha' moments of clarity and insight. I started to talk with him about the idea of a documentary about his life and his message so that his legacy could be left as a gift for all, particularly as a valuable educational resource.

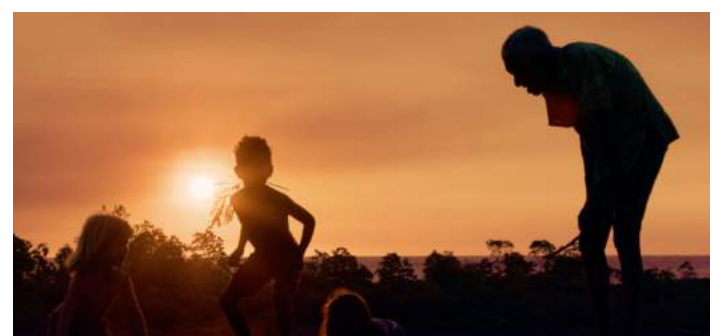
We agreed to embark on this journey with one very strong principle in place, that we would keep it an independent film, with no government money and no strings attached. Dr Gondarra wanted to be able to speak directly about his life's experience in the mission, in the Church, his experiences with Government and growing up in a world that was not his own. Integrity in the message was the most important thing, above and beyond what a big budget could offer. This decision did not make the process an easy road because it also eliminated taking film funding from Screen Australia, Screen NT and the likes. So how was I to deliver his huge message and make a beautiful film with no budget?

With my personal funds, I got the film off the ground in 2019 and then in 2020 I pitched a 20- minute sizzler to the all-Indigenous board of Arnhem Land Progress Association who were so impressed with what they saw that they became the major sponsor of the film. What this has meant is that it is not only an independent production, but also an Indigenous funded film; making it a genuine voice of the Yolngu people whom it represents.

I believe this film will be a gift to Australians personally and to their understanding of our First Nations Australians. It is also a gift to humanity, because Dr Gondarra's message cuts to the most pressing issues of our time.

The story has no real beginning, and no real ending, it is there – suspended in time as a gift for all to listen, feel and receive. We trust you can appreciate the raw and often unconventional ways in which we have delivered a powerful message from a group of people whose culture has existed before modern man started counting time.

Film Stills



SINEM SABAN – Director, Producer, Editor Biography



Sinem Saban is an award-winning independent filmmaker whom, for 22 years has been working closely with the Yolngu First Nation of Northeast Arnhem Land in Australia. This has given her unparalleled and trusted access into their often distant and misunderstood world.

With a background as a Media and Legal Studies High School teacher and a passion for giving uncensored voices a platform through independent media, Sinem's 16+ years of work have kept true to her values.

Her first experience in documentary film-making was in 2004 when she was the main camera person for a project that revealed the horrific human cost of the war in Iraq titled, '*I Know I'm Not Alone*' (directed by Michael Franti). This experience saw her at the age of 26 enter the active war zone in Baghdad with no fear and a spark of positivity to bring justice and a voice to innocent victims. This journey also took her to Palestine and Israel where she dodged bullets when entering a hostile curfew zone.

Six years later in 2010 she directed, produced, and edited her first documentary, '*Our Generation*' which looked at the human rights violations of the John Howard era NT Intervention policy. This became a cult film amongst the grassroots Aboriginal rights movement in Australia and won the '*Best Campaign Film*' at the London International Documentary Film Festival 2011.

Across the span of the next 8 years, she produced over 300 short videos for various Indigenous organisations in Australia, namely Young Deadly Free, NAAJA (North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency) and NAAFLS (North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service) as well as Indigenous suicide awareness videos for Beyond Blue and campaign videos for Independent Indigenous MP for NT, Mark Yingiya Guyula.

Luku Ngärra: The Law of the Land is her latest documentary which, in line with her long standing principles as an independent film maker, has taken 5 years to complete with no corporate or government funding. *Luku Ngärra* premiered at the Adelaide Film Festival in October 2022 where it won the '*Change*' Award.

REV DR DJINIYINI GONDARRA OAM - Co Producer Biography



Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM has spent most of the 78 years of his life fighting for the freedom and justice of his people. Having grown up in the missions in Millingimbi and then on Elcho Island, yet having maintained his traditional law and culture – his capacity to bridge the gap between the two very different worlds in which he has lived is exceptional.

Some of Dr Gondarra's long list of achievements include being the first Indigenous moderator of the Northern Synod, the first Indigenous representative on the World Council of Churches, the founder of the hugely successful cross-cultural mediation program Mawul Rom, receiving a Doctorate from the University of Roundtable in Arizona, serving on the board of Reconciliation Australia, and receiving an Order of Australia Medal. He has been the Chairperson of Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Association for over 30 years, the largest Indigenous owned and operated company and NGO in Australia.

As a senior initiated Yolngu lawman, a spiritual leader and a dedicated civil rights activist, his life's journey has been to empower his own people through the recognition of Yolngu customary law and leadership.

He featured in Ms Saban's first documentary, '*Our Generation*' in 2010 as an outspoken leader against the NT Intervention policies. His role in the movement that was spurred by the film saw him take his peoples' fight to the United Nations in Geneva to meet with the Human Rights Commissioner in person.

In his later years, he took on the Co-Producing role of *Luku Ngärra: The Law of the Land* which is his final call out to Australia and the world to stop and listen to the voices of the First Nations. *Luku Ngärra* won the '*Change*' Award at its World Premiere at Adelaide Film Festival in 2022.

Brief Credits

NARRATED BY

Rarriwuy Hick

EDITED BY

Sinem Saban

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS

Damien Curtis

Pania Edmonds

FEATURING

Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM

Yingiya Guyula

Baykali Ganambarr

Richard Trudgen

Biritjaluwuy Gondarra

Marcus Lacey

Brenda Muthaluwuy

Stuart McMillan

Wopurruwuy Gondarra

Rose Guywanga Gondarra

Laynbalaynba Gaykamangu

Alastair King

WRITTEN BY

Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM

Biritjaluwuy Gondarra

Sinem Saban

Damien Curtis

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Sam Harriss

Felix Baker

Maria Ines Manchego

Zachary Peel McGregor

Sinem Saban

ON SITE PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Pania Edmonds

Lowurpa Garrawirtja

Kylie Yunupingu

SOUND RECORDISTS

Sinem Saban

Pania Edmonds

Charlotte Haywood

NARRATION RECORDISTS

Trackdown Studios

Arian Pearson – Mulka Centre

TRANSLATORS

Biritjaluwuy Gondarra

Lowurpa Garrawirtja

Maratja Dhamarrandji

Brief Credits

POST PRODUCTION

POST PRODUCTION MIX	Folkore Sound
SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR AND MIX	Sam Gain-Emery
SOUND DESIGN	Ben Stewart
DIALOGUE EDITOR	Sam Lowe
ONLINE COLORIST	Danny Phillips
ANIMATION AND MAPS	Huni Bollinger
MUSIC DESIGN	Sinem Saban
	Damien Curtis

SOUNDTRACK FEATURING

Yothu Yindi	Mau Power
Yirrmal	Gawurra
Bobby Alu	Barra West Wind

SPECIAL THANKS

Tania Nehme

AN INDEPENDENT INDIGENOUS FUNDED FILM

OUR GENERATION MEDIA



ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT

AIP Collective
Aboriginal Resource Development (ARDS)
Bio-Distributors
Josephine Wolanski

WITH THE SUPPORT OF



Producer Contact Details

OUR GENERATION MEDIA

INSPIRING.SOCIAL.CHANGE.

2314 Coolamon Scenic Drive,
Ocean Shores, NSW 2483

email: sinem@ourgenerationmedia.org
mob: +61 424 722 705

www.lukungarrafilm.com
www.ourgenerationmedia.org



Adelaide Film Festival 2022 L to R; Narrator Rarriwuy Hick, Rev Dr Djinyini Gondarra OAM, Biritjaluwuy Gondarra and Director / Producer Sinem Saban