



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Northern Land Council congratulates Alan Young Najukpayi, OAM

26 January 2022

The Northern Land Council congratulates Mr Young Najukpayi, OAM from Yarralin following the news that he has been awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM).

Mr Young Najukpayi has selflessly devoted his life to his country, his culture and his people.

He has also provided many years of invaluable service in support of the activities of the NLC, particularly in relation to a number of claims under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* (ALRA) and the *Native Title Act*.

Mr Young Najukpayi's evidence, knowledge, assistance and advice has been critical to the success of a number of land claims and matters and also to the preservation of knowledge of country and the maintenance of culture.

NLC Chair Samuel Bush-Blanasi did not hesitate to support Mr Young Najukpayi's nomination when he was approached in 2021.

"I can think of no more worthy recipient for such an award than Mr Young Najukpayi, who has contributed so much to his people, country and the work of the Northern Land Council over many, many years," said Mr Bush-Blanasi.

"Mr Young Najukpayi is a humble man but he is one of the giants upon whose shoulders we all stand. It is only through the dedication and selfless commitment of people like Mr Young Najukpayi that we have got a lot of country back and kept our cultures alive."

Speaking from Mr Young Najukpayi's hometown of Yarralin, Mayor of the Victoria Daly Regional Council and Executive Councillor of the NLC, Brian Pedwell, said that the whole of Yarralin and the VRD district was happy for Mr Young Najukpayi today.

"We are all pleased to see that one of our countrymen has been honoured in this way. His recognition is long overdue and I know that I speak on behalf of everyone at Yarralin and right across the VRD when I send our heartfelt appreciation and congratulations to Mr Young Najukpayi, his family and countrymen and women," said Mayor Pedwell.

BIOGRAPHY – ALAN YOUNG NAJUKPAYI

Mr Young Najukpayi was born in the early 1930s in the Natives' Tent beside the hospital at the Victoria River Downs homestead and grew up in the "native" compound nearby.

Alan began working at the station just prior to the second world war, and worked at Moolooloo, Pigeon Hole, Centre Camp and Mount Sandford outstations on Victoria River Downs (VRD) station, along with other stations further west.

On a number of occasions he worked as a drover, twice travelling to Queensland and pushing cattle to VRD's Wyndham meatworks in the east Kimberley district a number of times.

In more recent years, Mr Young Najukpayi's evidence, knowledge, assistance and advice has been critical to the success of a number of resolved and continuing land-related claims and matters under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* (ALRA) and the *Native Title Act*.

These include, but are not limited to, the *Jasper Gorge – Kidman Springs Land Claim* (ALRA 1990) and the *Wickham River Land Claim* (ALRA 2009).

Mr Young Najukpayi's evidence and knowledge of country has been crucial in the *Victoria River Native Title Claim* (ongoing).

In that claim he contributed to a map that will form a key element of the claim and has been described by the NLC staff anthropologist as 'astonishing' in its detail, breadth and scale.

Mr Young Najukpayi has also contributed extensive mapping of the cultural elements of southern portion of the Judbarra-Gregory National Park and to the Judbarra-Gregory National Park Plan of management.

Mr Young Najukpayi's keen and enduring determination to see justice for his people extends not just to matters relating to land, law and culture but also to living and working conditions.

In 1972 Mr Young Najukpayi was instrumental in the strike by Aboriginal stockmen at the Victoria River Downs pastoral leaseholding in protest against working for rations, and demanded they receive proper pay and conditions and a return of their ancestral lands.

Those lands were not returned to them until the conclusion of the *Wickham River Land Claim*, when land in and around the Yarralin community was returned in 2016.

Over the course of many years Mr Young Najukpayi has also contributed to extensive recording and registration of sacred sites while working with the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA).

Mr Young Najukpayi has also been a long-term collaborator with anthropologist Deborah Bird-Rose on her books *Dingo Makes Us Human. Life and Land in an Australian Aboriginal Culture* (2000) and *Hidden Histories: black stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations* (1991); and as a collaborator with author and historian Darryl Lewis on his book *A Wild History. Life and Death on the Victoria River Frontier* (2012).

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