

## Chapter by chapter synopsis

### Introduction

The rationale for writing the history was to discover the events that shaped the development of Maningrida before I came to live there in 1983.

### Chapter 1: From the Time of the Dreaming.

This chapter introduces the traditional land owners and provides evidence of their occupation of the area. The first known visitors to the coast were Makassans from present-day Sulawesi.

### Chapter 2: The First White Men.

During the 1800s the first European sailors and surveyors came. Philip Parker King surveyed and named the Liverpool River upon which Maningrida stands. In 1866 King's was followed by the *Beatrice* whose crew entertained Aboriginal men and women on board their ship.

### Chapter 3: Cadell Recommends a Proper Site.

Francis Cadell was engaged by the South Australian Government to survey the northern coast of the NT in order to find a suitable site for Australia's Northern capital. Cadell's recommendation of the Liverpool River area was rejected.

### Chapter 4: Lindsay Survives the Stone Country.

David Lindsay surveyed the interior of the north-east of the NT on horse-back. He made no contact with the people of the Liverpool River when he travelled through. On his way back to Katherine his party nearly perished trying to get through the Stone Country south of Maningrida.

### Chapter 5: Searcy and the Makassans.

Customs officer, Alfred Searcy described his encounters with Makassans and Aboriginal people. His detailed descriptions include a massacre off the Maningrida coast.

### Chapter 6: Patrol Officers and a Trading Post.

First government attempts to influence and control the activities of Aboriginal people occurred when Patrol Officers moved into the area to act as scouts, bush policemen and "Protectors of Aborigines" after WW1. Patrol officer Syd Kyle-Little established a trading post.

### Chapter 7: Axel was Lamilami's Man.

A photographer named Axel Poignant spent six weeks at Nagalarramba on the opposite side of the river to the trading post at Manayangkarirra. He sensitively and respectfully captured images of local people conducting ceremonies, hunting, preparing food and caring for their families.

### Chapter 8: A New Dream: A Settlement called Maningrida.

A government-run settlement was established in 1957. It was headed by Dave and Ingrid Drysdale who spent four years supervising the construction of the settlement. They employed Aboriginal people to work on projects such as building the airstrip and community gardens.

### Chapter 9: Leprosy and Skinny Kids.

Leprosy was the primary health issue for the new settlement. Ingrid Drysdale was particularly concerned with the health and welfare of children, mothers and leprosy patients.

### Chapter 10: Balanda and Aboriginal Learn from Each Other.

Anthropologist Les Hiatt and his wife Betty Meehan arrived in 1958. Les worked with Burarra informants documenting relationship structures in the society. Betty became the settlement's first school teacher.

### Chapter 11: Mick Ivory, the First Superintendent.

The Superintendent virtually controlled the settlement. A famous visitor, David Attenborough observed the community, its Aboriginal artists and Ivory's management.

### Chapter 12: The Stuff of Life: Communication and Water.

Water and telecommunications infrastructure lagged far behind mainstream Australia. In the mid 60s the town ran dry. Not until the 1980s did a Telecom representative visit the community to see if people wanted telephones.

### Chapter 13: A Proper School:

The first school curriculum focused on English and hygiene. Preschools played an important "civilising" role. Bilingual programs were introduced and later scrapped by government.

#### Chapter 14: Training, Income and a Uniting Church.

Aboriginal people received training as domestics and gardeners and the training allowance was introduced. They called it *big money*. The community received its first Christian minister and the church was opened.

#### Chapter 15: A Grand Plan for Fisheries.

Maningrida was used as a pilot program to test the feasibility of developing commercial fishing operations at coastal communities across the Top End.

#### Chapter 16: Progress.

The community experienced several new projects. The 1967 referendum and the birth of the Maningrida Progress Association had far reaching impacts on development.

#### Chapter 17: Perennial Problems.

The beginnings of the problems we see today emerge: grog, housing, health, petrol sniffing, community infrastructure, relationships between community and government, the clash of cultures.

#### Chapter 18: A New Law and Order.

A police station was established. The role of a bush policeman was demanding and varied. Forestry operations at Maningrida clashed with traditional land owners and a young forestry officer tried to find a way to communicate with Aboriginal people about fire.

#### Chapter 19: The Outstation Movement.

Problems arose from too many tribes living close to each other at Maningrida. The novelty of the settlement was wearing off and Superintendent Hunter offered material support for those who wanted to return to their country.

#### Chapter 20: Labor Delivers on Self-Determination.

Whitlam's Labor Government supported land rights and self-determination. The change in policy led to a flow of people back to their country. Social security benefits and sales from traditional arts assisted people to fashion their own development.

#### Chapter 21: The Backlash to the Outstation Movement.

Supporters and opponents became divided along political lines. Several articles were printed in the national press critical of support given by government to outstation development.

#### Chapter 22: The Royal Commission Drops a Clanger.

The final report of the Woodward Royal Commission into land rights included provisions for Forestry to lock people out of their own land. The provision was headed for collision with Aboriginal people.

#### Chapter 23: The Prime Minister Meets Other Great Men.

Following Gough Whitlam's meeting with the Aboriginal Councillors in Maningrida, Balanda managers of Forestry and Welfare suspended operations and dismissed whitefella staff. These actions were a way of demonstrating their support for Aboriginal people who said that there were *too many Balanda*.

#### Chapter 24: Council Wins Back its Man.

Senior Aboriginal men held a sit-in the office of the Director of DAA demanding that their preferred advisor, John Hunter be returned to Maningrida. Their success led Council to dismiss Balanda staff again.

#### Chapter 25: The Felling of Forestry.

The Aboriginal Council dismissed Forestry staff in a bid to take control of operations. At the heart of the issue was control of land. Operations were scaled down and then withdrawn when Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974.

#### Chapter 26: Humpies, Huts and the Housing Association.

Initially Aboriginal people lived in humpies and huts. A Housing Association was established to address housing needs for Aboriginal people but its Balanda employees became self-interested and negative towards the community.

#### Chapter 27: A Bush Education.

Outstation schools were established despite negative racial attitudes. Aboriginal teaching assistants were employed. Balanda and Aboriginal co-principals provided an impressive model.

#### Chapter 28: Kánbaya Bárra-manga (They got Crocodiles).

Following the protection of crocodiles a research facility was established at Maningrida. Professor Harry Messel was charged with offences under wildlife protection laws but got away with it. The Aboriginal star of the program worked closely with Grahame Webb and others who disproved Messel's theories on crocodile survival.

#### Chapter 29: Black Hats and White Hats.

These labels were used to describe the political and social affiliations of people and organisations. Black hats supported Aboriginal self-determination, white hats held to assimilationist ideas. The community divided along these lines.

#### Chapter 30: Police Business and Petrol Sniffing.

Petrol sniffing caused serious problems in addition to alcohol. Police carried a heavy work load that included extraordinary experiences.

#### Chapter 31: Mysteries and Marvels of Medicine.

Traditional medicine men continued to operate in the community while Western medical services struggled to manage community health. Balanda sometimes adopted Aboriginal beliefs and Western diagnostics failed to explain traditional murder.

#### Chapter 32: Council Leads the Pack.

The Village Council was upgraded to an Aboriginal Council, having legal status, a constitution and the ability to apply for funds. It was invested with the authority to guide the development of the community and to oversee the welfare of its residents.

#### Chapter 33: Pulling Council's Teeth.

Councillors discovered that they did not have the power to govern the community. Interest in its activities waned. Traditional Owners became distrustful of Balanda law, and Balanda officers of the Council took over as the main decision makers.

#### Chapter 34: The Outstation Resource Centre.

This wing of Council operations was managed by three Balanda who strongly supported Aboriginal self-determination and the outstation movement. They conflicted with other members of the Council staff.

### Chapter 35: The First Territory Election.

In 1974 very few Aboriginal people were enrolled. The Labor candidate for the seat of Arnhem was a fair-skinned Aboriginal woman from Darwin. She pleaded with readers in the Maningrida newspaper to think for themselves. The Country-Liberal Party had an overwhelming win. Labor did not win a single seat.

### Chapter 36: The Second Territory Election: the Press Weighs In.

Labor mounted a campaign to get Aboriginal people enrolled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> election. The Maningrida newspaper, the *NT News* and southern press all carried articles relevant to the 1977 election. Aboriginal land rights was a significant issue.

### Chapter 37: Maningrida Red Alert.

Balanda supporters of Labor's self-determination policy were labelled *communists* in the press. Department of Aboriginal Affairs officers conducted reviews and were accused by the conservatives of lying, trickery and of trying to take over the Council.

### Chapter 38: The Minister Sacks Maningrida Council.

Federal Minister Viner decided to clean out the Maningrida Council in order for Aboriginal people to regain control. The Minister revoked permits for staff and their families to be on an Aboriginal Reserve. The three officers of the Outstation Resource Centre and their wives sought an injunction against the Minister's decision and were successful.

### Chapter 39: Natural Justice.

The case was heard in the Supreme Court. Chief Justice Forster found in favour of the plaintiffs after their Counsel argued that they had not been treated with the principles of natural justice.

### Chapter 40: Temporary Responsibility.

Following the sacking of Council, DAA officers took up positions in the Maningrida Council to temporarily assume responsibilities for its functions. Over a 12-month period a new Council was elected and new staff selected, except for the position of Town Clerk.

#### Chapter 41: The Birth of Bawinanga.

Outstation residents, rather than form part of the new town council, decided to set up their own organisation. The introduction of unemployment benefits enabled them to stay on their country. Bawinanga became a large and prosperous organisation.