

FOREWORD

I am pleased to be able to write the foreword for our new book on Oenpelli's history. We call it 'Gunbalanya' today, but I will use Oenpelli because that was its name, way back when the missionaries first came here. As one of the Traditional Owners for Oenpelli, I am proud of this town and its history. My Mandjurlngunj people are in the minority here now. You might say we are multicultural here in Oenpelli with people from many different clan groups calling it home. They have their homelands too, but this is my homeland – Mandjurlngunj land.

My clan are Mengerrdji-speaking people and our country spans well outside of the current Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) township. It is home to beautiful billabongs, floodplains and many stone outcrops such as Injalak and Arrkuluk Hill. These places have always been our home.

Our recent history is complicated. Not all of it is nice to read about. But we survived the tough times and we are still strong as a community today. My father – Nipper Marakarra Gumurdul – was the Senior Traditional Owner for Oenpelli during the time the first missionaries came. He was also the boss when Paddy Cahill was here, before the missionaries. People still talk about him today. He was a serious but generous man.

People say that he looked after people from other clans who came to live in Oenpelli. He allowed them to stay here, even though it was not their country. He was a tough leader and made difficult choices sometimes. When he thought the *balanda* were going too far, he took steps to control it. I guess he was a diplomat, but he did use force sometimes!

I hope you enjoy reading about our history. The stories and the photographs are powerful and will bring back many memories for our people. We are glad to share them with you too.

Julie Narndal Gumurdul

This text is taken from *The Bible in Buffalo Country: Oenpelli Mission 1925–1931*, by Sally K. May, Laura Rademaker, Donna Nadjamerrek and Julie Narndal Gumurdul, published 2020 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.