

**Larrakia Family groups**  
**by Dr Bill Day**  
**2012**

The anthropologist, Peter Sutton (1998:112) suggests four criteria for Larrakia membership. They are:

- Descent from a former identifiable landowner of Larrakia land, in accordance with Aboriginal tradition;
- Self identification as a Larrakia person;
- Acceptance as a Larrakia person generally by undisputed Larrakia group members;
- Desire to be accepted as a claimant in the present [Kenbi] case...

As well as the anthropological models presented in the two Larrakia land claims under different legislation, the membership of the Larrakia group is defined by membership rules in representative bodies such as the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation (LNAC), the Larrakia Development Corporation (LDC), the Gwalwa Daraniki Association and the Kenbi Danggalaba Association. In fact, with the failure of the native title claim, a codified membership may be the only option for defining Larrakia identity. If this is to be the case, without having a ruling from an impartial court for guidance, it is important to ‘get it right’.

The requirements for membership in the LNAC are listed in the rules of the LNAC (LNAC 1998; LNAC 2011) under Section 5.2.2, which states:

A person who is eligible to apply for membership must be an individual who is:

- a) At least 18 years of age and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person;
- b) One of the Native Title Holders of the Traditional Country and/or their descendants;
- c) All people registered with the Northern Land Council as Larrakia claimants in the Kenbi Land Claim and/or on whose behalf an application for Larrakia Native Title has been lodged with the National Native Title Tribunal, shall be eligible to become members. The family group to which the member belongs shall be recorded on the register of members.

The families are grouped according to a table attached as an appendix to the LNAC rules (2011, below).

Roman (provisional) Singh Lyons Minyiinma Rankin	Shepherd Baban Reid Briston Morton, Campbell Firth, Risk	Mills Raymond	Batcho Williams May Quall Alley Raymond
Cubillo Barnes Fox Carter, Devine	Fejo Parfitt King Dawes	Browne Talbot Kenyon	McLennan

**Table 1: Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation Family Groups (LNAC 2011).**

Numbers of LNAC members in each family group were given in submissions to Chief Justice Martin in the Supreme Court of Northern Territory of Australia on 10 September, 2009 (Table 2). The table was submitted under the heading, ‘The notification and involvement of Larrakia apart from the Plaintiffs’. The submission states: ‘The 7 plaintiffs have the support of at least 109 further members of their respective families ... In addition, the LNAC’s current membership (ex.RM2) totals 407’. The submission then refers to the following table of LNAC members (Table 2):<sup>1</sup>

<b>Family Group</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Family Group</b>	<b>Number</b>
Batcho	104	Roman/Danks	27
Brown/Talbot	35	Raymond/Mills	21
Cubillo	41	McLennan	53
Fejo	69	Shepherd	57
		<b>Total</b>	<b>407</b>

**Table 2: Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation family groups and membership numbers (Martin 2009).**

While there is some logic in grouping the families in this way, the results have proved to be unrepresentative for the following suggested reasons:

- The 8-family model does not include the Secretary family, who have perhaps the strongest claim to be traditional owners of Darwin by descent and connection.
- The 8-family model is based on family size and theoretically if not in practice gives disproportionate power to three large families who have the least claim of traditional connection, ie the Mills, McLennan and Cubillo families.
- The 8-family model nullifies the influence of the Danggalaba clan as traditional owners by grouping the Roman, Singh, Minyinma and Rankin families into a single group.
- Similarly, the 8-family model marginalises the traditional Bishop, Campbell and Morton families who have a well-documented genealogy as Larrakia through their father’s father’s father.
- Families are grouped with families with whom they have had little or no previous contact.
- The Bishop family is not listed. They should be with their cousins, the Morton and Campbell families.

For the above reasons, a family grouping is suggested as being more in keeping with Larrakia traditional social structure, both on the Cox Peninsula and in Darwin, as outlined in the Kenbi Land Claim book (Brandl *et al* 1979) and in the report by Mr Justice Gray (2000).<sup>2</sup> Obviously the requirement for membership to

<sup>1</sup> Outline Submissions for Hearing on 10 September 2009 Before Martin CJ, Supreme Court of Northern Territory of Australia at Darwin, No. 101 of 2009 (20921822) between: Robert Mills and Others, Plaintiffs, and: Northern Land Council, First Defendant, Larrakia Development Corporation Pty Ltd, Second Defendant. Plaintiffs’ (Martin 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Concerning Larrakia family groups, Sutton (1998:109) suggests, ‘It is very useful in land claims for such schematic overviews of blocs of descendants to be provided along with the detailed genealogies themselves, so that the internal structure of dominant groups, especially large “tribal” ones, can be readily appreciated.’

LNAC, that members be native title holders no longer applies, which then allows for considerable interpretation. As a result, an alternative model of 14 family groups is suggested below.

<b>Family name</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Relationships</b>
<b>1. Secretary family</b>	Regarded as the traditional owners of the Darwin area. Ancestors of Frank Secretary. Incorporated as the Gwalwa Daraniki Association to hold the 301 hectare Kulaluk Crown Lease in Perpetuity granted to Larrakia and associated Aborigines in 1979.	Includes Shields, Treves and Nelson families. Frank Secretary, Tommy Lyons, Crab Billy and King George were classificatory brothers of the Danggalaba clan.
<b>2. Singh – Thompson</b>	Apical ancestor, Tommy Lyons. His grandchildren Raylene Singh and siblings. As a local descent group, the ‘Tommy Lyons group’ won the Kenbi case for Larrakia in 2000. Includes the Thompson family as descendants of Margaret Moy, a partner of Tommy Lyons (Gray 2000:Para 4.10.4).	Families 1-6 are from the same descent line according to the 1973 genealogy and the Kenbi claim book, and closely related to 5, 7, 8 and 10
<b>3. Rankin</b>	Apical ancestor Josephine Rankin (dec) was Larrakia. Her daughter, Gwen, and son, Michael, and families are long-term residents of Darwin’s Bagot Community.	Maternal cousin of 2. Nipper Rankin was husband of daughters of apical 10 (sons Johnny Fejo and Raymond Rankin)
<b>4. Minyinma</b>	Descendants of apical ancestor Crab Billy, father of Long Billy Minyinma. As of 2012 there are two surviving members, Kathleen and her son Desmond.	Crab Billy was sibling of apical ancestors of 1-5. Descendants of Prince of Wales Nipul (cousin of Billy Minyinma) could fit here.
<b>5. Batcho</b>	Apical ancestors Blanchie and Pat Lawrie. Second generation siblings Sam, Dolly and Dedja Batcho. The Batcho descendants include the Williams, Quall, May, Raymond and Ally families. All belong to the Larrakia Danggalaba clan.	Pat Lawrie recorded as uncle of Sam Gundulg and Dolly Garinyi (and Dedja Batcho, Dolly’s sister). Shown on 1973 genealogy as Danggalaba clan.
<b>6. Roman</b>	Descendants of Amy Bandira and her daughter Lindy Roman. Kelvin Costello has been CEO of Larrakia Nation and held positions in LDC. Audrey Tilmouth is an outspoken elder.	Closely related to families 1-5. Apical Amy said to be sister of Tommy Lyons.
<b>7. Shepherd – Reid –Baban - Risk</b>	Descendants of Ababa (Gray 2000:37-8). Bill Risk gave the Larrakia welcome to country for Barak Obama. Also includes Musk, Collins and Briston family. Ababa’s children were removed by the authorities.	Ababa was the sister of the mother of Topsy Secretary (1).
<b>8. Bishop</b>	Descendants of Willie Daiyal and his son, Captain Bishop (dec). Captain Bishop was married twice. The Campbell and Morton families are descendants of his first wife, May. His two adult grandsons from his second wife live at the Knuckeys Lagoon Community in Darwin.	Captain’s daughter Jeanie was cared for by her mother’s sister, Mary Minmarama, daughter of Garamanak (10). Bishop descendants include Campbell and Morton families
<b>9. Fejo</b>	Descendants of Juma, Roger and Smiler Fejo. The Rev Wally Fejo died in 2012. The Fejo family are supporters of the Larrakeyah Community at Acacia Gap, on the old Larrakeah Reserve, south of Darwin.	‘King Charles is shown as adoptive parent of Blanchie (5). Blanchie may have adopted the three Fejo brothers (Gray 2000:41)..
<b>10. Talbot – Browne – Kenyon</b>	Apical ancestors are Topsy Garamanak and Hilda Gunmanga (sisters). Nigel Browne is the chairperson of LDC. Donna Jackson works for LNAC. Both families have affiliations with tribal groups apart from Larrakia. <sup>3</sup> Kenyons at Humpty Doo station.	Joan (Kenyon) is daughter of Hilda. Nancy (Browne) daughter of Garamanak. Talbots descended from Lorna, daughter of Garamanak.
<b>11. Cubillo</b>	Apical ancestor said to be Annie Duwun. The largest group identifying as Larrakia but not mentioned in the 1973 genealogy. Mary Lee was introduced to President	Includes Devine, Barnes, Odegaard and Lee surnames amongst others (Gray 2000:43-

<sup>3</sup> Larrakia Development Corporation Achievement Report (2008:29) states: ‘Nigel [Browne] is a Larrakia and Woolna man, a director of the Larrakia Development Corporation and a Chair of the Advisory Committee.’

	Obama when he visited Darwin. Her son Gary Lee is a well known artist (see Lee 2006). Donna Odegaard has been working closely with Raylene Singh. Richard Barnes ex Chairman of LDC.	45). Not connected with families 1-10. Annie Duwun not shown on records, but Cubillo family are accepted by LNAC and LDC.
<b>12. Mills – Raymond</b>	Descendants of Kowija or Kadjowi and James Mills (Gray 2000:40). Another family group with multiple tribal affiliations and not mentioned in the 1973 genealogy. Includes artist-filmmaker Desmond ‘Coochie’ Raymond and the musical Mills sisters.	No known past genealogical connection to families 1-10, but are accepted by LNAC and LDC.
<b>13. McLennan</b>	Apical ancestor Minnie Lily not evident in census records as Larrakia. Not mentioned in the 1973 genealogy. A large family (see Gray 2000:35)	No known past genealogical connection to families 1-10, but are accepted by LNAC and LDC.
<b>14. Firth–Waters–Lowe</b>	Apical ancestor Eva Humbadj, daughter of a Larrakia man called Fat Jack. Not mentioned in the 1973 genealogy. See Gray (2000:35).	Fat Jack shown on records as Larrakia, otherwise no known genealogical connection to families 1-10.

**Table 3: Suggested grouping of Larrakia families (Day).<sup>4</sup>**

The above 14-family model is based upon anthropological evidence and Larrakia tradition as it existed before the so-called revival of the Larrakia tribe and the formation by the Northern Land Council of the Larrakia ‘language group’ (Walsh 1989a, 1989b) or ‘new tribe’ (Sutton 1998). It is suggested that the advantages of the 14-family model are:

- The 14-family model gives greater authority to the families 1-10 who are shown on the 1973 genealogy and other documentation as Larrakia.
- The 14-family model includes families 1 – 6 as separate entities and thus respects their traditional authority.
- In the 14-family model each group consists of descendants of an undisputed apical ancestor of an upper deceased generation from recorded history. (Higher generations are contentious).
- The 14-family model represents the Danggalaba clan descendants separately in families 1 – 6 according to their apical ancestor. It is not respectful or traditional to group these families together as in the 8-family model.
- The 14-family model is not based on size. For example, the Cubillo family is by far the largest, and the Minyinma family has only two survivors, as of 2012. Basing the division of families by their size marginalises smaller families who have strong traditional rights to be heard, and should be respected.

The principle of descent in the above model is either through the mother or father. A decision by Northrop Hill and O’Loughlin JJ (at p.553)<sup>5</sup> cited by Blowes (1992:15) held that: ‘The particular principle of descent in operation will depend upon the circumstances of the particular case ... The point is that the principle of descent will be one that is recognised as applying in respect of the particular group. Further, there is no

<sup>4</sup> Sutton (1998:109) states: ‘While there are a few Larrakia families with no known upper generation links to the others, and one where only a minority view considers there to be such a link to others, a large proportion of the Larrakia fall into one or other of two large cognatic stocks.’

<sup>5</sup> Northrop et al (1992) <http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/cth/FCA/1992/69.html?stem=0&synonyms=0&query=northrop%20Hill%20O'Loughlin>

reason why the particular principle of descent traditionally operating may not change over time...' (as cited in Blowes 1992:15; see also: Kearney 1984, 1988; Toohey 1981a, 1981b, 1982).

### **The Larrakia land rights protests**

The Larrakia protests for land rights in the 1970s are described in the book, 'Bunji: a story of the Gwalwa Daraniki Movement' (Day 1994a) and other media reports (see Day 2011a, 2011b; Lockwood 1971, 1973). One of the earliest Larrakia protests was a walk (mostly in bare feet) from their camp at Kulaluk to the city centre on National Aborigines Day, 1971. Later, Topsy Secretary captured the moment in her language: '*Gweylgwa ngayuboenoe gwoyalwa nganigi*: I burnt my feet for this country, this is my country' (Secretary and Heffernan 1996:1). Placards included, 'I am Larrakia and proud of it', and, 'We love our land' (Day 1994a:18; *NT News*, July 10, 1971, p.3).

Amongst the earliest reports on the renewed Larrakia struggle was an article, 'A Call Out for all Larrakia' (*NT News* May 29, 1971), announced by 'Tribal leader, Mr Kooloomurinyee, (known everywhere as Mr Bobby Secretary)' who said he 'hoped to get all Larrakias together within a week or so'. Two years later as a result of their land rights campaign, in 1973 the Aboriginal Land Rights Commissioner Mr Justice Woodward visited the Larrakia camp at Kulaluk in Darwin (NAA 1973a). During the previous week a public notice was inserted in the *NT News* stating: 'All Larrakia tribe descendants who may be eligible for land rights – you are invited to meet Judge Woodward – Saturday 10 a.m. at Kulaluk, Coconut Grove. F. Fogarty, Vice Pres. Gwalwa Daraniki' (*NT News* May 31, 1973, p.27). Although few people responded to the above notices in 1971 and 1973, the Larrakia people later experienced a remarkable revival. Mr Justice Mansfield (2006:Para 839) referred to this 'revival' when he stated (his quotation marks):

In the 1970s the [Larrakia] land claims drew interest to the Larrakia culture and there has since been a revival of the Larrakia community and culture. A large number of people who now identify as Larrakia only became aware of their ancestry during these land claims, and acquired much 'knowledge' at this time.

Referring to the Larrakia land rights protests of the 1970s, Mr Justice Mansfield (2006:Para 388) also states: 'Indeed it is noteworthy that the historical record shows that people of mixed descent did not participate in any of the demonstrations outlined above.' However, despite these expressed opinions, the families identified as Larrakia by Topsy Secretary have remained relatively stable, according to information recorded on her 1973 genealogy.

### **The 1973 genealogy**

In his first report Woodward (1973:49) had stated:

When I first met [the Larrakia] I was told that there are some 18 members of the tribe left. Later information suggests that fewer than this number can trace paternal descent from Larrakia, but there

are more who identify themselves as Larrakia because of maternal links. They have told me that the whole of Darwin is built on Larrakia country...

In the 1957 Register of Wards, 38 people were recorded as being members of the Larrakia tribe (Mansfield 2006:Para359). By 1973, estimates of the numbers of Larrakia had ranged from fourteen (Mansfield 2006:Para 402)<sup>6</sup> to eighteen (Woodward 1973:49). In 1977, Federal Cabinet papers noted: ‘The immediate group of Larrakia people and their close relations is small, numbering only some 20 people...’ (NAA 1977). Alternatively, Len Muller (1971:1) estimated from the 1966 census and register of births and deaths that ‘the Laragia population was 15 males, 13 females, total 28’ (NAA 1971).

Despite low official estimates of the Larrakia population, the Topsy Secretary genealogy of 1973 submitted to Mr Justice Woodward in 1973 includes almost 100 people who identified as Larrakia, plus many more unnamed children (NAA 1973b). The genealogy has a red dot beside some names. A note on the chart says that the ‘[red dot] indicates these people speak the [Larrakia] language’. There are fifteen red dots. Beside the genealogy is a note: ‘Names underlined in red would consider themselves eligible for land rights’ (*ibid*). There are eighty-two names underlined. The chart was not rediscovered in the archives until 2009 (see Day 2010; Reeves 2011).

Topsy Secretary was a recognised Larrakia leader when I knew her and well qualified to provide information for a Larrakia genealogy. Her respected position was recognised in 1991 by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, Mr Justice Olney (1991:Para 9.20), when he stated, ‘[Topsy Secretary] is clearly a leader among the Larrakia people in the Darwin area as were her brother Bobby and her father Frank before her.’ Heffernan (1996:1) also states: ‘Along with Prince Mitbul, Topsy Secretary is one of the most senior traditional owners of Darwin and the Cox Peninsular or the Northern Territory of Australia.’ For the above reasons I regard the 1973 genealogy as a definitive record of the Danggalaba clan and the membership of the Larrakia language group.

At least six years before the Kenbi land claim, the genealogy by Topsy Secretary appears to confirm that the Larrakia accepted cognatic descent. On the advice of Topsy Secretary, a note on the genealogy states (NAA 1973b):

Children of mixed marriages have identified as Larrakia:

- a) If their father is Larrakia.
- b) If they were brought up by a widowed or deserted mother.
- c) If the family lived in Darwin and had one Larrakia parent.

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<sup>6</sup> From a list of Larrakia names painted on a shed at Kulaluk in 1972 (see Buchanan 1974:iv), Assistant District Adviser, Department of Welfare Jack Doolan reported that 7 were ‘full Larrakia’, 3 others were from maternal descent and 4 from paternal descent, a total of 14 (NAA 1971).

The 1973 genealogy and other indicators suggest that ‘people of mixed descent’, including Topsy Secretary’s grandchildren and the descendants of Dedja Batcho, Ababa and Garamanak were equally recognised as members of the Larrakia people. Brandl and Walsh (1983:151) cite a statement by Johnny Fejo from the newsletter *Bunji* (January 1973): ‘If one girl marries to a white bloke and has a baby, it’s a half-caste’, but we call it full-blood Larrakia...’ Brandl and Walsh (1983:151) comment: ‘Identification is bilateral then and “full-blood” is taking on a sense equivalent to “authentic”.’ There may be many explanations for ‘people of mixed descent’ not participating in the political protests. For example they were more likely to be employed and face external pressures not to participate.

By the 1990s, many of the older Larrakia people had died, leaving a small group living in the Kulaluk community, a family at Belyuen, two families in the Bagot Community, two or three individuals in the Knuckeyes Lagoon community and a community on the old Larrakeah Reserve at Acacia Gap, south of Darwin. Most of the other 1,600 members of the Larrakia Nation now live in urban housing and are members of incorporated associations under Western law.

### **The Danggalaba clan**

There is evidence that the Larrakia people recognise the Danggalaba clan as the rightful traditional owners of the Darwin region. For example, anthropologist John Avery (1997:57) states that the Danggalaba claimants claim ‘they (and the Tommy Lyons group) are Danggalaba and that the Danggalaba are the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land.’ In the Kenbi Land Claim, Brandl *et al* (1979:172) say they asked the question: “‘Who owns the [Cox Peninsula] claim area?’” and were told that ‘the *Danggalaba* clan owns it’. In 2000, Mr Justice Gray cited the Kenbi Land Claim book (Brandl *et al* 1979) which listed 7 people who fell within the definition of traditional Aboriginal owners in the Land Rights Act with respect to the land claimed. They were: Bobby Secretary, Topsy Secretary, Gabriel Secretary, Prince of Wales, Olga Singh, Rachel (or Paula) Thompson and Kathleen (or Dolphin) Minyinma. Mr Justice Gray (Para 2.18.1) noted: ‘These persons were considered to have as their principal dreaming, or *durlg*, the *Danggalaba*, or crocodile.’

Mr Justice Olney (1991:Para 7.3.5) states: ‘The pre-eminence of the Danggalaba clan means that all surviving members of the Danggalaba clan automatically have a publicly recognised entitlement to Larrakia country but for those with a filiative [marriage] link to some member of the Danggalaba clan two conditions should be satisfied: they must accept their birthright and they must demonstrate an active interest in that country.’

### **The Larrakia language group**

The 1973 genealogy indicates a wider Larrakia group of at least eighty-two named persons, including the Williams, Fejo, Roman, Shepherd, Risk, Rankin, Browne, Baban, Reid, Campbell, Bishop, Talbot and Kenyon families and their descendants. Sutton (1998:109) states that with some exceptions, ‘the Larrakia fall into one or other of two large cognatic stocks’, and this is basically true of the Larrakia society I knew in 1973, at least for families 1 -10 (Table 3). Whether the wider group of families, 1 -14, retain any rights and

interests over land and sites in the Darwin area is academic now that their native title claims seem to have lost every avenue of appeal (see Reeves 2011). However, the process has raised the members' awareness of their Larrakia identity.

As a result of the land claim process, the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation supposedly represents the wider Larrakia claimant group of eight families (Mansfield 2006:Para 695). According to Ben Scambary (2007:157):

This organisation [the Larrakia Nation] is a coalition, initially facilitated by the NLC, of Larrakia families, individuals and factions, with the primary purpose of providing a corporate identity for Larrakia against increased pressure from external agencies to 'know' whom the Larrakia were.

Amongst the wider Larrakia families Sutton (1998:111) explains that not all subgroups interact in the sense of being a society, with members of all other subgroups. Some subgroups predominantly interact with families who are not Larrakia. For example, Sutton notes that the day-to-day social world of the Belyuen-based subset of the Danggalaba clan is amongst non-Larrakia kin, rather than the Darwin-based subgroups of the wider Larrakia group (Sutton 1998:111, footnote 190). Others in the wider group like the Mills, Kenyon and Browne families have multiple allegiances.

The remarks by Mr Justice Mansfield (2006: Para 833) concerning the 'numerical extent of those professing membership' highlight how the land claim process itself has distorted Larrakia processes of succession. As the numbers of Larrakia grew, the inclusion of additional families created dissension so that it is not surprising that members of the Danggalaba clan like Tibby Quall, the Secretary family, the Rankin family and the Singh family have withdrawn to their own family groups where they feel more in control.

Mr Justice Mansfield (2006:Paras 832 and 833) commented on 'the breakdown in the process for the transfer of knowledge' amongst the wider Larrakia. Mansfield continued: 'I think that breakdown is also revealed in the current decision-making structures for the Larrakia people ... I am mindful that the numerical extent of those professing membership of (and apparently accepted as members of) the Larrakia people is much greater than during the early and middle decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, I think it is clear that the decision-making process among the Larrakia people has been largely transferred to the Larrakia Nation. Its composition is not traditional.'

Mansfield commented that 'the present laws and customs of the Larrakia people reflect a sincere and intense desire to re-establish those traditional laws and customs adapted to the modern context ... That, however, is not a sufficient factual foundation for making a determination of native title rights and interests in this proceeding' (Mansfield 2006:Para 15). However, it was my observation that the Larrakia people listed on the 1973 genealogy did not feel the need to 're-establish' traditional laws and customs because by a process of



succession, they considered themselves to be holders of those laws and customs and were recognised by others as such.

Once the wider group was established, in my opinion it could have become difficult for the Danggalaba group, as shown in the 1973 genealogy, and other traditional people to assert their perceived authority, particularly in a decision-making process that was foreign to them. The atmosphere in the wider Darwin community could also have been intimidating. Scambary (2007:157) writes:

...a public backlash occurred, fuelled by political comment from the Darwin Lord Mayor, Chief Minister Stone, and Prime Minister Howard - the latter describing the claim as 'an extravagant ambit claim' (Carey and Collinge 1997: 21). The NLC received a significant amount of mostly anonymous hate mail, including a newspaper photograph of Larrakia claimants at a press conference that had been modified by the drawing of targets with bullet holes on their foreheads...

Scambary (2007:156) also mentions an earlier claim whereby, 'The announcement of this claim had a divisive impact on the already fragile Larrakia polity and prompted a considerable public backlash...' For the above reasons I suggest that the 'Tommy Lyons group' chose to be represented separately in the Kenbi claim, while others in the Batcho group and the Secretarys at Kululuk were persuaded to join the Larrakia group. However, evidence suggests the basic structure of the Danggalaba clan shown on the 1973 genealogy remained and remains to the present.

In paragraph 814, Mr Justice Mansfield states: 'However, thereafter there is progressively little evidence of the continued practice of, and respect for, the Larrakia traditional laws and customs [up] until the 1970s.' I suggest that in the 1970s the Larrakia people with a recognised system of succession were practising laws and customs in conjunction with the Wadjiginy-Kiyuk people on the Cox Peninsula (Brandl *et al* 1979) and other groups to the east (see Graham 1997). They may have been adapted customs but they were considered to be uniquely Larrakia laws and customs. However, the land claims process, in ways suggested above, has then distorted the nature of the 'society' by rapidly adding many people who had not previously outwardly identified as Larrakia, over-riding the order of succession by the establishment of incorporated representative bodies.

## **Conclusion**

The contact history of the Larrakia people resulted in different formative experiences of traditional people and assimilated Larrakia and their families. However, in spite of the removal of children and the confinement of 'full-bloods' on reserves as 'Wards of the State' in the assimilation era, a semblance of Larrakia religion and practices survived, often in shared ceremony with neighbouring groups. In particular, Larrakia knowledge of country and rituals flourished on the Cox Peninsula, albeit through intermarriage with the Wadjiginy people as custodians. No doubt because Larrakia people, even the children removed to institutions, continued to live on their country in Darwin, contact was kept with between 'urban people' and 'traditional people'. In the bushland camps around Darwin, a semblance of ceremony was kept, as I

witnessed in the early 1970s. From these urban camps a protest movement emerged in 1971 to reclaim Larrakia land.

The growing disagreement amongst the Larrakia was created by confusion over the land claim process and the deaths of respected elders. During the record-long land claim process in the Kenbi case, the breakdown in the process for the transfer of knowledge amongst the wider Larrakia accelerated, although anthropological literature, transcripts and recordings preserved knowledge for those who wished to learn Larrakia ways. At this time, incorporated Larrakia organisations were formed to contain the decision-making structures for the Larrakia people.

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