



MERGA 18

GALTHA

DARWIN 1995

**EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE MATHEMATICS
EDUCATION RESEARCH GROUP OF AUSTRALASIA (MERGA)**

Conference Proceedings held at the Northern Territory University

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EDITORS NOTE

The eighteenth Annual Conference of the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia (MERGA) was held in Darwin July 7-10, 1995.

Conference Theme

Galtha is an Aboriginal word from the Yolngu languages of Northeast Arnhemland. Yolngu community elders gave the name Galtha to the Aboriginal curriculum in the schools at Yirrkala and the Laynha Homelands.

Galtha is, among many related meanings, a ceremonial act. When elders meet together to plan a ceremony, they are planning a unique ceremonial experience, specifically designed to reflect the histories and ancestral affiliations of all the participants, and what it is that has brought them together to this ceremonial moment.

The negotiation before a ceremony therefore often takes as long or longer than the ceremony itself. It is often a fraught business, where everyone's individual point of view must be taken into account. To mark the success of this process, and the movement from the negotiation into the ceremony proper, a small ceremonial act is performed to mark the *coming to ground* of the ideas, and their manifestation in cooperative and celebratory human activity.

In a Galtha curriculum, knowledge is celebrated as a text, negotiated, specific to a context and a time, and constructed as a reflection of the fields of power in which human activity is always staged.

The name Galtha was chosen to reflect a characteristic way of understanding the production and celebration of knowledge through a Yolngu epistemology. We believe that this Yolngu concept is relevant in current thinking about mathematics education. Permission has been granted by the Yolngu elders to use this idea as a theme and focus for MERGA 18.

Paper Selection

Guidelines for selecting papers adopted at the Hobart conference were used for MERGA 18.

Two independent reviewers were asked to comment on each paper submitted. Where there was a disagreement between the recommendations of these reviewers, a third was appointed.

The papers have been published as submitted by the writers. While great care was taken by the editors, some errors inevitably occur. For these we apologise.

The Editors