



**Life in Lockdown:
#RemoteIndigenousCommunity**

Leonora Adidi
Kalaw Kawaw Ya, Suy-Baydham Clan of
Bamaga and Saibai Island
May 2020

(Originally published in four parts on the
authors Facebook page. Reproduced with
permission of the author)



22 March 2020

On Thursday, Ama decided no more gatherings at home. Earlier that day, I noted rice on the Ibis supermarket shelf ... didn't buy ... bought a foaming hand wash ... there were three left, no hand sanitisers. None at shops next door. I have three at home: one is part of my travel pack, another for home use, another lives in my handbag. This is my normal.

On Saturday, I made a resolution to begin practising social distancing. Walked out of the house to go to an outdoor small gathering of a working group ... car pulled up, friend offering a lift. I said no, I'm social distancing ... laughter ... we had work-related matter to discuss ... I jumped in ... FAIL!

At our working group, we discussed social distancing and hygiene. We had hand wash ... but no hand sanitisers, couldn't get any. I had my own. A hand-washing station was set up: a tap, hose and hand-wash. We were working outdoors.

I heard people were looking for rice ... wondered if the sudden demand was a reaction to the notice of limited items put up by the local supermarkets on Friday.

Came home late. Saw that we had grandkids staying. Parents away for medical reasons.

That's how it is with our families.

Social distancing and social isolation are going to be difficult in our Indigenous communities.

23 March 2020

Yesterday, no church ... Anglican and Catholic services are on hold until whenever.



I am dealing with an elderly person in their home who is being bombarded with texts and phone calls about an overseas traveller's arrival into town, and the Elder is understandably disturbed by rumours in relation to this.

This is just a little of the consequences of spreading rumours. I'm doing the best I can to get to the facts of this info so I can ease anxiety.

It did raise questions about the effectiveness of non-essential restrictions. How are the passengers screened at the REX airline counter in Cairns? A very recent passenger told me there are no extra checks.

WHAAT?!

I'm told there will be a meeting of the LDMG (Local Disaster Management Group). Waiting to see what comes out of it.

Social distancing remains a challenge. Yesterday, had a small gathering of eight ppl. No one, including myself, remembered to stay apart 1.5m.

Today, another two grandkids popped in for breakfast/morning tea.

This is our family life ... how to manage this in these extraordinary circumstances?

27 March 2020

Went to Early Vote for the Local Government Elections at the RTC building.

It was a rainy day ... people queued around the veranda of the building for shelter. NO ONE observed the 1.5m rule. I kept the correct distance from the guy in front but the girl at my back did not despite my attempt to tell her.

A car drove past. Someone in it took photo of queue. A polling volunteer saw it and told everyone to stand 1m apart. I corrected it. Some did, others didn't.

Red 'x' marks for people to stand on were only from inside building to front entrance.

When I entered to vote, told electoral supervisor. He went outside to enforce the self-distancing rule.

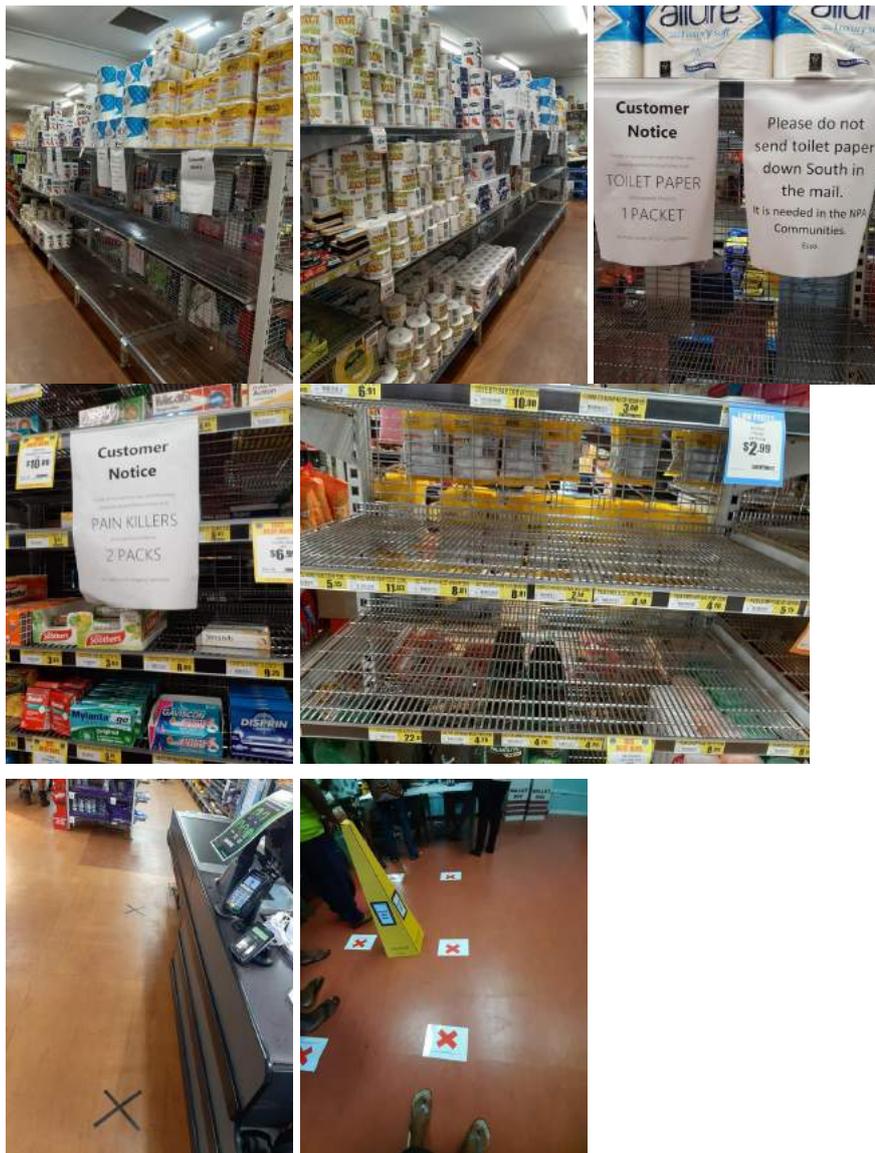
There were Elders present waiting to vote, people approaching them close to chat.

20 minutes later I noticed, from across the road, the queue was back to people standing close.

I forgot to bring my own pencil ... oh sh#t

Washed hands after arriving home, but I had to do groceries shopping first ... so, ummm. 🙄.

Meanwhile in IBIS supermarket ... I'll let the pics tell the story.



31 March 2020

Health worker from Community Health Centre visited and gave appointment & CV-19 advice to Ama & myself. Dropped off the info

pictured below. Health staff also dropped off the sign and put it up.

We were told health workers were going around the communities today. I'm assuming visiting high-risk clients.

The staff carefully worded the signs with health privacy in mind.

15 minutes later, the No Entry sign was blatantly ignored by someone despite being yelled at by both of us to remain outside.

Ama tied milk crates on the gate for incoming/outgoing items. We normally get seafood and other stuff dropped off by family, and we share out stuff as well. #SharingAndCaring

Delivered shopping will also be dropped in the crates.

I put out a call for signage yesterday. These were emailed to people, and to Community Services of NPARC (our local Council).

NPARC posted info, including the signs, on their website.

www.nparc.qld.gov.au has comprehensive COVID-19 information available on the site for the community and visitors.

I am saddened by the closure of our regional newspaper, Cape & Torres News, and only airline service to NPA, the Regional Express Airlines, REX. People will have to ferry to Thursday and Horn Island to board Qantas. An expensive trip. REX was providing a Govt subsidised scheme to Cairns for \$99. Hopefully, they will be rescued by the stimulus package for airlines affected by this crisis.





KOORIE
HERITAGE TRUST INC
GNOKAN DANNA MURRA KOR-KI



Leonora is a fluent Kalaw Kawaw Ya speaker of the Suy-Baydham Clan of Bamaga and Saibai Island. Leonora lives in the remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of Bamaga located at the very tip of the Cape York Peninsula, Queensland. Leonora is self-employed as a linguist and cultural consultant. She advises on diverse projects ranging from the development of language learning resources to the curation of artistic performances. Leonara is also manager of the nationally acclaimed dance troupe Naygayiw Gigi, winners of the inaugural National Indigenous Dance Rites Competition in 2015 and ambassadors to the 2016 Festival of Pacific Arts in Guam and 2016 Rainforest World Music Festival in Borneo. Leonora was a founding member of the Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee (QILAC) and of the musical collaboration project Yamani: Voices of an Ancient Land.