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Dwayne was a bright young man and Rose an elder and pillar of the community. Unfortunately, their inner pain was so immense that they both could not see another way and they ended their lives. I had worked with Dwayne’s parents and also with Rose. I got to know both highly gifted individuals. Their graves are at Minjilang and in Maningrida, and they remind us of the fact that what is often described as a boon – the bright lights of the industrialised world – is often a peril. This is especially true for fragile indigenous cultures that are perfectly adapted to the harshest environmental challenges, but which often are quickly destroyed by these bright lights and all the baggage that comes with it. I was immensely saddened when I learnt that Dwayne’s and Rose’s lives had ended, and I hope that a part of my work as a linguist helps build resilience and pride in the cultural tradition of Aboriginal people.

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