

Aboriginal Rainforest Council Newsletter: December 2007

Teamwork, leadership & achievement highlights of 2007



First and foremost I would like to acknowledge all Elders and Traditional Owners whose traditional homelands are part of the area now known as the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area.

To those of us who have lost loved ones over the past year, the Aboriginal Rainforest Council would like to pass on its commiserations to the respective families and to let you know that our thoughts are with you.

One of the many highlights of 2007 was my co-chair Rhonda Brim, Uncle Danny Hooligan and myself being selected to be a part of a national Indigenous Leadership Program. There were over 400 applications for just 63 places in the Men's program alone, so to have three people from the region and from the one organisation I think is quite an achievement. Congratulations also to Kimberley Gosam (Jirrbal), who has been selected to go into next year's program.

Another achievement was having a reasonably good regional workshop back in June, especially considering the wet and damp conditions up there.

I also had the chance earlier this year to take a delegation of scientists from the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) which is based in Paris, to Hinchinbrook Island with my Mum and Dad. After that we had the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network conference which covered a range of issues and was well-received by all.

Many of those delegates then went on to the Girringun Land & Sea Conference in October. The Conference went for three days followed by a two-day Cultural Festival, all of which was excellent and well done to Girringun for doing such a great job of managing all that. I'd also like to commend Chantal and her Cultural Heritage Mapping project team for what they've achieved to date, to pull all the four modelling projects together was a task and a half so full credit to her and her team.

Hopefully we'll soon be celebrating the re-listing of the World Heritage Area for its cultural values. Let's not hold our breath but we're quietly confident we'll get across the line.

I don't think we could have better people working on our IP sub-committee and I'd like to thank and acknowledge them for their great work in supporting all our mobs.



I'd also like to acknowledge and congratulate the long and hard work that has gone into successful native title consent determinations for the Kuku Yalanji and Ngadjon-Jii.

We had our AGM in November, I'm happy to say the auditors report was fine and that next year we're thinking about

having not just one regional workshop but two. I'd also like to say I'm still honoured to be here and would like to thank those who have supported and re-elected me into this position.

Looking at us now, just over four years down the track, we are starting to see the real benefits of coming together as the ARC. Fighting in isolation, as has happened in the past, means we end up doing the same thing over and over. We've all heard it, especially from the elders – 'we've been doing this for 15/20/30 years'. The only way to change that is to evolve, adapt and overcome. Let's not be pushed by the past but pulled by our dreams, that's the way ARC thinks and it's the grassroots of our people who drive us, that's the way we are. Within the ARC you have all of our TO groups ready to support you and if you need that support we'll be there.

We have a valuable asset in our people here in the Wet Tropics, we are gaining recognition and respect for our work and we look forward to continuing that work with you into the new year.

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News from the EO's Desk

...Allison Halliday...

Firstly congratulations to Yalanji Bama and Ngadjon Bama who recently received consent determination over their traditional lands.

As a direct result of these determinations both groups will have the opportunity to play a much greater role in the management and preservation of their respective countries.

The Aboriginal Rainforest Council is looking forward to supporting Traditional Owners with further on-ground land and cultural heritage management activities on all tenure types across the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.



2007 has been a busy year for every concerned with the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, particularly for the ARC as we shoulder our responsibilities and commitments with less support from Government agencies and funding sources than we need.

To date the ARC has received no funding from the Queensland State Government for the 07/08 financial year and we have been operating on a mere \$150K from the Federal Government alone.

Current funding supports one and a half staff (the CEO and Finance Officer), four meetings a year for our members and the administration for our entire organisation and operations.

This is a real concern.

The future direction and core operations of the ARC have been and will continue to be discussed by the ARC Board, ARC IP sub-committee and the recently formed ARC Technical Working Group (see below).

The Chairs and CEO's of ARC, Girringun, Terrain, Burdekin Dry Tropics and the Wet Tropics Management Authority have met regularly throughout the year to discuss various strategies and political lobbying as well as short term and long term funding requirements for the ARC to operate effectively and to ensure that both ARC and Girringun have secure and solid funding foundations into the new year and beyond..

Various strategies will be built into ARC's proposed Shared Responsibility Agreement as a result of the Regional Partnership Agreement, which is yet to be signed by both state and federal governments, but this will not affect the progression of ARC's SRA.

The RPA will eventually deliver one full time Coordinator for 12 months, one Implementation Officer for ARC (northern region) and one Implementation Officer for Girringun (southern region) for three years to assist in the implementation of both the Regional Agreement and the Aboriginal Plan.

It is hoped that the RPA will be signed within this financial year of 07/08.

The ARCs recent AGM saw no changes to the Delegates and Proxies for the northern region with the exception of one new proxy for Ma:Mu, Joann Schmider.

For the southern region Girringun's next meeting will determine any changes to their Delegates and Proxies for the ARC.

ARC has also obtained assistance from a consultant for three months to assist our Secretariat and the Technical Working Group sub committee to action various tasks, including strategic planning, corporate governance and the restructuring of ARC to be consistent with ours and our partners' strategies.

The TWG sub committee propose to meet on a monthly basis leading up to the next Regional Workshop.

You will find TWG updates and other information about what we are doing on the ARC website at <http://www.arc-inc.org.au>

I would like to wish each and every one you mob out there a very MURRI Christmas and I look forward to catching up with everyone next year to progress the ARC even further.

Cultural Knowledge Kit almost ready to go

A practical guide for Traditional Owner groups to manage intellectual property access and agreements will be ready to trial and possibly launch early in the new year, says ARC's IP sub-committee chair Henrieta Marrie.

Ms Marrie said the guide, called the "Cultural Knowledge Kit", had two components aimed at helping TOs guard the knowledge they have, including within systems they might use to develop databases for their country as part of the ARC Cultural Heritage Mapping Project.

"The first part is a practical guide for TO groups to assert their rights and interests over information they record, and to determine how that information will be stored, managed, accessed and used," she said.

"The second part is looking at a code of conduct which will guide people in terms of exploring contractual agreements and confirmation with respect to IP issues."

She said it was all about TOs securing IP rights over their own information, "as well as the issue of researchers".

"When researchers and consultants go out onto country they will have a contract to read and signed, agreeing to certain cultural protocols before they go out there," she said.

"This kit is now pretty much completed, it probably will go through it's final stages and then be pulled together into a small, colourful user-friendly guide or a booklet by an indigenous person."

Ms Marrie said working on the guide had been "wonderful".

"We're working together to strengthen and empower Indigenous communities to ensure that their rights and their knowledge systems are going to be protected," she said.

"This is very important and it's something that we're proud to be part of, we've all managed to have great input into this process."

She said the United Nations University (UNU) Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) Centre of Traditional Knowledge, launched earlier this month from Charles Darwin University, had also shown some interest in the kit.

"We're pretty excited about that, it's the first of its kind in Australia and it is really good," she said.



ARC IP SubCommittee members doing great work! (L-R): Rhonda Brim, Margaret Freeman, Ken Reys, Leah Talbot & Henrietta Marrie

National listing another step forward for TOs

On the 21st December 2007, the Aboriginal Rainforest Council, with great support from the ARC IP Sub-committee, the ARC CHMP, and the MTSRF Indigenous Landscape Research team, lodged the National Heritage Listing draft documentation with the federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

"This is just the beginning" ARC co-chair Russell Butler Jnr said.

"Once we hear that the draft application is on the 08/09 workplan, ARC will be working with the Canberra team to ensure the National Heritage Listing gets over the line.

"Extensive consultations in the new year can then make sure the national listing has the right stories and the right voice illustrating our cultural landscape.

"This will be our first step towards World Heritage Area Re-Listing, which will take more time, but WHA listing will be our best chance of gaining investment into Traditional Owner groups to manage internationally recognised cultural landscape values in partnership with WTMA."

Cultural Heritage Mapping

The four Cultural Heritage Mapping Project Pilots - Kuku Nyungkul, Ngadjon, and others, are providing training, information management system development, and getting the right of way along the way !! Below are some stories how each of these groups are progressing. The ARC Cultural Heritage Mapping Team will be getting out to other Wet Tropics project areas. The project may best support your local cultural heritage recording and mapping –

Kuku Nyungkul

Things have been moving forward for the Kuku Nyungkul group, who finished their 12 week Cultural Heritage Mapping Training in August this year (2007).

They were the first of four groups to finish the new program. Kuku Nyungkul have since elected a new and young board called Bana Yarrilji Bubu under the direction of their elders.

They have also successfully applied for an Environfund grant to help with land and biodiversity, and cultural management on their country. Their success means employment for the Traditional Owners, as does a grant from Terrain for an on-the-ground coordinator for Kuku Nyungkul activities on country.

Early in the new year ARC's Cultural Heritage Unit is planning to deliver a database workshop which will ensure Traditional Owners fully understand how information can be stored and accessed, and to enable them to develop a system 'tailor-made' for their country. Kuku Nyungkul Traditional Owners are also planning on furthering their training with a specialised oral history course through TAFE. A big Congratulations to Yalanji Nation for their Native Determination which means Kuku Nyungkul are now looking forward to having an office structure on country - too deadly.

Warren Canendo



Ngadjon

Gaining knowledge and skills, and technology and thinking of future generations are the many reasons Ngadjon people have been involved in the Tablelands over the past six months. They completed the Cultural Heritage Mapping Training course.

The courses have been supported by ARC. The courses are to roll out over Wet Tropics country into the future. Student Emily Hobbler said she was working on the project. "I'm very glad I did it," she said.

"I'm more confident than I was before using the skills I have learnt from using Geographic Information Systems. I can now identify areas of my country and the Ngadjon Tribe from Malanda have been involved in getting back on country, partly through the rainforest last year leaving the area dazed and damaged, and the opportunity to clean, heal and rejuvenate the area. With Ngadjon being the second CHMP training area, the Owners and Mossman TAFE were keen to get the course going. Nine weeks into the Cultural Heritage Mapping course, it is coming to an end, with the Ngadjon students completing the completion of each module they do.

As with the Kuku Nyungkul students, Ngadjon students Ray Rex and other staff under the direction of the ARC. And, again as with Kuku Nyungkul, students are going back to country to apply the skills they have been learning. As a result they are becoming more and more confident in the process and are keen to learn more about their country as well as practice their newfound ability to map - which can be daunting - along with relay the information it actually makes sense to everyone.

With the assistance and expertise of John Hobbler from the Department of Natural Resources, Ngadjon people have also been learning about the Cultural Heritage what it protects and how to use it.

They have also shown students how to record information using GPS and utilising mapping software. The process will not only self-empower them with the tools, skills and the ability to build their capacity overall.

Ray Rex said, "Future generations were the focus of the Ngadjon Peoples and the new technology is moving forward - it's all about passion."

ng Pilots Progress Reports

Ma:Mu and Jirrbal - have been tracking along well in terms of cultural heritage computer and recording equipment on country – and we've all been learning a pressing with learning to record and map their cultural heritage.
Topics Traditional Owner groups on the ground early 2008 to talk to you how the so let us know when the best time may be!!

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Cavel Cora

Ma:Mu

On the 20th November, the Aboriginal Rainforest Council hosted a meeting with the Ma:Mu traditional owners and TAFE in Innisfail to discuss how cultural heritage training will be customised to Ma:Mu country.

Ma:Mu will be the third group to undertake the Cultural Heritage Training course delivered in partnership with TAFE and ARC.

The course will be conducted on country and at the Innisfail TAFE for six months starting next month (January 2008).

Ma:Mu Elders and youth have expressed great interest in the course and are looking forward to getting into it.

The Ma:Mu Cultural Heritage Office is a local leader in cultural heritage management in the Wet Tropics, and will be working closely with the ARC in developing recording, mapping and information management skills in the Ma:Mu community.

In December, the Aboriginal Rainforest Council conducted the first "Systems Development" workshop with Ma:Mu people to discuss in depth the development of a tailor-made database for them, particularly focussing on developing security which will respect clan and family protocols.

"This will be the first local database development workshop with any group in the Wet Tropics and it will be very interesting to see how it goes" Allison Halliday said.

Troy Mallie

Jirrbal

Jirrbal will be the last of the pilot groups to start their cultural heritage training and systems development., CHMP Project Co-ordinator Chantal Roder says.

Recently a workshop was held in Ravenshoe for the Jirrbal Working Group to promote, identify and nominate people to take part in the course which will start in June/July 2008.

"With another six months to go before the course starts, we are trying to give the Traditional Owners enough time to get the word out and be in a good position from the start," Ms Roder said.

"Jirrbal is the first TO group where Giringun and ARC have come together to support traditional knowledge recording and cultural heritage mapping.

"This is very much about bringing information back to country."

Mossman TAFE Coordinator Ray Rex said the courses were open to anyone with enthusiasm and commitment to their culture.

He said some of the outcomes the course could offer were being able to draft up business and management plans, read and interpret maps (on all scales) and computer skills to record, store and retrieve information onto their own database.

Cavel Cora

...Focus on Conferences...

National Land & Sea Conference + Cultural Festival - Cardwell, 8-14th October

Girringun Aboriginal Corporation hosted the 2nd National Indigenous Land & Sea Management Conference from 8-12 October, followed immediately by their first Festival - three years in the making - over the weekend of 13-14 October.

And what major successes they turned out to be!

The Conference hosted more than 500 delegates from Perth to the Torres Strait and Melbourne to Broome at what was a critical time in Indigenous affairs, just over a month away from the Federal election in November.

The Festival was also well-attended, drawing local and national crowds to see local dancers, artwork, artifacts and, it seemed most of all, Boney M!

Staff and board members of the ARC presented one of the most popular workshops of the conference on the Cultural Heritage Management Project, while

many many other Wet Tropics mob were involved in everything from volunteering to keynote speaking.

Some of the best on offer in the Wet Tropics was on display as well, with all Conference participants taking part in one of four cultural tours on offer - either one of the first Saltwater Country Cruises around Hinchinbrook Island hosted by Bandjin Traditional Owners, one of two rainforest experiences - 'Moombay' hosted by Girrimay Traditional Owners or 'Echo Creek' hosted by Jirrbal Traditional Owners - or the chance was taken to have "a rich cultural experience on an active cattle property" at Mungalla Homestead, just outside of Ingham and hosted by Nywaigi Traditional Owners. ARC board members and staff would like to congratulate Girringun on a job very well done!

Photographs on these pages are courtesy of the Koori Mail and were taken by Christine Howes



***Elder Jack Maurita with Girringun Chair
Pastor John Andy & Abe Maurita***



***Bandjin Traditional Owners Darren Butler,
Russell Butler Snr & Russell Butler Jnr***

Active Knowledge Management Conference – Canberra, 22 October

On the 22nd of October ARC Project Officer, Troy Maillie attended the Active Knowledge Management Conference in Canberra.

The conference was about the management of information in different sectors both government and private, and issues such as access and security.

Mr Maillie's presentation outlined some of the work around the Wet Tropics Cultural Mapping project in regards to information management, such as the development of Cultural Heritage Information Management Systems and the Intellectual Property Sub Committee.

He said many participants had not seen indigenous knowledge management in practice, but were very

interested in the work being done and in particular in similarities to the work they have been involved with. "It was very interesting to see that the issues we face in protecting information are very similar, be it indigenous and non-indigenous information." Mr Maillie said.

"Feedback from the conference has been great with many participants following up with discussions online talking about the presentation and the indigenous input to the conference.

"It was a great privilege to present to such a well respected audience in the field of knowledge management and to be able to share the wonderful work that has been happening in the Wet Tropics."



'Caring for Country' mural on the side of the Cardwell Community Hall



Gulnay elder Marjorie Kinjun with Qld Local Government Minister Warren Pitt



Girringun CEO chair Phil Rist with his daughter & volunteer Jessica Rist



Girringun committee member Dawn Hart and her daughter Lily



Girringun Mob: Standing: Allan Buller Jnr, Leonard Andy, Mick Morta Seated: Mrs Beryl Buller, Marjorie Kinjun, Clarence Kinjun



Basket Weaving Workshop: Theresa Beeron, Lallie Schmider, Joann Schmider

Ecological Society of Australia Conference – Perth, 25-30th November

The Ecological Society of Australia conference is an annual event which brings ecological scientists together from all over the country to talk about key issues facing Australia's biodiversity and environment.

Climate change discussion was a key theme running throughout the event with this year's conference particularly focused on adaptive management.

With support from JCU, Chantal Roder and Cavel Cora went to the conference to be involved in discussions

around the importance of parallel knowledge systems of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, which can contribute greatly to the understanding of how Australia's environment has been shaped in the past, and to understand the future.

"Traditional Owners have invaluable knowledge of climate change and how Australian society has adapted in the past, and we need to respect that Intellectual Property exists in stories and other cultural expressions" Ms Roder said.

Long wait for Kuku Yalanji & Ngadjon-Jii Native Title celebrations

Celebrations and reflection marked two Native Title consent determinations celebrated in the Wet Tropics earlier this month (December 2007).

Under their agreement, the Eastern Kuku Yalanji's native title rights have been recognised over 126,900 ha of land and waters between Port Douglas and Cooktown. They have also had their non-exclusive rights recognised to access, camp, hunt, gather, conduct ceremonies and be buried in the ground in 96,000 hectares of timber reserve, term leases and special leases.

Justice Jeffrey Spender made his consent determination for Ngadjon-Jii at Malanda a few days later, over 13,287 ha of land and waters in parts of the Wooroonooran National Park, Topaz Road National Park, Malanda Falls Conservation Park and two quarry reserves. Ngadjon-Jii also have exclusive rights to an island in the Russell River.



Future leaders for Yalanji walk across their country with Federal Court Justice James Allsop (above).



A few days later Ngadjon-Jii elders and youngsters were celebrating their Native Title win (left).

Christmas & New Year Office Arrangements: the ARC office will be staffed by a skeleton crew from 17-21 December 2007 and then again from 7-11 January 2008. Our full staff will be back on board on Monday 14 January 2008. We'd like to take this opportunity to wish all our Rainforest people and the people we work with the very best and safe Christmas and New Year holiday break, we look forward to seeing and working with you again in the New Year - let's hope it's a good one for all of us!!!

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