



OLKOLA
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

News

November 2023



On track to our vision

We, the Olkola people, all stand together as one, upholding our traditions and culture with great respect for our old ways.

We lead and govern our traditional lands, business and future.

Others will listen to what we are saying and support our Ways.

Our ancestors have entrusted us to carry on the traditions and to care for the country and all the animals, plants and food within.

We do not take more than the land can give, so it will provide for generations to come.

Our elders teach the young people language and knowledge of how to protect our sacred sites, artifacts, water places and stories of our land, so they continue to live on for generations to come.

We support each other to live life to the fullest, living a healthy lifestyle, ensure we have happy homes, good healthcare and a safe community free of violence and crime.



A word from our Chair...

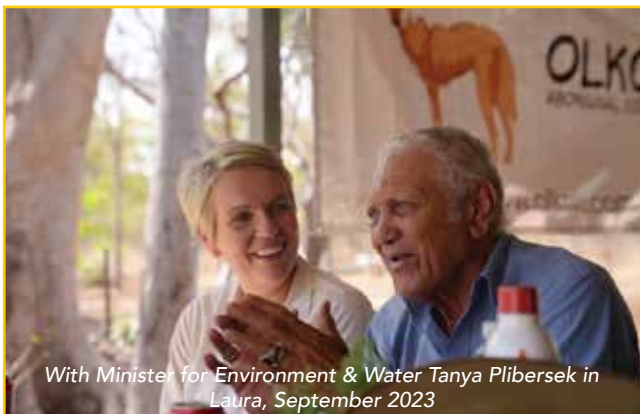
There have been many highlights over the past few months but we're still moving along the same pathway, **Olkola Aboriginal Corporation chair Mike Ross writes...**

We're improving every year.

We've gotten a step closer to the Sandy Creek Cultural Centre and the Nukakurra Walking Trail project.

Hopefully we'll have all that sorted out, because we've also had our One Claim meetings with the Cape York Land Council and it looks like our determination will go ahead in about July next year.

So between openings and celebrations, next year is going to be an even bigger year for us.



With Minister for Environment & Water Tanya Plibersek in Laura, September 2023

We're hoping to hold all those celebrations on Country up there, at Sandy Creek, and we've already got a crew working there now to tidy the place up and get it green – bring her up nice for the handover.

In the meantime we've got more young people on board now with the rangers, so that's all coming into line with our 10-year Healthy Country Plan.

We had a few fires come through earlier but they were dealt with, pretty quick, and other than that we haven't stopped working on all our projects, trying to get everything done before we knock off for Christmas and New Year.

Our AGM will be in Cairns in February, and while we have our members there, we hope to be doing some more land planning work with them.



Our authorisation meeting will be around the same time so there will be lots of Olkola People in town for that.

We try to climb a bit higher than we are every year.

We've got the future to look at now, and we have to look at our 10-year plan, which is almost complete.

So we have work to do, to see where our future is going from here –the future of our young people.

I would like to say to all our members and staff, I hope they have a good, merry Christmas and a good and happy new year.

I'd like to thank the board of directors for their support through the past year, and to all our workers out in the field, thank you for your hard work in building our vision.

I'd like to mention our Operations Manager Ash, for doing his part, and committing himself to working in the office.

Our rangers, overseers and leaders, thank you to them for the hard work they have put in over the years, through some difficult times.

I think, coming up to break up time, it's time to relax for a couple of weeks at least, before we're back to work next year.

I'd like to see everybody have a good Christmas and a good break because everybody needs it and we'll be ready for another big year.

Mike



With Queensland Government Land & Sea representatives on Country earlier this month

A word from our CEO...

This marks the final newsletter for 2023, and it's been an eventful year for Olkola Aboriginal Corporation, CEO Deb Symonds writes...



As the year ends, we're focusing on what our land managers and rangers are doing with the building of our Cultural Knowledge Centre, our Ajin (fire) and land management activities.

2023 has seen the increase of Olkola Traditional Owners' working on country, with our youngest ranger just 16-years-old and the oldest ranger an impressive 78-years-old.

This brings together a wealth of experience and learnings that will ensure that Olkola culture is embedded into the next generation.

Planning for 2024 has already begun, workshops and staff training will start in January with our rangers and land managers returning to on-ground works sooner than we have in previous years thanks to the

Olkola Aboriginal Corporation has sought written approval from the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations to hold our 2022-23 financial year Annual General Meeting (AGM) in early 2024.

A notice for this important meeting will be sent to our Members in the mail and on our social media.

If you have moved recently or changed addresses, please contact the Corporation to update your mailing address and contact details.

We kindly remind all members that as this special meeting is for exclusive for the Olkola people and that all information discussed during this meeting is intended to and for Olkola people only.

completion of our airstrip at Killarney Station.

2014 will be a remarkable year for Olkola, as it will bring together the work the Board of Directors and our Chair, Mike Ross, have been working on for many years.

The opening of Nukakurra Walking Trail, the Indigenous Protected Area's Dedication, the official opening of the Cultural Knowledge Centre and most importantly our determination of over a million hectares of land handed back to the Olkola People to manage will all be celebrated in 2024.

As we look forward to planning the next ten years and beyond, with the help of the members, the board, and the staff, we hope to keep moving forward to sustainability and a return to Country.

What have we achieved?

- Our Olkola leadership has been strong and our people were engaged and participating in our activities at every opportunity.
- By 2022 access to safe tools and equipment, well-planned low impact infrastructure, and supplies supported all Olkola operations.
- By 2022 we had a well-trained and well-resourced fire management team and we were working with our neighbours and key stakeholders to implement landscape scale fire management to mitigate the threat of late season wildfires and generate a carbon income.
- Income generated from Olkola enterprises flowed back into the Olkola Aboriginal Corporation to resource stable governance, business development and enterprise diversification.

We wish you a safe and happy year, we look forward to seeing you all in 2024.

In the News...

In mid-October and early November, Shania Ross spoke with Cape York Weekly journalists Sara Martin and Chisa Hasegawa about the Cultural Knowledge Centre project and 3D virtual reality story-telling project along the Nukakurra Walking Trail.



<https://capeyorkweekly.com.au/virtual-reality-is-helping-to-immortalise-country-for-olkola-traditional-owners/6655/>



<https://capeyorkweekly.com.au/new-centre-will-help-preserve-the-culture-of-olkola-people/6208/>

For more on the Cultural Centre see pages 6-7



Bringing Alwal Home

One of Olkola's expert Alwal Rangers and Operations Manager Ash Ross, along with Olkola Ranger Curtis George, worked to pass on their valuable knowledge to our newly signed-up Olkola Junior Rangers in mid-July.



The Juniors learned how to survey an Alwal nest, including the amount and detail of data to collect.

The Alwal Rangers also spent a few weeks from late-June to mid-August surveying Alwal National Park and Old Dixie for new and existing Alwal nests in known habitats.

"In recent meetings with our partner, Bush Heritage Australia, we have identified and are making plans to begin a large-scale survey across Olkola Country for Alwal in 2024," CEO Deb Symonds said.

"Next year, there are plans to workshop through a road-map Olkola staff have

designed specifically for the Bringing Alwal Home Project.

"This includes updating outcomes, reviewing the indicators, and understanding how the everyday jobs contribute to achieving the big picture of healthy country and people."

She said as part of the Olkola-led Golden Shouldered Parrot recovery plan, there were multiple recovery objectives.

"As we go about our planning and implementation, one of our main objectives is to better understand the cultural significance and role of dingoes in Golden

Shouldered Parrot recovery," she said.

"For example every year the Alwal rangers set up cameras transects up to five kilometres apart across Country to monitor dingo activity and to help with feral cat control."

Ash spoke about Ootalkarra (dingo) and it's importance at an inaugural First Nations Dingo forum in Cairns last month, with other Corporations and Land Trusts.

Discussions were centered on the cultural benefits of having a dingo population on their traditional lands.

See page 13 for more.



Cultural Centre moving ahead – a solid foundation for our work



Our junior rangers worked hard last June to fence the new Cultural Centre area to help keep out feral wildlife.

Other progress since then has included the official layout of the timber floor boards and sectioning of areas, the installation of gutters and downpipes on the centre building, trenching for storm-water drainage and most recently the successful delivery and fitting of two very large

rainwater tanks.

Olkola chair Mike Ross said the team were now preparing for the next step in the three-stage build – the Olkola Ranger Base.

“We want to use the centre for all projects – recording knowledge and collecting information of the country and culture,” he said.

“We want to use all the knowledge we can get of our landscape to manage country, putting together scientific information and cultural knowledge.

“We can do a lot in a centre base on country because you’re not just talking about your country, you’re on your country.”



An integrated teaching and research project to design and build a Cultural Centre on Olkola country using local sustainable materials, the cultural centre development so far has brought together the Olkola Traditional Owners and Rangers with Architecture and Engineering students and volunteers since its inception in 2018.

The project was a collaboration between Monash University, the University of Melbourne and the Centre for Appropriate Technology, and funded by the Queensland Government's Growing Indigenous Tourism Fund.

It evolved from Uncle Mike's vision for a cultural centre to ensure Olkola language, lore and custom were kept strong into the future, and to support and empower living and working on country.

The project has provided students with a real-life learning experience to develop conceptual and engineering designs, development applications, and construction guides for the project.

The Centre will house a purpose-built ranger base and remote scientific research campus that can support the continuation and expansion of Olkola's innovative biocultural land management work.

Olkola Ranger News

In June Olkola welcomed six new junior rangers to the ranger crew with an induction for new staff which included a history of the Corporation, current projects on Country and meeting Cultural Centre project volunteers on Country Head Ranger Richard Ross says.



Earlier this year our Olkola Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) Rangers, and some of our Junior Rangers, visited several cultural sites to document and record their 'health'.

Some of those sites have faced naturally caused damages such as weathering, or damage from wildlife such as insects and other small fauna.

CEO Deb Symonds said plans have been made to complete water quality monitoring of areas across country in 2024 to compare previous years of data collected within the IPA.

The data is analysed for indications of activities that could be adversely affecting our waterways.

"We continue to use and exercise all available means and resources to protect our natural and cultural assets from unwanted mining and other land uses," she said.

Our Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers and Junior Ranger staff spent a week in Cooktown with Queensland Parks and Wildlife staff undertaking their Indigenous compliance training courses, with follow-up On Country mentoring sessions proposed for 2024.

Richard said over the year rangers had set out pig baiting traps across Country and were monitoring those locations to record their data.

"We're also pushing the road through, we've got a road going through to this side of Sandy Creek which has cut a two to three hour drive back to an hour and ten minutes," he said.

"It's a good drive too, it's more or less following the great divide, which is great because when you come over high country there, it's just beautiful."

He said they were looking

forward to having the airstrip for the much-anticipated wet season.

"I haven't seen it so dry," he said.

"In a matter of just three weeks, it's bone dry, even after an extended wet season, which basically stopped us from properly burning in the lead up."

As part of the Corporation's continuous reporting commitment to our Land and Sea Ranger program, Olkola was thrilled to see the Cultural Centre got a mention in the Spring Edition of the Government's Ranger Round Up Newsletter.

Staff from the Queensland Government's Land & Sea Ranger Program have also travelled out to country with Corporation staff to discuss the many current project works we have up and running with the Olkola Rangers in person.



University of Queensland researcher Chris MacColl travelled to Olkola Country in July and November this year to check Red Goshawk nests and determine how many had successfully produced young.

“One of these very rare nests is located on Olkola country, where I have been working with rangers to monitor throughout the breeding season,” he said. “The rangers kept tabs on the nest with the female seen sitting on eggs between July and August before a chick was spotted growing inside

the nest in September.”

Chris was able to confirm the new chick had successfully flown from the nest and was in fact a “she”. He said females were larger than males in birds of prey, especially so in the Red Goshawk.

“The rangers also collected prey remains from around

the nest and we discovered that this pair like to eat Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and kookaburras,” he said.

“We also found a waterbird called a Pied Heron had been eaten, so perhaps these Red Goshawk’s hunt around wetlands as well as the woodlands and savanna.”



Pic by Chris MacColl

Fire work 'critical'

This year's aerial and on-ground burns on Country were critical work for the Olkola rangers, even though it has been complicated.



The Olkola Ajin (fire) Rangers are dedicated team who work each year during the ajin operations months of April to early August.

During this time extensive planning and observational on-groundwork was undertaken daily to ensure burns plans were executed.

Savannah burning for carbon needed regular cool burns to succeed.

"There has been some terrible wildfires through this year," head ranger Richard Ross said.

"We've spent a lot of time on them, they've caused a lot of damage, it's just terrible.

"We can't prove it, but you don't have to be in fires to work out it's someone throwing matches around.

"It's a shame to see what

they've done to the country up here, one of them could have nearly wiped Killarney out, but we've come out pretty alright."

CEO Deb Symonds commended the ajin rangers for their exhaustive efforts.

"They are on call throughout the hotter months until the end of the season – fingers crossed the wet starts earlier to help country and the wildlife," she said.

Working hard with Queensland Parks & Wildlife

Olkola Rangers and Junior Ranger staff spent a week in Cooktown with Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service staff finishing their Indigenous Compliance training courses in mid-2023.

A follow-up mentoring session on Country is proposed for 2024.

MEANWHILE a team of CSIRO scientists has thanked Olkola for their support in researching what they believe are the last remaining 680-1000 ghost bats in Queensland.

The team found mining-related activities were a threat to the species, and used non-invasive survey

techniques of using thermal cameras to monitor the bat species emerging from cave entrances.

"A single evening exodus of ghost bats (*Macroderma gigas*) was recorded using a thermal imaging camera placed outside the entrance to a cave on Alwal National Park (CYPAL) in September 2022," they said in the Australian Journal of Zoology, published in July

this year.

"At least 463 bats were counted, making it the largest known ghost bat colony in Queensland.

"Further work is required to determine the extent to which this colony is related to other nearby colonies in Cape York Peninsula.

"Work is also required to identify and reduce threats to this population and ensure its conservation."

Nukakurra Walking Trail a 'virtual reality'

Getting Back On Country is a Traditional-Owner led trans-disciplinary research project, supported by the University of Melbourne's Social Equity Institute, that harnesses innovative technologies to digitise Olkola cultural heritage.

The project was led by the Olkola Aboriginal Corporation and the Olkola Rangers in collaboration with researchers at the University of Melbourne, including Hannah Robertson and Rochus Urban Hinkel.

It combined participatory design, mixed reality technologies (virtual reality and augmented reality), archaeological science and digital cultural heritage to deliver innovative solutions for the repatriation of Olkola heritage.

In June several volunteers worked with Olkola Elders Mike Ross and Jack Lowdown for a day of extended audio and video recordings to help ongoing improvement in the virtual reality experience of the Nukakurra Walking Trail.

Olkola was also invited to present at the Indigenous Knowledge Institute in Melbourne to celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples in early August.

The virtual reality project and the Cultural Knowledge Centre drew strong interest, with many questions from floor, including the Indigenous Vice Chancellor who wanted to know what support we would require to continue the work we do.



Rochus Hinkel sharing the 3D video with the Olkola team.
Pics by Hannah Robertson.



Traditional Owners from across Australia travelled to share their cultural or spiritual connections to the dingo at the inaugural First Nations national dingo forum in mid-September.

The forum was hosted by Giringun Aboriginal Corporation and held in Cairns.

The two-day event considered how to review current methods of management, how First Nations might advocate and influence policy change (in all states except Tasmania, the dingo is legislated as a pest), how to provide a First Nations perspective in those debates, and the creation of a First Nations statement for the dingo to develop best

practice in management and bring dingoes back to Country.

The statement – the first of its kind to be created in Australia – was signed by more than 20 Traditional Owner groups and included a strong message advocating for First Nations' involvement in the management of dingoes.

Olkola Operations Manager, Ashley Ross, spoke to the forum about the importance of ootalkarra (dingo) – the boss Olkola totem – to

Country and to Olkola people at the forum.

He said there were cultural benefits to having a dingo population on their traditional lands.

The event also included a presentation by Sheila Hollow Horn, a Traditional Owner from the Navaho people, who spoke about the importance of the wolves to her culture, how they have helped her people survive in the past and how they were helping wolves survive into the future.



#1 Claim moving forward

The Cape York United #1 Claim is moving forward with individual groups progressing their own determinations, as sought by Olkola Aboriginal Corporation.

The Possum, Thaypan and Kuku Warra Peoples had their native title recognised on 2 November 2023.

The Olkola People's Determination remains scheduled for July 2024.

Boundary negotiations with all neighbouring groups have been completed.

Olkola and the Cape York Land Council (CYLC) have agreed on the changes necessary for Olkola Aboriginal Corporation to become the Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) for Olkola People.

The list of apical ancestors for the determination is very close to finalisation.

Pre-authorisation and authorisation meetings are likely to be held in February and March next year.

A general meeting of the corporation will take place around the same time to make the required changes

to the corporation's rule book. Meeting notices with more details will be sent out closer to the meeting dates.

Mining

Generally as part of the process of responding to mining applications, Olkola has been, and will continue to engage in cultural heritage mapping.

There are a number of new mining exploration tenements in the northern and south-eastern areas of Olkola Country.

They are at various stages, from non-notified application status through to being granted under the NTPCs

PacGold – Existing tenements (shown in yellow in bottom left area of the map, but excluding EPM 28287 and EPM 28288)

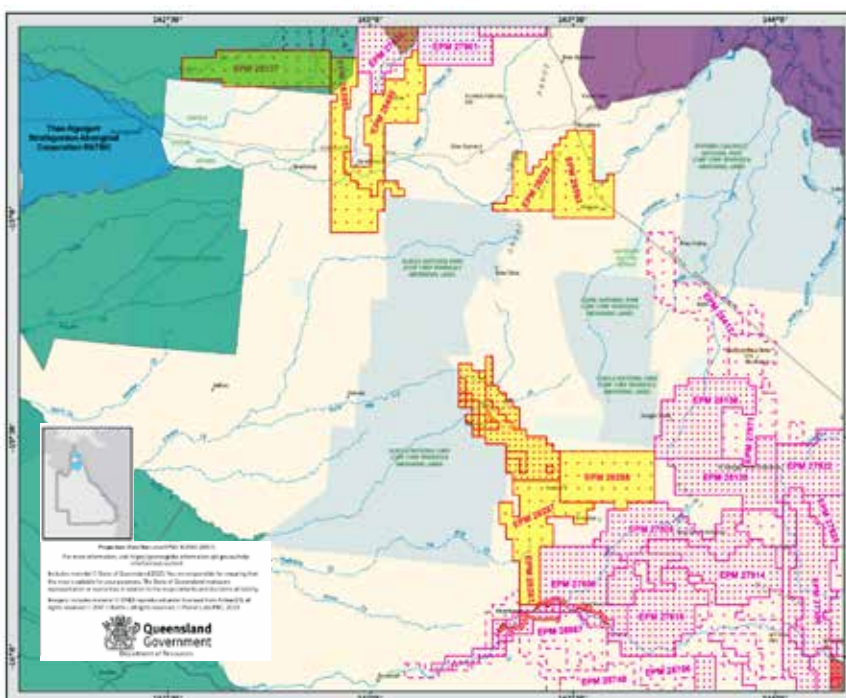
- PacGold have continued their drilling activities on their existing tenements

around the Alice Queen mine site.

- The Federal Department for the Environment are currently gathering information to consider whether PacGold's activities have a risk of significant harm to the Golden-shouldered Parrot. We are assisting by providing information.
- There has been destruction of termite mounds by PacGold in clearing the drill pads in late 2022. PacGold have denied any wrongdoing.
- It has become apparent that in conducting exploration using IP Geophysics (pegs with lines running between them carrying electrical current) PacGold have been digging small holes for the pegs. Department of Resources have so far refused to advise whether or not the digging of those holes prevents IP Geophysics surveys from being 'Agreed Exploration Activities'.
- PacGold have refused to provide the report they obtained from a private consultant about the Golden-shouldered Parrot to Olkola.

PacGold – New tenements (EPMs 28287 and 28288)

- EPMs 28287 and 28288 fall over the Kimba Plateau and extend to the south-east of PacGold's existing tenements.





Olkola's food van, usually housed at our Laura Roadhouse, was called into quick action to help with catering at the 2023 Laura Dance Festival in July.

"We received a lot of good feedback about the hot dishes we sold," Admin Officer and volunteer Kat Samuel said.

"Beef curry, sweet and sour pork, chicken vermicelli and coconut curry chicken, all with rice, and beef spaghetti were all popular favourites.

"The Food Van proved its worth by running very effectively over the three days.

"We hope to do this again but we will add a few more touches to the next stall."

She said the 24/7 unattended Compac fuel pump had also performed well over the year.



- The State has agreed that the Native Title Protection Conditions should not be applied to those new EPMs so PacGold will have to negotiate with the Olkola People before the EPMs can be granted.
- This is a good outcome for Olkola People.

Curwon Pty Ltd (EPM 28137)

- EPM 28137 falls in the majority within the Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (NAK) area, with a small portion within the Olkola nature reserve.
- The area of EPM 28137 contains several sites of cultural significance.

- Olkola and Wik People have instructed CYLC to oppose the granting of these new tenements under the NTPCs (Native Title Protection Conditions) and are seeking a right to negotiate.

Tarragon Valley (South 32) (EPMs 28395 and 28490)

- These tenements were notified on 10 May 2023.
- The area adjacent to EPM 28395 was subject to a full inquiry which ultimately resulted in the tenements being removed before grant.
- Olkola and Wik People are seeking a right to negotiate with Tarragon

Valley and a meeting between Olkola People and Tarragon Valley will take place later this year.

Anglogold Ashanti (EPMs 27269, 27270, 27271 and 27272)

- These tenements covered almost all of Glen Garland and surrounding areas.
- They have now been removed by Anglogold Ashanti.

FMG Resources (EPMs 28592 and 28593)

- These tenements have not yet been notified.
- Upon notification of the tenements Olkola People will be consulted.



The Olkola Rangers and
our office team would like to
say 'thank you' for the hard
work and commitment of our
families throughout 2023.
We hope everyone stays safe
over the holidays and wet
season.



We wish everyone a
merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year.

Photograph taken on Olkola Country, near Artemis
Station, by Christine Howes, 2023.

Contact us!

Follow Olkola's social media to keep up to date on
our latest news.

Instagram: [olkolaaboriginalcorporation](https://www.instagram.com/olkolaaboriginalcorporation)

Facebook: Olkola Aboriginal Corporation
Cape York

Website: <http://www.olkola.com.au/>

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Our next newsletter will be out in early
2024, to keep up to date check out our
Facebook page and Instagram posts.

The Corporation office will be closed
for the Christmas and New Year break
from the Friday 15 December 2023 until
Monday 15 January 2024.

Olkola News is edited by Christine Howes for the Olkola Aboriginal Corporation ©2023