

WELCOME

July 2023
Newsletter #8



Walking Strong in Two Worlds – Developing our Future Leaders

June 2023 recognised a significant milestone for the Learning on Country (LoC) Program, with over 3200 students now participating in LoC activities across 17 Top End communities. An incredible achievement for the Program and only made possible thanks to the collaborative effort of everyone involved in LoC.

Now in its 11th year, the LoC Program continues to grow and strengthen under the guidance of its all Aboriginal Steering Committee, which comprises representatives from each of the communities where the LoC Program operates. Through strong partnerships with the Northern Territory Department of Education, local ranger groups and Traditional Owners, LoC is seeing incredible outcomes in terms student engagement, Aboriginal employment and Vocational Education and Training outcomes.

The combination of curriculum and culture LoC delivers is continuing to builds the skills, confidence and capacity of our future leaders to walk strong in two worlds.

Enjoy our Term 2 Newsletter and wrap up of the last few months!

Deadly Facts

January - June 2023



'On-Country' Activities

Across the 17 LoC sites a total of **580** days of on-country camps, field trips, ranger activities were delivered.

Student Participation

3273 Indigenous Students Participated in LoC activities this period

1208 Target Cohort Participation in LoC activities as a core component of their studies*

**Middle and Senior target cohort students engaging in weekly core LoC cross cultural educational activities and VET based training packages*

260 Indigenous Students enrolled in VET based training courses, from Middle and Senior years.



Yirrkala bilingual school Co-Principals Katrina Hudson and Merrkiyawvy Ganambarr, Mayatili Mungunggur, Galpawiri Munungiritj and LoC Coordinator Dan McLaren

Vocational Education & Training

52 achieved certificates in Conservation and Ecosystem Management, Maritime Studies and First Aid.

49 students engaged in Work Experience, Traineeships & Internships

14 students have transitioned to employment



Learning on Country stand at Barunga!

Indigenous Employment

Indigenous Staff Employed by the LoC Program. Indigenous staff comprise 95.85% of those employed in the delivery of LoC activities.

173

5 Indigenous full-time Coordinators (Beswick-Barunga, Angurugu, Gunbalanya, Ngukurr and Borroloola).

Indigenous Staff Hours
Indigenous staff worked 68.09% of the total hours reported,

11.8k
hours



LoC Maningrida Camp at Duklwa-Djarranj.

Learning on land and at sea...



Laynhapuy Homelands School Maritime students kicked off their maritime learning in style!

The Laynhapuy LoC team collaborated with Nhulunbuy High School to make use of the amazing Maritime facilities in Nhulunbuy.

Students learned how to check over a vessel to make sure it is safe to use and were able to troubleshoot when things did not go as planned. All students tested their boat handling skills and were exposed to a range of weather conditions.



Participating in this camp, students commenced work on two out of three assessment tasks for a Stage I Integrated Learning: Maritime subject. The subject was written and is delivered by the Laynhapuy LoC team and is a practical, engaging and relevant way for students to progress towards gaining their NTCET. Well done to all students involved and we can't wait to test our skills on the boat at Garrthalala!



Indigenous Governance

Indigenous Values and indicators of Program success

Underpinning the ongoing adoption, sustainability and success of the Learning on Country Program is the emphasis on Indigenous governance and community ownership of the Program, which is ensured through the guidance and directives of the Local LoC Committee and the LoC Steering Committee.

Since the LoC Program's inception, there has been a strong focus on the need to monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the Program, providing an independent evidence base to assess the success of the Program. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation is also important to help identify improvements for the Program and understand the successes and the challenges at each site. Part of this process was the development of ten Indigenous values and indicators of success, to measure and guide the performance of the LoC Program, against the values as set by the Steering Committee and community members.

The Learning on Country values are the culmination of over a decade of research by Associate Professor Bill Fogarty in partnership with Traditional Owners, families, Steering Committee and Local LoC representative committees and community members involved in the LoC Program. The values were synthesised and collaboratively devised in a series of workshops with LoC stakeholders during 2020 and 2021 and officially ratified by the LoC Steering Committee in 2022.

These values are now being integrated into the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of LOC, with communities being able to conduct their own 'health checks' of the Program. The values will also be used to guide decision making on the future of the Program. The 10 Values are listed below:

V1. Strong language, culture, identity & wellbeing for children

V2. Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission (IKT) and relationships

V3. Two-way education

V4. Being on Country

V5. Community control, commitment & local development

V6. Looking after Country

V7. Collaboration & partnerships

V8. Kids engaged with school

V9. New pathways and employment

V10. Strengths-based teaching and celebration

Nurrūninygu Dhukarr

One of the key activities of the Learning on Country program in Galiwin'ku is the Nurrūninygu Dhukarr workshops, which help to build strong two-way pathways for our senior secondary students. Workshops are led by Traditional Owners, Elders, family members and Yolŋu staff, whilst community services and stakeholders provide the non-Yolŋu perspective on topics.



This semester the key focus was Yolŋu Rom, Balanda Law and Raypirri Gurruṯunur which saw students learning about their roles and responsibilities according to kinship with each other and the land, ways to interact with police, navigating respectful relationships, including seeking support through appropriate relationships. Students that participated in this camp were assessed by Yolŋu leaders as part of a Stage 1, 10 credit point NTCET subject.

- Traditional Owners welcomed students to the camp and provided strong support throughout, encouraging students to open up about topics relevant to them through sharing lived experiences.
- Staff from Galiwin'ku Women's Space engaged both men and women in a very lively discussion around domestic violence and how to recognise and prevent it.
- Yalu Aboriginal Corporation led a great session on respectful relationships and how to work through conflict with your partner using the support of family and other relations.
- NAAJA led two workshops on domestic violence consequences and how to find support; and how to interact with police, with some fantastic (and hilarious) role plays.



Laynhapuy Homelands new Ranger Trainees!

Congratulations to the four new School-based trainee rangers Yotjinj, Bilinyjorra, Vernon and Megan who started work in Week 1. Also continuing his traineeship from 2022 is Mamidal. Last week was a fantastic week of learning from Elders and senior rangers, and a very warm welcome to a new career for the teenagers. A big thank you to Yirralka Rangers and Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation for supporting these five students into work. In their first week they gained experience in recording knowledge from Elders, cultural burning, road clearing and feral animal impact inspections.



LoC at Barunga!

Did you see the LoC stand at this year's Barunga Festival? We had lots of visitors and interest in LoC over the two days, especially from other teachers, VET trainers and people who worked in remote education. It was a great opportunity to share some of the incredible outcomes that LoC is achieving across the Top End!

Big thanks to Laynhapuy LoC Coordinator Zach O'Conner who spent some time on the stand, helping to answer people's questions. We also had Hon Linda Burney MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians stop by and say hello!

We were able to show the LoC video over the two days in the cinema room, which gave people an opportunity to learn about the LoC Program, how we operate and the partnerships that make our Program so successful. Thanks to everyone who stopped by and said hello and helped out! It was a great weekend and we hope to be back again next year!



Yirrkala Bilingual School

Senior Students Bush Walk

Yirrkala students from Year 8-10 undertook a 3 day hike from Daliwuy Bay back to Yirrkala. Students were accompanied and guided by elders and Dhimurru Rangers who passed on important stories, place names and cultural knowledge about plants and animals. Participants showed great strength and resilience carrying heavy bags with their camping equipment, food and water.

Along the way students mapped out their walking route and place names they learned with the elders. On the last night the group travelled up to Yarrapay to perform in the Banumbirr (Morning Star) manikay and bungul at sunset.

Upon completion of the hike students were greeted by the rest of the school who were waiting to congratulate them on their arrival back at Yirrkala School, a very proud moment.



Culture Day



At the end of term Yirrkala School LoC held Culture Day, a school/community event celebrating each class's learning in LoC this Semester. Students, staff, rangers, families and other community members watched class presentations and participated in weaving, spear making, bush medicine and traditional cooking workshops.

This was followed by a whole school Bungul (traditional dancing) and bush foods feast including ground oven roasted wallaby, fish, damper and mud mussels. Overall it was a great school/community showcasing of all the engaging LoC activities and learning so far this year.



Out and About...

Girls Camp - Creating strong, confident women



Five LoC sites came together for a three day girls camping trip to spend time with Elders and community leaders, learning about culture, women's business and to talk in a safe place together and learn from one another.

Umbakumba, Alyangula, Numbulwar, Bickerton, and Angurugu School LoC students spent time with senior Elders who showed students how to find turtle eggs and learn traditional methods of hunting and life skills. Other cultural activities also included identifying and collecting bush plants. They even learnt how to make traditional shell dolls!

The purpose of the camp was two-fold. Firstly, to provide a women's only space where teachings around women's business can be taught safely to the young girls without worry that men may overhear. And secondly, to facilitate intergenerational teaching of cultural knowledge.

The term Women's business is used out of respect for the Warnumamalya, as the teachings of cultural information around girls and women's health is gender restricted.

Some topics that have been incorporated into this year's teaching program are quite heavy, so activities have been designed to assist the senior women to deliver their teachings and help to alleviate awkwardness amongst the girls when taking about restricted subjects. The aim of addressing these difficult and restricted topics, is to provide the girls with knowledge and empowerment in understanding their health, and to slowly remove the taboo-nature attached to some of these topics.

The information is primarily taught in Anindilyakwa by the Traditional Owners. Sarah Honey from ARCWomen also participated in the camp as a Women's Health facilitator, working with the senior women to co-design the health related teaching activities and delivery.

GEMCO rehabilitation project

Learning on Country students in Umbakumba and Milyakburra have been learning about the GEMCO rehabilitation program and the importance of re-planting native trees after mining.

The students learnt about the soils, identifying and planting native trees, and the importance of the rehabilitation process.



Out and About...

Binning & Balanda learning at Duklua Djarranj Camp



Two of Australia's fish experts, Dr Tim Howell (Aquatic Ecologist) and Dr Michael Hammer (Curator of Fishes with MAGNT) joined the LoC Maningrida camp at Duklua Djarranj, working with the students, rangers and teachers over several days to:

- Trap and record 21 different species of fish and 4 crustaceans
- Identify and use five types of Balanda traps (Box traps, Fyke net, spotlight and net, Seine trap, Yabbie Pump, Electro Fisher), how they are used and what traps work for which species, and how to use different methods safely.
- Understand and record the diversity and abundance of species in the system
- Understand the science of how traditional Binning bark poisoning works on the fish by measuring water temperature, conductivity, ph and oxygen levels.)
- Provide a snapshot of the health of the waterway (the water here is fresher than rainwater!)

Traditional Owner Victor Rostron then showed the students the traditional ways of how to do a fish kill. Looking at what type of trees to collect the bark from, how to collect and crush it up, and how to identify what water areas are suitable to use the bark poison. The students collected and applied the bark poison at around 4pm and tests showed the oxygen levels were at 90%. When they tested the next morning, oxygen levels had fallen to 4.8%! The students recorded these findings and will be using this as part of english, maths and science studies.

The information collected over the camp will also help guide and support ranger activities in caring for country, monitoring native species and managing introduced and feral animals, as this data provides a baseline of the health of this special spot.



Out and About...



Maningrida LoC has a whole of school approach to integrating on country learning with learning in the classroom. The LoC camps are an important way to engage students in educational outcomes as well as ensuring the transfer of inter-generational knowledge.

The LoC theme for 2023 is 'water', which was developed in consultation with Elders, community leaders and the school. This theme is being explored in many ways; methods of cooking with water such as steaming, poaching and boiling; studying river systems and fish by going out on country collecting fish and then writing scientific reports and recording the maths data. Victor shared the rainbow serpent sacred story at a special location near the camp. Victor has been sharing his concerns about rock art being impacted by water and rain, the impact of climate change on the environment, art, flora and fauna. So water was a strong theme for this year.

As part of the camp, the students had the opportunity to visit a number of very special rock art sites, and spent an afternoon with Traditional Owners, Djelk Rangers and the Warddeken Rangers specialist rock art team, learning about the stories of the art, how to protect sites from water, feral animals and fire, and how to properly record artworks.

On the last day, the students learnt about the importance of 'cool burns' to protect and maintain country and worked with rangers using both western and Binning burning practices. They also visited a scared site and learnt about how to maintain and protect these areas to ensure they are there for future generations. The learnings over the camp was taken back to the classroom and will support assessments for those students completing NTCET and VET training and certifications. Importantly, it was an opportunity to learn from and connect with Elders, Rangers and spend time out on country connecting with a very special place.





Learning on Country



NIAA

