

WELCOME

October 2023
Newsletter #8



Learning on Country - where culture and curriculum come together to prepare the leaders of tomorrow.

And just like that we are in Term 4 and on the home stretch to the end of the year! Students have been out and about exploring, learning and achieving great results, both in the classroom and out on country.

The teaching and learning programs are developed collaboratively between school and ranger staff, as well as with Traditional Owners and other community partners, with a focus on field-based activities, drawing on traditional and western knowledge systems. Activities include a wide range of ranger groups projects and responsibilities around land and sea management and are modelled by cultural knowledge as directed by Traditional Owners. This semester, LoC students have been able to experience a diverse range of activities and programs.

Enjoy our October newsletter and wrap up of the last few months! Make sure you are following us on Facebook to keep up to date with news and events across all LoC schools!

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Learning
on Country

Laynhapuy Homelands School's Lipalipa Project



Journeying the Waters of Knowledge!

Senior Learning on Country students at Laynhapuy Homelands School have a new vessel to tackle the waters of Caledon Bay! The students undertook a Lipalipa (dugout canoe) project at school at the end of Term 3, working together with Yirralka Rangers, community Elders and teachers to plan and execute all steps of building a lipalipa.

Students conducted risk assessments, planning for tools and equipment, conducted research about building methods and cultural significance of lipalipa and put together a team of skilled people to help with the project. The lipalipa project was part of an effort at Laynhapuy Homelands School to deepen students' cultural learning experiences at school. In addition to the practical work completed, students are working through written assessment tasks that will form a subject that contributes 20 credit points towards their Northern Territory Certificate of Education. Additional benefits of this approach to school include increased student and community engagement with school, strengthening of students' cultural identity and improved opportunities for Yolŋu teachers to take on leadership roles in education delivery. Congratulations to the Laynhapuy Homelands School students and teachers, Yirralka Rangers and the Laynhapuy Learning on Country team.



Learning Through Connection

Nuykal and Bonba Classes Explore Yolŋu Knowledge and Environmental Conservation

It's been a busy start to semester 2 at Yirrkala Bilingual School! Nuykal class have been studying a unit called Provide Visitor Information. As part of this unit students have been planning and preparing a guided walk down the Ralpa Way to teach visitors about Yolŋu plants and their uses. Students first learned about these plants and then worked to create and practice the guided walk which they will conduct for some Balanda visitors to the school in Term 4.

Bonba class has also been working on two units for their CEM Cert II—Recognise Plants and Recognise Fauna. Students visited a number of wäŋa to explore, identify and learn about the plants and animals that are found there. Using iPads, students took photos of the plants, animals or evidence of animals, using iPads and back in the classroom they researched and recorded information about these plants and animals.

During the term, students from Bonba and Nuykal class joined Laynhapuy Homelands School, NHS and Baniyala School students at Garrthalala Homeland to participate in a Bark Petitions Workshop. Dalapalmi and rangers taught the students about the history of land rights in Northeast Arnhem Land including the formation of the Bark Petitions. In August 1963 two bark petitions were presented to the Australian Parliament's House of Representatives. It was the Yolŋu's first formal attempt to have their land rights recognised. It was also the first time documents incorporating First Nations ways of representing relationships to land were recognised by parliament.

The students discussed modern day threats to their country and worked together to plan and make their own bark petitions against these threats. As part of this students learned how to make marwat and mix ochres to make paint.



Pathways to Conservation

Shepherdson College Students Thrive with Gumurr Marthakal Rangers

This term, through the Learning on Country Program, 10 senior secondary students from Shepherdson College completed several units of the Certificate II in Conservation & Ecosystem Management. This course is a direct pathway for employment with the local Gumurr Marthakal Rangers. Students completed training in the operation of handheld GPS units, which was applied through identifying and recording the locations of invasive plants. These skills were then built upon as students completed two units on how to recognise local plants and fauna. Students worked alongside the rangers to identify a range of species of significance to both biosecurity and Yolŋu culture across Galiwin'ku. The final unit for the year taught students about cleaning and maintaining tools and equipment used to preserve biodiversity.

At the end of this term, two students, Grace Durrurrunga and Wurrwuryun (Tyrone) Wanambi, completed all requirements for their Certificate II in Conservation & Ecosystem Management. Wurrwuryun, who currently works part time with the rangers, is excited to begin full time work next year once he graduates. And Grace is hoping to work within the Galiwin'ku Learning on Country team to support new students coming through. Further evidence of the strength of this pathway is in the recent addition of another 2022 graduate from Shepherdson College to the local Gumurr Marthakal Rangers team. Bulkunu Garrawurra joins Gawanartjiwuy (Helena) Garrawurra who also graduated last year. This time last year there were no miyalk (women) rangers, and now two-thirds of them are participants of the Learning on Country program – a testament to the authentic partnership between Shepherdson College and Gumurr Marthakal Rangers, creating meaningful pathways for the young people of Galiwin'ku.



Arnhem Land Adventures

Gunbalanya and Yirrkala LOC Exchange

A group of Yirrkala Learning on Country Program secondary students travelled over 700km across Arnhem Land for a Learning on Country exchange with students, rangers and Elders from Gunbalanya. Both groups of students came together and connected with each other by making connections via their appropriate skin names. This was followed by a smoking ceremony to welcome the Yirrkala students and staff to country.

LoC Coordinator Dan McLaren said that students had an amazing time seeing new country, learning new things and meeting new family.

Students explored and learned about numerous rock art sites nearby but which were particularly impressive on a hike up Injalak Hill. Elders took the visitors turtle hunting on the floodplain showing how to use kuba (long, thin metal rods) to find the turtles buried in the mud. A highlight for everyone was the plucking and cooking of a dozen magpie geese that disappeared very quickly once cooked. Local stories from around Gunbulanya were shared that connected them to the local culture and the extraordinarily beautiful landscapes in the region.

The students from Yirrkala were transfixed by the Kakadu Rangers crocodile management session where a restrained 1.6 metre crocodile was able to be touched and inspected close up. This was followed with a boat cruise up the East Alligator River spotting many kinga (crocodile), many of significant size were a strong reminder to always be wary and wise around waterways. By the end of the three days the students were ready to head home with a wealth of on country learning and experiences. For the Yirrkala students the final adventure was the long return drive across Arnhem Land.



Out and About...

Cultural Stewardship in Maningrida College's Learning on Country Program



The Learning on Country Program team at Maningrida College, under the guidance of Community Elders, has appointed Jonah Ryan as its first Learning on Country Program Ranger. The role will look after the cultural safety of students, staff and the LoC Program as well as the co-delivery and provision of Indigenous knowledge to ensure the program is being delivered with a two ways approach.

Djelk Ranger and LoC graduate Chris Campion has also been appointed as proxy for the role, and will be filling in and supporting Jonah as needed. Jonah graduated from the LoC Program in 2018, and will be using his experience as a Djelk Ranger to support the educational delivery of on country and in classroom activities and student engagement.

Jonah said, "I'm excited to work with the kids, and to be a good example for the next generation and encourage ranger job pathways and future opportunities".

Jonah will work side by side with LoC Program Coordinator Dave Tome to deliver the LoC program activities in the classroom and on country.

A special thanks to Nja-marleya Cultural Leaders and Justice Group who have provided the initial funding for Jonah's Role, and the Bawinanga Rangers Djelk Rangers for their support of Jonah's transition into the Learning on Country Program.



LoC Team is growing!

Welcome to our new LoC Monitoring and Evaluation Officer - Keith Ferdinands!

We are excited to welcome Keith Ferdinands to the LoC team as the LoC Program's Monitoring and Evaluation Officer! We spent some time finding out a little bit more about Keith and share with you the below!

Tell us a bit about yourself?

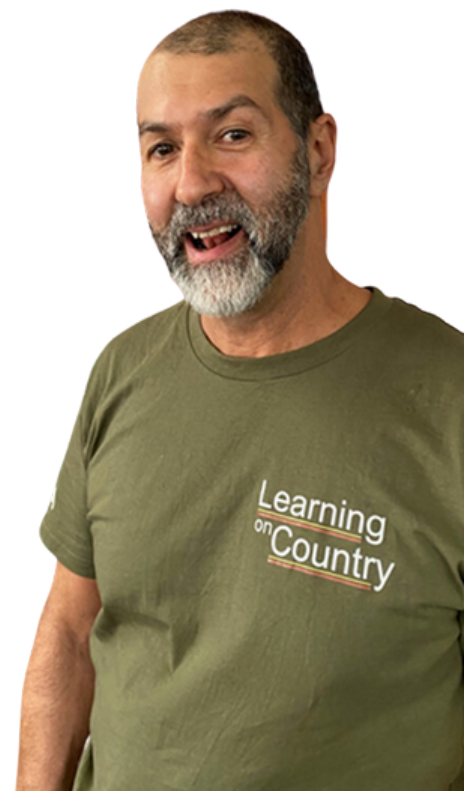
I am originally from Melbourne but I have been in Darwin for over 25 years now. I have Biological science /ecology background that led to decades of work related to natural resource management (NRM) work. I have been fortunate to work across the NT in weed management, mapping and monitoring (fire, weeds, ferals) and NT National Parks planning. I have also worked with NTG and CDU, and most recently 3 years with NLC Policy team reviewing legislation, regulations and guidelines.

What does the Monitoring and Evaluation role cover?

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), sometimes called MERI, which is the first bits plus Reporting and Improvement (MERI), is all about checking to see whether what we planned to achieve is being delivered. This is partly about good governance related to how money is spent, but, it is also needed to support planning and future LoC activities and growth. M&E related to the LoC program is about checking if the outcomes related to education (enrolment, participation in activities inside and outside the classroom, completion of studies), as well as learning about culture and traditional knowledge (intergenerational knowledge transfer, looking after country, strong language, culture and identity). The larger aim related to the LoC Program is improved Indigenous employment; both through LoC graduates getting jobs, but also by Indigenous people being employed to deliver the LoC program e.g. Ranger Coordinators and support staff. The M&E program, will be co-designed by local communities and will allow the LoC team to report against all its goals – some of which have been listed above.

What you are most looking forward to about your role with LoC?

Less time in the office reading government policy documents and more time on country meeting the students and people delivering the LoC Program and working with the LoC team and our collaborators. I'm looking forward to contributing to protecting and growing a very successful and popular innovative approach to education across the Top End!





Learning on Country

