

WELCOME

March 2024
Newsletter #9



Learning on Country results show bright futures for students in 2024!

As many students across the country returned to mainstream classrooms this term, a cohort of more than 3000 LoC students across 17 remote Top End Schools returned to 'less conventional' but more 'traditional' classrooms as part of the Learning on Country program.

Results from semester two of 2023 highlighted the success of the program with an impressive 30 LoC students completing Vocational Education and Training (VET) based training packages in CEM, Maritime and Senior First Aid, with 27 students transitioning into employment.

The semester two results are testament to the ongoing growth and success the program is having in delivering two-way educational outcomes, as well as training opportunities and job pathways.

Both teachers and students are already back into the swing of things as we approach the end of Term 1. It's going to be another big year in 2024 with plenty of LoC activities already underway!

Deadly Facts

June - December 2023

Learning on Country

Student Participation

2807 Indigenous Students Participated in LoC activities this period (1566 Females, 1241 Males)

This includes....

1063 Target Student Cohort participated 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*

Vocational Education & Training

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

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

37 students engaged in Work Experience, Traineeships & Internships

27 Students transitioned to work with local ranger groups and other community sectors.

669 Days of on-country camps, field trips and ranger activities were delivered with Traditional Owners



Yirrkala LoC students travelled 700km across Arnhem Land to share On Country learning with students, rangers and elders from Gunbalanya, seen here with Injalak Hill Rock art.



Ramingining LoC students work with their teachers and Traditional Owners, on camp at Yilan

Indigenous Employment

94% Indigenous Staff Employed. Of the 185 people employed by the LoC Program, 174 (94%) are Indigenous.

6 Indigenous full-time Coordinators are employed across the Program.



Manningrida Learning on Country graduate students started their first day in their Djelk rangers internship.

<https://learningoncountry.com/>

Caring for Country

CEM Certification underway in Galiwin'ku!

Senior Secondary students in Galiwin'ku were hard at work completing their first training block towards their Conservation and Ecosystem Management (CEM) certificates this term. Nine students are currently enrolled in Cert I and 10 students in Cert II, with two on track to complete their certification this year. The growing interest in these certifications reflects the dedication of students wanting to learn and care for their Country.

Most of the theory work takes place in the Learning on Country area at Shepherdson College, with regular visits to Waḍanga'yu (Bible Camp), every Friday as part of the regular VET Skills Application Day, and visits to Dhambala and Gaḷawurra for invaluable opportunities for hands-on learning. Support from the Gumurr Marthakal Rangers is key to ensuring the skills students learn will be practical in the field. LoC Coordinator Isaac Jansens said, "Working alongside the Rangers in conjunction with their work plan is essential to bringing the CEM units to life, enabling students to grasp the real-world applications of the skills and knowledge they're gaining."

Just some of the highlights for students in term one include learning about photography, particularly exploring the macro function of a camera to capture close-up shots of animals, insects, and plants, and familiarising themselves with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and trying on all the different gear!

In the next training block both Cert I & II students will complete Remote First Aid training and CPR.



"Shout-out to our RTO, INLOC, who have been working with us for the third year now and really understand the importance of working closely with the local Rangers to create authentic learning experiences for our students,"



All in a days work !

Maningrida Interns hit the Ground Running



Noreen Wurrkidj, Dimitrius Brian, and Max Maxwell, who all graduated from the Learning on Country program in 2023 commenced internships with the Djelk Rangers in Maningrida in February this year and wasted no time getting stuck into their new roles.

Biosecurity and land management were a big focus during the first weeks as they participated in patrols to identify invasive and noxious species on land and at sea, and undertook weed surveys from the Ranger helicopter, which was a highlight for Max, who said he enjoyed the feeling of satisfaction after his first week in the role: "It feels good to be a hardworking man and helping others on country and caring for country. Makes you proud." Both Dimitrius and Noreen agreed saying they were happy to be able to work caring for their country. The interns also had hands-on experience with wildlife conservation, collecting and processing over 1500 crocodile eggs despite facing challenges like swarms of mosquitoes. "We had to collect them, clean them and put them into the incubator. It wasn't scary, but there were lots of mosquitoes," Dimitrius said.

Maningrida Learning on Country Coordinators, Dave Tome and Jonah Ryan, help LoC graduates and their families prepare for internships and emphasised the program's positive impact on the community. "The whole community is proud to see new interns transitioning into the next generation of rangers." Jonah said. Dave stressed the importance of hard work to interns, saying: "If you are a good worker, you can be and do anything you want. Being a hard worker is the best skill you can have."

The six-month internship focuses on practical fieldwork but also provides opportunities for broader learning. In February, interns joined Ranger Manager Tom Nagle for a three-day trip to Darwin to attend the North Australia Savanna Fire Forum. "The trip to Darwin to participate in the fire forum is a great opportunity for interns to understand the bigger picture around fire management and how their work with Djelk plays a part in a huge network of fire management programs that are mitigating fire behaviour across the north of Australia, and that the work they do has a huge amount of meaning," Tom said.

Tom said he was impressed at how quickly the interns had taken to their roles and the proactive approach to employment. "They are the first ones in the morning, always ready to go and not waiting around for the next job. They are also the best-presented Rangers in the team. They are keeping everyone on their toes!"

Exploring Songlines

Joint Camp in Yilan

Students from Ramingining, Galiwinku and Maningrida joined together on country for a joint camp in Yilan, in West Arnhem Land, to learn more about the geography and songlines of the region that connect their communities and skin groups. The stories of the Guwak Bird (Yathalamara to Yilan), the Dog (near Garanytjirr to Yilan), and the Giant Trevally (Galiwinku to Yilan).

Students stood up and shared their skin name, country, where they were from, and how they were connected to Yilan with the group. Daunting at first, but the exercise helped give students the confidence to understand their origins and talk in front of others.

Over the three days they participated in male and female cultural activities focused on geography and caring for country. For some students, this was their first school camp, learning the ways of their ancestors. The ladies searched for mud mussels and the boys hunted for stingray. Miranda, a Traditional Owner for Yilan taught them how to prepare the stingray: "You need to separate the meat from the cartilage to make fish cakes," said Sifora, LoC Ramingining assistant coordinator.

Ramingining LoC Coordinator Chrystal Burgher said, "These camps provide a chance to make friends and build bonds through culture. "We had one very confident and experienced hunter there named Kevin who shared his hunting skills with the group, then a young fella called Caleb, who is normally very shy, caught his first stingray by himself. Everyone was really happy for him, and you could immediately see the boost in his confidence.

Understanding how the kids are connected to each other and sharing that intergenerational transfer of knowledge with Traditional Owners and Elders is really important for their development and keeps them engaged them with the LoC program."

Chrystal and Sifora are now busy planning the next joint camp with Millingimbi School at Dhipirri.



Protecting Waters for the Future

All aboard at Borroloola School

Borroloola School Students working towards earning Certificates I & II in Conservation and Ecosystems Management spent a day exploring the waters with the Li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers.

Eight enthusiastic students participated in the excursion, learning firsthand about the various tasks undertaken by the rangers. They participated in important patrols, checking Chanel markers for mussels, collecting samples to identify any invasive species that cause threats to the waterways and ecosystems, and tagging and collecting abandoned crab pots from along the coastline to prevent harm to marine life.

It wasn't all work and no play; students also got to enjoy some fishing, which was an opportunity to identify the various species that inhabit the water and, of course, bring home some fish for dinner!

The experience highlights the importance of two-way learning through the Learning on Country program, teaching the next generation to care for country by ensuring the waters remain healthy and abundant for future generations.



Record Numbers at annual meeting

The 2024 LoC Steering Committee Meeting and Forum

The 2024 Learning on Country (LoC) Steering Committee Meeting and Forum held in Darwin in March saw the biggest turnout to date! More than 100 people attended, with all 17 LoC sites represented and 13 members of the Steering Committee in attendance.

LoC sites gave informative and inspiring presentations showcasing the incredible projects being undertaken in their communities and the impact the program is having on attendance numbers, graduations, and career outcomes. It was great to have new communities for first time.

The Integrating Curriculum Workshop explored projects aligning cultural knowledge with essential core curriculum. Everyone was eager to collaborate and learn from each other. The three-day agenda also included breakout sessions for remote school principals and LoC coordinators and discussions on program monitoring and evaluation.

Wrapping things up was the all-important 52nd meeting of the Learning on Country Steering Committee, where issues were addressed, and decisions were made to set the path for what's next for the program. This annual forum allows LoC stakeholders to come together and celebrate successes, share ideas, and plan for an even brighter future for LoC.

Thank you to everyone who travelled to Darwin to participate. We look forward to meeting again next year.



Banksia Awards Finalists

Learning on Country Program Recognised for Prestigious Awards

The Learning on Country Program has been chosen as a finalist for the Nature Positive Award at the National Banksia Sustainability Awards and is the only Northern Territory representative among the finalists!!

The Banksia Awards spotlight the incredible efforts of individuals, organisations, and communities nationwide leading the way in sustainable practices. The Nature Positive Award celebrates the achievements of those pioneering sustainable management practices, ecosystem rehabilitation, and innovative research and technology to preserve biodiversity.

The Learning on Country (LoC) program has been shortlisted for its two-way learning program that is creating a pathway for future generations of Aboriginal Rangers and traditional custodians, who will be charged with safeguarding, protecting and preserving our natural environment.

Winners will be announced at the National Awards Ceremony in Melbourne on 4 April. Keep an eye on the Learning on Country Facebook Pages for announcements! Good Luck!



Have your Say

What do you think about the LoC Website?

Have you visited the Learning on Country website? We want to hear from you! Your responses will help us improve our platform to better serve your needs. The survey will only take a few minutes to complete!

Visit the website here <https://learningoncountry.com/>

Scan the QR code below to have your say.



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Out and About...

Steering Committee Forum & Meeting



Learning on Country



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