

WELCOME

December 2024
Newsletter #12

National Indigenous Award Winner for 2024

In November, the Learning on Country (LoC) Program was named the category one winner of the prestigious National Indigenous Governance Award for 2024. This award highlights the program's dedication to Indigenous ownership and decision-making and its positive impact on remote Indigenous student outcomes in the Northern Territory. Program Steering Committee Co-Chair Cindy Jinmarabynana, Ramingining member Justin Gaykamangu and Program Manager Shane Bailey travelled to Brisbane to proudly accept the award in front of a sold-out room of 800 attendees.

The judging panel who visited Darwin in October to attend and observe the LoC Steering Committee meeting said in their feedback report "The Learning on Country program excels in cultural legitimacy with Elders and senior community members being highly engaged in the program. Elders and senior leaders play a critical role, and the program is seen as vital to preserving Indigenous knowledge." Judges praised the place-based approach, which prioritises the sharing of knowledge across sites, ensuring that community values and cultural protocols are at the heart of student learning and activities.

This award is a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in the LoC Program. From the Steering Committee, Local Committees, Teachers, Principals, and Cultural Advisors to all those who tirelessly support LoC in their communities.

Thank you to everyone who has played a role in its continued success.



Quote from Matthew Ryan, MLC Chair:

"This recognition speaks to the dedication of everyone who has been involved in the Learning on Country Program. I look forward to seeing this team keep up all their good work empowering Aboriginal students!"

"The success of the LoC Program relies on Indigenous leadership, governance, and community involvement. This means that our people are in charge of running and owning the program, with guidance from the Local LoC Committee and the LoC Steering Committee."

Wugularr Camp

Inspiring students to explore future career pathways



A special Learning on Country camp for students at Wugularr School was held in Term 4 as an introduction to VET courses that will be on offer through the school in 2025. The camp focused on two key pathways that many students have expressed interest in; becoming stockmen, like their grandfathers, or pursuing careers as rangers.

The camp began with a focus on parks and wildlife, featuring Ranger Stacey, who guided students in setting up trail cameras at Cutta Cutta Caves to monitor wildlife while the caves were closed to the public. This activity required a permit and provided hands-on experience in wildlife management, and the group captured incredible photos of local animals and birds. As a reward for their enthusiasm and teamwork, the group enjoyed a boat cruise on Nitmiluk Gorge, where they had the chance to drive the boat and check crocodile traps. What started as an unplanned activity quickly became a highlight of the camp.

The camp also included two half-days at CDU Rural College, where students engaged in hands-on agricultural activities. They learned practical skills such as fencing, mechanical work, horse care, and cattle handling. Students had the opportunity to ear tag, brand, weigh, and use the cattle crush, gaining an understanding of livestock management. Teachers at CDU explained the importance of using sounds and body language when working with cattle to create a low-stress environment for the animals.

Aligned with the ACARA Curriculum for Year 10, the camp covered a range of subjects, including Design and Technologies, Agriculture, Mathematics, Science, and English. However, the most significant outcome was the opportunity it provided for students to explore and consider a variety of future career pathways.





Sharing Stories in Yirrkala Djulpan Galtha Rom Workshop



Year 6/7 students at Yirrkala School joined Dhimurru Rangers and ṅalapal for a Galtha Rom Workshop in Term 4, focused on the Djulpan story.

Over three days, students camped at Buymarr Homeland and travelled to Djulpan to learn about its cultural importance.

During the workshop, students explored new places, learned Yolŋu place names and the stories connected to them. With guidance from elders and rangers, they took part in seasonal hunting and gathering activities, gaining hands-on knowledge about bush skills and sustainable practices.

In the evenings, they came together to practice the Djulpan manikay (song cycles) and bungul (dances). These moments of song, dance, and storytelling deepen the connection to the land, help pass important cultural knowledge to the next generation.



Creative Projects in Galiwin'ku

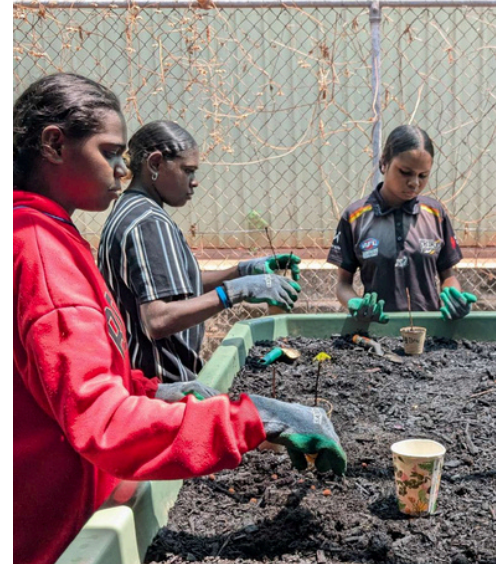
Buku Manapan Theme “Leaves and Flowers”

This term, Shepherdson College in Galiwin'ku focused on the Buku Manapan theme of Wurrki' ga Man'tjarr (Flowers and Leaves), where students learned about the traditional uses of plants in their community.

The students went out to collect leaves from local plants like nābarra (Melaleuca sp. paperbark), gaḍayka (Eucalyptus tetradonta, Stringybark), and mapudumun (Terminalia carpentariae, Wild Peach), from areas like Dayawili and Dhuḍupu.

They crushed and boiled the leaves to extract their medicinal properties, which are used to treat conditions like scabies, cold and flu, and body aches.

The students then worked with the art teacher to make handmade wrapping paper, and soap to be ready just in time for Christmas. This project not only taught students about the healing power of local plants but also helped them connect with their culture and traditions.



Landforms, Dreaming, and Discovery

Trial program success in Wadeye

As part of the Stage 3 implementation of the Learning on Country Program into Wadeye, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr College in Wadeye began trailing an integrated Learning on Country curriculum for middle-year students during Term 4.

The curriculum was centered around the theme of landforms, incorporating literacy, numeracy, and science learning, and featured three bush trips conducted mid-term. Learning activities focused on dreaming stories, the geology of the region, and family histories linked to a local site where natural sand-dune erosion has revealed ancient stone arrangements.

Students collaborated with Traditional Owners and Thamarrurr Rangers to map areas of the site, with the aim of documenting and protecting this culturally unique area. Their investigations also led them to nearby sites, where they explored related stories and dreaming narratives, which were similarly documented and mapped. The students also studied the western scientific perspective of landforms, learning about the natural processes that shape them. This included identifying and observing different types of rocks found both locally and globally, deepening their understanding of geological diversity.

The Learning on Country programs implementation into Wadeye has been met with great enthusiasm from the community, and the success of these trail programs is an exciting segway into the programs full commencement when school returns in January 2025.



Makarrata Learning Celebration & Graduation Laynhapuy Homelands School



Not even heavy rain could dampen the celebrations for Laynhapuy Homelands School as they celebrated the achievements of their graduating students with a special ceremony at Garrthalala. The remote East Arnhem Land school is made up of nine homeland sites in the Laynhapuy region, with senior secondary students travelling long distances weekly by road or air—often impacted by extreme weather—just to attend school.

The Makarrata Learning Celebration and Graduation brought together students, staff, and families from across the homelands to celebrate the students' accomplishments. Six students received their Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) qualifications, and seven earned their Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management (CEM), with four of these also receiving their Certificate II in CEM.

The Makarrata Program, a senior secondary initiative that enables students to complete their education on Country rather than attending urban boarding schools, combined with the Learning on Country Program, is seeing outstanding results.

“The Learning on Country program is a really strong part of what we do. All of the graduates this year have had Conservation Ecosystem Management in their patterns, and many will have had Maritime, and they will all have had a heavy involvement in the Learning on Country program to get them through their NTCET,” said Principal Abi White. “Most of the students graduating will have some identified pathway – some are going into ranger traineeships, or into other work or further study.”

The NLC LoC team would like to thank the community of Garrthalala for welcoming us to share in this celebration with you. Congratulations to all the graduates and we look forward to seeing what comes next!



*“They are all really strong students who work a lot and have shown initiative and leadership and also connected with other students, helping them to go forward”
“I am proud of them.”*

*Learning on Country Co-Coordinator and
Steering Committee Member
Gathapura Mununggurr.*

LoC Class of 2024

Congratulations to all the Learning on Country students for completing the 2024 school year! This year has seen an outstanding number of students graduate with their NTCET and VET certifications, including in Conservation & Ecosystem Management (CEM), across the 14 LoC sites. Here's a glimpse of some of the highlights and celebrations.



Maningrida

Three LoC participants graduated with their NTCET and three with their Cert II in Conservation and Ecosystem Management!



Yirrkala School

Three students graduated from Yirrkala School with NTCET and Cert III CEM



Galpawiri Munungurritj

"I would like to work at Dhimurru next year"



Guriniṅu Wanambi

"I'm looking forward to working at Dhimurru as a fulltime ranger next year"



Dharrpawuy Garawirrtja

Class of 2024 Continued

Galiwin'ku

Priscilla Garawirtja (Yr 9) completed her Cert I in Conservation & Ecosystem Management (CEM) and will continue with Cert II next year. Over 20 students took part in Cert I and II CEM courses, gaining skills in areas like First Aid, chemical application, operating camera traps, and maintaining cultural spaces.

CEM students also joined a project with local rangers and agencies to combat Gamba Grass in Galiwin'ku, receiving training in machinery maintenance and chemical application.



Ramingining School

Three LoC participants graduated with NTCET and three Cert II CEM.



Out and about photos...

Laynhapuy Homelands School Graduation



Yirrkala School Culture Day



Out and about photos...

Reconciliation Australia Judges Visit



National Indigenous Governance Awards

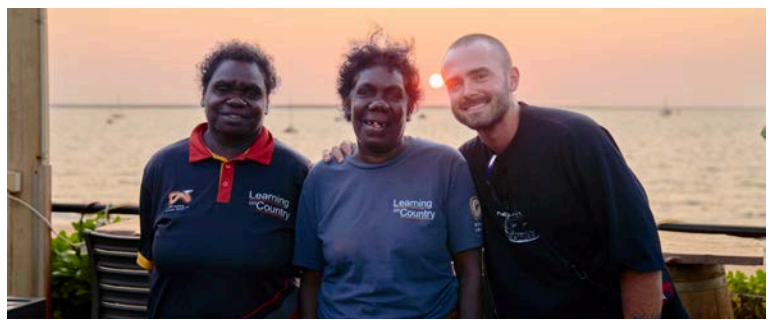


Out and about photos...

October Steering Committee Meeting



Steering Committee Dinner



Learning on Country

Thanks for a **FANTASTIC** year



Have a Merry Christmas and see you in 2025!

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the LoC Mailing List?

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