

WELCOME

October 2024
Newsletter #11

Wadeye Welcomes Learning on Country!

The Learning on Country (LoC) program rolled out its second round of community consultations in Wadeye in August, with it set to become the 14th remote NT community to join this innovative learning initiative. Over 100 locals including Traditional Owners, students, teachers, and rangers are backing the program with enthusiasm.

In Wadeye, LoC will team up with the Thamarrurr Rangers and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College, to offer students learning experiences that connect them to land and culture. From environmental research to sacred site conservation, students will engage in a range of activities guided by the Rangers.

A local committee is being formed to shape the program based on community needs and help integrate it into the school curriculum by early 2025. This approach has already proven successful in other communities, boosting student engagement, Aboriginal employment, and more.



“Wadeye needs Learning on Country. We need to support the kids to get to school, and connect back to culture. The kids need more strong role models. We can take them out on country hunting, fishing, learning about art and painting. We need to teach our kids the stories, help them learn our language and their skin groups. We can teach them about the stories of the animals and our culture and our history.”

Traditional Owner Raphaelia Bitting and Yellow Shirts Program Coordinator

Healing with Culture

Bush Medicine Herbarium Project in Beswick



Wugularr School is expanding its work with bush medicines through a herbarium project, which will document and share traditional bush medicines and remedies with students and the wider community addressing concerns around scabies and boils in the community.

"There's a bush medicine for this," explained a group of community representatives, referring to the healing properties of native plants used to treat skin infections, including a traditional method known as 'bush band-aid' a technique that has begun to fade.

Elders are leading the project and sharing their knowledge with students by collecting and sharing bush medicine, with the aim of producing a few different medicines each term.

The plants used in these medicines will be collected, dried, and framed, then displayed at the school as a visual guide, making it accessible regardless of literacy level and providing a lasting resource for students and the community, encouraging them to rely on the bush and keep the culture of bush medicine strong. As part of the initiative, students are recording the different plants and their uses in journals that can be taken home at the end of the year and shared with families.

Secondary students are leading the creation of their own herbariums, learning to collect, prepare, and process the medicines during LoC sessions. Originally aimed at secondary students, the project has attracted interest from all year levels eager to participate.

The herbarium project aligns with Wugularr School's educational goals, offering students a head start on Certificate I & II in Conservation and Ecosystem Management, set to begin at the school in 2025.



A Journey Through Country

Year 10-12 Bushwalk and Boat Trip in Yirrkala



One of the Term 3 highlights for year 10-12 students from Yirrkala School was a three-day bushwalk and boat trip from Guwatjorumurru to Yalanbara, guided by rangers and elders (ŋalapalmi) as part of their Stage 1 Outdoor Education and Maritime program assessment.

In preparation for the trip, students took charge of planning and logistics, mapping out their route, organising meals and equipment, and managing potential risks. They covered roughly 35 kilometers over the three days, including a 9-kilometer boat leg down Wonga Creek and across Port Bradshaw to their second campsite at Guluruŋa.

Carrying heavy packs with all their gear, the trek proved challenging, but the students showed great resilience and determination, pushing through the tough moments to complete the journey. Along the way, they learned about the country they were walking through, including transitions between freshwater and saltwater country, stories connected to the land, plants and animals.

Not only did the students carry and cook their own food, but they also supplemented their meals by hunting along the way. In the evenings, they gathered around the fire to listen to the Elders and rangers share stories about the land and its history and wrote reflections of their day in their journals each night, adding another layer of depth to an already meaningful experience.

This trip was not just a physical challenge, but a journey of cultural learning, connection to Country, and personal growth for all the students involved.



Strengthening Relationships in Ramingining

The Continued Growth of LoC Program

The LoC M&E team visited Ramingining for an insightful 2-day workshop with Ramingining School and ASRAC Rangers. This workshop offered stakeholders a space to discuss their LoC program openly and in depth and conduct a 'health check' to assess how well the program aligns with the established LoC Indigenous Values. This was the second new-site workshop in a matter of months, following a recent session in Milingimbi, which have both been met with strong support from the community.



The visit also allowed the team to meet Justin Gaykamangu, the new Indigenous LoC Coordinator, who will be working alongside Chrystal Burgher. Justin, a young local with extensive cultural knowledge and enthusiasm, is already making a positive impact on the Ramingining LoCP team.

Following the M&E meeting, the team were invited to join the Ramingining School's Senior Boys and Girls on an excursion to the Outback Spirit - Murwangi Safari Camp for a boat tour of the Arafura Swamp Wetlands, led by Senior knowledge holder and Traditional Owner Frankie Guninyirnyirr. This trip provided students with rich cultural insights and this special on-country experience complemented the classroom-based workshop, ending the visit on an inspiring note.



“Thank you to Principal Deanne, Chrystal, Justin, Frankie, the students, and the team at Outback Spirit Murwangi for their exceptional hospitality and support, which made the visit both memorable and impactful.” Shane Bailey, LoC Acting Program Manager.

Turtle Tagging on West Island

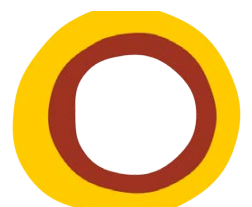
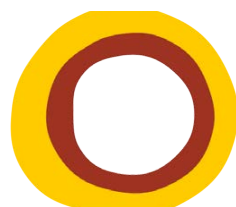
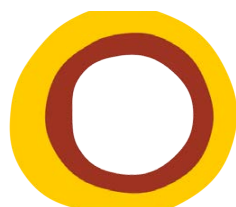
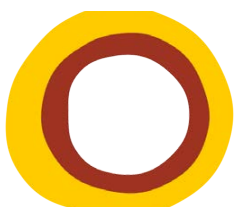
Borroloola Students Join Sea Rangers in Conservation Efforts

Students from Borroloola School's Learning on Country Program went on an exciting camp to West Island to work with the Li-Anthiwirriyarra Sea Rangers on a sea turtle tagging project. They collected important data for turtle research in both the Northern Territory and Australia, while also helping to care for Country.

On the first night of the trip, at around 9:30 p.m., the group witnessed a special moment when a flatback turtle came ashore to nest. Students and Rangers observed the turtle as she lay her eggs. Once finished, the Sea Rangers stepped in to scan, measure, and tag the turtle, a process that is vital for research.

Year 11 student, Xavier, had the important task of documenting the data from the first turtle. Xavier carefully recorded measurements read by rangers, including the time, date, longitude, and latitude, nest location, and monitoring turtles coming ashore to nest. The information will be used to better understand the behaviour and health of the flatback turtle population.

This hands-on experience not only supports marine conservation but also gives students like Xavier the chance to learn valuable skills. Xavier, who hopes to work with the Sea Rangers through the Learning on Country Program, gained practical experience, built relationships with rangers, and learned more about environmental science during the camp.





Welcoming Country

Gunbalanya Senior Girls Camp at Myra Falls



As part of the NTCE Community Connections subject, the senior girls from Gunbalanya School took responsibility for organising their Term 3 Learning on Country camp at Myra Falls. They helped with all aspects of planning, from preparing the necessary gear to creating meal plans and selecting the activities for their multi-day experience.

Throughout the term, the students had been studying Land Ownership and Protocols for welcoming visitors. Since Myra Falls is on one of the students' Grandfather's Country, she performed a special welcome on his behalf. This was a deeply meaningful and significant moment, not only for her but for all the participants. This connection to country also allowed the students to meet and learn from Elders camped in the area, hearing stories about the land.

During the camp, the girls, with the help of the Njanjma Rangers and local cultural experts, participated in traditional activities commonly practiced by women. These included gathering bush foods such as sugarbag, fishing, making pandanus dye, and learning about the healing powers of the waters around the falls. Through their experiences on the camp, the girls gained valuable cultural knowledge, practical skills, and a deeper sense of identity and respect for their ancestral traditions.



Capturing Culture

Burrunjū Rock Art Camp

Students from Numbulwar and Ngukurr schools joined SEAL Rangers and knowledge Hholders for an unforgettable experience at the term 3 Burrunjū Rock Art Camp. The camp was a unique opportunity for everyone to connect with the land, learn from one another, and share cultural knowledge.

This immersive cultural experience allowed students, rangers and Elders to engage deeply with the rock art, the landscape, and each other, making it a week none will soon forget.

Senior boys' teacher from Numbulwar School, Damien Stephens, captured the magic of the experience providing some incredible photos that truly reflect the spirit of the camp.



Navigating the Future

Learning Maritime Skills in Galiwin'ku



During Term 3, students from Shepherdson College in Galiwin'ku headed to sea for an exciting three-day maritime camp. The group travelled from Galiwin'ku to Mata Mata and Nyinyikay, learning valuable boating skills along the way.

Led by maritime trainer Joe Cooper from DoE Maritime, the camp was a collaboration between the school vessel Djapi1 and the Ranger vessel Birru Birru. Students followed local rangers, learning how to navigate and find safe places to anchor. They also learned about the important cultural sites along with way, guided by cultural advisor Margaret Dhorrpuy, who shared stories and knowledge about the land.

At Nyinyikay, the students and rangers worked together to support some necessary maintenance on the Homelands and spent time under the shaded trees completing parts of their Certificate I in Maritime Operations, learning important skills for future career opportunities. The return trip presented some challenging conditions, but the students handled them well, learning valuable lessons from the experience.

This trip had been a long time coming. Families at the Homelands had been hoping for years to see the school vessel visit with students and were so proud to see the students show leadership and confidence, gaining new skills that will help set them up for the future career opportunities and learning safe boating skills to share with family members and their communities.

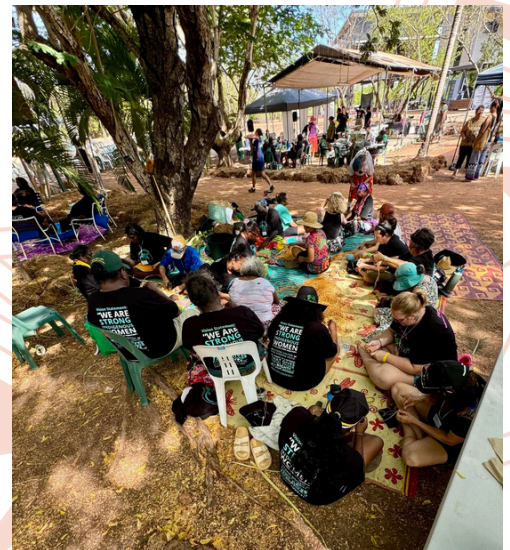


Empowering Strong women

Members of NLC LoC team attended the Strong Women for Healthy Country Forum on Larrakia Country in September. This was a powerful gathering celebrating the vital role of Indigenous women in caring for land and culture. The program featured presentations on Message Sticks, Self-care and wellbeing, bush medicine as well as art and digital technology workshops.

Learning on Country Program Interns Noreen and Ashleah, and Senior women's Ranger Joyce Bohme from Bawinanga Djelk Rangers spoke to the group about their Land Management Strategies.

Hosted on the ancestral lands of the Larrakia people, the forum brings together Indigenous women from across the country to share knowledge, discuss environmental stewardship, and advocate for healthy ecosystems.



Welcome to the LoC Team

Hi, my name is Jacinta, and I'm from Darwin. I'm proud to be part of my Indigenous heritage and I'm still at school, finishing year 12. I'm also working with the Learning on Country team part time as an Administration Assistant in the Darwin Office.

I love spending time on my great grandmother's country in Murganella, West Arnhem Land, where she is a Traditional Owner. This place means a lot to me, and it's helped shape who I am.

I'm passionate about making sure young people embrace both their education and their culture. Being part of the Learning on Country team gives me the chance to help students stay strong in both areas, and I love being able to share my experiences with them. I believe that when young people feel connected to their land and their roots, they grow stronger in everything they do. My goal is to support and guide them, so they can achieve success in their own unique ways.

My first trip will be to Wadeye for their first Local Committee meeting and I'm very excited. Looking forward to meeting you all in October!



Jacinta

Out and about photos...

Careers Day in Wadeye

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College



Out and about photos...

Shepherdson College Community Cook Up Investigating ways of making and cooking in a ground oven.



Learning on Country



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