

WELCOME

August 2025
Newsletter #14

**NORTHERN
AUSTRALIA
SUMMIT**

2025

Learning
on Country



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL
Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Learning on Country Summit Set for Darwin

The inaugural Northern Australia Learning on Country Summit is set to take place on Larrakia Country in Darwin this September. The invitation-only gathering will bring together senior leaders and decision-makers to shape the future of on-country education and employment pathways for Indigenous Middle and Senior Secondary students across Northern Australia.

Born out of the proven success of the NLC LoC Program, delivering outstanding outcomes across 14 remote community sites, the Summit responds to growing demand from Land Councils, education authorities, Indigenous organisations, schools, and Junior Ranger programs eager to develop their own culturally responsive, two-way learning models tailored to local contexts.

Over two days, delegates will explore practical, place-based approaches that blend classroom learning with Indigenous knowledge and community priorities. The program includes workshops, panel discussions, and plenary sessions led by the NLC LoC Program Management Team and guest facilitator Associate Professor William Fogarty (ANU), alongside other respected speakers.

The Summit is proudly endorsed by Mr Matthew Ryan (NLC Chairman), Mr Yuseph Deen (NLC CEO), and the LoC Steering Committee with valued support from the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Australian National University, and the Northern Territory Government. This important forum offers an opportunity for collaboration, learning and future program development across Northern and Central Australia.

Leading the way

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Learning
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Learning on Country Program Hits Record Participation



The Northern Land Council's (NLC) Learning on Country Program (LoCP) has recorded its highest-ever student participation rates in the first half of 2025, with more than 3,300 Indigenous students engaging in on-country education and vocational training across 14 remote community sites.

LoC Program Manager Shane Bailey said "The results reflect a strong Semester 1 (January to June) and a growing recognition of the program's impact in enhancing school engagement, cultural knowledge, and employment pathways for remote Indigenous students."

A total of 3,341 students participated in LoCP activities during the reporting period, an increase of 518 students from the previous semester. Of these, 293 students were actively enrolled in VET programs, primarily in Conservation and Ecosystem Management, Maritime, and First Aid with 45 students attaining Certificate I, II, or III qualifications.

"This milestone is a testament to the dedication and collaboration of our Cultural Educators, Rangers and Coordinators." Mr Bailey said "Their commitment is empowering young people to learn in ways that are grounded in culture and connected to future employment opportunities." "It also reflects the commitment from our School Principals and teachers in creating an engaging learning space that excites students and brings them through the school gate each morning"

Additional highlights from last semester include:

- 591 days of on-country learning delivered by Traditional Owners, Rangers, Coordinators, and educators.
- 76 students engaged in work experience or internships, and 19 transitioned into employment.
- 90 staff directly employed through LoCP this semester; 80 of whom are Indigenous, delivering an 88% Indigenous employment outcome.
- 85 Rangers from partnering Indigenous Ranger groups and 136 school staff (including 85 Indigenous staff) contributed in-kind support to the program.

These outcomes not only highlight the value of the LoCP model in improving education outcomes but also reinforce its role in fostering Indigenous employment, cultural knowledge transfer, and long-term economic participation.

Deadly Facts

January to June 2025

Learning on Country

Student Participation

3300

Indigenous Students Participated
in LoCP activities this period
(1733 Females, 1567 Males)

1201

Middle and Senior Secondary
students undertaking weekly
scheduled activities as a core
component of their studies

591

Days of on-country camps,
field trips and ranger activities were
delivered with Traditional Owners,
Rangers and Senior Knowledge
holders

*NIAA LoCP Funding directly employs 90
people in FT, PT and Casual engagement.
80 of these people are Indigenous.*

*This reflects an 88% Indigenous investment
in LoCP delivery across our 14 remote
Community sites.*

76

LoC students were engaged in
Work Experience, Work
Placements or Internships this
period.

19

LoC students transitioned into
employment this period.

221

Staff provided as 'in-kind' contribution
by Partner School and Ranger groups
to support LoC activities and learning
this period



Learning on Country in Raminingining

Vocational Education & Training

**293 Indigenous Students enrolled
in VET**

based training courses, from Middle and
Senior years, predominantly in Conservation
and Ecosystem Management, Maritime and
First Aid courses.

45 students attained **Cert I, II or III**
formal qualifications.



LoC Students at Yirrkalala School



Learning on Country in Milingimbi

<https://learningoncountry.com/>

Barunga Festival

LoC Represents at Barunga



The Learning on Country (LoC) Program was proudly on display at the Barunga Festival in June, bringing together culture, curriculum, and community. Festival-goers who came from far and wide were invited to stop by the LoC stand to chat with the NLC LoC team who are dedicated to sharing the importance of two-way learning on Country.

Visitors had the chance to test their basketball skills with a fun "shoot the hoop" challenge — and lucky winners took home a limited-edition LoC prize pack!



The LoC Program continues to deliver strong educational and cultural outcomes for students at the surrounding Wugularr and Barunga Schools, in partnership with the Jawoyn Association Rangers. This successful collaboration helps to nurture and inspire the next generation of leaders by blending traditional knowledge with classroom learning.

A special thanks to everyone who dropped by to learn more and connect with the LoC team, including Marion Scrymgour MP, who stopped in to show her support.



Two-Way Science Exchange

KLC and Nyul Nyul Rangers Visit Galiwin'ku

In May, the Learning on Country (LoC) Galiwin'ku Program welcomed the Kimberley Land Council's (KLC) Two-Way Science (2WS) program for a special learning exchange. The group included Nyul Nyul Rangers, Traditional Owners, and the 2WS Program Coordinator. They joined in LoC activities, shared language, stories, and ideas to strengthen Two-Way Science education on Country.

The Galiwin'ku community welcomed the visitors with a traditional smoking ceremony by the waṯaṅju (Traditional Owners), followed by a visit to Shepherdson College, where the local LoC program partners showcased how they collaborate to support the local LoC program.



The visit coincided with the start of planning for Term 3's whole-school theme: Maypal (crustaceans and molluscs). Visitors observed Yolŋu educators and the LoC team co-designing engaging learning experiences built on cultural relevance and students' strengths.

As part of the visit, the LoC team supported the Literature Production Centre in collecting resources on the Maypal topic at Waḍaṅga'yu — including a delicious lunch of nyoka (mud crab). Upper primary students went out on Country to gather and prepare muthir' (sandpaper fig) medicine for diarrhoea, along with leaves used to ease headaches and stress. The Nyul Nyul Rangers showed students how to throw a cast net and joined in fishing at Dhäyiri. The breadth of the program was further highlighted by the Junior LoC team, who shared knowledge about baḍarr (paperbark) medicine and treated families and visitors to fresh damper.

The exchange was a great success, with strong connections formed and valuable knowledge exchanged. While it was sad to say goodbye, the Galiwin'ku team looks forward to visiting Nyul Nyul Country in the future.



Borrooloola

LoC Partners working together at Borrooloola

In April, Learning on Country Program Manager Shane Bailey visited Borrooloola for a partnership stakeholder meeting bringing together the Borrooloola School and the NLC Garawa and Waanyi Garawa Rangers.

The meeting commenced with the introduction and induction of the new NLC Ranger Coordinators, Grant Ash Chong and Drago Karinic and provided an overview of the Program which extended into discussions on key strategies for Ranger engagement. The meeting formalised the new membership of the Borrooloola Local LoC Committee and included a student activity planning workshop for the 2025 LoC Operational Plan.

The Li-Anthawirriyarra Sea Rangers have been integral to the Program for many years and Fiona Keighran was in attendance to support stronger collaborations across the partnering Ranger groups. The attendance and input of NLC Regional Coordinator Tim West and Support Coordinator Marcus Paterson at the meeting was also much appreciated.



“With three Ranger groups in partnership we can expect to see in time some significant outcomes in the development of Ranger employment pathways for Borrooloola School students” said Shane.

Borrooloola LoC is only relatively new in terms of the wider Program having commenced in 2018 but it has been deeply imbedded into the School through the committed work of Coordinator and Steering Committee member Stephanie Anderson who has been in the coordinator’s role from the beginning. This same commitment is evident in the support provided by School Principal Stephanie Blitner, School Cultural Advisor Noela Anderson and long term Senior Waanyi Garawa Ranger Lizzy Hogan.

“In all aspects of the work LoC does in engaging students on the two-way educational journey, communication between the Local LoC Committee partners in guiding and directing the local program is vital. The meeting at Borrooloola was an inspiring example of stakeholders coming together to grow the next generation of Rangers, custodians and future leaders” said Shane.



Big Walk, Big Learnings

Wugularr School Waterhouse River Walk



The Learning on Country Program joined secondary as part of our Wugularr Schools Learning on Country program, students took on a 9km walk along the Waterhouse River during Term 2; great preparation for those students who are planning to do the Jatbula Trail in Term 3 of this year.

Before setting off, we welcomed four new students from Lajamanu with a traditional smoking ceremony. It was a special way to start the day and bring everyone together ahead of the journey.

In the weeks before the walk, students worked with WANTA to make fruit and meat leathers, which came in handy for energy on the track. Along the way, they found bush glue and bush tucker (djupi), giving students the chance to learn more about culture and Country.

Cloudy weather helped keep things cool, and although everyone was worn out by the end, they were also really proud of what they had achieved.



Bush Skills and Beach Clean-Up

On Country in Yirrkala



Maranydjalk, Wurrpan and Darrpiya classes from Yirrkala School's LoC Program had a special day out at Shady Beach, learning on Country with rangers and ṇalapalmi (elders) about important skills to help care for the land and sea.

The day started with the students learning how to make dhaniya (bush water carriers) from barrukala (pandanus leaves). The rangers and elders showed them how to weave the leaves into strong containers that can hold water, something that has been done for generations.

After this, the group walked together to Welama. There, the students learned how to find and dig for manutji gapu (freshwater) hidden in the sand dunes. It was exciting to test their dhaniya by filling them up with the gapu. This hands-on activity helped the students understand how people have always used natural resources to survive on Country.

Later, the rangers spoke with the students about marine debris and the impact of rubbish that washes up from the ocean and harms sea life and the environment.

Together, students, elders, rangers and teachers worked as a team to pick up the rubbish from the beach. It was a full day of learning, working together, and looking after Country.





Passing Down Knowledge

Keeping Culture Strong in Ramingining

Ramingining, NT – Students from Ramingining School's Learning on Country (LoC) program have teamed up with the Arafura Swamp Rangers this term to tackle invasive weeds and strengthen cultural knowledge through hands-on learning.

As part of the environmental education program, rangers worked closely with students to teach them how to identify and safely spray invasive plant species that threaten the Northern Territory landscape. The initiative is part of ongoing efforts to support the health of local ecosystems and foster a sense of environmental responsibility among young people.

In addition to their environmental work, students also had the opportunity to learn traditional skills from local knowledge holders. Under their guidance, students crafted spear throwers, gaining insight into both the practical techniques and cultural significance behind the tools.



In another recent activity, students headed out on Country to collect bark for traditional painting. Guided by local mentors, they learned how to carefully remove bark from trees and prepare it for painting using traditional tools and methods.

"These hands-on experiences are so important," said LoC Coordinator Justin. "It's not just about learning skills—it's about keeping culture strong and building confidence in our young people."

The Learning on Country team is already planning more cultural and environmental activities for Term 3, continuing their commitment to supporting students' learning in both Country and classroom settings.



The Key to LoC Success at Gapuwiyak Cultural Authority and Commitment

In May, the LoC Program delivered a two-day Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Workshop at Gapuwiyak.

Stakeholder commitment and participation in the process was exceptional and reflected the strength and significant outcomes LoC is delivering to Gapuwiyak School students.

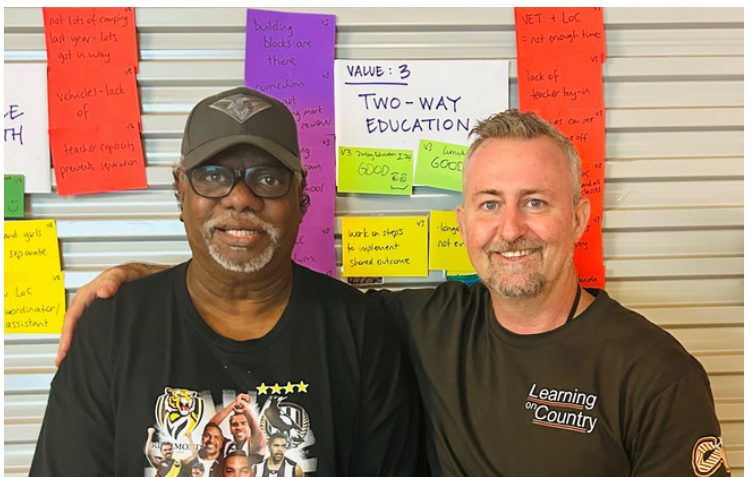
The LoC M&E Project provides the opportunity for the Local LoC committee (LLOCC) stakeholders to 'check-in' and provide their assessment on how they feel their Program is progressing against the 10 Indigenous Values that define and guide the LoC Program.

The workshops provide a dedicated space for valuable stakeholder discussion and strategic reflection. It captures the future aspirations of their Program and identifies the needs of their students to walk strong in both worlds.

Long-term LoC Steering Committee (and NLC) member Bobby Wunungmurra noted " This is important djama, sometimes we need to stop and have a look at what we are doing, even when it is good, then we can go forward together even stronger and do even better for our Djamarkuli".

The Gapuwiyak LoC Program commenced in 2015 and its two-way educational model is now deeply embedded within the School. Its VET Conservation and Ecosystem Management program, delivered by LoC Coordinator and award winning trainer, Chris Spurr is contributing significantly to NTCET student graduation at Gapuwiyak.

LoC is strongly supported in partnership with Yirralka Rangers and more recently the Gon-Dal Mutjun Rangers providing a direct pathway for students from the LoC Program into Ranger employment.



Saddling Up for Success

Borroloola Students Shine in Horse Clinic

The Learning on Country Program joined secondary senior students at Borroloola School, taking part in the highly anticipated horse unit of the Connecting to Country with Cattle Clinic in week 8. Horseman Des Burns returned for his third year working with Borroloola School, with support from Steven Anderson and horses kindly provided by McArthur River Station.

Each day, students looked after their own horse—feeding them in the morning, grooming, checking hooves, and putting on saddles and bridles. They also learned how to stay safe around large animals. By the end of the first day, students had already trimmed hooves, ridden at a walk and trot, and practiced basic control skills like stopping and turning.

On the second and third days, students improved their riding skills, learning to canter, open gates while on horseback, and ride through bushland. The final day ended with a fun challenge course, where students showed off their new skills in bending, flag races, and barrel racing. Regional Director Megan McKenzie and Principal Stephanie Blitner came along to watch and support.

Our students showed great confidence and enthusiasm and are excited to come back for the Term 3 clinic, where they'll be working with cattle.



Midawarr Magic - Milingimbi Camp

Bridging Cultures On Country and in Classroom

Milingimbi students participated in a four-day Learning on Country camp during May, the Yolngu season called Midawarr. This time of the year is known as 'harvesting' season, where the rain slows down, the wind direction changes and there is an abundance of wild harvestable foods readily available to be found.



The camp was a great example of strong partnerships coming together to deliver quality education, the perfect balance of two-way education celebrating timeless Indigenous knowledge and the incorporation of mainstream foundations. The 30 Milingimbi students were joined by four Pymble Ladies' College students all the way from Sydney, who were participating in the camp as part of the cultural exchange program Milingimbi has with Pymble.

Wildlife Unlimited scientists and the Crocodile Island Rangers led elaborate biodiversity surveys with the students, showcasing the skills and techniques associated with trapping and tracking, checking daily on the Elliot pitfall and cage traps. They also led a nighttime survey as the students walked along the sand dunes following the footprints of small amphibians and invertebrates.

Aboriginal Resource and Development Services (ARDS) 'respectful relationships' team also participated in the camp as part of the Milingimbi LoC and ARDS long term working relationship. The workshops highlight key cultural concepts that allow for Djarrakuli to reflect on their education journey, supported by the ARDS team and Milingimbi elders.

The camp wouldn't have been possible without the continued guidance and support from the Traditional landowners of the surrounding Crocodile Islands who provided students with real time-tested knowledge of the land, information of the seasons and the connection of songlines that forms the backbone of traditional Yolngu culture.

LoC Coordinator Marcus Santos said, "The camp was a huge success and is an example of what is possible when you combine two world education with traditional cultural application. Strengths based learning is what Milingimbi Learning on Country is all about."

On Country & In Class

Wadeye students thrive through Real-World learning

The Learning on Country Program at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College in Wadeye, is going from strength to strength. Secondary students are going on Country every week working with Thamarrurr Rangers and Traditional Land Owners exploring new places and learning content.

The Learning on Country program is proving to be a real hit with students. Attendance, engagement and student learning has improved with students enjoying every moment of the programs implementation which has started this year.



Students recently did a trip out to Yederr participating in a boat trip up the Moyle River with Thamarrurr Rangers and TOs. Students learnt about commercial fishing charters, animal names in Murrinh-patha, controlled burning and discussed the different types of jobs that Rangers do.

Students have also been completing work around the theme of fire this term, which involved students collaborating with Traditional Owners and the Thamarrurr Rangers and integrating this knowledge into the curriculum.

There has been a continued focus building the resources, relationships and curriculum to drive the program into the future. Everyone is looking forward to the first camp, which will be in mid-term three for the secondary students.

In Wadeye, the LoC program is being delivered in collaboration with Traditional Owners and the Thamarrurr Rangers, who manage the expansive 4,500 square kilometres of country and 240 kilometres of coastline in the Thamarrurr region, in partnership with Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College (OLSHT).



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Milingimbi School and Crocodile
Island Rangers (MOPRA)



Ramingining School and Arfura
Swamp Rangers (ASRAC)



Shepherdson College and
Marthakal Rangers



Gapuwiyak School and
Yirrkala Rangers



Laynhapuy Homelands School
and Yirrkala Rangers



Yirrkala School and
Dhimurru Rangers



Barunga School and
Jawoyn Aboriginal Corporation



Wugularr School and
Jawoyn Aboriginal Corporation



Numbulwar School and
Numbulwar Numburindi Rangers



Ngukurr School and
Yugul Mangi Rangers



Borrooloola School and
Waanyi Garawa, Garawa,
Li-Anthawirriyara Rangers



Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
Thamarurr Catholic College
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