



## Yamatji Marlpa ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



Above: Nyangumarta Traditional Owners and DEC representatives on site visit.

## Pilbara Traditional Owners share knowledge for environmental planning

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Nyangumarta Traditional Owners of the Pilbara are working with the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to help plan for and conserve the special marine environment of the Eighty Mile Beach area.

Consultation has been undertaken over 18 months between the Nyangumarta people, Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) and the Marine Policy and Planning Branch of DEC. In addition, DEC has been working with six other native title groups along the Pilbara coast to investigate the idea of marine parks and reserves.

The program, facilitated by YMAC and DEC, was successful in raising awareness about marine parks and the planning process amongst the Nyangumarta people. On-country visits also allowed for DEC to gain knowledge from Traditional Owners about some of the ecological and cultural values of Eighty Mile Beach and other parts of the Pilbara coast.

### **Engagement with the Nyangumarta people**

- In separate groups, men and women recorded sites of resource use and special features. From these mapping exercises, the working group recognised a number of important cultural areas along Eighty Mile Beach.
- Traditional Owners also created seasonal harvest calendars, revealing the key marine resources for the Nyangumarta people.
- Site visits to important cultural areas allowed Nyangumarta people teach DEC about their connection with coastal and sea country. The Nyangumarta people have an intricate knowledge of their country and retain a strong connection through sacred sites and ceremonial activities.
- A brainstorming session was also held to explore the future aspirations of the Nyangumarta people for the coastal strip. Protecting cultural sites, stories and songlines' was regarded by the Nyangumarta people as the most important component of any proposal for a marine park in the area.
- Nyangumarta aspirations for their coastline and sea country are best summed up by the phrase "Ngalpa warran, ngalpa marrngu", which translates to "Healthy country, healthy people".

Nyangumarta Traditional Owner, Nyaparu Rose said, "The best part about the process was that DEC came to the people. They sat down and learned from us. We taught about the seasons, about hunting and fishing, about bush foods. It was also a chance for young Nyangumarta people to go out on country and learn from their Elders. So it was like a workshop for our younger generations too."

YMAC's Chief Executive Officer Simon Hawkins said, "This is a great example of genuine consultation with Traditional Owners. DEC made on-country visits and valued the vast knowledge Traditional Owners have about their land and sea country. It's encouraging to see Government realising the value that Traditional Owners bring to environmental planning."

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### **About Nyangumarta People and Country**

The Nyangumarta People's native title rights were recognised on 11 June 2009. Nyangumarta Country covers an area of approximately 39,931 sq kms in the northwest Pilbara and southwest Kimberley regions of Western Australia.

Archaeological research in the region suggests Aboriginal occupation dating at least to 23,000 BP. According to Nyangumarta people, they have lived on and remain connected to the land, plants, spirits and animals of Nyangumarta since the beginning of time. The *Pakajimpirri* (or

*dreaming*) gave the Nyangumarta people their system; their institutions and the rules governing human behaviour; their 'Law'; their traditional territory and all the sites within it; their language; and their rituals and mythology.

Nyangumarta Country known for its' ecologically significant environment and includes inland lakes, which are fed by ocean currents. These are certified Ramsar Convention wetlands – a highly regarded international rating system for wetlands.

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### **About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation**

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for native title claims in the resource-rich Pilbara, Murchison and Gascoyne representative areas of Western Australia.

The organisation has a representative area of almost one million square kilometres and represents over 25 native title claims, all with their own language, culture and traditions.

YMAC is run by an Aboriginal Board and provides a range of services to its members including claim and future-act representation, heritage protection services, community and economic development and natural resource management.

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### **For further information, high res-images and interviews contact:**

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