News from Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

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Welcome to the 30th edition of YMAC News. This year has already proven to be an exciting time for Traditional Owners across the Murchison, Gascoyne and Pilbara regions.

In this issue of YMAC News, you will read about the final agreement with Rio Tinto Iron Ore (RTIO) – after 13 years of negotiations between Traditional Owners, YMAC and RTIO. We also want to share with you the work of the Nyangumarta Rangers, and their recently completed fencing project in the Nyangumarta Indigenous Protected Area.

Knowledge Partnerships has been busy working with the Nanda people, helping to promote the Nanda histories of the Kalbarri National Park with an information signage project. You can read all this on page 3.

These stories are just the beginning of what is ahead in 2016. We look forward to bringing you more news of successful outcomes for Traditional Owners across Country, and we thank you for reading this edition of YMAC News.

Message from the Co-Chairs

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Warning: Aboriginal People are warned that this publication may contain images of deceased people.
Knowledge Partnerships: Promoting Nanda histories in Kalbarri

Knowledge Partnerships has been working with the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) and the Nanda people to research, produce and install interpretive signage throughout Kalbarri National Park.

The project will include the telling of stories about certain spots within the park and the greater history of the Nanda people and its connection to the area.

There will also be special signage for visitors explaining the proper protocols and procedures for taking care of Country during their stay.

The project began during a heritage survey where DPaW expressed interest in installing the signage throughout the park.

The Nanda members of the survey team also expressed interest in the idea, and after some discussion, the Nanda Working Group formally endorsed the project in April 2016.

This project is an important part of our work to bring the traditional cultures of Country to the greater Australian community. The Knowledge Partnerships team is excited to contribute to more projects like this in the future.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Rory Chapple (DPaW), Mike Paxman (DPaW), Lynette Belotti, Sue Hancock (DPaW), William Mallard Jnr, Jason Harman (YMAG), Alistair Vaughan (YMAG), David Drage and Stephen Thorne.
May 1 2016 marked the 70th Anniversary of the 1946 Pilbara Strike. Aboriginal stockmen and station workers went on strike to protest the harsh and unfair treatment they faced. The date of the strike is also International Workers' Day and the start of shearing season, and to this day, remains the longest strike in Australia's history.

Aboriginal workers walked off stations in the Pilbara protesting a lack of wages and unfair working conditions. These workers had the reputation of being some of the best stockmen in the world, but they were excluded from industrial awards while working and living in appalling conditions. For those who joined the strike, they faced arrests, intimidation and violence – but it didn’t stop people from joining.

The strike begins

The strikers were seeking natural justice - the idea that they should be offered the same benefits and awards as settlers. The conditions they worked in would not have been tolerated by a white workforce - and yet Traditional Owners received no wages.

The decision to strike was made by more than 200 senior lawmen who represented 23 different language groups. They met at Skull Springs, a place filled with a history of resistance, and made a plan to get the message out across the Pilbara.

Along with Dooley Binbin and Clancy McKenna, Ernie Mitchell and Peter Coppin, the fathers of YMAC’s co-Chair Doris Eaton and Deputy Regional Manager Nyaparu Rose, were in charge of leading this mission.

Mr BinBin rode the rails and walked across the Pilbara, from station to station, bringing calendars marking the day to walk away. When May 1 1946 came, 800 people walked off their jobs in a massive display of solidarity.

Three years would go by before the strike came to a resolution. In all of that time, the leaders of the strike and many others were jailed, violently threatened and intimidated by police.

The station owners learned how valuable the stockmen’s labour was the hard way. Profits fell as the Seaman’s Union of Australia put a ban on wool shipments from the Pilbara in support of Aboriginal strikers.

Some of the pastoralists offered a small wage to have their workers return, and some of the workers took it. But for many it was too little too late. For most of the strikers, they wanted equality under the law.

The same struggle, 70 years later

Mrs Eaton feels that now is the time to remember what her father fought for if we want to see change.

“I want the next generation to get more education, so they can be independent. I want them to learn their language and look after land and culture. But it saddens me that they will still be fighting, just like my father, and just like I’m doing now.”
ABOVE: Peter Coppin; images courtesy of Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre.
BELOW (from left to right): Mrs Winnie Coppin (holding cake); Kenny Thomas, Donny Wilson, Alfred Barker and Mrs Alice Mitchell; Janet Stewart and Mrs Winnie Coppin.
The Nyangumarta Rangers have successfully completed installation of fencing at 80-Mile Beach in the Nyangumarta Warrarn Indigenous Protected Area (IPA).

In partnership with Nyangumarta Warrarn Aboriginal Corporation (NWAC), YMAC’s Ranger Coordinator Todd Norwell brought together the Nyangumarta Rangers to fence the block.

The main funding partner for the project was the Indigenous Land Corporation, with additional support received from the Commonwealth Indigenous Protected Area program, BHP Billiton and Rangelands NRM through Greening Australia, Wallal Downs Station and the Community Development Program.

The project was planned some time ago, with the hopes of protecting the 1.2km-long block from unauthorised campers. The Rangers also hope the fencing will protect the vegetation from cattle which tend to wander through the area causing damage.

This block of land along 80-Mile Beach has been chosen to host the Nyangumarta Warrarn Rangers when they are on-Country, and will become a cultural centre for the area in the future.

The site will also enable the Nyangumarta Rangers to access Country and begin land management activities. By securing the block of land which will become the hub for all future land management activities, the project will provide good opportunities for the Rangers to build skills and secure long-term employment.
Country Needs People

The Nyangumarta Rangers are part of a campaign which spreads the word on the work Aboriginal Rangers do for Country.

The Country Needs People campaign has been highlighting the positive stories of the Ranger programs, and it has been very successful with advertisements on television and in newspapers.

Country Needs People is getting noticed because it acknowledges that Traditional Owners know the best way to care for Country. The core message of the campaign is to expand funding for Rangers and guarantee the program’s financial security for the future.

YMCA is a proud supporter of Country Needs People. You can visit www.countryneedspeople.org.au to learn more about the campaign.
Dreamtime at the ‘G

On Saturday 28 May, Banjima man Jaden Parker was part of a team of Aboriginal players at the AFL’s annual “Dreamtime at the ‘G” game in Melbourne.

Jaden was chosen to be part of the joint Rio Tinto and AFL program Footy Means Business. As part of the program, Jaden attended two week-long residential programs in Darwin and Melbourne.

Designed for 18-24 year olds, Footy Means Business exposes players to elite AFL training and provides professional development.

As part of the Melbourne residency, Jaden played in the curtain-raiser at the beginning of the Dreamtime at the ‘G broadcast.

The game is a regular football match between the Essendon and Richmond clubs, and since 2007 it has been held on the Saturday of the AFL’s Indigenous Round.

“I feel lucky to be given the opportunity to participate in the Footy Means Business program and to share the experience with Indigenous men from across the country,” Jaden said.

Jaden said the entire experience has made him grow as a person.

“I believe a lot of young people can benefit from programs like this that can teach life skills, show career pathways and provide opportunities to step out of your comfort zone,” he said.

Playing at the MCG is a dream come true for me. It’s the home of football.
- Jaden Parker
In May, the Yamatji and Pilbara Regional Committees met in Exmouth to share their goals for YMAC’s work this year.

The annual meeting gives the two committees the opportunity to meet and discuss current issues facing both regions.

The cooperation between the two committees is an important part of understanding the issues affecting YMAC in the Yamatji and Pilbara regions.

YMAC’s policy is set by its Aboriginal Board of Directors. The Board is made up of six members from each of the Regional Committees, and provide provides the strategic direction of YMAC which guides the work of the CEO and Executive Management Team.

This year, YMAC recognised the long term dedication of its Regional Committee members.

Mrs Doris Eaton and Natalie Parker both received awards for 12 Years of Service to YMAC.

Nora Cooke and Peter Windie both received awards for 9 Years of Service, Susan Oakley and Terry Jaffrey received awards for 7 Years of Service, Selina Stewart and Paul Baron received awards for 6 Years of Service, and Cicily Dowden and Ben Roberts received recognition for 5 Years of Service.

2015 was a successful year for Native Title Determinations for the Jurruru, PKKP and Ngarluma peoples, and this year the joint committees and YMAC’s Board are excited to work towards and continue delivering positive results for more Traditional Owners.
Three young men who have attended the Clontarf Academy in Carnarvon have received the Clontarf Foundation's Extraordinary Achievement Award.

Brayden Dowker, Kristian Smith and Tony Dutton all received the awards late last year at an event celebrating their commitment to their studies and excellence in the workplace.

The Clontarf Foundation helps bridge young men into employment by partnering with companies for apprenticeship training.

This is made possible by the scholarship program in Horizon Power’s Agreement with the Gnulli Working Group and Rio Tinto Dampier Salt. These traineeships help students develop skills they will need in the workplace and prepares them for potential apprenticeships with sponsors.

An important part of these traineeships is the completion of TAFE certificates in Geraldton. Both Brayden and Kristian completed their traineeships and received Certificate II’s in Automotive and Engineering courses. Tony Dutton is in the process of finishing his courses.

The boys’ success means they have begun apprenticeships at Rio Tinto’s Dampier Salt project. Both young men have made impressive starts to their career.

Two more Clontarf students have begun their traineeships, and are on the same path to success as Brayden, Kristian and Tony.

ABOVE (left to right): Tony Dutton, Kristian Smith and Brayden Dowker receive awards at Clontarf Academy’s End of Year Awards night at the end of 2015.
End of an era: Rio concludes Pilbara Land Use Agreements

On Friday 27 May, YMAC celebrated the final agreement signings between Traditional Owners of the Pilbara and Rio Tinto Iron Ore.

For 14 years, YMAC has been a part of negotiating mining lease agreements between Rio Tinto and six claim groups in the Pilbara.

Through these agreements, the PKKP, KM, Yinhawagka, Ngarlawangga, Banjima and Nyiyaparli peoples will have access to work, training, business, environmental management, land access and financial stability for generations.

All of this now gives Pilbara Traditional Owners the potential to build brilliant new opportunities for their communities.

YMAC CEO Simon Hawkins told visitors and staff that he is proud of their hard work and the outcomes they delivered to Traditional Owners.

“These claim groups now have the ability to gain a true partnership with Rio Tinto Iron Ore, and it will go a long way to improving Traditional Owners’ living standards,” he said.

“Congratulations to everyone! I look forward to the future stability and success that it will bring to the Traditional Owners of the land.”
About us

YMAC News is produced by the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC).

We are the native title representative body for native title claims in the Murchison, Gascoyne and Pilbara regions of Western Australia.

We work with Yamatji and Marlpa (Pilbara) Aboriginal people to pursue:

- Recognition and acceptance of Yamatji and Marlpa culture in country; and
- A strong future for Yamatji and Marlpa people and country