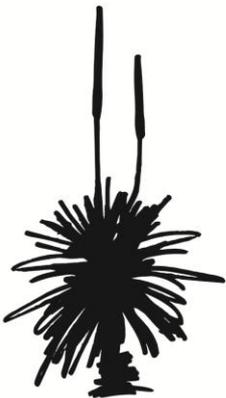


Cultural Connections to Place Friction Fire and People-in-Land Workshops

Ashby 7-8 April 2014

Workshops Report



**Nature
Conservation
Council** The voice for
nature in NSW

 firesticks



The Firesticks and Upper Coldstream Projects have been assisted by the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund and the National Indigenous Science Education Program assisted by the Inspiring Australia Fund



Cultural Connections to Place: Friction Fire and People-in-Land Workshops. Ashby, April 2014

1. Date and Venue

The workshops were held on Monday 7th and Tuesday 8th April 2014 at Michael's Clarence Valley Retreat, Ashby Heights. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) would like to thank Michael for his hospitality and for allowing the group to stay in such a tranquil setting.



Michael's Clarence Valley Retreat

2. Event Overview

The "Fire Friction and Cultural Connections" workshop programs were hosted by NCC (linked to the Firesticks and Upper Coldstream Projects currently operating in the region) and delivered in collaboration with Fat Kangaroo (Dr Miles Holmes and Matt Forde), Macquarie University's National Indigenous Science Education Program and the Maclean High School.

Participants gathered from across Yaegl and Bundjalung Nations, with others joining from Coffs Harbour and Sydney to collectively work together, to not only build their own fire but to also participate in and share stories and experiences on cultural values and their inherent links to the natural environment.

The workshops generated an encouraging level of interest and enthusiasm, with a general consensus amongst the group to continue to seek opportunities whereby programs and communities can work together to support the cultural and natural values of the NSW north coast, whilst also strengthening their links to current land management programs.

3. Welcome to Country and dance ceremony

Workshop activities started with a Welcome to Country by Uncle Ron who described the natural land boundaries which make up Yaegl country. As part of the Welcome, Uncle Ron provided thought evoking and personal stories of his cultural connections to country and of his life growing up on Yaegl lands. NCC would like to thank the Yaegl community for their Welcome and their hospitality whilst on Yaegl country.

Charles, Jacob, Vincent, Jamahl and Eathan from the Maclean High continued the Welcome with traditional dance ceremony. The first dance welcomed participants to the land and cleansed the country of any bad spirits. For the second performance, the group were introduced to the types of animals found on Yaegl country including the emu, kangaroo, brolga and goanna.



Uncle Ron provides a moving Welcome to Country with personal stories of growing up on Yaegl Country © O. Costello



As part of the Welcome to Country, Charles, Jacob, Vincent, Jamahl and Eathan from the Maclean High show off to the group their traditional dance skills © NCC

4. Participants

A total of 40 people participated over the two workshops with a range of representatives from Indigenous organisations, the NGO and research sectors and community groups. Participating groups and organisations included Yaegl Elders, Maclean High School (students and teachers), Yaegl and Bundjalung community representatives, Ngulingah Aboriginal Land Council, Jali Aboriginal Land Council, Macquarie University and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.



Dave Harrington introduces the group to Macquarie University's National Indigenous Science Program (NISEP) and their achievements over the years working with the Maclean High School, the Yaegl Elders and the Yaegl community © O. Costello

5. Fire Friction Workshop

This workshop explored the ancient technique used world-wide of starting fire by friction. Miles and Matt facilitated the hands on workshop which including learning and reconnecting with these ancient skills whilst also deepening the group's knowledge of what the land provides and how to look for it. This included having discussions on knowing your place, the types of wood, and ways to identify suitable wood in local environments; building tinders and tinder bundles; carving a fire drill and making a coal to then start a fire.

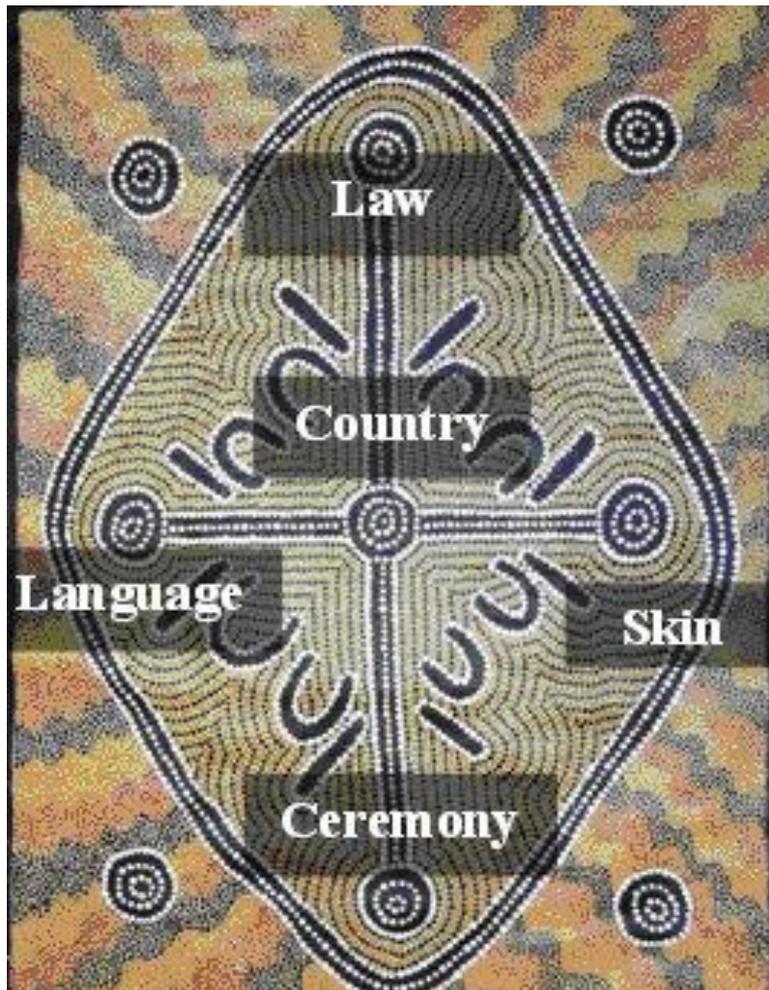


Mark Graham and Ferlin Laurie working together to start a fire coal (left) which can only be successful if you have the right type of tinder bundle to start the fire from the fire coal (right) © NCC

6. People-in-land Workshop

Facilitated by Dr Miles Holmes, this workshop explored some of the "golden threads", the common elements that are present internationally in the cultural connections of first peoples to their places. Using some interactive case studies, workshop participants explored how these common elements are manifested in Australian land management.

Miles led discussions on the "general principles of culture" and how they may be applied to the emerging trends in environmental management towards "ecosystem stewardship" and "linked socio-ecological systems" - or more simply - how people link to land and how this is inherently part of today's environmental management.



Land (Country) - caring for 'home'. The Country in the Ngurra-kurlu template (pp19)
www.nintione.com.au/resource/DKCRC-Report-41-Ngurra-kurlu.pdf

Our thanks to....



Uncle Ron | Yaegl Elder



Aunty Carmel | Yaegl Elder



Aunty Rosie
Yaegl Elder

The **Yaegl Elders** have been involved in cooperative projects with Macquarie University's NISEP program from the beginning, contributing to bush medicine research, the development of NISEP's educational programs and supporting relationship building and community networks. The Elders have presented to national science week activities at the Australian museum, conferences, regional land council meetings and to other Aboriginal communities, inspiring others to participate in cultural revival, research and collaboration.

The strength of this relationship is testament to their energy, commitment and perseverance, reflected in the strong personal relationships that exist between the Yaegl community and Macquarie University's staff.

We would also like to thank...

Miles Holmes and Matt Forde for running the workshops which were well received!



NISEP, Maclean High School and the Yaegl community: Dave, Mathide, Deb, Leena, Sam, Charles, Jacob, Vincent, Jamahl, Eathan, Ferlin, Uncle Ron, Aunty Carmel and Aunty Rosie





Ngulingah and Jali Aboriginal Land Council rangers: Silas, Jamahl, Jermaine, Allan, Keshia, Karan-Rae and Sirlinia



The NCC team: Mark, Dave, Josh, Michelle, Pepe, Oliver, Jim, Richie, Sian, Kate, Adrian, Waminda, Greg, Kim and Cooper





We all share a dream
My country, your country, our country
Australia

Aunty Rosie



MORE Photos



The Nature Conservation Council of NSW Healthy Ecosystems Program held their annual operational planning meeting of forward planning for 2014/15



Miles and Matt, rubbing big sticks then little sticks to try and start a fire – no luck here!



Michelle and Sian are please with their fire success



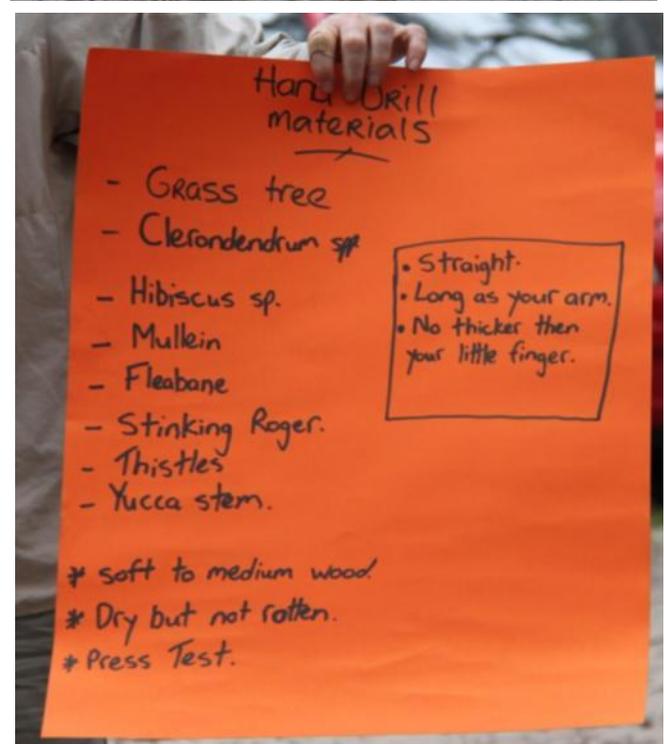
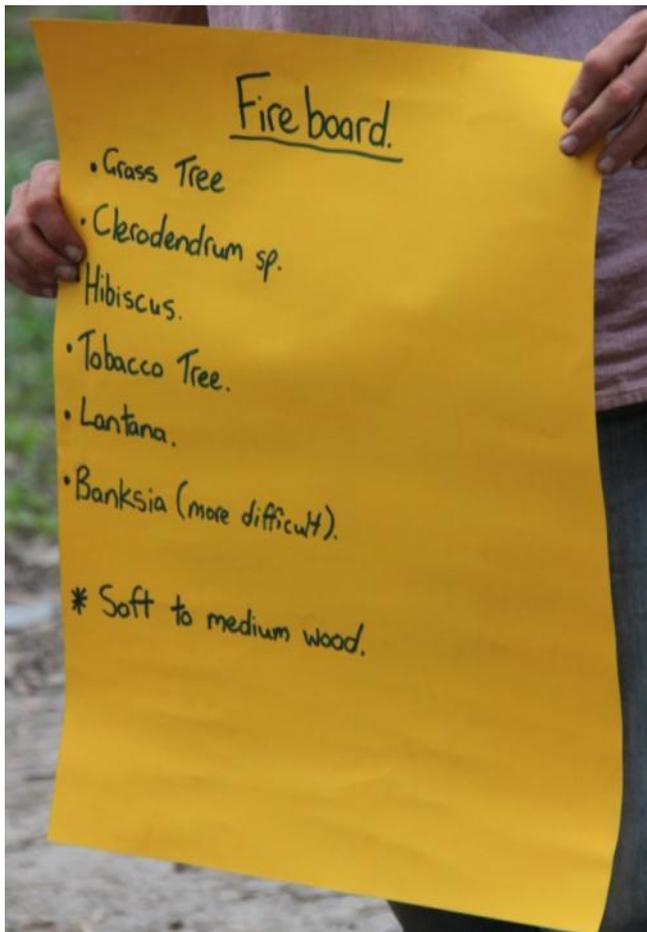
Oliver may look a little confused but the Aboriginal Land Council rangers seem to know what they are doing



Mark, Ferlin and Allan are pleased with their fire work together



The Maclean High boys have success



The types of natural materials used to start the fires



An unnoticed visitor passing through

Everyone is happy, the place is great. A couple of fun days had by all...

CONTACTS:

The Healthy Ecosystems Program

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) Healthy Ecosystems program continues to work towards ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate natural resource management - working with hundreds of rural landholders and peri-urban households to achieve healthy communities and healthy landscapes.

Contact: Waminda Parker | Healthy Ecosystems Program Manager
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The Firesticks Project

Funded by the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund, the Firesticks Project aims to re-invigorate the use of cultural burning by facilitating cultural learning pathways. Working within 6,700 hectares of Aboriginal owned lands on the NSW north coast and tablelands; Firesticks is using integrated fire, weed and pest management strategies to enhance ecosystem health, habitat condition and connectivity. Importantly, this project is enabling and empowering Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to work collectively towards resilient landscapes.

Contact: Oliver Costello | Firesticks Coordinator
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The Upper Coldstream Project

Funded by the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Biodiversity Fund, the Upper Coldstream Project is working with over 44 properties and impacting on over 20,000 hectares, this project seeks to holistically instigate landscape-scale rehabilitation and restoration activities across a highly significant coastal corridor for the NSW north coast. Underpinning effective landscape restoration includes relying on implementing collaborative fire management strategies that maintain and enhance the natural environment while reducing the risk of wildfire for this region.

Contact: Josh Keating | Upper Coldstream Coordinator
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The National Indigenous Science Education Program

Funded by the Inspiring Australia fund, the National Indigenous Science Education Program (NISEP) is an innovative, university based program, run collaboratively by Macquarie University staff, high school staff, Aboriginal communities and a growing number of partner organisations and universities. The main aim of NISEP is to provide secondary students, especially Indigenous students, with the motivation and skills to complete their high school studies and to open pathways to tertiary education.

Contact: A/Prof Joanne Jamie | 02 2 9850 8283 | joanne.jamie@mq.edu.au
David Harrington | Project Coordinator | 0434 916 778 | david.harrington@mq.edu.au



Fat Kangaroo

Dr Miles Holmes is an anthropologist who has spent the last 10 years working and consulting on Indigenous land issues, community governance, native title, sacred object repatriation and ethno-ecological research. He specialises in cultural land management and has worked throughout Australia for land councils, universities and government research agencies on the application of Indigenous land management in contemporary situations. He has also been studying and practicing bushcraft for 20 years and feels that the two pursuits have one thing in common - the value of connecting to your place.

Contact: Dr Miles Holmes | Director
| milesholmes@internode.on.net

