



Rainforest CRC

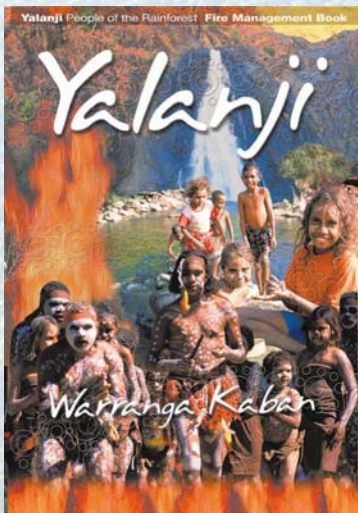
CRC Association Awards for Excellence in Innovation – 2005

Nomination for Innovation in Education & Training
and Public Outreach



Science meets Cultural Heritage: Yalanji-Warranga Kaban, Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book

Summary:



The Yalanji Fire Management Book (Image: S. Nowakowski)

Yalanji-Warranga Kaban. Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book has evolved from collaborative fire research between the Rainforest CRC and Yalanji Traditional Owners from the World Heritage listed Daintree rainforest. The book explores traditional natural resource management, transfers oral history into written words, both in English and – for the first time – in Yalanji language. The passing on of this intimate traditional knowledge in natural resource management will make a significant contribution to future generations.

The publication respects Indigenous intellectual and cultural property rights and is a unique and much needed example of “access and benefit sharing with Indigenous communities” as called for in the *Convention on Biological Diversity*. This beautiful book, published by Little Ramsay Press and launched on 20 December 2004 in Cairns, is proudly celebrated by the Yalanji People.

Award Criteria:

Education & training and public outreach activities that can demonstrate:

1. A novel product or program in education & training or technology transfer or public outreach activity that has contributed to the uptake and use of CRC research.

Yalanji Warranga Kaban. Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book has evolved from the collaborative fire research between Rainforest CRC researcher Dr Rosemary Hill and Yalanji Traditional Owners from the Daintree rainforest, part of Queensland’s Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and one of Australia’s biodiversity hotspots. The Aboriginal people of the wet tropics bioregion have a distinctive and unique rainforest culture, with special features in the material culture, languages and social organisations of the rainforest societies which set them apart.

This book is unique in many ways:

It is the first book ever published in Yalanji language. Exploring traditional natural resource management, the book transfers oral history into written word, both in English and Yalanji language – a symbol of cultural survival and evidence of the partnership with and trust granted to the Rainforest CRC personnel. The bi-lingual format is a novelty in the region. The passing on of this intimate traditional knowledge in natural resource management will make a significant contribution to future generations and will prove valuable not only for cultural and cross-cultural education but also for land managers.



Agnes Burchill sharing stories with the children. (Photo: S. Nowakowski)

Fire Management in the Wet Tropics of North Queensland is a resource management issue of growing relevance in the region’s protected area management. Yalanji people sharing their



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knowledge on Caring for Country can provide invaluable insight into traditional approaches and assist in progress towards sustainable rainforest management. The book demonstrates that the significance of fire for Yalanji people far exceeds controlled burns for landscape maintenance and hunting. Fire is presented as the “main source in bama life, second to water” and as a central element in food gathering, food preparation, arts and crafts, ceremonial and spiritual contexts.

Furthermore, this is the first book ever written *together* with Aboriginal Traditional Owners themselves on Aboriginal traditional fire management, a long overdue achievement given the comprehensive body of ecological and other literature on the subject. Other than a publication



Field work at Wujal Wujal. (Photo: S. Nowakowski)

“about” a people, this is a publication by a people about their cultural identity and care for their natural resources, told by their Elders in their own language – a unique product, which is a source of great pride for the Yalanji people. Uptake and use of CRC research in this project therefore has a different face than in mainstream scenarios: While the norm might be that researchers “bring science to the people” to educate them, in this case Yalanji People through collaborative research have “brought traditional knowledge to the science” with the offer to share it and the invitation to learn about Caring for Country. During this process, they have embraced the expertise of the

Rainforest CRC, which has also provided resources, in-kind support and funding opportunity to help build the capacity to create this product.

Upon the launch of *Yalanji Warranga Kaban*, the Management Committee has ensured the book’s distribution to all Yalanji families. This has particular significance in light of a previous history of researchers taking advantage of Yalanji traditional knowledge without sharing the benefits.

Across the world there has been little advance in “the access and benefit sharing from biodiversity for Indigenous communities” as called for in the Convention on Biological Diversity. This is a shining example of what can be achieved through collaboration and mutual respect.

2. Innovative quality that adds identifiable value / results / significant benefits to Australia, which meet the needs of recipients.

Rainforest CRC Program 1 applies innovative research to provide tools for the effective planning and management of sustainable development in tropical forest regions. Its Cultural Sustainability Project 1.5 was established to help develop policies, protocols and practical mechanisms for recognising Aboriginal People’s values, rights and responsibilities associated with rainforest environments and to establish key principles of culturally sustainable rainforest management.

Culturally sustainable rainforest management includes the cultural survival of its Indigenous people and the fostering of cross-cultural dialogue between traditional peoples, governmental and private land-managers and scientists. All of them will benefit from access to traditional knowledge on fire management.

In the Daintree National Park, land managers are concerned with establishing a fire management regime including vegetation communities for which only limited experience on



Edward Barney and Roy Gibson observe a fire. (Photo: S. Nowakowski)



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controlled burns exist. Project 1.5 has examined the potential of a fire protocol as a best practice model to bring customary and statutory law together in fire management between Yalanji people and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

This beautiful book – launched on 20 December 2004 in Cairns by Traditional Owners, Rainforest CRC, partner organisations and supporters – is proudly celebrated by the Yalanji People. For them it is not just a book but it is about their cultural identity and survival. The now recorded traditional cultural knowledge and practices will provide an invaluable tool for teaching language in school and for educating & training the young people on country. The community also takes pride in making traditional expertise available for cross-cultural processes with land managers, government, scientists, educators and the public, and (hopefully) through having their knowledge recognised.

One of the key innovations responsible for the successful partnership was the governance of the publishing process by a management committee established by the Traditional Owners, which ensured process and content to be culturally appropriate. Financial gains from the book-sale – e.g. at Bamanga Bubu Ngadimunku Inc's own tourism business "Kuku Yalanji Dreamtime Tours" at Mossman Gorge – are returned to the Yalanji People for language, culture and land management projects. This experience of ownership is particularly important due to previous experience of exploitation.



Management Committee members (from left): Edward Barney, Roy Gibson, Raymond Buchanan, Rosemary Hill, Kathleen Walker, Steven Nowakowski, Leah Talbot, Marilyn Wallace, Francis Walker, Doreen Ball and Eileen Walker (photo: S. Nowakowski).

3. Need for the CRC – the CRC is an essential element of the new development through the establishment of relationships, synergies between participants (2+2=5); collaboration is a key component.

The Rainforest CRC lead a partnership with the Cape York Land Council, Bamanga Bubu Ngadimunku, and Wujal Wujal Community Council to obtain funding from the Natural Heritage Trust of \$85,000 over a three-year period. Rainforest CRC Project 1.5 represents this partnership and has facilitated collaborative research into and the publication of Aboriginal fire management techniques in the Wet Tropics. The successful joint funding application for the Yalanji Fire Management Book also laid out the cultural protocols that would be followed. Furthermore, the Rainforest CRC has contributed additional funding, resources such as computers, camping equipment, vehicles, tape recorders and cameras, and in-kind support in form of Dr Hill's time three years as a Research Fellow at James Cook University.

Dr Rosemary Hill's collaborative research on "Culturally Sustainable Management" in her capacity of CRC project leader has been crucial for the development of this book.

Additional support came from the Australian Conservation Foundation, Bama Rainforest Aboriginal Corporation (Bama Wabu) Inc., the School of Tropical Environment Studies and Geography (TESAG) of James Cook University, Wet Tropics Management Authority, Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Community Council, and Photographer Steven Nowakowski & Little Ramsay Press. Contributions range from providing skills, expertise, facilitation, resources and artwork and have been made available generously.

Dr Hill has developed strong and trusting relationships with the Eastern Yalanji People during her work on collaborative fire management since 1995, which has made it possible to publish extensive amounts of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property despite a history of negative experiences in the area.



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The book project started in 2001, with the establishment of cultural protocols and the appointment of a Management Committee to oversee the project. The Management Committee appointed Dr Hill's masters student Leah Talbot, a Yalanji woman herself and recipient of a Rainforest CRC Aboriginal Postgraduate Research Scholarship, as their research assistant in the project. Without Rosemary's and Leah's research, commitment and trust from the community, this book would not have come together.

BAMANGA BUBU NGADIMUNKU INC

bama land from a long time ago

P.O. Box 171, Mossman Qld 4873
ABN: 26 904 810 679



Dr Anne Campbell,
Executive Manager, CRC Association
Engineering House
Unit 4 11 National Circuit
Barton ACT 2600

Re: CRC Awards for Excellence in Innovation
Dear Dr Campbell,

On behalf of the Bamanga Bubu Ndadimunku Inc, and specially our Community Rangers, I would like to strongly support the nomination of the book Yalanji Warranga Kaban, Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book, for the CRC Award for Excellence in Innovation.

The book is really important to us for many reasons. Community Rangers and other Yalanji people in Mossman have been working towards the book for many years. We started off trying to talk with the national parks and other government land managers about fire management a long time ago, but they didn't seem to really understand. About ten years ago, we started working together with the researcher to collect a lot of information about fire management from our Elders. We are very sad that so many of those Elders have passed away now, but at least we have all the information about fire management that was recorded during the research. Now we have a lot of this information in a book, all Yalanji people can find out about it and learn from those Elders who have passed on. We also think this book about Yalanji approaches to fire management will benefit the government land managers and help them understand our way of running the country from our law and culture. This is the first book about Aboriginal fire management in Australia actually written together with and by Aboriginal people.

We run our own tourism business at Mossman Gorge, "Kuku-Yalanji Dreamtime Tours", taking thousands of people on a walk through our rainforest and showing them Yalanji culture. Many of them want more information about Yalanji people, and so it will be great to be able to sell them the book. We will be able to use funds from the book to support our Community Rangers and their land management projects.

One of the best things about the book is the way that we all worked together on it. Researchers have come through our community before and collected lots of information, but we have never benefited from it. One researcher even made a film about our culture and then asked us to buy it off them for \$15000!!! The Yalanji Fire Book Management Committee made sure all Yalanji people's rights were respected. Every page and every word in the book has our agreement. The book also brought Yalanji people from Mossman and Wujal Wujal together in a good way.

We are really proud of the book and strongly support it for the Award.
Yours truly,

Edward Barney

Mr Edward Barney
Chairperson

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FEB-09-2005 WED 10:26 AM FROM:

FAX:

PAGE 2

Dr Anne Campbell,
Executive Manager, CRC Association
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Re: CRC Awards for Excellence in Innovation

Dear Dr Campbell,

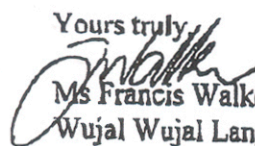
On behalf of the Wujal Wujal Language Group, I would like to strongly support the nomination of the book *Yalanji Warranga Kaban, Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book*, for the CRC Award for Excellence in Innovation.

This book is really important to Yalanji people, because it will help to keep our language, our culture, and our law alive. It's not just a book for us, it's about cultural survival. This is the first book ever to be published in Yalanji language. The Wujal Wujal Language Group was involved mainly through translating the English text into Yalanji language. We worked very hard to do this—although many of our old people are still strong speakers of Yalanji language, many of the words hadn't been written down before. We would like to acknowledge one of our leaders who passed away many years ago Norman Baird, who first wrote down a list of Yalanji words and their English meanings. We are honoured to be able to carry on his work. Most of the Elders featured in the book have passed away now so we were really grateful for the research that had recorded their stories and information about fire to put in this book.

The book has so many benefits for Yalanji people. We can use it in schools to help our children learn language. We can also use it to make sure all Yalanji people can know something about fire management, bush tucker, seasons, our history, and our important stories from the Ngujakura. WE can use the funds from the sale of the book to do more language projects. All Yalanji people are very proud of this book. We think the book also has many benefits for non-Aboriginal people. The book can help non-Aboriginal people understand that Yalanji people are the traditional owners of our rainforest country, and that we have our own ways of managing fire, our own culture, language and laws. We think the book can also show other researchers how to work respectfully with Aboriginal people, in a way that benefits Aboriginal people as well as the researchers.

We hope the book will be more broadly recognised through this award.

Yours truly,


Ms Francis Walker
Wujal Wujal Language Group



Cape York Land Council

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17 February 2005

Dr Anne Campbell
Executive Manager – CRC Association
C/- CRC Rainforest, Cairns

Dear Dr Campbell

RE: CRC – Awards for Excellence in Innovation - 2005

We provide this letter in support of the nomination by the Rainforest CRC to put forward the 'Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book' for an Award of Excellence in Innovation in the category of 'Education and Training and Public Outreach'.

The 'Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book' is replete with useful and interesting information about one of the oldest cultures on earth. We congratulate all those involved in the project.

The book has a very unique format that makes it accessible to both, Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people. The use of detailed and beautiful photographs depicting the Kuku Yalanji People and their culture provides readers with a fantastic visual experience. Through text and photographs a much larger story is being told about the unfathomable depth of knowledge traditional owners have and Kuku Yalanji Peoples' strength and courage to continue to struggle for respect and recognition of their rightful role as natural resource managers of their traditional country.

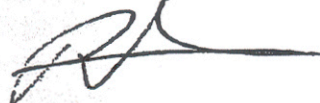
In addition to being accessible to both the general public and scientific community it will also prove to be extremely beneficial as a teaching resource for Kuku Yalanji People due to its publication in both English and *Kuku Yalanji*.

Many people have contributed to this book. Senior Yalanji elders were very keen to work with the Yalanji committee to pass on their knowledge to the younger Yalanji people and generously with non-Yalanji People. We congratulate the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people involved for their vision, leadership and perseverance. We also commend CRC, particularly the dedicated work of Dr Rosemary Hill and Ms Leah Talbot, and the Yalanji committee for putting in the extra time and effort to *develop appropriate research protocols* that have resulted in this publication receiving

tremendous support from Yalanji people as well as setting a benchmark for future research projects.

Cape York Land Council is extremely proud to have supported Rainforest CRC and Yalanji People in this project and believe this project is truly deserving of an Award of Excellence in Innovation.

Yours sincerely
CAPE YORK LAND COUNCIL



RICHIE AHMAT
Executive Director

Aboriginal Rainforest Council Inc. ARC

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Rainforest CRC
Birgit Kuehn
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16th February 2005

Re: Letter of Support for the Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book – *Yalanji Warranga Kaban*, to be nominated for the 'CRC Association Awards for Excellence in Innovation 2005 in category B: Innovation in education & training and public outreach activities.

We the Traditional Owners of the ARC support the nomination of the Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book – *Yalanji Warranga Kaban*, to be nominated for the 'CRC Association Awards for Excellence in Innovation 2005 in category B: Innovation in education & training and public outreach activities.

The Aboriginal Rainforest Council is the peak Rainforest Aboriginal organisation, which represents the views of the 18 recognised Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups in land management and cultural heritage within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA). Representatives of the 18 tribal groups form the ARC Management Committee.

The delegates of the ARC committee celebrate the books recognition and importance of strengthening Aboriginal peoples knowledge systems and language, transferring that knowledge to the next generation before it is lost.

The Yalanji book assists readers in bridging the gap to think more widely about the role of Aboriginal knowledge in land management both the tangible and intangible aspects of fire management. The book successfully emphasizes the role that cultural landscapes play in the holistic management of country in the Wet Tropics, and how this knowledge is captured in ceremonies, activities, customs, beliefs, stories and identity and applied to country in a beneficial way.

Our knowledge base is vital, dynamic and evolving. Our knowledge systems have been under threat for the past two centuries and the social systems that support them have been seriously undermined.

The Yalanji Book is an excellent example of recovery and recording of Aboriginal knowledge, it highlights the need for respect and revitalization of Aboriginal culture in

today's natural resource management planning. The book outlines the need for greater inclusion of Aboriginal people in managing their vulnerable cultural resources to maintain and maximise their benefit to the community, reinforce Aboriginal knowledge systems, affirm dignity, stimulate inter-generational dialogue about knowledge and strengthen community control over natural and cultural resources. Enabling Aboriginal groups to cultivate dialogue between today's contemporary cultures providing for greater cross cultural awareness within the wider community.

This book will assist others in the future in education, structuring of research, developing further interpretive texts, assist in determining development controls and management decisions and assist in justifying cultural significance in fire management to responsible authorities and provide environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits to Yalanji people.

The ARC takes great pleasure in fully endorsing the Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book – *Yalanji Warranga Kaban*, to be nominated for the 'CRC Association Awards for Excellence in Innovation 2005' providing environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits to the Yalanji and associated communities in the region.

Yours sincerely



ARC Chairperson Russell Butler



Executive Officer Michelle Cochrane



WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Your Ref:

Enquiries To: Nigel Hedgcock

Our Ref:

Telephone: 07 4052 0526

16 February 2005

Dr Anne Campbell
Executive Manager
CRC Association Engineering House
Unit 4, 11 National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600

Dear Dr. Campbell

CRC ASSOCIATION AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION 2005

The Wet Tropics Management Authority would like to offer its strong support for the Rainforest CRC's nomination of *Yalanji Warranga Kaban; Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book* for the CRC Association's Awards for Excellence in Innovation 2005.

The Authority is the statutory body responsible for the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA) and has been a partner of the Rainforest CRC since its inception. Working collaboratively with Rainforest Aboriginal people is a major focus of the Authority and we have recently completed negotiations with the 18 tribal groups of the WHA for more meaningful Rainforest Aboriginal involvement in management of the WTWHA.

The Rainforest CRC has collaborated with a number of tribal groups across the WTWHA on projects which both empower Rainforest Aboriginal people and assist them in preserving their culture. *Yalanji Warranga Kaban* demonstrates the strength of collaboration between researchers who utilise culturally appropriate techniques, and Traditional Owners who wish to preserve in writing, elements of their culture. We highly commend and applaud the collaboration between Eastern Yalanji Traditional Owners and CRC researchers, Dr. Rosemary Hill and Ms. Leah Talbot, on the production of *Yalanji Warranga Kaban*. This innovative book illustrates to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that the culture of Eastern Yalanji is vibrant, alive and strong. It demonstrates that the backbone of Aboriginal culture – language – is an integral key to preserving cultural knowledge and practices, and in educating others about culture. This publication is truly a community production bringing together thousands of years of cultural knowledge and years of research in fire management, that will be readily transferred to present and future generations for sustainable management of cultural and natural resources.

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The Wet Tropics Management Authority takes great pleasure in recommending the Rainforest CRC for their work on *Yalanji Warranga Kaban, Yalanji People of the Rainforest Fire Management Book*. We look forward to the development of similar projects whereby Rainforest Aboriginal people are empowered and the wider community are educated about Rainforest Aboriginal culture.

Yours sincerely



Nigel Hedgcock
Manager
Aboriginal Resource Management Program

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