

Barron Falls Walking Trail Cultural Heritage Report



September 2019



BULUWAI
LAND PEOPLE CULTURE WATER FLORA FAUNA ARTEFACTS
**INDIGENOUS
CORPORATION**

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Rainforest Aboriginal People, and other Australian Indigenous First Nations People, have been recorded across the rugged continental Australian landscapes for at least 65,000 years.

In the tropical rainforests of Far North Queensland (Wet Tropics) the native food forests, tropical reefs and traversing land to sea rivers and streams provided an ideal habitat for the Bama *Rainforest Aboriginal People* to live an abundant lifestyle.

Bama have thrived in this ancient rainforest as Earth’s glaciations have ebbed and flowed through millennia. The Wet Tropics has afforded a relatively stable micro-habitat for the numerous snapshots of evolutionary time for an extraordinary number of species, including the Bama, an ancient modern human who live in harmony with their bountiful natural environment.

What is Aboriginal Cultural Heritage?

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) is responsible for administering the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 and the Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (the Acts).

The main purpose of the Acts is to provide effective recognition, protection and conservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage.

The Acts define Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage as anything that is:

- a significant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander area in Queensland; or
- a significant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander object in Queensland; or
- evidence of archaeological or historic significance, of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander occupation of an area of Queensland.

An area or object is significant because of either or both of the following:

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tradition.
- The history including contemporary history of any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander party for the area.

The Acts:

- provide blanket protection of areas and objects of traditional, customary, and archaeological significance
- recognise the key role of Traditional Owners in cultural heritage matters
- establish practical and flexible processes for dealing with cultural heritage in a timely manner.

<https://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-cultural-heritage/what-cultural-heritage>

Buluwai land and waters vision

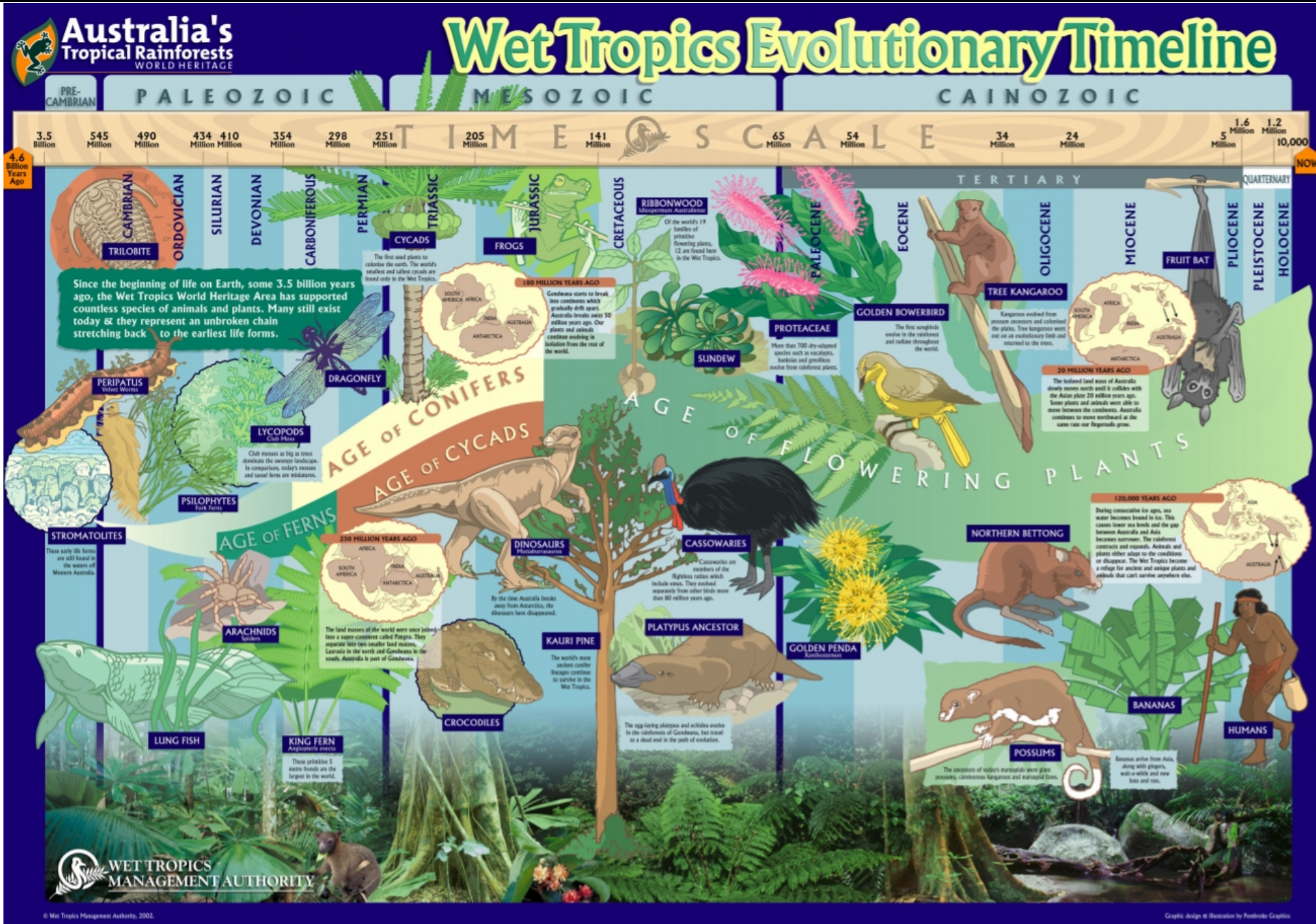
Our land and waters is of great importance to all our people, since time began, when our ancestors followed the footpaths of spiritual totem cassowary through the dense Wet Tropics Rainforests of Far North Queensland.

Our ancestors, only three generations ago born in the wild, drank directly from fresh streams that traverse the vast mountainous landscapes, fed on the bountiful fruits of the forest and fished a vast array of river and coastal foods.

We acknowledge all brothers and sisters on adjoining tribal lands to join with us to protect the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, today what remains of the oldest rainforest on Earth, our Bama Bulmba *homelands*.

Through the massacre-times our connection to country has never been broken and endures today as we walk in the footsteps of our ancestors – in peace and harmony with the peoples, lands, waters and creatures.

We are the cultural custodians who carry our stories of this special place into the future – to preserve the forest and our cultural knowledge so that generations to come will learn about the oldest continuous culture on Earth – the short-statured Bama *Rainforest Aboriginal People*.



https://www.wettropics.gov.au/site/user-assets/docs/timeline_a3.pdf

ARCHAEOLOGY
CULTURAL ARTEFACTS,
DREAMTIME STORIES,
MASSACRE STUDIES

Gathering cultural artefacts on Buluwai tribal lands



Buluwai Story - Great Flood

Buluwai Dreamtime Stories – video series



Buluwai rock art site – Bunda Dilbandji *Davies Creek*



Buluwai nutcracker stone, Kuranda

Documentation of cultural artefacts including

- Rock art sites – multiple galleries preserved
- Footpaths - extensive regional trails over broad landscapes
- Artefacts (tools) - grinding / nutcracker stones, stone axes, flint tools, spearheads
- Tree scars – track marking, tribal spirit markings, artefact manufacture, resin collection
- Bora ground (campsite) - compacted grounds, artefacts, fireplace
- Bora ground (worksite) - underground springs, modified plant species for building materials, artefacts, stone structures in creeks, engraving on stones,
- Sacred sites including birthing, initiation and burial sites, later massacre sites, storyplaces
- Land features/ monuments - eg. Ulurru *Ayers Rock*, locally *Din Din Barron Falls*, *Djuludjulu Pendas*, *Bunda Dilbandji Bare Hill*, *Dammrri Bada Glacier Rock*
- Water features/ storywaters - tribal boundaries, staple protein species eg. *Bana Waruu Barron River*, *Clohesy River*, *River People* – lived off the river resources



ARCHAEOLOGY
CULTURAL ARTEFACTS,
DREAMTIME STORIES,
MASSACRE STUDIES

**Regional
Massacre Map**

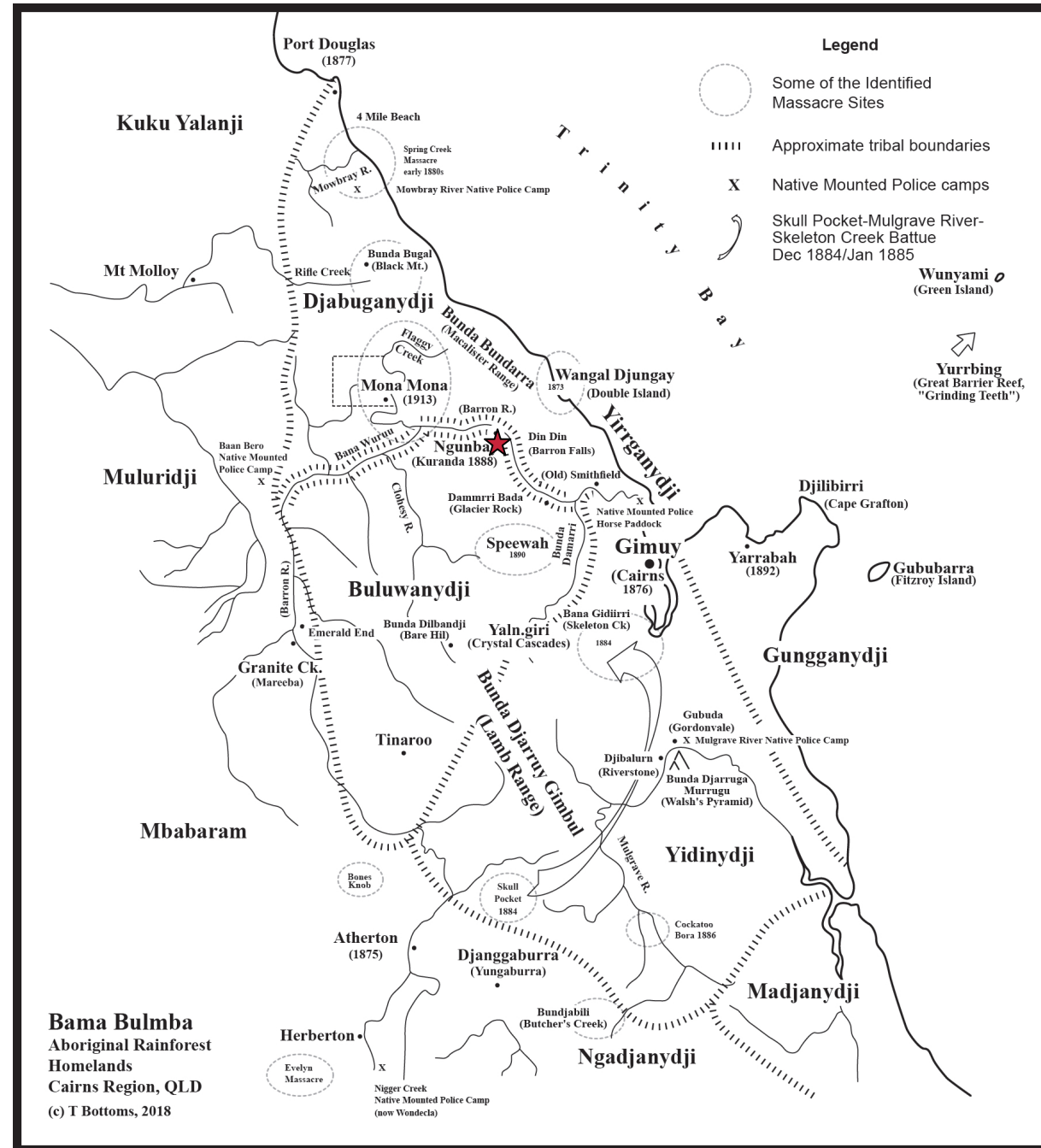
★ **Barron Falls Walking Trail**

Kuranda was established 1888 and the Speewah Massacre occurred 1890.

Great grandfather Tji Awan and his family were forcibly removed from their Bulmba *homelands* in 1916 and incarcerated at nearby Mona Mona Mission on Tjapukai tribal lands.



Bama Buluwandji men and boys, TJI AWAN *Toby Brim* third from left
Photograph taken Barron Falls Lookout Area



ARCHAEOLOGY
 CULTURAL ARTEFACTS,
 DREAMTIME STORIES,
 MASSACRE STUDIES

Buluwai projects continue with Massacre Studies

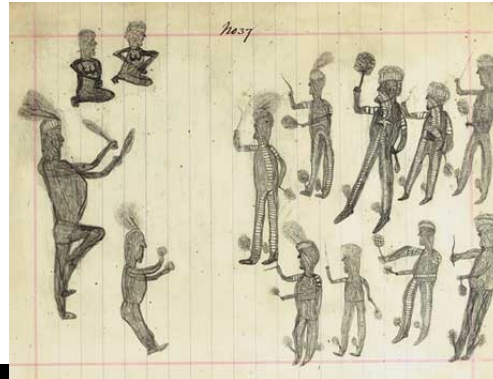
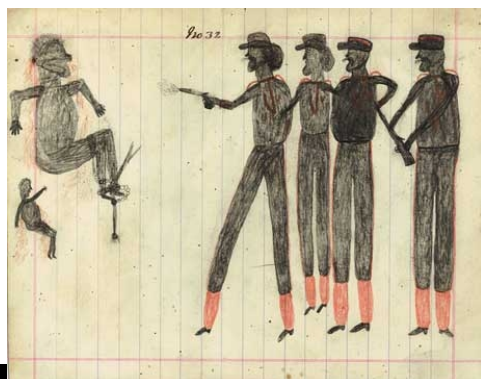
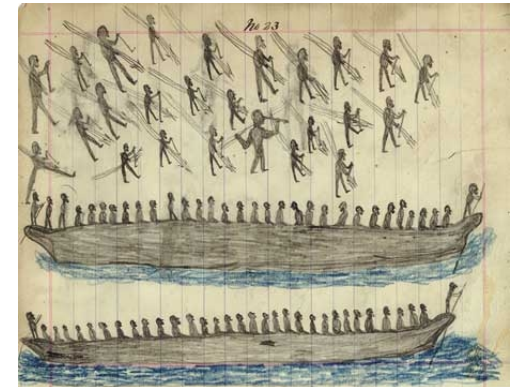
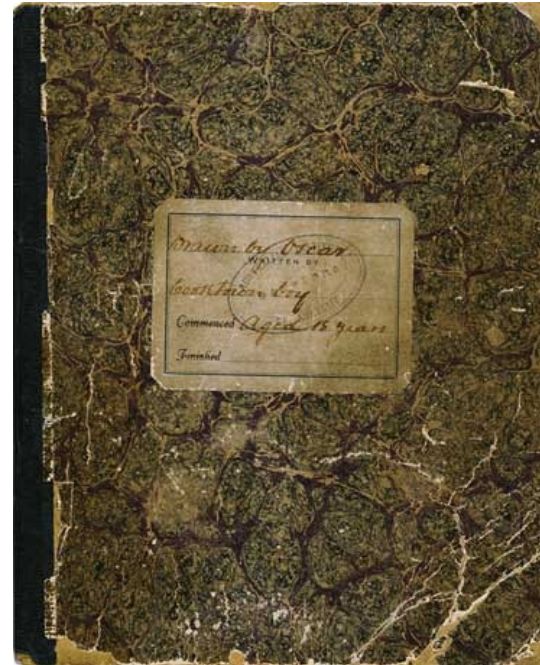
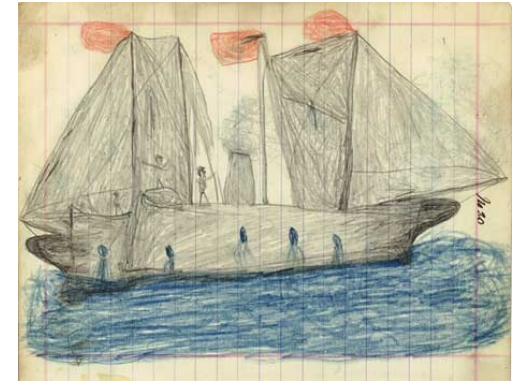
Oscar's Sketchbook is a rare document drawn by 15 year old Oscar with books and pencils provided to him by his captor at Cooktown, Far North Queensland.

The drawings give a child's view of the changing times; a glimpse into the *frontier wars* and *massacre times*.

Oscar, Buluwandji ancestor, grew up on the colonial frontier where the land wars were fought and lost by the small-statured, forest-dwelling Bama *Rainforest Aboriginal People*.

The Bama tribes fought back against the Settlers as they felled all the old-growth food trees, fenced paddocks for pasture, drained the rivers of fish, and took up their leases from coast to tablelands.

Oscar, stolen as a child after his family was *dispersed*, drew what he saw right there in front of him, in the 1880's. In a simple colour palette he drew the unfolding end for his people and culture for all to see.



LANDS, WATERS,
FLORA & FAUNA

TOTEM SPECIES,
THREATENED SPECIES,
MANAGEMENT OF BROAD
INTEGRATED LANDSCAPES

Environmental study and conservation of
Wet Tropics land and water ecosystems

Bama Rainforest Aboriginal People are intricately connected to the Wet Tropics native ecosystems by 65,000 years plus of human civilisation that included localised food systems, tool making, visual and performance art, trading systems, medicines, astronomy, language and music.



The Bama have a deep cultural knowledge of the wild rivers and animals of their homelands handed from one generation to the next with a culturally integrated animal-totem catalogue system.

Naturally, Bama have a keen understanding of broad landscapes, the interactions of these biodiverse ecosystems including plant and animal species. Traditional Owners have a working knowledge of their country and how best to manage the natural landscapes.



Bundarra -Buluwai spiritual totem
- all life comes from the cassowary egg

CARING
FOR COUNTRY
ONGOING
PARTNERSHIPS

Our organisation is striving to improve opportunities for working on country by developing partnerships with positive outcomes for all

TJI AWAN *Toby Brim's* great grandson Willie Brim (picture top right) and extended family (pictured below right) are Buluwandji Traditional Owners of lands and waters extending south from the banks of the Barron River Biboorah to Kuranda, east down to Redlynch Valley, west to Mareeba and south to Tinaroo.

The spiritual centre of these lands is Bunda Dilbandji today called *Bare Hill Conservation* and *Davies Creek National Parks*.

The Buluwai Indigenous Corporation (BIC) are broadening opportunities for the next generation to take management of our tribal lands through partnerships with associated bodies. We welcome opportunities to create real jobs for our people, that support our important conservation work on Buluwai lands and imbue pride for our young men and women working on country in tourism and land management (rangers) roles.

We aim to create enduring relationships to protect, enhance and present our Bama Bulmba *homelands*, in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and share our Buluwai cultural knowledge.



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Buluwai Cultural Custodian, Traditional Owner, Buluwandji Elder Willie Brim

Winner of the Cassowary Award 2005 for Nature-based Tourism as a leader in the presentation of World Heritage Rainforest Aboriginal values through cultural tourism.

Winner of individual Gnunkai Award 2006 for his exceptional commitment and contribution to indigenous tourism.

Willie Brim has dedicated his life to the preservation of his people’s culture through dance, music and holding cultural knowledge taught to him as a young man, walking the country with his Uncle Warren, learning the story places of his ancestors.

Willie was instrumental in the evolution of the Tjapukai Dance Theatre in 1987 and the first Indigenous Australians to tour the world performing cultural theatre. For nearly a decade *Kuranda was the place* to visit for an authentic Aboriginal cultural theatre performance and the troupe wowed Thousands with their daily shows.

In 1996 the business was relocated to the current Smithfield site. This move left Kuranda bereft of the tourism numbers of previous years and the village has slowly wound down from that exhilarating era over 20 years ago.

The intervening years has seen Willie continue his work preserving and sharing cultural knowledge with researchers, writers and videographers from around the world.

His performance career has continued throughout these years with notable successes in the Mantaka and Zennith music outfits. Willie enjoys sharing his songs about spirituality, love of his country, cultural values, and still performs regularly.

