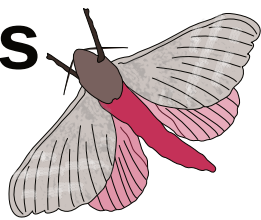


# In Brief : Cairns Regional Claim Native Title Tribes



In Cairns region, the Frontier Wars started over 80 years after the first British ship arrived in Sydney 1788; then taking decades for the colonial frontier to move up through Queensland to reach the far north. Atherton 1875, Cairns 1876, Port Douglas 1877, Emerald End 1877 and Kuranda 1888 townships were "Established" by the colonial invaders, displacing the former settlements of Bama people across the region. See T.Bottoms Bama Bulmba (Aboriginal Rainforest Homelands) 2018 map below.



Bama families at Mona Mona Mission, c \_\_\_\_

**Decades of Frontier Wars** saw the massacre of most Bama living from coast to tablelands: by disease, guns, poison, fire and imprisonment. The Bama population was reduced to only hundreds, the survivors then forcibly removed from their homelands and incarcerated at Yarrabah 1893 and Mona Mona 1913 Aboriginal Missions.

**From 1913 Mona Mona Mission**, Djabugay country north of Kuranda, was home to people from Djabugay and neighbouring Kuku Yalanji, Muluridgi, Buluwai, Yirrgay, Gunggay, Yidindji, Ngadjan and Mbabaram tribes. The mission was repository for people surviving the massacres and remained open for generations (49 years), finally closed it's dormitories in 1962 due to plans for damming Flaggy Creek.

The generational dislocation and disruption of Bama families and tribal culture was catastrophic. When the mission closed, the *Mona Mona Descendants* were relocated to Kuranda, Koah and Mareeba where the following generations continue to reside.

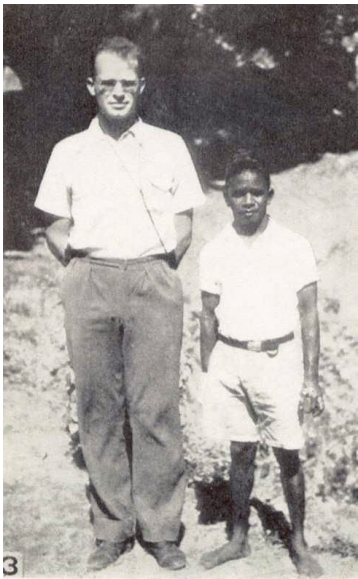
**In 1938-9 Norman Tindale and Joseph Birdsell** travelled with their wives by truck on an expedition from the SA Museum to visit and record an anthropological *time capsule* of 150 Aboriginal tribes across Australia. Tindale created genealogies of Aboriginal families, for up to three generations, and recorded the Bama people living at Mona Mona.

**In the Wet Tropics rainforest**, Joseph Birdsell noted a separate grouping where *"Physical characteristics of the Barrinean type, in addition to diminutive stature, include the un-Australian characteristic of crisp curly hair."* The Ngatjan tribe were living at Lakes Barrine and Eacham on the tablelands.

**The BIRDSELL GROUPING** (12 tribes of short-statured/pygmy people): *Ngatjan, Mamu, Wanjuru, Tjapukai, Barbaram, Idindji, Kongkandji, Buluwai, Djiru, Djirubal, Gulngai, Keramai*

**In 2012, this grouping was recognised in the World Heritage listing as Aboriginal Rainforest People:**

Joseph Birdsell, height 186cm, with twenty-four-year-old male of the Kongkandji tribe, height 140cm. Taken at Mona Mona Mission, 1938



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**Special thank you to FNQ historian Timothy Bottoms for preserving extensive Bama history in books, maps, videos and interviews.**

Short-statured Bama men centre, at Mona Mona Mission, c \_\_\_\_



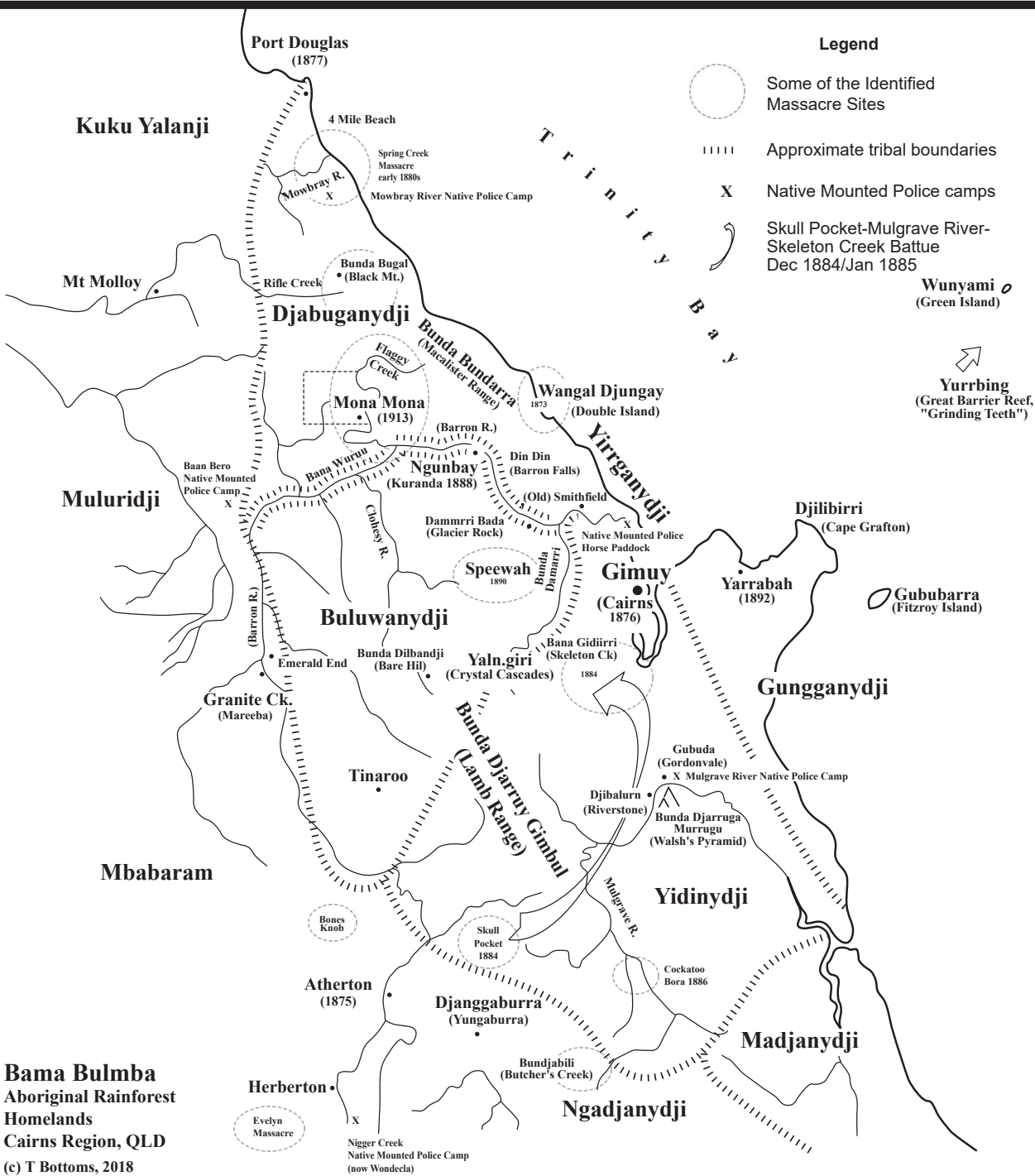
SIDE  
A

## Wet Tropics National Heritage listed for Indigenous heritage values

The Aboriginal Rainforest Peoples of the Wet Tropics of Queensland have lived continuously in the rainforest environment for at least [6]5,000 years and this is the only place in Australia where Aboriginal peoples have permanently inhabited a tropical rainforest environment.

The Aboriginal Rainforest Peoples developed a distinctive cultural heritage determined by their dreamtime and creation stories and their traditional food gathering, processing and land management techniques.

Reliance on their traditions helped them survive in this at times inhospitable environment. The distinctiveness of the traditions and technical innovation and expertise needed to process and prepare toxic plants as food and their uses of fire is of outstanding heritage value to the nation and are now protected for future generations under national environmental law.

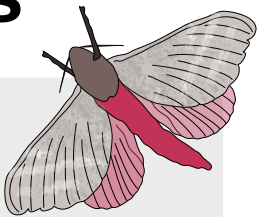


**In Brief: Cairns Regional Claim Native Title Sides A/B** is part of the series *Aboriginal Rainforest Peoples History Project*.

Please email [buluwai.corp@gmail.com](mailto:buluwai.corp@gmail.com) for enquiries, suggestions, correctons or further information.



# In Brief : Cairns Regional Claim Native Title Tribes



**BULURRU DREAMING GROUPING** (six tribes with Bulurru as their creator god):  
*Djabugay, Yirrgay, Buluwai, Gunggay, Yidindji, Ngadjan*

In earlier tribal language work it was identified that six neighbouring tribes shared the names and dreamtime stories of the creator god Bulurru. These geographic tribal neighbours shared boundaries, marriages, trade, ceremonies, celebrations, sacred sites, resources, knowledge, traditions, rites and lores.

The Wet Tropics landscapes are rich in biodiversity provided bountiful land, river and sea creatures for eating along with rich rainforest fruits. The landscapes also provided plant medicines, fibres for weaving and timbers for tools. The Aboriginal Rainforest People experienced extended periods of neighbourly peace and cooperation, enough to develop fully formed tribal lores, ornate tribal dress, elaborate stories and ceremonies, and to conduct a society that had endured for at least 65,000 years\*.

Today, the Bulurru tribal groups are working together, with their corporations and Native Title arrangements, across the bioregion to bring prosperity to future generations. The Frontier Wars and colonisation of ancient Sahul (Australia) were a brutal episode in the British Empire’s history. The survivors stand strong today – working together as one family – to look after country for the benefit of all who love the lands and waters of the Wet Tropics and choose to call this special place home.

SIDE  
B

**CAIRNS REGIONAL CLAIM GROUPING** (three tribes for Native Title): *Djabugay, Yirrgay, Buluwai*  
(The CRC native title claim group also includes people who may identify as Nyakali and Guluy)

DJABUGAY

Djabugay tribal lands and waters north of the Barron River to Port Douglas and west to the ranges were heavily logged during colonisation, removing all accessible old growth timbers and effectively decimating Bama’s natural rainforest habitat. The scant survivors were moved from their family lands on Djabugay country to Mona Mona Mission in 1913.

Today on Djabugay country where logging tracks still traverse the landscape, forestry projects continue in Kuranda State Forest, unabated by the adjacent World Heritage listing in 1988. A small community of *Mona Mona Descendants* continue to live on the land at Flaggy Creek.

Djabugay Native Title Aboriginal Corporation manage the Barron Gorge Native Title. Cairns Regional Claim Native Title is progressing with Tyrone Cannon named as Djabugay representative (a corporation would be more effective to manage Native Title?).

Djabugay spokesperson is \_\_\_\_\_, with next generation \_\_\_\_\_.

YIRRGAY

Coastal Yirrgay tribal lands and seas from Port Douglas to Cairns on the lowlands succumbed to the invasion early on, and were close to extinction by the end of the 19th century, leaving few survivors when the missions opened in FNQ. *William Parry-Okeden, in a short report on Queensland aborigines written in his capacity as Police Commissioner, wrote in 1897[7] that he counted 6 Yettkie, a name now thought to refer to a remnant of the Irukandji.[4]*

Today, the Singleton extended family and Yirrganydji Gurabana Aboriginal Corporation manage Native Title. Jeanette Singleton is named representative on Cairns Regional Claim Native Title. Yirrgandji spokesperson is Jeanette Singleton, with next generation Gavin Singleton.

BULUWAI

South of the Barron River the Buluwai tribal lands and waters yielded to rapid deforestation, fences and cattle: first coming west from Atherton and Emerald End, east from Cairns on the railway, and then Kuranda. One by one, the Bama Bora Grounds (rainforest pockets, work and camp sites) were taken over and “selectors” given the land.

The National Park area of Stoney Creek Gorge escarpment behind Kuranda / Speewah is where Katjiraka (Taipain) clan maintained the last Bama stronghold: only possible in this treacherous Wet Tropics gorge landscape where few could reach, and land with topography that few wanted.


Tourist walks feature “Toby’s Lookout” and “The Kauris” (Toby’s camp site) and today mark the places where everyday Bama life had thrived since the beginning of time.

But just over a century ago, Toby watched from his lookout on the ridge, season on season, decade after decade, down the valley to Caravonica, to the coast from Yorkney’s Knob to the mouth of the Barron River, watching the world change and hearing the stories of Bama Resistance losing ground. During these *killing times*, Toby in his prime, lost his eldest brother and three sisters to the frontier, his remaining brother Dick accused of murder. For Toby his options were dwindling.

In 1916, Toby Brim, his wife Annie and their third son Cecil were safely escorted by Speewah neighbours, the Veivers brothers, to Mona Mona Mission on Djabugay country. They refused mission accommodation, and instead chose to build a Bama camp on the outskirts, where they lived out their lives until Annie passed, then Toby passed in 1941, aged 74.

Today, the Brim extended family and Buluwai Indigenous Corporation manage Native Title. Willie Brim is named representative on Cairns Regional Claim.

Buluwai spokesperson is William C Brim (Willie), next generation William A Brim (Billy).  
See Buluwai:Katjarinka Clan Family Tree for more information.



**BULUWAI**  
INDIGENOUS CORPORATION

*In Brief: Cairns Regional Claim Native Title Sides A/B is part of the series Aboriginal Rainforest Peoples History Project.*

*Please email [buluwai.corp@gmail.com](mailto:buluwai.corp@gmail.com) for enquiries, suggestions, correctons or further information.*

**DJABUGAY / TJAPUKAI / DJABUGANJDJI**  
TINDALE TRIBAL MAP Catalogue Ref: (Y106) (Qld SE55-01)  
Language/Group: Djabugay / Tjapukai / Djabuganjdji language  
Language/Group: Djabugay / Tjapukai / Djabuganjdji people

**\* created to manage the Barron Gorge Native Title**  
djabugay Native Tribal Aboriginal Corporation (DNTAC) RNTBC  
Registered 16/06/2004, ICN 4358  
Directors: Rhonda Duffin, Christopher Richardson, Delvene Richards, Errol Hunter, Rhonda Brim, William Duffin  
Contact: [administration@djabugay.org.au](mailto:administration@djabugay.org.au)

**YIRRGAY / YIRRGANYDJI / IRUKANDJI**  
TINDALE TRIBAL MAP Catalogue Ref: (Y111) (Qld SE55-02)  
Language/Group: Yirgay language  
Language/Group: Yirrganydji / Yirgay people

**Yirrganydji Gurabana Aboriginal Corporation (YGAC)**  
Registered 21/01/2004, IUCN 4314  
Directors: Denise Singleton, Gavin Singleton (Jnr), Jeanette Singleton, Mercy Baird, Patricia Singleton  
Contact: [yirrganydjigurabana@gmail.com](mailto:yirrganydjigurabana@gmail.com)

**BULUWANDJI / BULWAY / BULUWAI**  
TINDALE TRIBAL MAP Catalogue Ref: (Y110) (Qld SE55-01)  
Language/Group: Buluwandji people  
Language/Group: Bulway language

**\*created to manage Buluwai tribal lands**  
Buluwai Indigenous Corporation (BIC)  
Registered 13/7/2018, IUCN 8867  
Directors: Diane Patricia Brim, Earl Gregory Hobbler, Ian Cecil Cannon, William Alan Brim, William Cecil Brim  
Contact: [buluwai.corp@gmail.com](mailto:buluwai.corp@gmail.com)

