



QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL

The Voice of Tourism

Indigenous Employer & Employee Case Studies

June 2013



**Queensland
Government**

QTIC would like to acknowledge funding provided by the Queensland Government to support the revision of the resource.

Introduction

Indigenous people continue to play an integral role in Queensland's tourism industry landscape. The following stories highlight both individuals and teams' achievements in a particularly competitive and challenging environment.

Enjoy the 2013 installment of Queensland Tourism Industry Council's 'Case Studies'.

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HOUSE OF JOY

Acknowledgements. The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) wishes to thank the following organisations for their contribution to this document: Coolgaree Bay Bistro, Industry Accreditation, Capta Group, Yurri Muntha Café, Minjerribah Camping, Mossman Gorge Centre

This document was designed for on screen reading. Please think of our great land before printing.

Coolgaree Bay Bistro

Building Communities

Coolgaree Bay Bistro commenced trading on 4 October 2012 and is centrally located on Palm Island.

Palm Island is predominately an Indigenous settlement and is situated some sixty five kilometres north - west of Townsville in tropical northern Queensland.

It is a remote and isolated community and has had a somewhat chequered past.

However, the establishment of this facility, other infrastructure, a committed Mayor, Councillors and Council staff to economic development, has seen a transformation that all and sundry, can and are, extremely proud of.

The 'brain child' of ex Information Technology expert, Shane Stratton, the Bistro has become a meeting place for the local Indigenous population and the preferred employer on the Island.

The operation was made possible through a grant from the Palm Island Council and in a 'fashion' is an up market replacement for the island canteen that ceased operation in 2008.

It is owned by the Council and operated under a lease arrangement and serves anywhere between 200 and 250 meals per day.

The menu reflects a conscious effort to educate Indigenous people in healthy eating habits and is structured around a balance of all five food groups.

There is a positive 'feel' and confidence on Palm Island...

Shane reflects on the culture of the business, 'We have created a competitive workplace, an environment where employees understand the importance of customer - not a means to an end, but an opportunity to create and reaffirm relationships'.

'The Bistro is a place where everyone is given a chance. Give and take make up a large portion of our daily mantra - the employees here really want to work and forge a career pathway in food and beverage'.



'We have never had the need to advertise for employees, the Palm Island grapevine works very quickly and the available positions are filled in hours'.

The facility is dual purpose, a bustling Bistro by day and a commercial kitchen to the adjacent licenced premise by night.

Coolgaree Bay Bistro employs seven permanent and four casual Indigenous people as part of the team that delivers seven day a week service to the resident population of around four thousand people.

Multi - skill 'on the job' training underpins Shane's engagement strategy with the staff. He sees his overall role as the guide and mentor for the new employees and empowerment as the methodology best suited for the experienced crew.

Furthermore, he believes an inclusive approach helps identify leadership talent and keeps everybody on track, in the 'know' and moving in the same direction. The staff members are particularly reliable, honest and outwardly promote a cohesive team environment.

The Coolgaree Beach Bistro also provides work experience placements for the local Community Development Program (CDP). This has enabled participants to remain local and eliminates the need to leave family and friends support networks to travel to Townsville and beyond for crucial work experience.

Specific training has been identified and implemented for those seeking management opportunities.

Shane Stratton's closing remarks capture the essence of the community impact the Coolgaree Beach Bistro has had on the people of Palm Island, 'A place has been created that is highly respected and where all people are acknowledged and welcomed. It is place to be proud of, a place for locals to learn new skills and a place where locals can call home'.

Industry Accreditation

Connecting to Country

Dean Nulty is a non - Indigenous, fifty two years young trainer of Indigenous people who lives in north Queensland and works in the Wet Tropics and Cape York regions of the state.

By his own admission, the body may be beginning to falter, but the 'stuff' between the ears is still going fine, thank you very much.

A forty five minute conversation with Dean is both refreshing and enlightening. You cannot help but be caught up in his passion for his work, his understanding of his craft and the respect for the people he has had the privilege of coming into contact with.

An experience base of ten years in tour guiding, throughout the northern extremities of Australia, has provided the launching pad for a successful shift into the training arena.

Dean and Jacqui Conway's training organisation, Industry Accreditation, delivers Certificates III and IV in Tourism Guiding for future and existing enterprises.

Unlike the majority of traditional classroom training delivery, he believes that the best way to connect with Indigenous people is to teach skill sets on country and most importantly in their own environment.

This sensible approach creates the opportunity to show case the Indigenous culture, enables first - hand research aspects of particular individual clan nuances and capture the thoughts and stories of the Traditional Owners.

'Indigenous people read the landscape the way others read a book'.

As Dean explains further, 'It is all about being comfortable in the environment and having a positive training attitude. Open and honest communication at all times - walking the walk. Using the 'Elder's' knowledge base to keep the culture alive. Establishing trust and showing respect for people who have been on this land for sixty thousand years. I do not see colours, I see people'.



Industry Accreditation

Connecting to Country

After four years of playing in the Indigenous training space and a stint in Madagascar, Dean has developed a teaching style and methodology that is underpinned by a simple yet effective principle - he calls it the 'Three Way Symbiotic Guiding Principle'. It relates to the inter relationship between the guide, the environment and the guest. In his own words,

'The synergy must be there for every element of the experience or it will not work'.

The use of theming and images (visual cues with simple pictures) of real people 'on country' often assist in breaking down barriers especially in terms of social, cultural, literacy and numeracy challenges. Written assessment is kept to a bare minimum, with a concerted effort to move towards testing being based around 'hands on' practical experiences and oral exercises.

I asked Dean what he thought was some of the challenges facing the Tourism Industry in Far North Queensland and he replied with "the transient nature of the Industry makes it difficult to retain quality staff and the proliferation of tour desks has affected the distribution mechanics of some smaller enterprises".

He added, 'It is certainly not all doom and gloom, we have a fantastic product here, people come to see the World Heritage Reef, Rainforest and Tropical Savannas. The industry is now recognising the importance of Indigenous tourism, as more and more clients to the region wish to experience Aboriginal culture. There is much that the Traditional Owners can contribute to the visitor experience, and Industry Accreditation hope to be a small part of that story.

Dean is a particularly well respected professional and his wide ranging skill base, is often called on by tour operators to take guided tours, interview and train new staff and up skill current staff members.

'The synergy must be there for every element of the experience or it will not work'.

It has been repeated many times throughout my working life - you only get one chance to make a first impression - and Kylie Singleton has certainly mastered the art.

Kylie lives in Cairns, Tropical North Queensland and is a direct decedent of the Yirrganydji tribe.

She freely admits that not everything has always gone to plan in her life, however, perseverance and a life motto of 'don't be shame be game - give it a go, cause you don't know unless you try'.

'Find something you are passionate about and give it all you got, because you are responsible for your future - no one else'

- has helped this resilient young lady find her feet.

Educated at local, Trinity Bay High, and graduating from Year 12 in 1991, Kylie took on the world with a strong level of academic achievement and a history of success.

Her first, post school decision was to leave family and friends in Cairns and move to Port Adelaide in South Australia to study at the Aboriginal Community College. A love for motor vehicles encouraged Kylie to enrol in a male dominated mechanics course which unfortunately only lasted for twelve months. An overly competitive environment and a bullying culture made learning difficult and remaining in the 'course' untenable.

Not to be dissuaded from furthering her education, Kylie re-enrolled at the College in a legal bridging course with the aim of studying at degree level at the Adelaide University. Again circumstances conspired against her and the study stint lasted less than a year.

'Jumping right back on the horse' Kylie by her own admittance finally came of age (even though still very young) with a realisation of identity. A Cultural Tourism Instructing Course at the Aboriginal Community College was the catalyst and circuit breaker

for change. It gave her the opportunity to work with school age children in culture and dance, preserve Indigenous culture and teach nomadic based skills - bush tucker, medicines and tracking.

'Find something you are passionate about and give it all you got, because you are responsible for your future - no one else'.



Staying with the tourism theme, Kylie returned home to Cairns to work at the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park - one of the most prominent Indigenous cultural facilities in the country. Eight years of tenure included roles and responsibilities in a number of diverse areas, including; sales and marketing; reservations; stage management; retail and food and beverage. Her achievements were rewarded with being recognised as a finalist in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Student of the Year.

A change of direction, but not commitment to her people, Kylie moved from tourism roles to that of an Indigenous Youth Employment Consultant for two years. Kylie says'

'I have a passion for helping and teaching all youth regardless of their background'.

Throughout her time as a Consultant, she assisted Indigenous youth to stay in school, complete other accredited training and mentored those seeking employment for thirteen and twenty six week outcomes.

Tourism was again firmly placed on the employment agenda with a job opportunity with local attraction based company, CaPTA Group. Kylie has held several positions, over three years, within the organisation, the current being in the Careers Training Department.

Her fellow work colleagues speak highly of her skills and commitment to assisting Indigenous people find meaningful career pathways in tourism related businesses.

It seems that this young, talented lady from Cairns has again found her feet in a support role that is important for her people and her culture.

'I have a passion for helping and teaching all youth regardless of their background'.

Yurri Muntha Café

Mapping the Future

Sheree Strauss is the Retail Manager of Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council's Yurri Muntha Café located approximately three hours' drive north, north - west of Brisbane in the Sunshine Coast hinterland of Queensland.

With twenty years hospitality and tourism experience 'under her belt' Sheree made the move from her own catering business in Kingaroy to the responsibility of managing

five Indigenous staff in a town that is growing as a tourism destination.

Asked why the move from her own business to working with an Aboriginal Council, Sheree replied,

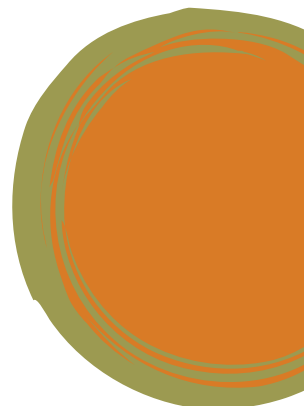
'I was impressed with the Council's vision that the establishment should be a community meeting place, a space where Indigenous and non - Indigenous people could connect and where some of the region's great ideas could be hatched'.

The café opened in August of 2012 and has quickly established a reputation for consistent, great quality and healthy food for both the local Indigenous population and visitors alike.

Food is sourced from the nearby towns of Murgon and Kingaroy and it is hoped that the local 'farm' in Cherbourg is re-established to enable the purchase of herbs and 'greens' from the immediate community.

After only ten months of operation Yurri Muntha

Café has received recognition for involvement in the 2012 (Technical and Further Education) TAFE Work Placement Program, support for the Cherbourg Family Playgroup and a Certificate of Appreciation for - Outstanding Contribution to Community Service.



Sheree plans to build on these achievements by undertaking an ambitious, but absolutely achievable five year growth strategy. It includes, however, is not limited by the following components:

1. Increasing the number of local catering contracts (currently 22)
2. Increasing the involvement in tourism based activities (Ration Shed Museum partnership and the establishment of weekend package tours)
3. Establishment of an outdoor catering arm to the business
4. Establishment of a commercial kitchen
5. Establishment of a training/meeting room on premise adjacent to the café

‘The support from local, State, Federal Government and organisations such as The Aboriginal Community Interest Consultative Committee (ACICC) is vital to the establishment of businesses such as Yurri Muntha Café. This is because it is important that employees can follow a training pathway and be equipped with knowledge relevant to the Tourism Industry and are the building blocks of a successful and sustainable business - Indigenous or non - Indigenous’.

In the ‘here and now’ the Café is focusing on developing a unique on the job training plan in partnership with Nurunderi TAFE which will give employees an opportunity to enrol in and complete Certificates III in Commercial cookery and Hospitality Operations. Delivering training on the job will benefit employees as well as customers- who will be able to purchase food items prepared by Yurri Muntha staff.

On a different tact I spoke with Sheree about some of the critical keys to success with a venture of this nature.

Her response was as follows, “It is obvious to the author that the business culture is built on mutual respect, trust, allowance for individual needs, illustrated by inclusive roster planning for the local football stars, and a genuine connection to community.”

This sense of community touches all and sundry - no wonder Sheree, the employees, the Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council and two thousand residents are as proud as they are.

Minjerribah Camping

Feel the Spirit

Ask any stakeholder in Minjerribah Camping Pty Ltd about the success of their new business, and the answer will invariably include the word 'goodwill'. Goodwill has resulted in the realisation of its first business venture, Straddie Camping. And goodwill is now driving forward a business committed to caring for country while generating economic, employment and social benefits for the

Quandamooka people of North Stradbroke Island.

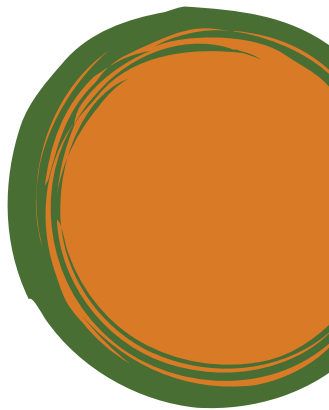
Thirteen kilometres from the Brisbane mainland a ferry is pulling up on North Stradbroke Island - 'Straddie'. As its ramp is lowered, 4WD, car and motorcycle engines roar to life as drivers and foot passengers prepare to disembark.

Among the passengers are some of the island's 2,000 or so residents, returning home from work or other activities on the mainland. If it's holiday season, the majority will be campers keen to kick-start their island adventure, and they'll be making a beeline for the booking office of Straddie Camping. Many will be repeat visitors, getting their regular fix of the Straddie vibe: white sandy beaches, magnificent sunsets, world-class fishing and a warm welcome from laid-back locals.

At the Straddie Camping booking office, the Guest Services team are standing ready to issue camping and

4WD permits, dispense information about tides, weather and fishing conditions, or just let people know where to buy bread and milk. As the first point of contact for many visitors to the island, and as proud Traditional Owners, the team are enjoying every opportunity to invite their guests to 'Feel the Spirit of Quandamooka Country'.

It's a simple invitation representing a long journey to self-determination. That journey ended - and also began afresh - in February 2013 when Quandamooka Elders bestowed their blessing, prayers and gifts upon the stakeholders and head office of Straddie Camping.



Minjerribah Camping

Feel the Spirit

The long-held aspirations of those Elders, and the broader Straddie community, were realised in July 2011 when a historic Native Title Determination transferred ownership of the island's existing camping business, Straddie Holiday Parks, and control of the land on which it was operating, from Queensland's Redland City Council (as trustees) to QYAC.

The signing of the agreement has enabled Straddie Camping to take over administration and management of the island's six holiday parks and two foreshore camping grounds (a total of 1,200 sites). With more than 85,000 visitors to Straddie each year, the joint venture is already producing significant employment and income outcomes for the Quandamooka community. Currently 50 per cent of staff are Indigenous, with further employment expected from a capital works program to upgrade and expand camping facilities; create new public art and signage across the island; and further develop its tourism and cultural potential.

'We communicate, are inclusive and respectful, we value input from our community and respect the rights of all members who love and share our Island. We are focused on delivering profits and benefits to our shareholders and our whole community, and to achieve that we are ultimately striving to provide great beach camping holiday experiences'.

Uncle Bob Anderson believes the employment being generated by the business will encourage Quandamooka people to remain - or return to - living and working on their island home. 'It will provide an opportunity for those who left the Island to come home, and I am confident that will happen... ', he said. 'People who are living on the mainland have got skills, and their very presence back here [has] started to broaden it out; you can feel the warmth and strength of all that spirit'.

The Chief Executive Officer, Clare Carroll reflects, 'Straddie Camping has thus far been successful because of the strength of its partnerships, based on the desire for a strong economic and social future for the island. 'We have a shared vision, we believe in it and we are serious about its outcomes', said Clare.

'An extract from 'Feel the Spirit', published in Indigenous Business Australia's Inspire magazine, issue ten 2013. Read the article in full at www.iba.gov.au/inspire

Mossman Gorge Centre

House of Joy

Once upon a time there was a young entrepreneurial Indigenous boy named Roy Gibson who dared to dream...

Whilst selling coconuts on the roadside of the Captain Cook Highway, he dreamt of a prosperous future for his Kuku Yalanji people, a future that included protection of 'country' (the spectacular Mossman Gorge and World Heritage listed rainforest environment)

and he dreamt of sustainable long - term employment for his Indigenous community.

Twenty years later Roy's dream has become a reality, a spectacular outcome and testament to perseverance, relationship building business flair and the passion of the Yalanji people. With the support and backing of the Indigenous Land Corporation this world class tourism facility is providing a unique insight into Indigenous culture and highlights the success of Indigenous employment programs.

Mossman Gorge and the Mossman Gorge Centre are located approximately eighty kilometres to the north of Cairns in Tropical North Queensland. Both are ideally situated between two reasonably significant urban populations and a major transport link. At the Centre visitors will find a contemporary café, tour desk, locally stocked art gallery and gift shop and four Indigenous guided walks

leaving daily from the main centre into traditional hunting trail within the Daintree Rainforest.

The entrée to a moving and spiritual Indigenous experience waiting patiently in the rainforest.

On the training side of the ledger the Centre boasts the following; residential facilities for twenty students through the Indigenous Youth Mobility Program; Nationally accredited Hospitality courses, full - time support from house parents, meals provided and single rooms with shared bathrooms.

From a course perspective Certificate Two in Hospitality is taught over a twenty week period and practical work experience sees trainees being placed in local businesses and within the Mossman Gorge Centre. Furthermore, the Mossman Gorge Centre has five hospitality trainees and three apprentice chefs learning their craft in - house.



The Kuku Yalanji people are the Indigenous inhabitants of the land and have a history dating back 50,000 years to the earliest human occupation of Australia. They are true rainforest people, living in complete harmony with their environment. It is part of them and they are part of it, a notion that is movingly brought to life during an Indigenous guided walking tour of Mossman Gorge.

Their traditional country extends from south of Mossman to Cooktown in the north, and Palmer River in the west.

The Kuku Yalanji culture is built around a deep respect for nature and an intimate knowledge of its cycles. Their knowledge has been passed down through the generations - with the members of the community having learned all they know from their elders, parents, grandparents, uncles and aunties.

The combination of Indigenous culture and a controlled access management approach to the Gorge has generated a triple win situation for the Kuku Yalanji people, the visitor and the environment.

Put simply, the environment is protected by guided access, the Kuku Yalanji people are employed in sustainable employment and visitors

are exposed to an experience like no other in Australia.

This success can be measured in a number of ways; the 'beat of feet' - some 260 000 visitors in the first year of operation (and that's more than Uluru in the Northern Territory); animal species have begun returning to the 'gorge' area of the forest; ninety per cent of employees at Mossman Gorge are Indigenous and in the main local; the business is completely stand alone and requires no further financial support from outside

agencies and most importantly, is the energy and absolute joy generated by the people that work and live here in the community. It is incredibly tactile and infectious. The leadership team embraces the Yalanji culture throughout all elements of the business, from the products and services on offer through to the policies and procedures for the team.

In the words of an exceptionally proud Roy Gibson, 'This is meant to be. It came to me one night in a dream. We worked towards this dream for twenty years. We worked with the

land owner, we worked with outside funding agencies and we worked as a community. To see so many of my people wanting to work, enjoying work and staying in work is that dream come true'.

Put simply, the environment is protected by guided access, the Kuku Yalanji people are employed in sustainable employment and visitors are exposed to an experience like no other in Australia.

Like so many 'Once Upon a Time' stories this story about the Kuku Yalanji community is one that is destined to become a story that will be told and relived for generations to come. Vision, sound management practices, a well - grounded business model and engaged, enthusiastic staff creates an environment that is credit to Roy and the community at large.