

Publicity

News Media (print)

- 2008.01.23 ABC NEWS. *Indigenous turtle conservationists arrive in Mexico.*
- 2008.02.05 TORRES NEWS. *Mexico Meeting.*
- 2008.02.20 NRM QLD NEWS (Regional NRM (QLD)). *Indigenous sea rangers return from Mexico.*

News Media (radio)

- 2008.01.17 ABC (NEWS) Rod Kennett – *Indigenous Rangers in Mexico*
- 2008.01.23 4K1G (MURRI VOICES). Rod Kennett, Frank Loban - *Indigenous Rangers in Mexico*
- 2008.01.24 FM 87.6 (YOLNGU RADIO) News Item – *Indigenous Rangers in Mexico*
- 2008.02.07 ABC (NEWS) Rod Kennett - *Indigenous Rangers in Mexico*
- 2008.02.07 4K1G (MURRI VOICES). Joe Morrison - *Indigenous Rangers in Mexico*
- 2008.02.07 NATIONAL INDIGENOUS NEWS SERVICE (NEWS) – *Indigenous Rangers in Mexico*
- 2008.11.05 4K1G (MURRI VOICES). Rod Kennett, Alberto Moreno - *Seri Indians in Australia*

Magazine Articles

- 2008.02.20 Topical Savanna. *Indigenous Sea Rangers in Mexico.*
- 2008.02.28 TSRA NEWS (Torres Strait Regional Authority). *TS represented at the international symposium on sea turtle.*
- 2008.04.01 BRN NEWSLETTER (Dept. Environment and Climate Change NSW)
Indigenous Sea Rangers Return from Mexico.
- 2008.10.01 Kantri Laif Magazine Issue 4, page 16-20: *Oceans Apart United In Action.*

Indigenous turtle conservationists arrive in Mexico

Posted Wed Jan 23, 2008 3:28pm AEDT

Updated Wed Jan 23, 2008 4:23pm AEDT

A group of Indigenous conservationists from northern Australia have travelled to Mexico this week for an international sea turtle symposium.



A Flatback turtle makes her way back to the ocean after coming ashore to lay eggs (Photo Contributed: Mackay Turtle Watch)

Rod Kennett, coordinator for the North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, says representatives from Arnhem Land, Thursday Island and the Torres Strait are presenting North Australia's Dugong and Marine Turtle Project at the symposium.

"Australia is one of the last great strong holds for turtle and dugong in the world. Australian Indigenous people take those responsibilities for custodians for those resources as very, very important they take them very, very seriously.

"Conservation of turtle and dugong requires community based efforts."

Kenny Bedford, who works to protect turtle and dugong populations at Darnley Island in the the Torres Strait, says Indigenous Australians balance the killing of turtles for traditional use with conservation.

"I think it's very important that people are learning that not only do we harvest turtles for traditional use but we also take seriously the responsibility of trying to protect turtles from the longer term for future generations."

Tags: [indigenous](#), [conservation](#), [marine-parks](#), [australia](#), [nt](#), [gld](#)



**TAGAI STATE COLLEGE
THURSDAY ISLAND SECONDARY CAMPUS**

POSITIONS VACANT – (Thursday Island)

TUCKSHOP CONVENOR

Classification: Tuckshop Convenor

Hours: 38 hours per week

Duties: Effectively manage the school tuckshop on a daily basis, including stock control, banking and management of an assistant. Education Queensland guidelines require a "Healthy Food" approach within all school tuckshops.

TUCKSHOP ASSISTANT (two positions)

Classification: Tuckshop Assistant

Hours: 22.5 hours per week

Duties: Assist Convenor with the operation of a school tuckshop, including food preparation, sales, cleaning, etc.

Closing date for applications – 8th February, 2008

Application packages can be picked up at the High School. Completed application can be dropped off at the school or posted to:

The President
Thursday Island Secondary Campus
PO Box 78
Thursday Island Qld 4875



Tagai State College

POSITIONS VACANT

• **School Liaison Officer (Two positions) (Thursday Island)**

Classification: AO3 Level 1

Hours: 72.5 hours per week

Duties: Outlined in package

• **Administration Officer (Multiple positions) (Thursday Island)**

Classification: AO2 Level 1

Hours: 72.5 hours per week (maximum)

Duties: Outlined in package

• **Teacher Aide-Student Welfare (Thursday Island)**

Classification: TAO02 Level 1

Hours: 20 hours per week

Duties: Outlined in package

• **Tutors (Multiple positions) (Thursday Island)**

Classification: TAO02 Level 4

Hours: 25 hours per week (maximum)

Duties: Outlined in package

Closing Date: 13 February 2008

Applicants must have or apply for a Blue Suitability Card (Commission of Children and Young People)

Application packages are available at the High School front office. Interested persons should apply to the selection criteria within the package and present a resume. Applications can be dropped off at the high school or posted to:

The Manager
Human Resources
Tagai State College
PO Box 78
Thursday Island Q 4875



ITEC Employment

102 Douglas Street Thursday Island
Queensland 4875

JOB SPOT

- Cook (Seisia)
- Co-ordinator (Disability Service) (Thursday Island)
- Flexi Respite Support Worker (Thursday Island)
- Glazier (Thursday Island)
- Office/Yard Person (Thursday Island)
- Playgroup Co-ordinator (Thursday Island)
- Trainee Cook (Thursday Island)

Come and see our friendly staff, who can help you with your career goal.
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The Torres Strait delegation to the sea turtle symposium in Loreto, Mexico, presented this framed Dhari to the Indigenous, Seri Indian community to thank them for their welcome and invitation to meet in Loreto.

Left to right: Efrain Estrella, Hammond Island Ranger Stephen Amber, Alfredo Lopez, Torres Strait Turtle and Dugong Project Liaison Officer Frank Loban and Amalia Astorga.

Photo by Kenny Bedford

Mexico meeting

A group of Indigenous conservationists from Australia, including representatives from the Torres Strait, travelled to Mexico last week for an international sea turtle symposium.

Rod Kennett, coordinator for the North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, told ABC News representatives from Arnhem Land, Thursday Island and the Torres Strait are presenting North Australia's Dugong and Marine Turtle Project at the symposium.

"Australia is one of the last great strong holds for turtle and dugong in the world. Australian Indigenous people take those responsibilities for custodians for those resources as very, very important they take them very, very seriously."

Kenny Bedford, who works to protect turtle and dugong populations at Darnley Island in the Torres Strait, says Indigenous Australians balance the killing of turtles for traditional use with conservation.

"I think it's very important that people are learning that not only do we harvest turtles for traditional use but we also take seriously the responsibility of trying to protect turtles from the longer term for future generations," he said.

**LAUNCH MASTER (SKIPPER)
THURSDAY ISLAND**

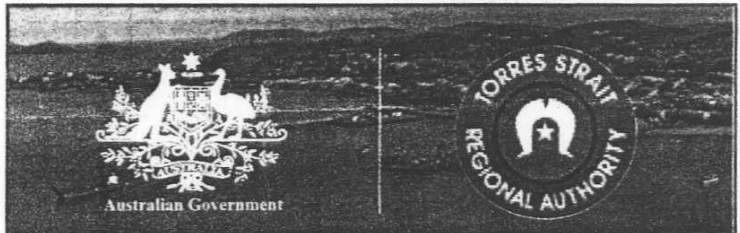
Torres Pilots Pty Ltd requires a Launch Master for our Thursday Island operation.

Applicants must have a Master Class 5 and MED 3 plus a current driver's licence.

Permanent position available after three months probation. Attractive salary and six weeks annual leave are offered.

Please forward written applications to:-

Brendan Carter,
Torres Pilots Pty Ltd
PO Box 622, TI, Q 4875
Fax: 07 4069 2252
Email: torresti@torrespilots.com.au



The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) is a Commonwealth statutory body, engaged in a wide range of service delivery functions to Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people living in the Torres Strait region. The TSRA is seeking a suitably qualified person to fill the following non-ongoing position for 18 months.

Coastal Management Officer
Position No. T01702
APS 6 (\$58,996 - \$67,769 per annum)

Enjoy an environment which offers great fishing, diving, spectacular views, abundant marine life and a relaxed and culturally diverse lifestyle. The primary purpose of the Coastal Management Officer position is to coordinate, manage and lead the coastal program within the TSRA. Key responsibilities include providing support to the Torres Strait Coastal Erosion Steering Committee, island communities, TSRA and key government partners in planning a strategic, coordinated and sustainable approach to dealing with disaster mitigation, coastal erosion, inundation and coastal planning issues in the Torres Strait.

The successful applicant will be offered an Australian Workplace Agreement.

You are required to include two documents

- (1) "A document Addressing the Selection Criteria" and
- (2) Resume or CV detailing full qualifications and experience including the names of at least two referees.

TSRA accommodation may be available for this position.

Note: - Applications which do not address the selection criteria will not be considered.
- Response to each selection criteria should be no more than 1 page.

Closing date for applications is COB Friday 15 February 2008.

For further information relating to this position please contact Damian Miley Tel: 07 40692957

To obtain a copy of the Selection Criteria for this position email recruitment@tsra.gov.au or visit the TSRA website <http://www.tsra.gov.au> and click on the Employment link on our homepage.

Applications should be marked 'In Confidence' and forwarded to:

Human Resources Manager
Torres Strait Regional Authority
PO Box 261
THURSDAY ISLAND QLD 4875

Or
Via e-mail: recruitment@tsra.gov.au

Enjoy the benefits of a career in the Australian Public Service.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants are encouraged to apply.
The TSRA is an equal opportunity employer, and provides a smoke free work environment.



Torres Strait (Land & Sea Management Unit)

Indigenous sea rangers return from Mexico

A week-long international celebration of Indigenous cultural practices and management of marine turtle concluded late last month in Mexico, but the experience gained by four Indigenous land and sea managers from the Torres Strait and North-East Arnhem Land will last a lifetime.

The small seaside town of Loreto, on the Mexican Baja California Peninsula, hosted this year's [Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation](#). Over 1000 scientists, conservationists and Indigenous land and sea managers from 60 nations converged on the town to explore the theme, 'Native Oceans'.

The delegation from Australia was sent to Mexico through a partnership between the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), the [Torres Strait Regional Authority](#) (TSRA), Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, James Cook University (JCU), and the North American organisation, Ocean Revolution. The delegates' attendance was made possible through travel funding provided by James Cook University and The Christensen Fund.

NAILSMA's executive officer, Joe Morrison, said the exchange linked Indigenous people from Australia's northern coastal regions with the Seri Indians of Mexico and facilitated the exchange of both cultural and technical information of marine turtle species.

The TSRA's chairperson, Toshie Kris, said he was pleased that three representatives from the Torres Strait, including the TSRA's Dugong and Marine Turtle Project liaison officer and JCU Masters student Frank Loban, participated in the international event.

"Such opportunities are invaluable and with the marine turtle playing a critical role in the Torres Strait's culture and way of life, it is important that our people learn how to sustainably manage this importance species," Mr Kris said.

Mr Loban said the opportunity to travel to Mexico for the symposium was an extremely important learning experience.

"The highlight was the coming together of Indigenous people from across the world, sharing ideas and knowledge about turtle conservation and why it is significant to our lifestyles and livelihoods," Mr Loban said.

"Indigenous people from places like Mexico and Venezuela have been involved in turtle conservation for a long time and we can learn from their experiences."

Mr Loban explained that the management of Turtle and Dugong by Indigenous people was critical.

"Turtles are species that are harvested by Indigenous peoples for subsistence, medicinal and cultural purposes, so it is important that the primary custodians using the resource are involved in conserving it.

"We don't want to be talking to our children about turtles from a book, we want to make sure we can continue harvesting and managing them and that future generations will get a chance to see a real, live turtle," Mr Loban said.

A major aspect of the Dugong and Marine Turtle Project, which is driven by Traditional Owners, is to build networks amongst Saltwater People that are linked to governments and the scientific community. The exchange extends this network internationally and will be reciprocated next year when the Seri people travel to Australia for the 2009 symposium to be held in Brisbane.

Last updated 20 February 2008

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Topical Savannas

Issue 113, February 20, 2008

Indigenous Sea Rangers in Mexico

A week-long international celebration of Indigenous cultural practices and management of marine turtle concluded last weekend in Mexico, but the experience gained by four Indigenous land and sea managers from the Torres Strait and North-East Arnhem Land will last a lifetime.

The small seaside town of Loreto, on the Mexican Baja California Peninsula, hosted this year's Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation. Over 1000 scientists, conservationists and Indigenous land and sea managers from 60 nations converged on the town to explore the theme, "Native Oceans".

The delegation from Australia was sent to Mexico through a partnership between the North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), the Torres Strait Regional Authority, Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, James Cook University and the United States organisation, Ocean Revolution. The delegate's attendance was made possible through travel funding provided by James Cook University and The Christensen Fund.

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"Such opportunities are invaluable and with the marine turtle playing a critical role in the Torres Strait's culture and way of life, it is important that our people learn how to sustainably manage this importance species," said Mr Kris.

"The highlight was the coming together of Indigenous people from across the world, sharing ideas and knowledge about turtle conservation and why it is significant to our lifestyles and livelihoods," he said.

"Indigenous people from places like Mexico and Venezuela have been involved in turtle conservation for a long time and we can learn from their experiences," he said.



Mr Frank Loban (left) at the Symposium with the Seri Indians of Mexico.

Torres Strait Represented at the International Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation

A week-long international celebration of Indigenous cultural practices and management of marine turtle concluded on 27 January in Mexico, but the experience gained by four Indigenous land and sea managers from the Torres Strait and North-East Arnhem Land will last a lifetime.

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The delegation from Australia was sent to Mexico through a partnership between the North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA); the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA); the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation-(as part of their Dugong and Marine Turtle Project), and the United States organisation, Ocean Revolution. The delegate's attendance was made possible through funding provided by The Christensen Fund.

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Dugong and Marine Turtle Project Liaison Officer Mr Frank Loban, Erub Island's Dugong and Turtle Community Project Officer Mr Kenny Bedford, and Hammond Island Ranger Mr Stephen Ambar, participated in the international event.

"Such opportunities are invaluable and with the marine turtle playing a critical role in the Torres Strait's culture and way of life, it is important that our people learn how to sustainably manage this species," said Mr Kris.

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Mr Loban explained that the management of Turtle and Dugong by Indigenous people was critical.

"Turtles are species that are valued by Indigenous peoples for traditional medicinal and cultural purposes, so it is important that the primary custodians of the resource are involved in conserving it."

"We don't want to be talking to our children about turtles from a book, we want to ensure we can continue harvesting and managing them and that future generations will get a chance to see a real live turtle," said Mr Loban.

A major aspect of the Dugong and Marine Turtle Project, which is driven by Traditional Owners, is to build networks among Saltwater People that are linked to governments and the scientific community.

The exchange extends this network internationally and will be recognised next year when the Seri people travel to Australia for the 2009 Symposium to be held in Brisbane.



NSW Scientific Committee final determinations

Final determinations for the period 1st January 2008 to 31st March 2008 are as follows. For details of the determinations go to:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/committee/ListOfScientificCommitteeDeterminations.htm>

Allocasuarina luehmannii Woodland in the Riverina and Murray-Darling Depression bioregions - Endangered Ecological Community listing. Gazetted Friday, 28 March 2008

Rotala tripartita (a herb) - endangered species listing. Gazetted Friday, 28 March 2008

Sandhill Pine Woodland in the Riverina, Murray-Darling Depression and NSW South Western Slopes bioregions - Endangered Ecological Community listing. Gazetted Friday, 28 March 2008

Sloane's Froglet *Crinia sloanei* - vulnerable species listing. Gazetted Friday, 28 March 2008

Pterostylis despectans (terrestrial herb) - critically endangered species listing. Gazetted Friday, 28 March 2008

Prasophyllum innubum (terrestrial orchid) - critically endangered species. Gazetted Friday, 28 March 2008

Prasophyllum keltonii (terrestrial leek orchid) - critically endangered species listing. Gazetted Friday, 28 March 2008

Tableland Basalt Forest in the Sydney Basin and South Eastern Highlands Bioregions - endangered ecological community listing. Gazetted Friday, 4 January 2008

FEATURES

Indigenous Sea Rangers Return from Mexico

By Joshua Kitchens

A week-long international celebration of Indigenous cultural practices and management of marine turtle concluded in Mexico this January, but the experience gained by four Indigenous land and sea managers from the Torres Strait and North-East Arnhem Land will last a lifetime.

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Mr Loban said the opportunity to travel to Mexico for the Symposium was an extremely important learning experience.

"The highlight was the coming together of Indigenous people from across the world, sharing ideas and knowledge about turtle conservation and why it is significant to our lifestyles and

livelihoods. Indigenous people from places like Mexico and Venezuela have been involved in turtle conservation for a long time and we can learn from their experiences," he said.

Mr Loban explained that the management of Turtle and Dugong by Indigenous people was critical.

"Turtles are species that are harvested by Indigenous peoples for subsistence, medicinal and cultural purposes, so it is important that the primary custodians using the resource are involved in conserving it. We don't want to be talking to our children about turtles from a book, we want to make sure we can continue harvesting and managing them and that future generations will get a chance to see a real, live turtle", said Mr Loban.

A major aspect of the NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Project, which is driven by Traditional Owners, is to build networks amongst Saltwater People that are linked to governments and the scientific community. For more information about the NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Project, visit www.nailsma.org.au.

Contacts:

NAILSMA Media Contact: Joshua Kitchens, telephone (08) 8946 6684

TSRA Media Contact: Susan Reilly, telephone (07) 4069 0700

JCU Media Contact: Mark Hamann, telephone (07) 4781 4491

One-third of NSW Flora Banked for our Future

Taken from Botanic Gardens Trust Media release (25th February 2008)

In what might be the best investment for our future, a third of the State's flora is now stored in seedbanks in New South Wales and the UK as insurance against climate change. Executive Director of the Botanic Gardens Trust, Dr Tim Entwisle said the 1000th seed sample has been sent to the UK, representing a significant achievement for the conservation of NSW plants.

'We now have a third of the State's flora in our seedbank,' Dr Entwisle said. 'The 1000th collection is from the rare *Acacia pubescens*, known as Downy Wattle or Hairy-stemmed Wattle, listed as a vulnerable species. 'We've duplicated 1000 of our collections to Kew's Millennium Seed Bank in an effort to contribute to the global effort to conserve 10 per cent of the world's flora by 2010.

'Our next big challenge is to focus on rainforest seeds. Nearly 2000 Australian rainforest species have seeds that are sensitive to drying out and can't be stored easily in our seedbank. Rainforest plants have evolved odd ways to distribute and germinate their seed, such as the fruit travelling through the gut of Cassowaries, but the seed just doesn't last. 'We'll be able to collect a variety of rainforest species and test cryostorage and other techniques thanks to funding from Allianz Insurance and an anonymous donor,' he said.

The seed collection is undertaken by SeedQuest NSW, an international partnership for plant conservation between the NSW Seedbank, part of the Botanic Gardens Trust, Sydney and the Millennium Seed Bank of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK. Leader of Kew's Millennium Seed Bank Project Dr Paul Smith, in Australia this week said with future climate change scenarios and the ever-increasing impact of human activities, Kew's Millennium Seed Bank Project is already looking towards the next 10 years.

By 2010, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew's Millennium Seed Bank Project and its partners in over 50 countries around the world will have collected and conserved seeds from 10 per cent of the world's wild flowering plant species,' Dr Smith said. 'Between 2010 and 2020, we aim to significantly increase collecting targets and associated conservation programmes with partners around the world. To help us achieve our ambitious vision and targets for the next ten years to 2020 we must attract funding.

'The species for collection and conservation are prioritised by Kew's partners and include the rarest, most threatened and most useful species known to man. These seed collections are actively used in scientific research and the potential benefits of the chosen species range from food, medicine and building materials for rural communities to disease-resistant crops for agriculture,' he said.

Kew's Millennium Seed Bank Project is the largest ex situ conservation project ever conceived. Its Seed Bank is the largest seed bank in the world for the conservation of seed from wild species and has the capacity to store up to half of the world's wild flowering plant species.

Oceans Apart: Unit

Words by Djawa Yunupingu, Director Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation; Frank Loban, Dugong and Turtle Project Liaison Officer for TSRA/NAILSMA and JCU Masters student; Kenny Bedford, TSRA/NAILSMA Project Officer Erub Island; and Stephen Ambar, Head Community Ranger Hammond Island.

The sea cultures of Indigenous people from coastal northern Australia and Mexico may be oceans apart, but for the Australian Indigenous land and sea managers who attended the 2008 Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation in Mexico, the 15,000 km journey revealed as many similarities as there were differences.

The Australian delegation included Djawa Yunupingu from north east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, and from the Torres Strait; Frank Loban from Maluiligal nation, Kenny Bedford from Erub Island and Stephen Ambar from Hammond Island.

Rod Kennett, NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Project Coordinator and Mark Hamann, JCU Research Fellow also travelled with the delegation.

The Australians were invited to attend the symposium and take part in a cultural exchange by the Comcaac or 'Seri Indian' people.

The location of this year's symposium (academic conference) was the small seaside town of Loreto on the Mexican Baja California Peninsula, and was a temporary home to the Australian delegation—as well as 1000 scientists, conservationists and Indigenous land and sea managers from 60 nations. The theme of this year's symposium was "Native Oceans" and it was hosted by the Seri Indians.

"It's good to go to international conferences. We can meet people from around the world and share our ideas about turtle management and conservation.

"We learnt about new methods being developed by scientists to manage turtles, respond to natural

disasters and different methods for rehabilitating sick or stranded animals", said Mr Yunupingu.

Mr Bedford described the experience as an excellent learning opportunity, as well as a chance to promote the work of Indigenous Rangers in Australia.

"The symposium was a very valuable experience, not only to learn from others around the world about the various issues relating to turtle conservation and management but to also promote the good work we are doing in our respective communities in Northern Australia", said Mr Bedford.

Mr Ambar acknowledged the dedication of the Seri Indian hosts towards the management and conservation of marine turtles.

"The Seri Indians have been involved in turtle management projects for many years, but in the Torres Strait it is only in the last few years that communities have become actively involved in turtle related activities.

"Now there is a growing enthusiasm in the Torres Strait to participate in turtle, dugong and other natural resource management projects on our country.

"The symposium is a chance from us to learn from people like the Seri about the issues they are faced with and how they address them", said Mr Ambar.

For Mr Loban, the conference also represented an opportunity to take back to the Torres Strait ideas about management policy relating to turtles that had been developed by other Indigenous land and sea managers from around the world.

ed in Action

Pictures by Kenny Bedford and Frank Loban.
Compiled by NAILSMA

“The theme of the conference [Native Oceans] was an acknowledgment of Indigenous issues surrounding land and sea management. Indigenous people from around the world have been involved in conservation for millennium. For us [Indigenous people], conservation is not a new buzz-word, it’s apart of our culture—we live closely with our environment and have strong cultural ties to it.

“Attending the conference was a real eye-opener. It made me realise how lucky we are in Australia to have stable populations of turtle.

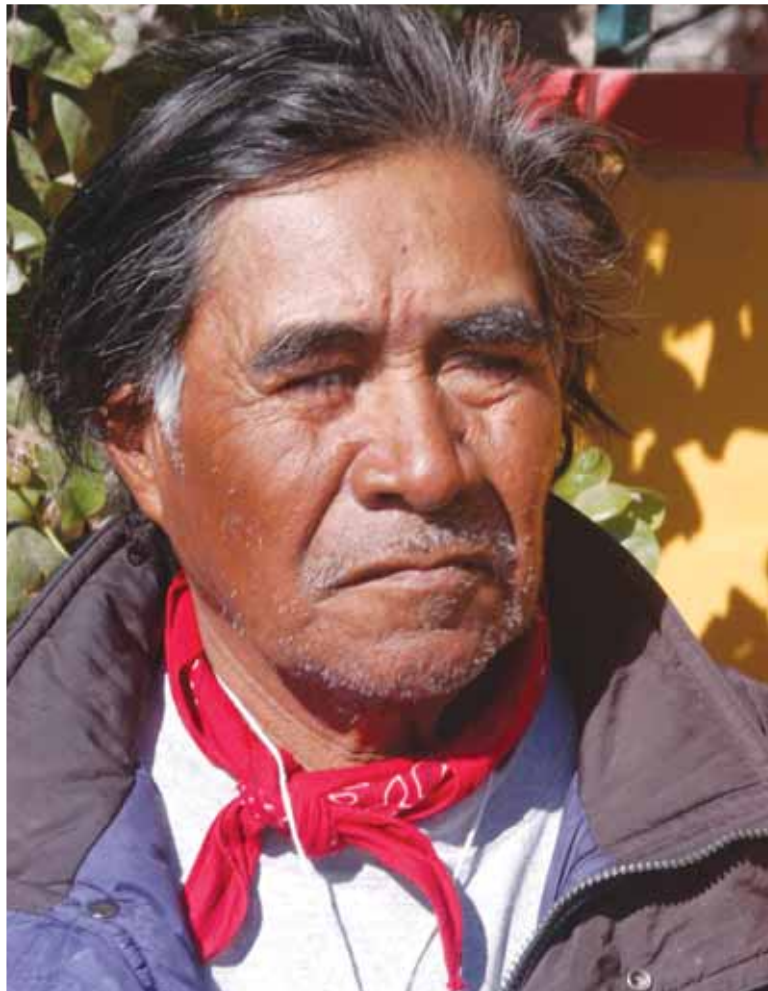
“It enabled me to see the bigger picture—to see what has happened in other parts of the world before it happens here [in the Torres Strait]. We are lucky to have this information while our turtle stocks are still healthy”, said Mr Loban.

The Australian delegates attended the Pacific Nations Meeting at the conference and were invited to make a presentation on the issues faced in northern Australia and some of the initiatives Indigenous people are involved in to address these issues.

“I spoke about some of the challenges of trying to introduce a management plan for the first time in my community, and discussed my role as Project Officer on Erub Island for the Dugong and Marine Turtle Project”, said Mr Bedford.

Mr Bedford provided insight for the attendees at the meeting on the complexities of cultural diversity in the Torres Strait.

“I explained the social and cultural diversity between islands in the Torres Strait and the





importance of developing local community-based plans that suit the needs and aspirations of respective communities.

“I stressed that although we still traditionally harvest turtles in our community; we also support research and are developing strategies and implementing projects that help to sustain turtle populations in our region”, said Mr Bedford.

Mr Yunupingu presented the Dhimurru video ‘Life of a big ghost net’ at the meeting.

“At the end of our presentation, we received a big round of applause from the people attending the meeting. They were impressed by our work and our dedication to maintaining healthy sea country; that we care about turtles, and that the government provides funding [through the Natural Heritage Trust] to our communities [involved in the NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Project] to allow us to continue our work”, he said.

A major aspect of the NAILSMA Dugong and Marine Turtle Project, which is driven by Traditional Owners, is to build networks amongst Saltwater People that are linked to governments and the scientific community.

The conference has enabled this network to be extended internationally, with the delegates making connections with scientists and Indigenous people from around the world, and gaining them access to international resources available to people concerned with marine turtle management and conservation.

Once such group is Grupo Tortuguero—a network of individuals, communities, organisations, and institutions from [predominantly Spanish-speaking]

nations around the world—who are dedicated to sea turtle conservation. The Seri Indians are members of Grupo Tortuguero.

As hosts of this year’s symposium, the Seri held a ‘welcome to country’ where they performed their Leatherback Turtle ceremony at a welcome social.

At a separate event, the Seri hosted a public forum where they formally welcomed each of the 50 Indigenous participants taking part in the symposium. 15 Indigenous nations were represented including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations from Australia, as well as Indigenous nations from Mexico, Nicaragua, Palau, Panama, and Venezuela.

Representatives from the Torres Strait presented the Seri with a framed Dhari (head dress). Mr Yunupingu presented them with a yidaki (didgeridoo) on behalf of the Yolngu people—but not before the skilled musician gave the audience a performance of music from north-east Arnhem Land.

“Everybody’s eye’s lit-up when they heard the sound of the yidaki. I think they were moved to hear an ancient instrument being played. The yidaki has been around for more than 60,000 years. For most of the people, this was the first time they heard a yidaki. It made hair stand up on end!” Mr Yunupingu explained.

Mr Bedford spoke with the Seri at the event and described the relationship between the elders and youth in the Seri community as encouraging.

“I emphasised the importance of ensuring we, as Indigenous peoples, maintain and transfer our cultural knowledge between generations, and that it is a shared responsibility by all members of our respective communities”, said Mr Bedford.

Mr Bedford extended an invitation to the Seri to visit Erub community in Torres Strait.

“I look forward to their interaction with our community, and to the opportunities they will have to experience our culture and environment and to learn about what we are doing to manage and conserve our sea turtle populations”, said Mr Bedford.

This was the beginning of a special relationship between the Seri and the Indigenous delegates from Australia as it signalled the commencement of a formal knowledge exchange program.

As part of the exchange, the Seri invited their guests from Australia on a two-day tour which included island visits and tours of rock painting galleries.

“I could see similarities and differences between Seri and Aboriginal people through the rock paintings. Their paintings were similar to ours—the colours were similar—but the stories were different”, explained Mr Yunupingu.

“Their stories praise the turtle. The turtle made the earth.”

The tone of the tour changed dramatically when the delegation visited a beach that told a very modern and disturbing story.

Mr Yunupingu explains.

“Hundreds of turtle carcasses littered the beach. It was very saddening to see such devastation.

“There was no official explanation, but some people think the carcasses may belong to turtles caught as by-catch by fisherman”, said Mr Yunupingu.

Witnessing such devastation brought home to the delegation from Australia the crisis facing turtle populations in other parts of the world. It helped to explain the drastic measures the Seri have taken to protect their turtle populations.

“Because of the outside pressures on the turtle populations, the Seri were forced to make a sacrifice I hope we [in the Torres Strait] will never have to make”, said Mr Loban.

“The Seri stopped hunting turtles many years ago. They have sacrificed a part of their culture over their concern for the dwindling numbers of turtle—brought about by the modern pressures the region now faces.





“As an Islander man, I find it hard to comprehend such a sacrifice, but I commend the Seri on their strength to make such a decision.

“Hunting turtle represents so much to Torres Strait Islanders, it fulfils sustenance, medicinal and cultural purposes. To stop hunting would represent a major loss to our culture.

“Conservation is apart of our culture. We conserve so we can consume. We are lucky that Australia’s turtle populations are still stable. We have to work together to keep it that way”, said Mr Loban.

The Seri and the Indigenous people from Australia are now collaborating on the I-Tracker project—a new method for monitoring turtle populations that combines the latest technology with the traditional skills of Indigenous people.

The knowledge exchange will continue throughout the year and a delegation of Seri is scheduled to make a visit to northern Australia towards the end of the year.

The delegation from Australia was sent to Mexico through a partnership between the North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), the Torres Strait Regional Authority, Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, James Cook University and the United States organisation, Ocean Revolution. The delegate’s attendance was made possible through travel funding provided by James Cook University and The Christensen Fund.



For more information visit:

www.nailsma.org.au,
www.nativeoceans.org,
www.oceanrevolution.org,
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