

Quandamooka



An interview with

CAMERON COSTELLO QUANDAMOOKA YOOLOOBURRABEE ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

INTERVIEWED BY

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The Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) is the Registered Native Title Body Corporate (PBC) responsible for management of the native title rights and interests of the Quandamooka people of the Moreton bay area in Queensland. The corporation is directed by a ten person board of Traditional owners and led by Chief Executive Officer and traditional owner, Cameron Costello. Cameron has been the CEO of the QYAC for three and a half years, and prior to that was a Chair and family representative.

In the interview below Cameron describes some of the changes QYAC have experienced in the past few years, the challenges they have faced, the successes they have had, and their plans for the future.

QYAC HAVE A NATIVE TITLE consent determination over 54,000 hectares of land and sea on and around Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) and a claim registered over Moorgumpin (Moreton Island). The consent determination was made on the 4 July 2011 by the Federal Court of Australia and included a number of benefits for Quandamooka people, including Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) with the Queensland Government and Redland City Council. QYAC was set

up under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) (Native Title Act) to manage the benefits of the native title determination.

As a result of our determination we have been able to take over the management of the Holiday Park and foreshore camping business known as Straddie Camping. QYAC has formed a joint investment partnership with Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) to repackage and revitalise this business. After this success we are now working with IBA for future tourism related activities that can value add to our initial investment.

Another major benefit we have had as a result of our native title determination is in the joint management of the Naree Budjong Djara National park. We are involved in land management, Caring for country, and we employ our own mob as rangers. We have both national park rangers and Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) rangers that work on our native title land.

QYAC have also been developing the community ranger program for about two years and we now have around 12 community rangers. This program is essentially about developing our young people with the skills to go on to become park rangers or council employees. Our

community rangers have done a Certificate III in Conservation and Management and we have created a pipeline of projects to further develop those young people as future leaders of our community.

Between QYAC and Straddie Camping we now have around 40 Quandamooka people in employment. QYAC is now in a nation building phase. We have undertaken large planning projects to look at how to best unlock our native title land for social, cultural, and economic development purposes.

In May 2016, the *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015* was passed in the Queensland Parliament.¹ This legislation enforces the cessation of the largest sand mine on Minjerribah by 2019. The bill was introduced to allow new and exciting opportunities for the Minjerribah community and was supported by the Queensland Government's North Stradbroke Island Economic Transition Strategy.

This new legislation has opened a new world for the Quandamooka people. The Economic Transition Strategy (ETS) is a \$20 million package that has twenty three initiatives of which QYAC will be delivering about eleven. These initiatives include a whale watching permit, whale watching infrastructure

Nation Building

such as an interpreter facility, a Minjerribah culture centre, further upgrades to our campgrounds, an Indigenous business development fund to help kick-start other businesses in a whole range of different sectors, and the refurbishment of our current site into an education and training hub. QYAC is now moving to deliver major projects on country which are going to further strengthen job opportunities and build capacity in the community. This is a pretty exciting time for us. The ETS package also includes the expansion of our land and sea ranger program with another five positions for Indigenous rangers.

As the proposed Toondah harbour development on the mainland side of the bay has native title and cultural heritage implications the Quandamooka people have authorised for us [QYAC] to lodge a mainland claim. As well as the native title area that has already been determined we are dealing with two other claims; the Moreton Island claim and the mainland claim. The Moreton island claim has been

lodged and the mainland claim is due to be lodged in the coming weeks. The claims are part of our ongoing role to secure the rest of our traditional estate.

As QYAC are also a registered cultural heritage body we've undertaken a lot of cultural heritage surveys across Redland City Council township areas, our campground areas and the national park. Through these surveys we are able to safeguard and protect our significant archaeological and cultural sites. We have also developed a Quandamooka world heritage area listing that we are working with the State Government to progress as we want to have world heritage listing to protect nature and preserve culture. As part of our cultural heritage work QYAC have developed our own festival which is now in its third year. The Quandamooka festival goes over a three month period and has over 50 activities to celebrate Quandamooka culture, Country, and people.

QYAC has grown rapidly, we now have 40 staffed positions and are involved in a whole range of projects. Our work has brought with it a whole

range of challenges, including organising human resourcing and in-house legal work. The biggest challenge we have faced is in building the capacity within our organisation to keep moving forward. If QYAC as an organisation is not functioning well our partnerships with IBA, Local Council and State Government will not be as effective. Whilst we have been operating really well, with our expansive and rapid growth the challenge for us is to have adequate resources to continue to grow and deliver projects and partnerships.

Most of our key challenges come from external influences in making sure that State and Local Government deliver on their requirements under our ILUAs and in working with the culture of agencies not used to dealing with QYAC as land holders. There is still a lot of negativity around native title and what it brings, support from local politicians would be helpful, but quite often we don't get that.

QYAC is now firmly entrenched within the tourism sector of Brisbane. We are working with Tourism and Events Queensland, Brisbane Marketing and the Redlands City Council Tourism to establish Quandamooka Country as a global eco-cultural tourism destination. It's really exciting that a lot of industry agencies are recognising the necessity and the opportunity to engage with traditional owners to deliver a truly unique product for their global tourism markets.

Almost six years on from our first native title determination, QYAC has undertaken substantial capacity building projects and has grown from a native title claim group to a 570 member corporation in the process of rebuilding and strengthening the Quandamooka nation. The transition away from sand mining on Minjerribah has allowed QYAC to explore a variety of cultural and tourism ventures that have produced a wide range of income generating employment opportunities for Quandamooka traditional owners.

¹ Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef The Honourable Steven Miles, Bill to phase out sand mining on North Stradbroke passed in Parliament (Thursday, May 26, 2016).

Opposite page top: Cameron Costello, QYAC CEO.
Credit: QYAC.

Opposite page: One Mile Creek, QLD.
Credit: Helen Groombridge.

Left: QYAC rangers eradicating asparagus fern from dunes.
Credit: Darren Burns

