

The Traditional Knowledge Recording Project was initiated by the Kuku Thaypan elders who wanted their knowledge, beliefs and practices recorded and preserved for present and future use by their families and youth. The project recognises elders as mentors and knowledge holders and their desire to revitalise youth and culture.



Traditional Knowledge Recording Project

Elders are concerned that identity, culture, language and inherited knowledge of Indigenous clans are rapidly disappearing.

The Traditional Knowledge Recording Project pilot program involved Kuku-Thaypan elders George Musgrave (Snr) and Tommy George (Snr) and Victor Steffensen recording, demonstrating, documenting and utilising their traditional knowledge to address key areas of concern for their community.

The project has developed a recording database that potentially can be used in all communities across Australia to record traditional knowledge and to implement traditional practices in a contemporary setting. Addressing issues relating to poor land management practices, by developing traditional protocols for land management and cultural management.

Activities already underway include conducting burns in traditional style to promote regrowth and prevent destructive large fires around ceremony and rock art areas, monitoring of a scared lake area and story place based in the Lakefield National Park, and the monitoring of waterways, lagoons and fish stocks.

The project has already gained international recognition for its fire management practices through the University of California.

Kuku-Thaypan elders have demonstrated to other groups that the TKRP and digital technology was easy to use, trustworthy and cost-effective. Kuku-Yalanji, Djabugay and groups from Aurukun have adopted the methods of the project and are undertaking their own knowledge recording on country.

Young people are being trained in how to use cameras for recording and the database for storing knowledge collected, to deliver the project in their own homelands.

With more clan groups interested in taking on the methodology, the main concern is ongoing project support. The opportunities surrounding the TKRP are too valuable to lose as the elders are providing direction through sustaining their knowledge for all future generations.

Project Coordinator Victor Steffensen said, if the knowledge is not saved in a few more years' time we might be saying,

“If only we got our act together when our old people were still alive.”

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(Bottom) George Musgrave demonstrating plants and (Top) Wik TKRP Mob in Aurukun Photos: Victor Steffensen