Kuuku I'yu Northern Kaanju

Chuula NEWS

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Cyclone Narelle and its impacts on the Chuulangun Community (Full Story on Page 2)

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Message from our Directors

We are proud to share the first edition of Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation's newsletter 'Chuula News'. Our newsletter takes its name from a series of short 'Chuula News' videos we produced 15-20 years ago which featured our young people presenting news and weather reports about life at Chuulangun on the Kuuku I'yu Northern Kaanju Ngaachi. The stories were about Ngaachi – the animals, plants, weather, and experiences living and working on country.

Each edition of our 'Chuula News' newsletters will share good news stories and updates about our projects and activities as well as provide information to the community about our work and achievements on the Kaanju Ngaachi Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers Indigenous Protected Area (IPA).

Coming up in our work plan this year we have many activities including establishing Advisory Committees for the Kaanju Ngaachi IPA and Chuulangun Indigenous Ranger Program projects, further surveys for the endangered Kila and assessment of the impacts of Cyclone Narelle on numbers and nesting trees, completion of new Chuulangun campgrounds facilities, and upgrade of the Chuulangun airstrip.

At Chuulangun we are carrying on the legacy of our Elders and Leaders who came before us and returned to Ngaachi in the mid-1990s. Our forebears had a vision to live and work on Ngaachi, and to regenerate and repatriate our original management from our ancestors and we are carrying out this vision through our projects.



If you would like to contribute to 'Chuula News' please contact us at chuulangun@gmail.com

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Produced, Designed and Edited by Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation

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Impacts of Cyclone Narelle

In March 2026, Cyclone Narelle passed through Chuulangun and the IPA as a category 4 system and brought significant impacts, with strong winds and heavy rainfall causing widespread damage across the area. The Wenlock River rose considerably higher than a normal wet season, with floodwaters reaching close to the houses in our community. Destructive winds stripped trees of their leaves and branches, while others were uprooted or snapped and brought down completely. Six months later and the devastation is still visible across the landscape.



The damage to property and infrastructure around the community was significant, fallen trees bringing down fences, and impacting water supply to the community. Narelle had a significant impact on our Ngaachi, with ongoing impacts on the use of the Chuulangun Campgrounds, and cleanup and recovery work still underway. Chuulangun Rangers have worked hard to clear roads of fallen trees, allowing us to safely travel across the landscape to conduct vital management.

Our community continues to work through the significant cyclone impacts, with cleanup ongoing across the IPA. The recovery process is taking time as we clear damaged vegetation, address the impacts to property and infrastructure, and continue to care for Country following the cyclone.



Ranger Opportunities



In February, one of our young rangers, Ching'ka, had the opportunity to attend the three-day Queensland Indigenous Women's Ranger Network (QIWRN) Forum in Brisbane. Our rangers are encouraged to take part in conferences, training opportunities and community events that allow them to connect with other Aboriginal Corporations and rangers from across Queensland and Australia. These opportunities provide valuable spaces to share knowledge and build capacity and skills that support their work as rangers and their roles within the Corporation.

For Ching'ka, attending the conference was an important opportunity to learn and connect with other Indigenous women rangers working across Queensland. The experiences and knowledge she gained helped to build her confidence as a young woman ranger living and working on Country. We are proud to support our rangers as they build their skills, confidence, and their connection within community.

Kila Project



The Chuulangun Ranger team are building on Indigenous knowledge and understanding of the endangered *Kila* and their habitat through the project "Turning down the Heat: Strategic burning for the Kila (Palm Cockatoo) population on Kuuku I'yu Homelands, Cape York Peninsula". The Kaanju Ngaachi Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers Indigenous Protected Area is a stronghold for this culturally important species.

The project helps us to better understand the species, the habitat they depend on, and the impacts of fire. Kila rely on large old trees like Bloodwood, Stringybark and Cooktown Ironwood with suitable hollows for nesting, as well as food plants such as Nonda Plum.

Rangers walked more than 60km through trackless tropical savanna and riverine rainforest counting 36 Kila, or nearly 2% of the Australian population mostly along the Wenlock River in late 2024. They also measured, assessed and GPS tracked around 300 trees that were determined suitable for nesting.

But we fear that extensive damage caused by Cyclone Narelle, including 1000s of century old trees being brought down across the landscape, may have impacted important Kila nesting habitat. Our rangers continue to monitor and protect Kila through ongoing surveys and monitoring in the hope that the Kila population has held up in the wake of the cyclone.

This project has been supported with funding under the Queensland Government's Threatened Species Recovery Action Grant Program.

Medicinal Plants Project

This project was initiated by the Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation (CAC) as part of a management plan for Ngaachi and the IPA. It was created to be an equitable partnership between Aboriginal researchers and Western scientific researchers for the investigation of medicinal plants, with University researchers invited to collaborate.



Since 2006, several medicinal plant and food species have been studied including *Uncha* (Dodonaea polyandra) which is a plant used traditionally to decrease pain and discomfort from tooth ache, inflammation and infection.

A collaborative research agreement is in place which protects Indigenous knowledge and where project intellectual property is equally shared between CAC and the University, with shared decision making going forward. For more information on our community's medical plants project visit: https://www.kaanjungaachi.com.au/traditional-medicine/

Devastation from Fires



Throughout August, we were heavily impacted by fires that burned across areas surrounding the Chuulangun community and campgrounds. The fires were made worse by strong winds and heavy fuel loads because of fallen timber and debris from Cyclone Narelle. We conducted cultural burns in the early dry season, but this was limited by the build-up of fallen trees and washouts impacting firebreaks and access tracks.

The conditions of the fire and low resources were challenging but our rangers and community worked tirelessly throughout the day and night to fight the fires, carrying out backburning to help protect Country, our community and campgrounds. With support from the Lockhart River Council and their roadcrew using water trucks and opening fire breaks, we were able to manage the fires and keep our community safe.

The impact of the fires has been significant, with native plants burned across parts of our Homelands and risks to the habitats of animals, including the endangered Kila. Following the significant impacts of Cyclone Narelle and the ongoing cleanup and recovery work, our Rangers continue to work hard to care for and manage Country.

Chuulangun Rangers

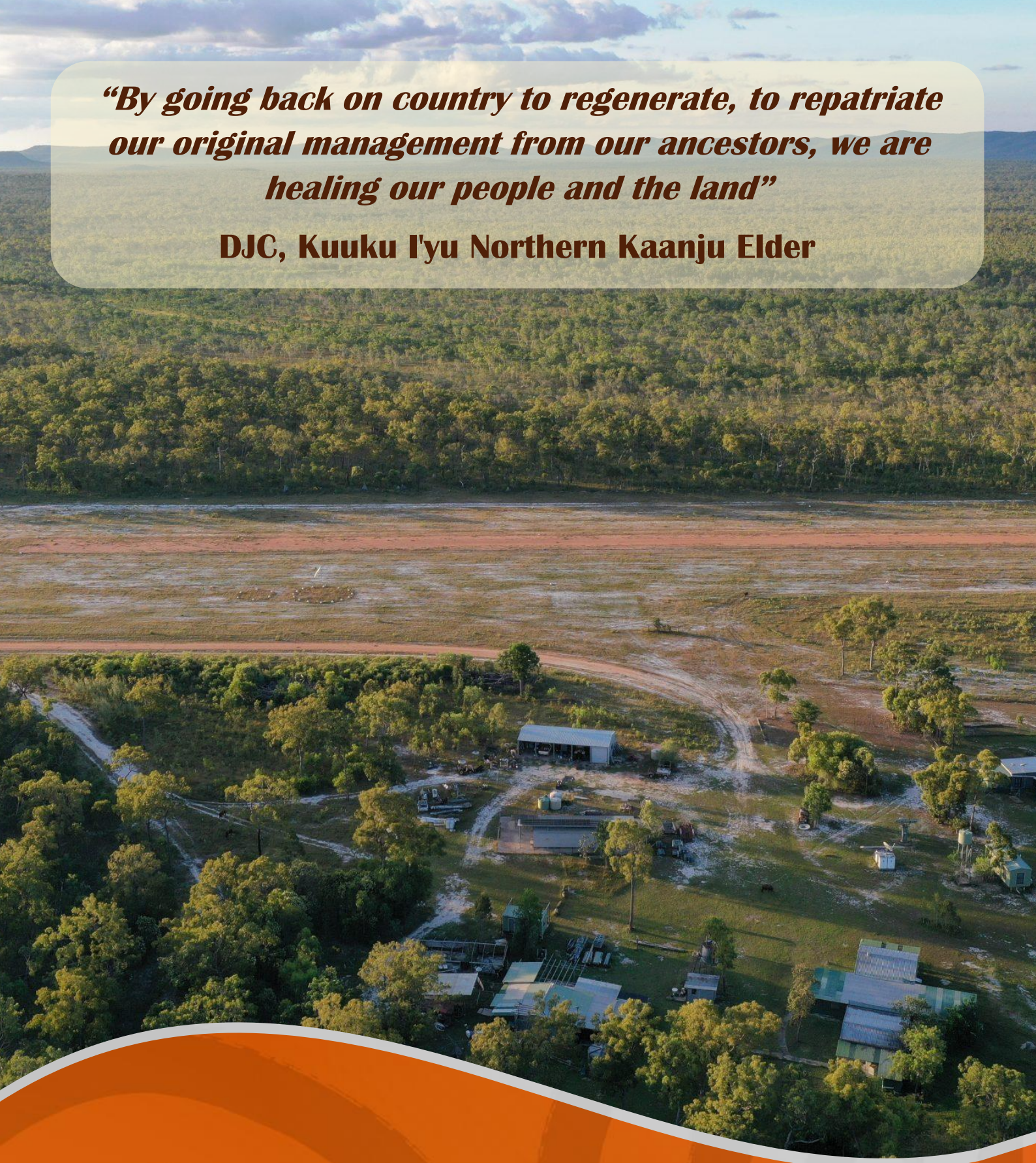


The Kaanju Ngaachi Wenlock and Pascoe Rivers Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) is one of the largest Indigenous managed tropical protected areas in the world. The Chuulangun Rangers living and working on Country have strong local and cultural knowledge and are at the forefront of IPA management. Our rangers are kept busy with an extensive program of activities to protect and manage country, including biodiversity surveys, mapping and monitoring, feral animal control, cultural burning, managing tourists and the Chuulangun campgrounds, and responding to high-priority threats like cyclones, wildfires, and biosecurity risks like bird flu.

The Chuulangun Rangers are supported with funding under the Australian Government's Indigenous Protected Areas program, and we have received funding under the Indigenous Rangers Program to employ additional rangers to help manage the IPA. We will be recruiting rangers in the coming period.

"By going back on country to regenerate, to repatriate our original management from our ancestors, we are healing our people and the land"

DJC, Kuuku I'yu Northern Kaanju Elder



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Archlock & Pascoe Rivers

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