

22 September 2018

State Library commemorates 100 years of Palm Island

The story of a Palm Island boat builder who saved his people's language from extinction is revealed in a new State Library of Queensland showcase opening today.

Palm Island and Our People acknowledges the centenary of the first placement of people to the island as an Aboriginal Reserve and explores the incredible history of this tropical paradise.

The late Jiinbilnggay (Alf Palmer) was the last man to speak Warrongo and was determined to safeguard his culture despite it being forbidden at the time.

Jiinbilnggay spoke at least seven languages either fluently or in part and his knowledge was recognised by linguists who travelled to Palm Island to record Aboriginal languages.

His story and more is explored in this fascinating showcase celebrating 100 years of Palm Island featuring images, memorabilia and digital stories. The showcase provides an opportunity to commemorate the past and to celebrate a new future for the people of Palm Island.

Highlights include:

- Rarely-seen home movies, from the 1930s and 50s, showing footage of everyday Palm Island life and the natural scenery.
- Culturally significant objects from the Manbarra (Traditional Owners) including woven bags, baskets, throwing stick and objects connected to public performances of music and dance.
- The story of Dr Lynore Geia, a Bwngcolman woman who works as a remote area nurse in Aboriginal community controlled health services. Dr Geia's work is informed by western research, Indigenous research knowledge and evidence based practice for youth and family health.

Quotes from Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council Mayor Alfred Lacey

"2018 marks the centenary of the first placement of people on Palm Island. It is a time to reflect on the past 100 years, to accept where we are today and to look to the future for our children and theirs."

"The future is bright on Palm Island. We have come a long way over the past 100 years and there is still more to do. We welcome you to join us and share our journey."

Quotes from Minister for the Arts Leanne Enoch:

"*Palm Island and Our People* tells an important story about the history of Palm Island, and provides an opportunity for Queenslanders to learn more through personal experiences and stories.

"*Palm Island and Our People* is a significant addition to the State Library collection."

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Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald:

“The exhibition is an emotive and informative experience, and highlights the incredible history of Palm Island and its people. The exhibition aims to shed light on its often tragic past and celebrate its present and hopes for the future.”

“State Library is a custodian of Queensland’s collective memory and we are uniquely positioned to share the incredible stories of our state’s past and present.”

Palm Island and Our People

22 September 2018 — 22 April 2019

Open daily | Free entry

kuril dhagun, level 1 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank

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State Library acknowledges the significant contribution of the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council and the Bwgcolman Indigenous Knowledge Centre in the development of this exhibition.