



October 2005

Message Stick



The monthly E-Magazine of the

The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

Our Mission: The UAICC is made up of ordinary people who do extraordinary things with God promoting the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians through: Holistic Evangelism, Justice, Transformation and Empowerment.

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The month of October has been another inspiring time for Congress nationally. Aside from supporting a broad range of Indigenous aspirations through our various community response programs, we have been active in implementing a range of measures that have been affirming of Indigenous Christians and their spirituality.

As Indigenous people, our spirituality is who we are and much more. It is part of our worldview and incorporates many elements such as religion, identity, heritage, culture and so on. As Rev. Charles Harris, one of the founders of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress said 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Spirituality of the past was something God-given. It sustained the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander race over those many thousands of years. It kept the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations intact'. There is a powerful force within each of us that can play a central role in transforming, empowering and enabling us to achieve our purpose and I believe that measure is the spirituality of one's being and how it is applied in reaching for one's goals.

This month we look back at just some of the activities that have occurred within Congress as we reach for our goals. We invite you to pray for the developing Christian Ministry at Aurukun, Cape York Peninsula in Far North Queensland.

We also look at an historic meeting that was held in response to calls from the Anangu people for assistance with Ministry in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yunkatjatjara (APY) lands. The meeting was hosted by the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church along with the NRCC and included visitors from the South Australian Synod, the South Australian Congress, Frontier Services and the National Congress Office. We ask you to pray for the successes of this ministry as it continues to evolve. We are pleased to present once again another Indigenous Reflection from Pastor Bill Hollingsworth.

For the past 20 years Congress has been working closely with Indigenous people to provide the necessary pathways to realize our ambitions. We have been developing programs and environments designed to provide Indigenous people with the spiritual, social and economic avenues to a better quality of life. We invite you to learn more about our mission and to pray for the ongoing successes of Australia's first people.

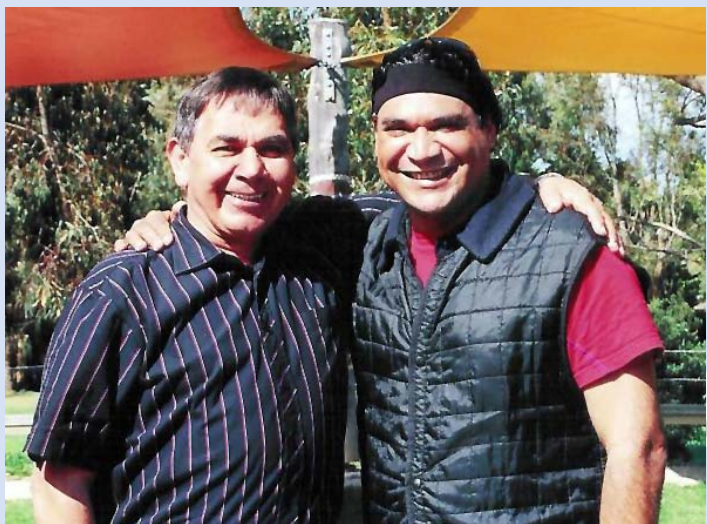

Rev Shayne Blackman
National Administrator

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress



THE 'BLACK OLIVE' VISITS NARANA CREATIONS

Narana Creations and the Victorian Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress were very fortunate to have Mark Olive aka 'The Black Olive', the visit recently. As many would know Mark is a famous Aboriginal chef who presents an Indigenous-cooking segment on the ABC Message Stick television program. Mark spent a whole morning meeting with staff from Narana Creations and the Victorian Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.



Congress Victorian State Director, Vince Ross (left) shares a laugh with well known Aboriginal chef Mark Olive.

He offered several progressive ideas about how to further develop the Narana Café. There were also conversations with State Director Vince Ross, to discuss the possibility of having Mark present one of his cooking segments from Narana Café in the near future.



Narana staff were delighted to meet Mark Olive (centre) who may present one of his famous cooking shows from Narana Creations.

If Narana were to have such a well known cooking program televised, staff are confident that such an activity would be wonderful for Narana's reputation as an Indigenous food venue. It would also serve to nationally promote the services and work we are undertaking.



GROWTH IN AURUKUN CONGREGATION

After the opening of the new Aurukun Church in December 2004, there are new signs of the growth within the Aurukun Congregation.

Before and since the opening, the elders and myself have been slowly developing this group. In April an elders training day was organised, where the role and service of elders was explored.

As a result, 25 new elders were commissioned in a May worship and celebration. There are also plans to recruit younger elders, to develop younger leadership.

Other positive signs of development include families linked with these new elders, are bringing their children for baptism and the ongoing activity of the



Aurukun Elders leading a worship.

Kids club on Monday and Thursday nights, also continues to spread the seeds of faith amongst the younger and older children.

The presence of the Christian church, and being a people of hope and light is paramount, in a community sometimes better known for its social disadvantage.



For God said "Let light shine out of darkness and my light shine in your hearts"

2 Corinthians 4: 6

Please pray for the light of Christ to be known in the hearts of people in Aurukun and also for the elders group, and myself and all our families as we exercise Christian leadership in this community. *Note - Aurukun is located 75 kilometres south of Weipa on the west coast of Cape York. The main language group is Wik-Mungkan.*

By Rev. Laumua Kofe (Aurukun Minister) with Andy King Education/Resource Officer, Calvary Presbytery.



PUKATJA SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM



NORTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CONGRESS

In the October school holidays, a group of 28 people from Congress and the Uniting Church in Adelaide visited Pukatja (Ernabella) in the north west of South Australia. The group went at the invitation of Katrina Tjitayi, Chair of the Central Region of the NRCC (Northern Region of Congress). The group consisted of young people and Indigenous and non-Indigenous families with the specific aim of running a school holiday children's program in the creek-bed at Christmas Tree Hill. This



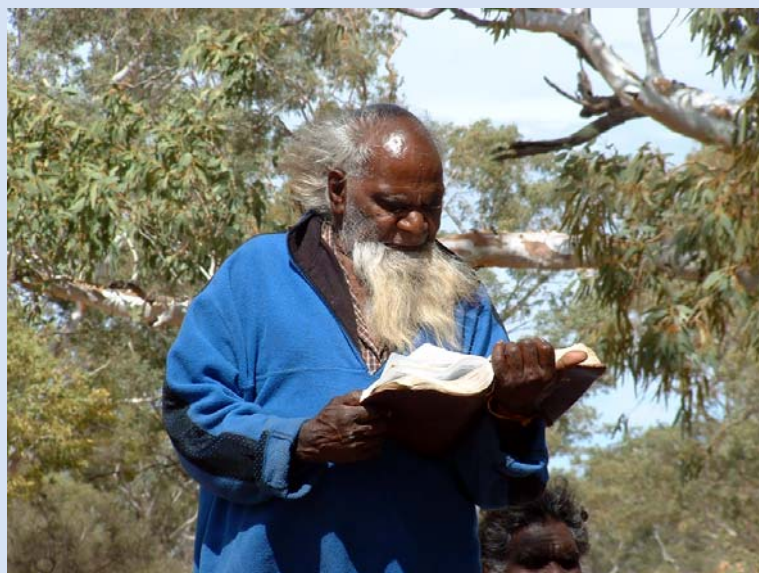
Some young people from Adelaide mix with the local Ernabella tjitji [children] on the recent trip organised by Congress

trip followed a visit held in December 2004 which was designed to encourage young Indigenous people to come to NCYC (National Christian Youth Convention) in Adelaide last January. The inaugural visit was successful as over 200 Anangu (Aboriginal people) from the APY (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankatjatjara) land attended NCYC. On this visit, fellowship and worship was focused around the theme 'Armour of God'. The singing of the Anangu children was a highlight of the week. They also enjoyed all the painting, sport and other activities which were part of the program.



An old car bonnet is used to represent the 'Armour of God' in an exercise that brought to life some of the scriptures in Ephesians Chapter 6.

In mid Sep 2005 a historic meeting was held in the creek bed at Christmas Tee Hill, South Of pukatja (Ernabella) to discuss ministry in Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankatjatjara (APY) lands, which is set mostly in the north west of S Australia. The APY lands for the central Australian region of the NRCC (Northern Region of Congress) and range from Indulkana in the East to Pipalyatjara in the West, and to Aputula (Finke) in the Northern Territory. The meeting was hosted by the



Rev. Peter Nyaningu reads from a Pitjantjatjara Bible.

Northern Synod of the Uniting Church along with the NRCC and included visitors from the South Australian Synod, the South Australian Congress, Frontier Services and the National Congress Office. Local Anangu (Aboriginal) people were well represented. The September meeting was held in response to calls from the Anangu people for assistance with Ministry in the APY lands.



Some women at Pukatja who attended the historic meeting.

A lot of praying, talking, eating and listening was done over the two days as the Anangu people led discussions about the issues and challenges which they face now and into the future. What was evident in the meetings was the willingness of all participants to hear of the problems and challenges that face the Anangu people in their life and ministry. A number of responses were also put forward. The prayers of the wider church are appreciated as the Anangu people, Congress and the wider church work through the issues raised in the meeting.



TABULUM CULTURAL YOUTH CAMP

The NSW Uniting Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) held its first Cultural Youth camp at the Tabulam Race Course in Northern NSW last week. Uncle Harry and Aunt Annabelle Walker were our hosts for the four days. We had thirty-five children, from as far as Queanbeyan and Queensland, between 10 and 17 years old. The 15 leaders did a great job with all the kids and everyone enjoyed it.



Tabulum camp members congregate with some members of the Korean Temperance Union.

The children learned turtle diving, spear making, beading (necklaces etc) and Aboriginal Bundjalung language. They went swimming to cool off from the soaring temperatures and listened to camp stories from Uncle Harry. Guest speaker Carl Blacklock spoke about the adverse affects from drugs and alcohol.

The Korean Temperance Union joined us for fellowship for one night and provided us with delicious Korean food for dinner. They also ran a workshop with the kids on drug and alcohol and handed out gifts for the children. Everyone enjoyed the few days at Tabulam. We look forward to the next Cultural Youth Camp to be held in January at Copeton Dam, hosted by Tingha Congress members.



Young participants at the Tingha cultural camp.



SONGS OF FAITH AND CULTURE

“Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere, Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. On a nearby mountain, came Christ one night and prayed. He sang this land’s Great Spirit, and we sing as one today.”

An old gospel tune gained some new and very local words as the Congress congregation at Leprena brought together culture, gospel, personal stories and church traditions around the theme of “mountains.” Over a number of weeks stories were shared about rock carvings engraved thousands of years ago, of Christmas traditions on the Cape Barren Island Reserve, of family walks and of the many occasions in the Bible when mountains are revealed as being places of prayer.



The dramatic backdrop of Mt. Wellington in Hobart, Tasmania reminds one of the significance of mountains in the bible as special places of prayer.

Each of these stories is mentioned or alluded to in our new verses. We ought not to underestimate the significance of what we are doing here. It is perhaps the first time in a very long time that Tasmanian Indigenous Christians have congregated to songs of faith and culture in songs formed by our own experiences.

“Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere, Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born. On a nearby mountain, came Christ one night and prayed. He sang this land’s Great Spirit, and we sing as one today.”

Over the past few weeks we’ve recorded our Sunday gatherings, particularly our singing, so we can share our songs with Congress communities around the country. Singing is an important part of our lives and we’re looking forward to writing and sharing more songs in the future.

Rev Grant Finlay
UAICC Tasmania



CONGRESS PROFILES CHERYL LAWSON

Hello my name is Cheryl Lawson I am an Aboriginal Australian from the Nyungar people in Western Australia.

My Father Rev. Sealin Garlett is a Nyungar man from the Wheat belt country town of Kellerberrin, and my Mother is a Nyungar woman from the South West town of Pingelly. Within my family I have two brothers and five sisters.



Desmond and Cheryl Lawson.... "my life will never be the same because the hand of Jesus has touched me"...

My schooling took place in various places and states in Australia. I have had the privilege of being brought up in a Christian home; my Father and Mother have been walking with the Lord for at least thirty years.

As I got older I couldn't understand why my parents went to church and who was this person God they were talking about. I started to ask the question, "who are you God? and if you are real then show yourself to me" As the years went by I forgot about what I had asked God and went about my business. Then on a sunny afternoon my life changed forever. God spoke to me in a mighty way and showed me that He is the God of Heaven and Earth, and of his people. God has shown me so much and I am privileged to know God as my Lord and Saviour.

As a family we moved to different places in Australia, through the calling of God within my Parents. Through our journeys my parents settled down in Coolbellup, Perth, Western Australia, which has been my home for the past seventeen years.

I am married to Desmond Lawson who is Yamajti man from Mt. Magnet and this occurred in the year of 2002; we have been married for 3 years. God has blessed us tremendously. We are currently going to church in Coolbellup at Maaman 'O' Mya which in the Nyungar language, means House Of The Lord.

My life will never be the same because the hand of Jesus has touched me.

INDIGENOUS REFLECTIONS FROM PASTOR BILL HOLLINGSWORTH



THE PRIESTHOOD OF ABORIGINAL BELIEVERS

God made all creation for His glory and His good pleasure. (Revelation Ch.4:11). When we look up into the night sky, we can see that "the heavens declare the glory of the Lord." (Psalm 19).

The cycle of seasons declare His faithfulness. Fruit bearing trees declare his constant provision for us. Leaves and bark, sap and roots provide healing for our sicknesses. (Ezekiel Ch.47:9-12)

Wherever you look you see the wonder of God's creation and with the Creator we can say, "This is very good." (Genesis Ch. 1:31).

God made man in His own image and put him in charge of all His creation on earth. He made us to be the priests over His handiwork, and express on behalf of all creation our praise and thanksgiving to God, so that through our voices all creation would live in harmony. When we worship God together we minister on behalf of the trees, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the creatures on land, the land we walk on, the mountains we look up to, and on it goes. (Genesis Ch.1: 26-31).

Remember, our chief purpose on earth is to glorify God. Our first priest Adam who was put in charge of all creation on earth failed. (Genesis Ch.3; Romans Ch.5:12). When sin entered in, the whole creation groaned in universal pain, waiting for the restoration of God's creation and the fulfilment of God's purpose in human lives. Did God abandon us when we rebelled? Is He sitting in His heaven then sulking because we disobeyed Him?

"No! No! No! "And a thousand times "No!" Our second priest Christ Jesus restored what had fallen, and we were called to be "king and priests" unto our great High Priest Jesus. (Revelation Ch.5:10) (Revelation Ch.1 :5-6)

Jesus did for us what we failed to do, that is to offer to the Father the praise and worship we failed to offer. He glorifies God through a perfect life of love and obedience.

Jesus comes to stand in for us just as the priests of the Old Testament stood in for the people of Israel. He became the lamb and the priest, the sacrifice and the minister before God in the most holy place. (Hebrew Ch 9:11; Ch 9:26; Ch:8:6).

He called us to be a "royal priesthood", "a holy nation". He called us to identify with Him in His great priestly work and ministry of intercession, that our prayers on earth might be the echo of His prayers in heaven. Our prayers become His, and His ours (Hebrews Ch.3:1; Ch.7:25;Ch.8:6; Ch.9:15; Ch.12:24; Ch.7:22). (1 John Ch.2:1) (1Timothy Ch.2:5).

Land management, land conservation, land preservation, land rights are popular words these days as we struggle to come to terms with the use of our land. Do we know that we, the original inhabitants were given "dominion" over this continent by almighty God himself? He called us to be the priests of his creation and offer up to Him the work of our hands and the worship of our lips. Let us not sell our birthright for a "mess of pottage" as Esau did, but rather, take seriously the great responsibility placed upon our shoulders by our high priest Christ Jesus himself. (Genesis Ch. 25: 30-34).

The questions I wish readers to contemplate are:

1. As the first inhabitants of this land of Australia, do we consider ourselves as stewards of this land? (Genesis Ch.1: 26-30).
2. If we consider ourselves as stewards of this land, how will the high priest of creation Christ Jesus lead us into the healing and restoration of this land? (2 Chronicles Ch.7:13-15).
3. Do we see ourselves as priests and kings unto God, called to enter into the High Priestly Ministry of Christ Jesus? (Revelations Ch.1:6).

God Bless. Pastor Bill Hollingsworth.



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