Atitjere gets a Taste of Maori Culture

Fierce faces and mokos (Maori tattoos) were all part of the fun at Atitjere, where school children learned about Maori culture from the Shire’s multicultural sport and recreation team.

“The senior students were studying the award winning New Zealand movie The Whale Rider and were also learning about my country. They invited my husband Stanford and me to talk about our family and life as Maori and to share some of the songs and dances we learned from our parents and grandparents”, said Sport and Recreation Co-ordinator Cherie Forbes.

cont. pg 3

Looking after our Elders

Aged care worker Judith Hudson wasted no time delivering meals in Yuelamu’s new Aged Care troopie after Cr Adrian Dixon handed over the keys at a BBQ ceremony.

For more pictures of our fabulous aged care staff at work have a look at the back page.
From the President

Welcome to Central Desert News and lots of stories about what’s happening in the Shire.

In my home community of Lajamanu we’ve been celebrating the achievements of some of our CDEP participants. Late last year 18 youngfellas completed a hands-on construction course.

One group built the playground equipment you’ll see on page 7 and the other group put up a shade shelter at the women’s area. CDEP mentors taught some of the women how to bake Maori bread and a writing group is getting underway. I can’t wait to read some of their stories in this newsletter. Another group of Lajamanu bush mechanics is very proud of finishing their Automotive 1 Certificate.

I spoke at the signing of the Local Implementation Plan at Yuendumu in February and attended the very moving opening of Kumanjayi Nungarrayi Egan classroom at Yuendumu’s new early childhood facility. I hope you enjoy this and other stories and pass this newsletter on to your friends and family to read.

I presented the Lajamanu graduates with their Certificates I in Construction and Certificates II in Workplace Practices.

Cr Norbert Patrick,
Shire President

From the CEO

Since the December 2010 Newsletter several important initiatives have been undertaken:

A Community Engagement Strategy and Policy has been established giving a clear understanding of Council’s commitment to community engagement. The Strategy and Policy is available on Council’s website and can be supplied to anyone who requests it.

Because of problems caused by the huge amount of rain we have received Council has done a review of roadwork jobs. The highest priorities are to make sure that the main access roads to our communities are trafficable whenever possible during wet weather, in addition to looking after the existing bitumen roads in the communities and not letting them fall into disrepair.

Council has decided that the best use of $600,000 received under the 2010/2011 Roads to Recovery Programme is to carry out:
1. Formation works and gravelling – various sections on the Yuelamu Road $300,000.
2. Road re-alignment to bypass swamp area approximately 43 kilometres from Tanami Road - Yuendumu/Nyirripi Road $150,000.
3. Bitumen resealing Atitjere Road (from Shire boundary to grid) and Willowra internal roads - $150,000. The works are proposed to be tendered out to contractors by the end of June 2011.

Council was successful in obtaining a Special Purpose Grant of $300,000 for the construction of two units of staff housing at Engawala and Willowra and tenders have been let. It is always important to ensure Council has staff housing available to attract qualified people to supply important services to communities.

Again for Engawala and Willowra, Council has made further efforts to other levels of government to get additional community housing. However, it has been hard to get a positive result because new housing is being only allocated by government to the Growth Towns. In Central Desert Shire only Lajamanu and Yuendumu are given Growth Town status.

I hope you enjoy our latest Newsletter.

Roydon Robertson
Chief Executive Officer

Shire CEO Roydon Robertson
Atitjere gets a Taste of Maori Culture

Cherie helped the young women try on the *piu piu* (grass skirts) while Stanford practised the *haka* (war dance) with the young men. “We also taught some fun action songs and the stick game and shared some special *taongas* (bone carvings) and greenstone weapons”, said Cherie. The senior class had mokos drawn on their face and they wore the bone carvings and piu pius for the final concert.

On the last day parents and teachers came along for a concert. Middle and senior school performed the ‘hope hope’, a song teaching the Maori names for the body parts. The senior girls performed an action song while the senior boys finished off with a haka. “The Atitjere children picked up the pronunciation with ease and their rhythm was brilliant”, said Cherie.
Yuendumu united in February to honour Kumanjayi Nungarrayi Egan during the emotional and touching opening ceremony of the new early childhood facility. More than 150 residents gathered at the school to name a classroom for the little kids after the long term teacher and community leader who is fondly remembered.

They also celebrated their work with government in preparing the Yuendumu Local Implementation Plan. The plan sets priorities in the areas of early childhood education, schooling, housing, community safety, health, employment, governance and leadership. Major projects are a child and family centre, the Mt Theo Warlpiri Regional Youth Development Complex and better roads.

Local Reference Group members joined Co-ordinator General Dave Chalmers (Australian Government), Minister Karl Hampton (Territory Government) and Shire President Norbert Patrick (Local Government) to speak passionately about the future they have planned for Yuendumu. They reminded everyone of the need for the community and the three levels of government to work closely together to achieve the plan’s goals. President Patrick said the plan was a very important step for the Warlpiri people at Yuendumu. “We look forward to signing the Lajamanu Local Implementation Plan next. It’s important that every local organisation in Yuendumu and Lajamanu works with government towards a better future for everyone.”

Senior women added a special touch to the celebrations with their singing, while school kids entertained the crowd with drumming and rap dancing.

Yuendumu community members celebrate the signing of the Local Implementation Plan.
The NT Libraries forum and 30th anniversary celebrations were not just a great excuse for libraries workers from around the Territory to share some birthday cake. Lajamanu Community Library Co-ordinator Stephen Patrick, Community Library Officer Kylie Patrick, Community Service Co-ordinator René Laan and Lajamanu Shire Services Manager Sue Greggery took part in some great workshops. They learned about using new technologies to make books, fun activities for getting kids involved in libraries and social networking sites such as face book. Watch out for some of their new ideas and skills to come to a library near you.

The school bus run between Irrerlirre outstation and Atitjere School has resumed this year. Fifteen school children from the outstation, about 30 km from Atitjere, can now come to school every day thanks to reliable driver Julius Bloomfield.

School bus services to Irrerlirre have been on the community’s agenda since the shire started. Late last year, a brand-new 20 seat bus was bought from Local Priority Funding. The bus has run every day since the start of the school year, except for 3 days of flooding. The bus run is funded for 6 months and everyone hopes it will continue.

Group Schools Principal Ian Hopwood and Shire Services Manager Clayton McCudden worked with the community and the Education Department to get this important service up and running again. It’s another example of getting things done by working together.
CDEP participants in Ti Tree had lots of fun showing off the skirts they made during a week of sewing training. They chose their own fabrics and enjoyed learning about patchwork. The finished skirts have been getting a lot of wear. They plan to sell some of their future creations in their CDEP Opportunity Shop.

From Tip to Table

Communities are turning their trash into tables and benches, thanks to their CDEP crews. The participants used old doors from community houses that had been replaced and collected other rubbish from the tips to make the furniture. They got hands on carpentry training, practised using power tools and sent a message about recycling. The project also helped with waste management because less rubbish ended up at the tip. The Atitjere crew gave some of the tables and benches to their Arts Centre.

Top: Nathan Fishhook, Jason Fishhook, Hudson Fishhook and Marie Bloomfield paint a table made from old doors and other recycled materials

Bottom: CDEP participants William Liddle, Jason Fishhook (rear), Coralie Bloomfield and Marie Bloomfield (middle) with trainer/mentors Michael Lerm and John Sarkanen.
Lajamanu CDEP participants practised their constructions skills by building a new playground. It’s been getting plenty of use.

“I know about cars”, said Shannon Rose. “I’ve been learning from my father-in-law.” Shannon and his fellow CDEP participants in Lajamanu don’t need a piece of paper to prove they’re clever bush mechanics.

Still, they looked pretty proud of the Automotive 1 Certificates they received during a breakfast celebration with plenty of bacon and eggs. The certificates show the guys can stick at anything they turn their minds to, especially if it means picking up some new tricks of the trade.

Shannon liked the course, even the early starts. “It gave me more experience. Now I feel more confident fixing cars. It also taught me about getting up in the morning.”
Look who’s advising Council!

Meet some of our talented and experienced Local Board members

Nancy Tilmouth I was born at Alcoota station and grew up at Engawala. I went to school at Traeger Park in Alice Springs and then came back to my family and community. In 1993 I worked as health worker at the clinic.

Now I work at the Shire Office as a cleaner. I am a local board member. I like playing softball and basketball. I barrack for the Crows.

David Stafford I was born at Coniston Station – my country. I went to the Coniston School. It was an old tin shed. We camped in the bush and we rode to school on a donkey. We also travelled to Yuelamu on a donkey to shop.

I lived at Coniston for a long time, when it was owned by Brian Bowman. I was doing stockman work, breaking horses, fencing, mustering. Later I moved back to Pine Hill, owned by Gill Bowman. I worked the same job but also looked after bores and buildings.

Then I moved to Yuelamu doing stock work. Mt Allen was owned by the community in the 1980s and we managed the cattle and got horses. I work for the shire as a supervisor of the rubbish collection, showing youngfellas what to do.

I am one of two CLC delegates from Yuelamu and a Local Board member. My language is Anmatjere. I understand Warlpiri. I am married with seven children, two married girls and five boys.

Irene Tilmouth I am a local board member at Engawala. I was born on Alcoota Station and I went to school at Engawala. I work for the shop and have worked on rubbish collection.

I have a drivers license. My languages are Anmatjere and English. I am married with 6 children – 5 boys and one girl. I am a little bit of an artist.

Kevin Bloomfield I am the Deputy Chair of the Engawala Board. I was born at Mt Riddock Station. I learned to work when I was 18. My father taught me about horses, racing, all that. I worked on Mt Riddock Station and other stations doing cattle work, bore, windmill, fencing, mustering, training racehorses.

After returning to Engawala I did CDEP work – fencing in the community. I have also worked in the clinic. And I can drive a truck, bus, back hoe and tractor. Last year I started to work with Night Patrol.

I am married and have a daughter and a son. My language is Arrernte. I understand Anmatjere and English.
Engawala, Atitjere, Lajamanu, Yuelamu and Ti Tree local boards were formed in late 2008 and early 2009. The term of local boards in Central Desert Shire is 2 years. That means that the first term of these boards finished late last year. Nyirripi, Laramba and Yuendumu boards were formed later and have a few more months to go. So what’s next for local boards?

Council would like to see local boards with no more than 12 members. That’s because it’s been too hard to get more than half of the members together (a “quorum”) when there were too many members. Of course everyone else can come along to speak, listen, and ask questions. Council would like to make sure there is always a good mix of experienced and new members, young and old, women and men, traditional owners and other residents, as well as all the different families. It would like 6 members from the first term to stay on for another term and to fill the other 6 positions with new members. This council policy is a guide. It may not be possible to achieve this in all communities, especially the smaller places where the same people are on many committees and groups. It’s up to each community to nominate who should speak up for them.

Over the next few months there will be meetings in all communities. At these community meetings new members can nominate and old members can say if they want to stay on (“re-nominate”). Where there are more than 12 nominations there may also be an election. Council then decides who to appoint. If you would like to be on a local board look out for community meeting notices. You can also tell your ward councillor or call Elke Wiesmann on 8958 9508. Make sure you have your say about who speaks up for your community.

What have Local Boards achieved?

Since the start of the shire local boards made over 60 recommendations to Council. Here’s some of what they asked for:

- Speed humps and signs
- Grassing footy ovals
- Changing the local government voting system
- Road grading and repairs
- Gravesite register
- Mobile phone coverage and broadband internet
- Public transport
Council supported almost all local board recommendations and the shire staff worked hard to make them happen. They doubled the number of garbage bins at Lajamanu and are building a multi-use community meeting place at Laramba. Willowra is getting new street lights. The Jarra Jarra road was graded to the Barkly Shire border and the road to Nturiya is getting regular maintenance thanks to a grader from Lajamanu. The new tourist roadside stop at Atitjere is ready for local board input in the information panels and a new pay phone is going up in Nyirripi. The shire is also working with CLC on a Community Learning and Early Childhood Centre for Willowra, on grassing the oval at Lajamanu and repairs to the Yuendumu – Nyirripi Road.

Council also agreed to speak up for local boards to the Australian or the NT governments to fund many things the shire can’t afford to do or does not have the power to do. Some of these council resolutions were knocked back by the other governments, for example new houses for Engawala and Willowra, exceptional drivers licenses at Yuelamu and a police station for Laramba. Other projects are going ahead or are finished. For example, a roof and lights for the Engawala basketball court and a review of the NT local government voting system, thanks to Nyirripi’s local board. A lot still needs to be done. Having a local board with a strong voice helps communities keep the Council on track.

It started as a bit of fun and fitness for Alice Springs-based staff and their families. A year on the Central Desert Shire touch footy team tops the B Grade Competition. The shire-sponsored team surprised itself by scoring second place in last year’s Alice Springs Corporate Cup. This inspired the players to join the B Grade Competition. Again, they came second.

“The next season we made it through to the finals again”, said team member Cherie Forbes. “We were facing Rock City Rollers. They got two tries up on us early and were leading by half time. Arlee and Stanford created gaps and fed the ball into backing players, allowing us to score. In the last few minutes we were all tied up. Tyrell made a spectacular intercept with only minutes to go, putting us in the lead by one touchdown. We won!”

Tyrell won Best on the Ground and Best Male, his mum Cherie won Best Female. Congratulations to all the players, managers Wilma and René, coach Stanford, sponsors and supporters!
Councillors Sascha McKell and Dianne Martin, along with Directors Nareen Carter and Cathryn Hutton, attended the first ever Women in Local Government dinner in Alice Springs late last year. Approximately 50 female elected members, local board members and female council workers from across the Northern Territory enjoyed the function. The Local Government Association of NT sponsored the dinner to recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of women in local government.

The final NT event in the 2010 Year of Women in Local Government was a smorgasbord of delicious food and delightful entertainment. It showed off the diversity of women in local government and the great contribution they make. It was also an opportunity for growth, development and networking for women from all walks of life. Betty Pearce from native title holders Lhere Artepe welcomed the women to country and prominent Territory women from many backgrounds inspired them with their speeches. In local government councils in the NT, women make up more than a third of elected members. Almost a third of Aboriginal councillors in the new shires are women. Three of the 12 members of Central Desert Shire Council are women. Women make up 48 out of 109 local board members – almost half. As far as representation goes, it’s good to see women are doing better in the NT than in the rest of Australia.
Volunteers with the NT Emergency Services are often the first at the scene of road crashes, flood crises, and searches for missing people. Lajamanu is lucky to have a whole team of enthusiastic shire staff who give up their spare time to help in emergencies. Owen Coco, Steve Balmer and Michael Erglis train regularly to keep their skills up to date. They took part in a two and a half day NTES First Aid (Medic) training course and completed all the tasks. Well done, team!

*Steve Balmer and former shire worker Sophie Dube practise their road rescue skills.*

---

**Aged Care: Seriously Yummy Meals**

Nyirripi aged carers Lee Wayne and Portia Michaels cook and deliver meals every day. When Central Desert News visited the curries smelled seriously yummy. Lee and Portia even made some fruit salad for dessert.

---

**Lajamanu Christmas Party**

Late last year they found festively decorated tables loaded with presents, the sound of joyful Christmas carols in the air and, of course, a Christmas tree.

More than 30 aged care clients and staff sat down with President Norbert Patrick and his wife Tracie to a delicious traditional Christmas roast followed by plum pudding, custard, fruit and sweets. After the elders had opened their presents the aged care “taxi” took everyone home for a well-earned afternoon nap.

A very big thank you to Aged Care Coordinator, Chrissie Balmer, and the staff for all the planning and hard work that went into making this such a special day.

*Everyone enjoyed the Lajamanu Aged Care Christmas Party and the delicious meal.*

The Lajamanu Aged Care Christmas Party is an event many old people look forward to all year.