



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

Thudgari People Celebrate Native Title Recognition

Media Release: 18 November 2009

Yesterday, exactly 12 years to the day their native title claim was first lodged, the Thudgari People and parties from the State Government and pastoral stations will meet in remote WA for a Federal Court hearing to determine native title over 11,280sq km of land.

Thudgari country lies between the Ashburton and Gascoyne rivers and is mainly covered by pastoral leases and the Barlee Range nature reserve. Settlement in the area occurred in the late 19th century by pastoralists. Aboriginal people working on stations such as Glen Florrie, Maroonah, Mangaroon, Willambury and Ullawarra were a vital part of the survival of these remote outstations.

The on-country Federal Court hearing, at Ullawarra Station, recognised the Thudgari People's native title rights to their country, which stem from their traditional laws and customs. The determination formalises these rights and interests, including the right to access the land, and to hunt, gather, camp and protect significant sites.

Traditional Owner Doris Parker said, "I was born on Thudgari country at an outstation on Maroonah Station, my father was born on Ullawarra. As a child I was sent to Carnarvon mission and only had contact with my parents once a year. It was very hard for us Aboriginal children who weren't allowed to speak our traditional language or be on country to learn from our elders. Today means that I can go out on my country and camp and hunt with my family. I can show our future generations this land and how it connects to who they are."

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation's (YMAC) Chief Executive Officer, Simon Hawkins said, "We are proud to have represented the Thudgari people and today's decision is a testament to their culture's survival. We hope today's decision will make it easier for Thudgari law and customs to stay strong in the future."

Fourteen agreements between the Thudgari People's corporation and pastoralists were signed immediately after the event. The agreements deal with the practical issue of co-existence between Thudgari People and pastoral stations and are intended to be registered as Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs).