

Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli people celebrate native title win

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Photo: Justice Bernard Murphy with the Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli people at the native title determination today

At a Federal Court hearing today – at Gascoyne Junction, on neighbouring Yingaarda Country, WA – the Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli (*Thin-mar, Worry-anga, Thuc-ari, Ji-warli*) people have been formally recognised by the Federal Court as native title holders.

The judgement made by Justice Murphy recognised the native title rights and interests held by the Combined Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli peoples' in relation to the land covered by the Determination Area.

Justice Murphy congratulated the Applicants on their native title determination.

“It’s a privilege to be invited to be part of such a wonderful occasion for the Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli people. It has been a long journey and through their own effort they have achieved recognition of native title. Congratulations to everyone involved”.

The Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli peoples claim (WAD 464 of 2016) was lodged in the Federal Court on 7 October 2016.

The determination area covers approximately 6,804 square kilometres of land lying within the Shires of Ashburton, Carnarvon and Upper Gascoyne.

All Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli Country and waters are important to the Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli people. Some areas of particular cultural, historical and environment significance within the determination are include the Lyons River, Edmund River, Yangibana Creek, Gifford Creek, Fraser Creek and Elliot Creek.

The determination area is home to places of special spiritual significance, in particular living waters inhabited by the mythical water serpent, thalu places, meeting and ritual places, and the burial places of the old people, whose spirits still inhabit Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli Country today.

The Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli people have maintained a traditional connection to this area since time immemorial, with a vibrant living culture maintained through stories, spiritual connections to the ancestors and Country, caring for and managing Country and waters, and by passing on traditional knowledge through each generation. Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli people have a strong connection to their land and waters through their intrinsic local knowledge of its natural resources and the land.

Hunting is one of the main customary activities of many Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli people, which allows people to spend time on their Country teaching younger relatives about the area’s resources and the knowledge to look after the Country. Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli people have extensive knowledge of the land’s resources learned from their old people, from the hunting of animals to the gathering of native plant foods and medicines depending on the seasons.

The same law and culture is still very much alive today and is passed on through the generations in the same way as it has been for thousands of years.

Traditional Owner, Herbert Eagles, said, “We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors, and I know that they would be proud that our connection to Country has been honoured today by the Federal Court.

“We can now look forward to the future and creating a legacy for our children and our children’s children,” Mr Eagles said.

“Today means everything - Ngurra - Country. It’s been a good journey with the people, we have walked together, and will continue to walk together every step of the way – to see a different world, to see a different future. This is for the past and the present, this is for the children,” Traditional Owner, Ben Roberts said.

The celebration was facilitated by Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC), the Native Title Representative Body for the Yamatji and Pilbara regions.

“Congratulations to the Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli peoples’ on working together to achieve native title I am reminded today of an analogy I heard from a Traditional Owner, that a single twig is easy to snap, but many sticks bundled together are hard to break. Together you are strong. Your success today comes from the hard work and dedication of your working group,” Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation Chief Executive Officer, Simon Hawkins said.

“Today is a day of celebration and we look forward to the future. Moving forward, YMAC is excited about the prospect of working collectively with the Thiin-Mah Warriyangka Tharrkari Jiwarli People and the newly formed Woodgoomungooh (*Woo-doo-mar-gun-awe*) Aboriginal Corporation. It has been a privilege to represent your community,” Mr Hawkins said.

All quotes from Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation must be attributed to Mr Simon Hawkins, CEO Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation.

About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Proudly celebrating its 25th Anniversary in 2019, Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the native title representative body for the Pilbara, Murchison, Mid-West and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. YMAC has a representative area of over one-third of WA and represents over 20 Traditional Owner groups - all with their own language, culture and traditions. YMAC is a not-for-profit organisation run by an Aboriginal Board of Directors and provides a range of services to its members including claim and future-act representation, heritage protection services, community and economic development and natural resource management.

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