

# **Cape York United #1 Native Title determination**

## **Traditional Owner quotes**

### **Quotes attributable to Charlotte Yam, Director of Kunjen Oikol Aboriginal Corporation:**

“I feel really proud for coming this far,” she said.

“I thank God for our past and present, and for our elders.

“I thank my dad for being there for so long and for being part of the fight, taking the anthropologists out on Country and telling them where we come from and how we are connected to the land.

“Our people will now have new and different opportunities, including go out on our Country and doing what we have to do to look after our Country.

“There are a lot of special places that are significant, like our story places.

“The countryside is special to me because I see it as a place that I can take our children and their children, and do things like camping, fishing, hunting and gathering.

“Our land is special because we can live off the land.

“I look forward to getting back on country, monitoring the land, building the culture of the Kunjen Oikol people.

I also look forward to new job opportunities for our people and building our capacity.”

### **Quotes attributable to Roslyn Gilbert, Traditional Owner, and Elder of the Kokoberra People of Kowanyama:**

“The recognition of Native Title means acknowledging the rights and interests of us Indigenous people to our traditional lands and waters, as determined by our laws and customs, allowing us to manage and protect our cultural heritage and maintain our connection to our country for the future generation,” she said.

“The recognition of Native Title will bring significant changes to our lives by formally acknowledging our connection to our ancestral lands, empowering us to manage and protect our cultural heritage.

“It will provide us with legal rights to use and benefit from our traditional lands, strengthen our community's autonomy, and ensure that our customs and traditions are respected and preserved for future generations.

“Additionally, it will open opportunities for economic development and sustainable land management, improving our overall well-being and ensuring a stronger future for our people and our future generations.

“The Township of the Kowanyama Community holds great significance for me and my family.

“Throughout the community, there are massive mango trees that were planted on top of placentas and where our ancestors were once chained (jail trees).

“These trees and landscapes serve as constant reminders of our past and our journey forward.

“Even though we have moved houses within the community, these trees and story places remain, anchoring us to our heritage and guiding our future generations.

“I am looking forward to the most is seeing our community come together to celebrate our cultural heritage and traditions with the recognition of Native Title, and honour our Ancestors. This will empower us to manage our lands, preserve our stories, and ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for the generations to come.”

**Quotes attributable to Michael Ross Snr, Traditional Owner, and Chairman of the Olkola Aboriginal Corporation and first named Applicant of the Cape York United #1 claim:**

“This means everything, it’s taken 200 years to be recognised, for the court to tell us what we’ve always known: that we are the First People from this vast Olkola land,” he said.

“It will mostly change the lives of the young ones – they can walk on that country freely, knowing that this is their home, they own something, and they don’t have to ask permission, they can learn the laws and customs of the Olkola people, and the knowledge from the land.

“Kurrumbila Country, where the Grasshopper story comes from, is a beautiful country, of many different landscapes: spring mounds, wetlands, lagoons, different coloured water lilies, and different plant and animal life.

“Each element from the landscape has a different meaning to each person.

“Our country was created by the Rainbow Serpent, the coloured scales dropped off as he was chasing the little boy, and he left the colours in the landscape.

“He caught the little boy, spit him out and the little boy turned into the Blue Kingfisher.

“The Grasshopper is the totem for the Kurrumbila people.

“Why it is so special to my family is because Mum is Kurrumbila. that is her name, and that name was handed down to her from the old people.

“In 1920 the Police came and took her to Coen and they took her name, they called her Cora Thompson and then Nancy Ahlers.

“But her real birth name is Kurrumbila and this recognition of Kurrumbila country honours my mother and her memory, that is why I fought so hard.

“I asked her one day, ‘who gave you that name?’. She said, ‘don’t be stupid, boy, my Mum gave me that name’. I laugh when I think about that.

“I’m looking forward to moving forward together, working hard as Olkola people for a better future for our children and grandchildren. To make our tribe strong.”

**Quotes attributable to Rosemary Bulmer, Traditional Owner, Elder, and director of the Ut-Alkar Aboriginal Corporation and Ngan Aak-Kunch Aboriginal:**

“The journey had been a long fight and finally, it is over,” she said.

“I’ve been fighting for my country ever since I was 18 with my parents.

“When they died, I lost motivation for country but then one day, my uncle said come back and fight for country and I realised that I carried the knowledge and values of my parents, my sister helped the fight too.

“We are proud to have Native Title recognised for Olkola people.

“A recognition means my people won’t be forgotten – especially our Old People.

“It means we have rightful ownership of our country.

“I hope this will mean employment opportunities for our people and more funds to get Traditional Owners back to healthy Country and generally improve lifestyle.

“For example, we can go fishing and camping. we can find our own feed, eat our traditional bush tucker, rather than just go to the shops.

“Hopefully this will help to improve the health of our people.

“Now that other elders and I have been part of the fight for recognition, it’s time for our younger generation to take over.

“Knowing that the areas which I have grown up on are being determined makes me happy.

“Now we can go back whenever we want. No one can tell us no.

“The Dingo Story from my dad’s side holds special meaning to me.

“I hold this area closest to my heart as I have cultural knowledge and rights to speak for that area.

“My father wanted to take my children back to Dingo Story, but he passed before he could do that.

“I’m looking forward to the future where Olkola Traditional Owners will have their voices heard and pass on knowledge to the next generation.

“We can encourage our next generation and I hope we can revive our language too.

**Quotes attributable to Rhonda Gilbo, Traditional Owner Kowanyama Peoples:**

“Native title means a lot to me because it recognises my rights and interest as a Traditional Owner,” she said.

“As a Kunjen/Olkol, Olkola and Kokorberra person, to ensure that our people and our families can go back out on our country and practice our traditional lore/custom, and to look after our country with great pride.

“This recognition will bring strong connection to country and feeling that powerful spiritual connection from our apical ancestors who lived and walked this country for many generations.

“Hunting, camping fishing and using bush medicine, making spears and dilly bags from the trees & plants that our ancestors used and handed down to us through dreamtime stories and storytelling, which is a valuable knowledge we need to keep practising, especially when it comes to our sacred places.

“Native title will change for the better and it will ensure and support us to be able to do our cultural practises without fear of getting rejected to come back on our own traditional country.

“Most of all, I’m looking forward to going home, because that is where my heart is, and giving me that strong sense of belonging that I was longing for, for so long, my dream has come to life now.

“Handing down cultural knowledge and skills to the younger generation is what I’m looking forward to the most because it’s keeping the culture alive before I leave this world with the knowledge from my mother, who carried tribal marks from the customs and lores.”