

Reconciliation Event with NQCC & TMSG

Personal reflection from Madeline Mexted, JCU student completing a placement with NQCC

On 5 June 2026, North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC) and the Townsville Multicultural Support Group (TMSG) welcomed some of Townsville's newest community members to an Indigenous education workshop led by Max Lenoy at the TMSG Centre. NQCC had invited Traditional Owners to speak at the workshop, however, they were unable to attend and gave Max permission to speak about Country.

The workshop was designed to help new Australian residents build a deeper understanding of the histories, cultures and governance systems of Australia's First Nations peoples. For me, it also highlighted the remarkable strength of Indigenous governance and the significant gaps that remain in mainstream education.

Indigenous Australia is made up of over 250 distinct Nations, each with its own histories, cultures and governance systems. The diversity and large number of Nations were exemplified by a map of Australia. While many participants were seeing such a map for the first time, it also prompted reflection on how rarely this perspective is encountered in Australian education.

Furthermore, after living in Townsville for five years, I was surprised to learn that *Wulgurukaba* translates to "canoe people". It is a simple yet powerful reminder that many of the place names we use every day carry deep cultural meaning, but their origins are often unfamiliar to those who live here. As many locals would attest, the name is particularly fitting during the wet season.

Building understanding is an ongoing responsibility and a necessary step towards addressing the inequities that continue to affect First Nations peoples today. The workshop emphasised that we all have a role in strengthening Indigenous peoples' connection to Country. This requires more than isolated initiatives. It calls for stronger integration of Indigenous knowledge, histories and perspectives into mainstream education systems. By embedding these learnings, compiled over tens of thousands of years of knowledge, into everyday education, we can foster greater awareness, respect and shared responsibility across Australian society.

Another compelling aspect of the workshop was Indigenous governance. Max explained that leadership is grounded in listening to community, restorative approaches to resolving conflict, and making decisions with future generations in mind. Seasonal calendars, developed through careful observation of Country over thousands of years, guided sustainable harvesting and resource management based on environmental indicators rather than fixed dates. These enduring knowledge systems continue to offer valuable lessons as Australia responds to climate change and seeks more sustainable ways of caring for the environment.

Indigenous Governance also includes neighbouring relations. Indigenous Nations peacefully shared borders whilst managing resources through kinship and shared trade. These principles of collaboration, long-term thinking and environmental stewardship remain just as relevant today.

Thank you Max Lenoy for generously sharing his knowledge and cultural insights.