

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF JINIBARA HISTORY

"The history of Aboriginal peoples prior to British colonisation was of clan or family groups with their own languages, culture and beliefs, living on, and managing their traditional lands and waters. For Queensland Aboriginal peoples, as with the other states, the colonial period brought dispossession of the land that was central to life and spiritual beliefs, as well as the destruction of the traditional way of life."¹

The traditional custodians of the land on which Witta's Good Shepherd Lutheran Church now stands are the Jinibara Nation (people of the Lawyer vine). Its four clans are the Garumngar, the Dungidau, the Dala, and the Nalbo of the Blackall Range and much of the Glasshouse Mountains.² Europeans knew the Blackall Range by various names in the 1800s, such as the Wide Bay Range, or the Bon-yi Mountains due to its bon-yi trees (now called bunya pines).



Aboriginal people "in war paint", at Bridge Creek which flows into the Obi Obi Creek at Baroon Pocket on the Blackall Range, circa 1870–1880. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

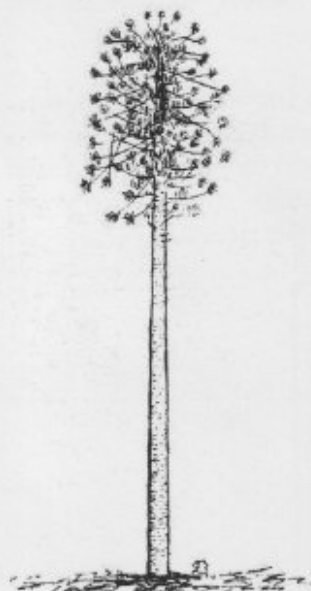
Bunya pines³ held a special significance for the Jinibara Nation with individual trees handed down within families, from generation to generation. These trees bear a few cones each year, then usually a heavy crop every third year. The cones (weighing up to 10 kilograms and holding from 50-100 nuts) could only be collected by the person connected to the tree although guests

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- 1 *Aboriginal people in Queensland: a brief human rights history* by the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland, published 2017, Preface. © 2017 Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland.
 - 2 *Jinibara Traditional Inputs; Sunshine Coast Heritage Study* by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council. The lawyer vine is a native spiky climbing palm with barbed hooks along its leaves.
 - 3 *"The Bunya pine is the 'holy tree' of the aborigines (Buni means holy or awful in Turabul)."* From a paper presented to the Royal Society of Queensland, *The Queenslander*, 24 November 1894, p986.

shared equally in the harvest. When the Jinibara Nation knew there would be an abundant yield of cones, they would invite other nations to attend the Bunya Gathering at Booroon/Boorum/Burun (Baroon Pocket) in their Bon-yi Mountains. Visitors came from Bribie Island, Bundaberg, Burnett, Fraser Island, Gayndah, Gympie, Kilcoy, Mount Brisbane, Brisbane, Mount Perry and Wide Bay.⁴

This gathering was a time when each nation would tell the others what had happened in their country.⁵ For ceremonies, marriage arrangements, dispute resolutions, trade and games.⁶ For singing, dancing, storytelling and feasting. A wide-ranging diet supplemented the Bunya Nut Feasts including small animals, pademelons, snakes, grubs, eggs, honey, wild yams, palm tips and plant roots. Another important food was the booroobin (black possum) which has given name to a locality about 9 kilometres south-west of the current township of Maleny. Found there in abundance, the possums were hunted for a change in diet following the Bunya Nut Feasts⁷ and their skins used to make the Jinibara's famous gugunde (black possum) fur cloaks.⁸

Traditional Bunya Gatherings have not been held since 1887,⁹ less than thirty years after the separation of Queensland from New South Wales (NSW) in 1859. Prior to separation, the Jinibara's Bon-yi Mountains and the Jarowair Nation's Booburrgan Ngmmungeor or Boobarran Ngummin (the Bunya Mountains near Dalby) were protected by the NSW Government who prohibited settlement and timber-getting:



*"It having been represented to the Governor that a District exists to the Northward of Moreton Bay, in which a fruit-bearing Tree abounds, called Bunya or Banya Bunya, and that the Aborigines from considerable distances resort at certain times of the year to this District for the purpose of eating the fruit of the said Tree:- His Excellency is pleased to direct that no Licences be granted for the occupation of any Lands within the said District in which the Bunya or Banya Bunya Tree is found...no Licences to cut Timber be granted within the said Districts."*¹⁰

Self-government for Queensland allowed it to make its own laws relating to the occupation, alienation and disposal of Crown Lands. As colonial settlement increased, the licences granted for timber-getting, agricultural farms, or to squatters for sheep and cattle grazing marked drastic changes for the way of life of all Aboriginal peoples. Slowly, piece by piece, Jinibara country was overtaken by European activity on or near their sacred sites,¹¹ burial sites, hunting grounds and camps.

Above: Bon-yi tree drawing by explorer, Ludwig Leichhardt, circa 1843, while visiting Thomas Archer's Durundur Station, Woodford, Queensland. State Library of New South Wales.

- 4 Tom Petrie's *reminiscences of early Qld (dating from 1837)* by Constance Petrie, published 1904, p16.
- 5 *Tribal alliances with broader agendas? Aboriginal resistance in southern Queensland's 'Black War'* by Dr Ray Kerkhove, published 2014.
https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/mcs/article/view/4218/4491#CIT0048_4218
- 6 *Jinibara Traditional Inputs; Sunshine Coast Heritage Study* by the Sunshine Coast Regional Council.
<https://haveyoursay.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/47596/documents/112297/download>
- 7 Attributed to John Grigor (b.1864), eldest son of Mary and William Grigor of Bankfoot House, Glasshouse Mountains as reported in *The Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser*, 12 July 1918, p4.
- 8 <https://heritage.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/First-Nations/Early-History>
- 9 *Mud to Magic, a History of Maleny* by the Maleny Visitor Information Centre, published 2012, p8.
- 10 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 26 April 1842, p623.
- 11 *The Brisbane Courier*, 9 June 1891, p6 reported that red clay used for "personal adornment" was taken from a Blackall Range sacred site and given to the Queensland Museum by a Mr M. Freaney.

During the 1800s, some Jinibara people were employed around Woodford, particularly on the Archer Family's Durundur Station, as stockmen, domestic workers, gardeners or in cutting bark for huts. There was also work in timber-getting camps on their Bon-yi Mountains when logging commenced there in the 1870s.

*"It was 'common practice' to send Aborigines to cut timber. Aboriginal guides were also critical. It is likely that Aboriginal guides originally intended to monitor European access to their country, but as occupation intensified and became irreversible, Aboriginal guides and timber workers worked more and more at the behest of European timber interests."*¹²

In 1923, a Blackall Range settler named William Simpson recalled his experiences dating back fifty years when he and his brother had been timber-getters. Needing Aboriginal guides through the "dense Maleny Scrub", they had also required their help to fell the trees. When Simpson's wife and infant son, Jane and William, moved permanently to the sparsely-populated Blackall Range in 1881, they had also received Aboriginal assistance. Alone for weeks at a time while her husband was away working, Jane's only "neighbours and guardians" were a small group of Aboriginal people, including King Sambo and Queen Beauty of the Jinibara Nation:

*"They were good friends and watched over Mrs Simpson well, bringing up the cows to be milked morning and evening, and sometimes carrying rations up from Landsborough."*¹³



*Queen Beauty.
The Brisbane
Courier,
26 April 1923, p5.*



*Queensland timber-getters and Aboriginal people, circa 1870.
John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.*



*Jane and William
Simpson, circa 1880.
John Oxley Library.*

For Queensland Aboriginal peoples, further disadvantage came with the passing of a law entitled *The Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897*. Taking effect on 1 January 1898, it brought removal to reserves under the control of a Superintendent and occurred to the majority of Queensland Aboriginal peoples by 1901.¹⁴ Jinibara people were moved to the Durundur Aboriginal Settlement at Woodford, then to the Aboriginal Mission Station at Barambah (Cherbourg) near Murgon.¹⁵

Nonetheless, despite their dispossession and the restrictions placed upon them, they were able to preserve their social and cultural integrity as well as the laws and customs connecting them to their land. In recognition of this unbroken connection, the Federal Court of Australia granted them Native Title to Jinibara country in 2012, acknowledging that:

¹² *People and Trees: A Thematic History of South East Queensland with Particular Reference to Forested Areas, 1823-1997* by Judith Powell, published 1998, pp21-22. © Commonwealth of Australia and the Queensland Government.

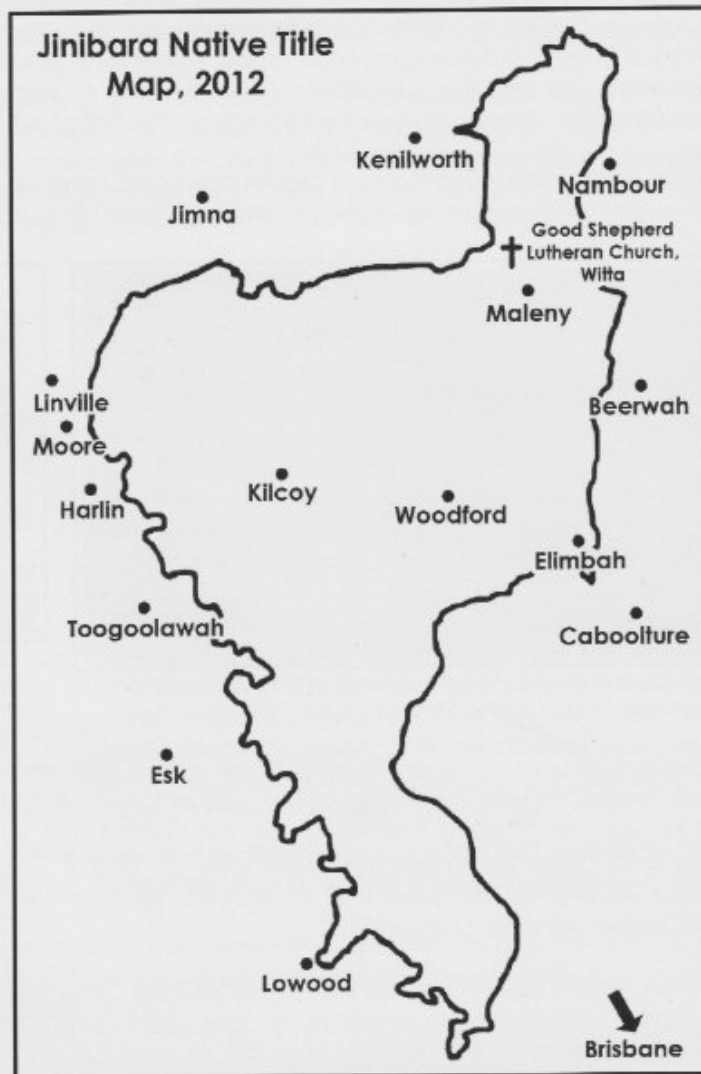
¹³ *The Brisbane Courier*, 26 April 1923, p5.

¹⁴ *Aboriginal people in Queensland: a brief human rights history* by the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland, published 2017, p60. © 2017 Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland.

¹⁵ *Murphy on behalf of the Jinibara People v State of Queensland* [2012] FCA 1285 (20 November 2012).

"A number of families went to considerable lengths to maintain their families outside of the mission environment in small townships (including Caloundra, Linville, Moore and Harlin) around the edge of the claim area...some of the claimants who were young adult residents of Cherbourg continued to not only use the claim area for fishing, camping and hunting but also participated with the other residents in the observation of important aspects of traditional law and custom in regard to kinship and mortuary practices, and maintained the body of beliefs concerning the Rainbow Serpent."¹⁶

This determination has granted the Jinibara Nation exclusive Native Title to about 138 hectares of land and Non-exclusive Native Title to about 70,187 hectares. It has also given them the right to: conduct ceremonies and rituals; maintain sites, objects and places; teach; camp; fish; hunt; and be buried on their traditional lands.



16 Murphy on behalf of the Jinibara People v State of Queensland [2012] FCA 1285 (20 November 2012).