



Wakaya-Alyawarre traditional owners to celebrate long-awaited land handback

The traditional owners of land near Canteen Creek in the Northern Territory will gather on Wednesday 16 April to celebrate the handback of country they first claimed more than four decades ago.

The Central Land Council lodged the original Wakaya-Alyawarre Land Claim 42 in 1980. Since then, the traditional owners have received two of three portions of the claimed area and agreed to withdraw the township of Canteen Creek from the claim.

They have waited ever since for the rest of their country to be returned.

To finally settle the Wakaya-Alyawarre (Repeat) Land Claim No. 130, traditional owners consented to an agreement between the CLC and the Northern Territory Government to surrender their native title rights to the Canteen Creek community.

After years of consultation, the Indigenous Land Use Agreement was supported by both the traditional owners and the Canteen Creek community. The CLC's elected members certified the agreement on 30 October 2019.

Under the agreement, the Canteen Creek Landholding Aboriginal Corporation, run by residents and traditional owners together, will receive freehold title to parts of the community. The rest of the claim area will be granted as Aboriginal freehold land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.

Eileen Bonney, the most senior surviving claimant, is happy to be alive to see the handback ceremony finally happening on her family's homeland, just north of Canteen Creek.

"I'm feeling happy to get this title. I waited a long time when I was young. I kept talking and kept fighting until I got old. And now it's going to happen," she said.

"This handback honours the determination and strength of the traditional owners who never gave up on their claim," said CLC chief executive Les Turner.

"It's a moment to celebrate and reflect on the sacrifices of those who didn't live to see this day. We recognise their legacy and the leadership of the families who have carried this claim forward."

The Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Malarndirri McCarthy, will present a framed copy of the title deed to the traditional owners, officially handing back the land to its rightful owners.

Traditional owners will celebrate the event by performing a traditional dance and cutting a cake to mark the occasion.

The Wakaya-Alyawarre (Repeat) claim is one of the CLC's final two land claims under the Land Rights Act. Over its 50-year history, the CLC has helped traditional owners win back more than half the land in the southern half of the Northern Territory and continues to support them to manage it through its 14 Aboriginal ranger groups.

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[Wakaya-Alyawarre handback fact sheet and timeline](#)