

BARKLY REGIONAL COUNCIL



MEDIA RELEASE

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Beats of the Barkly hop over to WA

A group of hip hop musicians from the Barkly will perform in Tennant Creek next Thursday before going on tour to a major music festival in Western Australia next month.

For the past week Barkly Regional Council (BRC) and independent hip hop producer Monkey Marc have been supporting and mentoring Desert Hip Hop to rehearse and prepare for the upcoming gigs.

Desert Hip Hop was born after several talented Indigenous musicians were discovered under the Barkly Desert Cultures program, a youth diversionary project run by BRC and facilitated by Monkey Marc and Beatrice Lewis since 2014.

The Indigenous musicians, including members of the E-Town Boys from Elliott, Hill Boys from Wutunugurra, and Desert Sevenz from Ampilatwatja, made their debut performance at Wide Open Spaces music festival in Alice Springs last year.

Since then the lads, ranging in age from 19 to 23, were headhunted to appear at Bush Bands Bash and various gigs in Alice. They're looking forward to the Nannup Music Festival, in the south west of Western Australia, during March.

"We feel excited about going to gigs and travelling to new places, getting our message out there about kids, us mob, doing the right thing," said E-Town crew member Alex Johnson, aka MC Elio.

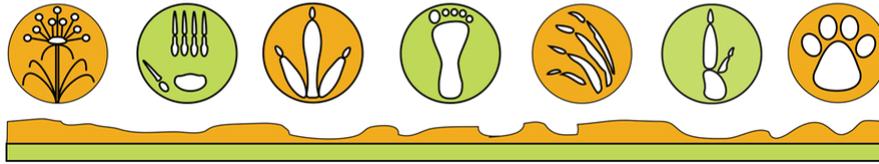
Alex, along with fellow E-Town member Lourick (Justin) Rankine (MC JR) and Hill Boys Trevanne Williams (MC Jedda) and Richard Peterson (MC Widget) are busy rehearsing 10 new songs for their tour and new album.

"Music changed my life," said Richard, who has written a song called *Don't Run Me Down*. "Before this [Barkly Desert Cultures] there was nothing for me. I sniffed petrol. I drank. I smoked ganja.

"This program and Monkey helped me. I stayed on country, tried to make changes. I don't sniff petrol. I don't drink or smoke. I have a family. I get a lot of negative talk but I'm staying strong. That's the message of my song."

All four young men have written lyrics based on real life experience, from prison life to personal challenges. Another one of the songs called *Wrong Turn* tells the story of two fictional characters, a boy called Brookie and a girl called Jewel who take the wrong turn in life.

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Monkey Marc, who has been working with BRC's Youth, Sports and Recreation Coordinator Sean Spencer, said the topics covered in the group's repertoire reflect the challenges and positive changes the young men want to make in their lives through music, in particular hip hop.

"The four young men practicing now have really grown together and helped each other out. MC JR has proved to be a natural at turning out the beats with the Hill Boys leading the way with their lyrics.

BRC's Sean added that after working with the group of young men for over 12 months it is amazing to see the changes. "Their self esteem and confidence have grown immeasurably. They've really matured."

Desert Hip Hop will perform at the Civic Centre in Tennant Creek on Thursday, 25 February, from 7pm. Gold coin donation.

This gig will be followed by their WA tour (4-7 March) where the band will support the headline act Kingfisha. Rayella, supported by Barkly Regional Arts, is also appearing at the Nannup Music Festival.

Media contact: Ktima Heathcote 08 89620027 or ktima.heathcote@barkly.nt.com.au