

BARKLY REGIONAL COUNCIL



MEDIA RELEASE

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Blazing Talent in the Barkly

A group of hip hop musicians from the Barkly have just returned from the prestigious Sand Tracks tour on the back of a NT Music Award win.

Throughout this year Barkly Regional Council (BRC) and independent hip hop producer Monkey Marc have supported and mentored Desert Hip Hop to rehearse and prepare for upcoming gigs and workshops.

In June two of the touring musicians – E-Town Boyz Alex Butler and Justin Rankine – won the Youth Award for their track, *Kulimindini Is My Home*, at the NT Music Awards.

Then in late August they joined the Hill Boyz crew from Ampilatwatja – Trevanne Williams and Richard Peterson – for the month-long Sand Tracks Tour through the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia.

Council's Sport & Recreation Coordinator Sean Spencer said Desert Hip Hop was invited on the tour to improve and expand their skills as well as help build creativity, capacity and connection between regional communities.

"The four young men practicing now have really grown together and helped each other out," said Sean. "Their self esteem and confidence have grown immeasurably and the tour was a fantastic opportunity to test and hone their skills and expand their practice across different genres."

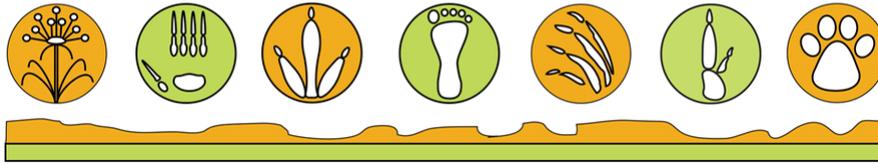
Sean said the seed of Desert Hip Hop's success was nurtured under the Barkly Desert Culture program, a youth diversionary project instigated by Council in 2014 and facilitated by Monkey Marc and Beatrice Lewis.

"We engaged youth and elders in a three-month long pilot program to bridge the gap between young and old," Sean said. "Part of the success of the program was that the youngsters engaged with the elders to discuss topics like drinking and substance abuse and what it was like for elders when they were young."

The results of these talks were then expressed through song, hip hop music, storytelling, film, posters and animation, with the multi-media program rolled out to other communities in the Barkly.

This project was so successful it won the Arts Animate Award in the prestigious 2015 Local Government Awards. Another unexpected outcome was the discovery of talented Indigenous musicians from around the Barkly who joined forces to form Desert Hip Hop.

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The Indigenous musicians made their debut performance at Wide Open Spaces music festival in Alice Springs in 2015. Since then the lads, ranging in age from 19 to 23, have been headhunted to appear at Bush Bands Bash, various gigs and music festivals and most recently the Sand Tracks Tour, now in its eighth year.

“We never thought the Barkly Desert Culture Program would take these musicians so far,” said Sean. “When we started consulting with elders and youngsters back in 2014 about Barkly Desert Culture their vision was to hand down knowledge through youth interviewing elders and gathering stories on culture and being strong.

With support from Council, the musicians in Desert Hip Hop took this project one step further, creating songs with lyrics based on real-life experience, from staying on country to prison life and personal challenges.

As E-Town Boyz crew member Alex Butler, aka MC Elio, summed up: “It’s been great to perform and travel to new places, sharing culture and getting our message out there about us kids, us mob, life on country in the Barkly and doing the right thing.

“On this tour we also got the chance to work with other bands, and learn new ways of remixing our songs.”

The Sand Tracks tour – funded by Country Arts WA - teamed renowned Aboriginal headline act, the Lajamanu Teenage Band, with the Barkly’s Desert Hip Hop to deliver live performances alongside music and culture workshops in the communities of Kiwirrkurra, Warburton, Warakurna, NG Lands Festival and Amata.

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