

# Napranum opens new Maryann Coconut Library

by Annalise Jennings  
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**T**oday we are here in gratitude for this wonderful event in the history of the people of Napranum.

Today we are here to join in the spirit of celebration.

Today we are here to honour Maryann Coconut.

My name is Annalise Jennings and I have the honour of saying a few words about Maryann, her achievements and her great spirit for humanity .

Maryann's parents were Cyril and 'I'na Hall. Her country is Luwang from her fathers side and Kwokkunum from her mother's side.

Maryann is the eldest of her siblings. Born in 1943. Maryanne lived in the girls dormitory from the tender age of 5 and attended the Weipa Mission School. From a young age she excelled in the Arts and received a highly commended award for the Queensland Art competition in 1952... (Hold up the article) You've been making headlines for a long time!

She became a teachers aid in 1957 and continued to take an active interest in education completing a Bachelor of Community Mgt from macquarrie University in 2009.

In 1963 she married Jerry Coconut . They had 7 children. Maryann has 10 grandchildren and 9 great grand children. She studied Theology in the NT and is a committed Christian . What strikes me about maryann's values on Christianity.. is that she doesn't just talk it ... she lives it ... maryann ... you are a woman of grace.. of presence ... infact when Maryann



Maryanne Coconut (seated left) with Annalise Jennings and Thankwithi women. Image supplied

walks into a room...she doesn't need to speak to be heard.. there are very few people on this earth that have that presence and alignment of the mind/body and soul

Maryann has contributed greatly to the life of her community. Her achievements are many and here are just some that I will share with you:

- Several terms as an elected councillor
- In the 1980's alongside her mother, she was an active member of the Weipa Bicentennial community committee that established the Oon-ing-an nature reserve and the Bicentennial Community Park
- She is the Chair of the Napranum Justice group and has worked tirelessly to bring peace to her community.
- Maryann worked closely

with Durie Davui and Rev samoni and other elders to start the 1st women's shelter in the late 1990's

- She is a Long term and active member of the WCCCA coordinating committee.

Maryann is passionate about her traditional culture and worked closely with her cousin Dr Thancoupie Fletcher and Thankwithi families to contribute to a dictionary of her Thankwithi language published in 2007.

I met Maryann in 2011 when the napranum council engaged me to work with the people to establish our community owned visionary plan. From the outset, my conversation about community ownership and self determination struck a cord with Maryann.

The fundamentals of engagement ownership and responsibility for change became deeply embedded in

our approaches to create a Whole of Community response to economic sustainability and spiritual wellbeing

In particular, we created a new conversation in the community about shifting our thoughts from negativity to hope and possibility. Where everyone has a voice... where everyone's contribution is valued

Maryann championed this work and soon became my rock of support within the community. Infact maryann showed up to every stage of the Whole of Community Change process. I wasn't surprised to see her at the strategy workshop when we formulated our community plan back in Nov 2011 ... but she then turned up to all the empowerment programs , including parenting, the young adults program, and even the student careerlife coaching program. Maryann was determined to have a presence and show her support

Maryann even turned up to a TEDtalk that I delivered at JCU in Cairns late last year

As the visionary plan for Napranum began to take shape ... . Maryanne became the person I could create and explore with during times of innovation... laugh with during times of joy and cry with through unexpected challenges ... she reminded me that life is like a rose ... and along the stem there are many thorns, but we must never lose sight of the rose at the end of the stem ... and so the plan continued to evolve and here we are

today at the opening of the library ... another tick off the Napranum visionary plan. Congratulation to you maryann and to the people of Napranum who's determination for a sustainable community ... . now stands the test of time

In 2013, Maryann along with 17 other Napranum Women came with me to Mungallli Falls for our Women of Worth program. 3 days of self discovery... and asking ourselves those age old questions... who am I and what do I stand for... something touched me really deeply during that program... when maryann said to me... Annalise, we wanted to buy you a gift.. but we didn't know what to get you. So our gift to you today is a song. And she and the ladies sang to me in language... i don't recall the words... but I do remember how I felt at my core... you touched me deeply

Maryann's phone calls always came to me at times when I needed to hear her divine spiritual knowing..

Maryann called me one afternoon at home early last year. she said Annalise... ive been thinking about you! she had made the decision that I would be an adopted daughter of her tribal land. She blessed me with the aboriginal language name of Kili... Kili represents the Lorikeet totem.

I later learned that the lorikeet symbolises the bridge between the human and the Devine ... The messenger between heaven and earth an honour that I hold close to

my heart.

Maryann's language name is Amomanja which means sugar glider

Her other totems are the eagle, sea mulet, and the catfish. All each with their very significant spiritual meanings...

The catfish reminds us that we continually enter periods of emotional learning and self discovery. That we must keep an open mind, accept life lessons as they come. It symbolizes the capacity to grow emotionally and spiritually and to learn.

Amonanja... this is so true of you. You are a symbol of unconditional love and acceptance. So are a source of creative imagination with the ability to awaken within us our own flights of magic and divinity. You are a reminder of that invisible strength that lives within each of us.

A quote from maryann... sacredness and wisdom are spiritual values that are inbuilt in us. It may be unseen on the outside but visible and seen in our own lives and in our relationships together..

For me Amomanja.. You are my mother angel. You are my teacher. For me... you represent the potential of the human spirit. And I feel humbled and blessed that you have accepted me as one of your own...

Congratulations once again and my wish for you ... that your life continues to evolve in the most spectacular way

