

First Court sitting in Gapuwiyak



Court sittings are to be held in the Gapuwiyak Heritage Centre

The first sitting of the Northern Territory Court was held at the Gapuwiyak Heritage Centre 7th April 2010 with Stipendiary Magistrate, Mr. Greg Cavanagh presiding.

Mr. Cavanagh SM presented a plaque to Gapuwiyak Community leaders and traditional land owners to commemorate the first sitting of the Court. During the presentation, he expressed his pleasure to be presiding at Gapuwiyak's first court sitting, which removed the necessity for community members to travel the long distances at a huge expense to the Nhulunbuy Court.

On his second trip to the Gapuwiyak Community, Mr. Cavanagh SM said that he had found it to be a very progressive community.

The Gapuwiyak Community has been keen to establish a regular court circuit. In a letter to the Northern Territory Government (June 2009) Community Leader Bobby Wunungmurra (Chairman Gapuwiyak Mala Leader Group/Community Board) raised concerns regarding the difficulties in getting people to and from Court in Nhulunbuy, which could result in a breach for not attending court.

Bobby Wunungmurra conveyed a heartfelt thank you from the community for their inclusion in the circuit.

He again raised concerns regarding getting people with extended family to attend Court in

Nhulunbuy as transport was often cost prohibitive:

- Bush Taxi costing \$500 one way, or
- air charter at approximately \$1,200 return.

Clients not attending court faced increasing penalties and for those that do attend, once in Nhulunbuy the community members were also subject to the additional problems of:

- the pressures of humbugging
- the temptation or pressure to take alcohol back to their community, or yeast for home brewing

- not having the return fare home.

In addition to the domestic violence and criminal cases heard, Mr Cavanagh SM presided over a successful Community Court matter which involved representatives from the community (as well as the offender, victim, prosecutor, correctional services) who participated in the sentencing process of a defendant.

Gapuwiyak is a 'Territory growth town', and establishing a regular court circuit fits well with the Government's 'Working Future' vision.

The next Court sitting in Gapuwiyak is scheduled for 4th August 2010. ●



Mr. Greg Cavanagh SM (right) with Gapuwiyak Community Leaders and Traditional Land Owners