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81 Cullen Street
Nimbin 2480
Phone 6689-1148

nimbin.goodtimes@gmail.com

Githubal make a stand at Cedar Point



by Steven Strong

The second cultural gathering and reconnection to the threatened Githubal men's site at Cedar Point took place in December. Those attending stood united in opposing the proposed open-cut mine, and sat together planning directions and strategies.

A stirring speech was given by Kevin Boota at the first meeting, and can be viewed on YouTube. Petitions are being organised through Get Up and AVAAZ, and there will be stalls set up at local markets with information, copies of public documents, and a petition to sign. Letters to the editor, agitation through all avenues of the public media, cementing ties with the local residents in opposing the development, and with the many already fighting CSG, are but some of the tasks to be undertaken.

Githubal spokesperson, Rob Williams Snr, made it clear that the site was too sacred to be mined, inextricably linked to men's health and essential in resurrecting ancient lore and culture. He

said it was from this site that the Githubal intend to teach their young men language, bring back their songs and ceremonies and communicate with the spiritual guardians of this sacred place. Rob was adamant that mining was not negotiable.

The offence doesn't stop on site. Rob is aware, and has seen statutory declarations confirming that sacred objects and tools, which belong to the site in perpetuity, were removed. The Githubal demand their immediate return.

This removal off-country is not only a cultural affront of the highest order, it has directly affected and accelerated the passage and approval of this mining development. The absence of these original artefacts is crucial and taints all processes and assumptions that followed. According to Section 146 of the 1977 *Heritage Act*, if any artefact is found in-situ and is suspected to be over 50 years old all development must cease and it is mandatory to notify the relevant agencies.

In what only compounds the illegality of that act, the Heritage Report compiled by Everick Consultants and commissioned by the developers then presented in support of mining the site, makes it clear 'aggravation of cultural heritage', especially if of a 'deliberate' nature, is a serious issue carrying penalties of up to \$1,100,000, and the possibility of one year in prison. If the consultants had seen ancient sacred artefacts spread across the site they would be obligated to report and recommend an immediate cessation of activities.

With the development approved over three months ago and survey pegs in the ground, time and options are limited. Rob said they have compiled an affidavit listing nine irregularities in process and actions taken or concealed, but as he pointed out, what other option do they have?

There are also outstanding issues relating to no notes or minutes being taken in any informal meetings between the developers and

Kyogle Shire Council staff; the mining operations are situated less than 200 metres from Richmond River; the protection of 15 – not two or three as mentioned in the Everick Report – scarred trees, and many other concerns.

First and foremost, is the issue of the 70-year-old wooden bridge. The addition of 80 trucks a day across this bridge, carrying loads of up to 23 tonnes, was unresolved in the 1999 application and led to the development being denied. Now a solution has been found. If the bridge is to be replaced as a result of the massive increase in traffic and weight, the ratepayers, not the developers, will foot the bill.

This one-sided funding arrangement enraged the present Kyogle mayor, Ross Brown, and he made a formal complaint in June 2012, stating he found it difficult to accept that there have not been faults with the process and a breach of the JRPP Code of Conduct has not occurred. To this date, he has not received any formal response.

Even the report which supports the development concedes that it is 'most likely ceremonies' were conducted on site, and they knew nothing of the extra 12 scarred trees or bounty of stolen artefacts nearby. The 'white-fella' processes were not adhered to, it is that simple, and despite all of this, any day now the dozers will appear.

Why is it even when they are morally and legally in the wrong, the miners seem to be able to act as they please? The Githubal are morally and legally in the right, but it makes no difference as another hole is about to be dug.

Those of us determined that the development will not take place will hold another gathering at Cedar Point Hall on Sunday, 10th January, from 9am. All welcome.



by Yagia Gentle

Presents at Christmas come in all forms, and Nimbin had the good karma of playing host to four Tibetan monks making a sand mandala in the town hall for the three days around Christmas Day.

The days would start and end with mantras being chanted. During the day the monks would carefully tap on special funnels to release coloured sand onto a board to make an intricate mandala (pictured).

At the completion of the mandala, in front of a crowd that had gathered in the hall, they swept the sand into an urn with the sounds of Tibetan Buddhist bells and chants. A procession went from town to Mulgum Creek, where the sand was poured into the water to flow to the sea and spread the blessings around the world.

The monks were from the Sera monastery in

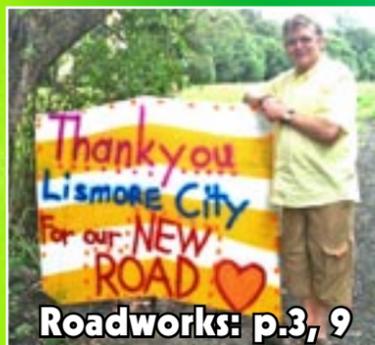
South India, and are in the Northern Rivers area creating (and destroying) sand mandalas. As well as raising money for the monastery, they are spreading the vibrations of peace and healing in the area.

According to Buddhist scripture, sand mandalas transmit positive energies to the environment and to the people who view them. While constructing a mandala, Buddhist monks chant and meditate to invoke the divine energies of the deities residing within the mandala. The monks then ask for the deities' healing blessings. A mandala's healing power extends to the whole world even before it is swept up and dispersed into flowing water—a further expression of sharing the mandala's blessings with all.

For details of Buddhist teachings and the monks itinerary visit: www.australian-tibetanbuddhistcentre.org.au



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