



## Aborigines fight to save rock art

Alita Pashley

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### **THE Bulwai name almost disappeared when the last five clan members were forced off their traditional lands in 1914.**

The Bulwai language area stretches from Kuranda, Stoney Creek, Freshwater Creek to Bentley Park.

Almost a century after his tribe left, Willie Brim hopes he will live to see the day when a workforce of young indigenous people reclaim the sacred sites and open it up to others to learn about the culture.

Mr Brim launched a native title claim over Bare Hill Conservation Park, near Kuranda, in 2002 in order to protect ancient relics and artworks, but said after years of fighting red tape he is yet to gain recognition for his people.

He also fears a wealth of misinformation, which has seen the Bulwai name reduced to a clan group under the Djapugay tribe, rather than recognising them as two neighbouring people, has forced "a blanket over the truth".

"It rips my guts out when I see what is happening on our country," the elder said.

"There are no Djapugay stories here, only Bulwai stories.

"They are trying to claim this country but in all the paperwork the bush medicine and languages recorded here are Bulwai.

"Djapugay is the communication language so people say, 'You speak Djapugay so you must be a Djapugay man' but I also speak English and that doesn't make me an English man."

As the tug-of-war for the scrub and rainforest land continues, Mr Brim said he is watching his history disappear before his eyes.

"When you see what is happening to the rock art, you see the urgency of delivering the knowledge now," he said.

"Our biggest worry is the water and fungi. Because we're not practising here these sites need to be protected and maintained."

Mr Brim and his sons regularly visit the spot.

"You come here and see the damage being caused by people on their bikes that don't respect what's here," he said.

"We don't want to stop people coming here but they need to be asking for permission, like the old days - this is a spiritual place."

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**Sacred:** Willie Brim is fighting to have a native title claim over Bulwai lands near Kuranda recognised to protect ancient artworks that have been dated to more than 5000 years old. Pictures: JAKE NOWAKOWSKI



**Rock art:** Willie Brim says the rock art near Kuranda is more than 5000 years old.



**Fight for culture:** Willie Brim has launched a native title claim over land where the rock art is.

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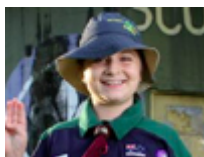


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