Building Community-based Information Management Systems within Aboriginal Cultures of the Kimberley Region, Australia

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With the passing of each generation of Australian Aboriginal people, cultural knowledge is endangered and in threat of being lost. For the traditional owners of the Kimberley Region of northwest Australia, cultural is bound up in the inter-relationships between people, language, land (and sea), spirituality and history. Community-based information management systems can provide the tools for Aboriginal people to access knowledge about their living culture and cultural heritage. Access to knowledge can empower communities to meet the challenges of self-determination, land rights and healthy country.

Integrated (database, GIS, GPS and www) techniques are being developed to manage knowledge-based systems. These systems include cultural archives, art and artifact catalogues, plants and animals surveys, traditional land use and occupancy maps and language web sites. The processes and challenges of implementing Aboriginal community-based information management systems in the Kimberley are discussed. A review of the nature and scope of such systems across the region is presented along with examples of projects currently being implemented.