

## Traditional owners now trained to work magic on Straddie

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HIGHER EDUCATION REPORTER

A NUMBER of years ago the Quandamooka traditional owners on North Stradbroke Island recognised they were facing an unhappy confluence of cultural, social and economic challenges.

Their traditional country needed but lacked people qualified in best practice land management, while in their community many of their young people were unemployed and were at risk of sinking into alcohol abuse and drug use.

Then a little over a year ago, according to Quandamooka Land Council chair, Darren Burns, "magic happened".

The "magic" was an extraordinary youth training program which culminated yesterday in 11 Indigenous youngsters graduating with a Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management, together with a raft of other qualifications and handy accreditations, including boat, bobcat, excavator, chain saw and chemical spraying licenses.

"The course was great," 21-year-old Kalen Gilbert said. "I think we've all grown heaps from it.

"I always wanted to be a park ranger, but now I've had this training and experience in the field, I'm thinking I can go all the way and complete a Certificate III, a diploma and then go to university."

Mr Burns said the young graduates had the capacity to go from strength to strength.



QUANDAM LEAP: Land management trainees Jahlow Walker, Kalen Gilbert, Tieghe Burns and Mahala Burnes.

Picture: Derek Moore