

## Tribal Warrior to circumnavigate the continent

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**Reporter: John Taylor**

JOHN HIGHFIELD: Well as you listen to The World Today this Monday, what's believed to be the oldest working wooden hulled sailing craft in Australia is moored in Brisbane - but only briefly.

The Tribal Warrior - a special project to give inner city Koori kids a new start on life, is on a voyage to circumnavigate Australia - the first with an indigenous crew.

This morning our reporter John Taylor - in our Queensland bureau - went down to the Brisbane River and climbed aboard to interview crewmate Tdindah Bird.

TDINDAH BIRD: We departed Sydney on the 30th of August and that's about six weeks now, and every day's as good as the last day.

JOHN TAYLOR: So there's four crew at the moment. There were originally six, but two have had to leave for family reasons, how far are you gonna go around Australia, and how long do you think it's going to take you?

TDINDAH BIRD: This is a circumnavigation of Australia and we're hoping to achieve this within 12 months, even though that might seem a long time, we're . why the 12 months I guess is we're giving the opportunity for each community that we pull up . out of 102 communities this is our 15th port of call and six weeks to get here seems pretty reasonable I guess.

JOHN TAYLOR: So what's the purpose of this trip?

TDINDAH BIRD: This is a, it's a goodwill trip, I should say. It's, it's to encourage our youth, our not so young, and our elders that something special can be . is still out there and it will be something different. It's something unique and there's always a first time for everything and we're hoping this, this trip and this . and the places that we meet will be an encouragement to everyone to maybe get out of the social stigmas that are around.

JOHN TAYLOR: So in terms of their perceptions of indigenous people?

TDINDAH BIRD: Absolutely. We . this is a, this is an Aboriginal vision, it's an Aboriginal boat with an Aboriginal crew, but we're for everybody. We're not here to beat drums about any political issues or anything else, just that this is a great way of life we're a . this is actually a training vessel this Tribal Warrior, and we're training deckhands, coxswains, and up to master fives.

JOHN TAYLOR: So tell me a bit about this vessel. I mean it's, it seems pretty old sitting here at the moment. It looks quite a historic sort of ship.

TDINDAH BIRD: I guess it is. It's a . the hull was laid in Thursday Island way back in 1899, and it's a ex-pearling lugger. It was built as a mother ship to a pearling fleet, and it's a little bit different in some ways that it's a narrower beam - we're only 15 foot on the beam, we're 70 foot from the bowsprit to our mizen boom, and we draw six foot eight in the water, and we're 30 foot high and our main mast - we have a mizen mast and a main. And it was used to service a pearling fleet up in the Torres Strait and around the Top End.

JOHN TAYLOR: It seems remarkable that you're billing this voyage as the first time that indigenous people have . a ship with an indigenous crew has circumnavigated Australia.

TDINDAH BIRD: Well that's, it might seem unusual and we believe that there are other members of Aboriginal communities who have actually been on vessels. I believe Mungaree [phonetic] was set out with Matthew Flinders on his voyage around. But yes, as a whole, as a whole and a vessel and the crew, yes this would be a first.

JOHN TAYLOR: What's been the most memorable aspect of your journey so far?

TDINDAH BIRD: The pleasure that, and that we've given to the elders. Each . in each community we've . the elderly fellows who are ... and the women and the men, who have really taken something from this and it's given something back to them that they can translate to their young and . the elders and the young together, it's something new and something unique. It's a really great combination.

JOHN HIGHFIELD: Tdindah Bird on board the Tribal Warrior, less than a quarter of the way around Australia in its circumnavigation. He was speaking with John Taylor at its mooring in the Brisbane River this morning.

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