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During national Reconciliation Week I visited Arcadia on Magnetic Island from my home in Rosslea, overlooking the Ross River, in Townsville.

Arcadia, Magnetic Island – is Gurrumbilbarra. The traditional land of the Wulgurukaba People. Wulgurukaba means “canoe people.” An important symbol of the Wulgurukaba .”people is the carpet snake. It’s ok to tell the Gabul story now, Gabul refers to the Wulgurukaba Dreaming story of how the islands off the Townsville coast were formed. According to the Dreaming, Gabul was a giant carpet python who carved the landscape while travelling from Herbert River, through the Palm Island Group, up Ross River and coming to rest at Magnetic Island. Gabul’s head can still be seen in the Arcadia headland). The head of Gabul represented at Alma Bay highlights the importance of the area. The Gabul story connects Yunbenun to Wulgurukaba country on the mainland particularly through the Ross River and to other Aboriginal groups to the north particularly the Manbarra, the custodians of the Palm Island group of Islands. There are at least two important art sites in Arcadia and a significant midden site located next to a spring/waterhole on a major freshwater creek in the area. This site contains oyster, pipi and mud mussel shell remains and stone tools. Because of the freshwater it would have been ideal for camping and could also have been a stopover point on a walking track connecting Arcadia to the western side of the Island.