

---

## Indigenous leader calls for repatriation

By Lucy Smith  
*Herbert River Express*  
28 January 2017

Remains of a Palm Island girl who was enslaved in a travelling human zoo in the 19th century have reportedly been discovered in a town in Germany.

Nywaigi man and Mungalla Station director Jacob Cassady has called for the repatriation of 17-year-old indigenous girl Sussy Dakaro.

Mr Cassady said Sussy was one of a number of Palm Island residents who were lured away from the island by R.A. Cunningham, an agent for the Barnam & Bailey circus in 1883. The group were presented as curiosities to European and American audiences, marketed as “boomerang-throwing cannibals”.

Cunningham returned a decade later and took a group of Nywaigi people from Mungalla, near Ingham.

Mr Cassady has recently received correspondence from Cesare Lazaros Borgia who works for the city archive in Wuppertal, east of Düsseldorf.

Mr Borgia discovered Sussy’s remains were buried in a protestant cemetery in the town. He sent Mr Cassady a copy of Sussy’s death certificate, which stated she died on June 23, 1885, from anaemia and tuberculosis.

“The German people are (fundraising) to put a plaque together to commemorate her grave,” Mr Cassady said. “They were even asking about Aboriginal art, whether they could use Aboriginal symbols.” Mr Cassady said he was touched by the correspondence.

“I was surprised that the people of that town recognised and wanted to do something for her,” he said. Mr Borgia has contacted the Australian embassy in Germany about repatriating Sussy.

The federal Department of Communications and the Arts is responsible for facilitating “the unconditional return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains from overseas governments, institutions and private holders”.

A spokeswoman said the department had previously undertaken two repatriations from Germany.

In April 2013, the Charité University Hospital in Berlin returned 33 Australian indigenous ancestors. “The remains were from communities in South Australia,

Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia," she said.

In July 2014, the Charité University Hospital in Berlin returned the remains of 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors.

"This is the second repatriation from the Charité and demonstrates the commitment from Germany to work with indigenous Australian communities to repatriate ancestral remains," she said. "13 Goemulgal ancestors were returned to community in the Torres Strait Islands (and) one Wajarri Yamati ancestor was returned to country in Western Australia." French production company Bonne Pioche travelled to Ingham and Palm Island this week to interview Mr Cassady for a documentary on the history of human zoos.

The documentary will screen on SBS at a date to be set.