

Dreamtime a reality as ancient language returns

THE extinct Awabakal language's strong rhythms struck local Aborigine **Daryn McKenny** as he revived its ancient words over the past eight years.

"I'd love to hear an original speaker as the cadence would be beautiful," he said.

The Awabakal people roamed

the land of present-day Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

McKenny and **Dianna Newman**, both with the Awabakal Cultural Resource Association, reclaimed words and grammar, and now put sentences together.

"Next we'll take the spoken

language to today's Awabakal people," McKenny said. "Language is our cultural identity, the way to express our dreaming."

The Cardiff-based group was national runner-up in a contest run by Microsoft late last year.

With Australia's 250 indigenous languages the world's

most "at risk", the pair developed computer software and training so that remote communities could revive their languages.

They're now training elders who've never touched a computer in 20 Aboriginal communities between Newcastle and Weipa, Cape York.



Revival ... McKenny and Newman.

Photo: Brock Perks