

Indigenous artists sold on market



REVIVE and survive ... artists Billy Missi, left, Dennis Nona and Lisa Michi at the location for Cairns's new arts marketplace and festival for indigenous artists. Picture: Brian Cassey

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INDIGENOUS artists in far north Queensland are set to reap the benefits of a new \$11 million arts initiative announced yesterday in Cairns.

The centrepiece is a new arts marketplace and festival to be held in July next year in Cairns at the heritage sheds on the city's waterfront.

Local arts centres in Cape York, the Gulf and Torres Strait will also be set up or enhanced using funds from the State Government's "Backing

Indigenous Arts" project. Moa Island printmaker Billy Missi said the initiative made a huge difference to the lives of local artists.

"It allows the oral history to be made accessible to the wider society and gives an opportunity for our stories to be revived and survive," he said.

A catalogue for his first solo exhibition has been printed with a \$12,000 grant through the project.

The funding for the new projects would be distributed over four years in an effort to make Cairns the epicentre for

indigenous arts in Australia, Arts Minister Rod Welford said.

It also was hoped that indigenous art would become a major new tourism industry by bringing in national and international buyers.

Award-winning Torres Strait printmaker Dennis Nona, who has achieved significant international success, said that the Indigenous Art Marketplace would provide the kind of support that was essential to his art.

"More artists will have opportunities to establish themselves in a way that didn't previously exist," he said.