

# People, Place, Power explored at the Native Title Conference 2010



Hosted by the traditional owners of the Canberra region, this year's National Native Title Conference was co-convened by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

and the National Native Title Council (NNTC). With approximately 580 registered delegates including some 120 speakers, the event was held at the National Convention Centre, Canberra, from 1-3 June, 2010.

AIATSIS Chairperson Professor Mick Dodson AM said that this year's conference theme of *People, Place, Power* was specifically aimed at reflecting the significance of holding the event in Canberra. 'Canberra is where the major legal and policy decisions about native title have been made, and it's where legislation is still being discussed and

formulated,' Professor Dodson said.

'No other national forum fosters knowledge in this dynamic area of law and agreement making and gives native title parties a chance to share information and experiences as the Native Title Conference does.'

Through workshops, speeches and keynote speakers, this year's conference explored contemporary native title issues including governing native title land, housing, tenure and community development, environment, conservation and joint management, the national policy framework and proposed National Partnership Agreement and the reforms to the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth).



(l-r) AIATSIS Chairperson Professor Mick Dodson, British Columbia Treaty Commissioner, Shana Manson, and President of the Sámi Parliament, Lars Anders-Baer.  
Photo by Otis Williams



Performance by the Ngambri dance group at the Conference Opening.  
Photo by Otis Williams

Each year the Native Title Conference hosts international speakers who deliver keynote addresses relating to the international experience of native title, land rights and Indigenous justice issues. This year, the President of the Sámi Parliament, Mr Lars Anders-Baer addressed the delegates on the topic of: *The Sámi people in the outmost North - the people in the twilight zone*. Mr Anders-Baer explained that the Sámi are 2 million people living across four countries in the Arctic Circle - namely, Norway, Sweden, Russia and Finland. He explored the varying political systems and challenges faced by the Sámi and the similarities in land rights struggles between Aboriginal Australians and the Sámi people.

Canadian Shana Manson, who is a member of the Lyackson First Nation, described the British Columbia Treaty system in her address: *Reconciling Aboriginal Title and Rights with Asserted Sovereignty: The Modern day BC Treaty process*.

Mrs. Bonita Mabo, the widow of the late Eddie Mabo and their daughter Jessie Mabo attended this year's Mabo Lecture, delivered by Professor Marcia Langton – the first woman to deliver the annual Mabo Lecture in its 11-year history.



Professor Marcia Langton – the first woman to deliver the annual Mabo Lecture in its 11-year history.  
*Photo by Otis Williams.*

The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP presented a keynote address where she flagged that the government would soon be consulting widely on changes to regulatory rules applying to native title corporations. Speaking after the Mabo Lecture, Minister Macklin said stronger governance regimes in Indigenous native title corporations would help ensure payments from the mining sector are best used to build economic and social independence in Indigenous communities.

The inspiration for the 2010 Native Title Conference logo came from Ngunnawal artist Jim Williams' painting, *Bogong Dreaming*. The moth was an important part of male initiations and ceremonies for Ngunnawal men.

The Conference Opening, held at Parliament House, was hosted by NTSCorp board member and Ngambri Elder, Matilda House, who started proceedings with a smoking ceremony. Performances included songs by the Queanbeyan South Public School and the Ngambri dance group.

Throughout the conference, delegates were able to browse and purchase goods from the Conference Trade Fair, which enabled local Indigenous people to exhibit, display and sell art, craft and other products. Stalls included Kemarre Arts, Bala Arts, the Yuarana (Canberra Institute of TAFE) and Jabal (Australian National University) Centres, Burunju

Arts and Ronin Films representing CAAMA Productions as well as sponsor stalls from IBA, and AIATSIS/ Aboriginal Studies Press.

Next year's Native Title Conference will be co-convened by AIATSIS and Queensland Native Title Services (QSNTS) and will take place at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on the 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

Papers, audio and PowerPoints from this year's conference will be available shortly on the Native Title Research Unit website at <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/ntru/overview.html>



(l-r) Jessie Mabo, daughter of Eddie Mabo, The Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP and Mrs Bonita Mabo, the widow of the late Eddie Mabo.  
*Photo by Otis Williams*