



LEADERSHIP LEGACY and Opportunity 2015

NATIONAL NATIVE TITLE CONFERENCE Port Douglas, Qld | 16-18 June

SHIANE LOVELL Conference Manager AIATSIS

THE 15TH NATIONAL NATIVE TITLE Conference was co-convened by AIATSIS and the Cape York Land Council (CYLC) in Port Douglas, QLD from 16 – 18 June 2015.

The gathering attracted over 830 delegates and stakeholders - over half of which were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The National Native Title Conference is the largest Indigenous Policy conference in Australia. For many delegates the National Native Title Conference each year is the leading annual professional development event for staff of native title representative bodies/ service providers and relevant government agencies, as well as independent native title practitioners and academics.

The Conference program included keynotes and plenary speeches, dialogue forums, technical workshops, topical workshops and Indigenous talking circles.

Under the theme of *Leadership, Legacy and Opportunity*, NNTC 2015 featured some 190 presenters across diverse topics as; access to cultural materials, agreements, building relationships, carbon farming, caring for country, climate change, community development, comprehensive agreements, constitution, cultural materials and values, demographics, economic development, governance, Indigenous Protected Areas, heritage, land management, land and sea, land and tenure, law and policy, leadership, nation building, native title law and recognition, opportunities, PBCs, policy development, regional



Above: Kuku Yalanji Dancers
Photo credit: Bryce Gray

agreements and claims, repatriation, research, resource extraction and empowerment, resource mining, social impact, traditional ownership and youth engagement.

The Conference featured four keynote addresses and presentations. Mary-Anne Port and Jim Turnour, Chairperson and Chief Executive Office of Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation gave the keynote address for the NTRB and PBC Program. Their keynote 'Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation: our experiences of native title' explored Indigenous Land Use Agreements implementation, and the challenges traditional owners face, the progress that has been made in country based planning, ranger programs, governance and the limitations it imposes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Gooda presented this year's Mabo Lecture. 'A new conversation regarding Indigenous land and economic development' outlined some of the feedback that was received from the recent roundtable meeting, convened by the Commission with Indigenous leaders of leaders on economic development and economic rights.

Federal Minister of Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Nigel Scullion addressed delegates about new funding for PBCs 'native title support to boost development'. Minister Scullion also used the Conference to announce \$20 million in additional funding to better support native title

Below: Kuku Yalanji Cultural Habitat Tour
Photo credit: Andrew Turner





holders to effectively engage with potential investors.

Noel Pearson, the Founder and Director of Strategy of Cape York Partnerships presented Public Program Day 2 keynote address 'in pursuit of a regional, reciprocal responsibility, settlement for Cape York: what is the right package of reforms for Indigenous social, political, economic and cultural development?' Mr Pearson outlined how Indigenous people want to take charge of their own affairs and develop their own agendas.

A *Dangerous Ideas* Panel saw five prominent identities pitching a challenging, controversial ground breaking concept to conference delegates. They included Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Wilson; Regional Development Corporation Managing Director, Bruce Martin; Kimberley Region Economic Development CEO, Wayne Bergmann; Indigenous Advisory Committee Member, Ricky Archer; and AIATSIS Director of Research Strategy, Dr Lisa Strelein.

The conference hosted three Indigenous Talking Circles; Women's, Men's and the Trials and Terrors of the Indigenous Advancement Scheme. These sessions were for Indigenous delegates only, and provided a space to discuss important issues in a closed session.

Presentations are available to view on the AIATSIS website: www.aiatsis.gov.au

Support from sponsors this year enabled over 80 Indigenous people to attend the conference as speakers, facilitators or delegates.

With significant assistance and planning from the Cape York Land Council, this year's NNTC featured a stunning welcome reception with over 40 dancers and performers representing the four corners of the Cape; including the Kuku Yalanji, Wik, Lockhart and Torres Strait Islander dancers.

Each year, the Conference also includes an exciting cultural program that offers an opportunity for delegates to engage with local traditional owners, experience local cultural activities and learn more about economic or business initiatives on traditional country.

In 2015, over 150 delegates attended two very significant offsite cultural events. One group went to the Mossman Gorge Voyages Centre - an Indigenous eco- tourism development within the southern part of the World Heritage Listed, Daintree National Park Mossman Gorge. Delegates met with traditional owners, before heading off on a personal tour through the rainforest.

Other delegates also visited Cooya Beach for a Kuku Yalanji Cultural Habitat Tour. The unique tour is run by Linc and Brandon Walker who educate visitors about their Kuku Yalanji culture through a guided tour of Cooya Beach (Kuyu Kuyu) - which is a special place and traditional fishing ground of the Kuku Yalanji.

Delegates and guests were invited to attend the special screening of 'Mabo' the movie on the evening prior to the NTRB and PBC Program. The 'Mabo' movie was introduced by Gail Mabo, the daughter of the late Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo and Rachel Perkins, the Director of the 'Mabo' movie who shared their stories about making this very significant movie.



(From top left to bottom):
Mabo Movie
 Photo credit: Marni Pilgrim
PBC Meeting
 Photo credit: Andrew Turner
Youth Forum
 Photo credit: Andrew Turner
Mary-Anne Port, Jim Turnour
 Photo credit: Andrew Turner



Based on recommendations from PBCs at previous conferences, this year's conference hosted the National PBC Meeting for the third consecutive year. The meeting provided a space for PBC Chairs, Members and Staff to discuss PBC business in a closed session. Representatives shared information and knowledge from their experiences around the country. The meeting attracted over 90 people, representing 51 PBCs from NSW, QLD, SA, TSI, VIC and WA, and three Traditional Owner Group Organisations. Delegates had the opportunity to hear briefly from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Building on the working groups that had been established since 2009, the meeting formally established an inaugural PBC National Council and elected Co-Chairs.

This year the conference hosted a Youth Forum. The forum attracted around 30 Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth delegates, aged between 18 – 35 to engage in discussions with other young



people about the native title sector, leadership and how to contribute towards the future wellbeing of communities.

As well as participating in the wider conference session, youth delegates spent a day at the Mossman Gorge Voyages Centre speaking with traditional owners and custodians.

The Youth Forum was supported by the Indigenous Land Corporation and included presentations from young Indigenous leaders within the native title, education and leadership sectors.

Conference feedback from delegates, speakers and sponsors rated this year's Conference as one of the best ever native title conferences.

Importantly, for many, this year's conference had a high representation of Indigenous people throughout the conference, including the program and cultural program.

In his closing address, AIATSIS Principal Russ Taylor AM acknowledged the dedication and



hard work from the Cape York Land Council and the Kuku Yalanji people for making this year's conference another inspiring conference.

"Your staff and your advice has been critical for us to organise this year's Conference."

Mr Taylor also acknowledged the contributions of the North Queensland Land Council and Carpentaria Land Council and the generous support and commitment from the Conference Sponsors in 2015.

"The growing numbers of delegates each year are a sign of the strength of this conference and how it has become an essential part of the native title sector," he concluded.

Above left: Mick Gooda
Photo credit: Andrew Turner

Above middle: The Hon. Nigel Scullion
Photo credit: Andrew Turner

Above right: Noel Pearson
Photo credit: John Paul Janke

Below: Dangerous Ideas keynote
Photo credit: Bryce Gray

