

CASE STUDY



- Event:** World Indigenous Network Conference (WIN) 2013
Connecting Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Land and Sea Managers
- Date:** 26 - 31 May 2013
- Total Attendance:** 1,200
- Organising Committee:** The Australian Government, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, and the World Indigenous Network National Advisory Group

An Australian Global Initiative

The World Indigenous Network (WIN) was announced at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) in Brazil in June 2012 by the then Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard, with the support of Brazil, New Zealand and Norway.

This was a “proud moment”, according to Melissa George, the Co-Chair of WIN National Advisory Group and Chair of the Australian Government Environment Minister’s Indigenous Advisory Committee. “As I stood and listened to the Prime Minister’s words, I felt the enormity and the possibilities of WIN across the world, and I knew I had to be a part of it.”

“All the peoples of the world share a responsibility to join with the world’s Indigenous peoples to protect and nourish the land and sea in the future. Protecting our shared environment is a shared task, and so we must come together. That is the purpose of the Network.”

Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard, June 2012

The original idea of an international knowledge sharing network was developed by Tony Burke, the then Australian Government Environment Minister and Wayne Bergmann, the CEO of KRED Enterprises, a Western Australian based organisation established to develop business and job opportunities for the Kimberley Aboriginal people. Their partnership and desire to share their vision of a network of indigenous rangers with the world was a catalyst for the development of this important global network.

A WIN International Reference Group was also established consisting of key country member representatives from Africa, Asia, North and South America and partner countries, Brazil, Norway and New Zealand. The group includes representatives from the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations University and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The overall aim of WIN is to encourage:

- Better conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of natural resources
- Improved social cohesion
- Increased economic opportunities
- The alleviation of poverty.

The vision for WIN and the 2013 inaugural conference was supported by a National Advisory Group comprised of representatives from Indigenous organisations around Australia, who provided strategic advice and direction.

The Secretariat for WIN will be hosted by the United Nations Development Program - Equator Initiative.

Conference Goals

The goals of the inaugural conference in 2013 were to bring together Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities land and sea managers to; share stories, knowledge and ideas to better manage ecosystems, protect the environment, share cultural experiences, and to support sustainable livelihoods.

Participants were expected to contribute to shaping the new network and help build an enduring and strong foundation for an innovative international network. Through his official welcome, the then Environment Minister, the Hon Tony Burke MP, encouraged participants to ensure that the network “becomes an environmental gift to the management of our land and sea country for many years to come.”

These goals were supported by key event targets:

- A strong conference program
- Attract at least 800 delegates
- Representation from 20 countries
- Local community representation
- Support from partners and sponsors
- Active exchange and engagement from participants
- Online engagement and accessibility
- Media support, both national and international

Rationale For Destination Choice

The committee considered several Australian destinations but Darwin was a clear front runner to support the goals of the conference according to Mark Nash, Project Director for WIN. “Darwin has the capacity through its venue, infrastructure and international access, as well as the appeal of the local warm weather in Australia’s winter, along with support from the local hosts, the traditional owners of Darwin, the Larrakia Nation.”

Engaging Program Extends WIN

The formal conference days were 26 – 29th June, however the duration of the event was extended by many weeks through pre and post-event engagement through online communication, activities and post conference field trips and post touring.

The format of the conference itself included an Opening and Closing Ceremony, six keynote presentations plus over 75 presentations and workshops with five key themes of:

- Territories, Lands and Waters

- Communities and Relationships
- Cultures and Knowledge
- Resource and Livelihoods
- Networks and Exchanges

The format included special streams for Women and Youth as well as 29 hours of live presentations streamed online over the course of the conference.

The social program was an innovative combination of events that only a place like Darwin could provide. Activities such as; outdoor dining, music and performances by local Indigenous artists, a picnic with movies under the stars, the iconic Mindil Beach Markets with hundreds of food stalls of local produce and art, all provided fantastic opportunities for delegates to socialise and enjoy Darwin's unique ambience. A unique networking hub was developed for breaks which included a spectacular arts and craft display by 19 Australian Indigenous Community Art organisations.

Amazing Results Exceed All Expectations

"Amazing" is how Mark Nash, Project Director for the first ever World Indigenous Conference Connecting Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Land and Sea Managers, described his experience in Darwin.

"It was an ambitious goal to bring together so many people, ten months after the announcement in Rio but the event has exceeded all our expectations including our key performance targets", he claimed.

Attracting sufficient attendees was more than achieved with over 1,200 delegates participating from over 50 countries, including every continent of the world except Antarctica.

Opportunities to share the conference messages were also achieved by an overwhelming representation of 50 media outlets including the ABC, Al Jazeera, and media from Africa, North and South America and Europe.

The life of the conference was extended beyond the event through the use of digital technology. This helped stimulate plenty of online discussions and panel questions posted through blogs, Facebook and Twitter. The online Photo competition showcasing Indigenous community and rangers work across the world proved very successful with over 4,000 online votes. Over 19,000 pages of the official website were viewed during the event. Plus live streaming and 79 videos were shared with global viewers.

Reports are still arriving on how inspiring the speakers and workshops were. "Incredibly inspiring... [WIN] has become much bigger than a simple idea on the beach...and we have established strong roots to hold a big tree up..." declared Wayne Bergman, CEO of KRED Enterprises.

Sponsors were delighted to get the opportunity to have a presence at the conference itself, meet partners from remote communities and develop relationships and ideas for their ongoing programs.

The network hub located at the Darwin Centre, along with the 60 artists and crafts people from Australian Indigenous community arts organisations providing practical art and craft demonstrations as well as displaying and selling their products to delegates proved to be of particular importance and success for both the attendees and the artists through sales as well

as cultural exchanges and education.

The Darwin Convention Centre Experience

By all accounts, the Darwin Convention Centre lived up to its reputation of being a world class facility for the Northern Territory and Australia. Project Director, Mark Nash believes that “the Centre’s stunning location near the waterfront and the light and bright design helped to enhance the mood of the participants every day!”

With the location and weather combination, where else could you so easily offer a unique idea of an outdoor picnic, blankets and a movie which delighted delegates? The Caterers created gourmet picnic boxes complete with a taste of Australia with kangaroo, crocodile and buffalo!

Mark described his experience with the Darwin Centre Management team as “very flexible”. “The service was wonderful, the quality of the catering was fantastic and everything worked like clockwork,” he added.

The Northern Territory Experience

Mark advised that their decision to host the conference in Darwin had some small challenges as all destinations do, “but nothing insurmountable,” he advised. “Everything worked beautifully and the warm weather allowed us to offer a unique social program that our participants really enjoyed and helped them unwind after a busy day.”

“A measure of how popular Darwin and the Northern Territory were was how quickly the optional field tours sold out, oversubscribed in fact” said Mark.

Tours and field trips included rare opportunities and unique experiences with local Aboriginal guides to Litchfield National Park, Tiwi Islands, Arnhem Land and Kakadu National Park.

Stunning billabongs, spectacular swimming spots and waterfalls, towering escarpments, rock art, pioneer heritage were included on this geographical and cultural feast of the Northern Territory. With the help of their guides, participants could delve deep into the local community and Aboriginal life and learn about local relationships to country and their place in modern life.

Comments from Delegates

“It was great to meet other rangers and hear what’s going on for them on their country. Some people here have nothing, but they still work with the tools they got. I felt a big connection with everyone, it didn’t matter where they were from.” **Indigenous ranger, Australia**

“I really extend my sincere appreciation to the Network and Australian Government for facilitating my participation to this important conference.

I have met and seen managers all over the world and have enriched my brain with their contributions to also better my work.” **Conference delegate, Cameroon**

“It was wonderful to be able to showcase our Arts Centre and artists. Many members speak through their art, so having the art alongside our visiting delegates made it easy for them to communicate across language and cultural barriers.” **Community Arts Organiser, Network Hub**

“I’ve had such an amazing time at WIN. The opportunity to meet and share stories with

Indigenous peoples coming from 50 nations is incredible and I wouldn't change a thing!

I was also honoured to be able to talk before the delegates, talking about my journey as a young Aboriginal man, my connection to land & sea and hopes for the future.

Thank you to all involved for making this experience truly special!" **Conference delegate, Australia**

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