

## PULiiMA Indigenous Language and Technology Conference CASE STUDY

<b>Conference Name:</b>	PULiiMA Indigenous Language and Technology Conference
<b>Dates:</b>	21-25 August 2023
<b>Host Organisation(s):</b>	Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre
<b>Organisations by type:</b>	Association/Institute/Community Development Agency
<b>Number of delegates:</b>	1,081
<b>Delegate origin:</b>	Australia Wide, Remote and regional communities / Asia Pacific Region, New Zealand, United States, Canada
<b>NT location:</b>	Darwin, Australia's Northern Territory
<b>Conference venue:</b>	Darwin Convention Centre

### Event Overview:

The PULiiMA Indigenous Language and Technology Conference is a biennial event that brings together people from all over Australia and internationally to highlight and share the work being done globally to preserve, revitalise and promote Indigenous languages.

Held consecutively on Larrakia Country in Darwin, Northern Territory (NT) the 2023 event celebrated the global theme of "International Decade of Indigenous Languages".

The five-day conference welcomed language speakers, technology experts, linguists, educators, and policymakers to network, share and develop ideas, products and equipment used in community-based Indigenous language projects. The program featured 21 workshops and 127 presentations from over 450 presenters, as well as three feature events, seven Plenaries, and 27 exhibitors. Of the 450 presenters, 411 were Indigenous, representing 28 countries and multiple Indigenous languages.

An incredible lineup of Indigenous performers and artists provided entertainment during the conference, including the renowned Ngulmiya Nundhirribala, Mitch Tambo, the Red Flag dancers from Numbulwar in Arnhem Land, and the TSI dancers.

Of the 1,081 registered delegates that attended the conference, 203 identified as local Territory-based, 851 as national and 27 as international delegates, making it the largest and most successful PULiiMA event since its commencement in 2007.

### Reasons for selecting the Northern Territory:

The NT is a place of significant Indigenous heritage and culture. It is home to more Indigenous communities than any other Australian region, with approximately 30% of the NT's population identifying as Indigenous and over 100 Aboriginal languages and dialects spoken Territory-wide. This

deep connection to land and language provided an authentic and immersive setting to meet and discuss the importance of preserving Indigenous languages.

Darwin's geographical location, in proximity to remote communities across Northern Australia and international regions, facilitated easy accessibility for delegates, resulting in increased participation by local language custodians, Elders, and community representatives.

The hosting venue, the highly awarded Darwin Convention Centre, is situated within the picturesque Darwin Waterfront Precinct, offering a safe and easy-to-navigate delegate experience with hotels, restaurants, a wave pool, recreational facilities and shops all within walking distance for attendees to enjoy a seamless conference experience.

### **Challenges and Triumphs:**

Coordinating travel and accommodation for delegates from various Indigenous communities that span large geographic areas and comprise different cultural and financial backgrounds can be logistically challenging. Darwin's CBD-based hotels and accommodation providers offered competitive hotel rates to PULiiMA delegates, presenters, exhibitors and workshop trainers to enable participation across varied budgets. Hotel hubs were also offered for accommodation 20 minutes or more outside the CBD, with coach services provided each day to and from the conference.

Globally, PULiiMA is considered unique by the Indigenous language conservation sector. Managed by Indigenous people for Indigenous people, PULiiMA's strong reputation respects, understands and encourages direct Indigenous participation. The result is significant Indigenous event engagement from presenters, trainers, exhibitors and delegates. Darwin as a destination and its cultural connections allow greater access to valuable Aboriginal language speakers, knowledge holders and those in the community working alongside.

### **The Execution:**

The official program commenced with an outdoor BBQ and Welcome to Country in the Frangipani Plaza of the Darwin Convention Centre. This traditional welcome was a symbolic gesture of respect and recognition of the Traditional Custodians of the land.

Conference presentation topics included, but were not limited to, new technologies, teaching methods, translation and language preservation projects and technology integration when working in classrooms. Other program features included an indoor cinema showing Indigenous short films, yarning circles, women's meeting spaces and exhibits.

On the final night, a three-course Gala Dinner was held under the night sky at the Darwin Convention Centre's outdoor Porte Cochere (Garawa) space, overlooking the magnificent Darwin Harbour. The event featured entertainment by Ngulmiya Nundhirribal, an iconic songman and ceremony leader from Numbulwar, Southeast Arnhem Land. Dinner entertainment also featured a talent contest called 'Australia's Got Language', which was first held at PULiiMA in 2013 and has since become a regular event and highlight of the PULiiMA program.

### **Social Programme:**

The venue's easily accessible outdoor spaces encouraged delegates to socialise in a relaxed environment. The conference utilised these spaces for various program elements. The Welcome to Country BBQ held in the Frangipani Plaza of the Convention Centre provided a beautiful space for an informal gathering, allowing delegates to meet and mingle and share stories, language and culture with singing and dancing.

Delegates were invited to attend the iconic Deckchair Cinema for The Red Room Poetry NT Showcase, celebrating the work of acclaimed local and national poets through a program of short poetic films, spoken word, live music and poetry readings.

With the CBD and most hotels within easy walking distance of the Darwin Convention Centre, delegates could explore and enjoy the destination and immerse themselves in Darwin's rich and diverse multicultural history and modern tropical lifestyle.

### **Any Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)/local community engagement/Sustainability elements to your event?**

Hosting such a culturally diverse group of delegates comes with great social responsibility. Understanding the different cultural backgrounds and customs was vital in ensuring inclusivity, respect, and a positive experience for all attendees.

The Darwin Convention Centre staff reflect the city's cultural diversity, and employees participate in cultural awareness training to understand the nuances of different cultures and engage and respond in a culturally appropriate manner to diverse needs. The venue was also able to provide a range of food and beverage options representative of different cultures and take into consideration the dietary restrictions and preferences of varied cultural groups.

In a commitment to environmental sustainability, the event minimised single-use plastics by presenting delegates with keepsake drink bottles featuring Aboriginal artwork upon arrival that could be refilled from the water coolers throughout the venue. Additionally, delegates received sustainable gifts such as notebooks, pens, canvas bags, and lanyards, to further reduce its ecological footprint.

26 Indigenous attendees were able to attend the conference thanks to the support provided by Aboriginal Languages Trust through Miromaa/PULiiMA. PULiiMA remains committed to achieving legacy outcomes as the largest Indigenous conference globally, organised by an Aboriginal Not for Profit organisation for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and Indigenous individuals.

### **Any bespoke NT touches to your event?**

Hosting the PULiiMA Conference on Larrakia Country offered a unique opportunity to connect with a diverse group of Indigenous people. The history and influence of the Larrakia people were carefully

interwoven and showcased throughout the conference, providing an incredible insight into their traditions and customs through the sharing of knowledge, traditional practices, stories, songs, ceremonies and art.

Local business and women's enterprise Starwin, who specialise in sourcing handmade products from Indigenous women across the Top End of Australia were engaged to provide gifts for international and VIP delegates.

The three-course Gala Dinner on Wednesday night showcased the rich flavours of the Northern Territory, with an emphasis on locally sourced ingredients. Guests enjoyed NT specialties such as local barramundi, as well as Indigenous bush foods and spices, highlighting the region's culinary heritage.

### **Most memorable aspect of the entire event?**

The Australian Launch of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022 -2032 was celebrated at the PULiiMA Conference in Darwin, and was a program highlight that drew significant media attention.

The Australian Government released Australia's Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032, jointly launched by First Nations leaders and Federal Minister for the Arts, Tony Burke. The live-streamed event provided a platform to forge common ground with Elders and Indigenous thought leaders worldwide.

### **Overall Satisfaction:**

Darwin provided a culturally welcoming and immersive place for delegates from varied backgrounds. Its proximity to regional and remote communities, access for international delegates as well as the city's modern amenities provided easy facilitation for event organisers and a safe, comfortable and memorable experience for delegates.

As a venue that actively engages with the local Indigenous community and supports Indigenous businesses, the Darwin Convention Centre team enhanced the conference experience for delegates through their understanding of the unique program requirements, including cultural performances, traditions, workshops and sensitivities. Using outdoor spaces for key program events such as the Welcome BBQ and Gala Dinner was a valuable opportunity to incorporate the strong connection to land and nature held by Indigenous delegates.

The overall result was the most highly attended and successful PULiiMA conference to date, with very satisfied attendees who were grateful for the opportunity to share knowledge in a city that boasts the unity and collaboration of culture. Darwin will again be strongly considered throughout the tender process for the 2025 PULiiMA Conference.

### Testimonials from delegates:

“The quality of the delegates, performances, speakers, and events were great. It was awesome to have a space to connect with other Indigenous people.” - Makere Carroll, Mob- Māori

“State of the art conference. Everything from the speakers, performers, food, venue etc” Judith Birchall, Yamatji (born in Noongar country)

“So well organised, well signposted. The dinner and event was amazing, hats off to all involved in that! This was my first PULiiMA and I was so impressed by everything. Great range of speakers, topics and geographic regions.” Wendy Ann Rushbrook, Euro Australian

“It was such an amazing 5 days workshops and conference AND plus the launch of the 10 years action plan for the decade of the International Indigenous languages. I witnessed the language authorities, elders, workers were all uplifted and feeling supported and united during the conference.” Yasunori Hayashi, Japanese, and supporting Yolngu languages program at Charles Darwin University

“Very good conference - managed very well, good venue and provides an opportunity for people interested in language work to come together in a sharing and supportive environment.” Sharee Buzzacott, Arrente / Arabunna.



Delegates enjoy a three-course Gala Dinner under the night sky at the Darwin Convention Centre's outdoor Porte Cochere (Garawa) space.



Performers at the 'Australia's Got Language' talent quest as part of the Gala Dinner.