



AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

Media Release

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Record numbers for conference

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) held the annual National Native Title Conference in Darwin in June which was co-convened with the Northern Land Council (NLC) and hosted by the Larrakia people.

AIATSIS CEO Russell Taylor AM was pleased to see a record number of registered delegates this year and an increase in sponsorship which supports Indigenous delegates to attend the conference.

“At the heart of the conference is the community spirit, giving people from all over Australia an opportunity to discuss issues important to them and to just catch up in a culturally supportive environment,” said Mr Taylor.

Each year the conference attracts an expanding number of Indigenous organisations, native title holders and claimants, lawyers, academics and representatives from government agencies.

The conference program highlighted being on country, practising and learning culture, community and recognition. It’s an opportunity for delegates to network, connect, showcase and share.

“Our keynote speakers make thought-provoking presentations that require all of us to take stock, they speak frankly about our past and the impacts, they ask where are we heading and how can we, as First Nations people, ensure we have a voice,” said Mr Taylor.

During his keynote address, NLC CEO Joe Morrison, took the opportunity to highlight the positive work of Indigenous rangers managing and caring for country in the Territory. This was followed by a session dedicated to celebrating and acknowledging the 40th anniversary and history of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976* and the history of land rights in the NT.

The 2016 Mabo Address was delivered by NAILSMA CEO Melissa George, who spoke of the land rights battle and the continuing frustrations for the future. Ms George expressed the importance of recognising, supporting and valuing the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and sea managers as protectors, cultural maintainers and creators of opportunity.

Keynote speaker, Professor Gerald Taiaiake Alfred from University of Victoria in Canada spoke of restoring Indigenous presences on the land and water, reinvigorating language and traditional cultural practices.

Professor Alfred took time to participate in the Indigenous youth talking circle where delegates discussed their native title experiences, barriers experienced as Indigenous youth and how they might be overcome.

The conference also recorded its highest online engagement with the #nativetitle16 hashtag being used over 3000 times and reaching over a million Twitter users.

Video and audio of the conference presentations will be available on our conference page soon.



Image caption: *Professor Gerald Taiaiake Alfred from University of Victoria with Indigenous Youth Forum conference delegates.*

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