

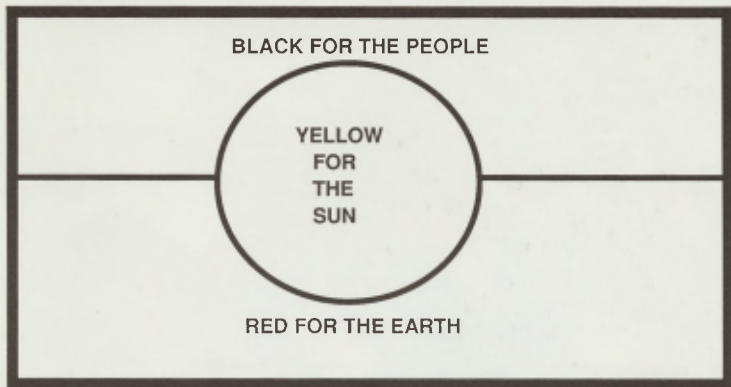
FINDING
COMMON
GROUND

First Indigenous
Women's Conference

7-18 July 1989
ADELAIDE AUSTRALIA

Conference Report

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The National Flag for the Indigenous People of Australia is a
combination of three colours

Red for the Earth

Yellow for the Sun

Black for the People

This Flag was first flown and recognised as a symbol of
Unity in

July 1974

Victoria Square Adelaide, South Australia

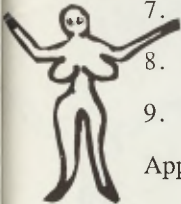
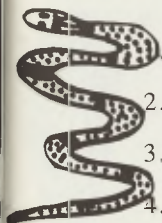
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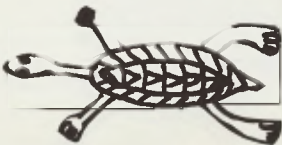
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GREETINGS



1 GREETINGS

page 1

To Our Sisters From The Aboriginal Women's Working Party

On 7 July 1989 commenced a unique chapter in the history of indigenous women's lives. Through the efforts of local Aboriginal women and others residing in South Australia at the time and spearheaded by Jo Willmot, we were proud to host the First International Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide.

We were excited because the project we had been working on for three years was about to materialise, yet we were not fully prepared for what lay ahead. To sum up we were completely "overwhelmed" at the response by international and national participants. Not only by their relevant social and political agendas but by their goodwill and generosity in their acceptance of the mammoth task that awaited us.

Of course there were some slight disagreements which proved minor in the totality of the conference and despite (to quote one of our working party members) "that there had been a lot of anguish, envy, jealousy and competition during this time," we overcame them by sticking together firmly. Some of you came to the conference with different agendas, intent on being heard, saying you wanted to be listened to - it's not surprising or easy when 300 women register and 1500 actually turn up! We feel sure that our conflicts of opinion have only lasted for the duration of the conference. Our time to talk was precious and intense and our desire to find common ground has dominated and outshone any egotistical or individual desire. For that reason we remain loyal and cemented in our bonds of friendship as the Aboriginal Womens Working Party.

Six days was such a short and a long time for us. None of us had ever worked together before. It has made us stronger, we have learnt from past mistakes and are determined to carry our experiences on in our everyday and professional lives. Our bodies ached for weeks later with exhaustion and joy in the accomplishment of our feat.

It is hard to convey, on paper, what an emotional experience it was for all of us - how exhilarating the march was, how this bringing together of women was like a dream come true, the singing and dancing at the festival, the way the children joined in, wandered around, and were looked after and perfectly safe and happy, the way the men supported us by looking after the kids that weren't there, the realisation that our issues were common and important to everyone there, and the knowledge that the conference was SUCCESSFUL and the start of something strong that needs to go on.

In many ways we felt humble to be the organisers of the conference, honoured to have shared, laughed and cried with you and will cherish those bonds until we die. Perhaps we will look back in another ten years and reminisce about those days and think how brave we were. There is an old saying that it is "people who make conferences" and we thank you for your participation and contribution in making what we believe has been the greatest show on earth.

Yours in sisterhood,

Jo Willmot

Jackie Huggins

Sandra Saunders

Dot Davey

Marg Crosbie

Heather Brown

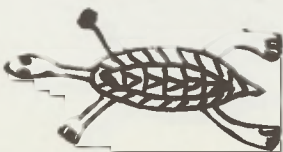
Jane Branford

Muriel Van Der Byl

Eva Johnson



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The following appreciation is extended to:

- All the Aboriginal women who worked tirelessly on the Conference; to those involved both past and present who enabled a continuation of the necessary preparations for the Conference.
- A special note of thanks must go to the non-indigenous women supporters who provided the practical support for the conference. They are too numerous to mention but we are grateful for their assistance.
- Relevant funding bodies especially DEET for travel monies and sponsorship of folders.
- United Nations Status of Women Committee
- CAAMA radio and television for documentation.
- Other media services including AAP, "The Advertiser", "The News", ABC Radio and Television, Radio Australia.
- Adelaide Aboriginal Community Centre for use of premises.
- Adelaide Festival Centre and Staff.
- Department for Community Welfare for secondment of staff and photocopying.
- Multicultural Arts Centre workers.
- All those organisations which provided funding in support of the Conference. [See Appendix 1]
- Report Preparation: Jackie Huggins, Irene Allen (graphics), Jo Murphy, Dot Davies, Ruby Hammond, Yve Repin, Sandra Sanders



THE DREAM



How and Why The Conference Happened

The following is an interview with Jo Willmot, the Convenor of the First International Indigenous Womens Conference

"In 1985 I went to Nairobi to the International Womens Conference. It was an experience in which the Aboriginal women of Australia formed a kinship, a reliance on other indigenous women around the world, and felt that for the first time in our lives we had come across a group of people who understood. We didn't have to explain the situation to anyone else as to how we felt. The understanding, the support, the solidarity, the unity was a link and it was from several weeks in Nairobi that the indigenous women came to formulate the idea that we should have our own international indigenous womens Conference.

I came back to Australia with the idea that it was going to be a reality, it wasn't just going to be a tall dream, it was going to be a dream that was going to come true for us as indigenous women. And talking to several other indigenous women in South Australia, and forming a link with the United Nations Status of Womens Committee, who supported the ideas overall in 1987, who of course didn't have any money but were very much behind the ideas of supporting the International Indigenous Womens Conference in Adelaide, we put several proposals to the state and federal government in regards to getting funding. Some funding came through and that gave us a little bit of money that we could put into the venture. The Aboriginal women worked weekends and evenings and met on a regular basis and didn't lose sight of the reality of what occurred in Nairobi and I feel very proud that that reality has occurred."



THE FESTIVAL



7th - 8th July 1989

Two days of "ceremony" welcomed the participants of the First International Indigenous Womens Conference to Australia. It also provided an opportunity to meet in an informal and relaxed atmosphere prior to the conference proper.

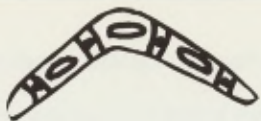
Victoria Square staged the opening of the Conference which was ablaze in the Aboriginal national colours of red, black and yellow. Hundreds of women congregated, proudly displaying the symbolic indigenous identification of their different countries and nationalities - flags, banners, customary dress and artefacts. Numbers were swelled by supporters and bystanders spontaneously joining the march along King William Street, the main street of Adelaide, then left down North Terrace to the Living Arts Centre, the site for the Festival.

On arrival at the Living Arts Centre a welcome speech was made by the host country and was responded to by the various participating countries in support and solidarity for the cause of indigenous women around the world. A cultural exchange of dancing, singing, readings, poetry and other items occurred throughout the duration of the day. The energy, excitement, solidarity and strength which had been generated at the march lasted through the whole festival; the Living Arts Centre was a blaze of light, colour, music and celebration day and night. The evening programme commenced at 8.00 p.m. with the Native American Womens Spiderwomen's Theatre Group; three brilliant elderly American Indian women from New York; they performed "Sun, Moon and Feather", an autobiographical play of storytelling based on the legends of the Hopi Indians and the lives of urban native Americans.

A cabaret followed each night's performance, and ran almost continuously through the two days. Many women stood and sang or danced; many had wonderful voices, and the singing varied from country folk, spirituals, musical comedy, ballads of all kinds. At night, the tribal women kept warm around fires in kerosene tins about the courtyard, often three generations of the one family were present.

Day two saw registrations, arts and crafts exhibitions, bead jewellery-making, basket weaving, pelican feather and reed weaving, emu egg carving and painting, singing, dancing and a variety of stage performances by indigenous women. On Saturday afternoon the tribal Aboriginal women danced some of their special ceremonial dances for us in the courtyard. No male over ten was allowed to be present. We formed a large circle, and women around the fires clapped their sticks and sang, while the Aboriginal women, bare to the waist, with their bodies painted with the traditional symbols pertaining to the particular dance, performed for us. It was a wonderful experience, and we felt honoured to see it. One of the dances was an initiation for menstruation. A local Aboriginal women's band entertained the crowd throughout the small hours of the morning. Continuous dance, festivity and celebration pervaded the night until the close.

For a pictorial record of the Festival, see the photographs and press clippings after Section 7 of this Report.



THE CONFERENCE



9th-12th July 1989

5.1 Opening Session

On Sunday the Forum began. Sessions were held from the 9th - 12th July in the Festival Centre Banquet Room, which was packed out. Women from many different countries, including North, Central and South America, Japan, Samiland, New Zealand, Ireland, India, South Pacific Islands and the Philippines, attended the Conference. The majority were Australian Aboriginal women indicating the need for Aboriginal women's conferences to be held on a regular basis - [see Appendix 2 for a list of registrations]. The participants were welcomed by Joanne Willmot, and Dameeli Willmot had composed an Aboriginal Women's Song for the Conference. The opening address was given by Natascha McNamara, an Aboriginal educationalist, who spoke on survival and success of indigenous women in contemporary societies. She said it was a matter of celebration that they had all managed to survive the experience of colonization. Aboriginal women have a great need for freedom to think, to speak, to plan, to do and most importantly the freedom to disagree. Natascha maintained that these freedoms for indigenous women have been eroded over the past twenty years through a process of legislation which has been based on the contemporary mythology of the inferiority of Aboriginal women's place in society. The government defined legislation for land rights which ignored the equity rights of Aboriginal women. Federal and State Governments established multiple bureaucracies controlled and dominated by men. The distribution of public resources shows little significant programming for women. She said we must change our current passive acceptance of mismanagement, of the current use of scarce resources for the promotion of window dressing activities, particularly art and sport, whilst Aboriginal children experience hunger and life threatening illnesses.

Natascha stated that women are the vehicle of social and cultural continuity in Aboriginal communities, and she challenged those present to be active, not passive, to actively participate in the revitalization of their communities, to fight against domestic violence, to participate in economic development, education, good health, social harmony, and to support those indigenous women who succeed. She saw those four days ahead as a chance to establish a dialogue and a network of women to create a better world - [see Appendix 3, for the full text of Natascha's speech].

The International Women's Panel responded as follows :

"We the international women recognise the prior sovereignty of Aboriginal people in their land. We feel privileged and honoured to be in your land today to share our unique experiences as indigenous women. We give our unconditional support to the Aboriginal struggle for land rights and self-determination. We deplore and condemn the racism and exploitation that Aboriginal people suffer every day in their own land. We speak in solidarity with all Aboriginal people and give our support in spirit and energy. Be strong, never give up the struggle, for your liberation is our liberation and we will always be with you. This is our common ground."

The Forum was then thrown open for discussion on "How We Define Ourselves." This caused a major disruption for the morning as one woman suggested non-indigenous women should leave the room. There was much debate for and against, and finally a message was read from some tribal elders saying they wished the non-indigenous women to be present, and welcomed their support. This did not settle the matter, and non-indigenous women were excluded from this session. Jackie Huggins, who was the initial DAA National Co-ordinator, spoke on "How we Define Ourselves - An Australian Aboriginal Woman's Experience". She focussed her talk on the Women's Liberation Movement and its proven irrelevance to Aboriginal women. She saw Aboriginals as being the most segregated group in Australia, with the least access to community facilities. [see Appendix 4 for the full text of Jackie's speech.] After lunch the meetings continued with non-indigenous women because the tribal elders took to the platform and made things go their way.

5.2 Conference Sessions

The Conference program then got underway, with a series of workshops, open forums and plenary sessions devoted to the Conference theme "Finding Common Ground" - [see Appendix 5, for full details of the Conference program]. Discussions and debates in each session were stimulating and diverse. International women were given the opportunity to elaborate on their concerns and share strategies for taking action in the fight for freedom and justice. The international women and Torres Strait Island women organised some separate sessions for themselves.

On the following days, sessions on land rights, education, employment, health, working with governments, human rights, sexual harassment, domestic violence, women's refuges and resource centres, and Aboriginal prisoners were among the many topics discussed.

The Conference was not entirely free of problems : e.g. a Palestinian proposal did not gain valid support from the Conference because voting procedures were not adhered to; and some women expressed dissatisfaction about the formality of the program, so on Tuesday state groups discussed how they wanted the last day to be organised, and the program was amended to include extra workshops. However, these problems were generally able to be dealt with by the organisers within the Conference.

Conference Resolutions are reported in full in the next section.

The final two sessions on Wednesday were the Women's Circle and the Closing Ceremony.

5.3 Women's Circle - Open Session

The Banquet Room at the Adelaide Festival Centre was filled from wall to wall to witness the exchange of gifts between nations and well wishes for the future. The host nation presented gifts to a representative from each country. The inaugural International Indigenous Womens Conference in Adelaide was about to end. Traditional women's dances and songs were performed by each country and a dry eye could not be spotted anywhere in the auditorium.

5.4 Closing Ceremony

In a moving conference closing ceremony Jo Willmot singled out international delegates for their "tolerance and support" which she said had enabled Aboriginal women to discuss common issues and their futures for the first time.

She concluded, "This Conference was above all an International Conference but indigenous women in this country also needed to express ourselves . . . and it was only through your tolerance, patience and support that we were able to come together to discuss our issues and our futures and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

5.5 Declaration of Unity

This Declaration of Unity was presented to the conference to represent the reality, hopes and aspirations of all indigenous women around the world. It was unanimously accepted and supported by all delegates at a conference forum.

We, the indigenous women participants of this First International Indigenous Women's Conference, come together to find common ground in our issues, demands, aspirations and struggles. We communicate in many tongues but we speak with one voice. We are the women of the land!

We assert our universal right to self-determination, a right of all peoples as guaranteed in the United Nations Charter. By virtue of this right, we should be allowed to freely determine our political status and freely pursue our economic, social and cultural development.

Our dignity and self-respect reach back into our deep-rooted spiritual and historical ties with our beloved ancestral homelands. To uproot us from our lands, to impose changes

without involving us would destroy our dignity and identity as indigenous peoples. Without the land, the people are lost. Without the people the land is lost.

We face powerful enemies that assault, dominate and try to eliminate us physically, politically and culturally - whose only interest is to usurp and gain control over our ancestral homelands and natural resources.

We live in a world which is dominated by multi-national corporations who are only motivated by profit and power. These corporations work closely with our governments to facilitate their interests, through

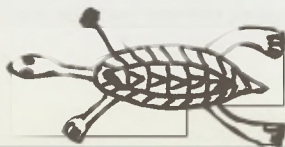
legislation and 'development' programs which violate our rights as indigenous peoples and destroy our lands, our culture and whole lifestyles.

We affirm our solidarity with one another and with the land our mother who through generations has witnessed our struggles drenched in blood. We express our firm belief that only in solidarity with one another and with other oppressed women and peoples of the world, shall our struggles for self-determination and sovereignty prevail.

[This Declaration of Unity will be taken to the Denmark-based United Nations International Working Party on Indigenous Affairs by Working Party member and Conference delegate Teresa Aparicio.]



CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS



The various workshops and forums yielded a range of resolutions, recommendations, comments and appeals to be noted by the Conference delegates. Those which we accepted are here presented, in the form in which they were presented to the Conference. Follow-up action is now up to the women's groups in the various relevant States and countries.

WOMEN IN THE ARTS

Recommendations

In relation to the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts support. (Former Aboriginal Arts Board).

1. We, the Indigenous participants of the First International Indigenous Women's Conference, 9-12th July 1989, call upon the Minister for Arts to establish a statutory authority to fund, support and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Arts throughout Australia. Also, that this new body be represented from all communities involved in the Arts and Crafts area and that other than funding, this new body be responsible to govern and determine other related issues such as copyright, royalties; supporting law core of traditional areas; and pricing control of Aboriginal works of arts. And that this body be entirely Aboriginalised.
2. The participants also request that the Minister for the Arts ensures that full consultation processes throughout Aboriginal and Torres Strait Communities be actioned in order to ascertain the best possible solution to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Arts.
3. We the Indigenous participants of the First International Indigenous Women's Conference (9-12th July, 1989) call upon the Federal Government to allocate 2% of the total of public spending on media and communications to Aboriginal and Torres Strait radio and television and communications. This 2% being the Aboriginal and Torres Strait portion of the Australian population.

INDIGENOUS LIFESTYLES AND LIVING CONDITIONS WORKSHOP

Recommendations

We the participants in the Indigenous Women's Conference demand:

1. Financial assistance be provided to Aboriginal centres and organisations in educating our children in Aboriginal sacred sites and culture to secure their heritage in Australia at a State and Federal level.
2. That the control of such education be handed back to the Aboriginal people.
3. That the State and Federal Governments recognise the right of Aboriginal people to maintain and foster our way of life and our own system of law and self-government.

TJILBRUKE TRAIL

Recommendations

page 9

1. That Aboriginal women be given fishing and gathering rights without restriction. Fishing and gathering is traditionally our way of life, and that this issue be given serious consideration. (Far South Coast of NSW)
2. State and Federal Government recognition of the Tjilbruke.
3. That the song of the Tears of Tjilbruke be handed back to the Kaurna Descendants, and to be immediately placed on the Site Register.
4. That no development must take place on any crown lands containing any one of these sites, which are the song of Tjilbruke.

YUEN MANDA - MORNINGTON ISLAND

Robyrtta Felton - Eder Clans Woman

Resolution

In spite of the fact that Aboriginal people have been consulted about housing designs which accommodate Aboriginal culture and traditional lifestyle, these designs have been continuously and systematically ignored. The houses which have been designed and built are totally inadequate for the needs of Aboriginal people. If our Government is as committed to social justice and equity as it claims, these needs should be met. Aborigines have the rights to make decisions about their own lives - self determination depends on this.

This resolution therefore appeals to this conference to demand the Australian Government's adherence to the Aboriginal desire for their own design of housing and not to be subjected to the European styles of housing. This will maintain and preserve the Aboriginal culture and tradition.

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS WORKSHOP

Recommendations

1. To recognise TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS as a separate indigenous race of people in Australia.
2. TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER Women seek membership of the International Indigenous Women's Council.
3. Should TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS as a recognised separate indigenous race of people seek Sovereignty and Independence?; we look for support from our Aboriginal sisters and the International Indigenous Women's Council

That a delegation from this International Indigenous Women's Conference on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, present to the Prime Minister and Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for immediate action on the following resolutions:-

- a. that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Indigenous people have free access to traditional foods and other things that are relevant to our traditional ways of life;
- b. To abolish laws that penalize Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when such foods and things are accessed.

Recommendation

1. Need to network indigenous women in/across our own nations, need to ensure government and bureaucracy structures build in indigenous and indigenous women's opportunities and perspectives: e.g. put pressure on the Australian Office of the Status of Women.
2. That indigenous and women's networks keep interacting with each other but ensure our mutual involvement addresses out separate needs in an open and honest way.
3. That indigenous women must be given the opportunity to, and must become responsible for making all major decisions and policy affecting indigenous women.

PITJANTJATJARA WOMEN

Statement

We women have heard sad stories about your countries. We women are not happy. The Government should be looking after the land, the people, all the children and old people. The Governments are like lions with greedy, sharp claws. They are looking and wanting all the land - they can see inside the ground and think about all the things in the ground they want - oil, gold, uranium. They don't care about people, culture, the earth. They just push people out and build where they want to/anyway like a dog, killing the people.

We say "Stop, stop, stop, and listen", give their land back, let the women and babies out of the prisons. "Please, Stop killing your people". Everytime we hear the news we hear sad and bad things about your countries. You should be looking after your people. Give them Education, Health, Housing, Employment and training, Wages and their land. Let the people be strong and have good lives, no sickness, happy families, please don't kill them . . . please, please, please our hearts are crying, tears are flowing for your children and land. We are one family, one heart, all over the world.

Stop the fighting, stop the hate and love with all your heart. "Please".

Nganyinytja
Tjikalyi
Tinimai
Paniny
Manyilitjnu

LAND RIGHTS WORKSHOP Recommendations

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The women at this Conference support and commit themselves to the struggle for Sovereignty for Aboriginal people which means that our ultimate goal is to stand as an independent nation alongside the nation now known as Australia and to have all the rights in the International area accorded to other nation states.

The women of this conference are from many tongues and many lands, we have many differences, but we are one family and we as Indigenous Women have one unique thing in common, we are all women of the land, our common ground is Land Rights, therefore we the Indigenous Women of the World support and demand Sovereign Land Rights as a matter of Indigenous Human Rights and justice.

1. We condemn and will oppose the moves of New South Wales Government in their struggle to retain the 1983 Land Rights Act.
2. We reject the Green Paper which proposes to reintroduce the policy of MAINSTREAMING assimilation. We demand that the New South Wales Government retain their present policy of self-determination. We also demand that special Koorie Services and the funding for those services be retained.

Motion:

1. We the I.P., of New South Wales call on the International Indigenous Women's Conference to stand behind us in preventing the New South Wales Liberal Government imposing their racist green paper on to New South Wales, I.P.
2. That this International Indigenous Women's Conference stand behind the I.P., of New South Wales in retaining and amending the 1983 New South Wales Land Rights Act.

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS

I would like to seek support for this recommendation from this Conference.

I would like to recommend that the State and Federal Governments give recognition to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander women, women of Torres Strait to be included on decision making policy by allowing them to serve on relevant boards, dominated by our brothers and not appointing someone irrelevant and of their choice.

Minister For Defence
Parliament House
Canberra A.C.T.

We the Indigenous Women attending the first International Indigenous Women's Conference being held July 7th - 12th 1989 in Adelaide strongly oppose the establishment of a joint United States and Australia space port launching facility in Cape York Peninsula.

These lands in question are the sovereign land of Aboriginal people of Australia.

The Aboriginal people of the far North Queensland region have not had prior consultation to any such development being established.

You must stop talks with the United States Government about our region, and cutting across our sovereign land.

Further more, Torres Strait people are concerned about how such a facility would affect people residing in the main land. The effect of such an operation would have detrimental effects on the environment.

Consultation with the traditional owners of the far North Queensland area must be done first and close liaison with the traditional owners and the Australian Government Representatives must first seek permission from traditional owners of this land.

A petition has been started and we ask you to really listen to us and think of the future; especially our children.

SOVEREIGNTY WORKSHOP

The Puntukupedha

We the women of the Audall River Community in the Gibbon Desert of Western Australia call on this Conference to support our struggle against the destruction of our Women's Sacred Site by the CRA Mining Company.

A resolution that Governments not be allowed to introduce principles to redefine treaties.

A resolution that Governments cannot say after a treaty has been signed that the indigenous party, who were a majority at the time of signing, are now a minority.

NB/When a treaty is signed, it is signed between 2 parties and no reference is made to majority or minority.

That this Conference call on the Federal Government to stop the leasing on the Far South Coast of New South Wales for the Harrie Diashowa Company Woodchip Mill.

The Women of the 1989 International Indigenous Women's Conference held in Adelaide from 7th - 12th July, demands upon this Federal Government of Australia to immediately recognise the Indigenous people of Australia as the Sovereign owners of this land.

The goals for which we strive are:-

1. Recognition as Sovereign of this land.
2. Recognition of all rights associated with being Sovereign peoples of this nation which included:-
 - Rights to national Land Rights,
 - Self Government,
 - Federal Government recognition of our right to enter into International agreements with other countries.

That this Conference condemns the actions of the Northern Territory Government on their introduction of the Aboriginal Area Protection Bill in May 1989 and calls upon the Northern Territory Government to immediately repeal the bill until negotiations are carried out to the satisfaction of the Aboriginals of the Northern Territory.

It is right and just that the Australian Government legally recognises our sovereign rights.

3 July, 1989.

The focus of the conference has broadened to focus on international issues such as multi national exploitation of indigenous lands, nuclear testing and the militarisation of the Pacific.

Yesterday afternoon's workshop on a nuclear free independent Pacific and conservation, Barbara Flick, a Valaroi woman, said that it's important to recognise that if we are to survive as the first nations in this region we must support each others demands for independence and our demands to live in a non nuclear, non militarised environment.

The workshop discussed the many common concerns of indigenous people directly and profoundly affected by these issues. Sami people in the arctic circle countries have had their fishing grounds and reindeer pastures poisoned by fallout from Chernobyl, while many Pacific countries, including Australia have experienced the devastating impact of nuclear testing.

It was felt that the establishment of military bases in the Pacific have caused forced displacement of people from their homes, cultural disintegration and the undermining of the sovereign will of the people. Military bases endanger the lives of the peoples of the Pacific. If U.S. bases are withdrawn from the Philippines, alternative sites in the Pacific will be found for the same purpose, with equally devastating effects. Multi-national companies are exploiting our resources and our poverty through mining, and the logging of the rainforests. Many face disastrous consequences from the "Greenhouse Effect".

In all this, Australia is a leading player, for example in providing military aid to the Philippines and as a major base for multi-national companies in the Pacific.

Indigenous Peoples in the Pacific face a common enemy in colonisation politically, economically and through militarisation. We intend to put in place stronger networks so as to be better informed about each other's struggle and to support each other in our struggles for independence, self determination and survival.

For further information contact Cheryle Scheamm, Media Liaison, of the International Indigenous Women's Conference - Telephone (08) 216 8681.

President Sarney
House of the Republic
Brazil

The Indigenous women and international delegates attending the First International Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide, Australia, strongly protest against the threat of physical extinction and loss of ancestral lands which the Yanomami Indians are facing.

We demand:

1. The immediate removal of all gold miners (garimpeiros) from Yanomami territories as only the Yanomami people have permanent and inalienable rights to their lands.
2. The revocal of Decree No. 160 which does not recognize the ancestral territories inhabited by the Yanomami since time immemorial.
3. The demarcation of Yanomami territory in a continuous area as officially promulgated through FUNAI's Decree 1817/E which recognises 9,419.108 hectares as Yanomami traditional lands.

We, the indigenous women and international delegates present in this conference, are committed to support the struggles of the Yanomami Indians. We will persist in reminding you of your government's moral, social, and political responsibility towards ensuring and guaranteeing the human rights and the territorial rights of the Yanomami Indians until the demands being raised are granted to our Yanomami brothers and sisters.

EDUCATION

Recommendations

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We the Women from the First International Indigenous Women's Conference held in Adelaide, Australia, July 7-12 1989, strongly support the right to Indian Education guaranteed by the treaties.

These treaties that were signed between the Indian nations and the Queen in the 1800's were signed in good faith. It is the Federal Governments responsibility to fulfill it's obligations to these treaties.

The demands:

1. restore the post secondary education assistance program; and
2. that a bilateral process be implemented, are not unjust. These changes restrict Indian Education.

It is through Education that the Indigenous peoples of Canada can work towards self-determination and self-sufficiency.

Cindy Sparvier - on behalf of the Saskatoon native students coalition and of Canada's Indian students.

WOMEN STUDENTS IN EDUCATION

Resolution

1. We the Indigenous Students recommend to this Conference that the Federal Government should ensure that monies be allocated and distributed evenly throughout each State for Conferences, meeting etc.
2. That all Indigenous students who are considering entry into tertiary studies, should produce references from their Aboriginal Community/Organisations with regard to their Aboriginality.
3. We the Indigenous students request that the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer within the education structure implement the policy on racism.

EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP

Recommendations

1. That the term Aborigines and Aboriginal as used in all Government policies and policy documents be changed to "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders".
2. That the AEDP Task Force representative for the Torres Strait Islander people be of Torres Strait Islander descent.
3. That training and employment opportunities be made available specifically for Torres Strait Islanders in the Torres Strait.

- that governments support submissions and establish more Aboriginal Women's Centres nationally;
- that government implement those recommendations relating to women's centres in the "Women's Business" Report.

THE PITJANTJATJARA/COOBER PEDY WOMEN
Recommendations

That the Conference support and RECOGNISE that the traditional communities of Ernabella, Fregon, Indulkana, Mimili, Amata, Pipalyatjara, Kenmore Park, Coober Pedy, Yalata, Docker River (NT), Uluru, have major problems with petrol sniffing and alcohol.

Therefore we ask that this Conference support us in our aim for self-determination.

As traditional people we have the right to determine the ways to stop our young people from continuing petrol sniffing and alcohol abuse.

We also ask for support from this Conference, the First International Indigenous Women's Conference to call on the Government for more funds to be made available to us to determine what petrol sniffing and alcohol programs suit our traditional ways.

SURVIVAL FOR OUR CHILDREN WORKSHOP
Recommendation 3 - Proposed by Edie Carter

That funding be provided to train and employ more Aboriginal people, to deal as a priority with the issue of child abuse and emotional abuse, rape, incest, child sexual abuse, physical abuse, verbal abuse and emotional abuse.

Community

1. Change State/Federal Policy Changes;
 - 1.1 discrimination because of criminal convictions, this excludes people from position,
 - 1.2 need for knowledge of all policies - because of diversity,
 - 1.3 funding should be flexible to enable us to respond to community needs
 - 1.4 all positions to be opened up to allow the community to respond and not only open to Government workers with an exception for these states that do not recognise EEO.
2. entry requirements AEDP need to be re-assessed to increase accessibility of our people, compliant people and men mainly.
3. more take courses; gain recognition and entry standards are re-assessed.

- that funding be made available for more refuges for both men and women, staffed by Indigenous people;
- that funding be made available for refuges in country towns, nationally;
- that funding be made available by Commonwealth Departments for counselling for women, men, children and youth;
- that all states be funded to produce an appropriate media/information kit, similar to Northern Territory;
- That Government provide resources both human and financial to Combat/contain Domestic Violence/Family Fighting-Killing.

This Conference recommends the following:-

1. that AVS be established and supported throughout the States/Territory and that they be under Aboriginal control.
2. that staff training workshops and education programmes be established for the AVS staff and the custodial officers.
3. that Aboriginal people be given a medical examination when first taken into custody.
4.
 - i. that State Government Legislation be changed to give more power to the coroner to enable them to carry out independent inquiries and to force custodial officers or other witnesses to come forward and give evidence.
 - ii. that AVS, AMS be called upon to assist the Coroner in his/her enquiries in respect of Aboriginal/Islander persons.
 - iii. that the next of kin be informed immediately of an Aboriginal/Islander death in custody.
5.
 - i. that Aboriginal Legal services be established to provide accessible legal services throughout this country and particularly in the city of Canberra.
 - ii. that extra funds be provided to ALS's for extra staff to cater for the legal advice and services.
6. that the Federal Government to continue the R/C into Aboriginal Deaths in custody until an appropriate crimes authority under the Aboriginal control be established under Federal Government.
7.
 - i. that the 31st May 1989 cut off date is not acceptable to the Aboriginal Community until such time as the State and Federal Government fully implement the recommendations of the Muirhead Interim report.
 - ii. we demand that the Deaths in Custody which have occurred to this date be investigated under the Royal Commission.
8. that funding for Alcohol Abuse programmes be given a higher priority in view of the fact that a significant number of deaths have been alcohol related.
9. that the State Government provide equal funds to Aboriginal families wishing to lay civil or criminal charges against any custodial officer who they believe contributed to the death of their family.

Reference Point: State Government provides funds to assist public servants who challenge the Royal Commission.



FUTURE OPTIONS



The First International Indigenous Women's Conference held in Adelaide July 7th - 12th 1989, has established an Interim Planning Committee to prepare for the second International Indigenous Women's Conference and the foundations of the International Indigenous Women's Council.

An interim working party of representatives from 10 nations was established to organise the next Conference which will be held in Samiland/Norway tentatively in August 1990. The Interim Committee is suggested to consist of indigenous representatives from regions such as the Arctic, North America, Pacific, Asia, Central and South America, Europe and Africa.

The first planning committee meeting will be held in Karasjok in Samiland on 22nd - 26th January 1990. It is envisaged that one and possibly two representatives will attend from Australia.

The Aboriginal Women's Working Party has maintained active contact with the selected national representatives, having had a number of telephone conference call link-ups to date. Negotiations have included election of representatives to Samiland, funding, local womens issues, finalization of report and ongoing communications.

The Sami Women's Association will host the Second International Indigenous Women's Conference where an International Indigenous Women's Council will be formally established for the following reasons :

- To create a political platform for decision making and action for indigenous women of the world.
- To establish a network for communication between indigenous women around the world and establish a forum on the priorities of indigenous women.
- To assert indigenous women's positions according to the right of indigenous women to determine their own well-being.
- To plan strategies to obtain positive change.
- To strengthen lobbying and struggle for indigenous women's rights.
- To share cultural, social and spiritual experiences.
- Apply to the U.N. for N.G.P. status.
- To raise funds for the operation of the Council.



APPENDICES



FUNDING

Funding was made through:

1. Department of Aboriginal Affairs
\$45,000
2. Department of Education, Employment and Training
\$29,500
3. UNESCO
\$4,848 for general conference expenses (venue, chairs, equipment)
4. Office of Aboriginal Affairs
\$14,376 for production of video
5. Assisted by S.A. Government through the Department for the Arts
\$7,000 (ceremony)
6. Foundation South Australia
\$5,000 (for airfares for Spiderwomen)
7. Australia Council - Community Cultural Development; Short-term performance projects programme
\$5,000
8. International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs - Denmark
\$3,000 (report)
9. QANTAS
\$2,722 (airfares)
10. Womens Community Health Centres Group
\$2,000 (Silver Moon)
11. Department of Community Services and Health
\$1,500 for information providing
12. Australian Film Commission Cultural Development Program
\$768 for equipment for ceremony.
13. School of Womyn's Mysteries Collective
\$700
14. Murphy Sisters Bookshop
\$700
15. S.A. Institute of Teachers
\$500
16. Stateliner/Greyhound Busline
(Concessions and prizes)
17. Westpac
500 pens
18. Ansett
1000 name tags

The Delegates

In addition to the following registered delegates who attended the Conference, we received numerous letters from all over the World from indigenous women who were unable to attend, wishing us well.

AUSTRALIA

South Australia	372
Queensland	338
Western Australia	113
Tasmania	47
Australian Capital Territory	35
New South Wales	148
Victoria	75
Northern Territory	146

OVERSEAS

USA	6
Canada	2
Samiland/Norway	4
Denmark	1
Sweden	1
Wales	1
Germany	1
France	2
Ireland	1
Japan	1
New Zealand	29
Chile	1
India (day reg.)	1
Palestine (day reg.)	2
Philippines	1
New Guinea	1

55

Total 1,329

INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
"FINDING COMMON GROUND"

"Survival and Success of Indigenous Women"

Keynote address by
Natascha McNamara

Introduction

It is my pleasure to be here today and an honour for me to present this keynote address on survival and success of indigenous women.

If we look at the story of indigenous women throughout the world it must surely be a matter of celebration that we have all managed to survive the experience of colonization.

This conference provides an opportunity to share that experience and to develop ideas for our future developments.

We have learned to survive. We must now learn how to thrive in a time and place where the social and cultural events and daily life experiences are shaped and determined by the colonizers and immigrants from other places.

We come together this week to talk about not only the problems which face us but also the actions we can take to resolve those problems.

In this country, and I suspect in others, we have been conditioned to what we call a "mission mentality" which attempts to confine us to think only thoughts which keep us isolated on little black intellectual islands.

As we move towards the year 2000, the greatest need for indigenous women in this country is to have freedom. The freedom to think, the freedom to speak, the freedom to plan, the freedom to do and most importantly the freedom to disagree.

Over the past 20 years, these freedoms for the indigenous women of this country have been slowly but surely eroded.

These freedoms have been lost through a process of legislation which has been based on the contemporary mythology of the inferiority of Aboriginal women's place in society.

Whilst the traditional society was group oriented, recent government policies of "self-determination" however well intentioned promote the development of the me-first-individual.

We like other indigenous people are caught on the twin - edged sword of development. On the one hand we need employment and independent enterprises to obtain a degree of independence. On the other hand we will have to change our value systems, many customs will change and the cultural foundations of thousands of years will be challenged and in many cases undermined. Identity built on the values and philosophy of another time may not satisfy the generations of the present. The current policies of economic development - although well intentioned - fundamentally change one of the basic values of Aboriginal heritage. Whereas in the past we would catch and share the kangaroo, the dugong and the food - we are now impelled to sell the kangaroo or the dugong.

The system of government in this country is basically democratic. But under this system indigenous women have not fared as well as their male counterparts.

Under this system, the government defined legislation for land rights which ignored the equity rights of Aboriginal women.

Under this system, the government - federal and state - established multiple bureaucracies controlled and dominated by the men.

Under this system the distribution of public resources shows little significant programming for women.

Part of the blame for this disparate situation reflects badly on ourselves. We have watched the control of administration systems and the distribution of resources pass from the colonisers to the children of assimilation with little comment. We have not understood the effects of the past on ourselves.

Whereas in traditional society we had responsibility for the maintenance of internal affairs within our community we have lost or abdicated this role in recent times.

We have failed to examine or critique what has been happening over time - within our communities.

We have failed to maintain a careful watch over the changes which have occurred in our cultural values and practices.

We have pretended to ourselves and the outside world that we still maintain a purity of our cultural values. Yet, if this were true, we would not be experiencing the social and cultural trauma which is facing us today.

For too long now, we have allowed the red, black and yellow flag to dominate our lives in a negative sense of defiance and protest.

We have rarely raised that flag as a symbol of hope. For indigenous people in this land we have not fully explained its meaning as the symbol of heritage and tradition, of custom and philosophy of an indigenous peoples who survived and thrived for over 40,000 years. It is time for a change.

This conference provides a timely opportunity for us to make a fresh start to define new directions for the future.

If indigenous women are to take a central role in the revival and more importantly - the revitalization of our communities we must be prepared to significantly change our current mind set.

We must change our current passive acceptance of the present system which promotes the elevation of an elitist few and ignores the fundamental needs for basic housing, water and health services for the many. We must change our current passive acceptance of the mismanagement which continues to flourish within the bureaucracies and demand that there be full accountability of resources and performance to the community.

We must change our current passive acceptance of the current practice which allows the current use of scarce resources for the promotion of window dressing activities - particularly in art and sport, extravaganzas whilst our children experience hunger and life threatening illnesses.

We must change our current passive acceptance of recent government initiatives which is creating two societies - the haves and have-nots within our community.

We must change our current attitudes that allows clan and personal jealousies to prevent the professional development and contribution of others in the community.

The survival and success of indigenous women requires that we work together as women for women. That we work as people for the progress of the whole community.

This does not mean that we work exclusive of the men.

It does mean that women have a greater responsibility to work in two domains.

It may be argued that it is the women who can and should work as colleagues - sharing a common sense of purpose, a common sense of commitment and a common sense of will and direction.

Indigenous women perform many roles - we achieve in many ways.

- We are the givers of life.
- We are parents.
- We are home makers.
- We are food providers.
- We are teachers.
- We are healers.
- We are the vehicle of social and cultural continuity in our communities.

If we fail in any one of these roles then we fail ourselves and our community.

In each of these roles we have a significant contribution to make to the future development and well being of our communities.

Let me raise some challenges for you:

- Will your contribution be active or passive.
- Will you actively participate in the revitalization of your community or will you passively observe its decline.
- Will you actively participate in the campaign in the fight against domestic violence or will you passively sanction this threat to women's survival.
- Will you actively participate in the road to economic development and independence or will you passively accept economic dependency on the dole or social security.
- Will you actively participate in the education advancement of our community or will you passively accept the burden and scourge of ignorance.
- Will you actively support challenge and encourage indigenous women who succeed or will you passively resent and hinder their progress.
- Will you actively promote the need for good health in our community or will you passively accept the rapidly developing myth that ill health is the norm for our community.
- Will you actively strive for and support the need for social harmony in our community or will you passively accept that social pathology is the norm for our community.
- The theme for this conference - finding common ground - is intended to reflect the notion and motivation of indigenous women world wide to explore a dialogue and commonality based on our cultures, histories and identities.

These four days ahead provide a rare but valuable opportunity for each and every one of us to establish not just a dialogue but a network of women who share a common interest and a willingness to support each other in the challenge to create a better world for our people.

Indigenous women have a central role in the **revival** and **revitalization** of community.

- We are the givers of life.
- We are the parents.
- We are the home makers.
- We are the food providers.
- We are the teachers.
- We are the healers.

We cannot fail in these roles.

For we are the vehicle of social and cultural continuity in our communities.

INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
 "FINDING COMMON GROUND"
 "Miminis, Kudjeris, Kungas and Tiddas
 An Australian Aboriginal Woman's Experience"
 Conference Paper by
 Jackie Huggins

I have the pleasure in addressing you today.

For many years we have been defined "as objects of study" by anthropologists, sociologists, historians etc. Yet have they listened or wanted to listen to us in terms of how we define ourselves? The following is an outline of an Australian Aboriginal woman's experience, one in which we might all identify somewhere along the way as indigenous sisters.

Traditionally, throughout the continent, Aboriginal women were the chief "breadwinners" for their families. They contributed the bulk of the ordinary food supply, the most reliable part of the day-to-day diet. Mostly this was in the form of vegetable foods. In domestic life, in family living around the campfire, the influence of men and women was fairly evenly balanced. In regard to everyday economic tasks centering on food, women could act independently to a large extent. They did not need to be told where to go, what to do or how to do it, except by members of their own sex - older women helping, educating and advising the younger.(1)

Some people would like to believe that Aboriginal society was not "classless" - that it was built on the basis of male dominance and female submissiveness, that it was a two-class society of "bosses" and workers, masters and slaves - the bosses and the masters being men. And, so the story continues, Aboriginal women were disadvantaged also in comparison with women in most other societies. This is a stereotype which Aboriginal women have had to contend with. We say that it is not correct. (2)

Aboriginal society worked on a two-sex model where people had equal opportunities not blocked by considerations of social rank or class. Under the clan system of the sisterhood of women and the brotherhood of men there was no more possibility for one sex to dominate the other than there was for one class to exploit another. Women occupied the most eminent position because they were the chief producers of the necessities of life as well as the pro-creators of new life. But this did not make them the oppressor of men. Their communal society excluded class, racial or sexual tyranny. (2)

It was in the wider sphere of decisions and actions outside the family group, and especially in the area of religion, that men had formally and informally the greater authority. (3). However Aboriginal women were solidly involved, traditionally, in the religion and spirituality of their particular communities. They were not on the fringes of it. The fact that men controlled certain sections of it - parts of its ritual and verbal and material expression - did not exclude women from the realm of religion. Their co-operation was crucial, and acknowledged as such. They had an active and positive role in the sacred life of their community, as a vital obligation resulting from their membership and also helping to define it. They have rich and powerful land and sacred sites claims which are the base of life-forms.

It is also overlooked that the patriarchal class system shattered its male counter-part or tribal brotherhood of men. Women's overthrow went hand in hand with the subjugation of the mass of toiling men to the master class of men. In the colonial context the black man had virtually lost his bargaining powers and the coloniser assumed almost total control, so the interaction between white man and black women was one marked by compulsion. The young Aboriginal woman often lived almost simultaneously with her Aboriginal husband and a white man, who, in practice had more rights over her than her husband because of the great discrepancy in status between them.

The patriarchal nature of contemporary society meant that Aboriginal women were subject to further specific oppression by both Aboriginal and white men. They have been typecast as capable only of roles and deserving only of treatment deemed unworthy or undesirable. The message came through to Aborigines, directly or indirectly, in words and deeds, in almost all their contacts with Europeans.(4)

It is not likely that Aboriginal women today will adopt the line that "we had control first, and therefore we should have it now". Traditionally, they were not in the habit of consistently co-ordinating their activities on a group basis against men. And they are certainly not likely to do so when they and their men are under pressure from outside - from non-Aboriginals. Also, many Aboriginal women are themselves finding fresh interests in the outside world. (5)

Black women have never been interested in being jockeyed into the position of fighting their own men. Women must support their every effort for equality and to emerge as a viable force in this society; it is a time for uniting, not dividing. "We should stand behind our men, not against them", is a popular militant battle cry.

However today black men are not necessarily innocent of the chauvinist attitudes charged against white men by creeping into Aboriginal society particularly with the advent of more visible and vocal Aboriginal and Islander women groups. A prime example of this has been in our endeavours to organise this conference with accusations being levelled at us on both a personal and official level. When once Aboriginal women were encouraged to enter the workforce they are now being pulled down by their own black males. As an Aboriginal woman exemplifies:-

It's not easy being a black woman at the top of a white bureaucracy. The hardest part has been dealing with chauvinist males (mostly black) who are threatened by a woman having this much power.

Black men may perhaps be more inclined to be comfortable with men in power rather than women. Today black men as well as white men are finding a complete woman a threat. It takes an unusually secure man - sexually, socially, emotionally and intellectually - these days to deal comfortably with a total woman. We must not however, forget the fact that in some ways Aboriginal women have suffered less trauma than their menfolk. It is often observed in culture contact situations that the men of the culture which is disrupted by a more dominant culture, have in a sense "further to fall", and hence suffer worse shock and dislocation in terms of identity than the women. The men had controlled the society, had been the chief sacred and political figures. Now they found men of an alien culture controlling the parameters of their existence. Women were accustomed to taking direction in some areas, and could transfer autonomy less painfully. Their roles in the family did at least continue, even if carried out under drastically changed circumstances, which gave their lives greater continuity. (6)

Today women's status has been changing, their prestige and opportunities increasing more rapidly than men's. Aboriginal women have continued important work-roles. But, of course, added to the disadvantage of sex and class, black women carried the additional burden of racism. Women have been prominent as workers, office-bearers and spokespersons in Aboriginal lobby groups and pressure groups arousing public awareness of Aboriginal needs. Women have also participated in the various State and Commonwealth consultative bodies. (7)

Black liberation as a whole for men and women is an important goal. Black women already are independent. Black men have not been able to make inroads into white society. What is holding black men back is the same thing that holds back their black mates: the white power structure. In other words, the main oppressor is white Anglo society.

The position of black Australians compared with white Australians is daily eroding, in relative and absolute terms - relative because the life chances for the white majority improve at a faster rate, and absolute because the rate of population growth is much lower among black Australians: any change in the position of Aboriginals, for better or worse, affects a continuously expanding population. (8). While the formal legal and political barriers to full citizenship have been removed the barriers that remain are social, the legacy of generations of training in dependency, poverty and isolation from the mainstream of the national life. In a highly urbanised nation, Aboriginals are the least urban element, in a rich nation they are the poorest, in a well-educated nation they are the least educated and most jailed. In full-employment economy they participate as an under-class, moving from unemployment into unskilled labouring jobs or into invalidity.

Health, housing and education make up a complex of interrelated factors that mutually reinforce one another. Poor health is often caused by poor housing and poor health retards future growth. Moreover, whatever happens in the schools is likely to be wasted unless a parallel effort is directed to improving the home environment. It is a well

established fact among white populations that educational performance is a function not only of innate intelligence and educational exposure, but also of the reinforcement that a child gets from the home. To make effective gains in health, housing or education inputs are needed in all three areas simultaneously.

Unless Aboriginals are to remain social and political outcasts, they must be able to participate on an equal footing in the central institutions of the society. To do that, they must be able to achieve educational levels which permit them to manipulate the symbol - system and the legal-bureaucratic system. Aboriginal women particularly are aware of this factor and are striving to instil the importance of education to their young children.

The overall scenario is that in such a deprived and oppressed culture it would seem ludicrous to suggest that either sex could be a victor.

Without question it is an easier adjustment for an Aboriginal woman to consider herself firstly a human being; secondly an Aboriginal and thirdly a member of the female sex. As Hilary Saunders eloquently sums up the feelings of many black women:-

We must not let this awareness as women go too far. We are a race of people who have suffered many injustices, we are fighting for self-determination. Women must play a large part in this yet we can only hope to achieve this as one people not a race of men, nor a race of women but of Black United People. (9)

How do we define ourselves?

Does the words Feminism/Womanism have any meaning to us?

eg. Alice Walker, the notable black American woman author believed that in defining herself, and having problems with the word "Feminist", said she was a "Womanist" because to her womanism is to feminism as "The Colour Purple" is to lavender.

Can we respect our sisters for their choices in life? and support them as Aboriginal women - not denigrate them?

Therefore where has all this led Aboriginal women? In terms of women's needs, we have different priorities in our agendas for change, we also have different ideologies and these will be discussed in our session. But let us not forget our strength and solidarity as Kungas, Miminis, Kudjeris and Tiddas (or indigenous sisters) in Finding Common Ground.

Thank You

REFERENCES

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- (4) B. Hooks, Ain't I A Woman, [London: 1982], page 122
- (5) C. & R. Berndt, The Aboriginal Australians, [Melbourne: 1978], page 71
- (6) N. Grieve, P. Grimshaw, Australian Women, [London: 1981], page 90
- (7) ibid, page 86
- (8) L. Broom, F. Lancaster Jones, A Blanket A Year [Canberra:1973], page 11
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**International Indigenous Womens Conference
"Finding Common Ground"
9th - 12th July 1989
Festival Centre Banquet Room, Adelaide, South Australia**

P R O G R A M

Day 1 - Sunday 9th July 1989

Forum : Culture

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 8.30 a.m. - 9.15 a.m. | Registrations |
| 9.30 a.m. - 9.45 a.m. | Welcome
- Joanne Willmot Conference Convenor and Chairperson,
Aboriginal Women's Working Party
- "Aboriginal Women's Song for the Conference"
Composer : Dameeli Willmot |
| 9.45 a.m. - 10.00 a.m. | Keynote Address
Natascha McNamara
"Survival and Success of Indigenous Women in
Contemporary Societies" |
| 10.00 a.m. - 10.35 a.m. | International Indigenous women Guest Speakers
- South Pacific Women
- Samiland, Japan, Torres Strait
- Northern Ireland
- Palestine
- North, Central and South America
- Philippines |
| 10.35 a.m. - 11.00 a.m. | Morning Tea |
| 11.00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. | How We Define Ourselves
"An Australian Aboriginal Woman's Experience"
Speaker : Jackie Huggins |
| 12.30 p.m. - 1.00 p.m. | Panel : Synopsis of workshop topics and questions for
clarification.
- Women in the arts
- Survival of Tjilbouke
- Survival in an Aboriginal community
- Aboriginal lifestyles and living conditions
- How we define ourselves |
| 1.00 p.m. - 2.00 p.m. | Lunch |
| 2.00 p.m. - 3.30 p.m. | Workshops |
| 3.30 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. | Afternoon Tea |
| 4.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m. | Plenary sessions and resolutions |

(x)

7.00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.

An international video and film program depicting the lives of indigenous women including Australia, Ateoroa/New Zealand, Canada and South Africa was shown from 9th - 11th July.

N.B. International indigenous women speakers will be included and participating on all panels.

Day 2 - Monday 10th July 1989

Forum : Land Rights

8.30 a.m. - 9.00 a.m.

Registrations

9.00 a.m. - 9.15 a.m.

Welcome

9.15 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.

- Land rights and sacred sites
- Nuclear Free, independent Pacific and conservation

10.30 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.

Morning Tea

11.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.

Indigenous Histories
Women and Racism

1.00 p.m. - 1.45 p.m.

Lunch

1.45 p.m. - 3.30 p.m.

- Workshop Topics
- Land Rights and Sacred Sites
 - Nuclear Free, Independent Pacific and Conservation
 - Indigenous Histories
 - Women and Racism

3.30 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.

Afternoon Tea

4.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.

Plenary Session and Resolutions

N.B. International indigenous women speakers will be included and participating on all panels.

Day 3 - Tuesday 11th July 1989

Forum : Education and Employment

8.30 a.m. - 9.00 a.m.

Registrations

9.00 a.m. - 9.15 a.m.

Welcome

9.15 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.

- Women and Education
- Women and Governments

10.30 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.

Morning Tea

11.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.

- Women and Employment
- Human Rights

1.00 p.m. - 1.45 p.m.

Lunch

1.45 p.m. - 3.30 p.m.

- Workshop Topics
- Women and Education
 - Women and Governments
 - Women and Employment
 - Human rights

3.30 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.	Afternoon Tea
4.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.	Plenary Session and Resolutions

N.B. International indigenous women will be included and participating on all panels.

Day 4 - Wednesday 12th July 1989

8.30 a.m. - 9.00 a.m.	Registrations
9.00 a.m. - 9.15 a.m.	Welcome
9.15 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.	All Day 3 workshops were reconvened to finalise resolutions and additional workshops were also included. Scheduled workshops were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's health - Women's refuges and resource centres - Domestic violence - Aboriginal political prisoners
10.30 a.m. - 11.00 a.m.	Morning Tea
11.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.	<p>Reconvened:- Workshop Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women and Education - Women and Governments - Women and Employment <p>Scheduled:- Human Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's Health - Women's refuges and resource centres - Domestic Violence - Aboriginal Political Prisoners <p>Additional:- Land rights, sovereignty, sacred sites protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survival of our children - child care - Pitjantjatjara Women
1.00 p.m. - 2.00 p.m.	Lunch
2.00 p.m. - 3.00 p.m.	Plenary Session and Resolutions
3.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.	Women's Circle - Open Session
4.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.	Closing Ceremony

NB International indigenous women will be included and participating on all panels















Anger over women's conference agenda

By SYLVIA KRIVEN and DEBORAH CORNWALL

An international conference of indigenous women was forced to abandon its agenda Sunday when delegates expressed their

hold another one," she said. Ms Willmott denied that the conference had been hijacked by militant factions

"I wouldn't exactly say that it's militant, but that women understand we are all very passionate about our particular struggles and we've given the

"When you plan for 400 people to attend an international conference and 1200 people turn up then it does get out of hand."

The disruption was not the first for the conference. On Monday, a group of Aboriginals complained about undue emphasis on

leishmanism. A spokeswoman for the conference, Ms Cheryl Schramm, said that there had been a workshop on the subject but it played

Success after conference 'anguish'

By SYLVIA KRIVEN

The inaugural International Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide ended yesterday with convenors claiming it as a success, despite changes in the agenda forced on them by angry delegates

About 100 women had demanded changes to the agenda claiming that they were not having a fair hearing. The convenors later met selected delegates to draft a new agenda for yesterday. The revised

program included more workshops.

In a moving conference closing ceremony at the Festival Theatre banquet room yesterday, conference co-convenor Ms Eva Johnson said that there had been "anguish, jealousy and competition" during the conference but that 1200 delegates had "stuck together".

Conference chairwoman, Ms Jo Willmott, thanked international delegates for their "tolerance and support" which she said had enabled Aboriginal women to discuss

common issues and their futures for the first time. "This conference was above all an international conference but indigenous women in this country also needed to express ourselves... and it was only through your tolerance, patience and support that we were able to come together to discuss our issues and our future and we thank you for the bottom of our hearts," Ms Willmott said. A conference declaration of Denmark-based Ullrich International

Indigenous Affairs by working party member and conference delegate, Ms Teresa Aparichio. The declaration includes a plan to form an International Indigenous Women's Council next year that would create a political platform for indigenous women.

plan to establish a worldwide network for communication between indigenous women and to apply to the United Nations for status as 4th Interim Working Party representatives.

World first for indigenous women

By STEPHANIE DALE

INDIGENOUS women from 30 countries will converge on Adelaide next month for a world first — the inaugural International Indigenous Women's Conference.

Billed as "a cultural exchange", the conference — Finding Common Ground — is expected to draw 1000 delegates and will highlight issues for indigenous women, such as land rights, health, the environment and social concerns.

An organiser, Ms Eva Johnson, said the conference, which was assisted by the UNESCO Status of Women committee, would look at how Western society had affected women who were native to various parts of the world.

"We hope the conference will be the first step towards building ongoing relationships between women in a universal sense," she said.

"Indigenous women share the pain of a very unique kind of oppression, and the conference will give us the chance to share our experiences, give us time to talk. Most importantly, it will give us the opportunity to look at how each of us can move towards self-determination for our people."

Ms Johnson, a well-known Adelaide playwright, said Aboriginal women from all Australian States had been invited to address the conference.

They included Australia's first Aboriginal magistrate Pat O'Shane, the first Aborigine to be awarded a doctorate from Harvard University, Dr Roberta (Bobbi) Sykes, and South Australia's Ruby Hammond, the first Aborigine to stand for parliament here.

All women, regardless of their race, were expected to attend the conference, which would be held from July 7 to 12 at the Festival Centre.

For further information, contact organisers on 232 0623.



Eva Johnson



Dr Roberta Sykes



Ruby Hammond



Pat O'Shane

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This week in Adelaide 1200 indigenous women from all over the world met to discuss their individual and collective concerns.

While they did not always agree on issues, they were united in their aim for a better future.
CATHY PHYLAND reports

I was Yanyi Baker, a Pitjantjatjara woman from Ernabella, South Australia, who really stole the show on the first day of the International Indigenous Women's Conference in Adelaide.

With sky determination, in the incongruous setting of the Festival Arts Centre banquet room, she quietly read a letter of support to the international women guests from the women of the Pitjantjatjara lands.

"We women have heard and stories about your countries. We women are not happy..." Ms Baker began.

"Stop the fighting, stop the hate and love with all your heart, PLEASE," she ended, in a plea to governments around the world.

Loud cheers and applause erupted from the other 1200 — mostly Aboriginal — women in the room, as Ms Baker smiled and walked back to the Pitjantjatjara women, many of whom spoke little English.

The letter, written instead of a resolution, was signed by Nganyinyira, Yilanyi, Timinal, Fanyu and Mayyinyjany. It called for an end to all that the women seemed to be reaching for and had struggled to put into words.

Three years ago, a group of women in Adelaide formed the Aboriginal Women's Working Party to put together the first International Indigenous Women's Conference. They established the theme, "Finding Common Ground", and since then have worked hard to bring the conference together. Inspiration for the gathering came from the Nairobi Forum at the end of the Decade for Women, when thousands of women from around the world met in Kenya. Funding for the Adelaide conference came from various sources, including UNESCO and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Up to 500 people were expected. The organisers were overwhelmed when 1200 turned up.

Addressing the conference, Jo Willmet, the working party chairwoman, said "It is time for us to come together and not work in isolation. We, as indigenous women, have got a lot to do. I hope that we will be able to look for a better future."

Several American Indian women who had come from New York were amazed at the number and cross-section of women. "It's like an international pot-wock, a great big pot-wock," Gloria Miguel said.

"There are just so many similarities between the problems facing some Aboriginal people and those facing various groups of America Indians, such as the difficulties of growing up in urban areas like New York City, if you're not a reservation Indian."

Grandmothers, teenagers, mothers and daughters, teachers and health workers, travelled by bus, train, plane, boat and car to attend the conference. Some brought babies and toddlers. Others — like Mary Yarmirr, a mother of seven from a remote town off the Northern Territory — had arranged for husbands to look after the babies.

Many women said that their male partners had readily accepted their decision to attend. Some had received active encouragement and some simply said that their husbands had had no choice but to stay home and mind the children.

There were women from Fitzroy Crossing, Sherrin, Cape York, Pinalia, Moree, Canberra, Tasmania, Arnhem Land, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, the Philippines and



Yanyi Baker (left), from Ernabella, South Australia, and Dr Mary-Anne Bin-Salik, who has just returned from Harvard University.

On common ground

pled territories. There were many Torres Strait Islanders and the Coang women from near Katherine in the Northern Territory represented the first Aboriginal people to be granted land rights.

A group of women had come from Norway and Sweden, representing the indigenous people of what they describe as Samiland, a strip across parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Soviet Union. Their land has been badly affected by the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

"Even now, three years after Chernobyl, you can't eat the fish from many of our rivers and creeks and we have had to move the reactor to the southern part of Samiland, because the food in the original growth area is contaminated," Lena Nordling said.

In Sonya Nordling's home town of Banská, residents are registered and monitored periodically to check levels of caesium in their bodies. Mushroom, berries and moose are also contaminated.

Aboriginal women from Marabaha also attended the conference, while a special workshop was held to discuss the islanders' wish for a nuclear-free Pacific.

Mary Thun, a Gornjal grandmother, is a veteran of kangaroo hunts and collecting bush honey. In stark contrast, her granddaughter, Colleen Davidson, is a cabaret singer backed by Michael Eagle, about to tour the United States and carry "big bucks".

Mary Thun's relative, Lorna Thomas, also a grandmother, had come with 20 friends and family on a 48-hour bus trip from the east Kimberleys, where she admitted she often ate "pericopes". "I'm homesick already," she chuckled on the second day of her visit, as she and Mary Thun practised a few impromptu traditional dance steps.

ground was difficult. However, tolerance and unity prevailed, with the women using one-to-one discussions and songs to reach consensus.

Once, when the organisers were upset about criticisms of the agenda, the Maori women gathered around them and began singing a traditional song of solidarity. They Mary Thun and Lorna Thomas and their Gornjal friends performed a special dance, ending the day with unity and hope.

"The arguments are one way of expressing our wider anger," said Dr Mary-Anne Bin-Salik, originally from Turkey Creek in Western Australia — the land of the Gurja people — who had just returned to Adelaide after gaining a PhD in education from Harvard University.

"We all came here highly charged, we had to pick an issue, clear our minds. At all conferences, we seem to have a day like this (of conflict). We come from different areas, different tribes, it is always difficult and it's not necessarily a negative thing."

Roseanne Brennan, from the Northern Lands Council, agreed. Both women hoped the conference would bring unity and strength. Dr Bin-Salik had returned early from the United States especially to attend the conference.

"Education tends to alienate," she said. "This conference will remind me who I am. The system forces you apart. I want to resist being a token educated Aboriginal woman. You can get sucked into the system."

Land rights was one issue on which the women were united, debating whether to aim for a national land rights package or for sovereignty. Many preferred the stronger option. But not women cautions. "If we do get land rights, what is the point without your family? Don't forget about your mum and

Although a land rights supporter, Irene Watson, from South Australia, warned that land rights could create a new class of haves and have-nots. "Some groups who do have land rights are seen as being more privileged, in the past we were separated by half caste and full-blood definitions. That separation is now based on those who do have land rights and those who do not."

Ms Watson also pointed out the need for strategies for some coastal groups, whose livelihoods are more related to the oceans and rivers than to the land.

Margie Nyemara, a grand-grandmother from Thursday Island, had come to voice her concerns for the Torres Strait Island women. "They already tried to achieve something by themselves but were unable to, so we feel that they need support from us, the Aboriginal women."

She laughed heartily as she described herself. "I was married at 17 and started making a nation at 18 when I had my first son," So far, she has 11 children (including one adopted son), 40 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

An International Indigenous Women's Council will be set up as a result of the conference. Other responsibilities include health, domestic violence and marriage issues, which the women hope will be the basis for action, not just talk.

As one woman said: "What's going to happen to these resolutions? Are they going to end up on the shelf like the results of all the rest of the conferences?"

They had found their common ground, but

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Women urged to end 'passive acceptance' of elitist system

By FONTELLA KOLEFF

Indigenous women must change their attitudes if they hope to take a central role in the revival and revitalisation of their communities, according to Ms Augusta McNamara, director of the Aboriginal Cultural Training Institute in Sydney.

She has urged them to stop passively accepting a system she says promotes the elevation of an elitist few and denies the indigenous people their basic housing, education and health services.

Ms McNamara was speaking yesterday at the International Indigenous Women's Conference at the Festival Centre.

The conference, hosted by UNESCO, is the sequel to the one of the Decade for Women held in the same city in 1985.

Ms McNamara said the system of government in Australia, although ostensibly democratic, had not allowed indigenous people to take part as well as their male counterparts.

"Part of this disparate situation rests badly on ourselves," she said.

"We have watched the control of administration system and the distribution of resources being taken away from the children of assimilation with little comment."

"We have pretended to ourselves and the outside world that we still maintain a variety of our cultural values, however, if we are to survive we must be able to change the social and cultural trends which is facing us today."

Ms McNamara said the survival and success of indigenous women required that they work together to progress for the whole community.

"This does not mean we work exclusively of the men but it does mean that women have a greater responsibility to work with men to change the system."

An international head of indigenous women from NZ, the Soviet Union, Sweden and Norway, the Pacific Islands, South and South America, Northern Ireland, the Philippines and Japan declared



Attending the Adelaide conference of indigenous women yesterday were (from left), Mary Yarnbert, Lenie Passi, Aboriginal Cultural Institute director, Norah McNamara, Hanoi Anand and Mimi Sam.

join them outside. As they conference is operating on the basis of consensus, we expected a conflict of opinion at times and were prepared for such situations," she said.

Other topics to be discussed include women's roles in the Pacific region and sacred sites, music, the Pacific region, women's violence and status in custody.

However, there were some indigenous people who felt that those who were non-indigenous should have been included in the discussion and decided to

their support for the struggle faced by Australian Aboriginal women.

A spokeswoman said the group supported the Aboriginal struggle for land rights and self-determination and we would continue to support the struggle in their own land. Nevertheless, we liberations."

Conflict arose at the conference over the exclusion of non-indigenous people

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