

Mountains of Meaning

Celebrating Mountains Conference Jindabyne, NSW November 2002

Summary of Presentations - Mountains of Meaning Sessions

The concept of Mountains of Meaning was proposed as a conference theme by Australia ICOMOS to build onto the Aboriginal Gathering proposed by the Australian Alps Cultural Heritage Working Group to celebrate International Year of Mountains.

The participation Aboriginal people associated with the Australian Alps and special Aboriginal sessions were funded and organised by the NSW NPWS and coordinated by NPWS officers Rod Mason and Dean Freeman.

Australia ICOMOS ran two special sessions called Mountains of Memories – talk sessions involving people who have lived and worked in the Australian Alps area.

Sub-themes proposed for papers covered intangible values- the meaning, spiritual and inspirational values of mountains to people; the experience of living, working and playing in mountain landscapes; design and technology in mountain environments; methods and models in heritage assessments and managing cultural heritage in mountains.

Conference Proceedings are being prepared and a volume of *Historic Environment* will feature selected papers. In the meantime, a summary of the Mountains of Meaning sessions has been prepared by Juliet Ramsay, using the rapporteur notes and the summary presented to the final plenary by Marilyn Truscott.

1. Keynote Speakers

Jason Ardler discussed the Aboriginal sacred sites in NSW, many of which are mountains and mountain landscapes. Although archaeological sites dominate state heritage registers, there are many listed ceremonial sites in NSW. Sacred mountains must be protected for Aboriginal people. The mountains often have historic importance, including places where Aboriginal people sought refuge from the effects of European colonisation. Some mountains, such as Mt Warning and Mumbulla Mountain have been protected for their important cultural associations.

Jane Lennon discussed the cultural heritage place information for the Alps and described how the national significance of the Alps as a cultural landscape has been assessed according to the 6 national heritage themes. She noted that cultural places remain as ‘dots on the map’, and the cultural landscapes they are associated with have not been delineated. The cultural meanings of the Alps landscapes must be understood for these values to be well managed.

Dianne Strand, a guest speaker from the Southwest Yukon and member of the Crow Clan of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations spoke on the Southern Yukon Ice Patch Research - linking Science with Community. The research program arose following the discovery of large areas of caribou dung emerging from the melt of ice patches. These patches within the melting ice have revealed well-preserved human artefacts and the body of an ancient hunter. She spoke of the cross cultural research arising, how outreach programs have involved elders and teenagers from the community, and how ‘the gifts from the past’ are providing many opportunities for community education and development.

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Discussion Points:

- The importance of tying together the cultural threads, such as mountain music.
- We should not appropriate space without understanding it (eg. historic sites).
- There is a cultural tradition of scientific meaning.
- Cultural interpretation should be presented by people from that culture (knowledge holders).
- There is a need to respect Indigenous people's efforts in recovering their culture.
- There is a need for partnerships to address cultural heritage in a regional context.
- There is a need to accommodate Indigenous people and local communities in healing their grief.
- Cultural landscape management guidelines are needed in the Kosciuszko National Park Management Plan (which is currently being revised).
- There is a need to maintain the connections to the land – particularly ceremonial.
- Indigenous people feel displaced.
- Empowerment should be given to Indigenous people as managers of the land.
- There should be one Australian Alps Park with one Aboriginal name and it should be a centre of excellence in management.

2. Inspiration and Icons

Messages from the Aboriginal perspective were provided by Jo Wilmot and Glenys Coulthard who both emphasised the need for Australians to understand Aboriginal associations with land; the importance of ceremonies such as 'singing up country'; the special role of women; the importance for Indigenous people to have legal title to their land; and the need for Indigenous heritage to be interpreted by Indigenous people.

Serge Domicelj stressed the need to understand the motivation behind the meanings given to mountain places, discussing the history behind Inca routes as example. He also discussed how perceptions of mountains changed during the 19th and 20th centuries.

The concept of understanding motivations was raised by Aedeon Cremin who used a 19th century image of Hartley in the Blue Mountains to discuss how it was manipulated to convey colonial picturesque social meanings.

Olwen Beazley discussed intangible spiritual values, natural phenomena values and inspirational values of mountain landscapes nominated for World Heritage listing, with many examples from around the world. She spoke about the assessment issues associated with landscape nominations to the World Heritage List.

Catherine Brouwer discussed issues arising from her consideration of the heritage values of the Glasshouse Mountains in Queensland, their special relationship to each other as a family of mountains, their iconic value in the locality and the superficial way in which the Murra peoples' legend has been appropriated for tourism.

Marilyn Truscott, using the *Man From Snowy River* icon and Craig's Hut (originally created as a film set), discussed mountain myth making by Australians and raised many questions about how 'fabricated heritage' is celebrated.

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Discussion Points:

- Non-Indigenous people should not interpret Indigenous heritage.
- The motivation behind meanings should be understood.
- Real stockmen and stockwomen's stories need to be told to redress/balance the Man from Snowy River myth.
- Fabricated heritage should not receive conservation dollars.

3. Living and Working

Matthew Higgins spoke about Clement Wragge and the meteorological station he established in 1897 on the top of Mount Kosciuszko. He discussed how the station was prepared for insulation and for the snow.

Ruth Lawrence's presentation based on historical research, traced the history of the Yaitmathang people of North East Victoria, their land affinity, cultural land uses, economy, use of totems, track networks from Gippsland, minimal use of fire and the devastation of their lives by Europeans.

Robert Kauffman provided an overview of mining in the Alps commencing with the Aboriginal mining. He stressed the enormous contribution that mining made to the region in terms of the development of towns, and also that over a billion dollars was made from mining in the Alps area in the past. He stressed that although the miners opened up the area in post-contact times, mining heritage is being lost. He contrasted this situation to the treatment of the iconic appreciation of the heritage of mountain cattlemen. He also noted that recording histories in themes does not do justice to the interaction of the Aboriginal activities, grazing, mining and tourism.

Barry McGowan discussed the Chinese presence in Australia, how Chinese miners migrated freely between fields and their sound organisation. He noted that the Kiandra Goldfields featured the most significant Chinese mining camp in Australia, with up to 700 people in Kiandra in 1860. After the mining, Chinese families continued until the 1920s with members of the Yan family being the first skiers. Distinctive remnants from Chinese mining remain as neat tailings mounds and pig ovens.

Geoff Ashley discussed the integration of natural and cultural components of the mountain landscapes and the need to work with the messy mixes of cultural landscapes. He discussed the origins of huts for mining, summer grazing, outstations, the government resorts and the Snowy Scheme developments, briefly touching on the recreation lease areas. He noted that the cultural features are an entrée to understanding the natural landscapes, and noted the correlation of huts on the edges of alpine herbfields and how the ephemera of the cultural landscapes are disappearing.

Discussion Points:

- The impact and influence of the Chinese is not well known.
- Landscape management should be a holistic approach of cultural and natural.
- Cultural landscape ephemeral features are being lost.
- Aboriginal mining research needs an Aboriginal perspective for the history of mining.

4. Mountains as Catchments

Michael Pearson in his paper 'Thatching the Roof of Australia', noted that by the 1880s the Kosciuszko mountain landscape had been seriously overstocked with 81,000 acres divided into 51

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snow leashes resulting in serious sheet and gully erosion. Reduction of grazing commenced in 1944 and restoration commenced in the post-war period. The landscape was stabilised with extensive straw mulching and netting but it took many years for the full vegetation to return.

Discussion Points:

- Interpretation needs to outline the history of degradation and rehabilitation on the main range.

5. Aboriginal Cultural Interpretation and Indigenous Forum

Cliff Coulthard presented the Iga-Warta story – including the Dreaming story of Wilpena Pound being created by 2 giant serpents, and the geological story of it being the oldest in the world. He explained that his family has owned land since 1970 and described how a sheep property has been converted to run tours as a family operation. There is no white advisor and no government money. The Elders have said there is a need to share some culture in order to gain respect. People can climb some mountains, but others are sacred and cannot be visited. Cliff has a vision of a trail through Central Australia linking Aboriginal groups (tourism groups).

Jo Wilmot noted difficulties traditional owners have in maintaining full control at Uluru.

Bobby McLeod said that Aboriginal people need to learn from each other with belief in the one, which is the 'mother' land. The biggest cause of division to Aboriginal people is money – it breaks up families.

Rod Mason spoke of how stories and paintings teach history. Traditional people know where they are because of the stories, language and ceremonies form a 'high order'. Old people carry the stories.

Discussion Points:

- Respect has led to a reduction in graffiti and other damage at Wilpena Pound.
- The family Aboriginal business needs to stay small to stay in control.
- Aboriginal people want control of what is said – first hand.
- There is a need for an annual get together of all park rangers - Indigenous and non-Indigenous - for mutual learning.
- Aboriginal people need to be united and need recognition as traditional owners.
- Aboriginal people should not have to ask permission to care for country.
- Aboriginal culture is very alive.

6. Managing Together and Special Cultural Session

Matilda House explained her upbringing and her family's role in the cooperative management agreement for Namadgi. Maxine Cooper spoke of the rights and obligations of joint management.

Rachel Lenehan and Warwick Baird discussed the mountains of meaning on the south coast of NSW, and explained the process for the return of Biamanga National Park that contains Gulaga and Mumbulla Mountains. They discussed the registration of Aboriginal owners, and the genealogical and anthropological research that assisted in establishing the register that provides a foundation for joint management. The structure of a management board was discussed.

Ian Christie spoke of the Parks Victoria partnership process with Aboriginal communities and their commitments to supporting a range of aspects for Aboriginal involvement. Co-management is the start of the journey.

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Megan Goulding outlined her recent study for the Australian Alps, seeking directions on Aboriginal heritage management. She described the process of planning meetings with an open agenda, and providing reports to people for checking before using the information. The themes for research and directions were outlined.

Discussion Points:

- Wilderness legislation can be offensive to Aboriginal people – does not allow for continued use by Aboriginal people.
- A vision is when Aboriginal people are managing the park/sites and making the decisions.
- Aboriginal people should be able to choose and appoint representatives to the management boards in the lease back arrangements.
- How can Aboriginal people secure access to Aboriginal sites on private land?
- Aboriginal people are looking for serious engagement with agencies and want their responsibility for country recognised.
- Continuum and connection is important, not just the past but the past, present and future.

7. History of Recreation

Ian McLeod spoke of 'Do-It-Yourself skiing' and the MOU between government and the Canberra Alpine Club in maintaining Mt Franklin lodge for recreation. The partnership between the CAC and ACT Parks has enabled interpretation and links to the early days.

Margaret Doring based her paper on personal memories with photos of over 100 years and 5 generations of skiing in Victoria.

John Siseman described the Australian Alps Walking Track as Australia's premier long distance walking track, with isolation and wilderness its key features. John discussed that, while it is a great success but there are a few problems.

Discussion Points:

- There is a need to collect, conserve and commemorate the intangible and fragile memories of early days of mountain recreation.
- The ski resort policy is moving away from the club and community spirit to private lodge and commercial apartments.

8. Methods and Models

Diedre and Bernard Slattery spoke of the issues arising from rapid growth in visitor access, the damage to natural places and the need to move away from former cultural traditions of dominance.

Juliet Ramsay spoke of the lack of inspirational value in the heritage records for mountain landscapes and outlined a study in progress that is seeking a new method for identifying inspirational national heritage values, describing how it has used essays from experts from diverse background and an on-line interactive conference.

Jennifer Storer presented an experimental risk management model for prioritising management of historical sites in the Alps where there are few resources.

Eva Logan discussed the importance of listening to the voices of the cultural landscapes in comparing cultural landscapes of the Snowy Mountains and Wales, discussing common issues and

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differences, noting the increase in rural recreates who are not fully engaged with communities and how tourism is seen as an economic answer but is problematic. She noted that Wales has a long history of mediators between community and government agencies – a model useful in Australia.

Discussion Points:

- People go to mountains to be inspired.
- Individual sites in mountains need to be looked at in their regional context.
- It is important to understand significance of places as a first step before management decisions are made.
- Conservation planning for places does not need to be highly detailed.

9. Conflicting Values and Cooperative Management

Olaf Moon presented a paper which discussed issues in managing huts in the Kosciuszko National Park. Of the 617 huts, 107 are outside the park, huts are progressively disappearing and 32 have been removed since the agreement with the Kosciusko Huts Association. The KHA provides voluntary caretakers and has prepared plans of management. In Tasmania the Mountain Huts Preservation Society involve the local community in hut management and do not rebuild huts if 2/3 of the fabric is gone.

Jim Russell discussed the method and findings of a study in Tasmania to address issues of a rural community, disaffected by the World Heritage listing of South-West Tasmania. The paper outlined responses by the Park Service and changes in the bureaucratic approaches to natural area management with community cultural values being better integrated into the management of natural areas.

10. Mountains of Memories

Neville Gare former manager of Kosciuszko National Park, Noel Gough former Snowy Hydro worker, Neen Pendergast of a local farming family and Stuart Garner, a slab hut builder of Adelong, discussed living and working in the mountains – anecdotes and tragedies. Stuart spoke of his family tradition of building slab huts and the difficulty they now have in procuring trees for the craft. Neen noted that the Snowy Scheme changed their lives making living in the mountains much more interesting.

Dianne and Ina Simpson spoke of their family's five generations of folk dance musical tradition in Corryong area of Victoria. They described the Nariel Folk Festival – as the first folk festival in Australia and gave a great performance of their music, with Ian using his self made concertina and also demonstrating the 'saw'. Tom Barry, from a Jindabyne farming family noted how life in the mountains has continually improved for families- allowing people more control of their lives.

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Results of the General Cultural Heritage Forum

There was overall enthusiasm for mountains from a number of different perspectives but with a strong emphasis on the importance of community values of the mountain landscapes.

Points made by conference participants on their opinions on key messages, burning issues and recommendations arising from the conference.

Key messages

Indigenous heritage:

- Aboriginal people must have a say and be involved in management and the control of land management.
- The spiritual nature of the relationship of Aboriginal people to their land is also linked to ownership.
- Indigenous people 'know what they are talking about'.
- Aboriginal people must have access to land for cultural practices.
- Aboriginal people are needed in senior positions in protected area management.

Integrated approach to mountain values:

- Cultural and natural mountain places are one.
- There is a diversity and complexity of tangible and intangible values attached to places – both cultural and natural places – for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.

How to integrate the process:

- Small mountain communities / landholders / interest groups must be part of values assessment, planning and ongoing management.
- There is a need for multidisciplinary discussions in land management.
- Cultural places should not be seen as dots on maps but as landscape layers.
- The cultural landscape approach can encompass multiple values – natural and cultural.
- Parks managers need to understand cultural heritage including social value.

Communication:

- Should take place in appropriate ways, in appropriate settings, with appropriate people.

Burning issues

Indigenous Control of Decision-making:

- Aboriginal people need to control their land.
- Aboriginal people need to be involved in land management.
- Real partnerships are needed not just lip-service.
- There is a need for more employment of Aboriginal people in land management agencies.

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Interpretation:

- Let Aboriginal speak for their own culture and heritage.
- Cross-cultural interpretation is required.
- Prevent non-Indigenous people misrepresenting Indigenous culture.
- Real stories – Indigenous and non-Indigenous need to be told – not myths and fabricated heritage.

Communication:

- Sharing Indigenous issues with non-Indigenous people is vital for the future.
- Raise awareness of the cultural / natural history and landscapes.
- Inspire means to break down barriers between disciplines.
- Interpretation must be based on real European and Indigenous heritage.
- Know who speaks for issues and who decides.
- Cross-cultural awareness should be undertaken by senior management.

Small local communities:

- Their knowledge and heritage values need to be respected.
- They need to have role in management of adjacent parks.

Integration:

- How to really integrate cultural and natural management?
- There must be a meeting and crossing of the natural / cultural division in values management.
- Project work needs to be more fully planned with a holistic approach.

Landscapes:

- Heritage studies are needed in regional landscape settings.
- Land management agencies should adopt a whole of landscape approach – for both natural and cultural values.
- It is not possible to protect the Alps for the future until a truly holistic landscape approach is adopted.

Resorts:

- Resorts should be viewed as potential cultural heritage.
- Some resorts are unsuitable and there is an overdevelopment threat to heritage values.
- Resorts can damage the fragile environment.

Recommendations

- Joint Management and Partnerships with Aboriginal people.
- Aboriginal ownership of cultural heritage interpretation.
- Indigenous ownership of cultural heritage.

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- Aboriginal employment and responsibility.
- Change parks legislation to empower Indigenous people.
- There needs to be a landscape approach to heritage studies.
- Non-Indigenous heritage is also important – not to be forgotten.
- Huts need to be managed as a group as part of the cultural landscape not singly.
- AALC should meet with Australia ICOMOS re heritage standards and training.
- The ski areas are large enough.

Implications

- More resourcing for parks is required.
- There should be access to parks without fees.
- Training is required on cultural heritage for non-Indigenous staff.
- Processes of cultural and natural heritage need to be integrated.

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Recommendations from Indigenous Participants

Rod Mason	Joanne Wilmot
Dean Freeman	Chrissy Grant
Paul Mcleod	Cliff Coulthard
Phil Mcleod	Vida Mcleod
Pat Davison	Dianne Strand
Matilda House	Garry Caines
Joe House	Rachel Puentener

The following recommendations are put forward to this conference to improve Indigenous people's position in regard to issues raised in papers and panel discussions under each of the themes of this conference.

Some of the recommendations should also be applied more broadly than to just mountains.

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Aboriginal Representation

That Aboriginal representation be included in the executive of the AALC to have input into the overall decision making for the Australian Alps. Also that more Aboriginal people be members of each working group.

Access

That designated areas be identified in the Parks to allow for cultural activities to be undertaken by the traditional owners and their visitors

Control

That Aboriginal people be given control and ownership of their cultural heritage and the information and knowledge that can be shared.

Protocols

That appropriate protocols be endorsed or developed with the Aboriginal People to address the involvement of Aboriginal people in consultation, identification, protection and management issues.

Confidentiality

That confidentiality of information be enshrined in legislation and policies in regards to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Joint Management

To develop joint management type arrangements with Aboriginal people and encourage a genuine Aboriginal voice within the management of the Park.

Exchange Programs

For all relevant agencies to establish an exchange program within or across the Park Services or other organisation to broaden participant's (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) skills, knowledge and networks.

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Training

That an appropriate training program be developed for Aboriginal communities to be more involved in the management of the Park beside the Park staff.

Aboriginal Employment

That organisational structures and budgets be established to increase Aboriginal employment and cultural activities in the Park Services and tourism industry.

2. Mountains for Tourism

Traditional Names

That a traditional naming program within appropriate timeframes be implemented across all State and Territory Parks and appropriate promotion be given for the name change to be adopted.

Impacts of Tourism

That the relevant agency or organisation seek feedback on the impacts of tourism or development from the Aboriginal communities most likely affected as well as any statutory obligations or policy requirements.

Gate Takings

That a percentage of the gate takings be negotiated to be channelled into community development programs and cultural activities for the local Aboriginal people.

Intellectual Property Rights

That Aboriginal people have control over the interpretation of significant places and that they maintain all intellectual property rights to that information at all times. Aboriginal people also demand that the information be treated with respect and sensitivity at all times.

Research

The Aboriginal people have complete ownership over the traditional knowledge in regard to bio-prospecting and research into plants used for medicinal purposes.

3. Mountains for the Future

Recording of information

That Aboriginal people have ownership over the information used for site recordings.

Access to Information

That traditional owners who have the knowledge of cultural heritage information to be members of an Aboriginal Advisory Board to be established to develop protocols in regard to access to information and records.

Conference Issues

That all future conferences with Indigenous input give prominence to Indigenous speakers at the beginning of the conference to acknowledge and pay respects in a practical way and set the scene for the conference.

That an appropriate time slot be incorporated into the program to allow Indigenous participants to address any issues raised in the conference.

That an appropriate time period be provided for Indigenous participants to report back any issues or recommendations to the conference.