

# Indigenous Business Australia

General manager of Ngati Porou Whanui Forests Limited attended and presented at the inaugural international conference on first nations economic development in Sydney.

The conference presented a great opportunity to firstly, benchmark both Ngati Porou and more widely, Maori economic development against that of other first nations peoples from Australia, Canada, Africa particularly. Secondly, the conference presented a great opportunity to network with 'like minded' peoples.



Convened by Indigenous Business Australia who's vision is: ***"Our vision is for a nation in which Indigenous Australians are able to share equitably in the commercial and economic outcomes of this country."***

The intent of the Conference was to assist and promote the Indigenous entrepreneur and allow a sharing of knowledge, expertise and insight and at the same time, offer a comprehensive overview of current thinking in the area broadly described as Indigenous business. By, bringing together people from a diverse range of disciplinary fields and Indigenous nations that are engaged in developing, have ownership of, or have an impact on the emerging Indigenous business landscape. The major theme of the conference was to share information.

Overwhelming what struck me says Chris, was irrespective of which indigenous people were talking at the conference, we all share almost identical founding value drivers in terms a genuine commitment to sustainable economic, social, and conservation development and critically, the preservation of our identity as indigenous people. The only difference is that as people we are each at different stages along this development continuum.



The conference provided a great opportunity to share information and ideas and importantly to learn from each others experiences that span back generations in time. This willingness to share information will enable Maori to fast track its own economic development program.

While in some ways it is unfair to profile one group, its clear that the Canadian First Nations people have learned some valuable lessons they are willing to share. Canada has over 600 First Nation governments, or Indigenous bands. The term First Nations was first used in the 1980s to replace the generic wording 'Indian Band' that was most commonly used until that time.

The Canadian delegation represented a diverse and experienced group of business leaders who are active in Aboriginal finance, energy projects, heritage tourism, wine production, manufacturing, agriculture, education, and business cooperatives.

Dawn Madahbee of the Waubetek Business Development Corporation presented one option that we as Maori can really learn from and that was their 20 year experience in setting up their own tribally owned and managed Development Bank. Dawn has willingly agreed to share their experiences with us on what they have learned.



Mainstream banking in New Zealand must recognize and appreciate that as Maori we clearly have our eye on this space going forward and not take for granted that they will automatically service our finance and banking needs.

Just as we have done at Ngati Porou Whanui Forests Limited, where the company as the representative of our collective landowners, plays the lead role all the way along the value chain, so too must we begin to start thinking about playing a similar lead development banking role in support of our economic development objectives as the Waubetek First Nations people have done – successfully.

**Chi-Miigwetch (First Nations Canada)**  
**Kia ora!**

To see all papers presented at the conference go to:  
<http://www.ibaconference.com.au/presentations.html>