

FIRESTICKS ALLIANCE INDIGENOUS CORPORATION  
MEDIA RELEASE - Tuesday 15 December 2020.

**The Firesticks Alliance brings together Indigenous Communities working in Cultural Fire from across the Nation.**

The Firesticks Virtual Conference held on the 4th & 5th of December opened with a stunning Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony from [Carl Fourmile](#), Yidinji man from the land of Gimuy in Far North Queensland, via a Cairns Studio live broadcast.

Over two days the conference was facilitated by Barry Hunter, Chair of the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation who introduced Indigenous Communities from Far North Queensland to Tasmania. The communities presented the important work they have been doing on Country, despite the challenges over the last 12 months.

Victor Steffensen from the [Firesticks Alliance](#) set the tone with a strong message “This [conference] is about taking [cultural fire] to the next level. We’re calling on agencies, universities, private landholders, all communities to work together and put our shoulders behind what is already working. We want to see more employment for all the people managing landscapes, we want to see education [about cultural fire] in schools, we want to see monitoring, research and data delivered proudly across the world from Indigenous knowledge, from the communities of Australia.”

This remarkable online gathering of Indigenous communities working in Cultural Fire practices and the supporting agencies, was a place to exchange ideas and information to plan the next steps for their vital work on Country.

The Firesticks Alliance discussed plans for the Indigenous led Certified Fire Practitioner Mentoring and Training Program. This includes strengthening the Women's Cultural Fire Program.

Victor Steffensen and Dr Peta Standley from Firesticks Leadership team presented on the Cultural Fire Mentoring, Training and Certification program and gained important feedback from the Indigenous Communities on the best ways to move forward.

“Stopping bushfires is a major challenge,” said Steffensen. “The healthier the land, the less likely it is to burn with wildfires. But we don’t have enough skilled practitioners to manage the country...a two day fire certificate [is not enough]. We’re talking about 3 years to get started with a simple training program that is tailored to each region.”

Strong women at the forefront of discussions shared the incredible work happening to better support women to fulfil their important roles in Cultural Fire - from being caretakers of women’s-only areas and plants, to teachers and role models to inspire the next generation to care for Country.

Firesticks announced an important new partnership with the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation, a fellow not for profit company working with Traditional Owners. Together we are working on the development and delivery of an Indigenous led cultural fire credit and verification framework.

Rowan Foley Aboriginal Carbon Foundation CEO introduced the new Cultural Fire Credits: An independent income to support Cultural Burning. This part of the conversation discussed the research and development of Cultural Fire Credits - a way to better channel sustainable, long-term and independent investment directly to communities to support Cultural Fire practices. This is being informed by the work on by Firesticks with investment support from WWF - Australia.

“After this year’s devastating wildfires, there have been lots of people who are willing to invest in looking after Country but don’t have a mechanism to do it” said Rowan Foley, CEO of [the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation](#).

“Ordinary mums and dads who want to look after Country and are sick to death of having Country burned down could buy Cultural Fire Credits...corporations such as insurance companies are keen to invest [in preventative measures] because it is much cheaper to invest in Cultural Burning than it is to replace a house...landowners could buy credits to support a local Aboriginal ranger team implement cultural burns on their property,” he said.

A percentage of funds invested would support Firesticks to continue to train, mentor and certify the next generation of Cultural Fire Practitioners and the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation to implement the Indigenous peer to peer strengths-based verification approach. The credit would also support social responsibility via a percentage investing in the Elders descendants to continue their fire management. The majority of the credit would go to supporting on-ground Indigenous community led cultural fire programs.

This empowers Traditional Owners to determine the environmental, social and cultural co-benefits and brings people together to share experiences and knowledge. The Aboriginal Carbon Foundation does not use a deficient model or engage non-Aboriginal verifiers.

The Firesticks Alliance is an Indigenous led organisation that aims to support Indigenous communities to increase cultural fire practice on Country.

To find out further information and interview opportunities about Firesticks initiatives, Firesticks Virtual Conference 2020 and Firesticks partnership with the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation

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### **Rowan Foley - Aboriginal Carbon Foundation CEO**

Rowan Foley comes from the Wondunna clan of the Badtjala people, Traditional Owners of K'gari (Fraser Island) Queensland. Rowan is the founding Managing Director of the Aboriginal Carbon Foundation a not-for-profit company with offices in Cairns, Sydney and Alice Springs.

Rowan was invited to give a TEDx Talk in Brisbane in 2018, presented at the UNFCCC in Bonn Germany on Indigenous carbon farming and speak at the Paris Climate Agreement in 2016.

Rowan arrived in the Northern Territory in 1989 working as a ranger at Uluru – Kata Tjuta National Park and returned in 2005 as the Park Manager living in Mutitjulu community for a total of six years.

The Kimberley Land Council employed Rowan as their first Land Management Officer 1995. He established their Land and Sea Management Unit and negotiated the first Indigenous Protected Area in Western Australia.

Rowan lives with his family, dog and horses in Alice Springs NT.

### **Dr. Peta-Marie Standley - Training services and Research Manager**

For two decades Dr. Peta Standley has worked alongside Indigenous people in the documentation, transfer, monitoring and communication of their cultural fire knowledge.

As a cultural fire ecologist, her PhD research focused on transformational research practice in Indigenous knowledge domains, while undertaking in-depth documentation of two Senior Kuku Thaypan Elders traditional cultural fire knowledge.

Her work also supported the co-development of the Firesticks National Indigenous Fire Workshops led by Dr. Tommy George and Victor Steffensen.

Prior to and during her involvement in this work she engaged with Indigenous communities in Cape York, Wet Tropics, Northern Gulf bio-regions and more broadly across Australia in support of caring for country initiatives and has a strong knowledge of protocol and ethics requirements when working with Indigenous Australians and stakeholders. She has been an associate non-voting director for Firesticks Alliance since its inception and is on staff as Senior Researcher and Program Manager.

### **Victor Steffensen - Co-Founder Firesticks Alliance**

Inspired by his mother and grandmother's heritage, the Tagalaka people of Northern Queensland, Victor's work began in 1991 when he realised the urgent need to record the invaluable wisdom of his Elders before it was lost. Over many years, through his love of the arts, film making, culture and the environment, Victor's life's work of re-engaging Traditional Knowledge Practices through creative community projects developed.

Victor co-founded the Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation and has co-convened the National Indigenous Fire Workshop for the past decade. He has also founded the Living Knowledge Place, an educational platform based on community and Indigenous teaching methods.

Victor released a book in February 2020 – 'Fire Country' How Indigenous Fire Management Could Help Save Australia. Victor's story is unassuming and honest, while demonstrating the incredibly sophisticated and complex cultural knowledge that has been passed down to him, which he wants to share with others and there is much evidence that, if adopted, it could greatly benefit all Australians.

### Background on Firesticks:

Firesticks Alliance Indigenous Corporation is an Indigenous led network that aims to reinvigorate the use of cultural burning by facilitating cultural learning pathways to fire and land management. It is an initiative for people to look after Country, share their experiences and collectively explore ways to achieve their goal of empowering communities to work together towards healthy, functional and resilient landscapes.

Firesticks is facilitating training, implementing on-ground works and conducting scientific monitoring to establish a greater understanding of the ecological impact of cultural burning practices. The program works with fire to enhance ecosystem health by improving habitat condition and connectivity within culturally connected landscapes.

Firesticks Alliance Directors assert *“Our knowledge and practices are a proven part of the solution to helping Australia manage its growing bushfire risk. We call on all levels of Government to collaborate with us to support organisations undertaking cultural burning and enable them to educate others so that the next round of bushfires in Australia destroys fewer lives and homes.”*

ENGAGE at: [www.firesticks.org.au](http://www.firesticks.org.au)

DONATE to our campaign: <https://chuffed.org/project/firesticks-alliance>

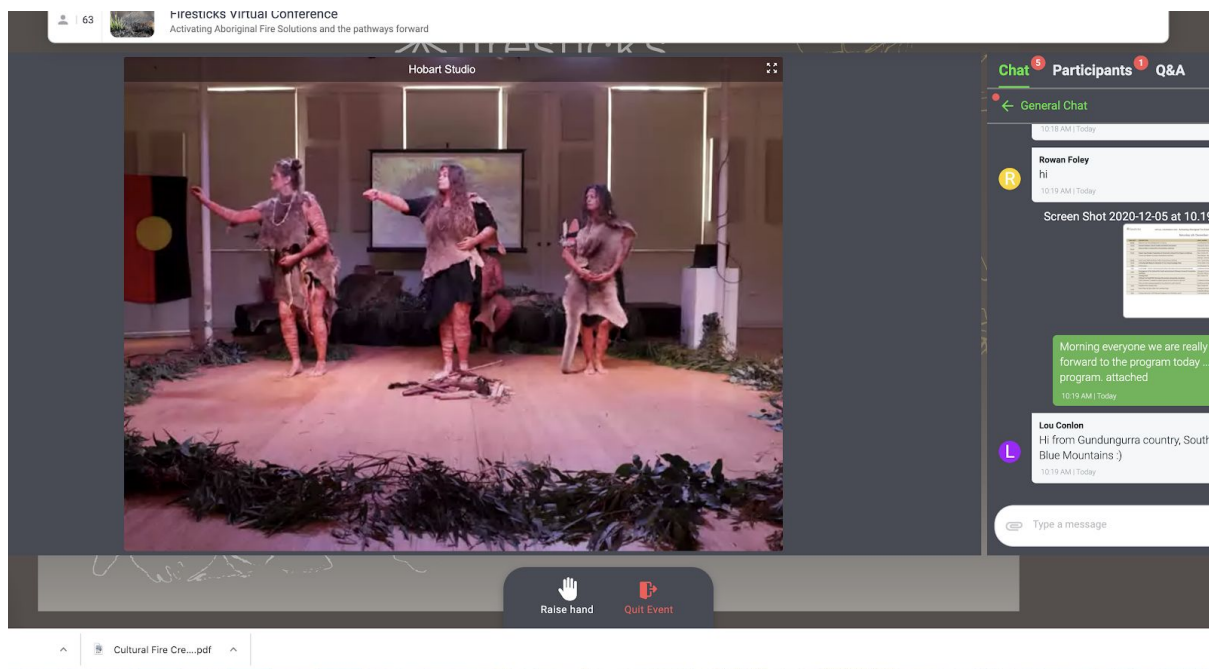
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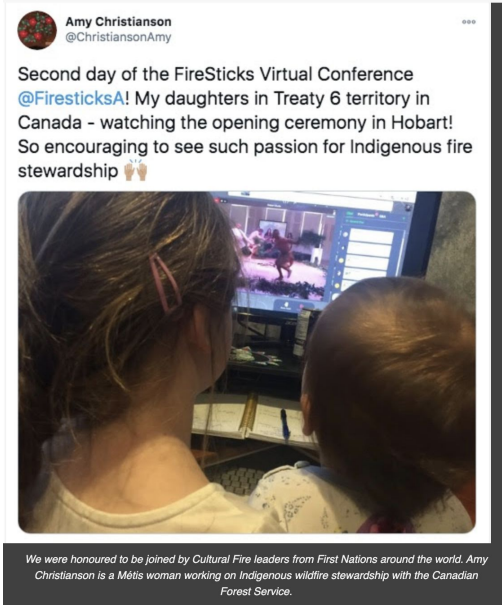
WATCH the Living Knowledge Place films: <https://vimeo.com/user12381768>

LISTEN to Right Country – Right Fire podcasts: <https://www.firesticks.org.au/podcasts/>

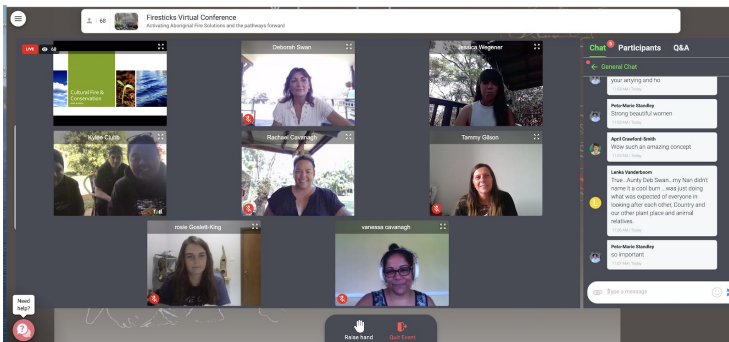
SEE the film and report from 2018 NIFW: <http://www.firesticks.org.au/bundanon-2018/>



Tasmania Welcome to Country Saturday 5 December Firesticks Virtual Conference



Social Media post Amy Christianson - Canada



Women's Role in Cultural Fire Panel Saturday 5 December



Aboriginal Carbon Foundation Rowan Foley & Barry Hunter