

# Prioritising Australian Native Food Sovereignty



*Traditional Aboriginal Elder Merridoo Walbidi with a cultivated gubinge tree at Bidyadanga Community where he lives. In 2004 Merridoo was named the Aboriginal Student of the Year in recognition of the work he had done in promoting horticulture and the cultivation of traditional bush foods as an enterprise and way to promote health in his community. (Photo courtesy of Mr Kim Courtney Head of Horticulture at The Kimberly TAFE, WA.)*

## **Amanda Garner**

2013 AgriFood Skills International Fellowship

Fellowship funded by Agrifood Skills Australia

**AGRIFOOD**  
SKILLS AUSTRALIA





**ISS Institute**  
Level 1  
189 Faraday Street  
Carlton Vic  
AUSTRALIA 3053

**T** 03 9347 4583  
**F** 03 9348 1474  
**E** [info@issinstitute.org.au](mailto:info@issinstitute.org.au)  
**W** [www.issinstitute.org.au](http://www.issinstitute.org.au)

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# i. Executive Summary

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*"Lessons from America about embracing indigenous knowledge and expanding commercial native food industry and capacity".*

Amanda Garner was awarded an AgriFood International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute) Fellowship in 2013 to travel extensively in America to investigate successful native food initiatives. She utilised this Fellowship to help fill the gaps in Australia's knowledge of the commercial use of native species for food and medicine. Her personal history, extensive experience in the hospitality industry and strong respect for indigenous culture have put her in the unique position of being able to extend the aims of the ISS Institute Fellowship program, seek international expertise in the area of food sovereignty and bring those learnings back to Australia.

In March 2014, the Fellow travelled to the World Health Expo in Anaheim, California, where she met with native food industry representatives. Discussions with many of the over 4000 exhibitors revealed a significant interest in potential Australian bush food products. This expo provided great insight into processes for setting up domestic and export markets for Australian native foods.

The Fellow then travelled to Minnesota and North Dakota in the Lakes District. Here she was based at the White Earth Reservation (the Reservation) where she met with the Director, Winona LaDuke, community elders and research students. LaDuke's powerful presence in the area of native health and seed preservation provides a strong role model for indigenous leadership. LaDuke has also received international recognition as a food sovereignty advocate.

Whilst in the Lakes District, the Fellow attended the Reservation's 2014 Annual Indigenous Farming Conference where notable speakers and representatives from government and non-government from across America attended. These included: seed researchers; government officials; slow food participants; native American Elders; food sovereignty and land preservation activists; and a broad range of America's farmers. The provocative series of lectures were extraordinarily informative, and included: prioritising native foods; resurrecting and preserving of native seeds; medicinal uses; and establishing sustainable farming and garden projects within indigenous communities across America (e.g. forestry, aquaculture, permaculture, organic, nomadic and traditional farming methods).

The extensive government initiatives encountered during this trip demonstrate the ability for a willing government to lead industry development and support indigenous communities. The current American model provides inspiration for other countries such as Australia, to develop their successful bush foods industries into the future.

During her travels under this Fellowship, the Fellow met with a broad array of researchers, academics and traditional owners. The contacts the Fellow has made will be of great value to her in the coming years as they will assist her contribute to the Australian native food industry as it expands.

The opportunity provided by the Fellowship has enabled the Fellow to gain great insight into the issues that the American native peoples face in regards to food sovereignty and also a wide range of government initiatives and industry development opportunities. The Fellow can see great application of these learnings in Australia and will continue to work towards to her broader goals of protecting and raising awareness of Australian native food sovereignty.

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# ii. Abbreviations/Acronyms

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**AAF**

Australian Agroforestry Foundation

**AIAC**

Australian Indigenous Advisory Committee

**AFSA**

Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance

**ANFIL**

Australian Native Food Industry Limited. The peak industry body for Australian native foods

**CDEP**

Community Development Employment Projects

**CSIRO**

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation

**DEC**

Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation

**DEPI**

Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries

**Department of Agriculture**

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture

**Department of the Environment**

The Australian Government Department of the Environment

**IAC**

Intertribal Agricultural Council

**NACA**

Native American Culinary Association

**NAFSA**

Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance

## ***ii. Abbreviations/Acronyms***

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### **NASAA**

National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia

### **Ninti One**

Ninti One is a national not-for-profit company that build opportunities for people in remote Australia though research, innovation, and community development.

### **NOTPA**

New Opportunities for Tropical and Pastoral Australia

### **OAN**

Otway Agroforestry Network

### **RIRDC**

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

### **WELRP**

White Earth Land Recovery Project

# 1. Acknowledgements

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Amanda Garner would like to thank the following individuals and organisations who gave generously of their time and their expertise to assist, advise and guide her throughout the Fellowship program.

## **Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)**

The International Specialised Skills Institute Inc is an independent, national organisation that for over two decades has worked with Australian governments, industry and education institutions to enable individuals to gain enhanced skills and experience in traditional trades, professions and leading-edge technologies.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our Fellows. Under the **Overseas Applied Research Fellowship Program** the Fellows travel overseas. Upon their return, they are required to pass on what they have learnt by:

1. Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions.
2. Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses.
3. Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

Over 200 Australians have received Fellowships, across many industry sectors. In addition, recognised experts from overseas conduct training activities and events. To date, 22 leaders in their field have shared their expertise in Australia.

According to Skills Australia's 'Australian Workforce Futures: A National Workforce Development Strategy 2010':

Australia requires a highly skilled population to maintain and improve our economic position in the face of increasing global competition, and to have the skills to adapt to the introduction of new technology and rapid change.

International and Australian research indicates we need a deeper level of skills than currently exists in the Australian labour market to lift productivity. We need a workforce in which more people have skills, but also multiple and higher level skills and qualifications. Deepening skills across all occupations is crucial to achieving long-term productivity growth. It also reflects the recent trend for jobs to become more complex and the consequent increased demand for higher level skills. This trend is projected to continue regardless of whether we experience strong or weak economic growth in the future. Future environmental challenges will also create demand for more sustainability related skills across a range of industries and occupations.

In this context, the ISS Institute works with Fellows, industry and government to identify specific skills in Australia that require enhancing, where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions or other Registered Training Organisations. The Fellows' overseas experience sees them broadening and deepening their own professional practice, which they then share with their peers, industry and government upon their return. This is the focus of the ISS Institute's work.

For further information on our Fellows and our work see <http://www.issinstitute.org.au>.

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## 1. Acknowledgements

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### Fellowship Sponsor

AgriFood Skills Australia is the Industry Skills Council for the agrifood industry: the rural and related industries, food processing (including beverages, wine and pharmaceuticals), meat, seafood and racing. The Fellow would like to thank them for providing funding support for this Fellowship.

### Influential Individuals

The following people supported the Fellow and without their continual support, this Fellowship would not have been possible.

Allison Saunders	Senior Research Manager, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
Andrew Fielke	Chair Australian Native Foods Industry Limited
Marianne Stewart	General Manager, Australian Agroforestry Foundation
Loretta Oden	Chef Native American Food Historian and Consultant
Winona LaDuke	Founding Director, White Earth Land Recovery Project
Mike Edwards	Marketing Manager, Otway Agroforestry Network
Jude Mayall	The Outback Chef
Rayleen Brown	Owner/Operator, Kungkas Can Cook
Rus Glover	Director, Australian Native Food Industry Limited
Vik Cherikoff	Wild Food Scientist, Vik Cherikoff Food Services Pty Ltd
Paul Keily	Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal Solutions
Slade Lee	Principal Research Leader, Southern Cross University
Michael Croft	Australasian CSM delegate at Committee for World Food Security
Athol Wark	Owner, Warkabout Consultancy and recipient of the 2006 ISS Institute Fellowship
Bronwen Williams	Policy Officer, Department of Environment and Primary Industries

### Influential Organisations

The following organisations also gave the Fellow considerable support throughout the Fellowship journey:

- Australian Rural Leaders Programme
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
- Australian Native Foods Industry Limited
- Australian Agroforestry Foundation
- Otway Agroforestry Network
- National Aboriginal Solutions.



## 2. About the Fellow

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The ISS Institute/ Agrifood Skills International Fellowship 2013 was awarded to Amanda Garner. This Fellowship has enabled her travel to America to investigate how to establish mainstream horticultural practices for Australian native food crops, in addition to sourcing knowledge for extension and marketing of our native food flavours into mainstream culinary facilities and households.

From a young age, the Fellow developed a strong respect for Indigenous culture and an interest in the cultivation and use of Australian native species for food and medicine. The combination of intriguing family folk law and her inquisitive nature has led to her recent discovery of letters from early family members <sup>1</sup> to Governor Latrobe, written circa 1838 (Victorian Government, 1898).

Whilst many views expressed in these letters are archaic, she was inspired by the accounts that showed recognition of the strong health of the Indigenous peoples prior to European settlement and their apparent decline resulting from the severing of access to native foods.

Over a catering career of 25 years plus growing up in rural Victoria, her life experiences and expertise have led her to become heavily involved in the promotion and development of the Australian native foods industry. Over these years in food and agricultural related industries her passion has grown and she has realised that native crops are being underutilised and undervalued for their many health and culinary purposes within Australia. The need to have a sustainable Australia is of high priority to the Fellow. The Fellow has developed many important and beneficial relationships which have led her to become a director of the Australian Native Foods Industry Limited board in 2012 and also an active contributor to the food industry sector.

The Fellow has worked in many catering facilities predominately as a chef for Peter Rowland Catering and in an Event Management capacity in later years. She has worked for The Big Group, then for Tailored Events Catering in Sydney before and during the 2000 Olympics promoting Australian foods to many international guests who visited during that time.

The Fellow retired for good, or so she thought, when she married and moved to Central Western New South Wales to a broad acre farming property in what turned out to be during one of our country's worst droughts. She became an active member of the local Little River Land Care Group during this period and actively sought options for diversification of the monoculture style European cropping that were highly contentious amongst the traditional farmers of the district.

With her culinary experience Garner managed to introduce native foods into government department lunches around the district and was able to spend much time with many farmers and experts discussing the feed shortage and sustainable agricultural issues at hand. Her conclusion was that the introduction of native species crops e.g. salt bush, paperbark, lemon myrtle, bunya pine nuts, Kakadu plum, lemon aspen, riberry and/ or any other localised plant species should be introduced for possible cash crop or animal feed options for farmers across rural Australia.

Little research into the horticultural practices has yet been developed and the Fellow has recognised significant skills gaps in the industry. The many options for education and knowledge expansion across Australia have led the Fellow back to her culinary foundations.

Twelve years later the Fellow moved home with her family to the Otway Region of Victoria and started a catering business, Sorella Foods, which she uses to spread the word about native foods. The Fellow is also the Bush foods Project Officer with the Australian Agroforestry Foundation. She is an active member of the local Otway Agroforestry Network and Land care Group which enable her once again to mingle amongst talented groups of like-minded people and inspiring local growers; and educating a wider audience with her passion for all things native.

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<sup>1</sup> Archibald Macarthur Campbell and Neil Campbell

## **2. About the Fellow**

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The Fellow currently undertakes the following industry related roles:

- Vice Chair of ANFIL (Australian Native Foods Industry Limited)
- Director of Australian Indigenous Advisory Committee (AIAC) to ANFIL
- Bush Foods Coordinator, Australian Agroforestry Foundation.

The Fellow's fast paced life in the hospitality industry still gives her much enthusiasm to achieve her Fellowship objectives:

- Enabling native foods to become an everyday staple in homes across Australia
- Promoting the use of Native Foods in Australian restaurants and commercial kitchens
- Widening knowledge of our native foods in educational facilities Australia wide.

To make a contribution to the sustainability of Australian landscapes and communities, in any way in her lifetime would be her great achievement.

# 3. Aims of the Fellowship Program

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The aims for the Fellowship are to visit America to research successful programmes in the preservation of native food crops and how they have commercialised the horticultural production of these ancient crops, in addition to being able to add to the sustainability of those traditional owners.

The issue of intellectual property in Australia with regards to all things native is also an issue in the Native American Foods Industry. The giving and receiving of important knowledge between the indigenous people and other key stakeholders is a problematic and sensitive issue and one that needs to be addressed to enable our industry to move forward to utilise Indigenous ways of knowing and interacting with land and culture to inform practice.

A better understanding of nutritional security and food sovereignty programmes overseas will provide great assistance to our fledgling native foods industry. In some Indian Reservations, food sovereignty pilot programmes have been the saving grace to sustainability issues in their communities. This Fellowship will also allow the Fellow to explore how American organisations have been able to highlight and categorise the commercially produced native foods in addition to being able to set standards for wild harvested products.

In identifying the skills enhancement areas, travelling to America and meeting with native foods experts, the Fellow intends to form an understanding of how we can promote Australian native foods on the worldwide food and health stage, in turn enabling ANFIL to devise a successful marketing strategy to attract new growers and unite the Australian bush foods industry.

# 4. The Australian Context

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Australia is a country with over 40,000 years of Indigenous culture and knowledge of the culinary and medicinal uses of native food sources. There is limited recognition of the significant Indigenous knowledge of horticultural practices, which is necessary for the development of a viable commercial native foods industry. To this end, the organisation, Australian Native Foods Industry Limited (ANFIL) was formed in 2006. See appendix 10.1 for details.

## Strengths of the Australian native foods industry

- The industry is indigenous based.
- Demonstrating Indigenous leadership and promoting Indigenous business in a healthy, positive light. Ensuring our domestic and international partners in culture and commerce, continue to receive Australian produce of the highest quality, delivering mutual benefit to all involved. Small scale.
- The Australian native foods industry has huge potential (countries overseas are keen to get their hands on various species only found in Australia for their extraordinary health properties alone). There has been much research done on specific plants that have been identified as potential commercial crops, e.g. Davidson Plum, Bush Tomato and the Native Pepper berry.
- There are two little known projects happening in Western Australia which have the potential to make a huge difference to some of our Indigenous community's sustainable farming and economic futures, one being the Kakadu Research project at Western Australian University under principal researcher Dr Liz Barbour – Research Development Advisor.

## Weaknesses

- There are many issues that are going to arise with each individual species, so the industry really needs a lot more research and investment in trials at all levels to enable it to capitalise on the huge interest and potential.
- Australia's industry trailblazers have forged their way ahead with their own problems combatting growing failures, diseases and market access difficulties, with little government support. This should be a thing of the past; knowledge is required to be harnessed, through knowledge sharing on a basic grassroots agricultural level with indigenous consultation, in addition to a horticultural and educational one.
- Supply and demand of the harvested crops is an ongoing issue. Seasonal availability limits commercial opportunities out of season. At present, like many other food product, issues of seasonal variations of harvest need to be accessed then again maybe not, maybe we need to educate our fellow Australians on consuming seasonal produce.

## Opportunities

- Clear cut opportunity for indigenous communities, Australia Wide, to grow and cultivate indigenous plants, community income, educate younger generations, promote developing ethical community owned and driven agribusiness initiatives that will serve the local communities.
- Devising a well consulted and researched marketing strategy to enable our industry to grow must involve many chefs, horticulturalists, Indigenous participants and elders, research teams from universities and also widen the minimal understanding of the health benefits and wonderful flavours our native Australian foods have to offer.
- Need to educate fellow Australians on consuming local seasonal produce.
- Growing swell of community drive farm products.

## **4. The Australian Context**

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- Low food miles Prioritising locally, sustainably and ethically produced food. The promotion of these elements will hopefully entice new investors and participants for the expansion of our small but nationally important food industry.
- Growing market demand from restaurants and tourism.

### **Threats**

- Government and agricultural industries not recognising and prioritising our uniquely Australian bush food industry.
- Community uptake of opportunities.
- Lack of widespread Indigenous education in culinary institutions and school.
- It is worthy of note that Australia narrowly escaped a patent application from the Texan cosmetic company Mary Kay, with regards to the method of producing Kakadu plum powder in the last few years. This brings forward a whole new situation with the commercialisation of native food products that need to be addressed with our Indigenous foods and our traditional elders Australia wide.

# 5. Identifying the Skills and Knowledge Enhancements Required

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There are examples of areas in Australian industries and activities where there are weaknesses in skills, knowledge, experience, innovation, policies and/or formal organisational structures to support the ongoing successful development and recognition of individuals and the particular sector.

The focus of all ISS Institute Fellowships is on applied research and investigation overseas by Australians. The main objective is to enable enhancement and improvement in skills and practice not currently available or implemented in Australia and the subsequent dissemination and sharing of those skills and recommendations throughout the relevant Australian industry, education, government bodies and the community.

**The skill enhancement areas to be addressed through this Fellowship were:**

## **5.1 Identifying successful marketing models for Australian native foods in other countries:**

- » How they have placed importance on particular aspects to enable specific crops that are nearly extinct to be resurrected
- » Strategic implementation of this research will enable priorities to be identified aligning with other successful models overseas thus setting an example to our government departments perhaps prioritising funding for future development of our native crops.

## **5.2 Recognising government involvement versus philanthropic assistance and what has enabled the establishment of wild harvested trademarks:**

- Placing significant importance on traditionally grown and harvested crops
- Understanding what factors have lead to the expansion and development of specific crops and the effect that it has had on industry growth.

## **5.3 Identifying which elements play a pivotal role in the establishment of Indigenous foods into mainstream culinary education facilities:**

- » Being able to identify beneficial components that have enabled comprehensive educational programmes to be initiated and actively supported.

## **5.4 Identifying the factors that have enabled Indigenous communities in America to be able to provide a more sustainably viable environment for their people.**

- » Harness the resurgence and interest in authentic native foods and utilise authentic and traditional customs as major marketing tools.

## ***5. Identifying the Skills and Knowledge Enhancements Required***

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The Fellow's personal outcomes as a direct result from the Fellowship experience are as follows:

- A greater understanding of our Australian Native Foods Industry as a whole
- Confidence in the Fellow's capacity to engage a wider audience for her industry
- Embracing the opportunities that have stemmed from the Fellowship experience – networking with international indigenous groups to gain a better understanding of challenges around the world for our industry
- Recognising the importance of the emerging new trade opportunities for indigenous foods
- Playing a key role in instigating some very practical workshops and educational exchange initiatives in remote Indigenous communities
- Extending existing research and development of new projects using existing documentation for commercial plantation in regions of Northern Australia and potentially nationally
- Instigate a successful marketing plan to attract investors and participants into the Australian native foods industry
- The Fellowship has solidified the Fellow's dedication to raise the level of awareness of all things Indigenous in Australia.

# 6. The International Experience

## 6.1 Los Angeles - Anaheim World Natural Foods Expo, 7th – 9th of March 2014

The Fellow was invited to assist Mr Graeme Firrell, Go Wild Australia, with his booth at the World Natural Foods Expo. The Fellow spent the three days discussing the vast array of Australian native food products with potential buyers (e.g. International pharmaceutical health food producers and medical companies).

Mr Firrell and his associates were promoting the following specific Australian native food products: Lemon Myrtle (*Backhousiacitriodora*), Anise Myrtle (*Syzygiumanisatum*), Tasmanian Pepperberry (*Tasmannialanceolata*), Tasmanian Pepper Leaf (*Tasmannailanceolata*), Wattleseed (*Acacia victoriae*) and Kakadu Plum (*Terminaliaferdinanadiana*).

In addition to the commercial health, cosmetic, naturopathic and culinary distributors the public interest was overwhelming.

The Expo ran for three days with over 4000 exhibitors. The booth was given much publicity due to the unique new products on offer. One of the products, Kakadu Plum, and its newly created bi-products (Kakadu Plum powder and fluids), was awarded Engredia Best New Novel Product for 2014's Expo.

The Kakadu Plum, more commonly known as Gubinge or Australian Bush Plum, is found growing in its natural state in the most northern remote regions of Western Australian and the Northern Territory (i.e. Broome to Darwin).

The potential uses of Kakadu Plum are endless. It is being touted around the world as the newest super fruit as it contains a 20-25 times higher Vitamin C content than citrus and six times the antioxidants than the world's antioxidant benchmark the blueberry.

### Mr Graham Firrell owner of Go Wild Australia

Firrell's goal and vision is *"To have the world understand the amazing health benefits of Australian Native Foods!"*

GoWild Australia is a global supplier, sales, marketing and development company for unique, natural/organic, Australian native food ingredients, fluid extracts, powder extracts, herbs and spices ingredients/products, natural bio actives and antimicrobial preservatives, personal care, cosmetic, nutraceutical, nutritional, food and beverage and medicinal/supplement companies.

Firrell has 35 years experience both as an owner and various management positions in the manufacturing, importing, marketing, distribution and sales industries, both in his native Australia and the last 25 years in the USA.

His strong background in business has led to a successful career exporting Australian products and raw materials. This began with the development, importation, sales and marketing of Australian wine and beer.



*"Mr Graham Firrell and Mr Gary Mazzorana showing their award received for "best production shown!"*



## **6. The International Experience**

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### **Mr Michael Dean – Founding partner in the Thursday Plantation (Tea Tree)**

Dean is one of the original founding family members of the Thursday Plantation, (ground breakers in the world's tea tree industry). The tea tree industry is a great model of a native plant that has been commercialised on a large scale. Thursday Plantation has been operating for 36 years. Michael's knowledge of establishment of a little unknown product in 1978 to the widely accepted tea tree oil usage today will be invaluable to assist Australia grow other fledgling native food industries.

### **Mr Gary Mazzorana – owner of Australian Rainforest Products**

Mazzorana is one of Australia's largest commercial growers of Lemon and Anise Myrtle products. He, along with the late Sibylla Hess-Buschmann, pioneered the Lemon and Anise Myrtle Industry and had it recognised and accepted into the competitive worldwide market. They designed a mechanical harvester, leaf processing plant and developed state of the art, computerised drying systems that have as little impact as possible on the leaf's natural qualities. The company specialises in wholesale bulk supply of native herbs, spices, essential oil and teas to customer specification.

Mazzorana was also present at the World Natural Foods Expo and imparted his wealth of knowledge to all. He would be a fabulous mentor to any potential growers in Australia.

### **Dr Frank King - Founder and owner of King Bio Pharmaceuticals**

I had the pleasure of speaking with Dr King and his researchers, which was an invaluable experience. He has a long history with discovering natural food products from all over the world, researching their health benefits and then using them in his medicines. King Bio is an FDA-registered homeopathic pharmaceutical company based in Asheville, North Carolina and is one of the largest of its kind in the world.

### **Dr Greg Cumberland is the President of Bent Creek Institute in Asheville**

Dr Cumberland is the President of The Bent Creek Institute in Asheville, USA. He is a researcher who is extraordinarily knowledgeable with regards to native food discoveries, intellectual property and preservation of species. He has a long association with Shiiian and Sojunative American tribes with regards to documenting traditional food sources and researching their health benefits.

## 6. The International Experience

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### Discussions with industry representatives

The Fellow posed the following questions to the above individuals and a summary of their collective answers follows each question:

#### **How do we overcome the clear gap between supply and demand?**

- By establishing horticultural knowledge and education for potential growers.
- The highly important factor to be taken into consideration is to foster knowledge exchange between Indigenous elders of identified communities, growers and researchers.
- Conducting scientific research into the composition of each species and its proven health attributes, and the creation of a series of bi products before launching product range that will attract a broad audience.
- Collection, storage and transportation: clear limitations are already glaringly obvious with regards to most of our earmarked native food species for commercial crops - vast distance from communities to processing sites, distribution and export facilities.
- Establishing relationships with potential buyers and distributors, gauging their level of interest and requirements before investing money and time.

#### **How does the Australian native food industry get produce into the United States of America and be accepted by the FDA?**

- The licensing process has to be undertaken for each specific food ingredient (a lengthy procedure).
- Import licenses must be obtained to ensure safe transport of each shipment of product.

## 6. The International Experience

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### 6.2 11th Annual Indigenous Farming Conference, The Shooting Star Casino, Mahanomen, Minnesota (The White Earth Reservation), 13th – 16th of March 2014



*Heritage Corn Growth, now produced by Native Americans*

was their region's ancient, tradition of ricing and preservation of the wild rice and native corn species.

The Fellow discovered that the wild rice consumed around the world is a commercialised product, created by the Agricultural Extension Office (USA) back in the 1970s. This led to the domesticated wild rice paddy varieties, as they are referred to, outstripping Minnesota's wild rice production and sales.

The 11th Annual Great Lakes Indigenous Farming Conference was held on the White Earth Indian Reservation, Mahanomen, Minnesota. The national farming conference brings together indigenous organic and sustainable farmers, schools, tribal and federal program coordinators, professors, research students from all over America and Canada to discuss how to strengthen our local food systems and our traditional food production.

Garner was initially introduced to the Native American Food advocate Winona LaDuke through one of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance Directors, Mr Michael Croft.

This relationship developed thanks to the Fellow's association and networks from the Australian Rural Leaders Programme, as part of her researching possible avenues of specific research for the Fellow's trip.

This in turn led the Fellow to arrange her research trip around the conference in March 2014 in Minnesota.

#### **Winona LaDuke**

LaDuke is an American Indian Activist, environmentalist, economist and writer of Anishinaabe descent. She is currently Executive Director of both the Honor the Earth and White Earth Land Recovery Projects, which she founded at the White Earth Reservation in 1989.

The stand out project that caught the Fellow's attention



*"Our land sustains our spirit, the loss of our land has meant the loss of our traditional values."  
-Winona LaDuke, Founder of WELRP*

## 6. The International Experience



Wild rice products.

## **6. The International Experience**

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(In 2013, WERLP received the International Slow Foods Award for the defence of biodiversity for their work to protect wild rice from genetic Modification and patenting, and for their work to restore traditional food varieties. Contamination of traditional varieties, and genetic modification of traditional foods is a big concern in Indigenous communities worldwide.)

The trade marking, patent, ethnobotanical importance, intellectual property and commercialisation of the name wild rice have taken many years and a lengthy court cases to settle.

### **Professor Dan Longboat at Trent University**

Longboat is a Mohawk from the Six nations of the Grand River. He is Director of the Indigenous Environmental Studies Program at Trent University, Ontario. Dan is known for his Traditional Haudenosaunee knowledge and has taught Mohawk culture at Trent in addition to his work in Indigenous Environmental Studies. Longboat was a key speaker at the conference.

Topics - The Roots of Indigenous Agriculture in addition to Bio culture framework for Indigenous Food Sustainability

The Fellow attended both of Longboat's lectures which gave intrinsic access into the higher education models in Canada and America focusing and placing importance on Indigenous Farming practices and re-educating and inspiring younger generations of Native Americans to place importance on their traditional ways.

He is also interested in educating Australian Indigenous students in an exchange and would be open to discuss potential collaborations in the future with our universities.

### **Joy Hought ~ Director of Native Seeds**

Hought is Native Seeds/SEARCH seed School Director and a primary instructor. She has a unique combination of expertise including fifteen years teaching and developing curricula in arts and sciences; two years in public broadcasting; and a graduate degree in seed science, crop genetic conservation and food systems.

Hought states that, "People everywhere are waking up to the vital importance of seeds for our future. Seed School is leading the way in this growing movement. With the unsustainable practices of industrial farming on the rise and our precious crop diversity disappearing, a new paradigm of seed growing, saving, and sharing is necessary. At Native Seeds/SEARCH, we believe the best hope for an ecologically sustainable agriculture is to build a broad network of regional seed systems brimming with abundance and diversity. To answer this need, we created Seed School. Real, meaningful change in our food system begins here" ([www.nativeseed.org](http://www.nativeseed.org)).

### **Anna Faulds is a Canadian actress and human rights activist**

Faulds, from Edmonton, Canada, is an actress, entrepreneur, mother, healer and human rights activist. During the conference, Faulds attended not to speak but to observe, interviewing visiting fellow Native American/Canadians for her new healing in the mountains project. She is somebody the Fellow made a strong connection with.

The project is being specifically designed for displaced Native Americans with post-traumatic stress disorders relating to social issues stemming from being moved off their native lands many, many years ago. This is an interesting project considering the parallel similarities between America and Australia's white settlements also many years ago.



## 6. The International Experience

Primarily the project intends to incorporate the traditional ceremonies, foods, agricultural methods and architectural construction of their people's homes to assist with the success of her collaborative project.

### **Dan Cornelius is a representative of the United State Department of Agriculture**

Cornelius is the Intertribal Agriculture Councils (IAC) Technical Assistance Specialist for the Great Lakes Region. IAC was founded in 1987 and funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Foreign Agricultural Service. IAC was created in order to provide a unified effort to promote change in American Indian agriculture for the benefit of American Indian people. The IAC has several interrelated projects that contribute to the overall success of American Indian products. By working with the federal government, providing information and opening markets the IAC has assisted many American Indian businesses gain access to opportunities related to American Indian agriculture.

Cornelius was showcasing his new innovative project called the Mobile Farmers Markets. He was on a road trip over the winter period in an effort to bring more awareness to unique Native products and strengthen connections among the producers across the nation.

The Fellow spoke with Cornelius at length and discussed the positive gains for Indigenous communities that have been made from his organisation's work. Cornelius's Mobile Farmers Markets concept arose from the need for cohesion and marketing assistance between many of America's Indian communities, such as, corn, rice, mesquite, cactus, fish and meats. It only started two years ago. He is also assisting communities' sales by providing



*AIFP American Indian Foods*



*Mobile farmers market and stall of products from conference*

## 6. The International Experience

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them with a large platform on a world culinary scale through world trade shows and conventions.

The pivotal connection between Cornelius and the Fellow was his involvement in the Trademark and Certification process on Native American products. The trademark was developed to identify true American Indian produced products. It is a unique symbol of culture, tradition and pride that American Indian products represent.

### **Bruce Savage and Tawny Savage - owners of Spirit Lake Native Products**

The Savages own 80 acres of old growth Maple trees in the southwest corner of the Lake Superior Chippewa Fond du Lac Reservation. They own Spirit Lake Native Products where they produce and sell their own maple syrup.

The family taps around 2000 trees and has been sugar making for at least 250 years.

The historical significance and ceremonial celebrations related to the sugaring season is intriguing. There are a plethora of stories related to the tapping and sugaring traditions by Indians of the sweet sap. It represented a large portion of trade for some communities lucky enough to have sugar bush in their region. Savage states in an article by The University of Minnesota Non Timber Products, the Savage family and their farm.

Savage states that, "We value the ability to harvest food; we pass onto our children the knowledge and respect required to run a sugar bush".

Maple sugaring is a great time of the year amongst fellow Native Americans, signifying the start of the early spring, the end of winter and holds many traditional ceremonies before the tapping of the trees begins. Tapping commences amongst Native Americans as soon as the snow starts to melt as the atmosphere begins to warm after the long winters that hit the mid west of America. The trees are cut into the cambium layer of the tree, no more than one inch into the bark and no thicker than a small finger width. The natural process of collection of the sap is quite simple as the fluid that has been stored in the root system over the winter begin moving up to the canopies of the trees to spread new life, and as the fluids drop down back into the root system at night the sap is collected. Maple syrup is one of the largest commodities still traded amongst Native American communities in 2014. The quality of the syrup is determined by its sugar percentage and its specific colour that seems to have a large variant amongst the regions.



*Sugaring and maple syrup sweet making*

## 6. The International Experience

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Wild harvesting of the maple trees is now done on a commercial level in American and Canada, The lengthy process of boiling down the sap is done these days in a modernised boiler which expedites the process of sugaring.

The longer method of dehydrating the sap to transform it to a powdered sugar as was done thousands of years ago is still a timely one, but it was easy to transport during nomad periods of existence and was a highly prized trade product.

### **Loretta Barrett Oden owner of Sundance Enterprises, Oklahoma City**



Oden a member of the Potawatomi tribe in Oklahoma region who is one of America's first Native American Chefs and promoters of Native American Foods. Oden has had a successful role as the television series presenter of the Seasoned with Spirit Series. She is also a co founder of NAFSA (Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance), an active member of the Native American Culinary Association (NACA) and is the owner of Sundance Enterprises.

NACA aims to reclaim vital elements of Native American culture through the research and development of Native American cuisine.

Oden is the doyenne of American Native Foods and the Fellow was extremely lucky to have been able to take up some time with her in Oklahoma City. The Fellow's time with Oden was a great collaborative of like-minded individuals and they instantly had a great rapport due to so much common ground. The Fellow found that trades and reasons for promoting native foods and personal drive were of an honest parallel nature:

- Native food uses and placing importance of this in the modern world
- Highlighting the extensive dual purposes of native foods and the promotion by way of renewing authentic food traditions.

Oden lives by the motto 'we truly are what we eat. We are of the land and so to take care of ourselves and one another we must be conscious caretakers of the land'.



# 7. Knowledge Transfer: Applying the Outcomes

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The Fellow's ideas, concepts and plans of action derived from the research trip are the following:

- To form a collective organisation lead by Indigenous elders to work together on all things native
- To assist and amalgamate all research entities with ANFIL
- To gain support from philanthropic organisations and corporate entities by way of solid marketing plans for our native foods industry
- Assisting the Indigenous communities of Australia with the expansion and development of specific identified commercial crops
- To amalgamate all culinary, horticultural and agricultural education providers Australia wide and request them all to incorporate Australian Native produce in their curriculums
- Utilise renowned Australian chefs to innovate our visions of Australia's native foods to reach a wider audience and enable our organisation to extend our sustainable native food production industry
- To recognise and collate all former and present government or non-government information with regards to native food research
- Placing significance of traditional knowledge of all native crops.

# 8. Recommendations

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The successful trademarking process is one that the Fellow has spent a lot of time on in recent years here in Australia in her position that she holds as a Director with Australian Native Foods Industry Limited (ANFIL).

Collaboration started in earnest last year with the importance of major collaboration between Indigenous elders Australia wide being noted and action was taken to form an Indigenous Advisory committee to ANFIL.

This has led the Fellow to be also a director of the IAC to ANFIL in recent months. The Fellow is working alongside the indigenous committee members to form a similar trademarking patent structure here in Australia; incorporating all communities, elders, previous research and instigating future guided research and development projects and commercial growers of our native produce to ensure that:

- Much collaboration is required before any sort of concrete structure is decided upon
- There is assistance in identifying remote communities to set up commercial plantings of our identified native food species in addition to continued mentoring to assist management of production
- Conversations with outback community elders and established organisations that the Fellow has earmarked are held and are utilised for information dissemination as promptly as possible.

Through the Fellow's participation in the above-mentioned existing organisations, she is in a privileged position to raise the profile of the industry, through marketing and knowledge sharing as well as capacity building practical projects, such as the Australian Agroforestry Foundation's Master Tree Growers programme. The Fellow has in the past few months managed to bring a gubinge project to fruition in the Broome region of Western Australia, in partnership with the Kimberly Training Institute, the Kimberly TAFE and Notre Dame University which incorporates an existing Federal Carbon Funded initiative of Savannah enrichment plantings at the Balu Balu Training and Research centre – Broome, of gubinge amongst other native species for example the little known pindan walnut (*Terminalia cunninghamii*), green plum (*buchanania obovatoa*) bush currant (*Vitex glabrata*) wild apple (*syzygium eucalyptoides*) to name a few.

The Fellow is a member of the Alumni of The Master Tree Growers course, and felt the Fellowship opportunity was a perfect match for knowledge exchange and education opportunities in Indigenous communities across Australia. More than one hundred courses have successfully run in agricultural regions in Australia, Africa, Indonesia and are about to start in East Timor.

Primarily the Fellow would like to see any commercialisation of these specific species done in harmony with indigenous practices and community harmony. Around the world there is a growing trend to prioritise food sovereignty which spotlights the traceability and sustainability, community development and social responsibility associated with all native foods. The Fellow believes through the likes of the Australian Food Sovereignty Association and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation that have a growing following around Australia, we can achieve a greater public understanding and awareness of the many uses and amazing flavours of our native foods in mainstream kitchen garden projects across our nation.

## 8. Recommendations

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*Kakadu Plum Seeds*



*Savannah-in-Rushmore trial plot. Supplied by Kim Courtney, Head of research, Broome TAFE, Western Australia*



*Native Bush near Broome, Western Australia*

There is a need to share all of our current research with the general public to extend the existing research with the aim to touch base with the average Australian and seek government assistance and utilising existing philanthropic organisations already on the ground around Australia. The industry and research is terribly fragmented at this point in time, with many research initiatives happening and also completed ones that have never been shared or utilised to their full potential. Urging the Australian Government to prioritise funding and support of current and future research of native plants in Australia is one of highest importance to the growth of our industry. By way of encouraging agricultural educational institutions to become involved, there is a need for researchers to take up areas of required research topics.

There is also a need for producing growing procedures and notes for each species and disseminating and formulating functional educational programmes to introduce into mainstream schools and culinary institutions. Harvesting, processing and transport of product in and from remote areas of Australia also need further consideration with regards to education of current food handling and processing standards and regulations to be implemented in remote communities.

The answers to sustainable living in remote Indigenous communities could lie in focusing on native food commodities and may well be a way to assist our remote communities to begin to reinstate good eating traditions.

If we are able to recognise and target potential growers we can introduce these crops as savannah enrichment and shelter belt plantings, in addition to feed or additional income avenues as options for our landowners in Australia. The key would be in utilising Agroforestry, Horticultural and Agricultural knowledge for broadening our information at a grassroots level across our large country.

## **8. Recommendations**

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With our existing agricultural research initiatives in Australia, the Fellow believes that introducing native grasses and little known native grain crops into our broad acre farming enterprises could well be a very viable option. Native crops are accustomed to our rain forest regions right through to our temperate and arid farming areas. Investigating the scope and future potential of introducing these Indigenous crops into our mainstream Australian Agricultural systems just makes sense.

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# 10. Attachments

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## 10.1 Australian Native Foods Industry Limited (ANFIL)

ANFIL's development stems from a national conference held in September 2004 on the Gatton campus of the University of Queensland. This conference established a working group mandated to design and establish a national body to represent all interests in the rapidly growing Australian native food industry. The initiative was supported and assisted financially by the Rural industry Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), the Commonwealth Scientific and industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Coles indigenous food fund and a number of significant participants in the industry.

ANFIL was formed in 2006, it is the peak body which represents all interests in the rapidly growing Australian native food industry. The company is a not for profit organisation with broad involvement in the development of this industry on a national scale. Encompassing national advocacy and lobbying on behalf of the industry, ANFIL has taken the lead in working with industry, federal and state governments to determine and prioritise research and development strategies to progress the industry into the future.

## 10.2 CSIRO PUBLISHING

The Rangeland Journal, 2012, 34, 359–373

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Horticultural development of bush food plants and rights

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example: a review

L. Slade Lee

Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation, Southern Cross University, PO Box 157, Lismore, NSW 2480, Australia.

## 10.3 Indigenous Fair Trade in Australia Scoping Study

By Michael Spencer and Jocelyn Hardie, January 2011

RIRDC Publication No. 10/172 RIRDC Project No. PRJ-005597

[www.rirdc.gov.au/research-project-details/custr10\\_DRC/PRJ-006137](http://www.rirdc.gov.au/research-project-details/custr10_DRC/PRJ-006137) (Australian Wild Rice)