

Kosciuszko Heritage Inc.: Final Report

on the Kosciuszko Year celebrations in Australia

Reporting to: NSW Multicultural

Our project **The Bicentenary of T. Kosciuszko's Death** was a huge success on an international scale, with a total budget of over \$140,000.00 from various sources like The Polish Senate, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Polish Consulate, NSW Multicultural, Blum Grant, SPK etc. It started with announcement of *The International Kosciuszko Bicentenary Competition* in February.

In July a delegation from The Kosciuszko Mound in Cracow, Poland made a daring winter expedition to Mt Kosciuszko (great success in spite of zero visibility & blizzard); a documentary DVD documenting this expedition had been produced in August; this expedition brought us a lot of publicity incl. dozens of articles in the Polish press.

In October we had announced the winners of the competition; our Competition Gala held in Rhodes Community Centre (Sydney) was attended by Deputy Speaker of the Polish Senate, Mrs Maria Koc, NSW Multicultural Minister Ray Williams MP representing The Premier, (a Congratulatory Message from the Governor of NSW was presented), President of the Supreme Council of The Polish Community in Australia, Mrs Malgorzata Kwiatkowska as well as competition winners - several ones from interstate and one from Poland. More importantly the Gala was attended by a delegation of Ngarigo Aboriginals - traditional owners of Mt Kosciuszko; Mrs Iris White after having delivered a moving speech had presented our VIP guest from Poland with a symbol of friendship, a **message stick** with Polish and Aboriginal symbols carved on it.

Soon after the Gala an Australian delegation, including members of KH Inc. and 5 Ngarigo people, left for Poland for the Kosciuszko Death Bicentenary celebrations in Krakow organized jointly by the Mayor of Krakow City and the Kosciuszko Mound. In Krakow, we had taken part in an International Conference "*Integration Around Kosciuszko*" where Mrs White's speech about Polish-Aboriginal Dialogue was highly acclaimed. We were invited to attend the Bicentenary Mass at the Royal Castle Wawel's cathedral which was attended by President A. Duda and the

First Lady. After the Mass we had a chance to meet the President and his wife. While in Krakow our delegation took part in the huge event on the City Market - "Sing Along Kosciuszko Songs" attended by several thousands of people. Our Ngarigo friends have been officially introduced from stage to the public. As a gift we have received several copies of an album of Kosciuszko Songs, including some of songs from our Competition; the album was issued in 5 thousand copies and distributed for free. Local media documented a unique moment when black Australians helped planting Kosciuszko Tree in the City Park "Planty".

Two weeks after our return to Australia we had to be ready for another important event - The Kosciuszko Bicentenary Festival & Polish Aboriginal Fraternity Flights in Jindabyne; apart from a young (16 yo) winner from Poland several performers incl. two Aboriginal singers, and the highlight of the festival was a premiere of Polish-Aboriginal Ballet "Dancing with the Spirits" with LAJKONIK Folk Ensemble as major performer. The script was written by Ursula Lang in consultation with Iris White the Aboriginal Educator. Four Photo exhibitions have been organized - two in Visitors Centre in Jindabyne (Kosciuszko Monuments Worldwide & KOsci Fests History both open all October) and two in Memorial Hall: 1) the best graphic works of the competition, 2) documentation of the Ngarigo historic visit to Krakow. For 2 nights we had sessions of Kosciuszko Film Marathon. On Sunday 29th October we'd moved to the Aero Club for Fraternity Flights (about 40 people benefited) and another round of performances "in the field".

At the end of November we welcomed another delegation from Poland, this time two people from the Polish Kosciuszko Foundation from Warsaw: Dr Les M. Krzesniak, President of the PFK, and dr Longina Ordon, President of Poland's Schools Named after Kosciuszko. They have taken part in a Polish Festival in Plumpton (Sydney, December 3rd) during which we officially closed the Kosciuszko Year celebrations. This time we had 4 Aboriginal artists performing. Amongst VIPs we have had a high ranking government delegation from Poland headed by Minister K. Szczerski, Secretary of State - Chief of President's Cabinet, as well as newly appointed Polish Ambassador to Australia, M. Kolodziejcki. One of VIP guests was the mayor of Blacktown Stephen Bali, MP. The event has attracted about 6 thousand people and was indeed a huge success.

Few days after we have taken our PFK guests to Jindabyne; they have made and ascent to Mt Kosciuszko. On Sunday 10th December we held a meeting with our Aboriginal friends at the National Parks workshop; we have presented them with Kosciuszko Bicentenary Medals and books about Kosciuszko published recently in USA (books written by Alex Storozynski and Gary B. Nash & Graham R. Hodges).

The dialogue between the Polish Community and the Ngarigo people speeded up during the Kosciuszko Year, in fact we have achieved more in 12 months than in the last 10 years.

After the Kosciuszko Year ended we have received a congratulatory letter (one and a half pages long) from the Deputy Speaker of the Polish Senate Mrs Maria Koc; a similar letter came from the President of the Supreme Council of the Polish Community Mrs Malgorzata Kwiatkowska. Several emails from Aboriginal friends prove that the trip to Poland and joint ventures were a big success. The renowned Ngarigo painter Cheryl Davison has written: *“Words cannot express my gratitude to you both and the hospitality of all during our trip to Poland, it was truly an eye opening journey and one I will not forget. Hopefully I will return to see more of your beautiful country and have the time to take a closer look at Polish culture and the arts. Kosciuszko is truly a hero to all and I am now very much in-awe by his generosity and leadership towards freedom and human rights. I find myself educating everyone I talk to about him and also correcting them when they pronounce his name incorrectly.”* (Nov 2nd 2017)

May I include some important links here:

http://www.zrobtosam.com/PulsPol/Puls3/index.php?sekcja=1&arty_id=17130

Ngarigo Voice in Krakow City , a link to the Paper delivered by Ngarigo Representative at the International Conference in Krakow, Poland

http://www.zrobtosam.com/PulsPol/Puls3/index.php?sekcja=1&arty_id=17243

H'Art of Diplomacy by Anna Zamecznik, an appraisal of our activities

http://www.zrobtosam.com/PulsPol/Puls3/index.php?sekcja=1&arty_id=17135

a speech by Jason Falinski, MP, Kosciuszko Bicentenary motion to Federal Parliament

http://www.zrobtosam.com/PulsPol/Puls3/index.php?sekcja=1&arty_id=17137

House of Reps, Kosciuszko Bicentenary Motion seconded by Mike Kelly, Craig Kelly, Nick Champion (their speeches)

and finally:

http://www.zrobtosam.com/PulsPol/Puls3/index.php?sekcja=1&arty_id=17233

This link is bringing A Collection of about **250 links** related to the Kosciuszko Year (some in English, most of them in Polish).

Written by:

Dr Ernestyna Skurjat-Kozek,

President, Kosciuszko Heritage Inc.

Organiser of Kosciuszko Year Celebrations in Australia

& Coordinator of the International Kosciuszko Bicentenary Competition

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