

Key Note Address

Burning Man

Regional Leaders Summit - March 5th-7th 2010

San Francisco

by: 'King' Richard Martin.

Saturday 6th March 2010.

Thank you for having me over.

Before I begin my talk I would like to share with everyone, that speaking before you today is such a great honour and I am truly humbled to be able to speak to you today.

To be brought all the way out from Melbourne in Australia, to present my thoughts and insights at this Summit of Regional Burning Man Leaders, is not only a wonderful opportunity to share with you some of my first hand experience in Outdoor Gatherings in Australia, it is also a great opportunity for broadening our understandings of each other and deepening our friendship on a very real level within the Burning Man community and beyond.

It is also a great opportunity to speak directly with you about the more recent developments that have been occurring within a small, growing, community of Burners, in our Region.

I hope that the main purpose I can achieve here today will be to develop some understanding about the upcoming Regional Burn starting in Australia and also talk about an exciting arts undertaking emanating from Down Under, which is The Birthing Woman @ Burning Man Project, that is trying to get a rather larger than life pregnant woman, rising out of the playa, next year, in 2011.

During this opportunity to speak with you I will also be making reference from time to time about some of the seminal moments and developments in the Outdoor Festival scene in Australian over the last 4 decades, which could help widen understanding and contextualise some of the things that have gone on and why things are, the way they are, in the land of Oz.

I feel this is an important understanding to gain, when considering this unique outdoor culture which has built up over this period of time and how this could interlink with a Regional Burn.

Such a Burn will naturally form a distinctly Australian flavour, like so many of the Regional Events which embrace the unique cultural backdrop of their region. The burn isn't intended to be a copy cat version of the main event in Nevada but will draw upon many aspects and experiences in conducting such an occurrence. In essence, the whole exercise is an ambitious undertaking of its own which will form its own identity and community over time.

It also presents various challenges to a Regional Burn in Australia. Particularly, for its organisers, who are committed in making such an occurrence a great success and ongoing reality of some significance, who are mindfully aware that we want the community to grow at an organic pace and not be pushed along at a rate of knots that could harm the potential of such a phenomena with people missing the point of it.

To begin with, I would like to discuss where we are at with the development and planning of a Regional Burn in Australia.

The last year has seen one of the most interesting developments in the Australian region with the occurrence of the first Seed gathering in June last year. This took place on an extended Public Holiday weekend from Friday 5th to Monday 8th June, 2009.

At this time of the year it's winter and it's very cold in the Southern parts of Australia. However, the North to South stretch of the continent traverses many latitudes and climates. So, the further North you travel from the Cold wintry South, moving closer to the equator, the climate becomes more temperate. As you get to the top end in the Far Northern parts, it becomes tropical.

I experienced this first hand, after flying to Sydney out of the depths of a Melbourne winter, then borrowing a sister's car and driving six hours to the Central North Coast of NSW, with a friend from Sydney to the location of the Seed, where the temperature was definitely cool to cold, but nowhere near as cold as what I left behind in the deeper South. I think I recall the daytime temperatures being bearable enough to wear a T-Shirt, which you could not do in Melbourne at that time of the year.

Nevertheless, there was a premeditated reason for having the Seed get together at a cooler and wetter time of the year, as summertime is our fire season and 'Total Fire' bans are imposed on any outdoor activity.

Unfortunately, this is the reality we live with, which was emphasised in February last year, during the horrific 'Black Saturday' bush fires, where 173 people died in the immediate, surrounding regions, just North of Melbourne.

Therefore to plan an activity involving fire, requires careful thought, which must take into account the time of the year and the location. This is why a cooler time of the year, in a temperate region, was chosen. This way you're not going to raise the concerns of authorities, when advising them of what you plan to do. The only other alternative is to travel to parts of the Country where nobody knows where you are or what you're doing, which simply involves very inhibitive distance, which in its early days, would be counter productive to the core aim of nurturing and building a new successful culture.

Nevertheless, over the weekend of the first Seed, the weather was really kind to us, because, in the months leading up to this small camp out, there had been local floods and the site was quite moist with heavy morning dew each day.

On the Seed weekend, about 35 people camped over and gathered around a circle each morning on a community established in the 1970s called Homeland located outside the township of Bellingen which is just inland from the Northern 'Central Coast' township of Coffs Harbour. This coastal area is about half way between two eastern capital cities of Sydney and Brisbane, which might be better known to people familiar with Australia.

The daily discussions around the circle became a feature of the weekend and while we

were poor on documenting the range of decisions made at the time, there was still the early beginnings of group meeting processes occurring.

I've been to gatherings where this type of daily meeting is called a 'Morning Sharing'. Now, while no name was attributed to this circle discussion, at the Seed, at around 10am each day, on the Saturday, Sunday and Monday, a circle formed to talk about the possibility of developing a Regional Burn.

Homeland kindly provided an area for camping and gathering on their property for the weekend. The spot which was provided was located on a River Bend flowing through a Valley, in a district that is very beautiful country.

The primary instigator of the Seed gathering was Phil Smart, who has recently been appointed as the Newcastle/Sydney regional representative, who for many years has been pushing to start a Regional Burn. Phil is a veteran of many Burns post 2000 and negotiated arrangements to hold this gathering at Homeland. However, standing behind him, with full support, was Australia's Regional Co-ordinator Robin Macpherson and myself.

Robin and I had been discussing, for many years the potential of a Regional Burn. These discussions have always included the pragmatic realisation that it would occur when the time is right and when the energy is coming up through the Region.

Robin also gave me the following view, which he shared with me, just before I left to come here, where he believed that part of the trick is knowing the right wave to pick. Using this surfing analogy, in the last ten years he has seen certain moments and energies rise or present themselves but instinctively knew due to the nature of the undertaking that they weren't the right waves to ride at the time.

However, Robin finally felt the right wave was coming and he got the ball rolling with a web site and domain. Also, at the opening of the first of these circles at the Seed, Robin introduced himself outlining his position as Australia's Regional Co-ordinator and lead the discussion, explaining his role and providing some background as to why we were here.

Some people sitting around the circle had been to Burning Man here in the States, others were new to the whole experience and simply inquisitive, while some were members from the Homeland Community. There were also a few other locals from the district who sat in on discussions.

Along with the daily discussions there was a fire that burned for the duration of the gathering in an open camping area up one end of the site. Also, on the Sunday night there was a much bigger 'Bon Fire' in between Bamboo Rob's Large overhead Bamboo Sculpture, which was positioned on one side and on the other a small open area facing out from a relic stage, most likely constructed for a past Rock festival event, probably in the Seventies, when the Homeland community was developing out of the spirit which flowed out of the seminal Aquarius festival gathering in May 1973.

The Aquarius Festival was a flowering moment in Australia's Alternative Counter Culture Lifestyle movement, which happened a little further North up the coast and was an era that birthed the town of Nimbin and some of the very first 'Multiple Occupancy' communities of the day, which included places like Homeland, where our first Seed gathering was being held.

On the Sunday night of the Seed a Bamboo Sculpture was placed on top of the 'Bon Fire' which took the form of a 'Seed Pod' and was created by a group of people who decided to make this as a symbolic icon to place on top to burn. This all arose out of earlier discussions around the circle. It was a great display of group 'Participation' which occurred in a very natural way out of discussions over the weekend.

The Sunday night burn was not planned and just happened over the weekend. On that night the actual attendance on site grew. Locals from up and down the Valley and in the Bellingen township caught wind of what was happening. On a rough count there were well over 100 people who had gathered for this impromptu burn.

On the area where the first gathering was happening, there is a river bend around the site which has a large growth of Bamboo, growing wild and out of control, on the rivers edge. There was nothing more satisfying, for the Homeland community than for a group to come along and cut down some of this large growth of bamboo and get rid of it. As you may know, Bamboo is a grass which in the right conditions grows like a weed and can really take hold. So Homeland were rapped to have us cutting some down and burning it that evening.

As people gathered around the huge stack of Bamboo with the Seed Pod bamboo sculpture on top, anticipation started to build and people came out dressed up in all sorts of attire and characters. Of course it was not on the scale the Playa, however some of the rituals being acted out was very similar.

It took a long time to get the fire started as the Bamboo was fresh and not dried out. So under the careful supervision of the local district fire officer a small team set to work distributing some inflammable material through the bamboo which was successful in getting the Bon Fire ablaze.

At this the point there was a real magic happening. People were memorised by the fire and the heat coming off and there was an atmosphere of celebration in the air. Wet Bamboo, when burned also crackles intensely with small periodic popping explosions. This all added to the lively atmosphere erupting.

On the old stage, near the Bon Fire, a sound system with decks fired up, just toward the end moment when the Bon Fire was burning out, which created an instant place for people, lifted by the experience of the burn, to dance to some very cool beats into the evening. The whole evening was truly uplifting and beyond any expectations. The Stage was certainly being set for the next year's first Regional Burn.

Another great moment, over the weekend, was a suggestion at the circle discussion, on I think the Monday morning, after the big Bon Fire burning night, for everyone to walk over the site, as a group and do an 'Emu Pick Up'.

Now for those unfamiliar with this term, an Emu is a large iconic, long necked, Australian bird similar to the Ostrich, which is found in Outback Areas that spends most of its time bending over pecking for refuse left on the ground.

The Emu also has great significance in Australian Indigenous culture and is incorporated in many ceremonial dances.

Therefore to translated this lingo to Burning Man talk, what was being suggested, to the

group, was to walk over the site and do a 'MOOP (Matter Out Of Place) Pick Up'.

In Australia its a common practice, when having a lunch time picnic or BBQ, for someone toward the end of the day to suggest doing an 'Emu Pick Up' or simply 'Emu Pick', which is simply clearing up any objects or rubbish left around.

So after the suggestion to walk the length of the site and pick up any rubbish, a line of people formed and walked over the site picking up anything left on the ground. This was a really significant gesture which didn't go unnoticed by members of Homeland, who have hosted many other groups on this location and I hazard a guess have never seen such a conscious and consensual group action to 'leave no trace' upon the land they came to camp and meet upon.

What was happening over this weekend was two fold. Firstly there was a group of people coming together to talk about the prospects of having a Regional Burning Man event in Australia which would naturally form its own unique community. Secondly there was an onlooking and at times participating community of Homeland, who provided the the land where we had come to meet, who seemed intrigued by our endeavours. In essence, over the weekend, Homeland, within their own community space were welcoming the stranger, who in the longer term, when this gathering moves out to a more remote area, will most likely become an established Theme Camp.

Before my very eyes, at this first seed gathering, a community was forming which over the proceeding year has started to galvanise through a number of means and forums which has set the course for our first officially organised Australian Regional Burn, which will be held on the same extended National Public Holiday weekend, in only three months time, on June 10-14.

So how did this weekend came about? Who initiated it? Why, in some peoples eyes, has it taken over ten years, since the Establishment of the Regional Network, to occur?

The answers to these questions really goes back to when Australia's Regional Co-ordinator was first appointed about ten years ago. Robin Macpherson, who I made mention of before, held that post, on his own, until recently.

With onset of the Regional Burn and recognising the spread out nature of Australia's population, the Australian Region has recently been broken up and has three new Regional Co-ordinators, being Phil Smart covering Newcastle & Sydney, David Cake in Perth and myself in Melbourne. Robin Macpherson remains a Regional Co-ordinator and will be covering Cairns in Far North Queensland. This has been a decision of the head office in San Francisco in close consultation with Robin and makes a lot of sense with all the recent activity in our Region.

In my eyes Robin has always considered his role as one of 'Holding the Space' and allowing the Australian region to form at its own natural pace and overtime nurture what bubbles up. I also mentioned how he has seen it as important to also pick the right wave, which is on the rise right now.

Geographically Australia is also a long 13-16 hour International flight, from here, with significant time zone differences. Therefore the personal commitment and expense for any Australian to attend Burning Man here is significant and also prohibitive for many.

This means that while the profile of Burning Man has grown significantly over time, particularly with the establishment of a regional network, it still means that in a country like Australia, with a small population, there are only a limited number of people who have attended a Burning Man in Nevada and a much smaller number who have been able to make a return trip. Although, for some reason this attendance seems to have been a little exponential since 2005. However, this has correlated with growing interest in the region.

Therefore, due to the smaller number of people that can attend or make the return trip, this accounts partly as to why the Australian region has taken a while to build a reasonable number of Burners to have the interest to kick start an Australian Regional Burn .

Nevertheless, it must be noted that Australians like to travel. This is over a number of age groups and demographics. We have longer annual holidays and many young Australians, due to our isolation like to explore the rest of the world, and in some ways its a right of passage for those under 26 years of age to head over to the UK and work using Commonwealth working visa options and then travel on from there to many wide places. Therefore, it hasn't surprised me to occasionally see the odd Australian on the Playa.

Also, please keep in mind that the population of Australia is only about 21 million people, on a land mass larger than here in the States, if you ignore Alaska. This is in stark contrast to the 300 million people that make up America. We also don't have the same demographics. All this has a significant bearing of the nature of the participants within the Regional Network in Australia.

Nevertheless, Australia has a vibrant outdoor festival culture spread over a number of event types where our participation ratio, at these events, when divided into our countries population, reveals quite extraordinary results. As an example the unique outdoor Electronic dance gathering called 'Rainbow Serpent Festival' is now attracting over 10,000 people annually. While this event is different in its approach to Burning Man in a strange way it seems to incorporate certain elements which counterbalances the needs by some people, who without an outlet like this, would be pushing much more strongly for a Regional Burn earlier on.

So essentially our region has some interesting and quite unique characteristics which have been important factors determining the growth of the Australian regional Burning Man community.

I attended my first Burning Man in 1999, which was also Robin's first and only Burn. I've been lucky to have made it back 5 more times over the last ten years. During Robin's visit he made himself known to the Burning Man organisation by joining a computer group. Though these associations he was appointed Australia's first Regional Representative, when the Regional system was established.

At that time, I was heavily involved and committed with quite an extraordinary outdoor dance party phenomena called Earthcore, where I ran their Front Gate operations and had developed their first web presence two years before hand.

When developing the Earthcore web site I was doing some research on 'Global Dance and Rave' databases. I was looking for events to link to the Earthcore web site when I stumbled across the very first website developed for Burning Man by Scott Beale of the Laughing Squid fame.

I was intrigued by what I read and saw on this website and appreciative of the way by which this website had been constructed. I immediately put a link to it, on the Earthcore's 'Community Links' page.

When I reflect back, I would suggest this single action, at that time, set off an unfolding process where a wider number of people from the 'Outdoor Electronic Dance Party' scene in Australia, started to become switched on about the Burning Man phenomena, which has had a flow on effect to the current day.

During the 90's, the emerging global rave culture was wholeheartedly embraced in Australia's Capital Cities, where there has always been a very vibrant music and arts scene. In the ensuing period, some of these events moved outdoor and this led to the emergence of a unique outdoor dance party culture which had early origins from the 'Tek Know' Village at ConFest, a festival which has been going since 1976, which was originally called the 'Down to Earth' festival.

This festival gathering changed its name later to 'ConFest', where the name is the combination of two words 'Conference' and 'Festival', which are the suggested underlying purposes of this gathering by its founder the late Dr Jim Cairns.

Only a year prior to calling the first 'Down to Earth' festival gathering, Dr Jim Cairns was the Treasurer of Australia, in Gough Whitlam's socially progressive Labor Party government, which had been the centre of Australia's greatest political crisis since Federation in 1901.

On the 11/11/1975 (a significant date) the Queen's representative, the Governor General, exercised the reserve powers of the constitution which were available to this position and sacked the Government of the day. This occurred after the Senate had refused to pass the supply, monetary, bill, on two successive occasions, triggering a double dissolution, allowing these reserve powers to be called upon by the Governor General.

A year later from his parliamentary office, while now in opposition, Dr Jim Cairns called the first 'Down to Earth' gathering to vision the New Society.

Two decades on, the early 'Tek Know' villages, while controversial to some of the older 'Down to Earth / ConFest' folk, saw a re-energising of the space, similar to the energies a the first 'Down to Earth festival, which were adding a new component to the myriad of activities already occurring.

This eventually spiralled off and influenced outdoor electronic gatherings in Australia in many ways. A lot of which thankfully has been documented by Dr Graham St John, in parts of his doctorate on ConFest and also in his first, post doctorate publication, called 'Free NRG'. This publication is an anthology of Australian techno tribes involved in raising awareness on a variety of fronts and was published around the 2000 millennium.

As a point of interest, if you're ever wondering where my title comes from, you only have to read the introductory chapter where Graham described some of the characters he encountered at the 'Tek Know' Village, in which I was described, in print, as 'King' Richard Martin. However, granting my title this way, has always labelled my history and attendance, at this gathering, in the context of the 'Tek Know' Village activity. This is true to a certain degree, as I always lent it my wholehearted support, but its not entirely descriptive of my wider involvement and understanding of the intent of 'ConFest' and the original 'Down to Earth' festival as a space for intelligent conferencing in a festival

environment.

However I digress, as I was trying to answer my earlier question regarding reasons why it has taken until now for a Regional Burn to evolve in Australia. Another significant factor is drawing together people with the required available skills and commitment to form a core crew to organise this type of undertaking in an ongoing manner.

As I've mentioned we have a smaller and more spread out population, which also means that we have a greater scarcity of human resources. This makes it more difficult with finding talented and available personnel to take on and co-ordinate this type of activity at the level of proficiency that you would find at the main Burning Man event and at its central office location in San Francisco.

Also, some of the talented people in Australia, who might be drawn to this type of gathering, are already involved in other outdoor events and also not in the one place. However, new technologies like Voice over IP telephony is changing the whole game.

Internet conferencing technologies like Skype have allowed a core group of Robin, Phil and myself to stay in touch regularly after the Seed and form a Vision Group who started meeting weekly online in October last year. We are spread 2000 miles apart from each other where Robin is in Cairns in Far North Queensland, Phil is in Newcastle in NSW and I am in Melbourne Victoria.

Using the combination of Skype conference calling and a group-ware system called ProjectFork, which is a plugin to our Joomla based website, we have been able to conduct our Vision Group meetings, where we are located in different Cities and document these by constructing minutes in real time as the meeting progresses and then posting these immediately, at the end of the meeting, into the relevant files area on the group-ware. With any new cultural undertaking it is also important to constantly examine the processes and ways in which things are done and review these regularly against the final results of what the community is trying to achieve. The processes and the manner by which this are done can be simple or complex and the way a community project self governs and accounts for itself to its inner group and wider members is always an important exercise.

The Seed in June last year was a simple camp out gathering made possible through the venue provided by the Homeland Community. There was no admission and people brought everything they needed for the weekend. However during discussions it was realised that a continued event would at some stage require organisation and the formation of an entity to handle operations, insurances, legal matters, financial administration, site leases and other contractual arrangements.

Speaking to the circle Phil Smart suggested that a Non Profit organisation would be desirable and Robin Macpherson pointed the stick at me saying "that I am a person who he trusts the most with knowledge in this area".

I then spoke briefly to the circle and said "there are many options available for forming entities in the way of Associations, Co-operatives, Companies Limited by Guarantee, Companies and Trusts and if anyone has an interest, to come and chat with me about this".

Over the weekend only 'one' person came up to me. His name was Neillo who I had just met that weekend and I showed him a constitution I had written up, in February, for a

registered Association called the 'Oz Birthing Woman Association Limited'.

When I discussed this with him, he said 'this is serious stuff' and not out of disinterest or ability to understand these types of matters, he simply wasn't in the mind frame to really want to engage on this sort of level at that particular time.

I had a realisation at that moment that while there was understanding of what was needed to be done it was going happen post the gathering with consultation and from the processes that will occur after the weekend and there was quite a job ahead of us if these dreams at the Seed were going manifest into a reality.

After the gathering three main things have happened that has kept the community in touch and seen it grow. These things have also enabled the energy of the Seed weekend to flow on, which is laying the groundwork for the upcoming gathering in June.

Firstly, the creation of the forum on the Australian Burning Man Website has been the lynch pin that provided our spread out community to come together with a way to communicate. This has also given a noticeboard to advertise when regional meet ups are happening. It has facilitated the formation and growth of the community on-line by simply joining the website and interacting throughout its forums.

The second thing has been a group in Sydney, initiated by Phil, who started a social meet and greet night at a Sydney Hotel. The night has been called 'Sydney Burning Beers'. At their first night they made a tiny effigy of a Man out of match sticks and burnt it in a lane way outside the Hotel. This has maintained a group who have been able to meet up in person to keep discussions alive. Only last Friday week, there was a meet up that I initiated called 'Mel Burn Beers' which was held in Melbourne at a Gallery Bar in the City which was well attended, where the group wants to try and meet monthly. Other groups in Brisbane, Perth and are also making murmurings.

The third thing has been the personal efforts of Robin, Phil and me. We have kept in regular contact after the Seed weekend and formed a Vision Group that has been meeting every Tuesday since late October last year. This has been a lot of hard work which has reward itself recently when we formed an agreement between us which outlines how we are going to approach establishing the organisation side of the project.

This agreement is novel for the Australian Regional community because while the company is a private company we have bound ourselves to conducting the company in a manner which will reflect the main and aspirations of a Non Profit organisation and going the extra yard of being transparent to the community it is functioning for. In time, money made in our community fund, established through this company, will be channelled back to proposals for Arts at our regional Burn. The bank account we form will be like a community fund, where overtime the money that comes in via the Regional Burn will build up and and then be returned by way of grants to the participating Artists and essential ares of the operations, which in some ways is a form of 'Abundance' model which we will refine over time.

The main difference with how this entity will operate, is that it wont be required to hold annual elections. Therefore in the early formation stage of the Burn having to put effort there could place the entity and its operations in a vulnerable position where valuable time and energy would be needed to be put toward maintaining this process.

Also, as our community is spread over such a large distance, due to our unique geographic dispersment, a private company like this, is the only form of entity which will allow decisions to be made without having to conduct the meetings in person, as there is a provision in the Corporations Act that allows directors to make decisions by circulating resolutions.

In a practical sense this means that Robin, Phil and me could have a meeting over Skype and produce our minutes. These minutes could then be printed and circulated in the form of a single circulated resolution, which would then be faxed along the to the next person needing to sign. After the circulated resolution has been signed up, by the three of us, it then becomes a legally binding decision of the directors.

Unfortunately and to the best of my knowledge, this approach isn't available to directors or committee of management members of registered Non Profit bodies like Associations and Co-operatives who are required to have their meetings in person.

However, the method of making decisions by a circulated resolution might be available to a Company Limited by Guarantee, which is a form of Public Non Profit company registered under the same Corporations Act as private companies. This is being investigated.

I believe the Homeland community is established as one of these Public Non Profit type companies, which is the legal entity that holds the title of their land upon which their community has formed, However, the process for establishing these types of Public Non Profit company entities requires lodging of a specific type of constitution which is costly process to establish. Initial start up processes of all the formation meetings and record keeping is a lot of work, as well.

I'm also very mindful that election contests at this stage of our communities formation could also introduce a type of internal politicking that could be counter-productive to the end result and functional purpose by which such an entity is set up for this type of gathering.

This could even work against the type of operation structure that we're trying to introduce for the benefit of the community, as the civic nature of this project and our agreement dictates that our actions as directors, of our newly formed private company, are directly for the community and not for private gain. Those with legal backgrounds, or an interest here, may think this approach of ours sounds like a bit of an oxymoron where we are trying to run a private company in a Public Non- Profit manner, but it has been done for all practical reasons I have been outlining to get us up and going and seems the best way at this stage.

One could also form a view that this approach is a form of benevolent dictatorship, which it is in a way. However, the overriding agreement that Robin, Phil and me have agreed to and the way in which our emerging community is closely aligned to the principles of Burning Man, almost determines that our roles as directors on the company are to be custodians of the principles and wider philosophies of Burning Man which we are offering the greatest protection of via these means.

Therefore, whether an individual chooses to participate by making Art, setting up their own Theme camp, bringing an Art car or Bus, this will be encouraged as their gift to the community. However, if they wish to go the extra yard and put effort into the year round operations, before, during and after the Burn, their gift will be welcome as well. It is

envisioned that these areas of the operations will be inclusive, built around various departments and be required to operate on consensus decision making. They will be allowed to self organise with how they choose to operate, always guided by their team lead carefully selected and appointed by the main operations body of the operations side of the company.

To achieve all of this we have recently registered a private company with shares called 'Red Earth City Pty Ltd', where Robin, Phil and me are its directors and three equal shareholders.

Our agreement requires us to run the company in a Non Profit manner where we don't distribute income to Directors, Shareholders, Stakeholders or the wider Burning Man community. This agreement also states that we will make decisions by consensus and allows us to reimburse people for their expenses and time and ensure there be transparency of the finances of the company and the organisation formed here by the company to the wider Burning Man Community. However, one of the key features of this agreement is that the company and the organisation formed out of the agreement is not the end of the line and it can be changed in the future, if required.

Now that we have established a legal entity, we are now able to sign the lease with Homeland, operate a bank account, start selling tickets and take out insurance. In essence this has given the community a means to get the operations up and running very quickly, where the next step will be for the directors of the company to introduce a clear set of 'Committee Guidelines' which will determine how the actual operations organisation will be structured and governed. This document is nearly formed and ready to be agreed upon and introduced.

The success of this approach is going to fall back on the way in which Robin, Phil and me govern the company 'Red Earth City Pty Ltd' and the organisation we will be forming out of this company when we establish the company's 'Committee Guidelines'.

I believe we have begun on a good footing with the regular meetings of the Vision Group where we have made all our decisions consensually and produced minutes of our meetings. In the long term our community will be judging the manner by which we keep the company and the organisation we form out of the company on-track and on-theme as honest, functional and integral.

All of this comes down to understanding the critical significance of having deep integrity in the design of the legal and deliberative instrumentation.

Initially, in our case, this all lies in the formation documentation of the company and the 'Committee Guidelines' which are about to be introduced and open sourced to our community.

As our community grows and our organisation forms these aspects of how we operate it will become paramount to achieving these aims.

I believe this is also relevant for each and every Regional Leader involved in undertaking events for their community, within their Regions, as it can be quite hard coming up with the right form of legal and deliberative instrumentations.

Once these are in place and established it can also be quite hard to apply these in a

practical ongoing basis which requires applied integrity and insight by those entrusted with its operation and where they are undertaken in a manner where the community for which they are serving don't get disenfranchised by the organisational side of things, which can occur. Even though, when ironically they are there for the very purpose of keeping things on-track and on-theme.

However, despite these difficulties, when such operational processes are working well, the community for which these are set up to serve ultimately benefits and the events stay on-track.

Now before I wind up, this is a good opportunity to make a brief mention about 'The Birthing Woman' project which is an exciting and ambitious arts endeavour that a group of us hope to bring out to Burning Man next year in 2011.

The Birthing Woman project is a massive transportable interactive sculpture taking the form of a woman preparing to give birth as she emerges from the earth. Measuring 100 metres long and 50 metres wide she will have the capacity to entertain and share dialogue with 1000 people inside her glorious body where the belly is the main performance arena, one breast is for cinema, the other is for workshops and the head is a meditative space.

It has been conceived by the Project's Artistic Director Robin Cooke who was one of the Founders of the Mutoid Waste Company. He has been creating fire based installation art out of recycled materials throughout Europe and Australia for over 25 years.

Earlier on I made a passing reference about the constitution I had written up for the 'Oz Birthing Woman Association Limited' which is a Non Profit Association we successfully registered in February last year to function as the financial and legal interface for the project. The design of the constitution of this association was done in a manner to allow the Association to apply for 'Tax Concession Charity' status and 'Gift Deductible Recipient' status.

Both of these statuses have been applied for and granted to the Association.

Tax Concession Charity removes the requirement for the Association to pay tax and Gift Deductible Recipient status allows the association to form a required Public Fund, where any donations given to this are tax deductible.

Our success with being granted both of these statuses is a remarkable achievement, particularly for any new organisation starting up. Many established organisations can take years trying to get only one of these statuses granted. Therefore, as we celebrate this major achievement, we are hoping it will open up the potential to funding which underpins the success of this project.

However, as I mentioned before, with regard to keeping things on-track and on-theme as honest, functional and integral, it has been an interesting year of meetings and various processes coming out after the registration of the association. It has made me realise that with all the best interest and intent, it is a lot of hard work to get things to where they are and get a group of people to work and operate in a focused and cohesive way, understanding the reasons and necessity for conducting things in the way they are established to be done.

Having worked with a few community organisations since the early 80s, I put my hat up to undertake the task of forming the constitution for the Association and being its Chair to

facilitate the processed so that all the Association's requirements are met.

I really know, first hand, how difficult it is , as not everybody in your community is drawn to these undertakings or can immediately grasp the required processes . However, at the end of the day, when your community group starts to gel and come to terms with the these things, it begins operating well, where the results stand up.

In my opinion things are starting to gel with the project on Association side, which hopefully will be able to raise the funds, in the short amount of time required, to make this a reality. However, we will be seeking your full support as this project is just as much for the Burning Man community as it is for the artists bringing the project over. Also, once The Birthing Woman has returned to Australia and achieved her harmonic planetary re-alignment, it is planned to take her on the road around the country on tour with the Earthdream which will be continuing its journey in 2012, starting in Perth in Western Australia then wrapping its way around the Southern parts of the Country, then heading North to be at the Solar Eclipse in Cairns on the 13th-14th of Nov 2010 before heading to the Centre for the Solstice on the 21st Dec 2012 for the Mayan End of Time gathering.

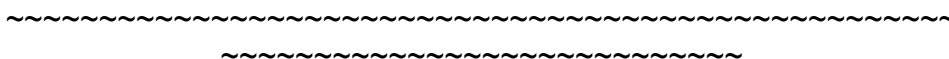
So we looking forward to seeing you on the Playa next year with our big Mamma in all its glory.

Now to wrap things up, I would like to thank you for coming along to the Regional Leaders Summit to hear me talk today. Its been a such pleasure to speak with you and inform everyone about the planning for the upcoming Regional Burn in Australia. In doing so, it has also been important to provide some understanding about some of the Outdoor Gatherings that occur and the challenges that we face in establishing a Regional Burn as we form our community and integrate this into the landscape over there. It was also really worthwhile to provide some insight about the reasons why it has taken the time it has to get to where we are at. Finally, it was a pleasure to talk about "The Birthing Woman @ Burning Man Project", that is trying to get to a rather larger than life pregnant woman, rising out of the playa, next year, in 2011. All of these are exciting projects requiring enormous personal effort and organisation by those involved which will have great benefit for our communities, which I feel an enormous pleasure to be a part of.

Now before I go and on a very uplifting note, it makes me very happy to pass on the following message that just came last night from Rusty, one of our community liaison officers, who conveyed the following message from Uncle Martin, one of the Indigenous Elders of the Bellingen Area, where Homeland is situated.

"Uncle Martin told Rusty he was looking forward to coming out to Burning Man to open it and have his band play there and have Victor and some other dancers there"

Thank you.



Postlude:

Please note that due to a late start to the day and a miscalculation of the length of the Key Note Address, on my behalf, the talk had to be shortened a little bit toward the end, where I paraphrased the discussions about the Birthing Woman @ Burning Man project.

However, Maid Marian (Marian Goodell), when advising of the shortage of time, was also able to introduce a very important summary of discussions made with people in Australia, during her recent visit, in January, about the great potential around 2013, when it is planned to move the Australian Region Burn to a more remote outback region, where the event may rapidly scale to a 10,000 plus gathering.

During Marian's quick 'wind up' summary, she obviously didn't have time to provide any detail as to why this could be the case. Therefore, I wish to add that the main imputes, for these rising conditions, could come out of the large and unique international gatherings being planned for the November 2012 Eclipse, in Far North Queensland, after which there may be an escalation in interest by Australian festival goers for supporting a large Regional Burn gathering, in a remote geographic location, incorporating all the wonderful aspects that Burning Man encourages of Radical Inclusion, Gifting, De-commodification, Radical Self Reliance, Radical Self Expression, Communal Effort, Civic Responsibility, Leave No Trace, Participation and Immediacy in an experimental temporary community.

Interestingly one of the most talked about locations could be near Broken Hill in New South Wales (NSW), which was the filming location for Mad Max 2 / The Road Warrior.

