



Editorial

Dear Readers and friends of NCQ,

Welcome to the first issue of the sixth volume of the *New Community Quarterly* ... a quite amazing array of 'things' have happened or are happening in our immediate context; most of those are surely having an impact on the issues taken on board in this journal (and which traditionally have been taken up by its predecessor, *Community Quarterly* which existed from 1983 til about 2000). To name a few: signing up to Kyoto, saying Sorry, 2020 discussions, renewed 'listening' to other voices, attention for education, housing and the ecology, removing the silencing clauses attached to government grants and programs, addressing the inter-States and States-Feds grandstanding, chest-thumping and red-taping and – could it be possible? – returning to building infrastructure and to a more progressive tax regime... all too good to believe in one fell – and rather breathless – swoop, isn't it...? But we'll keep you informed as to how the processes in these matters look from the underside ... and we invite you to continue to report about how they look...

We do want to break the rather deafening silence surrounding the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of a stretch of time – the 'Sixties' – which, for many of us 'ageing' activists, was absolutely formative and acted a bit like a 20th century wave of enlightenment. Significantly, during the 2007 French election, Nicolas Sarkozy let it be known that "May 68's heritage must be liquidated once and for all". Whilst not all of that time is to be celebrated, guided by economic (ir)rationalism, greed and the belief that all there is to society is to provide an infrastructure to our (assumed) egoistic human nature, he and many other conservative politicians have done their very best to turn back the gains made by radical movements, including attacking workers rights, welfare, health and education and destroy the legacy of a movement that shook the French and many other western societies to their core. Still, the events of Paris and elsewhere in the 'developed west' in the late sixties and early seventies still colour political debates and give substance to political orientations and cleavages, even if systematic and orchestrated 'forgetting' has been very much a feature of the four decades since.

Having been part of that time, it seems obvious to me that – at least – part of the inspiration behind many of the issues, activisms and critiques which filled and fills the pages of the (New) *Community Quarterly* is also part of the 60s-heritage. And I am convinced that we can still learn a lot from that period.

Whilst our subscription base has still not reached the extent which would make it possible to put our existence on a firmer basis (than the purely voluntary one it still consists of), we seem to stabilise around the 500 subscriptions, but we do need more... and if you don't believe me, listen to what some of our subscriber do say about NCQ: "Hi ... keep up the informative and interesting mag.! Regards, Marty"; "Just a note with my subscription to say congratulations on the work ... members of the editorial and management group put into NCQ. It continues to be a very valuable publication. I particularly enjoy the network news and the news/reviews section these days – great stuff, for instance from Whitmore, Reeves, Biddulph, Monbiot & co. What a relief that we now have a government with some vision, but gosh, we have a long way to go! All the very best to you and all ... Mary Lane." And, finally, Kirsten wrote "I am about to re-subscribe - love the journal and am so very excited when it arrives..."

Thanks to all for your friendly words; we invite also critical discussion and ongoing conversation and are looking forward to your contributions!

Jacques Boulet, for the NCQ management group

Autumn 2008

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Strengthening Indigenous community governance for sustainability: using Indigenous principles in a community development approach

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[This is an edited version of a keynote address to the 'Community Development and Ecology: Engaging ecological sustainability through community development' Conference, Deakin University, March 2008]

Let me start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who have cared for this land for countless generations.

I want to situate what I'm going to say into a wider debate going on in Australia about Indigenous development. Then I will go on to emphasise the importance of governance-strengthening through a community development approach as a key factor in sustaining Indigenous social and economic development. I will also include some examples of how Indigenous-led development plays a very positive role in environmental and natural resource management, as that is very much consistent with the theme of this conference.

However, I need to start by stepping back to the broader debates going on at a national level about Indigenous development, so please bear with me as this may seem a little distant from your ecological theme. I probably do not have to remind this audience about the 17-year life expectancy gap between Indigenous and other Australians. But I do not think it helps to constantly focus on the problems, significant though they are. Community development principles suggest we should build on assets and strengths, and I want to discuss those at greater length later. I think it is important to recognise, however, that there is no national consensus at present about how to 'Close the Gap' between Indigenous and other Australians.

As many of you will be aware there was, until the mid-1990s broad agreement in Australia about the basic principle of self-determination which underpinned policies of Indigenous development. The right of self-determination is fundamental international human rights principle, which requires acceptance of group rights and political interests, not simply individual rights (Evatt 2007) and implicitly recognizes peoples' rights to economic, social and cultural difference. In 1990, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs defined self-determination as:

'...the devolution of political and economic power to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. The Committee defined self-determination in terms of Aboriginal control over the decision-making process as well as ultimate control about a wide range of matters including political status and economic, social and cultural development. It means Aboriginal people having the resources and capacity to control the future of their communities within the legal structure common to all Australians.'

(HRSCAA 1990:12)

But since the mid-1990s doubt has been cast on the effectiveness of that strategy and you will be aware that vigorous debate has opened up about the best way to overcome Indigenous disadvantage. I'll try to summarise the alternative positions and am perhaps characterising the extreme positions in the debate to highlight the issues being discussed:

Some are arguing that self-determination has failed, that it led to cultural ghettos, separatism, isolation from mainstream Australian development, the market and productive labour, and caused entrenched welfare dependency and social dysfunction. Underlying this view is an assumption that Aboriginal culture, and particularly its emphasis on relationships with and obligations to wide family and kinship networks, rather than attention to the individual, is a problem—that culture is a barrier to development, and will have to change. The solution is to force people into the 'mainstream' through a series of changes in incentives (sticks and carrots) to make them move to where jobs or training and potential opportunities are – that is to get them into the market economy – which is often very weakly developed or almost non-existent in more remote areas.

Others are arguing that in the name of self-determination, governments in Australia walked away from their obligations to Indigenous citizens and just left them to it leaving a huge backlog of badly needed investment in infrastructure, such as housing, communications, public facilities, education, health etc which Indigenous people and communities urgently need. They have been denied basic citizenship entitlements. They emphasise that past and present experiences of racism and dispossession have excluded Indigenous people from jobs and opportunities and that collective trauma, grief and alienation have contributed to social problems and poverty. Related to this is a view that culture is central to Indigenous development – that building on the strengths of Indigenous culture will provide avenues for development. Thus, it is argued not all Indigenous people "want to join the mainstream", though obviously many will, but those who wish to develop what Altman (2001) calls a "Hybrid Economy" – livelihoods derived from a mix of state provision (e.g. payment for environmental services, such as land management, quarantine services, border control), engagement with the market (e.g. selling art, tourism, niche products, carbon abatement etc) and the customary sector (hunting, gathering) — should be able to do so.

Whilst this characterisation may be slightly unfair, as some commentators may accept elements of both positions, those who take the latter view are more likely to argue that there needs to be more support for community development to assist communities to really build on the potentials they have. Holders of the former view would see little point or value in community development – their focus is on individual development in the market economy. Of course, both individual and community development may be valuable – depending on diverse Indigenous aspirations.

However, many of the programs which are currently succeeding work from community development principles – they give Indigenous people real decision-making roles, often based on sole or joint management of their lands. They value and build on their culture and knowledge and provide education and networking to bring in new ideas and knowledge and to empower people. This does not mean that people's culture is frozen in time – rather it means that people's identity cannot be divorced from their culture and that culture, whilst it has ancient roots, will always change and adapt to new circumstances. For example, Indigenous people have embraced globalisation and new technologies; they are engaged in the carbon economy through fire management regimes; they promote and sell their art worldwide through the internet; they attract international tourists to their culturally-based tourism products. Robins has called these hybrid modes of operating 'indigenous modernities' (Robins 2003); they often involve win-win solutions, the West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement Project being an example of private investment in abating carbon emissions, also generating environmental management jobs for Indigenous people in a remote region.

Some of the most successful community development approaches relating to the theme of the conference are "Caring for Country" programs of land and sea management, which combine Indigenous knowledge about 'country' with western scientific knowledge – but in a way which is empowering of Indigenous rangers because both sorts of knowledge are respected and used. The Northern Land Council's "Caring for Country Unit" now supports some 35 ranger groups employing some 400 Indigenous participants across the Top End (Altman, Buchanan and Larsen 2007).

One example is a ranger group managed by the Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, which was formed in 1992 by 11 clans initially—two more have since joined, bringing the total to 13. Dhimurru rangers are involved in coastal surveillance, marine debris clean-up and rescue through a ghost net program (Altman, Buchanan and Larsen 2007). This organisation has now achieved the declaration of the Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area surrounding Nhulumbuy in northeast Arnhemland. The IPA covers an area of 92,000 ha, including 9000 ha of coastal waters and was formally declared in 2000, giving the clans sole management of their lands and waters. These IPAs could be described as Aboriginal conservation areas. The Dhimurru corporation works in partnership with many other agencies in managing its lands and a recent study of the organisation identified several factors as central to its success: the commitment of the traditional owners to take care of their country, good

governance, leadership and management, the commitment to partnership building and its willingness to innovate (Smyth 2007).

The Indigenous Protected Area programs are now demonstrating some outstanding examples of conservation-led development, based on cultural knowledge and the land assets which many communities have regained; some 23 IPAs have been declared and another 14 are in development. Such activities respond to Indigenous initiatives, and build on existing assets and strengths, including culture, in very positive ways. And, of course, there are joint management arrangements in a number of National Parks across the country, which enable Indigenous people to actively engage in land management and conservation activities, in addition to providing economic development through tourism and related activities in many cases.

In Victoria, organisations like the Brambrook Cultural Centre at Hall's Gap and the Lake Condah Sustainable Development Project in Western Victoria also exemplify sustainable Indigenous development. Ownership of Brambuk is shared between five Aboriginal communities with historic links to the Gariwerd-Grampians ranges and the surrounding plains. The Centre runs cultural and environmental education programs, a bush-food café and cultural tours in the National Park. The Grampians National Park and surrounds is home to 80 per cent of Victoria's rock art, the largest representation in southern Australia. Evidence of Aboriginal occupation in this area dates back over 22,000 years. The tours and education programs explain all this and traditional ways of caring for and utilising the land. At Lake Condah, the Gunditjmara people are in the process of restoring the wetlands of Lake Condah and the ancient and sophisticated eel trap system which sustained a settled Aboriginal society over thousands of years. In doing this, they are both developing their community and its economic base and restoring heritage wetlands and surrounding lands. The Lake Condah Water Restoration Project, for example, will revitalize the Lake's wetlands and reactivate the significant Gunditjmara aquaculture system that surrounds it.

These examples all take pride in their Aboriginal culture and build programs, activities and income-earning activities based on it. They also attend to their governance, which builds on kinship and clan arrangements. There is no doubt that sustainability of improved outcomes in Indigenous communities requires strengthened governance at the local as well as government levels. Whilst improved governance by governments is essential, Indigenous communities also need capable, effective governance processes and systems to partner successfully and drive their own social and economic development, including by partnering with government, research agencies and the private sector.

The COAG trials, which included eight whole-of-government pilots (one in each State/Territory) of working with Indigenous communities around Australia, ran from 2003-4 to around 2007 and revealed the importance of both governments and Indigenous communities getting their governance right in order to work successfully in partnership with each other (Morgan Disney and Associates 2006:21). Only one site, the Murdi Paaki Region in NSW, where local Indigenous

governance capacity was already relatively advanced through work undertaken during the ATSIC era, prioritized further governance and capacity building support during the course of the trial (Urbis, Keys, Young 2006). This trial site was the most successful and outcome indicators in that region are starting to show the results, although one bureaucrat involved told me I had to say here that it was "bloody hard". No doubt, the Indigenous leaders would agree; it's hard on both sides of this intercultural exchange, but it's worth the effort to get the results! This trial focussed strongly on education.

There are significant results at that site. In the year 2005-6 there were significant increases in the proportion of students in Years 3 and 5 in the highest bands for literacy and numeracy and decreases in the proportions in the lowest bands. Improvements in health have been quite remarkable and there has been a substantial drop in the rate of hospital separations due to alcohol. There have also been marked drops in domestic and other violence, break and enters and thefts from stores and homes (Jarvie 2007).

These achievements are all the more significant given the high Aboriginal population growth rate in that area. Much of the credit should go to the Indigenous communities and their leadership, who have worked on these issues over many years; it would be fair to say that the groundwork for these achievements was laid in the community development work which went on in earlier years, led by the ATSIC Regional Council, supported by local Aboriginal organisations and programs. The COAG trial built on this and has been able to make gains because of it.

This leads me to the nub of this presentation – the value of using community development approaches to strengthen community governance, which in turn will sustain the outcomes which we – and communities – want to see – it will enable communities to improve their socio-economic situation and often combine this with improved environmental outcomes. Interestingly, despite the far greater emphasis on community governance in the Murdi Paaki trial site compared to any others, the key learning emerging from the site on the part of governments is that there should have been earlier investment in community capacity building, particularly in youth leadership development.

For the last three years, I have been managing a major national ARC Linkage research project between the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at The Australian National University and Reconciliation Australia, investigating what works in Indigenous community governance in remote, regional and urban settings. It has involved some twelve researchers and various partner Aboriginal organisations. The research has identified some key Indigenous principles and strategies that underpin Indigenous approaches to governance across the country. Whilst we recognise that each Indigenous community is unique, having its own history, geography, social and cultural complexity and its own ways of interacting with the wider Australian society, we believe that our research has uncovered some fundamental principles which are common to the diversity of the communities we have been working with.

The meaning of 'governance' and 'community'

By governance we mean the processes, relationships, institutions and structures by which a group of people organise to represent themselves, negotiate their rights and interests with others and make decisions about:

Governance is the processes, relationships, institutions and structures by which a group of people organise to represent themselves, negotiate their rights and interests with others, and make decisions about:

- their group membership and identity;
- how they manage their affairs;
- who has authority and power within the group;
- how their leaders should exercise power and be held accountable;
- what their agreed rules are to ensure authority is exercised properly;
- how they enforce the decisions they make; and what kinds of structures and procedures they need to implement their decisions and make sure things are run well.

There are many different kinds of Indigenous 'community' located in rural, remote and urban areas, some are discrete settlements, others are 'communities of identity and interest' that are physically dispersed across wider regions and towns. Everywhere, family ties and relationships to 'country' lie at the heart of Indigenous 'communities of identity'. Indigenous people may identify as 'Noongar', 'Yolngu', 'Wiradjuri' or simply 'Koorie,' for example. These groupings have their own 'cultural boundaries' which may bear no relationship to government administrative boundaries.

Today most Indigenous communities are complex combinations of different families, clans, language and ceremonial groups, some of whom have an historical attachment to a particular location, while others have land-owning rights to the same area. So there are often different communities within a geographic community. Some families and organisations may represent a whole community; sometimes several organisations represent different rights and interests within the community. Sometimes, organisations work together to represent groups of communities over larger regions.

The governance of Indigenous communities is, therefore, extremely complex. Often, the governance difficulties in Indigenous communities arise because of conflicts or confusion about who has authority to make particular decisions, for example, about land or 'country', about cultural heritage, about delivery of government services like health, education, housing, child welfare, employment, etc.

Developing effective governance – whether for a single organisation or for a whole community or region – often starts by sorting out these complex relationships, understanding the histories which have led to the current governance situation, reviewing whether these arrangements are still effective, and perhaps changing them.

It also requires attention to what we call 'cultural geographies'. For example, clans and residents involved in the establishment of the Thamarrurr Council at Wadeye in the NT spent several years undertaking a community-based process of reflecting

on their own local history in order to consider what values, processes, relationships, forms of authority and strengths were important to them. During this process people began to conceptualise how their governance might be improved, developing a clan-based structure for their local government which made cultural sense to them and covered the traditional country of those clans.

Thus, three important principles for developing sustainable Indigenous governance can be summed up as "history, geography and culture":

- understand the governance histories and cultural traditions of groups and organisations and their role in shaping their contemporary governance solutions and relationships;
- resolve internal relationships and shared connections in order to determine group membership and representation;
- use cultural geographies as the basis for creating governance structures and giving legitimacy to them.

The case studies also confirm that Indigenous groups try to find a balance between their residential decentralisation and local autonomy on the one hand, and their political centralisation and regional representation on the other (with 'region' being quite diversely defined). This has important implications for any initiatives to reshape and build Indigenous governance at community and regional levels.

In line with this, Indigenous groups and organisations practice a form of 'micro-federalism' in their arrangements. They are allocating different functions to different layers of their organisational structures, keeping certain areas of decision-making at the most local level they can, while recognising that some decisions and services are better carried out by a body with broader regional and functional responsibilities. Indigenous people are not assuming that governance arrangements have to be centralised, bounded and unitary. Rather, 'federalised' systems of community and organisational governance are favoured that are able to accommodate inter-dependent layers. Groups in all our case studies are attempting to combine the advantages of united strength and larger-scale functions with a high degree of self-determination by constituent members and groups.

We characterise these initiatives as a form of 'networked governance' (Burris, Drahos and Shearing 2005), of which many different types are being practiced, indicating that this has considerable value as an institutional mechanism and design principle for Indigenous people. A couple of examples will suffice for this paper.

Anmatjere Community Government Council (ACGC)

Anmatjere Community Government Council is an Aboriginal local government body, centred on the small township of Ti-Tree about 2hrs north of Alice Springs. It was established in 1993, at a time when the Northern Territory Government was trying to develop more regional, multi-settlement local government, rather than very small community councils.

ACGC is about to be amalgamated into the much larger Central Desert Shire later this year, but in its 15-years existence has demonstrated some valuable principles about how localism and regionalism can co-exist and function effectively, overcoming some of the capacity constraints of a smaller body, but not overriding the autonomy which local settlements want. The Council serviced a number of outlying settlements some not too far from Ti-Tree, others a good distance away, and found that its legitimacy was strengthened by its ability to assist outlying communities to develop, including through the CDEP scheme, and to have a level of autonomy over their community operations, within the framework of the regional body's policies. Getting the balance right between maintaining and strengthening local settlement community activities and the aggregation of regional interests was vital, as was getting real clarity about roles and relationships between the different layers of its operation. These are important principles for the new, much larger Shire to work on (Sanders, forthcoming).

Yarnteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation

Another interesting example of the networked governance formation is one based on the institutional mechanism of 'families' of organisations, groups and communities, who cooperate for particular purposes. There is widespread evidence of the Indigenous use of the concept of 'family' as a metaphor for developing networked governance and for generating their underlying organisational rules and cultures.

Smith describes the establishment of Yarnteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation in Newcastle, where its leadership wanted to recognise a core of family groups as the non-profit organisation's main constituency. Family representation was developed as the basis for the new organisation's governing arrangements. Over the years, as it has grown and reassessed its strategic direction, Yarnteen has diversified its organisational structure to respond to the need for changing economic development strategies. It has incubated several offshoot organisations to take over different parts of its functional operations, all located in or around Newcastle, separately incorporated and with their own purposes and separate boards, yet remaining collectively known as 'the Yarnteen group' and the 'Yarnteen family'. Through this networked organisational relationship, Yarnteen's leadership has retained a strong role in mentoring and providing management support to the incubated organisations.

Yarnteen is a highly successful economic development organisation, which other things now running a bulk warehousing and commodity-handling service at the Newcastle docks, a 'green' car and boat-wash in Port Macquarie, an Indigenous Creative Enterprise Centre, providing access to computers and technology for business development and several affiliated organisations, among them a registered training organisation and an Indigenous employment centre and a cultural resource association. As a result of building a strong internal culture within the organisation based on the family concept, today Yarnteen's governing members, management and staff regard the organisation as being 'one big family' (Smith 2006).

Other examples of networked governance include the “umbrella organisation” like Thamurrurr Regional Council, or the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly which brings together under one ‘umbrella’ many different clans or communities. The essence of these models indicate the two common Indigenous design principles:

- networked models of governance which encompass dispersed local groups, and connected organisations across communities and regions;
- ‘bottom-up’ governance models that have inter-connected layers of decision making, roles and responsibilities.

What matters for successful governance in these cases is that organisations work out through a community development process what the responsibilities of different layers will be, what roles each will take and how their accountabilities to each other will function.

Leadership

In every research site, the role of leaders is a foundation stone for community governance—for the better or for the worse, depending on how it is exercised. Leadership is extremely complex on the ground, being socially dispersed, hierarchical and context specific (with ceremonial, organisational, familial, residential, age and gender dimensions). There are overlapping networks of leadership and authority in communities and regions, evident across organisations and family webs.

Indigenous leadership is conferred based on a range of criteria and processes, but it has to be constantly retained. There are strong norms about consensus, negotiation and consultation associated with leadership—leaders are expected to come back to their community constituents to discuss information and ideas with them. The communication and interaction between ‘leaders’ and community members is seen to be very important in sustaining their legitimacy. The concept and style of leadership and decision-making in Indigenous cultures appears to be significantly different from those familiar to governments. Non-Indigenous stakeholders may not even recognise legitimate Indigenous leadership and, hence, may inadvertently undermine it.

Leadership is critical to the development of a strong governance culture within organisations and communities and leaders committed to strengthening governance make a difference. More coordinated program funding for leadership development, mentoring and succession at the community level is needed, to foster the next generation of leaders in a very youthful Indigenous community.

Community leaders are often part of wider networks of regional or even national leadership which provide them with various forms of support – we see that there are some key people whose position within several overlapping networks gives them a particularly important leadership role – they are nodal leaders and at such nodes, where networks intersect, things get done. In essence, a final principle is the importance of influential leaders who can mobilise resources and people in order to get things done.

My colleague, Diane Smith, has been working for a number of years now with a group of Indigenous community leaders who are developing what is now to become the West Arnhem Shire in the Northern Territory. She has seen the value of the role of two Community Development facilitators (a man and a woman) working with these leaders and their communities to develop their governance processes and arrangements which will give them greater control of their local government and many community services.

The Community Development approach, working with the Indigenous design principles I explained above, has been used to help them strengthen their institutions of governance and develop sustainable governance for the future. It has not been easy, but it seems to be working. There are many other examples I could discuss and you will never hear about them in the mainstream media, so I will finish by just mentioning a couple more which exemplify community development and sustainability in multiple ways.

Murru Mittigar is an Aboriginal organisation in Penrith, Western Sydney, which has very successfully combined employment creation with land rehabilitation. The organisation was formed in 1998 to develop long-term benefits from a local quarry operation for the traditional owners and the wider Indigenous community of Western Sydney. It now has a professional land rehabilitation crew and more than 40 staff running a range of employment and training programs, a café, retail gallery, wholesale nursery and cultural tourism activities. This mix of business streams and fee-for-service approach gives the organisation economic independence from government funding. It has strong governance and takes a holistic community developmental approach to building the capacity of its people. It is also turning an old quarrying landscape into a beautiful parkland area for Western Sydney.

Joint management arrangements in Nitmiluk National Park (better known to some as Katherine Gorge and its surrounding area) provide my final example. Toni Bauman has documented these at length (Bauman 2007), but pertinent to our discussions today is the importance of Jawoyn traditional owners of that country now managing the Park jointly with the NT Parks and Wildlife Service and being able to balance social and cultural needs and interests (e.g. to care for their country in an ecologically sustainable way, respecting cultural protocols), with economic development opportunities particularly for young people, to provide for economic sustainability. Since 1989 Jawoyn have taken virtually full control of all commercial ventures in the Park, among them river cruises, canoe hire, walking tours, campgrounds, kiosks and a restaurant at the Visitor’s Centre. The Park contributes an estimated \$50m per year to the Katherine economy and some \$1.3m goes to the Jawoyn Association in various ways, which it uses, among other things, for a number of social services for its people. The value of traditional owner control, a community development approach, recognition of culture as ‘day-to-day lived experience’ and a strong emphasis on governance capacity development are among a number of critical success factors in that endeavour. Attention to the partnership and capacity development of non-Indigenous people interacting with them is also critical.

To finish, I want to emphasise that a community development approach, drawing on the Indigenous design principles I outlined earlier, is the most effective way to strengthen Indigenous community governance, effective and legitimate governance, in turn, enabling more sustained social and economic outcomes for Indigenous people. These outcomes are frequently combined with improved environmental sustainability, due to Indigenous peoples' cultural responsibilities to care for their country for succeeding generations.

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Some musings on lessons learned from PNG experiences

Helen Rosenbaum

recipients and mere spectators. The development process must take into account the spiritual, mental, physical and emotional aspects of an individual, the family, the community and the province as a whole.

The evaluation report summarised that:

Before 2000 communities were described as struggling to maintain their traditional values, laws and ways of organising. They were facing social, political, spiritual, economic problems brought in by western influence. This was resulting in a cultural breakdown and communities were not organised or self-reliant. There was almost no cooperation or community participation and very limited participation of women and youth. Communities also had no road infrastructure or access to health and education services.

While many of these problems continue, some significant changes were described to the Evaluation Team as a result of ENBSEK trainings. Communities are starting to become organised with more cooperation and community participation. Some women are starting to participate and take a lead in activities. Youth have also started to take up leadership roles and to organise themselves. People are now taking ownership of and managing their affairs. They no longer wait for government services but fund-raise themselves for projects such as play-schools and youth activities. Communities are also starting to recognise their own resource people instead of always looking outside.

With the knowledge community members have received from ENBSEK, they can better analyse situations and differentiate between the positives and negatives (i.e. they are starting to be able to make informed decisions).

Villages are more peaceful. There are better relationships within families and between different groups in the village. There are less arguments and less family violence. There are now sports associations, more cultural and church activities and activities involving men, women and youth.

Furthermore, significant changes at individual level were also described to the Evaluation Team by ENBSEK community volunteers or motivators:

All of the motivators appreciated the training received by ENBSEK and stated that this training enabled them to gain the confidence, courage and knowledge to take up these roles and gain the respect of their communities. Several of the male motivators expressed that before ENBSEK training they were "nobody" in the community and some even saw themselves previously as the "worst kind of person". The Evaluation Team could clearly see that ENBSEK trainings have transformed the lives of motivators, assisting them to recognise their potential.

All this leading to the question: is this new Australian government prepared to make the long term investment in community development required to achieve self-reliant, resilient and peaceful Aboriginal communities?