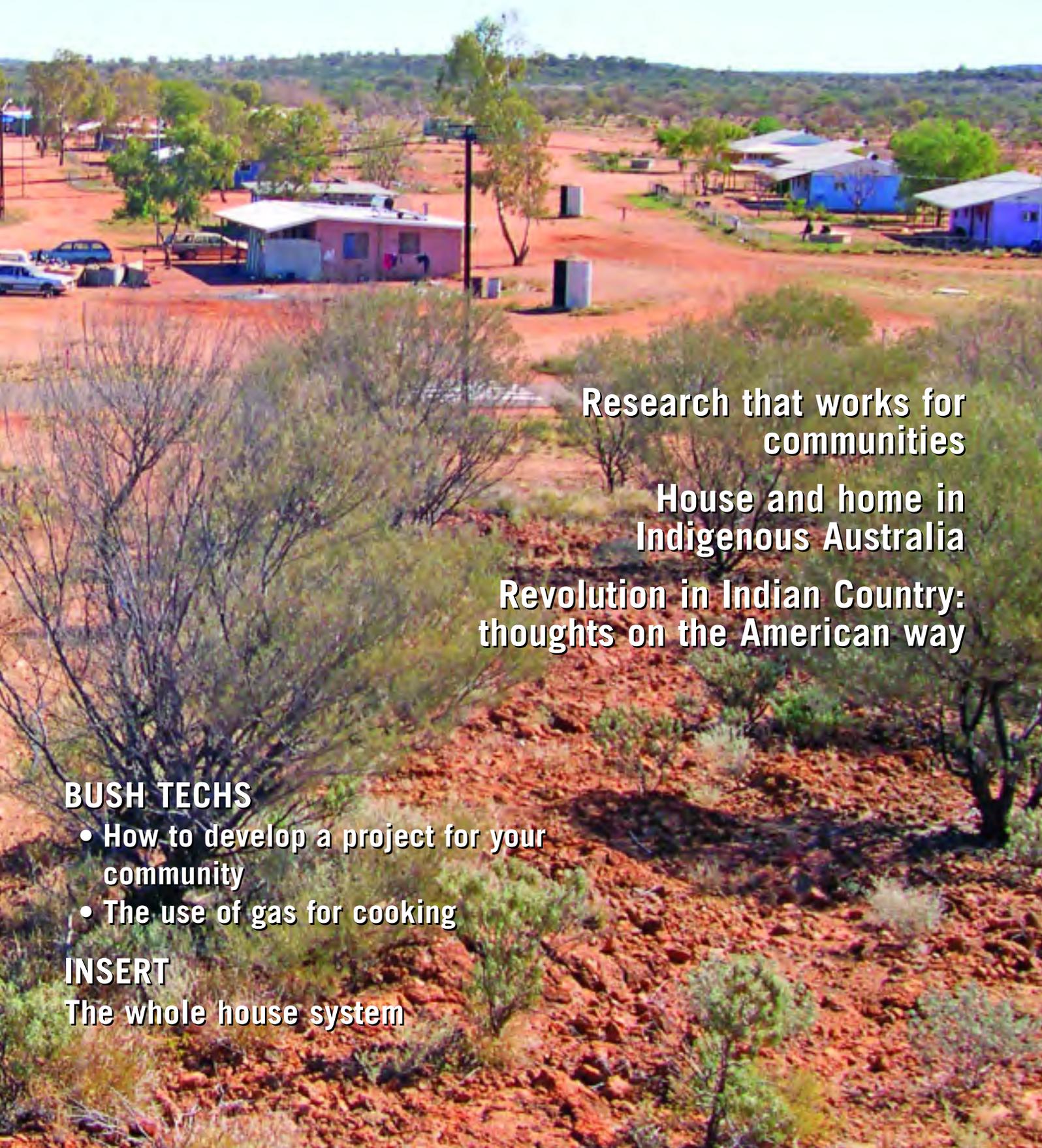


ourplace

Number 28



Research that works for communities

House and home in Indigenous Australia

Revolution in Indian Country: thoughts on the American way

BUSH TECHS

- **How to develop a project for your community**
- **The use of gas for cooking**

INSERT

The whole house system

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In this issue we focus on housing. Our insert and our articles in Technology on page 9 and Outlook, page 14 all deal with variations on the theme of housing, which we know is an area of concern for many people living in remote communities. There are a many aspects to the discussion on housing and we hope that these contributions will serve to inform people to make appropriate decisions regarding home ownership.

On page 16 Metta Young reports on her visit to the University of Arizona as a Fulbright Scholar, and shares her findings on the progress that has been made by Native American Tribes in their quest for self determination and economic development. “Although...economic prosperity is not a widespread reality as yet, there is substantial optimism that it will be”.

Clearly there are some interesting parallels and lessons for Australian policy makers.

Elsewhere we have a thought provoking article on research in communities on page 12. We report on the National Conference on Sustainability of Indigenous Communities as well as an update from our Technical Services Group page 7. Our BUSH TECH #31 is a step-by-step guide to putting together a community project and in BUSH TECH #32 we are cooking with gas.

I hope you enjoy this 28th edition of Our Place and I urge readers to respond to our request for information on page 5 regarding your stories and experiences of Vocational Education and Training. This is an area of particular interest to CAT and your input will be greatly appreciated.

Narelle Jones, Publications Officer



Front Cover

Engawala community. Engawala is 210 km north-east of Alice Springs. The community is determined to improve standards of living and quality of life for the residents. CAT is currently working with the community which will feature in future Our Place editions.



Left to Right: John Birch and Frank Curtis on duty in Kununurra.

Technology has given us better lives

Frank Curtis is a board member of the Centre for Appropriate Technology, Alice Springs. Frank hails from Alice Springs, has travelled extensively and is currently working as an Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer in Kununurra. Frank was involved in the early days of Tangentyere Council and in particular the Tangentyere Night Patrol from 1985 to 1986. A lot of the issues relating to drug and alcohol abuse that he encountered then are still relevant today.

When Frank came to a CAT Board Meeting I took the opportunity to interview him at Morris Soak, Town Camp. I asked Frank about his background.

“I’m an Arrernte man born at the Alice Springs Hospital, I have a twin brother. I grew up around Alice Springs. Mum and Dad took us back to Tennant Creek when I was three, back to Tennant Creek where my father’s from. I did my early years of education there and later went to Yirara College, Alice Springs.”

Frank has lived in different parts of the country like Haasts Bluff (Papunya), Tennant Creek, Barunga Community (90 km south-east of Katherine NT), Merri-den in the WA wheatbelt. Now resident in Kununurra. I asked Frank, if he had noticed any changes in communities during his travels. “I have noticed the difference in housing and infrastructure over the years, from people living in tents, tin sheds and brick houses. Places with no

electricity, no running water. People used to pay \$50 for 10 gallons of water years ago...that would have to last a month. They used a 44 gallon drum for cooking. Now we had to adapt to the western lifestyle, like cut the grass, keep your house clean. We used to go hunting for food. Goanna, kangaroo, porcupine, carpet snakes. The times have changed. The old days you have to get your own food; being fit was important and we would walk to get to places.”

“Technology has grown. It has given more Aboriginal people a quality of life”.

As he is living in Kununurra now, working for the Kununurra Police with the Kununurra Young Men’s Program (KYMP), I asked Frank about the situation of young people there.

“There is not much opportunity for training for young people. There is TAFE and CDEP. The KYMP has only recently started. We concentrate on troubled kids living in the town camps and we are trying to get the young people into welding, building, plumbing; basic things that they can use to repair their own home.”

“As the Senior Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer, I look after young men eight to sixteen years of age. The Program is held after school hours and only kids who have gone to school are allowed to come. I talk with them about drugs, alcohol, safe-sex and other things like how to repair bikes, hand signals, road rules.

Our next plan is to take them to Victoria River to take part in the cane toad blasting. This is really just to get them out of town for a bit.

We also do cultural awareness and try and teach respect for each other. I go out to the other communities around Kununurra. We can see what conditions they are living in, so we are able to help when they need us.”

I asked Frank about his views on CDEP and what effect it had on Aboriginal people.

“I worked on CDEP in Alice Springs and Town Bore. It was good because you were out and about...but the money wasn’t good. It was also unfair as it was only targeting Aboriginal people. It should have been for everyone, because my brother (in-law) could not work with me.”

The disadvantages of CDEP are less pay...if you missed days you were not paid. There was no top up money if you put in the extra hours.

The advantages are you are doing something and not sitting around drinking. Also on culture days, people can get together and cook-up bush tucker, make artefacts, tell stories to keep the culture stronger.”

Narelle Jones
Centre for Appropriate Technology,
Alice Springs



Testing the feasibility

Many tourists closely associate Central Australia with Indigenous cultures, and arguably, there is a growing demand by tourists wanting authentic experiences and an understanding of landscapes, culture and country. Recent research supports ideas that tourism may offer real livelihood opportunities for people living out bush. Black Tank community are currently investigating cultural tours on their community.

In February a group of people, various service agencies and community groups in Alice Springs arrived at Black Tank for a very unique experience. The Black Tank community invited colleagues and friends to experience their traditional culture, dreaming stories and country. It was a practice run for Black Tank cultural and contemporary tour to test the feasibility in the tourism industry.

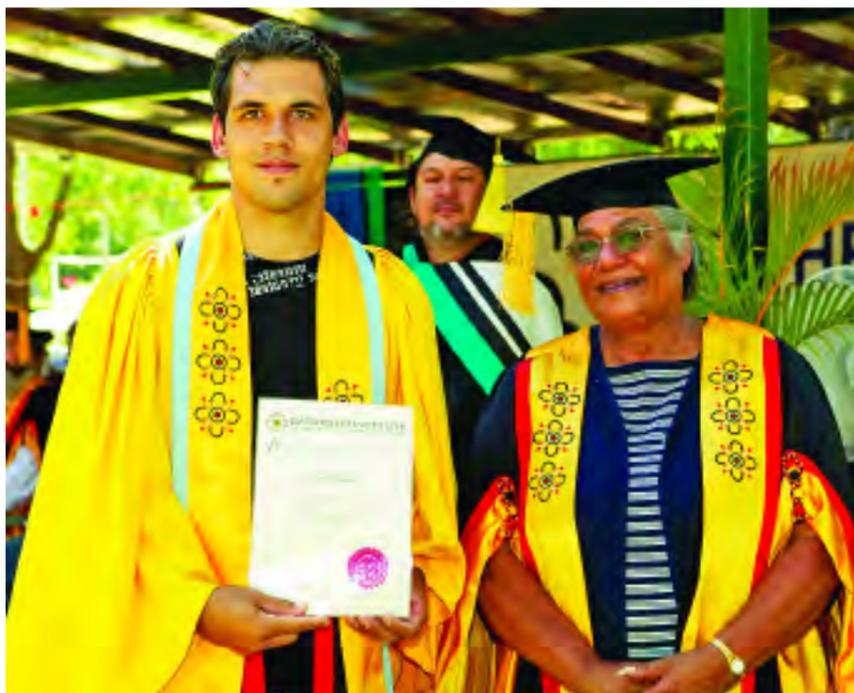
The experience involved a mix of traditional story telling, explanation of a dreaming story, a walk through significant sites, a discussion of cultural awareness and protocols, insight into history of Black Tank, introduction to the family members, a barbecue dinner (including kangaroo), and a night under the stars, amongst the corkwood trees in swags. One of the most special parts of this tour, is that all the family at Black Tank were involved; from delivering stories to cooking the dinner to walking the dreaming story.

Test running a product, is an important part in setting up a tourism enterprise. Pamela Lynch anticipates that this will allow the family to sit down and look at the real costs and benefits of running such an enterprise and “the nuts and bolts” that go into organising tours. But, all participants agreed that such an experience provides a unique and meaningful insight for tourists visiting Central Australia.

The Lynch family welcome groups for cultural awareness visits. For more information, contact Ingerreke Homelands Resource Services on 08 8952 8788.

Visitors are invited to bring and plant a tree.

Batchelor honours 200 graduates



Greg Hauser, receives his Diploma of Teaching from Rose Kunoith-Monks, Chairperson of Batchelor. Photograph courtesy of Batchelor.

The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education held its annual graduation ceremony in Batchelor on 11 May 2006.

More than 200 students from around Australia, including students from remote communities, rural and urban locations, received awards following successful completion of their courses in the Higher Education and VET sector. The event included “Special Achievement Awards” in recognition of students’ outstanding achievements in their fields of study.

The occasion was marked by traditional dancing, the Academic and Graduat procession, complete with distinctive academic dress, speeches by Rob Knight, MLA Daly and Matthew Bonson, MLA Milner as well as the inaugural address by Batchelor’s Director Dr Jeannie Herbert. Dr Herbert stressed the importance of “both ways” learning and the importance of education in taking control of one’s own life. She also told graduands to “Look to Elders for guidance and demonstrate your respect for those with whom you will work”.



CAT Cadet

Seth McCann comes from the Atherton Tableland in Far North Queensland and has connections to the Kimberley where his great grandfather came from. He is a young science student with James Cook University (JCU) and a cadet with CAT.

When he applied for the cadetship in 2003 Seth felt the “financial support and a guaranteed job was too good an opportunity to pass up”. Seth studies full-time at JCU and undertakes his cadetship during semester breaks, working on the “Kimberley Water Project”. He spends twelve weeks a year in the Derby office. According to Seth, “I was excited by the possibility of being the first in my family to return to the area”.

Seth was selected on the basis of his good results in his senior school years. So far in his university studies he has continued the good work achieving a number of distinctions and credits in his chosen subjects.

In 2006 Seth is studying chemistry, aquaculture and biology. Although it is keeping him very busy, the cadetship with CAT has given him an incentive to achieve and a sense of purpose, which has helped him focus at a time when the pressure is on during the final year of his studies. When he completes his degree Seth is looking forward to becoming a member of staff with CAT.



Back row, (left to right): Deirdre Lechleitner, Sandy Warner, Debra Mitchell (vc), Jodie Kennedy, Robyn Ellis. Front row, (left to right): Jenny Kroker, Wendy Cochrane, Jane Mitchell (c). Absent: Alyson Wright, Amber Osbourne Stookey, Holly Southam.

Imparja Cup 2006

The Imparja Cup has a long and interesting legacy in Northern Territory, supporting the development of cricket. As a community-based event, the first competition was between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. This has been transformed into a national Indigenous cricket competition with each state and territory represented. There are also divisions for community, major centres and women’s teams to compete.

CAT supported two teams this year, including a men’s team in the Community Division and women in the Women’s Division. The men had a good early start to competition but tired towards the end. The women played well throughout the entire competition, missing out by 8 runs in the final against Darwin. Congratulations to all who participated!

We want to hear your stories

Recent data from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) shows that Aboriginal peoples participation across the desert dropped by 25% between 2003 and 2004. The biggest drop was in Central Australia (NT). Participation had been steadily increasing for years so this change is quite perplexing. With changes happening to CDEP and the lifting of remote area exemptions, access to training becomes even more important. What do you think?

We want to hear your stories about Aboriginal people and training across the desert. From Geraldton to Mt Isa, Broken Hill to Kalgoorlie, Whyalla to Tennant Creek and everywhere in between.

- What is happening with Vocational Education and Training Programs for Aboriginal people across the desert?
- Is it getting harder to access VET training?
- Are people “trained to death”?
- Is the training being provided less relevant or too hard?

Tell your stories by phone 08 8951 4335 or email metta.young@icat.org.au.

Your stories will contribute to the NCVER and Desert Knowledge CRC research project “Growing the desert: effective educational pathways for remote Indigenous people’s”. Names of contributors will remain confidential. For further information contact project leader Metta Young – details above.



Left: Conference delegates participating in the Families Living on Country: Livelihood and Services workshop by CAT. Below: CAT information display.



Sustaining settlements in the bush

A conference in Perth tackles the tough issues for remote communities

Marie Taylor from Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre welcomed to country more than 250 delegates from around Australia and New Zealand at the recent "Sustainability of Indigenous Communities National Conference" held at Murdoch University in Perth on 12 to 14 July 2006. The future of remote Indigenous communities was in the spotlight at this conference.

Speaking to ABC Radio, Doctor Martin Anda from the Environmental Technology Centre at Murdoch University said that the conference would focus on success rather than past failures.

"[We will be] sharing ideas together on exactly how we might formulate some of these new ways forward to try bringing more life and sustainability to some of these far-flung communities," he said.

"Of course in many cases there are some excellent things happening and we hope people will be telling stories from those places and sharing those ideas."

There was a strong CAT presence at the conference, which was aimed at community leaders, members and representatives, planners, administrators, engineers, technologists, designers, health workers, educators, land managers and allied professionals. The conference provided an opportunity to share ideas and experiences on successful sustainable strategies and technical interventions and innovations that lead to improved cultural maintenance, quality of life, environmen-

tal health, local economic development in rural, developing and remote Indigenous communities.

The Conference also addressed recent changes in Australian Federal Government policy on the maintenance of remote Indigenous communities. Successful solutions to issues affecting remote communities were highlighted. Participants heard from a range of internationally and nationally-renowned speakers including government officials, consultants, academics, and grass roots community and environmental organisations. It was also important to investigate how communities construct their identity against changing Federal and State Government policies.

Rather than hearing only from "experts" the conference encouraged community leaders and workers in the field, as well as communities as a whole to present and share their ideas, successes and failures. The conference encouraged Indigenous and rural community leaders to share their experiences in the development of their communities, the issues and problems, and successes of sustainable development. The conference brought together scientists, engineers and professionals from government departments, private institutions, consultancies, research centres and education and training institutions.

The conference topics addressed many aspects of Sustainable Development for

Indigenous Communities and included:

- How to create sustainable livelihoods from regional resources;
- What is the role of key industries in regional areas;
- How to grow small business in regional areas;
- What makes remote settlements viable;
- How can services to settlements be sustained;
- How to facilitate access to services in remote areas;
- What are the integrated systems for regions?

All of these topics were discussed in separate parallel sessions around the themes of

- Natural resources, environmental protection;
- Social advancement, governance, capacity;
- Human resources, skills;
- Physical resources, assets, infrastructure;
- Financial values, cash, economic prosperity.

The conference at Murdoch University certainly supported an agenda that was packed with presentations about improvements in service delivery, encouraging enterprises, increasing Indigenous participation and shifting focus on to people rather than technology. It will take some time for all of the information that was presented to filter through. However there were a lot of lessons for all stakeholders in the increasingly urgent matter of Indigenous communities and sustainability.

For more information contact Dr. Kuruvilla Mathew, Director, Environmental Technology Centre, Murdoch University, Western Australia on 08 9360 2896, K.mathew@murdoch.edu.au or visit <www.etc.murdoch.edu.au/conferences>.



Maintaining good community roads

Training for local people to become grader operators

Anyone who has lived in a remote place will know the importance of good roads. Without them, journeys are longer, travel can be dangerous and vehicles need more maintenance. Training local people to look after the roads provides employment and enables more maintenance work to be handled locally.

Out near the NT/Qld border at Alpururulam (Lake Nash), earlier this year, six trainees from CAT did a Certificate III in Civil Construction (Plant Operations) course.

Trainees: Alec Petrick, Stuart Rusty, Dennis Campbell, Patrick Morgan, Robert King and John Pedersen learnt how to conduct machine pre-operational checks; how to select, remove and fit a grader's attachments; how to relocate a grader; how to carry out machine operator maintenance and how to operate a grader.

The pre-operational part of the course began with trainees learning about safety procedures such as how to identify and eliminate plant operation hazards. Then the team went into a paddock to do a walk-around inspection of the grader. This involved checking for water leaks, the condition of oil hoses and looking for any worn cutting edges on the machinery. Prior to starting the grader, trainees also checked oil, water and fuel levels. The next step was for the men to learn how to drive the vehicle without using the grader-specific controls. Once the driving skills had been mastered, the team moved on to learn how the machines' control functions worked while in the driver's seat. This was then followed by a week spent on a five-acre block practicing and perfecting grading techniques. One such technique was flat blading, where the instruction was centred around a mound of dirt, known as

a windrow, and the men graded the windrow from side to side until the dirt no longer took the shape of a mound but had a flat, levelled surface.

After this was achieved, it was time for the trainees to grade a local road. In this case it was the local cemetery road. Following on from this and with great efficiency and skill, the team then tackled sections of the Lake Nash side of the Austral road. Historically, this road was a bush track, and as is the case in many remote regions it was in poor condition and had not been serviced for many years. It is a road used by the general traffic of the community, including vehicular traffic such as road trains. The road was impassable after heavy rain and was one metre below ground level.

When the trainees first started the Grader Operations course, the road was still in the process of drying up. So, the ►



team trained and perfected their grading skills off-road throughout this period, and also spent time filling up some big waterholes and doing some general maintenance in the local area. Then, once the road had dried up and the men were ready to put their skills to use, the team went in to form sections of the road and bring it up to ground level. Grading operations are carried out with better results when the road surface is still moist after rain but firm enough to facilitate cutting, moving and compacting materials. Once the road was brought up to ground level, it was ready for community use once more.

In order for an unsealed road to be utilised by a community, there are four objectives in the maintenance of unsealed roads. These are:

1. To produce a good riding surface for vehicles;
2. To achieve a road that will support the transport of heavy loads;
3. To meet community needs;
4. To minimise safety hazards.

For the team to meet these objectives,

they needed to form crowns, cut batters, dig table drains, form cut-off drains, flat blade certain areas and grade the road.

Forming crowns

Crowns need to be formed as part of the road maintenance process for drainage reasons. Without a proper crown, water can quickly collect on a road, soften the road's crust and allow traffic to quickly pound out small depressions. Therefore, a properly crowned road helps to create an effective drainage system and also allows for a good riding surface.

Cut batters

Cutting batters is another important part of the road maintenance process because batters, the side slopes that connect the road to the surrounding land, need to be stable in order to stop the walls of the road from getting washed away. Water collected above cut batters should be engineered to be carried to the surrounding landscape.



Above: Trainees from Alpururulam (left to right), Alec Petrick, Stuart Rusty, Dennis Campbell, Patrick Morgan, Robert King and John Pedersen. Photograph courtesy of Advance Training Services.

Table drains

Table drains run along the uphill sides of a road to directly collect run off from the road surface and from batters. They need to be dug close to the road's edge whilst ensuring the wall of the road will not collapse in the process. Table drains require regular clearing, such as grading, so that water can drain away from the road surface effectively.

Cut-off drains

The forming of cut-off drains is another necessary part of road maintenance procedure because the drains help carry any excessive water flow away from the road. The entrances to these drains must be clear at all times in order to operate efficiently.

Flat blading

The process of flat blading gravel roads helps to recover and reshape the road's surface in order for vehicular traffic to travel comfortably along it. The previously displaced surface gravel and loose material is collected and shifted to make a smoother road travelling surface. Flat blade grading should be avoided on well formed roads with a good crown.

Grading

There are different levels of road grading: for example, there is a running grade and a full grade. The objective of a running grade is to have a satisfactory running surface for the traffic as well as to keep the road well drained, by shaping the road accordingly. A full grade is a more detailed procedure which involves grading the entire road formation, including the batters and all the drainage systems in place. ●

Kathy Senior

*Centre for Appropriate Technology,
Alice Springs*



On house and housing

Houses are complex social and technological systems that comprise many components, including old and modern materials and technologies. Houses provide many functions, ranging from basic needs like shelter from the rain, to contemporary ones like watching DVDs. Houses are also the sites for complex interactions. There are interactions between the parts of the houses – like the washing machine and the water supply – and between the parts of the house and the people who live there and use the shower to get clean and the stove to cook a feed.

If we think of the house as a system, understanding how it works means more than knowing about all the parts that come together in the building. We also need to know how the house influences the people who use it and how the people who use it influence the house. We should have an understanding of how the cost of repairs, local council or government

policy and funding arrangements might affect the proper functioning of the house. These influences in turn lead to the various patterns of behaviour that we see around a house, like cooking outside. They also affect the responsibilities for maintaining the house in good condition and undertaking repairs.

The house in remote communities

The house in remote Indigenous communities is the space where the cultural and economic impact of the changing world is its most evident in the lives of people. In the Western world, the house is a base from which families engage with the wider world, making choices about education, accumulation of material wealth or opportunities to participate in civic society. By contrast, Indigenous people historically tended to organise their society and environment differently,

the interests of the group taking precedence over individual choices, education paths and participation in society were regulated by tradition, and accumulation of wealth, as it is commonly interpreted in contemporary Australia, was unknown.

In remote communities, outside of welfare payments, probably no other institution of the European social model has catalysed as significant a change in traditional lifestyles as the house. There are suggestions that houses are increasingly valued more highly than cultural obligations. Examples include the denial of access for kin, or holding onto the house after the passing of a family member, and even more significantly the acceptance of these actions by the extended family and community. These behaviour changes are more important indicators of how remote indigenous housing is valued than the tidiness or life-cycle of houses. ►



A feast in celebration

Once the grader operations course was over and the work had been done, it was time to celebrate with some feasting on roo tails. There was also more to celebrate than the successful completion of the course. The men have since been offered further road maintenance work on the local council roads, as well as, the roads at Lake Nash Cattle Station, the place where they first honed their grader operation skills. When asked what the most enjoyable part of the course was for the trainees, Ian replied "the whole lot".



Approaches to improve living conditions

The connection between adequate housing and residents' environmental health, physical-mental-social well-being and the capacity to function and achieve in society is well documented and recognised¹. Given the importance of housing for overall life experience and potential, it is not surprising that adequate housing for remote settlements has been a priority for governments and Indigenous peoples for many years. Also given its central importance, it is not surprising that discussions about housing cover a wide range of approaches. Responses to "housing needs" in communities include housing and infrastructure programs and may incorporate new construction, upgrade or repair and maintenance. Some of these programs consist of technical interventions as well as research and educational activities.

Healthy houses – healthy people

One of the earliest and best known housing intervention advices comes from the Uwankara Palyanyku Kanyintjaku (UPK) Report². UPK is based on the principles of public health, and on the recognition that houses and infrastructure that do not work well actually promote disease. Building on extensive consultation on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara (AP) Lands Nganampa Health Council developed a set of recommendations around the central principle that the main role of the house is to provide access to "health hardware" for residents.

Further steps on this path included the AP Design Guide³, the development of appropriate specifications and design for health hardware components, the institutionalisation of the UPK recommendations through the Minister's Specifications (SA)⁴, and the nationwide rolling out of the Fixing Houses for Better Health (FHBH), and more recently Managing Housing for Better Health (MHBH) programs. These programs are now funded by FaCSIA.

The significance of UPK lay in the recognition that 'the provision of housing to all Anangu on the AP lands is probably beyond the capacity of Government and

their agencies⁵ and that it focussed on what it considered a technically achievable goal with potentially enormous impact. CAT contributed to the health hardware approach through the research and design development of several appliances and building components.

Evidence of lasting positive health impacts resulting from these programs still remains to be seen. However the focus on improving the functioning of health hardware has led to the identification of a range of issues beyond the lifestyles or skills of householders themselves that affect how well these function. For example the choice of components (light switches, taps) and the quality of their installation has a large impact on the life cycle of these parts. Also, the FHBH's focus on functioning health hardware through regular follow-up surveys has improved understanding of how regular housing maintenance programs can be designed to support environmental health improvements. These lessons from the FHBH approach highlight the importance of understanding the house as a system.

New houses – number of bedrooms

Another approach to improve living conditions in remote Indigenous communities, addresses overcrowding. Overcrowding adds to the burden of ill-health and highlights housing shortage. This approach relies on definitions of social science in measuring housing needs, crowding and homelessness. The "housing shortfall" approach considers the building of an adequate number of houses (in reality the appropriate number of bedrooms for the given population based on a formula⁶) as the solution.

Construction programs for new houses in some areas make attempts to include design features that appropriately respond to the cultural, climatic and environmental settings. However, they almost invariably fall short of fulfilling these goals, often citing shortages in funding, a conservative attitude in the construction industry, or tenant resistance. CAT has produced innovative housing designs, the long-term evaluation of which would certainly provide some valuable lessons.

The number of bedrooms approach may have a positive impact on the housing shortage in remote indigenous settlements, but on its own does not offer a universal remedy. In some instances the value of new houses to indigenous families is limited and even if there were adequate resources to eliminate the current shortfall, it is possible that the short lifecycle of new houses increases peoples vulnerability and adds to the complexity of the house as a technical system.

References

1. There is a wealth of public health sources, most recent ones include Booth, A. and Carroll, N., 2005, Overcrowding and Indigenous Health in Australia, CEPR Discussion Paper 498, RSSS, ANU, Canberra; Waters, A., 2001, Do Housing Conditions Impact on Health Inequalities between Australia's Rich and Poor, Final Report, AHURI. The 1993 Annual General Meeting of the Public Health Association of Australia (amended at the 1999 Annual General Meeting) recognised the crucial role housing plays in the health of people and the importance of adequate community-based housing for vulnerable groups
2. Nganampa Health Council, SA Health Commission and A.H.O.o. SA. 1987. Uwankara Palyanyku Kanyintjaku – A Strategy for Well-Being: An Environmental and Public Health Review within the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands.
3. Pholeros, P. 1990. AP Design Guide: Building for Health on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands: Nganampa Health Council.
4. Housing on designated Aboriginal lands – Minister's Specification SA 78A2000. edited by P. SA.
5. Pholeros, 1990, p9.
6. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2005. Indigenous housing needs 2005 – a multi-measure needs model. Canberra provides a detailed definition of overcrowding. "Overcrowding can be measured using either the Proxy Occupancy Standard or the Canadian National Occupancy Standard. Households requiring two or more additional bedrooms to meet the Proxy Occupancy Standard are considered overcrowded. Households requiring one or more additional bedrooms to meet the Canadian National Occupancy Standard are considered overcrowded" (p111).

On housing: a system approach

Looking at the whole system

For effective and sustainable solutions to housing provision, housing life cycles* and the well being of householders, the house needs to be understood as a complex system. The house itself, the indoor and outdoor living environment, its location, the interaction of people with the house and the layers of external influence such as access to technicians, policy and funding environments all interplay to affect how houses function and are used. Household residents are actors within all of these systems to varying degrees.

There seems to be a disagreement between what houses as technology and environment offer, and how indigenous residents in remote communities strive to function as individuals and families in and around them. It is important that the definition of the "house" includes all indoor and outdoor features that residents use as part of their living environment. Also important is how "households" are defined – indigenous household units in Central Australia may consist of a wide range of people occasionally spread over a large geographical area.

An analysis of the house as a system needs to consider how it works for its users: to gain insight on how the residents' aspirations are supported by the technology, how their behaviour enhances or negates features and how interventions may over time increase or decrease the function and use of the house.

The interaction of these factors affects the quality of life in the house. It can influence

- affordability of living there
- comfort level in and around the house for individuals and groups within the household
- functionality of the house for individuals and groups within the household
- attachment to the place.

Understanding the interaction between these factors can assist in planning the types of interventions that can improve the house system and thus inform better decision making and longer infrastructure lifecycles.

The following diagram outlines a standard approach to a common problem arising around houses in remote communities. When a tap in the yard area is continuously leaking the conventional response is to change the washer or even replace the tap.

This problem solving approach could be represented as in figure 1.



FIGURE 1

The arrow indicates the direction of causation (a new washer caused a change to the leaking tap) and the letter indicates how the two variables are related. An "O" means they change in the opposite direction and an "S" means they change in the same direction. So adding a new washer reduces the leaking from the tap. But what if the tap starts leaking again after a short time? It could be a faulty washer or perhaps it has something to do with the location of the tap in the yard and the interaction of the users of the yard, for example children at play, with the tap. A simple systems approach would look like figure 2.

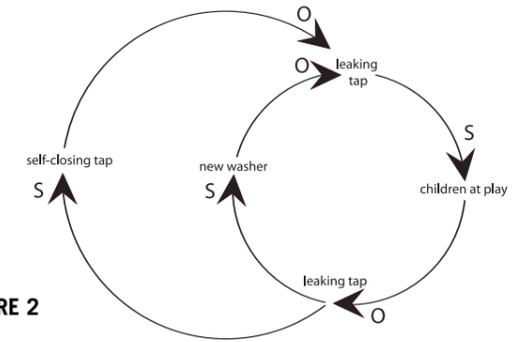


FIGURE 2

In this case the tap was continuing to leak because of constant use and not being turned off properly, so understanding the interactions between the children and the tap led to the fitting of a self closing tap. If other people were using the tap for activities other than drinking, such as watering the garden, the self closing tap "solution" would not work.

An understanding of all of the interactions within a context would therefore give the best solution. This of course may not necessarily be a technical solution.

Applying a systems thinking approach to "the house" can clarify why problems recur, despite well intended interventions, and why some things have been made worse by past attempts to fix the problems. By understanding past actions and uncovering the complex web of interactions internal and external to the "house" we can begin to identify the types of actions that will keep houses functioning well.

The insert in this edition develops a systems thinking approach to understanding housing on remote communities. The diagram identifies parts and features of the house including the people who live there and the links between the house and other external influences or systems such as community water supply infrastructure and repairs and maintenance arrangements. The relationships between all these parts and features will affect how well the house functions.

The loop diagrams track the interactions between all the parts of a system that come into play when a householder wishes to utilise a component of the house. In these diagrams we map the interactions that occur when a householder uses the stove to cook a meal and the air conditioner to keep cool. These diagrams are tools that can help us understand the dynamics between the householders themselves, the parts of the house and the external systems and influences that affect the functioning of the house. For example, not having money for the electricity pre paid meter will cause cooking to be done outside on a wood fire (if wood is available) rather than using the electric stove. Hot weather may also lead to the same action, as would lack of skills in using the stove or no appropriate cooking utensils. Broken windows would affect how well the air conditioning functions as would any issues with the flow of water to the unit.

By mapping a picture of the interactions between the elements in the house system, we can begin to identify the causes and effects of particular actions and events. We can also begin to understand the effect of interventions to fix any particular problem. Fixing a broken stove by replacing it with a new stove may not lead to the stove being used if the householders cannot afford the electricity or don't know how to use the stove. If we understand the dynamics of the system we can target the intervention required to get the best result. ●

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*Life cycle is the service life of an asset.

Research that works for communities

Can community people work on research questions they find important? Might there be a livelihood in research? Could local people coordinate projects for government and industry in their communities? Read on.

Some people say Indigenous communities are over-researched. But has there been enough research about how to live well and sustainability on remote settlements? Do we know enough about protecting bush tucker from feral species, or building viable enterprises a long distance from cities? And there are many other questions. Maybe the problem isn't research but whether the research matches the interests and priorities of communities.

Some communities have a long history of involvement with research and it often hasn't been a good experience. In colonial times, Europeans assumed the right to study communities and test their social theories on Indigenous peoples. Later, university researchers and government officers learnt to treat people better but they didn't respect Aboriginal ways. They flew in, asked questions, walked around taking notes and flew out – and the community never heard what happened with the information collected. Sometimes they didn't talk to the right people, so the research didn't tell the full story and yet these findings were used to make policies that affected people's lives. Now, researchers talk of working with communities, involving people in developing the research and bringing back the findings. Many community people know they have the right to say no to research they don't want and they are exercising this right.

In some research disciplines it's a big challenge to work collaboratively but researchers are learning how. Working together, researchers and communities can do better research.

What is research?

Research starts with people asking questions and then finding answers. It's telling a story about how and why things are the way they are, and looking to see what

needs changing. Research is about "knowing". Research is problem-solving; it's finding out more so better decisions can be made. Many different people do research; e.g. collect data by interviewing or counting or observing or testing. University researchers do formal research that follows a knowledge discipline and ethics guidelines. Some government officers do formal research but many others do less formal research activity, like a consultation or an evaluation of a service delivery program. A liaison or development officer with a private business, such as a mining company, might research the possibilities for a good neighbour program. While a researcher with CAT will focus in on a technical issue and look for the best solution for the community at that time.

Research builds up knowledge, which is a precious resource. Indigenous people have been making knowledge for many thousands of years; knowledge about how to manage country and birth children and much more. This can be called research but usually, by "research" we mean work that also draws on western knowledge and involves mainstream research organisations.

Community people can start research. It's about having a question, seeing who can help to find out more and talking it up. As people and organisations get interested, they bring resources – money and expertise – to do the research. In Australia today, it takes a lot of skill in working with mainstream structures to start a research idea from scratch. Sometimes, community people will get more results for their efforts if they negotiate with researchers from outside to have their interests and priorities taken up in their projects. The best time to talk is when the researcher is first developing the project – the "scoping" stage.



Effective research requires investment in processes that enable researchers and communities to discuss subjects of common interest.

Benefit sharing

Researchers who want to work with community people will be ready to talk about "benefit sharing". The researcher should have an idea about how the research findings will bring benefits to communities; e.g. that research in how to make houses last longer will make housing each family cheaper so more housing could be built. With the community's help, the researcher can make a good report but they probably don't make the money decisions, so the research may not bring the outcome everybody would like to see. The researcher can't guarantee the outcome but he or she can share benefits while the research is happening. The researcher has expertise that doesn't come by everyday. Perhaps community people have a question about housing that they would like a researcher with this expertise to look at and report to them about?

In negotiating how research will be conducted, community people have the right to define benefits according to their own values and priorities. Perhaps there will be opportunities for the extended family to visit country? There might be formal training. There should be opportunities for capacity-building. There could be paid work, which may contribute to building a livelihood in research.

Paid work in research

Community people can be involved in research work by starting research projects. More often, community people get involved because researchers from outside come and want to work with them. Research projects bring opportunities for capacity-building. A community person involved as a co-researcher, for example, might be mentored in how to assemble an expert team or report to policy makers. That person might go on to initiate a project

on an issue of community concern.

There are different types of paid roles that community people may have in research projects

Expert consultant

Aboriginal people have knowledge and expertise in relation to land management and cultural practices in particular, but also in many other areas. Consultant rates should be paid to people with expert knowledge.

This role is confused sometimes with the role of "informant" when the individual does not hold a position of authority in a western-style structure. An "informant" is someone who provides data or information for research but does not have a role in designing or conducting the project. An informant might, for example, be interviewed. A child can be a successful informant. Community people are expert witnesses of their own experiences. If someone is asked about their experience in living in a type of housing, they are acting as an informant. If someone gives an oral history of housing in the settlement, they are acting as an expert consultant.

An expert consultant usually will be an older person. A well designed project could support them in maintaining their expertise. Young people could be put in a position to learn from their community experts.

Research worker

"Research worker" is a generic term. In some projects, local community people might hold the position of researcher; in others, co-researcher; in others, research assistant. As with other members of the project team, their job title would reflect the knowledge and expertise they bring to the project. Pay rates should recognise knowledge, responsibility, skills, labour and relevant training; e.g. short courses.

A research worker participates with other members of the team in project development and implementation; e.g. framework, research question, design, data collection and analysis. This person may have specific knowledge to bring or be part of a team that draws on their expertise and skills alongside those of other team members. They might work as a first language researcher in projects involving their own community and other communities where they are accepted in the role.

Research projects may incorporate capacity-building and skills development ("learn by doing") as a means of delivering benefit. This could be formalised within the research process; e.g. via assessments of capacity, which are documented in transferable form, such as references.

Interpreter

Even if the same person were to fulfil several roles within a research project, it is important to distinguish their tasks as a language interpreter from other tasks. A lack of distinction can create very difficult situations for interpreters, who may be held accountable for words that are not their own.

An interpreter might be a local person who is fluent in a community language and in English, has cultural knowledge in both languages, and knows the ethics of interpreting; e.g. confidentiality and impartiality. Short course training and diploma courses are available. Interpreters can be hired on a fee for service basis; e.g. by the hour or half day, to interpret interview questions, interpret at meetings, etc.

In Central Australia, the term "linguist" has been used to describe Indigenous people working with language in research projects. A linguist goes more deeply into the structure of language and can capture the story embedded in the language itself. Aboriginal linguists could be a part of a research team and participate directly in developing research directions.

Local project developer

Community people often play the role of "community facilitator" in an unpaid capacity. A livelihood could be found in this role. A community facilitator could be the first point of contact for research and development work. Recognition of the role as work could open up multiple, sequential opportunities in fee for service work. People recognised in the role could apply their current skills, learn-by-doing in project work and have an incentive to learn more; e.g. via formal training.

Facilitators might be chosen for their local knowledge and because they are seen as legitimate in the role by the community. Fluency in English and one or more community languages also may be selection criteria.

However, the term "community facilitator" may lead to an underestimation of the community person's contribution to the project. An alternative term "local project developer" suggests roles in initiating and developing ideas and projects.

A Local Project Developer could be the first point of contact for research, government programs and industry engagements. The specific input and tasks of a Local Project Developer could be negotiated project by project. They might:

- organise meetings, identify the people to be involved, seek out and develop interest, identify and work with cultural protocols, make logistical arrangements and host visitors
- identify communication issues such as

the need for an interpreter; fulfil roles in language work or identify another community person to take up these roles

- participate as a member of a project team in project development and implementation; e.g. framing, design, data collection, analysis and evaluation
- be the local coordinator for a project with a wider brief.

Each community could select a pool (group) of Local Project Developers to accommodate personal and family relationships, gender issues, and competing demands on an individual's time. People in this pool might work in teams within projects where possible, and across projects to provide peer support. The leadership of older people might be recognised in the creation of team structures. This would enable Local Project Developers to draw on community strengths and assist community appropriation of new initiatives.

Pay rates

Local Indigenous people who work in research and development projects must be paid at fair and equitable rates. The rate should reflect the knowledge of the person; e.g. their cultural seniority and/or professional skills. The rate also should reflect the expected effort; e.g. will they draw on their own knowledge or need to consult others?

There is no need to wait for further capacity-building. People on communities are working in these roles now. Recognition as paid work would enable people to develop sustainable livelihoods and provide incentives for work and further training. ●

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Kathie facilitated a project on participatory and capacity-building frameworks or collaborative research, for the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre.

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House and home in Indigenous Australia

Housing, assets and values in Indigenous Australia

Thirty-two years ago, I lived in the house pictured above in a small community of Yolngu peoples in Arnhem Land. The house that I lived in was built by a team of builders and carpenters all of whom were Aboriginal people from the community.

The house was built with cypress pine timber which grew locally, was felled by a team of Indigenous men and then milled in their community sawmill into floor boards, wall panelling, ceiling panelling and weatherboards.

This was a community where housing was in short supply. There was full employment for working adults, although the church administered the finances of the community and the wages were not award wages.

Unfortunately following cyclone Tracy it was decided that the cypress pine did not meet the structural requirements of the new cyclone code, hence the sawmill closed.

Since that time there have been significant investments in infrastructure,

training, improved governance, health, education and housing, numbers of reports and policies, programs and interventions in the name of self-determination and self-management in this and other communities.

Despite these positive investments, today 32 years later a contractor from outside the community constructs every new house in this community and the local residents are offered training so that they can assist him.



What happened in the process of self-determination, change and development that led to this outcome?

Certainly there was a period during this time where greater public accountability meant that financial support had to be directed through technical consultants rather than directly to communities. One consequence of this action was an increased emphasis on meeting standards and complying with a growing number of regulations. Attempts to improve environmental health took centre stage in the battle to improve Indigenous health overall and through programs like Fixing Houses for Better Health the performance of all of the wet, smelly and difficult to clean areas of a house were highlighted, measured, recorded, and fixed. People were able to demonstrate that a well-constructed functioning house could improve health. And government could demonstrate that taxpayers dollars were well spent. Technical consultants took charge, equity was pursued and peoples rights were defended.

The unintended outcome of increased regulation, rights and accountability was that Indigenous people were gradually



disfranchised from the one area where males particularly were competent and practiced.

But this story is not only about building houses, what does it mean to own one?

Recent changes in Indigenous affairs have centred on reform of the land tenure arrangements to enhance investment in economic ventures and home ownership.

A number of prominent people have espoused home ownership as a desirable outcome. This article is not arguing for or against ownership as it is ultimately a choice that individuals have to make depending on their circumstances.

I am, however, keen to tease out what it means to own a house in remote Australia. Neither Indigenous Australians nor non-Indigenous people have previously experienced the current set of pressures that confront these types of small remote settlements. It is a new experience to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and it will require the shared knowledge and collective effort of both to develop sustainable opportunities.

Home ownership

It is difficult to contemplate ownership without subsidy. If you were going to invest in an asset that costs more than \$300,000 to build remote from most markets and employment opportunities where the half-life of the asset was somewhere between five and eight years (that is you need to invest about \$200,000 in that time to maintain the house as a serviceable and healthy technology) would you see this as a wise investment? Noel Pearson has suggested you would be better to invest in an asset elsewhere away from your community in a stronger market.

The motivation to live "on country" and the price that people pay to do so is not well understood. People make choices about where they live and carry the cost and benefit of those choices. Some communities pay \$2000 for a single visit



of a tradesperson to service a bore and others truck in bottled water because they are concerned about the taste and the composition of their rainwater or bore water. Living remote is expensive.

For many remote people the cost of services, distance to specialist technical support and finding replacement parts and suppliers who can provide consistent supply leads to high redundancy and the short half life of assets. We need to better understand the full lifecycle analysis of assets in remote areas before we come to conclusions about home ownership.

Whilst the popular view is that home ownership is the solution, the practical implications of this solution are not well understood or developed.

It may take a lifetime for people to accumulate a level of asset wealth around housing, let alone make the cultural adjustments in moving from communal ownership to personal wealth.

Educational outcomes may improve in fifteen years if we start now. There is going to be a shortage of skilled engineers, technologists and technical trades that will be felt most in remote Australia. Without these skills, sustaining the current housing model across remote Australia will be difficult and increasingly expensive and will be dependent on Indigenous peoples ability to manipulate, understand and control the technologies that make a house function.

Is it house ownership or home ownership?

What is it that people actually mean when they talk about home ownership? Is there a difference in peoples minds between a house and a home. A number of people I have spoken with describe home as country not house.

The article "On housing" has described some of the thinking that has shaped Indigenous housing policies over the past ten years. While all of these approaches are useful and necessary to improve hous-

ing overall, CAT is concerned that there is a part of the house story that is often overlooked because it is something that is difficult to deliver in a house construction program.

The "On housing" article establishes that the house is actually a complex system not unlike a car or a plane. It consists of many individual parts that must work together for people to derive the health and lifestyle benefits that a functioning house makes possible.

In as much as people attempt to use or value the parts differently so they will obtain different outcomes.

Whilst Indigenous housing suffers from overcrowding it is possible for more than four people to live happily and healthily in a house - but you have to live by a set of rules and values that accommodate a shared view and use of the components of the house.

In order to get my meaning ask yourself the following. What causes you to pick up something off the floor or to remove food scraps from the floor of a house? How did you learn this response?

Or have a look under your kitchen sink or in a laundry and identify the range of tools, minor assets, chemicals and wipes that you need to maintain environmental health functionality on a daily basis.

Ask yourself why you turn taps off or switch lights off? Who would you call if you had water streaming off your roof from the solar hot water heater? How long would it take for someone to arrive to repair it?

Owning a house requires you to own a set of values and networks that come to mind when you answer the above questions and many more.

If you add to this the interaction of water, waste and power systems in bathrooms, laundries and kitchens along with people using bedrooms as family rooms this increases the complexity of experience and understanding required.

All of this is before you take account of cultural pressures and social obligations. Indeed there is a question being raised in general about the meshing of technology with cultural practice and whether there is compatibility in all cases.

It should be clear that in owning a house you are owning all of these things that make your asset a valuable one that you derive ongoing benefit from.

Part of CAT's contribution to these discussions is to draw attention to the unspoken and often hidden aspects of making a house work so that people are better informed to make decisions around home ownership. ●

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San Xavier Mission Church and bough shelter, Tohono O'Odham Nation, Tucson Arizona.

Revolution in Indian Country: thoughts on the American way

I recently spent four months as a visiting Fulbright Scholar with the Udall Centre for Studies in Public Policy at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

The Udall Centre is home to much of the activity of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (HPAIED) and its sister organisation, the Native Nations Institute (NNI). In Australia, there is currently a great deal of interest in the research being undertaken by the Harvard Project. Over the past fifteen years or so there has indeed been a revolution in the economies and self-governance regimes of Native American Tribes. The constitutional recognition of Native American Tribes as “sovereign domestic nations”, policies of self-determination and self governance and escalating economic activities sets the scene for this transformation. What, can we in Australia learn from the changes underway across Indian country?

In the news
As in Australia, when reports about Indigenous peoples (Tribes) hit the media in US, they are usually negative. But instead of being focused on spelling out disadvantage or decrying community dysfunction, in the US media reports tend to be aimed at the need to limit Tribal powers, contest assertions of governance and how to get a bigger slice of the Indian gaming revenue pie. A recent analysis of the socio-economic status of some 400+ tribes across the lower 48 states highlights both increasing economic development activities and significant hurdles still to be overcome in addressing health, education, housing and employment issues despite great advances in the past fifteen years or so. Yet these issues are not the stuff of public discourse about Tribes. How, in a decade or so, have debates about the dire status of Tribes (which still exists in many

places) settled into the background and been replaced by debates about the delegations of sovereignty and intergovernmental relations? There is still a lot of sensational and incorrect reportage, but generally the impression is that Tribes are a big player in the economies of many States in the US. How has this transformation happened?

On Indian country
It is hard not to be blinded by the loud presence of Indian gaming facilities – especially the casinos and the very public branding of various economic activities as “an enterprise of the...Tribe”. Visiting a reservation, particularly those more remote in the south west semi-arid country, you could be visiting a larger remote settlement in Central Australia. You can get out of your vehicle and hear the kids who are playing in the sand speak their Tribal language and English, and you can speak with a Tribal member, who may be unemployed or on the local Council or a teacher, and hear the pride in her Tribe and great hope for the future, despite the very evident poverty. You can hear about the great challenges facing the tribe in



Chairperson (centre) and District Councillor, Tohuno O'Odham Nation on the Arizona – Mexico Border.



Teepee Warajo gift store, Tazewell Canyon National Park AZ.

building its infrastructure and the small wins of running their own health, welfare and education services. But underneath what is said is a very clear message of “we are in the driving seat”. Now that is the premise of much of the work of the Harvard Project. They contend that enabling tribes to be in the driving seat for making decisions about and managing their own affairs is the only Federal Policy that has worked in turning around disadvantage. But what I wonder has been the catalyst for moving over from the passenger seat? Is economic development and the widening of the delegations of governance that this can confer (as well as all the associated capacity development that must go alongside) an essential cog in the wheel to assertions and implementation of self-governance?

Self determination and wealth creation

Since 1975 the official US Federal policy regarding Tribes has been one of self determination and self governance. These policies marked a shift from a project or program driven approach aimed at reducing disadvantage, delivering services or creating jobs, to an evolving delegation of Federally appropriated funds to Tribal governments enabling them to determine how best to invest in and implement programs for their citizens (on and off

reservation). It didn't happen all at once but certainly seemed to escalate through the eighties and nineties, with a string of Acts such as the Self Determination and Employment Services Act. This escalating delegation of funds and responsibility to Tribes has rejuvenated the exercise of governance and demanded the building of strong institutions and effective leadership. Alongside the formal policy agenda of self determination and self governance is also an emerging economic development revolution occurring across Indian Country. Although it is spread unevenly and economic prosperity is not a widespread reality as yet, there is substantial optimism that it will be.

Gaming, particularly Class 2 (bingo, lotto, manual card games) and Class 3 (casinos), is indeed the new “buffalo” for many Tribes. However, less than half of the Tribes across America engage in these activities and 22 Tribes get most of the revenue. The other significant economic activities are small businesses, mining, niche location based enterprises such as selling big game hunts, fishing or manufacturing and hospitality, although the government sector still dominates. Interestingly, many mining activities on Tribal lands are steeped in controversy, litigation and poor community relations of the like not seen in Australia for many years.

Large scale gaming sponsored by Tribal governments started in the early 1980's. As State lotteries began to proliferate, several Tribes in Florida and California began raising revenues by operating bingo games offering larger prizes than those allowed under State laws. They were exploiting a contested loophole of their “dependent nation” status which limited the application of State laws on Tribal lands. The States tried to close the gaming operations and the Tribes sued in the Federal court and won the right to engage in gaming free of State control so long as gaming was not criminally prohibited in that State. In 1987 the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) was passed and enshrined Indian gaming as a power of Tribal governments (rather than a power of individuals or their companies with

profit making objectives). It also required profits to be directed towards Tribal economic and social development, charities, and some reinvestment back into the neighbouring State. Indian gaming has since proliferated and in many ways saturated the market. But it would seem that is not so much the economic activity and income generated per se but the expanding recognition and shaping of what Tribal self governance means – by what and over what – and how this relates to State jurisdictions that has set the course for change. Having the economic means to pursue these deliberations through the courts has also helped.

The place of good governance

The work of the Harvard Project asserts that nation building – the development of strong and legitimate governing systems – enables Tribes to effectively exercise their sovereignty and build successful and sustainable economic development efforts. The convergence of Federal policy, a catalytic Tribal government run economic activity such as gaming and the evolving consolidation of where Tribes “fit” within political jurisdictions (this has emerged through both litigation and agreement making) has demanded the focus on nation building and effective governing institutions. It would seem that “good” governance and economic development go hand in hand, and is nurtured by policies that support enhanced arenas for the exercise of self governance and intense relationship-building activities that bed down self-governance recognition often at the local level.

It is interesting to see the variation between tribes across the US and note how State responses to Tribes within their jurisdictions can have a big impact on how Tribes are faring. It is also interesting to see the escalating development of Intertribal organisations and intergovernmental agreements (State – Tribe, Federal agency – Tribe). These strengthen the advocacy front and enable the expansion of economic development activities through partnership beyond Tribal borders. Under the Indian Gaming Regulation Act some of the revenues of gaming Tribes are being shared with non gaming Tribes and it would seem that this is developing as a strategic advantage in leveraging seed and start up funds for Indian businesses as well as providing loans. Exercising the ability to design and run services under the various Self Determination Acts has proved difficult for some tribes due to isolation and small reservation populations but there is an increasing array of intertribal coalitions to harness the necessary critical mass and

expertise to do so collectively. Tribes are doing it together, for themselves.

In Australia, the proliferation of non-profit and Aboriginal organisations occurred from the 1970s onwards. These organisations focus on the delivery of services. Many of them are sector-specific organisations (health, education, municipal services) and whilst community based and often community controlled, they are not necessarily underpinned by clear language group or Indigenous politics asserting self governance responsibilities. Whether they should or could be is a contentious issue. The governance via representation assumed by Land Councils is an exception in the Australian context but this role is also at times challenged by the very politics being represented. The clarity of the issue of “governance for what” is much more marked in the US context (although still contested). The Native American “industry” (in the sense that we talk about the Aboriginal industry in Australia) wields greater weight because of the economic progress that has preceded it and the self governing rights and responsibilities that sit alongside it.

Nation building vs national integration

The constitutional recognition of Tribes as sovereign “domestic” nations sets the tone within which self governance and self determination plays out in the lower 48 States in the US. Combined with effective and legitimate institutional development (and herein lies the focus of the Harvard Project) economic development and expanding recognition and capacities at the local and State levels, there is a great sense of positive change occurring. Contemporary cultures and traditional histories and customs provide the defining sense for identity, innovation and the exploiting of niche opportunities and manifests in the “what and how” of decision-making processes and structures. There has been significant fragmentation amongst Tribes due to land allotments (land allotted to individual families and either sold off or fractured into smaller and smaller parcels by inheritance laws) and earlier policies of termination and assimilation. Developing social cohesion, shared visions and a solid land asset base has been critical to emerging self governing regimes. Achieving social cohesion has also demanded a range of institutions, structures and practices that shape the rights and responsibilities of citizens within Tribal jurisdictions. A key tool for social cohesion has been what the Harvard Project have termed “cultural match”. That is institutions, structures that resonate and reinforce local politics of identity – as Apache, Spokane, Hopi or

Lakota – and thus establish legitimacy in the practices of people governance. Successful tribes maintain a separation between people governance and business (corporate) governance.

In Australia, how Indigenous peoples “fit” within the political and social fabric of Australian society is unresolved. How Indigenous peoples “fit” with each other, as traditional owners, elders, residents or as a particular language group or from a particular community, urban or remote, is also unresolved and confounded by the impact of policies and practices that have variously destabilised ties to country, kin, custom and law. Without top down recognition self governance is restricted to the management of services. To be effective, self governance needs Commonwealth legislation against which to test and exploit the meaning and reach of its powers. The experience in the US shows that bedding down the effective exercise of self governance goes hand in hand with economic development, but even those Tribes who are at the lag end economically, are seeing improvements across all levels of socio-economic disadvantage. The importance of relationship-building with local governments, other Tribes, States and private enterprise is increasingly important in consolidating achievements to date particularly for those Tribes whose location and size mitigates against economic development opportunities or impedes the array of self governing activities that can be assumed. That said, Tribal self-determination and self-governance in the US is largely contained within the extant political constructs of America. The emerging strength of the constitutionally recognised third sovereign – Tribes (the Federal government and the States being the other two), is not without resistance and remains vulnerable. The impact of the Homeland Security Act (which expands the powers of the Federal government) and increased border controls on Tribal lands near the US-Mexico border is a clear example of this. Border patrols have been deployed onto Tribal Lands with little consultation or negotiation with Tribal governments despite great and often negative impact. There are currently hundreds of border patrol agents trying to tackle the 88000 illegal immigrants per year crossing the 75 miles of border on the reservation, many of whom may be Tribal members who remained in Mexico after the US – Mexico War and the US appropriation of the south west Territories in 1848. Remonstrating for a seat at the negotiation table for border control activities consumes significant effort and resources of the Tribal government. Maintaining the gains won to date will inevitably absorb more time and more

resources. However, the increasing economic power and resilience of Tribal governments also renders them a powerful political force into the future.

The constitutional recognition of Tribes, and the treaties that underpin this recognition, is a necessary but not sufficient explanation for the changes that have occurred across Indian Country over the past fifteen years or so. The confluence of economic opportunity, policies that facilitated new realms over which tribes could exert decision making and management and the deliberate exercising of sovereignty, however conflictual the repercussions of that exercise, have forged strong jurisdictions, new relationships and positive trajectories for Tribal governments and their citizens. In the US, the first fifteen years after the passing of the Indian Self Determination Act in 1975, saw a decline across the board in socio economic indicators for Native Americans (CBASSE, 1996), followed in the 1990s to today by dramatic and consistent improvements. It takes a while to bed down opportunity and build capacity and cohesion but the lesson from the American way is that it does happen. Perhaps the bottom up assertion of the “right to take responsibility” and invest in economic development is indeed a precursor of the power to assert self determination within a national polity where such assertions are symbolically dismissed. ●

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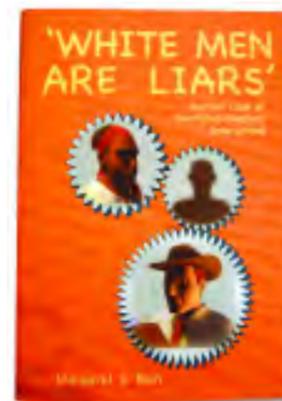
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‘White Men are Liars’

Another look at Aboriginal-Western Interactions



The curious title of this little book is confronting and yet appropriate. It is about cross-cultural communication or more specifically cross-cultural misunderstanding. The author, Margaret Bain, trained as an anthropologist, has a functional grasp of Pitjantjatjara and spent many years working in remote Aboriginal communities. The book is a condensed version of an earlier work – *The Aboriginal-White Encounter: Towards Better Communications* (SIL 1992).

The author attempts to explain problems in communication through analysis of the use of abstraction in language as well as social relationships. Her argument is that the traditional Aboriginal world view, as expressed in language and social relationships, is fundamentally at odds with its Western counterpart. The word “mother” as opposed to the word “motherhood” is a case in point. The former, in Aboriginal languages as well as

Western languages, can always be related to specific persons. The latter has no direct ties to anyone in particular and represents an abstraction that is difficult to translate into Aboriginal language. She illustrates her case by numerous anecdotes, which serve to show how easily misunderstandings can arise when Western abstractions muddy the communication waters.

A particular problem is in the area of hypothesis involving “if” and “maybe” sentences, which are invariably misconstrued by people who speak an Aboriginal language as a first language. “If” and “maybe” are not “real”. The title of the book is derived from situations where whitefellas speak about things that are not real leading to the conclusion that “White men are liars”. The implications for planners and people framing proposals are acute. “Floating an idea” will often be interpreted as a received fact and when something that has been “floated” does not eventuate, distrust and anger are often the result.

This gap in communication is not due to some deficiency in Aboriginal language, but is a direct result of a world view, which incorporates “dreaming”, “totemism” and “reciprocity” and is fundamentally at odds with Western conceptions of causality. In this context the author also identifies the issues raised by reciprocal relations versus negotiated relations. The former is representative of Aboriginal social structures, the latter very much a Western construct. The consequences for governance, business practices, justice and administration are enormous and the author eloquently explains the ramifications, which are anything but simple.

The findings of the book are sometimes controversial and possibly debatable. However this is a concise insight into the area of cross-cultural dialogue and deserves to be read by everyone and anyone who wishes to interact productively with people living in remote Aboriginal communities.

Margaret Bain
‘White Men are Liars’
SIL Darwin Inc, Price: affordable pb, 43pp
Reviewed by Narelle Jones

BUSH TECHS AND POSTERS

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For a free copy of a BUSH TECH, TECH POSTER, telephone CAT on (08) 8951 4311.

Our Place Radio

Our Place Radio show is now in its fifth year. Adrian Shaw produces a twenty minute report each fortnight, which presents the voices and perspectives of Indigenous people along with commentary on a technology theme. The major themes are energy planning, communication, health, housing, water, training and transport.

Our Place Radio is broadcast on community radio stations across mainland Australia and in the Torres Strait Islands.

- CAAMA 8KIN FM (100.5 FM), Alice Springs
- Radio Larrakia (93.7 FM), Darwin
- Walpiri Media, Yuendumu
- 6AR, Perth
- Nggaayatjarra Media, Wingellina
- Mulba Radio, Port Hedland
- 6GME (99.7 FM), Broome
- 6FX (936 AM), Fitzroy Crossing
- 6PRK (98.1 FM), Halls Creek
- 6WR (693 AM), Kununurra
- 3CR (855 AM), Melbourne
- 3KND, Melbourne
- Gadigal Information Service (93.7 FM), Sydney
- 4AAA (98.9 FM), Brisbane

- 4CLM (98.7 FM), Cairns
- 4K1G (107.1 FM), Townsville
- 4MOB (100.9 FM), Mt Isa
- 5UV Radio Adelaide (101.5), Adelaide
- 5UMA (89.1 FM), Port Augusta
- 5NPY Media Umuwa (101.3 FM), Pitjatjantjara Lands

BRACS stations in the Top End via TEABBA (Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association); in the Pilbara and Kimberley via PAKAM (Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media Association); in the Torres Strait Islands on Moa Island, Yam Island and via TSIMA (TSI Media Association).

Other stations pick up the show via the National Indigenous Radio Service and TAPE, the Aboriginal Program Exchange.

