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For environmental reasons, we have printed the full research report in limited quantities. If you require further copies, please download the PDF version from our website: www.telstrafoundation.com or contact the Telstra Foundation for a printed copy.

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The Australian Institute of Family Studies is an independent statutory authority which originated in the Australian Family Law Act (1975). The Institute was established by the Commonwealth Government in February 1980. The Institute promotes the identification and understanding of factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia by:

—researching and evaluating the social, legal and economic wellbeing of all Australian families;
—informing government and the policy making process about Institute findings;
—communicating the results of Institute and other family research to organisations concerned with family wellbeing, and to the wider general community;
—promoting improved support for families, including measures which prevent family disruption and enhance marital and family stability.

The objectives of the Institute are essentially practical ones, concerned primarily with learning about real situations through research on Australian families.

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Indigenous projects have featured highly in all funding rounds of the Telstra Foundation Community Development Fund, with almost 30 per cent of projects and funding directed to Indigenous community development. We recognise that in remote, rural and urban communities throughout Australia, Indigenous children and young people are seriously over-represented in all common measures of disadvantage, including poor physical and emotional/mental health, juvenile justice, education and unemployment.

This second volume of Early Learnings evaluates a selected number of projects under this priority area. The 14 projects reported on here by the Australian Institute of Family Studies demonstrate that community-identified programs are creating positive opportunities for Australia’s Indigenous children.

The feedback we received from the first issue of Early Learnings that focused on early childhood development was extremely encouraging. This confirmed to the Telstra Foundation Board that Early Learnings can make a valuable contribution towards improving the dissemination and uptake of new knowledge, research and improved service delivery to kids and families, especially those who are most at risk and vulnerable. Importantly, Early Learnings reflects our mission: to make a positive and lasting difference to the lives of Australian children and young people. With this in mind, sustainability is a key issue for the Foundation and one that needs to be integrated into all stages of a project’s development. For those projects featured in Early Learnings, some simply need a good ‘resting place’ at the end of the project, whereas others are sustained by the organisation and become a part of core business. In some instances, project design and outputs will be taken up by others and transformed to meet their specific circumstances.

We congratulate the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and the other Indigenous consultants who joined the evaluation team for the depth and quality of their research. The team was made up of Dr Daryl Higgins (AIFS) as the project manager, Indigenous researchers Ms Sandi Taylor, Ms Leanne Ramsamy and Ms Marlene Burchill (AIFS), and Ms Leah Bromfield (AIFS). The team has a wealth of experience in conducting participatory research in Indigenous community settings and a commitment to strengthening family, culture and community – which is evident in this report.

With Telstra Foundation funding, we wish to support Indigenous communities to identify their own priorities and develop culturally appropriate and effective solutions to meet their needs. We also prefer to fund those projects in which key personnel are Indigenous and which support the skills development and employment of young Indigenous people.

Through developing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities, the Telstra Foundation can play a role in the wider philanthropic sector, model good practice and assist Indigenous organisations to identify alternative sources of funding and support. Hopefully, in this way we can contribute to the broader goals of the reconciliation process by facilitating dialogue between Indigenous communities and the philanthropic and corporate sectors towards creating on-going partnerships and redressing past injustices.

We welcome your feedback and thoughts.

HERB ELLIOTT AC MBE
CHAIRMAN
TELSTRA FOUNDATION
I recently returned from my first visit to the “top end”. In reflecting on that trip, this second volume of the Early Learnings Research Report has taken on a special significance, given its focus on Indigenous community development. What I saw on my visit to north Western Australia and the Northern Territory has left many indelible impressions. The mix of hardship, on the one hand, and hope, on the other, was particularly evident in one of the community development initiatives that I visited. While the hardship is impossible to ignore, the hope lay in the growing strength of the community’s commitment to change and to building a better future for their children.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies is especially pleased to be able to be involved in the evaluation of the initiatives funded by the Telstra Foundation, in this instance in 14 Indigenous communities. In writing this second Research Report, the Institute seeks to continue its commitment to disseminating the learnings from child and family focused community development projects across the nation. The opportunity to be involved is especially timely for the Institute as we seek to broaden the focus on Indigenous families in our next Research Plan.

On behalf of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, may I acknowledge the foresight, initiative and commitment of the Telstra Foundation in funding the projects evaluated in this volume. The involvement of the Foundation in this area is an outstanding example of the importance of partnerships between communities, governments, and philanthropic organisations – the essence of what the Prime Minister refers to as the “social coalition”. There is a second sense in which the Report represents an invaluable partnership, in this case between three Indigenous researchers, Marlene Burchill, Leanne Ramsamy and Sandi Taylor, and two non-Indigenous consultants, Dr Daryl Higgins, who managed the evaluation, and Leah Bromfield. Together, they are to be congratulated on a very valuable contribution to our understanding of Indigenous -run community development initiatives. The examples they provide in evaluating the projects powerfully illustrate practical ways in which hardship can be turned to hope.

PROFESSOR ALAN HAYES, PHD
DIRECTOR
AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF FAMILY STUDIES
In 2004, the Telstra Foundation published the inaugural volume of the *Early Learnings* Research Report, which was prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies. It was the principal outcome of an evaluation of projects that were supporting children and families, or addressing early childhood literacy. This time, the evaluation is focused on *Early Learnings* from Indigenous Community Development projects. These projects look at community-identified solutions for the serious social and health problems affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. In particular, the themes addressed in the current evaluation round will be early childhood development and youth participation, with a focus on the role of schools in facilitating change.

The Telstra Foundation is committed to supporting innovative community development projects, including projects assisting Indigenous communities throughout Australia. Alongside the usual assessment criteria used in evaluating project applications, the Telstra Foundation Board has agreed that projects aimed at benefiting Indigenous children and young people must be made either by an Indigenous organisation or by a non-Indigenous organisation which is working in close partnership with an Indigenous organisation. Three-fifths of the Indigenous projects that the Foundation has funded come directly from Indigenous organisations. Also, projects in which key personnel are Indigenous and support the skills development and employment of young Indigenous people are more likely to be supported.

Since it was established in 2002, the Community Development Fund of the Telstra Foundation has provided support for 69 Indigenous projects, which will significantly benefit Indigenous children and young people.

From these projects that were funded over the past three and a half years, the Telstra Foundation identified approximately 22 projects across Australia from urban, rural and isolated Indigenous communities to be invited to participate in an evaluation of their project. The Telstra Foundation has identified these projects as showcasing Indigenous initiatives likely to contribute to positive change for Indigenous groups, individuals and communities. The assistance from the Telstra Foundation will have a measurable influence in handing back the power of change to the Indigenous communities.

Five projects recommended for evaluation by the Telstra Foundation did not have staff available or elected not to participate in the evaluation. Another three projects were not able to be included because of time or logistical constraints on the evaluators in being able to meet with the key stakeholders within the evaluation timeframe. In total, 14 projects participated and are reflected in this report.

The 14 projects stretch from the west (Perth) to the east (Brisbane), from the north (Torres Straits and Cape York Peninsula) to the south (Launceston), with a number based in the heart of Australia’s outback communities: Alice Springs. One key project was also national, covering all states and territories (Reconciliation Australia).

**AUSTRALIA’S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there were 483,994 Indigenous people living in Australia at 30th June 2004. New South Wales had the largest Indigenous population with 141,533, followed by Queensland (134,013), Western Australia (69,665), and the Northern Territory (59,508). The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Indigenous people among its population (29.8 per cent) and Victoria the lowest (0.65 per cent). The majority of Indigenous people live in cities and towns, but the Indigenous population is more widely dispersed across Australia than the non-Indigenous population (ABS 2003).

The Indigenous population is considerably younger than the non-Indigenous population. In 2001, 40 per cent of Indigenous people were aged less than 15 years, compared with 21 per cent of non-Indigenous people. Only 2.6 per cent of the Indigenous population were aged 65 years or over compared with the 12 per cent of the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous youths are more likely to be imprisoned...
than the general population, and the rate of suicides in police custody remains high. Rates of unemployment, health problems and poverty are likewise higher than the general population, and school retention rates and university attendance is much lower than the general population (ABS 2003).

Many other factors affect Indigenous communities: Indigenous children are over-represented in the child protection system and in out-of-home care (they are 6.5 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be in foster, kinship or residential out-of-home care). Indigenous children suffer from more preventable illnesses, malnutrition, communicable diseases, mental health and substance abuse, and have poorer access to medical and mental health services than non-Indigenous children. Indigenous adults die up to 20 years younger than non-Indigenous Australians. Many Indigenous communities live in substandard housing (overcrowding, inadequate water and washing facilities, poor sanitation, and limited food storage). Indigenous young people have lower levels of participation and completion in formal education, and consequently poorer educational outcomes (ABS 2003; AIHW 2001; NATIONAL CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH LAW CENTRE AND DEFENCE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL (AUSTRALIA) 2005).

The current health status of Indigenous people can be viewed as a result of generations of isolation from the mainstream economy, extreme social disadvantage, poverty and powerlessness. There have been improvements on some issues, but no improvement—or even decline—on others. Indigenous health has improved with the establishment of Indigenous medical centres; however, it remains significantly inferior to that of the general population. Often the diseases that confront Indigenous communities are those that reflect poor living conditions: infant mortality, eye and ear infections, diseases related to alcohol and drug abuse, malnutrition, asthma and STD (SAM 1992). At present, there are 120,000 Indigenous people (about 26% of the total Indigenous population) living in 1200 discrete communities in remote regions. There are key differences between metropolitan and remote communities, such as isolation, land ownership, customary and kinship practices, and access to services. Indigenous people living in remote areas fare much worse than both their Indigenous and non-Indigenous city counterparts on key economic and health measures (GRAY AND ALTMAN 2005).

As noted Indigenous academic and commentator, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, argued: “What is significant is that no matter which factors are examined – be it poverty, nutrition, access to services, smoking... the list goes on – you will find that Indigenous people are over represented at the wrong end of the spectrum” (O’DONOGHUE 2000, P. 723).

Marlene Burchill—the principal project officer, and one of the Indigenous researchers conducting the evaluation of *Early Learnings* from the Telstra Foundation-funded projects—writes: “Many Indigenous people today may say that our culture has been lost; others may argue this is not so. In reality for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ‘culture’ and the ‘mores’ bonding a culture takes second place. The rules that govern communities are almost lost when a large population of Indigenous people struggle with an increased alcohol and drug addiction, family violence and child abuse. Properly governed, according to tribal law, this would not have happened. Individuals guilty of breaking the rule would be severely punished.”

**THE IMPACT OF COLONISATION**

In order to understand the current issues facing Indigenous communities, it is vital to understand the history of colonisation. The past resonates into the present: it impinges on the family, the children, and their ability to reach their full potential.

Marlene Burchill comments: “As an Indigenous person growing up, I was taught about family and relationships. Historically, Indigenous families were group or clans of people whose lives were organised according to the tribal affiliations. Traditionally groups were composed of Elders, mother, fathers, sisters, and brothers. Culture was steeped in mythology and dreamtime stories. Spirituality and cultural mores were controlled. A complex set of laws developed from within groups to govern every facet of life and relationships. Marriage between kin was taboo. Wives were found outside of the tribal groups for Indigenous men during their hunting and gath-
ering expeditions. Traditionally sisters would leave their families and settle elsewhere when considered by Elders to be mature enough for marriage.

“Healing the community needs to happen before we can move forward and pass on a positive cultural heritage. We need to get back to the basics: nurturing; self-discipline; modelling; the drive to keep going under great difficulty. Aboriginal families often are not able to provide that, because they haven’t been taught it.”

The consequences of separation from parents and community can be seen. Past policies of child removal have damaged culture, family ties, and modelling of parental and cultural roles. Poverty is also a crucial factor associated with family breakdown, child neglect and child removal. As Chairperson of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, Muriel Bamblett (née Cadd) has noted: “Impoverished communities raise impoverished children” (CADD 2002, P. 1).

Marlene Burchill writes: “As one of the Indigenous researchers involved in the evaluation of projects funded by the Telstra Foundation under their Indigenous Community Development area, I must emphasise that we cannot move forward without understanding the impact colonisation has had on all Indigenous people in Australia. Those involved in supporting Indigenous communities today need to begin with the impact of colonisation and its devastating consequences on all aspects of lives, culture, mores and spirituality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Change will only occur when these needs are addressed within this context. Our original communities have been destroyed completely. We need assistance to develop communities that recognise heritage, but also, so that we can function positively and as equals in a modern contemporary Australia.”

**Healing the Communities**

It is evident from recent studies by Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers that violence is out of control and has reached a crisis state, suggesting that the present generation enacts the traumatic feelings of past experiences. Atkinson (2002) is a strong proponent of the theory of intergenerational trauma. She argues that recent research provides some explanations of the process whereby oppression and abuse are internalised by those who are oppressed and abused; consequently, their own behaviour both reflects and in turn reinforces the victimisation if they in turn abuse others.

Marlene Burchill explains: “We must take into account decades of massive upheaval caused to Indigenous people; we continue to struggle today. Many of us lack trust, belief and faith in other people. Whatever confidence we may have in others is fragile and easily disturbed or destroyed. So how does community development progress when we have not recovered from the wounds of the past? Before we move forward to achieve positive change there is a need to help heal the individual, the family and the community to ease the pain and trauma resulting from colonial domination and power abuse.”

Communities then need to take communal responsibility for ensuring the welfare of children. This does not just mean protecting them from harm. It goes further than this; it also means providing a positive sense of self, the world, and the future. It is important to not focus solely on individuals. Issues faced by Indigenous children and young people must be examined within the context of their family and community – communities that have also experienced disadvantage and victimisation (CADD 2002).

**Community Development from an Indigenous Perspective**

Marlene Burchill explains: “The trauma inflicted by the upheavals of the postcolonial era has removed the close cultural kinship ties that existed previously within Indigenous communities across Australia. As a result, Indigenous communities today are made up of many different tribal groups sharing the same community. In many instances we require a ‘start again’ approach to firmly develop the bonds and trust for a stable foundation toward community development from an Indigenous perspective. The problems for Indigenous people have multiplied, particularly family violence and drug dependency. These are persistently increasing over many generations. Sue Gordon—an Indigenous Magistrate from
Western Australia—maintains that ‘we are witnessing a national disaster’. In the light of these complex issues, Indigenous people have not overcome the wounds of the past. The question needs to be tested: Will a community development model bring change into communities that are vulnerable and fractured, still nursing the wounds of the past?”

Community development implies an awareness of exploitation and oppression. Community organising is based primarily on the conviction that people are capable of finding solutions to their problems. This in no way negates the often indispensable role of “experts” but it means that experts can best contribute by supporting initiatives decided on collectively by people who have joined together to address their community’s needs.

As explained by Marlene:
“The concept of community development has been around for a long time. Community development can be all things to all people. Within an Indigenous context, community development has been going on a long time with marginal gains achieved for Indigenous people across Australia.”

According to Indigenous academic, Jaunita Sherwood (1999), community development refers to “working with communities to assist communities in finding plausible solutions to the problems they have identified” (p. 7). Indigenous people in Australia have participated in community development for thousands of years, yet they have been forced to adapt to a non-Indigenous community development model for several decades (Sherwood 1999). She emphasises the importance of community development processes being “initiated by the community and not put upon the community” (p. 8).

Again, Marlene Burchill provides her perspective:
“Community development practitioners arriving in Indigenous communities today must come armed with the education, knowledge, patience, skills, cultural understanding, courage and respect. For change to take place within Indigenous communities, practitioners must not contribute to another generation of poverty, isolation and inequality. Well-meaning non-Indigenous people across Australia moved to support Indigenous communities thinking that they may create change or empower Indigenous people to take charge and control over their own lives and their communities. “Community development workers arrive in Indigenous communities with their aspirations, their tools, knowledge and expert advice; to build hope, to raise community consciousness and to the problems that have led to their exploitation, isolation, oppression and racial prejudice. For all of their good intentions and visionary exploits – little has changed. Well-meaning efforts that ultimately fail contribute to the suspicion and mistrust that does exist within Indigenous communities and individuals.

“There are many obstacles to overcome in this regard and many initiatives have become bogged down and left in the ‘too hard’ basket. In the past, Indigenous communities settled for second best. This meant they got the leftovers (similar to mission rations of brown sugar and white flour). They did not get the best, most educated, knowledgeable professional assistance. Indigenous communities and organisations have been a ‘honey pot’ for organisations and individuals who can access the funding provided by government but rarely achieve positive and lasting outcomes. Indigenous organisations and communities are easy targets, given that Indigenous people often have little control over how funds are used. But change has occurred and cannot be discounted or ignored.”

The aim of community development activities is to achieve better community outcomes for Indigenous communities. Many academics and practitioners have critically examined different approaches or strategies to develop appropriate practices to support Indigenous communities to create changes necessary within their own communities. Considerable energy and efforts have gone into research or reports to raise consciousness about the existing inequalities that continue to isolate Indigenous people from the mainstream economy.

Mainstream models of community development—as well as other more intensive therapeutic practices such as counselling and medical interventions to support Indigenous people—in many respects draw heavily on a western model of thinking rather than a combined effort to integrate western and Indigenous cultural practices. Patrick Dodson (2002) emphasises that for change to occur “it’s a two way street, so far it’s only been one way” (p. 22).
Sherwood (1999) calls for an Indigenous community development model that requires understanding, commitment, collaboration, partnership and respect. This requires “working with communities to assist their members to find plausible solutions to the problems they have identified. This must be conducted in an environment that advocates full and active participation of all community members in order that we understand and acquire skills to develop culturally-appropriate programs/projects and services to our communities” (pp. 7-8).

Sherwood argued that:

“Working with communities to assist their members to find plausible solutions to the problems they have identified... must be conducted in an environment that advocates full and active participation of all community members in order that we understand and acquire skills to develop culturally-appropriate programs/projects and services to our communities.”

(SHERWOOD 1999)

HANDING BACK POWER TO COMMUNITIES

Marlene Burchill offers some words of advice for non-Indigenous people planning to work in Indigenous communities:

“A positive Indigenous community development model must incorporate ‘yarning up not down’ (BURCHILL 2004). Yarning up relates to ‘yarning for outcomes’ rather than speaking down to Indigenous people. Yarning down is an indication that the outsider knows best or takes control of the outcomes for Indigenous people. Well-meaning people come to work with us but they do the work for us and we haven’t learnt how to do it. Another experience that stifles progressive community development outcomes is when funding organisations expect us to do things their way, but sometimes this means we lose control of the work. Many non-Indigenous people come and go. They take our stories, end a project, and then we are left to deal with what is left. This can be hard work for us especially when they have written and developed a new program in their ‘flash language’.”

The projects that are described in this publication have been initiated by Indigenous people for Indigenous people and provide a template for progress and development for Indigenous communities. Evaluation of the projects, as written up in this publication, was driven by collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.

Again, Marlene comments:

“The Telstra Foundations is to be commended on the way that they have proceeded with the Indigenous Community Development initiative. The Telstra Foundation has the confidence to involve Indigenous researchers in evaluating projects where Indigenous communities are exploring their own solutions. This is the way to create change.”

LEADERSHIP

A key to community development and community-generated change is leadership. Leadership is about giving guidance and direction, but also setting examples. It means gaining the confidence and trust of others regarding your style, the decisions that you make, and your ability to take people with you on your journey.

Marlene Burchill suggests:

“In this context, drawing on Indigenous writers is important because our views provide an ‘inside’ examination of the complex issues confronting Indigenous people across Australia today. This approach by no means disregards non-Indigenous contributions but accepts that the Indigenous voice has much to offer, for we share the same ‘reality’. So what does “leadership” mean in an Indigenous context? The expectations are the same as for any other community or society: leadership is needed to progress toward equality and full participation in society.”
Indigenous people need a bigger say and greater control over their affairs, including Indigenous leadership at all stages from the grassroots level up to policy development and implementation. To move forward, non-Indigenous people need to come to terms with this position and must allow Indigenous people to proceed—allowing for their sense of shared value, time and place (Anderson 2002; Chapman 2002). Leadership will only occur when Indigenous people take control of their own people (Perkins 1990).

However, different perspectives are evident. Pearson (2001) argued that leadership can happen when shackles of welfare dependency have been removed. Dodson (2002) advocated for leadership in terms of community capacity building. This according to Dodson requires solid partnerships to create change. Change involves capacity building, empowering individuals to maximise their potential, creating sustainable employment and creating lasting partnership between communities, government and the corporate sector. Dodson argued: “No one individual will have everything needed to undertake community capacity building, but groups of individuals do” (p. 23). The projects that are evaluated in this research report represent partnerships between local Indigenous communities, governments, businesses and philanthropy, as recommended by Dodson (2002).

**EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

One of the criteria for funding from the Telstra Foundation’s Indigenous Community Development area was that projects are based on sound research and have a strong likelihood of meeting their objectives. Therefore, the role of the evaluators was to assist these projects in reflecting on—and being able to demonstrate—how they have met these objectives, the processes they implemented, and the factors affecting outcomes, such as risks and benefits, barriers and enabling factors, expectations and achievements, strengths and challenges.

In order to ensure a broad impact, the evaluation strategy also focused on working with projects to help them document their capacity for modelling a new approach for wider application, including (where appropriate or relevant):

— their capacity to become self-sustaining and make a lasting impact, or to document the challenges they face;
— evidence of enhanced social connections and the active participation of children and young people in their local communities;
— how they have assisted in developing more cohesive and stronger communities;
— how they have addressed the needs of disadvantaged Indigenous children and young people, including those from rural and remote communities; and
— how prevention and early intervention strategies are working; and how they have measured results for children and young people.

Original applications for funding and other information, photographs, materials and reports prepared about the project were gathered to provide the context of the project or cluster of projects. Appropriate baseline data, including quantitative indicators, were requested from projects, where available. In particular, where projects have collected qualitative data on the views of their participants or consumers—particularly the views of children and young people—these data are reflected in the evaluation. One or more researchers from the evaluation team visited each of the selected projects. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of people directly involved with each of the 14 projects who were selected in consultation with the project leader. These included:

— community members/representatives;
— project workers;
— committee of management/lead agency/manager;
— local community representatives and
— others who are likely to be involved in or affected by the project.

In order to protect the privacy of individuals, personal names have often not been used when including direct quotes from informants in the narrative accounts that have been constructed.

Consistent with principles of participatory evaluation, each project was asked to check they agreed with the final narrative about their project, the themes that emerged, and conclusions and implications that are drawn. Discussion and input from the projects informed this final report.
TELSTRA FOUNDATION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND: INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

69 INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS HAVE BEEN FUNDED SINCE THE LAUNCH OF TELSTRA FOUNDATION IN APRIL 2002

$3,876,200 HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO INDIGENOUS PROJECTS (INCLUDING 2ND AND 3RD YEAR FUNDING)*

2005

Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat Action research to design best practice models of Indigenous kinship care NSW $180,000 over 3 years

Cape York Aboriginal Charitable Trust Traditional Knowledge for Indigenous Youths in Schools – multimedia project for young Indigenous people QLD $80,000 over 2 years

Gurriny Yealamucka Health Services Aboriginal Corporation Gurriny Healthy Family Eating – nutrition program for Indigenous families in Yarrabah QLD $85,000 over 2 years

Nintiringganyi Cultural Training Centre Indigenous youth pathways – skills development program for young people in Cape York communities QLD $39,000 over 2 years

Reconciliation Australia Towards 2007 National Reconciliation Convention – strategies to engage Indigenous young people National $120,000 over 2 years

Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation with The Fred Hollows Foundation Making Moves – nutrition and physical activity programs in the Katherine East region NT $80,000 over 2 years

Tangentyere Council Aeye – multimedia project in Alice Springs' town camps NT $80,000 over 2 years

Unity of First People of Australia Child diabetes program in Kimberley communities WA $50,000

Yothu Yindi Foundation Keeping Our Cultural Gateway – Garma Festival's young people program NT $60,000 over 2 years

LIST CONTINUES OVER PAGE

*AS OF OCTOBER 2005
2004

Bur-del Co-operative Advancement Society Bur-del Computer Café – IT skills development for Indigenous youth in Ayr QLD $70,000 over 2 years

Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation Kwiny Mob – playgroups and parenting program to improve well-being of young Indigenous children WA $40,000

Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council Cultural camps and on-going activities to develop responsibility and appropriate behaviour in ‘at risk’ Indigenous boys NSW $40,000

Ganbina Koori Economic Employment & Training Agency Jobs4U2 – program to address low retention rates of Indigenous students, low participation rate in school-industry programs and lack of access to employment in the Shepparton / Mooroopna area VIC $110,000 over 2 years

Garnduwa Amboony Wirnan Aboriginal Corporation Kimberley Youth Leadership Program – training program, activities and support to develop future Indigenous leaders $30,000 over 2 years

Koorie Heritage Trust Koorie Alive – an education program to reconnect Indigenous young people from South Eastern Australia with their culture VIC $62,000 over 2 years

Kurruru Indigenous Youth Performing Arts with Come Out Festival Soaring – physical theatre project exploring the relationship between traditional Kaurna stories and the lives of contemporary Indigenous young people SA $15,000

Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation Families and Communities Supporting Children to School Project – pilot program to address low school attendance of Indigenous community in Darwin area NT $101,000 over 2 years

Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation Australian Babies – early childhood books $40,000 over 2 years

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women’s Council Aboriginal Corporation Tjilku Kunpaku – Strong Kids Project – early intervention and nutrition program in five remote communities in the Ngaanyatjarra lands NT and WA $110,000 over 2 years

PACT Youth Theatre with Redfern, Waterloo and Alexandria Indigenous communities Gathering Words – collaborative writing and performance project NSW $14,500

Queensland Institute of Medical Research Investigation of Indigenous children with chronic moist cough and children with bronchiectasis Central Australia $60,000

Queensland Music Festival with Cherbourg community Ruby’s story – Ruby Hunter and Archie Roach workshop and performance QLD $20,000

Queensland University of Technology with Woorabinda State School Woorabinda Digital project – digital production and multi-media skills for Indigenous students QLD $50,000

Royal Children’s Hospital Foundation Indigenous Group Support Program – Indigenous parenting support program QLD $20,000

South Coast Women’s Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation Young Aboriginal Women at Risk – intensive support to young Indigenous women at risk of entering the juvenile justice system NSW $22,000

University of Technology, Sydney and Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Research into risk and protective factors in Indigenous communities National $52,000

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Indigenous Volunteers & Elders Program – culturally appropriate support, friendship and practical assistance to Aboriginal families VIC $120,000 over 3 years

Walija Tjurtargku Palyapayi Aboriginal Association Pipirri Tjuta Palya Kanyila, Tjana Ngurru Palya Kanyintjaku (Keeping Kids Healthy Makes a Better World) – child nutrition and community development program NT $110,000 over 2 years

Worawa Aboriginal College Creative Learning Centre – development of individualised learning curriculum, including cultural activity and mentoring support VIC $75,000 over 2 years

Wunan Foundation Feasibility study to establish a skills centre for young Indigenous people who are considered to be not job-ready or suited to TAFE in the East Kimberley WA $23,000
2003

Cape York Aboriginal Charitable Trust Cape York Youth Network – to develop and mentor young community leaders QLD $60,000 over 2 years

Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association We Gotta Be Strong – production of a youth video starring the Indigenous superhero Cuz Congress – NT $40,000

Griffith Aboriginal Medical Service Rebuilding Respect – program for youth focusing on building self-esteem and leadership skills NSW $13,400

Gudhum Wadjelah Aboriginal Association and Richmond River Historical Society Bush Learning – program using Bundjalung language and cultural traditions to improve outcomes for at-risk children and youth NSW $20,000

Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service Education forums about issues affecting the well-being of Indigenous youth NSW $35,000 over 2 years

Indigenous Unit, UTS with Alexandria Park Community School Indigenous Community Learning Centre – collaboration to increase literacy levels for Indigenous youth and their families NSW $35,700

Katherine Regional Arts Incorporated Arts: Get Into It! – alternative educational opportunities for youth at risk in the Katherine region NT $14,800

La Trobe University with Rumbalara Football and Netball Club Wanyara – media training for young Aboriginal in Victoria’s Goulburn Valley area to record Rumbalara Football and Netball Club’s sporting history and develop vocational skills VIC $35,000

Learning Links Koori Kids – playgroups for young children NSW $40,000 over 2 years

Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-op Murray River Quest for Health – promoting healthy lifestyle and physical activity in primary schools VIC $10,500

Ntaria Council (Hermannsburg) Community health education and awareness program for Indigenous youth NT $20,000 over 2 years

Queensland Institute of Medical Research with Indigenous health organisations, Culturally-appropriate paediatric asthma education for the Torres Strait region QLD $94,000 over 2 years

Queensland University of Technology with Cherbourg State School Strong and Smart Digital Project – training Indigenous youth in information technology production QLD $35,000

Reconciliation Australia National Reconciliation through Education program for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people National $130,000 over 2 years

School of Public Health, Queensland University of Technology with Indigenous communities Dreamtime Games: Pathway for Our Youth – traditional Indigenous games to increase physical activity and cultural knowledge in the Cunnamulla and Charleville communities QLD $32,800

South Coast Women’s Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation Healing programs to support Aboriginal girls and young women deal with issues of violence and abuse NSW $15,000

The Scout Association of Australia, Queensland Branch Community Activities Program through Education (CAPE) – community club recreation activities for Cape York Indigenous children and young people QLD $70,000 over 3 years

The Smith Family with the Balga Senior High School The Swan Nyungar Sports Education Project – drawing on sport and Nyungar culture to increase participation and educational outcomes for Indigenous students WA $55,000 over 2 years

Tracks with Ausdance NT UpFroNT – dance workshops and targeted performances involving young Aboriginal people who are gifted NT $35,000

University of New England with Catholic Education Office Wii Gaay project – early identification of giftedness and ongoing educational support to underachieving Aboriginal children NSW $140,000 over 3 years

University of Newcastle with Indigenous health organisations Development of research measures of dietary intake and physical activity in Australia’s Indigenous rural children NSW $95,000 over 2 years

Warmun Community (Turkey Creek) After school activities to maintain and strengthen the traditional culture of this very isolated community WA $10,000
2002

Albany Aboriginal Corporation Programs for young Aboriginal men around issues of substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence WA $40,000

Arts Access Society with Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations Voice Messages – an arts project, responding to Indigenous youth suicide VIC $25,000

Asia Education Foundation, The University of Melbourne Australia My Place – exhibition by young people living in rural and remote areas National $30,000

Curtin University of Technology Early intervention pilot study program for Aboriginal youth identified as being at risk of depression and suicidal behaviours WA $85,000 for 3 years

Gravity Discovery Centre Foundation Training and employment of young people as presenters and tour guides for science and technology programs WA $35,000

Institute for Aboriginal Development Publish four picture dictionaries for Aboriginal children in community languages NT $48,000

Minimbah Aboriginal Pre-school Corporation Establish a library that is culturally sensitive and accessible to Aboriginal children NSW $12,000

Mapoon Aboriginal Council Project Youth – engaging/training young people to build their own youth centre using local alternative building materials QLD $60,000

Murri & Torres Strait Islander Network Tajum – community development project for Indigenous youth support and skills development QLD $35,000

NGanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yunkunytjatjara Women’s Council Aboriginal child health and well-being project – supporting at-risk young mothers in their children’s early years WA and NT $120,000 over 2 years

Pitjantjatjara Council Ara Irititja Archival Project – providing Anangu young people with access to learning resources that celebrate their cultural identity NT / SA / WA $115,000 over 3 years

School of Public Health, Queensland University of Technology, Qld Queensland University of Technology with Indigenous communities Improving Aboriginal children’s health through traditional Indigenous games Rural QLD $36,500

St Philip’s College Voices from the Heart – creation of an ‘outback museum’ in Alice Springs – involving vocational training for Indigenous and bush students NT $40,000

Tangentyere Council Establish an evening drop-in centre to provide a safe place and counselling for homeless, at-risk young people in Alice Springs NT $50,000

The Scout Association of Australia, Queensland Branch Development of community-club recreation activities for Cape York Indigenous young people QLD $15,000

The Western Australian Indigenous Arts Showcase Management Committee, Perth International Arts Festival (a division of the University of WA) WA Indigenous Arts Showcase – promoting WA’s young Indigenous artists WA $25,000

UNICEF with Walija Tjurtargku Palyapayi Aboriginal Association Pipirri Tjuta Palya Kanyila, Tjana Nguu Palya Kanyintjaku: Keeping kids healthy makes a better world – child health and nutrition program NT $110,000 over 3 years
SECTION 1
CHILDREN: HEALTH, CULTURE & WELLBEING

...GROWING UP INDIGENOUS CHILDREN WHO ARE PHYSICALLY HEALTHY, ENGAGED EDUCATIONALLY, AND CONNECTED TO THEIR FAMILY, THEIR HISTORY, AND THEIR CULTURE
CHILDREN: HEALTH, CULTURE & WELLBEING

DARYL HIGGINS

INTRODUCTION

Nationally—and internationally—researchers and policy makers are focusing their attention on children's early years. From birth, through to puberty, change seems to be the only constancy in children's lives. These are the formative years when children's physical growth and development is occurring. It is also paralleled by cognitive and emotional development. Many psychologists have outlined some of the key stages of development as children mature and confront new developmental tasks. In order to successfully negotiate these stages, children need a good start, with adequate antenatal and post-natal care, nutrition, and educational opportunities (DUFFIE AND ROGERS 2002).

However, it is also important to consider children's cultural needs: to learn about their identity, their people's past, and to envisage a positive future. For Indigenous communities—many of which face significant health, economic and social disadvantage compared to other sections of Australian society—this is a difficult task. There are five projects funded by the Telstra Foundation described in this first section that assist individuals and communities in central Australia with their task of growing up Indigenous and retrieved by family members, or other people in the community interested in their history. People from these central Australian communities can enter and search the community archive that represents a collaborative effort between the health and education sectors (led by the Queensland Institute of Medical Research), addressing a crucial aspect of children's health: the prevention and management of asthma. It highlights the importance of regionally specific, culturally appropriate approaches to training and service delivery.

Another aspect that is critical to children's health is the level of physical activity. Obesity is recognised as a national priority issue—and one that particularly affects Indigenous communities. The Traditional Indigenous Games project—developed by Indigenous staff in the Queensland University of Technology's School of Public Health—was a community-based approach to increasing physical activity. The value of this project is that it calls on the benefits of historic Aboriginal cultures in utilising hunting games and other traditional Indigenous games as the mechanism for building a sustainable physical education curriculum that is inclusive of traditional Indigenous culture.

Adopting a partnership approach to addressing the issue of child nutrition, UNICEF worked with a local Indigenous agency, Waltija, to implement their project “Keeping Kids Healthy Makes a Better World”. It was an evolving partnership, with UNICEF playing the lead, and then working to build the capacity of the local Indigenous organisation to sustain the program. The project worked with local communities to provide information, equipment and practical skills to grow, buy and cook nutritious food to ensure a healthy start to life for young Aboriginal children in remote communities in central Australia.

The Institute for Aboriginal Development was funded by the Telstra Foundation to undertake the research, development and production of four children's 'picture dictionaries'—educational tools that have been used to improve the literacy of Indigenous children from communities in central Australia. The goal is to improve young people's ability to read and write—not only in English, but also in their own local language.

The final project in this section was also focused on cultural reclamation: the Pitjantjatjara Council's Aya Irititja Archive Project: Knowing the Past to Strengthen Our Future. Historic records (photos, letters, artefacts, recordings) in a digital archive, and can be searched by the Telstra Foundation to undertake the research, development and production of four children's 'picture dictionaries'—educational tools that have been used to improve the literacy of Indigenous children from communities in central Australia. The goal is to improve young people's ability to read and write—not only in English, but also in their own local language.

KEY LEARNINGS

In the evaluations of these projects that follow, a number of early learnings are described. Some of the important lessons learned by the organisations involved included the importance—and benefit—of collaborating with other organisations. It takes time to get to know communities when working with them. Project activities were most effective when they were able to enhance the capacity of local indigenous grass-roots organisations and community groups - building local knowledge and confidence. An important learning was the need for flexibility in designing and implementing programs. Finally, these projects highlight the importance of enhancing opportunities to transmit language and culture from one generation to the next, as well as respecting and linking activities to Indigenous cultures.
A paediatric asthma education training package has been developed primarily to build the capacity and capability of local Torres Strait Islander Health workers to address childhood asthma in the Torres Strait region.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

— To develop and deliver a culturally appropriate paediatric asthma education package for Torres Strait Islander health workers to assist them in educating children and their parents/carers, complementing the education on asthma planned by local Torres Strait Health Authorities.

— To provide education on childhood asthma for the local community and schools, to work towards achieving accreditation as an ‘Asthma Friendly School’.

— To reinforce the knowledge and skills of health workers by follow-up consultations in their local community.

**FUNDING PERIOD TWO: YEARS (2003 TO 2005)**

**FUNDING AMOUNT: $94,000**

**HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

Asthma is one of the current national chronic disease priority areas. However, there was no formal culturally appropriate asthma education program for the health workers and people of the Torres Strait Islands. It is known internationally that racial and socio-economic factors influence asthma severity, which is arguably related to broad service delivery issues rather than a reflection of intrinsic asthma severity. Studies have also shown that treatment of these children can be substantially improved and that asthma knowledge is relatively poor.

Commencing in 1998, the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR), Mater Children’s Hospital and University of Queensland conducted a Short Wind Respiratory Asthma Outreach Project in the Torres Strait Islands – a group of islands, between Cape York Peninsula (Australia) and Papua New Guinea. This was followed in 1999 to 2000 with a prevalence study on childhood asthma in the Torres region. This rigorous study demonstrated that, although prevalence was similar, asthma severity in children of this region is generally greater than that of children seen in urban areas.

The prevalence study provided an opportunity to engage with the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Health Service District, Elders and community members. The Regional Council was instrumental in initiating a grass-root response and facilitated the collaboration between the District Health Service, QIMR, the Royal Children’s Hospital (RCH) and the Asthma Foundation of Queensland.

Partners collaborated to develop a model (based on primary health care principles) that combines community education with clinical services, delivered primarily at the Primary Health Care Centre on Thursday Island. The project was also linked to relevant health initiatives being developed by the Torres Strait Regional Health Authorities.

**KEY PROCESSES**

The principal activity was the development of a culturally appropriate Torres Strait Paediatric Asthma Education training package for local health workers. Funds from the Telstra Foundation are being used to develop, implement and evaluate the package. Health workers play an important role in engaging communities and are pivotal to improving and/or sustaining health outcomes at a local level. Contents of the training package were sourced from existing accredited training packages – the Asthma Foundation of Queensland’s Course in Asthma Education and Management and the Central Australian Course in Paediatric Respiratory Care. Extensive liaison with local Torres Strait Islander health staff ensured that the content and delivery of the training would be appropriate to suit the learning needs of health workers. For instance, after the first workshop, changes were made to include more paediatric asthma information. The session on ‘triggers for asthma’ was also modified based on local information gathered at the first workshop. The package comprises:

— culturally specific and paediatric-focused pamphlets;
— an instructor training manual for health workers;
— powerpoint presentations; and
— educational booklets for children and young people.

The manual was designed as an educational/teaching tool for health workers to assist them in educating parents and carers about asthma. It was designed on
the premise that Indigenous health workers have a key role in promoting and maintaining health in Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal communities.

Using an adapted ‘train the trainer’ approach, QIMR staff and a representative from the Asthma Foundation of Queensland engaged in developing a range of activities for the three-day workshop. An initial training workshop was delivered to 11 Torres Strait Islander health workers and one nurse on Thursday Island. The training workshop was evaluated. QIMR staff and RCH doctors and health workers then worked together to provide clinical assessments to 90 children at Primary Health Care Centres on Thursday Island and Horn Island. It is hoped that, in the future, health workers will gain qualifications in Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training – and then deliver the workshops independently.

A second training workshop was again convened on Thursday Island. Ten health workers from the outer island communities participated, along with local health workers who had previously participated in the first workshop. A number of health workers facilitated relevant training sessions. In response to local need, the content of the training package was modified slightly, as doctors were keen for participants to gain a better understanding of paediatric asthma. Following the workshop, participants spent two days in the Primary Health Care Centre on Thursday Island assisting doctors with data collection, asthma education and asthma management plans.

Continuity of clinical care and education is then maintained via telemedicine.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
The principal outcome of the Torres Strait Paediatric Asthma Education program was an increase in the skills transfer and professional development of local Torres Strait Islander health workers in relation to paediatric asthma identification, prevention and intervention. Community members—in particular from Bamaga—developed more confidence as patients to administer their own asthma medication. The Asthma Foundation of Queensland had an opportunity to connect to local schools to introduce the CD-ROM of ‘Mission Asthma’ and encourage participation in the national Asthma Friendly Schools Program in the Torres Education District.

“The primary outcome is to reduce the number of unscheduled hospital/doctor visits due to asthma exacerbation for children. The secondary outcomes include improved awareness of asthma in the community, improved asthma management and use of Asthma Action Plans by children and parents.” (DOCTOR, QIMR)

The QIMR, RCH and the Asthma Foundation of Queensland project team intends to facilitate and/or conduct their own internal evaluation of the project outcomes and deliverables upon completion. This process has from the outset been built into the project framework and will reinforce the educational outcomes.

“The project is about local interventions that achieve better outcomes and empower local health workers.” (PROJECT TEAM MEMBER)

The remoteness of the Torres Strait region and its outer island communities provided another opportunity to respond to local needs. A telephone hotline has been established between RCH doctors and nurses and local health workers to resolve difficult asthma cases.

The Torres Strait Paediatric Asthma Education program generated wide interest and support from many different sections of the community, including local and regional Indigenous people—and even Aboriginal people visiting from the Northern Territory. There has also been an opportunity to network at an international level to promote the project and its outcomes. As QIMR and RCH conduct multiple research projects in Indigenous health there are tendencies for these project objectives to overlap. For example, aspects of the Torres Strait Paediatric Asthma Education project and the Bronchiectasis study (a chronic lung disease) has enabled the project team to connect to and possibly partner in the future with medical research institutions in New Zealand, Alaska, Canada and USA.

A key element in the success of the Torres Strait Paediatric Asthma Education project was the level of interaction that has been developed and built upon throughout the duration of the project.

“There have been improved relationships between local doctors and health workers to work more collaboratively on developing and/or delivering educational training. Also there has been positive
feedback from local health practitioners in relation to the project. The net outcome could be that we define a completely different role for health delivery for health workers.” (PROJECT TEAM MEMBER)

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES
Initially, staffing issues in both Brisbane and Thursday Island delayed the commencement of the project. Once these were overcome, the planning and implementation process began. The project is now proceeding in accordance with the proposed timeline. The joint nature of the project meant that good communication was needed between the partners, which posed its own challenges. The tyranny of distance between Brisbane and Thursday Island, combined with the logistical planning and coordination between relevant stakeholders, provided the project team with a number of issues to resolve or manage more effectively in the future.

Most importantly, the project provided the opportunity to raise the profile of childhood asthma in children of the Torres Strait region. The project not only enabled the development of Indigenous-specific paediatric asthmatic educational resources, but also strengthened previous asthmatic health initiatives in the region. The opportunities for international networking and engagement that the project provided will enhance the scope and credibility of the project.

KEY LEARNINGS
When conducting collaborative projects with Indigenous communities, sufficient time for the engagement process between health services and community groups is essential. The length of time needed is hard to predict. This project was one where the community determined the amount of time that was needed – and the project team had to allow for this.

The implementation phase of the project has run smoothly due to the links already established between QIMR, RCH and the Torres Strait region. This project has had the advantage of the employment of Indigenous staff as contact people at the administration and project implementation levels. Existing cultural and/or social capital can accelerate and value-add to building relationships with local health workers while delivering specific educational training.

“During my time spent working and living on Thursday Island I appreciate the cultural differences and acknowledge that the process is on-going and will be achieved through communicating with each other at all times.” (PROJECT MANAGER/CONSULTANT)

Interaction with local health workers and community members enabled QIMR, RCH and the Asthma Foundation of Queensland staff to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Torres Strait Islander culture and lifestyles.

“I have personally found my time spent on the project and experience to be insightful and wonderful.” (PROJECT TEAM MEMBER)

As more health workers are trained in this area it is acknowledged that training packages will continue to be revised and/or amended to suit the learning needs of the target audience during the life of the project and beyond. To ensure sustainability of projects, it is fundamentally important that local health workers be integrally involved in holistic planning and development of health models, thereby guaranteeing ownership.

“The training package has to be medically supported at a specialty level. It can’t be dealt with in one hit, nor can it be sustained by health workers and doctors. For equity reasons alone it needs to be ongoing – part of a holistic approach.” (PROJECT TEAM MEMBER)

Targeting health workers who have demonstrated an interest in the field will ensure that paediatric asthma remains a priority after cessation of the project. This will strengthen further their capacity and capability to drive the process at the grass root level in communities.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE TORRES STRAIT PAEDIATRIC ASTHMA EDUCATION PROGRAM, CONTACT:
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The key goal of the Traditional Indigenous Games training program is to improve Indigenous health through the use of traditional Indigenous games. The purpose of the training program is to build community capacity primarily through the revitalisation of cultural knowledge – in the practise of traditional games for fun, as well as incorporating them into physical education curriculum within schools.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
— To improve Indigenous health through the use of traditional Indigenous games.
— To develop the knowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth have about their cultural heritage.
— To train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (particularly youth) in traditional games.
— To build connectivity to schools and their communities through shared cultural and physical activities.
— To scope the feasibility of convening a state-wide Traditional Indigenous Games Festival.

FUNDING PERIOD: TWO YEARS
FUNDING AMOUNT: $69,300
($34,500 TO THE PROJECT IN WEIPA AND $32,800 TO THE PROJECT IN CUNNAMULLA AND CHARLEVILLE)

HISTORY AND CONTEXT
Through historical events there has been significant breakdown of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, tribes and communities. This social disintegration has had a negative impact on their social, cultural, physical and mental health. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, strengthening family and community pride, cultural identity and self-esteem are the foundations of empowerment and health. There is a public need to design innovative programs to fill this community void and to enhance and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community health and wellbeing. The aim of the project was to develop a number of strategies designed to meet the outcomes of the original Traditional Indigenous Games pilot project: ‘Our Health Our Games: Back to the Future’. Primarily the project team worked in partnership with a number of key community and educational stakeholders in two regions of Queensland: the Southwest (Charleville and Cunnamulla) and the western side of Cape York Peninsula (Weipa and surrounding communities of Napranum, Mapoon and Aurukun). The first process was for the School of Public Health at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to establish a community management forum in both locations to assist in project management responsibilities. Identifying the right brokers in the community was essential to implementation of the project.

KEY PROCESSES – CAPE YORK PENINSULA
Located 838 km north of Cairns, Weipa is a mining town with a population of over 3000 people. Although geographically part of the Cooktown Shire (which covers 11.3 million hectares from Cooktown to the Cape) it is run by a Weipa Town Office under a special act of the Queensland Parliament which gave the town the status of a Special Bauxite Mining Lease and handed control over to Comalco Aluminium.

The Napranum Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) covers 201,447 hectares and is approximately 700 kilometres from Cairns. The Napranum community has a population of approximately 800 people, 95 per cent of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. Mapoon is situated approximately 960 kilometres north west of Cairns, with the last stretch consisting of an all year access road, a distance of 86 kilometres from Weipa on the Gulf of Carpentaria. Mapoon was declared a Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) in 1998 and is held by a group of nominated trustees. About 92 per cent of the 200 residents are Indigenous. The shire of Aurukun has a population of approximately 1,100. It covers an area of 7,500 square kilometres and is situated about two-thirds of the way up the western side of Cape York Peninsula between the communities of Pormpuraaw and Weipa.

In Weipa, the principal activity was the establishment of a Traditional Indigenous Games training program. This program was developed as a two pronged approach: firstly, to begin a process to develop young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into leaders and, secondly, to train people in traditional games.
Two three-day workshops were held. Two project officers (who happened to also be Indigenous physical education teachers) were responsible to train all participants in a ‘train the trainer’ mode. The program targeted the following people:

— four physical education teachers from four different primary schools;
— one physical education high school teacher;
— six high school students involved in a school-based coaching program; and
— community people involved in weekend sports.

The training was very successful. In particular, the six high school students were invaluable in translating the games concepts to younger students and monitoring their skills developments. Each school was provided with resources – flip chart, video and equipment. Each school incorporated the Traditional Indigenous Games activities into an Indigenous cultural day or physical activity sessions. Over the week, 450-500 students participated in playing traditional games. At Aurukun and Napranum, all 80 students were involved in this activity.

An evaluation tool was developed and disseminated to participants—students, teachers and parents—to determine the extent to which traditional games could be implemented in schools, with 110 students and five physical education teachers responding to the questionnaire. The results are described below.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
– CAPE YORK PENINSULA

The training program achieved positive outcomes in terms of transferring knowledge and skill, exposing Indigenous young people to a positive element of their cultural heritage. Some of the feedback from students was that:

— 66 students had not heard of the traditional games prior to the sessions;
— 44 students had played the games before at the Croc Festival in Weipa or the Thursday Island, Brisbane or Stradbroke Island Cultural days; and
— 78 students would be keen to play the games in the future, especially at school.

Similarly, all five teachers responded positively to the program. They were confident to teach the games and knew where to acquire further information about the games if they needed it. They commented that the games could be embedded into the school as units or part of physical activity sessions and/or used in the future as special days and on weekends.

The ability for teachers to embed the traditional games into current school activities and curricula is a key element of the sustainability of the Traditional Indigenous Games training program, providing students not only with an enjoyable, healthy activity that improves fitness and skill levels, but—most importantly—connection to their culture.

The games program was highly successful and drew together teachers and over 450 students in an innovative cultural program. There was tremendous support from the Western Cape College. A strong community management forum was built in partnership with them. A broad cross section of age groups of children participated in a number of activities and there was a strong desire to incorporate traditional games into the physical education curriculum.

One particular game called ‘Gorri’ was a favourite with the children. The trainers would firstly inform the children of the cultural history behind each game, then proceed to use a red exercise ball to symbolise the red kangaroo and a tennis ball to symbolise the spears: “Firstly they would sit and listen and as they gained an understanding of the game – the whole group would get excited! It was wonderful watching the expressions on the kids’ faces. Their eyes would light up: they had to aim their spears to hit the roo – they were going hunting for tea!” (PROJECT TEAM MEMBER)

All students received a t-shirt promoting the project and all participating schools received equipment and resources. The project provided an opportunity to revitalise cultural pride in communities and encouraged fathers and sons in particular to bond through physical activity in a social and community setting.
KEY PROCESSES – SOUTHWEST QUEENSLAND
Charleville is situated 766 kilometres west of Brisbane on the banks of the Warrego River, which flows south into the Darling River. The town has a population of about 3,100. Also situated on the Warrego River is Cunnumulla: the southern gateway to the Matilda Highway and lies at the crossroads to the adventure way travelling west to Eulo and Yowah Opal fields and onto Thargomindah and Innamincka. The town has a population ranging from 1200 to 1500. Cunnamulla is an Aboriginal word meaning ‘long stretch of water’. Goondiwindi is situated on the Queensland/New South Wales border 355 kilometres southwest of Brisbane and 125 kilometres north of Moree.

In Charleville and Cunnamulla, the principal activity was the development and implementation of a traditional games festival. The project management team from QUT’s School of Public Health partnered with a number of key stakeholders from each community to facilitate the engagement process and to ultimately organise a festival.

A pivotal factor to engaging any community is through identifying the appropriate people. Two highly respected members of the Aboriginal community were employed to engage and broker the project objectives in each community. The training program, which was facilitated by key community members, was provided to both the Charleville and Cunnamulla communities. Throughout the duration of the project, additional community members were also invited to participate and assist. The role of respected Indigenous people in providing leadership for the project was invaluable.

The project manager, Beryl Meiklejohn—an Indigenous woman from QUT’s School of Public Health—ensured that the project was being implemented appropriately and facilitated excellent relationships with the local communities. The QUT team intentionally stayed several days in both communities to build relationships and to engage as many relevant stakeholders into the process.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS – SOUTHWEST QUEENSLAND
The traditional games festival was highly successful and drew together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, particularly in the Cunnamulla community with 32 people attending the inaugural meeting. A community management forum was established in partnership with schools, church groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based organisations, and Queensland Health.

The Cunnamulla community organised their own traditional games festival after the success of the festival in Charleville. Due to the high level of community engagement, the festival generated an interest from Aboriginal communities from across the border in NSW: Toomelah and Boggabilla. Both these communities were invited to participate in the festival at Cunnamulla. Over 200 community members attended the community-organised festival breakfast at Cunnamulla. A local DJ voluntarily contributed time and equipment, creating a festival-type atmosphere. As the festival in Cunnamulla was held at the local football grounds, QUT provided public liability insurance cover for all participants. This alleviated the stress on the local council and ensured that the festival could proceed knowing that public health and safety issues had been taken into account and managed accordingly.

A broad cross-section of age groups of children and adults participated in a number of activities, which made it more fun and interactive. Without prompting from adults, local school children created their own posters and banners depicting an alcohol-free and smoke-free festival. This action alone provided a strong positive feeling of pride and confidence in the young people and adults alike that reverberated across the entire community. Community organisations received equipment and resources. The schools showed a strong commitment to exploring ways to incorporate traditional games into their physical education curriculum. There is still demand from communities for videos and resources associated with the project, as well as interest from other communities, such as the Goondiwindi Police Citizen’s Youth Club, on the possible implementation of traditional games into their program.

Through this capacity-building process, health, social,
cultural and educational developments can occur that strengthen family and community cohesion.

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES
A concurrent teachers-only professional development program planned for September 2003 did not eventuate because of other commitments and demands on the teachers. Unfortunately, the inaugural Queensland Community Traditional Indigenous Games Festival did not eventuate during the life of this project; however, the project generated interest at a national level in the convening of an Indigenous traditional games festival in the future.

KEY LEARNINGS
Revitalising cultural games is extremely empowering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – particularly for the young people. This project provided a way of validating Aboriginal culture, as some traditional games are still played in remote communities in Cape York. Some key learnings that have emerged from implementing this project include the importance of spending time in the community. To successfully engage communities, project workers need to stay in the community and get to know community members over a period of days: you can’t just ‘fly in and fly out.’ Another key learning was the importance of how programs are ‘packaged’ to young people. To successfully engage communities (in particular, young people), branding is important. One of the keys to the project’s success was learning early on not to refer to the activities as ‘physical education’, but rather as ‘games’.

The project provided an opportunity to introduce a fresh and fun concept into communities – to reinvigorate community members in a different way. This approach enabled the project to be supported and eventually owned by each community throughout the life of the project. Some of the traditional games carried other messages such as being non-competitive, and provided skills for life: it enabled young people to gain a better understanding of their possible roles as carers and/or nurturers in the future.

These games have the potential to build community capacity. Four key factors are: (1) the games are inclusive of all ages and family groups within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; (2) the games are derived from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture – the intellectual property of Indigenous peoples; (3) the low cost involved in creating equipment and/or equipment can be easily replicated; and (4) the games can be played for small groups of 1-5 people, or large teams of up to 20.

“All kids enjoyed the traditional activities and marvelled at the equipment left behind and you could sense the excitement once they realised that future fun could be had with these games via the resources that had been provided for them. It was clearly evident that via physical activity and by using traditional games as a vehicle, large groups of individuals were brought closer together, uniting under a common banner of culture and fun.”

(INDIGENOUS GAMES RESEARCH CONSULTANT, AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION AND QUT POSTGRADUATE STUDENT)

Traditional games—such Kolap, Kee’an, Wana, Puuny, Taktterrain, Kai, Koolchee, Weme, and Gorri—have the potential to be incorporated into physical education curricula. They can be easily adapted by communities, can be driven at the grass-root level, and can be sustainable.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS GAMES TRAINING PROGRAM,
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The *Keeping Kids Healthy Makes a Better World* Indigenous child health and nutrition program in remote communities in the Northern Territory was initiated by Aboriginal community members who attended a presentation given by another Aboriginal community in Alice Springs. The communities wanted to target the health of 0-5 year old children in their own communities in Central Australia through the development of a culturally appropriate and sustainable community-based nutrition program.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

— To improve the health of 0-5 year olds living in remote Aboriginal communities through the development of appropriate and sustainable community-based nutrition programs.
— To establish sustainable community designed and driven nutrition programs in Mt Liebig (Amurrndurngu), Titjikala, Willowra and Nyirripi.
— To increase general community awareness of the nutritional needs of children.
— To create support networks for community programs utilising community and external services of UNICEF.
— To collate lessons learnt and share these with other services for expansion into further communities.

**UNICEF — FUNDING PERIOD: TWO YEARS (2002 TO 2004)**
**FUNDING AMOUNT: $110,000**

**WALTJA — FUNDING PERIOD: TWO YEARS (2004 TO 2006)**
**FUNDING AMOUNT: $110,000**

**HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

UNICEF is an international aid and community development organisation that has traditionally focused on promoting sustainable economic and social enhancement to improve the standard of living of people, particularly women and children, in developing countries. UNICEF, in partnership with Waltja Tjutargku Palyapayi Aboriginal Association (Waltja), sought funding from the Telstra Foundation to extend child nutrition programs in remote communities.

Waltja was established in 1997, but was formerly known as the Central Australian Family Resource Centre. When funding for the Family Resource Centre was withdrawn in 1997, the members decided to form the Waltja Tjutargku Palyapayi Aboriginal Association. Tjutargku Palyapayi means “doing good work for families”. Waltja services remote communities across 700,000 square kilometres in Central Australia. The members of Waltja are all Aboriginal women who live in remote communities in Central Australia. All members actively participate in Waltja projects, workshops, training and community-based activities. Each of the participating communities is different, even though they may be geographically close to each other.

Mt Liebig (Amurrndurngu) is located 340 kilometres west of Alice Springs. Access to the community is by road, the majority of which is unsealed and often in a poor condition, and by a weekly mail plane flight. The community of 250 people is comprised mainly of Pintupi/Luritja language groups with very strong traditional roots. Mt Liebig is governed by a Community Government Council elected by local residents. The community has a Council office, a store, an aged-care service, a child-care service, a clinic and a church. Mt Liebig also has a primary school. Secondary students are required to stay in Alice Springs, Darwin or Adelaide to continue their studies. The Northern Territory Government operates the school and the clinic; all other local services are community owned and operated.

The Mt Liebig community suffers from a number of family related issues including high instances of infant gastro-intestinal disease, alcohol and substance misuse, family violence and youth self-harm issues. The community has consistently approached Waltja over a number of years for assistance in developing programs to address these issues, as well as training and support for child care and aged care. Waltja has a strong member base in the community and those members sought Mt Liebig’s inclusion in Waltja’s nutrition program at the pre-submission stage. Mt Liebig had a nutrition program funded by the Northern Territory Government; however, funding was insufficient, and the program only operates intermittently and is subject to the direct support of current clinic staff.

Titjikala is located 115 kilometres by road south of Alice Springs. Access to the community of approxi-
mately 200 people is via a dirt road, which is of poor standard for much of the year. The road is impassable with minimal amounts of rain. Although the community is situated within the Arrernte language zone, Luritja is the predominant language spoken. A council elected by local residents governs the community. Unlike Mt Liebig, Titjikala has a Commonwealth-funded Community Development and Employment Program with a wide range of work activities undertaken. The community has infrastructure, including a community-owned store, women’s centre, men’s centre, aged-care service, child-care service, clinic, primary school and a church. The Northern Territory Government runs both the clinic and the school.

Titjikala suffers similar issues to the other target communities. Clinic staff note that infant gastrointestinal disease and failure to thrive are common problems to be addressed. Although inhalant substance misuse is not an issue, alcohol and other drugs are. Waltja’s members from Titjikala have sought assistance for some time in developing a community-based nutrition program.

Willowra is a remote community based approximately 350 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs. It has a population of approximately 300 people. The community has suffered from a lack of services since its council was de-funded in 2001 from poor administration over its financial affairs (now administered by the Yuendumu Council, which is 180 kilometres away). As a result of this, the community has suffered greatly from a lack of services. The current services in Willowra are a primary school, a community store and a community health service. Issues such as alcohol misuse, gambling and family problems and — recently — a death due to petrol sniffing affect the community. Due to the lack of services for women or children, poor health is a major issue.

Nyirripi is located 450 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs. Access is by a mainly unsealed road, which is often in a poor condition, and by a once weekly mail plane flight. The community of 250 people is predominantly from the Warlpiri language group. Nyirripi is governed by a Community Government Council. Local services include a council office, clinic, primary school, community-owned store, church, and a limited aged-care service. The school and the clinic are both operated by the Northern Territory Government. The community also has a non-functional women’s centre and are hoping to develop a child-care service in the near future. Instances of the social issues identified for Mt Liebig (with the exception of inhalant misuse) are also prominent in Nyirripi.

**KEY PROCESSES**

Strategies included:
- developing the partnership between UNICEF and Waltja to implement the program, with Waltja as the lead agency;
- establishing a Nutrition Steering Committee to oversee the project implementation, development, and evaluation;
- employing a coordinator and local Aboriginal nutrition workers in each of the four communities;
- training workers in the nutritional needs of children;
- establishing a brokerage fund to support a range of purchases, such as gardening utensils.

The Indigenous child health and nutrition program for remote communities in Central Australia was an early intervention approach to child health. The program addresses risk factors experienced by Aboriginal children aged between 0-5 years living in remote communities. The main focus was to identify and address factors associated with poverty, failure to thrive and poor health outcomes for Aboriginal children. Some of the main early intervention strategies included:
- supporting communities to adopt activities to improve nutrition for youth and children, including provision of healthy lunches or dinners for children to prevent health crises (for example, needing to be hospitalised in Alice Springs);
- establishing community gardens;
- cooking demonstrations of health foods;
- information days and regional workshop to educate local Aboriginal community members (in particular, women); and
- lobbying for the availability of affordable and healthy foods.

The nutrition program at the child-care centre works in partnership with the clinic, the staff share health
information about kids which helps in dealing with nutrition issues’. (NYIRRIPI CLINIC)

It was important that the project included all children and families, not just high-risk children or families, as this may have singled out certain children and families and would not have been as successful, due to a limited number of families being targeted and possible shaming of those at risk. The success of the intervention was due to the level of local community participation and input into healthy food choices for the children: both bush and store foods.

“It was important that the local people were deciding on what was best for themselves rather than outsiders deciding on what was best for them.” (PROJECT COORDINATOR, WALTJA)

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
A community development emphasis was evident through the level of active community participation and involvement of the project within each community. Some of the main community development strategies included providing the opportunity for Elders to educate young people through going on bush trips to source bush medicines and bush foods. Community members worked with the local community store manager to develop a health store policy towards the types of food that are stocked. Store training was provided for local Aboriginal community members. More broadly, local Aboriginal community members were trained to assist in improving the nutritional needs of women, young children and the wider community. A child-care centre was also established in Nyirripi. Titjikala won a National Heart Foundation Award for their vegetable garden under the category ‘Policy for Structural Change’.

Although the project was initially focused on nutrition, it has broadened its focus to wellbeing of children. Social outcomes included storytelling, photos and the production of a cookbook, and the employment of local nutrition workers in each of the communities.

“There has been proof that failure to thrive kids have actually decreased in communities, families are more aware of the nutrition needs of kids, which has also had an influence on the stores with more fruit and vegetables, and different campaigns happening in the schools as well around food and healthy breakfast programs”. (INDIGENOUS PROJECT OFFICER, UNICEF)

Aboriginal Health Workers and Registered Nurses in Nyirripi, Watiyawanu (Mt Liebig), Willowra and Titjikala have observed an increase in the number of healthier children in the community and an increase in knowledge among community members participating in the project on nutrition and healthy eating.

“The nutrition program contributes to better health outcomes for the kids. Due to education around nutrition, women are buying more fruit and vegetables and the kids are eating healthier meals. The program has helped to decrease the amount of anaemia cases not just through meals but also through education around nutrition.” (NYIRRIPI CLINIC)

The project has lead to an increase in the nutrition awareness in communities, particularly among women. Community members have an increased confidence in raising issues with the community store manager and ordering in more healthy snacks and fresh vegetables. Practical cooking demonstrations are conducted showing healthy and affordable ways to prepare fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as holding nutrition and health awareness days. Some families are making different choices about how they use their money, choosing to purchase nutritious food for their children, rather than, for example, using their money for gambling. Men are becoming more involved in the program in various ways, such as gardening, dropping the children off at childcare, sitting with them at lunchtime and cooking meals. Men have reported that they want to be more involved in family life as it makes them feel good and they are able to identify a role for themselves.

“The community are now running their own nutrition program through the childcare centre, this has been empowering for the program workers and the community as a whole.” (NYIRRIPI CLINIC)

Community volunteers have become involved in nutrition activities. These volunteers have also attended training workshops in areas of nutrition, food preparation and healthy living. This has strengthened partnerships and coordination between community-based organisations in support of each community
nutrition program. It has also provided an appropriate forum for young families to start talking about other pressing issues, such as domestic violence and alcohol and other drugs. This has meant a closer working relationship with local partners such as Alcohol and Other Drugs, The Heart Foundation, Sexual Health and Family Planning, and Family and Children’s Services.

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES
A practical obstacle to running some of the program was the weather. Due to the remote location of the communities and poor road accessibility, rain often interferes with particular activities that have been planned.

Some of the other barriers experienced throughout the project included achieving community ownership of all nutrition activities and therefore sustainability of the project benefits. A key element of this process was encouraging remote community clinics to support local nutrition workers. Local community workers need to be trained in administration so that they are able to report accurately to Waltja and request assistance as required.

Future opportunities for the ongoing success of Waltja’s Keeping Kids Healthy Makes a Better World program will be to sustain the level of community involvement through implementation of a ‘train the trainer’ model, accurate budgeting, and continuing to run the new child-care centre.

There are also opportunities for community nutrition programs to be independently managed and operated by the local community. In the future a project such as this would be best conducted in fewer communities at a time, as the amount of time the project coordinator spent in the various communities—as well as the time on administration, travel, and follow-up—was limited. Improvements need to be considered for monitoring the project, and increased opportunities for local Aboriginal community members to have access to accredited training courses, for example, ‘train the trainer’ programs and training in food and nutrition.

One of the major challenges of the program has been getting specific data on the health and nutrition of the children who are supported through the program. The main issue has been the confidentiality of this information in the small communities that we are working in. Even providing numbers can identify the child and there is a lot of shame surrounding poor nutrition of children. At present the project members have observed the changes in attitude and behaviour of participants in each community. There has been no formal collection of quantitative data, however UNICEF is exploring options with Waltja and government counterparts how to improve the monitoring and data collection systems in each community to assist in future evaluation by monitoring and reporting on health outcomes associated with the project.

“The project has had a strong focus on capacity building of local partners such as Waltja. In 2004, after two years of Telstra Foundation funding UNICEF Australia to implement the nutrition program with Waltja, there was a shift in funding and the support was provided directly to Waltja. UNICEF Australia continues to support Waltja with capacity building, reporting writing, monitoring and evaluation.” (INDIGENOUS PROJECT OFFICER, UNICEF)

KEY LEARNINGS
The most important lesson learnt was patience. It is also important to shift ownership of projects to the community to ensure sustainability. The process was important and flexibility was essential to the overall outcome. It was also important to understand that circumstances within each community were dictated by its particular social issues. For example, one community had limited access to fresh fruit and vegetables—so they decided to build a vegetable garden.

“Promoting bush and healthy store foods helped to maintain a positive approach advocating traditional ways of looking after children”. (PROJECT COORDINATOR, WALTJA)

Local community members have a high regard for nutrition in the community and some of the community members are more confident in approaching their own local community members about nutrition issues; previously community members would only talk to the nurse or a doctor. There is more of an integrated approach to nutrition between the local community based agencies (the council, school, store and health centre), and the children and their families in the selected communities due to the project.

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In 1969, the Uniting Church in Australia established the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) to assist with community development for Aboriginal people. IAD is now an independent Aboriginal community-controlled education and language resource centre in Alice Springs. In order to improve literacy of Indigenous children in remote communities, the IAD published a series of children's picture dictionaries, based on the template of the Central Anmatyerr Picture Dictionary.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**
- To address the immediate educational disadvantage of Aboriginal children in remote communities by publishing and distributing literacy resources relevant to their language and culture.
- To contribute to a general culture of literacy and increase the body of written resources available in English and the vernacular in remote communities.
- To research and publish picture dictionaries for Aboriginal children in local community languages.

**FUNDING PERIOD: ONE YEAR (2002)**
**FUNDING AMOUNT: $48,000**

**HISTORY AND CONTEXT**
The Institute for Indigenous Development (IAD) identified the need for 'picture dictionaries' in a range of Indigenous communities. IAD argued that in remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia there is little functional literacy and little use of literacy resources. Formal schooling was not established until the 1960s in the majority of remote communities in the Northern Territory. Even today, there are few language literacy resources available to remote Aboriginal school communities. A 'picture dictionary' would be a user-friendly resource to assist local communities address this problem with literacy.

Funding was sought to conduct the research and development, design and publication of picture dictionaries in local Aboriginal languages. The goal was to design and develop a culturally appropriate literacy resource with the aim to provide remote Aboriginal schools with a literacy resource in the first language spoken by the students, and address educational disadvantage through publishing and distributing literacy resources relevant to their language and culture.

**KEY PROCESSES**
The first key stage in the process of implementing the Children’s Picture Dictionaries project was the publication of the pilot project, the “Central Anmatyerr Picture Dictionary”. The “Central Anmatyerr Picture Dictionary” (compiled by Jenny Green with Ti Tree, Mount Allan and Laramba communities) was published in 2003. It included illustrations, vocabulary and example sentences. It was the first developed out of the series of 12 picture dictionaries, four of which were funded by the Telstra Foundation. Project strategies included involving community members in the production of dictionaries—language speakers, linguists, education workers and Elders—to adapt the example sentences to fit language requirements of the specific local communities.

The Central Anmatyerr Picture Dictionary was designed and developed as a template to assist in the development of a series of picture dictionaries. The Telstra Foundation grant was used to fund the production costs of the Central Anmatyerr, Kaytetye and Warumungu Picture Dictionaries (the fourth dictionary to be published soon using funds from Telstra Foundation is the Eastern and Central Arrente Picture Dictionary). Additional drawings were commissioned to suit regional variations. Once the final manuscripts were edited and sent to the designer/production manager for design and layout, they went to a limited print run.

The success of the intervention was due to the active involvement of Aboriginal community-based language speakers and their determination to have input into the current and future education needs of children within their local communities. The dictionaries have been effective in teaching English as a second language. The project focused on the local Aboriginal people having control over the current and future education of their children attending the kindergarten and primary school within the communities. Early intervention strategies include the maintenance of local language and culture, use of the kindergarten and primary school children, and the development and use of teacher notes.

As part of the project’s community development strategy, local Aboriginal people were used throughout the project and paid for their contribution.
Aboriginal community members view the school as the focal point in the community. This allowed community engagement of community members with their children throughout the development of the dictionaries.

“There is no sustainable funding for the development for dictionary projects, this means that you cannot offer any sensible employment or career for Aboriginal language speakers.” (LINGUIST, IAD PRESS)

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
So far, three of the picture dictionaries funded by the Telstra Foundation have been published, with a fourth underway. In total, IAD Press is publishing 12 picture dictionaries for children. Future outcomes will be to sustain the partnership developed throughout the project. The templates could be used in other parts of Australia to assist other Indigenous communities.

Throughout the development of each picture dictionary, local Aboriginal community members modified their particular dictionary to reflect cultural differences. Local workshops were conducted in each community to assist in the development of the picture dictionaries. Reports from each workshop were provided to the Northern Territory Education Department. Throughout the workshops, the team from IAD Press conducted observational evaluations. These indicated that the practical use of the picture dictionaries had increased. The picture dictionaries are used from pre-school to upper primary school. Adults also use the resource.

“Most of the schools that are doing a series of language programs are using the picture dictionaries.” (LANGUAGE RESOURCE OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING)

Linguists who worked on the project have reported the Central Anmatyerr Picture Dictionary is being used in schools and communities at Mt Allan, Laramba, Ti Tree and Pulardi outstation by approximately 850 Indigenous students, 12 Indigenous teaching staff, 12 non-Indigenous teachers, and 30-50 Indigenous parents. The Kaytetye Picture Dictionary is being used by 50 Indigenous students, two non-Indigenous teachers, four Indigenous teaching staff, ten Indigenous adults coming to the schools, and 120 other Indigenous adults. The Warumungu Picture Dictionary is being used in one primary school and one high school in Tennant Creek and one bush school (Rockhampton Downs) by approximately 120 Indigenous students, eight non-Indigenous teachers, four Indigenous language workers, and eight language workers training at the Papulu apparr-kari Language and Culture Centre, Tennant Creek.

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES
Some of the difficulties experienced throughout the project related to the timeframes and the unanticipated process of using the Central Anmatyerr Picture Dictionary as a template, obtaining illustrations and the correct spelling of Aboriginal words.

The timeframe of 12 months to produce the new picture dictionaries was unrealistic as the Institute for Aboriginal Development Press only had a small team, two of whom were part time. It was assumed that using a template would expedite the publication of the subsequent picture dictionaries; however, this was not the case. The use of the template was useful in collecting language words, sentences and illustrations, but did not significantly reduce the time required within each community.

Illustrations for each picture dictionary had to be relevant to each community. This meant more time was required in each community to obtain the information needed, and confirmation and approval for each picture.

The spelling of Aboriginal words has only been recently researched and developed. Throughout the project, spelling became a major focal point for the linguists with unanticipated increased hours working out the correct spelling of words. The linguists conducted community-based workshops and special visits...
to confirm the correct spelling of words with the Elders and local Aboriginal language speakers.

The picture dictionaries are a tangible resource for local Aboriginal people – one that benefits the whole community. Improvements in the future would be to produce a digital version and an interactive picture dictionary with sounds and graphics that can be used in the local pre-schools and primary schools, and also for adult learning. During the development of the picture dictionaries, a teachers’ guide was also being developed to complement each picture dictionary.

KEY LEARNINGS

One important lesson that the project learnt was that rigid scheduling is not always possible. It is important to work in a culturally appropriate manner with communities, which includes being flexible in the expectations of language speakers within communities.

The original instructions that were prepared and given to linguists were comprehensive and included a template into which each linguist only needed to enter the information gained from language speakers in the community. As a result of feedback, these original instructions were revised and updated in May 2005 in order to make the template more user-friendly. The use of templates saved some time and money. For example, it cost twice as much to develop the first picture dictionary than subsequent ones.

The key role that Aboriginal people played in planning, developing and implementing solutions for themselves was vital.

In her 12 years employed as the Indigenous Publisher at the Institute for Aboriginal Development, Josie Douglas was impressed with the picture dictionary project because it was an intergenerational project where the very young through to the elderly worked together to produce the same outcome. The picture dictionary was really valued because it is about maintaining language and culture and the passing down of language and cultural heritage.

“In one of the communities a local Aboriginal female taught herself how to read and write using the local Kaytetye Picture Dictionary.”

(JOSIE DOUGLAS, FORMER PUBLISHER IAD PRESS)
The Aga Irititja Archival Project – Knowing the Past to Strengthen Our Future project developed 11 years ago from concerns Anangu and three non-Anangu people had regarding the preservation and repatriation of important historical records that were removed from Anangu lands over many decades. Aga Irititja is a multimedia cultural database of Anangu and non-Anangu visitors to the Anangu lands, as well as a current and expanding database for Indigenous youth to access and contribute their own records.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
—To locate material of historical importance to Anangu.
—To enable Anangu people to have access to a multimedia cultural database and facilitate people adding their own information to the archive.
—To teach young people how to use digital technology and provide transferable educational skills.
—To promote community networking and a strong sense of Indigenous identity.

FUNDING PERIOD: THREE YEARS (2003 TO 2005)
FUNDING AMOUNT: $115,000

HISTORY AND CONTEXT
Since 1976, the Pitjantjatjara Council has been a service provider to Anangu (Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people). Anangu communities and outstations cover 350,000 square kilometres across Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, extending from Coober Pedy (SA) to west of Warburton (WA), and up to Finke (NT). It includes communities such as Kenmore Park, Fregon, and Ernabella – the older and largest community.

Photographic records of outsiders entering Anangu lands date back to 1884. Since then there has been an ever-increasing frequency of contact with Anangu. Most visitors to Anangu lands made some record of their visit in the form of journals, diaries, movies, photographs or audio recordings. Many of these records are important to recover because they date back to first and early contact between Anangu and non-Anangu.

Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara children have severely limited access to educational materials that value and reflect their cultural identity. The Elders were anxious to reinforce the value of traditional knowledge and community history. The Aga Irititja Archival Project was developed to provide an important archive that can be used as an educational and cultural resource.

KEY PROCESSES
Telstra Foundation funding has been used to develop the content for the project. The first stage was to collect and repatriate cultural and historic materials: photographs, sound recordings, movie footage and other documents that are of particular relevance for Anangu youth. The historic materials were then digitised, and entered onto the Aga Irititja archive.

An integral part of the project is to train Anangu in their home communities to operate the electronic database and to enable Elders and children to participate together in accessing the archive. The archive is presented to Anangu communities in a variety of formats. Some communities use a desktop, others use a portable unit (a ‘Niri-niri’), which includes the archive computer, printer, projector and battery power pack. Anangu have ready access to their electronic database and can obtain prints from it. To date, 15 Anangu communities, in South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory have an Aga Irititja archive. ‘Niri-niri’ means ‘beetle’ in the Pitjantjatjara language. ‘Aga Irititja’ means ‘stories from a long time ago’.

The formats used in Aga Irititja have been developed through consultation with Anangu over many years. The archive had to be user friendly. Access to the archive, however, had to cater to various cultural sensitivities. For example, certain access codes had to be created to cater for such factors as ‘sorrow’ (images of deceased Anangu). Ceremonial material required particular attention and special treatment to enable appropriate access. With input from the community, culturally appropriate formats for accessing the Aga Irititja archive were developed.

Icons used on screen are in the vernacular – the local language. Information can be recorded in either the vernacular or in English. A hidden grid was incorporated so that Anangu only have to click the cursor onto the face of an individual to read or enter that person’s name. By the same process, the user can enlarge an image to enable closer examination. The Aga Irititja
archive is a ‘live’ archive that, in addition to being viewed by the community, is constantly being updated and expanded to provide greater detail and accuracy. The archive format has developed and has been enhanced through consultation, expert advice, application, trial and error and by feedback from Anangu communities.

This project enables Anangu and the generations that follow to access and to be able to see photos and movies of their ancestors or of themselves when they were young. They can also see letters, artwork, artefacts and listen to singing and oral history which is stored in their archive.

“...It was used by a wide variety of age groups, ranging from teenagers, right through the elderly community members who came to the school to look at the materials. They relied on the younger ones to manipulate the computer, and talked about what they were seeing. Young people enjoyed being able to show off their skills. It was used during school time, but also after school. Using the archive would reinforce the family ties. Family members would talk about the relationships people had with each other through the images they witnessed, which is an interesting way of using images to look at what happened in the past. The archive is very positive: it reinforces the concepts of the family group and the way communities are structured, as they are able to look at photos of different people and places – to look at what the place looked like 50 years ago. People and family groups seemed to be the main focus.” (FORMER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, KENMORE PARK ANGANGU SCHOOL)

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The most satisfying outcome has been to see the delight Anangu display when they see and interact with their archive. Very often a whole family comes together to look at the photos shown on screen. They have never seen most of these photos before. Parents can listen to themselves reading in school from a 1963 recording, and can share that with their children. They can add information to any record and, where necessary, change incorrect or inappropriate information previously recorded.

“I like Arri Irititja. It makes me feel good when I see old people. I like learning on the Arri Irititja computer. It is good to use the things like printing, putting names and looking at photos of my family and friends. It is very great.” (17-YEAR OLD SCHOOL STUDENT, PUKATJA SCHOOL)

Another significant outcome has been generating a willingness among those people and institutions who hold material to which Anangu want access. The Arri Irititja project has established a vast and expanding network of donors and lenders of material for inclusion in the archive. Anangu regularly suggest names of people for project members to contact for access to collections.

There are now more than 50,000 multimedia records in the archive, including thousands of audio recordings, document copies, movie clips and copies of objects. This is an ever-expanding database. Rarely have Anangu had the opportunity to see or hear these records. Arri Irititja makes this possible. Anangu are now able to see first and early contact photos. They can listen to recordings of important ceremonies. They can read letters written in the vernacular by their grandparents. They can add their own stories to the archived records. They can now, for the first time, share all of this with their children and grandchildren. This access and interaction gives Anangu a great deal of pleasure and self-pride. The project has assisted in drawing together generations, with the Anangu young people typically operating the computer and inputting data described orally by Elders and others older family members. The project has been successful in facilitating intergenerational sharing within an educational environment.

“The kids just love looking at it – they love sitting in family groups, and the older people explaining who’s who. We’ll start using it more as a teaching resource. If you do a topic on ‘work’ or ‘transport’ you can compare modern day with the past – because the photos are there. Because the young people are visual learners, and it’s highly relevant for them, it’s a great learning aid. It captures their interest.” (PRINCIPAL, FREGAN ANGANGU SCHOOL)

Involvement with the archive at the community level enables Anangu youth to actively share learning experiences with Elders and family and improve their computer and literacy skills. Through accessing the
multimedia cultural database, young people have been developing an increased sense of pride in their ancestry and environment, as well as developing an interest in photography and recording important events. Their involvement with the Arta Irititja archive enhances their sense of themselves as young Anangu in a modern technological world.

“I like looking at the olden times things that I don’t know about. I like having the memory of my grandmother through seeing her in the photos, hearing the stories she tells and being able to look at her. Sometimes it’s OK for family to look at their families who have passed away.” (TRAINEE TEACHER, PUKATJA)

Many of the activities centred around schools, such as the Wiltja secondary school program in Adelaide, and many of the Anangu community schools. At Wiltja, the archive is available to Anangu students in the school as well as in their dormitory, encouraging them to contribute to the archive by documenting their own experiences. Later, as graduates move back to their various home communities, they can continue contributing and accessing data.

Anangu youth now have access to a unique and important record of their secondary schooling over three decades, and will be able to contribute to the documentation of these important personal historic records. The Arta Irititja Archive Project represents significant progress towards building a unique cultural resource, promoting intergenerational sharing, and developing information technology and multimedia skills. These achievements are important protective factors for youth who are recognised as being vulnerable to a range of social problems affecting Indigenous communities.

One of the aims of the project was to promote community networking and a strong sense of Indigenous identity, as well as to teach young people transferable multimedia skills. These are powerful protective factors that are likely to reduce the risk of unemployment, illiteracy, isolation, cultural alienation and disenfranchisement.

“...The project was successful for the children who are engaged in school and community life: a positive reinforcement tool. However, it did not have as much impact on those who were already marginalised, as it depended on being able to use the computer to get the benefit. For those who lacked the interest, they wouldn’t access it. Later in the year, however, we relocated the computer from the school down to the community centre, which made it more accessible (although the wear and tear could be a lot higher). It was a positive, worthwhile thing – to have these images that have been collected over the decades by western people (missionaries, teachers and medical staff). I was quite impressed with the quality and detail of the referencing contained in the archive.” (FORMER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, KENMORE PARK ANANGU SCHOOL)

At Ernabella (1300 kilometres northwest of Adelaide, on the land bordering South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory), the archive is located at the AnTEP (Anangu Tertiary Education Program, a branch of the University of South Australia), where students have been trained to walk people through it. They monitor the session, and help users weave their way through the archive. A lot of people have accessed it to log their family photos (as photos do not last).

“I used it as a really useful resource when we looking at pathways out of school and into work. We are a community that currently has no work. So we pulled out of the archive photos and stories of Anangu at work in the past. We found photos of people doing university lectures by long distance education; photos of the church being built (along with whitefellas); running a butcher shop; felling trees and so on. That was a great support to the unit I was teaching. I think it gives a sense of what is possible: we can do things. A lot of teachers use it as a resource to discuss issues about family, work... all sorts of stuff.” (DEPUTY PRINCIPAL, ERNABELLA)
BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

There have been no real barriers during the development of the Ara Irititja Archive Project. On the contrary, team members have been encouraged by the enthusiasm and support from Anangu, institutions and individuals who have contributed to the development of the archive. There have, of course, been considerable challenges during the project’s development but these challenges have all been met or are in the process of being addressed. For example, the power supplies on Anangu communities are unreliable, so battery power packs were incorporated into the archive hardware to avoid damage to the database.

The one long-standing and continuing frustration has been a lack of ongoing funding, despite generous support from the Telstra Foundation and government agencies. For example, the project has not been able to secure funding dedicated to retrieval of archived material, nor has it been able to secure a guaranteed ongoing source of funding to enable its long-term plans to be implemented. This means such essential tasks as recruiting and training Anangu people to become and remain actively involved with the archive have been curtailed.

KEY LEARNINGS

In the early stages of the project’s development it became apparent (mainly because team members had all experienced life on Anangu communities) that certain environmental realities had to be addressed. For example, the remote Anangu communities do not have good quality fixed-line telephone and Internet access. Ara Irititja has developed close community liaison and conducts regular field trips to facilitate the updating of the computer databases. The database software incorporates a synchronisation process so that information entered at the community level is amalgamated with that entered in other places and all archive workstations are updated on a regular basis.
SECTION 2
YOUTH: PARTICIPATION & LEADERSHIP

...YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERGENERATIONAL SKILLS TRANSFER; DEVELOPING DETERMINATION; FOSTERING HOPE
YOUTH: PARTICIPATION & LEADERSHIP

DARYL HIGGINS

INTRODUCTION

One of the key principles of community development is building the capacity of local individuals, organisations and communities to identify problems, develop solutions, and engage in actions to implement these solutions. This requires creativity, vision, and—most importantly—leadership. Leadership needs to be recognised and developed in local communities.

In order to sustain changes, however, it is critical to look to the next generation – and to equip young people with training and experiences in order to foster leadership skills. This involves having vision – but also empowering young people to envisage their own future. For skills to be transferred to the next generation, they need to be modelled, and young people mentored by existing leaders.

Building capacity for the next generation, therefore, means youth engagement and participation: creating opportunities for intergenerational skill transfer; developing self-determination; fostering hope.

THE PROJECTS

The five projects in this evaluation that were primarily focused on enhancing participation of youth in the life of the community, and facilitating opportunities for leadership were:

—Jarjum Youth Group;
—Soaring;
—Reconciliation through Education;
—Cape York Youth Network; and
—After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre.

The Murri and Torres Strait Islander Network’s Jarjum Youth Group provided opportunities for Indigenous young people in the Logan area of Brisbane to meet with each other, participate in cultural activities and receive mentoring. As well as explicitly building leadership among the young people, it enhanced family and cultural pride.

Kurruru Indigenous Youth Performing Arts’ performance of Soaring provided another example of a project-based activity, engaging young people in producing a creative theatre piece, performed at the Come Out 2005 festival in Adelaide. One of the unique aspects was the collaboration with a non-Indigenous circus troupe – fostering intercultural exchange and respect, which are key elements of the reconciliation process. Their arts participation experience also provides Indigenous young people with exposure to the prospect of a career in arts or arts administration. This is consistent with international research showing the importance of working together on shared tasks to break down prejudice and misunderstanding

(HIGGINS, KING AND WITTHAUS 2001).

In a similar vein to Kurruru, Reconciliation Australia’s ‘Reconciliation through Education’ aims to facilitate face-to-face exchange of ideas, and to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth through a series of forums and activities across the nation. Through their participation in the forums, non-Indigenous young people who may have never have had the chance to meet (let alone work with) an Indigenous young person, were able to hear stories and share experiences – breaking down barriers. Young people were also exposed to role models, and provided with mentoring opportunities from politicians, Elders, and other community leaders.

In a more targeted local region, the Cape York Youth Network also focused on engaging young people to participate fully in their community. Through a website, skills training, and engagement in community development activities by youth workers, young people were encouraged with positive alternatives to drug and alcohol abuse or welfare dependency.

In some ways, the final project – the After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre in Alice Springs – does not fit as comfortably with this group of projects focused on youth leadership and participation. The drop-in centre is focused on protection of at-risk vulnerable youth, rather than leadership. It is about preventing harm in young people (to self and others) and helping them participate in programs that are going to reduce risks, and increase the sense of community and hope, and to connect them with other services. In this sense, it is about participation and engagement with appropriate services. It is not until such critical needs are met for vulnerable youth that they will feel they are fully participating in their community, or that they those with leadership capabilities are likely to emerge.

KEY LEARNINGS

Two key themes that emerged in these projects were the importance of engaging young people in positive activities, and providing opportunities for cultural exchange between non-Indigenous and Indigenous young people. Positive activities ranged from learning about their culture (e.g., Jarjum), arts participation (Soaring), educational workshops and forums (Reconciliation through Education), or training and skill-development (Cape York Youth Network). The opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people to work together on arts projects, or to share their stories and experiences, foster empathy. Tolerance, respect and valuing of diversity occur when people work along side each other towards a common goal, and no longer perceive someone from another ethnic/cultural group as ‘other’.
The Jarjum Youth Group project worked in partnership with local high schools to empower Indigenous youth and to strengthen links to their culture. The key target group was Indigenous young people who are likely to be experiencing suicidal thoughts, exhibiting negative behavioural patterns, low self-esteem, lack understanding of their own Aboriginality, or who are experiencing high levels of racism.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
—To develop and implement a range of youth-specific cultural, social, educational and sporting strategies and/or tools to support and strengthen family and community cohesion at a local level.
—To facilitate effective networking, mentoring, and leadership between Indigenous young people and the sponsor organisation and other relevant agencies.
—To empower the community volunteer group to access early intervention training.
—To develop ownership through involvement in planning and coordination with relevant local agencies, including schools.
—To develop a participatory model that appropriately engages with a range of government and community stakeholders, Elders and, in particular, at-risk young people and their families.

FUNDING PERIOD: ONE YEAR (2002)
FUNDING AMOUNT: $35,000

HISTORY AND CONTEXT
Logan is situated between the Gold Coast and Brisbane. There are over 5000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Logan. The area has the second largest Indigenous population in Queensland. However, these people come from all over the country – including from different remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, towns and cities from across different states and territories. As a result of movement from traditional countries to relocate in Logan, there are few local traditional Elders living in Logan.

Although the Indigenous adults in the Logan area are very familiar and socialise with each other, the same community spirit did not resonate in their young people. The Murri and Torres Strait Islander Network identified a need to build the cultural capacities of Indigenous young people and their families in their local area. The Network had identified this gap through the community capacity-building work they had already done, such as:
—working with families in the community to build up strong relationships;
—raising the profile of youth in the Logan community;
—overcoming the splintering and disenfranchisement of groups in the community;
—rebuilding pride in Aboriginal culture;
—working toward building faith, hope and trust in the community; and
—organising regular social functions (such as sport and cultural activities for families, children, youth and Elders together).

Initially a focus group was established and volunteers from the local community justice group were enlisted to engage young people. The group learnt that many young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were dislocated from their Indigenous heritage and often felt ashamed of their Aboriginality because of negative media attention or stereotyping. They expressed concerns that they could not relate to older people from their community, yet so many of their friends from other ethnic backgrounds had strong associations with their community leaders.

A key aim of the Murri and Torres Strait Islander Network was to identify disenfranchised young people and improve their social, cultural and educational environments within the Logan area. In order to reach out to connect with these young people it was appropriate to involve young people themselves as the facilitators to enable the process to begin.

KEY PROCESSES
The principal activity in establishing the Jarjum Youth Group was employment of a part-time youth worker using the funds received from the Telstra Foundation. The applicant had to be under 25 years old. The next step was to engage with local schools and recruit young volunteers in the Logan community.

The project activities included:
—running lunch-time activities at a number of high schools;
—meetings after school;
—sporting activities, such as a 3-on-3 basketball program;
—cultural reclamation and self-identity camps; and
—family fun days and celebrations – providing opportunities for families to come together.

The Murri and Torres Strait Islander Network also developed a 12-month strategic plan to mentor and develop the skills of three young people and to promote the Jarjum Youth Group to relevant stakeholders in the local area.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Jarjum is now firmly established, and is clearly sustainable into the future. Examples of some of the measures of success reported by the Network include:
— a full-time traineeship offered to one of the youth workers;
—part-time work secured with the local community justice group for two youth workers;
—a decrease in the number of young Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander boys/girls reported by the school to be at risk of school drop-out;
—highly successful youth discos for 14 – 17 year old young people;
—highly successful sporting events and projects developed to engage young people; and
—establishment of a micro business – DJ Services – where the young people purchased equipment to provide entertainment for local discos and party hire on behalf of organisations and community members in the southeast Queensland region (income is used to fund ongoing costs for the youth group).

Jarjum has identified good strong youth in the community who are role models for younger people, as well as for others their own age. Some evidence of the ongoing influence of the mentoring that Jarjum provided was that the young people conducted their own survey to identify needs and appropriate community facilities that are available in the local area for young people. They went on to participate at a National Youth Conference in Sydney and presented survey findings. One volunteer won “Youth Citizen of the Year 2004” from the Logan City Council. Some of the youth workers are used as mentors in children’s youth camps. From a core group of ten young people, three youths emerged to be recognised by their peers as being potential future community leaders.

As well as these practical and tangible outcomes, a number of other important achievements have been noted in the community, and in the young people involved with Jarjum:
—improvement in the emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of the Aboriginal young people;
—improvement in the young people’s relationships, the functioning of their families and their future prospects;
—recognition by peers of the contribution to community young people can make;
—increased self-esteem, pride and cultural identity in participants; and
—increased support for the “Young Aboriginal Boys at risk” program (Yab-a-Gar).

“I wanted to see youth around the community have fun. Give them something to do. I got involved because there is absolutely nothing to do in Logan. I love working with youth: putting on events; or coming up with new ideas.” (YOUTH WORKER)

Another improvement attributed to Jarjum is that young Indigenous people will now naturally gravitate to the Elders Group for advice and support on local youth initiatives. Parallel to the Jarjum program is the cultural activity days run by the Murri and Torres Strait Islander Network, involving 11 ‘cultural trainers’. These are highly successful with parents and children being involved. Participation rates at the workshops by mid-2005 were 55 children and 25 adults. People learnt weaving, spears, jewellery, painting, dance, cooking. Film nights at the centre are also very popular. Workbooks have been developed for children to fill in every day when they visit the Network for activities and programs (these workbooks could be utilised as evaluation instruments at a later date). A critical success factor is the support of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members effectively transferring cultural knowledge and values to Indigenous young people. Cultural capacity building is an organic process that entails self-paced learning through increasing the awareness of the individual’s self-esteem and their own perceptions about family and community support to build trust and pride.

“We have seen direct community outcomes for the young people, as well as indirect outcomes for the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Jarjum is an integral part of the Network.” (MURRI AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NETWORK BOARD CHAIRPERSON)

One of the key elements in the success of Jarjum was the collaboration with schools. Indigenous teacher aides were crucial partners, as they were able to effectively follow-up if students are absent from school.

The establishment of the Jarjum Youth Group at the Murri and Torres Strait Islander Network and the improved partnerships between the school and the community resulted in the following outcomes:
—improved confidence and sense of pride;
—students motivated to undertake schoolwork;
—identification of new referral pathways (the Catholic Church manages an alternate schooling centre where...
The primary activity of Kurruru’s theatre project, Soaring, is to create change for Indigenous children, young people and their families. A creative approach has been adopted by a group of energetic and enthusiastic individuals – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The focus of Soaring is to bring families together to build bridges by encouraging creative movement for children, to foster self-expression, to develop confidence and to increase self-esteem.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

— To share history and foster reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.
— To provide an opportunity for children to develop their performance skills.
— To involve youth, their parents, their extended families, their schools, their wider communities.
— To refine social skills and develop self-confidence.

**FUNDING PERIOD: ONE YEAR (2004)**

**FUNDING AMOUNT: $15,000**

**HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

Kurruru is a community-based dance company, whose focus is Indigenous children and young people. The mission of Kurruru Indigenous Youth Performing Arts is “to present positive role models by developing and presenting works of artistic merit and excellent community cultural development outcomes.”

Kurruru has a board of management consisting of 12 people: ten Indigenous and two non-Indigenous board members. In addition, Kurruru has a youth council made up of older members of the company who meet fortnightly to monthly to discuss the issues they feel are important to the company. The youth council have input through a youth member sitting on the board. The local Aboriginal community steers how the projects are run.

“As a community-based arts body, Kurruru identifies community needs and responds to community requests with responsible, positive, supportive and culturally-aware programming.” (ARTISTIC DIRECTOR)

Soaring was a collaborative performance piece. The process of creating and performing Soaring was consistent with the goals and principles of Kurruru. Soaring originated from an idea by Sally Chance, the Come Out 2005 Festival Director, for a joint performance piece by Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. Kurruru were approached about doing a show in collaboration with a circus troupe: “Cirkidz”. Kurruru partnered with Cirkidz and Come Out 2005 to seek funding for a workshop-based project in which the children would work towards a performance for schools and the public as part of the Come Out 2005 – one of the largest Australian youth arts festivals, held in Adelaide (8-19 March, 2005).
30% are Indigenous young people;
—decreased expulsions;
—some young people have entered higher education;
—increase in parents participating with their children in cultural/community activities;
—under the Partners for Success strategy, community Elders and teachers have collaborated to increase the young people's numeracy and literacy skills; and
—Indigenous young people are staying at school longer (retention of students to year 12 has increased) and more often (absenteeism had dropped).

**BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

*Jarjum* operated from the Murri and Torres Strait Islander Network during a time when some of the other organisations affiliated with the network were de-funded. A housing agency and a child-safety agency were shut down, and families then had to deal directly with the state department for services. This created doubt about what would happen to other programs such as *Jarjum*. However, the youth were dedicated; they now knew each other, and could support each other.

The level of funding for the Network as a whole, and for the *Jarjum* project represented both a barrier and an opportunity. Key organisational personnel were very positive about the community's ability to be resourceful and survive by drawing on the resources available to them. Shortfalls were met by relying on donations of materials from people within the community. It also created the conditions for an entrepreneurial approach to ongoing support for the project. They used their own initiative to always do the best they can with limited resources. When asked directly, they acknowledged that the program was under-resourced, yet the resilience of the community shone through.

The initial funding from the Telstra Foundation enabled *Jarjum* to establish itself and build capacity to obtain subsequent funding from the Foundation for Young Australians.

**KEY LEARNINGS**

To successfully engage Indigenous young people, it is important to involve Elders and cultural activities in the same mix in an environment that is appropriate for the learning styles and dynamics of the target group. The method that worked well for *Jarjum* was starting with school-based activities, and using music and sport. These were useful ‘engagement tools’ for young people.

The Murri and Torres Strait Islander Network was critical to the developmental and implementation process of the *Jarjum Youth Group* project. The organisation was primarily responsible for creating the change amongst community members. The network has a strong infrastructure and service provision history over the past ten years, which meant it had the capacity to support the *Jarjum* project. Without their support, the project outcomes would not have been achieved. But it is not all a one-way street: having a well-established organisation was essential for getting *Jarjum* off the ground but, equally, having the *Jarjum* project running out of the Network helped to consolidate the Network’s strategic and operational goals, objectives and activities to such a point that all stakeholders and community members became more united and partnered more effectively to build community capacity.

“The network has been running a range of programs and services for the community over the past ten years. So it was easy to get *Jarjum* up and running because we’ve done it before.”

(MURRI AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NETWORK CEO)

The establishment of an Elders Group has enabled the Indigenous communities in the Logan area—and their young people—to maintain a cultural reference point that guides the entire community in a holistic and coordinated approach. To ensure sustainability of the project, it is important to strategically partner with other local community-based organisations to enable youth workers to be mentored and/or employed to continue the good work and maintain a strong work ethic.

Much weight is placed on supporting young people to be proud of their cultural identity in Logan. Many of the young people are the children of parents and grandparents stolen from their families, dispersed across the country and often reared in isolation from their cultural identity. More often than not, they felt ashamed of their Aboriginality and culture. The youth involved in the *Jarjum* project are making inroads; their message is a positive one for Aboriginal adolescents who continue to struggle with their Aboriginality. Their message is: Reclaim your cultural identity; don’t be ashamed; stand up, be proud; take your place alongside others with confidence.

“Once they know who they are, they can stand up and be proud. Often they are the grandchildren of the stolen generation, who have to discover for themselves their cultural heritage: A foot in each world.” (MURRI AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NETWORK CEO)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE *JARJUM YOUTH PROJECT*,

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In the months leading up to the festival, the young performers had BBQs with all of their families and the Aboriginal community. Elders led traditional story-telling sessions. These events assisted the young people in getting to know each other and encouraged cultural sharing and understanding. The involvement of Elders and the telling of traditional stories provided all of the young people with positive Indigenous role models and encouraged life morals such as respect of self and others. This provided opportunities for personal development: refining social skills and developing self-confidence. The project also involved the participation of the schools, families and extended communities.

The project required children aged 8-12 years to commit to months of practicing and eventually performing. Soaring was not a performance of a traditional story; however, the traditional stories were used as a starting point in workshops for the concept of the performance. The development of mutual understanding was a constant theme throughout the workshops and performance rehearsals. An Indigenous professional artist came down twice to work with the young people during the workshops. In the performance Soaring, flight was a metaphor for growing up, learning lessons, and taking off. Dreams and aspirations were a very big thing. The performance itself used traditional dance and lots of imagery of birds and flight.

“Children and young people need space in their lives to explore who they are and to make sense of the complex world around them. Arts participation helps children and young people to interpret events, to deal with diversity and to become confident communicators.”

(JOHN HILL, MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER IN THE ARTS, SA)

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Kurruru would like to continue working with Cirkidz and further develop the skills of the young people involved. However, the realities of doing another season of Soaring and touring with 20 young people – considering the expense and logistics involved – may be a setback. Instead, Kurruru are investigating the option of doing a Soaring film that could be used to launch the next Come Out Festival or be screened at the Adelaide Film Festival. Kurruru has a commitment and willingness to keep the Soaring spark alive, as they invested a lot of time, effort and funding into the original production, and would like to see its benefits reproduced in the future. The process of reconciliation takes a long time and they would like to continue working towards this through performance-based community development projects.

“It’s great to be using the skills of two of the state’s most important youth performing companies to explore issues of Indigenous culture and reconciliation. The arts are about interpreting who we are as individuals and as a society. Taking part in the arts helps make sense of the layers of complexity in all human beings.”

(COME OUT FESTIVAL DIRECTOR)

A goal of Kurruru has been to create real pathways for emerging Indigenous artists and art administrators. Over the past 20 years, Kurruru (previously known as the Port Youth Theatre Workshop) has helped children in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community achieve these dreams. Many of the children who have participated in the programs have gone on to be successful in major Australian productions, including the films Australian Rules and Rabbit Proof Fence, the television program All Saints, and the mini-series Jessica. Kurruru is a project that has been invested in over a long period of time.

“Children and young people need space in their lives to explore who they are and to make sense of the complex world around them. Arts participation helps children and young people to interpret events, to deal with diversity and to become confident communicators.”

(JOHN HILL, MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER IN THE ARTS, SA)

“The children were evaluated on their impressions of the group they were very honest and all expressed the desire to keep working together as a team. This came as a surprise, as the project team had expected some children to want to return to their original groups. By the final performance – seeing them working together and doing each others’ hair and makeup – the children were truly united as one.”

(ARTISTIC DIRECTOR)

The children were able to perform a professional show in a major venue and festival while conquering their fears together. The show itself was a big success: Soaring was the first show of the Come Out 2005 festival to sell out. Some of the children’s local schools, as well as children from schools in remote areas with high Indigenous populations, such as Ceduna and Yalta, attended the performance. The show sold out so quickly that children from a lot of the schools did not get to see it.
“2004 was a whirlwind of performances, project and profile raising for the company in all aspects of our work. The Indigenous staff gained greater confidence and ownership of the Kurruru and there was an increasing interest from the Indigenous community about programs and future events.”

(CULTURAL DIRECTOR)

For the young people involved, the Soaring project was an amazing experience. Both parents and grandparents have reported the significant changes in their children's confidence and behaviour.

The success of Soaring was a source of pride for the Aboriginal community, particularly given the investment the community made in its success. The project also has the potential to have a longer-term impact on the community by giving the youth a source of purpose, confidence and pride – factors that may assist in turning the tide of the over-representation of Aboriginal youth in negative domains such as youth offending. The project also provided employment for the local community. Some of these positions have been able to be continued after the completion of the Soaring project.

The involvement of the Elders, the use of traditional stories and dance as starting points for Soaring, provided the opportunity for the Indigenous young people to reconnect with their culture, and for the non-Indigenous children to learn about and interact with aspects of Aboriginal culture.

“The kids' performance was terrific. To bring two groups of kids together who wouldn't normally meet, get them to work as a team and produce a great piece of theatre is fantastic. This is a step towards reconciliation – I wish I had had this opportunity when I was younger.” (AUDIENCE MEMBER)

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The major limitation that is holding back the Kurruru project is security of funding. Every activity run by Kurruru is dependent on funding, including buses for transporting young people to rehearsals and performances, salaries and commercial rent. Kurruru are not prepared to commit to a project unless it is adequately funded as they fear that without adequate funding they are setting projects up to fail. As one of few Indigenous youth arts programs in Australia, Kurruru would like to eventually create a website to expand what they can offer to the community.

Working with a mainstream festival was a fantastic opportunity, and the festival organisers were very supportive. However, when you are undertaking a performance as part of a community development project, and things happen within that community that cannot be planned for (for example, performers not able to be located for a period of time), it can be challenging to meet the demands of a mainstream festival framework (for example, deadlines). This needs to be a negotiated process in order for the mainstream festival to better meet the needs of the Aboriginal community, but also for Kurruru to improve its capacity to meet deadlines.

“When you are working towards a performance and promotional material to support that performance there are some deadlines that are non-negotiable.”

(CULTURAL DIRECTOR)

KEY LEARNINGS

Challenges were not unexpected in the steps towards reconciliation: however, these challenges served to highlight the need for this project. In the beginning there were some difficulties experienced as a consequence of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups not understanding each other. However, as time passed the groups got to know each other and began working together. The need for consistency in the staff and individuals supporting the project was highlighted: when staff changes occurred, projects were slowed down, making it difficult to achieve deadlines.

With a project like this, the performance may receive public accolades, highlighting its success. This is only part of the project, however; it does not show the background of the production. While you strive for artistic excellence, the path for young people is equally important.

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The Reconciliation through Education project aims to put reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on the agenda for young people. The activities target young people primarily in schools through forums, workshops and the development of youth reconciliation networks. Through their participation, Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people are playing an active role in the reconciliation process. The project is underpinned by the premise that education is the key to making reconciliation meaningful and enduring.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

— To assist young people to gain knowledge and develop ideas on reconciliation through exposure to information and different points of view.
— To empower and encourage young people to articulate and share their views.
— To build relationships between young Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
— To promote understanding of issues of oppression, marginalisation and injustice.
— To develop young people’s leadership skills.
— To develop recommendations to be presented to decision-makers and promoted as part of the reconciliation process.
— To consult with young people on their views on a treaty or framework agreement.

**FUNDING PERIOD: TWO YEARS (2003 TO 2005)**

**FUNDING AMOUNT: $130,000**

(in 2005 the Telstra Foundation made a further commitment of $120,000 over two years to develop and implement an Indigenous youth participation strategy, including participation in the proposed 2007 National Reconciliation Convention.)

**HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

Reconciliation Australia is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation established in January 2001 to lead the national movement for reconciliation between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people. Its mission is to forge alliances that enable exploration of new ways to tackle problems and deliver measurable and tangible outcomes for reconciliation. It was established following the completion of the ten-year term of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, which had been a statutory body fully funded by the Australian Government. Since then, there has been little opportunity to engage young people in the process of reconciliation.

Issues relating to engagement of young people, youth participation and education are crucial in relation to reconciliation. There was no existing national reconciliation project in this field, so it was important for Reconciliation Australia to meet this need.

The process of engaging in reconciliation activities can have powerful positive consequences for young people. For Indigenous students, it provides opportunities to build confidence and self-esteem. For non-Indigenous students, it allows for knowledge, insight and respect to replace commonly held misconceptions about the history and the context of present disadvantage for Indigenous people.

“Ultimately reconciliation is about how best to recognise the right of Indigenous people to be Indigenous people within the complexity of our western democratic structure and to accommodate that rather than to suppress it.” (Patrick Dodson, LINGIARI FOUNDATION)

**KEY PROCESSES**

Funds from the Telstra Foundation were used to employ a project coordinator devoted to youth and education, building partnerships with organisations, and building the capacity of young Indigenous people. In consultation with colleagues from Reconciliation Australia, a strategic work plan was developed to address three key areas:

— developing programs that engage young people in existing reconciliation activities such as National Reconciliation Week;
— working with existing state and regional reconciliation groups to encourage them to develop youth participation strategies; and
—working with youth organisations and schools to heighten their awareness of Indigenous and reconciliation issues and develop youth-only activities. Through the development of a youth-specific participatory model, the project coordinator and colleagues engaged with existing state and regional reconciliation groups, youth organisations, Indigenous communities and organisations, educational bodies, schools, and local government and agencies to build the capacity of young people. Reconciliation Australia’s Reconciliation through Education program started the process of building networks and relationships with educational bodies, youth networks, and existing reconciliation groups.

“Activities such as understanding history and learning about Aboriginal people to stop misunderstandings begin from primary school. Acknowledging Aboriginal people’s culture and their contributions need to be taught in our schools.” (YOUTH PARTICIPANTS)

At an operational level, the Project Coordinator’s role was to organise forums and provide opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people to sit down with local Indigenous leaders and together consider issues relevant to practical and symbolic reconciliation in their own communities across different regions of Australia. Some of the issues discussed would include recognition of culture and history and having a better understanding of the context of current problems of real and perceived disadvantages. Strategies were deployed for people at all levels to work together to create stronger communities.

Reconciliation through Education initiatives have been developed over the two-year period across diverse regional communities of Australia. Over 3000 young people have participated in this project. Some key examples are listed below.

**TASMANIA**

In August 2004, a workshop was convened at the University of Tasmania’s Launceston Campus. The focus was on identity and future action. Attendance included 40 young Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, 15 Elders, school teachers, representatives from Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR), and community members. The workshop was very successful in engaging young people, in particular with the establishment of a Youth Reconciliation Network with young people identifying that they need to be involved in peer-education.

“A network needs to be youth-driven and young people need to be involved in teaching other young people.” (INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS YOUTH PARTICIPANTS)

Another initiative was the convening of a Youth Week Conference that incorporated an educational theme. Young people’s statements reflect the level of engagement and insight.

“There should be camps and reconciliation walks for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. There is a need in the future to employ more Aboriginal people in key educational areas – not just as educators, but have Elders-in-residence at schools and create Indigenous student representatives; to develop and embed an Aboriginal perspective into the educational curriculum.” (YOUTH PARTICIPANTS)

The conference provided an opportunity for young people to engage with key political leaders, community leaders, and Elders. Comments from young people participating were varied and positive:

“Politicians should be invited to schools to talk about reconciliation and we should involve the support of parliamentarians such as Kathryn Hay to help us. It is important to ‘know the rules’ and learn how government and decision makers work and operate.” (YOUTH PARTICIPANT)

The workshop would not have been as successful without the wisdom and added incentives from the adults and Elders within the Aboriginal community, who chose to reconcile differences among themselves in order to work together in the best interests of young people.

**TOWNSVILLE, QUEENSLAND**

In February 2004, Reconciliation Australia, Reconciliation Queensland and 60 members of the Townsville community gathered for a youth-focused reconciliation event. The main aim of the ‘People Meeting People’ event was to discuss educational and legal issues and their impact on Indigenous young people. One young Aboriginal lady recounted a
situation relating to her dealing with the local Police: "If they see a group of Indigenous young people they think they are making trouble. They should be more aware of what’s happening. They tend to ignore our side of the story." (INDIGENOUS YOUTH PARTICIPANT)

Discussions relating to racial taunts and bullying in schools highlight the variability in exposure that young people have to each other's culture. This highlights a crucial step in Reconciliation Australia's approach to overcoming prejudice and breaking down barriers to communication: facilitating face-to-face contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youths.

"A lot of non-Indigenous students that go to private schools might never come into contact with Indigenous people." (ABORIGINAL PARENT)

It was highly successful and has led to the establishment of a group to focus on police issues and their impact on Indigenous young people. An interim coordination group was formed to hold leadership-training forums for young people to further reconciliation.

SHEPPARTON, VICTORIA
The Reconciliation through Education project has continued to facilitate the development of a youth reconciliation initiative called “Word and Mouth” in Shepparton with the Council of Greater Shepparton. An outcome of the work done to date has been the Shepparton Council's commitment to endorse and incorporate a Cultural Harmony Statement into their 2005–2006 Strategic Plan.

ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA
The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Australia facilitated the convening of a third Reconciliation Forum at Old Parliament House on 24 May 2005. The forum hosted 100 young people from different regions of South Australia.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
The Partnerships Acceptance Learning Sharing (PALS) program, which is managed by the State Department of Indigenous Affairs, continues to grow through the efforts of the Reconciliation Youth Coordinator, Reconciliation Australia and ANTaR Western Australia.

Linkages have been established between the PALS Coordinators and the national Dare to Lead Project (www.daretolead.edu.au). It is envisaged through these partnerships that strategies such as school-based reconciliation programs and online resources will be developed to improve access to schools and communities at a local, regional and national level.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
The project led to an increase in the diversity of role models participating at local reconciliation forums and workshops and the methods used to reach out to engage young people in metropolitan, rural and remote communities. The participatory model allowed for innovative and fresh approaches to engage young people in four distinctive ways. Firstly, it maximised the group dynamics of young people and created a space to allow them to govern the process. Secondly, it provided role models with different perspectives and divergent views on reconciliation issues to encourage healthy debate. Thirdly, it facilitated stages of the process by using art to reflect their individual and/or collective perceptions. Finally, it used information and communication technology to build capacity (e.g., creating email groups, updating websites etc.).

Reconciliation Australia is reconstructing their website to include additional youth-specific information, such as policy statements, online resources, and enhanced databases. The website currently has 30,000 hits per week.

“The project involved over 3000 young people and engaged with organisations and communities around the country. The project has been deemed an overwhelming success as Reconciliation Australia has committed to young people and education – not as a side issue, but central in all its work. It has firmly placed young people—particularly young Indigenous people—at the core of the reconciliation debate. There are anecdotal stories of young people involved in the project who have continued at school as a result of not just participating in events, but playing a central role in the development of the events.” (PROJECT COORDINATOR)

At times, the project coordinator had to adopt a mediation role between different stakeholders prior to commencement of a local reconciliation project in communities. These mediations have always resulted
in good outcomes that are beneficial for all parties.

The project has significantly impacted on changing the culture within Reconciliation Australia at a strategic and operational level. Young people’s roles within the organisation are incorporated into core business. Projects such as Governance, Banking, Violence, Treaty and Agreement Making, and Youth all contain a strong youth element and role.

“The best way to engage young people is to keep their role functions and responsibilities embedded in the organisational structures – across the entire organisation at the core of the business not on the fringe.” (PROJECT MANAGER)

**BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Initially, a large number of organisations relied heavily on the Project Coordinator. Strategies are now in place to build their capacity without compromising the professional relationship between parties. Political differences, communication difficulties and/or indifference among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or with non-Indigenous people—as well as between different non-Indigenous groups—hindered progress. Being astute to read the social political landscape in each community prior to working with them became an art form. This highlighted the importance of not assuming that one group has a mandate to address social justice issues for all Australians: Indigenous or non-Indigenous. The Reconciliation through Education project was often the catalyst for getting different groups in the one community talking with one another.

Working cooperatively and more strategically with key government departments and programs (e.g., Shared Responsibility Agreements) responsible for social, cultural and economic development provides opportunities to value-add to Indigenous community development projects such as Reconciliation through Education. School principals are key stakeholders: it is important to build their capacity to become the change agents in their own school and community environments. Engaging relevant stakeholders to assist Reconciliation Australia to contribute to this strategic direction would create opportunities for the project coordinator and young leaders around the country to progress further.

**KEY LEARNINGS**

Education is the key to making reconciliation meaningful and enduring. The skills-transfer process is an organic one that incorporates diverse learning modes in different community settings. For genuine engagement, it is important to create the time and space for Indigenous young people.

“The learning process in this is as important as the outcomes. The fact that we have engaged young people from the beginning and not just as participants has been important.” (YOUTH PROJECT COORDINATOR)

The feasibility of long-term partnerships with targeted organisations across the country needs to be scoped. This should take into account the fact that a significant number of these organisations have limited capacity to develop, implement and sustain reconciliation initiatives at the local level. To ensure sustainability it is imperative that strategic alliances are identified at a national, state, regional and local level, and that community education models are explored. The linchpin is to creatively pool the physical and financial resources, along with human and social capital.

“We would focus earlier on building the capacity of the organisations, rather than the final six months. That would mean entering into relationships and partnerships being clear that Reconciliation Australia was not going to ‘run’ these events but work with the organisations to build their capacity to do so.”

(YOUTH PROJECT COORDINATOR)

“We have learnt an enormous amount but most importantly the value of young people. They are able to contribute fully to the debate and should not be seen as a side issue, but central to and in the debate.”

(YOUTH PROJECT COORDINATOR)

Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have been utilised as facilitators to engage their own community with the reconciliation process. The project has been an innovative engagement tool in itself as it has facilitated and pioneered the development of good governance models for this country into the new millennium. The work achieved to date in this project has set the blueprint for this legacy to occur.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE RECONCILIATION THROUGH EDUCATION PROJECT, CONTACT THE PROJECT COORDINATOR, RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA. PH (02) 6273 9200 EMAIL INQUIRIES@RECONCILIATION.ORG.AU**
The Cape York Youth Network aims to identify and assist emerging young community leaders in Cape York who understand their community’s issues. Self-determination is at the heart of this project. Through their involvement in the network, it is hoped to empower these emerging leaders to engage in community development.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

- To identify and empower young people aged 12 to 25 to become active within their own communities and in the region.
- To encourage the ongoing participation of Indigenous youth in education, training and employment.
- To develop and assist with the establishment of viable youth enterprises and an active digital mode of communication and learning.
- To develop, nurture and mentor emerging young community leaders in Cape York.

**FUNDING PERIOD: TWO YEARS (2003 TO 2004)**

**FUNDING AMOUNT: $60,000**

**HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

The Cape York Aboriginal Charitable Trust is a perpetual charitable trust whose activities are aimed at raising the overall living standards of Aboriginal people in Cape York, in Far North Queensland. The Trust does not manage projects itself but works with Cape York Partnerships who provide the day-to-day management of the programs and activities of the Trust. Cape York Partnerships is a non-profit non-government agency.

The Cape York Youth Network aims to identify and assist emerging young community leaders in Cape York who understand their community’s issues and are empowered to engage in community leadership and development. The Cape York Youth Network aims to:

- identify and support young people aged 12 to 25 to become active within their own communities and in the region;
- allow young people to develop opportunities that encourage their ongoing participation in education, training and employment; and
- develop and assist with the establishment of viable youth enterprises and an active digital mode of communication and learning.

Cape York Partnerships generated the idea of the Cape York Youth Network. Without the funding from the Telstra Foundation, however, the Cape York Youth Network may not have been possible. The funding from the Telstra Foundation was used to assist in the initial implementation of the strategies. The goal was to engage people across Cape York communities in communicating with each other: about their history, their culture, and their current issues. Networking between Indigenous communities across the Cape is something that was previously part of the culture, but has been lost. The community Elders felt that the current generation of young people do not appreciate that in the past people were communicating across Cape York, as well as with other communities outside of Cape York.

“There is a need to get on top of substance abuse.”

(PROGRAM DIRECTOR, CAPE YORK PARTNERSHIPS)

A number of different strategies have been developed and refined by trial and error over the past couple years by the network. One critical strategy was the development of the Cape York Youth Network website (www.capeyorkpartnerships.com/computerculture/index.htm) that enables young people to demonstrate their skills to their own communities as well as communicate with peers within the Cape and externally. Young people are provided with project-based skills training and experience to improve literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The network also worked on developing a range of youth enterprises to provide opportunities to develop skills and experience in employment, enterprise and project management activities. A key mechanism for providing these skills was mentoring, and fostering support for a regional community of workers with youth who share a common vision and can benefit from working with each other and use successful projects and ideas from each other.

**KEY PROCESSES**

The Cape York Youth Network developed a three-year plan to pilot the program in four Cape York communities. Overall funding was sought to employ two Aboriginal Youth Workers in Weipa. The funding was
also used to provide funding for leadership camps, seed capital for youth-led entrepreneurial projects, for youth worker network camps, and for a program review and report. Funding was sought from the Telstra Foundation to develop, nurture and mentor emerging young community leaders in Cape York.

Key issues the project focused on included developing leadership skills, networking between youth in different Cape York communities, enterprise development, exposing young people to higher thinking and using technology. Early intervention strategies included developing leadership skills of Cape York youth. The project also focused on young people understanding their past, and how some of the present social behaviour and attitudes do not foster normal behaviour.

“Aboriginal people were not on CDEP twenty years ago and they were not even on welfare thirty years ago.” (PROGRAM DIRECTOR, CAPE YORK PARTNERSHIPS)

One of the key issues raised at network events was the issue of ‘passive welfare dependency’. The appalling social and economic circumstances that exist today for Indigenous people in Cape York did not exist 30 or 40 years ago. These conditions emerged when people in the Cape were pushed out of the workforce. The lack of work opportunities and the dependence on a welfare-based economy has, over time, led to a loss of key social values, such as a positive work ethic, and valuing education. Being able to engage in work places a whole different context in people’s lives, providing socialisation experiences, and other positive benefits that are not only economic.

The network’s activities provided people with an intellectual understanding of the real issues with which people are grappling on Cape York. It provided a forum for discussion on those topics – particularly how they are dealing with the critical issues such as substance abuse and welfare dependency.

“Engaging in discussion about these issues has helped young people to have hope in the future. The network didn’t provide employment, but it provided an intellectual understanding to help others go on. Using words like ‘enterprise’ or ‘business’ were not in the vocabulary before.” (PROGRAM DIRECTOR, CAPE YORK PARTNERSHIPS)

The Cape York Youth Network believes that community development is all about developing people – not buildings or structures. Strong people equal strong communities. If you develop the skills of individuals, they can become strong community leaders. Some of the activities conducted by youth throughout the project included learning how to run movie nights, set up stalls, leadership camps, and rent DVDs.

**OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

There was active participation of youth in the project. This was evident in its achievements, including the development of a website, leadership camps, structured activities, computer skills, networking between Cape York youth, reports, photos, and participation in the Cape York expo.

The project is the first of its kind. It provided an alternative to youth who were petrol sniffing, drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana. The outcomes of the project have contributed toward individuals gaining employment, commencing traineeships, attending high schools in Brisbane, and participating in the Cape York Flight Path Program run by the Cape York Institute.

Future outcomes will be to sustain ongoing networks developed through the project and increased promotion concerning the importance of education.

“We need to develop projects at a community level that include normal functional behaviour and change passive welfare attitudes.” (PROGRAM DIRECTOR, CAPE YORK PARTNERSHIPS)

The focus on early intervention addressed the reality of social welfare attitudes and beliefs of Cape York Youth today. Many local people believe that reliance on government welfare has not always occurred; nor is it the way of the future. Similarly, there are positive attitudes about sobriety: “It’s not Aboriginal to be drunk”.

“As a result of the network, some young people have stayed at school, or taken up employment opportunities.” (PROGRAM DIRECTOR)

The network got people talking across communities – re-establishing the fact that they have commonalities. It broke down barriers. Often this was done through the use of new technology to facilitate networking.

“Originally it was an opportunity for people to communicate.” (PROGRAM DIRECTOR, CAPE YORK PARTNERSHIPS)
PARTNERSHIPS

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The project was not easy. It was intense work for the two youth workers who were employed in the project to engage the communities. The focus to begin with was on a smaller number of communities, in which case the Partnership worked with Western Cape York communities and specifically looked at enterprise, work opportunities and developing strong leadership qualities, particularly when working against all odds. In the future, the Network needs to increase its focus on involving local people and less on external assistance. Ideally, networks within—and across—communities should not rely on government funding. The focus should be on enhancing existing networks and making them more functional.

As a result of their involvement in the Cape York Youth Network, there has been development in the thinking of young people. Understanding the basis of a number of the social and economic problems facing Indigenous communities in the Cape provides a context for young people to try and overcome the issues. Real jobs and employment were the main focus; however, project workers felt that, in the future, it would be good to also address more explicitly the issue of petrol sniffing and substance abuse.

KEY LEARNINGS

It is important that youth have a sense of history and understand that things were never the way they are now. Aboriginal communities in Cape York were socially functional thirty years ago, and—if youth are reminded of this—they may be capable of dealing with some of the social problems that are experienced within their communities, particularly substance abuse and welfare dependency.

A number of important lessons were learned through the establishment and ongoing functioning of the network. Those involved with the project recognised the following:

— the importance of regional agencies being clear about their purpose and role;
— the benefits of investing time and effort into developing Cape York youth;
— the achievements that are possible from community-based activities; and
— the capacity to engage with youth to change the context of community-based passive welfare behaviour and attitudes.

During the project there was good contact with the Telstra Foundation who provided essential support. The project was instrumental in assisting the development of some skills and increasing educational opportunities for some of the youth in Cape York.

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Tangentyere Council is an Indigenous resource and social service organisation servicing Aboriginal town camps and Aboriginal people living in and around Alice Springs. The After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre was established in response to the concerns expressed over many years by agencies about the increasing number of young people aged 12-17 years who wander the town centre until the early hours of the morning. These young people are often affected by alcohol, petrol sniffing and/or other drugs and grow into adulthood with significant drug misuse problems. They are also at significant risk of sexual and physical assaults.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**
- To provide an after-hours youth drop-in centre in Alice Springs.
- To assess and quantify the number of vulnerable young people on the streets at night.
- To identify community service gaps and to ensure young people are linked to support services.
- To reduce in the long-term the level of juvenile offending, drug/alcohol related problems and the risk of physical and sexual assaults on young people on the streets at night.

**FUNDING PERIOD: ONE YEAR (2002)**
**FUNDING AMOUNT: $50,000**

**HISTORY AND CONTEXT**
Alice Springs is a town in the centre of the Australian continent: it sits in the south of the Northern Territory, mid-way between Darwin and Adelaide. Historically, it was a meeting place for a number of different Indigenous tribes from local areas, and further afield.

In Alice Springs, there was a desperate need for a crisis response service during the evening for young people (at the time of the project, support services were provided Monday to Friday during normal business hours). The community identified the need for an after hours youth drop-in centre, to operate particularly over the weekends and during the evenings to support Aboriginal youth. It was identified that they were at risk of drug and alcohol problems, engaging in offending behaviour, or being a victim of assault. This social need was identified in reports and proposals over the preceding decade. More recently the need was identified as a key recommendation resulting from the alcohol restriction debate in Alice Springs. Community agencies working with young people formed a Steering Committee to establish a plan to develop such a service.

The members of the Steering Committee were sourced from key youth service providers in the region, including Tangentyere Council, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Reconnect, Alice Springs Youth Accommodation Support Service, Bush Mob and the Alice Springs Youth Centre.

The Telstra Foundation contribution of funding was for the initial 12-month pilot period. Funds were required to employ a coordinator, operational cost for the After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre program, and to secure a venue. Additional funding was sourced through the Alcohol Education Rehabilitation Foundation, the Northern Territory Department of Family and Community Services, and in-kind services and operational materials (such as administrative support and materials, cars, staff resources) provided by youth service providers who participated on the steering committee (including Tangentyere Council, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress – Youth Outreach Team, Alice Spring Youth Accommodation Support Services and Reconnect).

The goal of the centre is to address the risks associated with 12-17 year olds who may be in crisis situations. Crisis situations may be defined as—but not limited to—homelessness, abuse at home, petrol sniffing or substance abuse. The primary aim of the project is to provide support to young people who are out at night and who may be at risk of harm or requiring support. The After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre also provides young people with a safe place to go.

After many attempts to identify an appropriate venue in the centre of Alice Springs (without success), the Steering Committee considered the establishment of a mobile caravan unit. While a suitable mobile was being sourced, the Alice Springs Youth Centre offered an unused demountable on their land at very low rent. This opportunity was taken up. The location of the demountable was close to the Mall area in the central business district, which had been identified by police and others as a hot spot for young people at night. In
the developmental phase of the project, young people were consulted regarding their needs. They identified the need for a fixed site venue in the town centre as a key component to meet their need for safety, access to showers, washing facilities and access to after-hours support. The centre is open from 8pm to 1am, three nights a week.

**KEY PROCESSES**

The key issue the project aimed to address was the large number of youth in the town centre of Alice Springs throughout the evening until early hours of the morning. Although the project targeted the purchase and introduction of a mobile unit this was not possible due to the complexity of the youth issues. The fixed venue, which was also outlined in the project brief, was achieved. The fixed venue is currently located at the rear of the Alice Springs Youth Centre. The Northern Territory Alcohol and Drug Service currently funds four salaried positions for the *After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre* coordinator and two youth workers.

Strategies included:
— monthly meetings by the steering committee to establish and implement the operation of the *Drop-in Centre*;
— liaising with partner youth agencies to develop a roster to cover after-hours staffing to support young people;
— developing protocols and contractual arrangements between participating agencies;
— facilitating referrals and access of at-risk youth to youth agencies to receive services;
— recruiting, supervising, training and coordinating staff;
— promoting the *Drop-in Centre* across the community; and examining sources of funding for the service and writing submissions to secure long-term funding for the continuation and expansion of the program.

“It is great that organisations like the Telstra Foundation are actually interested in these community programs. It’s definitely needed in this town or any town, it has – and is – definitely making a difference. And I think that’s the bottom line isn’t it?”

(COORDINATOR)

**OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

Success for the intervention was due to the intersectoral collaboration that occurred between all key stakeholders in Alice Springs, which included some of the following agencies:
— Alice Springs Reconnect Program;
— Alice Springs Youth Accommodation Support Program;
— Northern Territory Police Department;
— Department of Family and Children’s Services;
— Youth Night Patrol Program;
— Tangentyere Council Night Patrol Program;
— Congress Youth Outreach Team;
— Tangentyere Youth Service;
— Aboriginal Child Care Agency;
— local businesses; and
— individual community members, including Aboriginal Elders, grandmothers, aunties and young people.

Early intervention included the establishment of the *After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre* which was completed by linking crisis situations that occurred or were discussed after hours to daytime crisis intervention government and non government services for youth, in particular youth at risk.

“There is a fine line when you are trying to encourage youth to come here. Basically, you’re trying to build relationships with the young people, so if they ever find themselves in need, they will feel they can drop in”.

(COORDINATOR)

A community development emphasis was evident through the input and active participation of grandmothers, aunties and other carers in the early establishment of the project and during the implementation of the project and now. Since it began, the *After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre* has included some of the following services:
— crisis counselling;
— suicide prevention;
— counselling and support regarding alcohol and other drugs;
— safe, free transport;
— referrals to day-time government and non-government services;
— advocacy and support for youth on issues relating to the law;
— access to food, showers, toilet facilities and clothing;
—access to information about contraception and safe sex (with condoms made available as required); and —access to health information both through the youth workers and written publications.

The After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre collects statistical data about the number of young people who are in the central business district of Alice Springs and the Drop-in Centre at night, as well as documenting the issues they have at that particular time. Currently the Centre sees up to 30 young people a night. The Drop-in Centre also has a contact sheet for every young person who attends the centre. This includes details of their name, gender, address, whether they are affected by a substance (and what type), other issues, name of contact person, and any other youth services with which the client is in contact. All information on clients is confidential with the exception of mandatory notification requirements.

“The service has been of great support for young people that would have otherwise not linked into support agencies that are available only during business hours. Linking young people with educational support and vocational services is important.”

(COORDINATOR, RECONNECT)

“We have a core group of young women who actively engage in inhalant drug misuse. Because of their misuse, often they will avoid services during the day. They are wards of the state. The drop in service can give a run down of the wellbeing of the young person, and can get Reconnect—which is a Commonwealth-funded early intervention program for young people at-risk of homelessness—to do the follow-up.”

(COORDINATOR, RECONNECT)

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES
One challenge experienced throughout the early establishment phase was resistance from many of the local businesses and landlords with property in the central business district of Alice Springs.

Another obstacle in developing the program related to securing public liability insurance for the program. It took 12 months before any insurance company would grant public liability insurance (amendments to the Northern Territory Government Legislation had to occur which capped payouts on claims).

Variation to the initial funding agreement was sought and granted and the program became operational in the second year. These delays highlighted the naivety regarding the program budget, which meant that it was under-funded and donations had to be sought from local businesses to sustain the first year.

Organisational ownership and responsibility was also an issue. This was easily resolved through regular monthly meetings of the Committee of Management and signing off on the Memorandum of Understanding between members of the Committee of Management. The Memorandum of Understanding was written to reinforce the collaborative framework on which the project was developed.

There is a good relationship between the Alice Springs Youth Centre and the After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre. Future outcomes will be to sustain the current crisis intervention and operations. The Committee of Management is aware that there is an urgent need for a recreational facility for young people in Alice Springs. Efforts will be made in the near future to secure a suitable venue where the After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre can operate alongside a centre where young people can simply ‘hang out’.

The After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre complete referrals to ‘Reconnect’, which does day-to-day follow up of youth who attend the centre by night. This may include but not be restricted to client assessments and case management.

The After-hours Youth Drop-in-Centre has recently received funding from the Northern Territory Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs to employ a coordinator and three after-hours youth workers and to maintain the operations of the program for a further 12 months.

KEY LEARNINGS
The project identified that youth are not accessing existing daytime services. The public liability insurance is very high for this type of service in the community. An important lesson learnt was that collaboration can occur. Ownership and engagement by young people was vital for sustainability. The Centre demonstrated the ability of a cross-section of professionals and community members to work together to improve the lives of young people. Linking with existing service providers meant that a lot of infrastructure, knowledge and expertise could be pooled. The After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre is an important part of the youth services network in Alice Springs. A Memorandum of Understanding exists between the Committee of Management members, the guiding principle and purpose of which is to develop a cooperative model for the management and provision of services to young people through a multi-agency After-hours Youth Drop-in Centre. The Memorandum of Understanding is reviewed annually and addresses the rights and responsibilities of the participating organisations.

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SECTION 3
SCHOOLS: A SENTINEL SITE FOR CHANGE

...ENGAGING INDIGENOUS YOUNG PEOPLE IN CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS; PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP; GIVING HOPE FOR FUTURE EMPLOYMENT
INTRODUCTION
The projects described in this evaluation are aimed at enhancing the communities in which Indigenous young people live. Communities are comprised of a range of different institutions and activities, one of the most important of which is schools. With compulsory primary and secondary education in Australia, schools are important for a variety of reasons. They are a place where young people spend a large amount of time. The culture of a school—and the values that are transmitted to young people—can have an important influence on their lives. It is also a key way of engaging young people in the process of social change. A cross-cutting theme that emerged in nearly all of the projects, but particularly the four described below, is the importance of engaging with school communities in order to bring about change.

Schools can be a sentinel site for the change process. Schools have the potential to assist with engaging Indigenous young people in culturally appropriate educational programs; providing opportunities for leadership; giving hope for future employment.

THE PROJECTS
There were four projects in this evaluation that were either located in schools— or had a key focus on working with teachers or Indigenous students to achieve the program goals. These were:
— Early Intervention Program for Indigenous Youth;
— Jobs 4U2 Indigenous School-to-work Project;
— Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program; and
— Strong and Smart Digital Project.

Curtin University of Technology’s Early Intervention Program for Indigenous Youth is targeting those at risk of depression or suicide. Training models have been developed for professionals working in schools, to provide culturally appropriate early intervention. In addition, the program focuses on training up leaders among the Indigenous youth to identify risk factors early, so that appropriate supports can be provided to young people identified as ‘at risk’.

Ganbina’s Jobs 4U2 project is based in schools in the Shepparton region of north-central Victoria – an area known for its high levels of unemployment in the local Aboriginal community. Pilot programs have been established to prepare students for vocations after they leave school. Ganbina – an Indigenous employment agency – used its contacts in the business community to provide opportunities for students to meet with them and learn about career prospects, and develop links for work experience or part-time paid employment outside of school.

In a northern suburb of Perth, WA, Balga High School has established its Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program. Recognising that Indigenous youth were at high risk of dropping out of school, they focused on the issues where many Indigenous young people were excelling – sport – and developed a unique curriculum. Starting with a boys program, the school has now established a program for girls.

Cherbourg State School’s Strong and Smart Digital Project links Indigenous students with their cultural heritage, developing pride in their identity, as well as preparing them for living in the modern digital age. Production of a DVD is used as an educational and cultural tool by the school, and the broader community.

KEY LEARNINGS
One consistent theme that emerged from these projects was the importance of taking time, working with local schools and communities, including Elders, local families, and other key stakeholders. It takes time to build trust, to explain what the project is about, how it is intended to benefit the community, and what involvement from the community is required. Otherwise, it becomes an intervention ‘to’ rather than ‘with’ a community. True community development works when communities are assisted to identify the problems and implement solutions themselves. Communities are not always able to do this on their own. On the contrary – what we see in each of these projects are examples of collaboration between the school and other key agencies, universities, or other organisations to build the knowledge and capacity of those involved in running the program.

Programs need to be well integrated into the curriculum, and—where possible—to be run by Indigenous principals, teachers, teacher aides. They also need to be supported by the broader school community in order for them to work. This makes the development of a strong and skilled Indigenous education workforce absolutely critical for students’ future success, and provides the important example of role models of educational, vocational and social achievement. Working with established agencies who have credibility in the local community—with families, or with local businesses—can assist in the process of gaining acceptance, and establishing a sustainable program.
The early intervention program for Aboriginal youth developed by Indigenous Psychological Services and Curtin University of Technology is reported to be the first of its kind developed in Australia for Indigenous youth. The project is progressively being implemented in selected regions across Western Australia. The aim is to train professionals to identify Aboriginal adolescents who are at risk of depression or suicidal behaviour and to provide Indigenous-specific interventions to reduce these behaviours.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
— To conduct professional development with teachers, mental health professionals and key community members.
— To identify Indigenous young people at risk of self-harm.
— To pilot a culturally specific Indigenous early intervention program to foster resilience.

FUNDING PERIOD: TWO YEARS (2003 TO 2004)
FUNDING AMOUNT: $85,000

HISTORY AND CONTEXT
The early intervention program for Aboriginal youth has been considered a unique cultural development. It was designed specifically to identify Aboriginal youth at risk of self-harm by implementing measures to reduce high-risk behaviour. The rising figures reported on depression and suicidal tendencies among Aboriginal youth highlighted the need for a culturally sensitive program to reduce these behaviours. Dr Tracy Westerman, Managing Director of Indigenous Psychological Services—a private psychological consulting service in Western Australia—is one of the first Indigenous people to achieve a PhD in clinical psychology in Australia. She developed a scale to assess Aboriginal youth who are engaging in high-risk behaviours or may be at risk of depression and self-harm: the Westerman Aboriginal Symptom Checklist – Youth (WASC-Y). This was the topic of Dr Westerman’s doctoral thesis, supervised by Professor David Hay from the School of Psychology at Curtin University of Technology.

Many Aboriginal people view mainstream mental health services to be culturally inappropriate and not able to meet their needs. Rather than using existing measures of depression or risky behaviours that have not been developed with Aboriginal people and their culture in mind, a new scale was needed. The scale has been developed to be culturally sensitive. The new measurement scale has progressed through the support of Aboriginal people.

KEY PROCESSES
Telstra Foundation funding has assisted in the development of content for a program: ‘Indicated Intervention’ (the first of its kind in Australia) and pilot testing with a cohort of Indigenous youth. Primarily, the Telstra Foundation grant paid for development of the materials, and a part-time researcher to validate the content of the packages. Literature searches were conducted to ensure that the content is based on ‘best practice’ from a mainstream evidence base of what works with youth who are experiencing the impact of depression and suicidal feelings. These findings were also linked to the limited Indigenous research and outcomes of Tracy Westerman’s PhD research. The package is able to therefore address Indigenous-specific and mainstream risk indicators while also focusing on the development and, in many instances, consolidation of cultural resilience as a more effective method of suicide risk reduction.

Additional funding from Healthway will take the project into 2007 to its full implementation. This will culminate in the full nine-week intervention program being run out of the Swan Education District in Perth. Funds from the Telstra Foundation were used to employ a researcher to assist in the development of specific training content and materials. The research assistant also assisted in conducting professional development sessions to local service providers including teachers, mental health professionals and community. To date, this has included over 864 participants in five primary regions in Western Australia including the northwest, west Kimberley, Goldfields, and two regions in the Northern Territory. The research assistant developed content for the training modules in appropriate forms across these different regions (e.g., web and multi-media formats). Community service providers and youth have been trained around cultural
awareness, depression, suicide, and anxiety. Teachers were trained to look at how symptoms are expressed, because they can be very different in different cultural groups.

Development and implementation of an early intervention program involved:
—developing and piloting a culturally appropriate program for Aboriginal youth at risk that is sustainable in Aboriginal communities;
—consulting with local communities and Elders to ensure the project was seen as an Aboriginal-run project;
—providing support and intervention to a group of Aboriginal parents with children identified as being at risk of depression and suicidal behaviour;
—training Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal professional psychologists, teachers and Aboriginal health workers to use the program; and
—increasing the focus on positive attributes and existing protective behaviours among Aboriginal youth.

The modules that have been developed include:
—cultural identity; anger management; managing culturally based conflict (developing cultural resilience);
—knowledge of depression and suicide; coping and problem solving skills; effective communication; and, finally,
—stress management and relaxation. All the modules have been piloted with a cohort of Aboriginal youth. The final phase was to deliver and evaluate these modules with a group of Indigenous young people.

“Tracy remains the proactive person responsible in the development and implementations of the project.”

(PROFESSIONAL MENTOR)

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS
To date, the project has required extensive consultation with the Aboriginal community. Both professionals and other community members needed to be committed to support the project and its smooth flow throughout the various stages. An Aboriginal steering committee was established to oversee the overall functioning of the project, while additional professional support has been made available from academic staff from Curtin University to support the developments with research and project evaluation. Additional support comes from government and non-government organisations ready to assist and support the implementation of the culturally appropriate intervention project in different regions.

The measurement scale for high-risk behaviours has potential for wider use across Australia to assist Aboriginal adolescents experiencing depression or displaying suicidal behaviour. The model has been developed so that it is readily transferable into different communities and contexts. The overarching aim of the project has been to validate the content of the training packages across different Aboriginal communities, making the content and process applicable for as many regions in Australia that have issues related to Indigenous suicide and depression. The long-term aim is to train health and mental health professionals and paraprofessionals in program delivery to affected youth.

“I feel like I have the confidence to talk about suicide, because in this workshop I have gained some skills to talk to kids, people, families...” (COMMUNITY MEMBER)

“I feel a lot more confident in being able to help people who might be feeling this way as a result of the training.” (COMMUNITY MEMBER)

The program has been implemented across selected regions across Western Australia and in the Northern Territory. This has involved extensive consultation with Aboriginal communities and allied health professionals to complete the preliminary stages of the project. The program coordinator, Dr Westerman, focused on getting the Aboriginal community ‘on board’ and working to ensure that it was seen to be an Aboriginal-run project. The content has been validated for use in the northwest of Western Australia, Goldfields, Perth regions and the Northern Territory, by conducting youth forums. As well as being used as a tool to validate the training modules, pilot testing the materials on young people also had positive psycho-educational outcomes for the young people involved.

“This course Tracy has put together is easy to understand, not too high English like other courses. I found them too hard to understand. This course should be available to all Aboriginal people.”

(INDIGENOUS YOUTH PARTICIPANT)
The key part of implementing the project is to equip teachers and health professionals to be able to recognise and respond appropriately to signs of depression or suicidal feelings in Aboriginal students. The training modules will also assist in identifying young Aboriginal people experiencing behavioral problems and to reduce high-risk behaviour among Aboriginal adolescents. Ultimately, the aim is to reduce the risk of depression and suicide among Aboriginal youth.

“The teachers at my school would be talking about the feelings of Aboriginal people. Teachers would ask about suicidal feelings, knowing someone who has been suicidal.” (HIGH SCHOOL DEPUTY PRINCIPAL)

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

“The underlying philosophical orientation of the adaption of the early intervention programs is that it should reflect familiar, commonsense concepts understood by Aboriginal people based on information from our focus group. The value of using such common, colloquial terms is that they will have functional validity or relevance to Aboriginal culture.” (CHIEF INVESTIGATOR)

A number of needs were identified during the development and implementation of the project. More Indigenous psychologists are needed. Supports need to be put in place – and a new generation of leaders developed to prevent burnout in Aboriginal professionals. Web-based services are needed for people in rural and remote area, in order to link them to professionals online, and other supports and resources. More Indigenous people need to be trained in clinical psychology programs to supplement a mix of highly qualified non-Aboriginal as well as non-psychology trained Aboriginal staff. Finally, Indigenous measures of depression or other high-risk behaviours need to be used by health professionals and researchers, rather than using ‘white’ measures of mental health that are not sensitive to cultural differences.

KEY LEARNINGS

Recent research and government reports demonstrate high incidence of long-term unemployment, isolation and racism (both overt and covert). These factors have contributed to the critical events experienced by Aboriginal families and their young people in Australia today. These include not only incidents that have just happened but also the ongoing effects of massive social upheaval for Aboriginal people over generations. Professor Judy Atkinson, an Aboriginal academic, has attempted to place “intervention” issues on the public agenda since the early 1990s, citing “trans-generational trauma” as the key to understanding the complex issues currently confronting Aboriginal and young people today (Atkinson 2002).

“Tracy is the main link person in the projects. This is important because of the sensitivity of the issues, but still takes time! We could clone Tracy ten times over and it still wouldn’t be enough.” (PROFESSIONAL MENTOR)

The rising number of Aboriginal young people who have thought of killing themselves, or have actually tried is very concerning. Prior to the development of the cultural assessment measure there was no intervention measure specifically for young Aboriginal people to identify those with high-risk behaviours. The financial assistance of the Telstra Foundation resulted in getting the pilot program off the ground. The program has been well received in Western Australia, with signs of renewed confidence of young Aboriginal people and their families. The question of sustainability remains an issue in the long term to ensure the intervention continues to be utilised.

One of the key learnings from development and implementation of this program was the importance of getting the process of engagement right – ensuring that consultation is a primary part of the program development and delivery. Dr Westerman planned field visits to Aboriginal communities to work with schools, teachers and Aboriginal families to inform them about the intervention model and its long-term benefits for Aboriginal communities. Her unique cultural approach has been assisted in its development and progressed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal young people at risk. She draws on key socio-historical factors contributing to the plight of Aboriginal people such as transgenerational trauma. Westerman adds a new dimension for Aboriginal people from an Indigenous clinical psychology perspective.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVENTION PROGRAM FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH, CONTACT DR. TRACY WESTERMAN, MANAGING DIRECTOR, INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES.

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Ganbina runs the Jobs 4U2 Indigenous School-to-Work Project. Ganbina is an incorporated Indigenous organisation established to support and provide pathways to employment for young Aboriginal people residing in Shepparton, Mooroopna and nearby towns in north-central Victoria – an area marked by high unemployment among Indigenous people. The project has been developed to increase career options for local Aboriginal secondary students and encouraging them to remain at school longer.

“Ganbina” is a Yorta Yorta word meaning: “awaken, arise, or stand up”.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
—To understand and address the difficulties many Aboriginal students face when searching for employment.
—To increase self-esteem and confidence.
—To assist and support students to remain at school longer.
—To increase awareness to a wider scope of career opportunities.
—To empower and encourage parents’ participation in their child’s education.
—To develop students’ social and networking skills with local industries, business and the local council.
—To increase the prospect of future employment and foster hope for Indigenous students.

FUNDING PERIOD: TWO YEARS (2004 TO 2005)
FUNDING AMOUNT: $110,000

HISTORY AND CONTEXT
In the Shepparton/Mooroopna area, the local Aboriginal community numbers approximately 6,000. It is reported to be the largest Aboriginal group in Victoria outside of metropolitan Melbourne (Alford 2002). Recent research conducted by Dr Katrina Alford from the University of Melbourne confirmed local concerns about the chronically high level of unemployment for Aboriginal people in the Shepparton and Mooroopna area of north central Victoria. Alford (2002) reported that the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people living in both these towns is 80% or higher. A lack of employment opportunities across all ages for several decades has produced a sense of passivity evident among many of the young Aboriginal people. This has resulted in large numbers of young people choosing to leave school at a very young age – many in the first two years of their secondary education. This became a self-fulfilling prophecy: in most instances, leaving school does reduce their career prospects and their ability to find work at all, confirming their perception that unemployment is inevitable.

The primary aim is to facilitate the successful migration of Indigenous young people into the workplace through close cooperation with small business and corporate employers. The focus of Jobs 4U2 is on students from Year 7 through to Year 10, proving them with industry introduction tours (Years 7 and 8); career planning (Year 9); and access to appropriate work experience placements and after-school employment opportunities (Year 10). Students are encouraged to take up work, or transition into Ganbina’s other school-to-work program: “Ladders to Success”, which assists senior students to transition into the workforce. Prior to the introduction of Jobs 4U2, however, Ganbina identified a gap: many young Indigenous students were dropping out in the early high school years, and a continuum of support was needed to provide students with realistic vision of future workforce participation.

“No one is getting jobs, so why should we stick at school?” (LOCAL ABORIGINAL SCHOOL STUDENTS)

KEY PROCESSES
The program seeks to engage and educate the young people, the families and the schools. The key aim of the Jobs 4U2 project is to establish networks encompassing potential employment opportunities for local adolescents to gain work experience, and improve their perceptions of the availability of meaningful career paths – and their educational pre-requisites. Ganbina Koorie Economic Employment and Training Agency employed a project officer who has been working hard to develop positive partnerships with local business, the local council and a number of industries. Principal activities have included:
—establishing two pilot programs with two high schools;
—developing partnerships with deputy principals at local high schools;
—working with Aboriginal educators located in the high schools;  
—identifying potential employment opportunities;  
—developing a 12-month strategic plan to measure retention rates and changes in expectation of employment for all children over time; and  
—encouraging parental involvement in their child’s education by organising regular meeting for parents and actively promoting cultural awareness and family activities.

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Although the project is in its early stages, some key outcomes have already been achieved. Ganbina has established an advisory board to provide advice, and to facilitate effective networking as Jobs 4U2 swings into action. The board is made up of local individuals —both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people—from local industry, business and community who are committed to change, and to create employment or career opportunities for Aboriginal students in the Mooroopna and Shepparton region. The project will be introduced fully into two high schools this year to support students from Year 7 to Year 10, with plans to introduce the project into other schools in the future.

The project has been able to effectively establish partnerships with a number of local industries, businesses, and with local council to financially support the progress of the project.

“We just need time for the project to become known in the Aboriginal community and the wider community – to strengthen the relationships on either side.” (CEO)

There has been an increased interest shown by parents to support their children. Some parents have become increasingly active in attending regular monthly meeting at the school. Some parents have been actively preparing their adolescents to attend classes to learn how to drive a car, which is often a crucial skill for later employment. Shepparton is a regional-based community with poor public transport – and people rely on cars for getting to work, or to access further study or vocational training opportunities.

There are signs of increased hope and self-confidence with Aboriginal students. The students are keen to learn more about planning for work experience and are actively involved with visiting sites and to follow through with fieldwork activities. Jobs 4U2 is providing motivation and a focus for planning school subject selection carefully and to negotiate after-school work experiences. Students are forming positive relationship with their peers, often requesting additional support to assist with homework.

“This is one of the most proactive approaches – allowing students to see the benefits of education, and its tangible links to employment and opportunities especially within our region.” (CEO)

The CEO of Ganbina, who is responsible for the Jobs 4U2 program describes the way the service works with a typical Indigenous student:

“With one young girl in Year 10, we helped her to narrow and define a suitable career path. We then helped to find work experience appropriate to that career. She wants to do teaching, so we found her work experience at a local primary school. Additionally, we linked her to after-school work so that she can benefit from a history of employment. We have also helped her to study for her driver’s licence, and start building up some of the life skills that she will need, whether she goes on to further training or employment itself.” (CEO)

While the project is in its seeding phase, staff involved in the Jobs 4U2 project (in partnership with principals and staff from local high schools) implemented strategies targeting young Aboriginal students to remain at school longer. For example, the project was promoted via the ‘Koori grapevine’ (local word-of-mouth), and arrangements were made for students to attend “Job Fair Day”. The results of these promotional activities —within both high schools and through the Koori grapevine—provide evidence of change. Students are: more open to new ideas and challenges;  
—self-motivated to access the vocational preference self-assessment forms;  
—taking responsibility in organising and preparing themselves by developing a checklist of things to do and things they will need to have with them when seeking employment, such as bank account details, birth certificate, tax file number, driver’s licence and their resume;  
—keen to discuss vocational areas they are likely to be interested in;  
—proactively participating in programs;  
—requesting assistance with their homework and more able to see or plan their futures by remaining at school longer; and  
—moving from passivity to hope.

As part of the Jobs 4U2 project, students went and looked at one of the key local industries: the fruit processing industry. They saw a lot of career positions within the industry that they had previously not envisaged.

“I was very pleased with what the day offered. I was surprised in what the industry offers, as compared with what I thought was the main or common jobs.” (YEAR 8 INDIGENOUS GIRL)
BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES
The main thrust of the Jobs 4U project is to increase the educational standing of young students in the Mooroolbark/Shepparton region. The aim is to reduce a mind-set accustomed to failure and disenfranchise-ment for both young Aboriginal people and their parents.

“After six years—once we have had six groups of young people come through—there may not be a need for the program, or we may be able to wind it down.” (CEO)

The concept of Jobs 4U has been slow to get underway in the secondary schools. In the main, this was due to delays in securing the full funding that was needed to implement the project. Funds from the Telstra Foundation were used to leverage additional funds from other organisations to support the establishment of Jobs 4U2—but this took longer than anticipated. But it can also be difficult to establish a truly collaborative relationship, where the process is not ‘owned’ by the schools. In addition, schools do not necessarily have the connections or the ability to relate to the business world. Having the Jobs 4U2 program run and managed by Ganbina—a recognised Indigenous employment support agency—gave the project credibility with the business community, based on pre-existing working relationships.

Another difficulty that was faced in establishing the project was finding an Aboriginal person who had the skills required to lead the project and to be able to confidently relate to people across all levels: education, business and community. Finding a suitable project officer with the necessary skills was often hampered by the very issues for which the project had been developed to address: namely, that many local Indigenous people had not remained in school or gained the work experiences necessary for the role.

Forming positive partnerships with local business and with industry was a challenge for the project staff. In particular, it was difficult to change the mindset of many of the local employers who—in the past—have not facilitated Aboriginal people gaining employment. Because of its links with industries, Ganbina was able to facilitate better interactions: historically schools and industries did not work well together.

“One of the barriers for the project has been the time taken to get the project into schools.” (CEO)

The availability of Aboriginal educators and teachers’ aides is an important factor affecting the program. Only those schools that have Aboriginal educators or teachers’ aides have embraced the program.

Presently Ganbina is looking at a culturally appropriate assessment tool to be used with Aboriginal students in Australia to measure individual strengths and weaknesses. A similar model has been developed by Dr Richard Vedan, a First Nation representative from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.

KEY LEARNINGS
For a vision to become a reality, Ganbina needed to secure funding for the project. The Telstra Foundation played a vital role and has encouraged leverage of further funding from other agencies. Without this philanthropic assistance, the project would have been held back. At the same time, those involved in the pilot realise new things take time to be understood and accepted within the Aboriginal community. Equally important to the project’s establishment is the awareness of past practices experienced by Aboriginal parents, who often felt intimidated by past failure with the education system and attempts to gain employment.

“A lot of parents want to support their kids to go ahead, but don’t know how to do it. If we can help them support one child, they’ll be better positioned to support other children.” (PROJECT WORKER)

The “school-to-work” concept is a useful way of addressing the difficulties Aboriginal students may face in competition with non-Indigenous students seeking the same jobs or work experience opportunities. It is important to form lasting partnerships with local industry, business, professionals and local council, and to share resources equally between mainstream job seekers and Aboriginal students in a transparent manner.

“What would we do differently? Definitely have the Project Officer from Ganbina more aligned with the school, rather than have Koori Education Officers involved in the work of the Project Officer, picking up on the tasks required for the project.” (DEPUTY PRINCIPAL)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT GANBINA’S JOBS 4U2 PROJECT
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An innovative approach has been taken by the Principal at Balga Senior High School in partnership with two respected Nyungar Elders from the Swan Region and other significant individuals to expand their culturally appropriate curriculum for young Nyungar boys by having a parallel program for girls. The Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program combines sport within a conventional educational curriculum.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

— To develop and implement a sports-focused alternate educational program for local Indigenous girls.
— To retain Nyungar young people in the education system.
— To incorporate cultural activities into the educational curriculum to promote acceptance of Indigenous culture.
— To engage with parents, the local Indigenous community, and the broader business community in the education process.
— To foster life skills, responsibilities and positive attitudes to educational and vocational engagement.

**FUNDING PERIOD: TWO YEARS (2003 TO 2005)**

**FUNDING AMOUNT: $140,000**

**HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

The lives of the Nyungar people are often compounded by a continuous struggle: poverty, high unemployment, overcrowded households, drug and alcohol problems, feuding families, and harmful incidents of family violence all add to the malaise that exist for many young Nyungar people in the Swan region of Perth. Often Nyungar youth respond with hopelessness and apathy in the face of the lack of work prospects available to them, and drop out of school early.

The Smith Family partnered with the Balga Senior High School to implement an intervention program designed to encourage Aboriginal adolescents in the Swan Region (covering the northern suburbs of Perth) to attend school regularly. Balga Senior High School has a total of 525 students, including 74 in the Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program. Balga is considered a multicultural school, with students representing 40 different cultures. The largest cultural group is the local Indigenous people: Nyungars.

The Smith Family, Balga Senior High School and respected local Elders worked together to establish the original boys’ program. The Smith Family conducted an independent evaluation of the boys’ sports program in 2002, showing improvements in a range of outcomes for the boys, such as: attendance, retention, educational achievement, health standards, self-confidence and awareness of Nyungar language and culture.

It was recognised that separate programs are needed to address the needs of Indigenous boys and girls. Most boys are brought up by their mothers and maintain a close connection with them. Fathers are often absent from Nyungar families. In many instances, girls disconnect from their mother, forming closer ties with grandmothers or aunts. Aboriginal girls often become victims of abuse, or become mothers at a very early age. All of these social factors need to be considered when working with Nyungar families and communities to support young people engaging in the educational process.
Balga Senior High School began its Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program by first targeting boys. The program was based around participation in football, as well as a range of other sports. Funds from the Telstra Foundation were used to expand the program by implementing a parallel stream for girls, focusing on netball.

**KEY PROCESSES**
Supports have been put in place to assist Indigenous young people to complete their secondary schooling. The program sets some standards regarding personal responsibilities that are to be upheld by young people and their families. The aim is to increase young Indigenous students' presence at a secondary school level and to prepare others to enter university based on their academic achievements.

The professional expertise of the Swan Nyungar Sport Education Program (SNSEP) involved partners such as teachers, psychologists, local business and industries to share their knowledge and to support the progress of the project. As well as employing a Deputy Principal responsible for the boys' and girls' programs, Balga High School also employs a Student Support Manager. This role is to be expanded by involving some community psychology post-graduate students to work with the young people in the program, as well as their families.

The program is designed to encourage Aboriginal (boys and girls) to attend school on a regular basis, combining their sporting prowess within a curriculum designed to sustain their interest throughout their secondary education and to develop self-confidence, self-esteem and leadership skills. The approach is culturally sensitive, to gain trust and to inform Aboriginal families about the benefits of education. Families have expressed a desire to meet with other parents—in a parent support group—for other things that are happening in the community and within their personal lives.

“Getting an education and getting jobs for Aboriginal students is the key process of the project. Those involved in the project realise that not all students will advance on to tertiary education – instead, their options will be explored and supported during their secondary education. A guarantee of work in a career of their choice has motivated students that a dream can become a reality by way of taking on personal responsibility and to gain their own independence by getting a job.”  

(PRINCIPAL)

“We’re not a school that says you can only go to uni to be successful.”  

(PRINCIPAL)

The Smith Family and Centrelink played an important role in the community venture by providing student scholarships. According to the Principal, the Australian Government welfare agency ‘Centrelink’ identified that they have an image problem in the region among the Nyungar people, and wanted to change their culture to work more closely with Aboriginal families to remove these barriers. Young Aboriginal adolescents have been assisted to realise the benefits that come with completing their education. Every young Aboriginal person who graduates from the program will be guaranteed a job.

“Every young person that graduates from the program is guaranteed a job with Newmont Mining – the second biggest gold mining company in the world. For some, the jobs won’t suit… but at least it’s a promise that’s on the table.”  

(PRINCIPAL)

Potential new students are selected into the program based on sporting, literacy and numeracy ability, but they are then assisted with scholarships. The focus is on building leadership and life skills, and linking young people to vocational and educational opportunities.

“We don’t tolerate non-compliance. This may mean organising transport for a student to take them to work. One of the conditions is parental support. We need to engage the parents to work with us. It’s a challenge, because they are so disadvantaged.”  

(PRINCIPAL)
The Year 11 students attend the school premises three days per week. The other two days they are out in the workforce learning life skills or doing TAFE subjects. Balga Senior High School reports that they have had 100% compliance with this arrangement because it is a necessary part of the training. It gives students a sense of belonging. According to the Principal, they rarely miss a day.

"Here, Aboriginal students have worked hard, they have shown leadership skills, they have prepared and done presentations to the Dockers (an AFL football team) often being selected in the underage football teams. We are actually influencing the parents of tomorrow. If we can get some of the elements right with these kids, we stand a much better chance of having parents who are equipped." (STUDENT SUPPORT MANAGER)

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2004, researchers from the Institute for the Service Professions, Edith Cowan University published an evaluation of the SNSEP (Louden and Marsh 2004). They showed a number of key improvements for Indigenous students involved with the program. Average attendance rates for boys and girls in the program ranged from 82 to 85 per cent, whereas Aboriginal students in the same year levels in Balga High School’s mainstream program had attendance rates as low as 53 per cent. Attendance rates are well in excess of the average for Indigenous students in Western Australia, which is compelling evidence of SNSEP’s success in engaging students’ interest. Although students in the SNSEP were attending more frequently than their counterparts, retention rates from one year to the next were not as positive as had been hoped, usually the result of significant behavioural problems. Achievement measures (numeracy and literacy) also show significant improvements for both girls and boys, particularly the low achieving students. The authors of the report concluded that outcomes for SNSEP students were positive, with students improving academically, developing life skills, and learning about their culture.

"To see the dance troupe operate is a real joy. They perform at our assembly and the next step will be into the broader community or elsewhere. The dance troupe is self-funded. The students fund their own paint and equipment. An Indigenous dance troupe is actually a career path! It’s so positive. The next step is to improve the parenting skills.” (DEPUTY PRINCIPAL)

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

“You don’t close the door to someone who has had a history! We haven’t been afraid to give the opportunity to someone who wants to have a go. We never remove kids out of the program and let them go their own way. We try to find another suitable program for students. Or domestic living arrangements may change – which can be tough for us. That change can mean they will find it hard to continue.” (PRINCIPAL)

Although the girls are highly intelligent, teachers have noted that they bring a lot of ‘baggage’ with them – often battling with the authorities, or each other. As one teacher noted: “The girls don’t work well together as a whole, except on the netball court.” The females control a lot within the community, but finding positive female role models can be difficult, which is why it is important for the SNSEP program for girls to identify female Indigenous sporting figures, as well as other Nyungars who are achieving—vocationally or educationally—to whom they can look for inspiration.

“Culturally, the females are a long way behind the males. Opportunities are pigeon-holed. Getting a group of Nyungar girls together, you have the family feuding issues to content with. The girls have a completely different culture from the boys. It’s a tough program. It’s ten times harder than the boys’ program.” (PRINCIPAL)

At the moment, individuals involved with the project struggle to encourage parents to participate in the school’s cultural activities or to support their child. However this changes if you put on a Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program football or netball match, at which 200 or 300 parents attend.

There are a number of barriers to be overcome. The school needs more Indigenous Education Officers, more mentors for the young people, and more parent contact (the first steps have been put in place with the establishment of a parent support group). However, all these things have an administrative cost. There are also the practical costs: if a student gets picked for the
state side with football or netball, the school has to support them with the cost of flights, accommodation, entry fees, and so on. However, it is not possible to do this with every sport.

“Recruiting students to get the right mix can be difficult. To get a balance between academic background, sporting, and behaviour is time consuming. Our program has a lot of expectations from the community. Instead of being an educational facility, we have community issues that come into the school. It puts us in a difficult environment. Our students are labour-intensive. You have to go and talk to them and to be prepared to spend an hour having a yarn. But it’s what is necessary to try and create opportunities.” (DEPUTY PRINCIPAL)

Partnerships have been a key to the success of the program. Linking funds from the Telstra Foundation to the support from The Smith Family is likely to mean the program can be sustained – and replicated in other areas. Critical partnerships were also formed with two respected Nyungar Elders from the Swan Region, which ensured the cultural sensitivity of the curriculum – and, most importantly, the support from the local Nyungar community.

KEY LEARNINGS
Merging sport and cultural relevancy into an alternate school-based educational curriculum will support Nyungar students—both male and female—to remain at school longer. This approach increases the attendance of Nyungar Aboriginal students who are considered to be the most disadvantaged group in the Swan region of Perth. The Swan region itself has some of the most disadvantaged students in Western Australia. The program provides early intervention to enhance educational engagement and prevent young Aboriginal adolescents from dropping out of the educational system. The project plan targeted every Aboriginal student in the Swan region and ran a comprehensive and rigorous promotional campaign aimed at potential Aboriginal students and their parents or families to consider the benefits education has to offer, and the advantages that come with an education in finding employment.

Staff who want to be involved in SNSEP must be committed. If a staff member is involved against their will (without any expression of interest in working with Indigenous young people), the students pick up on it. A core principle of working in an education environment with Aboriginal youth is that relationships are the most important thing.

Finally, the program highlights the importance of gender and ways in which gender issues are addressed in the design and implementation of the program. The factors that influence gender-roles in the classroom—and in the home—need to be considered when working with Nyungar families and communities to support young people engaging in the educational process. Staff involved in the Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program learnt some key lessons about the importance of finding ways to engage girls, and to not ignore the realities of family feuds or other cultural factors that impacted on their behaviour at school and their engagement in the program.

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Through the Strong and Smart Digital Project, Indigenous young people are being trained in digital content production. The development and implementation of Strong and Smart in Cherbourg is delivering a sustainable educational, cultural and economic resource. The skills the students learn empower them to reclaim the positive aspects of their cultural and artistic heritage and create independent knowledge workers, skilled for survival in both rural and urban economies.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

- To tackle technological illiteracy amongst rural Indigenous children and their communities through skills development in current communication media and digital technology.
- To facilitate the development of production, project management and general multi-media skills among young people, staff and community members.
- To produce a broad spectrum of interactive digital program content.

**FUNDING PERIOD: ONE YEAR (2003 TO 2004)**

**FUNDING AMOUNT: $35,000**

(In 2004 The Telstra Foundation supported QUT in partnership with Woorabinda State School to expand the Strong and Smart Digital Project to the Community of Woorabinda. The Telstra Foundation also supported the development and performance of Ruby’s Story as part of the 2005 Queensland Music Festival that involved students from Cherbourg State School.)

**HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

In 2002, members of the Queensland University of Technology’s department of Film and Television partnered with the Cherbourg State School to produce a film called ‘Strong and Smart’. It tells the story of the rise of the Cherbourg State School from a situation of aimless despair to an institution with a sense of purpose, direction and unity. The ‘Strong and Smart’ theme reflected in the film is embedded in the school’s curriculum, activities and teaching methods. These are centred on motivating Indigenous children and young people to be strong and smart Australians. The Cherbourg State School comprises Indigenous and non-Indigenous teaching staff, Indigenous teacher aides, and 250 students.

Cherbourg is one of 16 ‘deed of grant in trust communities’ within Queensland. Prior to becoming a ‘deed of grant in trust community’ (DOGIT) in 1986, Cherbourg (formerly known as Barambah) was administered by the State Government Department of Community Services and its predecessor agencies including the Chief Protector of Aboriginals Office and the Director of Native Affairs Office. The original reserve was gazetted in 1900 at the request of William Thompson, a member of the Salvation Army. In 1901 the reserve area was moved three miles to its present location. In 1905, the Ipswich Aboriginal Protection Society who had been supporting William Thompson relinquished control of the settlement to the government. Over 2600 people who were ‘under the Act’ were removed to Cherbourg between the period 1901 and 1971.

Cherbourg is located in the South Burnett region and is approximately 250 kilometres west of Brisbane. The community has a population of about 2-3,000 and is managed by a locally elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council. A majority of community members are employed under the Commonwealth’s Indigenous employment assistance program: Community Development Employment Project (CDEP). The major employer is the Community Council.

The Cherbourg community experiences considerable economic and social disadvantage, including domestic violence, alcohol and substance misuse, and child abuse. The school community recognised that an intervention was needed to address these issues. The Principal at the time, Mr Chris Sarra—who was instrumental in initiating the digital project—is keen to recognise that these social problems are not the result of Aboriginal culture; these things are the legacies of the other historical and sociological processes. However, a program was needed to reinforce positive Indigenous culture, to promote literacy, technological skills, and a sense of pride and achievement for community members.
"It’s one thing to get the kids to school and to sit in classrooms, but you’ve got to do more. You’ve got to change what’s happening inside the school and I think the digital project has made the school a more exciting place to be, where kids can engage in those activities. They’re going to be excited about coming to school whether that attendance incentive is there or not.”

(FORMER PRINCIPAL, CHERBOURG STATE SCHOOL)

KEY PROCESSES

Funds from the Telstra Foundation were used to purchase a digital camera and to fund components of the salaries of the Project Manager, Coordinator and three tutors in editing, camera and sound. Combined with other funding, the principal activity for the project as a whole was to engage with 250 school children, 46 staff and 3000 community members in supporting and developing further a range of digital resources to build information/communication capabilities at a local level.

Community members, children and young people were consulted and engaged in developing appropriate resources that reflected their knowledge needs of their own community. Through this process, high participation and ownership was created and sustained.

The project strategy consisted of five elements: materials production, staff and student training, development of a digital domain, positioning the school in the broader community, and finally, distribution and promotion of the DVD. The goal was to produce a broad spectrum of interactive digital program content – ranging from inserts from the original ‘Strong and Smart’ DVD film (full length interviews) to newly created content like historical archives of Aboriginal studies and social issues such as domestic violence and truancy.

“If learning is contextualised, culturally relevant, and authentic, students will become more engaged in their education.” (HICKLING-HUDSON AND AHLQUIST 2003, P. 88).

The development of literacy skills is a central priority and the school aims to generate educational outcomes comparable to other schools in Queensland, while at the same time nurturing a strong and positive sense of what it means to be Aboriginal in today’s society. The Strong and Smart Digital Project has helped address an important aspect of literacy—digital literacy and computer skills—that will equip the young people who have participated with life skills in communication and media technologies.

“The pursuit of information and communication technology excellence is something that we’ve always insisted on. I’ve always described it to our kids and our staff as the ‘new literacy’. And as I say to them:

“We’ve got left behind in the old literacy and we’re not going to be left behind in this one.”

(FORMER PRINCIPAL, CHERBOURG STATE SCHOOL)

OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The project successfully engaged all target groups, in particular students from Grades 5, 6, and 7. The students acquired the skills to produce a DVD of short films – which was positively received by community members and revitalised cultural pride.

“The kids like being in front of the camera. Oh yes, they love it. I think the older kids got a lot out of it. One of the children that did it is my niece and she’s been helping me learn to use the camera. And another thing too, a lot of our children and people in the community – they’re not afraid now to be filmed.”

(COMMUNITY MEMBER)

Many families viewed the DVDs in their own home environment with all family members. This created stronger ties among each other and validated cultural and family histories from their own Indigenous perspectives.

“It’s bringing back the history, you know, making it accessible to people again. By using the DVD we can tell the truth about our history.”

(SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICER)

The project provided motivation tinged with curiosity among the student population and enabled improved relationships between all students and the teaching staff. It also significantly improved students’ attendance and participation rates. The project facilitated an introduction to new technological concepts through alignment and adding value to existing educational strategic priorities within the Cherbourg State School.

In a formal, independent evaluation of Cherbourg's digital project published in 2005, Dr Martin Hirst documented the achievements of the project against each of the stated aims. All the stakeholders and participants he interviewed for the evaluation were positive about the DVD and the ‘Strong and Smart’ vision for the Cherbourg community. Dr Hirst (2005) writes:

“It is clear from the comments offered during my interviews with key members of the Cherbourg community that the DVD is seen as an important achievement and something that the community as a whole can feel proud of. I was constantly told anecdotal stories of families gathering around the television to watch the DVD and many community members commented that the private screenings elicited strong emotional responses from those who viewed it. For participants, an increase in their own self-worth—described as feelings of ‘pride’—was a constant point emphasised in our interviews.”

(DR HIRST, INDEPENDENT EVALUATOR)

EXTRACT TAKEN FROM P. 12 OF THE REPORT)
Other key outcomes noted in the report include:
—use of the DVD as a teaching aid not only in the Cherbourg State School, but also by other educational administrators;
—use of the DVD in training Indigenous staff;
—providing skills to both pupils and teachers;
—improving student attendance;
—improving school retention and literacy rates;
—and involvement of the broader community in life of the school.

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES
The creation of a ‘digital domain’ for the Cherbourg community is a long-term goal. This project will assist to build the skills and infrastructure necessary for the next phase. However, it will take a more concerted effort from governments and educational players to work more collaboratively with the Cherbourg community and the school to realise this goal and vision. The challenge in the medium term is to keep the momentum going, to keep the interest alive and fresh, and to create new dynamics and fusion with young people and community members. This is possible, as there are other relevant State Government and community initiatives planned for the Cherbourg community. At present the State Library of Queensland is establishing an Indigenous Knowledge Centre at the school. This centre will ultimately strengthen and facilitate and/or partner on existing and future information and communication technology project initiatives in Cherbourg. The model of a Knowledge Centre is based on three main functions:
—a community library model;
—a cultural heritage keeping place repository; and
—a research and business unit.

The Community Council is supportive of the establishment of an Indigenous Knowledge Centre and a small museum in the community. Close cooperation between different community groups in these developments will ensure alignment to strategic directions relating to cultural knowledge is consistent with the aims and aspirations of the Elders and community members of Cherbourg.

The significant advances that have been achieved in Cherbourg School, and more broadly in the community have created the opportunity for the establishment of the Institute for Indigenous Leadership and Development, directed by the former Principal of Cherbourg State School, Mr Chris Sarra – an inspiring Indigenous educator who is soon to be awarded his PhD. In particular, the personal profile that Chris Sarra has as winner of the Queenslander of the Year 2004 has translated into broader interest in the Cherbourg model. The Institute was established in order to meet the growing need for identifying and communicating culturally appropriate models of leadership for Cherbourg and beyond. The Strong and Smart Digital Project included opportunities for Cherbourg to initiate training groups in other Queensland communities.

Because of the wider exposure the Strong and Smart Digital Project has created for the Cherbourg community, the positive impacts of the project can be seen as influencing the process of reconciliation.

“Cherbourg has entered the consciousness of Queensland… I think we’ve made a significant contribution to reconciliation because [through the DVD] we’ve moved the Indigenous community of Cherbourg from being the despised ‘Other’ to a different kind of ‘Other’, one that’s more positive.”

(STRONG AND SMART DIGITAL PROJECT TEAM MEMBER)

KEY LEARNINGS
Local schools in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ‘deed of grant in trust communities’ can—and do—play a pivotal role in engaging and building the capacities of community members. The hook is through innovative projects that focus on skill development of students and young people. The Strong and Smart Digital Project is linked to a philosophy of education that is holistic, emphasising the connection and overlap between different ‘Western’ compartmentalised disciplines, with unstructured and informal opportunities for learning that relate to where students are at. The Cherbourg State School is ready and able to tackle new technologies in the classroom and beyond – the setting is conducive to this new medium. The project has shown that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do have the solutions to building capacity in their own communities as long as cultural values and perspectives underpin the approaches. Planning needs to be done from the onset with the local community. Creative partnering within the community and external environments need to be forged. Most importantly, Aboriginal people need to be in control of the process.

The Telstra Foundation’s inaugural funding for Cherbourg has had significant flow-on effects. Given the success of Strong and Smart Digital Project and the model of Indigenous leadership provided by Chris Sarra, Cherbourg has been successful in attracting further philanthropic funding. The importance to the community of having a role model of a successful young Murri male should not be underestimated.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE STRONG AND SMART DIGITAL PROJECT
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CHERBOURG STATE SCHOOL: STRONG AND SMART DIGITAL PROJECT
There were a number of key learnings that emerged for the local communities, their leaders, and the evaluation team. These are identified in each of the project narratives, and are summarised briefly here. These key messages emerging from the project evaluations will assist the Telstra Foundation in its goal to support community organisations with their research and evaluation capacity, and to enhance the accountability of the Telstra Foundation to its various stakeholders by measuring the impact and effectiveness of its grants. They also have implications for future program development and implementation, not only by Telstra Foundation, but other philanthropic bodies, government bodies, businesses or community development agencies.

TRUST

It takes time to build relationships. Project workers who come in from outside the community need to spend time in the community to get to know the local people and how their community operates. This is important not only in building trust, but also in being able to tailor a program to meet the specific needs of the community. A critical aspect of building trust is to identify community brokers – key people in the community who are aware of the importance of the project, perhaps know of the project worker’s credentials elsewhere, and who can ‘vouch’ for the program and the individuals involved.

But trust goes both ways: it is not only about trying to foster the trust of Indigenous communities, but about funding bodies and project workers also trusting the local community. This means having good relationships with Elders and other key players, taking the time to communicate, explain, allay fears, and then to trust that communities not only understand best their problems, but also are the ones who can be empowered to identify and work with solutions.

Trust needs to exist between the funding body, the projects, and the communities. It needs to be a close-knit triangle for community development projects to work effectively and be responsive to local conditions and local needs. This involves listening to—and respecting—the vision of local Indigenous communities, but also having patience. Lasting change doesn’t happen overnight.

One project coordinator said:

“It is great that companies like Telstra are actually interested in these community programs. It’s definitely needed in this town – or any town, but it has definitively made a difference and I think that’s the bottom line isn’t it?”

FLEXIBILITY

One overall learning that emerged from the evaluations was that the boundaries do blur between many of the community development activities in which local organisations are engaged. Many of the projects funded under the Telstra Foundation scheme were located in organisations that were busy, often on a range of programs and projects.

“The network has been running a range of programs and services for the community over the past ten years. So it was easy to get the project up and running because we’ve done it before.”

Using established community networks as a platform to establish new services means that you enjoy the benefits of ‘economies of scale’, as long as you understand that programs often become intertwined. Funding bodies need to build in flexibility to their objectives and the deliverables they require, and value the type of integration between services that naturally occurs when services organically develop within the context of a local organisation working in the community and responding to its needs.

For example, a number of agencies were providing a broad range of services for children, and it was sometimes hard to delineate which parts of the projects were strictly falling within the funding arrangements, and which ones were not. The important message is that it should not be important. If project funding can add value to existing projects, and this leads to tangible outcomes for the community, then it has met the overall objectives of the funding scheme. The beauty of philanthropy is that projects do not necessarily have to be as tied to pre-determined deliverables as some government-funded schemes. The flexibility of a philanthropic trust should be employed to its full advantage to add value to such community activities.
LEVERAGE

Related to the issue of flexibility is the ability to use funds to leverage further investment in the community. This can be literally leveraging additional funds, or utilising the changes brought about by a small program to introduce systemic change in communities. A prime example of this is working with schools. Small changes in curriculum or support programs not only can make life changes for individuals; they build a sustainable base for ongoing changes in the community, as each new cohort of students move through the school system. These can be crucial early steps towards the broader goal of reconciliation.

We saw examples of how the Telstra Foundation funding has credentialed projects to get more capacity and set them up well to get funding from other funding schemes, such as the Australian Youth Foundation.

We saw significant evidence of how project funding from the Telstra Foundation meant existing projects could be expanded or continued, how a funded-project led to the establishment of a new project, or how seeding funds led to the procurement of additional funding from other sources.

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

The need to build a connection to their culture for Indigenous young people was a key element in most of the projects. This involves identifying potential leaders in the young people who can take on the role of learning, fostering, respecting and communicating their culture to their own generation – and into the future.

Leadership is a two-edged sword: it is important to identify and use community leaders to bring about change; however, too many demands can easily be placed on key individuals. There is much truth to the old adage: “If you want a job done, give it to someone who is busy”. Many projects were being supported by—or implemented by—key leaders in their local communities. Burnout needs to be avoided by expanding the leadership base.

The good practices, significant developments and opportunities for leverage described in these 14 projects are due in no small part to the key Indigenous leaders who are exemplified here. In particular, there is evidence that many of the needs would not have been identified—nor the projects developed—without the leadership of inspiring, hard working and skilled Indigenous people. This is true not only for those key people responsible for developing the projects, or liaising with communities, but also for the many Indigenous workers and members of the local communities who assisted with implementation at each stage of the project. By relying on leadership from within local Indigenous communities, many of the issues identified here as critical success factors—trust, flexibility, leverage and building sustainability—were incorporated into the project.

The key message that emerges from these projects is that community development activities need to build leadership in the next generation. Intergenerational communication and skill-transfer is important. This is crucial for sharing the load, and for ensuring sustainability. Many of the projects utilised principles of intergenerational transfer – exposing young people to the ideas and experiences of Elders, project coordinators and other leaders.

But leadership is not just something demonstrated at the community level. It is also something that needs to be fostered within individuals. Each person can be encouraged to show initiative, and to take leadership of their own life, their family, and the areas within their community where they can have influence. Important mechanisms for this are building cultural pride, self-esteem, and self-determination. This is done through projects that focus on youth engagement and youth participation: fostering different models of leadership and different styles of communication.
Finally, a crosscutting theme was the importance of sustainability. “Sustainability is a key issue for Indigenous communities” (Dodson 2002, p. 25). Many Indigenous communities are hurting from having their hopes raised that good things will happen, only to have funding dry up, programs peter out, and changes come to a standstill. One of the key criteria for funding projects was that they had the capacity for sustainability. In working with the communities, one of the goals of the evaluation team was to assist communities in reflecting on—and documenting—how their projects were able to build in elements of sustainability.

In order to ensure a broad impact, the evaluation strategy also focused on working with projects to help them document their capacity for modelling a new approach for wider application. Yes, many projects would like ongoing funding. And many deserve ongoing funding. But the critical issue is that lasting resources have been developed. One critical mechanism for ensuring sustained community change was to target schools: either to locate the program in the school, or to work cooperatively with schools to support the program. Educational resources, curriculum enhancements, economically self-sustaining youth groups, worker education kits, teacher guides, networks, archives and relationships are all critical outcomes that ensure the sustainability of the excellent work that we witnessed in the communities across the country.

Building sustainability is important if we are to turn around the poor social indicators highlighted earlier. As one project worker noted:

“Philanthropic trusts – and any entity looking at triple bottom line or wanting to repay social dividends – need to be involved. They will want a workforce that otherwise won’t be there. If only 2% of the Aboriginal population can be in the workforce, we have a problem! It may not affect people in Canberra and Melbourne yet, but its big time here!”

Resources or training packages will need to continue to be revised and/or amended to suit the learning needs of the target audience. But the most critical mechanism for ensuring sustainability is whole-of-community involvement, utilisation of local knowledge, local resources and local personnel, and adopting a holistic approach to planning and development of projects in order to guarantee ownership.

Philanthropy can play an important role in assisting Indigenous communities to develop and change. However, Dodson (2002) also noted the value—in return—of Indigenous partnerships to philanthropic organisations and businesses involved in philanthropy. It provides opportunities for meaningful relationships with Indigenous Australia, opportunities to initiate cultural awareness training for staff, and to break down perceptions among Indigenous Australians of the corporate world being the “other”. He writes:

“If together we can build the capacity of Indigenous people to move from a position of impoverishment to one of prosperity; if together we can help Indigenous people to participate fully in the social, political and economic activities of our nation; and if, together, we can do all of this without compromising Indigenous cultures and identities – that will be cause for celebration.” (Dodson 2002, p. 25).
CDEP – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYMENT PROJECT.
CDEP is the Australian Government’s Indigenous employment assistance program. A major employer in the CDEP scheme is often the local community council.

COMMUNITY – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in rural and remote communities, provincial and regional towns, and urban/metropolitan areas.

ELDER – A respected person within the specific Indigenous community is termed an Elder. Elders are turned to for advice – both by their own communities, and by non-Indigenous people wishing to consult with and engage with local communities.

MISSIONS – The term mission is usually used to describe former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reserves, which were administered by either the government or a religious organisation. In Queensland, many ‘Deed of Grant in Trust’ (DOGIT) communities historically were missions and government-controlled reserves (1986 Act in Qld). Many other state and territory governments have changed the status of missions or reserves in each jurisdiction.

INDIGENOUS – This is an internationally recognised word referring to the native/historic inhabitants of a land that has been subjected to invasion or colonisation by another ethnic group. Many of the native/historic inhabitants of Australia prior to European colonisation prefer not to use the word “Indigenous”, but either “Aboriginal” or “Torres Strait Islander”, or a generic terms for people from their area. In this report, the term 'Indigenous' will be used interchangeably with the terms ‘Aboriginal, or ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’. When talking about Indigenous people in a particular local context, the appropriate word for people that region may also be used.

KOORIE (OR KOORI) – the generic word for Indigenous people from southeast Australia (mainly Victoria and New South Wales).

MURRI – the generic word for Indigenous people in most of Queensland, except Cape York where ‘Bama’ is used.

BAMA – the generic word for Indigenous people from Cape York region.

NYUNGR (OR NUNGAH, NYOONGA, NOONGA) – the generic word for Indigenous people from Western Australia.

NUNGA – the generic word for Indigenous people from South Australia.

AN LANG U is used to identify the Pitjantjatjara and Yankuntjatjara people of Central Australia.

SUGGESTED CITATION METHOD FOR THE WHOLE REPORT:

FOR AN INDIVIDUAL SECTION:

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Leanne Ramsamy is a Kukaji, Western Yulungji and Walkerman woman from the Gulf and Western Cape York Peninsula areas. She has over 15 years experience in management and consultancy services to Aboriginal-controlled health services. She has held government positions in health policy and planning, health promotion and community development. Leanne has excellent skills in networking, facilitating and report writing, having worked as a consultant with many organisations working with rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. She has extensive experience in conducting community consultations and organisational reviews.

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Leah Bromfield joined the Australian Institute of Family Studies in September 2004 as a Senior Research Officer for the National Child Protection Clearinghouse in 2004. After having been a Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychology at Deakin University, she has been researching in the field of child and family wellbeing, family functioning and child abuse and neglect for over 12 years. Daryl has been the recipient of a number of research grants and has more than 20 articles published in peer-review journals. He has given more than 60 invited addresses, or presented papers at national and international conferences.

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Leah Bromfield joined the Australian Institute of Family Studies in September 2004 as a Senior Research Officer for the National Child Protection Clearinghouse. She has recently submitted her PhD on the topic of chronic child maltreatment in statutory child protection services. Prior to her appointment at the Institute, Leah was Research Coordinator at Barwon Health Paediatric Adolescent Support Service where she undertook research in the area of paediatric psychology. Since her appointment she has been involved in various commissioned research reports, including out-of-home care issues for Indigenous communities.
MAKING A POSITIVE AND LASTING DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE