

Indigenous Cultural Festivals

EVALUATING IMPACT ON COMMUNITY
HEALTH AND WELLBEING



A report to the Telstra Foundation on research on
Indigenous festivals 2007–2010

PETER PHIPPS AND LISA SLATER
GLOBALISM RESEARCH CENTRE

WITH BO SVORONOS, DANIELLE WYATT,
MAYA HAVILAND AND GLENN MORROW

Copyright © 2010 Globalism Research Centre, RMIT University

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act of 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission.

Published by Globalism Research Centre.

Indigenous Cultural Festivals: Evaluating Impact on Community Health and Wellbeing

1. Phipps, Peter
2. Slater, Lisa

ISBN 978-0-9805531-8-5

Globalism Research Centre
RMIT University

Building 37, Level 5
411 Swanston Street
Melbourne

www.rmit.edu.au/globalism



Cover image:

The Chooky Dancers from Elcho Island in Arnhem Land perform at The Dreaming Festival, 2008 after becoming an international YouTube sensation.

Photo: Peter Phipps

Acknowledgements	6
Executive summary	8
1. Indigenous festivals in Australia: Introduction and methods	10
Historical context	10
Policy context	12
Benefits, strengths and vulnerabilities of Indigenous festivals	15
Method: How we did our research	17
International context	18
2. Key Concepts: Indigenous People, Wellbeing and ‘the Good Life’	20
Indigenous concepts of health and wellbeing	21
Social inclusion	23
Empowerment	27
3. Croc Festival: Cape York, Torres Strait, Derby and Shepparton	30
Aims and objectives	31
Education	32
Freedom from discrimination	36
Capacity building and social capital	37
Identity and belonging	41
Heritage	43
Role models	44
Health	45
4. The Dreaming Festival: Woodford	48
Youth program	49
Identity	49
Intergenerational exchange	51
Representation and voice	52
Showcasing Indigenous excellence	55
Cultural security	58
Economic development	58
Reconciliation	61

5. Garma Festival: North East Arnhem Land	64
The Garma Festival	65
Garma as Yolngu education and training support	66
Garma as political strategy	68
Performing Garma	71
Garma as Yolngu philosophy	74
Conclusion	75
Yalukit Willam Ngargee conception	78
6. Yalukit Willam Ngargee: People Place Gathering, City of Port Phillip, Melbourne	78
Yalukit Willam and Boon Wurrung history	79
The Indigenous communities residing on Yalukit Willam country today	81
A Melbourne Indigenous cultural renaissance	82
Yalukit Willam Ngargee programs	83
Conclusion	85
7. Conclusion: Key findings and recommendations	86
Key findings	86
Recommendations	88
References	90

Acknowledgements

Report authors

Peter Phipps

Lisa Slater

Report contributors

Bo Svoronos (Chapter 6)

Danielle Wyatt (Shepparton and Aurukun social profile background)

Maya Haviland (Derby social profile background)

Glen Morrow (Selected Garma interviews)

Report layout

Todd Bennet

Other contributors

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the many individuals and communities who made this research possible. They variously made us welcome, gave their time and shared their insights and their stories. We hope the report serves at least in part as a way of reciprocating that generosity. In particular thanks to: the Yothu Yindi Foundation, its Board, Chairman, Secretary, CEO, advisors and their families and broader Yolngu mala; Buku Larrngay-Mulka; Yirrkala CEC; Dhanbul Landcare; Dhimurru; Gumatj Association; Dhanbul Council; Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA), Arts NT, Anglicare Nhulunbuy; City of Port Phillip; Yulukit Willam Ngargee Festival staff; Croc Festival staff and managers; Derby Shire Council; Greater Shepparton City Council; The Torres Shire Council; Dreaming Festival management and staff; Queensland Folk Federation; Community Prophets; The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Tagai State College, Western Cape College Aurukun Campus; and a range of other insightful and generous informants, guides and critics including: Simon Balderstone, Huni Bollinger, Paul Briggs, Jim Castro, Ali Copley, Christina Davidson, Alex Doyle, Galumay and the Moonie family, Bill Hauritz, Stephanie Hawkins, Klaus Helms, Jackie Huggins, Karen Jacobs, Amanda Jackes, Alan James, Vincent Lamberti, Djambawa Marawili, Dr Marika, Lydia Miller, Leitia Murgha, Rhoda Roberts, Chris Sarra, Pedro Stephens, Will Stubbs, David Vadiveloo, Helen Verran, Greg Wearne, Leon White, Michael Williams, Mandawuy Yunupingu, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, Yalmay Marika-Yunupingu, Gulumbu Yunupingu. We apologise that some significant collaborators and contributors will have been missed in this list, and hope you will accept our gratitude regardless.

This research and report were enabled by the collegial and intellectual environment of the Globalism Research Centre at RMIT. Thanks go to colleagues past and present who have offered necessary critique, intellectual and administrative support, inspiration and comradeship along the way.

Project funding

Thanks to the Telstra Foundation staff (Nancie-Lee Robinson and Georgia Symmons as Industry researchers, and their successors Maria Simpson and Stacey Thomas) and the Foundation Board who had the insight to see the importance of the Indigenous festivals sector, and the need for a relevant research base. The Telstra Foundation initiated this project in 2007, with an invitation to tender to conduct research on Indigenous festivals and community wellbeing. Through their support and flexibility, and with support and funds from the RMIT Research and Innovation office, Global Cities Institute, we were able to gain the support of the Australian Research Council under the Linkage grants scheme for an expanded project making some international comparison with the Australian material, *Globalising Indigeneity: Indigenous cultural festivals and wellbeing in Australia and the Asia-Pacific* (LP0882877, Chief Investigators: James, Phipps, Steger, 2008-10). Project funding enabled the employment of a full-time Research Fellow (Slater) and an APAI Doctoral Student (Svoronos), as well as extended periods of fieldwork.



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

With the support of the Telstra Foundation and the Australian Research Council, RMIT researchers investigated the role and significance of Indigenous cultural festivals in wellbeing outcomes for Indigenous communities and their young people. We found that festivals really do matter to communities; from a proliferation of very small events celebrating local community life, to complex, large-scale events with a national and international profile. Whatever scale they operate at, festivals support communities in their efforts to maintain and renew themselves through the celebration of culture.

In the search for practical outcomes it can be easy for policy-makers to overlook questions of culture as a marginal concern. By contrast, for many Indigenous communities culture is at the core of community life and their aspirations for a healthy and productive future. Culture has to be the starting point in any serious efforts to address Indigenous disadvantage with Indigenous people. Increasingly, agencies with responsibilities for Indigenous health, education, employment and other wellbeing outcomes are realising that cultural festivals are a powerful space for working effectively with communities on their own terrain: opening dialogue, engaging participation and working in partnerships to both imagine better futures and deliver results in these crucial areas.

In both Indigenous and mainstream Australia festivals are thriving; proliferating all over the country as communities learn from each others' experiences and want to share in the benefits of holding a festival locally. Festivals are an unqualified good news story in Indigenous Australia! They still hold huge untapped potential for supporting community development goals, including the massive unmet demand for international and domestic Indigenous tourism experiences. Despite this proven capacity for positive outcomes, and the latent, untapped potential of the Indigenous festivals sector, it remains vulnerable in a host of ways, from event management capacity (sometimes depending on one key individual), to the perennial problem of inadequate and insecure funding to establish professional support organisations and related employment.

Carefully considered programmatic government support is urgently needed for Indigenous Festivals, not only because of the ways they support community cultural identity across generations, but also for their capacity to enhance the lives of marginalised or isolated peoples and communities in a whole range of areas including health, education, employment, small business, regional development, and of course cultural and arts development. This last point alone should be sufficient reason to support Indigenous festivals. Indigenous Australia is a rich, living web of the oldest continuous cultural traditions on earth. While the experiences of the last two centuries have seen this web torn and battered in places, it still persists in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. Festivals not only provide reasons and spaces to renew and regenerate these traditions, they also create spaces where these cultures can be shared appropriately with all Australians and the rest of the world.



Key findings of the research are that:

- festivals are important to Indigenous communities for their contribution to community wellbeing, resilience and capacity;
- the Indigenous festivals sector is dynamic, diverse and thriving, but vulnerable to inconsistent and limited funding regimes;
- the sector is at a crucial stage of development with the emergence of outstanding examples of best practice in a general context of institutional instability, lack of sectoral coordination and structural vulnerability;
- the sector is under-recognised and under-utilised by governments in advancing the policy aims of social inclusion, closing the gap, cultural maintenance and fostering creative industries;
- Indigenous indicators of wellbeing are distinctive. Indigenous people and researchers have challenged mainstream indicators of wellbeing.

The key recommendations of this report are that:

- Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments should immediately begin a major injection of funds and capacity building over a long-term timeframe into the Indigenous festivals sector (minimum of three year funding cycles);
- initiatives in this area must work with Indigenous leadership, taking Indigenous governance seriously; and therefore,
- an Indigenous-directed agency such as ATSIAB be given responsibility and a significant net increase in resources to properly coordinate and fund the sustainable development of the sector;
- there be government-funded support for the appointment of year-long Indigenous festival coordinators for key festivals to provide continuity of organisation and communication between festivals, community and other stakeholders;
- the philanthropic and NGO sectors can continue to play key leadership roles in supporting these initiatives, holding governments accountable, and continuing to support further innovations in Indigenous cultural festival delivery and programs.

1. Indigenous festivals in Australia

Introduction and methods

Peter Phipps

With the support of the Telstra Foundation since 2007 (and from 2008 supplemented by the Australian Research Council) RMIT researchers have been investigating the role and significance of Indigenous cultural festivals in wellbeing outcomes for Indigenous communities and their young people. At the initial request of the Telstra Foundation we made a particularly close study of festivals and activities supported under their triennial funding strategy: Crocfests in Shepparton, Thursday Island and Derby, and the linked youth media project in Aurukun; Garma in Arnhem Land; and The Dreaming Festival in South East Queensland. We have also included a study of the Melbourne festival Yalukit Willam Ngargee being undertaken by the PhD student working within the project, and make reference to international comparative material to be finalised at the end of the project in December 2010.

The events we focused on most closely are not typical of the growing and dynamic Indigenous festivals sector. There are well over 100 Indigenous festivals in Australia annually; from small, one-day events with a focus on sport, music, culture, history or a mix of these, to a smaller number of large, complex events such as those we studied in more detail. The vast majority of Indigenous festivals are small, locally oriented events held primarily for their local Indigenous communities without dedicated festival administration or support, but pulled together by local communities and organisations often on short timeframes. The dynamism (and vulnerability) of this sector is consistent with the recent research findings on all types of rural festivals (Gibson and Stewart 2009). Their report identified 2,856 rural festivals in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania alone. There are many other comparisons to be made with that research, not least the broad range of demonstrated community benefits generated through festivals from the most intangible aspects of identity and wellbeing, through to a local economic impact which they estimate at nearly \$10 billion annually for the states they studied (Gibson 2009, p. 18). At the same time there are some distinctive features of Indigenous communities and the Indigenous festival sector.

Historical context

Celebrations and rituals are a key dimension of human cultures. Indigenous peoples have been conducting ceremonies and rituals on this country for an extremely long time. Among of the functions of Aboriginal ceremonial life is to bring together different clan groups to perform and renew the law at significant times and places in the presence of related peoples. It is common for people entering one another's country to engage in ritual and ceremonial exchanges, frequently exchanging songs, dances and stories with people from far away. In the early and later colonial periods non-Indigenous settlers were drawn in to witness these performative exchanges between Aboriginal people, which came to be widely known and popularised as the 'corroboree'.

Michael Parsons (1997, 2000) describes how the corroboree became its own hybrid theatrical form performed widely in South-East Australia in the first part of the nineteenth century, and then spreading from South Australia into what is now the Northern Territory. Developing a typology of colonial-era corroboree events as 'peace', 'command performance', 'gala' and 'tourist' corroboree, Parsons argues that all of them drew on the relatively high cultural status of Indigenous performance in the colonial context (2000: 564). The last of these was a significant, regular entertainment

in Melbourne and Adelaide from the 1830s to 1840s and Parsons provides evidence of the entrepreneurial quality of these sometimes very large and lucrative events run by Aboriginal people themselves, and later in partnership with non-Indigenous promoters and sporting clubs as pioneers of modern 'leisure culture'. It was only the intervention of colonial governments banning these events, and policies driving Aboriginal people out of the cities (and labour markets) and into controlled reserves and missions that dampened this thriving market. Instead in the missionary and Government reserve era right into the twentieth century, non-Indigenous authorities attempted to control and regulate Indigenous performance on their own terms. Most notably this would be for non-Indigenous visitors to these reserves, or in cities and towns on significant national occasions such as settlement centenaries, royal jubilees, coronation celebrations and so on. Despite this control, Parsons documents the initiatives Aboriginal people would take to conduct their own corroborees on the fringes of rural fairs and sporting events, some exclusively as traditional ceremonial business, others as public events drawing in a broad audience, and sometimes a complex combination of these.

The increasing cultural assertiveness of Aboriginal communities in the 'rights era' following the 1967 referendum has found many outlets in sports, the visual and performing arts, popular music, film and festivals. Festivals are just one of these expressive spaces, but one with the broadest range of purposes, forms of participation and opportunities. This period in which many of the controls were being lifted on Aboriginal people's lives coincided with significant social transformations in the Australian mainstream. This period has seen the strengthening of movements for human rights and specifically Indigenous rights as part of that struggle, and a media and migration-driven cultural transformation involving greater openness to cultural diversity at home and abroad.

Throughout the leisure societies of the world 'festivals' have become ubiquitous spaces where the norms and divisions of daily life are partially suspended in favour of the 'carnival' (Bakhtin 1984). Recent decades have seen the extension of music festivals, cultural festivals, sport and lifestyle festivals as an established, substantial industry and part of the cultural landscape. This

Blak Dramatics performance space events board, The Dreaming Festival, 2008

Photo: Peter Phipps



'training' has produced a very large market of experienced festival-goers familiar with the rituals of tickets and passes, tent cities, portable toilets and food stalls. As with the earlier corroborees, Indigenous festivals are a potent site for cross-cultural negotiations of meaning and spaces where Indigenous people can actively represent themselves and their culture in a positive light, as well as providing opportunities for economic participation on Indigenous terms. Rosita Henry (2000, 2008) describes festivals as, 'culturally situated performance events that allow Aboriginal peoples a means of political and economic engagement in both local and international arenas.'

Policy context

Indigenous difference

This report argues strongly for the need to take account of Indigenous difference; both from the mainstream of Australian life and the recognition of the significant cultural and historical differences between Indigenous communities. In the divisive context of disputes over history, culture and policy in the past fifteen years, this approach has been mistakenly identified with the exclusion of Indigenous Australians from participation in the mainstream of Australian life. It is the authors' intention that this report contributes to the understanding that effective policy responses to stop obstructing Indigenous opportunity (more commonly referred to as 'Indigenous disadvantage') must take that difference into account. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the opening chapter which begins with an exploration of the supposedly taken-for-granted notion of 'wellbeing'. As an increasingly important concept in international policy-making bodies from the United Nations Development Agency down, a definition of 'wellbeing' continues to be debated in the international literature. It should be no surprise that there has been detailed consideration of what this concept might mean in an Indigenous Australian context.

Indigenous festivals are powerful spaces for cross-cultural negotiations.

The tendency of governments in a politicised context to search for a simple, short-term 'fix' in 'Indigenous affairs' has led to inconsistent policy made on the run in defiance of the evidence. While largely relatively marginal in Australian political life, in the 1990s 'Indigenous affairs' became an overtly politicised object in a broader ideological contestation going on in Australian politics, to the detriment of Indigenous Australians and the policies and programs that frame their opportunities. Whether it be framed as 'closing the gap' in a range of social indicators from health, mortality, to education and employment participation, or under previous regimes as forms of assimilation, there is a shared desire to simplify or erase the very complicated fact of Indigenous difference. The recognition of this difference need not cause policy paralysis nor should it be an excuse for inaction on Indigenous disadvantage. On the contrary, it offers opportunities for making strong, consistent gains in all these indicators by listening carefully to Indigenous communities and properly resourcing sustained programs which will be supported on the basis of what is most likely to be incremental, long-term benefits. In this context the best hope of such a long-term approach is for leadership from the philanthropic and broader non-government sector, in collaboration with those areas of government which work effectively in partnerships with Indigenous communities and organisations.

Programs and policy

Australian Indigenous festivals operate in a complex, overlaid intersection of interests and institutions of governance. Obviously the federal, state and local layers of government are extremely important parts of this context, but add to this semi- and non-government organisations, philanthropic bodies, the corporate sector and other interests. First and most importantly, of course, are the layers of Indigenous community governance, both traditional, informal and cross-cultural (Indigenous community organisations, boards, etcetera) which frequently operate under conditions of enormous intercultural pressure. The relative importance of these layers of authority varies across regions and from community to community, but as a broad truism, the cultural authority of elders whether formalised or not is of paramount importance to Indigenous people themselves in any Indigenous cultural mobilisation.

Festivals are organised by a wide variety of institutions with varied capacities. Of the festivals we studied they are variously run by an Indigenous cultural foundation (Garma), a non-Indigenous company (CrocFest), a local government (Yalukit Willam Ngargee) and a folk music festival foundation (The Dreaming Festival). Added to this are education providers, sports clubs, individual philanthropists, health centres, media organisations and others. Some of these organisations are able to absorb much of the organisational costs of festivals into their general operating expenses, while others rely heavily on volunteer labour, external funding and gate revenues to make them viable.

Funding

Festival managers we interviewed repeated a dilemma common to arts and cultural organisations in Australia: their organisations are structured for other purposes but in order to produce cultural events they have to mobilise themselves for multiple rounds of competitive funding applications with long lead times, uncertain outcomes and demanding reporting requirements. Relationships with funding agencies might be developed over an extended period only to find the funding priorities have changed or a series of successful events might make it seem support is less important and can be directed elsewhere. There is a general reluctance among organisations to share the details of their funding sources and amounts, partly because the competition for funds is so intense and partly because funding may be awarded for a specific program of interest to the funding agency but be expended as general funds to run the event.

At the Federal Government level there are three main programs that support Indigenous festivals. The most significant of these has been the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council (ATSIAB) Celebrations program. This is the only program that explicitly recognises and supports the existence of an Indigenous festivals sector. As the ATSIAB website describes it, 'The Celebrations initiative supports major Indigenous arts festivals across Australia to build their capacity and sustainability' (ATSIAB 2009). The most distinctive and welcome feature of this program has been a triennial funding commitment on festival administration rather than the usual 'program delivery' funding model, giving some organisations a little more security to focus on their organisational development. Overall ATSIAB has focussed its efforts on supporting the sustainability of festivals. It was supporting nine festivals, including Dreaming Festival and Garma, by addressing business planning, financial management, human resource management, and programming and marketing. ATSIAB also provided funds to help establish The Dreaming Festival as a platform to showcase Australian Indigenous performance to an international performing arts market.'

Under the Federal Department of the Environment, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) there are two other programs which can be used to support festivals. The first is Festivals Australia, however, grants are fairly small (less than \$10,000) and 'to be eligible for funding, an activity must not have been previously presented and must be one that could not be afforded without the funding.' This requirement makes 'Festivals Australia' unhelpful for established events with multiple streams of funding. Much more substantially the Indigenous Culture Support (ICS) program, supports the maintenance and continued development of Indigenous culture at the community level. ICS 'supports activities that: maintain Indigenous culture through community involvement; support new forms of Indigenous cultural expression; increase public awareness of Indigenous culture, including through the presentation and exchange of culture; and the sustainable development of community organisations involved in cultural activities'. A significant minority of these grants included funding in the tens of thousands of dollars for organisations which run Indigenous festivals.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) runs the Indigenous-directed *Community Festivals for Education Engagement Program (Strong, Smart and Deadly Community Festivals)*. This program was the major source of funding for the Croc Festival events we studied until the re-allocation of funding in 2007 through a competitive tendering process, which saw a wider distribution of funds to a number of other Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations. It provides funds for regional community festivals that encourage Indigenous participation in education and school retention. In addition it provides funds to bring Indigenous and some non-Indigenous school children from across a broad region to the event to stay in a residential camp. In 2008 disbursement under this program was \$3.05 million (Gillard 2008). The Minister's press release explained the purposes of the funding,

The festivals will promote contemporary and traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, with activities including access to role models, and workshops focusing on literacy, numeracy, confidence building, teamwork, sustainability and tolerance. There will also be information and advice on health and well being, careers and educational opportunities.

Currently there is no coordination of these sources of Commonwealth funding with each other or other levels of government. Surprisingly, the huge Federal department which also has responsibility for Indigenous affairs (FaHCSIA) does not have identifiable programs supporting Indigenous community festivals. Clearly there is scope for a coordinating entity for Indigenous festivals to draw FaHCSIA, other relevant Commonwealth departments and other levels of government into funding partnerships (Fieldworx 2008, p. 27). State, Territory and Local Governments have various arts and events funding schemes, though frequently festival organisers need to apply for funds under other programs such as community development, training or employment schemes following the policy orientation of the day.

The philanthropic sector varies widely in its interests and approach, from a close partnership model with a particular community or organisation to a more generic funding model focussed on the arts or Indigenous community development. Corporate sponsorship can range from small to medium-scale local businesses supplying goods or

services for free or at cost or making donations, to very large national or multinational corporations contributing to communities in their region of operations, with an interest in being identified with iconic events. Most of these events also depend on large numbers of volunteers drawn from the local community and sometimes elsewhere providing a lot of the logistical services from parking to toilet cleaning required to keep an event running.

Benefits, strengths and vulnerabilities of Indigenous festivals

The Indigenous visual arts story is now legendary: a relatively marginal art practice largely situated as 'tourist crafts' boomed over a thirty year period to the point where it became a major cultural industry and an international art phenomenon with multiple benefits to Indigenous communities (Altman 2005). Indigenous festivals have the potential to follow a similar, sustainable path in the emerging Indigenous tourism and events market. While the barely touched market potential of this industry sector is not necessarily the primary justification for the importance of festivals, it is a powerful argument to engage the interest of economically minded policy-makers.

Cultural festivals hold great potential to strengthen community and national social and economic fabric.

Cultural festivals are one of the few consistently positive spaces for Indigenous communities to forge and assert a more constructive view of themselves both intergenerationally and as part of their drive for respect as distinct cultures in broader national and international communities. Cultural festivals provide a rare space for intercultural accommodations to be negotiated on Indigenous terrain, and hold great potential to strengthen community and national 'social and economic fabric'. As argued elsewhere (Phipps 2002) cultural production (along with land management) has been, and remains, the most promising area for growth of Indigenous engagement with the social and economic mainstream, providing the multiple benefits of employment, economic development and cultural renewal. While earlier literature on festivals and community wellbeing was largely inconclusive, the most recent publications on the matter (Mulligan et al. 2006; Gibson and Stewart 2009) make a strong, evidence-based claim for the link.

Indigenous communities hold and sustain cultural assets of enormous importance to themselves, to the nation, and in many instances to world cultural heritage. In addition, they are proving to be a well-spring of stories and other cultural creativity the world is eager to see, hear and experience. Despite this there is a tendency to represent them as lacking or failing in key indicators: not healthy, educated, employed, etcetera. Festivals are a space that pushes this discussion beyond the 'deficit model' in Indigenous affairs to recognise the enormous wealth of cultural creativity and individual talent that resides in

Indigenous Australia. In the post-industrial, knowledge and service-oriented economy of contemporary Australia there has never been a firmer economic foundation from which to support and cultivate this talent. As if that economic argument is not enough, there are obvious, pressing social and demographic reasons to support, engage and deploy any and all areas of Indigenous social and economic strength in the broader project of Indigenous community development. Yet remarkably, policy and programs in this area are severely neglected in terms of attention and funding. While Commonwealth Indigenous policy and programs remain adrift, and in some instances (such as housing or health outcomes in the NT 'Intervention') notoriously ineffective, this is one area where some coordination and even a modest doubling of existing funding could make a huge difference to communities.'

There is evidence throughout this report that Indigenous festivals in Australia are already contributing significantly to Indigenous community wellbeing from the less tangible areas of cultural maintenance to direct economic benefits. It is clear that with more systematic policy and program support this contribution could be much greater still. Understood as an industry sector, Indigenous festivals are both extremely dynamic, with enormous development potential, and at the same time they are very vulnerable in a number of ways. The key strength in the sector is the cultural expression that has been long-repressed, and the talented and creative individuals and communities who want to share that culture both among themselves, and with others.

The key risk factor for individual festivals, and reflected in the sector generally, are the vulnerable, limited and inconsistent resource bases they draw on for their success: human resources, organisational infrastructure and funding. The first and most crucial of these is the human and cultural resources in Indigenous communities which are too often in crisis; dealing with the loss of key organisers and knowledge holders to premature death, disability or other pressing responsibilities; 'too much sorry business' as is often reported by Indigenous people and borne out in much-quoted mortality figures.

In relation to some of these festivals there is an immediate employment and training opportunity for Indigenous cultural specialists and others, 'at home' in their own communities or region. As just one example, Garma employs 130 Yolngu during the festival in roles ranging from cultural tourism services, to the women's healing program, to festival site security. In the case of regional festivals this transforms some of the limitations of remote and rural locality into an advantage, and presents positive models and networks for Indigenous people to further develop their entrepreneurship and work skills in the cultural, tourism and other service sectors. At the same time this employment and training potential of the Indigenous festivals sector has barely been tapped. As our research has shown, the cultivation of local Indigenous community management has tended to borrow talent from other organisations out of necessity, rather than the festival sector building its own capacity. Training and mentorship in organising a festival and other events requires, firstly, having long-term organisational capacity which most festivals cannot afford. Secondly it requires sustained, long-term partnerships with government agencies, funders and education providers to support the training process, fund traineeships and then ensure that there are real jobs to move into from those training positions. Up to this point there is little evidence of government or other agencies providing this kind of long-term support, but the potential is there¹.

¹ The exception would be the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council (ATSILAB). Having a well-formed, Indigenous Board, ATSILAB overtly commits to and delivers on long-term partnerships and support.

Method: How we did our research

We conducted over one hundred structured and informal interviews, made observations and analysis through more than twenty extended festival and field site visits from urban to remote locations, analysed relevant public statements, policy documents, reports and media representations, and extensively reviewed relevant Australian and international literature.

The methodology used for this study draws upon the methodology developed for earlier research conducted by the Globalism Research Centre with the support of the ARC and VicHealth on community arts and wellbeing (Mulligan et al. 2006). We looked closely at various stages of community engagement in festivals including: lengthy strategic interviews with project organisers and participants, the collection of specific stories related to the projects and activities being examined in each community, photonarrative techniques for exploring less conscious or easily articulated experiences of project participants, and existing data relevant to the study (for example, extracted census data, health data and existing case studies) and the construction of detailed profiles relating to the history and character of the communities in which the research was conducted.

We use the overall term 'social mapping' to describe the way in which our forms of data collection are linked with our methods of analysis. Much of this data includes a subjective dimension, and the empirical analysis of the diverse sets of data (aimed at detecting emerging patterns in and across the data) includes a consideration of both the clear, 'objective' outcomes apparent in the data and the subjectivities underpinning the ways in which people choose to articulate their lived experiences or tell their stories. As well as an empirical analysis of the survey data we use a 'conjunctural' analysis aimed at relating local experiences to broader social processes and socially prevailing modes of practice (James 2006). These different levels of analysis enable us to capture both the subtle specificities of what is happening within local communities and, at the same time, relate these findings to broader social themes, such as the changing nature of indigeneity in the globalising world.

Site selection

In collaboration with the Telstra Foundation we prioritised research at three Australian festivals over five sites: the Garma Festival, The Dreaming Festival, and three very different locations of the Croc Festival. In addition the PhD candidate working under the project contributed a study of Yalukit Willam Ngargee, an Indigenous festival based in the City of Port Philip in St Kilda, Melbourne.

Garma is an intercultural gathering of national political, cultural and academic significance, and yet remains a very local gathering of Yolngu clans on Yolngu land for Yolngu purposes. Garma is also a national academic and policy forum on Indigenous issues, a local employment initiative, a youth music development and industry training opportunity for young people from Indigenous communities across the Top End, a local youth forum, and most importantly a celebration of Yolngu song, dance traditions in daily *bunggul* performances, among many other things. Running since 1999, Garma has accumulated a remarkable array of community development initiatives that run outside of the festival timeframe, including a women's healing initiative, a men's alcohol diversionary program and a cultural services business providing cultural inductions to new Rio Tinto mine employees.

More than fifty Croc Festivals were held from their inception in 1998 until the end of 2007 when they stopped running. Croc Festivals were distinctive in having an exclusive youth and educational emphasis. Their more generic mode of delivery across communities and regions was rolled out very efficiently from a head office in Sydney by a company called, 'Indigenous Festivals Australia', with a lot of expertise in production provided by its related, 'Rock Eisteddfod Challenge' organisation. The Croc Festival model brought mostly Indigenous students together at a residential regional event as a reward for regular school attendance, where they would participate in non-competitive eisteddfod-type evening performances with high-level production support and infrastructure. Days were spent in activities designed to inspire Indigenous young people to imagine inspiring, individualised life-narratives intended to encourage them to stay in education and follow formal pathways into mainstream employment. Agencies seeking to inform, employ or train Indigenous students set up career expo stalls at these events with varied attempts at engagement. These activities drew on inspiring Indigenous athletes, performers and education professionals as role models, with less emphasis on broader community development outcomes.

The Dreaming Festival is very different again, having more of a national and international Indigenous arts showcase emphasis, the impact of which is much more broadly dispersed amongst participating artists (both professional and community-based) and audiences (Indigenous and non-Indigenous). While the impact of The Dreaming Festival on the Murri host community of Jinibara land is important to understand, the emphasis of this festival is not specifically local, and involves participation on a much larger scale than the other two festivals. This festival invites reflection on some of the broader themes of Indigenous and national identity and creativity, reconciliation and the terrain of Australian postcolonial relations, and the implications of these broader representational frames for establishing the context and experience of wellbeing. It is argued (Cowlshaw 2004, Dodson 2003), that these apparently 'symbolic' phenomena are extremely important for individual and community wellbeing (mental and physical) and have direct health and wellbeing consequences.

International context

Indigenous peoples increasingly exist in a global framework, both self-consciously drawing on globalised strategies of rights and identity, as well as being objectively situated through international legal frameworks. The most recent example is the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which sets a new threshold in international protocols relating to Indigenous peoples, and continues through to myriad local cultural assertions and struggles. As globalisation grows in intensity, not only at the level of transnational institutions of justice but also global communications, travel, and trade, so will opportunities intensify for the insertion of marginalised cultures into this global imaginary: local or national struggles (and opportunities) become global very quickly. Culture is not just an object of rights-based discourses, but is also the terrain of global Indigenous struggles; struggles which exceed the limits of rights-based discourses and seek to assert an ethics of 'proper living'. Indigenous cultural festivals can be understood as part of the rapidly strengthening political and social phenomenon of global indigeneity.

Remarkably, there is little scholarly or policy work on Indigenous festivals, and no international comparative work on such festivals. The literature on globalisation and Indigenous peoples tends to look at 'culture' as a space to be protected by the struggle for 'rights'. In the mainstream literature, Indigenous peoples have been relegated to the occasional compassionate footnote of history. Throughout much of the previous century, the Western sciences and their agents from colonial anthropologists, missionaries, tourists and administrators generally assumed that tribal peoples and their cultures were doomed to destruction through internal decline or benevolent assimilation in the face of Western modernity. This has begun to change with the rapidly growing literature on globalisation and Indigenous peoples (Smith 1999; Nakata 2001; Niezen 2003; Coates 2004; Stewart-Harawira 2005). However, in this first wave of revision much of the writing is engaged more directly with international rights-based institutions than with questions of cultural assertion. Despite its strengths, there is a tendency in this field to limit the understanding of 'culture' as a space to be attained and protected by the struggle for 'rights'. This is perhaps linked to the absence of scholarly interest in Indigenous festivals, possibly because these festivals bear the border-crossing taint of 'inauthenticity' that haunts 'tourist and ethnic arts' identified by Graburn (1976). Historically, anthropologists have tended to prefer endogamous sacred rituals and practices for their own peculiar historical reasons, and until relatively recently have neglected the messy realities of cultural interchange (Eriksen 2003; Clifford 1997).

Today's fora of Indigenous assertion stretch from the UN (Nakata 2001; Niezen 2003) down to daily struggles for survival: in disputes about land-use; resource allocation; language; religious and cultural freedoms and education; health; employment and livelihoods. They are up against multinational mining companies, loggers, ranchers, assimilationist, corrupt or indifferent governments, armies and militias, the pressures of demography and poverty, everyday racism and exclusion; all of which conspire against the sustainability of Indigenous cultures and their communities. Through all these circumstances it is remarkable that many communities continue to offer up rich treasuries of cultural wealth as a gift to anyone, even those from dominating cultures, who is willing to receive them. In fact the international trend is, as in Australia, towards the assertion and celebration of Indigenous identities, and a significant manifestation of this is the mushrooming of Indigenous cultural festivals.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Indigenous peoples across the Asia-Pacific are loudly asserting that they and their distinctive cultures are very much alive. Despite the pressures of the developmental modernisers who expected them to disappear, these communities are using public cultural festivals as a space to celebrate, renew and reinvent their cultural traditions.

2. Key Concepts

Indigenous People, Wellbeing and 'the Good Life'

Lisa Slater

In recent years the concept 'wellbeing' has gained great salience in the health and development sectors. It is now used by the United Nations Development Programme and the World Health Organization to integrate cross-cultural understandings of what it means to be a capable person, bringing together ideas about health, education, political and civil rights, gender relations, human rights, the natural environment, and freedom and opportunities (Corsin Jimenez 2008, p. 2). As Alberto Corsin Jimenez writes, it has become a standard currency in economic and political models of welfare and development (2008, p. 2).

The essentials of health and wellbeing require access to basic services such as education, housing and health but are also determined by the everyday liveability of someone's life (Manderson, 2005c). The extent of the lack of equality in these areas reflects, Manderson posits, the social and political organisation of a given society (2005c, p. 8). Thus we are in agreement with our RMIT colleagues who argue that wellbeing is largely a collective rather than personal state (Mulligan et al. 2006, p. 25). Or as Manderson argues, '[w]ellbeing is not the state of individual bodies but of bodies in society' (2005c, p. 12). As our colleagues write, this is not to deny personal history or circumstances that affect our wellbeing, but rather 'to recognise that our social and communal life-world is not simply the contextual background to our wellbeing but fundamentally constitutive of it' (Mulligan et al. 2006, p. 25). To improve Indigenous health and wellbeing requires an exploration of what Indigenous people believe constitutes a 'good life' and what are the immediate and broader social, cultural and political circumstances that enable and disable a state of wellbeing. How we address wellbeing and inequality, Manderson determines, rests not only upon the evidence base but also the political philosophy we embrace (2005, p. 2).

How health and wellbeing are understood and defined have far reaching effects on policy and its implementation. Indeed dominant definitions of health and wellbeing could be bad for some people's health. Research indicates that there are socially and culturally distinctive understandings of what it means to be a 'healthy Aboriginal person' (Heil 2006). Concerns have been expressed about the indicators of wellbeing. Michael Dodson argues that selected indicators can't be just based on what government agencies consider success to look like—they have to focus on developing Indigenous measures of success (Taylor 2006). Kerry Arabena suggests that the attempt to reduce the complexity of Indigenous circumstances to measurable indicators is neither ideologically nor theoretically innocent (Taylor 2006).

It is of vital importance to understand Indigenous health and wellbeing from an Indigenous perspective. Without so doing, indicators of health and wellbeing, and so related policy, will have little connection to Indigenous concerns and cultural practices. Therefore, to understand and respond to individual and cultural wellbeing it is necessary to know everyday lived experience, how people make meaning and what they value. In the pressing moral and political objective of achieving statistical equality, as John Taylor observes, Indigenous people's own life projects can be obscured (2006, p. 8). If the notion of wellbeing, and indeed what a healthy person is, is not to remain ethnocentric and for it to carry ethical and moral meaning than it must in principle reflect people's ownership over its description (Corsin Jimenez 2008, p. 20).

Indigenous concepts of health and wellbeing

What is often referred to as the holistic concept of Indigenous health has in recent years found salience in mainstream concepts of social and emotional health and the social determinants of health, however, it continues to encapsulate a cultural difference which is as yet untranslatable. 'There is no Aboriginal word', Ian Anderson writes, 'in most of the languages I know for health' (1994, p. 36). He believes that the word 'punya' is as close as it can get: 'strong, happy, knowledgeable, socially responsible—that is, to 'take care'—beautiful and clean, safe, both in the sense of being within the lore and in the sense of being cared for'. Similarly the 1989 National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) Working Party arguing for the need for a holistic approach to health, stated:

In Aboriginal society there is no word, term or expression for 'health' as is understood in Western society. It would be difficult from the Aboriginal perception to conceptualise 'health' as one aspect of life. The word as it is used in Western society almost defies translation but the nearest translation in an Aboriginal context would probably be a term such as 'life is health is life'. (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party 1989)

It is the Indigenous social domain—lived experience of Indigenous people—which needs to be attended to in formulating responses to Indigenous health and wellbeing. It is critical that there is a connection between government aims and policies and how people, in this case Indigenous people in all their differences, are shaping their own lives in accordance with their own cultural basis and understandings (Folds, quoted Grieves 2007, p. 66).

'Wellbeing implies', Anderson argues, 'the act to be', which has a particular emphasis on the social and relationship between others and self (1994, p. 36; quoted in Heil 2006, p. 206). Thus conceptualisations of what is a healthy self and society are fundamental, which, in turn, requires an understanding of what are meaningful social activities and engagements. We have all benefited from developments in medical science. However, it is based upon an ideology of the Western concept of the self: self-contained, independent individual separate from family, community and country (McDonald 2006, p. 1). In prioritising individual health over social health, the individual is abstracted from the environment in which they live and how they make meaning of, and in, their life. Furthermore, it is assumed that there is a shared understanding of, and desire for, a specific 'healthy' body, which takes precedence over cultural, spiritual or moral interests (Heil, 2006, p. 100). There is a need for a shift, Danielle Heil writes, to understanding the person not as monadic individual but as always in the process of being constituted in social relations, and thus relationships between people and their ongoing reconstitutions and affirmations are what makes life worth living (2006). She suggests that it is not necessarily understandings of health that diverge, but rather understandings and expectations of life as Aboriginal people experience it. Thus preserving 'cultural security', or the quality of immediate social life is paramount (Heil 2006).

Like Heil, we do not want to pit essentialisms against each other—the dehumanising biomedical world against a benign Aboriginal cultural world—but rather suggest that a holistically orientated approach to health and wellbeing includes legitimate concerns about biomedical health, situated in a broad context, including cultural, social, historical, economic and political factors (Heil 2006).

There have long been calls for governments and funding bodies to get away from the biomedical indicators of Indigenous health, and embrace the less easily measured aspects of community living and wellbeing, now deemed to be of prime importance by Indigenous peoples and public health researchers alike (Atkinson 2002, p. 287). The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation remains one of the most quoted and influential definitions of Aboriginal health:

Aboriginal health is not just the physical well being of an individual but is the social, emotional and cultural well being of the whole community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential thereby bringing about the total well being of their community. It is a whole-of-life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life. (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party 1989)

This definition anticipated the recent development of what is now understood as social determinants of health—a commonly used term to describe the non-medical and behavioural influences on health, which recognises that health and inequality are determined by many interconnected social factors (Anderson, Baum and Bentley 2007; Dick 2007). Anderson et al. have criticised the rigidity of the term ‘determinants’, which they believe does not capture the less deterministic nature of the constellation of factors that create health and wellbeing. Aboriginal issues are represented as intransigent and a result of ‘dysfunction’ and ‘deviant’ characteristics inherent in Aboriginal community and culture, and indifferent to the broader historical, socio-political context which has led to such a crisis in Indigenous health and wellbeing. Thus social determinants theory without ignoring personal and collective responsibility, recognises and emphasises social, economic, cultural and community contexts which both disable and enable good health and wellbeing (Anderson et al. 2007).

In the long list of social determinants of health, attention is often given to those that affect all populations—education, housing, employment, income and environmental quality—and those that are particular to Indigenous people—culture, special relationship to land, history of dispossession and unique forms of social organisation (Anderson et al. 2007, p. xiii-iv). There are also those that are shared by other populations, but are very significant to Indigenous people: empowerment and governance, racism, relationships with broader Australia and social inclusion. As Marmot and Wilkinson write in their highly influential *Social Determinants of Health*:

The health of populations is related to features of society and its social and economic organisation. These crucial facts provide the basis for effective policy making to improve population health. While there is, understandably, much concern with appropriate provision and financing of health services and with ensuring that the nature of services provided should be based on the best evidence of effectiveness, health is a matter that goes beyond the provision of health services. (1999, p. xi)

It must be recognised when assessing the social factors that lead to better health that cultures have different social-cultural processes. A recent study undertaken in the Goulburn Valley region posits that understanding the social determinants of Koori health is about understanding the stories, experiences and life of communities, individuals and families who negotiate daily these many co-existing determinants. This they argue is the beginning of addressing health from a holistic, empathic and Koori-led approach (Tynan 2007, p. 12). Furthermore, if as we argue, wellbeing is the state of bodies in society then it is also necessary to understand how Indigenous people are positioned within broader Australian society.

Social inclusion

The concepts of social inclusion and social exclusion have become increasingly popular in social discourse, since the UK's New Labour government established a Social Exclusion Unit in 1997 (Mulligan et al. 2006). The concepts have been embraced by governments and health and social commentators as a more comprehensive way of understanding and tackling social marginalisation than the idea of equality because equality does not address the causes of disadvantage (Gillard 2007, p. 7), and emphasises tangible or 'practical' aspects rather than the less tangible, but nonetheless important aspects that result in marginalisation and deprivation (Mulligan et al. 2006, p. 25).

In 2007 the former Howard government set up a new Social Inclusion portfolio. At the time the then opposition minister, Julia Gillard noted that Indigenous Australians are highly likely to be socially excluded. In a further commitment to the role social inclusion plays in combating economic and social disadvantage, in May, 2008 the Rudd government established the Social Inclusion Board. The government noted that it:

has already begun work on a number of priorities which are important to the social inclusion agenda, including work on homelessness, a disability and mental health employment strategy, closing the gap for Indigenous Australians and universal access to pre-school. (Rudd 2008)

The (then) Minister for Social Inclusion, Julia Gillard, argued that importantly a commitment to social inclusion requires a new form of governing, and begins with defining the term. She wrote:

To be socially included is to be able, both through developed personal capacity and through access to employment and services, to play a full role in Australian life, in economic, social, psychological and political terms ... (The socially included) are well placed to secure employment; know how to access needed services or how to find out; understand how to seek political or community change; are connected to others in life through family, friends, work, personal interests and local community; and consequently have some resilience when faced with personal crisis such as ill health, bereavement or loss of a job.

On the other hand, she contended that social exclusion:

is the outcome of people or localities suffering from a range of problems such as unemployment, low incomes, poor housing, crime, poor health and disability and family breakdown. When these problems combine they can result in cycles of poverty, spanning generations. (Gillard 2007)

Notably, the government's concept recognises the necessity of structural changes— 'a change in the way we govern'— which requires an evidence based approach, assessing core government programs for their impact on social inclusion and dealing with the root causes of the problems. Gillard argued that social exclusion tends to be the outcome of a 'joined up set of problems which need a joined up solution' (Gillard 2007, p. 7). At this early stage it is difficult to critique the new government's approach to social inclusion, and Gillard recognised that social exclusion can be the result of being alienated due to race (2007, p. 4). However, there is as yet no examination of the concept as culturally constructed and normative.

Like notions of equality, social inclusion has been accused of being equally reductive or problematic: what are people being included in or excluded from? At its simplest

social inclusion might be defined simply as the condition of not being socially excluded: the complex or ‘multiplier’ effects of social and economic disadvantage (Barraket 2005, p. 4). The government and policy makers have limited consensus around what the indicators are, and thus this is reflected in policy responses. In turn, some policy has been criticised for the potential to be a form of assimilation or blaming the marginalised and, in so doing, entrenching of poor health and wellbeing (Mulligan et al. 2006). If there is a heavy focus on social and economic inclusion without recognising different values and aspirations then indeed it could be another form of assimilation; again the already marginalised are drawn into low skill, low paid jobs and cultural, generational, and other, differences are understood as a risk to the ‘common good’.

More expansive definitions see a socially inclusive society as one ‘where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so that they can live in dignity’ (Barraket 2005). Furthermore, social exclusion is ‘the process of being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of the person into the community’ (Cappo, quoted in Barraket and Kaiser 2007, p. 8). However, unless there is a thorough examination of the cultural constructions implicit in what is a meaningful and healthy ‘world’ — inclusive of, but also beyond, the notion of civil society — than the concept risks remaining ethnocentric.

As our colleagues have argued elsewhere, social inclusion can also be used as a critique of social practices and structures that constantly recreate division and ‘disadvantage’ (Mulligan et al. 2006). With these criticisms in mind, in drawing on the notion of social inclusion in this report, we share their use of it in a critical manner, which acknowledges that if inclusion is to have any meaning it entails change to existing social, political and economic arrangements and must recognise different values and aspirations and the history of Australian race relations. Social inclusion is the recognition of the social and cultural contexts of health and wellbeing and the creation of social and cultural environments that might produce better health outcomes (Mulligan et al. 2006, p. 5). Like the concept of wellbeing, how social inclusion/exclusion is addressed is political because it is not just the measures taken to reduce the impacts of social exclusion in terms of specific outcomes (such as health, employment, education), but it must also seek to address the broader social, cultural, historical and political processes that bring about such exclusion in the first place (Barraket 2005, p. 2).

In seeking to recover the fuller, more nuanced version of social inclusion, Richard Sennett argues that if social inclusion is to have any substantive meaning, it must satisfy three basic criteria (1999). These are mutual exchange by which people are recognised as included and to whom obligations are owed; ritual, which sustains the bonds between people; and witnesses to one’s behaviour which, in Sennett’s terms, entails accountability to, and dependence on, others (Mulligan et al. 2006, p. 28). Notably in Australia there has been a failure of cross-cultural engagement, which requires a form of reciprocity that is inclusive of a sharing and negotiation of what is a healthy social body.

The issue of social inclusion becomes further complicated in the Indigenous domain when necessarily recognising that concepts of health and wellbeing and socio-economic inclusion and exclusion are themselves culturally constructed, which sometimes involves very different values, meanings, aspirations and behaviours (Daly and Smith 2003, p. 1). So what is it that people are being excluded from, and included in? Daly and Smith argue that there is a complex dialectical relationship between inclusion and exclusion. Inclusion in an Indigenous domain — culturally based family, social and economic system — can result in exclusion from the mainstream. Boyd Hunter concurs, suggesting

that the existing discussion of social exclusion needs to identify the extent to which exclusion from mainstream society maybe an assertion of positive value of particular (encapsulated) culture. Exclusion from one may reinforce inclusion in another (2000, p. 4). Indeed, when considering a main contributor to social inclusion is social connection through the strength of family and community networks and that for many Indigenous families and communities family and kin is of the central importance (Daly and Smith 2003, p. 14), while Indigenous people are the most socially excluded Australians, then it becomes evident that we need to examine the forces impacting on Indigenous lives. Further complicating this discussion, if exclusion can be broadly defined as ‘multiplier deprivations resulting from a lack of personal, social, political or financial opportunities’, which result in the break up of family ties and relationships and loss of identity and purpose (Hunter 2000, p. 2)—and this is evident in Indigenous lives—then the dynamic or dialectic, broadly speaking, between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous social domains needs close analysis.

Daly and Smith ask if the ideas of exclusion and inclusion are simply two contradictory perspectives on the wellbeing of Indigenous children, adopted from two very separate domains? Or are these aspects of one dynamic, interrelated process? (2003, p. 16). In the preliminary findings of a study examining the risk of exclusion from mainstream Australian society for Indigenous Australian children, they believe that exclusion from the mainstream economy and its benefits has consequences for children’s inclusion in the Indigenous domain (Daly and Smith 2003, p. 16). Their work in Indigenous communities with families and households has led them to posit that exclusion from the economic mainstream that has resulted in entrenched poverty, chronic welfare dependence, poor health, low levels of education and high levels of unemployment, which in turn compound one another, is undermining the capacity for Indigenous families to reproduce valued relationships and roles (Daly and Smith 2003, p. 16). They suggest it may be, increasingly, that it is the entrenched exclusion of Indigenous people from the mainstream economy which is actively undermining Indigenous culture and the wellbeing of Indigenous children—more so than if they were actively included in it and experiencing its supposed assimilationist influences (Daly and Smith 2003). They fear that:

[m]any children are facing a double jeopardy. First, they are at high risk of entrenched exclusion from the benefits and opportunities of mainstream economic participation. Secondly, as a direct spill over from that, they are experiencing barriers in actively participating in areas of their own Indigenous social and cultural institutions. (Daly and Smith 2003, p. 18)

Further to this, Hunter argues, that unless Indigenous people are included in social and economic processes of mainstream society it becomes increasingly hard to break the vicious circle of welfare dependency and unemployment (2000, p. vi). However, he adds, Indigenous people more than other groups cite that they want to work, therefore an aspiration to do so is not the issue. Thus, as he writes, the economist’s toolkit—increasing jobs in particular location or sending people back to school—is unlikely to address the issue (Hunter 2000). What is resulting in exclusion?

The Indigenous population is almost always characterised as disadvantaged or deficient compared to the non-Indigenous. In contemporary Australia public discourse about Indigeneity in general, and remote Indigenous communities in particular, has been circumscribed by a climate of crisis. Indigeneity is structured through comparison with non-Indigenous population data across a range of socio-economic indicators like health

status, education and employment levels, income and housing. These comparisons have awakened mainstream Australia to vast inequalities, but the discursive frame continues to disable, or severely limit, an engagement with Indigenous lived experience and values. Furthermore, this framing limits thinking—there are only negatives to be addressed—rather than thinking more broadly and creatively, as Manderson advocates, ‘about social and economic difference, cultural and political values, philosophies of government, the state and interpersonal relationships (2005c, p. 12).

Like the Productivity Commission, Manderson argues that the mechanisms for wellbeing are not only health policies and programs but also those applied to policies, programs and interventions well beyond health (Manderson 2005c; Productivity Commission 2007). Innovative policies must also deal with the root causes of social exclusion, whilst respecting the unique ways that people draw meaning from their life experiences, take strength from belief systems, and value particular social institutions (Hunter 2000; Manderson 2005a). Discrimination and a lack of understanding are major contributors to Indigenous marginalisation, and there is a need to concentrate on the precise mechanisms by which Indigenous Australians are prevented from participating in Australian society (Hunter 2000, p. 29; Tynan 2007). The problem for Indigenous people is that with the fracturing of society and racism there are few ways individuals and communities can negotiate forms of social inclusion.

There are many factors that affect one’s emotional and social wellbeing. There are many stresses in Aboriginal people’s lives, such as high level of death in family, illness and unemployment. Tom Calma argues that a simple way to think about social and emotional wellbeing is to compare it to human dignity, which is at the heart of human rights (Calma 2007). The basics needs of survival are shelter, food, clean water, the right to live free of violence and the threat of violence, but there is also the need for control over one’s life (Calma 2007). The Aboriginal Health Strategy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples link Indigenous health to control over their physical environment, and to dignity, community self-esteem and justice. It is not merely a matter of the provision of doctors, hospitals, medicines or the absence of disease or incapacity (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party 1989). Indeed, these concepts concur with mainstream ideas of wellbeing. The critical goods of health and wellbeing are leading a life with purpose, having quality connections with others, possessing self-regard and experiencing feelings of efficacy and control. ‘These perceptual and psychological factors’, Manderson writes, ‘as much as pathogens or individual biology, creates wellbeing’ (2005a, p. 162). They enable a sense of self in society or a sense of social inclusion. If we return to the idea that wellbeing is a state of bodies in society or state of being-in-the-world than what is the social environment that supports or undercuts this state?

The authors share the view that to understand the unrelenting poor health and wellbeing of Indigenous people it must be understood in the context of history of dispossession and colonialism, racism, policies of protection and assimilation and continued neglect and denial of cultural and citizens’ rights (Anderson, et al. 2007, p. x). Indeed it is these issues that Indigenous people maintain as key to their experiences of health and wellbeing. Social, historical, political, spiritual and identity issues, or what is often referred to as holistic health, are raised as having a huge adverse influence on health and wellbeing (Anderson et al. 2007; Atkinson et al. 2002; Calma 2007).

Kooris from the Goulburn-Murray Rivers region identified specific illness as health problems, but also much broader issues of identity, dispossession, loss of rights and low self-esteem:

While a range of health conditions and illnesses was mentioned, discussion moved quickly from these specifics to broader issues of community life, history, lack of resources and opportunities, racism and marginalisation. Health was closely associated with relational concepts such as self-esteem, shame, role models and identity. (Tynan 2007, p. 11)

Relationships with the mainstream were also identified: lack of recognition and respect for Indigenous culture, racism, and lack of understanding of Indigenous culture and history, results in poor relationships with both mainstream individuals and institutions (Tynan 2007, p. 11). Similar issues were also identified in a New South Wales study undertaken by Vicki Grieves. What she refers to as intangible cultural heritage rated the highest in what is valued: spirituality, knowing family history, being with family, knowing Indigenous history and culture and giving to family and friends (Grieves 2007, p. 44). She makes the point that what she found astonishing was the research group indicated they were driven by core values very different, even antithetical to the values of mainstream western society in which they are located, even submerged or embedded, as a minority group (Grieves 2007, p. 66).

Empowerment

It is now generally accepted that an individual's perceived lack of control over their lives can contribute to a burden of chronic, unhealthy stress contributing to mental health issues, violence and substance abuse (Dick 2007, p. 5). Within Indigenous territories, poverty is also defined by power deficits, lack of self-determination, marginalisation and lack of mechanisms for meaningful participation and access to decision making processes (Dick 2007). Full and effective participation in broader society and community and cultural empowerment relies upon effective Indigenous governance.

Taylor, quoting Dodson's and Smith's work on Indigenous governance, writes:

This is not the same as 'government'. 'Government' means having a jurisdictional control, whereas 'governance' is about having the processes and institutional capacity to be able to exercise that control through sound decision-making. Good 'governance', on the other hand, is all about the means to establish this with the ultimate aim of achieving social, cultural, and economic developments sought by the citizens. (2006, p. 10)

There has been an historical erosion of power and control from early colonialism through to government policies of protection, removal, assimilation (Henderson 2007, p. 139; National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party 1989). Henderson et al argue that this erosion of power is manifest in contemporary social processes, self-management, land rights and native title. Past and present forms of marginalisation, they write, are deeply implicated in present tensions in local governance and in the problem of establishing legitimate forms of authority at the community level. They add that this level of analysis is crucial in establishing the dimensions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, and identifying the factors that undermine or enhance it (Henderson 2007, p. 139). This is supported by the former Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, who argues that the lack of collective control Indigenous people have over their lives is affecting their social and emotional wellbeing (2007).

Wellbeing is reliant upon feeling that one has a level of control over their own life, which requires the freedom to make choices about how one lives and what is a good life. Indeed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Well-Being

Framework supports self-determination, but cautions that to do so there must be genuine consultation, and recognition of cultural difference and forms of socialisation. Furthermore, one of the nine guiding principles of the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003-2013* is that the governments adopt a holistic approach, which is inclusive of community capacity and governance (Dick 2007). Social and cultural disempowerment affects personal senses of empowerment and a lack of genuine consultation has become an ongoing feature of the state's relationship with Indigenous people. A hangover from the previous federal government, which has permeated public discourse, is the language of mutual responsibility, pointing to the perceived lack of responsibility in many Indigenous communities or relationships of dependence upon the state, rather than not only a sharing of the burdens or responsibilities of civic life, but also a recognition of different values and understandings of what constitutes a 'good life'. A better term would be reciprocity which recognises a mutuality and allows for and enables a voicing of individual and community economic, social and political needs and aspirations (Manderson 2005b, p. 11). Thus also a reciprocity by the state and wider community to recognise what enables wellbeing and what social structures can encourage or discourage inclusion, mutual support and care, which in turn affects self-esteem, senses of belonging, and social relationships (Manderson 2005b, p. 24).

It is well understood that a sense of identity is a prerequisite for mental health, and, as Morrissey and others argue, cultural identity depends not only on access to culture and heritage but also on opportunity for cultural expression and cultural endorsement within society's institutions (quoted in Duri 2007, p. 249). Groundbreaking reports such as the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* and *Bringing them Home* have highlighted the devastating role that fractured, or loss of, cultural identity have played in the lives of Indigenous people (Tynan 2007). A recent study in Victoria identifies loss of culture, which is resulting in broken spirits, as a threat to young Indigenous people's identity. They recommend the necessity of public spaces where, especially young people can feel accepted: 'central to any further investigations on issues of identity is the centrality of 'place' and how policy can support the establishment of places that promote Aboriginal identity' (Tynan 2007, p. 13). Cultural activity allows a way of sharing, which they feel allows for 'empowerment, for a person to move on in life in every way' (Tynan 2007, p. 53). This concurs with broader social understandings of wellbeing, which posit that 'individual wellbeing does appear to be closely associated with community inclusion, the strength of collective identity, the extent of mutual support, and everyday social interaction' (Manderson, 2005a, p. 162). However, Indigenous identity, like all identities, is not only self constructed through socio-cultural practices, but also constructed through all forms of representation, which are inclusive of governmental and social institutions and broader non-Indigenous perceptions and concepts of Indigeneity.

Successive studies have found that improving Indigenous health and wellbeing is about far more than achieving equitable services (for example, Tynan 2007). Many argue that fundamental to Indigenous wellbeing is the relationship with mainstream societies—the images, misconceptions, and stereotypes, which shape understandings of Indigeneity and hence cross-cultural engagement and interactions with social institutions, which in turn impact on Indigenous identity and self-esteem. Boyd Hunter writes that the 'paradigm presented by mainstream institutions (and the nation's leaders) plays an important part in whether Indigenous people feel the desire to participate fully in Australian society' (2000, p. 29). Furthermore, it is argued that the effects that relationships with the mainstream can have on health remains under-explored in Australia (Morrissey 2007, p. 249). Not only is it clear that there are distinct

cultural values contributing to different social processes in Indigenous communities, but the ongoing social marginalisation of Indigenous people from mainstream society contributes to a substantially different social domain (Tynan 2007, p. 2).

This report examines the impact of Indigenous festivals on health and wellbeing. The discourse of wellbeing is associated with notions of social connectedness, social wellbeing, social and cultural capital, empowerment, economic self-sufficiency, positive health and resilience—all of which are critical to a meaningful, nuanced and workable understanding of health and wellbeing (Manderson 2005b, p. 3). However, to understand what will enrich Indigenous wellbeing it is necessary to understand Indigenous people's lived experience: value the way Indigenous people draw meaning from their life experiences and take strength from belief systems and particular social institutions, and understand the conditions of everyday life (Manderson 2005b, p. 13). Wellbeing, many Indigenous people argue, is dependent on a sense of control over one's life, and that empowerment grows out of self-definition—people need to define their own experiences and situations in their own terms, within relationship to their immediate and the broader world (HALT, quoted in Morrissey 2007, p. 250), which is further complicated and undermined when there are few avenues to do so, or people's experiences are not respected and valued. In turn, Morrissey et al argue, responding to Indigenous wellbeing requires 'creating social spaces in which the lived reality of Indigenous culture can assert itself over and against the social construction of that reality by non-Aborigines' (2007, p. 245).

3. Croc Festival

Cape York, Torres Strait,
Derby and Shepparton

Lisa Slater

At the 1996 Rock Eisteddfod Challenge held in Cairns, Normington State School performance was of a Friday night in their community. The setting was the 'Purple Club' and the story they told was of drinking and violence. In the crowd was the then Queensland Minister for Health, Mike Horan, and according to Peter Sjoquist, the Minister was deeply moved and concerned by the performance (Interview 20 June 2007). In acknowledging that the young performers were Indigenous, he asked Peter Sjoquist, producer of the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge, if there was a way to involve Indigenous students from 'remote areas of Queensland in a performing arts event which would promote important education and health messages' (Croc Festival). This was the beginning of what was to become Croc Festival: a performing arts and educational festival for school students in regional and remote communities around Australia, which ran for ten years from 1998 to 2007.

To ascertain if Indigenous communities wanted such an event, consultations were undertaken by Queensland Health workers—Karen Jacobs, Phillip Bowie and Lindsay Rosendale—and Peter Sjoquist, in Cape York, Queensland and across the Top End. Despite differences and complications around what type of event, it became clear that Indigenous people wanted a youth focused, non-competitive performing arts event which was alcohol and drug free and community focused: promoting positive messages and benefits for students and the communities involved, primarily that young people could have a good time without using alcohol and drugs (Carvolth et al. 2003). The Croc Festival is a sister event of the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge, a subsidiary of the Global Rock Challenge, which engages young people in countries around the world in drug-free performing arts events (Croc Festival 2006b). Peter and Helen Sjoquist are the producer and co-producer of both events, which are managed from the head office in Chatswood, Sydney. In 2003 Indigenous Festivals Australia was established as a not-for-profit organisation to run the events, sharing the staff and facilities of the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge (Croc Festival 2009). Croc Festival benefits from the expertise of events managers, which in turn affords youth from rural and remote communities an opportunity to perform on a professional stage.

The first festival, initially called Croc Eisteddfod Festival, was held in Weipa, West Cape York, Far North Queensland, in July 1998. It drew 350 students from seventeen schools from across Cape York and the Torres Strait (Croc Festival). From its inception, Queensland Health was (and continued to be) a major sponsor for the event as it was a vehicle for health promotion. Over the following ten years, the events grew in size and number and by 2007 fifty festivals had been staged in remote and rural Australia: Thursday Island, Weipa (Qld); Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek (NT); Dubbo, Kempsey, Moree (NSW); Port Augusta (SA); Shepparton, Swan Hill (Vic); Derby, Geraldton, Halls Creek, Kalgoorlie, Kununurra, Meekatharra, Mullewa and Tom Price (WA). In 2007 there were seven sites around the country with an estimated 19,000 students projected to attend from 475 primary and high schools (Parbury, 2007). Australia wide the festival slogan was 'Respect Yourself, Respect Your Culture', while Queensland Health established the healthy-life theme '100% in Control' to promote the idea of a fulfilling life without tobacco, alcohol or drugs (Carvolth 2003). Croc Festival was a platform for state and federal government initiatives and processes and attracts significant funding from an array of government and non-governmental partners, which have included the Federal Department of Education, State Education and Health

Departments, local government, the Attorney-General's Department and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and the Indigenous Times (Cultural Perspectives 2004, pp. 12-13).

The major sponsor of Croc Festival was the Federal Education Department through the Community Festivals for Education Engagement program—Strong, Smart and Deadly Community Festivals (for further information see Community Festivals for Education Engagement Program, 2009). In 2007 the Department opened up the funding to tender in a competitive grants scheme. Funding was won by six organisations, including Croc Festival, to run both small community based and larger regional events/festivals across Australia. However, in early 2008 the Croc Festival board, due to a variety of concerns, made the decision not to take up the funding and proceed with the events. They remain committed to returning Croc Festival to regional and remote Australia, but as of yet they have not resumed (Sjoquist, Interview 23 May 2008).

Aims and objectives

Croc Festival promoted itself as an innovative performing arts and educational program for primary and high school students in regional and remote communities around Australia. It aims to inspire and encourage Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and communities to celebrate youth and culture (Croc Festival). According to Executive Producer, Peter Sjoquist, when they were setting up Croc Festival they asked:

How can we be the catalyst for the creation of an environment that is fun and exciting, which helps the school system attract the students to come to school more often?

That was the philosophy of the whole thing. We started out by using the medium of rock and roll music, dance and lights and audio. As the students started coming into town we started adding activities, which are quite structured now, and there can be anything between forty and eighty activities (Interview 20 June 2007).

Over the ten years the aims developed into encouraging students to engage in education; improve school attendance, literacy, numeracy and oracy; build self-esteem, social skills, goal setting and teamwork; promote and develop healthy life styles; expose students to wider career options and pathways; promote Indigenous culture, multiculturalism, reconciliation and respect; develop creative skills; and have access to performing and visual arts (Parbury 2007).

Croc Festival, unlike other festivals we are examining, had an exclusive youth and educational emphasis and a more generic mode of delivery across communities and regions. The primary target group for the festivals was Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, aged 10 to 17 years, from rural and remote Australia, although the festival targets Indigenous students and promotes Indigenous culture. The secondary, however very important target groups were the wider community, local service providers especially health, education and employment agencies, local government, community groups, local employers and Elders. The festivals were held annually but in most years they alternated between regional sites: for example Weipa and Thursday Island share the Far North Queensland festival. The events were held over three days and visiting schools camp on site. The highlight is the non-competitive evening performances in which participating schools' perform a five to eight minute devised piece chosen by the

students. The performances are music based and can be contemporary or traditional and often dance based. The children perform to the wider community and the event is well attended, usually drawing a large and enthusiastic audience well beyond the students' families. During the day there were a range of activities, which at each site include a careers expo, 'I want to be' workshop, in which students choose a desired career, health expo, sports clinic, a disco and workshops—many initiatives of local and state non/government agencies. Workshops varied according to each site but have included: contemporary dance, climbing wall, slam poetry, music, drumming, Luxottica Community I-Care, Questacon and Traditional campsites.

The research for Croc Festival study was conducted across three primary sites in remote and regional Australia. They included far north Queensland: Thursday Island, Weipa and Aurukun; Derby, Western Australia; and Shepparton, Victoria.

After consulting with the Telstra Foundation, these sites were selected on the basis of region and the duration of community engagement with Croc Festivals, with ideally a long-term site and a newer site. The regional criteria included one site in south-eastern Australia, such as Shepparton, one in a more remote community other than in the NT (covered by Garma) such as Derby, and one that services a larger population centre, such as Alice Springs or Katherine. However, when the Northern Territory festivals did not run in 2007, the site was replaced with Far North Queensland, which has been involved with Croc from the beginning of the events. The inclusion of the township of Aurukun afforded us the opportunity to examine the impacts upon a community/school that was not hosting the event.

Education

For many years now it has been widely accepted that higher education levels — measured by years of formal education and adult literacy — is a key to improving the health and wellbeing of the population (Bell 2008, p. 37; Zubrick 2005). Why this might be the case is highly contested, however it is associated with wider social movements which have increased social and economic equality, and is more pronounced when associated with improved access to primary healthcare (Bell 200, p. 43). Some suggest that there has been little investigation into the claim that Western education improves health, and argue there is an emerging area of research that focuses on the quality and cultural appropriateness of mainstream education as an important consideration when assessing education's impact on Indigenous health outcomes (Dunbar 2007, p. 136). Furthermore, 'education' routinely refers to Western or mainstream education systems, omitting or ignoring the significance of Indigenous (and other) knowledge systems. However, Western education is acknowledged as preparing people for the workforce and participation in broader Australian society. Despite competing views, the point is that there are many social and historical issues, which make the education system's health effects complex and difficult to unravel (quoted in Dunbar 2007, p. 137).

What is largely not understood is that educational disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are far higher than health and mental health disparities (Zubrick 2005, p. 506). Yet it is well known that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have historically received much less formal Western education and have low levels of literacy and numeracy (Dunbar 2007; Zubrick 2005). While over the last decade incremental improvements in Indigenous school retention has occurred, this belies the fundamental failure over the past thirty years to improve educational outcomes (Zubrick 2005). There is, however, a general consensus that mainstream education is

'both a determining factor in the reproduction of health inequalities, and an active intervention into overcoming them'. It is not a magic bullet and schools cannot do it alone; change must also be driven by policy, service delivery and community action (Bell 2007, p. 38).

Indigenous youth's high level of social and educational disengagement from the education process, Jerry Schwab writes, is a looming crisis for many remote Indigenous (and arguably regional and urban) communities (2006). Making education locally and culturally relevant is one of the key challenges for the future of Indigenous education (Dunbar 2007; Sarra 2003; Schwab 2006). From our research, and that of earlier evaluations by CIRCA, there is some evidence that if attending Croc was used as an incentive then it did have positive effects on school attendance in the lead up to the festival. However, although some teachers noted that a few students who were irregular attendees became more regular after Croc, there is little evidence to suggest the event has significant impacts on school attendance. School principals, although supportive of Croc, were quick to remind us that educational achievements are based, amongst other things, on a good curriculum and quality teachers. There were concerns that as Croc grew it became less locally aligned. If a key to improving education is making it more locally and culturally orientated then events that aim to improve attendance and engagement must also do so. It has also been demonstrated that the social and emotional well-being of students improves when formal schooling experiences are connected in some way to the knowledge they bring from home, and to not do so has negative disempowering consequences which can impact upon culture or social cohesion (Cummins, cited in Dunbar 2007, p. 144).

The arts are a fundamental component of education: they empower self and communal expression, allow reflections upon, and the preservation of, history and heritage and can create visions for the future (Mulligan et al. 2006). In an increasingly complex and multicultural world creativity is, and will continue to be, a key element in us living in an equitable and sustainable world. Yet many schools in rural and remote Australia do not have the resources to implement an arts program. Croc Festival performances allow schools without a consistent arts curriculum an avenue to do so and a professional, local or regional, showcase. Watching Croc Festival performances, the students' and community's enjoyment and pride is very obvious. As many have reflected, the performances give the students an opportunity to shine



Students attending 'Journalist for a day' workshop, Croc Festival, Thursday Island, 2007

Photo: Peter Phipps



Croc Festival infrastructure trucked around the country, Shepparton, 2007

Photo: Peter Phipps

and this has significant impacts upon self-esteem and confidence (CIRCA 2003). The students experience success and recognition, and in our research we consistently heard that the positive benefits this offers are immeasurable and 'beyond words'. The process of working on their performances, as teachers and parents commented, encourages teamwork, time management skills, commitment and the surmounting of obstacles and fears.

Through their involvement with Croc, some teachers said that they were also 'up-skilled': by working with students to prepare performances, networking with other teachers or watching performances. Aurukun teacher, Melinda Stewart, noted that she would be taking ideas back that could be incorporated into her teaching and classroom activities (Interview 13 November 2007). A teacher from Yarrabah, Queensland, reported that after attending Croc, he started using multimedia to engage his students, develop their confidence and give them an avenue to tell their stories.

An important element of schooling, as Indigenous educationalist Chris Sarra notes, is to build confidence (2003). What became very clear during our research was, as the Aurukun School Principal Liz Mackie said, the real benefits of Croc are social and emotional development: student's gain life skills and build their confidence. The students not only have fun mixing with other kids from across their region but in so doing acquire important social skills and are proud of gaining new friends. Liz noted that for students living in remote areas, Croc offers them the opportunity to experience surmounting obstacles and challenges, such as flying on a plane or being away from family for the first time (Interview 1 August 2008).

As the students learn to negotiate the bigger world they grow in confidence and later teachers and family can use these experiences to remind children of what they achieved and that they can face and overcome challenges. For many students in remote or small communities they have limited opportunities to see the world beyond their own townships and to mix with children from outside their family and community. Croc Festival afforded students the exposure to a bigger world – be it career options, activities or mixing with sport stars or people from their region or Australia. The kids from Aurukun (and no doubt other communities) were thrilled by the variety of shops and 'bustling' street life of Thursday Island. To many young people living in urban areas, or whose lives offer them many opportunities, this might appear to be of limited value. However, Croc Festival allowed children to grow in confidence not only through their performances but also by engaging in activities and developing social skills by mixing with bigger groups of people or strangers. Many people commented that the government's focus should not be necessarily on using Croc to improve school attendance but rather more intrinsic values such as emotional and social development. As teachers and carers enthusiastically noted, they witnessed their students being engaged, having fun and rapidly growing in self-esteem. Events such as Croc Festival can provide students who regularly face trauma a space in which they feel valued and safe and good memories that might offer them hope; notably self-esteem, confidence and flexibility are important elements of resilience, which is a known protective factor (Grunstein 2002).

Teachers and teachers' aides have an extensive impact on a child's self-identity (Sarra 2003, p. 7). Croc Festival, and other such school events and activities, are an opportunity for teachers and students to build stronger and more positive relationships. In interviews, teachers commented that they got to better know, and see, their students and build bonds. In subsequent discussions with teachers in Aurukun, they felt that students had developed a greater sense of trust in them. This might not only have positive

impacts on the direct teacher/student relationship but also give children and young people the confidence that there are other adults to turn to and that the school is a place that supports and nurtures them. In turn, teachers have an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of their students' life experiences and socio-cultural values. Effective teaching and learning is responsive to students social and cultural context (Sarra 2003, p. 5). It is important that teachers, through all different means, develop an empathy and understanding of their students' lives. Of course, involvement in the life of the community is where this is most likely to happen, but events such as Croc might encourage or afford teachers' increased access to community life. Importantly, Croc Festival allows teachers and carers to see their students in a different light. Teachers noted how proud they were of older students taking care of younger children, disengaged students actively engaging, shy students mixing it up with strangers, which in turn might not only develop student/teacher bonds but also broaden the teacher's sense of their students' potential.

One of the most reported comments about Croc Festival from teachers, parents and community members is the importance of the careers market and 'I want to be' workshop. Many interviewees reported that at Croc the students were exposed to career opportunities that they wouldn't otherwise be exposed to. In turn, this allows, especially disengaged, students to aspire to and awareness of potential career paths. The school and teachers can use the information and students' enthusiasm back in the classroom to further encourage their students. Some teachers were concerned that the careers expo is a 'snatch and grab' and students are not engaging with the career options or the information. Also it is notable that it is heavily reliant on government agencies, which does limit the prospective job options. However, to attend organisations do need a budget and resources for community relations. Notably the careers expo is where people wanted to see more 'real' Indigenous role models. Some sites did use it to 'showcase' Indigenous employment, however, this was an area that many people wanted to see improved. From observation, some sites, such as Shepparton, were especially vibrant, employing enthusiastic and energised Indigenous Education Career Ambassadors and stallholders to inspire students: supporting them to set goals, believe they can achieve and have higher expectations for their working life.

Large community based events like Croc Festival allow other initiatives to be 'bolted on'. For example, in 2007, the day before Thursday Island Croc festival officially started, there was a rugby match between Tagai and Western Cape Colleges. There are also examples of programs that grow from the festivals: the event recruits or draws people who not only develop a connection to the students (and places) but are influential in their field, which enables them to create further opportunities for the children. For example, after running a media workshop at the Thursday Island festival, the *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Sam de Brito, along with Tony Whybird, ex-Principal of Weipa's Western Cape College, devised a plan to give Indigenous high school students, who are curious about media careers, the opportunity to undertake work experience in the field. In 2007, the program, 'Foot in the Door', created for ten high school students from Weipa and Thursday Island work experience assignments at Sydney media organisations: The *Sydney Morning Herald*, Channel Seven's Sunrise, Channel V, Fox Sports, The Weather Channel, *Dolly* and *Girlfriend* magazines. The initiative was also supported by Qantas and Rio Tinto (de Brito 2007). Another program was the Aurukun Student Storytelling Project funded by Telstra Foundation. A three-month project designed and run by Community Prophets multimedia trainers to help motivate students to come to school and to learn how to tell their stories through multimedia (see Slater 2008).

Freedom from discrimination

Fundamental to social inclusion and wellbeing is freedom from discrimination (HREOC 2009; Vic Health 2009). In Australia, Indigenous people have been historically (and continues) subjected to racism: it permeates the social fabric (Paradies 2007, p. 65; Zubrick 2005). Racism is often thought of as inter-subjective—how one person discriminates or stereotypes another—it is also structural and both overt and discrete or even blind. The affects of racism on health and wellbeing are under-researched and poorly understood, however research does indicate (and it makes common sense) that racism has negative effects on both physical and mental health (Paradies 2007, p. 66). Indigenous people report high levels of racism that result in feelings of exclusion, disempowerment, low self-esteem and stress and anxiety, which has a broad range of negative affects (Paradies, 2007; Paradies et al. 2009; Vic Health 2009; Zubric 2005). Racism can be committed by any racial group and includes inter-racial discrimination. Yin Paradies argues:

The most effective anti-racism training promotes an awareness of Indigenous history and culture, dispels false ideological beliefs and uses a liberal education approach that focuses on the complexities of racism and anti-racism, including the power relationships embedded in material and cultural structures (2007).

Clearly, School and community events are key avenues for providing anti-racism environments and education. Croc Festival involves Indigenous and non-Indigenous students uniting to create performances, enjoy activities and appreciate each other's talents. In working together to make performances students potentially gain a greater level of inter-cultural understanding and trust. Notably schools should already be undertaking anti-racism interventions, however Indigenous focused Croc performances could add to non-Indigenous students' awareness of Indigenous culture and history. Spaces outside of regular school activities can provide opportunities for students to develop mutual respect. Aboriginal kids in Shepparton, Paul Briggs reported, were proud to bring their non-Indigenous friends onto Aboriginal land and expose them to the vibrancy of their world (Interview 16 October 2007). In showcasing Indigenous talent Croc festival helped dispel negative racial stereotypes, and in so doing foster improved broader community relations.

Understandings of Indigeneity are also constructed by media representations and by people (and institutions) who have had little substantial contact with Indigenous people. These dominant, and too often damaging, representations—be they romantic or degrading—are rarely generated from dialogue or in relationship with Indigenous people and often limit Indigenous people to racial stereotypes and colonial representations (Langton 1993). Croc Festival, as Chris Graham the editor of *National Indigenous Times* (NIT) said, provides many good news stories of Indigenous achievement. Each year the festivals furnish NIT, and local, regional and national media, with an abundance of good news stories to bring to the attention of the Australian public (Interview 22 May 2008). Again positive reporting of Indigenous people and culture not only contributes to a much needed antidote to the relentless negative media portrays and bad news stories about Indigenous Australia, but can also bolster positive local self-image and foster inter-cultural trust. Kristie Lynch, former project officer for Shepparton Council, proudly noted that through Croc Festival non-Indigenous people learned a lot about Indigenous people and their talents and achievements (Interview 27 February 2009). Community celebrations can provide a non-threatening way to reduce prejudices, discrimination and social tensions by providing a social space in which

Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can interact and develop relationships of trust and understanding.

Discrimination is a major contributor to Indigenous marginalisation, and there is a need to concentrate on the precise mechanisms by which Indigenous Australians are prevented from participating in Australian society (Hunter 2000, p. 29; Tynan 2007). A priority of the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework (OID) is 'safe, healthy and supportive family environments with strong communities and cultural identities' (2007). Fundamental to anti-racism, and arguably safer and stronger communities and Indigenous cultural identity, is awareness and valuing of Indigenous history and culture by the broader community. Improving the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australians, Paul Briggs contends, requires what he calls cultural literacy: non-Indigenous people learning (and learning to share civic life) about, and from, Indigenous people, history and culture (Maddison 2009, p. 223). Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage also relies upon non-Indigenous Australians developing a respect for Indigenous people, communities and culture.

Events such as Croc Festival offer an avenue for non-Indigenous people to develop a 'cultural literacy' about local Indigenous peoples, culture and history (a history which is also shared). It is an intercultural space that brings the broader community together in both the making of, and participation in, the event. Shepparton Indigenous leaders, Geraldine Atkinson and Paul Briggs, in their opening addresses, spoke of Croc as an opportunity for celebration and unity between the many local cultures (16 October 2007). Jeff Waia, Torres Strait Island Elder, said that the festival is an important space for recognising the strength and knowledge in and of both systems, which he added, contributes to strong identities. He saw Croc as a 'beautiful learning experience because it gathers all different people on the soil and they can show them Torres Strait Islander culture' (Interview 20 July 2007). There was a broad consensus that Croc Festival provided an avenue for people to come together and, as has been noted, there are too few opportunities to do so. Celebrating together can encourage the breaking down of historical barriers.

Capacity building and social capital

Indigenous Australians were disempowered by the dominant colonial government and culture and subjected to intervention and intrusion into the most intimate parts of their lives. Leading public health specialist, Michael Marmot, writes that 'failing to meet the fundamental human needs of autonomy, empowerment and human freedom is a potent cause of ill health (2006, p. 2082). Despite all the changes that contemporary society has brought, structural inequalities and power imbalances persist and contribute to health and socio-economic disadvantage. Indigenous affairs is predominantly focused upon crisis intervention and this drains communities and leaders of the energy to nurture and support life. There is strong evidence from Australian and other Indigenous populations that having more social and political control is associated with better social and health outcomes (Calma 2006; Cornell 2006; Hunter 2008). Building community capacity and social capital not only requires a focus on local needs and circumstances, but also transforming local governance. Community events, as the Executive Principal of Tagai College Don Anderson said, allow things to be done differently (Interview 16 July 2007). If a broad cross section of a community or region is involved or has a voice then there is greater potential for the event to foster democracy. In each Croc site, there is a local steering committee with subcommittees that co-ordinate various activities and

aspects, for example food stalls and local organisations, such as TAFE or health services, run the careers, sports and health expos. Contributing to the making of community events enables people to be a part of creating civic life, which is empowering as people experience a sense efficacy. Or as Bella Savo, Weipa, said, 'Wow, we can do all this ...' (29 July 2008).

Croc Festival allowed school students in rural and remote Australia to participate in activities and workshops, have an avenue to careers markets and the arts that are usually only available to young people in more populated, urban or coastal regions. In the towns and regions where we undertook research, there was great support for their children and young people having access to what Croc had to offer, and praise for the organisation's expertise in event management. People spoke of the planning as exceptional, and appreciated that only a professional organisation could deliver such a big event that involved so many people and students from across the region. Despite Croc Festival being run and organised from Sydney, although it was a contentious issue, many involved in the local organisation thought there was adequate local ownership and control. It was clear that people felt that Croc helped to build community capacity by bringing people together and, as Ian Pressley, CEO of Weipa Town Authority, commented, ownership comes through the 'challenge of community coming together and making it work' (29 July, 2008). Kristie Lynch, from Shepparton Council, responded that nothing went wrong, which she put down to ownership and engagement (Interview 27 February 2009). When asking people how they measured the success of Croc, the reply was often about engagement—the kids engaged in activities and had fun and a broad cross section of the community attended the night performances. Notably, Croc Festival contributed directly to capacity building by providing Indigenous students and locals with an opportunity to be involved in organisational aspects and running activities. In Shepparton, young Indigenous students enrolled in sports courses at the Academy ran the Croc sports clinic, which allowed them to gain experience, build confidence and to establish networks, which in turn could provide a career path and opportunities for others to value their capabilities.

However, whether the Croc model provided for enough local control, capacity building and flexibility was the source of very differing opinions. There were concerns by some, and noted by the Federal Education Department, that as Croc Festival grew, local capacity building and ownership were diminishing. It is a difficult balancing act—to create a big, professional event and to ensure that local people maintain control and the event serves their needs. Notably, the 2004 CIRCA Evaluation recommended that there were opportunities for more community ownership, which could develop local capacity (CIRCA 2005). It was clear that many people were committed to Croc Festival, but also wanted the event to further contribute to Indigenous empowerment and not to diminish or replace local initiatives.

There was a strong sense that big events need outside organisation because most regional and remote areas do not have the local resources. It must be noted, however, that this was not the view of some people we spoke to in the Northern Territory. Syd Stirling, the former Deputy Chief Minister and member for Nhulunbuy, considered that they could not only run their own local events, but that there were also few educational outcomes from Croc Festival (Interview 12 August 2008). However, as Paul Briggs told us, Shepparton wants Croc or something like it, but they need longevity, and community control and ownership. There are risks, he went on to say, that big events like Croc could swamp smaller initiatives. It is necessary that the power doesn't lie with outside

organisations because the communities are then held to ransom and when it is gone all is lost. As Paul Briggs and others made clear, Croc is not cost neutral. Even if it doesn't cost money it is a huge investment in energy and self-esteem: energy that could go into other initiatives (Interview 12 March 2008). Shepparton Indigenous leaders noted Croc Festival needs to be a part of a mosaic of local initiatives that recognise, acknowledge and celebrate Indigenous culture and heritage as a part of wider history of a prosperous community (Shepparton Croc festival opening address, 16 October 2007). Reciprocity and cultural affirmation are fundamental elements for improving Indigenous wellbeing. In turn, community control and ownership provides greater potential for the event to be 'part of the mosaic of local initiatives'.

A deficiency model often fuels Indigenous affairs and non-government responses to Indigenous disadvantage. There were concerns by some that Croc Festival was tied to a similar model: as we were told, 'send in the southern stars and artists, which ignores what is already there, and prevents a building of capacity'. Those who thought that the event could be improved to grow local potential highlighted the lack of flexibility in the 'road show' model, which resulted in lost opportunities. They believed that the energy and enthusiasm for Croc demonstrated that there were opportunities to generate greater community ownership, capacity and career paths. It was also felt that local talent was under-utilised, especially artists and leaders, and these people could be employed to run activities and workshops. Initially the workshops might not be as professional or run as smoothly as Croc events; however it would provide a space for capacity building, community showcasing and role modelling. Some people spoke of wanting a broad based model that is adaptable to local needs and in which the delivery organisation works with community leaders to further develop leadership and sustainability and provide a model or 'how to' manual, and mentor individuals and organisations to run their own events, albeit on a smaller scale. In all the regions in which we undertook research, there was a recognition and appreciation of the benefits that Croc brought; most notably that it allowed students to shine and brought people and organisations together. However, to contribute to sustainable positive change, to borrow the words of David Martin, 'the process must involve working with the strengths, capacities, passions and commitments which people themselves have' (2006, p. 13). Building upon the local capacities not only results in transformation and community development but also ensures the event is sustainable.

In analysing Croc Festival one becomes aware of the skills, experience and passion that are in regional, rural and remote Australia and that 'talent' does not need to be brought in but rather harnessed. The young and energised Croc Festivals producers received high praise from community members for their professionalism and personnel qualities, however many people spoke of wanting them on the ground earlier, working in the community and getting to know local wants and needs and ways of doing things. Along with a 'how to manual', there was also recommendations for a local co-ordinator. In sites where the council or a regional body employed an Indigenous co-ordinator, such as Shepparton, she acted as a driving force to connect local government and Croc producers into the Indigenous community. Over time an Indigenous community co-ordinator could help increase community involvement, which in turn would prevent volunteer burn out and ensure an Indigenous focus was maintained. Notably, those we spoke to who have arts/event management experience were concerned that Croc Festival lacked a strategic plan that would enable an increase in local control and capacity building. Notably Croc Festival was led by a professional event organisation and a strategic plan of this sort could lie with them working with the Department of Education and local and regional

agencies to develop, co-ordinate and implement a long-term strategy that is focused upon empowering Indigenous people and serving local needs. What became very clear was the desire within communities to have more regular smaller events that every few years culminate in a larger 'Croc' like event. There are some communities that, with support, have the capacity to do so, and Croc Festival, or similar organisations, could provide the vehicle that enables communities to run their own festival, which in turn could create greater local ownership and capacity building.

The benefits that outside organisations bring to remote and regional Australia, as Don Anderson reported, is that they can get things happening on the ground that don't happen at a local level (Interview 16 July 2007). Croc Festival was an important vehicle for encouraging interaction between different community sectors and building what is often referred to as social capital (CIRCA 2004). The McClure Report provides a helpful, rudimentary definition of social capital: 'the reciprocal relationships, shared values and trust, which help to keep societies together and enable collective action' (cited in Hunter 2000, p. v). Notably some scholars argue that the concept is normative and should be contested, if not rejected, because it limits necessary systemic changes. Boyd Hunter asks, is it cross-culturally relevant and what forms of Indigenous social capital does it exclude? (2000). John Taylor rejects the term, replacing it with social capability (2006). To build social capability there needs to be focus on local needs and circumstances, reciprocity, enablement and the valuing of difference. Infrastructure in Aboriginal communities, as Paul Briggs notes, is not strong. In Shepparton the Indigenous organisations that supported Croc Festival wanted to encourage Council and Indigenous organisations to develop relationships and co-produce a community event which fosters Aboriginal ownership. Paul Briggs suggested that a collaborative approach ensures that the Aboriginal community isn't ghettoised or just a part of Indigenous affairs, but rather are recognised as a dynamic part of the broader community, and furthermore have the opportunity to welcome non-Indigenous people into an Indigenous social space (Interview 12 March 2008). To build the social capability of Indigenous people and communities there must be a respect for, and valuing of, cultural difference: that is genuine reciprocity, power sharing and recognition of the cultural history and boundaries of institutions and processes. This is not to deny the intercultural character of agencies or social processes but rather to recognise that government institutions and mainstream organisations are not universal.

However, an important benefit of Croc Festival was the opportunity for various community sectors to interact and to create networks. Even if people and agencies were not actively working together they had the opportunity to 'rub shoulders', which importantly facilitates dialogue and the possibility of future collaborations. Most especially the Careers Expo was a platform, and showcase, for not only community members to learn what services are available but for service providers to network. Pedro Stephens, the Thursday Island Mayor, said that Croc was a practical demonstration of a two-way system, which helped initiate partnerships. The event was a platform for agencies to educate the public about their programs, and most especially provide access and knowledge of government initiatives to isolated communities. According to the Mayor, the major issues in the Torres Strait are a lack of access and networking — 'joined up' local, regional and national agencies — that prevents the development of a dynamic system (Interview 20 July 2007). Katrina Mohamed, of Shepparton, made a similar point, telling us that Croc Festival allowed networks to develop across sectors, which encourages information sharing, collaboration and local agencies working together to provide better service delivery (Interview 26 March 2009).

After Croc was cancelled in 2008, in our discussions and interviews people repeatedly told us of their disappointment, and a sense that punitive government interventions and programs were being introduced—such as welfare reform and various forms of mainstreaming—yet concurrently an event that celebrated Indigenous children and young people was, as many understood, defunded. It appears that many communities, especially key stakeholders, were not personally informed by Croc Festival management of the cancellation. Instead most people learned of it from newspaper reports, which led to confusion (and blame) about why the event was cancelled. Frequent changes in Indigenous affairs, policies and program results in Indigenous people and communities being subject to enormous instability. A loss of an event such as Croc Festival, as Paul Briggs notes, reinforces a sense of instability, which makes people feel that they are not being valued and this impacts upon their commitment to future projects. A big professional event builds a sense of pride that children and young people are deserving, but equally the event must be sustainable, otherwise it leaves people feeling that their cultural identity is not worth celebrating or being valued (Interview 12 March 2008). Sustainable initiatives not only have stable funding and professional organisation, they are also created, and renewed, from the ground up and value local people, organisations and differences.

Identity and belonging

Belonging—being and feeling at home, safe, nurtured and responsible for, and to, people and place—is fundamental to not only individual but also social wellbeing. Scholars argue that belonging is a ‘thicker’ concept than citizenship: it is much more than membership, rights and duties but rather is about the affect or emotions that ‘memberships’ evoke (Kannabiran 2006, p. 189). Importantly, belonging is not only a personal or collective feeling but it is also political—it is where the personal, local and cultural interface with state power and images and narratives of the nation. To be included in a particular ‘community’ might also mean to be excluded from another or to feel the tensions of exclusion (Elder 2007, p. 11). People, places, cultures, laws and histories are located in relationship to narratives of the ‘imagined’ nation and the state, and this affects how we understand our selves, each other and Australia. In turn it creates a hierarchy of belonging and entitlement to the nation state and ‘Australianness’ (Perera, quoted in Elder 2007, p. 11).

We live in an intercultural world: since colonisation there has been entanglements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life worlds on a local, national and global scale (Hinkson 2005, p. 157). Yet Indigenous people and communities are marked by cultural, historical, socio-economic (more often perceived, but sometimes geographical) differences and, despite processes of colonisation and assimilation, have continued to assert sovereignty. The affirmation of Indigenous socio-cultural and historical differences has developed forms of belonging that stretch across the nation (and world), but in turn this also challenges what it is to be Australian. For so many Indigenous people, as Paul Briggs laments:

life is spent on the fringes of society. We are trying to—without knowing how—contribute economically, socially and spiritually to a mainstream society that devalues our worth. There is no sense of owning, sharing or understanding what our role is in an integrated Australian life. (2009, p. 15)

His concern, shared by many, is the impact of mainstream Australia’s lack of understanding and valuing of Indigenous cultural knowledge and history. ‘If you are

not interested in my world', Briggs continues, 'and you don't want me in yours, where do I belong' (2009, p. 15). He is emphasising a fundamental point: a lack of engagement by mainstream Australia with, and valuing of, Indigenous life worlds heavily impacts upon Indigenous people's sense of belonging, which has a marked effect upon wellbeing. The 'hierarchy of belonging and entitlement' has very real material affects on people's lives and their sense of inclusion in society.

A very important aspect of enjoying a sense of belonging is reciprocity and respect for, and valuing of, differences. Social and cultural disempowerment affects one's personal sense of empowerment and belonging. Croc Festival was a vehicle that enabled processes of reciprocity and inter-cultural engagement, and thus arguably contributed to building social bonds and inclusion. As previously noted, infrastructure in Aboriginal communities is not strong, and although non-Indigenous people and organisations want to offer forms of social inclusion and reciprocity, if the vehicles are not available then it is difficult to galvanise the support (Interview Paul Briggs, 27 February 2009). Without vehicles or platforms in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can positively engage and interact with one another, Paul is concerned that non-Aboriginal people will continue to 'engage and pick up knowledge and information about the Aboriginal community only through crisis' (Maddison 2009, p. 38). Croc Festival was a celebration of Indigenous young people and culture and the event enabled an Indigenous social space that welcomed the broader community, which in turn potentially worked to break down barriers between different socio-cultural groups and enhance people's sense of belonging beyond their immediate social ties.

One of the requirements for human development is to participate in the life of the community (Zubrick 2005). Colonialism and neo-colonialism has left many Indigenous people and communities not only marginalised from mainstream Australia but have also fractured families, clans and nations. Furthermore, ongoing trauma and the demands of government programs and policies can leave individuals, families and communities without enough energy to nurture and communicate with one another. In turn, this impacts upon people's sense of belonging and inclusion within their families and community. Croc Festival provided an opportunity for families to support their children's education and express pride and share in their achievements. In Aurukun, families were very excited and proud that their children were attending the festival. On the morning we flew to Horn Island (where we caught the ferry to Thursday Island), Chris Stewart, a teacher's assistant, was trying in vain to get last minute jobs done: he was repeatedly stopped by locals thrilled about the students going to Croc Festival for the screening of their films. At the Aurukun airstrip delighted and proud parents and families gathered to farewell the travelling students (Interview 13 November 2007). As Aurukun School Principal Liz Mackie said, 'When the kids are out [of Aurukun] they learn things and have experiences that they bring back home and everyone can share in and talk about it' (Interview 1 August 2008). Events and celebrations, such as Croc Festival, provide families and communities with the much needed space for people to stop, come together, rest and enjoy one another, away from the distractions and demands of everyday life. Interviewees noted that Croc Festival was a time when Indigenous families, clans and nations could put differences aside and work and celebrate together. Furthermore, as a few people noted, it was good for non-Indigenous people to see a united Indigenous community. The Derby Mayor said, for people to see positive things happening in the town and region develops a sense of pride and a greater sense of harmony (Interview 11 August 2007).

A priority area of the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework (OID) is 'safe, healthy and supportive environments with strong communities and cultural identity'

(Hunter 2008). The OID is recognising the importance of cultural security and identity to people's wellbeing. It must be remembered that Indigenous youth are too often subject to overwhelming negative images of Indigeneity, which, in turn, impacts on their self-understanding, self esteem, sense of hope and desire to participate in community and broader social life. Wellbeing is dependent on a sense of control over one's life, and empowerment also grows out of self-definition—people need to define their own experiences and situations in their own terms, within relationship to their immediate and the broader world. However, this is further complicated and undermined when there are few avenues to do so, or people's experiences are not respected and valued (HALT quoted in Morrissey 2007, p. 250). Children and young people, like all of us, need to feel a sense of worth about their identities and to belong: they need their identities affirmed and to know they are worth celebrating. A strong and positive identity is crucial to emotional and social wellbeing.

Croc performances, as has been noted, allowed students to shine. They also provided a social space for children and young people to develop identities and life narratives from their own experiences and values, rather than what is reflected back at them from public discourse. Katrina Mohamed, a key Indigenous co-ordinator for Shepparton Croc Festival, said the event was an opportunity for whole of community to learn about Yorta Yorta history and language and to appreciate and value local Indigenous people (Interview 26 March 2009). When asked why he supported Croc, Paul Briggs commented that he recognised the benefits that their Swan Hill brothers and sisters had gained from it. What it offered, he said, was a sharing and strengthening of identity and a place where Indigenous identity is valued, not for what they can give other people but for something in itself (Interview 12 March 2008). His concern is that there is a ready available 'corporate' identity—an homogenised and static image of 'real Indigenous people', which has commercial and tourism appeal—but is not reflective of people's lived experience. In so doing, it limits, denies and devalues the multiplicity and dynamism of contemporary Indigeneity. For many Indigenous people their identity is challenged by non-Indigenous people because they do not fit the stereotype of Indigeneity: often this is due to being light-skinned, living in urban or regional centres or working in mainstream professions. Croc Festival, or such events, were a space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to see and acknowledge the heterogeneity of contemporary Indigeneity, which in turn potentially strengthens Indigenous youth identity by providing positive representations and recognition of diversity. Where heterogeneity and difference are valued young people can feel their identity is safe and respected, which could lead them to be more inclined to participate, and feel more included, in mainstream society.

Heritage

Mainstream Australia and the public discourse of 'dysfunction' are dominant components of the environment from which Indigenous, most especially young, people's identity is composed. As noted, Indigenous people are subject to overwhelmingly negative images of Aboriginality, which, in turn, inform relationships with non-Indigenous people and mainstream institutions. Indigenous people have a rich culture, history and heritage to draw upon to strengthen their identity and community, to share with broader Australia and to grow a future from, yet there are few public avenues for young people to be a creative part of envisioning their future. Although the Croc Festival performances were only a maximum of eight minutes, some schools (with the resources) used them as an avenue for telling local stories.

A strong identity is also reliant upon a sense of connection to a cultural heritage, which is acknowledged and appreciated by broader society. Letitia Murgha, who formerly worked at Mapoon Public School (west Cape York), told of how the community used Croc Festival performances as a platform for telling, and passing on to the children, Mapoon's history:

At the time there was no question about what our theme was going to be, and we got the community support to dance the story of the removal of the people from Mapoon. We got the kids to invite all the older men to tell the story. Quite a few of them are long gone now, passed on, but they were actually part of the removal. So they came and told the kids their story about being removed from Mapoon. One particular fellow said he only had time to pack one small suitcase. So one line was 'He left Mapoon with one small suitcase and when he returned back to Mapoon, that's what he brought back to Mapoon' ... The whole community got totally involved, got behind us, helped us make our props, and do our artwork for the backdrop (Interview 28 July 2008).

Other schools have also effectively deployed Croc performances as a stage for local history and heritage. Yarrabah State School (far north Queensland) created multimedia based performances that incorporated archival images to make poignant local histories, where very few are documented. Tagai College's (Thursday Island) spectacular 2007 performance told the history of the Torres Strait from pre-contact, the 'Coming of the Light', the pearling industry, to contemporary Torres Strait Island culture. Notably, not all schools told Indigenous stories for their performances, and some people commented that they found this disappointing and felt there should be a much stronger representation of Indigenous culture. However, many schools and communities used Croc Festival as an avenue to tell and share their history and heritage.

Role models

Croc Festival was a platform to showcase local Indigenous people's talents and achievements, and bring Indigenous stars into town. In our interviews, many people noted the importance of Indigenous 'stars' and local role models for strengthening young Indigenous people's identity and contributing to their sense of hope for the future. Students commented that when a 'famous' person came to their town to spend time with them, it made them feel important and valued. It also provided an opportunity for the students to hear how Indigenous people have made a success of their lives. As already noted, performers were seen as heroes, and they were positive role models for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peers. However, in our conversations with parents and community members they expressed pride in the students but were also worried that there were not enough 'black faces' in other roles, such as hosts or presenting awards. Many people felt that politicians or bureaucrats were given too much focus, instead of local role models, and they saw this as a missed opportunity, most especially for the young people and community to be proud of their own achievements. A focus on positive role models supports positive student outcomes, but as Chris Sarra argues:

It is always nice to have a visit from a big-time flash role model who comes into a school and gets the children glowing ... What is more powerful is when you can get the children looking at role models who come into the school every day and work alongside them—everyday (2003, p. 9).

In general people were concerned that 'sending in southern stars' was based upon a deficiency model, which ignores local successful Indigenous people, be they artists, health professionals or people working everyday in and with the community. In future festivals, there needs to be opportunities to give more focus to local role models and a strong Indigenous presence, while maintaining an atmosphere that is inclusive of the wider community.

Health

Croc Festival was a vehicle for state and local health organisations to promote positive health messages. They were drug, including smoking-, and alcohol-free events in which families and communities gathered in a safe and supported environment. As already noted, the Queensland Department of Health had played a pivotal role since the event's inception, and developed the healthy life-style theme, '100% in Control' (Carvolth et al. 2003). After Croc Festival had been running for approximately five years, in a demonstration of their commitment to local festivals as platforms for improving public health, the Far North Queensland Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services (ATODS) workers, and Cindy Hales from Education Queensland, wrote a 'how to' guide for health workers and communities to learn how festivals could be 'mascots for investing in people and the future of our isolated communities' (Carvolth 2003 et al., p. 1). The writers saw Croc Festival as an innovative and proactive way to deal with substance misuse and other health related issues facing the young people in rural and remote Queensland. They wrote:

The program has been successful in increasing the profile of the needs of young people in rural and remote communities, and has addressed equity by providing more accessible professionally managed and supported youth cultural events in Far North Queensland (Carvolth 2003 et al., p. 2).

Croc Festival, they argued, allowed the social and health needs of isolated and rural communities to be better understood by the wider community and policy and decision makers, such as politicians and the media, who attended the events (Carvolth et al. 2003).

Cape York health workers, who had a long involvement with Croc, believed the major benefits of Croc Festival were that it put Indigenous youth issues on the agenda, was a part of a movement toward prevention of disease and promotion of healthy life styles and helped to develop community trust in the health workers and services (Interviews, 28-29 July 2008). The CIRCA 2003 and 2004 festival evaluations found that the positive benefits of the events, in terms of health services, were visibility and access to services, noting that '[p]reventative health people appeared out of the woodwork' (Cultural Perspectives 2004, p. 61). The increase in access to services enhanced community trust in such institutions and cultivated relationships between students and health centres (CIRCA 2005, p. 67). These findings concur with our research. Health workers we spoke to highlighted that community celebrations, not just Croc, provide an opportunity for people living in remote communities to get to know them and understand what organisation they worked for and their role in it, which helped build trust. As one health worker said, when she is a new 'face' in a community attending celebrations and events allows her to fast track people's understanding about what she does, who she is and therefore she gains people's confidence a lot quicker than if she were only undertaking regular community visits (Interview 29 July 2008). Given the high staff turnover in many sectors, especially health and education, community celebrations are important for accelerating trust and understanding.

Notably, poor health—for example hearing loss and nutritional health—has negative effects on educational attainment (Dunbar 2007, p. 135). Yet many communities have very limited health services. Croc Festival and community events are vehicles for awareness and prevention campaigns and also provide basic services such as eye and ear clinics. Many of the activities have an emotional health focus, such as the hip-hop workshop run in conjunction with Beyond Blue, the national depression initiative, which are designed to promote emotional health and to encourage young people to seek support for, and to gain understanding of, mental health issues. Notably, many regional and remote areas have few services to deal with the growing mental health issues faced by young people. The festivals not only allowed youth to access services but also provided government agencies or national organisations access into the communities and to young people in need of support.

The festival health messages were complimentary to health promotion and prevention being undertaken in communities, schools and families; however, it could not be a substitute for health organisations working closely and consultatively in rural and remote Australia. Health workers we spoke to said that there are few platforms for health promotion in regional and remote Australia, and events such as Croc were an avenue for children and young people to learn about health in multiple ways. They also thought that the event afforded an opportunity for culturally and age appropriate, and locally orientated, health promotion. Although, it must be noted that some teachers, parents and health workers felt some workshops were not tailored for the younger children and there was a need to keep the activities fresh, fun and interactive otherwise awareness messages are lost in a ‘snatch and grab’. However, as the CIRCA evaluations found, when students were prompted they affirmed that they learned from Croc Festival about the negative affects of alcohol and drug misuse and the benefits of good nutrition and exercise. Three months on, students had retained messages of respecting culture and oneself, various health messages and the festival tagline. The report concluded that the festivals act as good awareness campaigns. As per our research, parents and teachers were sceptical that a one-off event could make significant behavioural changes, but they felt Croc could inform behaviour by providing a positive drug and alcohol free community experience and reinforcing health messages (CIRCA 2005, p. 60). Consistently in our interviews and discussions, undertaken across the sites, parents, teachers and local service providers, told of the important role that community celebrations played in public health education.

Croc Festival was a celebration of Indigenous culture, with an exclusive youth, educational and health emphasis. The performance element provided students with the experience of ‘shining’ in front of their peers, family and broader community. Over the ten years, 50 festivals were staged in regional, rural and remote Australia and thousands of students had an avenue to careers markets, the arts and diverse activities that are usually only available in more populated regions. Croc Festival success was in creating pride in Indigenous people and culture, which has significant impact upon young people’s self esteem and confidence. Many people believe that the focus should not have been on using Croc to improve school attendance but rather more intrinsic values such as emotional and social development. Significantly, community celebrations are a non-threatening way to reduce prejudices, discrimination and social tensions by providing a social space in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can interact and develop relationships of trust and understanding. They are events that can be harnessed to build capacity but to do so they need to be a part of a ‘mosaic of local initiatives’ that recognise, acknowledge and celebrate Indigenous culture and heritage as a part of wider history of a prosperous nation (Interview Briggs 2008). Indigenous Australians have rich cultures,



histories and heritage to draw upon to strengthen individual, family and community wellbeing and to share with broader Australia. What became very clear in our research is that communities want Indigenous festivals: to celebrate, share and most importantly maintain and vitalise contemporary culture.

4. The Dreaming Festival

Woodford

Lisa Slater

The Dreaming Festival strives to present rich, diverse and distinctive Indigenous cultural performances and histories, and affirm Indigenous people as historical agents and sovereign peoples. The festival, held over the June long weekend near Woodford in southeast Queensland, began in 2005. Running over three days and four nights, the program features multi-art forms, including film and literature components, performing arts, new media and digital technologies, comedy, ceremony, exhibitions, performance artists, physical theatre, visual arts, craft workshops, music program, street performers, musicals and a youth program and forums. While the impact of The Dreaming on the Murri host community of Jinibara land is important to understand, the emphasis of this festival is not specifically local, and involves participation on a much larger scale. The aim of the festival is to showcase local, national and international Indigenous artists in a contemporary celebration of culture and Indigenous excellence. The Dreaming is a festival of international standing and a specific objective is to support, and develop, Indigenous Australian performers, artists, musicians and works to gain exposure and to grow an economic base and/or to tour both nationally and internationally (Interview Rhoda Roberts 2007). However, as this chapter will demonstrate The Dreaming Festival does much more: it enables processes of creativity and renewal. People gather to not only celebrate Indigenous cultures but also to tend dynamic living cultures; in this sense the festival is a space for performing, discussing and negotiating contemporary culture and identity, and provides much needed social space for affirming Indigenous visions and aspirations.

The Dreaming is an initiative of the Artistic Director, Rhoda Roberts², and the Queensland Folk Federation, and is developed from the Woodford Folk festival community celebrations model, and benefits from its support and infrastructure. The festival was the vision of Rhoda Roberts, who was the director of the Festival of The Dreaming and Sydney Dreaming events, staged in Sydney from 1997, and a continuation of her commitment to an international Indigenous festival, and her belief that such an event could succeed in regional Australia. She had been looking for a home for the event for a number of years, when she met Bill Hauritz, Executive Director of the Queensland Folk Federation, who shared her vision and wanted to join the partnership. In 2005 Woodford became the home of The Dreaming Festival, on the grounds of the Woodford Folk Festival, where it became a four-day event with camping facilities. Festival-goers and artists alike camp in the beauty of southern Queensland bush. Since 2005 the festival has not only grown its audience but also the range of works presented and its ambition. Participants and performers are drawn from more than 80 clans and 60 Indigenous nations, primarily from the Pacific and the Americas (Interview Rhoda Roberts 2007). The audience—2009 ticket sales were 8,593—is predominantly from southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales, although the festival does draw a large number from further afield. As is to be expected, the majority of the audience are non-Indigenous, but the festival has a large number of Indigenous festival goers: over the years 14 to 20 per cent (Dreaming Festival Surveys 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009). Of course a substantial number of Indigenous attendees might also be performers/artists, however, management are mindful, as the festival grows, of maintaining and developing an Indigenous audience (Interviews Rhoda Roberts 2007; Amanda Jackes 2009).

² Rhoda Roberts was Artistic Director from 2005-2009

Youth program

The mission of the Youth program is to 'create networks within and between communities that include Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in activities, communication and personnel development activities' (Queensland Folk Federation 2007, p. 11). Integral to the aims of The Dreaming Festival is involving youth in all aspects of the festival, and the 'youth program is a distinct stream within The Dreaming, it is also part of a whole' (Queensland Folk Federation 2007). Telstra Foundation funding for a youth program allows the festival to develop and realise not only a distinct program—including supporting emerging artists, 'Mapping Country project', and platforms for youth voices—but also to incorporate youth more broadly into the festival—for example in opening and closing ceremony participation, youth involvement in programming and feedback and growing connections with schools and youth and community organisations—and in so doing enhancing youth ownership of the festival (Interviews Rhoda Roberts 2007; Amanda Jackes 2007). We will begin by examining elements of the youth program, however, in keeping with the 'holistic' aims of the festival we will extend the discussion to focus on important aspects and outcomes of the festival, which although not specifically 'youth' focused, more broadly strengthen Indigenous peoples and community and nourish young people. Notably young people refers to the 14 to 30 age group, and although there are overlaps with the other festivals being examined, The Dreaming Festival's focus is an older demographic.

The opening and closing ceremonies encapsulates much of what The Dreaming Festival has to offer. Importantly the ceremonies not only allow a greater number of children, young people and school groups to perform at the festival, but also for those with little exposure to ceremony to participate and learn (Interview Rhoda Roberts 2007). In the rehearsals and backstage during the performances, young performers have the opportunity to socialise and make connections with many Indigenous people from across the country and internationally, which enables cultural exchange and transmission, intergenerational dialogue and the strengthening of self-esteem. Inclusion in the ceremonies gives young people a sense of ownership of the festival and importantly marks the space as one in which Indigenous people are culturally safe and valued. The participants who we spoke to said they were extremely proud to be part of the ceremonies alongside renowned Indigenous artists and to perform to such large and appreciative audiences. It charged them with positive energy: in being a part of, and witnessing, Indigenous mobs coming together to create a ceremony that demonstrates difference and connections. Inclusion in the ceremonies generates a very embodied experience of the vitality, power, spirituality and creativity of contemporary Indigeneity.

Identity

What was made evident during the fieldwork was the positive impact that the celebration of Indigenous culture (most importantly in a public space where they felt safe to be Indigenous) had on the young people whom we interviewed. Indigenous people, and notably children and young people, are subject to overwhelming negative images of their life worlds, which inform their sense of self and cultural identity. It is too easily forgotten that mainstream Australia and the public discourse of 'dysfunction' are dominant components of the environment from which young people's identity is composed. To borrow the words of Gregory Phillips, Indigenous young people have a self-evident right to be proud of who they are (quoted in Maddison 2009, p. 183). In speaking to Indigenous

youth, and those accompanying them, it became clear that The Dreaming strengthens young people's sense of Indigeneity: they are exposed to affirming representations and role models, and see, what Thomas described as, the pride in people's faces and witness their dignity (Interview 2008), which has a very positive impact on their self-esteem. Muriel excitedly spoke of being overwhelmed, and that she wasn't aware that there was so much Indigenous talent, which she found very inspiring as an artist. She felt that her experience was 'more than words could express' and she was leaving feeling 'proud and fuller' (Interview 2008). Her sentiment concurred with Corrina's, who said that being at the festival was inspirational and magical, and she felt that 'everyone was spinning out on the festival' (Interview 2008).

The young people spoke of being uplifted by seeing or, even better, meeting performers who inspire and influence them. In 2009 a group of Koori boys had the opportunity to meet, hang out, and later perform with the hip-hop artists the Street Warriors. The boys said that meeting their role models encouraged and motivated them to achieve their dreams and become strong Koori men. What was made manifest in interviews and discussions was that at the festival young people felt hope and pride. Thomas said it 'confirmed his belief that change is here—here to stay' (Interview 2008). At the festival, people receive positive and nuanced visions of Indigeneity in a world that too often renders Indigenous people absent, silent or which only sees dysfunction. The festival articulates a positive story of who Indigenous people are and their role in contemporary Australia.

Karl made the very important point that at the festival there is 'positive visibility [for Indigenous people] in a public space' (Interview 2008). Notably, this is not generally the experience for Indigenous people in public spaces that are dominated by the mainstream, where too often the experience is of invisibility, negativity or threat. It is critical that there is support for the development of positive and coherent youth identity which enables young people to live a life of value and meaning (Ray 2007, p. 195). However, Indigenous identity, like all identities, is not only self-constructed through socio-cultural practices but also constructed through all forms of representation, including government and social institutions and broader non-Indigenous perceptions and concepts of Indigeneity. Many argue that fundamental to Indigenous wellbeing is the relationship with mainstream societies—the images, misconceptions, and stereotypes which shape understandings of Indigeneity and hence cross-cultural engagement and interactions with social institutions, and which in turn impact on Indigenous identity and self-esteem (Morrissey et al. 2007; Tynan et al. 2007). There is a need to provide public spaces where (especially young) people can feel accepted, and there is a need for policy and programs to support the establishment of places that promote Aboriginal identity (Tynan et al. 2007, p. 13). The Dreaming Festival is a public domain where young people can experience ownership, belonging and positive affirmations of Indigenous identity.

At The Dreaming Festival we used a photo-narrative method to illicit deeper discussions about young people's sense of the festival. We asked a number of Indigenous youth to take digital photographs of their 'Dreaming experience'. Then, as we reviewed the images, much like looking through holiday snaps, the participants chose particular images to talk to and help articulate their experiences, thoughts and feelings. All interviewees enjoyed the festival. In a general sense they had fun, and it was an opportunity to share time with Indigenous people, young and old, from across the country and internationally. The photographers, and other young people we spoke to, highlighted social connections or 'mixing it up' as one of the best aspects of the festival,

especially connecting with family who they are geographically separated from. Like the Koori boys who had the chance to hang out with the Street Warriors, many other young people spoke of socialising with other Indigenous people—be they elders, emerging musicians and dancers or other young Indigenous people—as providing them with a sense of pride and value, and a strong sense of where they ‘fit’ in the world. It is well documented that social connection and inclusion are vital for wellbeing: a strong and resilient identity develops from meaningful and supportive relationships with others (Anderson et al. 2007; Manderson 2005b; Paradies et al. 2009). Furthermore, many Indigenous people put a very high value on maintaining social relationships with extensive kinship networks, and therefore it is fundamental to health and happiness.

The festival inspires hope not only because it is a showcase of Indigenous excellence but more so because it is a place of exchange and connection, where young people can feel the spiritual strength of people and culture and learn from each other. Karl said that he felt the pride of the kids and that they gained strength from being with elders and hearing stories: they were not subject to the shame they feel in the mainstream, which allowed them to reconnect with their ‘internal compass’ (Interview 2008). Thomas spoke eloquently and poetically of cultural gatherings, such as The Dreaming Festival, providing a stable platform for the next generation. He emphasised the festival’s important role in maintaining, what he referred to as, the structures of life: being and sharing with one other, cultural exchange and pride. We need, he said, to attend to the foundations of life, and he saw The Dreaming Festival as contributing to creating places where people can ‘take off from’; a generative force which enables young Indigenous people to gain the strength and confidence to participate in broader Australian life (Interview 2008). The Dreaming provides a cultural space where young people can make meaningful connections with other Indigenous people, which strengthens their connection to culture and country. Or, in the words of Nalia, a place where you feel part of a strong and deadly culture and people (2007).

Intergenerational exchange

In public discourse it has become distressingly familiar to hear of intergenerational breakdown in Indigenous communities, and the associated social and cultural disintegration. On the contrary, one of the most familiar comments we heard from performers and festival attendees alike was that attending The Dreaming Festival afforded people quality time with friends and family. Tom E. Lewis (Artistic Director, Djilpin dancers and Walking with Spirits festival, Beswick, Northern Territory) referred to festivals as ‘medicines for families’ (2009). Many young people spoke fondly and appreciatively of sitting with elders, sharing stories, and of how deeply connected they felt to both the person and, through them, Indigenous cultural identity. It is beyond the scope of this study to trace the influences or longevity of such social connections, however, interviews confirmed that The Dreaming Festival is supporting or creating spaces for not only intergenerational connection but also translation, and thus supporting social connectedness and cultural maintenance.

The Minh Pora Pormpuraaw dancers and their manager Jeremy Gaia (who is also the Laura Dance Festival Director) attended The Dreaming Festival in 2007. Gaia sees both Laura and The Dreaming as important vehicles for keeping culture strong and strengthening individual and community life. Young people, he said, are swamped by mainstream culture and cannot see a place for their own culture in the dominant world, and this has severe impacts on their self-esteem. Preparation for festival performances

plays an important role in reconnecting young people to elders and culture, and performances affirm that Indigenous culture has a valued place in the contemporary world (Interview 2008). The Narunga and Wirangu woman Lee-Ann Buckskin, an arts producer and First Nations Arts and Culture Program Manager for Carclew Youth Arts in South Australia, understands The Dreaming Festival as providing a space for intergenerational cultural translation—a process that is challenging, ongoing and takes place in sites where young people work closely with elders. The Dreaming 2009 saw a revitalisation of culture and intergenerational exchange for the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY) which encompasses 103,000 square kilometres of remote country in the northwest region of South Australia. After a lengthy consultation with the elders to address the need for younger men and women from communities to be involved in their Inma (dance cycles), cultural leader Tapaya Edwards and young dancers led Rikina Inma at The Dreaming Festival. The revitalisation of the Inma came under the guidance of Lee-Ann, who over the last few years has been instrumental in working closely with cultural custodians across the APY lands to produce creative projects for people aged 26 and under (Interview Buckskin 2009; correspondence Rhoda Roberts 2009).

Lee-Ann spoke of the breakdown of social bonds and the pressure young people are under to keep culture strong, as well as the distractions and attractions of contemporary mainstream culture, which often results in great distress, confusion and inertia. Young Indigenous people, as Hinkson and Smith write, do not simply make a choice between two worlds or move between them, selecting the best both have to offer. To think this is possible, 'fails to comprehend the processes through which representations, cultural identities and life worlds are produced and reproduced' (2005, p. 164). In the lead up to The Dreaming, the young dancers rehearsed a great deal and were confident about their routine. Notably, it is very challenging for young people to understand how the festival environment works with its programming and scheduling, and to translate ceremony, that often continues for days, into 20 minute dance routines so that it doesn't lose its integrity (Buckskin interview June 2009). However, just prior and during the festivals, elders changed the routine, which is their cultural prerogative. In respect to the elders, the young people did as told, however, such instances result in them feeling under further pressure, inadequate and lacking in autonomy. These are difficult issues, and we do not write about them lightly. However, as Lee-Ann offered, for all the challenges of dancing at The Dreaming Festival, it enables the necessary discussions to begin with the elders about the young people needing autonomy, room for 'creativity' and support and encouragement (Interview 2009). Louise Partos and Renata Glencross, Artback, NT, share Lee-Ann's sentiments that festivals and more localised community celebrations and community cultural development play pivotal roles in cultural maintenance and strengthening intergenerational relationships (Interview 2009). It is vital to create cultural spaces that help strengthen young Indigenous people's relationships with their own culture and community and foster a contemporary Indigenous youth identity. The Dreaming Festival is a context for the contemporary negotiation and circulation of Indigenous identity, intergenerational connections and cultural transmission (Myers 1994).

Representation and voice

It is of primary importance that young people make their experiences legible for themselves, as well as others. We are in a political moment when there is grave concern for the wellbeing of Indigenous children and young people. Yet there are limited avenues

in the public realm for Indigenous youth to articulate their own experiences, hopes and values. The Dreaming Festival speakers forums provide a platform for young people's voices, whether in youth dedicated panels or otherwise. Notably, youth forums ensure that young people's voices do not get lost amongst older speakers who might be more articulate or experienced. Over the last few years, there have been some especially dynamic youth forums that have enjoyed a large and responsive audience.

In 2007 the Youth Leadership Roundtable afforded the speakers the opportunity to not only give voice to their political visions and experiences but also for the audience to witness very articulate, strong and socially progressive Indigenous youth who are taking responsibility for their own lives and working with and supporting others to become future leaders. In conversations with panellists they said that being invited to speak made them proud, but it was also invaluable for gaining experience and confidence, which they saw as important for developing their leadership skills. There have also been forums where young people have spoken about community-based youth initiatives and programs. These forums are an opportunity for youth to speak about what they want and need, rather than be silenced by government, community or political agendas. Too often in public discourse, Indigenous youth are portrayed as 'dangerous or docile' — needing to be acted upon but not agents in their right. The speakers' forums present a very different picture: young people with vision and vitality. They are also spaces that encourage the emergence of young leaders. There is room, however, as is acknowledged by festival organisers, for more platforms for young voices. However, when presenting or performing at The Dreaming, young people are participating in the important work of generating their visions of their worlds and partaking in the important processes of identity and community formation and public dialogue.

The Dreaming Festival offers various avenues for emerging artists and for young people to be mentored in multi-art forms. The above discussions indicate that arts managers and youth organisations include younger performers and speakers in their ensembles to give them experience, exposure and the opportunity for not only professional development but also emotional development that comes with incorporating new experiences and socialising outside of familiar networks. In the opening and closing ceremonies young dancers work with seasoned performers, learning not only routines but also rehearsal and time management skills and the rigours and expectations of performance. Experienced and emerging artists and arts workers support young people in gaining professional performance and arts management skills. Visual and physical theatre companies, such as EARTH and Valconia, have mentored young people to undertake performances at The Dreaming. EARTH's artistic director said that the festival provides an opportunity for the young people to gain performance experience but more so to connect with Indigenous people, culture and country (2007). The manager of Mangkaja Arts Centre, Fitzroy Crossing, Kate, said that despite the exhausting logistics and expense of getting their artists and work to the other side of the country it was well worth it, not only for sales and exposure of Kimberly art but importantly for the professionalising experiences it offered the young women who work in the art centre. Kate, and the young women themselves, said that by talking to strangers, especially non-Indigenous people, about the art, their country and culture they grew greatly in confidence. The young women experienced themselves as valued, highly competent and knowledgeable and went home full of energy and ideas (Interview 2009).

Many have noted that the failure to value the multiplicity of Indigenous cultural and political practices as a legitimate and productive part of contemporary Australia reinscribes colonialism (Dodson 2003; Muecke 2004). An important element of wellbeing is to be respected, valued and included as a full member of society. A continuing task for

Indigenous cultural politics has been to criticise and attempt to overthrow the persistent colonial conceptions of Indigenous identity. As Indigenous public intellectual Michael Dodson argues, non-Indigenous representations of Aboriginality continue to define Aboriginal people in relation to the dominant culture, projecting unwanted aspects of the white self onto Aboriginal people (2003, p. 36). Representations of Indigenous people have primarily been racial stereotypes in which Indigenous people are deployed as alternatives to mainstream culture but not perceived as legitimate members of the social body. Both Dodson and Marcia Langton accuse white Australia of talking to itself. Indeed, they suggest that too often white, settler narratives stand in for non-Indigenous relationships with Indigenous Australian (2003; 1993). Thus, fundamental to Indigenous wellbeing is the creation of social-cultural spaces that encourage and enable the representation of the vitality and multiplicity of contemporary Indigeneity, which are in dialogue with and interrupt mainstream Australia's 'monologue'.

The Dreaming Festival is a showcase of Indigenous cultural and artistic excellence. Arguably, one of the festival's most important outcomes is to provide a public space in which heterogeneous 'performances' of Indigeneity are valued and co-present. Importantly, the festival does not privilege a particular representation of Indigeneity; rather it gathers a diverse range of performers and forum participants from vastly different places. The range of performances and divergent identities presented at The Dreaming defies anyone's ability to define and categorise Indigenous identity. In providing a social space for multiple and contradictory performances of Indigeneity the festival helps to destabilise the persistent image of the 'real', 'authentic', Indigenous person, which has both its noble and ignoble forms. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are surrounded by First Nations People who do not conform to 'pre-packaged', and indeed pre-colonial, images of Indigeneity. Not only are there performances by urban hip-hop artists, comedians, drag queens and galleries which promote urban and regional-based photography and art, there are also people and communities who would readily be considered 'traditional' (and too often perceived as outside modern Australia) who are seen not only performing but also walking around the site, listening to bands and socialising. They are people getting about and enjoying the festival. This is not to say that people at the festival are not subjected to being made exotic or having their identity questioned but rather that public spaces that enable representations of the multiplicity of contemporary Indigeneity play a vital role in challenging and disrupting the stranglehold of colonial representations of Indigeneity.

If, as is widely accepted, the critical goods of health and wellbeing are in leading a life with purpose, having quality connections with others, possessing self-regard and experiencing feelings of efficacy and control then the inability of broader Australia to accommodate and value the multiplicity of contemporary Indigeneity severely impedes goals for positive change (Manderson 2005a, p. 162). As the public sphere and civic life are not neutral or universal the wellbeing of Indigenous people is also reliant upon the dominant culture 'making space' for Indigeneity (Bell 2008, p. 854). However, as noted, in making space the mainstream often demand particular representations and performances of Indigeneity which fulfil expectations of and desire for 'authentic' pre-colonial culture. Too often people go unseen or unheard as Indigenous if they don't display the authentic images provided and accepted by the dominant culture (Panagia 2006, p. 123). The frustration, anger, alienation, loss of sense of individual and racial self and pride that people experience from going unseen and unheard or being subject to questioning of identity is, one would hope, self-evident. It is extremely debilitating and damaging for people, especially youth, to experience others experiencing them as 'not real'. To

be unable to self-represent and represent oneself as Indigenous further excludes and alienates one from being a full and valued member of Australian society.

To complicate the matter more the assertion of cultural and political differences has situated Indigenous people as un-Australian or not Australian enough. Without a 'voice', a recognisable or acceptable public identity as an Indigenous Australian, how does one participate in public debates or the making of civic life? In an interview with Bill Hauritz, Executive Director of the Queensland Folk Federation, he spoke of his concern about the limited opportunities in Australia for Indigenous people to participate in 'authoring' public life, and he sees both the Woodford Folk and Dreaming Festivals as playing a role in creating spaces for public debate on the difficult issues (Interview 2009). It is easy to see how The Dreaming Festival forums provide platforms for a diversity of Indigenous voices on a wide range of subjects. Many of the issues discussed challenge government agendas and public discourse, or at the very least complicate them. As the government and media provide for most mainstream Australians the most readily available interpretation of Indigenous Australia, the forums inject critical voices where the public desire is for easy answers and quick fixes. In so doing many in the audience are left with a level of discomfort or uncertainty, but arguably for a healthy public sphere it is necessary to disrupt certainties and for a greater value to be placed on questioning and reflection rather than simply seeking answers.

In 2009 Chris Sarra, speaking on Indigenous education, challenged the government's agenda of 'cherry picking' high achieving children to go to boarding schools and abandoning too many students to inadequate schooling. Despite the breakfast timeslot his large audience were stimulated to question and debate. In previous years there have been very passionate discussions about a variety of issues, from the Northern Territory Intervention and the anniversary of the 1967 Referendum to Indigenous cultural rights and inter-cultural relationships. As noted, management acknowledge there is room, and plans, for developing the forums and 'talking circles' to create a space for further dialogue and addressing contemporary social issues (Interview Michael Williams 2009).

I want to reiterate a fundamental role of socio-cultural spaces such as The Dreaming: to be an 'author' of civic life it is not only necessary to literally have a voice in public debate but, importantly for one's identity, to be recognised as legitimate. Hence diverse and divergent representations of Indigeneity – across the multi-art forms – play a vital role in overturning the stereotypes which limit Indigenous people's role in contemporary Australian life. The Dreaming Festival is designed not only to challenge the limited perceptions of Indigeneity but also perhaps to confound. The cultural space privileges competing identities, histories, perspectives and desires. In so doing, the festival creates a space for the many who are rendered voiceless by the cult of authenticity (Panagia 2006, p. 122).

Showcasing Indigenous excellence

The Dreaming Festival as a showcase of Indigenous excellence defies the images of Indigeneity that prevail in the media. As such it supplies a bounty of good news stories. In Australian public discourse the Indigenous population is almost always characterised as disadvantaged or deficient compared to the non-Indigenous. Media reporting is typically negative and plays to predictable themes and expectations of crisis and social dysfunction; so much so that it could be said to have become a narrative of dysfunction. In our media-saturated society the reported crisis in Indigenous communities has become a public spectacle of relentless horror (Langton 2008). There are considerable social challenges in many Indigenous people's lives, and in no way should these be avoided

or minimised. However, the dominant discourse creates the impression that Indigenous communities (and by association individuals) are terminal places outside of rational, modern Australia.

There are few alternatives to the one-dimensional media reports and government claims about so-called dysfunctional Aboriginal communities, so it is paramount that people have opportunities for self-representation. What is made clear by the performances at The Dreaming Festival is that people not only have something to say about their own lives but they are also aware of the complexity of their environment and the contradictory social forces which inform their everyday. The performers and participants are attempting to make themselves present in a media-saturated world that talks *about* Indigenous people not *to* them. Far from being just a supply of 'good news stories' the festival is a vital space from which people make their own lives legible and intervene in public discourse.

The Dreaming Festival provides much needed social spaces for affirming Indigenous visions and aspirations in a non-subservient relation to mainstream values. Mick Dodson sees Indigenous peoples as having twin projects, one of which is to 'subvert the hegemony over our own representations, and allow our visions to create the world of meaning in which we relate to ourselves, to each other, and to non-Indigenous people' (2003, p. 33). Dodson's call is a reminder that wellbeing is dependent on a sense of control over one's life, and that empowerment grows out of self-definition. People need to define their own experiences and situations in their own terms, within relationship to their immediate and the broader world (HALT, quoted in Morrissey et al. 2007, p. 250), which is further complicated and undermined when there are few avenues to do so or if people's experiences are not respected and valued. Many Indigenous people we spoke to affirm the festival as a site of renewal and creativity; fundamental to dynamic living cultures.

Indigenous artists, presenters and festival goers spoke of the festival as inspiring and invigorating, a great place to network with other artists, to share time and stories and listen and learn and a powerful site for cultural exchange. Karl said you can 'see through the performance to see the ceremony and cultural exchange'. He commented that the 'Dreaming is deadly, and it and other festivals connect up like traditional trading routes. It is all about culture. Having our space to do it' (Interview 2008). The importance of having space dedicated to Indigenous



Dreaming Festival Director Rhoda Roberts (2005-09) in forum discussion with Jinibara traditional owner Uncle Noel Blair and University of Queensland ATSI unit Director, Michael Williams, The Dreaming Festival, 2008

Photo: Peter Phipps



Festival-goers at the Blak Dramatics performance space, The Dreaming Festival, 2008

Photo: Peter Phipps

cultural expression and gatherings came through very strongly in our interviews and discussions, and parallels health professionals who argue that fundamental to Indigenous wellbeing is the creation of socio-cultural spaces not dominated by the mainstream (Morrissey et al. 2007; Tynan et al. 2007). In 2008 Native American Dancers joyously told the crowd how wonderful, inspiring and nourishing it was to be at the festival where they were connecting with so many First Nations people (2008). Again, a member of the Mexican dance troupe, Totonaca Dancers, through an interpreter, said that at The Dreaming they felt highly valued and respected. He spoke movingly of the troupe's enriching and nurturing experience with the Tjunpi dancers/weavers. Despite not sharing a language they felt a deep spiritual connection as First Nations people, and he finished by saying he would carry this home with him and from it take great strength (Interview 2009).

In our interview with Louise Partos and Renata Glencross, Artback, NT, they said that 'strong women from communities are going to festivals and having exchanges. Festivals give people options—they feel good about themselves, maintain culture and engage with people in meaningful ways. People are here to learn: there is a reciprocity and generosity of spirit'. (Interview 2009)

Emerging artists, presenters and young festival attendees told of being invigorated by and feeling a sense of support from talking to and seeing the work and performances of established artists, musicians and public intellectuals, which in turn influences and motivates their work, sense of self and strengthens connection to other Indigenous people.

Phillips asks what does it mean to be black in a changing world (quoted in Maddison 2009, p. 183). It is a question that could be posed to everyone in some way: what does it mean to be a woman, a man, a white settler Australian? But it has particular weight for peoples who have been historically marginalised, colonised and categorised. Yin Paradies argues that there is a need for a discursive space in which to debate the meaning of Indigeneity in contemporary Australia (2006, p. 356). In our interview, Lydia Miller spoke of cultural festivals as sites where Indigenous people are actively engaged in the important work of questioning and challenging what is contemporary Indigeneity (Interview 2008). Arguably, cultural festivals are discursive spaces in which innovation and creativity can occur, which is necessary for sustaining and renewing coherence between the past and present (McEwan and Tsey 2009, p. 11). Louise and Reneta from Artback said that festivals are a platform for developing artists and cultural maintenance. 'Dancers are knowledge and law keepers and need funds to do so'. They went on to say that The Dreaming gives performers the ability to be creative. The Tjunpi women's 2009 grass dance was experimental: the dancers changed routines and were playful with the audience. The Chooky dancers, they said, changed countrymen's views of dancing: if they could be that playful then it allowed others to do so (Interview 2009).

The Melbourne based visual artist and Wemba Wemba woman Paola Balla said that the festival's greatest strength is in 'presenting Indigenous arts and culture in the form that it is in right now', especially the very new and cutting edge, and that the 'modern and contemporary are presented as being as important and valid as the traditional forms' (Interview 2009). What is reflected very strongly in interviews is The Dreaming Festival, to borrow Dodson's words, is a socio-cultural space that allows Indigenous visions to create worlds of meaning in which people relate to one another and the wider world. Indigenous people gather to not only celebrate Indigenous cultures but also to promote dynamic living cultures. In this sense the festival is a creative space for performing, discussing and negotiating contemporary culture and identity.

Cultural security

The Dreaming Festival provides a space in which Indigenous values take precedence, which in turn enables a sense of cultural security or safety. In mainstream health and wellbeing research, it is widely acknowledged that a strong sense of identity is a prerequisite for mental health, yet there are few opportunities to assert the importance of cultural heritage and identity as a vital component in Indigenous wellbeing. Furthermore, cultural identity depends not only on access to culture and heritage but also on an opportunity for cultural expression and endorsement within society's institutions and social spaces (Durie, quoted in Morrissey et al. 2007, p. 249). Yet for Indigenous Australians there are few avenues to do so, and people's experiences are seldom respected and valued. Thus responding to Indigenous wellbeing requires 'creating social spaces in which the lived reality of Indigenous culture can assert itself over and against the social construction of that reality by non-Aborigines' (Morrissey et al. 2007, p. 245).

Many Indigenous people spoke of feeling culturally secure or safe at the festival: that their cultural rights, views, values and expectations are recognised, appreciated and respected, and therefore that they do not feel compromised or excluded (quoted in Heil 2006, p. 105). There are not many public places in an Indigenous person's life, outside of one's home or immediate family or friendship networks, to feel culturally safe and or not experience forms of racism. Michael Williams said the festival 'offers Indigenous people a space just to be rather than be on and trying to keep themselves safe in a very hostile environment (Interview 2008). Paola Balla shares Michael's sentiments, saying that her often-held fears or defensiveness about being in inter-cultural public spaces dissipated at the festival because she felt culturally safe and, as Rhoda Roberts is the director, she is reassured that all the protocols are in place. Paola also spoke of it as a 'space to be myself. For me there's a real spiritual and a cultural experience that takes place with many other Indigenous people ... I've been twice now, and I like to lose myself in experiences where I feel culturally safe' (Interview 2009).

Economic development

As an international showcase of Indigenous art and culture, The Dreaming Festival provides a platform for the exposure of emerging and established artists and art forms, the development of new work and an opportunity for networking, which enriches artists work and lives. It is one of nine festivals selected by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts board (ATSIA) for the Industry development Celebrations festival strategy. As already noted, the board recognised that festivals enabled work to be created that provides economic paths for artists, arts workers and administrators, and they produce cultural tourism components (Interview Lydia Miller 2008). The Celebrations strategy is designed to grow and support the capacity, capability and sustainability of the festivals in recognition of their artistic, cultural and economic benefits for Indigenous people and opportunities they present to 'keep culture strong'. The Dreaming Festival is also a strategic partner of Showcasing the Best, which aims to develop Indigenous artists and companies to become 'export ready' and target international opportunities for 'product' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts 2008).

Access to employment and economic independence is directly tied to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing. Although very few people can make a sustainable income from artistic-cultural pursuits it can lead to other forms of employment—for

example in arts management or teaching—alongside many other benefits that have been discussed in this chapter. There are those who, like Boyd Hunter, argue, that:

Indigenous unemployment cannot be addressed by relying solely on the economist's usual toolkit (for example, increasing the number of suitable jobs available in the local area or sending the unemployed back to school). Innovative policies must be found to deal directly with the root causes of social exclusion, whilst accommodating differences between Indigenous and other Australians. (2000, p. vi)

The Dreaming Festival demonstrates the possibility for the establishment of innovative employment policies that support arts and culture and the development of hybrid economies, which includes free market and customary and state components (Altman 2007).

Despite the number and variety of mainstream festivals and venues they provide few work opportunities for Indigenous artists. This lessens the avenues for employment and representation as well as opportunities for the development of new works. Through the Commission series and the Kinship program The Dreaming Festival supports new work and performers. Rhoda Roberts works closely with artists and communities to both establish and polish performances. The contemporary Torres Strait Island dance piece, *Koiki*, directed by Gail Mabo, which tells the story of the life of Eddie Mabo, was initially developed as a twenty-minute performance for the festival. There are few established 'traditional' dance troupes; rather most dances are adapted from ceremony.

In 2009 young and emerging artists were showcased in several contemporary dance and theatre pieces, such as graduates from NAISDA Dance College who performed a newly devised project and Katherine Becket who performed in the theatre production 'Coloured Diggas' directed by Leah Purcell. Through the Kinship program The Dreaming provides experience to community dance troupes. In 2007 Mutitjulu community (NT) and Mihn Pora dancers Pormpuraaw were supported to produce dance routines to perform at the festival, with the express vision to build a repertoire of work to tour or for local cultural tourism.

The festival is not only presenting Indigenous art and culture, it is actively engaged in developing work and professionalising emerging artists. What often goes unrecognised is the role festivals, national or local and community cultural development programs play in sustaining Indigenous cultural expression: performing and visual arts largely come from people and communities being supported at a grassroots level. For example, traditional dance troupes are often developed from elders being taken out on country with young people and practicing ceremony which is then adapted for public performance through intensive negotiations and performed at community or regional festivals or gatherings, which up-skills troupes in the chain of professional development toward larger festivals, such as The Dreaming. According to Artback NT, the dancers who come to The Dreaming have usually had two to three years development in community, which is also important to intergenerational exchange. Artback have been doing this work for ten years and they argue festivals are a platform for the development of artists, as well as an income base, and are sites for cultural maintenance (Interview 2009).

In conversations with emerging and established artists and performers several points were reiterated: The Dreaming Festival provides much needed exposure, which can lead to future work; and the immersion in art and culture, networking and dialogue and sharing with other artists and countrymen and women, inspires, motivates and enriches artistic life and practice. National and international festival directors attend

The Dreaming Festival, which has resulted in artists being booked for festivals such as Planet IndigenUs (Canada), Pasifika (New Zealand) and Cumbre Taijin (Mexico). The internationally renowned Yolngu singer Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu performed as a relative unknown to packed venues at the 2007 Dreaming Festival. The festival audience was abuzz with talk of his shows and presence, which no doubt spread across the country when they returned home. Skinny Fish music have long worked with Gurrumul (since his time with Yothu Yindi and Saltwater band) to promote his unique talents, however, festivals such as The Dreaming play an important role in exposing Indigenous artists to a large audience and 'target' markets.

Australian and international audiences, as Lydia Miller said, want access to Indigenous art and culture, which festivals can provide (Interview 2008). At The Dreaming the audience is also exposed to work they might not plan to see: sitting in a venue at the finish of one show, they might unintentionally catch the next one or walking around the site they might stroll into a gallery and learn about, or purchase, art from Arnhem Land, the Torres Strait Islands or southeast Queensland. Importantly, the festival presents contemporary Indigenous art and culture in all its diversity, potentially creating new audiences. Furthermore, as Louise Partos said, Artback NT, arts managers and touring organisations leverage off The Dreaming to get their artists more work in southeast Queensland or along the east coast before or after the festival. In 2009 Artback brought 30 artists to the festival and were confident that the exposure would lead to future performances and exhibitions (Interview 2009).

There are many established and emerging artists whose careers (although not enjoying Gurrumul's success) have been promoted and developed by performing at The Dreaming. Dan Sultan, Shellie Morris, Leah Flanagan Band, Freshwater Band, Street Warriors, Doonooch and Djilpin dance troupes, visual artists Lisa Michl and Bindi Cole, and international acts such as the Pacific Curls (who sold the highest number of CDs at the festival shop and undertook workshops with youth) are just a few. Notably, their success acts to inspire young people. Kahami King—the drag queen act, Constantina Bush—said that the festival is a great platform for artists. Not only does performing at The Dreaming lead to further work offers, both national and internationally, it also provides a focus for creating new work (Interview 2009). Similarly art galleries found festival patrons appreciative of their artists' work. UMI Arts of far north Queensland said the festival had been very good for them, providing reasonable sales but more importantly exposure, ideas and the knowledge that people want inexpensive items (\$100-300) and that over the next year artists could work on smaller pieces (Interview 2009). The manager of Sugarbag Gallery said that The Dreaming Festival is a great promotional tool for southeast Queensland artists work. It challenges and educates people about Indigenous art and the perception that it all comes from remote Australia. She said the audience are interested buyers and each year their sales increase and people develop a greater appreciation for local talent. Not all artists sell work but the festival is a showcase that can lead to commissions or later sales. However, she said most importantly exhibiting at the festival builds artists' confidence and enables them to develop networks (Interview 2009). Other artists and managers share her sentiment. Louise from Artback praised the festival management for their level of governance which recognises it is important that people are paid, get recognition as artists and professional development, including understanding contracts, and that the event is culturally appropriate. Speaking about the Tjunpi dancers, she said that it is great for the ladies to know they are professional:

This mob feel good about themselves. The performers feel very proud of themselves and they take that back to community – talk it up, others hunger to do it and get some insight into possibilities’. Like others, Louise finished by saying we need more festivals across the country – regionally and small community festivals (Interview 2009).

Artists and performers consistently spoke of the importance of Dreaming as a larger stage for Indigenous art and culture, where it is valued and recognised as powerful, diverse and where there is exchange with other artists. It is also notable how many people thought they needed a similar festival ‘back home’.

Reconciliation

In his 2009 Dreaming Festival address, Mick Dodson began by saying that ‘he’d been thinking about how we think about each other’: that is Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. His reflections stemmed from the recent release of, and his involvement in, the Australian Reconciliation Barometer, a national research study that explores how Indigenous and other Australians see and feel about each other and how these perceptions affect progress towards reconciliation and closing the gap (Auspoll 2009). The research found that the vast majority of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people surveyed believed it was important that all Australians know about Indigenous history and culture and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is important. Yet only about half of either population group believed the relationship was good or improving. Tellingly, only one in ten feels there is a high level of trust between the groups. Even more so, less than half of non-Indigenous people believe that Indigenous people are open to sharing their culture with other Australians, while 89 per cent of Indigenous people say they are (Auspoll 2009, pp. 3-5). As the report suggests:

This indicates a significant gap in perceptions and suggests that one important way to close this gap is to support Indigenous Australians in finding ways to share their culture with non-Indigenous people, and to support non-Indigenous Australians in finding ways to learn about, experience and take pride in Indigenous culture (Auspoll 2009, p. 5)

Mick Dodson recommended that every Australian attend The Dreaming Festival: we would learn a lot about each other and this would help build understanding (Dreaming Festival 2009). Perceptions, he said, shape reality; they have very material affects. Not only do perceptions shape direct behaviour and relationships they inform larger intercultural understandings, which in turn shapes our sense of what it is to be Australian, who is deserving of fairness and equality, and who and what should be included in Australian values, law, history and creating our future. It informs one’s very sense of ‘our’. Clearly the festival, with its multi-art forms and speakers forums, is a platform for diverse voices, representations, stories, histories, hopes, values and law, which in turn could provide a ‘reality check’ for all who attend.

As discussed earlier, public discourse and media reports largely paint Indigenous people and communities as dysfunctional, suffering or, alternatively, exotic, and in turn this shapes intercultural engagement and how non-Indigenous Australians think about and respond to issues (or what are considered ‘Indigenous issues’). The Dreaming Festival not only challenges representations of Indigenous people it also provides a space for various forms of cross-cultural engagement. Most non-Indigenous Australians have very little, if any, interaction with Indigenous people. At the festival non-Indigenous people

are in a shared space. Watching performances, moving around the site, sitting by a camp fire and talking and participating in workshops, provide varied forms of exchange and intimacy. This produces pleasures and discomforts, but arguably for many non-Indigenous Australians being in spaces not dominated by the mainstream (and which became clear in discussions and observations) often results in people reflecting upon their feelings, perceptions and perhaps prejudices toward Indigenous people, and what their role might be in maintaining the status quo and the privileges of being white. At times responses in the forums exposed a longing among some non-Indigenous people (of which many Indigenous people are aware) for romantic and nostalgic notions of Indigenous country and culture and the answers from Indigenous people to questions such as 'What can I do?', 'What should I think about the NT intervention, Indigenous health, education, incarceration,' and so on. However, as discomfiting and frustrating as this is for some, it also reveals a social dynamic and in so doing, promotes alternative responses and the possibility of generating new inter-cultural dialogues.

The Dreaming Festival is a space for non-Indigenous Australians to be educated about Indigenous Australians, cultural, history and contemporary issues and for exchanges and reflection upon what it means to be Australian and live in our shared, globalising world. Importantly it is also a site where non-Indigenous Australians might be challenged to rethink their ideas of indigeneity, Australian identity, their own sentiments (or perhaps own them), social history and the present. Arguably a forum such as The Dreaming enables what Amanda Jackes refers to as grassroots reconciliation: a connection to people, issues and history beyond government agendas (Interview 2009). Taking responsibility for where we find our selves.

If wellbeing is fundamentally about 'the act to be' then social and cultural distinctive understandings of what makes a healthy Indigenous person are of primary importance. Social and communal life-worlds are vital for everybody's daily sustenance. What is evident in contemporary Indigenous affairs, and public discourse in general, is that Indigenous people and communities are characterised as dysfunctional and deficient compared to mainstream Australia, which reinforces white, settler colonial values and experiences of wellbeing. Indigenous health requires creating public spaces in which Indigenous reality can be asserted over mainstream culture. Performances of cultural heritage and identity are vital elements in legitimising, sharing and challenging worldviews. They enable processes of creativity and renewal. People gather to not only celebrate Indigenous cultures but also to tend dynamic living cultures; in this sense the festivals are spaces for performing, discussing and negotiating contemporary culture and identity. Festivals, such as The Dreaming, are socio-cultural spaces in which people are affirming worlds of meaning and the very conditions of their wellbeing.



5. Garma Festival North East Arnhem Land

Peter Phipps

Aboriginal peoples and cultures are a prominent 'artifact' in non-Indigenous Australian public discourse and culture. Characteristically these discourses are concerned with the very real disadvantages in health, education, employment and life expectancy faced by Aboriginal people, sometimes expressed as moral panic, while occasionally they romanticise or mystify Aboriginal peoples and cultures. Neither position — abjection or romanticism — really engages with the experiences or aspirations of Aboriginal people themselves. Most of the Australian population, who live in large cities, have had minimal or no contact with Aboriginal people, or fail to recognise or engage with the Aboriginal people living and working around them. As a small and very diverse minority of the national population, Aboriginal people have deployed a whole range of strategies to further their twin objectives of equality of opportunity on the one hand (after a long history of severe discrimination) and on the other hand the recognition of special rights to pursue and maintain their distinctive cultures and connections to their ancestral lands despite a long history of pressure to assimilate and disappear.

The experience of colonialism has differed enormously from the more densely and early-colonised parts of the country, where Indigenous languages, religions and peoples' relationship to land were severely repressed, to those more remote places, particularly in the centre, north and west, where Aboriginal labour was needed and differences less thoroughly oppressed. It wasn't until the middle of the twentieth century that Australian colonial institutions really took hold of daily life in Arnhem Land (a remote, dry tropical savannah region in the northeast of what is today the Northern Territory) which had been set aside in the 1930s as a vast Aboriginal reserve. From that period on, Yolngu people were encouraged to live under the authority of missionaries in centralised towns such as Yirrkala and Galiwin'ku in the north-east and Ramingining, Maningrida and others further west. The national Aboriginal rights-based initiatives of the 1960s and 1970s (equal pay campaigns, citizenship, land rights struggles, and so on) and the social dislocation elders saw in the towns led many Yolngu to establish themselves back on *country* (ancestral lands) in what came to be known as the homelands movement. As a result of their relatively late and 'incomplete' colonial experience, Yolngu people have been prominent in these movements and still maintain strong connections to their ancestral lands and the law, language, spirituality, dance and music which sustains it.

Christie and Greatorex (2006) describe a pattern of habitation where today's population of about 5,000 Yolngu are distributed (and to an extent move) between these former mission towns of 500 to 2,000 people, small homeland settlements, with about 500 people in the regional capital Darwin for medical, educational, social or other reasons. The maintenance of these connections to country are the main concern of Yolngu ceremonial life, most active for frequent and demanding funerals. These connections have also generated a dynamic Yolngu visual arts sector generating income through community arts centres' linkages to a national and global art market. Similarly, ranger programs translate Yolngu land-management practices into an idiom recognisable (and fundable) by the Australian state, and Yolngu educators have been struggling to do the same for over two decades. In summary, Yolngu have forged a small world of Yolngu modernity where their own community organisations and corporations mediate relations with state bureaucracies and the local mine; while ceremonial life, hunting, gathering and associated cultural transmission continue and are transformed.

The Garma Festival

Garma is an intercultural gathering of national political, cultural and academic significance, and simultaneously is a local gathering of Yolngu clans on Yolngu land for Yolngu political, ceremonial and recreational purposes. Yolngu landowners invite visitors to participate in a five-day cultural event, held annually since 1999 by the Yothu Yindi Foundation on the Gove Peninsula in remote north east Arnhem Land. Gulkula sits on an escarpment in a stringy bark forest overlooking the Gulf of Carpentaria about 14 kilometres by dirt road from the Gove airport (with daily connections to and from the cities of Darwin and Cairns). The site is relatively accessible as a result of the substantial open-cut bauxite-mining infrastructure which has dominated the region economically, socially and physically for the last forty years. Garma typically involves up to about two thousand participants gathering at this site of temporary bushpole and portable administrative and catering buildings, bush shelters, makeshift shower blocks, toilets and over a thousand domed tents making up smaller, Yolngu family-based camps and the concentrated mass of a visitors' 'tent city'; all organised around a central, sand-covered ceremonial ground.

Over a decade the Garma Festival has built up a suite of activities and programs designed to engage a range of different visitor constituencies physically, intellectually and spiritually while bringing multiple benefits to the Yolngu host community in the process. These multiple and overlapping constituencies are a complex mix including Yolngu hosts the Gumatj clan and their intimate Rirratjingu 'mothers' clan, other Yolngu clans and organisations, other Indigenous people from Australia and elsewhere, *Balanda* (non-Indigenous visitors), Yolngu and Balanda youth from the region, tertiary students and academics, government and related policy-makers, cultural tourists (divided into men's and women's activities), international *yidaki* (didjeridu) students, media crews, 'VIPs' (including philanthropic, corporate and government sponsors), high school music students from Indigenous rock bands across the NT, '(mining) town visitors', the odd celebrity, staff, volunteers and so on. The eclectic mix of participants is one of the features that has given Garma a unique reputation for both intimacy and influence. Federal and Territory government ministers rub shoulders with Yolngu elders and artists, the occasional media celebrity or rock star queues for food with networking academics, smiling mining executives carry spears they made under the direction of Yolngu rangers, while barefoot kids kick a football in the sand.

Garma carries the intertwined pragmatic purposes of local cultural survival, renewal and resource gathering on the one hand, and visionary local and national cultural transformation on the other. At its simplest Garma was originally seen by its Yolngu founders as a way to advance Yolngu education, training and employment guided by traditional law. Garma grew from a 1998 workshop at Gulkula which was to be the site of a Yolngu 'bush university' or the beginning of an integrated cultural studies education facility (the Garma Cultural Studies Institute) with the original ambition being the construction of culturally appropriate office and service buildings connected with other organisations such as ranger programs, men's and women's healing, a cultural resource centre, and so on. Clan leaders selected the site of Gulkula both for its spiritual connection with the important Yirritja ancestral figure Ganbulabula and as the former site of Dhupuma College boarding school, a high-school education delivered specifically

for Yolngu with great effect in training Yolngu teachers, health workers and other professionals until it was shut down by the Northern Territory government in 1981 (Gaykamangu et al. 1999; McMillan 1999).

Much more important than buildings, Garma has made a 'festival' space where, for example, formal training in cultural tourism, musical performance and recording, and event security has been happening simultaneously with nationally significant Indigenous policy discussions, while a women's Yolngu traditional healing program has leveraged the Garma 'VIP' network to seek philanthropic support. While Yothu Yindi Foundation Chairman Galarwuy Yunupingu once asserted that he would prefer to do away with the term 'festival' to make the event simply and uniquely 'Garma', the use of the festival concept is a widely familiar cultural form in Australia and elsewhere that provides licence for framing experiences that cross entrenched cultural limits and personal habits. By holding a 'festival' the Yolngu hosts of Garma can muster a range of influential participants who are prepared to forego their usual urban privileges and comforts: queue for food and toilets, sleep in the bush, be out of mobile phone coverage, and listen to unfamiliar speaking voices and music through the day and as they sit in the sand watching the evening *bunggul* (ritual dance/ corroboree). After dark the school bands that have been in professional mentoring throughout the days leading up to Garma get their chance to perform on the bauxite mound stage their repertoire ranging from rock to hip-hop. With professional staging and sound production they look and sound their best, and their families and communities come to support them as they play sets alongside local and regional legends like Yothu Yindi and Saltwater Band, and the national and international acts Yothu Yindi's own international fame and networks attract.

Garma is a pragmatic strategy both for reinforcing and strengthening local cultural practices, building new resources, and for engaging and incorporating influential people in key institutions such as, media, law, health, public administration and education into relationships of knowledge exchange and the call for reciprocity. This invitation to reciprocity allows for the recognition of forms and practices of Aboriginal sovereignty simply by being there on Yolngu land with a sincere intention to learn from Yolngu. That act in itself is an affirmation of Indigenous forms of governance. Such opportunities are extremely rare for most Australians who live in cities and more thoroughly colonised places where Indigenous sovereignty is less palpably visible and assertive. Galarwuy Yunupingu is quoted by narrator Jack Thompson, in a Garma promotional DVD (Yothu Yindi Foundation 2002) evocatively describing the respectful, cross-cultural learning experience of Garma on Yolngu lands as 'a vision of Australia as it might be.' The viewer is left to imagine the possibilities such an unfamiliar, postcolonial vision might involve.

Garma as Yolngu education and training support

The vision of Garma as a Yolngu 'bush university' may not yet have achieved the full realisation of its founders, however, the educational programs at Garma mentioned above are extensive and significant. Certainly Garma has become the pre-eminent place for educating non-Yolngu tertiary students and others about the Yolngu world. More importantly Garma provides support for a range of Yolngu educational, training and income-generating opportunities, but these need to be understood in context. Yolngu live in a remote area where the dominant industry is the massive bauxite mine experienced as a radical imposition, and the small businesses and government services which serve its community of non-Yolngu migrants. A distant second to this economic base is the 'Aboriginal Affairs industry' dominated by non-Indigenous controlled

government organisations, providing education, welfare and other services to the Yolngu communities distributed through the Miwatj region. Yolngu leaders have spent the last forty years trying to assert influence, partnership, or some kind of control over these externally imposed services, with mixed success. No sooner has a partnership been formally established and agreed to, for example the written ceremonial agreement between the Yolngu-led Yirrkala Community Education Centre and the Northern Territory Education Department in 2006, then they are abandoned and broken by government partners (in this case in 2007).

Various education and training programs have come and gone with mixed success but generally the rhetoric of 'real jobs' is unable to be realised due to the limited employment opportunities and failure to engage Yolngu cultural difference. Banduk Marika (personal communication 2007) has wryly observed about the constant, shifting and short-lived training programs that try to link Yolngu into employment that 'Yolngu are the most certified, educated and trained people in the world'. However, the very bright star in this constellation has been the arts and culture 'industries' which are of central concern to Yolngu as acts of cultural expression and maintenance that connect also with mainstream market interest. Visual art production has enabled Yolngu in remote homeland centres and the bigger settlements to supplement their incomes and engage in culturally meaningful work with market value. Yothu Yindi demonstrated the appeal of Yolngu music to wide international audiences, while on a much broader and longer-term scale Yolngu visual arts have taken a leading place in the remarkable success of the Indigenous visual arts movement. Garma acts as a significant supplement to the arts industry, boosting visitor numbers and interest to Yirrkala's renowned Buku-Larrnggay Mulka art centre. Garma becomes their single busiest sales period for the year but also cultivates an educated art market that generates longer-term interest in and value for Yolngu art.

The Yothu Yindi Foundation has emphasised these cultural employment opportunities in the Garma Forum and the training opportunities available at Garma. Already Garma employs 130 Yolngu in roles from security to the men's, women's and healing programs, to site preparation and other cultural tourism activity. At times these employment experiences have also come with formal training certification. At least one of the Garma tourism staff has drawn on this experience and contacts to establish his own family tourism business, Bawaka Tours. Along with tourism on country Yolngu people could be employed managing this and other festivals themselves. The previous Festival Director Alan James and consultant Simon Balderstone had estimated that this was achievable as a ten-year process of transition, involving at least five years of recurrent funding for year-round training positions.

Another opportunity identified by Yothu Yindi Foundation is training in media, an area of great interest to many young Yolngu. In 2007, with a grant from the Telstra Foundation, they employed the media training consultancy Community Prophets to train Yirrkala CEC secondary students in all aspects of film making. The program was very successful in terms of active participation, school attendance and individual and community sense of accomplishment, with a number of short films being produced in the weeks prior to Garma and then being screened there as a public launch. Jack Thompson (interviewed by RMIT student Glen Morrow in 2007) expressed his enthusiasm as a media professional for this media training program saying,

The most exciting thing for me is how many young people, how many secondary school students are being presented ... with the opportunity to use cameras and to understand editing and to understand presentation. The more we get those people

involved, the more media savvy they are going to be ... Every major media teaching institution in Australia should have special Indigenous scholarships available that would encourage people in secondary education in Indigenous communities to present work that could be assessed, and go on to a tertiary education in media and communication.

Noting the opportunities and accessibility of new, digital media Huni Bollinger, a training organisation collaborator in the media project working with young people in remote Yolngu communities, explained that these technologies were very new to remote communities, only being around for five or so years. She noted they build on a long-standing base of community radio skills but open up exciting new areas of engagement for a new generation of story-tellers, and that these communities are alert to the potential despite basic resource constraints around access to computers, cameras, reliable electrical supply and so on. She particularly notes the project's significance for intergenerational knowledge transmission (interview with Glen Morrow 2007):

It's something they want to do, and something they are interested in ... In my experience, just anecdotally, (school) attendance improves, motivation improves, self-esteem improves. The community, the elders are really excited and want the kids to use this equipment ... it offers a way to bridge some gaps between the older and younger generations ... the elders are pretty excited to go, 'Well you younger mob know how to use this equipment. Come and talk to us, we've got knowledge to share with you, and we want to send you out to record these important parts of our culture. And you younger people have a role now to use that equipment'. I've been quite delighted to see that it can be that bridge between the generations as well.

The Yirrkala art centre (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka) has taken this media engagement to another level of broad community participation and long-term sustainability with its Mulka media project. The Mulka website describes the project as providing, 'meaningful employment and empowerment to the Yirrkala community by allowing Yolngu Aboriginal People to take control of documents of their culture in modern digital media. On one side is the repatriation of valuable documentation of the region's cultural heritage that is kept in outside collections. The other is training Yolngu to take the reigns of modern media to tell their own stories from now on'. This is consistent with the growing movement of community-based and controlled Indigenous knowledge centres across the Top End and throughout Indigenous Australia, and part of a significant international trend.

Garma as political strategy

The recently ended decade of Australian conservative national government from late 1996 to 2007 had seen a cultural and political stalemate in Australian Indigenous affairs which elicited many civic responses and initiatives focused broadly on 'reconciliation'. A turn to grassroots-based cultural and educational action made strategic sense as the space for the work of social transformation. The conservative Howard Government had refused to engage with the challenges of reconciliation with Indigenous Australians and its reactionary attack on Indigenous institutions, land rights and vilification of Aboriginal people themselves was hostile to say the least, and has left a destructive legacy which continues to retard and frustrate Indigenous-driven community development. Despite this there has been a substantial constituency of the Australian public and key social institutions who have remained deeply sympathetic to the notion of Aboriginal self-determination, cultural survival and further progress in formal and informal processes

of reconciliation as the most effective ways to remedy Indigenous disadvantage. Among other initiatives the 'Sea of Hands' and the mass bridge-crossing 'Walks for Reconciliation' in 2000 demonstrated this support on a massive scale and the possibility of the mutual human feeling that the work of decolonisation requires as a starting point.

For Indigenous Australians in the 1990s the political situation offered no signs of hope or comfort for Indigenous interests. It was a case of late-colonial business as usual, with a deeply conservative government setting policy directions inimical with Indigenous cultural maintenance, social or political rights. In this context of electoral political torpor some Indigenous organisations and leaders were determined to fight with whatever strategies they had available to maintain and advance the political gains they had made in the previous two decades. In particular the establishment of Land Councils ensured a relatively secure, well-resourced base for Indigenous land management and advocacy, and ATSIC appeared to be a secure national Indigenous institution. As a statutory authority the Northern Land Council (NLC) is responsible for a range of regional Indigenous governance issues including the distribution of mining royalties under the Northern Territory Land Rights Act (1976). By the late 1990s the long-standing Yolngu Chairman of the NLC, Gumatj clan leader Galarrwuy Yunupingu, had been a prominent advocate for Yolngu and broader Aboriginal rights for almost thirty years. Educated for two years at a Brisbane private boys' school, his skilled English and bicultural understanding qualified him as translator for his father and other plaintiffs in the Gove Land Rights Case (*Millipurm v Nabalco* 1971) seen as a watershed moment in the Land Rights movement (Williams 1986).

In 1999 Galarrwuy Yunupingu established the Garma Festival of Indigenous Culture with his equally famous brother Mandawuy, lead singer of the popular rock band Yothu Yindi. The Yunupingu brothers, both separately recognised as 'Australian of the Year,' mobilised this unique cultural-political initiative under the organisational structure of the Yothu Yindi Foundation (YYF), supported by a shifting alliance of Yolngu clan groups, principally the Gumatj-Riratjingu. These two brothers were perhaps uniquely well-qualified and resourced in Australia to breach the chasm of mainstream Australian ignorance of Indigenous realities and to make a cultural leap in the process of decolonisation. Over the years Mandawuy Yunupingu's vibrant creativity and Galarrwuy's political momentum, both drawing on a very strong grounding in Yolngu cultural life and law, had gathered together a well-connected network of talent and support from across Australia and a reservoir of goodwill particularly amongst educated urban 'southerners'. Mandawuy, with a university degree from 'down south,' had been the first Indigenous school principal in Australia (at the bilingual Yirrkala Community Education Centre) and his bi-cultural rock band had an international following which broke into the Australian mainstream with the overtly political hit-song *Treaty* in 1992.

Key members of the Yothu Yindi band became central to Garma (until a split in the Board in 2010 saw a change in Garma management): Mandawuy as Secretary of YYF and host of the academic and policy Key Forum; Witiyana Marika coordinating and mobilising *bunggul*; the band's manager Alan James became the CEO of the Yothu Yindi Foundation and Director of the Garma Festival; and guitarist Stuart Kellaway ran the music training workshops and became a music teacher at the Yirrkala school with support from other band members. From the start YYF was very good at bringing in outside expertise and connections: strong links with Melbourne, Darwin, Sydney and Canberra-based academics; a former Keating adviser working the media strategy and political connections; strong links across national Indigenous leadership and networks; film star

Jack Thompson present at every Garma and ever-ready to deliver the Garma message to camera or assembled guests; and occasional visits from other film, television and music celebrities such as David Gulpilil, Casey Donovan, George Negus, Ben Lee and others adding their own charismatic style. In addition long-term collaborators include local educators, local ALP politicians, the art centre, ranger program and school, the NLC, and the community relations manager from what was the miner Nabalco (then Alcan, and now Rio Tinto), with many others providing varying degrees of consultation, support and sometimes contradictions and tension. These kinds of human and institutional resources add up to substantial political clout, but in the Howard years, despite visits from the occasional minister (and Labor shadow ministers), even that was not enough to break through the impasse. Garma did however find a way around it by working at a cultural level, both with important individuals and at the broader level of public discourse and representations.

Garma has been a skilful Yolngu strategy to keep Indigenous issues on the national agenda through a highly localised and very specific public intervention in the realm of representation and knowledge exchange and production. For the most part it is very effective, evidenced by the stream of Territory and national politicians and policy-makers who appear and speak at Garma, announce policies and initiatives, hand out awards or just make sure they are present. However, this strategy of exercising political capital is not without its risks. The June 2007 Commonwealth 'Emergency Intervention' into Northern Territory Aboriginal communities was deeply disturbing for the affected Indigenous communities, their leaders and Indigenous rights activists nationally (Commonwealth of Australia, *Northern Territory Emergency Intervention Act 2007*). In the absence of a national forum like the now-abolished ATSIC, the national Indigenous leadership turned to Garma as a forum to discuss the intervention and formulate a united response. Galarrwuy stood shoulder to shoulder with the mainstream of the Indigenous response, strongly condemning the intervention at Garma. Noel Pearson kept away from Garma with his qualified support for the plan, a position shared by Garma stalwart Professor Marcia Langton. Two weeks after Garma Pearson and Langton brought the crusading intervention leader, Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough, for private meetings with Galarrwuy on his homeland.

The prominence of Garma and its Gumatj clan hosts in national Indigenous affairs made the prospect of a deal with Galarrwuy worth special compromises by the Minister. Encouraged by Pearson and Langton, and offered an exceptionally sweet development deal for his Gumatj homeland of Gunyangara (Ski Beach) without loss of control over land, Galarrwuy broke ranks with the national Indigenous leadership mainstream and signed on to the intervention. This divisive change of heart not only undermined Galarrwuy's national Indigenous authority but the authority of Garma as a national Indigenous forum. Indigenous leader Professor Mick Dodson was quoted in *The Age* newspaper (Chandler 2007) as saying,

The problem I have is that this doesn't appear to be a sound public policy approach — reacting to criticism in this way. It's bad policy... The precedent is now set. Jump up and down, and the Government will come in and bring some prominent Aboriginal people who agree with them to talk to you and to do a deal with you to keep you quiet. Is that how it works? Galarrwuy has been one of the most strident and outspoken critics of the intervention, particularly this aspect of it — the leases ... It must be a large inducement to turn his view around.

Within a few months the Coalition Government was predictably swept from power leaving the special Gunyangara deal uncertain if not dead, however, the NT intervention policy of the previous government has been broadly kept in place. By July 2008 the first Aboriginal community to host a Rudd Labor Government 'community cabinet meeting' was Yirrkala, whose leaders had taken a consistent stand against the intervention. As one of the regional Yolngu clan leaders present, Galarrwuy of course took a leading role in welcoming them and hosting a community celebration after they left. As a horrific indicator of the human tragedies that relentlessly strike the communities of Yirrkala and Ski Beach, the celebrations that night led to a drunken fight and the suicide of a wonderful and talented young man who had performed *yidaki* and danced for the Cabinet visit that day. The frequency of suicide, accidental and other violent deaths and injuries in these communities is the most powerful indicators of their vulnerability. The 'politics of recognition' of Yolngu cultural difference and the more concrete rights that accrue (and are apparently arbitrarily removed) by constant shifts in government policy are not in any way a superficial or trivial concern but an urgent question of survival and community wellbeing, with the deepest implications for young Yolngu people's sense of belonging in the world (or not).

In Arnhem Land and other remote northern Australian regions the land rights movement has been about more than the legal recognition of Aboriginal land ownership. At its most developed in the homelands movement this struggle has been for the reassertion of Aboriginal life and law on *country* (clan-based homelands). This is an emphasis on resuming and renewing local practices while managing the social (rather than material) technologies of modernity with caution. These movements are calling for 'mainstream' (dominating culture) understanding of Indigenous difference to allow an Indigenous modernity to develop relatively free from the intensely destructive stresses of colonial domination. Garma has been a significant instrument in this call.

Performing Garma

The core activity of Garma is the *bunggul* held each evening on the central ceremonial ground at the Gulkula site. These ritual performances depend on the negotiation of Yolngu knowledge holders, and may include clans from far away and sometimes even non-Yolngu Aborigines from places as far as the Kimberley or mixed groups like Sydney-based Bangarra Dance Theatre and the national Indigenous dance academy (NAISDA). The *bunggul* and other public displays of Yolngu cultural knowledge at Garma is also a way to generate interest for young Yolngu in traditional knowledge, to renew the *garma* ceremonies that might be less frequently practiced, and to show them that *Balanda* value this precious cultural knowledge which has demonstrable relevance to modern Yolngu livelihoods. Since 2004 the Garma *bunggul* has included a substantial cash prize for the clan group considered the best performers, which serves as a small extra incentive to widely dispersed Yolngu to mobilise for *bunggul* at Garma. The motivation behind *bunggul*, however, is something much more significant than a 'prize'. Franca Tamisari (2000, pp. 151-2) makes the point that Yolngu *bunggul* is art, law and an act of love. She writes,

Dancing in any Yolngu ceremony ... (is) an event in which knowledge associated with country is transferred, judged, asserted, and negotiated, and through which obligations are fulfilled by offering help to, and demonstrating love and compassion towards one's relatives. In this way Yolngu Law is seen to be immutable yet changing, maintained yet renewed, replicated yet reinterpreted ... 'Yolngu dance because they hold the Law'.

The *bunggul* is the space in which Yolngu epistemological difference is made visible to Garma visitors, with multiple levels of meaning available to differently educated viewers. Galarrwuy Yunupingu gives a minimal exegesis of the 'story'. One of their many layers of meaning in this context is a strong statement about Yolngu systems of governance, such as the annual performance by the professional Red Flag dance group from Numbulwar at the southern limits of the Yolngu lands. Their humorous and spectacular dancing provides an account of cultural contact with the Macassan fishermen with whom they traded goods, words, names and kinship for as many as 700 years (Macknight 1976). This performance can be seen both as an historical account, as a claim to the capacity for historicity (Rosaldo 1989), but perhaps more importantly as a continuing claim for the recognition of Yolngu sovereignty and their capacity to conduct sophisticated international diplomacy and trade on their own terms over an extended period of time. The constant Yolngu retelling of the story of the Macassan trade has become somewhat idealised but it is first and foremost a message for other Australians about the persistence of Yolngu forms of sovereignty and an illustrative ethical model and demand for a culturally and materially deeper reciprocal relationship from still-colonising Settler-Australia.

In this respect Garma is a deep pedagogical exercise, both for young Yolngu and for *Balanda*, who in most cases have no or very little knowledge of the Yolngu world. The Garma Cultural Studies Institute originally aspired to run accredited higher education programs for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to learn more about Yolngu philosophy, environmental knowledge and community. Some Garma participants are tertiary students enrolled in courses at the University of Melbourne, RMIT University or Charles Darwin University, but Garma effectively makes students of all its visitors. Visitors learn to sit quietly with Yolngu women and watch them weave, or go bush to learn how to make a spear with the men. These visitors learn a simple new skill through watching and doing but more significantly they learn about a Yolngu way of learning and teaching; a profound exercise in encountering Yolngu difference at work that commonly results in tears of frustration and the exhilaration of hard-won understanding. Seeing corporate heavyweights and national bureaucrats become playful enthusiasts for their gender-respective baskets or spears, attentively following their Yolngu instructors, will not immediately change the raw politics of land ownership and mineral rights in this country but it does open the possibility of a deeper



Yolngu dancers performing bunggul on the ceremonial ground at Gulkula, Garma, 2008 (Copyright Yothu Yindi Foundation)

Photo: Peter Phipps



Garma participants with spears listen to instruction in spear-making workshop, Garma, 2007 (Copyright Yothu Yindi Foundation)

Photo: Peter Phipps

understanding of ontological difference and dialogue that might make such changes possible. The themes of Mandawuy Yunupingu's music and writing capture this spirit, as he explains with Howard Morphy (2000, p. 494):

The (Yothu Yindi) band takes on the same agenda to what I did in teaching, really. But I'm a musician instead of a teacher. Our objective is to bring about a balance and understanding- a true sense of equality... it's the difference we want to maintain, not the sameness. The sameness can be classified as assimilation. That's what we don't want—we don't want to be assimilated—to think like a white man.

The metaphor (and practice) of Yothu Yindi's music exemplifies this philosophical-ethical approach to actively engage Settler-Australian and wider, global modernity. Their music both communicates and reflects the complexities of the experiences and aspirations of its Indigenous audiences, and also draws non-Indigenous listeners into that affective life-world. Dunbar-Hall and Gibson (2004) illustrate that Australian Aboriginal people have been finding spaces to communicate their experiences and make a living in the Australian music and entertainment industry over generations. The Yothu Yindi rock band sit firmly within this tradition, while having a specific, local and regional experience, particularly the emphasis of using (Indigenous) *language* and naming *country* in songs (Dunbar-Hall and Gibson 2004, pp. 192-211). They have combined the technology and musical idioms of western rock, reggae, country and western and techno dance music with the lyrics and musical styles from popular (and in some cases revived) Yolngu *manikay* (song traditions). This innovation on existing musical traditions and the dynamic Yolngu musical context is explored in detail by Aaron Corn (2009) in his discussions with Mandawuy Yunupingu. Karl Neuenfeldt (2000, p. 742) argues Yothu Yindi have successfully combined 'the business of music and the business of culture' with the musical and cultural aims complementing one another. This virtuoso cultural hybridism is both a spontaneously creative and generous act of sharing from a confident people secure in their identity, language, land and culture; and at the same time the urgent strategic manoeuvre of an otherwise culturally besieged people suffering intergenerational crisis.

While suffering some colonial depredations and massacre, Yolngu were relatively isolated from Australian colonisation until about 60 years ago. They successfully repelled aggressive cattlemen and fishermen earlier in the twentieth century only to be brought under a regime of missions backed by the threat of state violence. Through determination, creative adaptation and the historical good fortune of late colonisation they have been able to maintain their land ownership, languages, kinship systems, and cultural and spiritual traditions largely intact despite these colonial intrusions. However, since the arrival of the massive mine, and its town of 5,000 residents, the corrosive effects of alcohol and social dislocation have worked their way through three generations of Yolngu living in the Miwatj ('sunrise'—northeast Arnhem Land) region. Yolngu communities gathered into the old mission settlements of Yirrkala and Galiwinku, or Gunyangara next to the mine tailings mountain, are suffering the extreme physical and mental health afflictions of other colonised peoples in Australia and elsewhere, with levels of violence and premature death that create a perpetual air of mourning and crisis. As one Yolngu family member from Yirrkala said of the experience of camping at the Garma Festival, 'This is the best it gets all year: there's no drunks, there's plenty of good food and there's *bunggul* and the kids' performances making people proud!'

Garma as Yolngu philosophy

As well as being the name of a 'festival,' Garma is a concept and practice of the Yolngu people of north-east Arnhem Land. Discussions of Garma need to distinguish between uncapitalised *garma* as a form of Yolngu public ritual religious knowledge and practices associated with funerary rites, and capitalised Garma, the event. As Yothu Yindi Foundation background notes explain (1999), for a *garma* to take place as a Yolngu public ritual there has to be a negotiation between competing, sometimes structurally hostile, but interdependent groups. When this resolution has been made a spear is thrust into the earth and the *garma* ceremony can proceed around that point. Similarly for Garma (the cultural festival) to have the active participation of the various Yolngu clans who form the heart of the event by performing the evening *bunggul* (dance/ceremony) requires complex inter-clan political negotiations on a number of levels, from the sacred ritual and religious to the economic. The central point for Garma is the ceremonially painted *larrakitj* (upright log coffin) installed at the centre of the *bunggul* ground. At another level Garma also calls upon the non-Yolngu guests to enter relations of reciprocity and negotiation with their Yolngu hosts whose land they are on. This reciprocity includes showing respect for Indigenous protocols and opening to Yolngu epistemologies, including the importance of various spirits and spirit-beings to this place and the Yolngu world. Describing the significance of the site and its relationship to the spirit-being *Ganbulapula*, Gaykamangu et al. (1999) explain,

At Gulkula, he formed an open area, called *yati*, or a *garma*, for public ceremonials, for all the different Yirritja clans. And they gathered there together over the years, for ceremonies, especially for Yirritja mortuary ceremonies, where the bones of the deceased would be crushed and placed in hollow log coffin, and their spirits would be sent with a sacred string into the spirit world.

Even today, the Gumatj owners continue to call people together with the spiritual *yidaki* across the nation and the world, to come together in the spirit of *garma*. Using the old Yolngu ideas, the modern day spirits which come are exposed to a modern *garma*, where they come together to learn, to share and to develop ideas and celebrate together through art, through dancing, through radio, television, computers, internet, learning *yidaki*, learning about medicine, law, many different themes worked together.

In this explanation we are all 'modern day spirits' called together at Garma by the sacred *yidaki* (*didjeridu*) to learn. This learning is offered very much in the mode of Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), following and respecting Indigenous protocols directed by community elders in an historical context where that authority has been (and continues to be) undermined by processes of colonial domination. Garma is graciously offered as a gift or opportunity to settler Australia in a globalising context, inviting a serious, deep intercultural dialogue, and as a deliberate pedagogical model for how the national story might be constituted differently through a shared process of ongoing decolonisation (Rose 2004).

Extending the concept of *garma* to Yolngu-settler interaction invites participants from the dominating settler culture to consider not only their over-determined *difference* of cultural interests from Yolngu but to recognise their *interdependence* with them and the land, culture and life world that they maintain. Mandawuy Yunupingu (2001) has articulated this as having implications for broader, even global issues of social and environmental sustainability. These ideas of radical interdependence and balance can be found in

Mandawuy's music and writing and in a range of textual and figurative representations by other Yolngu intellectuals. The collected artist statements in the remarkable *Saltwater* (Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre 1999) publication based on the exhibition by the same name are a small indication of the deep knowledge of the inter-relatedness of human beings and their relationships to the natural and spiritual worlds.

Yolngu intellectual and political leaders have highlighted their rich ritual, artistic and intellectual traditions in an attempt to reconcile with colonial modernity. Closed off historically from the option of a nationalist anti-colonial struggle, the cultural-political expressions of Yolngu through Garma and other cross-cultural spaces (such as the dynamic visual arts movement) seeks to elicit and work with emergent strands of decolonising Australian nationalism. Yolngu intellectuals have articulated this through Indigenous metaphors and systems for balancing dichotomous tensions. The Yolngu and broader Indigenous Australian struggle is almost entirely framed as being for the recognition of both cultural difference *and* full citizenship entitlements (overcoming disadvantage) within the Australian nation, and in the process transforming it.

Conclusion

Mandawuy Yunupingu (2001) says of one of Garma's purposes,

We're living in fluid times, trying to discover in more profound ways what it is to be Australian. I think the vast majority of Australians would agree that Aboriginal Australians have a special contribution to make to that. But there seems to be a problem. I think most non-Aboriginal Australian accept that there is a deep intellectual strength to Aboriginal knowledge but they seem to think of it as a mystery. I hope we are less of a mystery now.

Indigenous cultural festivals are a powerful medium for cross-cultural contact that can displace and reframe those 'mystifying' characterisations as deeper understanding through personal, embodied experience. While dominating cultures easily fall into habitual stereotyping, State management (as Henry 2008 argues) or New Age romantic misapprehensions of Indigenous cultures, cultural festivals at very least provide opportunities for direct encounters with Indigenous people that can counteract some of these routinised colonising practices. Risks remain, however, in emphasising festivals and Indigenous cultural tourism and cultural marketing more generally as a cultural and livelihood strategy. There are unintended effects of packaging cultural practices as a commodity for consumption by visitors, which inevitably change established relationships and identities. As the Comaroffs (2009) point out, the reframing of culture as a commodity within the circuits of neo-liberal capitalism has some peculiar effects such as the corporatisation of tribes and the production of an 'identity economy'. In the context of the limited economic and cultural choices available in the remote Australian context some prominent Yolngu leaders are clearly choosing ethno-commodification as a strategy for engaging modernity and markets, over the option of cultural assimilation pushed by the previous conservative Coalition government and passively pursued by the current Labor one.

Cultural festivals provide a potent space for intercultural accommodations to be negotiated on largely Indigenous terrain, strengthening Indigenous agency and resetting the terms of cross-cultural engagement for at least the duration of these staged encounters. Cross-cultural performances have long been a part of the repertoire of strategies of Indigenous cultural survival and assertion, sometimes even in contexts

where those performances are part of the colonial exploitation of culture. In a period of intensified globalisation the terms of this engagement are shifting. Indigenous cultural activism is moving beyond an emphasis on contesting the colonising-national story's exclusion of Indigenous peoples and identities, to engaging with an emergent global sphere, which simultaneously reinforces specifically local identities and forms of governance. Clearly this is not happening with the same intensity everywhere, and it is certainly not a claim for a homogenising globalism, however, it argues that cultural performances and celebrations are, among other things, assertions of Indigenous power in this shifting context.

Garma is a festival and broader cultural event best understood through the kaleidoscopic prism of Indigenous cultural politics. Indigenous peoples have deployed many strategies for resisting social-Darwinist assumptions of their 'disappearance'; not just through violence and direct engagement with state politics, nor just Scott's (1985) 'passively' resistant 'weapons of the weak' but also with the remarkably generous and insistent gifts of cultural life. Throughout the history of contact with cultures of domination Indigenous communities have asserted the vibrancy of their people, their land and their cultural life through sharing the sensual enjoyments of place, music and dance, bush foods and medicine, games and work, through to the closely connected depths of philosophy and religion (not necessarily separated from these enjoyments as in the dominant Western traditions). These acts of generosity have been both attempts to educate and civilise the dominating cultures into a proper ethics of living, as well as a direct political assertion of various forms of existence and sovereignty through means not recognised by the dominating cultures. This aspect of Indigenous cultural assertion has been generally misunderstood and under-theorised through the lens of either romanticism or 'salvage anthropology' as cultural revival and survival, rather than as a seriously political and ethical practice of immersed, embodied experience. These celebrations are serious, joyful and urgent acts of cultural politics.



Gumatj clan helicopter towing a giant, re-configured, postcolonial Australian flag over the Garma site at Gulkula, 2007 (Copyright and permission, Yothu Yindi Foundation)

Photo: Peter Phipps



6. Yalukit Willam Ngargee

People Place Gathering
City of Port Phillip, Melbourne

Bo Svoronos³

Yalukit Willam Ngargee conception

Yalukit Willam Ngargee Euro Yroke Bullarto Nyoweenth: People Place Gathering St Kilda Plenty Sun is an Indigenous festival produced by Victorian local government authority the City of Port Phillip and held on Boon Wurrung country. Originating in 2006 for the Commonwealth Games, the Yalukit Willam Ngargee program was a two-day Indigenous and Polynesian music festival held in O'Donnell Gardens, St Kilda. The initial concept was a one-off welcome event for the City of Port Phillip's designated Papua New Guinean Commonwealth Games team and the local Indigenous community.

The success of the festival grew from a two-day free music event with market stalls and free children's activities to include a series of satellite programs extending the festivals dates and operations. Satellite programs included *CONFINED: Indigenous prisoners visual arts exhibition 2009/10*, *East Gippsland Aboriginal Arts Corporation visual art exhibition 2009/10*, *Etchings Indigenous literary publication 2010*, Noel Tovey's *Little Black Bastard* theatre production 2009, *Indigenous Success Stories Forum 2009*, a community mural 2007, Yalukit Willam heritage walks 2006/07/08/09 and arts and cultural professional development workshops.

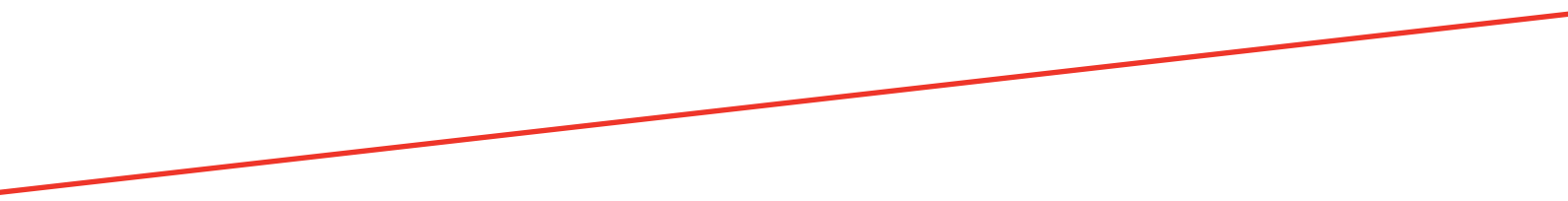
In the beginning stages of organising the festival a forum was held to inform and consult community members. Attending the forum was a Boon Wurrung traditional owner, local Indigenous access workers, service providers, Indigenous community members, police and local residents. The Boon Wurrung Foundation elder spokesperson suggested naming the festival the Yalukit Willam Ngargee (translating from the Boon Wurrung language to People Place Gathering), acting as an interpellation or hailing to visiting and local Indigenous peoples. Extended naming of the festival occurred in 2008 by identifying the space Euro Yroke (now known as St Kilda) and one of the Boonwurrung seven seasons Bullarto Nyoweenth—Plenty Sun or February.

In a festival survey conducted by Top End Arts Marketing with 132 participants during the 2009 Yalukit Willam Ngargee main day, under a third of the survey participants (43 people or 31 per cent) indicated they knew the traditional country the festival was being held on, while only half of those participants answered 'Boonwurrung'. Introducing Boon Wurrung language in the festival name begins to re-establish language, localises the event and assists in shaping reciprocal links between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Immediate changes to the City of Port Phillip included amended acknowledgments to country, Boon Wurrung naming of St Kilda Town Hall meeting rooms and the potential for sovereign recognition of the Yalukit Willam people.

'Fantastic evolving festival.' (Survey Verbatim 2009)

Financially the festival operates on City of Port Phillip funds and by maintaining close financial networks with government funding bodies, philanthropic trusts, private enterprise and in kind contributions. Networks are negotiated and maintained by the festival producer/director employed full-time as the City of Port Phillip's Indigenous Arts Officer. A common thread that unites the diverse mix of organisations financially supporting the festival is a commitment to the act of exchanging culture through Indigenous music and artistic expressions.

³ Bo Svoronos was the City of Port Phillip's Indigenous Arts Officer 2005 to 2010. He programmed, produced and directed five Yalukit Willam Ngargee: People Place Gathering festivals. Bo is currently finalising a PhD within this project on the festival called *Local Identity: Global Focus* examining reciprocity and community identity within the spaces of an Indigenous festival.



Indigenous festivals within Melbourne and surrounding metropolitan areas have been more closely aligned with significant Indigenous civic events such as Share the Spirit on Australia Day, Reconciliation Week, Sorry Day, Mabo Day and NAIDOC week. Political rallies have utilised festivals as a format to bring people together, while one-off large-scale events such as World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) 2008 and the Commonwealth Games 2006 have held Indigenous festivals as part of their cultural programs.

The distinguishing features of the Yalukit Willam Ngargee are its location, its being a stand alone festival program incorporated into the larger St Kilda Festival program, its ambitious program of events and exhibitions, and its willingness to work with other festivals.

There is a strong sense of reciprocal relationships between Indigenous festivals and events within Melbourne and its surrounding areas. Nearly half (47 per cent) of the festival survey respondents were aware of other Indigenous cultural events, with a similar percentage (46 per cent) indicating they had participated in or attended other Indigenous cultural events. Reciprocity between Indigenous festivals and events organisers can include marketing and publicity support, production assistance, networking contacts or highlighting funding possibilities.

Yalukit Willam and Boon Wurrung history

Naming and branding of the festival takes on a handful of meanings. It celebrates and asserts the identity of the local Yalukit Willam clan who are one of six clans that make up the Boon Wurrung language group stretching along the coastline from the Werribee River down to Wilson's Promontory and inland to Dandenong. The Boonwurrung people are part of a much larger nation or confederation known as the Kulin/ People Nation (Briggs 2009, p. 1). It is one of five Wurrungs/lips or languages that contribute to the Kulin Nation, the other Kulin neighbour's being the Wathawurrung, Woiwurrung, Taungurong and Djaja Wurrung. Each clan group within the language groups were then broken down into two moiety groups – Bundjil/ Eagle or Waa/ Crow – which influenced intermarriage, kinship systems, trade and ceremonies. The Kulin Nation is often referred to in acknowledgements preceding events.

The Boonwurrung faced the first large-scale invasion in 1803 (Broome 2005, p. 4) at Sorrento, and once Melbourne's main settlement began in 1835 the town's European population reached 4,000 people by 1840 (Broome 2005, p. 26). Aboriginal Protectorate William Thomas carefully estimated the Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung of Melbourne as collectively numbering 350 in 1836, 207 in 1839, and 59 in 1852: a fall of 83 per cent over the period (Broome 2005, p. 91). Introduced diseases, violent deaths and ecological imperialism had a dramatic effect on the Yalukit Willam clan and Kulin Nation populations.

Descendants of the Yalukit Willam clan are reconstructing and protecting the remaining spiritual understandings of the Boon Wurrung language. The importance of language is briefly outlined in Boonwurrung Elder spokesperson Aunty Carolyn Briggs publication *The Journey Cycles of the Boonwurrung*:

Other Kulin Tribes visiting the country of the Boonwurrung were required to speak the language of the Boonwurrung. This is explained as the spiritual base to the Boonwurrung country. Compliance with this cultural protocol was especially relevant because the demigod Loo-ern resided in Boonwurrung country, in the area known today as Wilson's Promontory. Visitors to Boonwurrung country were required to undergo a ritual that afforded rights and accompanying responsibilities. 'The Boonwurrung had a very strong and detailed oral history that recalled events estimated to be ten thousand years old.' (2009, p. 4)

In the period 1901 to 1973 the White Australia policy (or Protection Legislation) categorised Indigenous people as minors and in need of care from the state. Permits issued by the Aboriginal Protectorates sought to assimilate individuals by not allowing them to meet family members or other Aboriginal people, practice ceremonial beliefs or speak their traditional language. Gradually, the permit system, continual shifting of family bands from mission to mission, removal of children from their families and rapid population decline decimated Indigenous societies, languages and ceremonial practices. 'Smoothing the pillow for a dying race' was a popular romanticised white notion based on nineteenth century scientific racism informing three generations of Commonwealth government practiced apartheid on Indigenous peoples.

Resistance to the assimilation process took a range of forms, with respect and reciprocity a primary value between Indigenous peoples and their non-Indigenous supporters. A universal human quality uniquely shaped by cultural practices, reciprocity is a valued exchange of goods or services between two parties. The crafting of traditional Indigenous reciprocal relationships between band or language groups had been shaped by being in lean times; it makes good sense to be on the best of terms with neighbours and kin, able to rest assured that one's generosity to others in the past will be returned during one's own times of need (Schwab 1995, p. 2).

A contemporary example of reciprocal relationships on Yalukit Willam country between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people was the work of Helen Baille, who opened her house as a hostel to Aboriginal people between 1930 to the late 1950s, and is here briefly described by Uncle Banjo Clarke:

[Baille] could be strict with the blackfellahs living with her too. She would remind everyone of their Aboriginal principles and duties to each other, and once, when one of the blackfellahs was in hospital, she made all the blackfellahs that was staying with her go and sit on the lawn outside the hospital, the Aboriginal way, so that the sick person could feel their spirit ... Miss Baille did more than anyone I knew of at that time for Aboriginal people, never stopping to think about herself. And yet she has been so much forgotten.' (Clark and Kostanski 2006, p. 97)

Whilst Clarke outlines Baille's sense of activist influenced reciprocal altruism it also expresses a spiritual aspect of Indigenous reciprocity. Reciprocity in this way is a principle trait within Aboriginal culture, as sharing is the norm among Aboriginal kin (Schwab 1995, p. 1).

Early acts of colonisation tried to condition out Indigenous values through fear and shame. Indigenous people are commonly engaged with negative race relations on a daily basis in Australia and are more likely to feel a sense of displacement than non-Indigenous Australians. Transgenerational trauma and negative internal behaviours seriously affect Indigenous people's health and wellbeing, leading to fragmented communities dealing with health issues, substance abuse and domestic violence. Media portrayals shape a large proportion of mainstream Australian attitudes about Indigenous people, while

they continue to lack political representation at a federal level. One of the most effective ways for Indigenous people to recover from these negative internalised behaviours and symptoms of systemic marginalisation is to practice and celebrate Indigenous culture at a local level.

Twelve per cent of festival survey participants identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and they rated the festival as either 'Excellent' or 'Good' in being a place to recognise Aboriginal culture as part of the Australian identity. These results suggest the festival is achieving its aim of providing a space to generate Indigenous wellbeing through community identity.

'... today... it instils in me a great amount of pride as an Indigenous woman.'
(Survey Verbatim 2009).

The Indigenous communities residing on Yalukit Willam country today

Today's Indigenous community residing on Yalukit Willam country within the City of Port Phillip's boundaries roughly numbers 234 people, some of whom generally congregate at the significant contemporary meeting place of O'Donnell Gardens in St Kilda. 'Parkies' is a term often used by local Indigenous people to describe a contemporary metropolitan identity who lives and meets in city parks, predominately Indigenous people, Maori and potentially other cultural backgrounds. Some of the reasons why the Parkies choose to meet in O'Donnell Gardens are the reasonably affordable accommodation in local rooming houses, it being a highly visible space to meet up with other Indigenous people in a medium to high-density metropolitan environment, and it being a well-known inner city connecting point for Indigenous family members.

O'Donnell Gardens is accessed on a regular basis by Indigenous access workers from local health service provider Inner South Community Health Service and peak state health and welfare service provider Ngwala Willam Bong. A weekly Wominjeka/Welcome barbeque is held across the road from O'Donnell Gardens at Veg Out Community Gardens. Our Rainbow Place is a fortnightly lunch and health checkup coordinated by Inner South Community Health Service, and a men's and women's group meet on a regular basis.

After extensive consultation in 2005 the Victorian State Government introduced, as part of its 'A Fairer Victoria' social policy statement, 38 Local Indigenous Networks (LIN) which make up eight Regional Indigenous Councils (RIC), to be fully functional by July 2010. LINs are made up of Indigenous people, who work together to provide a voice for their community, identify local issues and priorities and plan for the future. RICs will be made up of two LIN representatives, one male and one female, from each LIN in their region. The role of the RIC is to provide advice to the Victorian government on Indigenous issues from a regional and community perspective. They highlight community priorities identified within their region and their respective LIN (Aboriginal Affairs Victoria 2009).

With the introduction of the LIN groups the City of Port Phillip has utilised the monthly meetings as a point of consultation. Instead of forming a separate Indigenous advisory body made up of the same community representatives, the City of Port Phillip seeks LIN input on local Indigenous community affairs and protocols. LIN input also reflects on the festival as one of the primary points of community consultation. Support from the LIN group attaches weight to festival funding applications and as the group strengthens it will take more of an active role in facilitating festival operations.

The City of Port Phillip has a number of service agreements in place with community organisations. Service agreements are annually negotiated financial contributions for the provision of community services. Indigenous focused service agreements support the Boon Wurrung foundation for civic ceremonies and cultural consultations, Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation and Inner South Community Health Service's facilitation of Our Rainbow Place. Each of these community services plays an important role in the maintenance of community identity, and representatives regularly gather at significant Indigenous events.

Recognition of National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week as a significant civic event is marked by the City of Port Phillip with a flag-raising ceremony, which has been accompanied by visual arts exhibitions featuring local Parkies, local community artists and arts programs run in Ngwalla Willam Bong's locally based women's drug and alcohol recovery centre Winja Ulupna and Galiamble for men.

A Melbourne Indigenous cultural renaissance

The City of Port Phillip was one of the first local government authorities in the state of Victoria to formulate a Memorandum of Understanding (which is due for revision), make an acknowledgement to country, recognise the importance of a formal Apology to members of the Stolen Generation (as outlined in the *Bringing Them Home Community Guide* 1997) and to set up an identified Indigenous Arts Officers role (in 1996).

A strong focus for the Indigenous Arts Officers role is asserting southeast Australian Aboriginal art forms and practices, considered not authentic or of valid identity due to colonisation and previous government policies. Arts programs, festivals and events produced by the Indigenous Arts Officers have contributed to an Indigenous cultural renaissance within the Melbourne metropolitan area and surrounds. Sparking a revival in reconstructing Indigenous cultural practices, circa 1970, the Aboriginal cultural renaissance has fuelled jobs, as well as much pride and cultural production (Broome 2005, p. 390).

With the growth of the Indigenous cultural renaissance there was a flourishing of Indigenous festivals that began to move slowly away from purely political movements and activist events towards ones specifically celebrating Indigenous arts and culture. It is in part this framework of



Festival attendee standing in the crowd watching the Yalukit Willam Ngargee main stage wearing a 2008 festival T-shirt



Koorie Night Market stallholder selling handcrafted artifacts displayed on possum skins

Indigenous representations that appears to be moving earlier attitudes from a defensive or reactive tone to one that is more culture-centred, emphasising commonalities, continuity and survival (Wassman 1998, p. 296). Some of the benefits from the Indigenous Cultural Renaissance are outlined in the Australia Council's recently released Australian Participation in the Arts Research Report 2010, which indicate interest in Indigenous arts is growing. It states, 'Attitudes to Indigenous arts are increasingly positive, indicating a great opportunity to grow the Indigenous art audience across Australia (Australia Council for the Arts 2010).

Creating an opportunity for non-Indigenous people to access Indigenous arts and cultural practices can best be experienced through a celebratory event, exhibition or local festival structure. In recognition of growing and maintaining access to Indigenous arts the City of Port Phillip have produced a number of significant festivals including We Iri We Home Borne (1996, 1998), Bless Your Big Blak Arts (2001) and Bless Your Blak Arts (2003). Through the festival form Indigenous Arts Officers have identified spaces for contemporary Indigenous practices, such as film, theatre, literature, music, cultural workshops and dance, to take place. They have provided a catalyst and platform for Indigenous artists to present their work and to voice issues relevant to the community.

Yalukit Willam Ngargee programs

Two components of the 2010 festival program are outlined here contributing to Indigenous cultural identity and Indigenous community wellbeing.

Lu'arn: Contemporary Indigenous Dance

The 2010 festival commissioned the choreography of a contemporary dance piece based on an adaptation of a traditional Boon Wurrung men's lore story about demigod Loo-ern. Choreographed by a celebrated Indigenous dancer, Lu'arn was presented with a Boonwurrung elder spokesperson as a seven-minute contemporary welcome to country on the festival main day, Saturday 6 February. Lu'arn reconstructs practices and language nearly lost to the Boonwurrung people and is a method for the exchange of local stories and ceremony to non-Indigenous Australians who do not have a spiritual or national dance.

The story follows Lu'arn's journey down the Birrarung/River of Mist (or Yarra River). Mesmerised by a black feather carried on the wind, he is met by black swans at Western Port Bay and follows their migration to Wilson's Promontory where he becomes a spirit and keeper of men's lore. The piece opens with Lu'arn lighting a fire as a boy, then three dancers painted white shift between being spirit guides enticing Lu'arn with a giant feather then operating purpose-built swan puppets fitted onto their foot, before finishing with Lu'arn performing solo as a man.

A major challenge facing the choreographer was encouraging the involvement of Indigenous male dancers and dance groups. Practising Indigenous dancers who perform at festivals and events are predominantly traditionally based. Although traditional dance styles seem to be more commonly accepted as a reconstruction of Indigenous cultural practices they don't authentically place contemporary Indigenous identity within complex modern metropolitan and urban lives. Hip-hop, break dancing and krumping are contemporary African American dance forms Indigenous youth are investing in. Appropriating Afro-American identities through dance forms is an attractive fit to Indigenous youth's daily cultural practices, finding similarities between expressing

experiences of contemporary culture, racism and socio-economic divides.

Lu'arn's choreographer has partnered with community cultural development organisation The Torch. Their assistance benefits the development of a Melbourne-based contemporary Indigenous dance company looking with youth at the reconstruction of Indigenous dances through puppetry and hip-hop as existing forms most youth are comfortable and aware of.

'The more Aboriginals get a chance to help act, dance etcetera the better, great!' (Survey Verbatim 2009)

Parkies Marshalling

On a community level the Yalukit Willam Ngargee has been working for three years to set up opportunities for the local Parkies to marshal and host the festival main day. This process has provided valuable lessons in shaping the 2010 festival marshalling operations.

An Indigenous security company was sought when organising security logistics for the festivals 2008 main day, however, no Indigenous security company operates in Melbourne. Instead, a non-Indigenous security company was contracted to work with the community, and so an agreement to have an all-Indigenous security and marshalling team was not fulfilled. Outside of the security company's regular operations and networks some of the contracted Parkies claimed they hadn't been paid, creating rifts between the festival director, security company and Parkies.

A second attempt in 2009 was a success but not without its trials. Collingwood Parkies were invited to marshal the festival. Due to their experience marshalling large events such as The Long Walk and NAIDOC in the Park the group displayed strong leadership skills in their organisational relationships with the festival. However, inviting the Collingwood Parkies resulted in a minor confrontation between the local Parkies and the festival director. Ultimately there was a forming bond established between the two parties to create a total marshalling team of 24 people, including six local Parkies, who were paid on the day. A documentary about the Collingwood Parkies marshalling and musician Dave Arden performing at the festival—Living in Two Worlds—was made by Indigenous Media Scholarship students. The documentary premiered at the St Kilda Film Festival 2009 and received an Indigenous Training Innovation Award.



Looking through the Koorie Night Markets Indigenous traders marquee onto the Yalukit Wilam Ngargee main music area



Yarn Strong Sister Indigenous educational trainer and stall selling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's stories and toys

As part of the 2010 festival local Parkies organised marshalling operations. Displaying local leadership and community pride the 12 Parkies marshalled and hosted the festival precinct. Duties involved being a welcoming presence for people attending the festival, monitoring the wet/drinking area and the dry/non-drinking area, and reporting any potential situations to the registered security guards. The introduction of a compulsory Brotherhood of St Laurence festival concierge course was designed in collaboration with community elders and Indigenous access workers. A statement of attainment recognised the marshal's ability to manage conflict resolution and diffuse potentially violent situations.

The Parkies' marshalling attracted a lot of positive feedback from Indigenous and non-Indigenous people attending the festival. There has been a demand for marshals at other Indigenous events around Melbourne but the Parkies are currently not in a position to adequately satisfy these demands. Security and first aid training for Parkies could open up further employment prospects and provide increased safety measures for Indigenous people who congregate in the park. Whilst not seemingly essential from a non-Indigenous event management perspective the importance of local marshalling of the festival is about providing training opportunities, short-term employment and for the 'Parkies' to have a sense of pride and ownership of the festival held in what's recognised as their park.

'It is an incredible special event bringing families and Indigenous people together.'
(Survey Verbatim 2009).

Conclusion

Riding the crest of the Indigenous cultural renaissance spreading across Australia, the Yalukit Willam Ngargee has demonstrated a variety of benefits to the local Indigenous and non-Indigenous community. As a council lead initiative the festival aims to contribute to the development and maintenance of local identity. Through its naming, main music festival day, satellite programs, community-based programs and support networks the festival aids in reconstructing language and creating spaces for the transference of cultural knowledge. This form of reciprocity is a universal aspect of all humans but it has been significantly shaped in Australia by the attempted cultural dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

Celebrating contemporary Indigenous culture on a festival platform authentically places its connection with the lives of Indigenous people who reside in rapidly developing metropolitan environments. The Yalukit Willam Ngargee brings people together invoking feelings of pride and gratitude suggesting the festival is achieving its aim of providing a space to generate Indigenous well being through community identity.

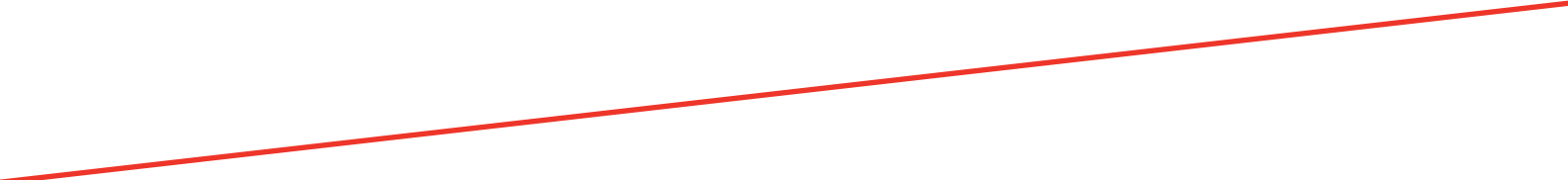
'It was deadly.' (Survey Verbatim 2009)

7. Conclusion

Key findings and recommendations

Key findings

1. The Indigenous festivals sector in Australia is a dynamic and rapidly growing component in the Australian Indigenous arts, culture and community development landscape. This cultural dynamism is broadly consistent with Indigenous festivals developing in similar jurisdictions internationally, but as in other areas of Indigenous policy is less clearly supported and more vulnerable here.
2. The sector is at a crucial stage of development with the emergence of outstanding examples of best practice in a general context of institutional instability, lack of sectoral coordination and structural vulnerability. Governments have generally failed to recognise the enormous value leveraged from the sector, resulting in mostly insecure funding supplemented by the philanthropic sector. Infrastructure investment particularly lacking.
3. Festivals leverage enormous cross-sectoral value from their investments; from positive engagement with employment, education and training, enterprise development, mental and physical health, to the more intangible but crucial social practices of hope: communities recognising, cultivating and respecting their Indigenous identities present and past in re-imagining their productive futures.
4. Festivals are important to Indigenous communities for their contribution Indigenous community wellbeing, resilience and capacity. They increase individual and community self-esteem and cultural confidence, develop local leadership, social, cultural and economic initiatives, open creative spaces of individual and collective opportunity, and provide a focus for governments and other service providers to better engage community needs and aspirations.
5. Festivals differ in the level of operation, longevity and degree of their wellbeing effects on different communities. Festivals may have multiple effects, such as both providing local celebrations and immediate practical opportunities, while simultaneously impacting on the national framing of Aboriginal peoples' lives through the complex interconnection of government policy, media representations, sectional interests and wider community attitudes and experiences.
6. The measurable, short-term and individualised benefits flowing from Indigenous festivals are significant. By way of some illustrative examples:
 - 6.1. The youth multimedia program at Garma resulted in two scholarships being offered to Yolngu young people to undertake tertiary level film courses;
 - 6.2. Short-term increase in school attendance, motivation and self-esteem of students in Aurukun as a result of the Crocfest program and related multimedia training, including the creation of a permanent media record of those achievements;
 - 6.3. The benefits and opportunity of the experience of cultural employment for performers at The Dreaming, and immediate exposure to an international arts market.

- 
7. The less easily measured, longer-term benefits are even more significant for their role in re-framing the structures of opportunity for Indigenous people and communities, including:
 - 7.1. All festivals studied intervene locally, and some nationally and internationally, in the barrage of negative reporting and representation of Indigenous people and issues with strong, positive representations and experiences;
 - 7.2. Indigenous people affirming the significance, value and persistence of their distinct cultures internally across generations, and externally as part of the local, regional and national stories from which their contributions are often excluded;
 - 7.3. Leveraging opportunities to be recognised, attract resources and exert influence in local, regional and national policy and related institutional development. In the case of Garma it has become a significant node in the critique, influence and development of both NT and national Indigenous policy.
 - 7.4. The generation of sustainable community development and economic opportunities. For example Yolngu elders and Garma management leveraging Garma facilities and relationships to generate broader cultural tourism and services development as specific, family-owned businesses including a women's healing centre and on-country tour operations;
 - 7.5. The Dreaming has been intensifying and solidifying the development of a coordinated national Indigenous performing arts industry sponsored by agencies such as ATSIAB of the Australia Council for the Arts.
 - 7.6. These events enhance reconciliation through intercultural engagement as audiences, performers, and staff. Reconciliation Australia bring corporate leaders to Garma for cultural immersion. Volunteer programs at events such as Garma and The Dreaming are practical reconciliation experiences that enhance intercultural understanding.
 8. While it is important to note that this diversity of festival types is an important part of their social impact and there is no 'one size fits all' model, certain features can be identified for optimising wellbeing outcomes:
 - 8.1. Culturally appropriate, localised and stable Indigenous control and 'authorship' under a considered governance model (this does not always mean Indigenous event management);
 - 8.2. Long-term vision, leadership and support for the event within communities;
 - 8.3. Ongoing Indigenous community consultation and strategic planning;
 - 8.4. Long-term vision, leadership and support from partner organisations. The biggest single risk factor for festivals' success is the short-term nature of most funding programs (3 year funding has been very effective in supporting proper planning where offered) ;
 - 8.5. Broad engagement with relevant stakeholders and institutions, building, linking and leveraging festival-related relationships and programs year-round.

9. Indigenous indicators of wellbeing are distinctive. Indigenous people and researchers have challenged mainstream indicators of wellbeing. Professor Mick Dodson argues that indicators can't be based on non-Indigenous presumptions, rather we have to cultivate **Indigenous** measures of success. Indigenous wellbeing indicators tend towards more holistic models which connect the health of individuals and groups with relationships in family and community, country (both meanings of land and nation) and spiritual connection.

Recommendations

These recommendations are built around support for Indigenous Festivals but are framed to apply broadly to other Indigenous support activity of the Telstra Foundation and the philanthropic sector.

1. That Festivals be recognised and supported as a unique, high-value, high-profile, cross-sectoral community development activity the exponential development potential of which has barely been touched;
2. That this support is more actively coordinated by an alliance of Indigenous organisations, governments and philanthropic agencies, ideally led by an established Indigenous-driven organisation with proven capacity in the area, such as ATSIAB;
3. That more coordinated support lead to a significant increase in the overall pool of funds available, particularly for year-round management. Coordination should not be used in an attempt to fit all festivals into standard 'templates' of KPIs. A key strength in the sector is the diversity of festival types and their connection to community;
4. That support is built as long-term partnerships with communities and organisations, both as governance support and substantial, recurrent funding commitments, recognising that current funding models and amounts are insufficient. 3 year funding cycles are a minimum requirement to enable proper budget stability, planning and the coordination required to engage with the tourism industry, multiply community benefits, etcetera;
5. That to be effective, any such partnerships must take Indigenous governance seriously, recognising and carefully respecting both formal and traditional forms of authority in their different manifestations around the country;
6. To encourage and support the appointment of year round Indigenous Festival Coordinators for larger festivals, who have the endorsement from their community and can provide continuity with stakeholders between festivals;
7. That properly funded and structured training and mentorship for local Indigenous staff and organisations be built into support programs for festivals;
8. That there be sustained investment in festival infrastructure;
9. That the variety of festival types be cultivated and supported, particularly recognising the importance of both major iconic events, and the plethora of smaller local festivals;

10. That work on diverse indicators of wellbeing and broader policy success be drawn on in policy development, implementation and evaluation to reflect the diverse aspirations and circumstances of Indigenous communities (for example, not every community wants or needs the same kinds of education services or employment outcomes);
11. That cultural development partnerships become a philanthropic priority. Supporting and sustaining the distinctive cultural dynamism in Indigenous communities (both 'traditional' and new-media innovations) requires philanthropic support. The philanthropic sector can help to advocate for and build the sector, filling the gaps in governments' lack of policy vision which remains in 'silos' (despite 'whole of government' and 'intervention' rhetoric and consequent misallocation of resources) and massive under-funding, market failure based on geographic remoteness and labour market distortions and persistent, historical, systematic exclusions;
12. That Indigenous festivals be recognised and supported beyond all these more practical, short-term considerations for the significant contribution they make to the sustenance, promotion and development of unique Indigenous cultures of international significance;
13. Recognition and promotion of the fact that Indigenous festivals are a leading space of innovation in creating a sustainable, secure and mature national culture for all Australians based on cross-cultural recognition, respect, exchange and creativity.

- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria 2009, <http://www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au/web7/AAVMMain.nsf/allDocs/RWPCDCFD67C4D7DAE53CA2574A5002F8B30?OpenDocument>
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts 2008, *A new landscape*, Australia Council, Sydney.
- Altman, J 2005, *Brokering Aboriginal art: a critical perspective on marketing, institutions, and the state*, Deakin University, Geelong.
- Altman, J 2007, 'Alleviating poverty in remote Indigenous Australia: the role of the hybrid economy', *Development Bulletin*, no. 72, pp. 47–51.
- Altman, J and Hinkson, M (eds) 2007, *Coercive reconciliation: stabilise, normalise, exit Aboriginal Australia*, Arena, North Carlton.
- Anderson, I 1994, 'Powers of health—on the politics of self-determining Aboriginal health', *Arena Magazine*, no. 11, pp. 32–36.
- Anderson, I, Baum, F and Bentley, M (eds) 2007, *Beyond bandaids: exploring the underlying social determinants of Aboriginal health. Papers from the Social Determinants of Aboriginal Health Workshop, Adelaide, July 2004*, Darwin Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health.
- Atkinson, J, Graham, J, Pettit, G and Lewis, L 2002, 'Broadening the focus of research into the health of Indigenous Australians', *Medical Journal Australia*, no. 177, pp. 286–287.
- Auspoll 2009, *Australian reconciliation barometer: comparative report*, prepared by Auspoll Pty Ltd for Reconciliation Australia, Canberra.
- Australia Council for the Arts 2010, *More than bums on seats: Australian participation in the arts*, Australia Council for the Arts, Sydney.
- Bakhtin, M 1984, *Rabelais and his worlds*, MIT Press, Massachusetts.
- Barraket, J 2005, 'Putting people in the picture? The role of arts in social inclusion', *Social Policy Working Paper No. 4*, Brotherhood of St Laurence and The Centre for Public Policy, Melbourne.
- Barraket, J and Kaiser, A 2007, *Evaluating the mental health and wellbeing impacts of community-based festivals: Awakening Festival and Braybrooks Big Day Out*, Centre for Public Policy, Melbourne.
- Bell, A 2008, 'Recognition or ethics?: De/centering and the legacy of settler colonialism', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 22, no. 6.
- Bell, S, Boughton, B and Barlett, B 2007, 'Education as a determinant of Indigenous health', in I Anderson, F Baum and M Bentley (eds), *Beyond bandaids: exploring the underlying social determinants of Aboriginal health*, Darwin Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, pp. 37–55.
- Behrendt, L 1995, *Aboriginal Dispute Resolution*, The Federation Press, Sydney.
- Briggs, C 2009, *The Journey Cycles of the Boonwurrung*, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL), Melbourne.
- Briggs, P 2009, 'A treaty now will go a long way to a more equal Australia', *The Age*, 4 May, p. 15.
- Broome, R 2005, *Aboriginal Victorians, a history since 1800*, Allen and Unwin, Melbourne.

Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre 1999, *Saltwater: Yirrkala bark paintings of sea country*, Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre in association with Jennifer Isaacs Publishing, Neutral Bay, NSW:

Calma, T 2006, *Creating futures – Influencing social determinants of mental health and well-being in rural Indigenous and Island people*, Social Justice Commission, HREOC [Electronic Version]. Retrieved 5 September from http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/index.html

Calma, T 2007, 'Indigenous health: real solutions for a chronic problem', paper presented at the Garma Festival, Gulkala, NT.

Carvolth, R, Jacobs, K, Bowie, P, Clough, A, Oches, J, Parr, J and Hales, C 2003, *Rural and remote festivals: a guide for health workers and communities*, The State of Queensland, Queensland Health, Brisbane.

Chandler, J 2007, 'Whose coup? Canberra and clan both celebrate a deal', in *The Age*, from www.theage.com.au/news/national/whose-coup-canberra-and-clan-both-celebrate-a-deal/2007/09/21/1189881777542.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1.

Christie, M and Greatorex, J 2006, 'Yolngu life in the Northern Territory of Australia: the significance of community and social capital', Charles Darwin University, from www.cdu.edu.au/centres/inc/pdf/Yolngulife.pdf.

CIRCA 2005, *2004 Croc Festivals research: Weipa, Port Augusta, Alice Springs, Moree and Thursday Island*, Leichhardt Department of Health and Aging.

Clark, I and Kostanski, L 2006, 'An Indigenous history of Stonnington: a report to the City of Stonnington', University of Ballarat.

Commonwealth of Australia 2007, *Northern Territory Emergency Intervention Act*.

Comaroff, JL and Comaroff, J 2009, *Ethnicity, Inc.*, University of Chicago Press.

Copley, A 2009, *Yalukit Willam Ngargee: audience research surveys 2009*, Top End Arts Marketing, Darwin.

Corn, A 2009, *Reflections & voices: exploring the music of Yothu Yindi with Mandawuy Yunupingu*, Sydney University Press.

Corsin Jimenez, A 2008, 'Introduction: well-being's re-Proportioning of social thought', in A Corsin Jimenez (ed.), *Culture and well-being: anthropological approaches to freedom and political ethics*, Pluto Press, London, pp. 1–32.

Cornell, S 2006, 'Indigenous peoples, poverty and self-determination in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States', paper presented at the Joint Occasional Papers on Native Affairs Arizona.

Cowlshaw, G 2004, *Blackfellas, whitefellas and the hidden injuries of race*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford

Croc Festival, accessed 5 May, 2009, from <http://www.crocfestival.org.au>

Daly, AE and Smith DE 2003, 'Reproducing exclusion or inclusions? Implications for the wellbeing of Indigenous Australian children', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 204*, Canberra.

de Brito, S 2007, 'Foot in the Door [Electronic Version]', in *Sydney Morning Herald*, from http://blogs.smh.com.au/lifestyle/allmenareliars/archives/2007/11/a_foot_in_the_door_1.html.

Dick, D 2007, 'Social determinants and the health of Indigenous peoples in Australia—a human rights based approach', paper presented at the International Symposium on the Social Determinants of Indigenous Health.

- Dodson, M 2003, 'The end is in the beginning: re(de)finding Aboriginality' in M Grossman (ed.), *Blacklines: contemporary critical writing by Indigenous Australians* Melbourne University Press, pp. 25–42.
- Dunbar, T and Scrimgeour, M 2007, 'Education', in B Carson et al. (eds), *Social determinants of Indigenous health*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, pp. 135–152.
- Dunbar-Hall, P and Gibson, C 2004, *Deadly sounds, deadly places: contemporary Aboriginal music in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney.
- Elder, C 2007, *Being Australian: narratives of national identity*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest.
- Fieldworx 2008, *Making Solid Ground: Infrastructure and Key Organisations Review, a report for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council*, Sydney. www.australiacouncil.gov.au/research/aboriginal_and_torres_strait_islander_arts/reports_and_publications/making_solid_ground
- Gaykamangu, W, Marika, R and Christie, M, 1999, *Gulkula and Ganbulapula*, from www.garma.telstra.com/1999/gbackground.htm
- Gibson, C and Stewart, A 2009, *Reinventing rural places: the extent and significance of rural and regional festivals in Australia*, University of Wollongong.
- Gillard, J 2007, *Social inclusion: a new portfolio, a new approach*.
- Gillard, J (Australian Minister for Education) 2008, *Indigenous community festivals for education expanded*, media release, Office of Minister for Education, Parliament House, Canberra, 31 March.
- Graburn, NHH 1976, *Ethnic and tourist arts: cultural expressions from the fourth world*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Grieves, V 2007, *Indigenous wellbeing: a framework for governments' Aboriginal cultural heritage activities*, from <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/conservation/IndigenousWellbeingFramework.htm>.
- Grunstein, R 2002, *Evaluation of the effects of the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge on adolescent resiliency and health behaviour*, Sydney University Press.
- Heil, D 2006, 'Shifting expectations of treatment: from "patient as individual" to "patient as social person"', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, no. 2, 98–110.
- Henderson, G, Robson C, Cox L, Dukes C, Tsey K and Haswell M 2007, 'Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People within the Broader Context of the Social Determinants of Health', in I Anderson, F Baum and M Bentley (eds), *Beyond band-aids: exploring the underlying social determinants of Aboriginal health*, Darwin Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, pp. 136–164.
- Henry, R 2008, 'Engaging with history by performing tradition: the poetic politics of Indigenous Australian festivals', in J. Kapferer (ed.), *The state and the arts: articulating power and subversion*, Berghahn Books, New York, pp. 52–69.
- Hinkson, M and Smith, B 2005, 'Introduction: conceptual moves towards an intercultural analysis', *Oceania*, vol. 75, no. 3, pp. 157-166.
- HREOC 2009, Human Rights Commission, from <http://www.hreoc.gov.au>
- Hunter, BH 2000, 'Social exclusion, social capital, and Indigenous Australians: measuring the social costs of unemployment', *CAEPR Discussion Paper*, ANU, Canberra, pp. i–41.

- Hunter, BH 2008, 'Indigenous social exclusion: insights and challenges for the concept of social inclusion', paper presented at the Brotherhood of St Laurence Social Inclusion Down Under Symposium, Melbourne.
- Hunter, E 2008, 'Service solutions, or stagnation?', *Arena*, no. 29/30, pp. 203–218.
- James, P 2006, *Globalism, nationalism, tribalism: bringing theory back in, towards a theory of abstract community*, Sage, London.
- Kannabiran, K, Vieten, UM and Yuval-Davis, N 2006, 'Introduction', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 189–195.
- Langton, M 1993, *Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television*, Australian Film Commission, North Sydney.
- Langton, M 2008, 'Trapped in the Aboriginal reality show' *Griffith Review*, no. 19, pp. 143–162.
- McMillan, A 1999, *Report on the first Garma*, Yothu Yindi Foundation, from www.garma.telstra.com/1999/workshop.html
- Macknight, C 1976, *The voyage to Marege: Macassan trepangers in northern Australia*. Melbourne University Press.
- Maddison, S 2009, *Black politics: inside the complexity of Aboriginal political culture*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest.
- Manderson, L 2005a, 'Social Capital and Inclusion: Locating Wellbeing in Community', in L Manderson (ed.), *Rethinking wellbeing*, Curtin University Publishing, Perth, pp. 161–184.
- Manderson, L 2005b, 'The Social Context of Wellbeing', in L Manderson (ed.), *Rethinking wellbeing*, Curtin University Publishing, Perth, pp. 1–25.
- Manderson, L (ed.) 2005c, *Rethinking wellbeing*, Curtin University Publishing, Perth
- Marmot, M 2006, 'Harveian oration: health in an unequal world', *The Lancet*, no. 368, pp. 2081–2094.
- Marmot, M and Wilkinson RG (eds) 1999, *Social determinants of health*, Oxford University Press.
- Martin, DF 2006, 'Why the "new direction" in Federal Indigenous affairs policy is as likely to "fail" as the old directions [Electronic Version]', *Topical Issues in Indigenous Affairs*, no. 5.
- McDonald, H, Arabena, K and Henderson G 2006, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and healing (editorial)', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, no. 2, pp. 1–4.
- Morrissey, M, PePua, R, Brown, A and Latif, A 2007, 'Culture as a determinant of Aboriginal health', in I Anderson, F Baum and M Bentley (eds), *Beyond band-aids: exploring the underlying social determinants of Aboriginal health*, pp. 239–254.
- Muecke, S 2004, *Ancient and modern*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.
- Mulligan, M, Humphrey, K, James, P, Scanlon, C, Smith, P and Welsh, N 2006, *Creating communities: celebrations, arts and wellbeing within and across local communities*, Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne.
- Myers, F 1994 'Culture-making: performing Aboriginality at the Asia Society Gallery', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 679–699.

- Nakata, M (ed.) 2001, *Indigenous peoples, racism and the United Nations*, Common Ground Publishing, Altona.
- National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party 1989, *A national health strategy: report of The National Health Strategy Working Party*, Canberra National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party.
- Neuenfeldt, K 2000, *Yothu Yindi*, in S Kleinert and M Neale (eds), *The Oxford companion to Aboriginal art and culture*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 741–742.
- Panagia, D 2006, *Poetics of political thinking*, Duke University, Durban.
- Paradies, Y 2006, 'Beyond black and white: essentialism, hybridity and indigeneity', *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 355–367.
- Paradies, Y 2007, 'Racism', in TD Bronwyn Carson, RD Chenhall and R Bailie (eds.), *Social determinants of Indigenous health*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest.
- Paradies, Y et al. 2009, *Building on our strengths: a framework to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria. Full Report*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.
- Parbury, N 2007, *Croc Festival*, Indigenous Festivals Australia, Chatswood.
- Parsons, M 1997, 'The tourist corroboree in South Australia to 1911' [online], *Aboriginal History*, vol. 21, pp. 46-69, cited 25 February 2010, from <http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=858755786095425;res=IELHSS>, ISSN: 0314-8769.
- Parsons, M 2000, 'Corroboree', in S Kleinert and M Neale (eds), *The Oxford companion to Aboriginal art and culture*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 564–5.
- Parsons, M 2002, "'Ah that I could convey a proper idea of this interesting wild play of the natives" corroborees and the rise of indigenous Australian cultural tourism', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 14–27.
- Phipps, P and Wearne, J 2002, 'Print, Publishing and Indigenous Australia', in B Cope and R Brown (eds), *Value chain clustering in regional publishing service markets*, Common Ground Publishing, Altona.
- Presland, G 1997, *Aboriginal Melbourne: the lost land of the Kulin people*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne.
- Productivity Commission 2007, *Overcoming indigenous disadvantage key indicators 2007*, from <http://www.pc.gov.au/speeches/cs20070629>.
- Queensland Folk Federation 2007, *A youth program partnership proposal*, Telstra Foundation, Woodford.
- Ray, T 2007, 'Youth well-being in central Australia', in J Altman and M Hinkson (eds), *Coercive reconciliation*, Arena Publications, North Carlton, pp. 195–203.
- Rosaldo, R 1989, *Culture & truth: the remaking of social analysis*, Beacon Press, Boston.
- Rose, DB 2004, *Reports from a wild country: ethics for decolonisation*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.
- Rudd, K (Prime Minister of Australia) and Gillard, J (Deputy Prime Minister of Australia) 2008, 'Australia Social Inclusion Board', media release, Prime Minister of Australia, Canberra, 21 May, from http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2008/media_release_0256.cfm.

- Sarra, C 2003, *Young and black and deadly: strategies for improving outcomes for Indigenous students*, Australian College of Educators, Canberra.
- Schwab, RG 1995, 'The calculus of reciprocity: principals and implications of Aboriginal sharing', *Discussion Paper No. 11*, ANU, Canberra.
- Schwab, RG 2006, 'Kids, skidoos and caribou: the Junior Canadian Ranger Program as a model for re-engaging Indigenous Australian youth in remote areas', *CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 281*, ANU, Canberra.
- Scott, JC 1985, *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Sennett, R 1999, 'How Work Destroys Social Inclusion', *New Statesmen*, pp. 25–27.
- Slater, L 2008, 'Aurukun, we're happy, strong people': Aurukun kids projecting life into bad headlines, *Borderlands e-journal*, vol. 7, no. 2.
- Smith, L T 1999, *Decolonizing methodologies: research and Indigenous peoples*, Zed Books, London.
- Stewart-Harawira, M 2005, *The new imperial order: Indigenous responses to globalization*, Zed Books, London.
- Tamisari, F 2000, 'Knowing the country, holding the law: Yolngu dance performance in north-eastern Arnhem Land, in S Kleinert and M Neale (eds), *The Oxford companion to Aboriginal art and culture*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp.146–52.
- Taylor, J 2006, 'Indigenous people and indicators of well-being', *CAEPR Working Paper No. 33*, ANU, Canberra.
- Tynan, M., Atkinson, P, Bourke, L and Atkinson, V 2007, "'If you don't have health, what's the use of living?'" – Koori voices from the Goulburn-Murray rivers region on health and its determinants', in I Anderson, F Baum, and M Bentley (eds), *Beyond band-aids: exploring the underlying social determinants of Aboriginal health*, Darwin Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, pp. 1–17.
- Vic Health 2009, 'Preventing discrimination and promoting acceptance of diversity', from <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au>
- Wassman, J (ed.) 1998, *Pacific answers to western hegemony: cultural practices to identity construction*, Berg, New York.
- Williams, N 1986, *The Yolngu and their land: a system of land tenure and the fight for its recognition*, Stanford University Press.
- Yothu Yindi Foundation 1999, 'Garma background notes', Yothu Yindi Foundation, from www.garma.telstra.com/1999/gbackground.htm
- Yothu Yindi Foundation 2002, *Garma Festival promotional DVD*, Yothu Yindi Foundation, Darwin.
- Yunupingu, M and Morphy, H 2000, 'A Balance in knowledge: respecting difference', in S Kleinert and M Neale (eds), *The Oxford companion to Aboriginal art and culture*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 493–496.
- Yunupingu, M 1991, *Tribal voice*, Yothu Yindi Music, Mushroom Records, Sydney.
- Yunupingu, M 2001, *What Is Garma?*, Yothu Yindi Foundation, from www.garma.telstra.com/aboutgarma.htm.
- Zubrick, SR, Lawrence, DM, Mitrou, FG, Dalby, RB, Blair, EM, Griffin, J, Milroy, H, De Maio, JA, Cox, A and Li, J 2005, *The Western Australian Aboriginal child health survey: the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people*, Institute for Child Health Research, Perth Telethon.

www.rmit.edu.au