

Title: **Cross-Cultural Partnerships in Violence Prevention**

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Abstract: Established best practices for family violence prevention activities in Indigenous communities emphasise community development principles of self-determination, empowerment and community ownership. Further, such prevention activities arise from community driven programs that respond to local needs, generate solutions, build on existing skills within the community, add value to existing structures and draw on the “strength of local traditions, structures and patterns of authority to promote a greater sense of community ownership and responsibility for local justice issues and problems” (Chantrill, 1997:13).

This paper describes a school-based violence prevention program at Woorabinda, an Aboriginal community in central Queensland which draws on community development principles and has been established through a partnership between the Woorabinda Women’s Shelter, “Gumbi Gunya”; Central Queensland University’s “Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family

Violence Research” (CDFVR); and the Woorabinda State Primary School. The activities of the program revolve around a life-sized kangaroo mascot named “Koorra” and a series of stories authored by the Gumbi Gunya Co-ordinator. These activities promote and explore respectful, cooperative ways of solving problems and highlight themes of respect for self, culture and elders; reconnection with Aboriginal culture; and cultural pride. Community members further explore the stories’ messages with the children through time honoured communication mediums such as art, dance, music and ceremonies.

The presentation will give an overview of the processes used in developing, implementing and evaluating this program and reflect on the learnings and challenges encountered in light of key community development principles.

Introduction

Paulo Freire’s seminal work in the early 1970s, which advocated working *with* people rather than *for* the people to overcome oppression (Phnuyal, 1997:1; Sung-Sang Yoo, 2004; Orellana, 1997) provided the foundations for contemporary community development approaches. His pioneering work in literacy programs in Latin America exemplified a model of empowerment that located both wisdom and the capacity for remedial action with the oppressed themselves.

Drawing from Freire, Ife (2002:88) notes that strategies that aim to raise consciousness and ensure that the “voices of the oppressed are heard, acknowledged and valued” must be incorporated into community

development work. The role of the “expert” in this context is to be a resource for the people to assist them articulate and meet their own needs.

While presenting in various forms around the world, community development is centrally concerned with processes of mobilising communities to address oppression, social injustice and powerlessness (Gilchrist, 2004). This paper is concerned with the mobilisation of an Australian Aboriginal community in central Queensland, to address issues of interpersonal violence.

Non-Indigenous writers such as Ife (2002) and Kenny (1999) remind us to view community development with Indigenous communities as distinct from community development with non-Indigenous communities, and that this may necessitate rejection of some community development principles and strategies. For example, community consultation and decision-making processes may be guided by conventions that are founded on respect for elders and tribal traditions (Kenny, 1999).

Ife (2002) cautions that community development in Indigenous communities has often been a “euphemism for oppression, domination, colonialism, racism and the imposition of Western cultural values and traditions at the expense of Indigenous people” (p.183). He argues that legitimising and strengthening Indigenous culture must be the primary aim of community development and that “Indigenous people themselves must set the agenda for development and have complete control over processes and structures” (p.183).

The role of the non-Indigenous worker in this context is two-fold: offer support and assistance, particularly in processes that engage the structures of the dominant non-Indigenous systems; and actively challenge the structural racism and racial oppression operating in the wider society that

is at the heart of problems in Indigenous communities. Establishing some knowledge of the culture and community before entering is important; however, a vital prerequisite to success is the worker approaching the community with genuine respect, goodwill, sensitivity and self-awareness (Ife, 2002).

In terms of developing family violence prevention activities in Indigenous communities, best practice literature reiterates the central importance of community development principles, including the redefinition of the role of government and non-Indigenous services to partner *with* Indigenous communities through providing funding, resources and support as required (Blagg, 2000; Memmott, 2000). Blagg and Memmott emphasise the need for models of intervention that are multi-disciplinary, reflect principles of empowerment, are tailored to the needs and culture of local communities, and “add value to existing community structures where possible” (Blagg, 2000; p.4-5). While recognising the capacity to adapt violence prevention programs from elsewhere, Memmott (2000) notes “they require a good deal of commonsense to render them locally relevant” (p. 84).

Locating Indigenous voices within the Australian community development literature is more difficult. However, Indigenous writers from related areas offer wisdom and insight when considering community work with Indigenous communities. Loretta Kelly (2002) has extensive experience in grass-roots community programs for family violence prevention. In writing about cultural appropriateness of restorative justice programs for Indigenous communities, she argues, “if a ... program does not respect and enhance our right to self-determination, then it is, *prima facie*, culturally inappropriate” (p.212).

The criteria Kelly (2002:212) uses for assessing the cultural appropriateness of restorative justice processes in Indigenous communities considers a program's value in terms of community empowerment, self determination, cultural sensitivity and cultural relevance. Her criteria can be usefully adapted to guide an assessment of the cultural appropriateness of other community-based programs in Indigenous communities, as follows:

1. Do values underpinning the program reflect Indigenous cultural values?
2. Are processes used in delivering the program culturally relevant?
3. Is the practice or the implementation of the program culturally sensitive?
4. Does the program empower Indigenous communities?
5. Does the program meet the desired outcomes for Indigenous communities?

Similarly, in writing about the portrayal of Indigenous women in non-Indigenous women's writing, Aileen Morton Robinson (2000) calls for Indigenous women's standpoint to be the *central standpoint*. This is to be achieved by non-Indigenous writers viewing themselves and others through the eyes of Indigenous women. This principle can be applied more broadly to partnerships and projects within Indigenous communities. It offers a particular challenge to non-Indigenous workers to review their values and assumptions about what it means to be Indigenous and confronts us with the reality that our non-Indigenous cultural background leaves us ill equipped to form any assumptions. Further, it challenges workers to invent and adopt processes that constantly review the standpoint that is being privileged in the work.

This paper reflects on a process that was initiated and driven by the vision of a member of an Aboriginal community in central Queensland, Australia. From this vision evolved a partnership between the community's Women's Shelter, Central Queensland University's Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research and the Woorabinda State Primary School supporting the creation of a community-owned violence prevention mascot, and a school-based violence prevention program (known locally as "Koorra").

Partnership Context

Woorabinda Community

Woorabinda is an Aboriginal community of approximately 900 residents, situated about 170km southwest of Rockhampton. Woorabinda was constructed in 1927 to accommodate the Aboriginal residents of Taroom Reserve, located approximately 300km away. These residents were forced to leave to make way for the building of a dam, which to date has not been built (McGregor-Dey, 1993). In 1942, several hundred Aboriginal families from Cape Bedford Mission and Hopevale Mission were also forcibly relocated some 2000km south to Woorabinda. The Woorabinda community's history is one of disenfranchised peoples from very different parts of Australia, diverse language speaking groups and dislocation from land, family and identity (Daniels, 2002).

Woorabinda's affairs are administered by the community's Aboriginal Council, which is elected in three-year terms. As one of the 15 Deed Of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) Aboriginal communities in Queensland, Woorabinda's administration has operated under the 'protection' of Queensland's *Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984*. However, these communities have recently commenced a four-year transitioning period

into Local Government Authority status under the State's *Local Government Act 1993*. This will result in the Councils of DOGIT communities having the same responsibilities and accountabilities as non-Indigenous local government Shire Councils in Queensland. Although the government has made some provision for the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal communities as a consequence of colonisation, some angst exists within Woorabinda in relation to how the changes will benefit the community (Kemp, 2004; Queensland Government, 2003).

Woorabinda community has a history of developing services and embracing initiatives that aim to improve the well-being of its members. Examples of Woorabinda's services include a hospital, community hall, a six-lane swimming pool, day care centre, primary school and preschool, Wadja Wadja High School, a hostel for the elderly, and a shelter for women and children. Community and Council administered programs include Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP), Community Justice Program, Community Housing Cooperative, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Police (QATSIP), Woorabinda Pastoral Company, and the Native Tree Seed Collection Project (Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council, 2002; Kemp, 2004).

In relation to community driven family violence prevention activities, Woorabinda community initiated a very creative and innovative program in 2000 that drew on the community's love of rugby league. Woorabinda's Wadja Warriors decided that anyone associated with the team who committed family violence would be excluded from matches for 2-3 weeks. Drinking alcohol prior to a football match also resulted in exclusion. This initiative was part of a broader community-based and state government funded program which included family violence education and awareness programs for footballer's families, a support and counselling group for men, an outstation for families experiencing

difficulties and regular family picnics and barbeques (DATSIP n.d.; Bowen, 2000).

Evaluation indicated remarkable results, including a reduction in the rate of domestic violence order breaches in Woorabinda from 97% in 1999 to just 36% in 2000, increased awareness within the community and reduced community tolerance of family violence (DATSIP n.d.; Bowen, 2000).

Local knowledge indicates that by the second year of the program, such success and local interest spurred the Council into expanding the program by increasing the community's number of football teams. However, the community did not share the Council's enthusiasm for re-balancing and directing resources into the expanded program and support for and commitment to the program subsided. Ultimately the program discontinued (Jeffers, 2004).

The Woorabinda Women's Shelter, "Gumbi Gunya" serves as a safe house for women and their children who are either anticipating an event of domestic or family violence or are in the wake of such an event. Local community member, Ailsa Weazel is employed as co-ordinator of Gumbi Gunya. Ailsa was introduced to formal delivery of violence prevention services several years ago when, as an interested and active member of the community, she was asked to take on the role as co-ordinator of the shelter. Ailsa is actively involved in a number of community initiatives including supporting the arts, such as a women's dance group and cultural festivals, and participating as a member of the Community Justice Group.

Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR)

CDFVR is situated at the Mackay campus of Central Queensland University and located within the Arts Health and Science Faculty's Centre for Social Science Research. The Centre is funded by the

Queensland Government to contribute, through its core functions of research, education and evaluation, to an evidence base that informs practice and social policy in the area of domestic and family violence. This charter guides the ways in which the Centre engages with communities. For example interventions and data collection methods must first be approved by the University's ethics committee and contact with people for the purposes of gathering data must occur within the context of signed, informed consent. CDFVR objectives in partnering the Koora project include supporting the development and implementation of the program, and contributing to the evidence base through documenting and evaluating the program.

Woorabinda Primary School

Woorabinda Primary School's student population is entirely Aboriginal and amounts to approximately 200. Education Queensland and the Woorabinda's Community Development Employment Projects scheme staff the school with approximately 33 people. This includes the non-Indigenous Principal; 14 teaching staff (1 of whom is Indigenous); 14 support staff (12 of whom are Aboriginal teacher aides); 2 part-time office staff and 2 part-time groundskeepers (all of whom are Indigenous). The school experiences a high rate of staff turnover and difficulty in attracting experienced teachers, making program continuity a challenge (Woorabinda School website, 2004).

Explicit objectives of the school include:

- To effectively manage school resources.
- To improve:
 - parent-school communication;
 - behaviour of students;
 - attendance; and
 - learning outcomes.

- To provide:
 - develop and implement culturally appropriate school based programs in key learning areas;
 - students with maximum access to computer technology;
 - an environment where effective learning and teaching can occur.
- To assist children to develop effective interpersonal relations through an understanding of themselves and others (Woorabinda School website, 2004).

The Principal indicated that the issues confronting Woorabinda Primary School included truancy, behaviour management, literacy and numeracy, and student underperformance in the State's 'Year 2 Net' and Year 5 and 7 tests.

Further discussion drew out some of the realities, constraints and objectives operating within the school environment. Heavy teacher workload, curriculum requirements and organisational requirements from Education Queensland mean that teachers have limited capacity to become involved in activities that are not connected to the State's education syllabus. The Principal advised that whilst there would be a high degree of interest and support for the project, the teachers would not be in a position to run an extra program or collect data for evaluation.

The primary objective expressed by the Principal during these initial discussions was in relation to strategies to support the school in managing student behaviours. The school had begun to explore "whole of school" options for shaping school culture and ethos through consultation with Cherbourg school. This Aboriginal community school had developed a whole of school program that yielded remarkable success in the area of

creating positive school culture and student pride in their Aboriginality (Maza, 2003).

Subsequently, the Woorabinda school adopted a “Values Education” program and a school motto that drew on local language and meaning: “*Proud and Deadly*”. “Proud” refers to pride in self and in culture through behaviour; and “Deadly” (meaning ‘great’ or ‘excellent’) refers to cleverness or ability to think. A range of values that stem from the core human values of: Righteousness; Peace; Truth; Love; and Non-violence are explicitly identified and explored with students to reinforce the school’s culture and ethos. As the Values Education program developed, the Principal’s objectives for the Koora program were clarified: support and complement the work of the existing values program; and increase the presence of Aboriginal culture and community involvement in the school.

Koora – A violence prevention program

The principles of working with Indigenous people and communities underpinned the commencement and evolution of the Koora project; these principles are clearly developmental in nature. Indigenous authors (eg Kelly, 2002; Behrendt, 2002) and texts incorporating Indigenous voices (e.g Lynn, Thorpe, Miles, Cutts, Butcher, Ford, 1998; Blagg; 2000; Memmott, 2000) refer to the central importance of relationship; approaches that respect and enhance the right to self-determination; and flexible time-frames in non-Indigenous workers engaging Indigenous communities. The wisdom shared by these authors together with the community development literature offers a valuable framework for reflecting on the processes and principles in play and understanding the various complexities encountered in the project. The project highlights the differentiation between community development with non-Indigenous communities and community development with Indigenous communities

(Ife, 2002; and Kenny, 1999), particularly with regard to the way in which Ailsa engaged the broader community in the project.

Project development and implementation

Background

In August 2002, Heather Nancarrow, then the Director of the State Government's Domestic Violence Prevention Branch, visited Woorabinda where Ailsa and her colleagues participated in research on the application of restorative justice practices to cases of domestic and family violence. Their participation in the research project was facilitated in part by the existing professional relationship between Ailsa and Heather who had both been working in the area of Indigenous family violence prevention for some years. During the visit to Woorabinda, but not directly as a result of the research, Ailsa expressed her great concern about the future of the community's children with regard to violence. She had observed increasing levels of violence among children, and referred to the inter-generational nature of violence that normalises its presence, diminishes respect for elders and others, and results in loss of pride and hope, and connection with culture. Ailsa identified that the community needed to work with the children, including the very young, to address this violence and loss of respect for people and culture, in order to prevent the perpetuation of family violence in the community. When Heather took up the position as Director of CDFVR in early 2003, she offered support and assistance to the community through Ailsa as a gesture of reciprocity and to continue the good relationship. This gesture recognised the opportunity to unite the respective knowledge, expertise and resources of the two parties to give effect to Ailsa's vision.

As Kelly, (1991:56) says, "...relationship is the pivot on which all else turns in community building". Ailsa's initiation of the "Koorra" community-based program was supported by an existing positive

relationship with Heather, CDFVR Director. As a result, Ailsa invited Heather and Michelle Bradford, CDFVR's Education Officer, to visit Woorabinda and explore the potential for collaboration between CDFVR and Gumbi Gunya on family violence prevention in the community.

During the initial meeting in February 2003 Ailsa shared her vision about a violence prevention strategy that incorporated:

- A community mascot that reflected a specific connection with not only Woorabinda, but also with contemporary youth culture as well as the practices of more traditional Aboriginal culture;
- A story-telling program for younger children that draws on the stories and wisdom of this mascot to explore respectful and cooperative ways of solving problems and emphasises themes of respect for self, culture and elders.

Process

The project development and implementation process unfolded through the following stages:

1. Consolidating a relationship between CDFVR and Ailsa
2. Identifying partnerships needed to progress the vision
3. Negotiating and building a partnership with the primary school
4. Securing Community Council funding for the creation of Koora
5. Designing and creating Koora the mascot
6. Introducing Koora to the community and building community interest and support
7. Negotiating the positioning of the Koora program in the school
8. Creating Koora's stories
9. Developing the teachers' resource package
10. Introducing Koora's stories to Woorabinda Primary and Preschool
11. Generating community participation in delivering the Koora program to the school

12. Reviewing the progress of the program

13. Ongoing evaluation of the impact of the program's activities on the students and teachers.

In discussion about the meaning of "Woorabinda", that is, "kangaroo sit down," Ailsa reflected, "*This must have been a peaceful place for kangaroos to sit and rest*". This observation became central to the discussion surrounding the mascot and its associated messages and provided the foundation for the emerging program. As a number of subsequent discussions progressed, Ailsa decided the mascot would be a male kangaroo named "Koorra". In kangaroo groups, the big buck kangaroo is the leader. He is responsible for guiding the group and the other kangaroos in the group all play a role in protecting each other.

Joint exploration of Ailsa's vision drew out several possibilities and potential, which included telling the stories to groups of children at the primary school, following up the stories with activities based in traditional culture (eg dance, art, ceremony, music and song) and involving elders and community members in delivering the program. This exploration clarified Ailsa's objectives, which included: creating story books for use in classrooms; challenging and changing children's attitudes toward violence; encouraging reconnection with culture; and developing a strong sense of pride in being Aboriginal and a strong sense of hope for a positive future.

Ailsa advised that Woorabinda has dance groups of young people who perform at community events and at a bi-annual Indigenous Cultural Festival at Laura in North Queensland. She said that mothers, fathers and family members often express great pride in seeing their children participate in traditional dance and she wondered if children's involvement and connection with traditional culture through the school-based program

might generate similar interest, pride and connection for other community members.

Together, Ailsa, Heather and Michelle visited the Principal of Woorabinda State Primary School, Angela Douglas, to explore her thoughts and reactions to the proposed program. The Principal's response was very positive; she indicated that there was a place in the school for such a program for all students from Preschool to Year 7. She spoke of her unsuccessful attempts at encouraging parents, various elders and community members to share stories and culture with the children at school, and of her hope that Ailsa's program might promote community participation in the school.

As Ailsa wrote her stories, ideas were explored regarding ways in which Koora's messages could be reinforced through classroom activities. A lecturer with the University's Faculty of Education and Creative Arts assisted in developing a teacher's resource package that contained culturally relevant information and suggested classroom activities that were consistent with the key learning areas of the State education syllabus for exploring and reinforcing Koora's messages. Therefore, the objectives of the teacher's resource package component of the project were to: support teachers' awareness of culturally sensitive practice; assist teachers with strategies for incorporating the Koora messages into regular classroom activities; and continue the presence of Koora's messages beyond Ailsa's school visits.

Roles and responsibilities

As the primary community partner and representative of the Woorabinda community, Ailsa led the development of her vision into a reality. Ailsa commenced consultation with those community members she identified as having relevant skills to contribute, and who would support her in the development of the program. These consultations were informal and did not involve input from the non-Indigenous partners.

Negotiations with the Council for funding the creation of the mascot costume were led by Ailsa and similarly, she developed a design of Koora through discussions with interested community members. Michelle assisted with locating mascot costume makers, costing the job of creating Koora and facilitating contact between the mascot making company and Ailsa.

Koora was officially launched in May 2003 at an evening concert following his debut earlier the same day at a “Stop Family Violence” street procession. Ailsa reported reactions of great excitement from the children at Koora’s debut and this excitement swelled again to fever pitch during Koora’s presentation at the evening concert. A nationally known Aboriginal comedian, Sean Choolburra hosted the concert, which was attended by almost the entire community, the Primary School Principal and teaching staff, Heather and Michelle from CDFVR and a representative of the State Department of Communities. The concert featured traditional dances from Woorabinda’s male and female dance groups, traditional and contemporary music performed by Woorabinda residents and a number of Aboriginal artists from outside who have continued associations with the Woorabinda community, and performances from primary school students and teachers, including their song “Proud and Deadly”. Children rushed close to the stage, screamed,

cheered, danced and, later, tried to mob Koora for a chance to touch him and talk to him.

This launch proved to be a very effective means of introducing Koora to the Woorabinda community. A very high level of community pride and enjoyment was evident. Some twelve months on, members of the community still talk with great enthusiasm about Koora's launch.

Having introduced Koora to the community through a free concert, Ailsa began to approach parents of children attending the school to discuss the project and seek their consent for the children to participate in a trial of the project that would be evaluated by CDFVR, using a range of methods including observations and artwork created by the children associated with the Koora project implementation. Although the CDFVR staff had suggested, and offered to pay for a community event, such as a barbecue, to facilitate this discussion and consent gathering process, Ailsa's local knowledge deemed it more appropriate to approach families individually.

Again, Ailsa led the organising of community people to attend the story-telling sessions at the school. This task proved difficult as, on a few occasions, some people agreed to attend, but did not arrive. Ailsa was unsurprised by this, indicating that many people in the community are involved in numerous projects and despite their best intentions cannot honour all of their commitments. Others indicated to Ailsa feelings of "shame" and reluctance to visit the school. Two community members followed through with supporting the program: Patsy, an elder who teaches traditional dance; and Kruga, another elder who is well known for playing the didgeridoo, has put his music onto tape for Ailsa to use in the program.

Originally the program attempted to reflect the time honoured medium of oral story-telling with the children; however, it quickly became apparent that the children's concentration spans did not easily tolerate this approach. At the suggestion of teachers, illustrations were arranged to accompany each story, and the stories were made into large A2 size books. Engaging local artists to illustrate the stories within the time available was not possible. Consequently, two Aboriginal women who reside in Mackay were contracted to produce the illustrations. Their work is exceptional and has been extremely well received by the children and teachers at Woorabinda.

CDFVR, through collaboration with CQU's Faculty of Education and Creative Arts, took a lead role in researching and producing the teacher resource package and formalising the evaluation processes. Other roles reflect 'brokerage' activities such as: giving information; resourcing the program through creating the storybooks, negotiating with the illustrators, creating materials needed to assist the sessions; and visiting Woorabinda to support Ailsa and Patsy in their delivery of the classroom sessions. Whilst Ailsa was always directly or indirectly involved, much of the communication with Woorabinda Primary School was led by CDFVR. This communication mostly involved advocating for Ailsa and the program and gathering data from teachers and staff for the evaluation component.

Woorabinda Primary School took on the role of enabling the program by encouraging Ailsa, making time and arranging suitable spaces for the program's activities, speaking positively with the children about the Koora program and joining the children in the dance activities, and providing ongoing evaluation feedback to both Ailsa and CDFVR.

Competing Interests

Creating partnerships, determining objectives and negotiating priorities inevitably produce complexities and competing interests. Kelly (1991) writes:

When we are able to articulate political rules, we know where we and others stand and in what ways we can and can't work together. When boundaries and differences are clear, we can connect in whatever ways are possible, without confusing compatible strategies with incompatible goals, or vice versa (p.39).

In this case, some objectives held by the two non-Indigenous partners, CDFVR and the school, had been defined by the systems in which they operate. Therefore, expectations of process and definitions of "success" are inherently defined, create the risk of taking privilege over those of the community, and if left unchallenged, can give rise to binary logic (eg 'right way/wrong way'; 'useful/useless') (Kelly, 1991).

Although there was a great deal of complementarity amongst the partners' objectives, different perceptions were apparent in relation to how to best achieve them. The highly structured and organised environment of the school system emphasised expectations of a "well-organised", "well-prepared", structured, consistent and carefully timed delivery of the Koora program. These expectations are likely to be related to systemic priorities of producing measurable outcomes and are supported by education discourses that propose learning and retention is best achieved in well organised and consistent environments.

Indigenous people's wisdom reminds us that structure and working to a rigid timeframe is much more aligned with non-Indigenous culture than

Indigenous. In terms of the Koorra program at Woorabinda, local knowledge suggests that planning and organising activities need only occur shortly before the program begins and that the most effective way to involve community people in a local program like “Koorra” is to “grab them” on the way to the venue at which the program is being held. Further, attempts to organise community members’ involvement in advance generally result in growing feelings of anxiety and “shame”, thus making the likelihood of withdrawal or non-attendance greater.

Once the school-based program commenced, Ailsa and Patsy visited the school at the same time each fortnight. It soon became evident that planning for these visits required flexibility. For example, other school activities (eg school camp; field trips) occasionally took priority; and for Ailsa, prior commitments or other community activities (eg Community Justice Group, Governance training) required the Koorra sessions to be rescheduled.

An unscheduled hiatus of approximately eight weeks occurred half way through the program. Factors contributing to this included significant training commitments that took Ailsa out of the community, “sorry business” arising out of the untimely deaths of some community members, and Ailsa’s rethinking of how the program’s delivery could adopt more flexible approaches. This break arose naturally in the process and challenged the partners to view this as an opportunity to rest, review and renew rather than a sign of defeat or lost commitment (Kelly, 1991).

The program’s trial has recommenced and will conclude following Ailsa’s seventh presentation to the students. Review and evaluation of the program and teachers’ resource package will be undertaken and published, and future directions for the program will be negotiated.

Conclusion

Indigenous writers and oral wisdom have given non-Indigenous people numerous clues about how to best support projects and partnerships in Indigenous communities. Maintaining the Indigenous standpoint as the *central standpoint* of this work challenges the non-Indigenous partners to adopt informed processes that enable and respect Indigenous rights to self-determination, honour Indigenous ways of building relationships and accept flexibility in timing and structures.

Juggling the objectives and interests of the partners in the Koora program challenges those involved to identify the standpoints being privileged and find ways to accommodate each other's expectations. Whilst these challenges have specific meaning when working with Indigenous communities, they also complement community development principles and apply to community development activities in non-Indigenous settings.

Numerous elements of community development also feature in the Koora program process, for example, community driven and owned; mutual relationship building, brokerage; valuing local knowledge and culture. The program's development and implementation also drew on the three community development principles of:

1. Believing in the potential of local people, that is: Woorabinda people are the scholars of their culture, traditions, social arrangement and environment and know what is best for their community. Established frameworks and systems within the community guided relationship development with community members.

2. Recognising the value of local knowledge arising from lived-experience. All stages of the program's planning and implementation drew heavily on the local wisdom (doing, classifying, categorising and analysing).
3. Emphasising community empowerment in solving problems. The community undertook identification and analysis of the community issues and alternatives for action. The role of the non-Indigenous partners was to support and resource the program. (Wood et al, 2003)

We can't do it on our own; we used to think we could, but we can't. We need the expertise of the whites and the black fella to come together and make collective expertise. It's the only way we will get anywhere (Woorabinda community member, 27 April 2004)

The Koora project demonstrates the capacity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaboration. The lessons from the Koora project, community development principles and Indigenous writers such as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000), call for Indigenous centred partnerships in making collective expertise, as advocated above. This model has been pivotal to the successful partnership developed between the Woorabinda community, CDFVR and the Woorabinda State Primary School.

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