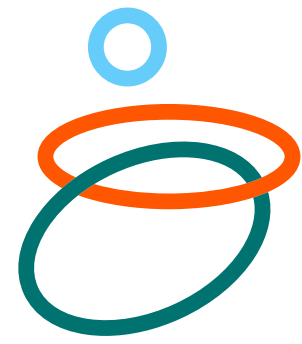


PRACTICE INSIGHTS MAGAZINE



IACD

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ISSUE 23

MARCH 2025



World Community Development Conference 2023 Edition

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN A CHAOTIC WORLD: CHALLENGE, CHANGE AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

IACD, with the University of Glasgow, is delighted to announce that the 2026 World Community Development Conference will be held in Glasgow, Scotland 29th June – 2nd July 2026.

We are living in a world where the international political and policy landscape is undergoing rapid and unprecedented change. Despite restricted resources, community development yields critical, responsive, and impactful work. This conference will provide a critical space to share best practice and learn from local and global community development work to create a stronger collective voice for positive social change.

Please save these dates and look out for further details coming in the next few weeks

Dates: International Reception Monday 29th June 2026 **Conference:** Tuesday 30th June - Thursday 2nd July **Practice Exchanges:** Friday 3rd July - Sunday 5th July **Venue:** The James McCune Smith Learning Hub, University of Glasgow

For more information
Follow us on Facebook and
LinkedIn or email:
wcdc26@iacdglobal.org



University
of Glasgow



IACD
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Contents

01	Reflecting on Conference Themes and Community Development Practice Anna Clarke	08	Maintaining Connections Deanna Borland-Sentinella and Jacinta de Sousa Pereira	40	09
02	Tribes Lead: Indigenous Ways of Knowing at the Edge of Tribal Leadership Development Annie Jones & Jennifer Gauthier	12	Changing the Lens: A New Approach to Research Prof Shez Cairney and Walbira Murray	44	10
03	Personal Reflections on the World Community Development Conference Jaya Manchikanti	16	Courage And Renewal for Community Development Workers Involved in Community Recovery from Disaster Louise Mitchell and Noela Maletz	48	11
04	Anchoring Community Development Practice on Culture: Perspectives from Africa Daniel Muia, Boniface Munene Rufo and Stellah Masese	20	“From the Edge” Ms Sheena Lindholm	52	12
05	Deadly ABCD Michelle Dunscombe and Dee Brooks	24	A Community Development Approach to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT)*Yitaki-maninjaku, warririnjaku, payirinjaku manu pina-jarrinjaku (YWPP) Community Research Team	56	13
06	Reflexivity in Disaster Studies: Contributions to Methodological Design Anna MS Torres	26	Taos Pueblo attends WCDC 2023 By Shawn Duran, Hillery Duran, and Holly Scheib	62	14
07	Government doesn't need to be the enemy in community development Brittany Szezak	30	What do human rights defenders need to flourish? Clare MacGillivray	66	15
08	Reflections: Applying What We Learned – Making the Australia/ Nebraska Connection Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel and Marilyn Schlake	36			

Foreword

WCDC 2023: From the Edge: Culture, Connection, and Community Converge on Larrakia Country

In June, 2023, over 600 community development practitioners, researchers, and activists from across the globe converged on Larrakia Country in Darwin, Australia, for the International Association for Community Development's (IACD) 2023 World Community Development Conference. The event, themed "From the Edge: Culture, Connection, and Community," proved to be a powerful catalyst for dialogue, learning, and collaboration. As we reflect on the conference's vibrant atmosphere and the wealth of insights shared, we are reminded of the critical role of culture, the strength of human connection, and the enduring importance of community-led solutions.

The conference began with the acknowledgement of the Larrakia people as the Traditional Owners of the land and waters. We extend our deepest gratitude to Auntie Bilawara Lee, the Conference Cultural Advisor, for her guidance and a moving Welcome to Country and Uncle Richard Fejo for the closing Saltwater ceremony at Darwin's picturesque waterfront. IACD would like to acknowledge the contributions of Michelle Dunscombe, Dee Brooks, and Denise Bijoux (IACD Trustees and Members) along with Dr Peter Westoby, Rachael Donovan, Fiona Miller, Vicky Mann, Dr. Jamie Mapleson, Jacques Boulet, Om Dhungel, Megan Courtney, Emeritus Professor Sue Kenny, Heather Ellis, Cherish Page-Brooks, Ashleigh Dunscombe, Nadene Marsh, and Tina Torrens.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to our conference partners, whose support was invaluable in making this event a success:

- Darwin Convention Centre
- NT Tourism (bid video?)
- Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA)
- Jeder Institute
- Catalyse
- ARDS Aboriginal Corporation
- Paperbark Woman

The program was packed with diverse perspectives and engaging formats. We thank all of our keynote speakers for their wonderfully insightful presentations:

- Ani Pahuru-Huriwai (Tumuaki/Executive Director, Tairawhiti REAP, Aotearoa): "Ae Neni, he tipuna pai koe." "Yes, Grandmother, you were a good ancestor." The struggle against all odds to leave the planet a better place than we found it.
- Karri-Lynn Paul (Nutokehkikemit, Program Teaching Staff Circle of Abundance - Indigenous Programs, Coody Institute, Canada): Building on Abundance in Indigenous Communities.
- Dr Samuel Bush-Blanas (Chair, Northern Land Council, Australia): Community-led development in the Top End.
- Faumuina Felolini Maria Tafuna'i (Edmund Hillary Fellow, Flying Geese Pro CEO, Aotearoa): How Indigenous peoples can create frameworks drawing from their culture and the importance of lived experiences in creating these frameworks.
- Stephanie Harvey (CEO, Community First Development, Australia): Shifting power: decolonising community development.
- Bill Armstrong AO (Retired Community Development Practitioner & Author, Australia): "Everything & Nothing."
- Cheryl Kickett-Tucker, Dawn Bessarab, and Juli Coffin (Mia Mia Community Development): Preferencing an Aboriginal lens for an authentic journey toward community development.
- Honorable Governor Gary J. Lujan and Shawn Duran (Taos Pueblo Government, USA): For Blue Lake and Beyond: Taos Pueblo's multi-generational community efforts in sovereignty and nation building.
- Clare MacGillivray (Director of Making Rights Real, Scotland): Fearless in the defence of rights: What do human rights defenders need to flourish?



Opening Plenary at WCDC2023 with Jamie Mapleson and Sylvia Nulpinditj from ARDS

Delegates immersed themselves in concurrent sessions, exploring topics such as "Supporting Native American Data Sovereignty," "Deadly ABCD," "Peacebuilding, Conflict & Community Development" and "Elevating the role of the community member as citizen scientist and agent of change". The program also included film screenings like "Coming to Lithgow" and "Granites Mine Affected Area Aboriginal Corporation (GMAAAC) - Celebrating Our Story", visual arts installations, yarning circles such as "How programs build community justice" and the Global CD Educators Forum focused on Decolonising Community Development / Work Education.

The spirit of "From the Edge" extended beyond the conference venue, with participants embarking on immersive Practice Exchanges in and around Darwin along with visits to Tiwi Island, Kakadu, Darwin and Katherine, gaining first hand insights into impactful community initiatives and cultural heritage.

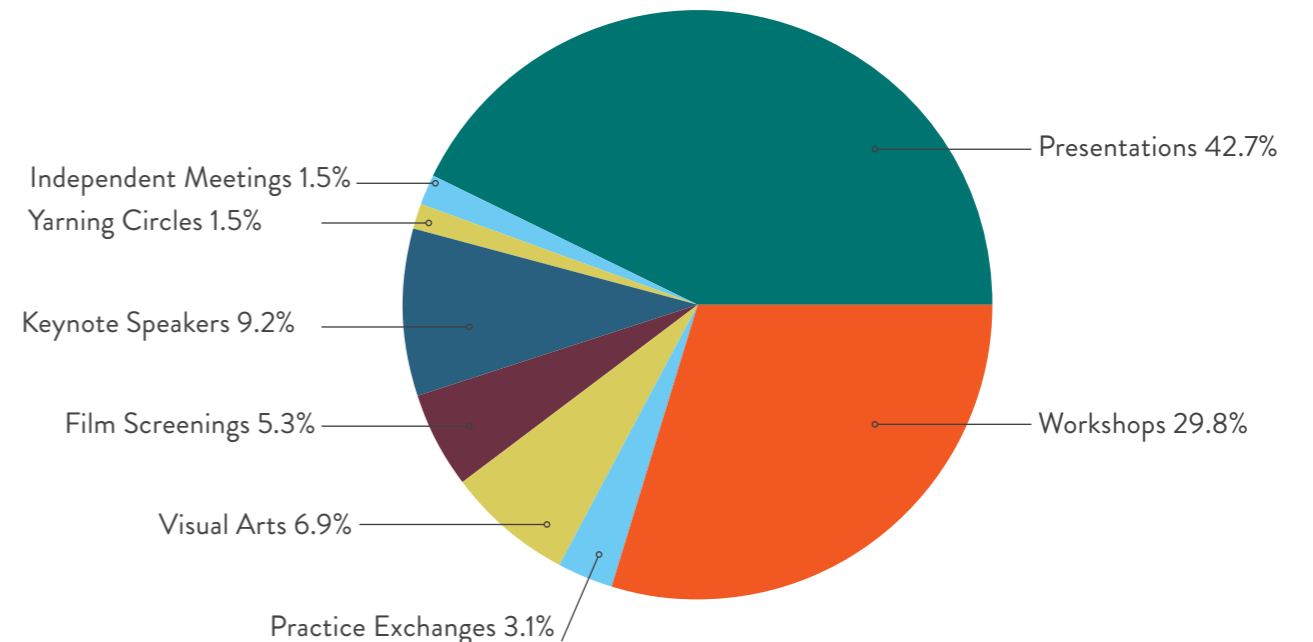
This issue of Practice Insights is dedicated to capturing the essence of the 2023 World Community Development Conference. We invite you to delve into the articles, reflections, and stories that emerged from this

transformative event, as we continue to learn, connect, and build stronger, more resilient communities together. We trust that the sharing in this magazine allows you to continue to ignite your imagination, inspire your passion, challenge your perspectives and to immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of cultural diversity, deep connections, and resilient communities.

Presenters and delegates came from the following countries:

- Australia
- Aotearoa / New Zealand
- Canada
- USA
- Scotland
- Hong Kong
- Taiwan
- South Africa
- Philippines
- Ireland
- Northern Ireland
- Timor-Leste
- Mauritius
- England
- Kenya

View the live map by clicking [here](#)





Darwin Conference Centre

Following is an overview of the sessions and the diversity of topics covered at the IACD 2023 World Community Development Conference. The program was packed with activities over three full days of conference sessions and the ensuing Practice Exchanges which included:

- Plenary Keynote Speakers (12)
- Concurrent Oral Presentations (56)
- Concurrent Workshops (39)
- Yarning Circles (2)
- Film Screenings (7)
- Visual Arts (9)
- Independent Meetings: ACWA & First Nations Roundtable (2)
- Practice Exchanges (4)

Diversity of Topics:

The conference covered a broad spectrum of themes and issues relevant to community development, reflecting the "Culture, Connection, and Community" theme. Key topics included:

1. Indigenous Community Development: A central focus, covering data sovereignty, community-led projects, cultural preservation, First Nations families, and reconciliation.
2. Community-Led Initiatives: Various sessions explored practical approaches to community-led development in different contexts.
3. Social Capital & Community Building: Exploring connections, networks, and collaborative practices.
4. Community Development in Remote/Rural Areas: Addressing the unique challenges and opportunities in these areas.
5. Sustainable Development: Linking community development with environmental sustainability.
6. Disaster Recovery: Focusing on community resilience, gender considerations in disasters, and mental health support.
7. Refugee Settlement: Rethinking approaches to refugee integration and community development.
8. Local Government's Role: Examining the role of local government in supporting community development.
9. Arts and Community Development: Showcasing creative approaches to community engagement.
10. Community Justice: Exploring programs that support First Nations families and address community justice issues.
11. Education: Focused on decolonizing community development
12. Food Security: Community, Culture, & Food Access
13. Gender Equality: Challenging gendered community & cultural norms during & after disasters
14. Digital Inclusion: Closing the Digital Divide to Create Promote Thriving Communities

The organizing team extends its sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to an outstanding week in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. We are especially appreciative of our partners, delegates, speakers, and market suppliers for their unwavering support and commitment to advancing community development—

particularly in sharing Indigenous and First Nations stories from around the world. This remarkable event underscored the vital role of community work globally and reinforced the profound truth that it truly takes a village.

Yours in Community,
Michelle Dunscombe, Dee Brooks and Denise Bijoux
IACD, Jeder Institute, ABCD Institute, ABCD Asia Pacific



Reflecting on Conference Themes and Community Development Practice

Anna Clarke

As Chair of the International Association for Community Development (IACD), it was my pleasure to welcome a diverse global gathering to Darwin, Australia, for the 2023 World Community Development Conference. It was my honour to be welcomed by Aunty Bilawara Lee on behalf of the Larrakia People, traditional custodians of the beautiful lands on which we gathered, and I pay my respect to Elders past, present and emerging.



Meeting of the Aotearoa New Zealand WCDC delegates

It was heartening to see so many dedicated practitioners, colleagues, and friends, gathering in this space of connection and critical dialogue, to explore the conference theme of Working with the Edge to deepen connection to community and culture. Under this banner we had three days together to engage with and consider key and current themes of significance for communities and for community development practice, from local to global levels.

IACD is a global multi-disciplinary network for professional community development practitioners and others with an interest in community development practice. As an organisation spanning 7 decades, the last 26 years of which have been operationally based in Scotland, the opportunity to gather together from around the world is always a privilege. Once again I want to express deepest thanks and appreciation on behalf of IACD to Michelle Dunscombe, Dee Brooks and colleagues at Jeder Institute, to partner organisations the Australian Community Workers Association and Catalyse and support organisations for making the WCDC 2023 a reality to be valued and enjoyed by so many.

From a practitioner perspective, I gained much from the inputs, contributions and conversations that I had the opportunity to hear and engage with. Memorable key note impressions for me came from Ani Pahuru-Huriwai, Tairawhiti REAP, Aotearoa; Karri-Lynn Paul, Coady Institute, Canada, Faumuina Felolini Maria Tafuna'i, Flying Geese Pro, Aotearoa; Cheryl Kickett-Tucker, Dawn Bessarab & Juli Coffin, Mia Mia Community Development, Gary Lujan & Shawn Duran, Taos Pueblo Government, USA and as always, our good friend and ally Clare MacGillivray from Making Rights Real, Scotland, who is always 'fearless

in the defence of rights'. I enjoyed the circle conversations, in particular time spent with Shine for Kids, exploring ways to support families when a loved one is in custody, taking new insights back to share with NIACRO colleagues in Northern Ireland. I also enjoyed the opportunity to meet with the Aotearoa delegation at the conference, to share more about IACD and to be asked questions that made me stop and think and shift my focus.

Conferences that focus on networking and sharing of practice mean that participants are also contributors. I valued the opportunity to co-deliver a workshop with Anastasia Crickley, sharing about our work with the All-Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training (AIEB) to promote the discipline and practice of community work and the importance of quality education and training to support it across the island of Ireland. We were delighted with the interest in our work, reinforcing what we know, that there are many contexts for community work that connect us globally, recognising again that national matters have international resonance and that community development practitioners need to be fully equipped with the knowledge, understanding and skills to work alongside communities to address issues and challenges of concern. This was further reinforced by discussions at the IACD Global Community Development Educators Forum, convened as part of the WCDC programme, on the critical theme of Decolonising Community Development Education and Training. Attended by a wide and diverse group of educators from different global regions, including Oceania, Europe, North America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, this was a timely discussion, leading to commitment to continue it further.



Banajarl Womens Group WCDC practice exchange 2023

Being together in one place for a period of days is important for us, as community development practitioners, it affords us the space and opportunity to lift our heads into a different space, and look at things from alternate angles, and the many 'little' conversations mount up. As an international organisation, IACD's engagement with others is held in the virtual space, so I really valued the time to sit and talk with fellow Trustees, meet some of our members and share with others why being part of an international network for community development practitioners is worthwhile.

Returning to the conference theme, 'The Edge' can be interpreted in many ways, positively and otherwise. It may be a place of creative innovation where new ways of doing things are borne out of shared experiences and the need for responsiveness and resilience. But the Edge can also be a place of exclusion, where rights and justice are diminished, infringed or abused and a space where vigilance and solidarity are paramount.

The conference provided a crucial platform to consider pressing global issues, from the enduring legacies of colonialism and systemic racism to the urgent challenges of climate justice and diminishing civil society space. As a global collective of community development practitioners, our starting point was our shared understanding of community development as a practice based profession and discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, human rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education, and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these are of place/locality, identity or interest, in both urban and rural settings. This understanding, as set out in the International Standards for Community Development Practice, guided our discussions.

The powerful voices of First Nations peoples resonated deeply, reminding us of the ongoing struggle for land rights, cultural preservation, and self-determination. We also grappled with the systemic barriers imposed by dominant economic systems and the necessity for community

development to prioritise autonomy, knowledge, and genuine participation.

At the end of Day 2, Anastasia Crickley and I, in our joint reflection, noted several recurring themes: the historical injustices faced by First Nations peoples, the barriers posed by dominant economic systems, the need for community autonomy, the distinction between consultation and true participation, and the importance of shared language and understanding. We also acknowledged the broader global challenges: climate justice, wars, rising racism, the criminalization of migrants, oppression of women, the impact of AI, limited multilateral solidarity, and diminishing civil society space. Yet, we found hope in the courage and resilience of social movements, and the work and words of conference participants.

We emphasised that community work involves collective analysis, action, and outcomes, prioritising marginalised peoples and addressing systemic issues. We identified racism as a pervasive global phenomenon, rooted in historical injustices and embedded in structures and institutions.

Finally, we discussed utilising existing mechanisms, such as community work values, human rights based work and UN human rights treaties, to collectively drive meaningful change. We stressed the necessity of moving from a needs-based to a rights-based approach, empowering communities as rights holders and engaging with international human rights frameworks.

As the final day closed and we marked IACD's 70th anniversary, the 2023 Darwin conference, fostered a sense of hope and renewed commitment and served as a reminder of the resilience of communities and community development practitioners to building a more just and equitable world.

Fast forward 20 months to March 2025 and that hope, commitment and resilience is needed more than ever, alongside courage and determination. Globally we are rapidly moving to an altogether different edge than that envisaged in the conference theme, one where we are witnessing

deepening exclusion, and the systematic dismantling of rights and the structures designed to protect them, in significant part, by those in positions duty bound to uphold them. This is a space where vigilance and solidarity are paramount.

In 2019, at the World Community Development Conference in Dundee, Scotland, the highly respected academic Margaret Ledwith spoke about the need for radical, empowering community development practice rooted in commitment to social justice. Practice that aims for transformative change not simply ameliorating of symptoms. For that, we need to come together, as community development practitioners and as communities, forge alliances across boundaries, borders and jurisdictions. We need to build and practice solidarity and give voice to the values that we collectively share, and which are the purpose of our practice; to achieve equality, social justice and human rights for all people, through the application of principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision making.

Whether at 3 day global conferences, or online for 1 hour, IACD strives to create the spaces for Community Development practitioners, educators, researchers, students and others with a shared interest in working for a fair and just world, to come together, to learn, share, connect and show up in solidarity. We will continue to create these spaces, regionally and internationally and work collaboratively with colleagues to support local and national conversations, and we invite you to join us in this www.iacdglobal.org/member.



Anna at International Welcoming Darwin

About the Author

Anna Clarke is Chair of the International Association for Community Development and an European Trustee based in Northern Ireland. A professionally qualified community worker, she works with the All-Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training, and NIACRO a regional non-profit that supports people with lived experience of the criminal justice system. Particular areas of professional interest include; Community Development standards and workforce development.

IACD Trustees Past and present at WCDC 2023



Tribes Lead: Indigenous Ways of Knowing at the Edge of Tribal Leadership Development

Annie Jones and Jennifer Gauthier

Working with Native Americans is made more complex because of historical trauma brought on by land dispossession, forced removal and the boarding school era which has created distrust among Native Americans for institutions. This complex relationship has led to a demand for processes that incorporate cultural teachings and Indigenous ways of knowing.



The opportunity to present at the 2023 World Community Development Conference, sponsored by the International Association of Community Development, offered the conference presenters and attendees a profound realization: Stories of trauma experienced by Indigenous people were, and still are, consistent stories of colonization that, through the Doctrine of Discovery, are sadly common throughout the world. Trauma demands that universities approach research and programming from an Indigenous lens.

Gauthier and Jones were researchers at the University of Wisconsin, Division of Extension located, respectively, at the Menominee Indian Reservation and University of Wisconsin Madison campus; both are enrolled members of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin.

Funded by an Innovation Grant from the University of Wisconsin Madison, Gauthier, Jones and Tribal community partners from Wisconsin and Michigan in the United States, sought to upend colonial thinking about leadership development. Together the team developed a Tribal leadership program for Tribal members in the upper midwest region of the United States. Frequently, western epistemologies are imposed on Native Americans, seeking to alter and exterminate cultural teachings that

have sustained Native Americans since time immemorial, or time before memory. What resulted was a leadership development program, “Tribes Lead!” that was created by Native Americans for Native Americans.

“Tribes Lead!” was an educational experience that used the Native American medicine wheel as an Indigenous methodology for program development, implementation and evaluation. The medicine wheel differs from western approaches where researchers are advised to adapt materials to be culturally relevant rather than actually leading from culture. Adaptation is frequently an after-thought and falls short of respecting knowledge sovereignty (Norgaard, 2014) of Indigenous people. Instead, researchers should focus on working cooperatively with Tribal members to lead research and program development.

Defined most simply, medicine wheels are a mandala, the Sanskrit word for circle.

According to Nelson (1998), cultures throughout time have used mandalas or medicine wheels as a representation for how the universe works. Indigenous people used nature to frame their worldviews (Napier et al., 1998). Changing seasons, sun rising and setting, and tides all presented

predictable realities and understanding cyclical patterns allowed them to have some control in their environment. Over time, these symbols were also used to explain other observed behaviors.

As Nelson (1993) pointed out, because colonial methodologies emphasize rationalism and linear-thinking, it undervalues circular, intuitive thinking, thereby creating dualism between these two “ways of knowing.” From a psychological perspective, dualism results in the conscious mind becoming correct or real, and the unconscious mind becoming incorrect and out of touch with reality. These beliefs about what constitutes “valid” knowledge are carried through to educational offerings by universities often at the

detriment to Indigenous learners. This results in the failure of universities achieving their intended outcomes, particularly when universities conduct research in Tribal settings. Academic approaches tend to be linear and rational in their outlooks toward cause-and-effect relationships, and undervalue the influence of complexity, trust and relationships, all of which are honored by using a medicine wheel.

A medicine wheel is like a “mirror” in which everything – ideas, persons, organizations, communities, and even abstractions are reflected. Everything within the wheel is equal. The center of the wheel represents intentionality and the relationship between the potential and the actual, in other words, Fisher, Rooke, and Torbert’s (2003) concept for transformation.

Medicine wheels can be very complex and vary from Tribe to Tribe; not all Tribes use medicine wheels. For planning and evaluation of the Tribes Lead! Program, Jones (2014), Gauthier and team used a simplified version of the medicine wheel which includes Intentionality, Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body. These components are similar to Torbert’s (2001) action inquiry domains where Spirit is similar to the domain of Visioning, Heart is similar to Assessment, Mind is similar to Strategy and Body is similar to Performing.



The intentionality of the Tribes Lead! Program was to utilize the gifts and teachings from Tribal community partners to create a culturally-led program for Tribal members. Partners hoped that by drawing from the Indigenous knowledge that had enabled Indigenous people to survive and thrive for thousands of years, participants would access deep learning, healing and fulfillment - needs that western leadership programs had not been able to meet.

The spirit component of the medicine wheel asks, “How is spirit calling our name to do this work?” Clearly, the researchers sought to decolonize leadership programming so that participants would

have the capacity to address strategic issues impacting their Tribal communities. Further, university partners sought to expose and uplift the value of including Indigenous perspectives in the scholarship of leadership development.

Heart includes assessment and understanding the barriers and enablers of transformative change. Here, partners steeped themselves in community conversations to understand the values and teachings of Tribal members. The team utilized a “Wise Council” or advisory group of Tribal elders and leaders to understand which cultural teachings, like “grandfather teachings,” and methodologies, like storytelling, to include in the curriculum.

Mind examines strategies to accomplish specific outcomes. These strategies were built into the curriculum with the ultimate goal of accessing deep learning to create individual visions and action plans that participants could incorporate in their settings. Engage for Equity’s “River of Life” activity, which was modeled at IACD’s World Community Development Conference, was a way for participants to use holistic (spirit, heart, mind and body) thinking to tell their own stories and to chart a leadership path forward in their work.



For body, which examines performance, the research team utilized the medicine wheel to implement and evaluate the program. The research partners used mixed method approaches including the medicine wheel methodology.

Participant evaluation was completed in a medicine wheel circle where the group moved through the components of spirit, heart, mind and body. Comments included:

“[Another western, community-based] leadership program was a good experience but I felt more angry when I finished it. I was forced to go to [the other] leadership program. After Tribes Lead, I felt better, I felt at home. Tribes Lead was much less stressful. It was good. I felt more centered.”

“Non-Native leadership development doesn’t always serve us well.”

“Tribes Lead was able to get me to express feelings. I’m real cautious. Here, I had to do some thinking. Made me feel comfortable and let me say things that I wouldn’t say to anyone.”

“I picked ‘spirit’ to focus on. I’ve been focused on heart, body, mind - physical being. I reached more into spiritual being. Western ways push things through paperwork.”

“Tribes Lead had me deep thinking. Helped me not give up doing it [cultural services for people] anymore.”

The “Wise Council,” had similarly successful evaluative comments. One hundred percent of respondents indicated that their experiences matched the intended purpose of the Wise Council. Respondents also reflected on the benefits of a leadership program based on cultural teachings, “Our vision and decisions always rely upon what is best for the next seven generations and oral traditions, customs, culture and ceremony are not always taught in the home. The next best thing is to incorporate them in educational settings.”

Ultimately, the research and planning team accomplished what they set out to do: The program was built around the cultural teachings and values of Tribal Nations and there was no purposeful incorporation of western concepts of leadership. What resulted were meaningful and emotionally impactful conversations resulting in deep connections between participants, facilitators and project partners. Reclaiming and honoring cultural identity works to build trusting relationships in Tribal-university partnerships.

References:

- Fisher, D., Rooke, D., & Torbert, B. (2003). *Personal and organizational transformations: through action inquiry* (4th ed.). Great Britain: Edge/Work Press.
- Jones, A.M. (2014). *The use of a Native American medicine wheel to facilitate the implementation of a strategic plan at the University of Wisconsin-Extension - Cooperative Extension: An action inquiry case study*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Fielding Graduate University.
- Napier, R., Sidle, C., & Sanaghan, P. (1998). *High impact tools and activities for strategic planning: Creative techniques for facilitating your organization's planning process*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Nelson, A. (1993). *Living the wheel: Working with emotion, terror, and bliss through imagery*. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser.
- Norgaard, K. M. & Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources. (2014). *Retaining knowledge Sovereignty: Expanding the application of tribal traditional knowledge on forest lands in the face of climate change* (By North Pacific Landscape Conservation Cooperative) [Report]. <https://pages.uoregon.edu/norgaard/pdf/Retaining-Knowledge-Sovereignty-Norgaard-2014.pdf>
- Torbert, W. (2001). *The practice of action inquiry*. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp. 250-260). London, UK: Sage Publications.

03 Personal Reflections on the World Community Development Conference

Jaya Manchikanti

At the outset, I would like to thank the organisers of the 2023 WCDC for putting together not only a wonderful three-day conference, but also ensuring that the attendees were well accommodated and were provided opportunities to attend events and practice exchange outings outside the conference hours. Having returned to my hometown in Melbourne, Australia, after a long trip overseas just prior to the conference, I was happy to only attend the three-day conference sessions and not partake in any of the events and outings. I was grateful for the opportunity to make a short presentation about my current research, as a PhD student, on the topic of investigating community development praxis in Australia in relation to sustainable development. Whilst I cannot possibly cover all the knowledge I gained from the many sessions I attended, I will provide a snapshot of some of the points that were raised and my learnings.



The conference was outstanding for involving a range of Indigenous speakers from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and North America, as well as for attracting many local Indigenous people during the three days. The highlight for me was dancing to the song 'Treaty' after a workshop presented by two Indigenous women (Galiwin'ku traditional Aboriginal owner representatives) from Elcho Island. This reflected the mood of the conference, where there was much needed and sometimes heartbreaking talk about self-determination, but it was conducted in an atmosphere of unpretentiousness and friendliness, where new and relevant knowledge was imparted, particularly about decolonising community development practice. There was a strong message of 'culture before strategy' explicitly stated by two presenters from Canada.

Anu Pahuru-Huriwai (Maori elder from Aotearoa (New Zealand) spoke about the intrinsic way that Indigenous people think intergenerationally. She spoke about never underestimating the power of the family and stated that community development is 'heart work' where we need to give the best of ourselves and not expect anything in return. She commented that people do not necessarily want to know what you do, but rather who you are. Anu stated that we need to look after our elders and learn from them, while being careful about the type of future we leave for the young people. Karri-Lynn Paul (Canada) spoke about the circle of abundance in indigenous communities and delivered a powerful and emotional speech about how we must not only start with the strengths in communities, but also start with the spirit, recognising that relationships are central, and that trauma ought to be considered when undertaking community development work. Samuel Bush-Blansi from the Northern Land Council in Australia stressed the need for two-way learning and community-led development. Faumuina Felolini Maria Tafuna'I (Aotearoa) encouraged us not to be afraid to look at the 'doom' and consider turning this into opportunities. She also stated it if you can master the process of 'how to learn,' then we do not necessarily need to get caught up in much formal education that is more about a 'culture of training' (checkbox exercise) rather than a 'culture of education.' Stephanie Harvey (Australia) challenged us by questioning whether there are too many not-for-profit community-based organisations and whether it would be more effective to work collaboratively. She impressed us by stating that her peak indigenous organisation, Community First Development, raises funds mostly from the community and not from government or philanthropic grants. I was particularly moved by a statement made by Hon. Governor Gary Lujan (Tas Pueblo, New Mexico, USA) where he said that 'our connection to land and waters is a right given to us from our creator and not from any person.' We all need to pause and think about the depth of that statement and the damage that is done to communities when they are removed from their connections to land and waters.

It was inspiring to hear the wisdom imparted by experienced community development practitioners and academics in Australia – Jim Iffe, Peter Westoby, Anthony Kelly, and Bill Armstrong who provided the following information:

Jim Iffe: The narratives that still dominate the world are modernity, patriarchy, whiteness and capitalism. We need to challenge these structures. Community development is essential in working through current and future challenges such as climate change, authoritarianism and so on. Community development rhetoric has been co-opted by right-wing populism, and we cannot be complacent about that. This needs to be challenged and we must be strong and hold firm on our values, theories, principles and practices.

Anthony Kelly: Indigenous people's wisdom is the beginning of knowledge. The problem is that there are too many camps in community development (hospitality tradition; dialogical tradition; strengths/asset-based traditions; ecological tradition; moral/rights tradition; yarning tradition; etc). Rather, we need to hold together all these methodologies, and, in Australia, we have no national structure to hold these expressions. We need to have a policy voice and win the social policy debate so that it has a strong participatory base, right from the individual to international work. That is, 'we need to pull together our gardening tools rather than creating new tools.'

Peter Westoby: It is important to hold history while evolving and 'haunting justice.' We should have constant humility and go broader than human centred practice. We need to hold story and theory, a philosophy of dialogue, and address personal and structural healing.

Bill Armstrong: 'self-determination' may be a better term than development or empowerment.

Community development work is about being everything and nothing. Here is a quote from a book (a biography about Bill) which I bought at the conference –

'It's an old community development technique. Done right, the critical work you do looks like nothing, it's invisible, it's in the background. But it can also change everything, it can catalyse people and communities to take their own action for change' (Britten, P 2022 Everything and Nothing – The life and development work of Bill Armstrong)

These words of wisdom by our community development 'elders' are priceless, and we were fortunate to gain their insights. Many presenters referred to authors/leaders that guide or inspire their thinking, such as Audrey Lourdes, Maya Angelou, Jack Derrida, bell hooks, Martin Uber, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary Brooksbank.

Here is a quote that was provided to us in a presentation:

"Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Every step towards the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals' (Martin Luther King jr)

In a workshop conducted by three dynamic academics from the University of Glasgow, where we practised the deepening of conversations by simply asking 'But why' three times as we moved through the rounds of conversation (a technique which I will certainly remember), a wonderful poem was used to open up the conversations. This is a poem by Moraene Roberts (1953 – 2020) titled 'All people, all human', as follows:

*I'm telling the people with power that I have power too
If you stifle my voice, and deny my choice, I will show my power to you
I will not come with a weapon and I will not come in fear
I will come with others, as sisters and brothers, and a voice you will have to hear
I'm telling the people with knowledge that I have knowledge too
If you ignore my words and deny what you've heard, my knowledge will be lost to you
I will not come in anger, I will not come in pain, I will come as me
With dignity, and your denial will be to your shame
I'm telling the people with control that I have control too
If you put me in chains, then hatred reigns, and fear gains control of you
I will not come as a prisoner, I will not come broken to you
I will come with pride and stand by your side
Because I am human too.*

In conclusion, the conference enabled people to network face to face and this was a refreshing experience after the long years of pandemic shutdowns. The informal conversations during lunch and morning tea/ afternoon tea breaks were as important as the formal presentations, and it was particularly delightful to meet the team of the Australian Community Workers Association. It was also useful to collect brochures and other products at the many information and art/craft stalls set up at the 'marketplace' in the downstairs hall. The final plenary session about Australia's upcoming referendum on an Indigenous 'Voice' to parliament, as well as the presence of Pat Farmer at a media event outside the venue during the first day of the conference (while running around the country advocating for the 'Yes' vote for the referendum) were not only relevant moments for the Australian audience, but also an educative experience for our international guests. Finally, as stated by one of the presenters from Sunshine Coast Council, in response to the conference theme of 'From the Edge,' let us make the edge attractive, so that as the centre moves towards it, we keep pushing further edges.

About the Author

Jaya Manchikanti is currently a PhD candidate at Victoria University. Her research topic is 'Examining Australian Third Sector Community Development Praxis in relation to progressing the Sustainable Development Goals'. She has come to this research after more than twenty-five years of field work, working on community development projects, either as a volunteer or an employee, with a range of not-for-profit organisations, local governments and the state government of Victoria, Australia. Jaya was awarded 'Victorian Volunteer of the Year Award' in 2021 for her leadership in setting up an organisation called IndianCare which aims to support people of Indian origin in Victoria. She was also inducted into the Inaugural Victorian Multicultural Honour Roll in 2022.

Anchoring Community Development Practice on Culture: Perspectives from Africa

Daniel Muia, Boniface Munene Rufo and Stella Masese

“Culture is the be all and end all of development”

Léopold Sédar Senghor,
Poet and First President of Senegal (1906-2001)

Community development processes increasingly have to be undertaken with communities. This is more so when it is realized that the process has to be undertaken from the inside-out where community initiatives and needs are key. Communities serve as co-designers and owners of any development interventions, and most importantly, guided by their culture. It is also a fact that culture and community development in Africa are quite intertwined. Culture is intricately woven into communities' languages, customs, values and practices and it is sustained through generations. Culture is variously defined but there are key attributes that are universal pillars of culture. To the extent that culture is pervasive and therefore found in every community of human beings, it has to assume a centre stage in community development practice. It is our take - culture is everything. This is more so if we adopt the definition of culture by Odetola, T.O., et al (1985:38) who hold that culture is the total way of life of a society. It is made up of its members' customs, traditions and beliefs, their behaviour, dress, language, their work, their way of living, relationship network and their attitudes to life, the focus of group loyalties and the way they all perceive the world. Just like most societies are complex, so is their culture. Taylor (1871) sees culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, mores, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man (we add woman) as a member of society. These definitions of culture are critical for community development as inherent in them is the prescriptions that community development should contribute to the development of the culture of society also - for example, in unleashing the capacities inherent in communities to make their lives better.

It is also important to note that culture is the accumulated experience and the totality of the way of life of a community, and consequently dictate the rhythm of live of individuals and communities. This more so when it is appreciated that culture dictates the totality of community needs, roles, norms, sanctions, rights and obligations, and therefore ensures orderly community life. There are of course other functions culture plays in communities, including, assigning identity to individuals; linking them to the past and the future; -establishing institutions for social functioning; as well as defining the cosmos of a society. As a consequence, it becomes the glue that holds communities together. Therefore, it is the responsibility of government, institutions, community members, and more importantly community development practitioners to sustainably anchor community development on culture through the promotion of intergenerational knowledge exchange. Leveraging indigenous communities, marginalized groups, elders, youth, and children

as stewards of culture and community development cannot be gainsaid.

Linking culture and community development

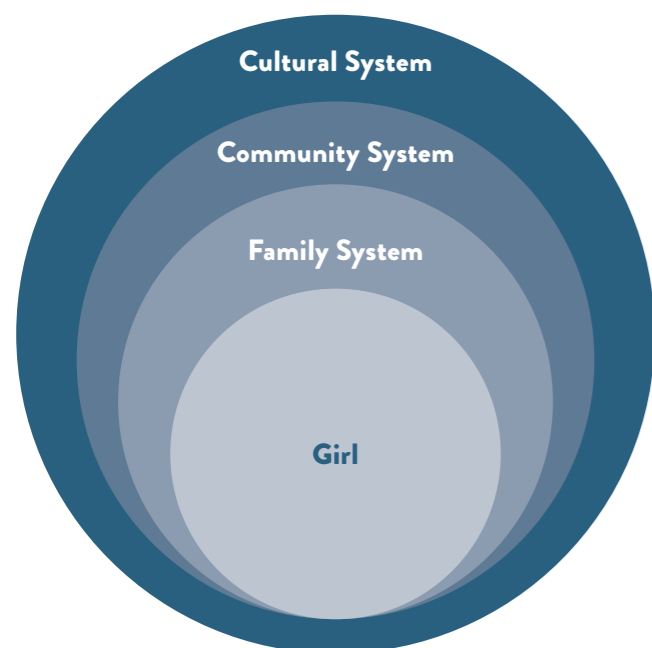
First let us define community development, a concept that is also variously defined. The United Nations defines community development as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. IACD (2018) has an amplified definition where community development is seen as an academic discipline as well as a practice that entails a process of organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings - to attain participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice. What is critical is that all these actions need to be contextualized and validated by the community's cultural perspectives of what is valuable to them. This is because community development as a process of social change has to be negotiated through these narrow corridors so that ultimately social economic justice and rights of all are protected and promoted. The rights are also socio-culturally prescribed and hence the importance of looking at the nexus between community development initiatives and culture.

How do we anchor community development on culture?

The starting point in this process is to ensure that the context and practice of community development is aligned with the beacons of reality as defined by the community - and its culture. In the converse, it is important to ensure that society's socio-cultural system anchor governmental policies and legal framework. The gist of which is that from a legal, ethical, cultural and pragmatic imperatives, community development practice (values, principles, theories, approaches and methods) should be informed by and promote cultural parameters of a healthy and sustainable community life.

Since change has to be meaningful to individual actors for it to be embraced, it is important that community development as a purveyor of social change is promoted as well as embraced by individual actors. It however needs to be born in mind that individuals belong to subsystems of communities and institutions. As such, the capacity to implement change and embrace - incidentally is determined by forces beyond the individual actors - in power vested in family, community and social system (see the Onion model - Aubel and Rychatarik, 2015).

Girls are embedded in family, community and cultural systems



Community cultural system

Unfortunately, community development practitioners often downplay the place of culture in their practice. They do not adequately appreciate culturally defined power dynamics in communities in their rush to honour project timelines, and their focus on power based functional positions and roles that facilitate their goals. In the process, in many cases, they also do not draw on board elders and other indigenous knowledge systems in communities, which are dismissed as time consuming. On the other hand, culturally ordained division of roles and the underpinning normative system are nominally embraced as a way of managing tensions as well as conflicting values or views. Ultimately culture embodied in especially customs and traditions that have endured the test of time is dismissed as an obstacle or barrier to change. The end result is that often misdirected community development initiatives are undertaken, with minimal ownership by communities.

So it is important that community development is anchored on culture. The question is how to do it. Several perspectives drawn from the African cultures will be shared here.

First, honouring and drawing from the wisdom of elders. A good example is the change through culture approach used by the Grandmother Project in Senegal (Aubel and Coulibaly, 2023). The approach is based on five key actions, namely, building on cultural roles and values; involving elders – as guardians of community interests throughout all phases of the project cycle; strengthening intergenerational communication; increasing confidence and capacity

of local leaders; and catalyzing dialogue for consensus-building between community actors. The net effect of the grandmother project has been to mentor and empower young girls through tapping the wisdom of grandmothers.

Secondly, the spirit of Ubuntu underpins community development initiatives in Africa. The core and call of Ubuntu is - “I am because you are” (Tutu, 1999). The realization is that “Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual” (Mbiti, 1990). Community life is based on interdependent relationships with others, caring for each other and exercising empathy as a matter of course. Ubuntu oozes social capital and Bourdieu (1986) holds that social capital permits an individual to exercise power in community processes. Equally, Ubuntu assures an inclusive community development where no one is left behind - as we are all one!

Thirdly, within the African landscape, thrives on the spirit of mutual support, commonly known as self-help. In Eastern Africa, self-help is such a big deal it is labeled as self-help movement. Self-help is documented as one of the approaches in community development (Robinson and Green, 2010). People have over the years in African communities helped each other through self-help groups and in the process weathered all adversities. Self-help groups informally bring people together to address matters of common interest. Other key tenets of self-help include voluntarism; focus on the needs of group members; cooperation and participation; and shared responsibility among group members. Moreover, self-help offers an avenue for pooling and multiplying resources to address needs of individual members (school fees, roofing house, weeding, etc) as well as collective needs (building community infrastructure eg schools, water points, social empowerment through table banking and micro-credit schemes which evolve into and support income generating activities). Inherent in self-help is a culturally enforced norm of reciprocity which obligates participation by all in community processes. Being informal, self-help groups thrive on culturally prescribed norms and social sanction mechanisms. Consequently, self-help groups are important vehicles for community mobilisation and development in most countries. In the ultimate, self-help promote voice and agency which are also important goals for community development.

Fourthly, traditional knowledge and practices are a vital part of African culture and have been used for centuries to manage resources, preserve the environment, and solve problems at the community level. These practices are often rooted in communalism, where the wellbeing of the community is prioritized over individual success.



Community Consultation meeting

Lastly, African communalism is another ideal that can easily be valuable for community development practice. Communalism is a traditional way of life in most communities in Africa where there is belief in equal access to opportunities and a large measure of egalitarianism. Communalism values human dignity, rights, mutual support, and responsibilities. It also promotes an attitude of moral duty to share and contribute to the community well-being (Ikuenobe, 2018). The individual subjugates self to community. Individual needs and community needs find a confluence!

Conclusion

Any community development process has to appreciate, recognize and navigate through the cultural imperatives of the community within which it is being undertaken. Anchoring community development on culture; ensures needs, rights, obligations and solutions are given cultural context and meaning; draws from time tested culturally grounded practices and thus ownership and sustainability of community development processes and initiatives become a norm; and lastly, aligns with community ideals of honouring the wisdom of elders, Ubuntu, empathy, self-help and communalism which breed healthy communities and sustainable community development practice. Consequently, it is only wise that community development practitioners would be better advised to always anchor community development practice on culture.

About the Author

Daniel is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Kenyatta University. His academic and research interests are

Community Development and Empowerment processes:- community mobilization, development and empowerment, Human/child rights based development, Sustainable development, and governance processes. He is a trained gender trainer and undertakes gender mainstreaming and empowerment advocacy work. He has participated in community development programme/project evaluations both within and outside Kenya for national and international agencies. He has conducted research and published book chapters and journal articles. Daniel is the current chair of the Association of Community Development Practitioners-Kenya, the Kenyan network of community development professionals.

Daniel joined the Board of IACD in 2019 as a Regional Trustee for SSA. In 2021 he chaired IACD's first fully online World Community Development Conference from Nairobi.

References

- Aubel, J. and Coulibaly, M. (2023) Enhancing Ubuntu: Promoting Community Connectedness—The Foundation for Social Change for Girls. In Muia, D. and Philips, R. (2023) *Connectedness, Resilience and Empowerment: Perspectives on Community Development*, Springer Cham, 2023.
- Aubel, J. and Rychtarik, A. (2015) Focus on family and culture: Grandmother Project- Change through culture for TOPs Project funded by USAID, Washington DC
- Bourdieu, P. (1986) “The Forms of Capital,” trans. Richard Nice, chapter 9 in John G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (Greenwood Press, Westport, CN, 1986).
- IACD (2018) *International Standards of Community Development*; IACD, Glasgow
- Ikuenobe, P. (2018) African communal basis for autonomy and life choices. *Developing World Bioethics*, Volume 18, Issue 3, September 2018
- Mbiti, J. (1990). *African religions and philosophy* (2nd ed.). London: Heinemann.
- Odetola, T. O. and Ademola, A. (1985) *Sociology: An introductory African text*. London: O. Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Robinson, J. R. and Green, G. P. (eds) (2010) *Introduction to Community Development: Theory, Practice and Service-Learning*. Sage Publications, Los Angeles
- Taylor, E.B. (1871). *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. London: John Murray.
- Tutu, D. (1999). *No Future without Forgiveness*. New York: Random House.

Deadly ABCD

Michelle Dunscombe and Dee Brooks

In the realm of community development, innovative approaches are constantly being explored to foster sustainable and impactful change. One such approach that has garnered significant attention is "Deadly ABCD," presented by Dee Brooks and Michelle Dunscombe at the IACD 2023 World Community Development Conference. But what exactly is Deadly ABCD, and why is it a game changer for Indigenous communities?



Understanding ABCD

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a methodology that focuses on identifying and leveraging the existing strengths and assets within a community to drive development and positive change. Unlike traditional needs-based approaches that often highlight deficiencies and problems, ABCD emphasises the potential and resources that already exist within the community.

The "Deadly" Twist

The term "Deadly" in Deadly ABCD is an Australian Aboriginal slang term meaning "excellent" or "awesome." This twist on ABCD highlights the unique and culturally rich perspectives of Indigenous communities. Deadly ABCD integrates traditional ABCD principles with Indigenous knowledge, practices, and values, creating a powerful framework for community development that is both inclusive and empowering.

Key Components of Deadly ABCD

1. Cultural Respect and Inclusion: Deadly ABCD places a strong emphasis on respecting and incorporating Indigenous cultures and traditions. This approach ensures that community development initiatives are culturally relevant and resonate with the community members.
2. Strength-Based Approach: By focusing on the strengths and assets of the community, Deadly ABCD fosters a sense of pride and ownership among community members. This approach helps to build confidence and encourages active participation in development projects.
3. Community-Led Initiatives: Deadly ABCD promotes community-led initiatives, where community members are the primary drivers of change. This bottom-up approach ensures that development efforts are aligned with the community's needs and aspirations.
4. Sustainable Development: By leveraging existing assets and fostering local leadership, Deadly ABCD aims to create sustainable and long-lasting development outcomes. This approach reduces dependency on external aid and empowers communities to take charge of their own development.

Conclusion

Deadly ABCD represents a paradigm shift in community development, offering a culturally sensitive and self-determined approach that celebrates the strengths and assets of Indigenous communities. By integrating traditional ABCD principles with Indigenous knowledge and practices, Deadly ABCD paves the way for sustainable and impactful community development.

As we continue to explore and implement innovative approaches like Deadly ABCD, we move closer to creating communities that are not only resilient but also thriving and self-sufficient.

About the authors

Michelle Dunscombe is Vice Chair of the International Association for Community Development (IACD) and an ABCD Institute faculty member and with a wealth of experience working with communities and community organisations. Michelle utilises asset based community development methodologies and participatory leadership practices to support community led initiatives.

Michelle has experience working with disaster affected communities across Australia and internationally, happily sharing her lived and professional experience in disaster preparedness and recovery using ABCD principles and practices.

Dee Brooks is a Director of the Jeder Institute and the International Liaison for the ABCD Institute who brings people together in dynamic ways to realise and engage the full potential of their networks and communities. For over 30 years, her work has inspired people at hundreds of events and workshops worldwide where she offers community engagement and development training and also provides professional co-design, facilitation and keynote addresses for conferences, forums and events.

Dee has traveled and worked in over 20 countries and her background is in youth work, community-based research and community-university outreach. Dee is a firm believer in the power of tapping into the collective wisdom of a community to strengthen and build on what's already there.

Reflexivity in Disaster Studies: Contributions to Methodological Design

Anna MS Torres

I was halfway through a research project on migrant perceptions of disaster, when I found myself in the midst of massive riverine flooding in my city of residence in regional Australia. I am by no means new to crisis and response, having been born and raised in Manila, however, I found myself somewhat at a loss between being an academic bystander and an active participant in a very real disaster phenomenon. Through a deliberate effort at reflexive practice, I was able to connect my research inquiry with the experience of volunteering in an evacuation center while my own home was at risk. I employed techniques from different disciplines and distilled themes and messages to share from this exercise, and this led to my presentation at the WCDC 2023 in Darwin entitled *Reflexive Tracks: When Disaster Affects the Disaster Researcher*. I knew I was contributing to the pool of knowledge, but it was also being there among community development peers that galvanized my thoughts about the power of reflexivity in qualitative research.

I was halfway through a research project on migrant perceptions of disaster, when I found myself in the midst of massive riverine flooding in my city of residence in regional Australia. I am by no means new to crisis and response, having been born and raised in Manila, however, I found myself somewhat at a loss between being an academic bystander and an active participant in a very real disaster phenomenon. Through a deliberate effort at reflexive practice, I was able to connect my research inquiry with the experience of volunteering in an evacuation center while my own home was at risk. I employed techniques from different disciplines and distilled themes and messages to share from this exercise, and this led to my presentation at the WCDC 2023 in Darwin entitled *Reflexive Tracks: When Disaster Affects the Disaster Researcher*. I knew I was contributing to the pool of knowledge, but it was also being there among community development peers that galvanized my thoughts about the power of reflexivity in qualitative research.

Reflexivity is not a new concept (Dodgson, 2019; Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016; Holland, 1999). I use the term here to refer to the process in which a researcher honestly accounts for and articulates personal perspectives, and how these might influence research decisions. This is based on the understanding that bias is essentially present in all research, whether it is acknowledged or not (Bourdieu & Adamson, 1990; 1987; England, 1994; Rose 1997). But how does one locate the relevant perspectives to begin with? In this respect, disasters as my subject matter provided an excellent setting, because, as disaster gurus have noted, when extreme hazards disrupt normal routines, they reveal, if only for a short while, unnoticed patterns and relationships in the impacted society (Hoffman and Oliver-Smith 2022)

I started by making use of observations I had noted in my journal, particularly during the few days before, during and after the flood reached its peak in the city. In the weeks after those critical days, I added more detail in the ethnographic tradition of thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973; Emerson et al., 2011; Ponterotto, 2015), while looking for those unnoticed patterns and relationships. A technique that proved additionally useful was to filter for emotion, an approach also used in the health profession (Alley et al., 2015; Ilan & Arber, 2018; see also Fort 2022). I used these as reflexive triggers, examined values apparent in these emotions, and how my situatedness might account for these.

As an example, below is an extract from my journal, describing people around me as I helped out on the second day of operations in the evacuation center:

In the next couple of hours, we packed about 300 meals ... Fushila and Sharah came to collect some of the food packs to deliver to families who were stranded, made me think of the contrast to my earlier sort of disappointment – seeing who was in the sleeping area indicated ‘migrants’ were vulnerable after all, but then again all around me in the kitchen it was ‘migrants’ who were working so efficiently and at short notice to feed the others.

But then again there were plenty from the white Aussie contingent as well- not just SES and Council... there were tents and caravans, camp chairs and glamping gear, people with crying kids and stressed pets ... there was the old man who reminded me of Dad... and a shopping trolley hinted homeless persons were also there...

From this account I recognized the underlying resentment of a prevailing narrative, that being a migrant, a.k.a. non-white Australian, is a condition for helplessness in disasters. This was certainly negated by the over-representation of people from Asian, African, Middle Eastern and Pacific Island backgrounds bustling around me in the food brigade during those first few days. However I could not ignore the fact that several families occupying the mattresses provided for evacuees were also from such backgrounds. Having caught myself with this partiality, I dropped my ‘migrant’ lens and substituted a framework which I refer to as diversity within diversity. I could then revisit memories of the evacuation center more discerningly, and consider different people coping in a variety of ways but sharing the common circumstance of having to move out of homes that were flooded or at risk of flooding. This reflection was a clear signal for me to continue to examine my assumptions about differentiated risk.

Another theme I extracted through this process revolved around how personality and socialization, in addition to intersectionality, can influence selective connection and communication channels during disasters. This was drawn from detecting in my notes an apparent aversion to mass media and communications from the local government unless absolutely necessary. I attribute this to a combination of being an introvert, as well as having tuned out from messages in local papers and council announcements after repeated encounters with overt and subtle racialization. I channeled awareness of this tendency to contemplate what I might be missing by not being connected to the broader political context in which my research was taking place.

As a third example, there were my reflections on how the term ‘community’ seemed to be used quite liberally by politicians, media, and other entities external to the town. In

my journal I expressed skepticism about applying this concept to a locality where I had too often observed segregation, stereotyping, privilege, politicking and spotlighting. While ‘community’ for me implies a potential outcome that still needs lots of work to organize and mobilize, from a remote perspective a one-dimensional homogenous entity seemed to suffice. There is a lot more to be said about the use of convenient collective nouns like ‘community’, but for reflexive purposes, I used this discord to revisit my own assumptions when regarding others from afar. Beyond physical distance, there are also those who have socio-economic characteristics or politics quite different from mine. Does this affect the way I select my respondents? Do I miss out on important dynamics, settle for dominant voices of gatekeepers?

It was a pleasure to share these ideas and listen to others at the WCDC 2023. In this environment I felt comfortable with the humility required in reflexivity, because I was among academic peers who are also community practitioners, forever striving to reconcile practice and theory. The experience has certainly led to specific upgrades in my research framework. Where journaling was sometimes a chore, I relish it now as a critical source of methodological insights. I have pivoted the scope of my fieldwork from an overview at a state level to involve more cases at my hometown level. I increased the number and style of key informant interviews to get a wider range of perspectives, and I expanded the interviewee pool to include respondents outside of my original migrant cohort. I have also enhanced triangulation to include an examination of official statements in government websites and media articles about disaster management practices during the floods.

To sum up, my unexpected encounter with disaster while researching disaster found meaning through reflective practice and contributed substantially to the way I theorized

concepts in disaster research and designed my data collection and analysis. Although the process was far from neat or linear, the diagram below outlines the progression of these tasks:

This practice continues to influence my work as I scrutinize, interpret, and write up my findings. The journey would not have been complete if I had not touched base with colleagues in the WCDC in Darwin, and I hope the process I have demonstrated will be of benefit to the research ventures of others.

About the Author

Anna is a PhD candidate at La Trobe University working on Diaspora and Disasters. Her academic background includes graduate and post-graduate degrees in Environmental Planning, Community Development, and Natural Resource Management. She has worked for many years in support of persons of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker background in regional Victoria. Email: a.torres-abblitt@latrobe.edu.au

References:

Alley, S., Jackson, S. F., & Shakya, Y. B. (2015). Reflexivity: a methodological tool in the knowledge translation process? *Health Promotion Practice*, 16(3), 426-431.

Bourdieu, P., & Adamson, Matthew. (1990). *In other words : essays toward a reflexive sociology*. Polity Press.

Dodgson, J. E. (2019). Reflexivity in qualitative research. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 35(2), 220-222.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, Rachel I, & Shaw, Linda L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.

England, K. V. (1994). Getting personal: Reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research. *The professional geographer*, 46(1), 80-89.

Enosh, G., & Ben-Ari, A. (2016). Reflexivity: The creation of liminal spaces—Researchers, participants, and research encounters. *Qualitative health research*, 26(4), 578-584.

Fort, E. (2022). Managing our personal traits in the field: exploring the methodological and analytical benefits of mobilizing field diaries. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 25(3), 345-356.

Geertz, C. (1973). *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*. The Interpretation of Cultures.

Hoffman, S. M., & Oliver-Smith, Anthony. (2002). *Catastrophe & culture : the anthropology of disaster*. School of American Research Press ; J. Currey.

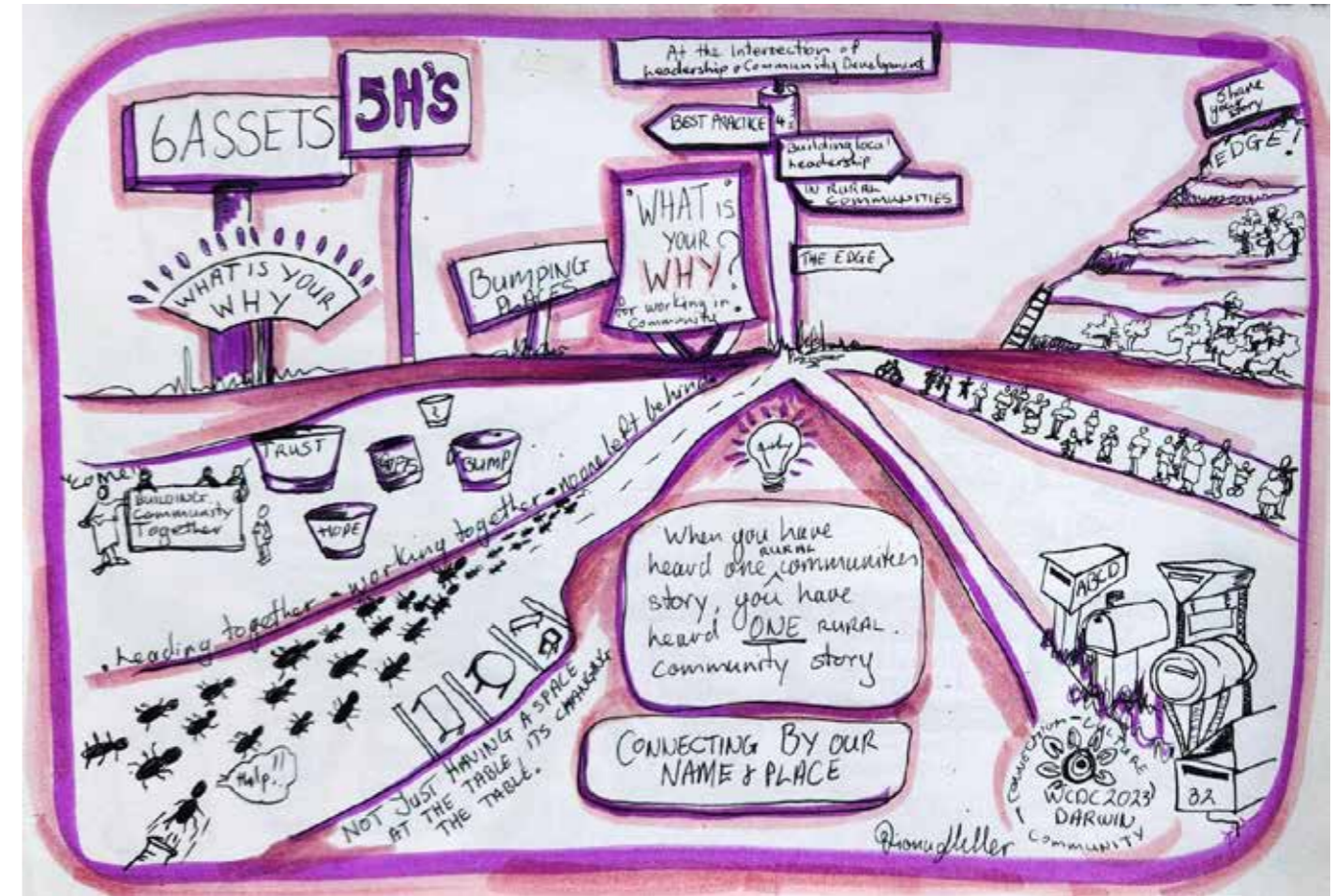
Holland, R. (1999). Reflexivity. *Human relations*, 52(4), 463-484.

Ilan, H. T., & Arber, A. (Eds.). (2018). *Emotions and Reflexivity in Health & Social Care Field Research*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ponterotto, J. (2015). Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Concept Thick Description. *Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2006.1666>

Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in human geography*, 21(3), 305-320.

Graphic Harvests created by Fiona Miller, Jeder Institute.



Government doesn't need to be the enemy in community development

Brittany Szlezak

Attending the 2023 ICD Conference in Darwin and sharing the story of how we developed and implemented a thriving youth action group in one of Australia's most statistically disadvantaged communities-the municipality of Brighton, Tasmania-was almost as cool as doing the on-the-ground work with the young people themselves. I invite you to explore our journey here.

<https://brightoncommunitynews.com.au/big-year-for-byag/>

Throughout the conference, I found it inspiring to hear from community development practitioners from across the world about their own work, in their own communities. However, I became increasingly overcome by a pervasive view that rather being part of the solution, Government was at the heart of the problem...

For 17 years I have worked and volunteered in a wide variety of government and not-for-profit services including Defence and Local Government and have attributed my lived experience of breaking my own intergenerational cycle of poverty to the support and opportunity that I have received from all levels of government. It was because of Government support I had the opportunities to study, work and heal which I wouldn't have achieved as easily in a system where support wasn't available.

So far at this point in my career, I have found community development work within government to be very satisfying and meaningful. Because of this lived experience, both professionally and personally, I find perspectives where Government is the enemy difficult to contend with.

I enjoy the privilege of being a voice alongside the community to the government, as well as the feeling of satisfaction that comes when you demonstrate to the government that complex social problems can be worked through if you put trust in the experts-the communities themselves-through support from specialists such as community development practitioners. I believe there is value in advocating for community to government, and ensuring government better understand community, its needs and strengths.

My hope and aspiration for community development in the Australian context is to see it recognised as a specialist skill and see it funded as a core component of local government service delivery. To the old saying 'Roads, rates, rubbish' we also need to add 'Resilience'. I think one of the best ways we as a sector can help make this happen is to get better at economics and risk analysis and speaking language that includes cost benefit analysis and articulating what we risk losing if we don't do better for, and with, community.

Governments-particularly local governments seem to be scared of complex social problems. Community development practitioners are not. We are specialists in leaning into discomfort and finding the light when others can be overwhelmed by darkness. By using our skills in harnessing that light alongside community plus some skills in speaking the language of government, and offering

solutions instead of only highlighting concerns, we might get the sector a few more wins on the board...

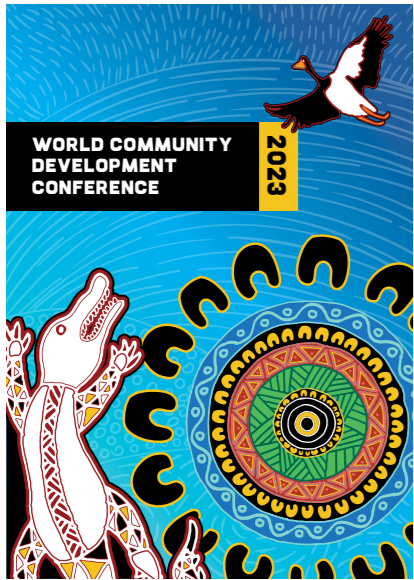
My three takeaways

- Get to know your local Council, big-or-small, and work with them
- Focus on solutions-based good public policy.
- And always ask for more because the worst anyone (including government) can say is no.

About the Author

Brittany Szlezak is a Community Development Practitioner and Social Worker and a previous employee of Brighton Council, now working in a similar role in New South Wales.





“Looking forward to the next one!”

“Thanks for getting the tone of the conference so right (which I think came from the organisers and flowed out from there). It set everything up so well. So classy and respectful, but informal and not at all pretentious. Allowed delegates and presenters to get straight to the heart of everything that matters.”



“Key takeaway: ‘decolonisation approach to community development and regeneration’”



“Absolutely thought provoking and will make me better at what I do”



“An incredible location and diversity of presentations. Thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience”



“Exceptional. Beautiful engagement of all your team, lovely flow, wonderful presentations and enjoyed the open discussions.”



“Awesome, awesome, awesome. One of the best conferences I’ve been too. Grounded people with no ego - so refreshing!”

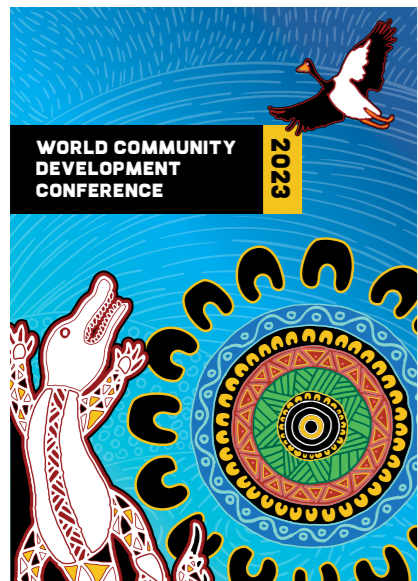


“I had an amazing Conference and felt the organisers created a welcoming and inclusive space. I felt valued as a member of IACD and learnt so much about myself and how I can help other possibilities emerge.”



“Excellent especially with the venue, food, speakers, sessions and community practice trips.”

“The conference was the best conference I have been to, with delegates chatting with each other and sense of community.”



Memorable Moments

"I loved the stories of strength from the key note speakers from NZ, the two sisters from Galiwinku speaking about their programs and the way they are utilising their royalty money for community programs as at CLC and NLC really inspiring community strength and initiative."

"The Story Slams - listening to Uncle Richard and then later in the day participating in a saltwater ceremony."



"Hard to pick one thing. For me it was chatting to Aunty B in the marketplace."



"Hearing about Central Australia Indigenous communities taking control."



"Most memorable moment was a very effective presentation by two women from Galiwin'ku country on the topic of 'locally led projects for self-determination', which ended with a group dance to the song 'Treaty'."

"When the Belyuen Dancers came on during our presentation."



"The Saltwater Ceremony with Uncle Richard."

"Tony Kelly's short story on the kangaroo and the quiet voice of elders wisdom."



"The weaving presentation that allowed us to talk while actually doing something to celebrate the experience and learning. I am a "doodler" while listening so this helped immensely."



"I loved the variety of the types of presentations (e.g presentations, workshops, yarning circles, videos, human library, story slam, practice exchanges)."



"Meeting First Nation's People and CD Practitioners from all around the world."

Reflections: Applying What We Learned – Making the Australia/ Nebraska Connection

Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel and Marilyn Schlake

There are all types of learning that take place at an international conference – through formal presentations, informal conversations in the hallway and those very relaxed networking sessions over food and drink (and yes, that is the source of the best ideas!). If you are like the two of us, throughout the conference random thoughts seem to float around in your head as you try to piece together the meaning and implications for your work.



Ellis collecting data on sale day

But every once in a while, a session topic immediately resonates with you and stops you in your tracks. You can't help but think, "Huh, that is such a cool idea, I wonder if the same thing happens back home?" And then that topic seems to stay with you – it will not let you go. There is something about the issue that is begging you to play with it and find out if your home situation is similar or different than what was shared in the presentation.

Well... that is what happened to us, Marilyn Schlake and Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel. We are both University of Nebraska Extension faculty who work with rural communities all across the state helping them to be inviting places to live, work and play, now and in the future. As part of the University's Land-Grant mission, we are encouraged to generate knowledge through research and share it back with residents in an applied way so that it can be used for the betterment of the state. In essence, we help put "knowledge to work". So, this desire to research an idea from something we heard during a conference presentation was not out of the question for us. In fact, it was rather enticing!

What Clicked?

We happened to accidentally both attend a session by Heather Ellis, from BlueWren Connections, an independent, Australian based, consulting business. She presented her work that was supported by the Australian Livestock Markets' Association (ALMA) looking at the social value of rural saleyards in Australia. Now for us, since we both

had family connections to agriculture and on a personal level and professional level to community development, the light bulbs went off! Heather was talking our language and sharing a perspective on social value that was intuitively understood but never communicated in that way before. Immediately after the session the three of us had a long "yarn" and the sharing of business cards. That night we bounced several ideas around and were keenly interested in finding a way to conduct a similar study, replicating several aspects of Heather's work, with her permission. When we got back to the states, we emailed Heather, and she was happy to see a possible U.S. connection. (a full report of her study can be found at <https://go.unl.edu/ausaleyardsstudy>)

"The World Community Development Conference served as an invaluable platform for us to connect and share our insights. Collaborating with like-minded souls internationally, especially on a topic like social value in rural communities that has never been explored in this way before, is incredibly exciting."
Heather Ellis

Why the Connection?

Why did this topic resonate so strongly with us as Nebraska Extension faculty? It is all about rural life and seeing the everyday actions of people in a new way. Nebraska is located in the center of the continental United States and in the center of the Great Plains where agriculture is both an economic engine and a unique way of life, especially when it comes to raising livestock like beef cattle. The agricultural similarities between rural Australia and rural



Heather Ellis (right) at a saleyard event Stephanie Whitaker (ALMA)

Nebraska were just too obvious to ignore. There are also notable differences but that is what made the project so interesting. All three of the researchers were curious and wanted to know more.

With a little bit of sleuthing, we found some pilot project funding, through the North Central Regional Rural Development Center. We also invited some collaborators in Nebraska with beef industry expertise and others with health and wellness expertise. As a team we developed, fine-tuned and then developed again (big sigh here!), a grant proposal, which included Heather as an on-going resource, and submitted it in the early winter of 2024. Within a few months the group got notification that they had been awarded some dollars for the pilot study in Nebraska. On that day we are almost sure, if you listened very carefully,

you could have heard a collective “Hurrah” from two sides of the globe - Queensland and Nebraska!

“The partnership with Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel and Marilyn Schlake has provided a unique opportunity to explore the parallels between rural communities in Australia and Nebraska. This connection has opened the door to deeper collaboration, allowing us to combine our expertise and focus on understanding and enhancing the social value of rural saleyards and barn sales across continents. These international partnerships are crucial for advancing community development research and bringing fresh perspectives to our work. The opportunity to innovate and break new ground together is truly inspiring, demonstrating how global connections can enrich our local work.” Heather Ellis

A Work in Progress – Stay Tuned!

Right now, we are in the midst of scheduling four pilot sale barn visits in Nebraska. The research will include a survey, observations and personal interviews conducted over videoconferencing. Our goal is to compare and contrast the results of this study with Heather’s research. We have some hunches of what might come out of the research, but we are all anxious to see how people respond. The sale barn owners are very interested in this as well. We believe that sharing the aggregated data and themes back with them will reinforce their understanding of how their business connects to the community.

This study is a pilot, and the grant funder has the expectation that this data will provide the foundation for an even larger study in the future. So, stay tuned – we are just starting this adventure! Perhaps there is another IACD conference presentation in the future?

In the next grant proposal submission, we hope to also think broadly about other aspects of rural life that may have unique social value that has been overlooked. In this age of increasing virtual connections, what happens on a face-to-face basis and even with blended virtual and in-person opportunities is important to rural community life. We need to know more as things change – and they are changing all the time. We need to keep learning, adapting, and exploring

Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel (left) and Marilyn Schlake (right)



as things evolve—and that’s what makes this work so fulfilling.

About the Authors

Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel, Ph.D., is an Extension Specialist – Rural Prosperity Nebraska/ Department of Agricultural Economics. During her three decades of community involvement, she has primarily focused her research, graduate student teaching and extension work on newcomer recruitment and retention, tourism development and community engagement.

Marilyn Schlake, M.S., is a University of Nebraska Extension Educator - Rural Prosperity Nebraska/ Department of Agricultural Economics. She has over 30 years of experience working on rural issues such as leadership, entrepreneurship, community economic development, and organizational strategic planning. She has also led numerous local and state community efforts.

Heather Ellis is the Founder and Director of BlueWren Connections, specializing in community development, organisational capacity building, and research. With 30 years as a primary producer in regional Australia, Heather is a social worker and changemaker, passionate about strengthening communities and driving impactful, research-driven initiatives for rural Australia.



Maintaining Connections

Deanna Borland-Sentinella and Jacinta de Sousa Pereira

We are two Community Workers who use theatre and arts with communities. We share a similar understanding of the importance of using the body as part of the language of story-telling, through all aspects of a communities' life: from celebrating, to healing and also visioning. This article shares our journey of maintaining connections across different countries, in order to continue to share practice and learn from each other, in our continued exploration of theatre as a tool for Community Development. The 2023 World Community Development Conference in Darwin marks one chapter in our story. For you, our reader, we paint the picture of our story collectively, interspersed with reflections from our own individual voices.

We met initially through Deanna's PhD project, Embodied Futures, which used Applied Theatre methods to bring to life ideas of Futures Thinking within a Community Development, popular education model. Deanna's candidature was granted on the basis that their project would include fieldwork outside of Australia. Through putting out feelers of where to include in the PhD, connections led to introductions in Timor-Leste.

Reflection from Deanna

I was surprised to discover I actually knew so many people in Meanjin/ Brisbane who had worked in Timor-Leste. The strength of an already known person introducing me over zoom meant I was trusted enough to be invited into BaFuturu to run workshops with participants organised by the non-for-profit. The PhD candidature was awarded to me to continue to explore ways to collaborate across transnational borders in a way that used creative facilitation approaches as a catalyst for local participants to explore issues in their communities, as I had done in my honours dissertation (Borland-Sentinella 2014).

Jactina leads a team who use drama for development, from exploring issues of malnutrition to women's economic-empowerment at BaFuturu. Their director shared the opportunity to have a visitor from Australia (Deanna) to share more Applied Theatre techniques that they could perhaps gain something from witnessing. Jactina had first encountered arts for purpose through an overseas visitor and continues to grab new learning pathways with both hands.

Reflection from Jacinta

I first discovered the power of the arts for community healing through a physical theatre and movement project I participated in from an overseas visiting artist-facilitator. Through movement, I found a way to express emotions that words often failed to capture. It became a vital tool for understanding trauma and building resilience. Witnessing the transformation in myself and others reinforced my belief that creative expression can be a powerful catalyst for change.

Since then, I've actively sought out various artistic practices to explore their healing potential. Attending workshops and observing different methods has enriched my understanding of how to harness the arts in my own work. I've learned how storytelling, movement, and visual arts can bridge gaps in communication and foster a sense of belonging.

My aim is to empower my local community by integrating these practices into our shared experiences. I believe that when we come together to create, we not only heal

individually but also strengthen our collective identity. Each project becomes a step towards resilience, a celebration of our shared stories, and a pathway for transformation. By continuing this journey, I hope to inspire others to embrace the arts as a vital part of healing and community building.

The workshops Deanna came to lead in Dili were five full days of process-content, which was delivered with two different cohorts. Not having any fluency in the local language, Tetun, Deanna, required translation assistance to share their participatory, creative-community process in Timor-Leste.

Reflection from Deanna

Jacinta was assigned as my translator but in fact was more of a co-facilitator! Jacinta was already experienced in some techniques using drama as a tool for community-building, so I was able to explain my plan for upcoming sessions and get feedback on activities and how they might be received in the local cultural context. We also reflected together after each workshop session to assist me in redesigning the next iteration.

Through working intensely together, Jacinta became a colleague and a friend, extending care beyond professional support, to my well being - always checking I had enough rice to eat.

After my workshops finished Jactina invited me to the districts to see one of BaFuturu's theatre for education shows. Through this generous invitation I learnt more deeply about the context of BaFuturu's work when creating responses to donor-objectives. And I heard, in contrast, about Jactina's dreams for the kind of creative community-building work they wanted to do in the future.

From our first meeting in 2017 we found we had so much in common: from our shared training in Theatre of the Oppressed, pioneered by Augusto Boal, to our interest in harnessing creative forms to support Community Development. We saw we were often working in parallel in our arts-based approach to community work.

Reflection from Jacinta

When I met Deanna we ran a lot of workshops in BaFuturu. The impact of these program initiatives is profound. By presenting relatable stories that reflect to the community especially youth challenges, we create a safe space for dialogue. Participants often express feelings they had not previously acknowledged, fostering empathy and understanding. This collective reflection helps break down barriers and encourages collaboration to find solutions.

In addition, the interactive nature of these workshops empowers community members to voice their concerns and ideas. This instils a sense of ownership of the process, reinforcing that their contributions are valuable in shaping a peaceful future. This engagement not only enhances conflict resolution, but also strengthens social cohesion, as people learn to listen to each other and appreciate different points of view.

After learning from my colleague Deanna, I continued to facilitate these theatre projects. The effects of healing and unity became more evident. Communities not only resolve immediate conflicts; they are also building a foundation for lasting peace and resilience, ensuring that the lessons learned through art are carried forward into everyday life.

After Deanna's fieldwork in Timor came to an end Jacinta invited Deanna to meet at a behaviour change summit in Bali in 2018 that BaFuturu was presenting at. Then, later in the same year Deanna returned to Dili for the final stage of their PhD.

At the completion of Deanna's PhD (Borland-Sentinella 2020), Deanna had arranged to return to BaFuturu to work with Jacinta for 18 months, through an-in-country-equivalent salary provided by Australian Volunteers. Then borders closed and that opportunity passed in the Covid-19 pandemic period of domestic isolation.

Reflection from Deanna

Going to Timor again felt like a distant dream in the time-warp of Covid travel restrictions. Even when borders were officially opened, my focus had shifted to health issues my mum was having, and so still the idea of going to live abroad no longer felt in my present reality. But I knew I wanted to still find ways to maintain the connections I made from my time in Timor-Leste and so when I saw the World Community Development Conference was happening in Darwin, I thought that could be a fantastic place to meet. Only about an hour's flight from Dili for Jacinta and a domestic flight for me.

So I also hoped the conference might provide Jacinta with more of the theory language and international examples of Community Development to support her in articulating to potential donors the benefits of the way she wanted to work, in a more community-led way.

The Embodied Futures workshops in Timor-Leste we have been reflecting on became the topic of our Darwin conference presentation contribution. Once accepted into

the program we both put our efforts into fundraising the cost of Jacinta's participation in the conference. Even the cheapest conference ticket registration fee would have taken most of a month's wage for Jactina, who supports their whole extended family. Both of us were successful in getting some donations and Deanna personally covered the gap in additional costs.

Reflection from Jacinta

For me, attending the World Community Development Conference was important because it provided a unique opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals dedicated to creating positive change in their communities. The exchange of ideas and experiences inspired me to reflect on my own work and the impact it has on those around me.

Hearing from speakers who have successfully implemented community development initiatives deepened my understanding of effective strategies and the importance of collaboration. I was particularly moved by the stories of resilience and innovation shared by participants from diverse backgrounds. This reinforced my belief that we can learn so much from each other's journeys.

We will keep working together and supporting each other in our work. This is our first co-writing experiment and so we continue to find new ways to collaborate!

We call each other "mana" which is a term that means sibling in Tetun. We continue to walk together into the next chapter of our connection. Ultimately, the experience reminded me of the strength we have when we come together to support one another in our shared mission for a better future.

About the Authors

Deanna Borland-Sentinella was born in Australia as a sixth-generation settler onto land their ancestors may not have understood was stolen, but is something Deanna grapples with constantly. Deanna has had the privilege to travel on their Australian Passport and make connections and collaborate with diverse communities as an invited visitor.

Jacinta de Sousa Pereira is a Timorese facilitator, community-worker, peace-builder, writer and actor/ director. As the Theatre Program Coordinator at BaFuturu, Jacinta uses creative tools to address a variety of issues, including domestic violence, violence against children, early pregnancy, bullying, discrimination against people with disabilities and the LGBTIQ+ community, youth conflict, and more.



Jactina and Deanna together while at the 2023 World Community Development Conference in Darwin

Changing the Lens: A New Approach to Research

Shez Cairney and Walbira Murray

In June 2023, a transformative event took place at the World Community Development Conference in Darwin. Goomeroi artist Walbira Murray and wellbeing neuroscientist Professor Shez Cairney presented an immersive experience that redefined the traditional research paradigm. Their collaboration emphasised a two-way learning model, placing the experiences and stories of Indigenous communities at the forefront. Through interactive installations and personal narratives, they sought to create an environment where dialogue could flourish and research could take on new meaning.

Bridging Worlds Through Storytelling

One of the most impactful moments of the conference was the setup of a traditional Aboriginal shelter, or Yumba, which served as the centrepiece of their presentation. Walbira described the Yumba not merely as a structure but as a space for storytelling and connection. Attendees were invited to step inside, where they encountered a collection of personal artefacts significant to her, including photographs and traditional artworks. Each item conveyed not just her individual journey but also the collective history of her people.

Researchers have historically gone into communities, asked people about their personal stories and handled people's personal belongings and even if unintentionally, that can feel very intrusive, an infringement on the privacy for those "being studied". By bringing their own treasured personal belongings and stories, Walbira and Shez intended to turn the tables on research. The researchers, becoming the researched within the space of the Yumba.

During one session, a participant shared their initial apprehension about entering the Yumba. However, once inside, they felt a sense of belonging. Walbira's warm demeanour encouraged them to engage, ask questions, and share their experiences. This exchange highlighted the importance of context in research. The participant recognised how traditional methods often stripped away the richness of stories that made the data meaningful.

In an unexpected yet somewhat intentional occurrence, Shez recalls walking up to the Yumba and seeing people inside playing with and handling her personal items, and although they had been brought there to allow people to explore, it was a confronting feeling seeing strangers handling very personal items without knowing the personal significance and weight that these belongings held for the owner.

"My reaction was interesting, I felt, even though we had set it up with that intention, it was really quite confronting to see and I had to just go with that. So that was an interesting experiment and the way it made me feel" Shez said.

Another poignant moment arose when Shez shared other artefacts, including a journal filled with reflections on her work. Shez reflected the often exploitative nature of traditional research, which frequently left communities feeling disempowered. The ensuing dialogue that unfolded within the Yumba illuminated the necessity for representation and frameworks that honour the voices of those being studied.

The Yumba Concept and Its Inspirations

The Yumba installation was meticulously planned to foster connection and reflection. Constructed from thin, supple branches, it was both traditional and adaptable. When outdoor space was limited, they creatively used a pop-up tent, demonstrating flexibility in their approach.

By including personal artefacts in the installation, Walbira aimed to invite attendees into their lived experiences. "Instead of people coming in, taking whatever meaning they find, we were able to provide context and answer questions," she explained. This methodology recognised that Indigenous communities often felt marginalised in research. Sharing their stories empowered attendees to appreciate the richness of those narratives.

Additionally, projected images and stories from Aboriginal people living around Australia, shared with the Interplay Project, enhanced the immersive experience. As attendees entered the Yumba space, they were enveloped in a virtual cultural tour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander landscapes, allowing them to connect with the culture on a deeper level. This multi-layered approach encouraged participants to consider their own positions within broader societal frameworks.

The Yumba cultivated a safe space that many participants commented on. Each time there was a break, people from all over the world would gather in the Yumba, sitting on the ground, side by side, with cups of tea and thoughts and reflections to share. By creating this space, it encouraged a different type of interaction and conversation, an openness and comfort that comes with being in a safe space.

Many attendees expressed that the experience challenged their preconceived notions about research and cultural engagement. The Yumba and wider installation highlighted the need for a shift in methodologies, inviting participants to reflect on the roles and relationships shared between researchers and research participants.

Reflections on the Journey: A New Lens for Research

Throughout their collaboration, Walbira and Shez navigated their respective edges—Walbira from the Goomeroi community and Shez from the scientific community. Their mutual commitment to understanding each other's worlds was evident. As they reflected on their work in Mparntwe, Alice Springs- the Red Centre of Australia, Shez noted, "We moved from the edges of our communities to find new ways to work together."

The insights shared resonated deeply, with many participants engaged in community development or research expressing a desire to implement similar two-way learning frameworks in their work. Walbira and Shez emphasised that research must evolve to prioritise the voices of those being studied.

As they dismantled the Yumba at the end of the event, Walbira reflected on the transient nature of the installation. "I pack my stuff away, deconstruct the shelter, and sweep away my footprints, leaving nothing behind." This metaphor encapsulated their desire to leave a lasting impact without imposing a permanent presence.

Conclusion: Embracing a New Paradigm

The collaborative efforts of Walbira Murray and Professor Shez Cairney at the World Community Development Conference 2023 highlights the potential for change in research methodologies. By embracing a two-way learning model, they invited participants to reconsider the dynamics of research and its implications for community engagement. The Yumba and surrounding installation became a vessel for connection, understanding, and reflection—challenging attendees to recognise the value of Indigenous perspectives.

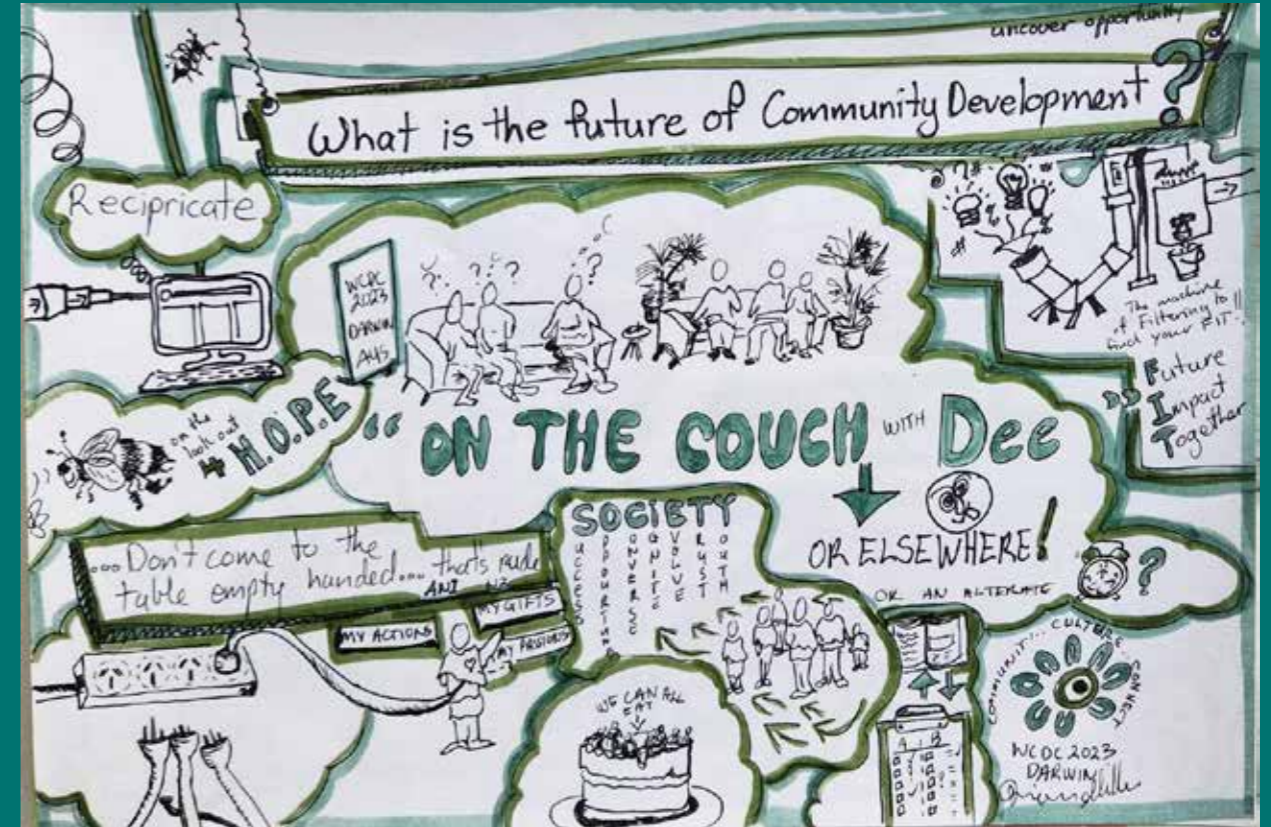
As the conference concluded, the message was clear: moving from the edge to the centre of research requires a commitment to dialogue, respect, and empowerment. Their immersive experience will undoubtedly inspire future collaborations that honour the voices of all communities, paving the way for research that is inclusive and transformative.

About the Authors

Professor Shez Cairney, a neuroscientist passionate about bringing together people and ideas to inspire change through science, culture, art, and business. Founding CEO of The Interplay Project, Shez and the team provide impact frameworks and technologies that empower diverse cultural values, knowledge systems and worldviews towards community development and wellbeing.

Walbira Murray is a Gamilaroi woman, from Dirranbandi, Western Queensland. Walbira is a Health Researcher, traditional dancer, Artistic Director, Arts Facilitator, Art Maker and Events Coordinator, combining traditional and contemporary practices, crafting spaces and experiences that reflect a connection to spirituality and allow for an interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

On the Couch with Dee - "What is the future of Community Development?" yarn captured creatively by Fiona Miller, Jeder Institute



Day 3 Morning Plenary Graphic Harvest by Fiona Miller, Jeder Institute, Australia



Families Tasmania workshop captured by Fiona Miller



Courage And Renewal for Community Development Workers Involved in Community Recovery from Disaster

Louise Mitchell and Noela Maletz

“Reflection gathers the past into the present in service of the future”.

Westoby, 2016, ‘Soul, Community and Reflective Social Practice’

In the year of 2023 that this conference was held, Australia had a a 41% increase in the percentage of people experiencing disaster¹. The increasing number, frequency and intensity of disasters and percentage of people affected by disasters, is exhausting for both community members and the workforce that provides support to communities.

The work of community development (CD) in disaster recovery is crucial to communities world-wide. In recent times with multiple disasters (including the COVID-19 pandemic) there has been an increase in the pressures and demands on the CD workforce. In the pace of it all, we are at risk of becoming transactional to the point of undermining the humanity that we seek to serve and the wisdom we need to be generating. This article introduces “the issue” and then describes the application of Courage & Renewal[®] for community development workers and the workshop offered at the 2023 World Community Development Conference. Courage & Renewal[®] approaches seek to nurture deep integrity and relational trust and build a foundation for a more loving, equitable, and healthy world.

The issue

Many communities lead their own initiatives in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, and alongside this, local, State and Federal agencies as well as philanthropy and corporate entities, typically become involved in providing a range of supports. Community development practices and approaches are foundational to community recovery and to the resilience of communities. Governments recognise this and there have been many State-led programs that employ community development workers in disaster recovery².

For community, social and health workers, who may employ community development approaches, the challenges of working in this context are significant. These include the short term commissioning of these services in a time of urgency, with onerous reporting requirements, juxtaposed with the essential relational nature of the work; highly sensitive issues of collective trauma³ as a result of death, grief, loss and distress; and the significant losses to businesses, the economy, infrastructure and natural environment. In addition, the exacerbation of previous community issues or tensions as well as the highly sensitive political environment all make this intense and demanding work. The current commissioning environment has typically led to a quick service-delivery model rather than a commitment to the longer term processes of community work⁴.

In the field of community development Peter Westoby in his book “Soul, Community and Social Change” (2016) gives attention to reflective social practice and the honouring of the practice of community development work through self-understanding. The holding space or container that community development workers offer to people and

communities are bridges between the real and ideal in the complexities and dilemmas of the work (Westoby 2016, Hoggett, 2009). The environment in which workers are held also contributes to workers ability to cope with the work, providing spaces and practices where they can safely “confide, reflect, debate, grow and heal” (Erikson, 2021). Courage & Renewal[®] approaches are an emergent and effective offering for sustaining and renewing community recovery workers.

Application of Courage & Renewal[®] approaches after disaster

Courage & Renewal[®] programs use the principles and practices of a Circle of Trust[®] approach developed by Parker J. Palmer and the Center for Courage & Renewal. These approaches offer transformational learning spaces and encourage participation of the whole self, providing an environment that acknowledges the inner and the outer realities of the human condition. It is essentially about rejoining who you are with what you do. It is individual work in community and with the community that is there at the time. It offers practices with ways of being with yourself and the people with whom you are building trust.

The authors are aware of Courage & Renewal[®] programs for the field of disaster recovery conducted in the USA and they were involved in a three year offering in Australia for a team of community development workers.

In the Mississippi, USA after Hurricane Katrina, Allen et al, 2012, were invited to design a program with impacted communities. They brought an expanded notion of community recovery from simply returning to normal or ‘bouncing back’ to “one that uncovers the hidden assets, dreams, and possibilities of residents for individual and collective transformation”(p91). The Circle of Trust[®] approach was a new approach to social change applied to community recovery and democracy building. This resulted in “a frame for transformative learning and action to create new community narratives”. (p91)

A series of online and face to face workshops, during 2021 – 2023, following the catastrophic 2019-2020 bushfires in Australia, was commissioned by East Gippsland Shire Council in Victoria, for their team of place-based community recovery officers. The impact of these Circle of Trust[®] retreats including connecting with self, strengthening the team, making sense together of frameworks for community development work and together practicing ways of being for community development approaches through

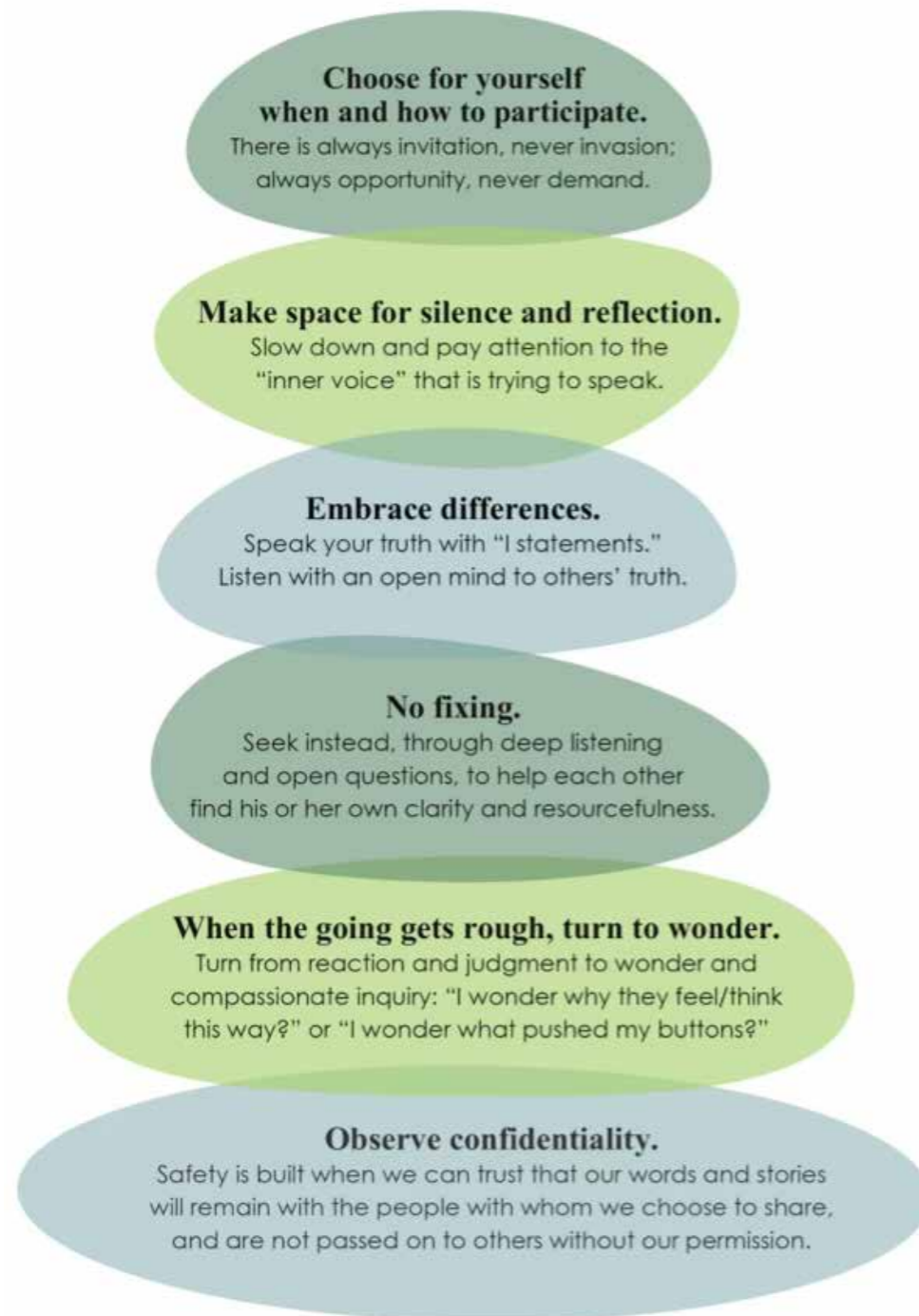


Figure 1. Touchstones for creating a Circle of Trust®

the Courage & Renewal Touchstones. A video featuring participant reflections on the process was made to make the evaluation of the impact of these retreats accessible to a broader audience and can be found here (10 mins).

The WDCD Courage & Renewal workshop

This workshop was imagined as an opportunity to introduce to the Courage & Renewal Circle of Trust® approach which

offers connection with self, building of relational trust, creating community and potentially generating collective impact amongst CD workers.

During the 2023 WDCD, Louise and Noela hosted a one hour immersive session to introduce participants to a Courage & Renewal® approach and to practices that enable the co-creation of a safe and trustworthy space.

The context of the work was shared: "A lot of the work that is done with communities and in community after a disaster is deeply meaningful work, workers choose to be there for people and communities, to serve, to listen deeply, to witness, to hold space and to support and respond. A lot of the work that is done in community after a disaster is also grief work and when held well it can build relationships and connections. So there is both joy and grief that we are containers for (our own and the community we are working with) that we hold in working with communities after a disaster – it seems paradoxical that we hold the opposites together, and yet it is so quintessentially human to do this."

There was an invitation to slow down, pause, reflect and reconnect with self and colleagues, about the community development work they were doing in preparation for or during times of great disruption and adaptation. The Touchstones for creating safe space were introduced as a scaffolding for sharing responsibility for this. Participants were invited to use the touchstones as a way of being with themselves as they took part in reflection and dialogue. The hour was carefully curated with the use of poetry and activities for individual reflection. Participants were invited to share their individual reflections in small groups and then with the larger group.

The Courage and Renewal® approach offered reflective practice in the form of learning by doing, practicing listening to each other in ways that helped build connections, and practicing holding tensions in the listening, in ways that might be life giving. Through the processes offered, participants were invited to become more aware of the community building and healing that they were involved with and open to affirmation, shared stories and challenge.

The scaffolding of the touchstones is illustrated in Figure 1, and is one version of group norms for conversations with the 'inner teacher' that have been honed for over 25 years⁵ by the worldwide collaboration of Courage & Renewal facilitators. The Touchstones are a particular constellation of group agreements and practices that form strong boundaries for interactions and are designed to disrupt the typical hierarchies and power dynamics that occur in 'regular' conversations so that honest exchange can occur.

Grounded in honouring the identity and integrity of each participant, what happens in a Circle of Trust® flows out into the world as an authentic source of personal and societal healing and a power for positive social change to respond to shared issues which impact communities.

This workshop at the WDCD conference attracted 20 participants who left with a sense of grounded hope. We imagine a future where the capacity of community development practitioners is built to enable them to host place-based peer to peer reflective practice to sustain their teams, both in regular working practices and particularly in times of intense work pressure after disaster.

To learn more about the work of the Center for Courage & Renewal, visit www.couragerenewal.org. For more about the principles and practices of the Circle of Trust® approach in theory and in practice, see Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

About the Authors

Louise Mitchell (BSc, Dip Ed, PhD Candidate) is a Courage & Renewal Facilitator prepared by the Center for Courage and Renewal. She is passionate about empowerment, voice, agency and democracy and has been working in disaster recovery for 25 years. She believes transformation is born when a circle of humans sit together to listen, to speak their deepest truths and to share their wildest imaginations for change. She can be contacted at: louisecmitchell@bigpond.com

Noela Maletz (M Soc Sc BA Dip Ed) is an educator, psychotherapist and visual artist who also loves to write. She has worked to with others to establish a Waldorf School and then a Social Therapy Centre for people with disabilities, in Adelaide. Her current work is in private practice, as a psychotherapist, and in growing Courage & Renewal work in South Australia and Australasia. She can be contacted at: Noelamaletz99@gmail.com

References

- https://www.aidr.org.au/media/11357/australias_riskscape-2024_v10.pdf
- Shevellar, 2015; Community Recovery Officer Report from 2022 Floods (unpublished)
- <https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-assets/documents/emergency-services/arc-cte-guidelines-2019-web-version.pdf>
- Shevellar, 2015; Community Recovery Officer Report from 2022 Floods (unpublished)
- Chadsey et al 2012

“From the Edge”

Sheena Lindholm

“Today as we gather to explore the transformative power of community development using events and the radiant glow they create.

I stand before you, Sheena, from Kingaroy, located in the rural inland region of the South Burnett, Queensland Australia. I pay tribute to the traditional owners of those lands, the Wakka Wakka people, and also acknowledge and pay my respects, thank you for the welcome to the Larrakia people, the traditional owners of the land on which I stand.

My home in the South Burnett has a rich history of gatherings, particularly in the majestic Bunya Mountains where First Nations people came from hundreds of miles to gather for their event every three years for a magnificent feast based on the bunya nut harvest.

Though, I was young, my own family would gather provisions and embark on journeys to the Bunya Mountains, where we would reunite, almost in the same spirit of traditional owners, with relatives who travelled from distant places. As time went on, I would unite in

hyper localised gatherings, alongside musical tractor performances, local agricultural shows and pioneer celebrations, demonstrated the remarkable capacity of people to come together, share stories, and honour our diverse ways of life. My parents possessed a unique ability to create or subtly interweave threads of memories and moments around these occasions, even with limited financial resources. I regarded this as a kind of superpower, one that could be systemised and replicated. It became evident to me that events on a community scale held unmatched potential for weaving significant moments that would contribute to the collective well-being of our community.

As I gained experience in a career of events, I witnessed something I have come to call the “glow,”. The glow is a beautiful emanation from our communities when they came together in shared time and space. It comes from that radiant spark of pride, hope, and belonging that transcends from any event, and then extends into our individual lives for recall in ongoing connections and future interactions.

Let us uncover this together.

In my opinion, every group, committee, and board already possess a certain glow simply by the virtue of their coming together. When these groups are channelled into festivals and events, regardless of the nature of the event or festival, they are subjected to a

Unique set of circumstances that I have yet to witness in any other framework. This framework has group first choosing it’s message and purpose, then capturing the collective essence of humanity, in a social combustion and symphony to orchestrate a future moment. What a complex, yet polarising task.

And, it’s almost impossible to run an event alone, so teams are forced to work together. Each event requires members of the community event team have a voice and fulfil a role, responsibility. Each person possesses the power to shape that event and create their own glowing pockets, as long as

it continues to share the same goal.

Then, to get the event off the ground, the group’s idea is socially tested in a very raw and real manner amongst community. To succeed in the test, often it’s a matter of checking to see if the story carries over and above singular voices, so that others to want to join in; creating safe appetite for their peers to participate.

Next, in a wave of momentum, the start of the communal glow, people who choose to come to the event, publicly and peacefully declares with their two feet and wallet that they too support this cause.

This in my view, is one of the best example of humanity in action?!

Take a moment for me; and imagine the problems you face or the conversations you want to have with you community and how you could wrap them into a group exercise where they come together in an event.

Community events and festivals hold more significance than meets the eye, and their value needs to be acknowledged and recognised, beyond any monetary measures. They create significant milestones in our life, or jars of light in the way of cherished memories and conversations of hope and enduring connections, that we bury in our bodies, recalling them at a future time.

I have witnessed communities facing numerous obstacles that impede progress and hinder growth. Complex issues, political divisions, fractured communication channels, and deteriorating social structures, which until I found festivals and events, have been difficult to engage with community in meaningful, extensive, multilayered and impactful work.

Yet, at their local festival, the same work, worked through a festival, at a time where our communities tend to drop all of their previous inhibitions to fall into the flow of humanity and find the shared moment, the shared conversation – whatever that looks like for that community, obtains less invasive results.

In the face of our worldly barriers, hope persists. Events, my friends, serve as bridges that connect individuals through shared experiences, uniting us as a communities, into a shared hope of infinite possibilities. It’s can be seen in world events like the Olympics, in destination events, music events, cultural events, or the local show that draws appreciation of agriculture life from its interaction.

In one example we utilised events, marketing principles, and community development to co-create with arts practitioner Olivia Everitt, community leader Jeff Connor and the Blackbutt community to craft 2022 AvoFest, with Australia's first town-based arts strategy. This strategy took the town's local festival called Blackbutt AvoFest, and used it to install a deeper connection to the Blackbutt story in amongst the celebration of in the industry. This project was born from the realisation that despite Avocados being part of the town's rich agricultural annual output, that the town had not shared conversation in the history of the community, or the future; and therefore, not agreed. This strategy used the major festival to supplement the conversation, sew in the forward arts values, deepen the conversation of the community, yet excite and delight along the way.

Staying on the topic of food festivals in the South Burnett, we harness community development principles through Kingaroy BaconFest, an event that seeks to reconnect consumers with Australian growers by leveraging our nation's love for a particular food product, Bacon. The town is home to the biggest pork production facility in the Southern Hemisphere. Attracting 16,000 visitors, this festival has been built on connecting and skilling our volunteer base, creating opportunities for over 15 community groups, inspiring and connecting young food students in experiences with senior and celebrity chefs. You can ask 3-year former Chief Baconer and President of Kingaroy BaconFest, Kristy Board in the audience about the community development outcomes sewn into this festival through pin-up pageants, BBQ competitions and more.

Beside another great colleague, Craig Tunley, who similarly sees community value in projects, we used community development and marketing to ignite a passion for the history of Dalby and surrounds, and it's local machinery club, through the creative use of the humble overalls as a catalyst, so that the wider community could join in on a world record attempt for the most amount of running vintage stationary engines in one place.

Even in one of my workplaces, as the General Manager of the Nanango RSL Club, we used a series of mini events to save that local services club from bankruptcy while invigorating staff and the community.

These are all examples of varying levels of festivals and events that have engaged communities.

When community development practice overlays into festivals, it delivers a deeper meaning and has been

my most valuable tool in repositioning stories lost in miscommunication; and reinvigorating human involvement.

If you ask me, the best kind of festival involves the construction of communication bridges, the creation of opportunities, the infusion of symbolism, and the cultivation of moments that transform into cherished memories. This combination creates a radiant halo that lingers long after the event, fostering ongoing neighbourly exchanges, encourages the media to share uplifting stories, reignites the flames within community groups, and installs a sense of belonging, and much more.

Festivals, events, and the arts serve as powerful yet underutilised vessels to illuminate our communities worldwide, to grow skills and find community together. It is at these pressing times that communities most need support to gather their glow and magic. We get through hard times much better when we work together and share events.

Events truly hold immense potential for community development. They provide opportunities for social interaction, learning, economic growth, civic engagement, and empowerment. By harnessing the power of events, communities can create spaces that promote connections, inspire positive change, and foster a sense of belonging.

Embrace Events as a means to ignite the spark of community development and work together to create a glowing future for our communities.

Let's light up the globe and let it glow.

Thank you.

About the Author

Sheena Lindholm, hailing from rural Queensland, empowers regional Australians to architect their own destinies with unwavering commitment and strategic vision. Her deep-rooted regional connection fuels the integration of community development through purposeful, transformative projects. Sheena's impact includes significant infrastructure upgrades, state awards, Australian-first community plans and destination events.

Sheena started her own business Push Pull Marketing, PR and Events in Kingaroy, Queensland, as a vehicle to deliver on her vision. She is on the verge of launching 'More Than That,' a program amplifying her impact through accumulated real-world experiences.

CALL FOR ARTICLES NEXT EDITION PRACTICE INSIGHTS MAGAZINE "COOPERATIVES, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, FOR A SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE AND BETTER WORLD."

The United Nations has declared 2025 the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC2025), in recognition of the role Cooperatives play in fostering sustainable and equitable development, their contribution to addressing key global challenges and to 'building a better world'.

This year, as part of a series of events and activities to promote IYC2025, the International Association for Community Development (IACD) is dedicating an issue of Practice Insights, our bi-annual publication for Community Development practitioners, researchers, and academics to the theme of Cooperatives, Social and Community Development, for a Sustainable, Equitable and Better World.

IACD recognises the UN IYC2025 as an opportunity for everyone concerned with social and community development to call for policies that support community empowerment, collective action, and solidarity, which place renewed focus on social justice, human rights, and climate justice and within that to emphasize the important role of cooperatives in achieving equitable and sustainable development.

Submission Guidelines

If you are involved in a Cooperative, or an initiative that is adopting the cooperative model and has a focus on community development practice, we would love to hear from you and invite you to send us a short 500- word abstract (summary) of your proposed article by 8th May. The abstract should outline the intended topic, framing, and scope of the article. Abstracts will undergo an editorial review process and feedback will be provided to support alignment with the issue's theme. Abstracts should be submitted to anna.clarke@iacdglobal.org

Authors of accepted abstracts will receive further guidelines and are invited to submit full articles of up to 1,500 words by **Friday 6th June, 2025**.

Cooperatives, Social and Community Development

In our recent response to the UN Global consultation on Social Development, IACD expressed concerns that despite some progress on social issues, equitable progress for all has been held back by the dominance of neoliberal economics and ideology, leading to and reinforcing widespread poverty, inequality, discrimination, social exclusion, environmental crisis, conflict and insecurity. This is reinforced by dominant narratives that individualise issues, and responsibility for them.

In contrast, IACD recognises the strong connection between the cooperative model with its focus on member ownership and democratic control, and the core community development values of community participation and empowerment.

Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, human rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings.

Click here for more information and for suggested topic information

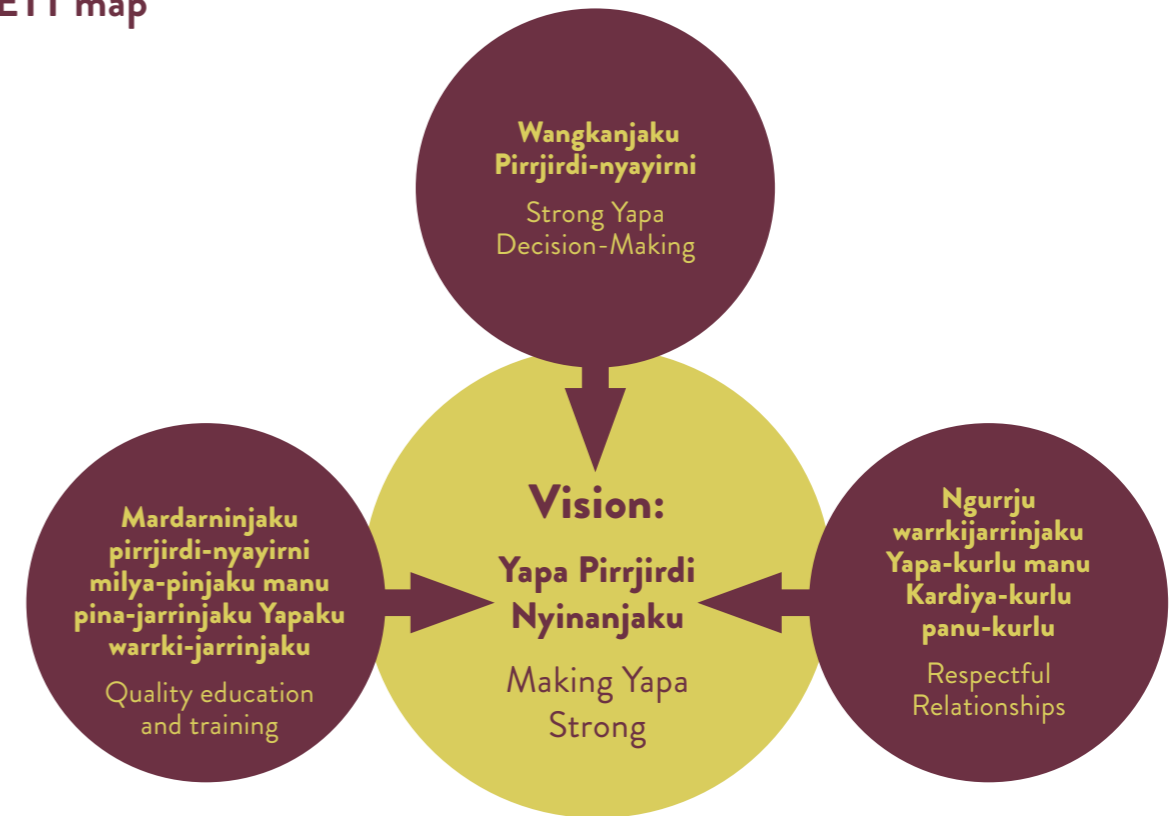
We look forward to receiving your abstracts and learning from your experiences. Please share this call with your networks to help us reach a broad community of contributors!

#cooperativesbuildabetterworld

A Community Development Approach to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT)*Yitaki-maninjaku, warririnjaku, payirninjaku manu pina-jarrinjaku (YWPP)
Community Research Team

The WETT map



This map was designed by WETT Advisory Committee as a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework. It helps us to make strong decisions as Yapa by paying attention to each of these areas.

Our Community Research Principles



*Yapa means Aboriginal person in our Warlpiri language. Kardiya is a non-Aboriginal person. We have worked together as Yapa and Kardiya to build this project and these principles guide us.



Institute for Human Security and Social Change

Training and developing our skills

Each year we do training together as community researchers, building our skills and developing our research plan.



How we collect stories

We are guided by strong cultural protocols and safe ways of working to keep this work strong. Yapa collect stories from Yapa in safe and comfortable places, working respectfully with kardyia.



Sharing with the community

Sharing the stories back to the community first means they can give us feedback about what we have heard



Making sense of what we hear

We reflect on the stories that we collect in “sense making” sessions and connect what we hear to the WETT map.



How the WETT Advisory Committee uses the feedback

We bring the stories to the WETT Advisory Committee which helps them to make program decisions and undertake advocacy



The WETT map



Top Tips: Some good practices we have learned

Engage local researchers from the beginning & build local employment into the research

Start with community strengths and respect Yapa knowledge and expertise

Cultural safety in fieldwork means letting Yapa drive the process

Work carefully and respectfully to avoid conflict

Encourage young people to try the work and work alongside elders to learn

Build trust and strong relationships between project partners

Open communication, reflection and feedback for safety, learning and improvement

Taos Pueblo attends WCDC 2023

Shawn Duran, Hillery Duran and Holly Scheib

In June 2023, six members of Taos Pueblo joined their long-time consultant, Dr. Holly Scheib, to attend the World Community Development Conference in Darwin, Australia. At the conference, two members of leadership spoke about Taos Pueblo in a plenary session; in two other sessions, consultant and community members led a workshop and presented in a group panel session. The following are comments from three of the conference attendees about their experiences at the event.



Shawn Duran, Taos Pueblo Chief Operating Officer

Attending and participating in the WCDC highlighted to me that the experiences of indigenous communities all over the world are not isolated; we are not alone. We have similar challenges and similar goals. WCDC helped me see ways that we can work collectively, even if we're not geographically near each other. At the conference, I learned more about human rights and am interested in exploring ways First Nations in the United States may leverage United Nations principles and mechanisms within our country. I also loved learning about ways other indigenous communities approach their advocacy and rights. For example, in talking circles with elders from the Australian aboriginal communities, I learned that they have face-to-face meetings with representatives from the Australian government. It made me think more about our political advocacy, that we don't have to follow the same rules from the past. Face-to-face conversations are important and I'm now inspired to work more on our accessibility into these leadership spaces to better advocate for our goals.

Hillery Duran, Taos Pueblo Department of Public Safety

During the World Community Development conference, I attended several sessions where I got to explore issues indigenous rights and sovereignty and think about these ideas from a law enforcement and community wellness perspective. In one session, "Creating a platform for Indigenous Rights and Sovereignty" we worked in groups to create an image of sovereignty and what that means for our future generations of our community. In Taos Pueblo Community Policing, officers earn the trust of the community through consistent presence by patrolling, being in schools, and holding events for the community. In the active workshop, I got to tie these initiatives to sovereignty and discuss it with other attendees. In other sessions, particularly "Unlocking Your Inner Social Sector Hero", "Ensuring Strong Voice from the Edge", and "Creating Connections: Community responses to collective trauma," I learned how similar challenges are across First Nation communities: racism, substance abuse, governmental funding issues, and even how our own community members can be spiteful towards each



other when we are all supposed to be on the same team to help our community. It felt validating to know that these issues, which can feel so isolating, are part of shared experience. Further, the sessions gave opportunities to consider ways of successfully addressing our collective traumas and be a force for healing in our communities. In addition, I enjoyed the dancing and singing shared by the Gung'yunga Djmarrkuliny of the East Arnhem Land, who shared their experiences of displacement of culture and land, injustices that are also very present in our lives, too. I was proud to hear our Governor Gary Lujan and Chief Operating Officer Shawn Duran present our tribal history, showing how we are standing strong even in the face of ongoing threats to our future. At the close of the conference, we visited the Tiwi Islands and the homelands of the Tiwi people, who greeted us with a blessing ceremony and showed us places of importance to their people. As we learned about their community, I was grateful to be able to share a bit of the culture and history of Taos Pueblo. Overall, the conference was a humbling experience. It was eye-opening to hear how we are facing the same issues as other First Nations and to also consider how we, as individuals and communities, can be part of positive change. I am thankful to everyone

who supported my attendance to this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Holly Scheib, former community development consultant and current Community Development Director for Taos Pueblo

As a North American Trustee for IACD, I was eager for my Taos Pueblo colleagues to attend the WCDC 2023. The First Nation focus of the event seemed like a wonderful opportunity for our work to be presented and to bring Taos Pueblo into a global spotlight for its important history in community activism and leadership. I believe that it is inappropriate for outside consultants and researchers to present on behalf of their community projects; it is the responsibility of outsiders to elevate their community partners and not take leadership spotlight from them. Community members should always be supported to present shared work. Therefore, my consulting company offered to underwrite conference costs to allow my closest colleagues to attend, and open the invitation to leadership to consider attendance. I was surprised when the Taos Pueblo Governor and Tribal Secretary not only expressed

interest in attending, but found donors and raised \$20,000 USD to support attendance for six members of the tribe. I was struck by the commitment Taos Pueblo leadership gave to WCDC; conference attendance of this kind by leadership requires both an approval from Tribal Council and blessings from the community. Leaving the United States is considered extreme and is looked at with tremendous scrutiny. That leadership took the initiative to raise these funds, bring six attendees, and go through the approval processes to facilitate attendance reflected not only a global interest for Taos Pueblo but also a great respect for me, as all involved are aware of how much I value IACD and our global events. With their attendance confirmed, WCDC arranged a plenary speech for the Governor and Chief Operating Officer. My colleagues' participation at WCDC allowed more in-depth sessions around our work together, where we could reflect on the nature of our partnership and the ways we have created anti-racist, anti-colonist practice in active, applied, community work. We reflected on how rare this was even within the WCDC event; many presentations were of researchers representing group projects or interventions that claimed partnership, yet no one from the actual community was present. This observation further galvanized our partnership and highlighted for us the importance of our shared approach. As a group, we were so proud to hear our Governor speak to this global audience on the incredible history of advocacy and sovereignty of the Taos Pueblo people. Individually, I was awestruck by the plenary presentation of my colleague, Chief Operating Officer Shawn Duran, who described the evolving nature of addressing the needs of the community in exercises of sovereignty through programming, negotiation



with federal and state entities, and constant connection to the culture and people. In a session, Shawn and I were able to model an active, arts-based workshop, like what we do in Taos Pueblo. An attendee to our workshop from an Aboriginality run Australian NGO approached me at the event and later hired me as a mentor. Since the conference, I have been doing regular supervision with this social worker, coaching her in ways to connect Yolngu communities in Arnhem lands more actively in child protection. This work has recently produced a report that argues that Arnhem lands people have their own cultural laws and traditions that provide a foundation for Yolngu-created and operated child protection; they are using this report to reframe and re-write child protection code in the region. Taos Pueblo has been enthusiastically in support of this and values the duality of the relationship; we have utilized lessons learned in connections to Yolngu communities in our work in Taos Pueblo. In summary, I am so thankful for my connections to IACD and am endlessly grateful to Taos Pueblo for our work, our relationships, and their attendance at this event.



What do human rights defenders need to flourish?

Clare MacGillivray

This keynote presentation, *“What do human rights defenders need to flourish?”* is an adaptation of research explored in 2023 with the Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity at London School of Economic, International Inequalities Institute and the resulting podcast series available at <https://fearlesspod.scot>

Here’s what I covered in my keynote session:

- The term ‘human rights defender’
- The challenges
- The hopes and joys
- What already works?
- What human rights defenders need to flourish
- Some wicked questions...

So, I want to hand that back to you. Hands up if you’re a human rights defender?

Would you describe yourself as such?

I think as community workers we are human rights defenders – even if we don’t always use the term to describe ourselves.

One of the words that keeps coming up when I talk to people about what is a HRDs is FEARLESS – people who are fearless in the defense of human rights.

And we need to be fearless.

Why are human rights important in communities?

When talking about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at its launch in 1948, Eleanor Roosevelt stressed that human rights must have meaning in the ‘small places, close to home’.

“Where, after all do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home, so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works...

Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.” E Roosevelt

It is the small places that matter to communities that human rights are often abused, and where human rights defenders work to change systems and structures that oppress.

Here are some of the assumptions I’m making in exploring this topic.

We are facing incredible challenges globally:

- Environmental catastrophe
- Neo-liberal economies and the legacy of colonialism which uphold power structures and marginalize communities to embed structural inequality
- Rise of right wing populism and a disturbing rise of racism
- Global inequalities – including health inequalities recovery from trauma of covid
- Increased areas of war, conflict and violence

These issues are not experienced equally - in the words of Mary Brooksbank – the socialist, trade union activist, songwriter and weaver from my home town of Dundee, in Scotland “Oh dear me, the world is ill divided. Them that work the hardest are aye the least provided.”

The disproportionate impact of inequality is always most crippling for the most marginalised communities.

BUT – there is hope. There has to be. And there has to be radical hope.

If we make assumptions that:

- Inequality is not inevitable
- We can transform structural inequality
- People build social movements
- We can use human rights based community development to change systems

And if we believe that through collective action we can use human rights to change systems – we need to ask what do HRDs need to flourish?

So, what is a human rights defender?

UN Declaration on Human rights Defenders was 25 years old in 2023.

HRDs are defined as people who, “individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights in a peaceful manner. This could be in a voluntary role or in paid employment.”

The declaration represents a paradigm shift: it is addressed not just to States and to human rights defenders, but to everyone. It emphasizes that there is a global human rights movement that involves us all and that we all have a role to fulfil in making human rights a reality for all.

There is a Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders – currently Mary Lawlor from Ireland.

Amnesty has said “Supporting HRDs is one of the most effective ways to create just, equal and open societies with human rights and justice for all.”

HRDs are in every field and discipline in every country. And are often uncredited for their successful, tireless and often dangerous work to advance human rights for all.

As community development workers, activists or community members we might not describe ourselves as a human rights defender – but if we are working with or as rights holders to hold duty bearers to account, to tackle injustice and human rights issues – then we are.

Community development is a rights based profession and practice. Human rights are at the heart of our values and standards as a profession and should be embedded in our practice.

International HR treaties and the principles of a human rights based approach should be embedded in what we do to support communities to challenge power structures which are repressive.

The PANEL principles of a rights based approach put the participation of rights holders at the centre of social change work, and community workers are at the heart of challenging structures / holding the state to account, shaking the tree of power to challenge institutional racism, misogyny, colonialism.

We know Power has been built up in the hands of the few over centuries. This neo-liberal system and the legacy of colonialist pursuits which concentrates and exacerbates wealth and power in the hands of the few – continues to marginalise communities. We can't talk about challenging systems without talking about power. And the risks that speaking truth to power brings risks to human rights defenders.

We often don't celebrate the success of HRDs to shift systems to advance human rights. But there are many. And we can't stop now. The rights we have won sit precariously on edge and we need to fight to protect against the rollback of our rights globally.

So what about the term human rights defenders?

Do community workers describe themselves as HRDs? They would describe themselves as activists, campaigners, community champions or people standing up for what they believe is right

Incredible people doing extraordinary things – leading campaigns against poverty, climate injustice, for the rights of Gypsy Travellers and Roma people, for refugees and asylum seekers, for trans people, disabled people, children acting to gain children's rights, young people campaigning on issues important to them, local communities fighting for a healthy environment or for housing rights, for carers, people taking a stand against racism, people organising against a capitalist system that individualizes problems and makes things worse by wilfully structurally marginalizing people.

The humility, compassion, energy and drive of HRDs is outstanding. So does the term matter?

In international frameworks it does – and there are international systems that protect HRDs. And to monitor attacks on HRDs.

Maybe we adults can learn from children human rights defenders who seem to have grasped the title and proudly wear their badges. UNFEARTIES – is a network of adults who stand up as human rights defenders, run by the Children's Parliament in Scotland.

But if people at the grassroots don't use the term, should we force it?

Or does the language of human rights give rights holders POWER?

Should we describe ourselves as ‘warriors for human rights?’

Those are the discussions that community workers need to grapple with in their own countries, communities and contexts.

What are the challenges faced by human rights defenders?

The challenges we face as human rights defenders and community worker give us ethical dilemmas. On one hand – it is our role to support communities to effectively critique human rights breaches. To speak truth to power in order to support collective action and campaigning on human rights issues. Yet – we know that some human rights defenders are more likely to face danger *because of who they are and the human rights they are trying to protect*; LGBTI activists, indigenous people, minorities, women, land rights and environmental activists are more at risk statistically, globally. And often it is the state which is supposed to guarantee human rights which perpetrates these violations.

And we know that being a human rights defender can bring real dangers. In spite of there being laws to protect HRDs – there is often an implementation gap domestically which means that HRDs can face death, imprisonment, torture, harassment, physical assault, trolling, doxing, mental and physical breakdown.

Many spoke about the impact on mental health – being drained by the constant fight for rights, by not being believed, or being isolated, feeling alone, the fight leading to burnout or withdrawal, and a guilt about resting and caring for our own wellbeing. HRDs often speak about the difficulty of separating activism life and work – for many this is a life's vocation – a way of life that consumes us – so when you're facing threats it is also all consuming.

When I was exploring these issues in Scotland, HRDs in Scotland faced death threats, vandalism to property, harassment and physical assault – so these issues are not the preserve of states with poor human rights records.

We all need to waken up to these outrageous actions.

There is an inherent challenge for CD practitioners – we sometimes don't have all the tools and resources to protect human rights defenders in practice – legal routes, access to international protections. So that leaves us with ethical dilemmas and striving for change....

But there are also the hopes and joys of being a HRD

We have to celebrate the wins when we get them – whether they are small in our own communities, or have international impact – all have a role to play in advancing human rights. And success as a HRD – can take dogged determination over many years. HRDs keep going – even when success seems remote or impossible. So celebrating when change happens is a powerful moment to rest, reflect, record the win and refresh resolve for what's next.

There is tremendous solidarity in being an ally, and acting with others.

Collective actions are bringing more human rights laws, and there are growing movements of people naming and claiming their rights. In every country there are incredible people acting with humility – mighty activists!

So, what already works for HRDS?

Speaking to HRDs in Scotland – what they said was important is:

- Finding your tribe –being with the people who have got your back
- Connecting and learning from each other
- Safe spaces including being safe to make mistakes
- Support with mental ill health
- Trauma informed practice
- Participation and accountability
- Accessibility and funding

Laws, structures to protect human rights defenders

1. Transformation of laws, structures to protect HRDs, advance rights and give access to justice in an easy and affordable way
2. Legal framework of protection that is fully implemented by states for individuals and right association to act collaboratively with others and free access to international bodies
3. And domestic law that creates free and supportive civic space where HRDs can operate free of threats, harassment or reprisals

Human rights based culture and systems

- Don't ask for recognition, glory
- But to be believed
- To speak truth to power and this being valued
- To change systems with urgency

Time and space to connect, to heal, to learn

And space for conversations about human rights to connect with each other, to learn from each other to rest and to heal – international HRD fellowships – but where is the space for domestic human rights defenders to heal?

Practical support like learning

Training on how to deal with social media / trolling

- Practical info on how to keep social media accounts safe
- How to protect personal information
- Knowledge about human rights might help to progress a better understanding of what human rights are how human rights can be met and also how communities can take ownership of those human rights

Support for wellbeing

- Mental health support
- Time to rest
- Trauma informed counselling that is intersectional in approach

Independent funding for human rights

- Independent funding for human rights work (co-option, speaking truth to power)
- Regarding personal finances, a lot of activists self-fund “genuinely can't afford it and or have to make the choice between being an activist community champion standing up for the rights their community “
- Funding is a crucial crucial part to all this and that's what I'm saying. And supporting grassroots activists to

do the work that they do and making sure that they can do it more effectively and that finances aren't a barrier”

Support to participate

Children and young people need support mechanisms - adults need to listen. Children shouldn't have to do the work of adults to uphold rights.

Questions for community workers

There are questions we need to ask ourselves as community workers:

- What am I doing in my practice to advance human rights?
- What systems to protect human rights defenders do I have in my:
 - Organisation
 - Community
 - Country
 - Community development networks?
- Are we even talking about human rights defenders in our spaces?
- What do we want to see change?

Conclusion

I do think that as the rapid changes we are experiencing globally to political, democratic systems and increasingly impact on the most marginalised communities, that community development workers can turn to human rights and the protections offered by the human rights framework, including to HRDs to collectively organise around rights. Alongside that collective action, requires the careful assembling of laws, structures, processes, networks and protections for human rights defenders that create the conditions where people can speak truth to power and challenge the structures that oppress the communities we serve.

Toast to Human Rights Defenders

by Clare MacGillivray

Human Rights are ours to take. We hold them. We cherish them. And we must claim them.

To the human rights defenders all over the world who are speaking truth to power – we stand beside you.
We are inspired by you. We salute you.

But you must know that you are not alone.

We know that you face personal risk to protect the human rights of others.

We know you face risk of imprisonment, torture, intimidation, death.

We know this happens every day.

We saw this even today. We know the impact of this will stay with you.

Still, the wilful silencing of human rights defenders goes on.

We know you have lost family members.

We know you have been crushed.

We know you have lost your health, your mental health. We know your struggle.

We know you have lost your jobs for speaking out. We know you face daily harassment.

You are trolled. Your lives poured over for any chink in your armour that might show your vulnerability.

You know the risks.

And yet still you rise. Still you speak out. You stand firm. You challenge power. You organise. You mobilise people.
You create alliances.

You empower others to stand with you. You take on the impossible. To shift power. To drive change. To claim rights.

You are nimble. You are quick. You are smart. You actively and creatively change the way you work to make sure rights are protected, respected and fulfilled.

We know that despite the heartaches you face, the risks you endure, the power you take on, that you somehow, despite it all, you still imagine, dream, design and deliver progress on rights.

You are making a world where human dignity and respect are at the heart of how decisions are made.

Your wins may be small. Progressively realising our rights in action.

Or they make huge strides that transform whole nations.

Whatever actions you can do, we welcome them as acts of love and solidarity for a better world.

You are clearing the way for those who will come after us, so that all our rights will prevail.

We salute you. We stand by you. We are you.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (IACD)



IACD is a global multi-disciplinary network for professional community development practitioners and others with an interest in community development practice. As an organisation, and collectively as members we are committed to promoting participative democracy, sustainable development, human rights, economic opportunity, equality, and social justice, through the organisation, education, and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity, or interest, in urban and rural settings.

We have an international board of Trustees, and a global membership that extends to more than 70 countries and includes practitioners, educators, researchers, students and organisations active in the field of community development. Through our activities we support networking and collective sharing of learning and good practice.

Join us and become a member www.iacdglobal.org/member

IACD is a non-governmental organisation, we are accredited with the United Nations and have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. We are operationally based in Scotland and receive financial support from the Scottish Government.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

✉ info@iacdglobal.org www.iacdglobal.org www.iacdglobal.org/member

f facebook.com/IACDglobal/ @ [@IACDglobal](https://twitter.com/IACDglobal)

in International Association for Community Development

📍 International Association for Community Development, Baltic Chambers, Suite 305, Wellington St, Glasgow, G2 6HJ, Scotland, United Kingdom

Registered in Scotland as a charity, number SC 036090

