Empowering Indigenous governance through vocational education and training

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This report is support document to Indigenous vocational education and training: At a glance and is an added resource for further information. The report is available on NCVER’s website: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1630.html>.

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Executive summary

This painting by Darlene Beitsch symbolizes holistically the Community, Elders, Younger Generation, Knowledge, Wisdom and Experiences. The dark swirl going from the outside to the middle represents the Elders carrying the knowledge into the centre. The Elders are the darker swirl because they are the holders of knowledge, wisdom and experience; their knowledge is then passed onto the next younger generation, which is the lighter swirl that travels from the centre outward becoming thicker with knowledge, wisdom and experience at each level. The dots that are around the border are the future generations waiting to be born and become the next holders and portals of knowledge to pass on to the future generations coming. These generations young, old and unborn are our whole existence as a community and our existence for the future. The image is organic.

Overview

Imagery is the strongest way of representing Indigenous voices and the most pedagogically sound. The above image represents the outcomes of this research project. It represents the power of community voices; elders, the young and the still to be born. It represents the power of community as a whole and the importance of having a community vision.

A wise education cannot be something that is done to people, it is something that people must learn to do for themselves. This involves the whole community and starts with a collective vision of the future (Silatunirmut, The Pathway to Wisdom, 1992, p.21).

Culturally appropriate vocational education and training in Indigenous governance is a strong desire by Indigenous peoples. A wise education is what is called for.

In 2005 the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Research (NCVER) commissioned the consortium of Umulliko Indigenous Higher Education and Research Centre and the TAFE NSW Hunter Institute to research “the importance of capacity building for Indigenous governance”.

The purpose of this project was to investigate the role that vocational education and training (VET) could play in Indigenous capacity building, not only for the planning and delivery of VET, but also for building governance skills for broader economic and social purposes and community capacity building.
The research questions included the following; what do Indigenous peoples conceptualise as Indigenous governance? What skills do Indigenous peoples require to build individuals’ capacity to participate in governance of their communities and organisations, and how does/can VET contribute to this? What are the best models for engaging Indigenous communities in self-governance approaches, and how does/can VET assist? What are the underlying funding, planning and accountability frameworks of these successful models?

Informants from all three trial sites agreed that Indigenous peoples involved in governance roles need vocational education and training. How this should be done remains dependent on local community needs.

The research methodology involved a decolonising approach to research (see Supplementary Document) and a 5 stage process including the following steps; the development of a Research Proposal and the submission of ethics to the University of Newcastle and Hunter Institute, the conduct of a Literature Review, the Development of Case Study Questions, the conduct of Yarn Times and the analysis of data.

Indigenous voices have been centred in the research process, not western Eurocentric research philosophy and methodology. The research locations involved a selection of 3 COAG (Council of Australian Governments) trial sites in the central eastern region, rural Australia, southern rural Australia and in a semi-remote location in northern Australia. Nineteen participants; 5 female, 14 male conducted yarn times with members of the research team.

The following issues were clearly articulated by participants in the yarn times as significant and central to Indigenous peoples’ governance and vocational and education training in governance.

- Indigenous governance is a non-Indigenous concept;
- It's all about relationships, Indigenous governance;
- Holistic governance;
- Polarisation of the expectations of communities and government;
- Compliance equals funding and survival;
- Self-determination;
- Leadership and governance.

Three main sources of information contribute to the Literature Review (see Supplementary Document):
- Building Effective Indigenous Governance Conference
- Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University
- Cape York Partnerships.

Much of the literature on governance focuses on governance in the northern parts of Australia; specifically the Northern Territory and Cape York. There is less literature that addresses governance in the southern States and Territory. As an emerging field there is a wide range of issues involved in discussion.

Most significantly, there is much discussion about the concept of ‘governance’ as articulated in the Literature reviewed (see Appendix C) and through the field research (see Appendix A). There is a need to move beyond the concept of what governance is, to the challenge of defining and understanding governance in the context of Indigenous communities in Australia. Indigenous governance is an emerging research field which is multi-disciplinary in nature drawing on Indigenous Philosophy; a world view that is holistic, that encompasses contemporary disciplines such as health, social science, law, science, environmental studies, politics, business and management etc. People articulate governance being associated with
power, traditional cultural strengths, decision-making, capacity, and leadership. People identify some degree of conflict between the notions of 'governance' and Indigenous governance' or at the least finding a balance between the two rather than the imposition of a western style of governance over Indigenous forms of governance.

The Literature Review identifies the following areas of significance for further discussion:

- Defining governance
- Regional governance
- Accountability
- Cultural Match
- Leadership
- Wealth creation and economic enterprise
- Research
- Training and Leadership Development

The research clearly found that there can not be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to training in Indigenous governance. Training may involve a number of different sectors including VET. VET may have a role training non-Indigenous peoples. VET may train people from Indigenous community organisations to become Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) as well as in the development of curriculum for accreditation. VET may negotiate courses with individual or regional communities which are delivered on-site by trainers prepared to live on-site and engage as partners in the learning process.

We must remember that:

Indigenous nations have been problem-solving for a long time. They have had to in order to survive. They know their situations and their communities better than any outside governments ever will (Cornell 2004, p.6).

The final seven Recommendations build on this principle.
In 2005 the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Research (NCVER) commissioned the consortium of Umulliko Indigenous Higher Education and Research Centre and the TAFE NSW Hunter Institute to research “the importance of capacity building for Indigenous governance”.

Research purpose

The purpose of this project was to investigate the role that vocational education and training (VET) could play in Indigenous capacity building, not only for the planning and delivery of VET, but also for building governance skills for broader economic and social purposes and community capacity building.

Research questions

What do Indigenous peoples conceptualise as Indigenous governance?
What skills do Indigenous peoples require to build individuals’ capacity to participate in governance of their communities and organisations, and how does/can VET contribute to this?
What are the best models for engaging Indigenous communities in self-governance approaches, and how does/can VET assist?
What are the underlying funding, planning and accountability frameworks of these successful models?

What is governance/Indigenous governance?

Governance has been defined as the ‘art of steering societies and organisations’ (Plumptre and Graham 1999). Fundamentally, governance has been conceptualised as being about power, relationships and accountability, who has influence, who decides, and how decision-makers are held accountable.

There is a need to move beyond this concept of what governance is, to the challenge of defining and understanding governance in the context of Indigenous communities in Australia. Indigenous governance is an emerging research field which is multi-disciplinary in nature drawing on Indigenous Philosophy; a world view that is holistic, that encompasses contemporary disciplines such as health, social science, law, science, environmental studies, politics, business and management etc. It must be grounded in a rights based approach (Dodson 1993).

There is much discussion about the concept of 'governance' as articulated in the Literature reviewed (see Appendix C) and through the field research (see Appendix A). There is a great deal of diversity amongst peoples when they discuss governance. People articulate governance being associated with power, traditional cultural strengths, decision-making, capacity, and leadership. People identify some degree of conflict between the notions of 'governance' and Indigenous governance' or at the least finding a balance between the two rather than the imposition of a western style of governance over Indigenous forms of governance.
'Indigenous governance' is a Western concept.

M: Big differences opposite… they're (governance and leadership) opposite ends of the spectrum (unclear…) we tend to put them together all the term leadership and governance… that's where we come unstuck it's government terms leadership and governance it's not really ours and…that’s why it brings, it brings our communities unstuck… [S1 YT1]

In Australia, governments are based on the Westminster system, which includes large bureaucracies and agencies involved in the provision and delivery of services. Governance is conducted through local, state and federal government bureaucracies and agencies. To place the word 'Indigenous' in front of 'governance' makes the assumption that Indigenous peoples traditionally practised 'governance' in their communities and that 'Indigenous governance' simply Indigenises the whole Western notion of governance.

Indigenous governance studies are important for an understanding of the nature of authority in past and current Indigenous societies, the effective delivery of services to Indigenous peoples, the maintenance of security and public order in Indigenous settings, and the achievement of social justice for Indigenous peoples (which encompasses their relations with non-Indigenous peoples and states). (Dodson 2004).

Governance structures within Indigenous communities in Australia were severely disrupted by colonisation from 1788 onwards. Since that time, Australian authorities have failed to develop, and have struggled to come to terms with, Indigenous peoples effectively governing their own affairs, as well as contributing to governance within contemporary government frameworks (Rowse 1992; RCIADIC 1991).

In recent decades, under a policy of self-determination, Australian governments funded the incorporation of Indigenous community organisations to conduct their own community affairs and deliver government-funded services (Dodson 1996; Sanders 2002; Wolfe 1989). The result has been an efflorescence of Indigenous community organisations in Australia with, on one estimate, there now being one such organisation for every 100 Indigenous people (Huggins, J. 2003).

Limited sustained attention has been given to issues of governance in Indigenous Australian communities. In the absence of coherent approaches to programs for capacity building and the lack of recognition of the need for systematic support for the development of effective governing institutions at the community and regional levels, calls are being made for a more unified approach to Indigenous community governance. One where stable and broadly representative governing bodies are designed to be reflective of, and accountable to their entire membership, thereby creating an environment conducive to community economic development and social investment (Ah Kit 2003; Smith, D. 2002).

A more coordinated commitment from government including VET, the private sector and Indigenous organisations to develop the capacities needed at the community level to underwrite more effective governance is fundamental to the delivery of Indigenous governance.
Policy and practice issues

The research team acknowledges that the Australian VET sector has policies that articulate Indigenous cultural diversity and acknowledge the need for partnership with Indigenous communities. What this research advocates is the need to strengthen the rhetoric and facilitate the practice nationally. Consultation is not enough. Negotiation at all stages of research, education and training curriculum development, implementation and evaluation is fundamental if we are to improve outcomes for Indigenous peoples. The sector as must others, finds their place as a partner, a facilitator and not a manager.

In taking this approach there must be some serious consideration of the following issues:

- Delivery of courses in local communities where trainers live for extended periods of time and where numbers are not the driving force for course delivery; the need itself is enough;
- Training for non-Indigenous people in 'Indigenous governance';
- Training or assistance with local Indigenous communities/organisations in gaining RTO status and in the sector's accreditation requirements and skills.

Resulting research questions

The resulting research questions do not vary from those identified in the initial stages of the research project. The Literature reviewed served to highlight the significance of the original questions posed.
Methodology

Design of research

Umulliko has made significant contributions to the current debate on Indigenous Theoretical Perspectives and Research Methodologies nationally and internationally. For the purpose of this research project, we position Indigenous communities and Indigenous controlled organisations at the centre of the research and examine how community capacity and Indigenous governance is conceptualised by them, their cultures and practices. Umulliko uses decolonising methodology based on the work of Tuhiwai Smith (1999) as a tool to analyse policies, documents and issues. It asks questions like, who wrote/said it? Through what cultural lens was it written/spoken? Who is the intended audience? Who benefits? In what context was it written/spoken? (See also Blair, 2003; Hanlen, 2002).

The consortium of Umulliko and TAFE NSW Hunter Institute worked in collaboration with Indigenous community organisations and Indigenous communities in a regional rural, regional remote and a remote isolated area across Australia.

The Research team embodied the best of Indigenous self management and Indigenous governance through the Consortium of Umulliko, Indigenous Higher Education Research Centre, University of Newcastle and TAFE NSW Hunter Institute. The team had a majority of Indigenous researchers (5) and a non-Indigenous researcher who is a graduate of Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, University of Newcastle.

Umulliko purports the concept of an Indigenous Research Methodology (IRM). Umulliko is actively involved in the current debate in academic arenas about the idea of an Indigenous Research Methodology; one that centers Indigenous voices and not western Eurocentric ones. This approach does not lock out western Eurocentric voices it merely places them on the perimeter to be used as required, if required at all.

Blair in 2001/2002 conducted a pilot research project entitled 'Research to Death'. The Australian Research Council funded this project. 65 Indigenous people (25 male and 40 female) were interviewed in four communities; two communities in Western Australia and two communities in NSW. Participants in each of the identified communities were from the arts, performance, education, health, legal service, community development, women's groups, child care, employment, ATSIC, community welfare and included elders and youth where possible.

Indigenous peoples, not surprisingly are cynical about research with the following comments being reflective of peoples fears:

- Every time research is done a piece of my culture is … erased (P3f)
- They want something from me, what do I have to give up, part of me feels my soul is being given away, it is my experience, it is like an emotional photograph (C4f)
- If you want to make something dead - research it (C4m)

Researchers and organisations funding and conducting research must appreciate the intensity of feeling amongst many Indigenous peoples about research. We can never become complacent about the need to be culturally appropriate. For too long non-Indigenous researchers have defined us as Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are now reclaiming that space. We are reflective of current research practice. As Smith states (1999, p.1) Indigenous research is an 'emotional roller coaster'. We can not separate emotion from the research process. Research for
us does impact on our daily lives; whether it is done well or not. Our research is more often than not subjective.

This project embodies these principles and listens to and centers Indigenous people’s voices. It does this by acknowledging and centring Indigenous world views. The informant’s voices are therefore the essential elements of this research. We have not been able to place Indigenous peoples’ voices in the main research report in any detail. However, peoples' voices are clearly articulated in the appendices.

In order to hear Indigenous voices the gathering and collation of stories and experiences in the case studies involved Yarn Times (Hanlen, 2002). This involves the researcher firstly setting the scene for the participants then introducing a topic for yarning eg. “Tell me about…” The most culturally appropriate means of eliciting information from Indigenous Australians is through storytelling and narratives allowing the participant to determine the priorities, importance and range of issues. Question and Answer format is not a useful tool for eliciting information in Aboriginal languages or in Aboriginal English (Eades, 1995) or indeed in much depth. Questions can severely constrain the extent of relevant information based on the limited understanding of the researcher of the issues and how they relate to the people or group being interviewed. This is a proven means of gaining rich data from Indigenous perspectives according to their beliefs, values, goals, experiences, social practices and access to resources (Hanlen, 2002). It is also useful with non-Indigenous participants as we propose to conduct this research from an Indigenous World View (Hanlen, 2002).

‘Yarning empowers Indigenous Australians to use the traditional manner of sharing knowledge and information through narratives in the manner that they want information conveyed and in context. It replaces the traditional academic practice of framing questions to elicit information with a more culturally appropriate means of collecting ethnographic data for case studies through narratives (Hanlen, 2004)’. Framing of questions constrains a person to answer within the framework of the question based on the researcher’s limited knowledge of the person being researched or of the Indigenous person's length and breadth of knowledge and experience. Yarning produces richer and more accurate data.

The research team conducted the research initially aiming to use three key means; firstly, through the facilitation of a Focus Group drawing upon an Expert Group of Practitioners, secondly through case studies (involved Yarn Times) in three key communities as identified in discussions arising out of the Focus Group and thirdly, the Literature Review. There is a more detailed discussion on the Focus Group in the methodology later in this report.

**Recruitment process**

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Trial Sites were considered to be ideal for recruiting Indigenous people in roles of governance in Indigenous communities.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is the peak inter-governmental forum in Australia. COAG comprises the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The then Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers agreed to establish COAG in May 1992. It first met in December 1992. The Prime Minister chairs COAG. The COAG Secretariat is located within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (COAG 2005)

The role of COAG is:

- to initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance and which require cooperative action by Australian governments
- (for example,… family violence and child abuse among Indigenous families, investment
Six research stages

There were 6 research stages that have been more fully discussed in the appendices to this research report including the following:

Stage 1 – Research process development and ethical issues; convening of the focus group
Stage 2 – Literature review
Stage 3 – Development of case study questions
Stage 4 – Conducted yarn times and developed case studies
Stage 5 – Data analysis and draft final report
Stage 6 – Final report

COAG Trial Sites

Trial site #1 was visited 20-22nd March and is located in a central eastern regional rural area of Australia. This COAG trial site services a vast area of the state including many isolated communities. The town where the yarn times took place is in the country of one Indigenous language group but the trial site covers such a large portion of the state which incudes many and varied Indigenous language groups and cultures. At the time of our scheduled visit to S1 there was a funeral for a highly respected member of the Indigenous community from that state and many of the people involved in COAG were going to attend. They very graciously accommodated the research around this.

Eight Indigenous people in governance roles contributed their valuable knowledge and experience to the research and the data from the two people from the focus group was included in the eight. Informants included seven Indigenous men and one Indigenous woman.

Trial site #2 was situated in a southern Australian rural region and was visited April 6th-7th. We had yarn times with three Indigenous people in that region. There was one Indigenous woman and two Indigenous men.

Trial Site #3 is one of the most remote locations in Australia. We spoke to eight people there involved in the COAG trials including two Indigenous women, one non-Indigenous woman and five non-Indigenous men involved in governance roles. This trial site services a smaller area than the other two trial sites and involves seven language groups and clans. It is the general practice of this community for the CEO and some members of the Land Council to give a historical background on Indigenous governance in their community and it was explained to the research team before the yarn times and permission was granted for us to use this information and was subsequently evidenced in several of those yarn times.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important component of this research. There are many implications for Indigenous Australians when they talk about themselves, their communities and their organisations. If people, their communities and organisations are identified the implications go far beyond just their jobs and the cultural and community consequences can be devastating to the participants as well as their communities. For this reason the trial sites and the yarn times have been coded:
COAG Trial Site 1 = S1
COAG Trial Site 2 = S2
COAG Trial Site 3 = S3

Yarn times have been coded based on the trial site code followed by the number of the yarn time from that site eg. S2 YT5

Quality Assurance

Principal researchers consulted with a selected committee, which provided feedback and review of this study. The committee consisted of the research group, Paul Callaghan – Manager Access and Equity, and Tony Hanna – Faculty Director of Access and General Education, Heather Porter (Manager – Purrimaibahn Unit, TAFE NSW Hunter Institute), Carolyn Fairhurst and/or nominee from the Research Branch University of Newcastle, Paul Gordon (Elder Cultural Advisor/Yarnteen ATSI Corporation), a member from Equity Programs and Strategic Research Directorates, and Aboriginal Education Consultative Group.

Umulliko as an Indigenous Higher Education Research Centre is committed to conducting culturally appropriate research and adheres to guidelines and protocols such as Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2000, *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies*, Canberra and the National Health and Medical Research Council, 1991, *Guidelines on Ethical Matters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research*, Brisbane, June. Umulliko conducts research in which Indigenous peoples voices are centred and that their experiences of research are satisfying to them (Blair, N. 2003, *Researched to Death*. current research for the Australian Research Council-Indigenous Researchers Development Scheme).

We also suggest that any attempt made by ourselves to know or speak about Indigenous peoples does not simply entail having good intentions, being culturally sensitive or seeking touch of Indigenous input, it involves an ongoing process of asking for whom, by whom and in what way is a knowledge of Indigenous cultures and societies being produced or developed; for what purpose or use is the knowledge being sought; who will own this knowledge; how will it be communicated to others; and what the overall effects of producing it may be. We believe that it is important that researchers should sustain a life-long relationship with Indigenous peoples, which extends far beyond the realms of research. Regular reviews on progress and regular audits were carried out. All procedures were carried out within TAFE and University ethical guidelines.

Copies of all the yarn time transcripts were sent back to all the informants for them see if what was transcribed accurately reflected what they said or meant. They were invited to make any changes, omissions or additions where necessary.

The research team methodology is further discussed in the appendices.

Summary of the issues identified in the yarn times

The following issues were clearly articulated by participants as significant and central to Indigenous peoples’ governance and vocational and education training (the appendices provide more detail of peoples’ responses).

Indigenous governance is a non-Indigenous concept
M: …governance is again, is a concept of white mans it is not a concept (unclear) of Aboriginal people… [S1 YT2]

It’s all about relationships, Indigenous governance

M. Well to me it’s kinship because our kinship system was our system of governance you know [S3 YT2]

Holistic governance

M: If we are talking about a holistic governance I think, I think its more an example of where Indigenous and non Indigenous integration of governance then I think a holistic governance [S2 YT3]

Polarisation of the expectations of communities and government

M: Sometimes its… it’s a real clash of expectations where as lots of times the Aboriginal organisations through their um agreements with governments are right to deliver, and acting a certain way that satisfies their funding agreements and other things, and they get into conflict over that with family leadership and needing services and they get into conflict with elders about the directions of culture in communities. More often than not the bureaucracy and the ministers are talking with corporate governance and family governance there is a real lack of knowledge of country and who belongs where and traditional owners, who belongs where and who speaks to who, um and there is an interlink with um like a sense of… ownership and self esteem and future directions and cultural identity and expressions of young people about what they see as Aboriginality and what they see as the way… express their identity all of that sort of stuff is um I don't think has properly been um identified or Aboriginal leadership understanding what is actually said and how best to work with resources are in communities [S2 YT2]

Compliance equals funding and survival

F: … we have to always be compliant we have to do what government want or they won’t fund us… we say we want this, we want that and it is all our idea, and they give it to us. If we do it the way they want… you get to a stage where eventually you accept, base condition you accept that you have to be compliant… I think it’s a game that you have to learn to play, ok working with the government, it’s a game. I don’t know what it means and I don’t know who to play… it’s a game… I really don’t to know the rules and I don’t want to know how to play…[S2 YT1]

Self-determination

M: …Governance is used too loosely and I think we’re… we’re all (unclear) for certain years, you know, we think that as an Aboriginal (unclear) we’ve got no Aboriginal board partnership with business, all Aboriginal people are starting to get jobs for Aboriginal people, yet this government is still in control over affairs where you can still make your decisions about which direction you want to work in but really we’re all dancing to the tune of government…[S1 YT1]

Leadership and governance

M. Leadership is about having a vision and taking risks to achieve the vision. It's also about the respect of elders' wisdom, knowledge and experience and how communities can be damaged if you do not include them in governance. Again we see that leadership and governance is all about relationships [S2 YT1].
Summary of the issues identified in the literature

'Indigenous governance' is an emerging field in research and there has not been much literature specifically written about the topic. Governance from Indigenous perspectives today is a highly complex issue and fraught with cultural incongruencies. Traditionally it would appear that governance is/was not an Indigenous concept. Indigenous peoples have their own perceptions of the notion of governance. These often relate more to living at the interface of two cultures; Western and their own.

Much of the literature on governance focuses on governance in the northern parts of Australia; specifically the Northern Territory and Cape York. There is less literature that addresses governance in the southern States and Territory. As an emerging field there is a wide range of issues including the following:

- Defining governance and Indigenous governance
- Regionalisation and localism;
- Capacity-building
- Cultural match
- The role of local governments
- Self-determination
- Risk-taking and fear of the unknown
- Time and the need to make mistakes
- The importance of country and culture
- Political factors associated with governance
- Changing the conversation
  - 'One size does not fit all'
- Conflict resolution
- The importance of stories
- Policy development
- Treaty, Native Title and Land Rights and their lead in to governance and impact on governance today
- Wealth creation in communities, enterprise development and economic dependency
- Intergenerational welfare dependency
- Multiplicity of governance structures
- Reconciliation
- Ethics
- Families; strong families lead to strong communities
- Research
- Involvement of the private sector and civil society organisations
- Education and literacy
- Community dysfunction
- Accountability
- Partnerships
Leadership

The importance and role of elders

Training and 'leadership development'

Protection of rights

Complexity of governance

Financial management

As an emerging field of discussion, people are generally concerned with defining the term 'governance' and looking at different models of Indigenous governance and the mechanics associated with effective governance. The literature to-date describes historically, traditional and contemporary forms of governance impacting on Indigenous peoples prior to and since the invasion of our countries. It endeavours to source the complexities and in congruencies of governance when dealing with different world-views.

Cultural strengthening through capacity building in specific communities/regions is the focus of many of the papers read. This includes the significance of families, relationships and elders.

A more recent trend in the literature is the importance of economic development and establishing more effective links with private enterprise to break loose the shackles of colonisation and welfare dependency. Writings from Cape York particularly focus on this aspect of governance. In some instances this is identified as 'changing the conversation'; rethinking the approach to governance and centring Indigenous experiences and world views.

The Literature Review details these issues in more detail and is available in the Appendix C.

It is important to note here the work of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) and Reconciliation Australia. They are currently conducting a research project entitled the Indigenous Community Governance Project (ICGP) which has been funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC). They have developed a very useful Annotated Bibliography that is a 'continuously developing collection of recent and key literature on the broad field of governance, with a particular focus on Indigenous community governance.' The Bibliography identifies national and international literature in the fields of Indigenous governance and natural resource management, Indigenous governance and health, Gender and Indigenous governance, National governance and International governance. This material is available on-line at www.anu.edu.au/caepr/governance.php

The Cape York Partnerships website is also an invaluable source for recent views pertaining to Indigenous governance. This site address is www.capeyokpartnerships.com

Data analysis

Data was sorted according to the research questions with the emerging themes noted and analysed using a Decolonising Methodology and centring Indigenous voices. The themes emerging in the research findings were discussed within the field of each research question. (Researchers in the team have different approaches in yarning with the informants and as a result the term compliance has emerged in some yarn times and not others).

The Indigenous Governance Educational Program Model was developed as a direct result of people’s comments during the yarn times and the themes emerging from the literature. The skills identified in Figure 2 for example were fleshed out and grouped where a grouping made sense. The course modules and mode of offering (for example flexibility, multiple entry and exit requirements) have evolved from an assessment of all data collected and collated in this research project.
Conclusions and recommendations were developed as a result of the analysis of each aspect of the evidence. Due to the holistic nature of Indigenous cultures many of the themes overlapped. Responses to all the research questions are found in the conclusions although they may not be articulated under specific research questions due to the holistic nature of the responses. Recommendations were made on the basis of the conclusions and the models provided.

Limitations

The research project was limited in terms of overall sample size. Funding to travel to at least 2 other sites would have added greater depth and diversity to the data collected. The Focus Group as mentioned earlier did not eventuate the way the team had planned but some valuable information was collected. Communities often have other day to day business to manage and researchers are often viewed as intruders. In each of the communities visited people were generous with their time and their experiences, knowledge and understanding. The day to day business did impact on the 'yarns' conducted. We accept this as inevitable and a statement of the different communities' governance in action.
Findings

M: um, I just feel very strongly, that um, that we have to build tools that protect us, that you walk around and you live in a very unprotected environment ahh, I think anywhere were we can try to build capacity that um, we have to look at the nature of cultural heritage and the legacy that we leave our grand kids and future generations training in governance is about getting people to understand, look to understand how it is applied but also build, like you said build those skills that deliver it [S2 YT2].

Indigenous peoples want training in 'governance';

One size does not fit all;

Meaningful partnerships must be established between communities, government, industry or private sector organisations that contextualise locally-based training;

Non-Indigenous people must be trained to be resource people, facilitators and partners, not managers;

Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) need to be established in communities/regions;

The Australian VET Sector could assist with RTO status and accreditation of courses designed and delivered by communities;

The Australian VET Sector could offer a training package that contains a core, which is presented here, but which would need further negotiation with local and regional communities. This would be delivered locally and flexibly and would have -on-site trainers who live in the communities for extended periods of time. The Model presented in the Report is the beginning not the end. We stress 'one size does not fit all'

Vocational education and training

Informants from all three trial sites agreed that Indigenous people involved in governance roles need vocational education and training. How this should be done remains dependent on local community needs.

The Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations funds and endorses training through an accredited Certificate IV in Business (Governance) which has been tailored to meet the needs of Indigenous communities. This has been offered since 2002 and has a retention rate of 93 per cent. In a review done by an independent body in 2005 it was found that:

The training was found to be working well, contributing to;

safer communities (with good corporate governance contributing to communities being functional and effective)

building Indigenous wealth, employment and an entrepreneurial culture, which in turn boosts economic development and reduces poverty and dependence on welfare.

This course is one option for training. It is possible to use it in conjunction with the proposed model (below) or independently of it. It may not be appropriate in some communities. What we propose is that communities have choices; choices that help them craft the best vocational and education training in Indigenous governance and leadership for them. The model presented below and any existing courses become tools in the community's 'toolkit'.
Cultural diversity

Every Indigenous community is culturally, linguistically, geographically and demographically different. Each community has their own needs and aspirations. It is important that the development of curriculum and the delivery of courses must include partnerships with the local communities for whom the programs are targeted. Indigenous communities must be equal partners in the planning, decision-making and delivery process of vocational education and training is to achieve its objectives. The document entitled 'Creating a sense of place' (Robinson, C. and Hughes, P., 1999) establishes some strong fundamental principles but doesn't go far enough. It talks about partnerships but establishes Advisory bodies. Advice can always be discounted. Advisory Boards can always be tokens of 'consultation'. Real and meaningful partnership requires a different conversation.

Indigenous governance model

The educational model and the curriculum must embody the local Indigenous community’s governance models. Of course, this requires considerable negotiation with the community in the planning, decision-making and the delivery process.

Means of delivery

Distance

Almost all informants believe that it is not conducive to Indigenous communities for their community members to leave their communities for training. Some stated that trainers who come in and out just for training are equally redundant and expressed a desire for live in trainers. This would involve trainers staying in the community for a minimum of 3 months. Distance is a major factor in deciding whether or not to do courses.

Financial costs

For many Indigenous people wishing to gain VET, the cost can be too great to live away from home, travel long distances from home as many rely on public transport. This on top of the course costs makes it a determining factor in whether people do the courses or not baring in mind that Indigenous Australians generally are the most disadvantaged group.

Student support

Indigenous students generally may need support in a number of ways, including child care, the use of community role models/mentors, language and time-frame taken to deliver courses.

For both men and women there may be a need for child care. It has been suggested that Indigenous role models from local communities who have had experience in 'governance' would be most advantageous as mentors in the training itself. Community members may be able to provide support in the classroom. This is an important issue particularly for those people for whom English is a second plus language. There is also the recognition that for many people, they may require to take the learning a little more slowly to accommodate language and cultural differences included in the course and maybe delivered by non-Indigenous teachers.
Indigenous Governance Educational Program Model

Proposed structure

As discussed above, Indigenous people wishing to do VET will come from many different backgrounds and life experiences and their educational needs and aspirations may vary greatly. Their differences may include age, gender, educational backgrounds, language, and life experiences with bureaucracies and government agencies on a personal and business level. All of these will impact on their personal aspirations in education. Any program will need to have three entry points to accommodate these differences, Certificate 1, Certificate 2 and Certificate 3. Each Certificate will have different entry requirements and provides different approaches to the development of skills (see Figure 1). Certificates are the initial common educational currency and there may be options outside of this 'square'.

Flexible delivery

Recognising that there will be many different life experiences reflected in Indigenous students who wish to do VET there will also be many and varied means of delivery that would be useful. Some people have indicated that On-Line education would work for them in preference to leaving their communities or travelling long distances. In discussions with people in S3 (who have their own airstrip) it was suggested that for some very remote isolated communities it would be better if trainers were sent to the community to deliver the modules. There may be many more factors that affect individual Indigenous communities where innovative ways of delivery can be created recognising that costs are a very big part of the equation. This is a critically important issue as trainers themselves become educated in different contexts and learning becomes a two-way process rather than the notion of one group filling up an 'empty vessel'. The latter is unfortunately still the experience of many people trained in all educational sectors in this country.

Core modules

In each certificate of the Indigenous Governance Model presented here there will be some core modules developed to accommodate the needs of students. These include:

*Communications*

This module could be designed to develop and provide confidence in oral, written, financial and computer literacy’s. Other modules could be designed to develop and utilise these skills throughout all certificates as literacy practices have a dynamic relationship with social practices (Gee 1996; Hanlen 2002). The role of communication and literacy in community contexts, especially the frequent mismatches is an important critical feature of such a component. (Kral and Falk)

*Decolonisation*

This module could provide students with a tool to understand interpret and analyse the histories of colonisation and the impact it has on the lives of Indigenous peoples today in their everyday social experiences and practices. It will empower students to learn about social practices and expectations in mainstream Australian society, not at the expense of their own cultures. The module will empower them to see themselves at the centre of Australian society and to investigate how government agencies and bureaucracies will work for them and from their communities’ perspectives.
Business management

This module would not just be an Indigenous version of mainstream business management. It would centre Indigenous voices and world view. It could involve aspects of personal, organisational and agency business management and students will be able to utilise their developing skills in the first two modules in a holistic approach to the VET program.

Certificate I

Entry Requirements

There would be no entry requirements for this certificate. People wishing to enter at this point may have little or no literacy experience and may be speakers of traditional languages, Kriol and/or Aboriginal English (AE). Aboriginal English is a dialect of Australian English and has many varieties ranging from the broad to light. The broad varieties are more influenced by speakers’ traditional languages past or present in grammar, sounds and intonation, meaning, words and pragmatics or use of language (Eades 1995). The lighter varieties are more highly influenced by English in the linguistic aspects just mentioned and it can be the similarities in the words used and grammar to Australian English that can cause the most problems (Eades 1995).

On successful completion of this certificate students would have basic/functional skills in oral, written, financial and computer literacy as well as a reinforcement of the centring of Indigenous voices and world-views, analytical skills in decolonising governance and basic/functional personal business management. Successful completion would enable them to enter Certificate 2 if they so wished. Students should be encouraged to do Certificate 2 as Certificate 1 is really a foundation for developing their skills in all modules and to develop skills in organisational business management.

Communications 1

This module could be designed to develop skills in oral, written, financial and computer literacy’s for people who have little or none of these skills.

Decolonisation 1

This module could be designed to facilitate and further enhance the basic skills of centring Indigenous voices and world-views. Empowering people with the basic analytical skills in approaching Indigenous governance from their communities’ cultural perspectives. It could provide people with an understanding of the impact of past and present governments’ policies on all Indigenous communities as well as skilling people to interact with agencies in accordance with their own individual community Indigenous governance models.

Business management 1

This module could involve Personal Business management. For many Indigenous students their life experiences may not have included successful outcomes in personal business transactions. The module could include basic practices in personal banking, post office, filling in forms, Standard English bureaucratic and agency jargon and signs. This module could be designed to develop, strengthen and reinforce the basic skills required for personal business as a foundation for learning general business management for organisations.

Certificate II

Entry requirements
Entry requirements could include functional literacy skills, basic knowledge and experience of personal business management, some knowledge and experience in organisational management and some understanding of the history of colonisation and its impact on Indigenous peoples today. This certificate would equip Indigenous students in reinforcing their communities’ models of Indigenous governance in interactions with governments, agencies and organisations in everyday business matters.

Communications 2

This module could be designed to develop and utilise students’ emerging skills in oral, written, financial and computer literacy’s.

Decolonisation 2

This module could build on the development of skills in Certificate 1 and the prior knowledges of those whose program entry is Certificate 2 in the centring of Indigenous voices and world-views and decolonisation in analysing their approaches to Indigenous governance.

Business Management 2

This course could build on the development of skills in Certificate 1 where students develop their skills and reinforce their confidence in everyday business and organisational management. It could include government policies and regulations and jargon. Ideally students could be located in classes relating specifically to either health, education, housing etc. This course could also facilitate better management of people’s commitments to their communities and to recognise their accountability. Students could develop basic skills in conflict resolution.

Certificate III

Entry requirements

Entry requirements could include successful completion of Certificate 2 and the standard requirements for entering comparable courses in mainstream educational programs. This certificate could facilitate Indigenous peoples skills to work at any level in Indigenous governance. To interact with governments, organisations and bureaucracies with confidence in making decisions.

Communications 3

Students could develop more sophisticated means of communication at every level of governance on the basis of the students’ own communities’ Indigenous governance model. They would be empowered with sophisticated negotiation skills and be able to make confident decisions. Some aspect of theoretical understandings could be useful here.

Decolonisation 3

This module could facilitate more highly developed analytical skills within a decolonising methodology.

Business management 3

This module could empower students, based on their individual communities’ Indigenous governance models. It could further develop skills to interact and negotiate confidently with governments, agencies and organisations at any level. Students could further develop skills to
balance Indigenous governance roles in communities and agencies and to run agencies and/or organisations. Students could further develop skills in complex conflict resolution.

**Figure 1: Indigenous Governance Educational Program Model**

**Entrance**
- Standard RTO eg: TAFE entry
- Completion of Certificate 2 or equivalent skills

**Skills**
- Well developed communication skills
- Well developed analytical skills in from a decolonised perspective
- Well developed analytical skills and transference skills in Indigenous

**CERTIFICATE III**
- Communication 3
- Decolonisation 3
- Business Management 3

**Entrance**
- Completion of Certificate 1 or equivalent skills

**Skills**
- Functional oral, written skills in English
- Functional financial and computer literacy
- Knowledge and understanding of decolonisation and associated functional analytical skills
- Function skills in Indigenous governance business management

**CERTIFICATE II**
- Communication 2
- Decolonisation 2
- Business Management 2

**Entrance**
- No formal requirements

**Skills**
- Emerging oral, written skills in English
- Emerging skills in computer and financial literacy
- Understanding of decolonisation
- Emerging personal business management skills

**CERTIFICATE I**
- Communication 1
- Decolonisation 1
- Business Management 1
Conclusion and recommendations

Indigenous peoples clearly want education and training in Indigenous governance. Coming to terms with the concept of ‘governance’ is the first step in such a journey. ‘Governance’ is a non-Indigenous concept based on the Westminster system of government. To place the word ‘Indigenous’ in front of ‘governance’ makes the assumption that Indigenous peoples traditionally practised ‘governance’ in their communities and that ‘Indigenous governance’ simply Indigenises the whole Western notion of governance. The Literature read and many of the people who conducted yarns with the research team for this project found this not to be the case.

Exactly how any training is developed, delivered and evaluated is dependent on many varied local contexts. Exactly what is covered will also vary with each different context. The role VET can play will vary from community/region to community/region.

Partnerships are important in this process; partnerships between Indigenous communities and training and government agencies and the private sector. Partnerships must however be more clearly defined so that each player is an equal partner.

Recommendations

Recommendations are based on the information gained in this research through the informants and the literature review.

Recommendation 1

That the VET sector as a whole; DEST, State and Territory training authorities and individual providers, continues to recognise and acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous cultures, peoples, languages and countries.

Recommendation 2

That the Indigenous Governance Training Model, presented in this research as a loose and broad framework be considered as a model for training by State and Territory training authorities, where appropriate. Any consideration of the use of the model and the locally/regionally appropriate training body would involve extensive and constant negotiation with local and regional Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 3

That VET providers engage in flexible delivery of Indigenous governance with on site and online means of delivery and/or VET trainers taking any training to remote and isolated Indigenous communities no matter what the numbers are. That State and Territory training authorities as well as DEST acknowledge this as fundamental policy.

Recommendation 4

That DEST and the VET providers recognise the support services suggested in this research as those considered to be in addition to mainstream means of student support as a result of unique circumstances facing Indigenous students.
Recommendation 5
That VET providers in local and regional areas as well as State and Territory training authorities engage in partnership with local Indigenous communities in the planning, decision making and the delivery of services at the local level to ensure culturally appropriate VET to Indigenous students in acknowledgment of the diversity of Indigenous cultures in Australia.

Recommendation 6
That VET providers train non-Indigenous people to be partners, facilitators and resources rather than managers.

Recommendation 7
That VET providers train Indigenous RTO’s to deliver such community-based and community-developed courses and assist with accreditation.
References

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Appendix A: Research methodology

Introduction

Umulliko has made significant contributions to the current debate on Indigenous Theoretical Perspectives and Research Methodologies nationally and internationally. For the purpose of this research project, we position Indigenous communities and Indigenous controlled organisations at the centre of the research and examine how community capacity and Indigenous governance is conceptualised by them, their cultures and practices. This particular research investigated Indigenous peoples’ understanding of the role that VET does and could play in empowering Indigenous communities with culturally appropriate VET skills and knowledge that accords with their perceptions.

Umulliko uses decolonising methodology based on the work of Tuhiwai Smith (1999) as a tool to analyse policies, documents and issues. It asks questions like, Who wrote/said it? Through what cultural lens was it written/spoken? Who is the intended audience? Who benefits? In what context was it written/spoken? (See also Blair, 2003; Hanlen, 2002).

The consortium of Umulliko and TAFE NSW Hunter Institute worked in collaboration with Indigenous community organisations and Indigenous communities in a regional rural, regional remote and a remote isolated region of Australia.

The scope of the research encompassed past, current and future functions of VET in Indigenous governance capacity building:

For education, health, community development and justice services

For integrated cross-sector services or whole of government services planning

Across various communities (i.e. urban, rural, remote)

In government and non-government organisations, comprising Indigenous-controlled organisations and councils

The research team conducted the research initially aiming to use three key means; firstly, through the facilitation of a Focus Group drawing upon an Expert Group of Practitioners, secondly through case studies in three key communities as identified in the Focus Group discussions, and thirdly, a Literature Review. For a more detailed discussion on the Focus Group see the methodology section of the report.

Recruitment Process

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Trial Sites were considered to be ideal for recruiting Indigenous people who were in roles of governance in Indigenous communities.
The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. COAG comprises the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The then Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers agreed to establish COAG in May 1992. It first met in December 1992. The Prime Minister chairs COAG. The COAG Secretariat is located within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (COAG 2005).

The role of COAG is:

- to initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance and which require cooperative action by Australian governments (for example, National Competition Policy, water reform, reform of Commonwealth and State/Territory roles in environmental regulation, the use of human embryos in medical research, counter-terrorism arrangements and restrictions on the availability of handguns). Issues may arise from, among other things: Ministerial Council deliberations; international treaties which affect the States and Territories; or major initiatives of one government (particularly the Australian Government) which impact on other governments or require the cooperation of other governments. (COAG 2005)

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important component of this research project. There are many implications for Indigenous Australians when they talk about themselves, their communities and their organisations. If people, their communities and organisations are identified the implications go far beyond just their jobs and the cultural and community consequences can be devastating to the participants as well as their communities. For this reason the trial sites and the yarn times have been coded:

COAG Trial Site 1 = S1
COAG Trial Site 2 = S2
COAG Trial Site 3 = S3

Yarn times have been coded based on the trial site code followed by the number of the yarn time from that site e.g. S2 YT5
Five research stages

Stage 1. [Research Process Development and Ethical Issues]

The preparation included the development of a Research Proposal that encompassed the research aims, significance, methodology; including the recruitment of participants, research tools, ethical considerations and anticipated outcomes. Ethics Applications for both the University of Newcastle and the NSW Department of Education and Training were developed and approved. Appropriate documentation including Information sheets, consent forms and letters were distributed to targeted participants: Indigenous community members, Government agencies, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Corporate Services, Registered Training Organisations. This was followed by letters of appreciation.

Convening of the Focus Group:

Participants were drawn from the COAG community groups currently identified as Indigenous trial sites with the fundamental focus of improving service delivery to Indigenous communities [www.icc.gov.au]. These sites include; Cape York, Queensland, Wadeye in the Northern Territory; Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands in South Australia; Shepparton in Victoria; WA COAG Trial site in Western Australia; North-eastern Tasmania, ACT and Murdii Paaki in New South Wales. All COAG sites include government representation at all levels and Indigenous community representation on Working Parties. Representation from the corporate sector and the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre were also sought. The recent Australian Indigenous Research Network established through the University of Newcastle will also be a point of reference (for more information on this Network see http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/airn/index.html).

The Focus Group reflected on the proposed research questions identified above as well as drew on the participants areas of expertise outside of but relevant to the research area. This reflection process is a significant aspect of Indigenous Research Methodology (Smith, 1999; Hampton, 1995). The responses were thematically identified and coded using NUD*IST software.

Stage 2. [Literature Review]

A literature review was developed and contributed to the research data, conclusions and recommendations. It provides understanding of Indigenous social organisation from before the 1788 invasion of this land now known as Australia. The Literature Review sought to identify and consider the constraints and impact of Western concepts of governance and the current bureaucratic and government frameworks on Indigenous peoples from the time of invasion and how this has shaped the interaction between Indigenous peoples and Non-Indigenous people. The literature review is couched in Indigenous philosophical view of the world using Decolonizing methodology.
Stage 3.  [Development of Case Study Questions]

The research team developed questions based on data gathered from the Literature Review and Focus Group. Initially it was intended to visit many of the COAG trial sites. The constraints of distance and funds eventually determined that we would visit three geographically diverse sites, one southern, one northern and one eastern region. It was intended that we visit a site from the west, however, due to the vast area of the region, the logistics of arranging for people to come long distances to meet at the same time as we would be there, proved to be too difficult and impractical. The northern site was selected in its place. Three communities were identified for the case studies to conduct yarn times. The team ensured that appropriate geographical, economic, historical, social and size distribution was accounted for in the identification of Indigenous communities. This involved representation from three very different geographical locations, representing the diversity of Indigenous peoples, cultures, needs and experience.

Stage 4  [Conducted Yarn Times and Developed Case Studies]

This involved 'yarns' with key Indigenous stakeholders in the identified communities; focusing on challenges and opportunities offered for community capacity building and Indigenous governance. Yarn Times (Hanlen, 2002), involved the researcher firstly setting the scene for the participants then introducing a topic for yarning e.g. “Tell me about…” The most culturally appropriate means of eliciting information from Indigenous Australians is through storytelling and narratives allowing the participant to determine the priorities, importance and range of issues. Question and Answer format is not a discourse tool for eliciting information in Aboriginal languages or in Aboriginal English (Eades, 1995). Questions can severely constrain the extent of relevant information based on the limited understanding of the researcher of the issues and how they relate to the people or group being interviewed. This is a proven means of gaining rich data from Indigenous perspectives according to their beliefs, values, goals, experiences, social practices and access to resources (Hanlen, 2002). It is also useful with non-Indigenous participants as we propose to conduct this research from an Indigenous World View (Hanlen, 2002). This research tool is known as 'Yarn Times' rather than interviews. (Hanlen, 2002). Indigenous and non-Indigenous contributions were sought from reports and other material identified in the case study communities.

COAG Trial Site 1

This site was visited 20-22nd March and is located in a central eastern regional rural area of Australia. This COAG trial site services a vast area of the state including many isolated communities. The town where the yarn times took place is in the country of one Indigenous language group but the trial site covers such a large portion of the state which covers many other and varied Indigenous language groups and cultures. At the time of the team’s scheduled visit to S1 a funeral was being conducted for a highly respected member of the Indigenous community from that state and many of the people involved in the COAG trial were naturally going to attend the service. They very graciously accommodated the research around this.

Eight Indigenous people in governance roles contributed their valuable knowledge and experience to the research and the data from the two people from the focus group was included in the eight. Informants included seven Indigenous men and one Indigenous woman.
**COAG Trial Site 2**

This site was situated in a southern Australian rural region and was visited April 6th-7th. The project team conducted yarn times with three Indigenous people in that region. There was one Indigenous woman and two Indigenous men. Visits to all the communities needed to fit around their community needs at the time and it is often difficult to predict when the best time will be. The project team had arranged to have a phone link up with members of the Board of the community health service which was located in one of the local Aboriginal communities. However, this did not eventuate due to logistical difficulties where people would be staying back too late after the meeting, which was to be held in the evening. There was a female Indigenous health worker who was very happy to take part, via a phone link up, but unfortunately she had to cancel due to community needs and work related demands.

Indigenous communities are not homogeneous and often consist of a number of different cultural groups. Sometimes as a direct result of colonisation and the forced removal of people from their home lands on to missions often with other language groups with whom there may or may not have been traditional mistrust (Donaldson 1985a; 1985b). Word often travels fast in Indigenous communities in small towns as was the case here. Some of the people who were initially agreeable to share their knowledge and experience with the project team had heard of others from other groups who had already participated and sadly, as a result, chose not to go ahead with their yarn times. These issues arise in many Indigenous communities when research enters the equation and the team wholeheartedly respect the right of community and individuals to participate or not in research.

**COAG Trial Site 3**

Trial Site 3 is in one of the most remote locations in Australia. The team spoke with eight people from this site who were involved in the COAG trials including two Indigenous women, one non-Indigenous woman and five non-Indigenous men involved in various governance roles. This trial site services a smaller area than the other two trial sites and involves seven language groups and clans. It is the general practice of this community for the CEO and some members of the Land Council to give an historical background on Indigenous governance in their community. This historical overview was presented to the research team before the yarn times commenced and this process was instrumental with gaining the trust and permission of the community to use this historical information and was subsequently evidenced in several of the yarn times.

An Indigenous man involved in governance invited the research team to his country where he shared many things including aspects of governance in his cultural, community and country context. The experience and the knowledge shared were extremely valuable, culturally appropriate, and accurate in demonstrating the inspirational governance model practised in his community. Unfortunately, he had to leave the region the next day on business and the team were unable to have a formal yarn time with him. A written account of what the project team recalled of the things that he shared with them was sent to the Chief Executive Officer of the Land Council, and if he was agreeable it was anticipated that this record would be included in this report with changes, additions or omissions that he wanted to make.
Focus Group:

It was a difficult task to arrange a single time for holding a teleconference with all the COAG trial site managers. We were mindful that most of these trial sites covered vast areas and the managers were frequently involved with work in remote communities in their regions that often covered vast distances. Eventually the project team arranged for teleconference for March 18th with five managers confirmed to link up through Telstra. Unfortunately on the day there was only one trial site manager who was linked up. One manager was ill and wanted to be connected from his home but Telstra was unable to arrange this at short notice. Another manager sent apologies as they were stuck out in community and unable to get back and it was established later that the same applied to the other two managers. An Indigenous person involved in governance from the same region as the participating manager also agreed to participate in the focus group. As these two people were from one of the case studies the information from this teleconference was analysed accordingly and added to the data from the COAG trial site S1.

Stage 5  [Data Analysis/Draft Final Report.]

Case Study data was entered onto a database and analysed using NUD*IST software. The findings were combined with the findings of Stages 1 and 2 with recommendations developed.

Stage 6.  [Final Report]

Feedback is an imperative aspect of Indigenous research methodology and a priority to the project team. Dissemination of findings to Indigenous Australian communities and to schools systems across Australia and written and oral reports to the relevant stakeholders including the Indigenous Australians and their participant communities are critical to both establishing trust and the observation of Indigenous research methodologies and protocols.

Quality Assurance

Umulliko as an Indigenous Higher Education Research Centre is committed to conducting culturally appropriate research and adheres to guidelines and protocols such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2000, Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies, Canberra and the National Health and Medical Research Council, 1991, Guidelines on Ethical Matters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research, Brisbane, June. Umulliko conducts research in which Indigenous peoples voices are centred as well as facilitating research experiences that satisfy them (Blair, N. 2003, Researched to Death, current research for the Australian Research Council-Indigenous Researchers Development Scheme).

Umulliko also suggest that any attempt made by researchers to know or speak about Indigenous peoples does not simply entail having good intentions, being culturally sensitive or seeking Indigenous input. It involves an ongoing process of asking for whom, by whom and in what way is a knowledge of Indigenous cultures and societies being produced or developed; for what purpose or use is the knowledge being sought; who will own this knowledge; how will it be communicated to others; and what the overall effects of producing it may be. Umulliko believes that it is important that researchers should sustain a life-long relationship with Indigenous peoples, which extends far beyond the realms of research. Regular reviews on
progress and regular audits were carried out. All procedures were carried out within TAFE and
University ethical guidelines.

Copies of all the yarn time transcripts were sent to all informants enabling them to see if what
was transcribed reflected accurately what they said or had meant. The informants were invited
to make any changes, omissions or additions where necessary.

Research Team Expertise

The Research team embodied the best of Indigenous self management and Indigenous
governance. The team had a majority of Indigenous researchers (5) and a non-Indigenous
researcher who is a graduate of Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies, University of
Newcastle. The Committee previously identified also comprised a majority of Indigenous
membership.

The research team brought together research strengths in methodology for the conduct of
research with Indigenous communities (Blair, Hanlen and Morgan), working and research
experience in the VET sector at levels of management and operations (Rose), research and
development and implementation of programs impacting on community capacity building
(Morgan and Blair) and leadership and management training (Blair and Morgan), and research
administration (Newton).

The team also has extensive local, regional, state, territory, national and international networks
in the conduct of Indigenous research, the development, implementation, and evaluation of
curriculum for Indigenous peoples across all sectors of education. Other relevant and critical
networks include the teams' education networks; government and community at all levels and
are inclusive of both Australian and international contexts.

Organisations’ expertise

TAFE NSW Hunter Institute is the largest regional provider of nationally recognised
vocational education and training services in Australia. Established in the 1980’s, through the
amalgamation of 16 TAFE Colleges in the Newcastle, Hunter and Central Coast regions.
Initially operating from the one campus in 1995, TAFE NSW Hunter Institute has grown to
become a modern, integrated training organisation responsive to current and future regional,
State and national needs. In 1999, the Institute was one of the first in NSW to achieve Quality
Endorsed Training Organisation status and, late in 2001, we were the first TAFE Institute in
Australia to achieve ISO quality certification under the new ISO 9001/2000 standard. Our
record of achievement and our capacity to deliver were recognised last year through the award
of State Training Provider of the Year. Serving a population of more than three-quarters of a
million, the Institute has a current annual student enrolment of 55,000 local and international
students and a staff of 2,500. Whatever the location, TAFE NSW Hunter Institute provides
training on-site; from assessment and recognition of prior learning, through to post program
evaluation, accreditation and certification.

The Umulliko Indigenous Higher Education Research Centre, at the University of Newcastle,
has, since its inception in 1996, made significant inroads to improving Indigenous research and
research bases. The Centre now has some 23 Indigenous research higher degree students
working in Aboriginal Studies across a broad range of disciplines in the University and,
pleasingly, in key areas of health and law research. Umulliko has graduated 2 PhD students, 4 Masters students in this time. The Centre has also been very successful with competing for Australian Research Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Development Scheme grants, and Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies grants. It has successfully tendered for approximately $1m since its inception. Umulliko proudly initiated and hosted the first Indigenous Research Forum early in 1999. The Forum provided a stimulating environment for open discussion and collegiate exchanges. Umulliko was once again given the privilege of hosting the fifth conference in November in 2005.

**Umulliko Higher Education and Research Centre**

Umulliko is an all Indigenous research centre within the Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle. The Umulliko Research Team:

Associate Professor Nerida Blair: Research Team Leader

Dr Wendy Hanlen: Project Manager

Dr Bob Morgan: Researcher

Ms Cheryl Newton: Research Administration

**TAFE NSW Hunter Institute**

Ms Kate Rose was the Project Liaison Officer and Administration from the TAFE NSW Hunter Institute.

**Data Analysis**

Data was sorted according to the research questions and the emerging themes noted and analysed using Decolonising Methodology and centring Indigenous voices. The themes emerging in the research findings were discussed within the field of each research question.

Researchers have different approaches in yarning with the informants and as a result the term *compliance* has emerged in some yarn times and not others.

Conclusions were developed following the research findings as a result of the analysis of the evidence. Due to the holistic nature of Indigenous cultures many of the themes overlapped. Responses to all the research questions are found in the conclusions although they may not be articulated under specific research questions due to the holistic nature of the responses. Recommendations were made on the basis of the conclusions and the models provided.
Appendix B: Research findings—
Indigenous peoples' voices

Indigenous Peoples' Voices

The most important aspect of this research is the Indigenous voices heard and the centring of these voices. It is in acknowledging and centring Indigenous world views. The informant’s voices are therefore the essential elements of this research though we have not been able to place them in the full research report in any detail. The information provided by the informants from the three COAG trial sites was sorted into fields based on the NCVER research questions below:

What do Indigenous peoples conceptualise as Indigenous governance?
What skills do Indigenous peoples require to build individuals’ capacity to participate in governance of their communities and organisations, and how does/can VET contribute to this?
What are the best models for engaging Indigenous communities in self-governance approaches, and how does/can VET assist?
What are the underlying funding, planning and accountability frameworks of these successful models?

This appendix presents an overview of the responses to the four research questions posed by the NCVER. In some cases it also draws on the literature.

There is a large diversity of Indigenous cultures and peoples across Australia, which underlies our intent to present the diversity rather than try to homogenise peoples’ responses. Research too often packages and categorises people’s experiences and thoughts in such a way as to distil the voices, in effect silencing the voices.

M: …when you use the word Aboriginal we all identify with it nation wide but we know we are all different in lots of ways… [S2 YT2]

What do Indigenous peoples conceptualise as Indigenous governance?

A number of different themes emerged from the different trial sites and indeed from individuals;
Indigenous governance is a non-Indigenous concept
It's all about relationships : Indigenous governance
Holistic governance
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Indigenous governance is a non-Indigenous concept
Indigenous governance is a Western concept. In Australia, governments are based on the Westminster system, which includes large bureaucracies and agencies involved in the provision and delivery of services. Governance is conducted through local, state and federal government bureaucracies and agencies. To place the word ‘Indigenous’ in front of ‘governance’ makes the assumption that Indigenous peoples traditionally practised governance in their communities and that ‘Indigenous governance’ simply Indigenises the whole Western notion of governance.

(Male) M: …governance is again, is a concept of white mans it is not a concept (unclear) of Aboriginal people… [S1 YT2]

The Western notion of governance imposed on Indigenous social organisation and world views has not empowered Indigenous peoples but has brought with it many negative social issues.

M: Big differences opposite… they’re (governance and leadership) opposite ends of the spectrum (unclear…) we tend to put them together all the term leadership and governance… that’s where we come unstuck it’s government terms leadership and governance it’s not really ours and…that’s why it brings, it brings our communities unstuck… [S1 YT1]

Indigenous governance is based on Indigenous world views:

F: It’s leadership in the community, um to provide services for us, so we can have equity and equality in, in society… and on our terms rather than mainstream. I think it’s important to recognise that we have a different world view… that it doesn’t mean that we have to give up our cultural world view to function in our own country… [S1 YT4]

It’s all about relationships: Indigenous governance

Many of the informants, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, believe that the Western concept of governance is incongruous with Indigenous cultures and practices. Indigenous cultural communities traditionally and contemporarily find the concept of governance foreign in everyday cultural practices and only consider the concept of governance in terms of the interaction with and existence alongside and within mainstream Australian society.

Languages grow to accommodate culture (Eades 1996) and there does not appear to be anything in English that would adequately and accurately describe how Indigenous societies function. Possibly the closest broad term could be “social organisation” (Dixon 1980) through relationships, kinship and clans. People are born into roles through their extended kinship relationships and clans rather than elected or nominating themselves to apply for roles. Everyone in Indigenous communities has a role to play within these systems.

M. Well to me it's kinship because our kinship system was our system of governance you know [S3 YT2]

M. … leadership within Aboriginal communities is still very, very much something that is passed down from, from family member to family members. I think one of the things in a contemporary society where the leaders often aspire to leadership, and want to be a leader or a politician, in Aboriginal communities, probably this community, whether you like it or not,
your place at birth says that whether you will be a leader or not, and I think that there is where I think you admire Aboriginal people as that they don’t just do because they’re aspiring to it, but they do it because there’s a responsibility for the leadership.

[S3 YT3]

M. The term leadership is a sort of a generic term that can be used across a whole lot of different cultures and social situations….in this context here and I guess in the Indigenous context in a broader sense but certainly here where we are now leadership is not a collective leadership is in a sense it resides within a person but it’s not given to a person leadership you’re born into it’s part of this kin and country that we spoke mentioned a few minutes ago so that leadership and authority go together and you can’t you can’t be a leader in our terms you know part of the you know captain the football team unless you have the authority to do so and none one gives you that authority that that authority is destined to you by where you fit into where you’re born your family etc into it it’s not hereditary in the normal sense passed on from one generation to the next but it is hereditary in the sense that ……within family groupings there’s ways of authority been passed … You’re vested with it … Yeah it I mean we elect people to positions and we say those people are elected to this position therefore they have authority simply because they’re elected and might I say in the Indigenous sense that doesn’t happen elections in the non Indigenous sense are meaningless you could we could elect all the people we want to councils but the old man sitting out here under the tree who never comes near the meeting he’s the one with the authority and they’ll always go to him for you know to get a direction someone else who doesn’t even live here might live out in the bush (unclear) [S3 YT4]

M1. … and the way of doing this what we’ve did for a thousand of years here, is very much based on a family planned language and ceremony structure. Within the (place) Council area there’s twenty separate clan groups, sixty to seventy (unclear) groups and about over 3,000 people and from what we can work out that the clan estates and the clan (unclear) doing business have been, were in place well before the mission arrived.[S3 YT5]

While many other informants from the Trial Sites 1 and 2 did not articulate Indigenous social management in precisely this way they did emphasise that the relationship of the Indigenous individuals involved in governance roles in their local or broader community is primary to their other roles and tasks within mainstream governance roles in agencies. If the individual in the governance role does not have the support of, and relationship to the Indigenous community generally then the community’s expectations that services will be delivered in the manner that meets their needs are non-existent. The community will not have faith in the individual’s right or ability to negotiate with government agencies on their behalf.

Colonisation has had a greater impact on the communities in S1 and S2 where traditional languages are less spoken and English is mostly the first and in few circumstances the second language today. Communities have often been displaced from home land and live in other communities’ countries and there has been degrees of cultural confusion in terms of kinship and clan practices in the way that their ancestors had interacted with the land, each other and in ceremonies (see Donaldson 1985a: 1985b). These communities still have rich Indigenous cultures and Indigenous philosophies and views of the world, which still centre on relationships and country. Very often the traditional owners still live in their country alongside many other Indigenous language/cultural groups who have been forced to live there or have in recent times chosen to live there. These communities still centre governance and leadership on family and community relationships.
M: ...it gets very messy now about who is actually a leader of our people but if you start putting the microscope on it we’re all leaders in different aspects of life in the community and you’ll hear the term a lot who made that person a leader so in fact the fact that your father the leader of your family and if you usually start getting into employment you become a leader for your, your broader family as well as you extended family. [S2 YT1]

Family and kinship relationships are the basis for understanding Indigenous governance even in communities that have often been incorrectly stereotyped as not having culture because they may not speak a traditional language or by living in what is often wrongly perceived as a traditional lifestyle.

M: ...we... with its leaders in organisations, elected leaders in a democratic approach or whether it is family based leadership or people who... are acknowledged... councillors or leaders or support people within their own families... and elders in communities across, or not necessarily all the states but there are three different levels of leadership that is working at that higher level of community development. And they don’t necessarily talk to one another in a direct way but they influence each other so the influence of elders and the influence of family members have a direct impact on the government of Aboriginal organisations and elected leaders... [S2 YT2]

M: Well not only take into account they’re (Indigenous people involved in governance) gotta work with their ... with people not for people. They see themselves as a mix of manager of the great white ochre another white expert and things won’t happen for people. Aboriginal people have gotta have ownership or gotta have control or feel that they have a say or are stake holders or partners in any... any branch in government or for Indigenous people otherwise it won’t work. And I’m talking about all the Aboriginal communities not another a select few that might be working or living up town... that ordinary person in the street. [S1 YT2]

M: ...to me I think in terms of Aboriginal Governance, I really do believe that we need to be very strong in terms of developing um...similar approaches to what’s happened years ago, which was in terms of our elders... [S1 YT3]
**Holistic governance**

The whole notion of bureaucracy is compartmentalised into departments based on the Western cultural practices of managing health, housing, education, environment etc. For Indigenous peoples, society functions in a holistic manner. Life includes health, housing, education, environment etc in a holistic way as well as each being in dynamic relationships with each other, not separate from each other.

M: If we are talking about a holistic governance I think, I think its more an example of where Indigenous and non Indigenous integration of governance then I think a holistic governance. [S2 YT3]

Compartmentalisation of life into areas of health, education, housing, employment etc. is a Western concept and practice. Indigenous peoples find it very confusing when they have to know which department is concerned with what issue.

M: …Family, ten different services probably working with that one family but not anyone's really asked the family about what is it you really you want what is it really about your family what is maybe you really wanna be here tomorrow next week and the week after because they can't really see where they're goin… [S1 YT1]

M: But say that I was someone who was, ah, representative of all in that community, and that means, you know, all those, all those community organisations… and I thought that, that was a very good model in terms of, ah, getting us to start thinking, or those people to start thinking about, ah, how can I actually influence the services and the provision of services in that community for all people in that community, which was, I think… a good model… I think there is still a whole… range of strategies that need to be put in place to make sure that, um, you know, the community actually have power to actually undertake that role successfully, and that's a learning process. [S1 YT3]

**Polarisation of the expectations of Indigenous communities and governments**

Governments make the policies for health, housing, education, employment etc, and these are based on Western cultural beliefs and value systems. The expectations of governments are definite in terms of criteria for receiving funding distribution of those funds, how that funding is managed and by whom, laws and the pragmatic understanding of the Western government systems in Australia and accountability to the Australian taxpayers in the electorate. Indigenous people often believe that funding comes with conditions and regulations that work better for the government agencies and for the taxpayers than they do for the people who are intended to benefit from funding.

F: … It’s, its (sigh)… we have to, we have to always be compliant, we have to do what government want or they won’t fund us. We make, we say we want this, we want that and it is all our idea, and they give it to us. If we do it the way they want. [S2 YT1]
The expectations of communities are very different to those of government agencies. Communities identify needs and relay these to the Indigenous people in the relevant governance roles and expect that these individuals have the means to negotiate with governments to understand the issues from their Indigenous communities’ perspectives. There is often no common ground to even begin the negotiations in a culturally appropriate manner. It is imperative for governments to recognise the chasm in terms of communities’ expectations of the roles of Indigenous people in governance and the expectations of governments of those individuals.

In order to have holistic governance then we all need to have a knowledge of what are the sensitivities of both societies, what are the cultural expectations, what are the business expectations and what are the community expectations (unclear) yes in short, yes it all needs to be shared... [S2 YT3]

M: Sometimes its… it’s a real clash of expectations where as lots of times the Aboriginal organisations through their um agreements with governments are right to deliver, and acting a certain way that satisfies their funding agreements and other things, and they get into conflict over that with family leadership and needing services and they get into conflict with elders about the directions of culture in communities. More often than not the bureaucracy and the ministers are talking with corporate governance and family governance there is a real lack of knowledge of country and who belongs where and traditional owners, who belongs where and who speaks to who, um and there is an interlink with um like a sense of… ownership and self esteem and future directions and cultural identity and expressions of young people about what they see as Aboriginality and what they see as the way… express their identity all of that sort of stuff is um I don't think has properly been um identified or Aboriginal leadership understanding what is actually said and how best to work with resources are in communities. [S2 YT2]

There is an enormous amount of pressure placed on Indigenous people in governance roles that are not experienced generally by non-Indigenous people in such roles in mainstream society. For Indigenous people in governance roles, their first obligation is to their communities and secondly, to the government. In recognition that the expectations of communities and governments are almost polarised the Indigenous workers are placed under the cultural obligations to use their position to meet the communities' needs and aspirations and at the same time adhere absolutely to the regulations set down by governments in terms of their roles and functions. This takes a very heavy toll on most Indigenous people involved in governance roles and they run the risk of burning out very quickly.

M: I think… its reflects the, the social, the economic and social isolation in our communities that… that become primarily we tend to communicate with Aboriginal Affairs Ministers and bureaucrats who deal with Aboriginal issues and their respective or we talk somewhat with local government about servicing issues so our relationship with the general populace really is non existent um and the government, the governance that is set up currently in a place like (place), (place) trying to work and talk as agents of bureaucracy to deliver services um but we are trying to use those same vehicles and those same structures to carry cultural heritage, um cultural protection and to do um um, social work between families and its causing all sorts of grief. I think it's causing lots of grief um and putting extra pressure and extra… stress on families and individuals within… Aboriginal Communities… I think in lots of ways its very damaging…
I think we, the last 30 years people have… suffered under the notion of Aboriginal organisations and governance. The recent mental health, a recent mental health research project here, identified Aboriginal workers in organisations and people involved in Aboriginal organisations… the most stressed individuals in Aboriginal community as opposed to trying to deliver services to, and people are being weighed down I think, I think it has had a lot of emotional impact… I think people are pretty pissed off about it all at the moment… we sort of live as a collective as part of our contemporary issues and our history we have come into town and the pressures of society and the pressures of culture have sort of pushing us apart and you see, families have been split by the pressures of society, say extended families are being impregnated and the application of governance in Aboriginal organisations could quite possibly be contributing to that segmentation unknowingly because they are operating on a day to day basis not over a long period of time.[S2 YT2]

Many Indigenous community people have not generally had access to equitable education and are not familiar with bureaucracy and government procedures, policies and regulations or the Western cultural beliefs and values that underpin them. If the Indigenous communities generally are uninformed of basic personal business transaction procedures and obligations then it is even more difficult for them to have a knowledge of the broader system of bureaucracies and governments. Equally, it is important for governments to understand how Indigenous communities function in terms of relationships and obligations, and communities generally see the primary obligation of the Individual in a governance role is to the community not to the government.

M: I think when you talking about essentially a white bureaucracy trying to deal with Aboriginal governance you’re almost always gonna have a level conflict and it’s, you know, very difficult for us in the position we’re in to try and be the middle man between both and that I mean how you deal with it is… I think it’s down to an individual to how well you cope to fit in between both worlds and the best thing that we can do is try and educate the white bureaucracy, importance of Aboriginal governance and the need to allow Aboriginal governance to, to take affect and work communities but also to try and educate governance structures that they need to be able to work with the white bureaucracy to be able to… move forward so you know, it’s a real challenge and its, you know, up to an individual how they’re dealing how they’re able to deal with that but essentially in our experience or my experiences anyway, it’s about fitting in between, between both and educating on either side the importance of you can’t… one can’t deal without the other and they need to be able to work together.[FG]

It would appear that the notion of Indigenous governance needs to be better understood by governments, corporations, the public sector, educational institutions, and the broader mainstream society, this understanding must be informed by Indigenous perspectives and realities. It would appear that these entities will also need to revisit, in full consultation with Indigenous communities, the whole concept of Indigenous governance in their communities and organisations.

M: …I suppose the application of the word um differs in certain, in different situations so, from the way in which family structures operate, um and what do you call it… leaders within families or leaders in communities as opposed to corporate sort of bodies of governments and leaders in organisations and corporate bodies. I see lots of different (unclear) governance. I worked in our community and um wondered about, you know, if you had a clean slate, redesigning governance practices and acknowledging governance practices whether we would still redesign the community or leave it the way it is in our communication channels. I think we have set up a governance structure that talks to government but doesn’t necessarily talk to communities and we are trying to use the governance structures to carry roles um that they are not designed to carry. [S2 YT2]

Indigenous governance as conceptualised in the past by governments has created factions within cultural communities and hinders the empowerment of those communities.
M: And in terms of Aboriginal Governance out in the communities, I think that government has played... a major role in terms of creating us as a factional people, and that's actually impacted upon a whole range of things, like government services, access... I don't think at this stage you can actually have a real empowerment... because I think it actually comes back to the... issues our government for a long time has, and I would say this for... all levels of government... has created a factionalism within out communities... I don't think, you know, we still have government agencies setting up their own, ah, Aboriginal advisory committees or boards or whatever... and they still go and play off, you know, one family against the other. Unintentionally maybe... but that still happens.

[S1 YT3]

**Compliance equals funding and survival**

Many of the informants believe that compliance with governments funding guidelines is the only means to the survival and successful operations of their organisations. Funding bodies place very strict regulations on how the funding is managed. Those who receive the funding are bound to using the funding in a manner that is usually determined by others who are not from that community and have no concept of the beliefs, values, needs, and aspirations of the recipients. Being compliant is not what people want but it is what they believe they have to be just to survive and it is often likened to a game where Indigenous communities do not know the rules. If the government knows the rules and Indigenous peoples generally do not, then the game is stacked where Indigenous communities are often set up to fail. It is critical at this stage to caution that Indigenous self governance, in this context, maybe more correctly interpreted as a process of compliance rather than one of self governance.

F: ... we have to always be compliant we have to do what government want or they won't fund us... we say we want this, we want that and it is all our idea, and they give it to us. If we do it the way they want... you get to a stage where eventually you accept, base condition you accept that you have to be compliant... I think it's a game that you have to learn to play, ok working with the government, it's a game. I don't know what it means and I don't know who to play... it's a game... I really don't want to know the rules and I don't want to know how to play....[S2 YT1]

M: ... I mean people are well, I shouldn't say well trained, but... they have an understanding of what is required to... be compliant and to manage they've had to do that forever they...don't necessarily have the skills to be able to govern but we're what we're about... I think to be able to demonstrate that governance is probably more... important than political structures in the community cause... we've always I think placed more emphasis on the political structures as in the ATSIC regional councils and so on they don't necessarily bring good governance to a community... you could look it as a board game where people are playing off against each other and so on where governance, whilst it's still part of that I think what you generally have in a governance structure is people all heading in the one direction you don’t necessarily have that within the political framework so I think you know there are again, there are distinct differences and that stuff needs to be taught that.... politics is obviously.... part of the game but it’s not necessarily... what is important for good governance...[FG]
A clear example of disastrous compliance for funding occurred in S3 during the early 1990s with devastating results for the Indigenous community concerned. As mentioned earlier, S3 is a remote isolated community. The effects of colonisation only reached this community in 1935 with the establishment of a mission. It has been a relatively short and steep learning curve for the Indigenous community to understand Western cultural practices and the impact that they have had on their large community. The community has no hospital or clinic and in the early 1990s they received government funding for a clinic with a doctor and other limited medical staff and equipment as set out in the regulations for the management of the funds. The Indigenous Health Worker from that community worked with the Land Council to manage the project. The amount of around $700,000 was provided for one year. At the end of that year, having followed the regulations set down exactly as required of them, the community discovered that in reality, the cost to run the clinic was well over $900,000. The community financially collapsed and it nearly destroyed the Indigenous Health Worker, as he felt shamed that he had personally failed his people. This had a shattering effect on the community at large. It would appear that on this basis the community was set up to fail either wittingly or unwittingly. After much community discussion, the community decided to refuse to comply with government agencies simply on the basis of securing funding. As a result of this experience the community set out to articulate their own governance beliefs, values and practices in the model referred to throughout the findings from S3.

There are similar stories in other trial sites.

F: I've seen small communities have billions of dollars thrown at em, over the years, and… the social… issues are worse than they were twenty years ago, even after a million or couple o million dollars has been thrown at it, and it's because of the breakdown of our values in our own culture. [S1 YT4]

Governments need to be open and transparent with Indigenous communities and processes need to be defined that better position Indigenous communities so that they have both a space and the means to explain and allow their social and cultural perspectives and approaches to inform the process of governance.

M: … it’s (Indigenous governance) about getting transparency across the field with transparency with the community, transparency with government agencies and organisations that we deal with but as (name) said it’s about taking control of our own affairs and us setting the direction of which we want to move forward… the governance is about the process and about the how you actually do it…[FG]

Many Indigenous people in governance become fearful of not complying in case their communities suffer without funding or in losses of jobs for their community. Often to do things that are legal requirements in the Western notions of the law can in fact often conflict with Indigenous cultural values. This does not mean that breaking a Western law is a cultural value but rather that the regulations are designed to work well in Western cultural frameworks and have not necessarily been developed in consultation with Indigenous communities. Such a framework provides for the development of processes that addresses compliance issues but may not necessarily respond to nor accommodate community perceived needs and aspirations.

F: … good governance is about doing things the right way. So that means being compliant, then you have to be compliant. If that means doing things correctly and legally because if you don’t there’s too much at stake you know it’s your organisation that’s at stake, community suffers and the people you employ suffer. So it’s really important and all of that.[S2 YT1]

Indigenous governance for some people just simply means taking non-Indigenous concepts with Indigenous people implementing them.
F: Indigenous governance, I guess it just means... the way we are able to cope with running our committees and organisations. That's black fellas doing it... Shapes how we do things, even today what we are doing is comply with government ways. We have to they, that's have determined what we do. How we do it, and what we get... It’s not self-determination. ... [S2 YT1]

Self-Determination

Dr Mick Dodson as the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner in 1993 clearly identified the importance of self-determination:

... self determination is a process. The right to self determination is the right to make decisions. These decisions affect the enjoyment and exercise of the full range of fundamental freedoms and human rights of Indigenous peoples.

There is as Dr Bill Jonas, second Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner stated a subjective element of self-determination as articulated by Madame Erica-Irene-Daes, the former Chairperson of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations;

Self-determination means the freedom for indigenous peoples to live well, to live according to their own values and beliefs, and to be respected by their non-indigenous neighbours... The protection of this freedom unquestionably involves some kind of collective political identity for indigenous nations and peoples, i.e. it requires official recognition of their representatives and institutions. However, the underlying goal of self-determination for most indigenous peoples has not been the acquisition of institutional power. Rather their goal has been achieving the freedom to live well and humanly - and to determine what it means to live humanly...

It is important that we must try to guard against a kind of false consciousness with respect to achieving the true spirit of Indigenous self-determination... the true test of self-determination is not whether indigenous peoples have their own institutions, legislative authorities, laws, police and judges. The true test of self-determination... is whether Indigenous peoples themselves actually feel that they have choices about their way of life. The existence of a genuine right to self-determination cannot be only determined from the outward form of indigenous peoples' self-governing or administrative institutions. The true test is a more subjective one which must be addressed by indigenous peoples themselves

Self-determination was a dominant issue in relation to Indigenous governance throughout the three COAG trial sites.

M: I think it (Indigenous governance) means an opportunity for Aboriginal people to have a level of self-determination and control over what happens at a community level and an opportunity for them to have, you know, an amount of control over what the Aboriginal community it selves do and how they manage their business... so you know it’s basically allowing Aboriginal people to have some control over their own affairs. [FG]

Indigenous people often believe that the term self-determination is just lip service and does not empower them in any real sense that makes a difference to their access to equity in delivery of services to Indigenous communities.
Governance is used too loosely and I think we’re... we’re all (unclear) for certain years, you know, we think that as an Aboriginal (unclear) we’ve got no Aboriginal board partnership with business, all Aboriginal people are starting to get jobs for Aboriginal people, yet this government is still in control over affairs where you can still make your decisions about which direction you want to work in but really we’re all dancing to the tune of government...[S1 YT1]

Indigenous people often believe that without self-determination and control of their affairs there will always be a conflict between them and governments. The only skills recognised by governments are those that relate to government process or that those that will influence Indigenous communities into compliance. Indigenous Australians have many skills that are important and useful in managing their own affairs. At the present time Indigenous peoples are forced into compliance with governments to exist but it is important that Indigenous community people’s skills be harnessed and used in existing governance roles.

M: Well there's always been conflict between government.... Aboriginal people have never been given control over their own destiny or their lives or things that affect their lives since they (the British colonisers) landed ....and even now these responsibilities we got all come with strings attached there’s no such thing as autonomy or self management or self govern, we’re all under the constitution of the Australian government and we’re all, all under the state or the local, state or Federal government laws and those things restrict us from, you know, from... achieving self-determination... So there's always gonna be conflict between the government and the community organisation because the government don’t recognise that there's skills in the community to grow, to grow some from the bottom up they're talking down to people they talking bureaucracies they go from the minister down to the toilet cleaner before the black fellas get their money or something you know. Where as what we’re saying, what I'm saying in community development or for us to achieve self-determination governance or self-management we gotta work from the bottom up bottom up involves consultation with the community at grass roots level. [S1 YT2]

F: there’s a very important part that, ah, Aboriginal people shouldn’t be dancing to somebody else’s tune, we should look at our own values and our own, from our own culture and use that to govern ourselves today… We get ourselves, our leaders educated in the community and... help them to make informed decisions about our, our mob and... make sure that they’re there for the right reasons as well. [S1 YT4]

M: ...under ATSIC things were a lot easier...[S1 YT1]

Leadership and Governance

Opinions were mixed on the differences or similarities between governance and leadership with many saying that you cannot have good governance without good leadership and others who believe that the two roles are very different. Generally, most informants believe that the two are in a dynamic relationship.

M: ...there is a clear difference between leadership and governance but obviously you can't have one without the other but... you need the two to work together and... leadership can be an individual where as governance you can’t have governance with one person you can have one person within a group who takes on that leadership role and takes you forward...
you need to have input from a number of people a number of players to ensure you have effective governance. [FG]

M: Leadership is about having a vision and taking risks to achieve the vision. It's also about the respect of elders' wisdom, knowledge and experience and how communities can be damaged if you do not include them in governance. Again we see that leadership and governance is all about relationships.

M: Leadership? Leadership's about having a vision, it's about (unclear) people taking, takin' responsibility, takin' the front foot… takin' the step forward but sometimes when you take the step forward you've gotta take a look who's behind you because you're not a leader if no ones following and… as you look back through the communities and see where society has, has damaged or in some ways taken away a lot of responsibilities of our traditional leaders [S2 YT1]

Some Indigenous people believe that leadership emerges from the community as a whole and is not just representative of a select few:

M: Look …I think first and foremost a good leader has got to listen and you've gotta listen to everyone in the community not just, you know, a select group and then make decisions on the information gathered that is good for the whole group not for individuals… [S1YT1]

Some people believe that the notions of leadership and governance are separate but are dynamic in nature.

M: No, I think that… they're intertwined…and I come back to this, you know, the elders type program… they are two separate things, but, but they are related, interrelated, between each other, and…um, without good leadership, within our community, and outside our community, I don’t think that we can have a real… governance structures put in place that would actually empower us. So, although they are separate I think that they are interconnected. [S1 YT3]

Others believe that leadership is more about compliance:

M: Well like I said leadership’s…. following the idea and to the principals of the requirements of government and imparting those onto your staff or onto the community or the community in general so they know what guidelines you operate under…[S1 YT2]

F: …I see leadership as being… you know, those people who are in control and running, you know... sort of doing all the talking to people all the consultation and negotiations and the lobbying and all that sort of business. Then with governance, is actually getting in and running you know sort of running the organisation and doing all the leg work and ground work and that sort of thing…[S2 YT1]

Pearson (2000) identified 'leadership' as a pervasive concept.

It is something that everybody is capable of exercising or failing to exercise. Not just people at the top of the formal trees of governance, but throughout the "layers" of governance, down to the families. Even people, who, in the current systems of governance which we are
familiar with, are "followers" rather then "leaders", are leaders in their own way. They either
fulfil or fail their responsibilities of leadership - of their families, of their village, or of their
community group, of their friends. Because the thing about leadership in the lowest layers of
governance is that anyone can lead and everyone must. (Pearson, N., 2000, p.52)

In this context Pearson advocates for a 'partnership approach to governance in communities' …
with a central imperative of Aboriginal governance being the devolution and sharing of the right
and the responsibility'.(Pearson, N., 2000, p.58).

The demise of ATSIC saw Pearson identify the ‘need to replace ATSIC with a governance structure
that facilitates the creation of an intellectually and politically strong national leadership’ (Pearson,
N., 2004). Leadership has become a key element of discussion on governance. The Australian
Indigenous Leadership Centre has established Certificate and Diploma level courses in Indigenous
leadership in response to this discussion.

What skills do Indigenous peoples require to build individuals’ capacity to
participate in governance of their communities and organisations, and how
does/can VET contribute to this?

Who or what determines the nature of required skills for Indigenous governance?
The emerging themes in this area are based on the informants’ perceptions of holistic Indigenous
governance roles being based on family and community relationships as discussed previously.
Additionally, they perceive the need to gain training in governments’ and the public sector
expectations of the skills required for Indigenous governance. This adds another factor into the
equation. Many of the elders who have the community knowledge, wisdom and experience, may
not have had experience on a personal or community level with how bureaucracies, governments
and corporations work. In Australia there is often the incorrect pragmatic assumption that everyone
knows how to do their personal banking, fill out forms, conduct ‘everyday’ business transactions,
sign contracts, have a knowledge of everyday laws and regulations, and have basic functional literacy
skills. Indigenous Australians remain the most educationally disadvantaged group in Australia
(DETYA 2001) and this is reflected in their experiences with the above-mentioned everyday
mainstream social practices (Hanlen 2002). Another often incorrect notion in Australia is that
literacy skills are an indicator of intelligence, knowledge, experience and other skills (Gee 1996).

Is it literacy or formal schooling that affects mental functioning? and Can [sic] one distinguish
among the effects of forms of literacy used for different functions in the life of an individual
or a society?… If literacy is what is affecting mental abilities, then all literates… should show
the same effects, but if schooling is responsible, then only schooled literates will show the
effects… Neither literacy enhanced the use of taxonomic skills, nor did either contribute to a
shift towards syllogistic reasoning. In contrast, literacy in English, the only form associated
with formal schooling, was associated with some types of decontextualization and abstract
reasoning… But schooling does not give rise to 'higher intelligence' or 'higher mental
abilities' in any general global sense. (Gee 1996, p. 55)

Indigenous Australians recognise the wealth of knowledge, wisdom and experience that their elders
have is vital to the future wellbeing and directions of their communities and it is these same people
who were often most affected by the past inequity of education, and who were denied access to
mainstream society in education and employment, and the delivery of services to communities.
They were denied access to bureaucracies and governments in contributing to planning, decision-
making and the implementation of policies and the delivery of services. They were denied literacy
for empowerment skills, employment, and quality services in housing, health, transport and many
others. In most communities, younger people have had more access to education and literacy but are still denied equity in outcomes (DETYA 2001). Communities recognise that the younger community members have had more exposure to these aspects of mainstream Australian society and the elders still hold the community wisdom, knowledge, experience and expectations for the delivery of services to their community and the elders often acknowledge that the younger ones are the ones that hold governance roles in organisations, bureaucracies, governments and the business world as a result.

M: I think you need to have… that balance, to have the older people involved who can who can use their experience and guide and I think you also need to have the young people involved and I think that’s what we’re struggling with at the moment is that we don’t have the young people who are involved who can learn the skills from the older people and bring in a whole new way of thinking that’s, you know, a more modern way of thinking to balance the older people and their knowledge who which is essential that youth and a whole range of skills that they’ve managed to learn through their through living in today’s society. [FG]

F: I can see that as, um…and each section of the community, you have people who have abilities for different things, some… living the day to day life, and coping with life and that, and so therefore they need to (unclear) with the… people who have got the education or the background, to be able to, to call upon them to provide services that they need for their day to day life like most people do.[S1 YT4]

Cultural diversity is an essential factor to consider. There are many differences in cultural, social and geographical backgrounds between Indigenous communities Australia wide. These factors need to be addressed in the development of courses for training in Indigenous governance. In other words ‘one size does not fit all’.

M: Well the first thing they gotta do is they gotta listen to the people and they’re gotta be prepared to work with the people and they’re gotta be prepared to….to recognise the diversity between the people like in this area there’s 17 or 18 different tribal groups, language groups living in our community so it’s not only (traditional land owners) and it doesn’t, it’s not conducive to cohesion… [S1 YT2]

In looking at the skills required for Indigenous governance training, it is also important to recognise that culturally, Indigenous peoples believe that there are many situations that are strictly either men’s or women’s business and this may clash culturally at times with affirmative action regulations on gender issues. Training for Indigenous people in governance may require separate classes for men or women in some cases, for example, women’s health and social work.
M: I think you obviously need to have that balance I think in a lot of cases (name) generally participation of male and females is still determined by culture a lot of that is still evident… in the communities… that is starting to break down, some cases it’s still culturally appropriate for the men or the women to have a level of control of the governance and the leadership in the community but obviously we’re seeing now that some of that’s been broken down and where you can get a balance is obviously… you don’t have people throwing stones from the sidelines saying you know it’s boys club or all women are tryin’ to control and so… obviously to stop some of that it’s more beneficial to have a balance within a group. …not upsetting peoples cultural values is what….that’s the challenge…[FG]

M: …that it’s men’s business and women’s business you can’t have…. you can’t have men dealing with women’s issues like childcare or preschools or domestic violence or whatever the specific roles because that’s breaking cultural knowledge…[S1 YT2]

Skills and training

Informants unanimously argued that it was necessary to have training in the skills that they perceived were necessary for working in Indigenous governance. However, it was also overwhelmingly emphasised that it must be culturally appropriate training that provides competency in presenting Indigenous community needs, aspirations and empowering them to present these issues to governments, organisations and the corporate sector in ways that do not comprise community direction, but are able to access and utilise these areas in a way that is understood by governments etc. and which provides the best outcomes in delivery of services as possible. This means that people also need training in the workings, services and roles of government agencies and the Western interpretation of regulations, policies and laws, as they are pragmatically understood in mainstream Australian society.

One participant identified a sentiment echoed by many others. When people are asked what they want to learn they will tell you. In this way people are driving the training agenda not simply responding to a particular course.

F. I guess what I’m saying is they’ve got their own ideas about what it is they do need to learn and if people are able to inform whatever courses or whatever training that’s happening I think the outcome could be better … one of the leaders in the community asks, wants to know what a million dollars looks like what does a million dollars look like cause there’s this figure floating around about a million bucks…. and he wants a workshop on what a million dollars looks like now nah I don’t know but that I find that a really interesting concept … [S3 YT1]
Another participant identified this in another way;

F: I was just telling these guys, about 10 years ago when government was throwing money at organisations to do governance training… you know how to be a director, and part of the board and everything else so we got the money and the organisation go moment to run, provided that course the board of directors so, so we had you know a light accountant I don’t know where he was from but he come and delivered the course about how associations operates and how our sporting groups run and those sorts of things so we sat there and we went through it and it was a whole week, a whole week. He was probably paid a heap of money to do it. And um I’d say when we walked, when we left out of there, I don’t know if it where the same thing I can’t even remember parts of it at this stage. If I was asked to recall some of it, but I wasn’t I believe it wasn’t done appropriately it wasn’t done it wasn’t relevant to us, because ‘is was mad because we couldn’t because it was such always about all the rules and regulations about some place and everything else you couldn’t it was just really hard to try and apply it to our organisation. Yeah so, it just seemed to have no relevance to what we were doing so. Yeah. [S2 YT1]

Ultimately, many respondents supported the view expressed by Cleary that 'training …needs to be continual, with one to one mentoring, not visiting trainees who vainly attempt to teach unfamiliar faces on an intermittent basis.' (Cleary, J., 2004, The Sea Trials, Building Effective Indigenous Governance Conference, Jabiru, NT, November).

An overview of skills determined by participants as important in governance training is presented in Figure 2 below.
Figure 2: Skills identified as appropriate in a VET sector course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILLS IDENTIFIED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Numeracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Communication; mediums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oral</td>
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<tr>
<td>written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-verbal</td>
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<tr>
<td>technical eg: email, telephone etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Legal issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. History;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Listening skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Financial management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mechanics of managing communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Self-esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Business management for small business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Indigenous terms of reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Valuing our own world view</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Models and philosophies of management and government including Westminster, bureaucracy etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. What is governance?</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Conflict resolution and management</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Managing people</td>
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<tr>
<td>individuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>government departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Identifying and dealing with post-traumatic stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Employability skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Analysis and critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Understanding and defining objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Leadership skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Personal skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Understanding the United Nations; global governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Knowledge of how things work</td>
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<td>28. Knowledge of how the Mint works</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. How to govern an organisation</td>
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<td>30. How and what is a Constitution?</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Decision-making</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Ability to network, form partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Tell stories about how black fellas have done it</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. Valuing other cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td>35. How government works</td>
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<tr>
<td>36. Ability to disseminate, absorb and translate information back to communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. Self-awareness</td>
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<td>38. Innovation</td>
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<td>39. Creativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. Counselling</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. How to grasp issues at local, regional and national levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>42. project management</td>
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<tr>
<td>43. Connectedness between issues</td>
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<td>44. Negotiation skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>45. Grasp different types of service provision and their impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Information technology</td>
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<td>47. Logic</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Policy development and how to influence the development of policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>49. Marketing</td>
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<tr>
<td>50. Advocacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>51. Occupational Health and Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>52. First-Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>53. Cultural awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>54. Board of Directors; roles and responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>55. How government agencies relate to each other and within themselves</td>
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<tr>
<td>56. Strategic approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is important for Indigenous peoples and communities that any training that is provided to those who are involved in Indigenous governance must be culturally framed and appropriate.

M: Well it’s… it’s imperative it’s you know it’s absolutely (unclear) that they have training, but in saying that, the training has gotta be culturally appropriate…[S1 YT2]

M: Culturally appropriate delivery [S1 YT1]

An important skill for conditional entry into Indigenous governance training is that Indigenous people need to be grounded in a knowledge of their own Indigenous community and how it works.

F: I think… there should be, the first and most important skill is to have that community contact and consultation and know what’s happening at your grass roots level.[S1 YT4}

It was also considered important that training be relevant to Indigenous governance specifically and not just mainstream training for governance roles.

M: One thing you really have to look at is in the terms of training is to link in with the industry and your area that’s been the biggest thing that’s been missed in the past you know the training was so inappropriate there’s a lot of our people walking around with big portfolios but they can’t, can’t get a job because it’s not going to take them to the industries or the labour market in the towns they live and you know and probably where they got the capacity to move to…. and what we do at the training and developing level I think has to be in partnership with what and where the community are at so you’ve gotta have those conversation with people I guess we’ve been running TAFE particularly have been running programs for quite a long time that has been ……inappropriate to start off with and not connected with further aspirations not certainly in employment… I think inappropriate is the word I would use training for training sake [S1 YT1]

**Student Support**

The learning needs of Indigenous students are often the same as for mainstream students but for Indigenous students many other additional factors impact and influence teaching and learning outcomes and experiences.

F: Because unless you have contact with them (students), day to day, you they think that… life’s not too bad. If you’re (teacher) bringing in about 50 thousand (dollars) to yourself, you’re quite comfortable, you can provide for your family. But, the stories that I have, with the students coming, are, are real life things and it’s actually… can be a very… the real struggle is about survival day to day. Survival to, to live day to day, but also… to provide food and that, but also too, to meet in your own territory too. We need to have funding to be able to afford that. I think it’s a very important role that… maybe you call it a, a, student support officer. I think… as a student support officer, it’s, almost like career advising but also taking into account all the other things they need to know, to empower them to keep studying… to be able to come back… to give assistance and advice in what's available in the community to help family keep rolling, keep going. And, then help them to develop a career path that is attainable, and talk to ’em about the steps and procedures they need to do, to do, to gain those, that position.[S1 YT4]
Some people believe that for Indigenous people, training may have to take a little bit more time with a lot more support than may otherwise occur in mainstream training courses.

M: …to get reasonably required standard and that might take a little bit more time … …they gotta be supported too … But anyone who works with … who are expected to do jobs in the community that involve with fair bit of dealing with responsibility with no support, they’re more than likely they’ll fail without support, without education and training [S1 YT2]

Support can come in the form of community mentoring involving Indigenous people who have been involved in Indigenous governance or the corporate sector and who may or may not have had training and who may be of great encouragement and support to students.

M: And I think one of the biggest things that we need as a community is mentoring people who are going to you know point you in the right direction… What I want to say is there is any number of mentors available if you want to play football or if you want to paint a picture but if you want to run a business it’s a different kettle of fish all together…like we have NAIDOC weeks every year whatta they do? They invite sports people, eh! I’ve never seen a school yet invite professionals like our own people like there’s a few doctors hidden around now like Aboriginal doctors in (place) one young blokes out in his own surgery in (place)…[S1 YT1]

M: … And in terms of, um, someone that comes out, that um, you know, had their tickets in fork lift… back hoe… and machinery… again, can play a critical role in terms of governance for that community. You know, they can be an active member of the community and play a whole range of things in terms of positive role modelling… bringing in some cash flow into a family, extended families and those type of things. So um the governance doesn’t actually just stop at someone going into a management role and any of those type of things. [S1 YT3]

Support could mean having Indigenous support people in the classroom.

M: So you know and that was this bloke did marvellous, you know, I was just lucky enough to find the money (unclear…) as long as… if you’d set up a course as long, as there is the support mechanism there for our people, you know, we’re mad on (unclear) courses and doin them (unclear) but we don’t seem to be able to stay there and there’s not much support there for our people, like our people won’t go and ask for help, it’s gotta be if, you know, if you’re the teacher you know they’re having trouble you identify it first. I can’t see why teachers can’t say, look bring a support person, he’s havin’ trouble with the say with his reading or with his writin’ or with this subject here, why don’t you give him a hand. [S1 YT1]
Support can be in a number of forms that include tutoring, time for funerals, but also in the form of childcare assistance.

So, I don’t think, it’s not very friendly for Aboriginal people to use TAFE because their gotta go to institutions things like childcare or… community issues they might deal with like we got a funeral one of our elders passed away in this community on Friday and we had to close this centre down on Friday… but we had to do that as cultural with respect to traditional owners and pass them on. TAFE might’n be as accommodating to non-Indigenous students when they have to, they might have to attend a funeral or might have to attend other things that are important in Aboriginal community whether it’s a sport or recreational anything there with a cultural aspect to it they might… they just go to the curriculum like TAFE they were running jewellery making classes yeah which was fine it’s close here with the mothers can come they can do that its traditional jewellery making but one mother had a 2 year old kid with her and he was in the pram it was bottle fed and whatever the teacher come up and said that Aborig… that baby can’t come, you can’t bring your children and so this mother she didn’t come back, and I asked the teacher, I said, what happened? And she said, well, they’re not allowed to bring their kids to courses. I said, well listen, I said, their in a community centre this is not a campus you’ve have come from TAFE to here because you can’t get people to go up to TAFE and part of our learning is women and kids and families are gotta be all together so unless that mother can come with her child or anyone else that’s got kids because we’ll organise childcare, someone to look after the kids, you just take your TAFE course and take your courses and take them back up to TAFE so now that woman come back and others can come here with their kids so we can educate them to our ways you know that are culturally appropriate, yeah they didn’t have a leg to stand on if you don’t want to listen to us as a community and what we doing is acceptable and culturally appropriate…. it’s not a campus where you got a crèche or people aren’t given crèche you know so it will work out pretty well but you gotta do those things… so people can access education in the first place let alone reach the level of sort of requirements.[S1 YT2]

Bearing in mind the earlier discussions on Indigenous governance it is important to establish that the term is a relatively new concept culturally for Indigenous communities and is generally recognised as a non-Indigenous concept. Historically, governments and policies have had hugely negative impacts on Indigenous peoples and communities and words like government, governance etc. have generated a lot of fear of the past whereby Indigenous people have been subjected to non-Indigenous systems of power and control. (Fletcher 1989a; 1989b).

M: …so those issues that have to be taken in account for people to get training in… governance and all that is required in governance because it’s a new concept …[S1 YT2]

Some people in governance roles acknowledge that they have been actively working in roles for which they believe they have had no training.

M: …speaking for myself I still need training I’m not good enough on the infrastructure of the CDEP managing a wide (unclear)…[S1 YT1]
Knowledge of existing Indigenous governance VET courses in RTOs

Generally speaking most informants were not aware of any specific courses related to Indigenous governance. There were however some anecdotal notions of the existence of courses.

M: Well apparently there is something at TAFE because they're getting TAFE to do self governance and management here with the management committee like the community centre I work with, their getting them to… their gonna train them to take over managing from the auspicious body already. I'm not quite sure how long… they take or what it involves.[S1 YT2]

M: (VET programs) …Not that I'm aware of. No… No I can't say that I'm aware of… I think from memory that quite a few years ago TAFE were looking at developing a like a committee type training course for a board of directors in Aboriginal organisations… I'm not sure whether that got up and running or not… I think Aboriginal Programs Unit or the Aboriginal Development Division when it was TAFE I think they… developed it but that's the only sort of training that I know of and that's really focused at… at sort of board of directors… level rather than the… operational managers that that run these organisations…[FG]

Some people believe that there maybe programs available on Indigenous governance, but that they may not have met the needs of Indigenous communities nor included Indigenous perspectives of the topic. Some questioned the suitability of the relationship and relevance of such courses to Indigenous communities.

M: …well we (TAFE) run governance programs. Um… universities run governance programs. Private providers run governance programs. But whether they actually really meet the needs of the community is still a bit of a, a…quandary… Well, yeah, we (TAFE) … have a certificate IV in a diploma in… I can't remember the exact words, ah… Aboriginal governance. That's not the exact title but… are they at the right level? You know? … are they aimed at, are they too high? Um, you know, to do a diploma course it takes, anywhere between two and three years, full time… is it fair and realistic to, you know… depending upon… the people who are aimed at, who sometimes, in some cases are, you know, full time workers or they are the people who are on, you know, most boards in that community… some of them are seventy year olds that, might not necessarily want that. So, you know, I think we need to, look at, from my perspective, something that would, meet that communities needs, ah, and really tailor something that… was in a position that, you know, met the needs of that community in terms of what were the types of service provision? How did that fit into the service delivery strategy that that community wanted for that period of time? And, you know, looking at where they were headed for the next five or ten years? And that's where I think community action planning processes are critical… in that, they will provide, that community, a direction that's set by that community, for the, you know, next five or ten years.[S1 YT3]
Distance from RTOs

Communities are reluctant to allow their community members to leave and go away for training. This, it was feared, will interfere with the person’s perceived obligations to their community and upset people through separation from families. They also fear that some people may not come back home. Other logistical problems such as geographical isolation, language, frequency of travel and associated costs hinder access to and participation in training and development for Indigenous peoples.

M: …I think this travelling away for training and development is a major issue… Of course I don’t know how anybody could say there’s not just a role but a very very significant one, there’s a Certificate IV in governance run by TAFE last year and 8 people from (state) finished the class, not enough, you know, once again I go back to the issue of having to have x amount of people to run the course (name) and I have had our names down for well 3 of us had our names down for 6 weeks to do it this year, still waiting to fill the class and you know we’ve gotta travel one day a week to (place) to do it, I mean their running it in (place) and not (place)…. to get some training in our CDEP when we sat with the consultant to work everything out what sort of training, the list was that long, I think there was 26 to 27 modules drawn from our front line and all that sort of stuff and now he’s gotta go out and look for the courses to get them in to get us in there. See what happened with that go to a RTO rather than TAFE we’re looking at a private RTO because TAFE can’t deliver for one person for half the module here in (place) anyway talking (place) that can deliver them but we’d have to send (name) to (capital city) for a week at a time and we can’t afford that. [S1 YT1]

M: Many of those people couldn’t participate because, um, of a whole range of factors, being the length of study, the cost of study in terms of getting to and from… also the cost of study in terms of time commitments etc[S1 YT3]

TB. The people are, the family relationships are so close and so strong, that it’s just, it’s hard for somebody to be away, the slightest, often the slightest (unclear) slightest perhaps, that things that happen in family, to family, within the family, cause very serious concern to the people, … But, once again, if something happens in family, it means people got to come back home and then that causes interruption to (unclear). So, I think it might seem to be costly by some government people to do this training in communities, but at the end of the day it is much more effective because people can handle it. Often this out of class situation might only take 10 minutes, but if you’re a thousand miles away, it takes 10 days and a lot of money. [S3YT3]

M3. … the people down there are reluctant to leave their community to go away, you know, expected training away from their community [S3YT5]

It is equally important that Indigenous governance training should provide people with the skills to empower their communities by building on the skills that they already have in a way that benefits individuals and communities commercially e.g. Setting up an art gallery to sell their paintings.
M: …I'd imagine any TAFE stuff would be accredited to work or could be applied anywhere else cause most of the TAFE stuff is mainstream anyhow… Even their art courses and music, Aboriginal art, they’re often taught in a contemporary (unclear) and contexture. Like they might want you to do art for commercial purposes to make money out of, or make a living where as art for someone else might be a spiritual thing or a healing thing or an expression of what they’re done in that day, they don’t need to be out there selling t shirts or painting boomerangs or whatever you know but they might be keeping alive their stories of their people through their art…. they pass onto their children, you know, what their stories meant about their country, where that would be an emotional or spiritual thing, you know, that … that could help or assist with Aboriginal peoples' well being as opposed to their bank balance or getting off welfare dependency.

[S1 YT2]

In S3 some of the informants spoke of the major Indigenous educational institution in their region had a course on Community Development that includes some aspects of Indigenous governance but the course was not specifically developed for that purpose.

F: No there’s a whole there’s a whole range of…. RTO’s which is a training organisation yeah (Name's) one (Name's) another there’s a range of private RTO’s as well that sometimes miraculously just pop up out at (unclear) I don’t know nobody knows how they got there or what they’re doing there or somebody in DEETs or some bodies put in an application to do a certain type of training you know and all of a sudden they turn up well it’s not quite like that but it almost looks like that when you’re visiting the community a lot and you know you come into contact with a whole range of people so what we’re trying to do around the employment and training stuff is to stop that happening you know there’s a there’s plan of priority areas for training the employment and training committee which is made up of local people and government people will say well here’s our priorities and we’ll put that into action and if you want to come in to (unclear) to deliver any form of any training you’ll have to go through this committee and you’ll have to tell us what you’re doing if we don’t want you here you’re not coming yeah so its about that’s about governance and controlling and been in charge yeah [S3YT1]

M: In terms of doing the course the provider doing the course so the provider gets the course and says look we’re gonna come out here and do it and offer the course yes …..in this context it’s a tough ask tough ask….

As I’m saying in this context and I think in this sort of context generally in terms of remote areas …..and I and I guess this opens up a little bit of an issue with you that you might have with the course and that is that when we get back to this to the point the structure of governance here as representative of the (unclear) model belongs to here and here’s this service this provider coming out saying well I’ve got a course on governance I’m gonna teach you lot and they’ll scratch their heads and say well we already have one thank you maybe we could teach you something you know so we come back to this point of regarding is the course about offering content or content and context and it’s the context that in this particular course as I’m understanding it is more important than the content you can draw up very quickly how do people vote how do people run meetings you know all this sort of stuff you can even do it from a cultural component in terms planned affiliations family affiliations language group kin group country group ok that’s that’s the content of the course the context of where your actually delivering and how your actually delivering that’s the key to it [S3 YT4].
Historical background of Indigenous governance

For many Indigenous communities, there is not much information provided to them on recognition of how the social organisation of their communities were traditionally affected by colonisation, what happened in between then and now and how this experience has impacted and influenced the emerging field of Indigenous governance in a contemporary setting. They need to be skilled in deconstructing Western interpretations of Indigenous histories, cultures, languages and social practices and revisit their histories from their own cultural and social perspectives using decolonisation methodology (Smith 1999).

F: …I’m talking about my community here in (place) there are probably there are communities that operate a lot different to how we operate and where we’ve come from at that very early stage. In this structure and organisation so I think it needs, people need to be told how it happened and how that happened and sort of political implications and that. I’m talking about black politics…… (training) its also about the past, the present and the future… Oh look I really think, it really needs to be written I think we, think that you know our younger generation need to know the actual you know about all the political infighting that occurred or that happened to shapes it’s what shaped our community, today. Really when I talk about our culture. What happened you know through last you know, that last period from the “70’s” up to now was really, that you know a turning pint that was like the renaissance in Aboriginal Affairs, really that’s where things changed, that’s were we had all the organisations starting…. They got, remember (name) saying that he wouldn’t have been a principal today if people that had worked on those national committees changing things. So that shaped what we have today, and that's, that real history, that’s apart of what is shaping us. [S2 YT1]

M: I’d teach um, understanding, the history of governance in Aboriginal community and what forms, and what forms it was originally in and how, how it has evolved to where it is now so that people have and understanding of it. In doing that thinking about the nature of governance and the understanding of what, what may be a trend that um Aboriginal Australia are leaning towards in governance? [S2 YT2]

M: Well you know I mean there’s a need there’s a need for training. Aboriginal people aren’t going to TAFE in their droves for a start you know there’s not every black fella you know putting their hand up for a TAFE course. Even though TAFE offer a wide range of skills, trades and courses… Because we were denied education…. you know prior to the 1971. We were…. the referendum 67 denied us a lot of things then it wasn’t until actually 71 that we were allowed to vote or participate in any meaningful way in society with equity. Then the people out here even on our mission the (unclear) Mission they stole kids away, the welfare, if you spoke our lingo or told about ….about our cultural things you know where…. any of the dreamtime stories different places or how to hunt or how to survive in Aboriginal culture if that was if that was spoken then people got removed or their children got removed they got separated and a lot of people even when they did get to school they didn’t get to do, they didn’t get into top classes in school they were mainly used there because they had to be there they were often out cleaning up the play ground and doing….doing mundane things.. .takin….they weren’t offering us any coaching then or equality and even now they’re still trying to undermine some of the things we’ve achieved in education to say….you know it’s it’s only Aboriginals who can do this or they…. they can deperpetrate the myths that Aboriginals get things for free when in fact we don’t. We have to pay heaps and all the rest so not many blacks are…. our parents our grandmothers what have you, were not encouraged to go to school and TAFE’s a relatively new concept anyhow itself to the broader community. [S1 YT2]
F: If you're gonna lead or fight for your people, you've gotta understand where you've come from, before, so you know, kinship's very important. Um, valuing our, our law, our technology, an our society is very empowering. [S1 YT4]

Communication and interpersonal skills
Some strong themes emerged from the yarn times. Communication skills cover a broad range of cultural and social implications. To interact between communities, and governments, organisations and the corporate sector it would appear that you need sound written and oral communication skills. Fundamentally, Indigenous people involved, or potentially involved in Indigenous governance (hereby referred to as person/people) would come to these positions generated through their own language/cultural community when working at that local level of governance or through the broader Indigenous community at state or national levels in the same manner. They would need to have a good understanding of how their own community works and their role in that community in relationship to all other members of that community. Again we get back to the fact that Indigenous governance is holistic and needs to be grounded in relationships.

M: …management across corporate leaders like Aboriginal organisations, um management across families and relationships between people… [S2 YT2]

The areas discussed below are all dynamic for Indigenous people and are generally pragmatically accepted by the mainstream as essential skills for any person, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, involved in governance roles and these will be discussed separately later:

M: Well you gotta have sound written and oral communication skills you gotta have an understanding of legal issues you gotta have understanding of figures….you've gotta have a clear be able to clearly define the objectives….so …you’d have to be sort of educated enough to be really succinct straight to the point what they want what you …require how to deliver what they’re askin’ like funding bodies are askin’ and being specific in those… meeting those objectives. You probably have to have a fair deal of common sense. Sort of be realistic about what you can and what you can’t do. [S1 YT2]

M: One that points out to me immediately is the communications skills I mean the ability to communicate with all with all levels of government and community I think that is the number one or most important factor of I would think certainly within the role of the what we’ve got at the moment in terms of what we’re doin’ with the communities I mean it’s the ability to get across to the community what we’re trying to do and equally so to to government what community wants and how we can match that. [FG]

Oral, Written, Computer and Financial literacies
Clearly, full literacy competency has been denied many Indigenous Australians. As Indigenous people involved in governance roles have been generally generated from within their communities where access to and training in literacy skills are limited it is reasonable to argue that literacy training would be needed for some people.

Financial literacy is a skill that is often taken for granted in mainstream society. Indigenous Australians as the most educationally disadvantaged group also have disproportionately higher unemployment rates. Subsequently the discourses in mainstream families are more likely to include
more discussions on financial literacy practices such as personal banking, interest rates, credit cards, mortgages, statements, accounting, financial planning, financial management, budgets, audits, statistics and other associated matters. If people’s families have not been involved with these practices or linguistic terms then the individual’s of these families will probably not have a sound knowledge or experience with these financial literacy practices either.

M & M: Like look with all of our communities probably I’m guessing 65 to 70% of our problem is numeracy and literacy and (name) and I identified that up at (place) last year and to coerce people into going into the course and staying we had to change it from a numeracy and literacy course to a life’s skills course and add hospitality components into it in between the normal numeracy and literacy so we sort of conned them because half of them would’ve gone back would they? No. Yet it was the best graduation I’ve attended …financial management… Yeah so you need that financial management you know I think you know you could probably throw in counselling there because we you know maybe some formal mentor training would be better that counselling maybe a mentoring component. [S1 YT1]

M: …we’d like to learn a bit more about accounting or bookkeeping or something like that that’s not always (unclear) too well so we gotta… they’re gotta have the literacy and the numeracy… [S1 YT2]

M: we’re still getting a lot of enrolments though in terms of you know, literacy and numeracy needs, um, which is a critical component… Oh, obviously, um, the training that, that we've had, um, or that I’ve had. Um, you know, develop skills in terms of communication, written, verbal…um…non-verbal communication. Um, you know, management skills obviously they’re pretty, um, but that’s interesting, in terms of, you, you know, I….what is good management practise? [S1 YT3]

Standard English language and jargon

The Indigenous communities in S1 and S2 primarily speak English as a first language with a few people who speak English as second language. Some communities in both places are reviving their languages. There are seven language groups in S3 and English is mainly the second, third and even fourth or fifth language. It is very difficult at the best of times to conduct business in your first language. For those Indigenous communities there are many reasons where it is still very difficult for people who work in Indigenous governance roles. For those people for whom English is not their first language it places enormous strains on people mentally to cope with interpreting everything they read or hear, or telephone calls, meetings with English speaking stakeholders into their own language, referring these back to their community and then interpreting the community’s feelings back into English. This can be problematic when there are no English words to accurately convey some Indigenous concepts and no traditional language words to accurately convey mainstream Western concepts and jargon into traditional Indigenous languages.
M. … but I think, that its, its our own people who have the time to do things and talk about it because even though when we workshopped all this legislative materials English, most of the discussion that happens is in language because they pick up on the concepts and us as (unclear) speakers have just got to sick back and wait. One of the other things that we talk to when white people come and talk about things, these people have done a couple of tests with them. We did one time with a group of local government people and what it was people from the outside come in and speak quite a high level of English to a group of people whose English is second language of, those people listening, eventually get a headache, it’s the same with anybody hearing another language, so what we did was, these local government people carried the Local Government Act around with them like it’s a bible, so we got one of the guys to translate into (unclear) first half a dozen pages of the actual Local Government Act, and all these (unclear) were in the room and they’re all sitting around and going to talk to someone that’s, you know, really is important to them, something that they’d be interested in hearing and got somebody to stand up and start reading this whole thing in (unclear) and it was interesting to see how switched off people become. There’s a few smiles on their faces for the first minute or so, and after it dragged on for about 2 or 3 minutes, you could see people getting totally bored, and after about 10 minutes, they were fidgeting and ready to sort of walk out of the room. Those blokes said, that's how it is for us, you know, this mob come in here, you talk like this, you talk quick, you do (unclear), and you assume we’re hearing. We’re probably, in lots of cases, we stumbling over the first word that we didn’t hear and we’ve lost the concept totally, so they, so you know, that’s just one of the things that (unclear) is talking about and I don’t think this is just for people who, you know, the traditionalists that still are thinking in their own languages and I know the work that I've done down in Victoria and western New South Wales some years back in some community development work, ... So, it takes a bit of time, but it’s worth it, because the decisions you get are good. [S3 YT3]

The issue of jargon and how Western concepts are embedded in English is a very difficult one for Indigenous Australians. Even when English is the first language of communities, their English is Indigenised. As mentioned earlier, language grows to accommodate one’s culture and for Indigenous Australians whose first language is English most people speak Aboriginal English in its various forms of the dialect across Australia. The English they speak accommodates Indigenous cultural concepts and often does not include the jargon and language discourses that take place in most non-Indigenous sections of Australian society (Eades 1995).

M: You tell me (unclear) I don’t know… I mean… we, we use, we are using language that we struggle with sometimes you know, in the real affirmation it brings some of those cultural principals out, in, [S2 YT2]

Accountability

In any organisation or governance role the question of accountability is paramount. For Indigenous people everyone is accountable ultimately to each other according to the relationships to each other and the community as a whole as discussed earlier. For people working in organisations, services and the public sector there are often rigidly established lines of accountability down through a hierarchy of roles within them. Historically and since the early days of colonisation, Indigenous peoples were denied control of their land, the means to survive, how they interacted with the land and each other, where and how they lived and they were controlled in every aspect of their lives. Now suddenly Indigenous communities are in the situation where there are emerging opportunities to have a say in their own community planning and decision-making. It is important for people to understand how accountability works in mainstream services and organisations so that this may better inform and therefore maximise the best outcomes for their communities.
Empowering Indigenous governance through VET

M: Aboriginal people have never been encouraged to be in control of their own affairs never and due to past policies and practices so now people like myself and others are charged with that responsibility and the community organisations we work and with accountability and the skills needed to manage the demands are more so for Aboriginal people to perform than non-Indigenous people. I mean even in society they don't have to really care about about white policy for like you know the CEO’s of HIH and people like that they can rip people off for for lots of money and they can get a pension or pension them off they don’t get sent to prison or anything like that so it’s OK for them but then at the end of the scale to fraudulently misuse shareholders money but if an Aboriginal organisation mob get a few bob short on something then perception is that everyone’s stealing or everyone’s corrupted so people need to…to be told in accordance of it of accountability and credibility and they need to be shown and assisted through a process what with to reach a standard where they can operate you know within the guidelines….

[S1 YT2]

Conflict resolution

As with any mainstream organisation, there are always occasions when conflicts arise in terms of what should be done, how, by whom and where. Indigenous communities have their own ways of dealing with this matter and they need to be understood at the local, regional, state and federal levels. Indigenous conflict resolution processes and methods need to be addressed alongside those processes and methods considered essential for the effective and efficient operations of organisations, bureaucracies and for the public sector generally.

M: There’s also I think really important is conflict resolution obviously in communities people have different views and they don’t necessarily the best way isn't to go outside and have a go at them sitting down and talking through that and that sort of leads also into negotiation and you know having the ability to sit down and negotiate respectively and to when you know when you’re talking about communication it’s about the ability to listen as well and while Aboriginal people probably do that better than anyone it's important to be able to work on those skills to be able to listen and then be able to sit down and negotiate and if there are different opinions to be able to sit there and resolve conflict without having to deal with it forcefully so they’re really critical and you know that’s within communities and that’s also between governments and communities. [FG]

M: I think there should be a big component in conflict resolution… We have so much conflict within within all the areas of government we deal with and most times don’t know how to go about if there is a conflict how to resolve it you know the first time I’ve been to a meeting where someone said if you’ve got a problem with what we’re doing the details are on the back page who who to go to complaints first time I’ve ever had it it’s never happened before because we have government departments sit on the other side of the table and I’ve got a big stick and you’ll do as I say that’s all there is to it [S1 YT1]
**Business Management**

It is clear that business management is an important part of Indigenous governance training. Training in Business Management should include basic accounting, conducting meetings, banking, business protocols, contracts and legal documents, staff management, business services, budgets and auditing procedures.

M& M: I think you, you need to be open and transparent it needs a level of I mean these are all personal traits you need to have a lot of honesty and integrity and so on but you also need to have skills in terms of you know…ability to manage affairs and you need to have effective governance you need to have you need to have a group of people with quite different skills you know it would be good to have you know people with financial management or people with you know PR skills ….communication skills so you need to have a variety… You know I think are you leaning you looking for like process types skills technical skills administrative type skills are these the sorts of things you’re after?[FG]

F: If your meeting procedures aren’t right and correct and you don’t do things right then you have, when you have sort of elections and voting procedures and everything else, you can be challenged. So what I’m saying is you had to learn all this on the way and because of all those things we’ve had to learn how an organisation has to work um legally and how it has to work to suit community. [S2 YT1]

M: …contractual stuff that we’ve got in our department we’ve got no real understanding about what it really is contracted to do… So there’s gotta be real focus on on what it means for your community when you go and get training and development a couple of other things I want to kick around if I can all the training you talked about what we need I suggest a whole heap of things Project Management you know I run an organisations that organises a million dollars a year no one asks me what skills I’ve got (unclear) the (unclear) stage would falter Financial Management look how many bout 126 Land Councils at one time every one of them is under administration because of what financial management how many organisation out of ATSIC funded over the years and government has funded over the years no longer that exist because of what can’t manage their money people manage money they just expect that (name) can manage… [S1 YT1]

**Information technology**

Information technology is now an essential means for conducting business in the public sector and governments. It would therefore need to be an integral part of training for Indigenous governance.

M: …IT we could do much more training and development with our people and it’s probably just started I’ve been around to many organisations all their computers are still locked in the cupboard or Red Backs are crawling over them cause they don’t know they’ve signed off on the funding the government department gives them the IT setup there and it’s just sittin there in terms of communication and so on people don’t know how to use their IT yet. [S1 YT1]
Balancing community and government

For many people involved in Indigenous governance there is a huge chasm between the expectations of communities and the expectations of governments. Learning how to manage both without compromising the best possible outcomes for communities and funding agent is a very challenging task.

M: When you look at my positions, they have always been positions, some of my positions have be purely in the community and others have been about how we would facilitate both community and government in terms of working together and I think that is a skill that doesn’t get a lot of recognition certainly about government the role an Indigenous persons plays ahh a gap between the government sector and the community and then both coming together in terms of how they both work and operate and I think not just me there is a lot of other people right across Australia who work in the same position as I do. They have great skill, I think probably the most valuable skill is which is probably the one that is less recognised is the skill of being able to managed um not just individuals, peoples, government departments and organisations um in terms of: one understanding, two being able to envisage resolutions, I think um to be a great communicator in terms of and I think um unlaying and hidden things to that is being able to manage conflict how to resolve issues to reach amicable agreements to be able to provide the missing texts if you want to call it that is missing in terms of government and community um so I’d say if anyone came it what they would be the skills they need, they would need to have um strong sense of community, um a good personality, to be able to disseminate information um, but also to absorb and disseminate cause sometimes I think it is the message that gets confused um so this person has to grab the message absorb it and then translate it back into the community where it is seen as what is the great picture apart of so, um they need to be a good operator… it is important to have dual skills um I think it is called multi skilling these days but uh to have not just the multi skills of that of an Indigenous society but also that of the non Indigenous society…[S2 YT3]

M: I think the big one in terms of governance and if your talking about dealing with government is negotiation that you know if one of the if communities fall down in one way it’s that they probably don’t have the skills to be able to sit there and negotiate effectively with government and a lot of that’s got to do with the fact that governments have the power, government has the money, government has all the resources so on so communities are in a sense tied to being at the whim of government but basically communities have the ability to stand up and negotiate and you know in a sense be forceful to put their needs and aspirations forward and that also puts them in a position to be able to negotiate effectively to get what they what they need to be able to move forward. [FG]

M: I reckon understanding, understanding what governance means and where it applies and how, so that people can acknowledge where it came, where training course can be governance into a community family structure and an understanding of what those clashes are…. in trying to get real urgency, especially Aboriginal views and we are just adopting skills, adopting structures to serve to serve a remedial purpose but really I think that notion is not, is not a lot of strategic thought has been put into why we take these things on. I mean we originally took it on to know to get some money out of the government so we could do some of the crisis work, you know that is our legacy. [S2 YT2]

There is a lot of pressure placed on Indigenous people in governance roles from their own communities and the government’s expectations of them.
…requirements and governance and other things how you get a lot of pressure to do that kind of work you responsible for it for a lot I mean like I’m responsible for half a million dollars and….. that’s a lot of money. [S1 YT2]

So that’s what, and I guess that’s kinda different from what you asked. But I don’t know that’s different, that’s become. We had to that’s white fellas way.. giggle.. to become a part of our culture and how we run our organisation because of a whole lot of other things that happen within community. [S2 YT1]

Sometimes there are different factions within Indigenous communities (as there are in non-Indigenous communities) and those involved in Indigenous governance roles have to manage how to deal with these factions and to act as a bridge between these communities and government agencies and organisations.

F: …because I guess because we have been a really competitive community we have you know it’s been very fractional… [S2 YT1]

M: Most definitely I think that’s the the single most important thing that needs to be achieved with in a lot of communities is is training in strong governance practices and procedures I mean I don’t have to tell you about the number of factional organisations organisations for one reason or another aren’t aren’t achieving what they’d hoped to achieve and the problems they find themselves in and I mean that’s that’s a direct result of of not having appropriate training in the way in which they should be operating.. [FG]

M: Um and that they need to have you know, a good understanding of um, how, government agencies relate to each other and within themselves… [S1 YT3]

Indigenous governance becomes very tenuous when you balance traditional community laws and mainstream Western laws. Indigenous laws are culturally grounded in the Dreamings, land and ceremonies and are not negotiable and remain static. However, in mainstream Australia, laws and policies change all the time.

F: they change the rules all the time.’ You go to court one week and this is the law or the, the legislation for it one week. And then you can go back in a few months time and it’s changed again, because it suited somebody else, not because it gave you a leg up. [S1 YT4]

*Training who? Non-Indigenous people could be trained.*

Cornell (2004) identifies the need to ‘change the conversation’;

You have to change the way people think and talk about what governance is … For many years and years in the United States, many Indian people have been taught that government is about distributing goodies: money, jobs, services….. That view of government has to change. … It’s primary task is to lay the foundation for rebuilding the nation …(Cornell, S., 2004, Starting and Sustaining Strong Indigenous Governance, Building Effective Indigenous Governance Conference, Jabiru, NT).

Further, in an effort to change the conversation, training non-Indigenous peoples becomes imperative. Training non-Indigenous people to be resource people, facilitators and partners rather than managers is imperative. Training non-Indigenous people to listen, to reconceptualise time and
to accept different world-views rather than superficially accept a cultural difference and add an Aboriginal perspective. The need for a reconceptualisation must be Indigenous-centred.

Recognise that your role, too, has changed. You have moved from a decision-maker role to a resource and partner role. This requires a different set of skills and a different way of interacting with Indigenous communities. (Cornell, S., 2004, Starting and Sustaining Strong Indigenous Governance, Building Effective Indigenous Governance Conference, Jabiru, NT)

What are the best models for engaging Indigenous communities in self-governance approaches, and how does/can VET assist?

Various reports (Jonas, W. 2000, 2001; Indigenous Community Governance Project) have referred to models that have engaged Indigenous communities in self-governance. What is critically important here is the notion that local context is fundamental. There can not be a ‘one size fits all’ approach in terms of a model. There is potential for the development of training that incorporates modules that accommodate diversity [S2 YT1].

F: I’d just like to say probably just site sites specific sort of stuff I sort of a bit aware when we we’re talking that you now what things that we’re saying sometimes are you know quite specific to (unclear) or even in of that magnitude that we’re talking about is (unclear) I suppose so you know whatever training you know some sort of vocational training that’s put together or whatever comes out of this you know I mean governance is governance training to you know people from my mob could be over in North Queensland and be very different to sort of you know basic concepts and that foundation work that would need to happen to understand governance (unclear…) [S3 YT1]

F: … we’re, we’re really diverse (unclear) in terms of the context in which we live and survive and offer … Absolutely yeah we are I mean you know we’re just so different in the (place) I mean we’ve got desert we’ve got salt water we’ve got (unclear) we’ve got (unclear…) Clever persons to, to write up a course but it has to be and I mean it had it just has to have the fundamentals and you’ve got to go in I think if you’re going to teach in a community you have to be there for a while to see even if the course is written up to see how it’s going to fit in [S3 YT2]

M3: … I mean, we all know at the end of the day that the, the Indigenous community will determine the model from our region, so that needs to be supported with that training, [S3 YT5]

However,

F: … And I think we have to tell the story about how black fellas have done it. Yeah… [S2 YT1]

There are many stories and many different models that could and should be shared. The bottom-line is that there can not be a ‘one-size fits all’. There may be some common principles that some communities share. There may be some common practices that many communities share. The local-context differs; be this geographical, political, economical, social or historical.
So, what are the best models of Indigenous governance and how can VET assist? Let us look at this complex issue one question at a time.

The best models are the ones that work; and trial and error is an important feature of the process. As Cornell states:

"Tolerate mistakes. Self-governance without mistakes is unrealistic - for anybody. … Nation-building - if it is done right - is a time consuming process. It is unlikely to conform to policy timetables. … people need time to make mistakes and time to deliberate about possible solutions. Hurrying down the wrong road is a quick trip to nowhere." (Cornell, S., 2004, Starting and Sustaining Strong Indigenous Governance, Building Effective Indigenous Governance Conference, Jabiru, NT)

Indigenous Governance Model: Based on the model practised by S3

As discussed earlier, in the early 1990s the community in S3 suffered a financial collapse brought about through compliance with government regulations and was compounded through inadequate funding to carry out these regulations which resulted in a $200,000 plus deficit. The community wanted to articulate and apply Indigenous governance as they have traditionally practised it. The work that they have done in articulating their model is now being seriously examined with many postgraduate research students now researching specifically this form of Indigenous Governance. The model seems to be working well according to the informants in S3.

Most of the people in these communities do not speak English. If they do it is often a second, third, fourth or even fifth language.

Governance model based on relationships: Kinship and clans

Governance roles are based on cultural relationships of kinship and clans. People are born into roles and are not elected. These roles are not generally contested.

Elders: Knowledge, Wisdom and Experience

The community acknowledges, respects and acts on the knowledge and wisdom of community Elders. In this community there are seven language groups whose countries are all included in the non-Indigenous boundaries of the COAG trial sites (COAG 2005). In discussions with informants from S3 the trial site is not technically in the exact region of the location that bares the name of the trial site and the S1 trial site covers a vast area of eastern Australia where the language groups have not been linked together culturally in the real sense of community linkages. Generally speaking most of the Elders have not had access to formal education or to equitable education. Most do not have experience interacting with mainstream government agencies, organisations or the corporate sectors. This does not mean that their skills are irrelevant to Indigenous governance. On the contrary, their skills provide the community with consistent well being, social order and articulate the communities’ future needs, aspirations and directions.

Middle Managers

As most Elders do not have Western education or experience with mainstream Western governance or corporate practices they rely on those of the younger generation below theirs. Many of these people from the younger generations were taken from their families as young children and placed in dormitory accommodation in Children’s homes. Some of these people are now in their forties and
fifties and in their community they are referred to as the ‘middle managers’. Their first line of accountability is to the Elders and their community. They are also born into their roles and are not elected. They are grounded in their community and they are generated from the community on this basis. The middle managers consult the Elders and community on every decision including their own promotions in governance roles. They only act on the approval of the community. The community is involved in the planning, decision-making and every level of the governance process. There is individual community ‘middle managers’ involved in all the different government agencies.

**Rotating meetings in all countries within artificial non-Indigenous boundaries**

S3 has seven different language groups and clans in their relatively small COAG trial site region. Each group has their own country and Land Council meetings are rotated and officiated over equitably in each country.

**Rotating Chairpersons**

In S3 each meeting is held in a rotating system of different countries and also has a different chair representative from the country where the meeting is being held. The chairpersons are generated from their own group and not elected.

The Indigenous governance model provided by S3 appears to have worked well in this community for a decade. The core values in this model were also supported by evidence from the other two COAG trial sites. There were some small variables based on different cultural communities' experiences and aspirations.

**Non-Indigenous Land Council Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

The CEO is a non-Indigenous man who is committed to community’s Indigenous Governance Model. He takes the directives of the Elders, community and middle managers in the final decision-making. The CEO’s role is more of a facilitator whereby the incumbent provides information and background on everything from non-Indigenous perspectives in terms of the expectations of governments and possible implications for certain decision made. When all the information has been presented to the community, with all the alternatives, it is the community who makes the final decision. There is also a non-Indigenous Town Planner and many other non-Indigenous staff who all appear to be altruistic in their approach to Indigenous governance.
Seven Land Council Chairpersons

There are seven language and clan groups in this region that comes under one artificial non-Indigenous designated boundary. Each of these groups has their own Chairperson in the Land Council. They are all equal in power and status. Each meeting is chaired by a different group’s Chairperson and the meetings are rotated and held in the country of the presiding chair from that country. In yarns with the eight informants from the S3 trial site, it appears that there have been no significant problems with this model in practice.

Individual community models

All Indigenous communities Australia wide are unique linguistically, culturally and geographically. This model works well for this remote isolated community. It is recognised that there are many different community situations. For the COAG trial site S1, this covers a vast geographical distance and includes many diverse Indigenous cultural, linguistic, and geographical implications. For example, the informants from this COAG trial site are from language and cultural groups from all over that region. They are based in a large regional centre town so their interactions with one another are not grounded in central cultural beliefs. These factors would have to be addressed in the development of a model. However, there are several core values that can be included. For example, each of the Indigenous people in S1 and in S2 are from their own Indigenous community and are there on the basis of their relationship to their own communities. And their first line of accountability is still to their own community and those of the other communities that they represent in their individual governance roles. The following is an example of what is happening in S1:

M: And.. and one of the things we've been struggling I shouldn't say struggling but we've been trying come to grips with is what is an effective process to let the two marry up and you know one of the for instance one of the ways we're doing it in the region is by having communities develop a community plan so the government can see quite clearly what are the needs the aspirations priorities of communities and to respond in a manner that… one in partnership but will also see that those needs have been identified rather than governments always does things in an ad hoc way responding to needs as they come up put it through a coordinated way and in the form of one develop a community plan but then sitting down collectively and looking at the plan and priorities that have been identified and then trying to respond in whole of government way that that's the process that we're trying too establish out this way but you know again it's about what we need to recognise is that not one size fits all and that whilst it might work out here it might not necessarily work anywhere else I think that's the key to all of this that we that's there clear recognition that both communities, communities work differently and the government needs to be flexible and you know be in a position to work in a way that suits the communities that they're dealing with. [FG]
How can Australian VET assist?

Australian VET can;
enter into active partnerships at all levels of course development, implementation and evaluation with Indigenous communities who seek training through this sector;
assist with RTO training and status;
assist with training if needed in the preparation of accreditation documentation;
train non-Indigenous people;
train Indigenous teaching staff;
adopt flexible delivery methods.

Indigenous teaching staff

Although it is recognised that there would not be a large number of trained Indigenous teachers it would be more advantageous for Indigenous teachers to train people in Indigenous governance where possible. All non-Indigenous teachers should be trained in Indigenous governance with involvement from Indigenous community members.

Flexible Delivery

Indigenous people need flexibility in delivery of courses. Flexibility for the courses to be held in the location where the community people live and flexibility in terms of required course numbers.

The delivery should be in such a way that people do not feel shamed but rather proud and gaining in confidence through the training process. Shaming is an important part of Indigenous cultures. It is used for ensuring cohesiveness in social organisation when people cross boundaries of acceptable behaviour. However, many people take this notion on themselves rather than have the community do it first if they feel that they have failed their communities in their roles.

M: Shames a big thing… And the way we set it up we lost 2 people out of 12 you know…[S1 YT1]
What are the underlying funding, planning and accountability frameworks of these successful models?

The research itself did not significantly identify many of these issues. However, the literature identifies issues of funding and accountability frameworks.

Funding

Most of the debate surrounding funding and governance involves the issue of sustainability and avoiding the ‘welfare cycle’. Pearson (2000) advocated for the removal of the “gamon” welfare economy entirely from our social and economic system (Pearson, N., 2000, p.83). This sparked some feverish debate amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike.

M: …If the government ripped out our funding tomorrow all the governance and self determination and all the you know the goals and aspirations we have that's the finish so, so governance is very loosely used (unclear) I still feel that we're in a position to make our own decisions but really we're always you're always still waiting for the government to be able to assist you in what you [S1 YT1]

M: … that's really what governance is about to govern your own life by making your own decisions but you gotta have the capacity to make those decisions and live independent so… the real challenge is the welfare problem it's still really engulfing our heels you know … unemployment is one of the things we're all we're all trying to scratch the surface of and there's stuff in the government there's stuff in the private sector and there’s stuff in the community that we’re all tryin’ to be able to do in terms of governance to improve the lives of our mob at this point of time (unclear) … [S1 YT1]

A Report prepared for ATSIC by AIATSIS in 2000 identifies issues surrounding incentive for sustainable development:

Under current financial arrangements Indigenous organisations have neither the means nor the incentive to develop the economic base of their communities. Sustainable development is a long-term process that requires assured funding over a number of years. (AIATSIS, 2000, p.14)

The above paper articulates that aspects of a new order of Indigenous governance could include: replacement of discretionary tied grants with more flexible and varied funding arrangements; a diversity of governance arrangements to be developed over time, including the potential to develop governance arrangements with new jurisdictional responsibilities or within existing governmental structures; allocation of rights and responsibilities for a broad range of functions and decisions, including political, cultural, social and economic.
In 2001 the Commonwealth Grants Commission reviewed Indigenous funding. The Social Justice Commissioner in his report (2001) identified seven key principles for aligning funding closer with the level of need and the key areas for action to implement these principles (Jonas, W., 2001). It is worth reproducing these here:

- the full and effective participation of Indigenous people in decisions affecting funding distribution and service and service delivery;
- a focus on outcomes;
- ensuring a long-term perspective to design and implement programs and services, thus providing a secure context for setting-goals;
- ensuring genuine collaborative processes with the involvement of government and non-government funders and serviced deliverers, to maximise opportunities for pooling of funds, as well as multi-jurisdictional and cross-functional approaches to service-delivery;
- recognition of the critical importance of effective access to mainstream programs and services, and clear actions to identify and address barriers to access;
- improving the collection and availability of data to support informed decision-making, monitoring of achievements and program evaluation; and
- recognising the importance of capacity building within Indigenous communities

One of the key points of this Report was ‘the relationship between capacity building and the achievement of service outcomes needs to be recognised in funding decisions’ (ibid). ATSIC have similarly put this argument forward.

The Social Justice Commissioner’s 2001 Report clearly articulates a range of developments that ‘link the need for greater participation and community capacity with the development of Indigenous self-governance and arrangements that re-define the current financial and administrative relationship between government and Indigenous communities.

In mid 2003, the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) was awarded an Australian Research Council Linkage project to work with Reconciliation Australia on Indigenous Community Governance. (Sanders, W. 2004, p.1) This is a significant indicator of the political and philosophical direction of the debate about governance. Ah Mat (2003) advocated strongly for the political and moral case for ‘enterprise development in Indigenous Cape York … for involvement in the wealth creation process’ (Ah Mat, R., 2003, p.10). Ah Mat further contends:

We must make wealth-creation and wealth-participation respectable amongst our people. Impoverished and dependent people will never be able to keep their culture, language and identity as a distinct people in the long term. Instead they will continue to decline into social dysfunction and cultural poverty (Ah Mat, R., 2003, pp10-11)
The final word on funding illustrates the importance of resourcing communities enough 'to have a collective vision';

M: I don't think, no it's not unlike our kind COAG trial we are currently involved in almost on the tail end of two years we have um we've Premier Cabinet turned up to the community with the resources of state government um, the Commonwealth and the Feds turned up with (name) backing them and the Aboriginal community turned up or tried to turn up um under allsorts of different ways. But what primarily people who not paid to sit and talk to um, um, bureaucracy, they are paid to go out there to pick a kid up off the street or to fix the ill the crisis work so we are dragging, so we are trying to do two things with limited resources, I don't think we are resourced well not enough to get into the debates and we are certainly not resourced enough to um have a collective vision what the next 30 years might look like for an Aboriginal person in this part of the world or anywhere I think that is a part of where ATSIC hasn't left us with that either, with that understanding of a unified community or where Aboriginal Australia sits and how we are going to look after ourselves. It's pulled down and all of a sudden and we are left wondering what is going to replaced how we are goin' to talk to each other um people become (unclear) and we are trying to reconstruct out of limited or no resources we are trying reconstruct in a way to talk to each other and um … [S2 YT2]

There are clearly divergent views in different parts of the country and these must be respected, not homogenised.

Planning

Clearly any planning requires listening, and listening to people at a local level about what their needs are in terms of governance training.

M: Well if you gonna be in em I think you gotta listen to the people first their gotta listen to the people and the people will tell em what they need or what they require. I'd like to see a lot more support given to school leavers or the people in the school system….as to working in organisations or serving on committees or…. to groom those people and incorporate some governance stuff type stuff in TAFE and the school system when prior to year 12 [S1 YT2]

M: Well TAFE is good I TAFE and other…other institutions are learning (unclear) poorer people who provide training they're gotta listen to Aboriginal people and they gotta work specifically with our community and (unclear) [S1 YT2]

Planning also encompasses who should actually deliver such courses? TAFE was seen as an option but Registered Training Organisations were also viewed as possible operators.

M: And the vision for community to aspire want to use that tool to give them an end that they need and I think, I don't think that is really clear and I think the TAFE colleges are struggling because the community is not to sure why they want to go to TAFE and they think ah we need and education but there is no vision of participation… if you have got 80% unemployment you'll notice it nobody has participated in the economy what do you want to go to school for when the life the, the, generational experience says that schools have no relationship with and you can't a job for all different sorts of reasons so the vision is very limited. Um and I think to devise that a training program is really need, and what you're doing I suppose is you need direction and an understanding about how it would get applied and who would apply it and for what purpose would they apply it? [name] you mentioned many people wish um, things you mentioned, um, ah, um, to be looked at in terms of this is a course that's got to (unclear) sector ah, but just doesn't mean that TAFE colleges run it. If there was an Aboriginal registered training organisation in (place) or anywhere else then they could run it, so could you see that as (unclear)… [S2 YT2]
A very significant planning issue is that of numbers required to run a course. The locale of delivery and mode of delivery will clearly impact on this as well.

F: How you deliver and where you deliver and everything else, that makes the difference… Because what you would want to do you want to look at and explore what is happening in your community with you know when your doing, when your teaching it. Whatever it is you are going to do with it. So you look at what has happened in your community and the history of your community. [S2 YT1]

M: …the expectations of the communities that I deal with on a regular basis are never fulfilled you know you go to some communities and this maybe digressing a bit but 20 out of 25 people there will have done a small engines course and we’re talkin (unclear) you don’t need 20 people with small engines capabilities in an in an area like that but that is what the government says you must do you must have at least 15 participants to run that course so you’ve got 5 people who really want to do it you end up with 20 you know… That’s right. I see these things all the time and that’s just that’s not an isolated incident we can go to any any pre… or any education and training module you can think of and that’s the way the government says you must have this amount of people why the whole of (place) population 75 people you know where probably in a lot of areas like that will not so much (place) let’s say (place) you’ve got all these people with all these qualifications and skills no where to use them you know we don’t like moving to far away from our families you know and to get a job with the qualifications that some of these that our people have got they’ve got to move to (place) or (place) or you know some large town and the same thing in (place). [S1 YT1]
Appendix C: Literature review

Introduction

Indigenous governance is an emerging field in research and there has not been much literature specifically written about the topic. Governance from Indigenous perspectives today is a highly complex issue and fraught with cultural incongruencies. Indigenous peoples have their own perceptions of the notion of governance. These often relate more to living at the interface of two cultures; Western and their own. Living at the interface of two cultures has been articulated in the following manner:

‘Garma,’ in a language of north East Arnham Land, means ‘the meeting of river of salt and fresh water, the turbulence of which produce lines of foam where the streams interface’ (Marika et al. in Greville 1997)… two different cultures are seen as two streams meeting together, interacting, and making up a ‘complex pattern of turbulence’ (Greville 1997:33). It is not that the smaller stream is integrated into the bigger stream but that the two streams interact and contribute equally. Both sides, people from both Aboriginal and Western culture, ‘can benefit from theorizing over the interaction between the two streams of life’ (Marika et al. in Greville 1997:33) (Greville in Tauchi, 2000, Segment 4.3.2)

To properly understand Indigenous perceptions of Indigenous governance today we need to briefly address generally how Indigenous peoples have lived from the beginning and how social organisation works. Generally speaking communities have lived in a dynamic relationship between ‘country’; Dreamings; ancestors; kinship relationships with each other and the land and with language (see Dixon 1980a, 1980b, 1980c; Goodall, 1996; Haviland, 1979; Reynolds, 1990; Rumsey, 1993). People live by the laws of the Dreamings and their ancestors. The Elders provide knowledge and advice; in essence the wisdom. Decisions are made through consensus. There were no governing individuals or bodies until the notion of western governance was imposed on Indigenous peoples in 1788.

The very essence of our traditional political structures which was based on seniority and religious power gained through consensus decision making had restricted influence over individual clans and nations. This political structure proved in early contact with the invaders, and subsequently in today’s national Indigenous political debates, to be compromised by non-Indigenous political processes, which dictate terms, timeframes promotes individual leadership and representative platforms, over our traditional consensus decision making processes. (Lester 2001, p.1)
When the British invaded Australia in 1788 and notwithstanding the application of the doctrine of “terra nullius” it must have been understood and abundantly clear that languages, societies’ organisation and social practices. What the British, and later Anglo-Australians did make note of was interpreted through their own Western cultural lens and measured against their own beliefs, values and social practices (Hanlen, 2000). According to the original British invaders they thought that the peoples were one people with one language and culture. Western cultures viewed communities of people everywhere would/should have forms of governance as they knew them in England. The British measured the social organisation of the Indigenous peoples against their own beliefs, values and social practices systems, which they then used to legitimise their invasion, theft of land and resources hence the term ‘terra nullius’ (Goodall, 1996). This was followed by the imposition of the Colonial, Federal and State governments based on the Westminster parliamentary, British legal and education systems (see Fletcher, 1989a; 1989b).

The complex, diverse and egalitarian social and political order in traditional Indigenous communities has been totally disregarded as the British invaders persisted to inculcate Indigenous communities with their ethnocentric power/political structures by anointing Aboriginal 'kings', 'chiefs' and 'queens', in an endeavour to systematically take their land. No regard was given to the primarily egalitarian nature of the kinship, sacred and secular political life of the Indigenous Australians. Indigenous laws established in Dreaming which served Indigenous nations over tens of thousands of years to maintain their culture and protect Mother Earth, were deemed inadequate or too 'primitive' for any serious consideration or understanding by the invaders. Under the mandate of 'terra nullius' the British were prepared to go to any length to secure an economic land base in Australia and if that meant fabrication and imposition of an alien political system for the Indigenous people, then so be it. (Lester 2001, p.18)

Indigenous world views are different to non-Indigenous world views. They centre Indigenous experiences, values, systems; laws, relationships, country. No discussion about governance is complete without an understanding of context, without an understanding of world views. Battiste and Henderson explain this difference by identifying three fundamental problems. Firstly, Indigenous knowledge 'does not fit neatly in to the Eurocentric concept of "culture"'. Secondly, 'Indigenous knowledge is not a uniform concept across all Indigenous peoples'. Finally, Indigenous knowledge is 'so much a part of the clan, band or community, or even the individual, that it cannot be separated from the bearer to be codified in to a definition' (Battiste and Henderson, 2003, pp. 35-36)

A well-known Indigenous elder from Derby, Western Australia, who has since passed away, explained his view of the world and Indigenous community organisation in the following manner:

Pattern thinking is Aboriginal thinking. There is no big boss. Patterns are about belonging. Nothing is separate from anything else. This land is not separate from nature, people, the heavens, and ancient stories. Everything belongs in the pattern. There is no ‘ownership’ in pattern-thinking. Only belonging. Money can not [sic] buy bits of a pattern. Power runs all through a Pattern. It cannot be sold. It is not separate from the pattern.

(Mowaljarlai in Blair, 2001, p.5)

He provided an account of how he saw Western societies’views of the world as follows:
Triangle thinking is western culture thinking. There is always a big boss. There are other bosses who have power over people down the triangle. Triangles are about money and power. Triangle thinking separates everything into layers of power and administration. ‘Ownership’ is a triangle idea. ‘Belonging’ cannot fit into Triangle thinking. ‘Ownership’ means ‘rulership’ by the owner. Triangles are separate from each other, and separate from patterns. Triangle thinking tries to squeeze patterns into triangles. This cannot work. Patterns do not have rigid lines like triangles.

(Mowaljarlai in Blair, 2001, p.5)

Watson and Chambers discuss the importance of finding patterns that make sense of the world. They discuss contrasts between the patterns that organise and the laws that govern European knowledge and perception and the patterns that make sense of the Aboriginal world. Aboriginal people have a “genealogical pattern” where there are ordered ways of naming and construing relationships of natural things associated to perceived ancestral or familial linkages. European Australians have “number patterns” that order ways of naming and construing natural relationships according to conventional techniques of counting and measuring. There are notions of equivalence and hierarchy, notions of economic hierarchy and “competition over value”. They clearly articulate the view, that both kinds of patterning are found as systems or organisations in all human societies, they cannot be polarised. Patterns, therefore, play a fundamental role in Indigenous epistemology – a role that networks and relates ideas and themes, one that offers a sense of Belonging. (Watson and Chambers,)

This suggests that there can be cultural conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perceptions of social organisation and governance. Since the 1788 invasion, Western concepts of Indigenous governance were generally developed and framed by how governments and the mainstream systems could manage and control Indigenous peoples through the colonial and federal ‘protection’, ‘assimilation’, ‘self-determination’ and ‘reconciliation’ policies (see Fletcher, 1989; Goodall, 1996; Reynolds, 1990). With ‘self-determination’ in the 1980s came the introduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC) proposed to include Indigenous leadership and governance, and with the introduction of the Mabo Native Title and the Land Rights Acts, all these gave the impression that Indigenous peoples are involved in, and have some control of their own governance in the big picture of Australia. The infrastructure of ATSIC was set up in regional sectors however it was based on Western beliefs, values, social practice concepts of bureaucracy and governance. Indigenous peoples had the right to vote in the regional ATSIC elections and these were still based on Western social practices and notions of governance. Indigenous peoples have often become disenchanted with the concepts, believing that they do not really benefit from them according to their own perceptions of their needs. They are doubtful of just how much of a role they have really had in the planning and decision making in the ‘self-determination’ process. At this point in Indigenous histories, ATSIC had offered the best opportunities towards ‘self-determination’ to date and therefore Indigenous Australians generally viewed ATSIC as one of the only means towards ‘self determination’ available to them. Often Indigenous peoples have been regarded as the ‘other’ and were not truly involved in the processes themselves and had to rely on the decisions made by governments and bureaucracy where the real power lies.
In any consideration, we [Indigenous Australians] are not ‘Other’. We are at the center of our own lives and our own history, and we need to give primacy to that position. We stand in relation to the mainstream but we do not have to view that relationship as secondary to it, as it has been inscribed in the corpus of Western Disciplines (Nakata 1999:3), (Nakata in Tauchi, 2000, Segment 4.3.1)

In essence;

Currently our governance systems - black and white - barely recognise each other. Our law is ignored by the mainstream system most of the time. How can a new generation of leaders grow up and become strong if the foundation of their authority is not recognised. (Daly, J. 2004, p.5)

This literature review centres Indigenous voices (Hanlen, 2002; see Nakata in Tauchi 2000) in researching the notion of Indigenous governance and considering the topic in relation to Indigenous peoples using Decolonisation as an analytical tool.

This collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then presented in various ways back to the West, and then through the eyes of the West back to those who have been colonized. Edward Said refers to this as a Western discourse about the Other which is supported by ‘institutions’, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, pp.1-2)

Decolonisation is used here to deconstruct Western perceptions and to present Indigenous perspectives of Indigenous governance as it is presented in the limited current literature available.

Much of the literature on governance focuses on governance in the northern parts of Australia; specifically the Northern Territory and Cape York. There is less literature that addresses governance in the southern States and Territory. As an emerging field there is a wide range of issues including the following:

Defining governance and Indigenous governance:

Regionalisation and localism:

Capacity-building:
Cultural match

The role of local governments:

Self-determination:

Risk-taking and fear of the unknown:

Time and the need to make mistakes:

The importance of country and culture:

Political factors associated with governance:

Changing the conversation:

'One size does not fit all'

Conflict resolution:

The importance of stories:

Policy development:

Treaty, Native Title and Land Rights and their lead in to governance and impact on governance today:

Wealth creation in communities, enterprise development and economic dependency:
Intergenerational welfare dependency:

Multiplicity of governance structures:

Reconciliation:

Ethics:

Families; strong families lead to strong communities:

Research:

Involvement of the private sector and civil society organisations:

Education and literacy:

Community dysfunction:

Accountability:

Partnerships:

Leadership:

The importance and role of Elders and Traditional Owners:

Training and 'leadership development':

Protection of rights:

Complexity of governance:

Financial management:
As an emerging field of discussion, people are generally concerned with defining the term 'governance' and looking at different models of Indigenous governance and the mechanics associated with effective governance. The literature to-date describes historically, traditional and contemporary forms of governance impacting on Indigenous peoples prior to and since the invasion of our countries. It endeavours to source the complexities and incongruencies of governance when dealing with different world-views.

Cultural strengthening through capacity building in specific communities/regions is the focus of many of the papers read. This includes the significance of families, relationships and elders.

A more recent trend in the literature is the importance of economic development and establishing more effective links with private enterprise to break loose the shackles of colonisation and welfare dependency. Writings from Cape York particularly focus on this aspect of governance. Changing the conversation; rethinking the approach to governance and centring Indigenous experiences and world views will become a more significant and focused theme in the future.

There are three main sources of information for this Literature Review:

Building Effective Indigenous Governance Conference
Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) and Reconciliation Australia are currently conducting a research project entitled the 'Indigenous Community Governance Project' (ICGP) which has been funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC). They have developed a very useful Annotated Bibliography that is a 'continuously developing collection of recent and key literature on the broad field of governance, with a particular focus on Indigenous community governance.' The Bibliography identifies national and international literature in the fields of Indigenous governance and natural resource management, Indigenous governance and health, Gender and Indigenous governance, National governance and International governance. This material is available on-line at www.anu.edu.au/caepr/governance.php

Cape York Partnerships.

The Cape York Partnerships website is also an invaluable source for recent views pertaining to Indigenous governance. This site address is www.capeyorkpartnerships.com

The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre is also a significant centre 'harnessing research and jurisdictional collaboration to sustain governance initiatives' (Furber, H., Ganter, E., and Davies, J. (2003).

Journal articles from an Australian Indigenous perspective are far and few between at this stage with the Australian Journal of Public Administration being at the forefront and publishing in this area. There is much more information published overseas in the area of Indigenous governance.
Building Effective Indigenous Governance Conference Papers

A conference was held in November 2003 in Jabiru, Northern Territory. The papers presented at the conference are included here. There were numbers of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and those from Canada and the United States who presented papers that shed some light on how Indigenous peoples here and elsewhere perceive the notion of 'governance'. These papers are listed here as they appear in the conference details for the interim report to NCVER and are properly referenced at the end of this document. We have identified them specifically here as they are significant expressions of issues from a broad spectrum of peoples. These conference papers form the basis of any literature review as they are the largest collection of papers thus far in Australia. They have put the issues of governance on the Indigenous policy agenda outside of Cape York Partnerships and the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research.

Conference Papers:

Tony Binalany & Banambi Wunungmurra; Regional Governance

John Cleary; Sea Trials

Tobias Nganbe, Mathias Nemaluk, Aloysius Narjic and Theodora Nardu (Thamarrur Regional Council) (2003); The Past, Present and Future

Stephen Cornell; Starting and Sustaining Strong Indigenous Governance

Commissioner Kim Hill (ATSIC, NT North Zone), Regionalisation and ATSIC

Maralampuwu Kurrupuwu (President of Tiwi Islands Local Government); Tiwi Pathways to Regional Governance: Our DREAM, Our FUTURE

Neil Sterritt; Governing First Nations in Canada: The comparative policy and practical community challenges are there lessons for the Northern Territory?

Terrence Whap (Torres Strait Regional Authority); Torres Strait Regional Authority

David Ross (Director, Central Land Council); Aboriginal Customary Authority and Decision Making: The key role of Traditional Owners in Creating Legitimate and Capable Governance

John Daly (Deputy Chairman, NLC); Northern Territory Statehood and Constitutional protections: issues and implications for future Aboriginal Governance

Leah Armstrong (Yarnteen, Newcastle, NSW); Financial Management and Business Systems: The Backbone of an Effectively Resources Capacity for Governance

Theodora Narndu; Strong Families: The Roots of Strong Governance

Manley Begay Jr. and Stephen Cornell (Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management and Policy (University of Arizona) and Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development; What is Cultural Match and Why Is it so Important

Will Sanders (Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU; Hastening Slowly: Legislative and Policy Reform for Indigenous Community Government under the NT Local Government ACT.)
A number of themes have been identified from these papers including:

How do we [Indigenous Australians] define governance?

How do we [Indigenous Australians] define Indigenous governance?

How has governance worked for Indigenous peoples?

How has Indigenous governance worked for Indigenous peoples?

Is there a conflict between Indigenous cultures and the notion of ‘governance’?

How do we develop a notion of ‘governance’ that works for the benefit of Indigenous communities?

Who is accountable?

What are some of the major issues that have arisen as a result of the issues mentioned above?
Ways to address the education and training of Indigenous people that meets the needs of their communities and empowers them to plan, make decisions, maintain service delivery.

Ways to address these issues that work for Indigenous communities where the Indigenous peoples are genuinely involved in the planning, decision-making and the maintaining of service delivery?

A number of case studies are identified and discussed including the following:
- Bamaga Accord: (Whap, T.)
- Cape York: (Ah Mat and Pearson, N.)
- Canada - Mettakatta, Gitksan Health Authority and Skeetchestn: (Sterritt, N.)
- Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development: (Begay, M. and Cornell, S.)
- Miwatj: (Binalany, T. and Wunungmurra, B and Jonas, W. 2003)
- Mututjulu: (Jonas, W. 2001)
- Northern Territory: (Sanders, W. 2004)
- Nunavut: (Jull, P. Ross, D) 0
- Nyirranggulung Mardrulk - Ngadberre:
- Tiwi Islands: (Binalany, T. and Wunungmurra, B and Cleary, J.
- Torres Strait Islands: (Sanders, W. 2004b, Whap, T.)
- Wadeye: (Westbury, N)
- Yarnteen, Newcastle, NSW: (Armstrong, L.)
- Yenbena Indigenous Training Centre, Yorta Yorta (Jonas, W. 2001)

We now focus on a few of the emergent themes from the literature reviewed, specifically;

- Defining governance
- Regional governance
- Accountability
- Cultural Match
- Leadership
- Wealth creation and economic enterprise
- Research
- Training and Leadership Development

Defining governance?

There is a great deal of diversity amongst peoples when they discuss governance. People articulate governance being associated with power, traditional cultural strengths, decision-making, capacity, and leadership. People identify some degree of conflict between the notions of 'governance' and 'Indigenous governance' or at the least finding a balance between the two rather than the imposition of a western style of governance over Indigenous forms of governance.

Indigenous governance is a Western concept. In Australia, governments are based on the Westminster system, which includes large bureaucracies and agencies involved in the provision and delivery of services. Governance is conducted through local, state and federal government bureaucracies and agencies. To place the word ‘Indigenous’ in front of ‘governance’ makes the assumption that Indigenous peoples traditionally practised ‘governance’ in their communities and that ‘Indigenous governance’ simply Indigenises the whole Western notion of governance.

Decision-making through strong leadership and transparency are what Binalany and Wunungmurra (2003, p.5), highlight as a marker of good governance:

Good Governance is about having the structures, processes and capacity present to make sound informed decisions through strong leadership and transparency. …[the]capacity walk
[sic] hand in hand and cannot be separated, both must grow and develop together, our education must provide the tools for meaningful employment and eventually, informed choices about our future.

Ross identifies cultural tradition and customary law being:

At the heart of these discussions about 'governance' is the nature of Aboriginal customary law, and specifically the traditional relationships with, and ownership of, land (Ross.D. 2004 p.1).

Dictionary definitions are quoted with Dodson identifying the most pertinent as 'rule with authority, conduct the policy, actions, and affairs …' (Dodson, M. 2004, p.3). Dodson as others do (Ah Kit, J. 2004, pp. 4-5) attach some significance to the definition by Plumptre and Graham who articulate that 'governance is about power, relationships, processes of representation, decision-making and accountability. It is about who decides, who has influence, how that influence is exercised and how decision-makers are held accountable.'

Cornell looks at the concept of 'governance' as well as that of 'Indigenous governance':

When we talk about governance we're talking about people deciding how to work together to do the things they need to get done. How do we make decisions? Who has the authority to act for us? How do we resolve disputes among us? How do we get community business done? Good governance means having good rules for those sorts of things, rules that are effective and that have the support of the people.

Indigenous governance means Indigenous peoples make these rules for themselves. They make the decisions. They have the authority to decide how they will run their lives, their communities, their nations. Indigenous governance is not consultation. It is jurisdiction. It may be shared jurisdiction; it may be sole jurisdiction, bit it involves genuine decision-making power. (Cornell, S. 2004, p.3)

Hill asks whose point of view we consider governance from?

... if we 'are talking about governance from the government's point of view such as reporting requirements? And is this mainly about service delivery or the needs of government? Or, should we be looking at governance strictly from an Indigenous perspective? If so, should the emphasis be on rights or realigning decision-making to more traditional methods? (Hill, K. 2004, p.1)

Is there a conflict between Indigenous cultures and the notion of 'governance'? Cleary (2003, p. 4) explains the differences between “Democracy vs. Traditional Decision-making”.

Governing bodies in Indigenous communities need to ensure community representation and communication without being too cumbersome. In trying to meet the needs of everyone, the creation of TILG included the continuation of 4 community management boards of elected members, together with the full TILG Council with all these bodies initially meeting monthly. All this on top of a population of around 2,500 people) holding western style elections where 10 votes can get you elected. This makes decision-making a confusing and time-consuming process.

Within Tiwi culture the most important forum for the communication and discussion are the Family structures based on Clan and Skin Group. Opportunities for informal community involvement in governance need to be given greater credibility and thought so that there is greater level of understanding and communication at grass roots level. With strong family and community support, one single elected body could be all that is needed to streamline governance processes.
I cannot stress strongly enough that a simple coordinated structure is required for any regional governance structure to work.

Cronin asserts what governance is not for Indigenous people:

governance for Aboriginal people is not just about:

- drafting a Constitution, choosing governing council members and seeking incorporation or legal recognition; or
- having an organisation to deliver services or delivering services on behalf of government agencies; or
- putting in place structural and funding arrangements to ensure financial accountability; or
- designing Aboriginal organisations to interface with government, bureaucracy, and the dominant society.

This type of governance has been designed and put in to place in Aboriginal communities to serve the interests or objectives of the Territory or Federal Governments. In this form of governance Aboriginal peoples are passive 'clients' or disadvantaged Australians with no rights and responsibilities and who need more service delivery to solve their problems or need to be controlled and assimilated. This method of governance concentrates power, resources and initiatives with bureaucracy or government. (Cronin, D. 2004, p.5)

But Indigenous nations have been problem-solving for a long time. They have had to in order to survive. They know their situations and their communities better than any outside governments ever will. (Cornell, S., 2004, p.6)

Some highlight the human element of 'governance';

While governments talk about outcomes and management processes, it is clear Wadeye residents talk about the personal, the family and the community. (Westbury, N. 2004, p.1)

The last word on the definition of 'governance' should lie with Narndu:

Many years ago our parents and grand parents and their parents had a system of governance. This system of governance worked very effectively for our people.

This system was tied to identity that is attached to land and spirit. Today there is recognition that our own systems of governance from long ago are still strong in our hearts. (Narndu, T. 2004, p.1)

Regional Governance

Regional governance or regionalism has been identified as part of a new agenda. Others see this as an idea perpetuating a colonialist myth that Indigenous peoples existed in splendid isolation from each other. However it is viewed regionalism is identified by some as a means to achieve successful Indigenous governance.

Binalany, T. and Wunungmurra, B (2004) believe that:

Regional governance – constitutes a new agenda in the management of Indigenous affairs in Australia. There is a general wish to do things better and differently. It involves Government agencies changing the way they do business with Aboriginal communities.
Ah Kit, J. (2004) on the other hand asserts that regionalisation is not a new concept

There is a complete false view that Aboriginal communities, from outstations and pastoral excisions, to larger communities and townships - through indeed to inhabitants of towns and cities - exist in splendid isolation from each other.

It is a view based on colonialist notions encouraged by the days of the mission, the settlement and the pastoral property. It is an idea designed to divide Aboriginal people from our lands, our languages and our ceremonial connections.

It is an ideology that deliberately denied the fact that Aboriginal people of what is now known as the Northern Territory have always worked together - socially, culturally and economically - as a series of overlapping and interconnected regions.

… Indeed the idea that a ceremony is the exclusive possession of a particular community is both bizarre and offensive. Major ceremonies express themselves socially and politically - indeed economically - as regional forms of governance and communal relationships. …

Uniquely the Northern Territory is a jurisdiction that reflects - in large part - pre-colonial boundaries, rather than notions of the individual, isolated, community, disconnected from the region which it exists.

Regions - however defined, and for various purposes - have always been a feature of organisation for Aboriginal peoples of the Northern Territory.

So service delivery at the level of the individual community is not just stupid on the basis of cost efficient or economic rationalism, it is just plain silly in cultural terms.

(Ah Kit, J. 2004, pp.11-13).

Ah Kit notes that 'some in the Northern Territory have found the emphasis on 'regions' as opposed to 'communities' threatening'. (Ah Kit, J. 2004, pp.10).

Pearson identifies regionalisation as one of three themes in discussions about the future of Aboriginal affairs. He asserts that though he sees regionalisation as part of the solution he is not without his doubts. (Pearson, N. 2004).

Smith agrees that 'the push towards the regionalisation of governance appears justified from certain perspectives - but it raises fundamental challenges of power, jurisdiction, scale, autonomy, representation, process and structure.' (Smith, D,2004,p.17).

Mowbray (Mowbray, M. 2005) and Ross. (Ross, D. 2004) articulate concern that larger regionalised councils will be much more able to cope than smaller ones. Mowbray asserts that 'even regionalised local governments are likely to have far too much to do with far too little resources. (Mowbray,M. 2004, p.18). Mowbray discusses 'choices in local government arrangements' and presents this as an option that will 'prompt thinking and draw out ideas to expand the discourse' for strong Indigenous governance.

Sanders argues the case for dispersed rather than unified governance for Indigenous communities and regions. (Sanders, W. 2004b, p.19).

Westbury and Sanders believe it is better to encourage local councils/organisations to be complemented by, and linked to, larger specific-purpose regional service agencies. (Westbury,N. and Sanders, W. 2000, p.8).

The discussion on regionalisation and governance is perhaps one of the most well articulated in the current debate, however, there is still much to be said and much to be researched.
Accountability

The issue of accountability has been put on the political agenda for Indigenous peoples. With the introduction of ATSIC there has been a considerable amount of money provided targeting Indigenous communities. The issue of empowering and equipping communities to meet the needs of their communities recognising the expectations of governments and bureaucracies, the limitations and constraints in realistically achieving their objectives. If problems arise as they do, the accountability has fallen to those involved in ATSIC and other Indigenous community organisations.

Indigenous peoples are more accountable than any other group in this country. It is both time-consuming and an unnecessary duplication of peoples effort.

Accountability works both ways. Lee talks about the Nyirranggulung developing a visitors book which he suspects will show that some government, Territory and Commonwealth as well as other agencies, visit too much and some are avoiding the area. (Lee, R. 2004, p.2). This approach turns the tables.

Ah Mat frames the idea that the great lesson of leadership is accountability. His focus for his Address to the Institute of Public Administration Conference was 'the great need my people have for excellent standards of public accountability and governance'. (Ah Mat, R. 2003c, p.1)

The issue of leadership and implementation for the Tiwi people (Cleary, 3003, p.2) also involves accountability.

After the Tiwi Islands Local Government legislation passed through the NT Parliament in 2001, the existing community councils were left to their own devices for a further 9 months without leadership, without the promised establishment package, without a financial management system in place and without a strategic plan of what they were trying to achieve. …The Tiwi Islanders were left to sort out a mismanaged mess for themselves.

What are some of the major issues that have arisen as a result of the issues mentioned above?

Binalany and Wunungmurra (2003, p.4) believe that:

> The current situation sees a collection of small disconnected and isolated organisations attempting to perform functions for which most are not equipped with the necessary “tools” to do so.

They believe that there should be streamlining of the roles of accountability and differences of rules and a reduction in duplication in the different existing organisations. In a similar manner Cleary (2003, p.1) explains how President Maralampuwi Jurrupuwu likens the government of the Tiwi Islands to that of a number of ships in a fleet and each ship has a captain “with all crew on board so that the Tiwi can travel together in the same direction… Before the Tiwi Ship hit the water there were problems”. If there were one ship with one captain and crew there would be less room for duplication of roles and differences of rules. This is clearly significant to communities as there are usually relatively small numbers of people in each community and several organisations within them and these organisations often involve the same people in different positions in many of these. The reliance on centralised service delivery from in this case Darwin exacerbates the situation.

The crew of our ship … the big difference would be that we would have one engine and one rudder so that we can travel in the one direction. We also want all the crew members to be on
board the ship in the Tiwis and not giving directions from their offices in Darwin.
(Kurrupuwu, M. 2004, p.2)

Cultural Match

The concept of 'cultural match' was introduced into Australia through the Harvard Project research team. It has become a term that people have been able to focus on and emerge different associations and meaning from. Cultural match was defined by Begay and Cornell as:

Cultural match means institutions that … embody values that Indigenous peoples feel are important, reflect their contemporary conceptions of how authority should be organised and exercised, are generated through Indigenous efforts and therefore have the support of those they govern. (Begay, M.A. and Cornell, S. 2004, p.11)

Binalany and Wunungmurra are advocates of this approach:

Considerable work was done in our region, consulting with our communities and exploring the type of structure which would suit us best. Our cultural priorities and kinship systems had to walk along side any western governmental construct.

There must be a match between the Yolngu culture and a western style Government system. This is reinforced by a recent paper by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research by Smith and Dodson (Paper 250) which stresses:-

The importance of a match or common ground between the types of governing structures and procedures it wants to develop, and the culturally-based standards, values and systems of authority of community members. For example, common ground must be found about issues such as who should hold power, how power should properly be exercised, how decision making and disputes should be handled, and about the respective rights and responsibilities of different members and leaders. The more a governing body finds some cultural “fit” or “match” in these matters, the more it will secure the ongoing mandate of its members.
(Binalany and Wunungmurra, 2004, p. 6)

Ah Mat on the other hand 'tempers the idea that our governance structures must be made to suit our social and cultural arrangements':

There is a lot of talk nowadays about the need for "cultural match" in indigenous governance, that is structures should match the cultural arrangements and realities of indigenous groups if they are successful. There is no doubt much truth in this.

However, I would temper the idea that our governance structures must be made to suit our social and cultural arrangements. In relation to business organisation, we must also ensure that our governance structures suit successful enterprise operation and management. (Ah Mat, 2003b, p.5)

Mowbray asserts that 'how well some such organisational devices (such as leases, regional agreements and bi-cameral decision -making arrangements) fit Indigenous forms of social organisation may be highly problematic'. (Mowbray, M. 2005, p.16)

Lee in his discussion of Nyirranggulung-Mardrulk-Ngadberre emphasises the importance of blending the old and the new:
In summary, a lot of the principles of Nyirranggulung-Mardrulk-Ngadberre such as sharing, cooperation and communication have their roots in very early times. The way we have structured Nyirranggulung-Mardrulk-Ngadberre is linked to the ways we have organised socially in the past, and connecting this to the way we want to move forward in the future. This is the kind of structure that will make us legitimate in the eyes of our peoples - not the things that have been imposed on us from the outside as happened in the past. (Lee, R. 2004, p.4).

Begay and Cornell assert that:

What matters is not that things be done in the old ways. It is that things be done in ways - old or new - that win the support, participation, and trust of the people, and that can get things done. Some will be old. Some will be new. (Begay, M.A. and Cornell, S. 2004, p.17)

Smith believes that the vision of 'cultural legitimacy' (a key component of the concept 'cultural match') in the Northern Territory is not matched with the experiences of Native American peoples where the concept of 'cultural match' originated. (Smith, D. 2004, p.24).

The Thamarrurr Council summarises this concept well;

The symbol is about Thamarrurr - the government of our ancestors and the building blocks of the future. (Thamarrurr Council, 2004, p.2).

However people conceptualise 'cultural match' it embodies traditional law and spirit. How it is derived is a whole other dilemma. Its use in contemporary discussion may derive more appropriate and decolonised terms for the many divers Australian contexts and spaces.

Leadership

Leadership is not surprisingly one of the themes emerging from the literature reviewed. There are critiques of leadership, (Ah Kit, J. 2004; Taylor, R. 2003, p.11) excuses for poor leadership and acknowledgments of the need to better equip our future leaders.

Taylor asks us to 'consider and discuss models and styles of leadership' to better understand what will work in our communities. He asserts that in his view:

the nature of leadership now required in the Indigenous community context is leadership which will challenge us to face our problems in ways which honestly assess the reality of our community situations - and our values - and which will mobilise our communities to develop new approaches to community problem-solving. (Taylor, R, 2003, p.14)

It is important at this point to note the work of the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre in developing and offering Certificate 11 and IV as well as a Diploma in Indigenous Leadership. More information can be found on their website.

Dodson illuminates this issue:

I am proud of our mob for what they've done, and the non-Aboriginal friends we've picked up along the way. What I think is long overdue, though, is a revision of what we believe leaders can look, smell and taste like. I don't mean inventing a new shiny, digital, one-size-fits-all model. I mean expanding our views and minds.

We have to figure out how to integrate the dignity, courage, and passion of some of our luminaries with the smarts we have now that we've had access to education and. With it, a seat at some tables. (Dodson, M. 2004, p.5)
Wealth Creation and Economic Enterprise

These issues are particularly significant in discussion evolving from Cape York. The discussion is best summed up by Ah Mat:

> Whatever dilemmas and problems enterprise development present to our people, we must face the fact that unless we succeed with enterprise development, our people will be trapped in impoverishment and dependency. And we will continue to fail to develop an economic base for our people. (Ah Mat, R. 2003a, p.13).

The complexity of Indigenous enterprise development is highlighted by Ah Mat in terms of changing Indigenous peoples minds about the notion of wealth creation and Indigenous concepts of ownership:

> Failure to sort out ownership is a frequent reason for enterprise failure. In the wider community, people who have a business idea and the means to develop their idea can develop their own enterprise at their own initiative. It is not as straightforward in Aboriginal communities. This is because Aboriginal people are invariably members of wider family groups and communities, and individuals are not completely free to undertake private enterprise. Many assets (land being the primary example) are not capable of being privately owned by individuals - they are community held. Similarly, opportunities are frequently seen as communal assets - belonging to clan groups or to communities, not to individuals. (Ah Mat, R. 2003b, p.6)

Huggins hopes that 'good governance leads to significantly improved prospects for economic independence' She also makes it clear 'that the equation doesn't necessarily work in reverse - economic independence, with or without native title, doesn't necessarily lead to good governance'. (Huggins, J. 2003).

This is clearly an area of growth in terms of debate.

Research

Appropriate and tangible research is critically important to the development of all aspects of Indigenous governance.

> Indeed one measure of success in terms of establishing good governance, is that Regional Authorities begin to assume the capacity to compile their own statistical measures of progress (obviously in partnership with government agencies who often hold the necessary (data), and to progress in stages to their interpretation, presentation, replication, and dissemination with the ultimate goal of applying them to decision-making for regional planning. (Taylor, J. 2004, p.9)

And

> Research, education and training are key components of governance and capacity building and must meet the developing needs and aspirations of Aboriginal communities. Community based research helps identify issues and creates understanding and knowledge of those issues as the basis for finding solutions and taking action. However, a lot of research does not benefit Aboriginal communities because the impetus for research is generated not by the needs or priorities of communities but by the needs and priorities of the dominant academic and government institutions. (Cronin, D. 2004, p.8).
The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre asserts that harnessing research and jurisdictional collaboration to sustain governance initiatives is a key role for them (Furber, H., Ganter, E., and Davies, J. 2003, p.1). Indigenous communities should investigate the options available to them and set their own research agenda and terms.

Training and Leadership Development

The area of interest most relevant to this research is one where the literature reviewed is sparse. There have been many papers and reports prepared that look at vocational education and training in general. Indeed the National Council for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) has itself produced a comprehensive document about appropriate education and training for Indigenous peoples. (Robinson, C. and Hughes, P. 1999).

Jonas in his 2001 Annual report highlights the work of Yenbena Indigenous Training Centre in Victoria. (Jonas, W. 2001). Unfortunately this centre no longer operates courses or training. It could be argues the complexity of funding and accountability sources took away the training and Education agenda.

Cleary identifies the roles of Registered Training Organisations (RTO) in the delivery of education and training. The example provided of the Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board becoming an RTO is a significant step towards controlling education and training development and outcomes. He further asserts that:

Training in governance as in other areas needs to be continual, with one to one mentoring, not visiting trainers who vainly attempt to teach unfamiliar faces on an intermittent basis. The most productive governance training we have comes from daily training in the workplace augmented by Indigenous community volunteers who live and work in the community…

(Cleary, J. 2004, p.8)

Some authors identify particular aspects of governance training that are critical. Sterritt, N (2004, pp5-6) suggests training in governance principles, practices and institutions, as well as how to develop policies and procedures for both staff and leaders and principles. Djayghurrnga an Aboriginal principle suggests people must be equipped with competency in English literacy;

If this is to change and Aboriginal people are to become recognised in Australian society and truly represented in decision-making organisations, the first essential tool the people must be equipped with is competency and confidence in written and spoken English. … Note that I distinguish English literacy because what needs to be clearly understood is that Aboriginal people are perfectly literate and numerate in their own ways. Likewise they are capable and confident in their self governance. We are talking about a culture that has clear roles and responsibilities in governance for thousands of years. (Djayghurrnga, E. 2004, p.1)

Education and training in governance is clearly important but the literature does not yet identify the most effective ways to do this. We leave the second last word on this to the Report from the Nunuvut Education Task Force:

Institutions handle complex activities by breaking them up into smaller tasks and spreading them out among many people.

With the organisation to guide them, it is no longer necessary for most people to have an overall understanding of what is being done. As long as they follow instructions the institution will keep working, like a machine with human parts. Institutions can be very powerful, but they can make people dependent on being told what to do.

Seeing only a small part of things, people in institutions find it difficult to judge the appropriateness of their tasks.
This can cause people to become dispirited, passive, or even self-destructive. (Silatunirmut, The Pathway to Wisdom, 1992)

Lee identifies this reaction:

At the moment most live passive lives lacking in any real control (Lee, R., 2004, p.3)

What we must strive for in vocational education and training is a wise education:

A wise education cannot be something that is done to people, it is something that people must learn to do for themselves. This involves the whole community and starts with a collective vision of the future. (Silatunirmut, The Pathway to Wisdom, 1992, p.21).

Indigenous nations have been problem-solving for a long time. They have had to in order to survive. They know their situations and their communities better than any outside governments ever will. (Cornell, S., 2004, p.6)
Appendix D: References for the appendices


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