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CULTURAL KEYLINE

The Life Work of Dr. Neville Yeomans

**Thesis submitted by Les Spencer BSc. (Hon), BSSc.
24 December 2005**

**For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
In the School of Social Work and Community Welfare
James Cook University**



Photo 1 Four stages in Dr. Neville Yeoman's life

- Top left: At Fraser House, circa 1961
(Yeomans, N. 1965a, p. 81)
- Top Right: As election candidate, 1969
(Yeomans, N. 1965a)
- Bottom Left: Wedding to Lien, November 1972
From Lien Yeoman's book – used with permission
(Yeomans and Yeomans 2001)
- Bottom Right: On Atherton Tablelands, 1993 Yeomans Family photo
- used with permission

Two Poems Written by Dr. Neville Yeomans

Together the following poems (Yeomans 2000a; Yeomans 2000b) provide a feel for the subject matter of this thesis. I first knew of the existence of these two poems when they were handed out at Neville Yeomans' funeral on 7 June 2000.

The Inma

There seems to be a new spirituality going around - or a philosophy – or is it an ethical and moral movement, or a feeling?

Anyway, this Inma religion or whatever it is – what does it believe in?

It believes in the coming-together, the inflow of alternative human energy, from all over the world.

It believes in an ingathering and a nexus of human persons' values, feelings, ideas and actions.

Inma believes in the creativity of this gathering together and this connexion of persons and values.

It believes that these values are spiritual, moral and ethical, as well as humane, beautiful, loving and happy.

Inma believes that persons may come and go as they wish, but also it believes that the values will stay and fertilize its area, and it believes the nexus will cover the globe.

Inma believes that Earth loves us and that we love Earth.

It believes that from the love and from the creativity will come a new model for the world of human future.

It believes that we have started that future - now.

I guess that if you and I believe these things we are *Inma*.

On Where

Perhaps somewhere there is an unimportant place caught between East and West, North and South, past and future.

It is so far behind that it can only go forward.

Its Indigenous people are so badly treated they will risk anything for a better life.

Its white overlords are so distant from the centre of their own culture that they don't know where to go except to self-government.

It is wealthy, industrial, consumer, under-populated and chaotic.

It has tropical coasts and islands. It has cool mountains and tablelands.

It is closer to Asian and Melanesian peoples than its own capital city, and it often sees itself as the end of the earth.

Yet the desires of some of its citizens are:

- to build the first free territory guided by global humane laws

- to implement the UN covenants on Human Rights

- to give migrants, visitors and native born an equal say

- to accept ideas, people and music of living from all over

- to welcome and respect every interested person

- to love Planet Earth, and

- to take a next step towards a happier more beautiful more human community.

Maybe one such place is called Northern Queensland, Australia.

But an Aboriginal word meaning 'a coming together' is Inma.

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Photo 2. Dr. Neville Yeomans at his desk at Fraser House -
Circa 1961 (Yeomans, N. 1965a)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis researches psychiatrist barrister Dr. Neville Yeomans' lifetime action research into changing the social-life world towards becoming more caring, humane and respecting of all life-forms. Particularly, it researches Yeomans' adapting of his father's sustainable agriculture Keyline processes to the human social life-world as 'Cultural Keyline'.

After a brief review of therapeutic community, community mental health and self-help networks in the UK, USA and Australia, and a brief summary of Keyline and Indigenous precursors influencing Neville, the research focuses, firstly, on describing and analysing the structures/processes used by Yeomans in evolving Australia's first psychiatric therapeutic community 'Fraser House' in Sydney from 1959 to 1968. In particular, what contributions did Neville make to evolving social and community psychiatry and clinical sociology in Australia? Secondly, the thesis describes the community mental health outreach and other psychosocial wellbeing related action research that derived from Fraser House. Thirdly, there is a description of the Laceweb social movement and network, its evolution from Neville's action research and its current development. Finally, there is some discussion of the significance of Neville Yeoman's life work. This research used the same qualitative, 'naturalistic inquiry' method that Neville used including in-depth interviews, archival research and action research.

Neville Yeomans' methods of social action and research can be traced to his collaboration with his father P.A. Yeomans (along with brothers Allen and Ken). P.A is recognised as the most significant person globally in the past 200 years in the field of sustainable agriculture (Mulligan and Hill 2001). P.A. evolved Keyline sustainable agricultural practices based around Keypoints in landform that have system implications.

In researching Cultural Keyline, the thesis details how its precursor, Keyline agricultural practice, recognizes, respects, and makes use of natural forms, functions and processes in nature - especially landform, gravity, as well as self-organizing and emergent aspects of natural systems. The research outlines how Keyline practice fosters nature's tendency for thriving, and documents and analyses Neville's adapting of Keyline as Cultural Keyline in

fostering emergent and thriving potential in social systems. Four non-linear interconnected inter-related aspects of Cultural Keyline are identified:

1. Attending and sensing self organising, emergence and Keypoints conducive to coherence within social contexts
2. Forming cultural locality (people connecting together connecting to place)
3. Strategic, design and emergent context-guided theme-based perturbing of the social topography
4. Sensing and attending to the natural social system self-organising in response to the perturbing, and monitoring outcomes.

In developing 'Cultural Keyline', Neville adapted his father's Keyline to the social life world. Neville pioneered therapeutic community in Australia. Neville worked with inmates he had arranged to be transferred to Fraser House from asylums and prisons in New South Wales. As part of their rehabilitation the inmates were effectively placed in charge of every aspect of Fraser House administration. The research documents how, within eighteen months, these inmates and the Unit's staff developed a style of community psychiatry practice, psychiatric nursing, collective therapy (large group as crowd and audience) and psychiatric training.

The research also traces Neville's use of his Cultural Keyline model in pioneering family therapy, suicide/crisis telephone services, counselling and family therapy within family law, community mental health (becoming the first NSW Director of Community Mental Health, and starting Australia's first Community Mental Health Centre), psychosocial self-help groups and networks, multicultural festivals, cultural healing action, mediation and mediation therapy.

The thesis then explores Neville's development of a number of small therapeutic community houses in North Queensland, as well as evolving what Neville termed an 'International Normative Model Area' or 'INMA' in northern Australia that continues as a micro-model exploring linked local, regional and global governance as an aspect of epochal transition. An outcome of Neville's action research has been the emergence of informal Laceweb networks

amongst Indigenous and other intercultural healers in the northern Australia and in the East Asia-Oceania-Australasia Region. The thesis details how these networks are evolving and supporting self-help and mutual-help amongst Indigenous/Oppressed trauma survivors. Yeomans' writings about his macro-framework for global epochal transition over the next 250-500 years, and potential global futures are detailed in the context of Cultural Keyline and linked to unfolding action.