

“Dancing back our spiritual identity”

**EVALUATION OF THE YABA BIMBIE CULTURAL
DANCE TROUPE PROJECT, YARRABAH 2006 -
2007.**



Janya McCalman, Komla Tsey, Les Baird, Bradley Baird

**School of Indigenous Australian Studies, James Cook University and
Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service**

March 2008

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the core dancers of the Yaba Bimbie dance troupe – Bradley Baird, Colin Costello Jnr, Shaun Davidson, Kerrod Gibson, Vivian Miller, David O'Burns, and Clifford Harris.

We appreciate the assistance and contribution of Gurriny Yealamucka's Social Health Team Manager, Brian Connolly, (the former Justice Group Coordinator) and Cultural Development Officer, Colin Costello.

We would like to thank the funding body – the Indigenous Small Business Fund of DEWR through the Indigenous Coordinating Council.

Finally, we would like to thank Jessie Bridge for completing the literature review, Cecci Bridge for developing the interview questionnaire, and Lisa Lui for formatting this report.

Contents

Introduction	5
The Yarrabah Community	5
History of the Yaba Bimbie dance troupe	6
Goals and Strategies of the 2006-07 Yaba Bimbie Cultural Dance Troupe Project	7
Project Description.....	7
Project Objectives.....	8
Expected Project Outcomes	9
Intended Significance and Benefit to the Local Community.....	9
The Project Activities.....	9
Employment of a cultural dance manager	9
Dance performances	10
Small business training	10
Example of a dance performance	11
Evaluation Methodology	11
Data collection and analysis.....	12
Challenges of the implementation process	13
Outcomes	15
Increase men’s skills and knowledge about the establishment of a small business and community enterprise	16
Restore traditional and cultural practices to the men of Yarrabah ...	18
Other	23
Conclusion – “We must all move together”	26
Recommendations	27
References.....	28
Acknowledgements.....	2
APPENDIX 1: LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY: THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF CULTURAL DANCE TROUPES	30
Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.....	31
Creative Pathways: An Indigenous Dance Forum	32
The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival	32
Bethel Indigenous Dance Festival	34
Mudi Dungura Mudang Youth Dance of Life Program	36

Personal Persistence, Identity Development, and Suicide: A Study of Native and Non-Native North American Adolescents	36
Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community?	36
APPENDIX 2: EVALUATION - YABA BIMBIE DANCE WORKSHOP WITH DAVID HUDSON MAY 2007	37
BACKGROUND:	37

Introduction

The Yaba Bimbie Cultural Dance Troupe was established in 2003 by the Yarrabah Men's Health Group, which was auspiced by Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service. It was seen as a strategy to both promote tradition and culture and to create employment for local men and young people.

In late 2005, the dance troupe applied through the Indigenous Coordinating Council for funding through the Indigenous Small Business Fund (ISBF) of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). The ISBF offers funding to Indigenous community-based organisations to assist Indigenous people learn about business, develop good business skills and expand their businesses. The aim of the submission was to provide for the development of a business plan, action plan, and marketing plan for the dance troupe; and employ a business manager to mentor a dance group manager for the 12 months of 2006. It was anticipated that at the end of the training / mentoring period, the Dance Troupe Manager would be capable of operating the Dance Troupe as a viable and independent business venture.¹ This report provides an evaluation of the ISBF-funded dance troupe project.

The Yarrabah Community

Yarrabah is an Aboriginal community of 3000 people located 54km south of Cairns. The traditional owners are the Gunganghi and Yindinji peoples. In 1892, the Rev. John Gribble established an Anglican mission at Yarrabah, and the history of the community has closely linked with the theology and practice of the Anglican Church since that time. From 1897 onward, the Queensland government's assimilation policy led to the "removal" of Aboriginal infants, children, women and men from at least 32 tribes across Queensland to Yarrabah. Today, approximately 80 per cent of the community's 3500 residents are their direct descendants. During the mission years at Yarrabah (1892-1960) and under state government control, Aboriginal people lived within a white-dominated social system and their decision-making and cultural expression was extremely constrained. However, cultural practices such as dance, ceremonies and settlement of tribal disputes continued to occur outside of the mission area. The last known traditional man in charge of dance passed away in the 1980s.

In 1982, Wilson considered Yarrabah to be a reserve with a "high rate of violence, legally available alcohol, a relatively high-density population, made up of persons displaced from different areas, and with a low level of traditional culture" (in Hume 1989). Some attempts have been made to revive cultural dance, including the employment of a dance group through the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) in 1993, which performed at the Menmuniy Museum until funding ceased in 1996. A Yaba Bimbie (Father Son) Men's Group was formed in Yarrabah in 1997 in response to social issues such as excessive alcohol use, domestic violence and a series of suicides in the community. Its vision was to "restore men's rightful role in the community using a holistic healing approach encompassing in the program the spiritual, mental, physical, emotional and social aspects of life. In 2001, funding was obtained from the Commonwealth's National Suicide Strategy for two Men's Group Coordinators. Men's Group members recognised the importance of maintaining cultural traditions and danced "once in a while".

¹ 'Cultural Dance Group Proposal (and Amendment) – p1 (2.5)

In 2003, the Men's Group submitted an application to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) for feasibility and business planning for the development of a Yaba Bimbie small business venture. The proposal explored creative alternative ways of improving employment opportunities for men by focusing on three potential small business ventures – cultural dancing, landscaping and stone masonry, and arts and crafts. It recommended that each of the proposed ventures had the potential to provide employment opportunities either as an independent business or in partnership with an outside operator or community organisation.

History of the Yaba Bimbie dance troupe

In June 2003, the men's group formed a cultural dance troupe called Yaba Bimbie. The dance troupe included six regular members (aged 18 to 29) and had weekly practice sessions. Other dancers join in from time to time. The core group members were all Christian men and Men's Group members. However, the group stated that it was open to other members and regularly included other men and boys in dance performances. It developed a vision to become a commercial dance group and undertook extensive planning work and limited commercial work at schools, parties, conferences and official openings.

The dance group has close links with the local Anglican church, including dancing in church services every week (since June 2003). Men's group leaders see this as a healing and integration of church and traditional culture, and an important change in the church's policy in integrating Aboriginal culture within the church. As well as performing weekly within the church, the group performs intermittently at social, conference and commercial functions. Some of these are paid performances, some voluntary. There has been no funding to employ dancers, and little income from performance. In the four months from July 2004 – December 2004, for example, the group performed at 34 social and church events, and seven commercial functions earning \$1200.

In addition to dancing for church and social functions, the dance group has explored its potential to provide employment and income. In June 2004, a business plan for a Yaba Bimbie cultural dancing business enterprise was developed by consultants, Cardno MBK. The report recommended that given the growing demand from tourists to experience Indigenous cultural dancing and story telling, and that Yarrabah has a culture and history to offer non-Indigenous people, there was potential to develop cultural dancing and story telling as a commercially viable business similar to many other niche small businesses. However, the report cautioned that careful strategic planning and collaboration with other Indigenous organisations, professional development, value for money and a guaranteed performance schedule were all necessary to ensure its viability. It acknowledged that the group lacked professional training of dancers or choreography of dance routines, and business development and business management skills. The best opportunity would be for the dance/storytelling performance to form part of a tour run by an existing tourism operator from Cairns.

In early 2005, the cultural dance troupe obtained a small grant (\$4940) from Arts Queensland to strengthen the core group of five dancers through choreography training and to attract more men and boys to dance with the group. The funding application sought support for a series of community-based workshops in Yarrabah, employing a professional choreographer

to provide training and group facilitation to dance group members and interested men and boys. International “edu-tainer” (educator/entertainer) David Hudson was contracted to provide a 2-day choreography workshop for 17 dancers. The group also organised a “Family Dance Festival Day” at Yarrabah pre-school for 60 children and family members; and developed a Yaba Bimbie DVD promotional showreel. This five month project (April to September 2005) was successfully acquitted and led to the ISBF application for further funding to establish Yaba Bimbie as a professional dance troupe. The David Hudson workshop, in particular, helped the group to realize their vision, and helped to build commitment and teamwork.

The men recognised that a long-term commitment is required to develop its vision, and that a lack of commitment has been a key factor in the failure of other regional cultural dance groups. They recognised the need to develop a stronger cohesiveness as a group and in their performances through obtaining professional training of dancers and choreography of dance routines. The dance group also committed to remain open to non-Christian men and boys, and to attract more members to the group. The availability and promotion of professional choreography training was seen as a means to attract new members to the group as there was considerable interest, particularly among boys and teenagers.

The group identified its longer term vision as “get(ting) back to our cultural identity, which means basically having a spiritual life.” Men’s group leaders saw the dance group as a high priority. It encourages men to reconnect with their cultural and spiritual identity and hence to address a range of health and wellbeing issues. For Christian men, the recognition and acceptance of the dance group within the church helped to heal the church’s past destructive influence in repressing traditional cultural expression. This new acceptance helped Christian men to restore their rightful place within the church structure and in their spiritual and cultural expression. The Men’s Group leaders believed that current dancers could be incipient leaders of a cultural revival, and the cultural dance group could be a vehicle for Yarrabah men (from many different tribes) to develop a sense of belonging and wellbeing (within Indigenous culture and within an Aboriginal Christian fellowship).

This report provides an evaluation of the 2006-07 ISBF-funded dance troupe project.

Goals and Strategies of the 2006-07 Yaba Bimbie Cultural Dance Troupe Project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The submission for the ISBF funding described the Yaba Bimbie Cultural Dance Troupe Project as a small business venture which has involved the establishment of a professional dance troupe to perform cultural dancing and story-telling for tourism purposes.² This project was intended to be part of a larger programme that was linked to a Shared Responsibility Agreement (SRA) for Yarrabah, which would eventually include artists and craft workers travelling with the dance troupe and producing items for sale.³

It was originally intended that the funding be used to employ a Business Manager to implement the Yaba Bimbie Business Plan and mentor the Yaba Bimbie Cultural Dance

² ‘Cultural Dance Group Proposal (and Amendment) – p1 (2.5)

³ ‘Cultural Dance Group Proposal (and Amendment) – p1 (2.5)

Troupe Manager. It was anticipated that at the end of the training / mentoring period, the Dance Troupe Manager would be capable of operating the Dance Troupe as a viable and independent business venture.⁴

Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service was successful in obtaining \$66,000 of the \$99,370 originally applied for from the ISBF, DEWR via the Indigenous Coordinating Council (ICC). Funding was provided for the employment of a Business Manager for the project but NOT, as requested, for a local Dance Troupe manager during the mentoring phase.

Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service responded to the ICC expressing their belief that it was essential that a local Yarrabah person be employed to coordinate this project and concern that they would not be able to satisfy the objectives of this project by solely employing a non-local business manager. Objective one, for example, stated a requirement for a high level of traditional knowledge of appropriate local cultural practices, and it was intended that the dance troupe manager would mentor local young men in acquiring further cultural knowledge and skill. Objective 2, stated a need for increasing the business skills of a group of Yarrabah men to ensure that the sustainability of the project was maximized. Gurriny Yealamucka argued, the proposed outcomes could not be achieved without a committed effort on the part of a local coordinator – for example – it would not be feasible for an “outsider” to recruit further young people into the dance troupe, or even to successfully coordinate the current group members.

They therefore applied for a variation in the funding agreement. Given the critical role of a local coordinator, they suggested half-time wages for a Yaba Bimbie dance troupe manager during the mentoring phase of the project, as per the original submission. The remaining funding would provide for an independent audit of the project and the contracting of a customized range of business management training, skills and advice. These would include:

- Stage 2 choreography and motivational performance training for dance troupe members by International Edutainer, David Hudson.
- Quickbooks and other financial management training by Trish Taylor, Director of QBSolutions.
- Marketing and Promotional training and advice.
- Establishment of performance contracts by Cairns Indigenous Events Committee and local dance troupe manager.
- Submission writing training and advice by the Learning Workshop.
- Evaluation support and training from School of Indigenous Australian Studies, James Cook University.

The ICC agreed to this proposal and the 12-month project commenced in June 2006.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the Yaba Bimbie Cultural Dance Troupe project included restoring traditional and cultural practices to the men of Yarrabah, as well as increasing their skills and knowledge through the establishment of a small business and community enterprise.⁵

⁴ ‘Cultural Dance Group Proposal (and Amendment) – p1 (2.5)

⁵ ‘Cultural Dance Group Proposal (and Amendment) – p2 (2.6)

EXPECTED PROJECT OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes of the project included:

- Increasing the number of Aboriginal cultural performances.
- The employment of a full-time Dance Troupe Manager to co-ordinate the business venture.
- Increasing the number of dance troupe members to 15 to perform regularly on a full-time basis (Monday to Friday), thus removing the need for CDEP.⁶

INTENDED SIGNIFICANCE AND BENEFIT TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The project was intended to benefit the community of Yarrabah in the following ways:

- Creating employment opportunities for the people of Yarrabah.
- Increasing the self-esteem and overall physical / mental health and emotional well-being of the dance troupe members.
- Supporting the self-determination and self-management principles of local Indigenous community members.
- Equipping personnel involved with the business venture with the essential skills, knowledge and understanding of small business operations.
- Engendering an awareness of the Aboriginal culture both within and outside the Yarrabah community, with reconciliation the ultimate goal.
- Encouraging the younger generation to embrace their culture.
- Providing a place for healing to the members of the Stolen Generation.
- Establishing a small business venture that is free from government funding.
- Long-term employment and economic independence.
- Reduction in youth suicide and domestic violence.
- Creating a more secure future for the people of Yarrabah.

The Project Activities

Employment of a cultural dance manager

A local Yarrabah man was employed 0.5 FTE for twelve months from June 2006 to coordinate the project. The project description stated a requirement for a high level of traditional knowledge of appropriate local cultural practices, and it was intended that the dance troupe manager would mentor local young men in acquiring further cultural knowledge and skill. The local coordinator was also required to recruit further young people into the dance troupe, coordinate the current group members, and organise the range of training and skills development activities.

⁶ 'Cultural Dance Group Proposal (and Amendment) – p2 (2.7)

Dance performances

Yaba Bimbie had a record of a variety of dance performances in the church, community, and at other venues. The intention of this project was to strengthen the group's capacity to perform by increasing the number of dance troupe members to 15 and to find venues for regularly performance on a full-time basis (Monday to Friday), thus removing the need for CDEP. Some dance performances were held locally (eg at the school and NAIDOC day performances), nationally (eg Garma festival, Arnhem land) and internationally (eg in Seattle, USA 2006 as part of a church-sponsored tour; and at the International Health Promotion and Ethics Conference in Belgium, September 2007).

Small business training

The project undertook to contract a customized range of business management training, skills and advice. These included:

- Stage 2 choreography and motivational performance training for dance troupe members by International "Edu-tainer", David Hudson;
- Quickbooks and other financial management training by Trish Taylor, Director of QBSolutions;
- Marketing and promotional training and advice by an indigenous community volunteer;
- Establishment of performance contracts by Cairns Indigenous Events Committee and local dance troupe manager; and
- Submission writing training and advice by the Learning Workshop.

The workshops with international "edu-tainer", David Hudson were a follow up to the previous workshop facilitated by David Hudson in Yarrabah in March/April 2005. This stage two workshop occurred in Kuranda in April/May 2007. In the words of a participant, the original workshop had *"helped the men build upon what it was already doing. Helped them to realize their vision, reaching goals in life, opening up and realizing what it's going to take. Helped to build commitment and doing it together. He was the right person for the job"*. Following the workshop, David Hudson had offered ongoing support, suggesting that the Yaba Bimbie website be linked with his own website, that Yaba Bimbie could become a back up act for himself, and that he would recommend them for work once their promotional material was completed.

The 2007 workshop incorporated not only dance and choreography training but also the production of artefacts such as boomerang, shields and spears. Because of limited transport, only nine Yarrabah people (seven men and two women) attended the workshops. Eight of these people had previously danced through the church, museum, or other places.

Quickbooks financial training was provided by QB Solutions at Gurriny Yealmaucka Health Service, Yarrabah for 6 local people in March-April 2007.

The development of a marketing plan including a website was completed with the assistance of Indigenous community volunteer, Gordon Beattie.

At the time of developing this submission, a group of Indigenous people were proposing to start an organisation, the Cairns Indigenous Events Committee. However, this did not eventuate, so the local dance troupe manager attempted to coordinate this function.

Evaluation support and training from School of Indigenous Australian Studies, James Cook University who produced this report.

EXAMPLE OF A DANCE PERFORMANCE

In September 2006, the first day of an international psychiatry conference was held in Yarrabah to give conference delegates a chance to experience life in an Aboriginal community, and to showcase the resources and achievements of the community. A highlight of the day was the performance of the local cultural men's dance group, Yaba Bimbie. This group of local men performed a series of traditional dances.

One dance involved the JCU research team and staff members of Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service and represented the relationship that had developed between the external research team, staff of the local health organization, and community members. A lead dancer enacted his experience of being 'down and out' on the streets, plagued by drug, alcohol and mental health problems and crying out for help and healing of his body, soul and spirit.

In the dance the JCU team and Gurriny Yealamucka staff members stood within the circle of dancers and reached out their hands and arms to assist this man in need. Their support enabled him to lift himself out of despair and move forward. As he moved forward, the supporters stepped to the side to give him space. The other dancers then followed. They were all passing through Yealamucka. Together they reached a place where they were able to work as a group to take control and responsibility and realize the vision they have for themselves as men, their families and the Yarrabah men's group. No longer did they need alcohol or drugs to live life. In doing so they became role models for others coming along behind.

According to the lead dancer the name Gurriny Yealamucka has important historical significance. Traditionally people had gone to the healing waters in the community - Yealamucka - if they were sick or if they wanted to maintain good health. At this healing pool people would sing traditional songs and dance. Water would bubble up and people would then bathe in the water to be healed by the spirit of the land. The involvement of Gurriny Yealamucka staff symbolized the responsibility the health service has taken on for community healing through men's group, women's group and youth programs. JCU researchers have been there to facilitate and support this transition. This combination of the traditional way and the European way is the essence of reconciliation.

Evaluation Methodology

The cultural dance troupe project was evaluated by James Cook University researchers as part of a broader research program which aimed to analyse the efforts of the Yarrabah Men's Groups in its efforts to support men take greater control and responsibility for the issues affecting their health and wellbeing. The men's group had received external support from James Cook University researchers since 2001 as part of a broader research program exploring the place of empowerment based strategies in improving Indigenous health.

In keeping with men's groups stated objective of empowerment, the broader research project was informed by the theoretical position of empowerment and the related methodology of PAR. Empowerment is a cross-disciplinary concept used to describe a process by which individuals, groups and communities gain increased control over their lives. Participatory action research (PAR) is based on the principle that 'ordinary' people become researchers in their own right and generate relevant knowledge in order to address the issues that are of priority concern to them. External researchers can assume a valuable role as peer facilitators to generate broader systemic frameworks for understanding given situations, then questioning the situation and identifying alternate courses of action. From here the process spirals, as knowledge and understanding inform strategy development, followed by action, reflection and new understanding. The goal is ongoing change and improvement.⁸

The evaluation question was "What are the opportunities and challenges facing the cultural dance troupe, and what are its outcomes?" To answer this question, we collected a range of evaluation data. These included documentation of:

- Regular reflective planning and evaluation sessions between the external researchers and the men's group workers, cultural dance group manager, and the indigenous community volunteer during the course of the project. We used a basic reflective tool which helped to highlight and celebrate small successes and achievements, prioritise activities, address conflicts and misunderstandings, by asking questions such as "*What are the main things we have been doing? What have been the highlights or good things? What has been hard? How could the hard things be overcome? What have we learnt?*" The rationale was to frame problems as challenges for which there are always solutions.
- An evaluation questionnaire by people who participated in the David Hudson workshops. Nine questionnaires were returned, seven of which were completed by men. Participants were spread across a wide age range with 4 being in their 20's, 1 in his 30s, three in their 40s and one in his 50s (see Appendix 2).
- Transcripts of interviews at the end of the project (January 2008) with three information-rich community members at the end of the project. These were the Project Manager, one of the key dancers, and the (then) Coordinator of the Yarrabah Justice Group. We also tried to interview the senior dancer of the troupe but he was unwell and unavailable.
- Project documentation including the funding submission, promotional material developed during the course of the project, and the Yaba Bimbie website (<http://www.yababimbie.org.au>).
- Finally, a literature review was completed to discover the potential benefits of Aboriginal dance troupe interventions and evidence as to their efficacy, and hence provide a context for this project (see Appendix 1).

Data collection and analysis

Thematic analysis was then used to identify, analyse and report the themes from these data sets using the project's broad concepts of 'restoring tradition and culture', 'increasing small

business skills and knowledge', and 'other'. We used interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) to understand people's everyday experience of reality in order to get an understanding of the opportunities, challenges and outcomes from the cultural dance project (McLeod 2001 in Braun and Clarke 2006). The four datasets were read repeatedly, searching for meanings, patterns and so on. With the research question in mind, the data was then coded systematically. The codes were then sorted into potential themes. These were mapped, defined and refined to produce a final report (Braun and Clarke 2006). Several themes were identified through this process.

Challenges of the implementation process

Interview respondents stated that although there is huge potential for Aboriginal dance troupes to be successful both commercially and culturally, there are also a range of challenges.

Need for expert business management

One of these is the need for dance troupes to be managed by skilled business people. Dance troupe manager, Les Baird commented *"The not so good things were to get into it without business skills. I mean at the management level. That's one thing I want to do, is business administration. But I believe like this will probably come up again and... like do similar things to what we've done but get it right by getting all those things in place and like someone with expert business management skills. Like use people like how Noel Pearson used business managers from the banks and that, you know. Like establish partnerships with companies, you know. Not necessarily getting money from them but getting all their expert knowledge and that about business, business marketing is really important, you know. Because you've really got to sell yourself, nobody knows about you so you have to use every possible means of selling yourself. Billboards in Cairns, internet, newspaper advertisements...."*

The time, commitment and expertise required by local managers and dancers to coordinate the group was also considerable. Immediately before the start of the project, debriefings with the men's group worker identified that he was: *"spending a lot of time getting the dance group going."*

Commitment to professional dance

Immediately before the start of the project, debriefings with the cultural dance manager and men's group worker identified that there was an issue about commitment of dancers – *" The dance group is sorting the boys out - more commitment. They have two things going - they want to dance but they like their music too"*.

During the project, the need for choreography and other training for dancers, as well as commitment and dedication by the dancers became evident. Dance troupe manager, Les Baird reflected: *"Well .. the dancing worked but you didn't have the same regular dancers. They had to, like, because of the instability of the dancers you had to use other dancers and some of them didn't know some of the routines when we went through the training program with David Hudson. Like the dancing worked but not as good as we hoped it would because of the change over of dancers"*. He continued *"they have to make a commitment and probably, I don't know what you could do, probably sign a contract with them, for their commitment. ... Unfortunately I think just listening to David Hudson's experience, that's why*

he went solo. It's because of the problems of, like you're working with other people and other people have, like there's some like issues in the community that take people away from what they are supposed to be committed to. And it's like you've got Bradley as a dedicated and committed dancer but his friends aren't as committed as him in dancing. Maybe he could do a solo business".

Time frame too short

A further challenge is the need for seed funding is needed to get dance troupes off the ground as established enterprises. Interview recipients commented on the need for a longer time frame to achieve ambitious goals such as that stated on the dance troupe's website; i.e. *"to restore traditional and cultural practices to the people of Yarrabah"*. Les Baird commented: *"we were working towards it but I think that when you look at such a goal as that it probably requires two or three years. Like the time frame was twelve months which was a short time frame and it's hard to achieve that in a short time frame. It's hard to get .. community dancers to meetings. Although we prepared workshops and that for community dancers to come to and meetings but only one dance troupe came along. It was successful in educating like school children in traditional cultural dancing"*. The Justice Group Coordinator added *"With regards to the number of years it took to destroy our culture, to the time that its going to take to try and restore itself, if you're judging success based on the short period, I don't think it was successful. I think they needed more time to actually get the message through and what they were trying to achieve. I think it's a long term project that they should be considering. I recommend that if there's more funds and dollars available for cultural dances and stuff like that, it all pays off in the end. It took us two hundred years to get to where we are now so it's not going to happen in one or two years, you know."* Young dancer, Colin Costello commented *"we need to have an appropriate place to have it because we have the rainforest and the boardwalk you know the history, outback all that there. Just to maintain it I think is funding to fund dance troupe from anyone"*.

Cultural challenges

Immediately before the start of the project, debriefings with the cultural dance manager and men's group worker identified that dance group leaders were finding it difficult to manage a range of community expectations and commitments to different agendas. A dance group and men's group leader said *"I also learnt about how to manage the split between dancing in the church and for the Men's Group – I feel that I've been doing everything. But I know it's all for the dancers. I realised that they need to have ownership – we need to get the right balance between dancing for the church and other purposes."*

There were cultural challenges which made the implementation of the project more complex. In a stolen generation community such as Yarrabah, the dance troupe needed to negotiate the permission of traditional owners to perform certain dances. Dancer, Colin Costello said *"that's a big challenge I guess due to other elders in the community also their tribal groups I guess. Different tribal groups and we need to look into it more deeper. Especially with the different tribal groups"*.

There were also issues about finding the right balance between focusing the project within and outside the community. The Justice Group Coordinator said *"Some time I think that the emphasis was too much on the outside cultures. I think some of our people were more concerned about stuff that's going inwardly and they would love to see more unity within our*

own community with regards to our own cultural aspects of dance and ceremonies and stuff like that.” At the start of the project, the men’s group worker also identified that he “Would like to work with young people who are in the Juvenile justice system in teaching them to dance.”

Organisational support

Local organisational challenges had also been addressed as part of the process of submitting for funding for this project. In July 2005, Yarrabah Council had written a letter to say they were unable to support the Yaba Bimbie dance troupe in their application for funding from the Indigenous Coordinating Council. They cited lack of clarity on a number of issues; including a request for a MOU between Yaba Bimbie and Menmuni Museum; a shared responsibility agreement outlining certification to organisations; clarity of copyright/intellectual and cultural property rights; clarity of use of the CDEP, and a questioning of whether the dance troupe fits within Gurriny’s primary health care brief. Council’s concerns were addressed in a face to face meeting with Gurriny Yealamucka management, but the issue defused some of the momentum generated by the David Hudson workshop and delayed the funding submission.

Logistical challenges

Finally, there are logistical challenges in trying to implement project strategies within a rural Aboriginal setting. Reflecting on the process of developing the dance troupe’s website, indigenous community volunteer, Gordon Beattie said *“we talked about a variety of media – pamphlets, paper, web presence. There was no web presence for the group, so we explored the basic web creating facility on MS Word Publisher. Les was away Thurs-Sun, so I sat down with Bradley, collected photos and everything that had been written about themselves. Spent the day on Thursday at Gurriny – thought “I’m here for the day, if it happens it does, if not, it doesn’t”. Learned how to use the program and put up an idea for a webpage. Presented it to Colin who liked it. On Monday, I sat down and looked at what I’d done and played with ideas. It felt good, as it would be easy to transfer skills in using the program. I registered the yababimbie.org.au domain name and site through easyhosting. Developed the web pages on Monday and Tuesday. The website was secondary to the process of language development and marketing plan. It was a fantastic tool – emerged in the 2nd week – applied to the process of developing a vision and plan. I hit a brickwall in developing the website as the health service has a firewall. Huge restrictions on what can be loaded. The person who put the restrictions on was based at Council and was not available until Thursday. I wanted to show David Patterson the process of developing the website, so he could take over its maintenance and further development. David couldn’t make it to the meeting on Thursday. The Council guy was not available. So had to put the website on a thumb drive and do it from home. I have a sophisticated system in my house with wireless technology etc. I run a consultancy from a wilderness area of the far south coast of NSW. Transferred the web pages to my system on Saturday (easy to download) and it was up and running on Sunday. That’s my biggest disappointment – them not having control – a matter of circumstances”.*

Findings

The project was established with two complementary but quite distinct objectives, so the evaluation will address each in turn. These were to:

- Increase men's skills and knowledge about the establishment of a small business and community enterprise;⁷
- Restore traditional and cultural practices to the men of Yarrabah; and
- Other unintended benefits/issues.

INCREASE MEN'S SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SMALL BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE

The expected outcomes of this project all related to the establishment of a small business. They were to increase the number of Aboriginal cultural performances; employ a full-time Dance Troupe Manager to co-ordinate the business venture; and increase the number of dance troupe members to 15 to perform regularly on a full-time basis (Monday to Friday), thus removing the need for CDEP.⁸

The expected benefits to the local community, as described in the funding submission, were much broader. They incorporated business-related benefits such as creating employment opportunities for the people of Yarrabah, equipping personnel involved with the business venture with the essential skills, knowledge and understanding of small business operations, establishing a small business venture that is free from government funding; and long-term employment and economic independence. But they also described cultural, health and self-determination objectives (described in the sections below).

The literature review of the potential business or economic benefits of cultural dance troupes identified the provision of satisfying employment and business income. Henry, for example, described the pride that dancers from the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park felt about their employment: 'Tjapukai dancers think of themselves as ambassadors for their people. They do not see their dancing as being just a job like any other. Rather, they see themselves as being representatives of Djabugay people in the wider political context of their dealings with agencies of the state'.⁹ Henry also describes the potential employment and income which can be derived from cultural dance. From its inception in 1987, for example, Tjapukai Dance Theatre grew to become 'the single largest employer of Aboriginal people in Kuranda' by 1997. It had 'grown from a business with a capital base of \$45 000 to a theatre complex employing 37 Aboriginal people and turning over \$1 million (gross) annually'.¹⁰

The evaluation data from this project indicated that project leaders and participants had aspirations to similar achievements. Immediately prior to the commencement of the project, the (to be appointed) cultural dance group manager and men's group worker indicated their commitment to establishing Yaba Bimbie dance troupe as a small business. In fact, using Tjapukai Cultural Park as a model, they had taken six of the Yarrabah dancers to a Tjapukai show, talked with the Director of the Yarrabah Menmyny Museum about showcasing the troupe, discussed options for the incorporation of the dance troupe into a potential tourism operation (Waroo Tours), organised public liability insurance through Gurriny Yealamucka

⁷ 'Cultural Dance Group Proposal (and Amendment) – p2 (2.6)

⁸ 'Cultural Dance Group Proposal (and Amendment) – p2 (2.7)

⁹ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 329.

¹⁰ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 327.

Health Service, obtained quotes for sound equipment and costumes, and made decisions about charge-out rates for performances.

Website

The website, developed during the course of the project with the assistance of an Indigenous Community Volunteer was a business marketing tool, but also defined the vision of the troupe as "Dancing back our spiritual identity" (<http://www.yababimbie.org.au/>, accessed 10 February 2008). The website described the aim of the project as reviving and restoring *"cultural and spiritual identity through dance, song, story telling, language, art and history. A means of reconciliation and celebration through dance and story telling within and outside the community. Generating unity, energy and respect in the community"*.

The website also provided a clear statement of the dance troupe's cultural positioning and intent. The Yaba Bimbie dance troupe acknowledged *"the traditional rights and lore first of our creator spirit Guiaburra (God). The aspirations, dreams and hope of our four traditional owner groups, Guru Gulu, Gungandji tribal group, Guru Bana Gungandji tribal group, Yarraburra Gungandji tribal group, and the Mundingalbay Idinji tribal group."* They also acknowledged the *"disposition, genocides and forceful removal of our historical people from their traditional tribal home lands. The Kuka Yalangi, Tjapukai, Tjapukangi, Irikanji, Umpla, Kuka Imigi, Kuka Jungan, Lama Lama, Yiidhuwarra and other tribes and clans that are not mentioned here"*. They accepted the diverse differences of the Tribal Groups as unique and said therefore that they *"share one common dance as one common unique people"*. They also acknowledged *"the European peoples of this nation and the many other different nations, who now call Australia home. Together we celebrate as one dance"*.

Workshop participants

During this project, all of the nine participants in the May 2007 workshop with David Hudson said (in an evaluation survey) that they believed that the benefits of a dance troupe and associated cultural craft sales included its potential as a business opportunity, potential income through tourism, and that it could help to provide economic recovery. All nine participants said that they would want to be part of a dance company. Participants comments included:

I learnt "How to possibly set up a cultural park like Tjapukai". "Lot of things like props, painting and sharing." "How to promote ourself."

Making cultural artefacts that can be sold at the dance gigs "is excellent and will begin to create employment - educate the community about culture". "Very good, help promote and build community economics."

A cultural arts factory to mass produce aboriginal artefacts would "bring jobs into Yarrabah for many young artist and dancers." "It would be a great opportunity to set up a arts factory to create jobs for the younger ones". "We will strive if we continue to create and build on our own possibilities in terms of our culture and dreams through artefacts, we will create employment and develop together strength, honour and unity to unify our identities on this land."

Interviews

Key stakeholders interviewed at the end of the project also said that they believed that the dance troupe had the potential to become a long term business venture. Young dancer, Colin Costello, for example, said *"Oh yeah can lead to tourism and it will eventually. If given the professionalism in that area of dance"*. Justice Group Coordinator, Brian Connolly added *"Well at one stage there, we had a dance troupe mob covering Australia and we were even getting some interest from overseas. So for me it's a good thing. It means that they made an impression on a lot of people. What I really believe was that it needed someone full time to be employed in the position as a dancer, you know. It was a bit hard for a couple of our performers because they're at full time work and they had to commit to that as well. It would be more appropriate if we had people fully paid to go around dancing and telling our stories and stuff"*.

While the key respondents felt that dance was an important part of Aboriginal cultural expression, all three felt that funding assistance was necessary to create a commercial dance troupe. The Justice Group Coordinator said *"my personal feeling is that dance is about who we are as Aborigines, the Indigenous people of this country. But I mean to promote our culture through a health perspective of course we need funds. We need the dollars to back the cause. Dancing should be a passion of every Indigenous person because it tells the story of who we are and what we are about. Yeah to be more commercial, commercialised, you need funding and if it's for you're personal gain or a cultural gain, it more depends where the team wants to go"*. Dance troupe manager, Les Baird, expressed doubt about motivating dancers to become involved without funding: *"To create it without funding? It would be difficult because like Yarrabah don't do something for nothing any more"*.

Two of the respondents stated that the project had not achieved its aim of increasing the number of dance troupe performers. Member, Colin Costello said *"no it was just average. Up and down sort of a thing. Umm I think it went up to eight, back down to five, four."* The Dance troupe manager estimated that approximately twenty dancers (mainly young boys) were involved with the project at various times.

There was consensus that the project had increased the skills and knowledge of dancers in Yarrabah, primarily through the David Hudson training. The Justice Group Coordinator commented: *"I believe that the existing dancers need to become facilitators now and pass on, there's still some knowledge in a big way and not in a small way as they've been doing in the past. I think it would be more effective if each one of those existing dance members could become teachers now. I understand that it went from one, which was Bradley, into two and then into seven and I think it needs to go further from seven onto seven each. But once again it comes back to funds and time"*.

Project manager, Les Baird said that although it was important that the project built local management skills and self-determination, this process *"takes more time"*. To facilitate the development of a commercial troupe, he suggested *" I think that it may have been better for bringing in outside expert in and mentoring a local person and I think that would have been successful. Because I didn't have the business management skills that's needed."*

RESTORE TRADITIONAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES TO THE MEN OF YARRABAH

It was expected that project would benefit the local community by engendering an awareness of the Aboriginal culture both within and outside the Yarrabah community, with reconciliation

the ultimate goal; encouraging the younger generation to embrace their culture; and providing a place for healing to the members of the Stolen Generation. Through these functions, it was also expected that it would assist in creating a more secure future for the people of Yarrabah.

The literature review identified a range of potential cultural benefits. Lydia Miller, the Director of the Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Islander Arts Board, described a gathering of 40 Indigenous dance practitioners from across Australia (2005) which encouraged its participants to explore '*...the role of dancers as custodians and repositories of culture; the layers of meaning imbued within the gesture; the lonely journey often taken in isolation; (and) the spirit of strength to inspire national and international communities*'.¹¹ According to Miller, '*each participant contributed to a broad agenda that included training, dance maintenance, cultural protocols and misappropriation, mentoring children and young people, learning and sharing, identity and place, infrastructure, choreography, responsibility and obligations, professional opportunities, networks, (and) community social issues*'.¹² Keynote speaker to the forum, Raymond Blanco commented that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dance Theatre has afforded "*Indigenous people a chance to explore avenues of expression for their own stories*".

Henry argued both the Laura dance festival and Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park provide an invaluable means for Indigenous people to engage in cultural revival and empowerment. The Laura festival, for example provides Indigenous people with the 'opportunity to meet relations and friends and a means of making themselves present to the outside world, and also to other Aboriginal peoples'.¹³ The festival is also "a means of celebrating a shared Aboriginal identity based on a common history while at the same time acknowledging differences among Aboriginal peoples...".¹⁴ Moreover, Henry describes the festival as a '*...public statement of the continuity of cultural transmission*', and expresses how the performances are more than just 'displays of song and dance' but rather are 'performances of teaching and learning'.¹⁵ She said that both events allow Indigenous people to engage in performance in a way that displays 'cultural vitality', encourages the 'continuity of cultural transmission to the younger generation'¹⁶, and enables them to 'play a part in redefining themselves'¹⁷. This is summarised by the following paragraph:

'Performance here becomes a tantalising opportunity to challenge a paradigm that assumes that cultural authenticity is only about the transmission of intellectual knowledge. An awareness of the possibility of embodied acquisition of culture, and of body memory, allows for continuity, where there might otherwise be discontinuity. Through their dancing Aboriginal peoples animate and empower place with memories of

¹¹ Miller, Lydia. 'Creating Pathways an Indigenous Dance Forum.' *Danceforum*. 12. (Summer 2005). 13.

¹² Miller, Lydia. 'Creating Pathways an Indigenous Dance Forum.' *Danceforum*. 12. (Summer 2005). 13.

¹³ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 325.

¹⁴ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 325.

¹⁵ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 326.

¹⁶ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 330.

¹⁷ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 331.

the ancestors. They dance into being the continuity of their life-worlds. By moving into performance they enfold mind with body and body with mind and so allow the past into the present and the dead to remain among the living'.¹⁸

Other global Indigenous people also express commitment to dance as a means for cultural revival. Berardi describes the survival of dance through western Alaska as a "*story of cultural resistance and resilience despite attempts by certain missionaries to suppress it since the late nineteenth century*".¹⁹ According to Berardi, dance is part of a 'broader cultural reawakening' in Western Alaska, which has also seen a dramatic cultural renaissance in recent times in many other forms including "*...oral history projects, multivillage dance festivals, bilingual school curricula, and political action*".²⁰ Although Berardi recognises that '*...some of the ceremonial aspects of Yup'ik and Inupiaq (the Eskimo of north-western Alaska and northern Canada) dance are no longer present...*', she maintains that '*...the reasons for dancing remain the same as 150 years ago: to share family history, give life lessons, convey valuable role models, and celebrate traditional lives through storytelling in song and dance. The dance also promotes self-esteem and community identity*'.²¹ Berardi makes reference to the following comments by Indigenous people from Bethel to illustrate the fundamental role that dance has to play within their community:

- "In our village of 1000 people, all can dance. The children grow up dancing. It is like talking, its part of our rituals. Some songs are so special, you have to change the words so no one is affected by them. Sometimes the audience can feel their bodies being lifted and healed; the songs are that powerful."
- "Dance is a way of allowing people to get together several times a week, to ground them and given them self-worth, provide focus, and instil discipline."
- "Young people are interested in this because its fun and you get to travel to places, it's a way to learn about the culture, and people enjoy watching it."
- "I dance, for it lifts my spirits. I reach out and touch the hands of my ancestors and know that I've come home."
- "Yup'ik dancing is a real grounding type of dance. It gives you a connection with the land and where the traditions have come from. Elders love what we're doing because it has such a good influence on the community; they can feel our sincerity and how we honour the tradition."
- "...practice sessions are also part of how novice dancers learn traditional ways. Elders share the songs and dances that they know and guide the younger dancers. The instruction carries with it counselling on traditional morals and on how one should act."

Immediately prior to the start of this Yarrabah project, members of the cultural dance troupe had toured to cities and towns across Australia. Organised through the Anglican church fellowship outreach program, dancers had visited and danced in the churches at Rockhampton/Woorabinda/Emerald in February 2005, Melbourne in April 2005, a church

¹⁸ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 331.

¹⁹ Berardi, Gigi. 'Lights in the northern landscape: Alaska's tiny Bethel hosts a wondrous indigenous dance festival'. *Dance Magazine*. 75.11 (Nov 2001).

²⁰ Berardi, Gigi. 'Lights in the northern landscape: Alaska's tiny Bethel hosts a wondrous indigenous dance festival'. *Dance Magazine*. 75.11 (Nov 2001).

²¹ Berardi, Gigi. 'Lights in the northern landscape: Alaska's tiny Bethel hosts a wondrous indigenous dance festival'. *Dance Magazine*. 75.11 (Nov 2001).

conference in Cairns in June 2005. They had also danced at non-church events such as the NAIDOC day celebrations in July. After the trip to southern Queensland *"They were on fire. The dance group needed them to take ownership, and by them going down there, they got that ownership and matured a lot."* However, family commitments were a potential barrier to touring a dance troupe. *"The men have also been talking about a previous vision of the dance group was to travel around Australia and dance in celebration of everything. This is difficult because of family commitments."*

Issues identified through notes from debriefings with the cultural dance manager and men's group worker immediately before the start of the project included the sensitivity of defining the appropriate cultural relationships, protocols and messages: *"Dance/tradition/culture should be driven by the community, but people are not from the area so feel out of place. They worry about T.O.s. Connecting back - this is your place. There should be a declaration to each and every person in the community. That way we can all celebrate. It's a little thing, but then we can move ahead. Build us more closer"*. Concern was also expressed by other Yarrabah community members that the group was not inclusive of non-Christian men *"David is also concerned about the dance group. They are all Christian men."* *"Ruth worries that the dance troupe is not for the entire community. Not inclusive. They haven't recruited one non-Christian man into the troupe. Recruitment happens through the church rather than through the men's group. She wonders is this dance group should be a church group and another be established through the men's group"*.

Workshop participants

During the course of this project, all of the nine participants in the David Hudson workshop (May 2007) said (in an evaluation survey) that they believed that the benefits of a dance troupe included its capacity to help restore traditional Aboriginal cultural practices, help Yarrabah people develop a cultural identity, share culture with other Aboriginal communities and white Australians, and to create new local dance practices. The depth of feeling about the importance of reviving culture is expressed in the following quotes from workshop participants: *"Thank you to David Hudson for educating me how to maintain my culture"; "Start now before we all die", and "there should be more voices and people like him in our community to share the true values of life and learning culture"*. One person said: *"Each tribal group in this community, has a right to be recognised and express itself for who they are! T.O's if they say they are true people who belong to this place, then why is it hard for them to share with the rest of the people"*.

Participants in the David Hudson workshops commented that they liked the workshops because *"It's sharing culture and knowledge and learning new experiences"; "The artefacts and culture"; "All the people coming together as one!" and "Our culture must continue to find its way in everything we do"*. It was important to participants that they learned *"How to make artefacts"; "Keep our culture alive"; "how to make Aboriginal artefacts, boomerang, bipperra, shield, didgeridoo, etc etc."; and "painting, how to present myself and how to get along with everyone"*. In relation to the possibility that cultural artefacts could be made and sold at the dance gigs, participants said *"It would be a great experience for me to make artefacts and to get younger ones involved"; and "I am overwhelmed (be)cause I can't wait to start making my own products"*.

Reflecting on the development of the dance workshops with David Hudson, Indigenous community volunteer, Gordon Beattie, said *"There had been a series of dance workshops,*

and they wanted to organize workshops with David Hudson – the question was what do they want to do? We talked about dance revival in the community and opening up the workshop to others in the community. There was a history of dance that sat in the community. We talked about organizing a meeting to invite people to join in with the workshop; having a mini-festival in May next year; using resources and involving a broader range of people. It was quite a successful process”.

Interviews

Like the workshop participants, the key stakeholders interviewed at the end of the project felt strongly about the potential for cultural dance to strengthen Aboriginal cultural revival. Young dancer, Colin Costello said *“We there in Yarrabah, that’s who we are. We need, I guess to realise it, who we are, to grow. Bring back the cultural revival. Like I say, you have to be committed and you have to have the initiative to drive it and it will start and these young people might. And I guess just being patient with them. To target them, to build their self esteem and get through to their self esteem. Especially to go out and dance in front of a crowd as well and so forth. It will generate a positive environment, if you give it time..”*

Dance Troupe Manager, Les Baird said *“Dance is something that unites people. It would begin to unite the community. It would begin to open up the potential for tourism into the community - working together with other enterprises like the museum and arts and crafts centre. It would also open up the potential of more dance troupes coming in and establishing in Yarrabah but also sharing the work load maybe nationally and internationally. Dance troupes going overseas and around the country. That’s the potential that I see for it. But like I say you need like a small core of people whose committed and dedicated and have the skills for business management and also training skills and making sure that things work on time. Because in Yarrabah they work on Murri time.”*

The key stakeholders said that young Yarrabah people need to be exposed to and learn their own culture. Les Baird said *“A lot of young people here they embrace the television culture of hip-hop. Caps back-the-front, trousers hanging down and yes when the dancers were dancing they seemed really attracted to their own cultural dance. Not only kids but older people. Because Yarrabah was a place where people would dance regularly and it revived memories to older people and attracted younger people”.* Colin Costello also voiced concern about the disintegration (or dilution) of Aboriginal culture. *“I think that there is confusion there or something and with things such as rap music and that, I’ve seen it over the past couple of weeks doing things like that. There’s no one there to drive it, so other cultures come in. That is another big problem there in itself. But not such a problem that it’s doing much sort of damage but it’s just sad to see that our culture’s not being recognised in our community, especially our dances”.*

Brian Connolly added *“I believe that we all need to know our origins, you know, where we come from, so we know where we’re going to. It was part of our overall plan when men’s group and justice group and youth club eventually got together was to know exactly where we come from so we know where we’re going to in the future”.* He observed that *“We had (young) people who will follow the footsteps of some of the dancers. Even though they didn’t join up with our group they joined up with other (dance) groups from Yarrabah. Great achievement there I s’pose”.* He added *“You need structure to achieve the full outcome of bringing some of our traditional ways, getting our kids to respect who we are and what we have done”.* Brian Connolly also commented on the sense of community identity and pride

engendered by dancing in other cities and communities: "... when it came to dancing people knew where we were from. What I gathered, you know, going into any dance performance or activity they knew who the Yarrabah Dance Troupe were. I think they've done well."

OTHER

Other intended benefits of the project to the Yarrabah community, as stated in the original project submission, were to increase the self-esteem and overall physical / mental health and emotional well-being of the dance troupe members, support the self-determination and self-management principles of local Indigenous community members, and reduce youth suicide and domestic violence.

Although these expectations are ambitious, the literature review supports the view that cultural dance troupes can have a range of potential benefits. Mogowan offers a useful overview of the significance of dance for Australian Indigenous people, particularly as a means for political expression. She traces the history behind the use of Indigenous performance as a tool for political representation, claiming that its origins extend '...as far back as the 1920s and 1930s and that dance has been a tool of Indigenous 'empowerment' and the 'focus of a participative arena' through strategies of self-determination, which have urged Indigenous groups to assume control over their own affairs since the 1970s²². According to Mogowan, 'a heightened awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture' has led to a situation whereby '...political figures are having to actively ignore, rather than be ignorant, indifferent, or seemingly impartial spectators of dance'.²³ She describes how 'Aboriginal groups are performing statements of their Indigenous rights when important political issues are at stake and politicians are being forced to participate in the conditions of Indigenous dance contexts'²⁴. Ultimately Mogowan argues that 'Indigenous dance should be examined as an expressive, active and ongoing dialogue with the nation' and '...one means by which reconciliation can be manifested between Indigenous and non-Indigenous performers and spectators'²⁵. According to Mogowan, non-Indigenous Australians have a responsibility to perceive Indigenous dance '...not only as a theatre of life but as a declaration of support for the intercultural state of the nation'²⁶.

Miller also argues that the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre (AIDT) has had an integral role to play in the Indigenous struggle towards gaining acceptance within mainstream society, and in '...re-educat(ing) the non-Indigenous populace about the value and relevance of Indigenous cultures'. According to Blanco, 'the Australian nation is a myth until Indigenous culture and prior sovereignty are embraced and acknowledged as a culture that has a valued contribution to our futures'.²⁷

²² Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 313.

²³ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 317.

²⁴ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 317.

²⁵ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 319.

²⁶ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 320.

²⁷ Blanco, Raymond. 'Creative Pathways: Keynote Speech – Raymond Blanco'. *Danceforum*. 14. (summer 2005).

Both Henry and Greathouse-Amador explore potentially exploitive effects of tourism on Indigenous cultures. Henry disputes the notion that the Laura dance festival is the 'real thing' whereas Tjapukai dancing is a 'slick tourist reproduction', arguing that they are equally 'complicit responses to the demands of the tourist industry'.²⁸ Greathouse-Amador (working in northern Mexico) also recognises the potentially exploitative effects of tourism, but ultimately highlights the potential for tourism to open a space for Indigenous people to assert their position within the dominant sectors of society²⁹. This notion is summarised by the following paragraph:

*'...tourism, which having arrived in the area, brought new attention to the indigenous people and gave them a stage upon which they can demonstrate with pride their customs, culture, and traditions. Because of increased tourism in Cuetzalan, indigenous people have gained a new position that has allowed them to assert themselves as they never have before, especially in economic areas. They have also enjoyed important changes in many of the traditional power relationships.'*³⁰

Finally, the literature describes the use of dance as a medium for specific health education messages. Minniecon and Rissel describe a dance program that was initiated in Central Sydney among a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth aged seven to twelve years with the aim of increasing awareness about the harms caused by tobacco use and unhealthy eating habits.³¹ The primary strategy for obtaining this goal consisted of dance and mural projects which celebrated traditional aspects of Indigenous culture and promoted knowledge of contemporary issues such as the dangers of tobacco use and the importance of nutrition³². The project, which lasted for six months, led to a number of positive outcomes for its participants. In particular it was noted that the children's confidence, self-esteem and behaviour had improved since partaking in the program³³. In western Canada, Chandler, Lalonde et al describe a study that reveals that '...efforts by Aboriginal groups to preserve and promote their culture' and to 'regain control over aspects of their communal lives' are associated with dramatic reductions in rates of youth suicide.³⁴

Issues identified through notes from debriefings with the cultural dance manager and men's group worker immediately before the start of the project included a recognition that the ability and potential of the dance troupe to address a range of issues. Men's group worker and dance leader, Bradley Baird said that he could dance the messages from the Family Wellbeing Program. *"Dance is just like words. I could dance the meaning of those topics or*

²⁸ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' The Australian Journal of Anthropology. 11, 3. (2000). 329.

²⁹ Greathouse-Amador, Lousia M. 'Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community?' Review of Policy Research. 22, 5. (2005), 709.

³⁰ Greathouse-Amador, Lousia M. 'Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community?' Review of Policy Research. 22, 5. (2005), 717.

³¹ Minniecon, Sharon., Chris Rissel. 'Mudi Dungurra Mudgang: Youth Dance of Life'. Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal. 26, 5. (Sept/Oct 2002), 15.

³² Minniecon, Sharon., Chris Rissel. 'Mudi Dungurra Mudgang: Youth Dance of Life'. Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal. 26, 5. (Sept/Oct 2002), 16.

³³ Minniecon, Sharon., Chris Rissel. 'Mudi Dungurra Mudgang: Youth Dance of Life'. Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal. 26, 5. (Sept/Oct 2002), 18.

³⁴ Chandler, Michael., Christopher Lalonde, Bryan Sokol, Darcy Hallett. 'Personal Persistence, Identity Development, and Suicide: A Study of Native and Non-Native North American Adolescents.' Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development. (April 2003), 2, 40, 43, 44.

the whole thing. Get the message through by dance". "Could dance school topics eg history dance it for you. It's a matter of priorities". "The theme of NAIDOC is solidarity. We danced about unity. The dance symbolised bringing our mob from all areas - Torres Strait, Kowanyama, HopeVale. Each dancer represented one place and they danced over to where Yarrabah was and danced as one. Brought it to a conclusion." The men's group worker also stated that while there was potential to offer cultural dance performances in a range of settings, resource limitations constrained their capacity to do so. *"We could offer cultural dance performance to schools, but have a problem with lack of transport". "Dance group was asked to dance at PCYC in Yarrabah next Friday, but no money; can't dance".*

Workshop participants

During the course of this project, all of the nine participants in the David Hudson workshop (May 2007) said (in an evaluation survey) that they believed that the benefits of a dance troupe included its potential to help young people develop a vision and direction, to educate Yarrabah people about health and social issues, and to protect young people against the risks of suicide. Participants comments included: *Learned "that we must all move together, not no-one trying to lord it over others. Together we can accomplish anything"; Making artefacts will "also open the eyes of our younger ones and they might get involved too".*

Interviews

Interviews with key stakeholders at the end of the project identified that Yarrabah people, too, felt that dance could both empower participants and influence the process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Dancer, Colin Costello described a process where *"being part of the Dance Troupe we hold together. It's to be proud of who we are and what we're dancing for. There is identity in this for me, in encouraging others to dance. That's the one thing that we share no one can take that kind of thing away from us."*

Young dancer, Colin Costello described some of the pressures which young Yarrabah people live with on a day to day basis *"looking for money for yarndi as well, ... these boys with that alcohol in their mind. That alcohol makes them, you know, silly too and the yarndi and it makes them mentally ill. That's the kind of peer pressure they get from friends as well. That yarndi and alcohol"*. He felt that the dance troupe helped young people to cope better with peer pressure in the home and community.

The Justice Group Coordinator noted that *" for one particular kid I've seen him go from someone with small dreams and small visions into something quite, you know... Mostly, the number of students come through who muck around on the streets but really didn't really have anywhere in particular to show off their skills and I believe that the opportunity arose with the Dance Troupe. Those (opportunities) were given to us allowed them to have them out there to show them the rest of the world and to show them what skills we have here in Yarrabah. I think significant changes in some kids. We've allowed a few kids who didn't really have a name or a place in community to become someone and for me that's more important of somebody being lifted up out of the gutter, so to speak, into a position where he felt good about himself and he showed off, I spose, he showed us what he had. He was a young kid he was still at primary school. But I know people; from my mum's background in New South Wales often ask for him to go back down. That's a big thing, you know. A lot of the men, their self-esteem was quite low at the time and to get up and actually perform in front of people gave them a lot of self-esteem. There were dramatic changes there. ...I*

believe it did, it empowered a number of people. I mean I can see the end results now, since it stopped. These people sort of lost their stature of who they were, you know, twelve months ago. You know, for me it feels like they've grown a bit disheartened that this project that they were so enthused about came to an end."

Les Baird agreed "Because they may not have other skills but they know that they have the skills in dancing and it builds them up. They feel good every time that they go out and dance and they know that they're passing down some traditional knowledge about stories of the dancing and they are able to participate in this community and also to the wider, mainstream community. And they feel that they've made a contribution".

In relation to broader reconciliation issues, Brian said "Yeah, I mean we celebrate everybody else's culture each year. I think it's time for ours to be recognised in the same way. I would love to see them do a joint venture with some other country, like that American festival over there where the Indians and all them come together. I wouldn't mind seeing Aboriginal dance troupe being over there as well." He commented that the Dance Troupe was also able to educate non-Indigenous people about the value of dance. "I believe there was a big. From what I hear from places like Taree and Port Macquarie and even in Melbourne, in some of the universities and colleges down there that some of the kids, students and teachers in tears because of some of the messages that they were given through the dance, really hit home and made them realise that we were part of this country and that we will always be and the past two hundred years have had a big impact on our culture and I believe that the message was strong and clear. So we get invites every year to go back there".

Respondents also commented on the effectiveness of the dance troupe in promoting health messages. Brian Connolly observed "There was one real, real deadly one that the boys used that was about alcohol and culture. That alcohol will destroy our culture. I reckon that was about the best dances that I've seen for a long time. Integrating the new western way of living into a cultural way and how it destroyed us as a people. I believe that message should be continued".

In addition to the dance about alcohol and drugs, the performers also danced to bring awareness to health issues including "violence, like family violence and also awareness of dangers around the bush, like crocodile dance and that. And mostly education of the environmental animals like sea eagle, bush fowl, cassowary, that's it yeah" (Les Baird).

Conclusion - "We must all move together" (quote from workshop participant)

This evaluation found that the project brought multiple benefits to the Yarrabah (and other) communities. Yarrabah people feel deeply that there needs to be greater promotion of cultural awareness and revival in their community. They believe that the Yaba Bimbie dance troupe can play a role in this. All of the participants in the David Hudson workshop and all key stakeholders interviewed said that they believed that the dance troupe could help restore traditional Aboriginal cultural practices, help Yarrabah people develop a cultural identity, share culture with other Aboriginal communities and white Australians with the ultimate goal of reconciliation, and to create new local dance practices. In the process of this, it could support the self-determination and self-management principles of local Indigenous community members and provide a place for healing to the members of the Stolen Generation.

Informants were particularly concerned about encouraging the younger generation to embrace their culture and increasing the self-esteem and overall physical / mental health and emotional well-being of the dance troupe members and community members. They felt that the cultural dance troupe project had contributed towards these goals. Respondents also said that the dance troupe was an effective medium for promoting health messages to Yarrabah community members and others.

All key stakeholders interviewed at the end of the project and several of the survey respondents said they believed that the dance troupe had the potential to become a long term business venture. But clearly, at the completion of the ISBF-funded project, the Yaba Bimbie dance troupe cannot function as a viable and independent business venture. The project did not meet the expected outcomes of increasing the number of regular full-time dance troupe performers to 15 or even increasing the number of cultural performances. The evaluation documented a range of challenges associated with attempting to implement commercial dance troupes in Aboriginal communities. The first of these is the need to clearly define the intention of the troupe (as either a voluntary cultural activity and/or commercial venture. Possibly the main reason for the failure of the project to reach its commercial objective was that (reflecting its religious and health-related origins) the key Yarrabah stakeholders had more interest in the cultural, spiritual and health benefits of the group than in its commercial potential.

The project did equip some of the personnel involved with the business venture with skills, knowledge and understanding of small business operations. A website was created to define the cultural positioning of the troupe and market its availability. However, the time frame and the amount of seed funding provided by the ISBF were insufficient to get the dance troupe off the ground as an established enterprise, and local respondents indicated that some funding of wages would be necessary for dancers. Project staff did not have the business/management skills nor connections to effectively establish the dance troupe as a commercial venture. And there was doubt expressed that the dancers were willing to invest the level of motivation and commitment needed to become professional dancers. They needed more intensive choreography and other training in order to reach the level of professional dancers. As the 2004 business plan by Cardno MBK suggests, the best opportunity for doing so may be for the dance performance to form part of a (yet to be established) tour run by an existing tourism operator from Cairns. The proposed False Cape resort may also offer opportunities for more regular dance performances.

The evaluation also documented some challenges associated with implementing this dance troupe intervention. In addition to those raised above in relation to establishing a commercial business venture, the challenges were related particularly to cultural issues within the stolen generation community of Yarrabah. They included the legitimization of the stories and dances by traditional owners, and the balance of priority between dancing within the community and outside of it. There were also logistical challenges associated with working in a small rural Aboriginal organisation.

Recommendations

1. The cultural dance group would like to increase its employment and income-generating potential. In the short term, this is perceived to be through building on its

ad hoc engagement for paid functions. In the longer term the group is interested in having a regular professional performance program at a fixed venue, such as at the proposed Reef Cove Resort at False Cape, and the Menmuny Museum in Yarrabah. Ultimately, they envisage working towards establishing a cultural park similar to Tjapukai.

2. The group would like to begin to teach dance to students at Yarrabah State School, and with consent from parents, to take upper primary school children through an annual initiation ceremony. The cultural dance would become part of a cultural revival, in conjunction with hunting, fishing, traditional healing practices, ceremonies and other traditional activities.
3. The church has provided some financial support, but further networking is required to develop strategies for teaching in schools, business development, and developing traditional activities, and immediate funding support is needed to provide coordination/choreography support.
4. Obtaining the commitment of dancers to practice and perform on a regular basis is an issue. This could be addressed through developing contracts with dancers at the start of a project, providing funding to dancers, or by supporting individual dance leaders to "go solo".
5. The revival of Aboriginal culture, including cultural dance groups, should be viewed as critical to improving Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing, and as a long term proposal. Project proposals should either develop realistic goals within a short term timeframe, or advocate for long term funding support.

References

Baird, Bradley. 'Cultural Dance Workshop with David Hudson: Report on Yaba Bimbie Cultural Dance Workshop at Yarrabah. Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service Yarrabah. (2005).

Berardi, Gigi. 'Lights in the Northern Landscape: Alaska's Tiny Bethel Hosts a Wondrous Indigenous Dance Festival.' Dance Magazine. Vol 75, No 11. (Nov 2001).
Blanco, Raymond. 'Creative Pathways: Keynote Speech – Raymond Blanco'. Danceforum. 14. (summer 2005).

Chandler, Michael J., Christopher E Lalonde, Bryan W Sokol, Darcy Hallett. 'Personal Persistence, Identity Development, and Suicide: A Study of Native and Non-Native North American Adolescents.' Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development. (April 2003).

Greathouse-Amador, Louisa. 'Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community?' Review of Policy and Research. Vol 22, No 5. (2005).

Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Dance Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' The Australian Journal of Anthropology. Vol 11, No 3. (2000).

Miller, Lydia. 'Creating Pathways an Indigenous Dance Forum.' Danceforum. 12. (Summer 2005).

Minniecon, Sharon., Chris Rissel. 'Mudi Dungurra Mudang: Youth Dance of Life.' Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal. Sept/Oct 2002, Vol 26, No 5.

Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Speech.' The Australian Journal of Anthropology. Vol 11, No 3. (2000).

APPENDIX 1: LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY: THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF CULTURAL DANCE TROUPES

A systematic literature review was conducted in order to explore the potential benefits and outcomes that might be linked to the establishment of a cultural dance troupe project.

This review was conducted via the following databases:

- Informit;
- Infotrac;
- Blackwell Synergy;
- Proquest Social Sciences;
- Taylor & Francis; &
- JStor.

Further, the review was guided by the following search terms:

- (Aborigin* or Indigenous) with (cultural dance) or (cultural revival) and intervention
- (Aborigin*) or Indigenous) and "cultur*" and intervention
- Indigenous and "cultural dance"
- Aboriginal and "cultural revival"
- Indigenous and dance
- Aboriginal and dance

While this literature review ultimately revealed that relatively few studies have been conducted on the topic of Indigenous dance initiatives, a number of key articles were located which provide valuable insight into the potential outcomes of cultural dance activities stemming from Indigenous communities.

The article *'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle'* by Fiona Mogowan offers a useful overview of the significance of dance for Indigenous people, particularly as a means for political expression. Mogowan traces the history behind the use of Indigenous performance as a tool for political representation, claiming that its origins extend '...as far back as the 1920s and 1930s in the concert hall repertoire of soloists such as Harold Blair'³⁵, and that by the mid-twentieth century '...performances from remote communities had become a common sight in the major cities of the nation'³⁶.

Mogowan highlights a number of historico-political processes that are relevant to the way in which Indigenous dance is currently viewed as having a 'political potency within urban locales'³⁷. In particular, she describes how strategies of self-determination, which have urged Indigenous groups to assume control over their own affairs since the 1970s, have created a stronger awareness of the Indigenous presence within mainstream sectors of society³⁸. To illustrate this point Mogowan refers to the way in which Indigenous land rights have been confirmed by a number of legislative enactments, including the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and the *Native Title Act 1993*, as well as the way in which Indigenous people have been promoted through government institutions, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).³⁹ It is within this context that Mogowan depicts dance as a tool of Indigenous 'empowerment' and the 'focus of a participative arena'.⁴⁰

According to Mogowan, 'a heightened awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture' has led to a situation whereby '...political figures are having to actively ignore, rather than be ignorant, indifferent, or seemingly impartial spectators of dance'.⁴¹ Furthermore, Mogowan describes how 'Aboriginal groups are performing statements of their Indigenous rights when important political issues are at stake and politicians are being forced to participate in the conditions of Indigenous dance contexts'⁴². Ultimately Mogowan argues that 'Indigenous dance should be examined as an expressive, active and ongoing dialogue with the nation' and '...one means by which

³⁵ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 311.

³⁶ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 311.

³⁷ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 312.

³⁸ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 313.

³⁹ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 313.

⁴⁰ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 313.

⁴¹ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 317.

⁴² Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 317.

reconciliation can be manifested between Indigenous and non-Indigenous performers and spectators⁴³. According to Mogowan, non-Indigenous Australians have a responsibility to perceive Indigenous dance '...not only as a theatre of life but as a declaration of support for the intercultural state of the nation'⁴⁴.

CREATIVE PATHWAYS: AN INDIGENOUS DANCE FORUM

The article '*Creating Pathways: An Indigenous Dance Forum*' by Lydia Miller is another article highlighting the benefits associated with the revival of Indigenous dance. Creative Pathways was a gathering of some 40 dance practitioners from across Australia that was funded by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board and Dance Board of the Australia Council, and managed and produced by Ausdance National. Driven by 'the desire of Indigenous dance practitioners to articulate a collective vision and direction for the future of Indigenous dance'⁴⁵, Creative Pathways encouraged its participants to explore '...the role of dancers as custodians and repositories of culture; the layers of meaning imbued within the gesture; the lonely journey often taken in isolation; (and) the spirit of strength to inspire national and international communities'.⁴⁶ According to Lydia Miller, the Director of the Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, 'each participant contributed to a broad agenda that included training, dance maintenance, cultural protocols and misappropriation, mentoring children and young people, learning and sharing, identity and place, infrastructure, choreography, responsibility and obligations, professional opportunities, networks, (and) community social issues'.⁴⁷

The significance of this Indigenous dance initiative was summarised by Raymond Blanco in his keynote speech at the Creating Pathways gathering, where he commented on the current state of Indigenous contemporary dance and highlighted the importance of the way in which the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre (AIDT) has afforded Indigenous people a chance to explore avenues of expression for their own stories. He depicted the AIDT as having an integral role to play in the Indigenous struggle towards gaining acceptance within mainstream society, and portrayed Creative Pathways as being part of an ongoing attempt to '...re-educate the non-Indigenous populace about the value and relevance of Indigenous cultures'. According to Blanco, 'the Australian nation is a myth until Indigenous culture and prior sovereignty are embraced and acknowledged as a culture that has a valued contribution to our futures'.⁴⁸

THE TJAPUKAI ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PARK AND THE LAURA DANCE FESTIVAL

Another article depicting the fundamental importance of Indigenous dance initiatives is '*Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival*' by Rosita Henry. Through this article, Henry compares and contrasts the experiences of the Laura Dance Festival against those of the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and although she recognises essential differences between the two, she ultimately argues that they both

⁴³ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 319.

⁴⁴ Magowan, Fiona. 'Dancing with a Difference: Reconfiguring the Poetic Politics of Aboriginal Ritual as National Spectacle.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000), 320.

⁴⁵ Miller, Lydia. 'Creating Pathways an Indigenous Dance Forum.' *Danceforum*. 12. (Summer 2005). 12.

⁴⁶ Miller, Lydia. 'Creating Pathways an Indigenous Dance Forum.' *Danceforum*. 12. (Summer 2005). 13.

⁴⁷ Miller, Lydia. 'Creating Pathways an Indigenous Dance Forum.' *Danceforum*. 12. (Summer 2005). 13.

⁴⁸ Blanco, Raymond. 'Creative Pathways: Keynote Speech – Raymond Blanco'. *Danceforum*. 14. (summer 2005).

provide an invaluable means for Indigenous people to engage in cultural revival and empowerment.⁴⁹

Introduced in 1983 by the Qld State Government, the Laura Aboriginal Dance and Cultural Festival was initially held on an annual basis at various Indigenous communities in Far North Queensland including Mossman Gorge, Hopevale and Wujal Wujal.⁵⁰ Henry describes how the festival was originally designed as a dance competition between a number of dance groups from Aboriginal communities in Cape York, and how although the festival was operated under state control, Indigenous people 'eagerly embraced' the 'opportunity to meet relations and friends and a means of making themselves present to the outside world, and also to other Aboriginal peoples'.⁵¹

Today the festival is based in the community of Laura and is held biennially.⁵² According to Henry, 'the festival is a means of celebrating a shared Aboriginal identity based on a common history while at the same time acknowledging differences among Aboriginal peoples...'.⁵³ Moreover, Henry describes the festival as a '...public statement of the continuity of cultural transmission', and expresses how the performances are more than just 'displays of song and dance' but rather are 'performances of teaching and learning'.⁵⁴

Henry also evaluates the effectiveness of the Tjapukai Dance Theatre and Cultural Park. Inspired by the cultural traditions of the Djabugay people, The Tjapukai Dance Theatre began its life in 1987 in a space under a small shopping complex in the main street of Kuranda, before relocating to its own theatre, also in the main street⁵⁵. Henry reveals that by 1997, the Tjapukai Dance Theatre had become 'the single largest employer of Aboriginal people in Kuranda' and had 'grown from a business with a capital base of \$45 000 to a theatre complex employing 37 Aboriginal people and turning over \$1 million (gross) annually'.⁵⁶

According to Henry, the replacement of the Tjapukai Dance Theatre by the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park in Cairns in 1996 was a traumatic experience for the Djabugay people.⁵⁷ She reveals how the Djabugay people have 'ambivalent feelings' towards the Park as they battle to assert their position within what has become a 'large commercial venture'.⁵⁸ However, Henry maintains that this ambivalence is balanced against the pride that the

⁴⁹ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 330.

⁵⁰ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 324.

⁵¹ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 325.

⁵² Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 330.

⁵³ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 325.

⁵⁴ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 326.

⁵⁵ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 327.

⁵⁶ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 327.

⁵⁷ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 327.

⁵⁸ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 328.

Djabugay people have towards the park as a vehicle for reviving their cultural traditions. According to Henry, 'Tjapukai dancers think of themselves as ambassadors for their people. They do not see their dancing as being just a job like any other. Rather, they see themselves as being representatives of Djabugay people in the wider political context of their dealings with agencies of the state'.⁵⁹

Henry disputes the notion that Laura dancing is the 'real thing' whereas Tjapukai dancing is a 'slick tourist reproduction', arguing that they are equally 'complicit responses to the demands of the tourist industry'.⁶⁰ While Henry acknowledges that both the Laura Dance Festival and the Tjapukai Cultural Park are sites for 'the embodiment of hegemony'⁶¹, they also allow Indigenous people to engage in performance in a way that displays 'cultural vitality', encourages the 'continuity of cultural transmission to the younger generation'⁶², and enables them to 'play a part in redefining themselves'⁶³. This is summarised by the following paragraph:

'Performance here becomes a tantalising opportunity to challenge a paradigm that assumes that cultural authenticity is only about the transmission of intellectual knowledge. An awareness of the possibility of embodied acquisition of culture, and of body memory, allows for continuity, where there might otherwise be discontinuity. Through their dancing Aboriginal peoples animate and empower place with memories of the ancestors. They dance into being the continuity of their life-worlds. By moving into performance they enfold mind with body and body with mind and so allow the past into the present and the dead to remain among the living'.⁶⁴

BETHEL INDIGENOUS DANCE FESTIVAL

Lights in the Northern Landscape: Alaska's Tiny Bethel Hosts a Wondrous Indigenous Dance Festival by Gigi Berardi is another article exposing the benefits of dance initiatives for Indigenous people, this time from an international perspective. Bethel is a small town in Alaska which is 'accessible only by air, boat, or snow machine' and has a reputation for having one of the largest concentrations of Indigenous people still practicing a subsistence lifestyle. Bethel is the site of an annual Indigenous festival that hosts approximately 4000 guests and 500 dancers, drummers and singers, and consists of three days of cultural activities including dancing, music, storytelling, native arts and crafts, a quilt show, and traditional food tasting.

⁵⁹ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 329.

⁶⁰ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 329.

⁶¹ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 331.

⁶² Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 330.

⁶³ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 331.

⁶⁴ Henry, Rosita. 'Dancing into Being: The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and the Laura Dance Festival.' *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 11, 3. (2000). 331.

Berardi describes the survival of dance throughout western Alaska as a ‘...story of cultural resistance and resilience despite attempts by certain missionaries to suppress it since the late nineteenth century’.⁶⁵ According to Berardi, dance is part of a ‘broader cultural reawakening’ in Western Alaska, which has also seen a dramatic cultural renaissance in recent times in many other forms including ‘...oral history projects, multivillage dance festivals, bilingual school curricula, and political action’.⁶⁶

Although Berardi recognises that ‘...some of the ceremonial aspects of Yup’ik and Inupiaq (the Eskimo of north-western Alaska and northern Canada) dance are no longer present...’, she maintains that ‘...the reasons for dancing remain the same as 150 years ago: to share family history, give life lessons, convey valuable role models, and celebrate traditional lives through storytelling in song and dance. The dance also promotes self-esteem and community identity’.⁶⁷ Berardi makes reference to the following comments by Indigenous people from Bethel to illustrate the fundamental role that dance has to play within their community:

“In our village of 1000 people, all can dance. The children grow up dancing. It is like talking, its part of our rituals. Some songs are so special, you have to change the words so no one is affected by them. Sometimes the audience can feel their bodies being lifted and healed; the songs are that powerful.”

“Dance is a way of allowing people to get together several times a week, to ground them and given them self-worth, provide focus, and instil discipline.”

“Young people are interested in this because its fun and you get to travel to places, it’s a way to learn about the culture, and people enjoy watching it.”

“I dance, for it lifts my spirits. I reach out and touch the hands of my ancestors and know that I’ve come home.”

“Yup’ik dancing is a real grounding type of dance. It gives you a connection with the land and where the traditions have come from. Elders love what we’re doing because it has such a good influence on the community; they can feel our sincerity and how we honour the tradition.”

“Some of the people at Camai may feel like this is a revival but, to me, it has always been with me, for I was born with dance fans in my hands. It is not just an isolated part of our lives. Rather, it shows how you are connected to everything and everybody else. It is not just a dance but our way of living, our rules and regulations – not only in our past but in our spirit, now.”

“...practice sessions are also part of how novice dancers learn traditional ways. Elders share the songs and dances that they know and guide the

⁶⁵ Berardi, Gigi. ‘Lights in the northern landscape: Alaska’s tiny Bethel hosts a wondrous indigenous dance festival’. *Dance Magazine*. 75.11 (Nov 2001).

⁶⁶ Berardi, Gigi. ‘Lights in the northern landscape: Alaska’s tiny Bethel hosts a wondrous indigenous dance festival’. *Dance Magazine*. 75.11 (Nov 2001).

⁶⁷ Berardi, Gigi. ‘Lights in the northern landscape: Alaska’s tiny Bethel hosts a wondrous indigenous dance festival’. *Dance Magazine*. 75.11 (Nov 2001).

younger dancers. The instruction carries with it counselling on traditional morals and on how one should act.”

MUDI DUNGURRA MUDANG YOUTH DANCE OF LIFE PROGRAM

The article 'Mudi Dungurra Mudang Youth Dance of Life' by Sharon Minniecon and Chris Rissel details a dance program that was initiated in Central Sydney among a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth aged seven to twelve years with the aim of increasing awareness about the harms caused by tobacco use and unhealthy eating habits.⁶⁸ The primary strategy for obtaining this goal consisted of dance and mural projects which celebrated traditional aspects of Indigenous culture and promoted knowledge of contemporary issues such as the dangers of tobacco use and the importance nutrition⁶⁹. These were presented to the local primary school in Glebe and subsequently to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital⁷⁰. According to Minniecon and Rissel, the project, which lasted for over six months, led to a number of positive outcomes for its participants. In particular it was noted that the children's confidence, self-esteem and behaviour had improved since partaking in the program⁷¹.

PERSONAL PERSISTENCE, IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT, AND SUICIDE: A STUDY OF NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS

Through the article '*Personal Persistence, Identity Development, and Suicide: A Study of Native and Non-Native North American Adolescents.*' Michael J Chandler and Christopher E Lalonde et al describe a study that reveals that '...efforts by Aboriginal groups to preserve and promote their culture' and to 'regain control over aspects of their communal lives' are associated with dramatic reductions in rates of youth suicide.⁷²

TOURISM: A FACILITATOR OF SOCIAL AWARENESS IN AN INDIGENOUS MEXICAN COMMUNITY?

The article '*Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community*' by Louisa M Greathouse-Amador examines the impact of tourism on the Indigenous people of northern Mexico.⁷³ The article provides a backdrop whereby '...Indigenous and other marginalised people find themselves at a crossroads where their cultural survival is challenged' as the '...Latin American economies and cultures are becoming increasingly tied to a global political, economic and social order...'⁷⁴ According to Greathouse-Amador, tourism has an integral role to play within this new economic order. While recognising the

⁶⁸ Minniecon, Sharon., Chris Rissel. 'Mudi Dungurra Mudgang: Youth Dance of Life'. *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal*. 26, 5. (Sept/Oct 2002), 15.

⁶⁹ Minniecon, Sharon., Chris Rissel. 'Mudi Dungurra Mudgang: Youth Dance of Life'. *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal*. 26, 5. (Sept/Oct 2002), 16.

⁷⁰ Minniecon, Sharon., Chris Rissel. 'Mudi Dungurra Mudgang: Youth Dance of Life'. *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal*. 26, 5. (Sept/Oct 2002), 17.

⁷¹ Minniecon, Sharon., Chris Rissel. 'Mudi Dungurra Mudgang: Youth Dance of Life'. *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal*. 26, 5. (Sept/Oct 2002), 18.

⁷² Chandler, Michael., Christopher Lalonde, Bryan Sokol, Darcy Hallett. 'Personal Persistence, Identity Development, and Suicide: A Study of Native and Non-Native North American Adolescents.' *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*. (April 2003), 2, 40, 43, 44.

⁷³ Greathouse-Amador, Louisa M. 'Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community?' *Review of Policy Research*. 22, 5. (2005), 709.

⁷⁴ Greathouse-Amador, Louisa M. 'Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community?' *Review of Policy Research*. 22, 5. (2005), 709.

potentially exploitative effects that tourism can have on Indigenous cultures, Greathouse-Amador ultimately highlights the potential for tourism to open a space for Indigenous people to assert their position within the dominant sectors of society⁷⁵. This notion is summarised by the following paragraph:

‘...tourism, which having arrived in the area, brought new attention to the indigenous people and gave them a stage upon which they can demonstrate with pride their customs, culture, and traditions. Because of increased tourism in Cuetzalan, indigenous people have gained a new position that has allowed them to assert themselves as they never have before, especially in economic areas. They have also enjoyed important changes in many of the traditional power relationships.’⁷⁶

In particular, Greathouse-Amador makes the following observations with regards to the positive outcomes of tourism for the Indigenous population in the Mexican community of Cuetzalan⁷⁷:

- The creation of social institutions such as community cooperatives, support social organisations and privet and community projects where Indigenous populations work together;
- The renewal of cultural and regional pride;
- Maintenance and revitalisation of a variety of arts and crafts, including handicrafts, dance, theatre, ceremonies, and festivals;
- Financial assistance made available for the creation and maintenance of cultural venues and other facilities that promote cultural awareness;
- Tourism infrastructure has led to increased availability of social services and amenities;
- Increased cultural understanding and awareness.

APPENDIX 2: EVALUATION - YABA BIMBIE DANCE WORKSHOP WITH DAVID HUDSON MAY 2007

BACKGROUND:

- To “dance back our cultural identity”.
- Father Les, Bradley Baird and other Yarrabah people, along with researchers from James Cook University have been interested in how cultural dance can help Yarrabah people. We looked at what research has happened in other places.
- We found that cultural dance can help people in lots of different ways.

⁷⁵ Greathouse-Amador, Lousia M. ‘Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community?’ *Review of Policy Research*. 22, 5. (2005), 709.

⁷⁶ Greathouse-Amador, Lousia M. ‘Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community?’ *Review of Policy Research*. 22, 5. (2005), 717.

⁷⁷ Greathouse-Amador, Lousia M. ‘Tourism: A Facilitator of Social Awareness in an Indigenous Mexican Community?’ *Review of Policy Research*. 22, 5. (2005), 718.

1. EVALUATION FINDINGS:

Number of Evaluation Questionnaires Returned

- 9 evaluation questionnaires were returned.

Age of Participants

Age Bracket	Number of Participants
12-20	
20-29	4
30-39	1
40-49	3
50-59	1
60+	

Gender of Participants

Gender	Number of Participants
Male	7
Female	2

Do You Think Cultural Dance Can Help Yarrabah People With the Following Things?

Suggested Benefits	Number of Participants Who Believe in Those Benefits
Helping young people develop a vision and direction	9
Helping Yarrabah people develop a cultural identity	9
Sharing culture with other Aboriginal communities	9
Sharing culture with white Australians / reconciliation	9
Help to restore traditional Aboriginal cultural practices	9
Create new local dance practices	9
Be used for getting income through tourism	9
Provide business opportunities for Yarrabah people	9
Educating Yarrabah people about health and social issues	9
Helping to provide economic recovery	9
Protecting young people against the risks of suicide	9

What Did You Like About the David Hudson Workshop?

Survey 1:

- Empowerment

-
- Everything – experience making artefacts; learn the potential for establish Aboriginal cultural tourism in Yarrabah, do a ...?

Survey 2:

- Well it is good and also a vision to me and my people.

Survey 3:

- Everything, singing, education, videos, storytelling, artefacts, ...? to other places

Survey 4:

- Good. Need more of it in our communities.

Survey 5:

- It's sharing culture and knowledge and learning new experiences.

Survey 6:

- The artefacts and culture.

Survey 7:

- All the people coming together as one!
- I like uncle's approach very good teacher!
- Our culture must continue to find its way in everything we do?

Survey 8:

- Everything his teaching.
- Music, video, artefacts, storytelling, excursion trip to other places.

Survey 9:

- It's very good.

What Did You Not Like About the Workshop?

Survey 1:

- Too much chicken everyday.

Survey 2:

- No: Everything was good.

Survey 3:

- Nothing.

Survey 4:

- Everything.

Survey 5:

- Nothing cause it was all educational.

Survey 6:

- Nothing because its all good.

Survey 7:

- Starting too late all the time.

Survey 8:

- Nothing, it was all good, good experience for me.

Survey 9:

- It is good.

What Did You Learn At the Workshop?

Survey 1:

- How to make artefacts.
- How to possibly set up a cultural park like Tjapukai.

Survey 2:

- Lot of things like props, painting and sharing.

Survey 3:

- How to promote ourself.
- Enjoyed the workshop.
- Was pleased with the education he provided.

Survey 4:

- Keep our culture alive.

Survey 5:

- I learned how to make Aboriginal artefacts, boomerang, bipperra, shiled, didgeridoo, etc etc.

Survey 6:

- I learn to make artefacts and get bit knowledge.

Survey 7:

- That we must all move together, not no-one trying to ...? it over others.
- Together we can accomplish anything.

Survey 8:

- Painting, how to present myself and how to get along with everyone.

Survey 9:

- All these.

Have You Danced Before?

Whether the Participant Had Danced Before	Number of Participants
Yes	8
No	1

If Yes, Where Have You Danced?

Dance Venues	Number of Participants
Church, Yarrabah	6
Museum, Yarrabah	5
Other places in Yarrabah	7
Cairns / Innisfail	5
Other Australian cities or communities	5
Overseas	3

How Are You Going to Use Your Dance Gift and Skills?

Dance Purposes	Number of Participants
At social events	7
Dance at Museum	7
Dance for income	7
Dance in Church	6
Other ways – How?	2 (survey 1 said: "encourage young people".

Would You Want to be Part of a Dance Company?

Intention to be Part of a Dance Company	Number of Participants
Yes	9

No	0
----	---

Is There Anything Else you'd like to Say?

Survey 1:

- The best two week of learning and gaining knowledge not only about dance but also...

Survey 2:

- No.

Survey 3:

- Thank you to David Hudson for educating me how to maintain my culture.

Survey 4:

- Start now before we all die.

Survey 5:

- No cause I enjoyed everything but there should be more voices and people like him in our community to share the true values of life and learning culture.

Survey 6:

- *(no comment)*.

Survey 7:

- Each tribal group in this community, has a right to be recognised and express itself for who they are!
- TO's - if they say they are true people who belong to this place, then why is it hard for them to share with the rest of the people.

Survey 8:

- Thank you David. Thank you for the laughter and jokes.

Survey 9:

- No.

What Are Your Thoughts about Making Cultural Artefacts that can be sold At the Dance Gigs?

Survey 1:

- This is excellent and will begin to create employment - educate the community about culture.

Survey 2:

- Good.

Survey 3:

- It would be a great experience for me to make artefacts and to get younger ones involved.

Survey 4:

- I think it's a good thing to do.

Survey 5:

- I am overwhelmed cause I can't wait to start making my own products.

Survey 6:

- Making products to start foundation.

Survey 7:

- Very good, help promote and build community economics.

Survey 8:

- I don't make them but I love the painting. It will also open the eyes of our younger ones and they might get involved too.

Survey 9:

- *(no comment)*.

What Are Your Thoughts on Setting Up a Cultural Arts Factory to Mass Produce Aboriginal Artefacts?

Survey 1:

- This is going to bring jobs into Yarrabah for many young artist and dancers.

Survey 2:

- I think it's good.

Survey 3:

- It would be a great opportunity to set up a arts factory to create jobs for the younger ones.

Survey 4:

- I think it good.

Survey 5:

- We will strive if we continue to create and build on our own possibilities in terms of our culture and dreams through artefacts, we will create employment and develop together strength, honour and unity to unify our identities on this land.

Survey 6:

- Very good and educational.

Survey 7:

- It's a must, if we want to build this community.

Survey 8:

- Yeah, it will help to open the eyes of our young people to get? Supporting the family.

Survey 9:

- *(no comment)*.