

The delivery of the  
Community Praxis Co-op  
Local Community Builders' Training Course

**A Guide to Good Practice**

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# Section 1. Introduction

This guide to good practice in the delivery of the Community Praxis Co-op Local Community Builders' Training Course (known as *Building a Better Community* in some contexts and *Community Animator's Training* in others) is designed to provide a guide for the delivery of this training material.

## 1.1 An introduction to Community Praxis Co-op

Community Praxis Co-op is a not-for-profit workers' cooperative offering professional services in:

- community development
- youth development
- international aid and development
- community consultation
- sector development
- organisational development
- evaluation
- community facility planning
- community arts
- community based training
- literacy and numeracy programs.

Community Praxis Co-op was established in December 1998 by a group of community development colleagues who live in Brisbane and have worked together over the past 12 years.

There are currently seven members of the co-op and a network of more than fifty colleagues who have worked together on a range of projects.

### **Our Mission**

**Community Praxis Co-op exists to empower people and to resource and strengthen the capacities of groups and organisations in developing peaceful, just and sustainable communities.**

The Co-op operates as an education, training and consultancy agency for individuals, neighbourhoods, non-government organisations, and government authorities.

The Co-op seeks to practice traditional co-operative principles, encouraging the development of acceptance and respect, spirituality and compassion, solidarity and participation, responsibility and competence in the individuals, neighbourhoods and organisations with whom we work.

As a result of our work all of us in Community Praxis Co-op hope to contribute to the reduction of exploitative competition; the expansion of productive collaboration; the celebration of the unique gifts of all people, especially those on the edge; and the equitable utilisation of our common resources.

## **Our way of working**

Community Praxis Co-op Ltd provides a collaborative infrastructure that enables members, friends and colleagues to earn an income by forming self-managed teams for project, consultancy and training work. In effect, the co-op is a clearinghouse for work.

### **We design and facilitate processes that contribute to more peaceful, just and sustainable communities.**

Co-op consultancy teams are usually made up of one or more co-op members, working with colleagues from our networks who are practitioners with particular expertise.

Our teams design and facilitate processes in response to invitations, project briefs and partnership opportunities - mainly from government and community sector organisations.

### **We bring together project teams...**

We will consider any work for which we can bring together a team with appropriate skills and experience, in which there is an opportunity to contribute towards building more peaceful, just and sustainable communities.

The project teams bring to their work an ecological worldview - in which context, connectedness, interdependence and acknowledgment of on-going change is crucial.

### **... that value community ...**

The teams also bring a strong belief in the integrity of community. At the heart of our practice is the belief that healthy communities are not communities without problems, but rather are communities that have the capacity, resources, resilience and leadership to creatively engage with their own issues and the wider context.

And beyond that, we believe, soulful communities have developed ongoing processes which engage their issues as indicators of potential - with attention, awareness and imagination.

### **... in a self-managed enterprise that gives back.**

The co-op is not-for-profit. All Co-op members and employees are casual or short-term project workers who are paid for the work that they do on a particular

project. We budget a small 'ethical dividend' in each project, which we donate to support local community building initiatives in Australia and overseas.

We also support one another's vocational learning in the context of a commitment to the tradition of community development as a practice discipline - providing space for ourselves and other practitioners to develop and share reflections on creating peaceful, just and sustainable communities.

## **1.2 The Story of the course**

In the late 1990s an experiment took place in Caboolture Shire that has become a living story of grass roots community development. This is the story of the Building a Better Community (BBC) training course.

The training was part of an even larger experiment in Caboolture Shire called the Social Infrastructure Program (SIP). SIP sought to bring together local and state governments with a diverse range of stakeholders in the community sector to develop some effective human services planning, community development outcomes and enhanced community capacity to respond to local needs. A committee was established and funding was provided to develop some innovative projects.

In 1998 the SIP Committee set up a working group to consider the vexing question of how could community development be done better in the Shire. At the working group's first meeting (which was attended by about 15 people) the focus of discussion was not on a technical response to community development ie let's employ a CD Worker – it was more around how is "community" built in neighbourhoods and what can we do to encourage this.

People shared their experiences of community and what they thought were the key ingredients to building safe, healthy neighbourhoods. A common theme emerged around the notion that there were some values and skills that were underlying principles to building community, and that if people could learn and practice these skills this would enhance the building of community in their neighbourhood.

A decision was made to put a proposal to the SIP Committee to seek funds to trial a small training project in a discreet location in the shire to skill people in community building.

At first the proposal sought to engage an academic with extensive experience in a training methodology called "community based training" (CBT) to mentor a group of residents in a hands-on training course. However, the cost of this made the idea prohibitive, but through further exploration Community Praxis Co-op Ltd was approached to develop a training course that could skill people in community work using the CBT methodology.

In 1999, the SIP committee identified the area of Burpengary (a rapidly growing area in Caboolture shire with minimal social infrastructure) as the location for the training and the Community Praxis Co-op was contracted with the following brief:

- To establish a Burpengary Community Development Training Group that would be a local auspice for the training project;
- To work with that Group to conceptualise the training framework, clarify recruitment and publicity for the course and establish a realistic timeframe,
- To develop, implement and evaluate the course; and
- To write up the course in a way that was accessible to other trainers.

This first course in Burpengary was a huge success, and the training developed to become a vital part of SIP's agenda in community capacity building in the shire. This has included the investment of over \$30,000 over the next two years to deliver the training in other parts of the Shire.

The BBC training course has come from a tradition of training in community development that has borrowed from the wisdom of many in its development.

It's humble beginnings could date back as far as the history of "community based training", or to the conceptual meandering over a cup of coffee by two planners given the task of writing a brief for piloting the training course, or one could find its seed in the freedom embodied in the aims and purpose of the SIP.

It matters not where the beginning is, nor who owns the training. What matters is the spirit in which the course is developed and delivered, and that is the spirit of co-operative learning and the commitment to the ethos of inspiration through story telling and openness. It is just another face of community development, that has found its expression in the fertile soil of some communities in Caboolture Shire.

## **1.3 An introduction to the Local Community Builders' Training Course**

*Local community builders' training* is a short course designed for people in a local area who want to make a difference in their community. It explores what ordinary people can do in their own neighbourhoods to create the kind of community that they want to live in.

It's a 20 hour course for a group of 12-15 people, that is focused on developing the confidence, skills and connections to build the kind of community that we would like to live in. Participants:

- Get a clearer vision for what they want their community to be
- Discover ways to solve problems and create community solutions
- Develop skills and understanding that enable them to effectively build a better community.

What people who have done the course have liked:

- 'it was positive and supportive'
- 'it was informative, but not hard work'
- 'it made me believe in myself a bit more'
- 'it gave me an understanding of how to approach people'
- 'it showed me that we are already making a difference'.

### **What does the training cover?**

In the first session we look at '*the kind of community that we would like to live in*'.

In the second session we consider '*what are the things that block us*' and '*how to overcome them*'.

In the third session we explore '*skills for connecting in community*'.

The first three sessions are pre-planned. But then – as a group – course participants choose the topics that will be the most helpful for them – called elective sessions. Electives include:

- Developing community through communication
- How to get people together around an issue
- How to sustain and nourish a group
- How to 'get things going' and sustain the vision
- Dealing with difficult people
- Dealing with difficult organisations
- Strategies for working in the community
- Maintaining privacy and dealing with daily difficulty
- Conflict Negotiation
- Surfing our feelings
- How to run a meeting/ committee

While the delivery is flexible, a course as a whole will probably look something like this:

- Session 1 Introductions  
"The Ideal Community" – Vision & Values
- Session 2 Blocks, Barriers & Transformation:  
Moving from disempowerment to empowerment
- Session 3 Skills for Relationship Building, Connecting and Developing a  
Community Initiative
- Session 4 Debrief action  
Elective
- Session 5 Debrief action  
Elective
- Session 6 Debrief action  
Elective

### **What is required of course participants?**

Each time we meet we reflect on the experience that people have had trying out the skills and understandings covered in the previous session. We need people who are open to listening to other people and telling their stories.

We believe that all participants have knowledge and experience to contribute – and we aim to create a fun, interactive learning environment.

Community based training is not about 'experts' standing up in front of a group and 'delivering' knowledge, skills, and information. This manual will not equip anyone to do that.

Community based training is about groups of people struggling together to understand themselves and their communities in the context of concerns, hopes, passions, issues and creative potential.

It is often about participants telling their stories, trainers telling their stories, listening to the stories of people in our neighbourhoods – and trying to understand the lessons and actions that emerge from the stories.

The word of caution is therefore to recognise a manual for 'what it is' – with all its limitations. Trainers using this manual will not be able to avoid doing 'the work' of:

- listening to the participants in their course drawing on their own stories;
- identifying training needs in a collaborative way with participants;
- developing new training sessions according to those identified needs; and
- drawing on their own experience and stories as trainers/community workers.

However, whilst acknowledging the limits of a manual and highlighting a word of caution we also hope that this manual acts as a useful guide.

## **1.4 So what is in this guide?**

Section one provides an introduction to the course.

Section 2 outlines 'Perspectives on programming' which undertakes to give people the 'nuts and bolts' of the program cycle.

Section 3 explores 'Perspectives on the training process' – a section of edited papers written by a number of people involved in the course. These papers whilst not so useful in terms of 'landing a course' on the ground, are critical for people to understand the philosophical and historical context of the course.

The 'further reading' and appendix offers a brief bibliography of resources commonly available for designing other sessions and also examples of publicity and application forms that could be used as templates for other local courses.

## **Section 2: Perspectives on Programming**

Section one of the good practice guide provides insights into the particular type of training process/methodology required for the delivery of the Community Praxis Co-op Local Community Builders' Training Course.

Three papers provide different perspectives on the programming of this training:

**2.1 The logistics of locating the course in a context** provides a summary of the principles that we borrow from this approach to training, and apply to the delivery of the course.

**2.2 Supporting and sustaining people after the Local Community Builders Training Course** presents a reflection on the co-op's experiments with different models of support for participants following the course.

**2.3 Evaluation** provides a web-site gateway to a thorough evaluation of the delivery of 15 courses.

## **2.1 The logistics of locating the course in a context**

### **Peter Westoby and Gerard Dowling**

This part of the best practice guide will explore the following dimensions of locating the course.

- Engaging with the community to deliver training
- Landing the course in a context
- Publicity
- Recruitment of participants
- Training spaces
- Support of participants during the training
- Development of participant projects during the course.

### **1. Engaging with the community to deliver training**

The evaluation of 15 courses summarised as follows: “Accessibility was maximised through negotiating the time of courses at information nights and conducting training at local community venues.

#### **Existing agencies**

The course has been most effective when local agencies have really wanted the training in their communities. Examples of where this has taken place are when Deception Bay Community Youth Programs, Woodford Bush Family Connections, Sunnybank Caravan Park WANTOK Group requested the course. The level of local ownership was so significant that the training team from Community Praxis Co-op did not need to engage in any level of participant recruitment.

However in communities where there has been a complete lack of community welfare organisational infrastructure there have been a number of successful courses run. In such environments other ingredients were important. For example, in Burpengary the role of the local Councillor cannot be under-estimated. She was

tireless in advocating and publicizing the course when she spoke at, visited local sporting and recreation groups, Progress Associations, etc.

On a couple of occasions where there has been neither a significant level of local ownership nor a significant publicity strategy the course has failed in recruiting enough participants to make the course effective.

We have found that the critical factors for successful organising were:

- ☐ a pre-existing relationship between Co-op staff and the local community
- ☐ a history of Co-op courses having been run in the area
- ☐ strong partnership arrangements between Co-op staff and critical friends (usually a worker in an established community organisation) who can mobilise members of community groups
- ☐ community group infrastructure already present in the community, and
- ☐ an emerging grassroots initiative motivating individuals to seek training in order to move the initiative forward.

It appears to be difficult to negotiate entry and/or attract a sufficiently large pool of applicants within a few months when several of these factors are absent.

## Timing

When engaging with the community timing is essential. In the past three years we have learnt a number of lessons about delivery of the course.

**It is hard to deliver the course after a large project has been through a place.** Whilst some practitioners have really pushed us to deliver a course at such a time 'to maintain the momentum' of the people (eg. in a Community Renewal process), we have found that generally people are exhausted and from 'their perspective' it is time for a break. Residents of communities seem to sometimes have a much longer view of sustainability than 'CD workers'.

**Delivering a course over the Christmas period or in the run-up to Christmas is almost impossible.** Once we enter November the energy levels of communities are low; there are many competing events and people are tired and unwilling to sustain participation and have many other distractions in their own lives competing for their attention.

## 2. Landing the course in a context

It is essential that the training team (both setting up, delivering and providing post-course support) understand the existing processes occurring in a community, including the work of local groups and agencies and all levels of government authorities.

## Community development processes

The course can facilitate community development processes in itself but is ideally contextualised within a broader community development process. Examples where this has occurred in the past three years have been:

**The course as part of broader Community Renewal Strategy in Caboolture South and Deception Bay.** This was particularly successful in Deception Bay where the course was partly conceptualised as a way of building the confidence and competence of marginalised public housing tenants so that they could participate in the Community Renewal Community Reference Group. A number of public housing tenants felt confident to participate in the reference group and saw the BBC course as safe space to discuss fears, issues, anger etc. The course in Caboolture South was particularly difficult because the course was implemented after the development of the Community Action Plan – the community residents and participants were ‘waiting for money and projects’ to land on the ground as part of the Community Renewal Action Plan. It is very hard to inspire people in a process of grassroots community work when they are ‘waiting for money’.

**The course as part of a broader community development strategy of Sunnybank Caravan Park.** A community development worker was already working in the park 2 days/week around building relationships, bonding and banding. The training course resourced the work of this worker building stronger links, confidence and skills of park residents.

**The course as part of a broader community development strategy – the Caboolture Shire Council/Mercy Family Services partnership in Burpengary/Narangba.** The course built a number of networks, relationships, and skills that could be drawn on for the development of Burpengary Youth Connect and the Narangba Neighbourhood Centre.

## Government processes

**The course has been more effective when linked into government processes that are occurring in a community.** The course has worked best where it has linked with and been supported by the prevailing local, state or federal government processes. CSC through the SIP program has been a core instrument of building sustainable processes, as has the Community Renewal Officer in Deception Bay, and the FaCS departmental officer in Woodford.

### 3. Publicity

Ideally the publicity is an issue for local groups who feel a strong ownership of the course. However this is not always the case for a number of reasons (lack of local groups, local politics etc.).

A publicity strategy should build on a number of dimensions:

- Involve key community 'gatekeepers' like the local councillor/member and the local CD worker in letting local groups know about the course. Build a relationship with the local democratically elected representatives if possible – they often reach a large number of people and groups that might otherwise never hear about, or take the course opportunity seriously.
- Get a story into the local newspapers – this has historically been a successful way of recruiting a number of participants into each course.
- Utilize leaflets/flyers in local libraries, shops etc.
- A comprehensive mail-out to local groups.
- The kinds of groups that have been targeted in the past have been sport and recreation groups, school Parents and Citizens' associations, progress associations, local churches (of all denominations), etc.

In areas of high public housing demography or marginal residents (caravan parks) the only successful strategy has been building on word-of-mouth and existing relationships (of existing CD workers), friends of friends etc. This is the key dimension of any publicity strategy but it is probably the only one that will work in lower socio-economic contexts.

Local radio announcements and/or a story on radio.

### **Information session**

One of the key dimensions of the publicity process that has been used in the past three years had been an **information session**. This has provided a non-threatening opportunity for residents to learn about what the course has to offer, how it will be structured (times, child-care etc.) without having to make an on the spot decision. People are given an application form that they can fill out there and then, or take home and consider.

## **4. Recruitment of participants**

(See section 2.5: Reflections on 'constructs of community leadership' as part of this discussion.)

### Homogenous or heterogeneous?

This issue is a dilemma for almost all community work processes – do you work with a group of people who have more in common than differences, or do you consciously work with as diverse a group as is possible?

In the past three years almost all courses have ended up being reasonable homogenous in terms of class, not so much by design but by default. In Burpengary and Woodford the courses were mainly made up of lower-middle class participants. In Deception Bay and Sunnybank Caravan Park all participants came from a lower socio-economic context of unemployment or underemployment.

## Inclusive - age, gender, ethnicity, ability/disability

In many other ways the courses have been quite inclusive and diverse – most courses have had a good mixture of sexes. People from non-English speaking background, people with quite serious disabilities, and people from indigenous backgrounds have participated meaningfully. In one case two young children (aged 9 and 11) participated successfully.

## Mixture of residents and workers

The past three years have demonstrated that ideally the course has a mixture of residents and workers. We have purposefully ensured that a two-thirds majority be residents, but there has been no exclusion of workers.

The training course provides an opportunity as a 'leveler' for local workers and local residents. They are in an equal position as participants and can discuss issues with a level of mutuality that might otherwise be tough going.

Also we have found that most workers have been keen to participate in a safe space to explore issues of community and community development. Many have felt a lack of such input in their pre-existing training opportunities.

## Local and non-local

We have applied the same rule of two-thirds minimum as locals. When we are referring to non-locals that usually has meant people from a neighbouring suburb have wanted to participate because no such course is being offered in their area. This has been useful in building local community discussion within a context of neighbouring communities and regional issues.

## Process of deciding who does the course

In the recruitment stage we have used an application process. People are expected to fill out an application form that they can either ask for directly or collect at an information session. This ensures that we have some sense of who would like to come to the course and some of the demographic issues can be considered.

We have also developed three processes to decide who will do the course if more than 15 people come to the information session and wish to participate:

**Process 1:** Initially the group would have to identify times for the training – this might eliminate some people.

**Process 2:** The group decides who will attend this course and who will not. A preferred process of consensus could be used.

This would require potential participants to each articulate why they would like to do the course and how flexible they would be about doing it at a later stage. The group listens to each person and then people can choose to 'opt out' on the basis of what they have heard from others. If after listening to one another people still all wish to participate then we would move to process 3.

Plans could also be discussed to organise and implement a second course if enough people agree to post-phone their participation.

**Process 3:** An application process is engaged in whereby potential fill in an application form and the training team are left to decide.

The following information would be important in selection:

It is expected that participants selected for the course would meet the following criteria:

- be flexible and non-judgmental (open to learning)
- already have expressed interest or are currently involved in community activities
- have some links with networks and would be willing to do something during and after the course.

## **5. Training spaces**

### Formal and informal places

We have been successful in using all sorts of training places. The most formal place has been the local library in the evening where we had access to comfortable chairs, a large room, and white-board. Other training places have been quite informal including a caravan park resident's lounge room and the garage under Deception Bay Community Youth Programs.

The latter example illustrates some important considerations. Participants had a choice of the local neighbourhood centre or the garage. One group (for the first and second course) chose the garage as it was a place where people felt welcome, at home, able to smoke, able to wander in and out with children. The third group chose the neighbourhood centre as they preferred the chairs, carpet,

white board etc. The key factor is working with what the participants feel most comfortable with in the constraints of what actually exists and is available.

## Low-key, low-tech training tools (flip charts etc.)

A white board is very helpful for training – but is probably as high tech as we need to get. We have successfully run the course using butchers paper on a lounge room table. We want to model a training process that is empowering, that leaves people with a sense that they can also ‘do it’, ‘get active’, so the more low-tech the better. Training processes, like good community work projects, use appropriate technology for the context than ensures people can maintain some sense of control over the technology.

## **6. Support of participants during training**

Because of the diverse nature of each course the kind of supports that participants will require during the course will vary significantly. Some of the course participants have led quite stable and routinized lives (not in a negative sense) and have required minimum support during the course. In some courses peoples lives have been more hectic and chaotic – Centrelink appointments, child protection issues, court appearances have occurred during the course and such participants have required some support.

In these courses we have ensured that local workers who are a part of the process can provide the appropriate support outside of the training space. As trainers we have ensured that whilst providing a safe space to discuss such issues (if the participant discloses and wants to) we have not got involved out of course time – it is critical that trainers be clear about their role as a trainer.

## Flexibility

The potential hectic and chaotic lives of some participants have meant that the trainers will have to maintain a level of flexibility in delivery. Starting and finishing times, whilst important, are not to be held onto too tightly. A willingness to engage with the ‘issue of the moment’ rather than the ‘training agenda’ is critical. Good training can build story, analysis and possibilities out of such crisis and chaos.

## Transport

For people from low socio-economic contexts, organising transport to the venue has been an issue. On a couple of occasions local workers have had to provide some transport to get people ‘to and fro’ the training – and often this is linked to the worker dropping in and ‘motivating people to come along’ as well as providing the transport support.

## Reminding

The motivation mentioned above is linked to reminding people that the course is on. We have found that participants who live lifestyles that are not routinized or are not used to regular meetings will need reminding that the course is going on. Again, in most such contexts local workers connected to participants have played this role. Without it, dropouts, not necessarily intentional, will increase.

## Child-care

Provision of childcare is crucial for some people to be able to participate in the course. We have found that some groups have been willing for Community Praxis Co-op to pay someone to provide child care, and on other occasions there has been such a level of mistrust that groups have wanted to organise themselves to provide child-care (by rotating participants to take an hour each etc.)

## **7. Development of participants' projects during course**

During the initial stage of the course participants are requested to either work as individuals, or as small groups in taking a local community building initiative within the context of an adult learning framework.

These initiatives can be *relationship oriented* (eg. a single mother who decides that her initiative will be to visit other single mothers in the neighbourhood once a week and develop some personal support networks) or *project oriented* (eg. a group of people within the course decide that they would like to start a local micro-enterprise initiative as a poverty alleviation strategy that also builds community).

In many ways this is the tough part of the 'training' process. And yet it is what makes the course 'training' as opposed to education and learning. Training means to get into 'active mode' – to learn primarily through 'doing'. In the experiential learning tradition, learning takes place when people either 'do' something and reflect on that 'doing', or reflect on a 'simulated doing'. In this course we try gently to push people to get into that 'active mode'.

As part of the 2002/3 evaluation process trainers struggled again with how to conceptualise efforts by participants to **apply** the values, understandings and skills to their own community context; how to make sure that we 'notice' all actions to build community in the training process, and how to decide whether sufficient significant community building is resulting from course participation.

Most funding agreements highlight as a significant course outcome, the involvement of each participant in identifying and developing a community-based project. As we have worked with this concept we have realised that the term 'project' may not be fully descriptive of the kind of outcomes participants seek to achieve through involvement with the CLTP. Our trainers have strongly resisted a rigid conceptualisation of the notion of 'project' and prefer to use such language as

'the next step' or 'activity', believing the language of 'project' may be intimidating or foreign to many participants.

Trainers point out that some participants start the course with a depth of personal resources which enables their next step in community building to be a large scale public undertaking; for others a courageous next step in community building is to try and resolve tensions with a neighbour; and for other participants the mere act of attending the course and engaging with other participants is a giant step towards embracing community building. We expect that one of the factors that differentiates the Co-op's work from other community leadership initiatives is the way we value all of these actions as legitimate community building activities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For relevant discussion see section 2.5 'reflections on constructions of community leadership and/or the 2002/3 evaluation at [www.communitypraxis.org](http://www.communitypraxis.org) within the 'past projects' portal.

## **2.2 Supporting and sustaining people after the course**

### **Helen Abbott and Gerard Dowling**

November 2002

This paper explores the experience of Community praxis Co-op in supporting and sustaining participants after the Community Builders Training Course.

It reflects on the conceptualisation and approach to post course support so far, particularly in relation to the philosophy which guides the training course, and clarifies its understanding of post course support/mentoring/learning circles. It is informed by:

- An understanding of what has been done before and why those approaches have been used.
- Trainer's reflections and learning from past experiences of providing post course support.
- Participants experience of post course support
- Literature and research on supporting and sustaining people (eg adult education, community work)

Post-course support at its best responds to the energy, need and initiative of the participants. But it also recognises the limit of resources in doing this and continues to look for alternative ways of providing post-course support to individuals, groups and the network of participants that are sustainable.

### **Different models of post-course follow-up and support we have experimented with**

- Other agencies (MFS in Burpengary)
- Local agency workers (Deception Bay Community Youth Programs CD worker, Sunnybank Family Support CD worker)
- Community Praxis Co-op donating time to provide 'strategic planning' services to Woodford Bush Family Connections
- Running post course support sessions each month for 2-3 months after the course – as a way of catching up with how people are going, how projects are moving along, and ways of building networks between one another.

- The occasional linking of people who participated in one course with people from another course. This has occurred in Burpengary and Deception Bay (where more than one course has been delivered in each place). Participants have been able to provide a level of informal support for one another.

**The challenge is to:**

Build sustainable local peer support groups to continue learning (linked to other sources of information and inspiration)

Building networks of support and cross-community learning across the neighbourhoods where the courses are delivered. This builds a sense of communities learning together and from one another and also builds a regional perspective.

**Trainer’s reflections and learnings**

Trainers have reflected that post course support is necessary after every training course. Through post-course support ‘good ideas have become great projects’ – outcomes have occurred that might not have happened.

People have different support needs. For some participants training was sufficient to meet their needs, especially if they were already heavily committed. ‘You can’t mentor people who don’t want to be mentored.’ Where action has been suggested from an external source, initiatives have not been sustained. The key learning from this is that trainers need to respond to the need, energy and initiative of the participants after the course. Brockett (1994) writes that self-directed learning, a key part of the training, is not an all-or-nothing concept and people can strive towards it as a goal, rather than see it as an erroneous task used to rate their success as learners.

It seems that one of the biggest tensions for trainer’s lies where communities have few resources after the training course to sustain their initiatives. With the FaCS funding the Co-op has been able to provided more intense support to participants after the course in continuing their initiatives in their community. However in some ways this funding has changed the workers role from trainer to community development worker or capacity builder.

The Co-op has been clear that their primary role is training, and not capacity building or community development work. However it seems these boundaries can be blurred quite easily. The transformation of the role of the trainer and the increased scope of post-course support requires the Co-op to reflect over the purpose and philosophy behind the Community Builder’s Training in order to determine the purpose and role of post-course support.

Another significant concern for trainers seems to be about their responsibility to participants once they have completed the training. Community work can seem overwhelming, frightening and ‘to much like hard work’. It is these things which keep people from engaging in community work in the first place.

While the training course attempts to deal with some of these issues, the challenge for the Co-op is how they go about continuing this after the course. O'Regan & O'Connor (1990:32) argue that 'if work in the unstructured field of community is to be maintained in a continuing way, it is imperative that those engaged in it receive ongoing support.'

Therefore this proposal suggests that in determining how to support people the Co-op considers its primary reason or focus for providing post-course support, particularly in light of the philosophy that guides the training course.

## **Levels of support**

It appears that these are three clear levels which the Co-op can conceptualise and approach post-course support - individual, group and a network across participants.

*Individual support* - At this stage the Co-op is not able to individually support participants after the training beyond what FaCS funding allows. This support, provided by trainers to individuals, facilitates what appears to be a mentoring relationship. So far this has meant supporting people through one-to-one meetings, and providing support via telephone conversations and email exchanges. This is an important relationship as it provides the potential for the individual to 'be and to become' (English, 2000:30). The Co-op should reflect on whether it is able, and willing, to provide support at this level.

*Group level* - Providing post-course support on a group level appears to be the approach that the Co-op is best resourced to provide. A number of approaches have been used by the Co-op to provide support on this level. They have ranged from holding a couple of 'catch up' sessions with the group, supporting participants who have formed a group to work on an initiative within their community, to linking groups with 'experts' in their area of interest. Again the FaCS funding has significantly increased the scope of the support trainers have been able to provide.

*Network level* - The other level of support facilitates a network between people who have participated in the different courses. This adds a new dimension to the post-course support provided and creates a structure that is potentially sustainable beyond the Co-op. This is important for the Co-op because it seeks to develop structures that are able to be maintained in the long term, by minimising the extent to which they draw on and consume external resources.

## **Sustainability**

The gathering (September 2002) held by the Co-op for people who had participated in previous courses provided an important opportunity for people to celebrate their achievements and share these with other people who had had a similar experience. The celebration provided a way to reawaken people's hope and faith. Karen Shields (1991) suggests there are four basic principles for sustaining and nourishing people involved in community work. They are: reawakening people's hope and faith, envisioning the future, finding ways to

nourish our inner being and strengthening our sense of community (Shields, 1991:24). It seems that it is these things which the training hopes to do in the first place, thus they must be sustained in post-course support.

In looking for alternative ways to provide post-course support the Co-op has also employed local participants with skills and interest in community work and local workers with established relationships in the community. The Co-op has decided to invest in building the capacity of the local leadership, with the hope that the network of relationships established by the Community Builder's Training Course would be sustained beyond the duration of the project and add to the long-term capacity of the community. If post course support is provided by a participant in their local community that person may still require support or mentoring from the Coop.

The evaluation of post-course support asserts that Post course support has been most eagerly accessed where:

- ☐ There are particular participant-driven initiatives that have emerged before or during the training workshops. Where this has not occurred there has been little enthusiasm for mentoring (the experience of one trainer/mentor was that when he tried to rally a group around his own idea in the absence of an idea emerging organically from the group, post course support around this idea was unproductive)
- ☐ Local groups and/or graduates from earlier courses can be called upon by the Co-op to extend participant networks and alliances. Co-op staff have found it difficult to sustain enthusiasm without the existence of a critical mass of like-minded people.
- ☐ Individuals can make room for a mentoring commitment. Individuals who feel over-extended may be able to make a commitment to a short course but see post course support for 'yet another activity' as a time burden.

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## **2.3 Evaluation**

### **Helen Beazley and Gerard Dowling**

For the period between 1999 and 2001 the only evaluation mechanisms used had been participants' evaluation during the last session of the training course. Participants were given the opportunity to provide written and oral feedback both as a group and as individuals. At this point there has been no longitudinal evaluation of the impact of the course on individuals or communities over a longer period of time.

An evaluation framework (both qualitative and quantitative) was developed for 2002/3. This evaluation framework provides some in-depth analysis of the delivery of 15 courses.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Interested readers can access this on [www.communitypraxis.org](http://www.communitypraxis.org) under the portal 'past projects'.

## **Section 3: Perspectives on the training process**

Section two of the good practice guide provides insights into the training process required for the delivery of the Community Praxis Co-op Local Community Builders' Training Course.

Four papers provide different perspectives on the delivery of this training:

**3.1 A Brief Introduction to Our Understanding of Community Based Training** provides a summary of the principles that we borrow from this approach to training, and apply to the delivery of the course.

**3.2 An Introduction to Experiential Learning** presents a simple framework for experiential learning that has been developed by Praxis workers.

**3.3 Training and Soul** explores Peter Westoby's reflections on training that introduces people to the soulful tradition of genuine community development – a vocation of solidarity committed to building a soulful civil society. He considers the role of stories and texts as vital tools for training to re-imagine; training as psychotherapeutic conversation; and training as inspiration not information.

**3.4 In-Situ Community Education** presents Dave Andrews' reflection on his own experience of receiving and providing training throughout a lifetime of involvement in building community. Dave articulates a hope that any community development training that we do would encourage nonformal, transformational, spiritual, experiential, personal, relational, principle-based, process-orientated, politically committed action-reflection!

**3.5 Constructs of community leadership** presents Helen Beazley's reflection on the ways of understanding community leadership, the motivations of participants, and a framework for understanding the way different motivations leads to different learning experiences, individual and community outcomes.

## **3.1 A brief introduction to our understanding of community based training**

### **Peter Westoby**

The Community Praxis Co-op Local Community Builders' Training Course has been developed using the principles of community based training.

Here we have attempted to articulate some of these in a way that hopefully enables the trainer to feel both 'more and less afraid'. Less afraid because we do not need to be experts; but more afraid because community based training is not just about being in the classroom – it is about building community within the 'classroom' and engaging people in experiences and experiments of building community in their everyday life.

Community based training attempts to enable participants and trainers to become more conscious of building community in their streets, their neighbourhoods, their workplaces and their households during and after the course.

- It acknowledges that all participants come with experience and stories
- It builds on a 'strengths based' or 'assets oriented' approach rather than 'problem' and 'needs' focused. Problems are tackled, needs are identified, but the starting point and the focus is strengths and assets of both individuals and communities.
- The role of the trainer is that of a facilitator - creating a space within which participants feel safe telling their stories and learning from one another.
- The trainers come with the simple advantage of having prepared – and will therefore have often thought and practiced more consciously about the issues prior to the session.
- The 'stuff' of the training is not abstract and separate from real life. It is community based training in that the 'stuff' of the training emerges out of people's experience within the community - the issues arising through trying to 'build community'.
- In this sense the participants have relationships with the 'truths' explored within such a course. It is not 'out there' to be observed, analysed in a curious, distant way. The 'truths' are to be engaged with, interacted with, experimented with in a way that evokes compassion and inspires commitment.

## 3.2 An introduction to experiential learning

Enabling experiential learning involves more than simply offering opportunities for participants to have experiences as part of a training process. Learning from experience depends upon opportunities to make sense of experiences. The learning is enhanced by reflecting on old and new information and by making connections with the values/knowledge/skills/attitudes of the learner. This process of integration ensures more effective learning for participants and values the experiences of the person as a source of learning for themselves and others.

**Planning and Doing Something** doesn't necessarily result in any particular learning occurring unless we:

- **Observe** the result of that action;
- **Reflect** on what worked well and what could have been different;
- **Replan** use the learnings from this observation and reflection to plan/to perform better in the next event in our lives. This planning can take the form of goal setting that endeavours to use our new learnings to help us perform better in a new situation.

### The ERAGA Model:

- **Experience** - the process used to provide participants with a new experience, or a chance to identify/focus on previous experience(s). *What is your experience of .....*?
- **React** - a chance to reflect on what happened during the experience, and how participants felt/feel about it. *How did you feel about the experience?*
- **Analyse** - this is the beginning of interpreting the significance of the experience, and beginning to identify the learning, which could emerge as a result. *What sense/understanding do you make of this experience?*
- **Generalise** - looks at the bigger picture and develops general understandings that could be tested in other situations. *What are the principles/themes that emerge from the learnings that are applicable in other situations?*
- **Apply** - is about moving back to practice, but still at a theoretical level. *How might you apply this in future projects?*

The cycle can begin again when participants actually apply their learning/theory and therefore create a new experience. Sometimes it is possible to go through several such cycles within a program.

## **3.3 Training and Soul**

**Peter Westoby**

### **Introduction**

In a previous reflection (published in “Praxis Vol. 1” called ‘soulful community development’ \*)<sup>3</sup> I have argued that the vocation of community development is in danger of being co-opted by modernisation. The modern approach is to take anything that is good, fast track it, package it, market it and sell it.

The training projects called “Building Better Communities” (BBC) and “Community Animators Training Strategy” (CATS) could easily be co-opted in this way – a sense of ‘packaging’, ‘one-size-fits-all’ for any community.

This brief reflection is a call to keep in mind these social/cultural and economic/political forces for the trainers, team members and partners.

### **The co-option of community development**

As we move into a new global era of conservatism in the guise of re-allocation of resources away from the poor, the elite will utilise the notion of community and the technique of community development to justify their greed. I sense and see that empowerment is being defined as the poor taking responsibility for their own lives and “professional” community development workers will be contracted to mobilise the poor to build “self-reliant” community organisations.

During such a time more than ever we will need a movement of people committed not to this quick-buck technique but to the soulful tradition of genuine community development - a vocation of solidarity committed to building a soulful civil society. “Building Better Communities” (BBC) and “Community Animators Training Strategy” (CATS) are to be understood contextually within this tradition.

This reflection addresses the issue of how to train people in this tradition. It calls those of us who can influence resources for training to suck in a deep breath and commit ourselves to the real long-term resourcing that is needed to bring genuine transformation.

We need an ‘army’ (maybe not a useful metaphor during this historical moment) of change-agents that are passionately committed to soulful community and a soulful

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<sup>3</sup> In this paper soul is defined as a process of giving full attention, of awakening, of connecting and of dis-continuity.

vacation. I feel that I write this reflection at some risk. For many, even the notion of change-agent reflects a modernistic approach to development - that is, the need for “outside” knowledge and people to “bring” development.

I will however discuss the training of such change-agents despite such risk. In my work I have become more and more convinced that the key to genuine soulful community development is not lots of money, lots of buildings and infrastructure (clinics, schools, roads, water etc.) but the actual quality of the people who dream of a new world and want to take some kind of action - we will call these people the change-agent.

The change-agent, whether an outsider or an insider is the person who can model a new attitude, a new vision, who can bring a fresh energy and insight and who can facilitate the awakening of awareness, imagination and powerful action. It is such a cadre of change agents who will bring fresh hope and a sparkle of transformation in the communities within which they work. The development of such a cadre requires a new commitment from those with powers over the resource allocation of training budgets.

In this reflection I will not concern myself with the methodology, orientation or programmatic issues within the training process - many good books have already been written on such subjects. I will again focus on the heart of training - what is it within training that will awaken people to soul?

## **Training to Re-imagine**

One way of understanding our context for training is the failure of the imagination of modernity and technique - or put more simply, people can no longer imagine a new society based on anything other than what is!!! The media has dominated our dreams, our education has dominated our minds - our heads are so busy with the new information highway that we have lost the capacity to imagine.

It is the thesis of this reflection that the world that we take as given is really only a long established act of imagination that appears to simply be and claims assent as the only legitimate occupant of the field. It follows then that long-imagined lens can be challenged, and a counter given can be imagined. This is the initial role of training for a soulful vocation of community development.

We must train people in a new awareness that the world we have taken for granted in economics, politics and elsewhere is an imagined construct. As it is a construct, then from any other perspective, the world can yet be constructed differently.

Our goal is not to create a new hegemony in terms of what should be, clearly that would undermine all that has been said. Our goal in training is to enable participants to counter-imagine the world.

I once read an ancient Japanese story “Tea for Two” in which a young highly intelligent and most accomplished young student wished to have an audience with The Grand Master. The young student sat down and the master asked if he

wished to have a drink of tea. The student said yes and the master started to pour. He poured the tea until the glass was full and then he continued to pour until the glass was overflowing and then he still kept on pouring. The student jumped up startled by the tea flooding over the tabletop and down onto his legs, "Master the cup is full to overflowing". The Master continued to pour, the tea spilling out onto the table and floor. "As you are" the Master replied.

The story illustrates a problem that many of us have. I have learnt that many of us are so preoccupied with progress and development within the parameters defined to us by the current "given" that there is very little space for us to begin imagining a new world. To nurture imagination we need space and silence - we need to stop pouring tea into a full glass. A training space is such a space – an opportunity to begin this act of imagination.

*In my life there is a reoccurring dream. In the dream I am usually trying to do something or go somewhere. I am racing for a plane or a taxi and I am trying to fill my bag or pack. I always have problems filling my bag; some items fall out or refuse to remain attached. I often miss the plane or taxi. In my dream I am then presented with an alternative; usually it is someone, a friend or relative who is sitting silently or walking up into the mountain to meditate.*

The dream has become a story, an image that presents me with two ways of living. One way is the way of the activist - do, do, do - the other is that of retreat, silence and attention. Clearly neither options are the correct way, there is a middle path. This middle path is the way that enables us to 'both' engage with the world and take time out to imagine and re-imagine a new world. Our task in training participants for re-imagination is therefore about providing counter-givens for re-imagination and also encouraging the disciplines that enable the ongoing task of imagination.

## **Stories and Texts for Re-imagination**

Stories and texts are the vital tools for training in re-imagination - they provide the models, images and pictures that enable us to imagine a new world. We will briefly explore two kinds of story and text. Firstly stories (authors/books) as written texts and secondly models (communities, practitioners) as lived texts.

Re-imagination is often future-orientated. We are attempting to envisage a new world. But when we consider stories and texts that are rich in meaning we see that often they explore the past. Maybe a story that has matured is one that links the past, present and future in a way that combines the wisdom of the past with the imagination of the future.

As a young student of theology I was always fascinated with two traditions that flowed through the story of the Judeo-Christian scriptures. One was a prophetic tradition - it always wanted to bring change, it demanded transformation – it was present and future orientated. The other was the priestly tradition - it always looked backwards - it liked things as they were and upheld the status quo. Here

we saw a mature tapestry emerge that combined the past (what the priests saw as important) with the present and future (what the prophets saw as important).

This is our challenge. A tapestry of texts that links us with the past and provides wisdom and insight but that gives a freedom and flexibility to engage with contemporary concerns and struggles.

## Written texts

Firstly, let us explore the written text. For a long time my reading of the biblical scriptures has sustained me as a text that inspires the imagining of an alternative world. There is something enriching for the soul when we are reminded through such wisdom that everyone dies and no one can take their wealth and riches with them. There is something enriching for the soul when we are challenged to live by an ethic such as "do unto others as you would like them to do to you".

Such texts ignite possibilities that seem beyond reality and they inspire a hope and memories that within history we have often seen the apparently impossible happen. Such scriptures link us to a far distance history and remind us that history tells stories. I often read scriptures and find myself questioning the miracles that occur as some kind of fantasy. But then I am reminded of modern day miracles that I have witnessed. Who would have ever dreamt that the repressive regime in the Philippines under Marcos could have been removed so quickly, or that the Berlin Wall would so suddenly be dismantled? Miracles occur - and they often fly straight into the face of despairing reality.

Scriptures are full of stories and it is the power of story that unlocks imagination. When I talk of texts I am not referring to textbooks. They are often too dry and technical to inspire imagination; they tend to simply inspire ideology. The kinds of texts we are looking for are texts full of story, narrative, and people. Story connects with our reality, we can locate ourselves within a story and identify with characters and events - this is the source of their power.

Other kinds of texts and stories that I have found inspiring are the likes of Herman Hess' "Siddhartha" or Ursula La Guin's "The Dispossessed". There are many options. In these training courses one of the challenges for trainers is to find texts and stories that invoke imagination for trainer and participants, stories that are 'yours', that others can engage with. For those of us who wish to sustain a lively imagination that inspires us to build a community world it is important to collect stories and resources to feed our soul. One must remember that we are constantly being fed stories through the newspapers and TV's that imagine a world that most of us do not wish to replicate. To engage our imaginative faculties we must feed alternative options constantly.

Other important texts for those involved in community development are the stories and writings of many author/activists. They are not ideological textbooks but writings that reflect on experience and are informed by certain values, perspectives and praxis. They are essential as training tools in that they invite learners of community development to consider the many methods and tools available to build a community world. Such author/activists would be Mahatma

Ghandi, J.P. Narayan, E.F. Schumacher, Helder Camara, Saul Alinsky, Franz Fanon, Paulo Friere, Marcuse, Sheila Rowbotham, the list could go on. Feel free to utilize texts from such people in the training process.

## Models as texts

The second text that we wished to explore is that of models. Here it is important to nourish our capacity to re-imagine a new world not simply through engaging with written text but with lived text and story. We actually need to see people and organisations that model the kind of values, commitments and concerns that we ourselves are inspired by. This implies the importance of documenting the lives of individuals and organisations that are modelling a new world.

At this point it would be worth saying that the "reading of such text" should not mean that we set out to imitate people, groups or organisations. Soul calls us to our own authenticity. Soul will draw energy and imagination from others but it will integrate and develop its own story.

(These two forms of 'text' come together and as one listens to communities stories memory is invoked. This is the power of text and story – memory and a fight against amnesia.)

I have gained inspiration and fresh imagination from peoples of all walks of life. Many of the refugees I work with in Brisbane challenge me and call me to imagine a world of peace and welcome. Their exposure to the harsh realities of brutality and irrationality, their resilience in the face of alienation and exile touch me deep in my soul. My imagination and memory have been activated in a way that never allows me to forget the reality of our own underworld.

Models of work such as local savings and loans co-operatives, unemployed workers co-ops, support groups, community-youth initiatives inspire me, and ensure that I keep believing that it is possible to bring positive change.

Organisations as models and stories also provide an essential tool in empowering us to imagine and work for a new world. Training people requires us to link participants with such organisations in a way that will enable them to sustain their imagination. We must look out for, participate in and nurture organisations and networks that provide a culture, a tradition, a spirit and a structure that is alternative to what "is given". They can be organisations focusing on anything from local development to global development. They may be corporations, associations, networks - but they have one thing in common; they inspire us to imagine and work for a community world.

## **Training as Psychotherapeutic Conversation**

Any of us who have been involved in forms of re-imagining the world and transforming struggle end up confronted by our need for healing. Our imagination had wakened us to the hope of a new world and we end up being tripped up by our own undoing. Our practice teaches us to be attentive and in that attentiveness

we are confronted with aspects of ourselves that need a deeper exploration. Many activists/ community development workers end up seeing therapists/ counsellors.

In our awareness of the layers of resistance within our society and ourselves we simply end up having to confront all the contradictions that our socialisation and biological make-up leave with us. It is one thing to advocate for a world without the divisions of race, gender and class - it is another thing to live without them in our daily lives. We dream of a non-violent world yet our dreams may be full of violence. We dream of a community world but we often wish to withdraw into our private space and avoid the inevitable conflict and pain of genuine relationships. We find ourselves caught up with a part or parts of our self that we cannot understand or even relate to.

It becomes the task of therapy to unravel the contradictions of the many selves that make us "us". The therapeutic challenge becomes to learn to welcome, relate to, even befriend the many selves and explore a rich depth of self that before we never knew existed.

Training is in many ways similar to this process of unravelling the psychological contradictions within. However, it is not so much about integrating the contradictions of the psyche but integrating the contradictions of genuine social transformation.

When we start with psychotherapy we often subscribe to a way of viewing ourselves, our perception of whom we are. It is essentially our story – in many ways a fictional story as opposed to a factual one because it will have become distorted through all sorts of processes (amnesia, memory, 'blind-spots', socialisation, internal critics etc.) - we could call it our own myth. It certainly is not a story or myth based on facts, but only our perception, our memory of what has happened in our life filtered through all sorts of lenses.

The role of psychotherapy is to "broaden" the myth, to fill it out. The critical task is to awaken imagination in such a way that we do not limit how we view ourselves to old stories - stories imposed on us from others or ourselves. This awakened imagination can lead to much tension and many dilemmas but if we can integrate the new stories emerging, the other selves - then a more creative, integrated and whole person can emerge.

Training could be understood and informed with a similar process. I have outlined four stages to this process within a training framework:

**Stage 1:** Trainers and participants come with a view of the world. This view is purely an 'act of imagination', or put another way: a story, a myth of how it should be and is. Such a story in no way reflects reality. The story has been informed through parental and educational socialisation, gender, racial, class windows and media/political propaganda. Stage 1 of training requires participants to recognise this – to recognise that as an individual 'I do not know the truth' about the world and "I am willing to work with this group of people journeying with me to experience the world differently'. Recognising this is an act of humility that creates the space for 'training'.

**Stage 2:** One of the key training tasks is to provide models, images and pictures of an alternative world that can be left to linger and challenge. These models, images, pictures (we have called them stories and texts) broaden the myth and unravel the old stories. They do not give the "true" story, (there is no such thing), they simply broaden it! In a way this process introduces us to many ways of seeing the world, many perspectives - or many worlds.

**Stage 3:** The next training challenge is to provide space and place for internal struggle in which a dialogue around these stories, perspectives, multiple worlds can occur. Old stories are being evaluated alongside new ones, some myths are broadened, and others are narrowed. There are many tensions and dilemmas and we must encourage one another to engage with these dilemmas with honesty and courage.

Many before us have struggled to make the choice to engage with the marginalised in a struggle for genuine community and justice. Oscar Romero's classic moment of soulful struggle in the desert of El Salvador is an example. There in the desert he knew that he had a choice to either back off from the demands of soul and struggle and accept the world as given by the El Salvadoran government and US allies or he would have to dig deep and find the courage to push on, imagine the world as different, advocate for another truth in opposition to the El Salvadoran government and stand "alongside" the poor with compassion and in solidarity.

The mythology surrounding Moses (the burning bush) and even Christ (at the garden of Gethsemane) lend me to believe that for many of us there will come a moment of such soulful struggle. Often our capacity to deal with these critical moments in a way that will lead us to courage will depend on how sincerely we have struggled with all the small choices and options that have come our way in the toss and tumble of everyday community life.

Or to ground this in the experience of some of the training courses I have run recently in SE Queensland I have often seen people struggling with whether to give up the myth of "young people are 'hoons' and we need to get them out of our community' and expand the story to engage with the complexity of 'hoons' and 'HOONS', the why's, causes, motivations, options and opportunities for response. It is a painful process for people and as a trainer you can see etched on people's faces the process of working out whether to struggle for inclusive or 'excluding' communities.

**Stage 4** The result is transformation or regression. People give up with the struggle and remain content with the given world or they embark on the life-long journey to live a life that engages with soul and solidarity of mystery, multiple worlds, and hidden worlds.

This is an ongoing circular process. It is the training process itself that must equip participants to constantly engage with the circular process within their work, themselves and networks/organisational forms of support.

## **Training as inspiration not information**

I have outlined a training framework that advocates for the centrality of imagination, stories and text and psychotherapeutic conversation. Finally I would like to make some points about training as inspiration rather than information.

We live in a world that is flooded with information – news, papers, articles, radio, TV, the Internet – an information highway that I am both thankful to have access to, and yet also quite suspicious of. In my own life I have tried to impose limits on this information highway by not having a TV, only reading the weekend newspapers, subscribing to a reputable International weekly newspaper, and listening to the radio only when driving. I limit this flow because the stories within these information sources serve to disempower me rather than inspire me.

Since we started to run the courses ‘called “Building Better Communities” (BBC) and “Community Animators Training Strategy” (CATS), we have advocated that if they are to lead to positive social and community change they must be primarily about inspiration, not information.

The trainer brings themselves, their stories, the texts of others, their own imagination, they create a safe space for ‘conversation’ – but they do all that with an underlying desire to awaken inspiration. People will be motivated not by information alone, but by inspiration!

This does not mean information is not important (and usually we provide people information oriented articles and readings to engage with when they are at home), but we try to avoid the use of the ‘training space’ to engage with information.

In the dictionary ‘inspire’ means ‘to breathe in’, or to be ‘inspired’ – that is, to ‘have something conveyed to the mind under extra-ordinary influence’. This is how I imagine training – a process of participants and trainers ‘breathing in’ new possibilities – taking the stories, texts, ideas, imaginations deep into the lungs, deep into the selves, and make them a part of themselves. I imagine ‘extra-ordinary influences’ because a training place should be a safe space to imagine new worlds, discuss possibilities and dream up ideas, actions – and that is extraordinary. It does not take place within most people’s households, over dinner tables, in Parliament – it can take place in our training spaces!

Most of us are aware that one of the toughest challenges in life is not so much knowing what to do, but having the motivation and inspiration to do it. This awareness underlies the training framework – it is not hard for people to awaken to the possibilities of a new and better world, there are plenty of stories and texts that provide wonderful imaginative ideas of what could be – but it is hard to get motivated and inspired to do something and sustain that doing!

## **3.4 In-Situ Community Education**

### **Dave Andrews**

In this paper Dave articulates some personal perspectives on the nature of training in the Local Community Builders' Training Course.

#### **1. In-Situ Training I've Received.**

Most of the training that my wife Ange and I have received was from our parents.

My mother and father, Frank and Margaret Andrews, not only took people into their hearts – but also into their home. Home was always open for those in distress. People going through difficult times would stay for a day, a year, or however long they needed.

As a young impressionable boy I can remember the excitement that some of those people brought to our house. A cat burglar, who had just got out of jail, showed us how easy it was to break into our house. And my parents never bothered locking the house after that!

Not all encounters were exciting. Some were actually pretty scary for a kid like me with a vivid imagination. Having a man, who had stabbed someone to death, sleep in the room next to me, made for some very restless nights and some very graphic nightmares!

But my parents taught me to relate to these people as 'people' – not just as 'robbers' and 'murderers' - and, as 'people', they got respect.

My wife, Ange's parents, James and Athena Bellas, operated the Star Milk Bar in downtown Brisbane. It was famous for its food and drinks. And people would come from all over town for a fresh salad sandwich and a mango milk shake.

Every morning, very early, my father-in-law would open up the café. When he did, it seemed like all the hobos round town would emerge from the hiding places they had huddled in during the night and make their way to the cafe. My father-in-law would welcome them in; sit them down; serve them tea and toast; and chat with them about the night they'd had and the day ahead.

If anyone needed a job my father-in-law would leave his brothers in charge of the café and go job hunting with them. If they got in trouble with the police, he would visit them in prison. He regularly visited those who got sick and wound up in hospital. When anyone friendless died, my father-in-law would make sure he went

to their funeral, so as no one, no matter how friendless, would be buried without a friend. Often he'd be the only one there.

Ange's dad would invite folk home to share a meal with the family – even though Ange's mum had eight children of her own to feed. If anything, meals at the Bellas' house were even more famous than the milk shakes at the Star Milk Bar, so there was never a shortage of people who were willing to take up the invite - or just invite themselves!

Ange grew up in a large family, which was always being enlarged to make room for one more; her parents taught her the importance of being family to those who had no family. In so doing they introduced Ange to the Greek practice of *symbetheri* - profound reciprocal regard for family - but, at the same time, they totally revolutionised the traditional practice of *symbetheri* to include people whom Greeks traditionally excluded - their enemies - the Turks!

Our parents were shining examples to us of how we could become people who were not preoccupied with ourselves, but could create a sense of community with others - particularly with those who are usually marginalised and disadvantaged. So Ange and I have, quite unashamedly - but not slavishly - tried to copy our parents - and tried to set a similar example for our children.

### **In-Situ Training I've Given.**

Most of the training that my wife Ange and I have given has been an attempt pass on the lessons we learnt from the previous generation to the next generation - including our own kids.

### **Dilaram**

In 1973 we set up some communities in India that we called *Dilaram*, or Houses Of The Peaceful Heart, to cater for weary travellers, trekking up and down the Asian hippie trail in search of enlightenment, or a cheap opiate substitute. So it was, in the context of living in a *Dilaram* community, working with disillusioned heroin addicts that our elder daughter, Evonne, learned her first few lessons about helping people with life controlling problems.

### **Aashiana**

In 1975 we left *Dilaram*, which was working mainly with expatriates, to set up *Aashiana* to work solely with local drug addicts. *Aashiana*, literally meant 'nest', and we hoped *Aashiana* would be a 'nest' where 'wounded birds' could 'mend their broken wings' and 'learn to fly, free, again'. We helped people on the condition that they would help others. So out of *Sahara*, the residential rehabilitation community, emerged *Sharan*, an unusual, innovative, community development organisation, staffed mainly by (ex)drug addicts, who were learning to use their understanding of despair to serve communities who knew nothing but despair. Thus it was, in the

context of the *Aashiana* community, rehabilitating addicts and rebuilding slums, that our younger adopted Nepalese daughter, Navi, learned her first few lessons about helping people overcome life controlling problems that, otherwise, would end in debilitating despair.

## Waiters Union

In 1985 we returned to Australia, and set up an intentional community network, that we call 'The Waiters Union', in an inner city suburb of Brisbane, which is our hometown. Ange's mum and dad live just up the road from us. So we have come full circle. Back to where we started from.

We still draw reassurance from the inspiration of Ange's mum and dads' involvement in the locality. And we still try to set a similar example for our children as they set for us, of caring for people in the community. It's been awesome for Ange and I to see Evonne and Navi be able to individuate themselves without having to isolate themselves from us - or our world - in the process. So far, we have been able to move from being a nuclear family to being an extended family, including Marty (who married Evonne). And now - as an extended family - we are continuing to extend ourselves, as *syμβetheri*, to those in the community who have no family at all.

We decided to call ourselves the West End 'Waiters Union' because we wanted to be '*waiters*' in West End. We didn't want set agendas for people. We just wanted to be available, like 'waiters', to take people's orders, and to do what we could do, to help them. We particularly wanted to help to develop a sense of hospitality in the locality, so that all people, especially people who are usually displaced in areas like ours, could really begin to feel at home in the community.

There have never been many people in the Waiters Union. We started with two households fifteen years ago; there aren't more than twenty households associated with us now.

The Waiters Union is not a high profile group. As '*waiters*', we try to keep a low profile in the area. None of the activities that we are involved in carry our name. They all carry the names of the groups that organise those activities - which we contribute to - but we do not control.

As a result, a lot of people in our area may know us well as people, but may not even know that the group we are part of exists. Which is fine, because the group exists to promote the community, not the group; and the group can function more effectively as a catalyst in the community if it is prepared to be more or less invisible, rather than attract attention to itself at the expense of other groups. However, we are not secretive. We welcome enquiries and answer questions as freely and as fully as we can. And we are inclusive. We invite anyone who is interested in our work, to with work us, alongside of us, as partners in the work together.

All the work we do is *self-directed* and *other-orientated*. Each person has the right to shape every group that they are a part of. Being part of a group depends on

participation. A person becomes a part of a group, not by jumping through any hoops, but simply by participating in the group. Once a person is a part of the group, they have the right to manage the group they are a part of. We believe people should have the right to shape all the decisions that impact on their lives. And we believe the best way for us to shape the decisions that impact on our lives, individually and collectively, is through the process of consensus.

So all the groups nominate rotating facilitators for their meetings so as to 'be careful to do what', the good book says, 'is right in the eyes of everybody.' As the groups work from the bottom up to empower people, particularly people who are marginalised and disadvantaged, we particularly include people who are usually marginalised and disadvantaged in the decision making process of the groups. So all the groups actually work *with* the people that they work *for*, and in so doing, seek to enable the people they work *with*, as partners, to realize their enormous potential.

Through one group we seek to promote the aspirations of the original inhabitants of our neighbourhood, for whom Musgrave Park - in the middle of the neighbourhood - is still 'sacred ground'. Through another group we seek to support refugees by sponsoring their settlement and the settlement of their families, working through the anguish they go through as 'strangers in a strange land'. Last, but not least - though they are often considered 'last', and treated as 'least' by the powers that be - through a whole range of groups we seek to relate to the people in our community, who are physically, intellectually, and emotionally disabled - not as 'clients', nor as 'consumers', still less as 'users' - but as 'our friends'!

None of these things that any of us are doing seem that great. However, we constantly encourage one another to remember that true greatness is *not* in doing *big* things, but in doing *little* things with a *lot* of love over the *long* haul. And that is exactly what we are trying to do!

## Resource Association & Community Praxis Co-op

The Waiters Union has always been a nonformal community network. But over time we have come to recognise the need for a formal community organisation as an auspice for some of our community activities. Usually groups solve this problem by turning their non-formal community network into a formal community organisation. But, in the move towards institutionalisation, they lose the very charisma of community. The free and flexible, strong but gentle spirit of the community that they started out with, ends up being bound hand and foot by rules and regulations and becoming a slave to the system that it sought to overthrow.

So we decided that we would not institutionalise our community under any circumstances.

Instead we set up a formal organisation as a parallel structure alongside the nonformal network, so that if anyone in the community needed an officially recognised, legally registered auspice for certain activities, they could use the 'Community Initiatives Resource Association'.

To make sure the Resource Association only serves as an auspice for the Waiters Union, and does not have the power to co-opt the Waiters Union, it has been designed as a minimalist organisation - with minimal power - apart from its capacity to function as an official, legal auspice for the community.

Since its inception the Resource Association has provided an auspice for managing community property, providing compulsory public liability insurance, and supplying volunteers with the status required by the state. But by far the association's greatest role has been to help establish community programmes which needed legal backing for funding - with maximum accountability, but minimal control. The Resource Association has helped establish dozens of community programmes including the Creative Stress Solutions Project, the Inner City Citizens' Advocacy Group, and the Community Praxis Co-op.

## The Community Orientation Course

Some time ago, we were asked to set up some training in community work based on our experience. So we set up what we decided to call *The Community Orientation Course*. And so, twice a year, for the last fifteen years, we have run these courses in West End. The courses are run for two weeks mid year, (usually the last week of June to the first week of July), and three weeks at the end of the year (usually the three weeks in December leading up to Christmas). They involve living in West End, with some people from the West End Waiters Union, and include personal reflection, interpersonal interaction, group process, cooperative organisation, whole-hearted, holistic engagement, cross-cultural dialogue, practical service and nonviolent action. The costs of the course are decided by the participants in a group cost-sharing workshop, that we run as part of the course.

People come to the course from all over Australia, and from other parts of the world as well. Lyn and Steve Hatfield-Dodds, describe what the course is like.

'The daily program started with prayer. After breakfast we joined in studies. People shared of their life in the local community - involved in peace networks, community arts, housing assistance, legal aid, refugee resettlement, and offering hospitality and shelter to those without a place to stay. The afternoons were unstructured times, to allow us to get to know the neighbourhood, and its people. In the evenings we had dinner with different members of the network.

Most days finished with a much-needed briefing session. We also managed to squeeze in time to deliver meals on wheels, go on outings (with people who were intellectually disabled), and help out at an evening meal for over a hundred homeless men.'

'The nine of us on the course lived in a group house for the first week, moving out to stay in boarding houses or hostels we found for ourselves in the second week. For many of us this was a difficult and sometimes frightening experience, living in the midst of depressed and often violent lives, and it was good to come back together for the last few days to the security of group living. Highlights of the course for us (included) being

involved in a Murri service in a maximum security prison; hearing people's stories; developing friendships; (and) meeting people who not only talk about being compassionate, but who are trying to put these things into practice.'

These courses have been quite formative for hundreds of people, like Lyn and Steve, who have been able to participate in them over the last fifteen years. But they have two major limitations. One, is that the courses are all based in our own neighbourhood; and two, is that we keep the numbers on our courses small in order to facilitate maximum participation in the course, and ensure minimal impact by the course on the community in which it is based.

## The Local Community Builders' Training Course

A couple of years ago Peter Westoby approached me with the proposal of developing a course that we could provide under the auspice of the Community Praxis Co-op to more people more broadly in the context of *their* own communities. And as a result of discussions with Howard Buckley, who was working for the Social Infrastructure Programme at the time, we developed a course for the Co-op that we delivered for the Caboolture Shire Council, that we initially called *Building Better Communities*. This course - also known as the *Community Animator's Training Course* - provides an opportunity for people to explore their potential to develop community in their locality.

The Community Praxis Co-op seeks to practice traditional cooperative principles, encouraging the development of acceptance and respect, spirituality and compassion, solidarity and participation, responsibility and competence in the individuals, neighborhoods and organizations with whom we work. And the Local Community Builders' Training Course that the Co-op provides is intended to help people explore their potential to develop acceptance and respect, spirituality and compassion, solidarity and participation, responsibility and competence, both individually and collectively, within the context of their own community.

Given my background its not surprising I would hope that any community development training that we would do would encourage *nonformal, transformational, spiritual, experiential, personal, relational, principle-based, process-orientated, politically-committed action-reflection*.

### **3. In-situ Community Training**

#### **3.1 Nonformal Training**

*Formal* community development training is usually conducted *formally* in an institution. While *nonformal* community development training is usually conducted *nonformally* in the context of the community itself. *Formal* community development training tends to be *inflexible* - with the content for the learners set by the

teachers. While *nonformal* community development training tends to be *flexible* - with content that is set by a community of teachers and learners together.

Most of the community development training I have participated in has been nonformal rather formal, but the formal training that I have participated in informs my nonformal training.

The most useful formal community development training I have received was at the Department of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Queensland. There, under the guidance of Dr. Allan Halladay, who was Head of the Department, and Mr. Tony Kelly, who was the Senior Lecturer in Community Development, I was privileged to get what I consider to be was the best formal community development education available in Australia at the time.

When I start to think about the most useful formal community development training that I have given myself, I begin to feel a bit ambivalent. On the one hand, there is no doubt in my mind that the training I did at various TAFE colleges - pitched as it was, at a very practical level - was of great help to a lot of people. But on the other hand, I personally found TAFE colleges the most difficult educational institutions I have ever tried to work with. In each of the three cases where I tried to work with TAFE colleges, the unhealthy culture of the institution adversely affected the healthy quality of the education that we were seeking to deliver.

These experiences only served to reinforce the notion that we needed to find a way to deliver good quality, practical, community development courses - outside the formal constraints of the TAFE system. And for us, this has meant developing community development training options for small groups in nonformal in-situ locations. With community education processes incorporating flexible content prepared by practitioners, with the help of experts, rather than by experts themselves. In the hope of creating co-learning communities who will test their learning through action and reflection in the context of ordinary everyday life.

<b>Community Development Training</b>	
<b><i>Formal Community Development Training:</i></b>	<b><i>Nonformal Community Development Training:</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large groups in formal institutional locations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small groups in nonformal in-situ locations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with school education processes, and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with community education processes, and</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fixed content - prepared by experts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flexible content - prepared by practitioners.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers teach and learners learn.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitators create a co-learning community.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning tested by summative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning tested by action and</li> </ul>

evaluation.	reflection.
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### 3.2 Transformational Training

Some time ago, as part of a reform process started in my state, as a result of the findings of the famous 'Fitzgerald Inquiry' into police corruption in Queensland, I was asked to teach in a course for law enforcement officers. In order to deal with the culture of corruption in the police service that had been brought to light, there was a real concern that *transformation* rather than *information* would be at the heart of this course. That, through the course, the participants would be encouraged to not only discuss and debate issues of personal integrity and social justice but also actually develop a commitment to personal integrity and social justice themselves.

However, though it is easy to *teach* about personal integrity and social justice in the classroom, it is difficult - if not impossible - to actually *learn* personal integrity and social justice anywhere but in the context of the ebb and flow of ordinary everyday life in the community itself.

So we invited students from the colleges where we were teaching to come and live in our community for two or three weeks to *learn* something about personal integrity and social justice.

We introduced them to Auntie Jean, an Aboriginal elder, who not only told them the story of her people and their painful dispossession, but also took them with her to meet her people - some in a maximum security prison, languishing in their cells - and others in a human rights organisation, fighting for their release.

And we introduced them to Father Kefle, an Eretrian priest, who showed them the scars of thirty years of civil war, and they visited refugees who have been torn away from their families, tortured by the very people who were supposed to protect them, forced to flee for their lives, and are now struggling to rebuild a life for themselves as strangers in a strange land.

Some of the students had never actually met an aborigine or a refugee face to face before. Let alone heard their story, or seen their struggle for themselves. These encounters confronted the students with questions that we all have to answer one way or another. Like

- *'How do we, as members of a 'white' society, deal with our 'black' history?'*
- *'How do we, as members of the human family, respond to the desperate plea from our brothers and sisters, not just to address the superficial symptoms, but the underlying causes, of their ongoing pain?'*
- *'And what are you - and I - going to do about it?'*

These are *questions to us*, which call for *answers from us*. Not merely *theoretical* answers. But *practical* answers. Answering these questions is a *moral imperative* that we can accept or reject, but which we cannot ignore.

One of the students who accepted the moral imperative to answer these questions, as honestly as he could, was a cop we'll call Brad who had been on the beat for many years.

Brad said that, like a lot of police, who only ever related to people in their job as sources of information about "criminals", or as potential or actual "criminals" themselves, he had become quite cynical about the public. But, when he took the opportunity to get out of uniform, and to meet people he'd stereotyped, face to face, as fellow human beings, he began to *change*.

The first stage of change was in terms of *perspective*. What we see depends on where we stand. And standing with the very people he had often been expected to take a stand against, helped Brad see a different side to the struggle on the streets than the one he'd seen before.

The second stage of change was in terms of *responsibility*. What we hear depends on whom we listen to. And listening to people who he and his fellow officers didn't normally listen to helped Brad not only hear a different side to the story of the history of our society than the one he'd heard before, but also accept his part as a police officer in perpetuating that history.

The third stage of change was in terms of *pain*. How we feel depends on what we do. And recognising that what he was doing as a police officer was often part of the problem, rather than part of the solution, helped Brad feel the impact of the issues much more acutely than he'd ever felt them before.

The fourth stage of change was in terms of *responsiveness*. We have two options for managing the *pain* that comes from recognising the gap between who we are and who we are meant to be. One option is *rationalisation - changing the ideal*, so it is closer to who we are. The other option is *transformation - changing the reality*, so we are closer to who we are meant to be.

The chance for Brad to choose *transformation* rather than *rationalisation* came along one day quite unceremoniously when a local *Murri* asked him for a smoke. Instead of moving on - *as he usually did* - this time Brad chose to stop, and have a smoke and a bit of a chat - *like he would have done with any of his other mates*. This *small* change was a *big* deal for Brad.

This was the stage of realisation Brad was at when he completed the course. I spoke to him about how encouraged I was about the stages of change he had gone through so far. But I cautioned him, saying, that it would all be in vain, unless he continued to take the change a stage further. The fifth stage of change is in terms of *practice*. We are what we do repeatedly. *Transformation, then, is not an act, but the habitual practice of personal integrity and social justice.*

All quality community development training provides the opportunity for transformation.

### 3.3 Spiritual Training

We need to begin with the realisation - our world is in trouble; and religion - which was meant to make things better - has often made things worse. We do not suffer from the lack of religion, but from the lack of love. So, if we are to have any hope of survival, we need to find a way to be able to care for ourselves, and for our world, once again. It is my view that *a radical spirituality of compassion is not merely our best hope; it is our only hope.*

But, we may well ask ourselves, how can this generation, which is more troubled than ever before - more disillusioned, more lonely, and more depressed; more anxious, more angry, and more aggressive - how can this generation rediscover the capacity to care enough to save us from destruction? Especially when so often so many of us experience so little care ourselves in the increasingly dysfunctional families, disintegrating communities, and destructive political economies that shape our lives? And, everywhere we turn, we are encouraged to opt, not for care, but for the slick quick-fix kill, which doesn't bother about trying to solve problems, it simply blows them away?

The psychologist, Dan Goleman, says that the question about the survival of humanity is a question that all of us will have to answer in our own 'hearts'. He says that at the 'heart' of the matter is 'empathy'. 'Empathy' is the capacity for us to 'feel how others feel'. It is, he says, in 'empathising' with potential victims - people in danger or distress - and 'feeling how they might feel', that we can be motivated to refrain from harming them, and, hopefully, even perhaps consider helping them.<sup>4</sup> Empathy is the basis of compassion.<sup>5</sup>

The philosopher, John Macmurray, says that while most of us might be willing to give intellectual assent in our 'heads' to the priority for us to rediscover our capacity for empathy, it simply will not happen, unless all of us give some emotional affirmation to that intellectual assent in our 'hearts' and make it happen!<sup>6</sup>

The issue is not so much a conflict between our 'heads' and our 'hearts', but a conflict that we have in our 'hearts'.<sup>7</sup> In our 'hearts' we know that we cannot live without love. And that love involves an enhanced 'sensitivity' - an enhanced appreciation of, and affection for, one another's lives. But, in our 'hearts', we also know that if we develop an enhanced 'sensitivity' towards the beautiful, yet painful reality of one another's lives, it will inevitably entail great agony as well as great joy. So we vacillate. Wanting to become more loving, and wanting to become anything but more loving. Both at the same time.

As we prevaricate we are tempted to withdraw from 'sensitivity', which involves a greater sensitivity toward the total reality of one another's lives, into 'sentimentality', which involves more sensitivity to those parts of one another's lives which are less painful, (like rumour, innuendo, scandal and trivia), and less

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4 Goleman, D. Emotional Intelligence, (New York: Bantam Books, 1995) 119

5 *ibid* 328,329

6 Macmurray, J. Freedom In The Modern World, (London: Faber&Faber, 1958) 28-29

7 *Ibid.*, 55

sensitivity to those parts of one another's lives that are more painful, (like disadvantage, disability, disease and death).<sup>8</sup> Thus we tend to retreat into an unreal world of info-tainment, sit-coms, chat-shows, and hot-gos magazines, which give us the illusion of relating to the real world, without relating to the real world at all.

*But, the only way we can live, is to live in the real world. And the only way we can live in the real world, is to love the real world. And the only way we can love the real world, is to overcome our fear of the suffering that love in the real world involves. We must not allow our fear of the suffering to so take over our lives that we put all our efforts into building up our defences against the world, and so alienate our selves from the very reality to which we need to relate. We need to find a faith that can help us overcome our fear of the suffering, so that we can embrace the world as it is, love it, warts and all, and live our lives, with friend and foe alike, to the full.*<sup>9</sup>

It would be my hope that any training we would provide would serve as a step along the way for people exploring a spirituality of compassion that is essential for developing 'community'.

### **3.4 Experiential Training**

I have found when I talk to people about 'community', most people respond very positively. Sociologists Bell and Newby say, 'everyone - even sociologists - has wanted to live in a community.'

Some say it is because 'community' is a 'touchy feely' word, like 'love', 'romance', 'friend-ship', 'marriage' or 'family', and the concept has 'warm fuzzy' connotations. Certainly, according to Williams, in his book Keywords, the word 'community', 'unlike all other terms of social organisation, (such as 'group', 'party', 'network', 'association', or 'institution') is 'never used unfavourably.'<sup>10</sup>

It maybe an overstatement to say that the word is *never* used unfavourably. But some say that the reason the word 'community' is hardly ever used unfavourably is that we have for-gotten how parochial and oppressive 'communities' can be.

According to Bryson and Mowbray, 'In drawing on the historical notion of community, the Nelsonian touch is applied by communitarians, (turning a blind eye) to the tensions and conflicts that were ordinary parts of their archetypal communities. Gross inequalities, rigid status, blood feuds, intolerance, bondage and ignorance are carefully forgotten, so that "real community" is seen only in terms of cooperation.'<sup>11</sup> And, for some, that may be so.

But the reason the word 'community' is hardly ever used unfavourably by the people I talk to is not that we have forgotten how parochial and oppressive

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8 Ibid., 88-90

9 Ibid., 58-59

10 Williams, R. *Keywords: A Vocabulary Of Culture And Society* (London: Fontana, 1976) 66

11 Bryson, L & Mowbray, M 'Community: The Spray-on Solution.' *Australian Journal Of Social Issues* Vol.16 No.1 p.256

'communities' can be. Quite the contrary. We remember very acutely the 'tensions and conflicts', that so often have characterised our 'communities'. Yet, for us, the word 'community is essentially a qualitative term which refers to "the way we ought to be', liberated from 'intolerance, bondage and ignorance', rather than 'the way we are', circumscribed by 'gross inequalities, rigid status, and blood feuds'.

According to Nisbet, our use of the word is quite typical. Whether we are talking about Confucius, Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun or Thomas Aquinas, the notion of 'community' has always been a 'normative prescription' of an ideal for the world, rather than an 'empirical description' of the real world.<sup>12</sup> According to Bellah, this notion of 'community', which we speak about in qualitative terms, may be 'resisted as absurdly utopian. But the transformation of which we speak is both necessary and modest. Without it, indeed, there may be very little future to think about at all.<sup>13</sup>

So, for us, 'community' is not merely a 'warm fuzzy', it is actually a 'framework' for building a better world. Yet there is still a lot of confusion about the meaning of the term 'community'.

As long ago as 1955, Hillery noted no less than ninety-four different definitions of 'community'. And more than a decade later, Stacey stated that 'certainly confusion continues to reign over the uses of the term.' So much so, Gowdy once said in frustration, 'it is doubtful whether the concept of "community" refers to a useful abstraction.'<sup>14</sup>

After much study, however, Hillery was able to distinguish three distinctive common elements among the myriad of definitions that he had tabulated. Later Wirth, then Gowdy, confirmed Hillery's findings. They found that, to increasing degrees of significance, the components most likely to constitute 'community' were a common physical location, common social connections, and common reciprocal interactions.<sup>15</sup>

Clark, picking up on the quality of common reciprocal interactions as the most important component in 'community', says in his study of Basic Communities: *'community (is) essentially a sentiment which people have about themselves in relation to themselves: a sentiment expressed in action, but still basically a feeling. People have many feelings, but there are two essentials for the existence of community: a sense of significance and sense of solidarity. The strength of community within any given group is determined by the degree to which its members experience both a sense of solidarity and a sense of significance within it.'*<sup>16</sup>

In his book on community, psychologist Scott Peck said: *'If we are going to use the word meaningfully we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their*

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12 Nisbet, R. The Sociological Tradition. (London: Heinemann, 1966) ch.3

13 Bellah, R. et.al. Habits of the Heart (Berkeley: Uni. of Cal. Press, 1985) 286

14 Gowdy, 1982, 374

15 ibid p.374

16 Clark, D. Basic Communities (London: SPCK 1975) 4-5

*masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to 'rejoice together, mourn together', 'delight in each other, make other's conditions our own'.<sup>17</sup>*

And after researching five different communities in depth, sociologist Luther Smith wrote: *'The primary indicator of communal well-being is that members feel their fellowship approximates the qualities of a caring family. Hardship and failures will be the occasion for creative solutions and increased resolve. They do not break the spirit of a community. But loss of mutual respect and steadfast caring strikes a deathblow at the very heart of a community.'*<sup>18</sup>

Thus it would be my hope that any training we would provide about 'community' would provide the opportunity for people to *experience* the 'sentiment' - the 'sense of significance and solidarity' - at the *heart* of 'community'. That they would experience the training as an experience of learning to develop 'deep mutual respect' for one another - like in a 'healthy extended family' - where they can be free to *'rejoice together and mourn together'* with their neighbours'.

### **3.5 Personal Training**

Community development is a *personal* issue - *it begins with us!*

Leo Tolstoy, the noted author of War and Peace, once lamented, 'Everybody thinks of *changing humanity*, and nobody thinks of *changing himself*'. Unfortunately, for Leo Tolstoy's family, that statement included Leo Tolstoy 'himself'.<sup>19</sup>

Fortunately for us, however, Leo Tolstoy's most famous disciple heeded his exhortation rather than his example. So when he started his movement to change society, Mahatma Gandhi started it by changing himself. This apparently unremarkable process of change in one man's life, was to have such a remarkable impact of international significance, that Albert Einstein was later reported to have said, 'Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.'<sup>20</sup>

Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi represent the choice we have: *either we can complain about the way things are, or we can change the way things are, starting with ourselves.*

Those of us who feel tempted to think that we have *no choice*, need to think again in the light of Viktor Frankl's findings. 'Frankl was a determinist raised in the tradition of Freudian psychology which postulates that whatever happens to you as a child basically governs your whole life. The limits of your life are set, and, basically, you can't do much about it.'

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17 Peck, S. *The Different Drum* (London: Rider and Co. 1988) 59

18 Smith, L. *Intimacy And Mission* (Herald Press, 1994) 98-100

19 Mead, F. (ed.) *Encyclopedia Of Religious Quotations* (London: Peter Davis, 1965), 400

20 Mehta, V. *Mahatma Gandhi And His Apostles* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 46

'Frankl was also a Jew. He was imprisoned in the death camps of Nazi Germany where he experienced things that were so repugnant to our sense of decency that we shudder to even repeat them. His parents, his brother, and his wife died in the camps or were sent to the gas ovens. Except for his sister, his entire family perished. Frankl himself suffered torture and innumerable indignities, never knowing from one moment to the next if his path, would lead to the ovens, or if he would be among the "saved" who would shovel out the ashes of those so fated.'

'One day, naked and alone in a small room, he began to become aware of what he later called "the last of the human freedoms" - the freedom his Nazi captors could not take away. They could control his entire environment, they could do what they wanted to his body, but Victor Frankl himself was a self-aware being who could look as an observer at his very involvement. His basic identity was intact. He could decide within himself how all of this was going to affect him. Between what happened to him, or the stimulus, and his response to it, was his freedom, or power, to choose his response.'

'Through a series of such disciplines - mental, emotional, and moral, principally by using memory and imagination - he exercised his small, embryonic freedom until it grew larger and larger, until he had more freedom than his Nazi captors. They had more *liberty*, more opt-ions to choose from in their environment; but he had more *freedom*, more internal power to exercise his options. He became an inspiration to those around him, even to some of the guards. He helped others find meaning in their suffering and dignity in their prison existence.

'In the midst of the most degrading circumstances imaginable, Frankl used the human endowment of self-awareness to discover a fundamental principle about (humanity): *between stimulus and response, (we) have the freedom to choose.*'

We all have the ability to choose, but if we want to bring about change then we need to choose to be 'proactive', rather than 'reactive'. 'Reactive people are often affected by their physical environment. If the weather is good, they feel good. If it isn't, it affects their performance.

Proactive people can carry their own weather with them. Whether it rains or shines makes no difference to them. They are value driven; and if their value is to produce good quality work, it isn't a function of whether the weather is conducive to it or not!'

'Reactive people are also affected by their social environment, by the "social weather". When people treat them well, they feel well; when people don't, they (don't function well). Re-active people build their lives around the behaviour of others, empowering other people to control them. Proactive people feel the affects of their social environment, take the "social weather" into account, and decide how they are going to deal with the conditions. Whether people treat them well or not, they do the best they can. Proactive people build their lives around their own behaviour, developing their power over themselves, so as to exercise increasing control over their responses.'

*It is only as people become less reactive, and more proactive, that they can actually become more responsible.* Stephen Covey, the famous American life

coach says, 'Look at the word responsibility - *"response-ability"*- *the ability to choose your response*. Highly proactive people recognize that responsibility. They do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behaviour. Their behaviour is a product of their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on (un-thought-through) feelings.' Covey concedes, this is very hard to accept especially if we have had years and years of explaining our misery in the name of circumstance. But *until a person can say deeply and honestly, "I am what I am today because of the choices I made yesterday," that person cannot say, "I choose otherwise"*.<sup>21</sup>

It would be my hope that any training we would provide would serve as an opportunity for people to develop an awareness of ourselves as persons - our capacity to choose our response to the world around us, and our capacity to change our world proactively - starting with ourselves.

### **3.6 Relational Training**

Community development is not only a *personal* issue - it is also a *relational* issue. *Change may start with us, but if it stops with us - it will stop altogether!* We need to make changes - but *others* need to make changes too. Unless we all choose to relate to one another proactively we can never hope to experience a healthy sense of community with one another.

My friend, Mike Riddell says, 'Some people consider it demeaning to have a need for anything else. They follow the illusion of autonomy.' But Mike says 'The teaching of the universe is that all things live together. Nothing is totally independent. All that has life is in relationship.'

Mike says This is not a cause for resentment, but celebration. The tree has need of the soil, the soil has need of the rain, the rain has need of the cloud, the cloud has need of the air, the air has need of the tree, and all have need of (All). None detracts from the other, and in their harmony they allow each other to be fully what they are.<sup>22</sup>

Mike insists 'Humans are intensely relational creatures. (We) need each other. (We) shrivel with rejection and loneliness, (but) flourish with love and affirmation.' And Hugh Mackay, the respected Australian social researcher, concurs, saying, "We are social creatures - we thrive on our personal connections with each other. We are at our best when we are fully integrated with the herd; we are at our worst when we are isolated."<sup>23</sup>

According to activist comedian Fran Peavey, there is potential for connectedness with not just the few with whom we share an obvious and immediate affinity, but all our brothers and sisters in the human family, regardless of the glaring differences and ongoing difficulties between us.

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21 Covey, S. *The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989) 69-70

22 Riddell, M. *Godzone* (Lion: Oxford, 1992) 15

23 Mackay, H. *Turning Point* (Sydney: McMillan, 1999) 2561

'Those of us working for social change', says Peavy, 'tend to view our adversaries as enemies, to consider them unreliable, suspect, and generally of lower moral character'.<sup>24</sup>

Saul Alinsky, a brilliant community organizer, explained the rationale for polarization this way: "One acts decisively only in the conviction that all the angels are on one side and all the devils are on the other. A leader may struggle toward a decision and weigh the merits and demerits of a situation which is 52 percent positive and 48 percent negative, but once a decision is reached he must assume that his cause is 100 percent positive and the opposition 100 percent negative. Many liberals, during our attack on the then-school superintendent (in Chicago), were pointing out that after all he wasn't a 100 percent devil, he was a regular churchgoer, he was a good family man, and he was generous in his contributions to charity. (But) can you imagine in the arena of conflict charging that (he was) a 'bastard', then diluting the impact of the attack with qualifying remarks? This becomes political idiocy."

But, as Peavy points out, 'demonizing one's adversaries has great costs. It is a strategy that tacitly accepts and helps perpetuate our dangerous enemy mentality.' So the strategy may help a group of people achieve a specific outcome in a particular conflict, but the relationships of enmity that the strategy engenders are actually inimical to the development of community.

Hence Peavy says, *'instead of focusing on the 52 percent 'devil' in my adversary, I choose to look at the other 48 percent.* To start from the premise that within each adversary I have an ally.' She acknowledges 'that ally may be silent, faltering, or just hidden from my view.'

But she acts on the assumption that *'apparent enemies' are 'potential allies' - if not friends.*

Robert Putnam refers to Saul Alinsky's approach as *'bonding'*, and to Fran Peavy's approach as *'bridging'*.<sup>25</sup> *Bonds* are strong connections, between like-minded people, that are exclusive. They produce deep, 'thick' trust, and are essential for supporting one another - for 'getting by'. Community organisers like Saul Alinsky help like-minded people *bond* pretty well.

*Bridges* are weak connections - between people who are not alike - that are inclusive. They produce broad, 'thin trust', and are crucial for co-operating with others - for 'getting on'. Community animators like Fran Peavy help people who are not like-minded *bridge* the gap.

Robert Putnam says that *if we are to develop healthy communities that we need to move beyond merely bonding with people who are like-minded people - against people who are not like-minded - to bridging the gaps between people who do not appear to be alike at all.*

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<sup>24</sup> Peavy, F. *Heart Politics* (New Society Publishers, 1986)

<sup>25</sup> Putnam, R. *Bowling Alone* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2000)

'Community' may be an ideal that is worth striving for, but it is not an ideal that can ever be realised as a result of an ideological battle that we fight for in the name of the 'community'. 'Community', as we have said, is essentially 'a sense of significance and sense of solidarity' that comes as a result of 'developing relationships' that are characterised by 'mutual respect'. The 'loss of mutual respect' in relationships strikes a 'deathblow at the very heart of a community.'

Hence it is vital for us to keep in mind the aphorism made famous by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the anti-Nazi German martyr, who said - 'Those who love "community" - destroy "community". Only those who love people ... develop "community".'<sup>26</sup>

It would be my hope that any training we would provide would serve as an opportunity for people to develop an awareness of ourselves as persons-in-relationships - and of our need to move from dependence, through independence, towards interdependence, characterised by developing relationships of mutual respect between people, regardless of culture, class or creed.

### **3.7 Principle-Based Training**

Amitai Etzioni, the irascible American communitarian, says when it comes to teaching about *principles* in community development most people think of a lesson in *values clarification*.

'Students are asked to list what is dear to them - money, reputation, power - and then to rank these pursuits in terms of which they hold most important. They fail - and are thus considered in need of moral tutoring - only if they have difficulty in deciding what is up and what is down in their scale of interests.

Etzioni says 'They are further helped to clarify their preferences through exercises such as the 'lifeboat drill', In this exercise students are told to imagine that they are in a lifeboat with a group of people that includes a scientist, an artist, a teacher, and a general (the list can vary). The boat is overloaded, and they must decide whom they would cast overboard first, second, (third) and so on. In this way the students' values are revealed. For instance, do they rank art higher than arms? (Usually the teachers are cast off first and the kids themselves last.)' As long as the pupils are clear on their preferred tossing order, and hence by implication their values, their moral education is considered properly advanced. Under moral reasoning per se, nobody is supposed to discuss the question whether they *should* have cast (anyone) overboard or ask why there aren't enough lifeboats to begin with.'

Etzioni concludes, 'Such development of moral reasoning may be helpful, if and when they are provided to people who already have evolved moral commitments. They can help such people sort out how specifically to express and apply their generalized sense that they ought to do what is right and to order various moral values when these do not readily dovetail with one another. But for youngsters whose moral commitments are underdeveloped, such classes tend to become idle

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<sup>26</sup> Vanier, J. Community And Growth (St Paul, 1989) 61-62

debating clubs. In moral reasoning teachers are typically expected to be passive discussion facilitators rather than active proponents of values. The students' success in these exercises is based not so much on the depth and scope of their moral sensibilities, but on how well they spin an argument. What is missing between the development of moral reasoning (and the development of) character formation (the ability to guide oneself) is the internalization of (i.e. making part of oneself) commitments to a set of substantive values.'<sup>27</sup>

If we are to help people develop the *principles* required to develop community, then we need to help them not only *clarify their values*, but also *commit themselves to a substantive set of values* - without which healthy community development is a complete impossibility.

I agree with Stephen Covey who says 'these *principles* I am referring to are not esoteric, mysterious, or "religious" ideas. There is not one *principle* that is unique to any specific religion, including my own. These principles are a part of every major religion, as well as enduring social and ethical systems. They seem to exist in all human beings, regardless of conditioning and loyalty to them, even though they might be submerged by such conditions or numbed by (incidents of) disloyalty to them'.

Covey says 'these *principles* are essentially unarguable because they are *self-evident*. (They) are guidelines for human conduct that are proven to have enduring, permanent value. One way to quickly grasp the self-evident nature of principles is to simply consider the absurdity of attempting to live an effective life based on their opposites'.

'*Principles*,' Covey says, 'are not *practices*. A *practice* that works in one circumstance will not necessarily work in another, as parents who have tried to raise a second child exactly like they did the first can readily attest. While *practices* are situationally specific, *principles* are fundamental truths that have universal application. They apply to marriages, to families, to private and public organizations of every kind. When these truths are internalized into habits, they empower people to create a wide variety of practices to deal with different situations'.<sup>28</sup>

Probably *the most important of these principles* is what we call '*The Golden Rule*' - that is the basis for building the networks of mutual obligation that provide the foundation for community.

A sense of mutual obligation can be either '*specific*' or '*general*'. If it is *specific*, the reciprocity is specific - *I'll do this for you if you do that for me*. If it is *general*, the reciprocity is generalised - *if we do what we can to help other people now, then someday, when we need help, someone may help us*. '*The Golden Rule*' is a classic call to *practice the principle of generalised reciprocity*. And *the same call is enunciated - with slight variations - in all of the eleven major religious traditions*.

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<sup>27</sup> Etzioni, A. *The Spirit Of Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993) 98-99

<sup>28</sup> Covey, S. *ibid* 34-35

In Taoism the call is *descriptive*. 'Regard your neighbour's loss or gain as your own loss or gain.' In Jainism the call is *instructive*. 'One who neglects existence disregards their own existence'. In Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Judaism and Baha'i the call is *imperative* and it is framed in *negative terms*. 'Never do to others what would pain you.' 'Hurt not others with that which hurts yourself.' 'What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour.' 'Do not impose on others what you do not yourself desire'. 'Desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.' While In Christianity, Islam and Sikhism the call is *imperative* and it is framed in *positive terms*. 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. 'Do unto all people as you would they should do to you'. 'Treat others as you would be treated yourself.'<sup>29</sup>

In all these traditions the call for us to practice generalised reciprocity is the same.

<b>The Golden Rule</b>	<i>Hinduism</i>  'Never do to others what would pain you'  -Panchatantra 3.104	<i>Buddhism</i>  'Hurt not others with that which hurts yourself.'  -Udana 5.18	<i>Zoroastrianism</i>  'Do not to others what is not well for oneself.'  -Shayast-na-shayast 13.29
<i>Jainism</i>  'One who neglects existence disregards their own existence'  -Mahavira	<i>Confucianism</i>  'Do not impose on others what you do not yourself desire.'  -Analects 12.2	<i>Taoism</i>  'Regard your neighbour's loss or gain as your own loss or gain.'  -Tai Shang Kan Ying Pien	<i>Baha'</i>  'Desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.'  -Baha'Ullah 66
<i>Judaism</i>  'What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour.'  -Talmud, Shabbat,31a	<i>Christianity</i>  'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'.  -Matthew 7.12	<i>Islam</i>  'Do unto all people as you would they should do to you.'  -Mishkat-el-Masabih	<i>Sikhism</i>  'Treat others as you would be treated yourself.'  -Adi Granth

29 Tobias, M (ed) A Parliament Of Souls (San Francisco: KQED Books, 1995) 124-5

There are no short cuts. There are no quick fixes. We cannot hope to develop community in our localities unless we 'do unto others as we would have them do unto us'.

### **3.8 Process-Orientated Training**

The *content* of *what* we want to do is community development. The *processes* we want to use are *how* we want to do community development. We want to use *processes* that will not only *encourage the development of community* but also *encourage the development of the people engaged in the development of community*.

People tend to get involved in movements when they get excited. We can get people excited either through '*manipulation*', or through '*motivation*'. '*Manipulation*' involves imposing our vision upon others, and pulling their strings to get them to do what we'd like them to do. While '*motivation*' involves exploring a vision we share with people, and tapping into their passion about what they'd like to do in order to make their dream come true.

We need to make sure we develop '*processes*' that we use are '*motivational*', rather than '*manipulative*'. And there a range of *motivational processes* we can use to help people explore their vision of community - and help them tap into their passion to make their dream come true.

**The first process is helping people *Articulate Their Vision*.** Articulating our vision is a vulnerable process in which we reveal the desperate hopes we hold dearly in the deepest parts of our hearts.

I remember how scary it was for me when I sat down and wrote out my vision. It seemed too romantic, too idealistic, too unrealistic - and more like Martin Luther King's than my own!

*'I dream of a world in which all the resources of the earth will be shared equally between all the people of the earth, so that even the most disad???*

*I dream of a great society of small communities co-operating to practice personal, social, economic, cultural and political integrity and harmony.*

*I dream of vibrant neighbourhoods where people relate to one another genuinely as good neighbours.*

*I dream of people developing networks of friendship in which the private pain they carry deep down is allowed to surface and shared in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and respect.*

*I dream of people understanding the difficulties they have, discerning the problems, discovering the solutions, and working together for personal*

*growth and social change according to an agenda of sustainable justice and peace.'*

Every time I share this vision with other people I feel very self-conscious but I have found that if I am prepared to disclose *my* dream that others will normally be willing to share *theirs*.

In an atmosphere of acceptance and respect it's easy to get people talking about their vision of the ideal kind of community that they would really like to live in themselves.

**The second process is helping people to *Communicate Their Vision Through Stories*.** Stories are the best way for people to share their vision. Stories are inclusive. Different people can apprehend them - intellectually and emotionally - at different levels. Stories are also inspirational. They put soul into the body, and flesh on the bones of our airy-fairy dreams.

One of the stories that I love to tell people is about Ronnie and Leon.

Some time back a loud fight broke out next door. However, before I could move, my neighbour, Ronnie, sprang into action. Ronnie called out to the angry young man next door who we'll call Leon, whom, he suspected, might be beating up his elderly parents. 'Leon, Leon!' Ronnie cried. 'What's going on in there? Tell me what's going on in there!'

But there was no reply. Only the pathetic sound of crashing and screaming as if bodies were being knocked about the place. So Ronnie rushed through his house, out the front, and round to the neighbour's house where upon he started banging on the front door, demanding some kind of response. 'Leon!' Ronnie cried. 'Come here! I want to speak with you!'

Again there was no reply. But soon the sounds inside the house began to subside, and somebody opened the door. As soon as the door opened, Ronnie walked straight in and, while Leon was hurling his fists about to prevent anyone from interfering in the fight, Ronnie calmly strode up to Leon, put his arm around his shoulders, and carefully ushered him out of the house.

After Ronnie had taken him round the block a few times, Leon was brought over to join us on the verandah. And while I spoke with Leon, Ange my wife, went over to speak with Leon's mum and dad, about what could be done about his abusive behaviour in future.

As I sat there sipping my cup of tea, sharing a plate of biscuits with Leon, I reflected on the events of the evening. It hadn't turned out as I expected. It was far more traumatic than I had imagined it would be. But it was also far more momentous than I had imagined it would be.

This story says it all. People like Ronnie make community a reality in our locality. They assume responsibility for the welfare of their neighbours. They don't project the responsibility to help on to anyone else. They understand that - in a crisis - responsibility always requires action.

They don't prevaricate, but act promptly and appropriately. And, as a result of their action, minimise the damage that we do to one another.

Whenever I tell a story like this, other people soon pitch in with their *own* stories of people they know who make the dream of community a reality in their locality. And every story they tell encourages people to believe that the dream is *not* an impossible dream. And every story they hear encourages people to believe that they *too* might be able to make the dream come true!

**The third process is helping people to *Demonstrate The Vision In Their Own Lives*.** It's pretty easy to get people talking - and swapping stories about their vision for community. The hard part is helping them clarify their values, check that they are consistent with the principle of generalised reciprocity, and commit themselves to incorporating those values into their lives.

It may be hard, but - deep down - people know that it's got to be done. That they need to demonstrate the values they advocate in their own lives. For it is only as they demonstrate those values in their own lives that they can prove that they are possible to live out in their own locality.

One night I was walking down the street and came across a man being attacked by a couple of hoods, who were stabbing him with the jagged shards of a broken bottle. His face was already covered in blood. And the hands he used to protect his face were already badly cut and bleeding.

I thought, if someone doesn't do something soon, this bloke could be cut to pieces. I looked up and down the street. But no one else was around. I knew I it was up to me to do something myself; but, I must confess, I was tempted to just to walk on by. To pretend that I hadn't seen anything warranting my attention, let alone my intervention.

I was afraid, terribly afraid, and my fear was well founded. There were two men across the road trying to kill someone, and if I tried to help him, chances were that I could be killed too. After all, there were two of them; and only one of me. They looked like street fighters; and I looked like the wimp that I was. I had no weapon, and wouldn't know how to use one even if I had one; and they had shards of sharp glass, that they wielded as wickedly as the grim reaper himself might have swung his scythe.

But I knew it was time for me to act, so I wrapped the tattered rags of my makeshift courage around me, and, with trembling hands, wobbly knees, and a heart ringing like an alarm bell, crossed the road to intervene in the fight. I didn't rush over and try to crash tackle the assailants. That only ever works in the movies. And even then it doesn't work all the time. I simply walked to within ten metres of the melee, propped, and said from a safe distance the most inoffensive thing I could think of the time, which was, 'G' Day.'

The antagonists immediately turned I my direction. Now I had their attention I tried to distract them from further hurting their victim. But the trick was to do it without them harming me instead. So I said to them, in as friendly a tone as I could muster, 'Can I help you?'

The aggressors looked at one another, then at me, and laughed. They thought it was a big bloody joke. 'Does it look like we need any help?' they asked facetiously. 'No.' I said very carefully. 'It doesn't look like *you* need any help. But, it looks like *he* might need some help. What d'you reckon?'

By now they had stopped stabbing their prey, and, in answer to my question, they shrugged their shoulders, and said, 'Well *you* help *him* then!' And with that, they walked off, and left me to care for the mutilated man on the side of the road. He was seriously injured, but at least he was still alive. And so was I.

Talk is cheap. Actions speak louder than words. And there here comes a time for all of us when we have to stop merely *telling* the stories and start *living* out the stories in our own lives.

**The fourth process is helping people to *Cultivate Their Vision in the Lives of Others*.** We can *cultivate* the vision in the lives of others by *articulating*, *communicating*, and *demonstrating* the vision of community we have in our own lives, and *inviting* others to participate in the community we are developing with us.

One of the people I decided to invite to get involved with us was a kid in a local hostel with thick glasses, spikey hair, and empty gums named Dean. Dean started his life behind the eight ball. A little kid, at the mercy of big, merciless blokes, in an endless round of foster homes and special schools, Dean was knocked about a lot, and was constantly left feeling completely snookered.

At the age of eighteen Dean was placed in a Linden Court. I remember meeting him well, because at the time the only way Dean knew to express his emotions was by thumping people, and he was apparently so glad to make my acquaintance that he almost killed me.

Since that time Dean and I have become quite good mates. We share a passion for Rugby League Football, and are very passionate supporters of the Brisbane Broncos, whom Dean and I reckon are probably the best Rugby League team in the world. We regularly go out together with a bunch of friends, to have a barbecue in a park down by the Brisbane River, and Dean has even been known, to drag me into a game of 'touch footy' now and again - which is really to fast for an old fella like me.

Not long ago, a brother-in-law of mine sadly lapsed into an episode of psychotic despair, jumped off the Storey Bridge, which spans the Brisbane River, and tragically killed himself. Needless to say, I was devastated. When I told everybody at church how devastated I was, I noticed Dean, standing in the back of the room, listening intently to me. Before I realised it, he made his way to the front, where I was standing, and stood beside me, with his arm around me, quietly waiting until I had finished what I was saying. Then, all of a sudden, he embraced me, gave me a huge hug, and said, 'Don't worry Dave. I'll be your brother-in-law.'

I'll never forget that unpretentious gesture of care. It was a sign to me that my dream of our locality becoming a community of people who really cared for one another was coming true.

**The fifth process is helping people to *Celebrate The Realisation Of Their Vision*.** Each of us, who feel inadequate, need to be helped to realise our capacity to act. And each of us, who feel afraid, need to be helped to realise our courage to act. Each of us, who feel impotent, need to be helped to recognise the potential of our actions. And each of us, who feel insignificant, need to be helped to recognise the consequences of our actions.

We can do this by commemorating every act of truth as a victory over lies, and every act of love as a victory over hatred. Consecrating every act of justice as a victory over brutality, and every act of peace as a victory over bloodshed. And celebrating every risk a person takes to make a stand - *no matter how small* - as a victory in the battle for light against the darkness.

Each Sunday night, at half-past-six, for the last ten years, Ange and I have met with a large bunch, of up-to-a-hundred people, from all over our own neighbourhood, in the basement of (the rather serendipitously named) St. Andrew's Church.

Sunday night is essentially a gathering of local people - many of whom are physically, intellectually, and/or psychiatrically challenged, and live in extraordinarily difficult social, economic, and political, life-controlling circumstances - who gather together to celebrate their life and faith together.

One of the locals who you would meet if you came to St. Andrew's one night would be Kay Irwin. Kay goes out of her way to greet everyone who comes through the door at St. Andrew's. Her first words are, 'Hi. My name is Kay. I do dialysis.' Kay has a life-threatening kidney complaint. She has waited for a kidney transplant, in vain, for years. So, three times a week, Kay goes to the local hospital to 'do dialysis.' It's a matter of life and death.

But even though Kay's life has to revolve around dialysis, Kay 'does dialysis' in style. She is upfront about her 'struggle'. She wears the scars on her arms as 'badges of honour'. She challenges people to join her in hospital while she is doing dialysis 'if you've got the guts.' Somehow she transforms her struggle into a sacrament for others. She sells raffle tickets to raise money for kidney research. And she draws funny cartoons to give her fellow sufferers a bit of a belly laugh.

If we are to keep going, all of us need to celebrate every single breath we take and every single step we make - like Kay Irwin does- and encourage those around us to do the same.

### **3.9 Politically-Committed Training**

Jacques Ellul, the French social historian, says 'at the present moment we are confronted with a choice - the "Brave New World" of Huxley - or a different civilization, which we cannot yet describe because we do not know what it will be; it is still to be created.<sup>30</sup> The creation of this 'different civilization', what I call a

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30 Ellul, J. The Presence Of The Kingdom (Seabury, 1967) 42

'community world', is what 'community development' is all about. Community development is essentially a *political* process. It is *not a party political process*. It is not partisan. It is committed equally to people both on the left and the right. It is *not a state political process*. It does not project our problems and the solution of our problems onto the state. Quite the contrary - it recognises that if we have problems in our communities then we will have to solve those problems ourselves. But it is a *political* process in the sense that *it involves people continually making corporate policy decisions about the nature of our common lives*.

The sociologist Talcott Parsons says, 'the *political* process is the process by which *the necessary organization (for making corporate policy decisions) is built up, the goals of action are determined, and the resources requisite to it are mobilized.*'<sup>ii</sup> This may, or may not, have anything to do with the state. But, *for community development to take place, this process needs to be 'organised for the people, by the people themselves'*. Because it's about *empowerment!*

There are two ways of understanding *power*. *Traditionally* our notion of power has been defined as *the ability to control other people*. This *tradition* emphasises *bringing about change through coercion – getting others to change according to our agendas*. While the *traditional* approach advocates taking control of *our* lives by taking control of *others*, the *alternative* approach advocates taking control of *our* lives by taking control of *ourselves*. This *alternative* emphasises *bringing change by transformation – encouraging one another to change our lives, individually and collectively, in the light of an agenda of sustainable justice and peace*.

The traditional notion of power is popular because it often brings quick, dramatic results. But it is characterised by short-term gains for some, and long-term losses for everyone else. Every violent revolution there has been, has - sooner or later - betrayed the people in whose name it fought its bloody war of liberation. The alternative notion of power has been unpopular because it is a slow unspectacular process. But it is slowly - but surely - gaining in popularity because people are beginning to realise it is the only way that groups can transcend their selfishness, resolve their conflicts, and manage their affairs in a way that does justice.

The essential problem in any situation of injustice is - that one human being is exercising control over another and exploiting the relationship of dominance. The solution to the problem is not simply to reverse roles, in the hope that once the roles have been reversed, the manipulation will discontinue. The solution is for people to stop trying to control each other.

All of us, to one degree or another, exploit the opportunity if we have control over another person's life. Common sense therefore dictates that the solution to the problem of exploitation cannot be through the dominant approach to power - with its emphasis on controlling others. The solution is in the alternative - the strong but gentle approach - which emphasises controlling ourselves, individually and collectively, through self managed processes and structures.

Some of us believe if we are to help people - particularly the oppressed - we need to manage their affairs for them. But it doesn't matter how we try to rationalise it, controlling others always empowers us and disempowers those we seek to help. The only way people - particularly the oppressed - can be helped, is for them to be empowered to take control over their own lives. This is why we should not take control over others, no matter how dire the circumstances. Our job is not to seek control, but to enable others to take control over their own lives.

The British community worker, Fred Milson says, our work will be able to be judged to have succeeded or failed, *'by the practical demonstration in all feasible areas, that the community (was able to) define it's own needs and organise (it's own) resources to satisfy them.'*<sup>31</sup>

### **3.10 Action-Reflection Training**

We need to remember that - *anything that's good enough to do is worth doing badly to begin with - but if we want to do good, then each time we have a go at something, we should try to do it better than we did before. And if we are going to try to do something better than we did before, we need to develop the capacity to reflect critically - but constructively - on our actions.*

To develop the capacity to reflect critically - but constructively - on our actions actually requires more than the development a way to reflect on our actions. It requires the development of a way of life that is conducive to the development a way to reflect on our actions.

We need to make sure we get enough sleep at night, so that in the morning we can wake up not groggy or grumpy, but glad to be alive. And we can give ourselves over to the joy of living.

To prepare ourselves for the day we can take a bit of time just to sense the tensions in our bodies that signal things we are uptight about. Often these are grievances, real or perceived of ways that people thwart our plans. We can note the issues they raise that we need to address. Then open our hands and let our grievances go.

Once we let our grievances go we can begin to let the love flow. We can try to do this by bringing to mind all the people that we are connected to in our community, then one by one, picture their face, speak their name, and pronounce a blessing upon each and every one them, friend and foe alike.

We can often be in a hurry. On the move from morning to night. But at regular intervals throughout the day we can always take the time to stop, to look, and to listen. And to deliberate on the activities, conversations, and undercurrents in our community.

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31 Milson, F. op cit

Every now and again we can try to get a bit of distance from our community and put it into a bit of perspective. We can meditate on our community. As it is. And as it might be. Imagining all the things we could do to bring people in the locality together more.

Because there's so many things we *could* do, it's very difficult to figure out exactly what we *should* do. We are often confused. So we can seek clarity by listening to the still small voice of intuition inside us. We can listen until we hear a word that is right for us. Then we can take that word to heart.

We can take it to heart. But not go for it on our own. We can run it by a group of people whose opinions we trust. And together decide on what we are going to do about it. Discern the direction that we ought to take, on the basis of consensus and consent.

Even if we get the direction right, doesn't mean we get the action right. We may actually get it wrong far more often than we'd like to admit. So it's really important to be a part of a group that can help us monitor our progress by reflecting on our actions.

When we reflect on our actions, we are brought face to face with our failures and successes. And if we're not careful we can let our failures discount our successes. So it's important to be a part of a group that can help us not only evaluate our progress but validate our progress.

One of the many things we have done in our community is help set up all kinds of co-ops.

And one of the co-ops that we started in the block we lived in was a chook co-op. The idea was to keep some chooks for our neighbours at the bottom of one of our neighbours back yards.

In return for putting scraps for feed in the pen, people could get their eggs for free. When the chooks finished laying we would meet under a mango tree next door for barbecue chicken. At one of those gatherings I remember a Greek woman pointing to the gathered throng, and announcing triumphantly - 'this is just like my village at home in Greece!'

Now - *what could be better than that?*

### 3.5 Constructs of community leadership

#### Helen Beazley

The Co-op's course is not specifically promoted as a leadership course. It has not been the intention of the Co-op to limit participation to individuals that see themselves as leaders - in fact the Co-op believes that publicly labeling the course as a 'leadership course' would be counter-productive, discouraging attendance by many who could benefit from the training.

The course however, is designed to attract people who want to do something to help build a better community in their locality. Co-op experience is that participants include people who see themselves as leaders (and who others see as leaders), people who aspire to be leaders, and people who 'want to help' but would eschew the label of 'leader' even though actively exhibiting qualities associated with leadership in their own local context.

Consistent with the underlying philosophy of the CLTP and social capital research, there are two types of leaders which the course wants to attract and support: individuals who exercise initiative and apply their skills to *enhancing informal community connectedness*, and individuals who exercise initiative and apply their skills to *enhancing civic institutions*.

Putnam (*Bowling Alone*, 2000, pp.92-93) describes these two types of behaviour:

In Yiddish, men and women who invest lots of time in formal organizations are often termed *machers* - that is, people who make things happen in the community. By contrast, those who spend many hours in informal conversation and communion are termed *schmoozers*....*Machers* follow current events, attend church and club meetings, give to charity, work on community projects, give blood, read the newspaper, give speeches, follow politics, and frequent local meetings....[*Schmoozers*] give dinner parties, hang out with friends, play cards, frequent bars and night spots, hold barbecues, visit relatives, and send greeting cards.

Experienced Co-op trainers have commented that many training courses only attend to skill development in the area of formal civic engagement. In contrast the CLTP values both informal and formal behaviours and pays considerable attention to informal relationships and strategies to initiate and develop these relationships.

We believe that it is helpful to regard schmoozers, or what Australians might term socialisers, as 'potential non-traditional leaders' in that their contribution to community life by generating informal social networks has been traditionally undervalued and can be encouraged and strengthened through the course. We are concerned that undervaluing this form of leadership would also lead to an understating of outcomes from the course, as participants are encouraged to

pursue projects involving informal relationship building as much as those involved with establishing and maintaining community groups.

There are also some participants that come to the CLTP because they are hoping it meets a need reasonably unrelated to leadership development - for friendship or to be personally stretched for example. Perhaps other adult education initiatives could equally meet their needs, such as assertiveness training, a learning circle or self-help group. It is assumed that these individuals are less able or interested in developing and expressing community leadership qualities. Nevertheless, we welcome their participation as the course is structured to provide opportunities for all participants to encounter and generate social relationships, altruism, reciprocity, trust and a sense of belonging, hence enhancing the quality of community life for participants and adding to a community's stock of social capital.

Included in these less leadership-oriented groups are participants who find it difficult to establish status and a sense of belonging in their community. As well as creating an accepting environment for these participants for their own benefit, the Co-op recognises that including marginalised people in training enables trainers to role-model inclusive community development.

*One information session was attended by Jessica\*, an individual with complex identity issues, a mental illness and high social needs. Trainers were hoping Jessica would decide against doing the course because they suspected her presence would create very difficult group dynamics. Jessica turned out to be one of the most committed participants.*

*The trainers were able to create a supportive environment for Jessica, and managed group processes in such a way that Jessica was well accepted by other participants. Some participants welcomed Jessica into their own community circle and advocated for her rights for inclusion in the planning of a community event. (\*name changed)*

There can be a downside for participants with significant unmet needs. The disbanding of a supportive group at the end of training workshops leads to an experience of grief by all participants, but this grief can be very intense and possibly destructive when there is an absence of other social supports.

The following table provides a tentative CLTP participant typology and possible benefits from course participation related to each segment. This typology is generally supported by the data collected from participants and validated by trainers. (However, it has not been rigorously tested through the evaluation process).

### Participant Typology<sup>32</sup>

Personal profile	<b>Most significant learning experience from participation may be:</b>	<b>Most significant individual outcomes from participation may be:</b>	<b>Most significant community outcomes from participation may be:</b>
<p><i>The self help seeker</i></p> <p>Wanting personal growth</p>	<p>Finding satisfaction and meaning by moving beyond personal needs to community needs</p>	<p>Volunteering with a community group recommended by another participant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A community group's volunteer capacity strengthened</li> <li>- Increased altruism within community</li> </ul>
<p><i>The friendship maker</i></p> <p>Feeling some to extreme isolation and wanting to meet people</p>	<p>Learning to connect through sharing activities, experiences, ideas and values (Leong in Barringham p55)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sense of belonging within course group</li> <li>-Individual confident and equipped to make neighbourhood friendships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More informal activity within community</li> <li>- Increased sense of belonging within community</li> </ul>
<p><i>The social-leader/ animator</i></p> <p>Moderate to intense social networks, and wanting to 'be more involved' to create better community life for self and others</p>	<p>Developing personal vision of healthy community, understanding notions of bonding and banding</p>	<p>Applying strategies to establish relationships with people from different cultures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Development of non-traditional community leadership</li> <li>-Enhanced bridging capital within community</li> </ul>
<p><i>The civic-leader/ animator</i></p> <p>Moderate to intense level of involvement in a community organisation(s), feeling need for more knowledge and skills to cope with issues organisation faces</p>	<p>Developing greater understanding of how groups function, healthy group processes, how to manage conflict, external environment</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills to support organisation they are involved in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Development of traditional community leadership</li> <li>-Healthier, more sustainable community organisations</li> </ul>

<sup>32</sup> To further explore the data relevant to this discussion you can access the evaluation of 'community leadership' at [www.communitypraxis.org](http://www.communitypraxis.org) under the past projects section, p36

## **Appendix A: Further reading**

### Training and community development

Wilf E Bean (2000) *'Community Development and Adult Education: locating practice in its roots'* New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education No 85: **Addressing the spiritual dimensions of adult learning – what educators can do**, L. English and M. Gillen (eds) Jossey Bass Publishers, San Francisco.

Anthony Kelly, Arlene Morgan & Deirdre Coghlan (?) **People Working Together Volume III**, Boolarong Publications, Brisbane

In particular:

Anthony Kelly, Arlene Morgan & Deirdre Coghlan (?) *"To understand, to appreciate and to act"* in **People Working Together Volume III**, Boolarong, Brisbane

### Community development

Dave Andrews (1996) **Building a Better World**, Albatros Books, Sydney

Anthony Kelly and Sandra Sewell (eds) (1986) **People Working Together Volume II**, Boolarong Publications, Brisbane

Anthony Kelly and Sandra Sewell (1988) **With Head, Heart and Hand: Dimensions of community building**, Boolarong Publications, Brisbane

### Community leadership

Alice Spigelman (2001) **How to forge an economic and social alliance: The role of community leadership**, Northern Community Economic Development Forum, Casino NSW

Maureen Rogers and Janet Barker (?), **Community Leadership Programs and the Government: a Partnership for Building Learning Communities**, reference

Collin Freeland and Rod Burgess (1999) **Developing Community Leadership in the Australian Capital Region**, Regional Australia Summit, Canberra

## **Appendix B. Community leadership programs in Australia**

### **Community Mentoring Program (ACT Department of Urban Services)**

The Community Mentoring Program is a free, 4-5 month community leadership development program open to Canberrans who want to make a contribution to their community. The program gives participants the skills, know-how and mentoring support to develop and implement a practical community project of their choice.

The program is delivered by three consultants—Ann Villiers, Georgina Birchall and Kerri Dickman—from Canberra business Capital Leadership. Capital Leadership specialises in leadership and mentoring programs and consultation processes.

This web site gives you information about the program and how to become involved. It also provides resources on leadership and mentoring and related programs in the ACT.

### **Community Leadership Program (Oxfam/CAA)**

The Community Leadership Program (CLP) is an initiative of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad in partnership with the University of Queensland. These unique four week learning programs aim to assist you to understand aid and development work and the central role of community processes in development. All programs will focus on Community Development as a methodology. Some will deal with community development practice in depth while others will concentrate on Gender and Microfinance issues.

The Community Leadership Program runs in January, June/July and November/December each year. It costs about \$4,990 all inclusive ex-Melbourne/Sydney/Brisbane (for other cities contact us for details).

The overseas program will provide Australians with an unique opportunity to experience and analyse some development projects and methods which are successful and challenging. They will be assisted in this through the input of local 'change agents' and community workers, together with the experience of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad staff and the analysis of an Australian academic.

Participants will be encouraged to draw on this experience and to envisage what lessons can be applied to Australian conditions. The vision for the Community Leadership Program not only encompasses a combination of workshops and project visits in overseas, but is an ongoing process of building effective

community involvement in Australia around issues of human rights, international justice, sustainable development, North/South partnership and poverty alleviation. To this end participants will be expected to give some voluntary time in the 12 months following their return, to assist in developing programs, or by being involved in Oxfam Community Aid Abroad programs within Australia.

In conjunction with [the University of Queensland](#), the Community Leadership Program is one of three subjects in a postgraduate certificate in community development.

In order to take advantage of this, participants will need to contact the University of Queensland. Full details of this offer are available from Dr Ingrid Burkett <[i.burkett@mailbox.uq.edu.au](mailto:i.burkett@mailbox.uq.edu.au)>, Lecturer in Community & International Development at the University of Queensland.

### **Local Community Leadership Program (Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology Sydney)**

This program responds to a call to build coalitions and alliances across the arenas of education, advocacy and social action. This program will bring together community leaders in schools; ethnic, sporting, cultural and activist groups; youth and community work; government agencies; legal support; unions; health services; TAFE, adult and community education.

The program is for those in the Sydney metropolitan area engaged in education, advocacy or action working with people at the 'coalface' to address social issues. It is for people who are regarded by themselves and others as 'leaders' or potential 'community' leaders.

The notion of a leader refers to someone who is highly motivated and committed to further developing perspectives and practice in education, advocacy, and social action. A leader is not someone who necessarily holds a management position. It is someone who accepts responsibility and is capable of inspiring others.

This program is about creating spaces to make a difference at the 'local' level. An emphasis will be placed on taking a fairly hard look at the nature of practice and action at a local level.

### **University of Technology Sydney UTS Shopfront - A Unique Community Program**

UTS Shopfront is a university-wide program that acts as a gateway for community access to the University. It links disadvantaged and under-resourced community groups to university skills, resources and professional expertise.

Community-based projects are carried out by students through their subjects under the supervision of academics. The process is collaborative: students and

community groups are involved in all facets of the projects' development and implementation.

In partnership with the Strengthening Communities Unit of the Premier's Department, Shopfront is carrying out research into community leadership initiatives in NSW. For information about this research project, contact us on 9514 2900.

### **The Williamson Community Leadership Program**

The Williamson Community Leadership Program has earned an Australia-wide reputation as an outstanding program to develop tomorrow's leaders.

This is a unique one-year program for 32 outstanding participants drawn from diverse backgrounds in the private and public sectors.

Participants are challenged and extended, meet with a broad cross section of today's leaders and hear their frank opinions, concerns and experiences. The program explores social and economic issues with a 10-year horizon.

### **Gippsland Community Leadership Program**

The Gippsland Community Leadership Program aims to promote growth in the social and economic future of Gippsland through the establishment and development of civic leadership support networks, by:

- developing emerging leaders by creating a better understanding of the diversity of issues affecting the community
- influencing the future direction of the Gippsland region by creating the opportunity for the exchange of ideas and views among emerging leaders
- providing a forum for communication and learning
- achieving a more effective contribution to the broader development of the community as a consequence of participation in the program
- establishing and maintaining strong network within the groups.

A maximum of 25, emerging Gippsland leaders with the potential to develop further, are chosen. Diversity across regional boundaries, profession and background are essential elements of the Program.

The program commences at a weekend residential where participants are introduced to the broad issues facing our community. Subsequently, they meet twice per month to critically review specific issues affecting our region. Speakers who are acknowledged leaders in their own field stimulate this process. The Program deals with a diversity of topics such as the economy, social justice, tourism, education, environment, health, citizenship, industry, agriculture and

much more. The participants are encouraged to challenge and debate the views put by Gippsland and Australia's leaders.

A final two-day residential consolidates the year of learning into personal and group action plans. With the acquired knowledge and broader perspectives it is anticipated that these emerging leaders commit to actions and outcomes that will make a difference both personally and within our community. Past experience shows this is the case.

The Gippsland Community Leadership Program is registered and owned by SCOPE Quality Learning Inc, which developed and promoted the concept of a regional Community Leadership Program and has been providing quality education and training programs for regional communities for over 26 years.

### **The Benevolent Society Social Leadership Programs**

The Benevolent Society's social leadership programs are driving social innovation and new pattern changing approaches to social problems.

The Centre for Social Leadership takes committed leaders from business, government and the community sector and:

- Provides an unprecedented opportunity through [Sydney Leadership](#) to examine complex and interdependent social issues such as education, justice, youth, the economy, family and rural communities.
- Develops a shared vision and collaborative approaches to Australia's major social issues.
- Implements innovative models for social change.
- Engages leaders through the [Sydney Leadership Alumni](#) in pioneering projects with a social benefit. Projects include a community regeneration project in Redfern, IT training in Moree, a social venture capital fund and creative ways to engage corporations in the community.

#### **Contact details**

The Benevolent Society  
Paddington House  
Level 1 / 188 Oxford Street  
PO Box 171  
Paddington NSW 2021  
Tel: (02) 9339 8000  
Fax: (02) 9360 2319  
Email: [mailben@bensoc.asn.au](mailto:mailben@bensoc.asn.au)

## **Volunteering Queensland - Community Leadership Programs**

Over the last few years Volunteering Queensland has delivered a number of community leadership programs for a variety of target groups; for youth, for the general public and for particular communities. These have taken many different forms, however some themes remain constant. They have been designed to assist and further develop the leaders in our communities and facilitate action and development in those communities.

Common themes include:

- Exploring various leadership styles and developing effective approaches to leadership which reflect an individual's philosophy and personality
- Considering successful community change efforts and assessing how these strategies can be effective within a range of contexts.
- Developing a range of skills in strategic action planning to facilitate change efforts.
- Creating and utilising opportunities for empowerment and group development
- Sharing and developing ideas for civic innovation and community building

If you would be interested in participating in such a program, you can register your interest for future programs by contacting the Education Unit. Similarly if you would like to arrange a program for your organisation or department, please feel free to contact us to discuss the possibilities.

Contact:

Education Unit

Volunteering Queensland

07 3002 7600

e-mail [education@volunteeringqueensland.org.au](mailto:education@volunteeringqueensland.org.au)

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i Riddell, M. *Godzone* (Lion: Oxford, 1992) 15

ii *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975) Vol 14, 697