

stepping stones

Issue 2, December 2011

**Connecting culture
and country**

Indigenous
community
volunteers

Welcome to Stepping Stones



Stephanie Harvey, CEO

In the first edition of Stepping Stones I mentioned that we are undertaking a new model of community development that strengthens community engagement work before, during and after projects and ensures projects are part of communities' long term plans. This means doing more to measure the impacts of projects over longer periods of time.

We are now implementing a new monitoring and evaluation model that, using feedback from volunteers, communities and other stakeholders, will provide an evidence base detailing the impacts that ICV is contributing to the larger picture of reducing Indigenous disadvantage. It is important that we go beyond just measuring the inputs and outputs of our program.

While it is rewarding to know how many communities we work with and how many volunteers have been placed, the true value of what we accomplish in partnership with communities is the impact on people's lives. Being able to measure an increase in school retention and literacy and numeracy skills, reduction in youth involvement in the criminal justice system and being able to tell you about economic growth in communities is truly what we are about.

The story on page 14 is an update on how the community at Daly River in the Northern Territory has increased its economic independence and confidence to step out with new ideas to grow its business. It all began with local hope that things can get better in the top end community.

There have been multiple projects at Daly River. It is a good example of why it is important that ICV builds and maintains relationships with communities and commits to being involved over a long period of time.

Efforts to address disadvantage takes time and resources but are far more targeted and effective when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are enabled to take responsibility for their strategies and directions.

In this edition, we also profile one of our committed volunteers. I know that having a best practice model of development - one that meets international standards and a great team of ICV staff around Australia is terrific. But without our cadre of skilled, passionate volunteers, ICV would only be able to achieve a small impact.

Our volunteers come from all walks, with varied experiences in life and work. Our screening process considers not just what's in an applicant's CV but if prospective volunteers are able to really put the agenda of a community first; listen and learn as they share their skills and connections. The community of Burrunju - featured on page 6 - benefitted from this sort of interaction based on mutual respect.

"The true value of what we accomplish is the impact on people's lives."



Out and About



EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE: Summer Borg of Shalvey Public School at the Aboriginal culture centre, Muru Mittigar.

Aboriginal education centre Muru Mittigar in Castlereagh has a new education program for New South Wales school students prepared by ICV volunteers. Pat and John Cassidy gave up their time over six months to write a program aimed at complementing what's being taught in schools about Aboriginal culture and society from prehistory to contemporary Australia. More than 10,000 school students visit Muru Mittigar each year.



Cultural Education in Western Sydney

ICV volunteer Robert Foley has been designing a BMX track near the Gulahgambone Youth Centre north of Dubbo in New South Wales. Robert has helped with its construction, working with employees with a local Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program. The BMX track is being built on a vacant block next to the youth centre with the aim of creating a safe environment for young people to learn about road safety and to encourage health and fitness.



BMX track for youth centre



ON TRACK: Surveying and digging out the new BMX track.



BIG IDEAS: Phil Obah, born and bred on Palm Island.

ICV has been visiting Palm Island in recent months on a fact finding mission to learn about the assets and hopes of the 3000-strong community. Staff have spent time with Elder, Phil Obah (pictured), who runs Guburu Cultural Consultancy.

Phil says there is a lot of 'talent and potential' on Palm. The north Queensland island, with its diverse and at times fractured past, is also unique for its environment, culture and tourism opportunities.



Palm Island dreams

The art beat of community

It has taken only a few years for Canberra's only Aboriginal owned and managed Indigenous art gallery, Burrunju Gallery, to move from an idea into an emerging commercial success.

ICV has played an important role.

Volunteer, Peter Stewart, worked with Aunty Meg Huddleston of Burrunju Aboriginal Corporation and staff over an 18 month period, becoming in that time a confidant and friend.

Peter helped source funding, develop plans, encourage partnerships in the business and art community in Canberra and provide general support and ideas.

"There's been a tangible development of a support network. It's been gratifying to see the generosity of others. The team is better able to cope with things," Peter said.

"We wanted help with writing applications and Peter provided that and much more. I am now more confident," said Aunty Meg.

Burrunju now has a paid curator to work alongside Gallery Coordinator, Greg Joseph (pictured). Funds were sourced through the Australia Council for the Arts. The curator promotes the art business and has secured long term tenancy for the gallery located in a choice lakeside spot at Yarramundi Reach. In less than a year sales from artworks hung have nearly doubled. Profits go back to artists and into maintaining the gallery.

"We wanted help with writing applications and Peter provided that and much more."



GETTING SUPPORT: Burrunju Gallery Coordinator, Greg Joseph.

National Program Manager Glenn Cummings said, "This has been an excellent project because the volunteer had the right attitude and the space to be taken where the community wanted to go."

Peter has been happy to continue advising Aunty Meg beyond the project creating links to create support for public relations, governance and office management.

ICV has worked with Burrunju on multiple projects since 2008. One project established Burrunju's profile with a website built with a Perth-based volunteer who Aunty Meg billeted. The website promotes art, music and products and services that encourage healthy eating.

The Burrunju projects are representative of the increasing number of business focussed projects supported by ICV in urban areas where most Aboriginal people live.



Festival comes alive



The small Aboriginal community of Bulman-Weemol east of Katherine in the Northern Territory shared its history and culture at its inaugural festival held in July. The festival, infused by traditional art and music and cooking, was supported by ICV over many months before and during the two day event. Elders showed children how to make traditional rafts using paper bark. Kite-making and flying were also among a number of activities that drew young and old alike.



Jenni with some of the art sold at the Koorie Night Market.



Our volunteers

Flexibility is key

Jenni Mitchell has been a quiet but pivotal volunteer working for Victoria's only Indigenous night market. Staff at the Koorie Night Market love her, not least because she is prepared to be a general 'dogsbody'.

The Koorie Night Market moves around Melbourne often supported by local government. It is aimed at creating and sustaining work for the state's Indigenous people by showcasing and selling Indigenous music and hand-made arts and crafts. Stallholders are individual business owners. They handle their own merchandise but pay a sliding fee for market support and administration.

Jenni, who has administration and community development experience, has committed one day a week every week since 2009, providing support to ensure the markets go to plan. The glitch is that often the plan changes, as Jenni explains:

"It really is a wonder of wonders that the markets happen at all and are so successful. But participants, stall holders,

volunteers and staff are genuinely excited about the possibilities of the market and really want it to work.

I like order. But relationships are much more important than the actual job. There are lots of holes in what gets done but that doesn't appear to be a problem. Systems are idiosyncratic and based around people.

My role week to week can involve anything from database entry and inventory reports to washing tablecloths and putting out the garbage. The job has evolved.

I wouldn't say that I was patient person but I have had to learn patience. Having said all that, I do enjoy it and I do feel valued.

I am now part of the furniture and the frightening thing is that people now assume I know stuff.

I first wanted to volunteer with ICV when the federal parliament moved a motion of 'Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples'. I thought something must be done to make this real, volunteering is something I can do.

"I'm prepared to help for as long as I am needed".



Koorie Night Market in Northcote, Melbourne – Bindi Cole

Walkabout for change

Join ICV's CEO, Stephanie Harvey on a trip of a lifetime!

You don't have to be an ICV volunteer to participate or even a die-hard trekker. You just need to have a passion to raise valuable funds for ICV, be willing to walk for five consecutive days through the red centre of Australia, sleep under the stars (under canvas too), eat dinner around the campfire and join other like-minded people.

The money that is raised will go directly to help provide access to high-quality services and skilled volunteers in areas where employment, economic development and education opportunities are often limited.

Please join us

ICV will take a party of intrepid walkers next year along the Larapinta Trail as a fundraising venture.

The money raised will provide essential funding for ICV to help create a sustainable future for Indigenous communities.

What are you waiting for?

For more information visit

www.inspiredadventures.com.au/ICVWalkabout2012

or call Helen on 1300 905 188

or email helen@inspiredadventures.com.au



Fast facts

- Fundraising Target:** \$5,400 (this includes \$2,400 travel package and a \$3,000 donation to ICV)
- Registration Fee:** \$700
- Trip Duration:** 8 days (8th to 15th July 2012)
- Physical activity:** 5 day trek
- Accommodation:** 4 star hotel and comfortable camping
- Challenge grade:** Moderate

Communities in Focus

Daly River's sawmilling enterprise, Big Rivers Inc., has gone from strength to strength since we wrote about the remote NT community in the January edition, as **Robert Austral** explains:

"Things have really progressed since we partnered with ICV. The first project involved purchasing a portable sawmill. Then we learned how to safely use it and make basic furniture as part of a CDEP program. Volunteers Ian Straker and Peter Dorman were great.

12 months on I have become the Training Coordinator at the mill, supervising other men. I have completed Certificate I & II in Furniture Making and a 'train the trainer' course through Charles Darwin University.

I feel very proud. What seemed impossible and a dream is now a reality. I'm happy that the Daly River has also inspired other communities to establish their own sawmill. We have been asked to assist two other communities.

Colleague, Arnold Sambona (who's also completed furniture making and training courses) and the team at Daly River have shown real persistence to get where we have today.

We have extended the furniture making business to include ice making. We purchased an ice-making machine for the community and fishermen that come to Daly River for fishing here and at nearby resorts. It's another way of getting some income.

We now make lots more furniture with stockpiled and processed timber and have extended our sales so more money is coming in. Big Rivers has begun selling furniture in and around Darwin!

We are now seeking assistance from ICV in developing our own website to promote the business and increase customers. Thank you ICV".



"I feel very proud. What seemed impossible and a dream is now a reality."

Robert Austral



Please give what you can. Thank you.

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