A Practitioner's Guide to Strengths Based Community Development:

AN
INALA
WANGARRA
STORY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CONTENTS PAGE

ABOUT INALA WANGARRA

Inala Wangarra is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled community development organisation based in South West Brisbane, Queensland. It was incorporated in early 2005 and has been operating for over 16 years as of the date of this publication. Inala Wangarra focuses on enhancing and strengthening the skills and capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within Inala and surrounding areas. It focuses on delivering community driven programs and services in the areas of sport, education, health, employment, justice and culture and arts. It is fully managed by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Disclaimer –

The intention of this community practitioner's guide is to illuminate the practice of strengths based community development ("SBCD") using the learnings from Inala Wangarra, an Indigenous controlled community development organisation based in Inala, Queensland. Inala Wangarra is recognised as a leading model of best practice strengths based community development.

This guide does not propose a step by step manual of SBCD work, but rather aims to offer a map of values and questions for community workers to reflect upon. It hopes to help fill the gap in the community development literature relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led approaches to community development. For succinctness this guide will use the term "Indigenous" to encompass both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The authors acknowledge the rich cultural diversity within these groups, and that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prefer to identify by their language group/s and ancestral nation/s.

This guide does not attempt to speak for all Indigenous community organisations or approaches to Indigenous led community development. Non-Indigenous community development organisations and workers will also find this guide informative and applicable to their practice. The case studies included have had consent from the individuals, with names fictionalised. Readers are advised that this guide may contain images and stories of people who have passed away.

WHAT IS STRENGTHS BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

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WHAT IS STRENGTHS BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

Community development aims to resource and empower people to collectively control their futures. This self-determinative aspect of community development is attractive to many Indigenous communities. However, community development has largely been done to Indigenous communities by non-Indigenous policymakers and community workers rather than *by* Indigenous communities themselves. This paternalistic way of doing community development work reinforces pathologised understandings of Indigenous communities as being 'dysfunctional' and 'incapable' of managing their own affairs. It goes against the self-determinative objective of community development. It traps Indigenous communities in dependency cycles and deficit narratives. This only serves non-Indigenous community workers who conflate and pathologise structural injustices with the deficiencies of Indigenous peoples.

Strengths based community development ("SBCD") as articulated and practiced by Inala Wangarra seeks to question and counter these dominant racialised understandings. Strengths based approaches do not seek to disregard or ignore the structural social realities and changes that are necessary to bring about the material empowerment of Indigenous communities. Rather it is a way to mobilise and enhance existing agency, capabilities, knowledges, skills, talents and strengths that enable people to thrive.

The starting point in SBCD becomes the strengths of the community rather than its 'failings', 'needs' or 'problems'. Strengths based workers acknowledge that everyone has something to offer the community, whether that be a skill, networks or motivation to participate. An inability to see strengths is a reflection on the lens through which one is looking rather than the community itself. Once these existing strengths are identified, community work can build on this existing foundation.

SBCD in Action: Mobilising what's already there

Michelle was an active member of the Inala community. But when she lost her first child prematurely she entered a period of grieving for several years and struggled to keep engaged with the community.

A few years later, her younger son was involved in Inala Wangarra's Rites of Passage program. Michelle started becoming involved with the program, teaching the children how to dance and eventually participated in a security guard training program provided by Inala Wangarra. This built her confidence and she soon thereafter secured a job as the Jarjums Playgroup coordinator. She has continued to work with children in the community in various roles.

Michelle's story demonstrates how Inala Wangarra does not seek to 'fit' community members into their programs but rather mobilises their interests and skills when they are ready to do so.

Further Reading

Bond, C. & Brady, K. (2013) Locating Indigenous Australia within Community Development Practice – Clients, Consumers or Change Makers. *Community Development Journal Australia, 43, 33-39.*

Burchill, M., Higgin, D., Ramsamy, L. et al. (2006) Workin' together: Indigenous perspectives on community development. *Family Matters,* 75, 50-59

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WHAT SCBCD IS AND IS NOT

The following table shows a side by side comparison of a strengths based approach with a needs based/deficit approach in the community development process. This practitioner guide will illustrate each stage of the community development process through a strengths based lens.

|	Needs/Deficit Approach	Strengths Based Approach
Organisation's Theory of Social Change	Increase a community's dependency on professional services	Increase a community's involvement in delivering their own services and programs
Community Workers	Come from outside the community, have professional qualifications	Are community members, with diverse life experiences, skills and backgrounds
Core Resources	Financial	Relationships
Operational Question asked by the worker	How can we get the community involved?	How can we build on people's existing participation and engagement in the community?
Project formation	Grand new projects having to build engagement from scratch	Value adding onto existing activities and points of connection for the community
Engagement and participation over time	Thins	Snowballs
Measuring Success	Key Performance Indicators ("KPIs"), needs met, project outcomes	Growth and transformation of individuals, relationships and the community worker

WHO IS COMMUNITY?

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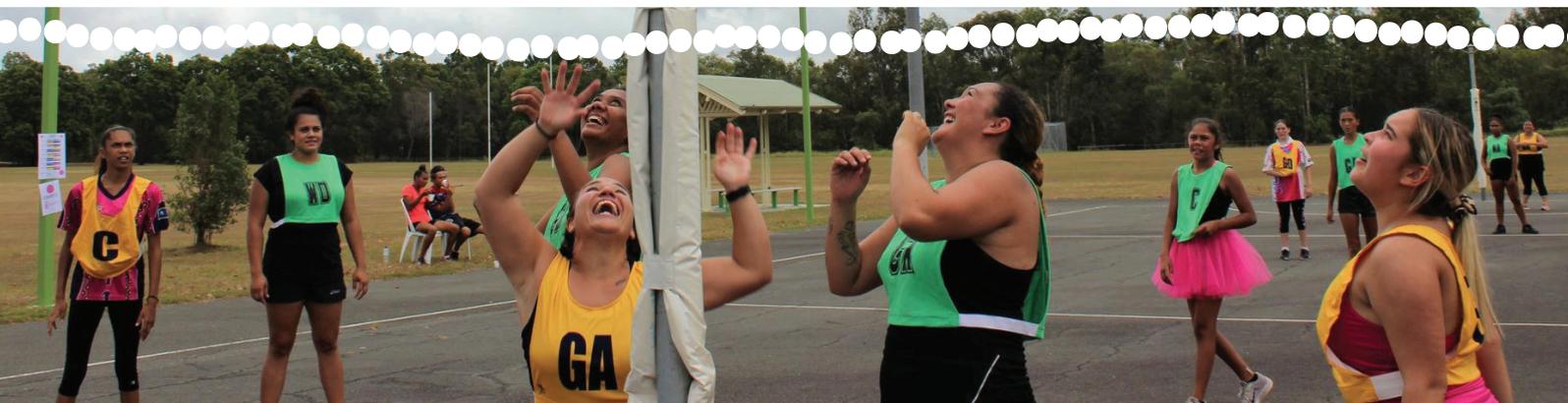
WHO IS THE COMMUNITY?

The question of who the community is becomes important when a community worker or program attempts to target the 'most needy' people. Who is most deserving of care? Who gets to decide this? The danger of targeting only those that are deemed 'most worthy' of 'help' simply reinforces a deficit based community development approach.

When you think of a 'poor' neighbourhood or an urban Indigenous community, what are the first few images that pop into your mind?

Are they…
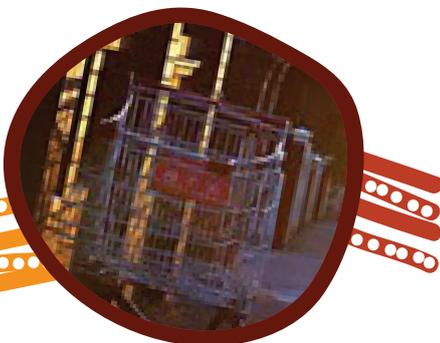
It is important to recognise that these partial truths do not tell the whole story, and often mask and conceal the richness and strengths that exist within these communities.

A community worker must understand *who* the community is before they can identify its strengths. For outsiders coming into a 'disadvantaged' community, they will carry a mental map of that community well before any first-hand evidence or account from people who live there. These preconceptions are often mediated and distorted from one dimensional partial truths and **negative media stories** such as SBS's *Struggle Street*.

The following quote about marginalised American communities paints a picture not unlike Australia:

> For most Americans, the names "South Bronx", or "South Central Los Angeles", or even "public housing" call forth a rush of images. It is not surprising that these images are overwhelmingly negative. They are images of crime and violence, of joblessness and welfare dependency, of gangs and drugs and homelessness, of vacant and abandoned land and buildings. They are images of needy and problematic and deficient people. (Kretzman, McKnight & Punteney, 1993)

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS IMAGE "INALA BOYZ

ORIGINAL INALA BOYS

You see this image of graffiti on a fence as evidence of vandalism and criminal activity, confirming negative preconceptions attached to a lower socio-economic suburb like Inala. But on closer inspection, this fence may reveal another story…

The graffiti tag "Inala Boyz" is a symbolic mark that carries rich meanings of community pride in Inala as a unique historical site of black resistance and an inclusive place of belonging for many diasporic Indigenous communities. The moniker "Inala Boyz" carries a special meaning to young and old men from Inala. It represents a proud identity, strong connections and a sense of community belonging. Listen to Inala men talk about what "Inala Boy" means to them.

Often what constructs a community are the relationships that people form over time. In Inala, there are strong and intricate communal and family ties, relationships and networks which transcend geographical boundaries and expand the notion of 'community' beyond postcodes. It is important for community workers to understand, listen and learn about these relationships and networks when entering a community and readjust one's understanding of a place according to the people who live there.

Further Reading

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BASICS OF STRENGTHS BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

RECONFIGURING INDIGENOUS STRENGTHS & CAPACITY

The following strengths are often overlooked by non-Indigenous community workers.

They are strengths that reinforce and feed one other.

CULTURE

*"Strengths come from culture, identity and connections."* - Community Worker

Indigenous health workers and experts have long recognised that reaffirming and strengthening connections to culture, spirituality, country, language, and place is integral to achieving better health outcomes for Indigenous peoples. Cultural revitalisation and maintaining connection to culture in the context of colonisation is not a deficiency of Indigenous communities but an important source of strength that is often overlooked by non-Indigenous community workers. Culture is lived not lost. It fosters a strong sense of identity and belonging to a place and is a means of connecting with family and community. It is also important to acknowledge that Indigenous cultures are not static but undergo a constant process of rearticulation and co-creation between the generations.

CLICK HERE

SBCD in Action: Culture lived not lost

Jarjums Life Museum is a project run by Inala Wangarra that gives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children the opportunity to tell their own stories. The project was created from a series of workshops with the jarjums of Goompi-Dunwich on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) and the jarjums of Hymba Yumba Independent school. The jarjums worked alongside Elders, parents and families to engage in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, creating and living. The jarjums painted, wrote and curated their stories into a museum setting. The project was showcased throughout their individual community and was included in the Out of the Box Festival. Jarjums Life Museum used culture as a 'way in' to engage younger generations in a process of co-creation.
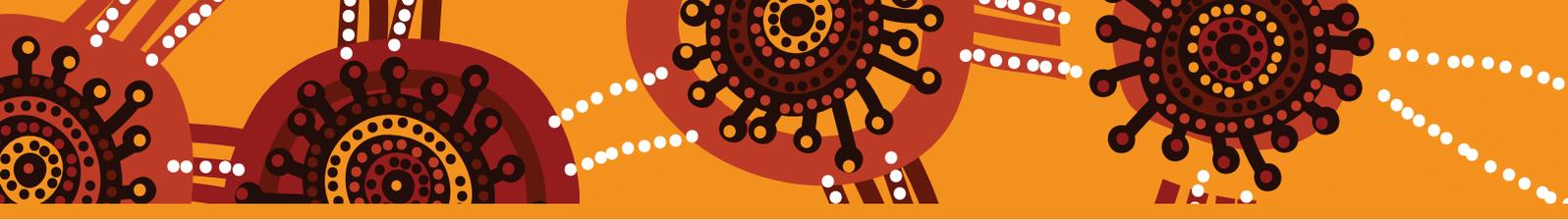
ELDERS

"Growing up in Inala we had a lot of Elders that volunteered their time to take us out and you know to keep us out of trouble. I look up to all those Elders and they didn't get paid for that. I just want to give back to my community like what they've done in the past." - Community Worker

Elders and eldership in the Indigenous community are defined by the community. It is a status often given to those who have attained a certain level of life experience and ability to pass that knowledge onto those that are to follow. This life experience can be gained regardless of seniority or attaining a certain age. It is important to acknowledge that in comparison to the non-Indigenous population whose senior demographic (aged 65 and over) comprises 16%, Indigenous seniors only comprise 5% of the Indigenous population. This makes the visibility of senior Elders a rarity and makes them a valued asset. SBCD workers must be cautious of not overburdening Elders who are a small segment of the community.

Elders of any age, are a significant resource and point of connection, especially for younger people. They possess vast amounts of cultural and experiential knowledge that can assist in intergenerational teaching and learning which scaffolds young people, strengthening their sense of identity and belonging to country, community and place. Elders also model a blueprint of thriving, SBCD and giving back to the community that is often taken up and emulated by other community members.

YOUNG PEOPLE

"I just see such beauty and richness in these kids." - Community Worker

Young Indigenous people are not a risk group but an asset. More than half of Indigenous people are under the age of 25 compared to only 31% of the non-Indigenous population. This means Indigenous communities are significantly younger in age than their non-Indigenous counterparts. They often have care giving roles and responsibilities that their non-Indigenous peers do not share. Indigenous communities are stronger when their young people are supported and their talents, self-confidence and identities nurtured. Children bring people and communities together. Young people are not empty vessels that need saving or aspirations that need building. They need to be given opportunities that see possibilities and potential instead of problems. They are not passive but active co-producers, leaders and innovators of community services and programs. Inala Wangarra's Rites of Passage program is one such example of a youth led initiative that has been built on the strengths of young people.

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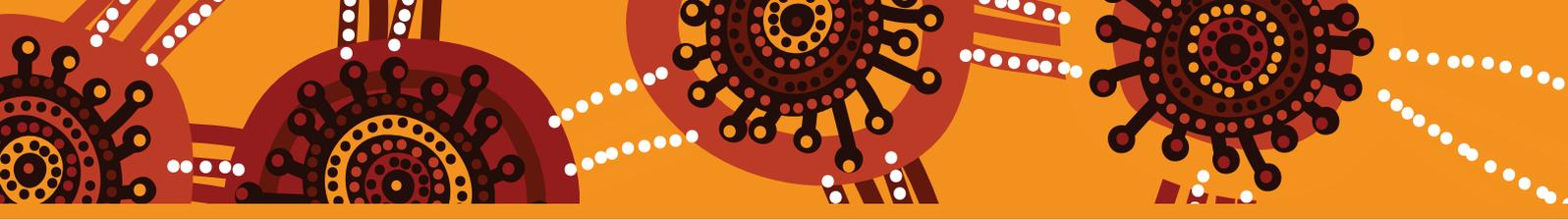
RELATIONSHIPS

"It's about working alongside people…You can't just come in and start working in there. You need to build trust and relationships and you need to listen." - Community Worker

Maintaining strong family/kinship, social and neighbourhood connections are important resources and sources of strength in Indigenous communities. These networks contain large amounts of bonding capital, respect and trust built up over time. They are reciprocal relationships, with mutual obligations. This is important to understand for the community worker who wants to achieve good outcomes. They will have to show up to gain the community's trust and walk alongside the community. It means forgoing notions of 'professionalism' where the community worker operates separate to the community. Such 'professional' community development practices are often experienced as dehumanising. Supervisors and organisations should give time to their workers to be able to establish, develop and maintain genuine interpersonal relationships with community members, allowing for home visits and attendance at community events. Workers need to make time for cultivating and maintaining these relationships inside and outside of work time. This ensures community workers and organisations are engaged with the community and that such engagement is returned.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

"I know I get the engagement because it's not me making the programmes. It's my women that come to my programmes. It's what they want, what they want in our community and what's the need in our community." - Community Worker

Community members are recognised as co-producers and active agents in the design and delivery of services and programs. Through a strengths based approach the line between a community member and community worker is blurred. Their skills, talents, capabilities and leadership derived from their lived experience are recognised and valued often over and above other professional or academic based qualifications. In identifying community member-worker, outsider lenses of 'volunteering' and formalised ways of 'doing' community work can be misleading as this work may not be understood in this way. Community member-workers often practice strengths based community work every day. This may involve attending to and feeding extended families, providing housing for relatives, and coaching sports teams. It is important for strengths based organisations to recognise and support these informal community work practices and provide community member-workers with resources to strengthen their practice. This means investing in their leadership capabilities and may mean enabling them to pursue professional careers in the community services sector.

COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

For outsiders, identifying who the 'community' is in an urban Indigenous context can be complex due to the intricate, diverse and dispersed nature of relationships. Community controlled organisations can be valuable resources in accessing a wide range of community members due to their pre-established connections built up over time. These connections are nurtured because the community controlled organisation typically shares the same values as the community they serve. Community controlled organisations are also valuable sites of collective history keeping, which outsider community workers can draw knowledge from. They foreground Indigenous agency and formal and informal Indigenous leadership. They are also valuable blueprints for seeing what has worked and has not worked in their community and can offer important lessons for the strengths based community worker.

Further Reading

Brough, M.K., Bond, C., Hunt, J., Jenkins, D., Shannon., C & Shubert, L. (2006) Social Capital meets identity: Aboriginality in an urban setting. *Journal of Sociology,* 42(4), 396-411

SBCD in Action:
Valuing local expertise

Inala Wangarra is unique as a community development organisation that values what local community members have to offer. Inala Wangara's hiring practices first and foremost prioritise local people, local connections and local knowledges. It recognises hiring local people is crucial to the success and participation rates of their programs.

When partnering with an external community organisation that sought to hire Indigenous community members Inala Wangarra distributed this opportunity to community members outside its organisation. This practice shows how Inala Wangarra is not about empire building but sets out to work across and outside organisational structures and reach out and engage community members in community projects.
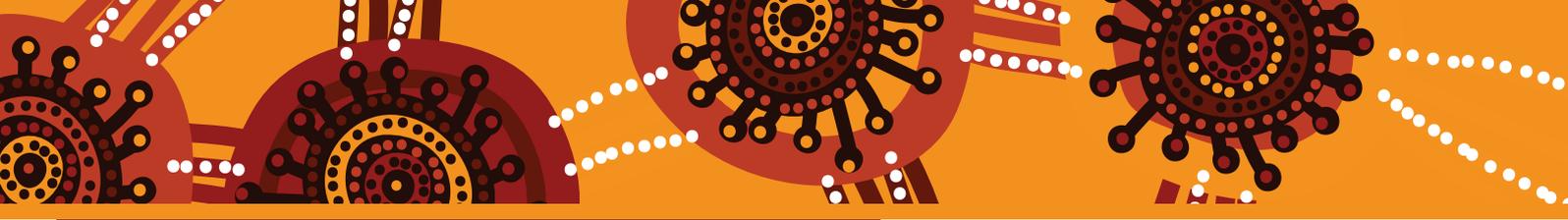
TAKE A MINUTE TO REFLECT...

SELF-DETERMINATIVE & COMMUNITY DRIVEN

As a community worker what does it mean to work *with* people rather than *for* people?

WORKING **WITH** COMMUNITY	WORKING **FOR** COMMUNITY

Does your practice resemble the former or latter approach?

Community driven program design and delivery gives control to community members and a sense of ownership, that is likely to sustain engagement and build further capacities and development opportunities. This departs from dominant community development approaches as it does not position the community worker as the 'saviour' or best 'knower' of what the community needs. It is the task of the strengths based community worker to acknowledge what they do not know and to ask the community what they need, what they like and what their strengths are. By building on existing capacity, community workers can ensure engagement and usefulness to the community and reduce wastage of resources.

SBCD in Action: From Client to Collaborator

Tom was a participant of Inala Wangarra's Murri Court program through which he accessed their diversionary program, Naree Wandima. In his cultural report Tom expressed he loved art. The Murri Court coordinator linked him up with the Urban Exhibition program run by the Inala Elders. This involved an 8 week workshop leading up to an exhibition in NAIDOC week. Inala Wangarra saw some of Tom's works at the exhibition and asked him to design their uniforms to represent the story of the organisation. He completed his Murri Court program and transitioned into the Creative Arts program at Inala Wangarra where he started to receive business development support and was connected to community art projects like 'Paint up a Piano'. In return, Tom helps guide Inala Wangarra's Creative Arts programs and the projects that are delivered.

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EVERYDAY EMBEDDED PRACTICE

"I had to play a season to prove it to them, that if I can do it youse can do it." - Community Worker

SBCD in Action: Finding a Win-Win

Paul was a young person who had been through the youth justice system. Through an external organisation, Paul was able to connect with Inala Wangarra. He started a part time job working to re-establish Inala Wangarra's youth committee and later, secured a community justice traineeship.

A few months into his new role Paul rang management on a Saturday morning to say he had been found drink driving. Inala Wangarra's policy stated that workers could not have a current criminal record. The CEO took this matter to Inala Wangarra's board who were divided on what to do. Nevertheless, they treated each other and Paul's case with dignity and respect. Many board members expressed the need to not turn their backs on a fellow community member-worker who was in a time of need.

They mutually agreed on him taking leave without pay to finish his community service, while holding onto the traineeship. Inala Wangarra considered this a win-win situation, as even though Paul found work elsewhere, he completed his community service, and Inala Wangarra could manage community perceptions while not turning their back on a fellow community member-worker.

Strengths based community development is a day to day practice. It is embodied in the ways of doing business and relating to people in both organisations and individual community workers. It requires community workers to be involved and engaged in the programs and projects alongside members of the community. This reinforces reciprocal mutual relationships of engagement and trust building. It involves constant questioning and holding oneself accountability to the community you are working in. *Are we doing the right thing? Are we doing the thing right? If we don't have an answer what can we do?*

In strengths based ways of doing business there is also an acknowledgement by organisations like Inala Wangarra of the need for sustainability and acknowledging the limits of their capacity in what they can deliver. However they do not send community members away with no response when they do not have an answer. Instead they ask the question: *What can we do?* They attempt to use their resources, knowledge and experience to provide a constructive response.

COUNTING WHAT COUNTS REDEFINING SUCCESS

"I take the little wins in every situation because it can be a heavy weight on your shoulders if you're just continually looking at it in a negative light."
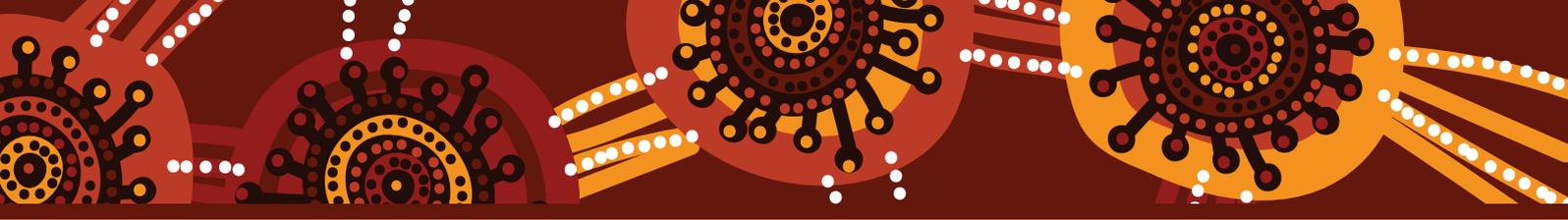- Community Worker

In dominant community development spaces the definition of 'success' is often tied to how many Key Performance Indicators ('KPIs') are met. These KPIs are often set by state and non-government funding bodies outside of the community. In SBCD approaches, success is redefined as not outcomes based but transformation. This transformation takes place within relationships, and often occurs when the community worker is transformed as much and perhaps more than the community itself. The SBCD worker does not give up when things go bad. They count the 'little wins', such as gaining the gradual respect and trust of community members and celebrating small positive steps taken by individuals.

The 'Most Significant Change' technique is often used to measure transformative success by letting community member-workers themselves tell stories to identify changes that were important to them and narrate the complex nature of how these changes were experienced. Measuring success this way allows strengths based workers to capture unintended positive consequences that often slip through in traditional program evaluation metrics. This method of quantifying success is a self-care strategy and a way to deal with challenges that inevitably appear in community work

STRENGTHS BASED PRACTICE

ADVICE TO COMMUNITY WORKERS!

FOR FOSTERING STRENGTHS BASED VALUES IN YOUR PRACTICE

1. Question your intentions for wanting to work in this space

2. Meet the community where it is at, go to where the community goes/wants to go.

3. Walk alongside community members and participate in programs.

4. Strengths based community development is a marathon not a sprint – change will be slow but worth it.

5. Develop trusting relationships built on respect

6. Learn and Listen

7. Be open to being changed

8. Self-care, especially if you are a community member-worker

9. Empower others

10. Use your innovation and creativity in addressing structural issues

11. Use your common sense

12. Always remember that the community are the ones who should make the decisions.
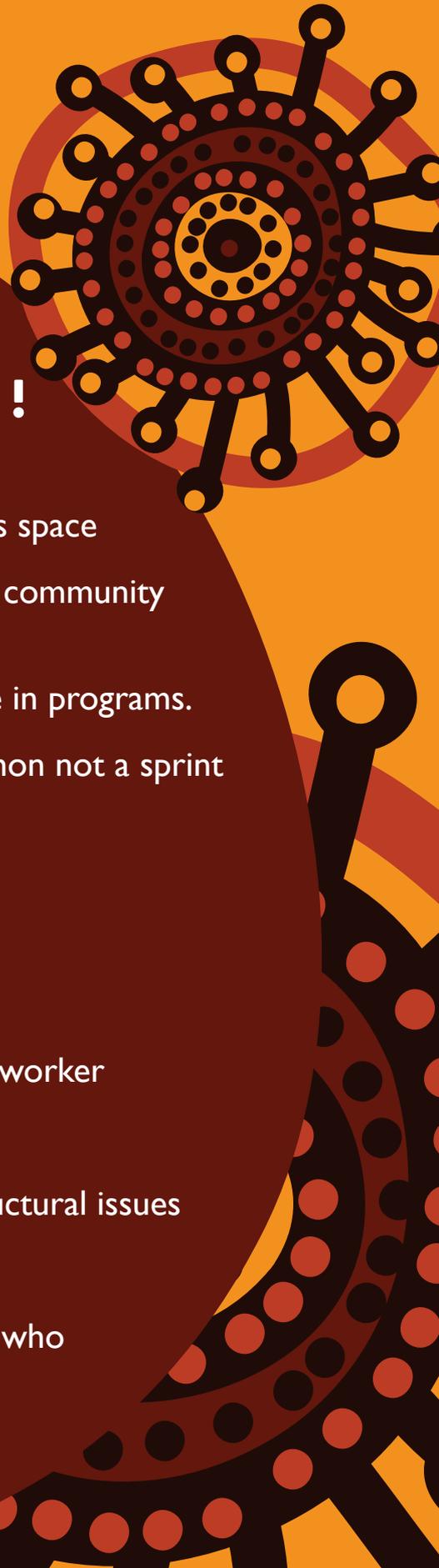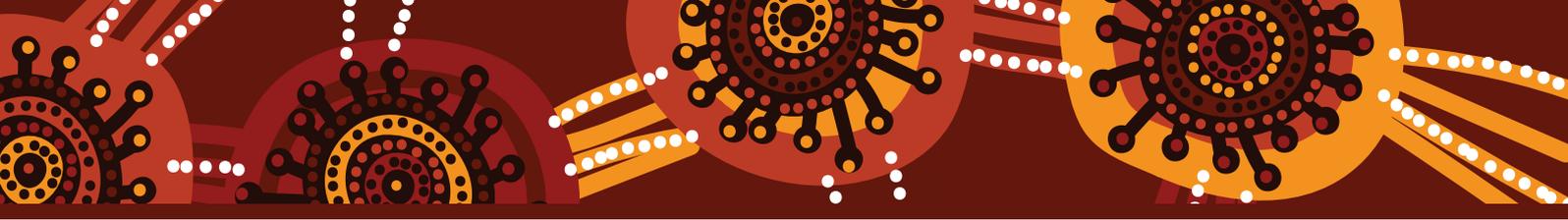
INSIDERS VS OUTSIDERS - COMMUNITY MEMBERS AS COMMUNITY WORKERS

"At the end of the day, you don't just go home." - Community Member-Worker

The distinction between community workers and members is blurred in a strengths based community development organisation like Inala Wangarra. Community workers who occupy dual roles as a member-worker cannot just pop in and out of their obligations, roles and responsibilities. They have to return back to the community they work in at the end of the day. They cannot just go home and switch off, as they will be held accountable to their families and communities. This contrasts with saviour models of community practice where drive in-drive out workers can get up and leave, retreating to their homes outside of the community once they are done or burnt out. A strengths based approach enables a community member-worker to navigate and negotiate the often difficult dual positions of insider/outsider. Strengths based community organisations acknowledge and allow community workers to still be community members. Value is placed on the importance of self-care and organisational support is provided. In practical terms this means allowing community member-workers to attend community events, take leave for sorry business and other family and cultural commitments, taking time to nurture the very relationships with which strengths based community organisations seek to engage.

However, there is a moral dilemma here. By virtue of occupying two spaces, the community member-worker is faced with the following question – *is it ethical to be profiting from the suffering of my own community?*

Inala Wangarra employees grapple with this question by employing local Indigenous people, paying it forward by upskilling staff and ensuring they move onto a career pathway, and doing what they can to work themselves out of a job. The objective of Inala Wangarra is that one day the community will not need them for the same type of programs and services addressing the same types of problems. Inala Wangarra expects its service delivery to change and adapt to the community changing.

EXTERNAL WORKERS AND AGENCIES IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

"I'm feeding off Inala. I'm giving back but what they're giving me is more valuable to me in my eyes to what I'm giving them because I'm learning every day. I'm learning more." - External Community Worker

There is an added onus on external community workers and agencies to acknowledge their deficit position when entering a particular Indigenous community. The external community worker or agency must be willing to listen and learn from the knowledge and expertise of local community members. They must understand that they will be gaining more from the community than what they will be able to give. There needs to be a shift away from 'saving' and a move towards *serving*. A similar moral dilemma faces the external community worker and agency in Indigenous communities - *Who is succeeding you? Who are you making space for? Are you allowing Indigenous capacity to come through or are you blocking local Indigenous expertise being recognised and valued?*

ADVICE TO EXTERNAL WORKERS!

"Be prepared and open yourself up to the idea of falling in love with this community. I think if you don't love a community, how can you even possibly achieve or work in a community." **- Community Worker**

1. Be clear of who you are

2. Position yourself

3. Listen & Learn

4. Be Genuine with your approach and intentions

5. Build trusting respectful relationships

6. Connect with local organisers, young people and Elders & finance their knowledge and expertise
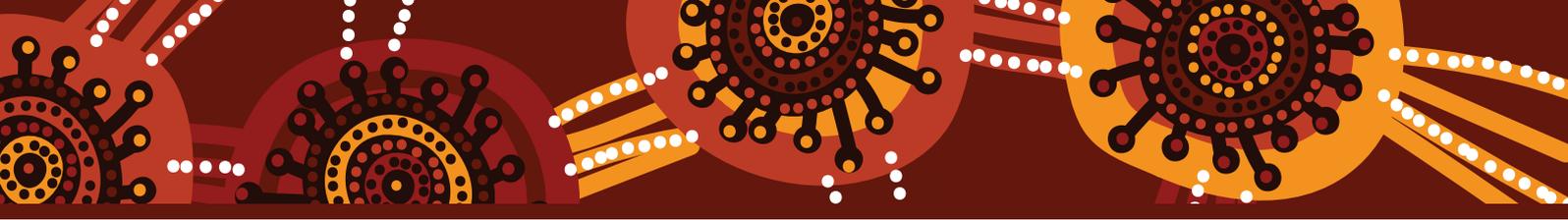
STRENGTH BASED CONFLICT RESOLUTION - DEALING WITH CONFLICT IN A COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

SBCD In Action: Learning From Conflict

A dissatisfaction expressed by a community member over an employment opportunity with Inala Wangarra subjected the Board and staff to ongoing experiences of abuse, harassment and slander. This led to the rejection of membership applications from the complainant and a close relative who also engaged in the same behaviour. Both individuals threatened to 'take over' the organisation and tried to enlist the support of other community members to step in to 'roll the Board'.

Inala Wangarra convened a special general meeting to enable the complainants to appeal their membership rejection and ensure that community members had their say. The membership did have their say and voted unanimously to uphold the Board's decision.

Inala Wangarra's organisational governance provides a robust model for community management with at least 8 -12 different family groups from the community. Attempts to destabilise the organisation because of personal grievances became more difficult. Rather than prevent community members from having a role in their local organisations, this model ensured greater accountability to the broader community rather than vested interests of more outspoken individuals or families. Learning from the conflict, Inala Wangarra also took steps to hire a media officer so that the community were aware of who they were and informed of what they did on a regular basis.

The central tenet in dealing with conflict in a strengths based organisation is to trust that the community can ultimately resolve it. The community are the ones ultimately in charge of making decisions for themselves. Conflict should not be dismissed as a sign of dysfunction and 'black politics'. Through a strengths based lens, conflict is a sign that the community cares about the issues in question and is seeking to hold community workers accountable to programs and services that impact their daily lives.

The role of the strengths based organisation and worker is to not become defensive or ignore the conflict. Rather they should be held accountable, provide a platform and listen to what the community has to say. Being open and transparent and honouring each other's dignity, especially when it is difficult to do so, fosters respect between the community organisation and community members and facilitates avenues for mutual conflict resolution. This is a reflective approach to conflict resolution. It requires the community organisation to ask - *What is the core grievance this person is trying to say? What is the underlying motive or concern? How can we use this conflict as a learning opportunity to strengthen our practice?*
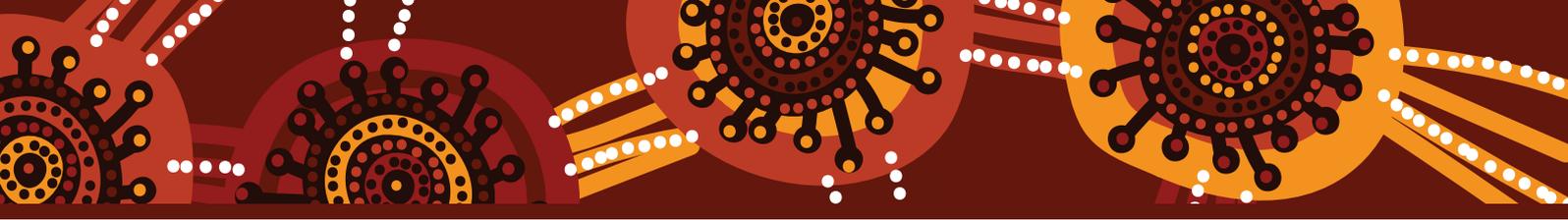
HOW TO WRITE A GRANT APPLICATION WITHOUT ADOPTING DEFICIT DISCOURSE

Adopting strengths based language to require needs based funding can be a challenge. Instrumental funding bodies continue to force community organisations to adopt deficit and needs based discourses in grant applications. This presents a challenge to the strengths based community worker as it requires repeating the shortcomings and inadequacies of the community they wish to advocate for by demonstrating the greatest need. Inala Wangarra navigates this challenge by focusing on the structural service gaps rather than pathologising peoples and communities. A clear line is drawn from the service gap to what the problem actually is, disentangling the problem from the individual or community.

SBCD in Action:
Inala Wangarra's grant application for the Strong Indigenous Tiddaz program

The Strong Indigenous Tiddaz (SIT) program aims to provide opportunities in Inala for Indigenous women who are the sole providers and carers for their children. It is Inala Wangarra's intention, through SIT, to facilitate access to support, self-care and healing services, intergenerational relationship building and cultural education for Indigenous women. The SIT program has been developed based on Wangarra's community knowledge and intrinsic understanding of the pressures that our women could encounter on a daily basis. These include the financial, emotional, spiritual and physical challenges of being the sole providers for their families. The assumption that women are the sole providers in families also derives from statistical data which states that 39.2% of Indigenous households in Inala are occupied by one parent families. In comparison, the same indicator in the Greater Brisbane suggests only 27% of households are sole parent families *(Queensland Regional Profiles: Indigenous Profile – Queensland Treasury)*. Additionally, with the recent Sorry Business of 18 attempts of suicide of young people in the past 4 weeks, Wangarra recognises a gap in services for our women. These gaps are further highlighted when mapping the current mainstream services in Inala and their core business. **While there are many services, none of them provide holistic and culturally safe access and support to Indigenous women** but rather, focus on youth or individualised barriers such as health, education or employment. SIT will be positioned as a social and emotional wellbeing service that focuses on the whole woman, her strengths, her needs and her potential.

Further Reading

Hollinsworth, D. (1996) Community development in Indigenous Australia: self-determination or indirect rule? *Community Development Journal, 31(2),* 114-125

Kenny, S. (1996) Contestations of community development in Australia. *Community Development Journal 31(2), 104-112*
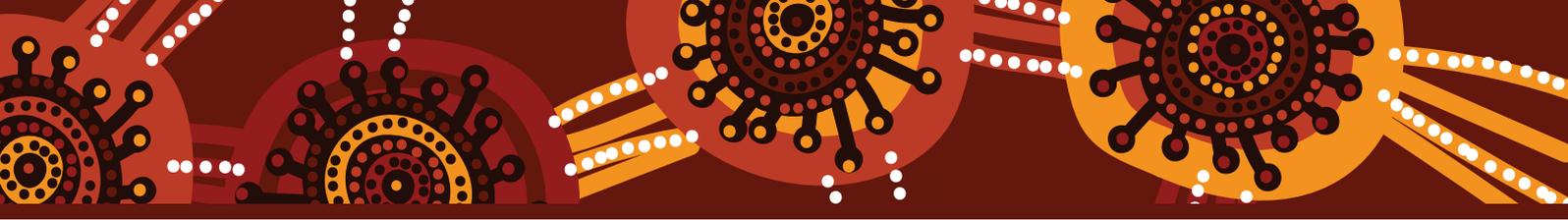
STRENGTHS BASED LEADERSHIP - IT TAKES CAPACITY TO BUILD CAPACITY.

How people are managed in Inala Wangarra is unique. Inala Wangarra believe that staff reflect who you are. The care and wellbeing of community workers is prioritised by management. Constant check ins with staff especially when they are seen struggling, conversations around self-care, pushing for more processes and performance management systems to ensure workers do not burn out are all essential to fostering a strengths based culture in the organisation.

A strengths based approach is not just something that is 'done' on community members. This approach to organisational culture and management benefits the wellbeing and growth of community workers too.

GLOSSARY

'Capacity Building'

A term widely used in social policy and community services in relation to Indigenous communities. The term is contradictory, as it contains within it the assumption that a community lacks capacity. It is a term often used without specification and defaults to capacity-limiting perceptions of Indigenous communities, reinforcing 'saviour' and 'helpless' narratives.

'Clients' vs Community Members

The term 'client' often represents s a passive object. 'Clients' are to be acted upon, they are consumers rather than producers of services and social change. On the other hand, community members are change makers they are active, co-producers and co-designers of programs and services.

Culture

Culture is defined by the community. It is a dynamic, constantly evolving, contested process of co-creation and rearticulation. It encompasses a way of life, customs, beliefs, attitudes and worldviews. It is not static or frozen in time. Narrow perceptions of 'authentic' or 'traditional' culture can be racist and harmful.

Hymba Yumba

A unique Prep to Year 12 independent school grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, situated in Springfield, Queensland. It focuses on building strong and proud Indigenous identities and nurturing a supportive school environment.

Inala Elders

An organisation focused on the needs of the older Indigenous population in the Inala region. The Inala Elders actively engage and co-design local, state and general projects and programs.

Jarjums

Common Aboriginal word meaning 'children'.

Reflexivity

Reflexive practice is a necessary element in strengths based community development practice. It requires community workers to move beyond their feelings and begin to interrogate their own values and assumptions underpinning their practice. It calls on the community worker to not do their identity work through their community development work.

Murri Court

This program aims to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members with advice and support to help them navigate the justice system. It is funded through the Department of Justice and Attorney General, and works in collaboration with other local services to address issues of law and order from a community perspective.

Naree Wandima

A community driven program focused supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members impacted by drug and alcohol abuse. It is funded through a partnership with the Institute of Urban Indigenous Health and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service.

About The Artwork

This artwork represents people coming together, supporting one another, then linking and branching out into the wider communities, sharing their power of knowledge.

Artist/Designer: Casey Coolwell

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