

Incorporating Indigenous Interests.....

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Session started with opportunity to continue conversation with Nanikiya Munungurritj, then moved onto exploring the practical and emotional issues of embracing indigenous interests on non-indigenous lands.

In order to explore barriers and feelings to 'incorporating indigenous values, we shifted our 'shoes' and focussed our 'style of thinking'. We stepped into the shoes of non-indigenous land owners and/or land managers (eg private, local government, Conservation Reserves, Water Reserves, leasehold) and borrowed two of Edward De Bono's Six Hats to untangle our thinking.

Firstly: from our **Indigo Thinking Hat** which represents gloom and negativity, which we wear when we are looking at the down side of issues, when we are thinking why something cannot be done or what could go wrong....

What could go wrong with incorporating indigenous interests on the land we own/manage?

- our place might get burnt-out or damaged
- traditional white users (eg of National Parks & Conservation Reserves) may not like indigenous people and see their influence in management inappropriate
- might not know the right/appropriate people with whom to start a connection with, or whom to ask advice on how to link with indigenous custodians
- could make dreadful faux pas (and thus deeply offend the very group we wished to work with)
- agreements might be short term, and commitment may not be followed through
- negotiation may be lengthy with huge associated costs
- people might injure themselves or property - liability issue - who will be on my property, what liability do I have?
- property management may not be respected, eg gates might be left open, waterholes destroyed and thus stock lost and my income and/or land affected
- they might pinch something
- I might lose control
- my neighbours – what will they think? How will their response affect my position in community?
- as a 3rd party in the process linking indigenous groups with land owner/manager – when things go wrong how will I handle the situation
- will it all need to be underpinned by legality
- the public perception of 'good conservation management' may be destroyed if we embrace indigenous links and practises
- the indigenous group may want to re-initiate hunting rights and ceremonies...the conservation and archaeological/cultural aspects of the area could be degraded? (ie what gives this Reserve we manage its specialness)

Secondly: from our **Yellow Thinking Hat** which represents positivity, which we wear when we take an optimistic, positive, hopeful view of the situation

What could be the positives of incorporating indigenous interests on the land we own/manage?

- real involvement with indigenous people
- a bridge to reconciliation
- a way of healing the land and the people
- a more complete ecological sustainability
- conservation of biodiversity
- an opportunity for knowing new people and starting new relationships
- a change in our interactions
- a better value of our fauna
- sharing or enrichment of knowing the land eg cultural use of animals, how to cook wallaby
- improving the potential for sustainable land management
- an opening up new markets for selling property (ie with a more rounded cultural, landscape and nature conservation)
- the potential for land holders/land managers seeing new set of values in the land
- the untapped advantages of allowing for even greater diversity on the land (eg joint cultural tourism) which could then contribute to managing the nature conservation aspects
- a strong tie in with Native Title Agreement
- ensure site protection through embracing an understanding of the indigenous links to these sites
- international recognition for positive action (eg United Nations)
- opportunity to embrace the spiritual experience of the land which has been lost in many areas – with non-indigenous community being more involved.
- more caretakers and custodians for the land may emerge
- a better understanding and embracing of indigenous links to land and reading of the land may bring a halt to how in urban areas we are constantly reconstructing European world and obliterating 'Australia'

Continued overleaf

We then moved to looking at the barriers which stopped us from being able to embrace the positives of knowing and incorporating indigenous values on properties

Key barriers included fear

- fear of the unknown
- fear of loss
- fear of our land being taken out of our control
- fear of offending.

From here the participants worked in smaller groups to look at **key barriers** and suggested **some strategies to work through these...**

BARRIERS	STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ length of time it takes to establish a dialogue ▪ actually making the effort – it’s scary ▪ fear of stuffing up ▪ current lack of interaction with indigenous community, thus a fear and ignorance of them and what their wishes are for involvement in the land 	Find the right people – so start with contacting the local aboriginal community and asking ‘whom should I be linking with?’
	Be flexible – meeting at their convenience, in their place and be tolerant --allow enough time.
	Find out what’s in it for them?
	Develop the cultural contact – start by sharing stories (eg of the land) – share similarities rather than differences
	Find the common denominator
	Recognise Nationhood and associated language – help to make this mainstream (eg aboriginal language as part of school curricula)

BARRIERS	STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ differences in ‘quality of life’ ▪ multiple use of the land ▪ involving young people ▪ attitude – not knowing or not wanting to know ▪ fear of difference ▪ fear of what can go wrong ▪ fear of being dominated again by landowner/boss ▪ difficulty in doing things different ways ▪ connections to the land eg whether we live off the land, or whether we use the land for exports + then live off imports 	Initiating social interactions – start gently – eg lots of bbqs (in northwest could share bbqed goat and stories)
	Establish and support the ‘green corps team model’ for ‘Land and Community Renovation’ which would include indigenous and non-indigenous elders and youth - giving a strong value to respect for knowledge of land and developing a pride in being part of this caring for land

BARRIERS	STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS
Ignorance and Fear – as elements of racism	Develop Regional responses, thus work with the more relevant issues, concerns, knowledge
	Education – long term (and a particular focus on young)
	Encourage/enable cultural interaction – eg through centres and tours
	Share success stories – thus breaking down fears

	“Get Johnny across the bridge” – thus demonstrating national leadership in this area
Entrenched systems and beliefs	See above...as similar strategies appropriate
Entrenched systems and beliefs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ land management 	Cooperative management
Entrenched systems and beliefs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ legal 	National Treaty New form of Native Title Changes to CALM Act (WA)
Entrenched systems and beliefs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ education (history + language predominantly from invaders perspective) 	Significant changes required to tell all the story and to support the learning and use of Aboriginal language
Entrenched systems and beliefs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cost of change 	Significant funds required
Entrenched systems and beliefs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ownership of land and resources (control mentality) 	Raise awareness of what land ownership gives – ie doesn't give total rights and choice Move towards more co-operative ownership and use of the land
Entrenched systems and beliefs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ arrogance 	Long term social change needed

BARRIERS	STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ fear ▪ time prioritisation ▪ who are the right people (lack of confidence) ▪ politicised situations ▪ lack of trust ▪ levels of suspicion ▪ few NGOs employ indigenous staff 	Responsibility of everybody ..having a protocol to ensure even better interactions and thus development of connections, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ having patience ▪ being honest ▪ being transparent ▪ showing respect ▪ listening ▪ asking ▪ building trust

Finally, though it is hard to refine all this thinking as well as the conversations around this issue, three key highlights of the ‘incorporating indigenous interests workshop’ were:

- ✓ **the opportunity to talk about this sensitive issue**
- ✓ **the realisation that fear and ignorance are the biggest barriers...stemming largely from lack of interaction**
- ✓ **the teasing out of positive and practical strategies to improve the embracing of indigenous values and interests on all land.**