

Identifying Training Needs to Improve Indigenous Community Representatives Input into Environmental Resource Management Consultative Processes: A case study of the Bundjalung Nation

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Abstract

Despite increased engagement of Indigenous representatives as participants on consultative panels charged with processes of natural resource management, concerns have been raised by both Indigenous representatives and management agencies regarding the ability of Indigenous people to have quality input into the decisions these processes produce. In order to determine how to more effectively engage Australian Aboriginal peoples in the management process, this article describes the results of interviews with Elders of the Bundjalung Nation and other community representatives who represent their community's interests on natural resource management boards within their traditional country. Community representatives identified the factors they considered important in understanding natural resource management and administrative processes and where training would enable them to make a significant contribution to the consultation process. It also highlighted a need for non-Indigenous managers to gain a greater understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems and protocols.

Introduction

Federal, State and Local governments of many developed nations are increasingly engaging the community in a myriad of planning and management activities to help make decisions about environmental priorities (Perhac, 1998; WCED, 1997; Stern 1996). Underlying the trend toward support for greater involvement is a recognition that environmental decisions are "political" as well as scientific. Resolving environmental problems requires addressing the perceptions, interests and values of the community (Stern, 1996). Some interest groups have raised the concern that community engagement is shifting the emphasis of environmental decision-making too far in the political direction, sacrificing the quality of decisions in pursuit of political expediency (Yosie, 1998; Hamilton, 1999). Yet for communities and locally based

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interest groups the processes may be deemed to have many purposes beyond making decisions (Fiorino, 1990; Beierle, 1999). This might include capacity building and social learning, conflict resolution, and networking among members (Perhac, 1996). For some commentators, the process is more important than the actual input, as involvement in the processes can help rebuild communities, and initiate the poor and powerless into the mainstream (Burke, 1968; Fourmile, 1997, p. 623). Marcia Langton summed this view up with her 1995 report to a national conference on biodiversity management where she said, "Effective management of this land mass and adjoining coastal and marine areas and the resource wealth they contain, constitutes a significant and urgent challenge for the nation. At the same time it provides a significant opportunity for the development of an enduring indigenous economic base and an end to Aboriginal welfare dependency" (Langton, 1995, p. 622).

Such a process is effective when participants share common "world views". However, when different world views collide, problems can occur. Reasons for failures of participation in programs often reside in the failure to establish common expectations and agreed goals. Many processes fail to take into account community and stakeholder groups pre-existing schema (Alba, 1983) or expectations, their abilities to influence outcomes, their roles in the final decision-making process and the expectation of what can be reasonably achieved.

Schema is a generic term for a variety of memory structures that lead people to expect to see or experience certain things in certain settings (e.g., water conservation means building a dam to an engineer, while to a horticulturalist it may mean using water efficient appliances). Schema theory confirms that people often fail to notice anomalous information (Kardash, 1988), implicitly substituting what they believe is correct, such as responding to the information they believe they have read rather than to the actual information before them (Reder, 1991; Kamas, 1996). Schematic knowledge has a significant effect on organisation of ambiguous or disorganised stories. In complex social interactions people employ complex sequences of behaviour with a type of schema called a script, such as a meeting script, parent script or supervisor script (Bower, 1979). Scripts allow interactions to unfold almost automatically, facilitating social behaviours. Unfortunately when schematic processing is engaged, people are more influenced by what they expect to see or hear than by what actually exists in the environment (Smith, 1998). Thus, if the schema is appropriate for the setting, events unfold smoothly. However, if the schema is inappropriate or contrary to the setting's rules, problems can occur.

Rarely are two such different schemas brought together as occurs in the case with the knowledge systems of Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities (Lloyd, 1996). Studies indicate that Australia's Aboriginal people have inhabited the land for over 60,000 years (Toyne, 1991). During this history, traditional knowledge systems have developed, emphasising the unity and symbolism of people and nature, that governs the way Aboriginal people conduct themselves and manage the environment (Harris, 1990; Wolfe, 1991). Aboriginal ecological knowledge is based on generations of accumulated knowledge as well as the detailed knowledge of the genesis of all things defined by the stories (Wolfe, 1991). What Aboriginal people know to be true about the land and its aspects is derived from practical experience as well as the scripts generated by their religion and ceremonial training. The resulting close links with country combined with keen observation skills, provide many Aboriginal people with important insight into the ecology of an area from a notably different perspective to that of a scientist or non-Aboriginal land manager (Ghmire, 1997; Baker, 1992).

The value of Aboriginal belief systems and spiritual and related thinking, extending to patterns of resource use and management, is being increasingly recognised (Tindale,

1974; Baker, 1992; Alderson, 1997), and over the last twenty years there has been considerable effort employed in the development of consultative processes and collection of traditional information to involve affected communities and relevant stakeholders in the management of natural resources, with Aboriginal representation on advisory committees existing as the predominate technique (Morgan, 1998; The Review Steering Committee, 1998; Banerjee, 2000). It is widely accepted that optimal environmental protection will only arise through a collaboration of western science and Indigenous knowledge systems (Worboys, 2001).

Despite relatively recent recognition of the value of traditional knowledge systems and increasing attempts at co-management, there persists a lack of acceptance and integration of traditional and non-traditional Indigenous information into current decision-making processes specifically concerning environmental resource management. Attempts so far have been primarily concerned with protected areas, focussing on boundaries and levels of protection (Lloyd, 2002). Traditional Aboriginal knowledge describing ecological food chains and human protocols of respect, along with modern Indigenous knowledge systems of this century, are ineffectively conveyed to individuals of other cultures (Everett, 1997). Also, generally little effort has been made to incorporate such knowledge into day-to-day management strategies of western-based environmental resource management (Libesman, 1995; Birch, 1996; Dermot Smyth, 1996). Valuable Indigenous input is often overlooked due to differing "world views" (or schema) which impact on their communication and negotiation success with various government and nongovernmental organisations (Walker, 2002).

Linked to the moral imperative to involve Aboriginal communities in natural resource management, is the legislative requirement to now do so. Of particular significance in terms of land rights is the Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth), arising from Mabo and Wik decisions in support of the strong connection between protected area management, Aboriginal self determination and cultural survival (The Review Steering Committee, 1998). Traditional Laws and customs of Aboriginal people are recognised under the Act, and rights in reference to these interests are acknowledged accordingly (Worboys, 2001). In New South Wales, the Land Rights Act is similarly supportive of the Native Title Act in a statutory land management role (Altman 1993). More recently, legislation relating to intellectual cultural property rights has also been enacted (Fourmile, 1997, p. 623).

A number of other government initiatives and strategies have also helped to focus greater attention to Aboriginal issues and, in some cases, precipitate change. In June 1992, all governments indicated support for most of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, notably Recommendation 314 and Recommendation 315. Recommendation 314 concerns involving notification, consultation, and negotiation between government representatives and Aboriginal groups affected by a major proposal for a mining or tourism development. Recommendation 315 provides a set of 10 principles aimed specifically at advancing the protection and preservation of the rights and interests of Aboriginal people who have cultural, historical, and traditional association with national parks. In addition, governments have agreed to ensure "full participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in community progress towards ESD" (Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC), 2002).

Lack of meaningful involvement in land management can be attributed to a variety of factors predominantly related to inadequate western-based education and limited skills acquisition. In this regard, Morgan & Slade (Morgan, 1998) cite a general inability to accommodate philosophical and cultural differences within education processes as the primary downfall. It is well understood that Aboriginal

connection with the land is mythologically and spiritually strong. However, to benefit from institutional education and succeed in acquiring managerial positions within western-based resource management structures, Aboriginal students find that they must participate in processes of knowledge acquisition and assessment that differ profoundly from the more holistic, contextual processes they have learnt and continue to use within their own community, and with which they are more familiar (Morgan, 1998). From an Aboriginal perspective, a general poor understanding of western-based knowledge systems is regarded as a severe disadvantage when confronted with dominant European management structures and decision-making processes (Walker, 2002).

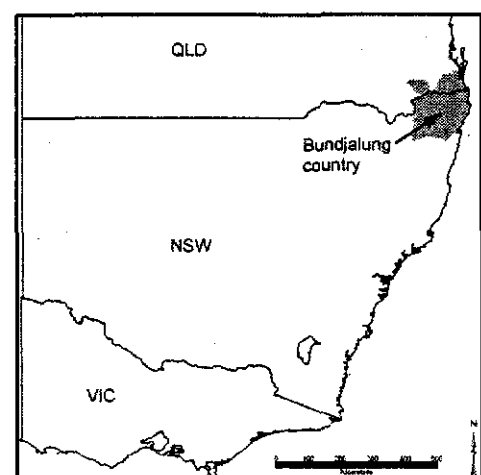
Rationale for this Study

This study was undertaken to address the need for western-based skill development amongst the Bundjalung people, in recognition that current education practices do not adequately accommodate the requirements of Indigenous Australians, nor equip them with necessary skills in order to provide meaningful input into existing environmental resource management structures. Adopting techniques and training that are sympathetic to Indigenous needs, has an effect of empowering Indigenous minority groups who are otherwise segregated and disadvantaged on the basis of cultural and philosophical differences (Sagie, 2000). Training for empowerment and capacity building translates to increased recognition and respect and increased control in decision-making processes. Furthermore and in terms of Indigenous input into environmental resource management, traditional information will be better conveyed within the dominant western-based structures (Marilee, 1995). Education and training is regarded as instrumental in improving relations and achieving co-operative outcomes – provided training is well suited to the intended participants (Drummond, 1991). An accurate assessment of training needs is therefore essential. By identifying current shortfalls or problems, training can facilitate improvement in knowledge, skills or attitudes of individuals or groups. Conducting a training needs analysis is a positive step towards ensuring the training is both necessary and meets a detected need.

Location

Indigenous Bundjalung people are the original inhabitants of the Northern Rivers Region of far northeastern New South Wales. The Bundjalung Nation comprises about ten tribal subdivisions, covering an area stretching from the Logan River in the north, to the Clarence River in the south, and from the coast west to Warwick and Tenterfield (Alcorn, 1993) (Fig. 1). The assumed total area occupied by the Bundjalung people is approximately 6000sq km, and at the turn of the 20th century, the population of the Bundjalung Nation was estimated at between 300-600 people (Tindale, 1974).

Today, the Bundjalung people remain a large and important Aboriginal group whose Elders, story and song keepers have maintained knowledge of traditional customs and language. Australian Bureau of Statistics report greater than 1000 Indigenous people (including Torres Strait Islander people) residing within the region, at least half of whom are presumed to be



(Source: Greg Luker, Southern Cross University)

FIGURE 1: The Study Area:
Bundjalung Boundaries

of Bundjalung origin (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996). It is interesting to note that the Bundjalung language has been adopted by many other Aboriginal people throughout Australia whose languages have been lost.

Methodology

The nature of this study required qualitative research methods to be employed. Research was based on the key informant approach consistent with action research techniques, whereby emphasis was placed on understanding and interpreting people's words, actions and records, in the manner outlined by Maykut & Morehouse (1994). Contrary to traditional scientific methodology, exemplars rather than replicates were used in order to record the human element associated with Bundjalung perceptions of deficiencies in their involvement within current western-based resource management structures. Background information was primarily derived through literature review, internet research and personal communication. An understanding of existing mechanisms for Aboriginal involvement within western-based environmental resource management consultative structures including government obligations and responsibilities, and perspectives of Aboriginal people, was required to establish a benchmark for adult education and training programs that may be undertaken at a later date. Underlying philosophical and educational constraints of Aboriginal people, and associated mechanisms of empowerment, were also examined to gain a broader understanding of the problem at hand. In addition, the function and benefits of action research were thoroughly explored as they form the basis of the methodology for this study.

In using action research techniques to identify requirements of Bundjalung Nation representatives involved in environmental resource management, and to undertake a training needs analysis, four methods of data collection were used:

1. Informal telephone interviews;
2. Informal face-to-face consultation;
3. Rigorous observation; and
4. Feedback to focus groups involving Elders

Eleven Bundjalung key informants (with backgrounds in resource management and advisory committee representation) were targeted for individual interviews, and over forty other community members were opportunistically targeted as part of focus group meetings to verify the assumptions derived from interviews. The approach for the unstructured interviews involved purposeful consultation: that is, questions and active listening in order to gain a more complete understanding of deep-seated concerns (Maykut & Moorehouse, 1994; Wengraf, 2001). Due to the sensitivity of interviewees to taped interviews, transcripts were limited to hand note-taking only, and thus only key issues have been extracted.

Results

A number of common perceived values and threats were identified in relation to both Indigenous perceptions of deficiencies in western-based natural resource consultation processes, and their perceptions of their respondents' weaknesses such as education and background when engaging in the management process. Primary concerns, in terms of necessary skills and rating of relative degree of importance and/or accomplishment (either directly stated or inferred), are outlined in Table 1, as part of the training needs assessment. Table 1 is a summary of the authors' interpretation of importance and accomplishment ratings (obtained from extensive consultation and observation at the grass roots level), as respondents were not asked to directly rate concerns.

Responses from Key Informant Interviews

By tabulating data and responses, distinct patterns, weightings and relationships emerge that are useful in reducing bias and thus developing a training program that accommodates the needs of the wider Bundjalung community. However, in keeping with qualitative research principles and effective analysis of ever changing conditions and circumstances, a more powerful tool for appropriate program development lies in the recognition of personal opinions and attitudes.

High priority and concern from all respondents was allocated to understanding legislative and policy related issues, especially those that concern Aboriginal people.

TABLE 1: Skill Requirements of Bundjalung Respondents: Importance and Accomplishment Ratings

SKILL REQUIREMENT	RATING OF RELATIVE IMPORTANCE (Number of Respondents)			RATING OF PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT (Number of Respondents)		
	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low
'Big Picture' – understanding legislation / policy (system hierarchy)	11			5	1	5
Understanding decision-making processes	9	2		5	3	3
Understanding regulations and legislative provisions / exceptions for Indigenous people	11			4	3	4
Understanding funding (application / acceptance) procedures	8	3		3	1	7
Plan and policy development and execution	7	4		3	1	7
Role of committees	4	7		4	3	4
Understanding protocols for natural resource managers	7	4		3		8
Understanding scientific and legislative jargon	3	4	4	2	1	8
Dealing with authority	5	4	2	4	2	4
Meeting procedures (e.g. taking minutes)	3	5	3	4	4	2
Document and seminar presentation	3	6	2	5	3	3
Communication and negotiation (assertiveness / confidence)	9	2		2	4	5
Conflict resolution	3	5	3	1	2	8
Understanding market forces	2	1	8	3	2	6
Understanding basic systems concepts of Western-based environmental science	10	1		3	1	7
Understanding human impacts on natural resources	8	3		3	1	7
Understanding environmental management techniques	8	3		3	1	7
Understanding Indigenous management techniques and their role in western-based processes	7	4		2	2	7

In reference to the legal system as a “tool” for management and change. For example, Key Informant #3 observed that “Aboriginal people do not have tools. Aboriginal people do not use modern tools in society - we think we can use old tools”. This informant also noted that “Aboriginal people need to know the rules of the game”. A general feeling of frustration and disillusionment was evident, with the same informant noting that “Aboriginal people are not in control. They don’t manage their culture. They’re not managers, controllers or owners – only clients or recipients”, and another claiming that “We are fighting a system from the outside” (Key Informant #7).

In terms of providing meaningful input, Informant #6 stated that “Aboriginal people get caught up in processes – we don’t know what we’re getting into and how much of our information will actually be absorbed”. In particular, legislation relating to land ownership and control was identified as being significant “When we talk about a bit of land – who owns it?” (Key Informant #5).

An understanding of resource science and basic skills concepts is also favoured as being of high importance, along with a thorough understanding of human related impacts, mitigation and solutions. In reference to the opening of Belongil Creek (at Byron Bay) to the ocean, for example, Informant #5 commented that it is “easy for us to say open it up – but we don’t know the implications”, while in reference to building a bridge over a creek, the same informant noted that “all the time something goes wrong and the sand builds up in the creek, then someone explains that this is what happened ... we need to know these things”.

In addition to impacts, identifying western-based land values was determined to be of equal importance: “We don’t know what’s there. We want to know what needs protecting, and what has good value” (Key Informant #1). Informant #3, referring to Indigenous people’s limited understanding of western scientific knowledge as being detrimental to maintaining a sound reputation amongst non-Indigenous Australians (as evidenced by the respondents use of the term “Black Magic” to describe traditional knowledge), commented “It’s important to make connections with science and biodiversity because Aboriginal people are often seen as wanting to hold onto black-magic”.

It is also interesting to note that in a course tailored to improve Indigenous input into Western-based resource management processes, a high level of concern among respondents was given to understanding government agencies processes of identification, control and management of culturally significant areas within existing management systems. “You’d think (that Aboriginal people would have knowledge of Indigenous practices and culturally sacred sites), but no” says Informant #9, “No way! Most of them blokes have no idea and this is a major problem”. Informant #4 is concerned that “there is Aboriginal people on regeneration and dune care groups, but some fellas have no experience in finding Aboriginal sites – it’s disastrous”.

Committee procedures and protocols for natural resource management are also highlighted as being of widespread concern. Again, a feeling of frustration pervades, with Informant #2 and #1, respectively, commenting that “committees don’t check what fellas want in the first place. Aboriginal people want to know how committees will affect them”, and that “it’s too confusing, we don’t know what has to be done. So much paperwork but what does it all mean?”. Frustration is combined with a lack of perceived power, self-confidence or assertiveness, with comments such as the following reflecting this: “Sometimes I don’t feel comfortable when I go in there (environmental resource management related meetings), I feel like I’m going to say something wrong” (Key Informant #5). Informants suggest that procedures need to be simplified and clearly explained, with Informant #3 exposing a key problem: “I get lost in the technical talk”.

Discussion

Empowerment

In analysing the responses and attitudes of Bundjalung study participants, it becomes apparent that results obtained were more or less consistent with sentiments expressed elsewhere in the “White” literature. Limited input into environmental resource management consultative processes appears to be largely a function of Indigenous disempowerment and exclusion from present “White” decision making processes, on the basis of cultural differences and education disadvantages. Responses of participants highlighted a deep-seated disillusionment with power relationships and the status of Aboriginal involvement, dictated by a frequently oppressive “White” system. The remark of Key Informant #1 effectively verbalises what many respondents conveyed in expression and tone: “Aboriginal people are not in control. They don’t manage their culture. They’re not managers, controllers or owners – only clients and recipients”. Feelings of exclusion and inequality were evident in the responses of all participants, frustrated with present constraints that limit recognition, involvement, choice and control within management structures. Key Informants #7’s reiterated statement typifies this common sentiment: “We are fighting a system from the outside”.

The struggle for equality and empowerment is felt by Aboriginal people to be deeply rooted in cultural and philosophical differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous values, in which the former are considered secondary. The Aboriginal schema is frequently misunderstood by the “White” majority, and Indigenous people feel they have to justify beliefs to gain recognition and respect. Key Informant #3 effectively expresses his reluctance in using his own Indigenous knowledge and value systems, instead trying to argue a “White” paradigm of biodiversity, in discussions on managing “his country” when he says, “it’s important to make connections with science and biodiversity because Aboriginal people are often seen as wanting to hold onto “black-magic”. This indicates that a lack of mutual respect or understanding of the schema between the two cultures prevents communication and appreciation of the others system of knowing, thereby resulting in conflict situations where, within a European dominated system, Indigenous viewpoints emerge as inferior.

The result for the less dominant group in this situation is disempowerment. As it stands, Aboriginal people feel as though their input and involvement within environmental resource management consultative structures is merely tokenistic, and in many cases involuntary, to meet recent legislative requirements and State and Local Government demands. Consistent with Shailor (Shailor 1994), forcing Indigenous people to participate in “White” structures without adequate explanation and instruction is detrimental rather than beneficial to equitable management and intercultural relations. Empowerment is not facilitated and Aboriginal participants are not meaningfully involved. Indigenous community members are unsure of the system and therefore reluctant to participate for fear of information being ignored or misused: “Aboriginal people get caught up in processes – we don’t know what we’re getting into and how much of our information will actually be absorbed” (Key Informant #6).

Education

The results also draw attention to significant concern and frustration with specific “White” environmental resource management processes, and consistent with the literature review, education is at the forefront. Major concerns of respondents lie with deficiencies in legislative knowledge, “White” concepts of resource science and management, committee procedures and protocols, and presentation and communication skills.

Legislation

An understanding of legislative systems was deemed to be of high importance (Table 1), with particular regard for competency in understanding regulations and legislative provisions and exceptions that involve Indigenous people. Whilst the importance of understanding the system is recognised (in order to achieve progress and instigate change), personal accomplishment ratings (i.e., how the respondent rated their own abilities) were reasonably low. Even those respondents who had been employed in positions relating to resource management for a number of years, often in positions of authority (thereby explaining some high rates of personal accomplishment), still recognised the importance and relevance of understanding the legislative system to mainstream Indigenous people. In a domain where resource management is predominantly a land rights issue (The Review Steering Committee 1998), it is inherently important that Aboriginal people know the “rules of the game”. Legislation relating to Native Title, Aboriginal Land Rights Act, and the Crown Land Act were noted as being particularly pertinent.

Concepts of Resource Science and Management

Understanding basic system concepts of western-based resource science were also determined to be of high importance, with difficulties and disadvantages once again expressed as a function of difference in worldview. Where relying purely on traditional knowledge may have been appropriate for environmental resource management prior to “White” colonisation, it is recognised by Aboriginal people that traditional knowledge systems are often ill-suited to contemporary management structures, and training in “White” scientific concepts is certainly necessary. Table 1 illustrates that the majority of respondents had a relatively poor (low) understanding of such concepts, yet recognised the worth of incorporating them into the proposed training program. An undercurrent of frustration is also apparent in Indigenous ignorance of western science in that Aboriginal people feel disadvantaged where decision-making and valuation of land rely on European techniques of assessment. Again, empowerment is an issue as Indigenous people feel they are relatively uninformed: “We don’t know what’s there. We want to know what needs protecting, and what has good value” (Key Informant #1).

Considering the notion of empowerment through knowledge and education (Sagie 2000), training of Indigenous people in traditional practices and identification of artefacts and sites would assist in cultural enrichment and increase individual’s and communities’ self esteem through the broader communities’ recognition of their custodial role of their cultural heritage. Not only is provision of western-based knowledge and scientific concepts effective in empowering oppressed groups, but affirmation of Indigenous knowledge is likely to have the same effect. By acknowledging differing knowledge and belief systems co-operation and empowerment are likely to result (Ristock, 1996).

Committee Procedures and Protocols

Confidence in committee procedures and protocols was another area noted by participants as being of primary concern. Competence in what are perhaps considered by non-Indigenous resource managers to be fundamental skills in “White” managers (e.g. meeting procedures including voting and taking minutes), are a product of a different schema to many Indigenous peoples. To informants this prevented them from feeling comfortable in such a forum and they felt this prevented them from making meaningful input into consultative processes. Comments such as: “It’s too

confusing" (Key Informant #1) and "I get lost in the technical talk" (Key Informant #3) confirm this sentiment. In line with Sagie & Koslowsky (2000), by improving employees' competence in simple but necessary tasks, Indigenous people will be empowered to provide increased input to the betterment of themselves and their employers. In outlining procedures and protocols, consideration must also be given to defining scientific and legislative jargon, so information can be accurately relayed from environmental resource managers to Aboriginal employees to Aboriginal communities. Formalities and technicalities, whilst not the most tangible means of managing resources, are vital to understand in order to provide meaningful input and contribute to desired change.

Presentation, Communication & Negotiation

Inequality of access to information resources is not the only factor restricting Aboriginal involvement within western-based environmental resource management. Limited self-assurance in committee procedures and protocols is also directly related to respondents low confidence in their communication, negotiation and presentation skills. They also identified a general lack of assertiveness as problematic in Bundjalung participants as Indigenous peoples are far from self-assured when confronted with modern European-style discussion, which is often confronting and argumentative: "Sometimes I don't feel comfortable when I go in there (environmental resource management related meetings), I feel like I'm going to say something wrong" (Key Informant #5).

In addition, dealing with conflict situations is difficult for Indigenous people considering a general lack of assertiveness attributed to differences in schema (Marquardt, 2001). Training in communication and methods for dealing with authority are considered necessary for personal empowerment and thus increased input into management decisions regarding Australia's natural resources.

Conclusion

Constraints to Indigenous involvement within western-based environmental resource management consultative processes are largely the result of fundamentally different schema between western-based and Indigenous worldview. This is compounded by educational disadvantages caused by an inability to access formal educational structures and the dislocation of traditional educational structures. Differing schema lead to a poor understanding of western-based resource management processes and knowledge systems, which prevents Aboriginal people from making meaningful input into existing consultative structures. This is to the detriment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous resource managers alike.

The development of an education and training program for Indigenous people involved in western-based resource management can be considered cultural awareness training in western constructs and institutions. By increasing knowledge of "White" processes within Indigenous communities, a sense of empowerment is likely to be fostered, providing for ease of communication and further encouraging voluntary and thus more valuable input into natural resource management processes. The Authors feel that it would also aid Indigenous communities in translating traditional knowledge systems into a paradigm understood by the broader community and hopefully lead to genuine co-management of areas of the cultural and natural estate important to Indigenous communities. A greater emphasis on cultural awareness training would also greatly benefit non-Indigenous staff of many management agencies in enabling them to better communicate with traditional owners and custodians of natural resources.

Keywords: Schema Theory; Bundjalung; Indigenous Consultation; Co-management; Indigenous knowledge systems and protocols; Capacity building.

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