

# WINDS & WAVES

C O N N E C T • C R E A T E • T R A N S F O R M



## LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD

Walking in Birpai country,  
Northern NSW, Australia



### 4.....THE LANGUAGE NEST

An indigenous community in Kingston, Ontario, experiments with an immersion-based approach to help its children acquire fluency in their native language and familiarity with their cultural practices.



### 10.....MISSION TO CONGO

A specialist emergency physician based in Sydney and the Australian co-founder of the NGO HandUp Congo return to Congo to continue their initiative in training doctors and nurses across the DRC.

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# BEHIND THE SCENES

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

In this bumper issue, before *Winds & Waves* migrates to a new platform, we have republished a selection of articles from the last six years. Their titles appear below in gold font.

Behind The Scenes ..... 2  
From The President ..... 3

### EDUCATION

Recovering Indigenous Languages .... 4  
A New Story for New Times ..... 5  
The Truth About Life Experience ..... 5  
“Imaginal Education” by any other Name..... 6

### VOLUNTEERING

Finding Community ..... 8  
among Strangers

### MISSIONS

Rhumba and Resuscitation in the Congo..... 10  
Learning from the Bonobos..... 12  
Helping the Disabled in Chile. .... 13  
Get Jobs and a Role in Society

### WHAT'S ON

ICA's Hits and Misses..... 14  
in Maharashtra

### FACILITATION

Playing with Cognitive Complexity ... 16  
No Boundaries to ..... 17  
Facilitative Process  
Transformative Facilitation..... 17  
through ToP

### COLLABORATION

Whole Systems Approach Gets Communities Buzzing..... 18  
Empowering Chicago's Community Leaders ..... 19  
A System that Works..... 21

### ENVIRONMENT

Going Green in Taiwan ..... 22

### BOOKS

Telling the Stories of Manilamen ..... 23



Change is not easy, even when we agree it's needed. It means learning new ways of doing things. Things may look different. It can take time to get used to a new look. So it is with our decision to turn to Medium, an online platform, for publishing *Winds and Waves* issues in the future.

The magazine, preceded by other periodicals such as *Network Exchange*, *Edges* and *Pacific Waves*, is published by the Institute of Cultural Affairs International (ICAI). It aims to be a global forum for sharing stories of achievement by people and

communities. Such accounts from the grassroots—where so many people are creating change—often don't get the attention they deserve. We are deluged instead with news about what isn't working. So in *Winds and Waves*, we share and celebrate what is working!

Following our recent readership survey, the editorial team concluded that it was time to approach the publication differently. We wanted a way to publish stories so that they could be shared easily, widely and with less “behind the scenes” work.

In a recent Skype conference (challenging to arrange across our team's diverse time zones), we discussed the issue and settled on Medium, launched by Twitter co-founder Evan Williams in 2012. We knew it as a blog platform and had questions about using it for *Winds and Waves*. Given that you may well have similar questions, we thought we would share the key points here.

Besides blogs, Medium supports magazine publication and organizes articles, pictures and videos into an appealing format. So, with this platform, we can accept and showcase videos as well.

We are excited by the possibilities. With videos as part of our “virtual” magazine, we can also publish in languages other than English. Photographic essays will be easier to manage. And “producing” the magazine will require less labour.

We will gain access to a broader audience on Medium. We can share stories about the power of human development more widely and regularly. Medium produces a daily digest of articles that it circulates widely. If one of “our” articles appears in the digest, it will gain a wider circulation. Readers will also find it easier to share our stories on social media platforms, including the ICAI website.

We know many of you will miss the format we have used over the last six years. We are marking this transition—and celebrating it— by profiling 10 articles from previous editions, along with new articles. We thank all the authors who have shared their learning, wisdom, reflections and news over the years, and team members who have laboured to produce *Winds and Waves* in that format.

We hope that you will join us on the journey to a new way of publishing. Please visit us at <https://medium.com/winds-and-waves> for a preview. The articles posted there now are from previous issues but please click on them to familiarise yourself with our new home. Besides reading on this platform, you can also contribute as a writer, photographer or videographer.

We are preparing a short “how to” guide that will lay out the key points of how to submit story drafts, videos, and photographs for review by the editorial team. We would also be delighted if you would be willing to become a “story scout”, helping us identify stories all over the world that are crying out to be told and shared globally. Join us!

Rosemary Cairns

Photo credit Markus Pittmann

# FROM THE PRESIDENT



**W**elcome to this November 2016 issue of Winds & Waves, the online magazine of ICA International, on the theme “Looking back and forward”.

As editorial team member Rosemary Cairns writes on page 2, Winds & Waves is taking this opportunity to look back at past issues

and articles as it looks forward to a new life and look from next year on the blogging platform Medium. This is also a timely opportunity for me and ICA International to be “looking back and forward”, as I and others complete our 4-year terms as members of the ICAI Board and new members are elected.

Seventeen representatives of 11 member ICAs of our global network participated in two online General Assembly meetings on October 20. Sixteen of 24 current statutory member ICAs voted in the online GA poll over the following ten days. We are grateful to all who participated. As a result of the GA we are pleased to congratulate Archana Deshmukh of ICA India and Gerd Luders of ICA Chile, who have been unanimously elected to serve from January (2017-20), and Seva Gandhi of ICA USA who has been re-elected to serve another two years (2017-18). Lisseth Lorenzo of ICA Guatemala has accepted the Board’s invitation to succeed me as President. Gerd has been invited to succeed Lisseth as Vice President Americas and Archana to succeed Staci Kentish (ICA Canada) as Secretary.

In pursuing our mission of “Advancing human development worldwide”, ICAI has been through some developments of its own in recent years. In 2006 we relocated from Belgium to Canada and expanded our Secretariat team and its role. In 2010 we closed our office and Secretariat and embarked on a new and largely virtual “peer-to-peer” approach. Since 2012, our membership has experienced a resurgence in numbers, with many long-standing members returning and

no less than 9 new Associate members welcomed by the General Assembly - including at the October GA Focus Homini Poland. The membership has experienced a surge in peer-to-peer activity as well, with face-to-face regional gatherings becoming an annual fixture in all 5 regions and new global task forces taking on roles in global conferencing, co-ordination and collaboration on ICA’s “Technology of Participation” (ToP) facilitation methodology and exploring collaboration and partnership with the International Association of Facilitators, as well as global communications and publications including this magazine and our monthly bulletin the Global Buzz. It has been a privilege serving as President these past four years, and I look forward to taking a new relationship to ICAI from next year and to continuing to contribute to our mission in other ways. I am excited and grateful to be able to leave such a strong and capable Board with strong and capable new leadership.

In this issue you will find a diverse collection of new stories and stories from the archive, illustrating how ICAs and colleagues of our global network are helping to “advance human development worldwide”, often in peer-to-peer collaboration with each other. This issue includes stories from Australia, Canada, Chile, Congo (DRC), India, Taiwan, Ukraine, UK & Africa and USA. It includes stories on recovering indigenous language and fostering creative action on climate change; on profound personal reflection and on imaginal education; on addressing exclusion of people with disabilities and on building capacity for emergency medical care; on comprehensive human development in village communities and on transformative facilitation through ToP; on cross-cultural mentoring and on applying systems and complexity theory.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this new issue of Winds & Waves. Enjoy this issue, and please share it and encourage others to do so.

**Martin Gilbraith**

[president@ica-international.org](mailto:president@ica-international.org)

*Martin Gilbraith, a certified professional facilitator, is president of the Institute of Cultural Affairs International*

*Like ICAI on Facebook and follow ICAI on Twitter.*

## WHAT'S ON

**22 October** International Facilitation Week: ICA UK will hold an all-day gathering of facilitators in Birmingham on Oct 22.

**28 November**, ICA Europe gathering: ICA UK will host the event in Warrington on Nov 28 to Dec 1.

**30 November**, Australasian Facilitator’s Network conference: The network, which involves many ICA members and ToP facilitators, will hold the event in Whaingaroa (Raglan), New Zealand, on Nov 30 to Dec 2. The theme is *Tuakana Teina*, a Maori word referring to older siblings guiding their younger siblings. Special effort is being made to involve Maori and Indigenous Australian and Torres Strait Islanders.

# WINDS & WAVES

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## Recovering indigenous languages By Miriam Patterson



a community-led “language nest”. This is an immersion-based approach first used by Maori grandmothers in New Zealand to teach the Maori language to children. Here, caregivers come together to cocoon the young children in linguistic and cultural practices that are meaningful and real. This helps to build fluency in both language and culture. In many communities, the biggest challenge to doing this is finding people fluent enough in the language.

In the Canadian city of Kingston, Ontario, the community we work with has created a language nest with the few resources it has. It meets on alternate weekends for two-hour sessions. Elders take turns leading the group of children and caregivers in traditional openings, language-based games, singing and drumming, craft making and listening to teachings.

My role as a facilitator has been to guide the group towards what it wants. We’ve created several short-term and one long-term vision and plans. We’ve created plans for fundraising and for the language nest itself. More and more, members of the local lead team are taking charge of this effort. The language nest includes children, parents and elders who speak different languages. They want to improve their first language abilities and to develop that ability in their children. It is a safe space for learning and speaking these languages.

*Miriam Patterson ([mpatterson@icacan.org](mailto:mpatterson@icacan.org)) is the facilitator/guide for ICA Canada’s language recovery partnerships with Indigenous communities.*

I began working with Learning Basket consultant Elise Packard and a small team on creating early learning programs for communities in Rwanda, India and the First Nations in North America in 2008. Since then, our projects, key partnerships, funding and even the focus of work have changed.

When we began, the question was how to impact the lives of children through their caregivers. We wanted caregivers to understand the importance of social emotional (brain) development in the early years and to engage them in direct play-based learning with their children. As we reached out to indigenous communities in North America, our work became less directed and much more responsive. Out of that grew the Indigenous Literacy and Language Initiative.

An ICA Canada team member describes the effort as follows: “We aim to bring

indigenous language speakers together with those who, through the process of colonization, have lost the ability to express themselves in their traditional language. We are committed to working with respect, using processes of listening and collaboration, with children, parents and elders in a comprehensive and community-led approach to co-create and co-discover little and big ways to reclaim indigenous languages. We are committed to this way of being.”

The communities we worked with were looking for ways to remember and revitalize the language of their ancestors for the sake of their children. Studies show that people need to be linked to their culture in order to develop sound ideas of themselves and their communities. Our play-based and brain-based model of working with children and caregivers morphed into

## A NEW STORY FOR NEW TIMES *By Nelson Stover*

The Climate Change Conference in Paris highlighted the widespread awareness of humanity's intensified relationship to the environment. For many at the local level, the question was "what can I do?" While practical actions are required relative to energy usage and resource consumption, a much deeper and more pervasive response involves the overall image that individuals and societies have about their place on the Planet.

One writer who sheds light on this issue is "Earth Scholar" Thomas Berry (1914-2009). The single most illuminating phrase in his published writings may well be his insight that: "The historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human – at the species level, with critical reflection, within the community of life-systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience."

This challenging task outlined by Thomas in *The Great Work* sets the climate change discussion in the largest possible context. It calls for a response at the most fundamental level, the realm of humans' self-understanding of their place and role on the planet and in the

cosmos. To reinvent the human at the species level, a new set of stories, songs and images is required. They must spell out the 14 billion-year emergence of the cosmos and point to the human species' role as the essential mode of reflection for the planet. Such a story would inform daily actions and provides meaning and significance to individual and societal endeavors toward building mutually enhancing relationships between the human and non-human realms.

In his book, Thomas describes, in detail, the complex forces that have brought human civilization into the unique position of actively participating in shaping the entire future of the planet. Civilization's current situation is filled with immense opportunities, fraught with unforeseen dangers and requires an in-depth reconsideration of the values, understandings and assumptions that have carried the human species up to this point. By outlining types of changes required by the major institutions that shape human society, Thomas provides the seeds for individuals and groups to chart their personal and collective ways into the ever-emerging future.

Emerging Ecology (www. EmergingEcology.org), an ICAI associate member based in Greensboro, North Carolina, the US, has produced a study guide on *The Great Work* for groups looking for fresh ways to understand how to respond appropriately to the challenges of the 21st Century. It is available at [www.EmergingEcology.org/TGWStudy](http://www.EmergingEcology.org/TGWStudy). Those who need help using or accessing the materials can contact [NStover@EmergingEcology.org](mailto:NStover@EmergingEcology.org).

Emerging Ecology strives to develop and promote a worldview that fosters creative action at the grassroots level through contextual programs, artistic presentations and collaborative efforts. People interested in working with Emerging Ecology can like our Facebook page – [www.Facebook.com/EmergingEcology](http://www.Facebook.com/EmergingEcology) or follow our newly established blog at <http://tell-new-story.blogspot.com>. Additional downloadable resources are available on our website.

*Nelson Stover is president of Emerging Ecology's board of directors*

*This article first appeared in the December 2013 issue.*

## THE TRUTH ABOUT LIFE EXPERIENCE *By Richard West*

At the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), we see ourselves as "The People of the Question". For me, the question was "How is the whole world going to live?" Being in farming, I helped raise corn and soyabean. Then I became aware that countries like India were self-sufficient in food. My world opened to new possibilities of engagement. Questions clarify the gap between beliefs and what's going on in life. They help us discover the change needed.

ICA Taiwan is hosting a series of dialogues called "The Truth about Life" Experience (TAL). It began as a monthly book study. It focused on coaching and mentoring, which many of us were doing. Our concern was effectiveness, especially in maintaining a facilitative stance. We explored many topics over the last 10 years. The group has grown as well. Books and articles are a starting point. Anyone can suggest topics and questions. That keeps the dialogue fresh.

We explored various arenas: community; making a difference; healing; wellbeing; context; political/economic/cultural systems; and power versus force: levels of consciousness. The underlying

question is: "What's the truth about life for you now in arena X that wasn't true for you before?"

The 150-minute session begins with a provocative question. Each person gives a quick response as a way of checking in. This sets the stage for the dialogue. Its direction is influenced by whoever comes. At the end, we pick a topic for the next session. Some topics generate so much energy that we continued them for months. We are never short of topics. The ground rules, from the *Open Space Technology User's Guide*, are: "Whoever comes are the right people. Whenever it starts is the right time. Whatever happens is the only thing that could. When it's over, it's over. Be prepared to be surprised!"

TAL is a personal research event. Participants have varying contexts and reasons for coming. One said he felt more free at TAL to talk about his thoughts and beliefs than in other groups, and that what he said was always accepted. We are diverse. We learn from the values and thoughts of each person.

So, how has the question "How is the

whole world going to live?" changed for me, 45 years later? The difference has to do with new and changing relationships, information, contexts, ecology, technologies, connectivity and more. The world has to be inclusive enough for all. We can't limit it to an either/or situation.

There are many methods to support significant engagement. Yet, they sometimes limit or divide, restricting our awareness of reality and choices. "Facilitation" is an approach the ICA pioneered. For me, it has to do with asking explorative questions rather than teaching or declaring. Context is crucial. It not only needs to change, it does so whether or not we are aware of it. Reflecting on this is essential. Discovering what others think in a safe and open environment is more important than getting my own ideas out. As John Heider admonishes in *Tao of Leadership*, "Facilitate what is happening, not what you think ought to be happening!"

*Richard West (icataiw@gmail.com) is executive director of ICA Taiwan*

*This article first appeared in the April 2016 issue.*

# “Imaginal Education” by any other name...

By Randy Williams

The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) has often said of its various methods and processes that they are “life” methods. This means that they are modeled after the way people really experience life. Two conclusions arise from this. One, the ICA does not create or otherwise invent its methods, it discovers them. Second, if these are “life” methods, chances are they exist and can be found elsewhere in other formats used by other organizations.

One such “discovered” method forms the basis for the ICA’s approach to learning, called by the ICA “Imaginal Education” This suggests that the process is used to enhance and expand the imagination.

However it also is indicative of the source from which the process was discovered. In 1956, Kenneth Boulding, an economist and educator, wrote a book entitled *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*, in which he proposed the four premises upon which Imaginal Education is built.

1. People operate out of images.
2. The images which people hold determine their behaviour.
3. Images are communicated and can therefore be changed.
4. Changed images lead to changed behaviour.

One of ICA’s strategic approaches to its mission is called “contextual re-education” which means changing the context, that is, shifting our perception of the world that informs our response to and participation in what is going on. This begins to get more to the root of what Imaginal Education is about. It goes further than merely the transfer of knowledge and acquisition of skills, which is frequently how education is perceived. Imaginal Education has to do with a change of heart, mind and will which leads one to adopt new approaches and lifestyles and subsequently to do things differently.

In the US, the ICA was founded as the non-sectarian arm of the Ecumenical Institute, an overtly Christian organization.

As such, this concept of learning as a change of heart, mind and will fits very well. In the New

Testament, the Greek word *metanoia* is sometimes translated to mean to be “born again.” In a sense this is all the Ecumenical Institute and the Institute of Cultural Affairs have ever been about—providing opportunities for people to



have a change of heart, mind and will so that they do things differently and thus “bend history.”

I want to share one instance in which I encountered this life method in another institution and format. Sometime in the early 1990s I attended a two-hour seminar presented by Peter Senge, the systems thinker who is director of the Center for Organizational Learning at the MIT Sloan School of Management. I do not remember the title of the seminar that morning, but what I do remember is a process which Senge presented, which he referred to, as I recall, as “Depth 3 Learning.” I no longer have the notes I took that morning and am therefore writing from memory, but my memory of this event and the process presented is vivid. No doubt over the years as I’ve interpreted and expounded upon what I heard that morning, I’ve put my own twist on what I remember Senge to have said, and I have actually consciously added a couple of steps to the Depth 3 Learning Cycle as he presented it, but certainly without distorting his original meaning and intent.

For a bit of context, many will remember Senge’s best-selling book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, first published in 1990 with a second edition in 2006. One of his five disciplines is “Mental Models”

which he defines as deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action” (*The Fifth Discipline*, page 8). This of course immediately calls to mind Boulding’s “images” and hence ICA’s “imaginal education”. Senge continues by explaining that “working with mental models starts with turning the mirror inward; learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny.”

One last comment about Senge before I get to his Depth 3 Learning Cycle –when he founded the Society for Organization Learning he defined learning organizations as “organizations where people continually expand their capacities to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.” (*The Fifth Discipline*, p4). He emphasizes that organizations as such do not learn, but the people in them do. However, he also stipulates that learning is best done in teams where everyone is a teacher and everyone a learner.

In the presentation I attended, Senge used the phrase “stories of reality” to connote exactly the same thing he means by “mental models.” His presentation of the Depth 3 Learning Cycle and the conversation that followed caused me to immediately see the parallel to the process of “imaginal education” I had learnt years earlier from the ICA.

I have already confessed that the graphic represents my adaptation of Senge’s presentation in that I have added “New Action” and “New Results,” which he did not include. Also, since the notes I took that morning have long since vanished, I cannot vouch that I am using Senge’s exact words, but I am close enough that his meaning is intact. Here is the gist of the presentation that morning, with my own reflections and stories added.

## NEW EXPERIENCE

Every learning opportunity begins with a practical experience, a happening that may be extraordinary or it may be very

“every day,” but it is new in that it never happened before exactly this way, in this context. It is an objective occurrence that just “happened” and anyone who was there could have experienced it.

## REFLECTION

To capitalize upon the potential or learning which the new experience presents requires reflection, by which the meaning held within the experience can be discovered. One of my graduate school professors had a very simple “three questions” in his reflective process which he abbreviated with three short words, “what, so what, and now what.” What happened, what does it mean, and what are the implications for the future? Those who are familiar with the ICA’s structured conversation format referred to as ORID, for *Objective, Reflective, Interpretive* and *Decisional*, will recognize the similarity. Senge did not specify what he meant by reflection, but in other places he refers to “dialogue,” citing the process developed by physicist David Bohm for group reflection, which is then called conversation for the sake of learning.

## NEW THINKING

Senge stipulates that through reflection we may begin to call into question some of our most cherished assumptions about how we see what life is and how the world works, and we may begin to formulate new assumptions which become the basis for a deep transformation of our core understanding, emotional response and courage to act.

## NEW STORIES OF REALITY

Thinking new thoughts can lead to the creation of a whole new way of seeing the world, which Senge called “new stories of reality.” The power of the stories we tell ourselves about the reality we live in and are a part of is unmistakable. In the 1985 book by Robert Reich entitled *Tales of a New America*, the author outlined four prevalent stories held by citizens of the USA at that time which he suggested were not serving us well. He called them respectively the *Tale of The Mob at the Gates*, *The Triumphant Individual*, *The Benevolent Community* and *the Rot at the Top*. I was particularly caught by the first, *The Tale of the Mob at the Gates* and remember how that played out at the time. As I recall, we as a nation were telling ourselves that we were under assault from three sides:

Latin Americans were coming at us from the south to despoil our culture, Asians were moving in from the East to capture our economy, and the then Soviets were a political threat from the West, waving their ICBMs and threatening to physically annihilate us. As a result we strengthened our immigration laws, enacted trade embargos and built a national missile defence system popularly called Star Wars.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, three significant global events occurring in the 60s and 70s reshaped our global story about the relationship of human beings to the natural environment and launched the environmental movement. The first was the publication in 1962 of Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring*, in which she raised our awareness of the harmful effects that pesticides were having upon the air we breathe. The immediate result was the passage of laws in the US banning the use of DDT. On Christmas Eve of 1968, US astronauts orbiting the Moon on board Apollo 8 beamed back photos of planet Earth from outer space, showing for the first time the “Earthrise” of this blue marble upon which we all live and depend for life, which Buckminster Fuller and others would come to refer to as “Spaceship Earth.” This metaphor alone is one of the most powerful “new stories” of modern times.

And finally, in 1972 a team headed by Donella Meadows, writing for the Club of Rome, published the book *Limits to Growth*, which for the first time called into question the story of unlimited resources and perpetual material and economic growth for the planet. The story of reality that emerged from these three events goes something like this, that we all live together on a finite planet where we depend upon the same systems and resources to sustain our lives, where resources are finite and limited, and which may be defiled and destroyed by our own actions. The impact of this new story of reality is being acted out as a global movement to care for the planet and all its inhabitants has emerged and is growing daily. Environmental activist Paul Hawken has called it “the largest movement in the world”.

## NEW ACTIONS AND NEW RESULTS

As mentioned earlier, although Senge did not include these two steps in his presentation, for my purposes I have added these last two phases of the cycle – that New Stories of Reality lead to New Actions which achieve New

Results. The oft-quoted truism, that the height of insanity is to continue to do the same thing we’ve always done and expect to get different results, is relevant here. The proof of the pudding that learning has indeed occurred, that new stories have been embedded in our conscious awareness to give us a whole new perspective, is that we in fact approach things differently and engage in new actions that achieve different results. The new results give rise to new experiences, and so the cycle goes round and round. We see how learning may be continuous, and that a change of mind, heart and will need not be something that occurs only once in a lifetime but can be always in process, preparing the learner to be transformed again and again.

Senge had two admonitions as he concluded his presentation that morning. One was that the most often ignored or truncated step of this process is Reflection and that without it learning never occurs. Much of his work up to and since that time has been to encourage and facilitate reflection and dialogue as a prerequisite to learning in our communities and organizations. Finally, and I think I remember his words almost precisely, Senge explained: “Please remember, our stories about reality are stories *about* reality. *They are not reality!*” This punctuation has to say that reality will continue to be as elusive as ever and our stories will at best always be but part of the whole story.

Therefore to continue to learn we must always be open to the next experience of emergent reality so that we may reflect upon our experience, think new thoughts, and once again tell the transforming new story that will lead again to a change of mind, heart and will.

Since 1969 I have been at one time or another an ICA staff member, constituent and colleague and am currently a member of the ICA-USA board of directors. As such I confess to some degree of pride and a great deal of reassurance to discover that “Imaginal Education” our approach to learning, is indeed a “life” method that has been and is being proliferated around the globe by a variety of entities in a multiplicity of formats. I am grateful that, thanks to Boulding and others, we discovered it and that it continues to serve us well.

*Randy C. Williams is a member of ICA-USA*

*This article first appeared in the December 2013 issue.*

# Finding community among strangers

By Kay Alton



I'm sitting in a small space that could be called a kitchen because it has a stove and still smells of roasted lamb but lacks any other evidence of kitchen use. It is in the small Chilean town of Futaleufu, known for its powerful and famous river, in Chile.

My partner Scott, a rafting and kayak guide, hopes to get on the water. We have been travelling for five months and are starting a month-long climb back to Santiago and our flight to California. I don't know if one can go on a six-month long trip in any country without coming home changed in some way. Chile started out for me as a place for Spanish lessons and a professional opportunity but is ending as a meditation in humility and the importance of community.

I had e-mailed Isabel de la Maza of ICA Chile and Ken Hamje of ICA Peru in July last year. I had asked my father Richard Alton about who I could contact in South America who might need help with Technology of Participation facilitation and he immediately thought of Isabel and Ken. I recently acquired a Masters in Social Work and since I live in California, I needed to hone my Spanish. I had spent too many hours at a desk in Spanish classes with meager results and decided to take a plunge and do a complete immersion for six months. Both Isabel and Ken were warm to the idea of me helping out with their programs but the work in Chile was more immediate and so I bought a ticket to Santiago. The work there was only for two months but

I figured I would explore the country and keep learning for four more.

The first cultural hurdle I faced was the Chilean habit of doing things at the last minute. More accustomed to extensive planning, I e-mailed Isabel every day with questions about visas, places to stay, when and where the courses were, the course materials and how much Spanish did I really need to facilitate, without getting my answers. I later found she simply hadn't received a lot of answers herself. Five months into my trip, I am still surprised at how last minute a lot of things are here. Chileans don't like to plan. Actually they don't even have a word for plan, they use the English one. So I decided the trip would be an opportunity to practice being "in the moment".

On landing, I was pampered by Isabel and her insanely knowledgeable mother Ana Mari Urrutia. I was picked up at the airport, taken to an amazing lunch and told to rest for a couple of days before starting work. This was not in my character. So I decided to take a more personal relationship with the city before getting down to business. I ate empanadas; walked the river; ran the parks; sat and watched; danced cumbia; and sat and watched some more. My dad used to tell me about this wall he sat on in Brooklyn where he watched life go by for hours. It's how he got to know the community. When I was young I didn't really get it but now I understand.

Watching taught me a lot but I learned the most about the people of Chile through the courses as well as my struggle with communicating. My biggest challenge was facilitating in Spanish. I am a good facilitator. I can mold techniques to fit individual and group needs and I am sensitive to group dynamics. But it threw a stick in my spokes to have to struggle to simply understand people and express myself. Add to the mix that they are physically and mentally handicapped, many with speech impediments and I had myself a challenge. I leaned on humor and my ability to poke fun at myself when I got stuck. The participants would go so far as to applaud when I hummed a tune while thinking of a word I needed. They loved it when I used facial expressions and hands to express myself. We all had challenges. Mine may not have been so visible but it allowed the participants to relate to me on a different level.

Two incidents taught me a lot about working with Chileans and people in general. I was helping with a regular Saturday for youth with physical disabilities, mostly cerebral palsy, and noticed a pretty girl who rarely spoke.

It was easy to spot the shy ones in the group of about 20 rambunctious young people. She always showed up on time to the courses and would sit patiently but rarely volunteered to read or present work.



On my second Saturday, I was looking up the long list of Spanish words I didn't know in the dictionary when she pulled up a chair and sat next to me. I looked up surprised. She immediately started asking me about where I was from, my hobbies and my family. She told me she had been hit by a car while walking with her two-year-old daughter a year ago and fell into a coma. The doctors told her family she would be a vegetable for the rest of her life. A month later she was sitting up in bed. Six months later, after extensive physical therapy, she was standing up on her own. Her memory and speech had been affected and she had a hard time holding on to information and communicating but was getting better. I choked up listening to her story and realized she was not shy – she just had to exercise her memory muscle. Her challenge was to listen and remember. This course was the social part of her rehabilitation. Like all the other participants, she was isolated from society save for the Saturday courses. That's when I realized exactly how important these day-long courses were for the young participants. It wasn't necessarily about action plans or facilitation skills. It was the shared laughter and new numbers in the cell phone that proved there were people who cared about you.

I facilitated a course in a low-income community outside Santiago called La Granja. The participants were from various residential programs for people with mental disorders. Most were struggling with schizophrenia. This may have been the hardest course for me. Scott helped and at first was



confused by what we were trying to do. He saw participants struggle with the introductory name game and was skeptical about introducing more complicated methods. There were a couple of participants who were higher functioning and able to navigate the materials. They seemed embarrassed when others would go on rants about the war or interrupt a presentation to tell us a story from their youth. Yet everyone sat loyally in that small room for the four days. They lit up when we formed the action plan around a day to the beach. Hands flew up to volunteer to help raise funds and leaders were nominated to take charge of food, transport and other logistics.

By the end of the course, Scott and I realized that the victory was in communion, in the gathering of people who were otherwise isolated. This experience, compounded with my experiences with the Saturday courses, led me to understand that people with mental and physical disorders are still ostracized in Chile. They are put aside, ignored and have few opportunities for social participation. This course was one of the few times they would interact with strangers, let alone make new friends. With every hug I received while handing out diplomas I saw the look of pride in each face. There is more to methods than the methods themselves. There is process, a growth within each individual

that can be felt only from within. There is the struggle to silence inner voices to hear what others have to say and to focus on coming together.

As I sit in this kitchen months later it is easier to tease out the moments of growth from my time in Santiago. I know I will return to California a more patient, well-rounded facilitator. Mostly though, I will come home humbled by the fact that I still have so much growing to do. I will come home with a suitcase full of names and faces of people who had so much to teach and give. I will come home knowing that what matters isn't necessarily who brings the material and organizes the dates, but who shows up. It's about the gathering, about community formed from strangers.

This was the gift to me from Isabel, Ana Mari, Joaquina Rodriguez and Eduard Christensen, who I was lucky to work with at ICA Chile. I was offered the opportunity to plunge into the lives of Chileans in a way that I would not have been able to do as a tourist. I have deep gratitude for this opportunity and have been changed.

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*Kay Alton, a social worker in Northern California, was raised in the ICA communities in Kenya and Brussels and completed her ToP facilitation training in Minnesota.*

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*Please send comments or question to [kayalton@gmail.com](mailto:kayalton@gmail.com).*

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*This article first appeared in the August 2013 issue.*



*Left: Proud smiles from mothers and daughters to go along with diplomas.*

*Above: Weekly Saturday courses in Santiago with youth who have been undergoing physical rehabilitation.*

# Rhumba and resuscitation in the Congo

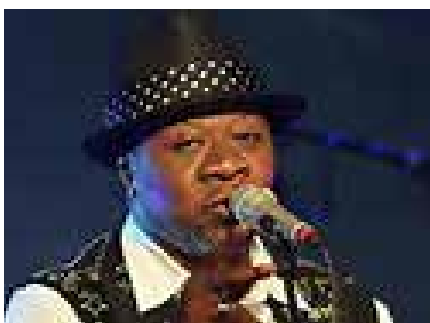
By Dr Vera Sistenich



Hands-on emergency care practice in Kimpese.



“Has anyone done resuscitation on a real patient?” A few hands go up in a room of doctors, nurses and medical students. “Has anyone seen a situation where resuscitation should have been started but nobody was there who knew how to do it?” The room erupts with cries of “Papa Wemba!”



**P**apa Wemba, 66, the flamboyant King of Rhumba, collapsed and died on stage during a concert in Côte d'Ivoire on April 24, 2016. Videos of the incident went viral. It was clear that not even those wearing Red Cross bibs knew how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The Congolese singer and musician received a state funeral. Kinshasa was plastered with banners and murals of grief and commemoration.

This was the backdrop to our mission bringing emergency medicine education to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I am a specialist emergency physician based in Sydney with an interest in developing emergency medicine in low resource settings. My team member Lucy Hobgood-Brown grew up in the Congo where her parents had lived and worked. Her father was Rector of the Université Protestante au Congo (UPC, <http://www.upcrdc.org>; <http://www.upcongo.org>). She is a co-founder of the NGO HandUp Congo (<https://handupcongo.org>) through which she has been doing community development projects since 2005. She is also a member of ICA Australia, which has been a generous supporter of HandUp Congo's capacity building projects in Equateur Province. We met at a development sector social function in Sydney in October 2013 shortly after I returned to Australia from working with the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

Despite a clear need for, and growing interest in, developing emergency medicine in the DRC, the discipline does not exist as a specialty. There is currently no postgraduate training program for doctors and nurses. There is no functional public pre-hospital system of ambulances and paramedics, although some private hospitals provide

an ambulance service. Basic and advanced life support are not a standard part of medical training. Few Congolese medical institutions have the capacity to train recognized specialists of any kind. Most doctors must seek this outside the country. UPC is the only university in the Congo able to train family medicine specialists.

After an initial assessment of the potential to deliver emergency medicine education through the UPC infrastructure last year, we returned this year to develop the initiative further. We started our six-week trip in Cape Town at the International Conference on Emergency Medicine. UPC members gathered there with representatives from the African Federation for Emergency Medicine (AFEM <http://www.afem.info>) and the WHO Emergency, Trauma and Acute Care program (<http://www.who.int/emergencycare/en/>), among others, to help shape the project.

After that, we travelled with two Congolese doctors specialising in emergency medicine outside the Congo, Dr Müller Mundenga and Dr Ken Diango, and Australian nurse Maureen Hurley, to deliver a three-day emergency medicine training course at five locations across the country where UPC has clinical sites for their family medicine trainees. These included Goma in the east, and Tshikaji,

Vanga, Kinshasa and Kimpese in the west.

The program included didactic and practical modules on resuscitation, paediatric rehydration, trauma management, ECG interpretation and intravenous access. Over 220 healthcare providers participated. They were each given certificates of attendance and a USB containing the training material in electronic form (donated by Blu Gibbon <https://blugibbon.com>).

A core principle of the project is the involvement of Congolese doctors, especially those trained as emergency medicine specialists outside the DRC, in the shaping and leadership of this initiative. The project also aims to establish a component of visiting physicians from overseas to help in on-site teaching.

Back in Kinshasa, our team held further meetings, including with the Ministry of Health. We conducted hospital site visits to assess them for suitability as a pilot site for emergency medicine training. Together with UPC, we aim to develop a one-year emergency medicine



*Lucy Hobgood-Brown (from left), Dr Müller Mundenga, Dr Vera Sistenich and Dr Ken Diango arriving in Goma.*

certificate for Congolese doctors already trained in another specialty, based on an African-centric curriculum developed by AFEM. A longer-term ambition is to train emergency medicine specialists in the Congo based on AFEM's three-year curriculum.

Lucy and I are most grateful for the support of Rotary Australia World Community Service and many individual donors. We are constantly on the lookout for potential donors or suitable collaborators.

*For more information or to share your comments and ideas, please e-mail [handupcongo@gmail.com](mailto:handupcongo@gmail.com).*

*For tax deductible donations (in Australia), please visit <http://rawcs.org.au>; Project No. 47, Year Registered 2015-16, "Building a Healthy Congo".*

*Dr Vera Sistenich, a specialist emergency physician based in Sydney, contributed this article following her recent visit to the DRC with ICA Australia member Lucy Hobgood-Brown.*



*Celebrations after completion of the course in Vanga.*

# Learning from the bonobos

By *Désiré Safari Kanyena*

**B**onobos are a great ape species found only in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). They and chimpanzees are more closely related to us than any other animal.

Recently I visited the bonobo sanctuary on the outskirts of Kinshasa. Most of the bonobos there are babies and young adults rescued from poachers. Bush meat trade is rife in Congo, where livestock is scarce and expensive. Up to 80 percent of the meat consumed here consists of wildlife, according to a sanctuary guide. *Lola ya Bonobo* [www.lolayabonobo.org](http://www.lolayabonobo.org) is the world's only organization providing lifetime care to bonobos orphaned by the illegal trade. When possible, it releases its bonobos into the wild.

Most bonobos are found in Equateur province, where I live and work with HandUp Congo on capacity building projects. The province became infamous two years ago for an Ebola outbreak, believed to have been caused by eating infected bush meat (not necessarily the bonobos).

I enjoyed seeing the bonobos up close. I believe we can learn a lot from them. For example, they live in a matriarchal society that is peace-loving. The females are smaller than the males but will join forces to prevent an aggressive male from hurting others.



*A sack becomes a toy for a playful bonobo. Photo: Maureen Hurley*

**B**onobos have evolved to avoid fighting. Researchers at the sanctuary have discovered that in a situation with a potential for conflict such as over food, chimpanzees have an increase in testosterone, which makes them more competitive. Bonobos, on

the other hand, have an increase in cortisol, which is related to stress. The stress response causes bonobos to seek social reassurance and so they hug each other and share instead of fight.

The sanctuary guide told me that bonobos are the only great apes that have never been seen to kill their own kind. We must learn from bonobos, so that we can have peace in Congo. Bonobo females give birth only once in five years, another practice needed among humans in Congo, where many families have 10 or more children.

**T**he bonobos' willingness to share is also noteworthy. Recent research at Lola has shown that bonobos are good Samaritans, perhaps more so than human beings. We prefer to help people we are related to or whom we know rather than strangers. But although Bonobos also show empathy towards family and friends, when given a choice, they prefer to share food with strangers.

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*Désiré Safari Kanyena, a community development consultant, is an advisor to the Australia-based NGO, HandUp Congo [www.handupcongo.org](http://www.handupcongo.org), which works in Equateur province.*



*Safari Kanyena and HandUp Congo co-founder Lucy Hobgood-Brown at the bonobo sanctuary. Photo: Maureen Hurley*

# Helping the disabled in Chile get jobs and a role in society

By Ana Mari Urrutia A.



Fourteen years ago Mr. Bruno Casanova invited me to participate at SOFOFA's (the Federation of Chilean Industry's) Commission for the Disabled. This Society is in charge of associating different Chilean industrial enterprises. I started working together with the General Manager of the Children's Rehabilitation Institute (Telethon), Mr. Sergio Oyadanel, and though we were highly motivated, at the beginning we were not at all sure what this Commission was seeking. It included representatives of the Work Ministry, Health Ministry and Education Ministry. There were also representatives of the Security Mutual (ACHS), FONADIS (National Fund for the Disabled), some very important entrepreneurs such as Mr. Raúl Sahli and Mr. Casanova and Municipality representatives. This Commission had a total of 16 members.

At the beginning we decided to establish in each Municipality in Chile a Communal Commission for the Disabled (CCD) that would let us support the disabled inhabitants and their families in each of these communities. As time passed we realized that the big issue was to include the disabled in the work force, by providing the means for all of them to get work, regardless of age. It's a painful fact that when the disabled become adults they have great difficulty getting any kind of work.

ICA-Chile has a long history in this country designing programs for

vulnerable people, especially young ones physically challenged. The results we had had with our program for youth using ToP Methodology had been excellent, so we decided to try it on the adult members of the CCDs. We started giving courses that took 30 to 34 hours in 2006. People from different organizations were motivated to start small enterprises and were enthusiastically looking for work according to their different abilities. There is still a long road to travel though, in order to really include the disabled in the work force in Chile. We know that in those places where there has been an ICA course, something really good has happened: participants have awakened, they were motivated, they created new possibilities of organizing themselves in order to work and develop different projects. Up to this point we have given 54 ToP training courses to 1.296 participants all through Chile during six years of hard work.

We have worked with several CCDs not only in Santiago but in many places north and south of Chile. This year, 2012 we expect to give 20 courses.

The great plus of this project is that it unites private enterprises and the Employment Service of the Chilean Government (SENCE). This is a public entity that finances our courses in order to attain help for the disabled. The participation enterprises do it through the RSE (Enterprises'

Social Responsibility). Besides this, they completely trust the tools we use in ToP Methodology, in order to get results that contribute to attain the goals of the program. This is a very important initiative. Its leader today is Mrs. Anita Briones. She is a very important Chilean entrepreneur at SOFOFA.

The stimulation, motivation and enthusiasm that these courses can result in help us realize that we should consider repeating them whenever they are necessary. We want to thank all those who have been involved in this very special and different "Program for Human Development" on behalf of those persons that suffer disabilities in Chile. This program relies on ToP Methodology to awaken the spirit of everybody and of the organizations involved and helps them plan new strategies in their work so as to include all the disabled in society and work.

*Ana Mari Urruti Arestiabal is Executive Secretary of the Board of the Sociedad Pro-Ayuda al Niño Lisiado and Theleton Foundation that's in charge of the Institution and a member of the SOFOFA (Sociedad de Fomento Fabril) National Commission for disabled people. She is a specialist in Participation Technology, trained at the Institute of Cultural Affairs in Chicago (1984) and in Phoenix, Arizona (1995-96). She is now Trainer and Board's Secretary at ICA Chile.*

*This article first appeared in the July 2012 issue.*

# ICA's hits and misses in Maharashtra

By Dharmalingam Vinasithamby

When Chikhale residents laid out their vision in 1979, they wanted a railway station. I tagged it then as a pipe-dream. But when I visited in January, there it was – a station linking it to Mumbai, 33 kilometres away.

Chikhale was a “model village” set up by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). Our target was 232 such pilot projects across Maharashtra state, one in every *talukh* or sub-district.

The first was the Maliwada Human Development Project, near Aurangabad, in 1976. To “replicate” this in other villages, we set up a Human Development Training School. The eight-week course was to motivate villagers and train them in leadership methods. Many of them joined the ICA and were sent out in batches with a few ICA veterans to villages in the scheme. Their mission: live there for two years and help residents organise themselves and develop the village.

After almost 40 years, I wanted to see what these places were like. Our *Nava Gram Prayas* (“New Village Movement”) was a life-changing experience for me. But what was its impact on rural development in Maharashtra? I also wanted to meet people I had worked with and hear their stories. I visited some of these villages with Hiranman Gavai and his wife Mangala who live in Pune. The following are some impressions and reflections.

## Republic Day at Chikhale

We drove to Chikhale on January 26th, India's Republic Day. The main landmark, a large moss-covered pond, was still there. Next to it was a residential school that we had built. About 700 children from tribal communities in the vicinity live and study there for 12 years. Many were taking part in a flag-hoisting ceremony, belting out patriotic songs and slogans, as we arrived. The tribal communities are among the poorest in India. The tribal school, one of several run by the government, helps some to make the leap from subsistence labour to more remunerative employment.

Other parts of the village had changed. The mud hovels of the poor and large



Children coming for the flag-raising ceremony in Chikhale. About 700 children spend up to 12 years in the residential school that serves tribal communities in the vicinity.  
Photo: V. Dharmalingam

houses of the well-to-do had been replaced by multi-storied buildings. Much of the farmland had gone as well. The village is now a dormitory for workers in Panvel, 6 km away.

When we began the project, access was a key problem. The road into Chikhale (the name literally means mud) was a sticky, slippery mess in the rainy season. The bridge across the stream was too narrow for trucks to enter the village to support any industries.

The railway station and other improvements solved these problems. But, ironically, they also led to the village being swallowed by Panvel.

## Meeting Maliwada's elders

The situation was similar in Maliwada. Previously, you could see the village from the road. A bus stop with a tea vendor marked the road junction. But when we drove up, commercial buildings lining both sides of the road blocked our view.

Several villagers we had worked with recognised us, including Lakshmi Bai. She and her late husband Pandit Udawant, the village goldsmith, had been pillars of the project. His son, then a child then, now runs the business. He invited us to his goldsmith shop. Another elder was Pundlik Dangare. He spoke a smattering of English and took us on a tour.

The central square or chowk looked the same. The area around it was now packed with more houses. A water tower obscured the famous view of the ancient Daulatabad fort in the distance, showing that the village now has piped water.

The grounds were strewn with shreds of white Styrofoam plates and cartons. The village used to look cleaner – rubbish was more organic without the everlasting quality of plastic and quickly disintegrated. The large building where we lived had returned to its state of rubble. When we started the project, we rebuilt the *haveli* for staff quarters and village meetings. Stripped of its timber and roofing, it now reeked of human waste. Previously, villagers would nip over to the nearby fields to take a dump. Now that those had been built over, the abandoned *haveli* with the privacy its walls afforded had made it a convenient open-air toilet.

The Human Development Training School, another large building next door, was a recycling factory. It was packed with mountains of used plastic bags to be turned into plastic pellets.

Pundlik and the others recalled the changes. The population had grown with many villagers working in Aurangabad, 20 km away. Outsiders also lived in Maliwada. The village, once politically part of another village called Abdi Mandi, now had its own *gram panchayat* or village council. The younger generation

was now in charge with better access to government resources for development.



## Jawale's progress

We also visited Jawale, a former project in the Khandala sub-district of Satara. Here the village identity was intact, perhaps because of its remoteness. The village is about 60km from Pune and 9km from Shirval, a small town.

Mangala, who had worked here, and village elders who greeted us described the changes. Also with us were Jeroen Geradts and Rokus Harder, both of the Netherlands. They had worked here as volunteers for six months in 1983 (see *their report, Journey back to Jawale*).

The access road, originally gravel, was tarred. What was once a bare plot on the right of the road was now a grove of trees. Small bunds built during the project years had elevated the ground water table. After the village got electricity, pumps and an irrigation system linked to a nearby dam had made farms more productive. Piped water was also available.

Among other changes: village paths which used to get muddy in the rainy season had been surfaced. Open drains beside them had been covered as well, with grill-covered inlets here and there for runoff water. Several brick-built homes stood next to ones of mud and rocks. Some were double and triple-storied. Several motor-cycles, once a rarity, were parked outside.

Another change – a woman was village chief. Poonam, who gets a meagre salary as *sarpanch*, spends most of her time dealing with infrastructure glitches like a breakdown in the irrigation system. Husband Ravindra Patil does some of the running around for her.

The improved political status of women is due to the Panchayat Raj policy changes in 1993 by the late prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. These require state governments to enact laws empowering panchayats in various ways such as reserving a third of the seats for women, proportional reservation

of seats for disadvantaged minorities, direct elections and gram sabhas (village assemblies).

The changes give panchayats political clout in the district level. But village elders in both Maliwada and Jawale said local involvement in decision-making is not as keen as before.

One factor – the satellite dishes sprouting on the roof tops of even humble homes. People are reluctant to attend meetings and prefer to watch TV, said a Jawale elder, Vinayaka Dhondeba Patila, 72. “Jawale population has grown, programmes continue but they do not have the spirit of those days,” he said. Another elder, Mahadev Baburao Patil, blamed the growing individualism on mobile phones that everyone seems to carry. “Before, everyone would show up for *shramadans* (voluntary work sessions). Now people are more materialistic,” he said.

On the positive side, people seem more aware of the larger metropolitan community, the nation and the world, and interact more with these realities.

The urban influence also empowers the panchayat. Small factories and industries on the outskirts of Jawale, for example, pay taxes to the gram panchayat, enabling it to carry out various infrastructure maintenance and improvements. It also seems to have more access to development funds from the government. Credit is more readily available. Previously, villagers had to go after bankers. Now they come offering loans.



## A village servant force

I did not get all my questions answered during my brief tour in Maharashtra. But I realised that some came from a dated perspective. Things I found jarring such as rubbish and haphazard urbanisation were present in non-project villages as well. There was a new generation of leaders in charge with different priorities. The world had moved on.

But other issues gained focus. One was

the absurdity of having picked places where urban growth would obliterate our work, something an economist could have foreseen from the map. In Chikhale, for example, we should have helped villagers plan their future as part of an urban rather than a rural reality.

It was also clear that the main driver of development is the government. Its various schemes for individuals and backing for infrastructure development have made a big difference in both project and non-project villages.

Where we played a useful role was in closing the gap between the village and the government structures. We did this by having a residential team that coached and encouraged villagers to visit government offices and banks to make use of the available schemes. This, rather than any funds we poured into the village, left lasting changes.

In addition, it was the presence and commitment of some of the volunteers that seemed to inspire villagers and others; and it still has a role today.

I saw this dynamic at a project run by former ICA staff Mary and Cyprian D'Souza in Mawal sub-district, near Pune. The main activity is a learning centre for school. But what stood out for me was a secondary project – an educational outreach program run by young village women. The Potali Project, based on the Learning Basket program developed by Keith Packard and other ICA workers, aims to boost brain development among infants which is at its peak in the first three years. The team of young teachers, equipped with books, cards and other materials, tour villages in the area. They hold meetings once a week for parents and grandparents in a village and show them how to interact with their infants and thereby release their full potential.

When we began our work in Maharashtra, a part of the vision was to raise a servant force for development. Instead of ICAs focusing on infrastructure projects preferred by donors, equipping youth with methods to play a catalytic role in India's villages would have a more lasting effect. That would also have a broader effect on society by providing youth a channel for plugging in their creativity.

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*Dharmalingam Vinasithamby, who spent several years with the ICA as a village worker in India, is a freelance journalist based in Johor Baru, Malaysia. He can be contacted at [pulai100@yahoo.com](mailto:pulai100@yahoo.com)*

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*This article first appeared in the April 2015 issue.*

# Playing With Cognitive Complexity

By Bhavesh S Patel

Complexity is the new buzz word. There is an explosion of books exploring complexity in international development, business management, public policy, evaluation, organisational development, cognitive science and so on. The field is approached from many disciplines with no agreement yet on terms and definitions. Some link its beginnings to Warren Weaver in 1948 or Ilya Prigogine in the 1970s. Over the last five years, I have been exploring those who mix theory and practice such as Dave Snowden, Glenda Eoyang, and Ralph Stacy.

Systems or situations that have lots of visible and invisible elements interacting in visible and invisible ways that produce changes that are inherently unpredictable and emergent are considered complex. Culture is a good example. These systems cannot be modelled or analysed completely. Instead they can be engaged with using multiple perspectives to make sufficient sense to experiment in small safe-to-fail ways to understand more. Many of the situations we work in can be considered complex. Yet many of the tools and methods we use are designed for systems that can be understood. The complexity approach could lead to a major shift in the way that we understand and act in the world.

We can find complexity in the way that ants organise or flocks of birds fly. Complex processes in human systems have the added element of the way we think, feel, make sense, or choose to act. I would like to share a recent experience of applying cognitive complexity ideas to the Consensus Workshop method.

It involved a group of 48 cultural managers, 24 from the EU and 24 from Ukraine, part of an 18-month partnering programme developing arts-based projects to address social issues. The aim of my work was to support the group by helping it identify effective principles for partnering that could be used by each pair of partners.

**STEP 01.** I gave the group a general context and avoided asking a Focus Question. I did not want them to start consciously and unconsciously editing their thinking to look for “answers” to a question.

**STEP 02.** I asked the group to sit around eight tables in groups of six. At

tables, people shared specific stories of partnering with another person or organisation that went really well. If something one person shared triggered a memory for another then that person could start next rather than “wait for their turn” in the circle.

**STEP 03.** Everyone moved to a different table with a different set of people. This time they shared specific stories of partnering that went really badly.

**STEP 04.** Everyone moved again. This time they reflected on the last two rounds and silently brainstormed principles for effective partnering.

**STEP 05.** They shared their ideas and came up with five principles. They wrote these up on cards and produced duplicates.

**STEP 06.** Half of each table went to one side of the room with a copy of the principles from their table, and the other half to the other side. The two groups worked independently with the same set of cards, clustering, and then naming.

**STEP 07.** The two groups came together to share their work. There were definite similarities which showed whole group consensus, as well as differences which together created a diverse set of principles for partnering which the group were happy with.

Let me explain why I made the above changes to the “traditional” Consensus Workshop method.

## STEP 02 & STEP 03

### STORIES

When you ask a person a question, their answer is shaped by the way they perceive the context and the person asking. The design and directness of the question also influences the answer. A question invites the construction of an answer.

Knowledge management theory suggests that “we only know what we need to know when we need to know it”. Studies show that when people are asked what they did, their theory of what they did does not always match what they actually did.

We get closer to reality when we informally and naturally tell unrehearsed anecdotes in the corridor, café or at the school gate. When we tell stories we step back into the context and therefore

trigger our contextual knowledge.

## BIAS

Moving to different tables after sharing what went well and after sharing what went badly, reduces premature convergence. Humans are pattern detectors not information processors. We look for and fall into patterns and biased positions in groups. Moving to different tables breaks the bias patterns, giving a greater opportunity to see more ideas, options and patterns instead of possibly being limited by one reinforcing group bias.

ICA:UK does the clustering process by only allowing the group to cluster only pairs. This controls our bias to see patterns and allows for more diversity and options to be noticed before the clusters become stronger in their meaning.

## STEP 05 & 06

Clustering with the whole group can increase shared understanding through a single meaning-making process. However it also increases the group bias.

Dividing the group into two to cluster the same set of cards both reduces bias and allows for different meanings to emerge. Contradictions emerge which don’t need to be fully resolved because the right level of tension/conflict can be a good thing in a set of principles to increase their flexibility in practice.

The aim in the example was to develop partnering principles that could be used by a pair. It was not to create principles that the whole group needed to own and act on collectively. This could be achieved if more integration is done between groups at the end.

The underlying point is to reduce group bias and premature convergence in the early stages to increase the range of data and options explored, so that when the group moves to convergence the final product will be better.

The above is a taste of applying cognitive complexity ideas. The field offers theory to support the use of participatory methods which I have found very helpful for myself and my clients.

*Bhavesh S Patel (bhav@peoplejazz.com) works with groups.*



# No boundaries to facilitative process

By Larry Philbrook

As facilitation has moved beyond being only a tool to becoming the way that individuals and organizations are using to create change in life and work, the world is calling for something more from facilitation and from facilitators. Increasingly, we talk about “facilitative” process - with the emphasis on results and change in human development - rather than just “facilitation” - as a business and a practice.

That was a key conclusion when we gathered in Taipei in July to look at how we have used facilitation in the past and how we may all be using facilitation in the future - in Taiwan, Asia, and the world. For our exploration, we used the “wall of wonder” or “historical scan”, one of the potent participatory tools developed and used by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) over the past three decades.

## OUR INSIGHTS:

- Facilitators are, through their own lives, demonstrating transformation all the time. Any moment, and any method, is a chance for profound learning, sharing, and personal reflection.
- We have moved from applying a concept, to exploring its application much more deeply, and we believe

there are no boundaries for using facilitation in terms of disciplines, countries, cultures, or generations.

- People see the need for facilitating conflict resolution and collaborative decision-making. Citizen participation in public affairs is increasing, and facilitation competence is becoming a standard.

So, if we are moving beyond facilitation as a tool towards facilitative process as a way of life, what does that look like? We see these trends:

- Moving beyond using only ICA practices towards multi-disciplinary collaboration;
- Moving from facilitating single events to partnerships that cross sectors and functions
- Moving from “following authority” to “expressing individual views”
- Moving from “sharing sound bites” to dialogue that transforms emotions in a healthy, mature way
- Moving from “divergent voices” to “convergent voices”
- Moving away from “professional facilitation” towards a much greater public understanding and application of facilitative process.

There are, however, some challenges.

We identified three concerns for facilitation as a practice and for ICA as a key promoter of facilitative process.

- Virtual facilitation is growing in terms of capacities and flexibility. While it has not replaced face-to-face consensus-building, gaps in access to the technology and the Internet mean some people are being left out - both across the ICA network and the world.
- For ICA, the challenge is to find a balance between sharing facilitation and methods as widely as possible in order to support transformative change across the world, and supporting those who want to build and refine their professional skills and competencies through certifying ToP (Technology of Participation) facilitators and recognizing ToP trainers.
- While public understanding of the need for facilitation and community participation is growing, transparent and open facilitative processes may worry some politicians and political systems.

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# Transformative Facilitation through ToP

By Lawrence Philbrook

“Is there a contrast between delivering a program and facilitating a group’s process?” A trainee facilitator posed this question during a mentoring session.

It reminded me that I always approach an event as both an event and as part of a journey, and that this has been part of the history of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) from its beginning.

ICA used facilitation as part of community development work. Each individual event we facilitated was set

within the larger, longer-term context of community-driven participatory change. We knew that we were both guides for an event, and role models.

I began to wonder if all facilitators approach their work in this same kind of transformative context. So I thought I would set out its key elements, so others could compare their practice.

I always assume that a long term change is unfolding, that individuals will change as part of this process, and that I must pay attention to this moment, this system, and these people because things I have done before may not work in this specific context. I stay curious, and empathetic, because I want to learn everything and I don’t know what is most important to know.

In transformative facilitation, each

element - client communication, design, and facilitation - is a facilitative moment.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACILITATOR AND CLIENT IS KEY TO COLLABORATION.

Client interviews offer an opportunity to get diverse input while connecting with all engaged in the process. Once a date is set for the event, a deeper dialogue - perhaps a design conference or facilitated dialogue - with the sponsor explores the client’s need more deeply:

**Current situation:** What is the business climate? How is it changing? What has changed recently that has made you aware of the need to change?

**Vision or hope for the future:** Why did you become involved in this business? What is your vision of the future?

**Issues:** What major issues you are facing? What needs to change?

**Next steps:** What are you hoping for by working with us? Who, besides yourself, is key to organizational change? At some level, the change is always required of the leader; are you ready to make the necessary change? How urgent is that change?

**DESIGNING BY LISTENING FOR THE DEEPEST LEVEL OF FELT NEED AND BRINGING OUR FULL SELF TO THE DESIGN PROCESS.**

“Facilitator stance”, as seen by a 2011 US ToP network task force, includes such aspects as “I will symbolize our values, hold the container of possibility, trust in the group, trust in group process, participation is key, suspend assumptions, willingness to seeing and affirming what is, coming to a situation without judgment, and (of course) neutrality.”

**TOP DESIGN EYE**

**Assessing the Current Situation-** What do we need to address?

**Understanding the Change Dynamics** – What fundamental change needs to happen?

**Clarifying Images of the future** – How will this work be carried forward

**Discerning the focus:** What are we trying to achieve?

**Create a working design:** What processes will enable the group to achieve this result

**Values/Guiding Principles in ToP Design** (Adapted from Jane Stallman’s list)

**Co-design with client** - unique to client needs – dialogue, draft, dialogue, draft, modify as we go

**Ownership** of work is the client’s.

**Participation is key** – Experiential intent, safety for the work that is needed

**Focus on outcome**, action, resolve ... Begin with the end in mind.

**FACILITATING WITH THE FOCUS ON THIS GROUP AT EACH MOMENT, ADJUSTING PROCESS, METHOD**

**AND STYLE MOMENT BY MOMENT.**

**Explore** hidden facets of their context. “Appreciation for gifts” and “exploring contradictions” help surface deeper and often unexplored aspects of their context.

**Developing awareness** of dialogue and silence as skills in “holding the space” for the group to process its learning and thus move to a deeper level of reflection and choice.

**Being open** to “letting go of the design” while recognizing that the facilitator must keep the group focused on time, task and context at times of choice or transition. Even if they are not aware of it, the group is in charge and is self-organizing.

*Lawrence Philbrook, director of ICA Taiwan, is a facilitator and organizational transformation consultant who has been designing processes for teams and leaders for over 20 years. For more information or feedback, please contact him at icamail@icatw.com*

# Whole Systems approach gets communities buzzing

By Bill Staples



of visible results including schools, clinics and electrification projects. Those results stand even after thirty years. The belief was borne out again in ICA inspired city-wide renewal projects in the 80s and 90s in North America, Europe, Latin America, Africa and South East Asia. We have seen it in the beginning of this millennium in hundreds of projects and organizations using community development approaches inspired and supported by ToP facilitators on every continent. You can read about some of these at <http://top-facilitators.com/> serendipity and even add your own.

## Recharged Battery

My own personal battery was recharged in my recent work with 13 multi-ethnic geographic communities spread throughout the City of Toronto. Each community had hired 3 full time animators who were supposed to get their neighbourhood involved in some unspecified CD efforts. The animators, along with a core of community leaders, embarked on a year-long programme using the ICA whole system community development approach. It was awesome to witness their historical scans, social

## Every Continent

One constant about ICA colleagues over the decades has been the fervent belief in the unlimited potential of every human being. The belief was tested and proven in the 5th City neighbourhood

project in Chicago where jobless and restless youth started businesses, schools and lasting organizations. It was seen again in ICA’s Nava Gram Prayas in Maharashtra where hundreds of young men and women with no future prospects launched a community development movement with hundreds

process analysis, mapping and gridding and strategic plans. The implementation was amazing! Within two years, Glendower community's strategy of "improving safety in community streets" lead to a police report saying Glendower had "a marked decrease in crime. A new standard has been set." One strategy in the Jane-Finch community was "resident-led community action." They turned the ICA gridding walk-about into an annual affair to 'take back the streets.' There are many more stories like this.

## Inspiring Results

Colleagues in Il Ngwesi community in Kenya reported a dramatic increase in HIV/AIDS testing participation - from 0% to 82% of the population, as a result of the ICA community development approach. This level of success is unheard of throughout Africa, as reported by a Public Health evaluation expert from the University of Toronto who visited Il Ngwesi.

Ghoramara, a small Bangladesh community of displaced persons, has recently reported the establishment of a primary school, school building, skills development and tube wells, all as a result of the ICA whole system approach.

ICA's collaborative 100 Valleys Project in Peru has been a recent and enormous initiative implementing self-development demonstration communities throughout the Sierras and facilitating collaboration between agencies. This has resulted in the extensive use of advanced irrigation systems to double crop harvests and youth returning to their communities after completing their advanced education, among many other visible improvements.

## Whole Systems Approach

Two common elements among all these initiatives and hundreds of others has been the core belief in the unlimited potential of every human being and the practice of ICA whole system community development. The simple use of the ToP™ Consensus Workshop Method, for instance, automatically engages the population in the whole system approach. Participants end up with a consensus on initiatives and goals that represents a bigger system than any one person would have anticipated. Of course, not all ICAs use the "whole system" terminology in regular conversation but they are familiar with it and know what it means. ICA's Brian Stanfield popularized the term "whole system community development" to help people understand the difference between ICA's community development approach and those approaches that tend to work on a particular issue. While the ICA approach has analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation like most other approaches, it also has best practices within it that can lead to dramatic outcomes like replication, extension and expansion.

## Variety of Strategies

The ICA whole system approach has the ability to evolve into many other approaches and to serve a wide variety of needs. Witness ICA's work in Peru: its whole system approach was central to the development and organization of a nation-wide self-empowerment system for youth with physical disabilities and resulted in a string of large hospitals funded by national lotteries. The

approach also was put to use in the earthquake and tsunami ravaged coastal areas of Peru in 2010.

ICA Japan which has for over a decade been a constant and great source of funding and inspiration for community development efforts around the world, has shifted the whole system approach towards massive relief efforts for the earthquake and tsunami victims in Japan in 2011. ICA Japan staff noted the unlocking of human potential which occurred when traditional Japanese emotional reserve was transformed by immediate interest and preoccupation with the well-being of one's neighbors.

There is expertise within the ICA global network for using the ICA Whole System approach in crisis relief, material support and advocacy. Enormous experience can be found in development education, developing basic infrastructure and generating local solutions.

There are many initiatives in the past ten years in human resource development, organizational strengthening and systems development.

I am looking forward in the next year to collecting stories, approaches and other ideas that can be shared globally. Perhaps the conference in Nepal can make headway in this. All of us in ICA have a tremendous history in community development and in helping people gain confidence in using the unlimited potential which is theirs.

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*Bill Staples is a member of ICA-Associates, Canada.*

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*This article first appeared in the October 2011 issue.*

# Empowering Chicago's community leaders

By Terry Bergdall



*Meetings of the SLN are hosted by members on-site at their work, thereby allowing for in-depth sharing with one another about ways they are engaged in sustainability. An SLN gathering occurs here at the Rebuilding Exchange which collects materials from the demolition of old buildings for recycling into new construction.*

Networks are about connecting people. They involve diverse purposes, approaches, interests and forms. In Chicago, ICA-USA is creating a "Sustainability Leaders Network" (SLN) in a response to the urgent issues of our times. These include economic dysfunction and injustice, unsustainable consumption of natural resources, and the mammoth implications of global climate change.

SLN has involved 30 leaders from community groups across the city, continuing the "Accelerate 77" (A77) program launched by ICA in 2011. The success of the program led the

Boeing Corporation to award \$90,000 to underwrite the creation of SLN over a two-year period. Direct work on this commenced in September 2013.

## Why SLN is important

Economic chaos, disparity between the rich and poor, unsustainable consumption of natural resources, and the extreme effects of climate change are realities across the world. Climate change is often referred to as a "super wicked problem". No one knows for sure what will happen when the earth warms two degrees. It is important to

“expand the table” with different perspectives and knowledge so that people can work together to anticipate impacts - and so that they know how to collaborate when problems arise. The importance of collaboration and “soft skills” is apparent in analyses of numerous disasters around the world. People cope with disasters more effectively when they have good social networks and connections.

The challenges of climate change are increasingly obvious. According to national weather reports this year, 11 of the past 12 years have been the hottest ever. Wildfires, hurricanes and other disasters have been increasing in number and size. Like other cities around the world, Chicago has prepared sweeping plans. They ultimately depend on widespread engagement of the people. Regional and municipal plans use a “top down” strategy to change behavior among city dwellers through a combination of education, promotion and incentives. Though important, such strategies have limited ability to release the creativity and innovation of citizens. Another approach is



“bottom-up, building upon ingenuity and resourcefulness that emerges from, and is driven by, people’s interests, concerns and commitments. A third approach, which SLN advocates, is complementary action from the top and the bottom - and the nurturing of a space “in-between” where government and communities work together to analyze and solve big challenges.

In addition to strengthening these networks and connections for lateral purposes of mutual support, there is a need to empower them to make vertical relationships more effective. Community representatives are frequently included on special commissions and working groups but they are often token participants. While other members represent large powerful institutions (for example, government, businesses and funding foundations), community representatives typically come from small, independent, organizations. While their work may be exemplary, their voice is relatively weak. Their insights are often buried or lost amid the volume of inputs from more powerful members.



*Accelerate 77 Karen Weigert, Chief Sustainability Officer for the City of Chicago, speaks at the opening of the Accelerate 77 ‘Share Fair’ held in September 2012.*

This imbalance has a negative effect, for example, on community representatives, when feelings of marginalization are perpetuated, and on the effectiveness of working groups, when insights from a local perspective are overlooked.

## What the network does

SLN’s goal is to increase the impact of local sustainability initiatives through lateral interactions and by developing a stronger public voice in vertical relationships. SLN does three things - connecting, aligning and producing.

Connecting - ICA’s facilitation expertise has ensured progress through an initial link up with community organizations identified during the A77 program. There is now a core of 15 leaders and three SLN working groups. One is identifying assets and exploring ways to “share knowledge” as peers. A second is thinking through issues of “community design” to strengthen organizations within the network. A third group is clarifying the purpose of the network through planning and through promoting potential benefits to get other community organizations involved. Because SLN is new, much of this initial work is about conceptualization and planning.

Aligning - This involves establishing a common language and context through training events and workshops on sustainability innovation. This is still in an initiation phase. During the next year and a half, SLN will host activities involving facilitative leadership and community engagement skills in different parts or “hubs” of the city - the south, west, and north sides. Forums may also be organised on themes such as food, energy, water, waste management

and recycling, transportation, and community resiliency. Such forums will link community organizations with experts who have researched and/or been involved in related work on a regional or municipal basis.

Producing - This is about coordinating local sustainability initiatives and is still in a planning stage. Communication and information sharing are an important part of future discussion. As more experience is gained with the hubs, SLN will act on high priority areas emerging from experiences and insights gained from the “alignment” phase. This could involve designing and testing a process to create sustainability action plans with clusters of communities.

## Practical questions for the network

The SLN has been initiated by a core of leaders. Its aim is to multiply the impact of independent, and often isolated, sustainability initiatives. ICA, which plays a “backbone” role with the network, is now one of three highlighted co-sponsors of the Green Town Conference, along with the City of Chicago and Chicago Metropolitan Agency of Planning. This is company that would have been unimaginable for ICA prior to Accelerate 77. It is a result of growing recognition of the importance of nurturing the “in-between” space connecting top-down and bottom-up.

ICA has been invited to join a consortium to respond to a US\$12 million request for proposals from the National Science Foundation to advance sustainability practices in urban environments. The consortium includes the University

of Chicago, Northwestern University, Notre Dame University, and the Argonne National Laboratory.

While ICA and SLN are winning recognition, they still have many practical questions to deal with such as:

What value does SLN provide to community sustainability organizations and how is it communicated?

How does the SLN creatively relate to other networks?

Who speaks for the network? How is it represented in its online publications?

How are financial matters addressed? ICA has shared information about its grant from Boeing but there is the potential for people to feel like some are raising money for themselves based on the work of others. How can issues like this be avoided?

How will SLN's impact be measured? What should be tracked and reported?

Answering these questions is crucial for the future as communities everywhere come to terms with the urgency of the environmental crisis facing us today.

*This article first appeared in the April 2014 issue.*

#### Highlights of the Accelerate 77 program, 2011-2012

800 community-driven sustainability initiatives documented from all 77 community areas of the city; this was accomplished by 220 students from DePaul, Loyola, Northeastern Illinois, Chicago State, and Roosevelt universities;

a network website established and basic database of community initiatives made publicly available at [www.accelerate77.net](http://www.accelerate77.net);

city-wide "Share Fair" held on September 15, 2012, attended by 400 people with tables from 63 communities;

three follow-up meetings - on the north, south, and west sides - held in February and March 2013;

## A System That Works

By Jonathan Dudding

Volunteers in the UK, all with experience in management and business development, offered to link up as mentors for directors of ICAs in Africa in early 2012. The latter could use this expertise to enrich their thinking and approach to issues such as developing their careers and work; and for growing and supporting their organisation.

The plan was to have three to four conversations over a period of between six months and a year. Four senior staff members showed interest and were linked up with three mentors, one of whom agreed to work with two directors. Out of the four relationships, one did not take off, one stalled, one lasted as long as the director had an issue that required attention, and one is still continuing. This experience provides several lessons, many of them related to laying the foundations for an ongoing relationship.

It is important that everyone concerned is clear on what is involved and expected. While the concept of mentoring is fairly familiar (although not always understood) in the UK, in Africa it is less common. Expectations there are more in line with tangible advice and guidance, rather than questions to consider, examples to share, time to reflect and help to reach your own conclusions. Spending time to tease out these different perceptions and expectations, and to understand each other's roles and responsibilities, therefore, is valuable. This also helps to build up trust. One mentor noted that the relationship improved after she became friends on Facebook with her mentee, thus revealing more about herself and demonstrating her openness. Confidentiality is also a key concept – agreeing on what can and cannot be revealed to others. In our case, all conversations were held in confidence, which is why there are no names or explicit references in this article. It is also wise for mentors to be able to link mentees to other sources of advice and guidance in cases where the needs are important but fall out with the remit of a mentoring relationship. In our case, the mentors linked the directors back to me in such situations.

Agreement on the communication arrangements is another key. Which

technology works best for both parties? In the UK we tend towards using Skype – it is free and easy to use as most of us enjoy good broadband access. In African countries, these advantages are often countered by the inconvenience of carrying on sensitive conversations in Internet cafes, and electricity and Internet provision can be unreliable. In our examples, discussions with the mentees led to different solutions – in one case Skype was appropriate, in another it was mobile phone, in another a combination of Skype, mobile and email.

Which language works best? Two mentors were able to communicate in more than one relevant language for their mentees. So they were able to offer a choice of which language to use, or to switch between languages depending on their ability to express themselves on a particular topic.

What time works best? In addition to agreeing on how often the calls should take place, the broader cultural question of how time is regarded and managed needs to be addressed. As one mentor

said "If I have a call booked for 10am, then that is as serious a commitment for me as meeting someone face to face – I need to be there and ready in time". Whether everyone sees it this way is always worth exploring. Sometimes, the issue may not be one of commitment but of the power going off at the wrong moment.

Both parties need to be adaptable and flexible. The relationship needs to be mutually beneficial – this is not a one-way street. Mentors need to be ready to learn too and, as one said, "allow ourselves to be vulnerable".

When we take these considerations into account, a mentoring scheme can work to the mutual benefit of both parties. It becomes an effective way of transferring knowledge, enabling learning and creating a space for reflection.

*Jonathan Dudding is the Director of ICA:UK. He is responsible for its international programme, including working with partner organisations in Africa.*

*This article first appeared in the December 2014 issue.*



# Going green in Taiwan

By Gordon Harper

It took a while for the environmental movement to register on the ICA screen. In my own case, I gave it serious attention only after our UN collaboration, the International Exposition of Rural Development, culminated for us in Taiwan in 1985.

In 1987, the UN and its Brundtland Commission had issued its explosive report on development and the environment, called *Our Common Future*. The report became a worldwide bestseller. It showed economic and social development, locally and globally, inextricably connected with the environment in which that development occurred. It argued that its impact on that environment was not tangential but a critical aspect of responsible development. Suddenly, a new term from the report, “sustainable development,” was in the air.

Like the millions who studied this report, our understanding of what we meant by development was powerfully addressed – so much so that ICA appropriated the report’s title for its international conference the following year in Mexico. There we explored how this would change what we did and how we went about it.

We brought this new understanding into ICA programs in Taiwan. Some small non-profit groups were starting to appear publicly on the island (up to then, they had been considered suspect by the government). Taiwan created its own Environmental Protection Administration. One of Taiwan’s prestigious academic institutes issued a sobering projection (*Taiwan 2000*) of what lay ahead if nothing were done to address a long list of critical pollution issues. The editor of these studies accepted our invitation to join our ICA Advisory Board.

At first, we found places where we could help direct attention to the topic. ICA was a member of the American Chamber of Commerce in Taiwan, and we held meetings that looked at what members might do to curb the industrial waste and pollution of their operations on the island. ICA helped form the Chamber’s environmental committee, which brought in speakers and programs to inform the expatriate business community of the new regulations that were coming

and how it could work with rather than against these winds of change.

We also decided we needed our own programs in this arena. Our first venture was to create an Environmental Roundtable, a monthly gathering of ICA colleagues, local environmentalists and expatriates for discussion of aspects of the topic. With the help of a local computer users group that otherwise mostly distributed counterfeit software, we started an electronic environmental bulletin board for posting environmental information, discussions, news items and a calendar of upcoming events. We helped to publicize Earth Day and organize clean-up workdays in local communities. The international radio station in Taipei became our partner in interviewing our environmental speakers and recording and broadcasting the events that we sponsored or co-sponsored.

In 1990, ICA asked Taiwan to host its next international conference. The program would focus entirely on ways of caring for the environment. We were fortunate to obtain support from the Taiwanese government, which provided the venue. We invited speakers and workshop leaders from the public and private sectors as well as non-profit organizations across the Asia Pacific to share their efforts and plans for combating pollution and preserving our natural world. Daily email reports linked people as far away as the United States and Europe to the conference, and we shared their responses with the participants. One of our small contributions to changing our own ways was to distribute the final reports to participants at the closing plenary entirely on floppy discs – what we would refer to as the first paperless ICAI conference.

## The father of deep ecology

When you focus on something, amazing things just seem to fall in place. We were given the opportunity to partner with our local radio station in inviting an internationally respected scholar widely known as “the father of deep ecology.” Dr. Arne Naess from Norway was then in his seventies, with many books and honours, and a remarkably engaging speaker. ICA was privileged to host him and arrange his schedule with the many groups who wished to hear him during the week he spent with us.

The most delicious of these events for me was one we arranged with Taiwan’s EPA itself. Dr. Naess was the guest of

honour at a session with the director and his staff, all EPA department heads being on board. They came to the meeting with three-ring binders full of information, ready to discuss any topic and answer any questions their distinguished guest might ask. Dr. Naess began with a question, but one that no one in the room had anticipated. He gently inquired of the EPA officials, “What are you doing to help people here move away from seeking a higher standard of living to seeking a greater quality of life?”

The shock in the room was palpable and followed by utter silence. I no longer recall what the director at last managed to say, but everyone there knew they had had their lives addressed by this visitor and that question.

One of the last environmental ventures we initiated while I was in Taiwan was again the result of a fortuitous accident (or synchronicity, if you will). We had invited Dr. Jean Houston to Taiwan for a week-long series of workshops, ending, at her request, with an island wide bus trip to visit some of the aboriginal and indigenous (non-Han Chinese) communities in the mountainous interior and hear their stories. The experience was an eye-opening event that brought together scenes of great natural beauty and the ways in which traditional cultures profoundly storied, honoured and cared for that environment.

Following Jean’s visit, and with the help of a colleague anthropology professor, we set about arranging and conducting what we called eco-cultural tours. A series of these would follow over the coming years, each with a mixture of Taiwanese and expatriate participants, and all of whom would subsequently perceive and engage the environmental and developmental challenges they faced from a new perspective.

These are some of my memories of how in Taiwan we finally embraced a critical issue that we had up to then largely ignored or seen as of secondary significance. For some strange reason, it was two Norwegians, Gro Brundtland and Arne Naess, who figured prominently in my personal transition. As always in the work that we do, this shift in focus not only changed those with whom we partnered during those years--it also changed us.

*This article first appeared in the August 2014 issue*

*The writer, who worked with the Institute of Cultural Affairs from the 1970s and was a mentor and trainer of trainers, died in February this year at the age of 79.*

## Re-imagining Australia: Voices of Indigenous Australians of Filipino descent.

By Deborah Ruiz Wall with Christine Choo; Southport, Queensland: Keeaira Press 2016

### Telling the stories of Manilamen

Australia's pearling industry boom in the 1880s drew many divers from the Philippines. They married into the indigenous population and settled in remote parts of Northern and Western Australia before the country federated in 1901.

Dr Deborah Ruiz Wall and Dr Christine Choo make use of oral histories and other primary sources, as well as the scholarship on early Australian-Philippine relations, to reconstruct the lives and histories of these "Manilamen" and their progeny.

These accounts date from a period of global migration and trade underpinned by intersections of colonial cultural assertion, foreign missionary endeavours and early infrastructure economic development before British Australia and Spanish Philippines became independent nations.

The pearl divers faced challenges to obtaining equal rights with British subjects and securing stable employment and settlement. Even after living in the country for decades with their indigenous families, most were disenfranchised and treated as "aliens". Both indigenous and Asian people experienced the effects of laws that reinforced hierarchies based on race. These laws were indicative of the state's effort to define and assert its sovereignty during periods that marked Australia's emergence into nationhood, gradually incorporating people entering the country from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The book contains the accounts of 21



Filipino pearl diver Severo Corpus and his Aboriginal wife, Emma Nyobing. They were married in 1898.

descendants of the Manilamen from Broome, Western Australia and Torres Strait. Drawing on family stories and memory, they reflect on their heritage and how it has shaped their lives.

They discuss what it is like to be both Aboriginal and Filipino, one culture enriching the other to create a uniqueness "that no one else has", as one narrator, Mitch Torres, puts it. The stories reveal a more intimate connection between indigenous Australians and Asians than is presently recognized.

The rich narratives and well-chosen photographs fill a significant gap, given

that few Australians or Filipinos are aware of the length, strength and depth of their intertwined history. This book will serve as an important historical resource for the narrators' families and their communities as well as the nation.

A book launch will be held in the Philippines on Oct 18 with Wall and narrator Kevin Puertollano in attendance. The event, sponsored by the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the Australian Embassy, commemorates the Indigenous People's Month and the 70th anniversary of Philippine-Australian diplomatic relations.



Dr Deborah Ruiz Wall



Dr Christine Choo

Dr Wall OAM ([wall.deborah@gmail.com](mailto:wall.deborah@gmail.com)) has done oral history projects featuring Redfern Aboriginal stories and Aboriginal and Filipino women in Sydney.

Dr Choo, who has an interest in Western Australian history and the contributions of indigenous people, is an Honorary Research Fellow of the University of Western Australia.

