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INDIGENOUS FESTIVALS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF AN AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS FESTIVAL

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Festivals and events are widely recognized as having the potential to deliver sociocultural benefits for host communities and destinations. In countries such as Australia, Indigenous communities are looking towards festivals as vehicles to facilitate capacity building, self-determination, and reconciliation. Given this context, this article utilizes Brisbane's Annual Sports and Cultural Festival as a case study to identify and critically examine the sociocultural benefits of festivals; and to identify and discuss those key critical factors which promote positive sociocultural benefits and sustainable community development through the staging of indigenous festivals. Through a qualitative research approach, semistructured, in-depth interviews were undertaken with 18 Queensland local and State government actors and key stakeholders of the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival. The findings revealed that the festival creates positive sociocultural benefits not only for festival participants and attendees but also for the wider indigenous community. Such benefits include the development of social capital, cultural preservation, and reconciliation, all of which are arguably significant factors in the facilitation of sustainable community development.

Key words: Indigenous festivals; Social capital; Sustainable development

Introduction

Festivals and events have emerged as a global industry due to the significant economic, sociocultural, and political benefits they can provide. While there are of course challenges (Ap & Crompton, 1998), the benefits of festivals can include increased

revenue and employment (Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis, & Mules, 2000; Ritchie, 1984; Van de Wagen, 2005), increased commercial and tourism opportunities (Alston, 1998; Crompton & McKay, 1994; Moscardo, 2007; Soutar & McLeod, 1993; Van de Wagen, 2005), enhanced community image and pride (Horne, 1992; Jago & Shaw, 1998;

Pennington-Gray & Holdnak, 2002; Wolman & Spitzley, 1996), increased community cohesion and social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2002; Derrett, 2002; Wood, 2009), and attracting tourists to a region (Jago & Shaw, 1998). Increasingly, in countries such as Australia, international tourists are seeking to incorporate indigenous products and experiences into their itineraries and thus there is a growing interest in indigenous tourism and events (Briednehann & Wickens, 2004; Harrison, 1996).

Consequently, in countries such as Australia, tourism and events have come into the focus of both the Federal and State governments for the numerous sociocultural and economic benefits they can provide indigenous communities and regional economies (Moscardo, 2007). Festivals, and events in particular, are considered effective vehicles with which to not only showcase Indigenous culture, which continues to thrive through art, storytelling, dance, and community gatherings (van Den Berg, Collard, Harben, & Byrne, 2005), but to also create awareness and interest in indigenous tourism. The significant role Indigenous festivals and events can play as facilitators of positive sociocultural benefits should not be underestimated. Indeed, the value and importance of indigenous festivals was noted in the Northern Territory Indigenous Tourism Strategy:

festivals offer indigenous communities an opportunity to share and showcase their culture in a managed manner for a limited period. This can result in communities experiencing some of the benefits of tourism without significant social impacts. Indigenous festivals are also very important in increasing mutual understanding between host community and other Territory residents. (Northern Territory Tourist Commission, 2004, p. 10)

In particular, cultural and sporting festivals and events provide communities with the opportunity to not only experience a leisure episode, but they also have the potential to provide host communities with positive sociocultural benefits. Accordingly, more indigenous communities are looking towards sporting and cultural festivals as vehicles to facilitate a more positive future through the development of, among other things, capacity building, self-determination, and reconciliation (Downey, 1993). One example is the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival, which is held in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

Arguably, the success of indigenous festivals such as the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival in Brisbane cannot, and indeed should not, be judged simply on profit and loss (Gratton, Dobson, & Shibli, 2000). Although the festival generates significant economic benefits for the host community, it also provides a forum for community cohesion and celebration, while concomitantly strengthening and enhancing cultural knowledge. Consequently, festivals like this are being viewed as vehicles for facilitating social capital and community development. Although some research has been undertaken in regard to Indigenous events and related development options (Chang, 2006; Tremblay, 2009; Tremblay & Haydon, 2007), little if any work has been undertaken to identify the extent to which Indigenous festivals promote positive sociocultural benefits and facilitate indigenous community development. Based on the results of a broader sociocultural and economic impact study of Brisbane's Annual Sports and Cultural Festival, this article utilizes the festival as a case study and provides empirical evidence to: (1) identify and critically examine the sociocultural benefits of Indigenous festivals and (2) identify those key critical factors which promote positive sociocultural benefits and sustainable community development through the staging of Indigenous festivals.

The Annual Sports and Cultural Festival

The Annual Sports and Cultural Festival is run by First Contact Inc., a not-for-profit indigenous community organization that provides a number of different services to the greater Brisbane indigenous community, including resources, training, and development facilities; support and guidance to organizations and projects within South East Queensland; implementing strategies to overcome youth social problems; conducting night patrols to monitor youth on the streets; and conducting and coordinating preventative, proactive projects, innovative activities, and events (First Contact Inc., 2008). One event developed by First Contact Inc. is the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival, which is an indigenous sporting and cultural performance festival that has been held annually in Brisbane since 1993. The festival seeks to achieve outcomes for the indigenous community, the wider community in general, and for numerous funding

organizations by bringing together indigenous and nonindigenous touch football teams from Brisbane, regional Queensland, interstate, and overseas. Additionally, a range of indigenous music and cultural entertainers perform on the "community stage" throughout the 3-day festival and various food stalls and arts and crafts are available for sale.

The festival has grown from a small, local community "get together" to become an international sports and cultural festival, as evidenced by anecdotal growing numbers of participants and attendees. It is estimated that the festival receives some 10,000 visitors over the 3 days from the greater Brisbane region as well as interstate and international. The growth of the festival has been facilitated by media support from local radio and newspapers and sponsorship from Commonwealth and Queensland State government departments as well as the Brisbane City Council. Further, the growth of the festival can arguably be attributed to the entrepreneurial vision of the late Robbie Williams, CEO and founder of First Contact Inc. and the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival. There has been much discussion pertaining to entrepreneurship and economic development within indigenous communities (Anderson, Dana, & Dana, 2006) highlighting the importance of entrepreneurs in developing business opportunities, sourcing start-up finance, and developing partnerships with other business as well as government and nongovernment agencies. Furthermore, Hailey (1992), believed indigenous entrepreneurship is an integral part of balanced development, not only because such participation is fundamental for promoting economic growth, but also because indigenous entrepreneurs help generate confidence in indigenous activities and a climate of greater self-reliance.

The Annual Sports and Cultural Festival has not been run by benign ownership/management that is overly dependent on government resourcing but was, and continues to be, a vibrant activity where new combinations are being achieved and where new activities and markets are being explored (Neblett & Green, 1999). Importantly, the festival remains the responsibility and control of indigenous peoples and takes into account cultural values and heritage to ensure they are supported by local communities (Fuller, Buultjens, & Cummings, 2005). Alarming though, many indigenous tourism products are not owned and/or controlled by Indigenous

peoples and often the operators do not work with indigenous people, seeking little to no input into the appropriate utilization of indigenous culture, land, and sacred sites (Johnston, 2000). Additionally, difficulties in developing indigenous tourism product have also been attributed not only to a lack of government funding but also to a limited awareness and interest from tourist markets (Schmiechen, 2006). Arguably though, there was renewed interest when the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games showcased indigenous Australian culture to the world as a unique and important feature of Australia (Schmiechen, 2006) and revitalized indigenous tourism in Australia.

The Annual Sports and Cultural Festival is unique as it is a prime example of a "culture controlled" (Butler & Hinch, 1996) sports festival that has been developed and operated by an indigenous Australian not-for-profit organization. Tourism products, including festivals that have been developed and controlled successfully by indigenous peoples with a focus on promoting Indigenous culture are deemed "culture controlled" (Butler & Hinch, 2007). Such control undoubtedly provides indigenous Australians with a means to reclaim heritage, increase economic independence, and preserve culture (van Den Berg et al., 2005). Additionally, culture-controlled products, such as First Contact Inc.'s Annual Sports and Cultural Festival, are less likely to experience negative impacts such as loss of authenticity, commoditization, and a market-determined product (Ryan & Huyton, 2000). Arguably, it has the potential to become one of Australia's most internationally well-known and attended national indigenous sporting and cultural festivals. Given the benefits of smaller festivals and events such as sports and cultural festivals and the focus on indigenous tourism, it is not surprising that a key priority identified by Tourism Australia (2007) was the continued development of iconic indigenous festivals, such as the Brisbane Annual Sports and Cultural Festival.

Method

Although indigenous festivals are recognized as providing a forum for community cohesion and celebration, strengthen and enhancing cultural knowledge, and facilitate social capital and community development, little if any work has been undertaken

to identify the extent to which indigenous festivals promote positive sociocultural benefits and facilitate indigenous community development. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which Brisbane's Annual Sports and Cultural Festival facilitates indigenous community development through the generation of positive sociocultural impacts. A qualitative research approach utilizing semistructured, in-depth interviews was undertaken with 18 Queensland local and State government actors and key stakeholders to obtain an in-depth understanding of the sociocultural aspects of the festival. Respondents included representatives of government, organizers/event managers, touch football association representatives, performers, stallholders/vendors, and team members. Stakeholder contact details were provided by the organizers First Contact and all stakeholders were invited to participate in the study. The interviews were undertaken either via telephone or face to face, depending on the respondent's preference. Although the use of two interview formats could be considered a limitation of the study, this approach was necessary to access difficult to reach participants yet still provided the opportunity to obtain insight into the research topic from diverse viewpoints.

The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the respondent's willingness and all interviews were recorded and transcribed to allow for content analysis to be undertaken on the data. Due to the use of semistructured, in-depth interviews, an interview schedule was developed with topics for discussion including: the sociocultural aspects of the festival (meeting friends and family, celebration, culture and heritage, festival impacts); economic impacts (small business opportunities); and governance (organization, stakeholders roles and responsibilities, community involvement, reconciliation), which emerged as relevant themes from an extensive review of the literature. The research was underpinned by the ethics of indigenous knowledge research (Sheehan & Walker, 2001) and designed to ensure the reliability, validity, replicability, and authenticity of the study.

Content analysis is a technique used for gathering and analyzing the content of text by categorizing and coding data. The content analysis procedures used in this study followed the principles of Neuman's (1997) use of manifest and latent codes

as Neuman (1997) suggested that the use of manifest coding in conjunction with latent coding strengthens the final result. Manifest coding examines the visible surface content in text and is more reliable because the phrase or word either is, or is not, present in a text. In essence, manifest coding concentrates on "the elements that are physically present and countable" (Gray & Densten, 1998, p. 420). However, manifest coding does not take into account the connotations of words and phrases, when such words and phrases may have multiple meanings in the context in which they are written. Therefore, latent coding is employed to look for the underlying, implicit meaning in the content of the text (Neuman, 1997).

Latent codes identified in the literature review were selected and allowed for the nomination of key distinguishing criteria for each code which were used as a reference throughout the ensuing latent coding of the interview transcripts. Secondly, single or multiple words and/or phrases emerging from the interview were selected and allocated manifest codes. Selected words and/or phrases were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet along with the relevant interview number (e.g.):

Page No. Keyword(s)/ Interview No.	Manifest Code
We met up with family	strengthens family

The importance of words and/or phrases was determined by a review of the relevant literature and a critical colleague validated their importance. Following this, manifest codes were condensed to latent codes and placed in a corresponding column in the spreadsheet. Latent codes identified in the literature review as being the most discernible during the study period were selected and relevant literature allowed the nomination of key distinguishing criteria for each code which were used as a reference throughout the ensuing latent coding of the interview transcripts (e.g.):

Manifest Code	Latent Code
strengthens family	Social capital

Latent codes were sorted by alphabetical order to provide visual ease of identification for the

following procedure and grouped according to their respective manifest codes (e.g., strengthens family = social capital).

The study involved interpreting the content of interview transcripts and during the analysis the researcher's own awareness of factors outside the social and historical context may have distorted meanings and understandings. For instance, the research was undertaken by two nonindigenous Australian females. Gadamer (1976) pointed out that the contemporary consciousness of history could be fundamentally different from the apparent reality prevailing at the time. Furthermore, subjectivity is an essential part of the interpretive analysis and the researcher's political perspectives may have influenced interpretation of the text. In order to reduce researcher subjectivity, two critical colleagues versed in content analysis techniques reviewed the manifest and latent coding of the policies and discrepancies in interpretation were debated until consensus was reached. The results of the stakeholder interviews are presented according to the themes that emerged from the manifest coding. Direct quotes from the interviews have been presented throughout the results and discussion section.

Results and Discussion

Sociocultural Impacts of the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival

The staging of a festival can impact on the social life and structure of a community by either enhancing or detracting from the social environment of the region (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Hall, 1992; Soutar & McLeod, 1993). Indeed, the results demonstrate that the festival generated positive socio-cultural impacts including the development of social capital, cultural preservation, and reconciliation. For instance, respondents discussed enjoying "the camaraderie among black fellas. You know getting together, being part of the mob, enjoying each other's company, talking about how things are going, and how people are going in the community."

Importantly though, common negative impacts often identified at festivals such as disruption to resident lifestyles, traffic congestion, vandalism, overcrowding, crime (Dwyer et al., 2000), loss of authenticity, and commoditization (Ryan & Huyton, 2000) were not raised by respondents as issues at

the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival. Instead, the festival generated a sense of community celebration engendered by the occasion, which was a public and freely accessed social gathering involving a variety of media such as arts and craft, performances, and demonstrations. According to one respondent, "one of the significant things that you come away from this festival with is having knowledge that it is purely a celebration of not only cultural events but also cultural achievements across the board." Additionally, respondents identified that "the strength of the festival (was) in building social capital across a number of Indigenous community groups."

Consequently, this and other festivals are increasingly seen to be facilitators of the development of social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006). This study adopted Putnam's (1995) focus on social capital, which essentially refers to the collective benefits accruing to the community that can be derived from social capital. According to Dekker and Uslaner (2001) social capital is fundamentally about how people interact with each other and signifies a web of relationships, norms of behavior, values, obligations, and information channels (Ford, 1999). Social capital is grounded in the connectivity of human activity yet it is similar to other forms of capital in that it can be invested with the expectation of future returns (Adler & Kwon, 2002). When social capital is present, it is generally found in the social structures of society, allowing individuals to act effectively within these structures (Coleman, 1990). It is best conceptualized as a cumulative and transferable public good, freely accessible by the community involving civic engagement, associational membership, and the development of social networks (Cooke & Wills, 1999).

Unfortunately, there is strong evidence (Cox, 1995; Pascoe, 1996; Putnam, 1995) that social capital is in decline as a result of among other things, residential mobility, the welfare state, increased demands on time and money, the changing role of women, and the advent of television. Moreover, Cox (1995) suggested that the values responsible for holding a society together, such as cooperation, goodwill, trust, and reciprocity are rapidly disappearing and hoped that society might realize "a new century of optimism that will allow us to move cooperatively and not competitively toward a more

civilized future” (Cox, 1995, p. 2). From the results of this study, it is suggested that festivals may provide an opportunity for such cooperation to occur. Although the links between the development of social capital and festivals remain theoretically tenuous, it was possible to identify some clear connections between the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival and the development of social capital, particularly as the festival facilitated increased social cohesiveness, celebration, and community resources (Arcodia & Whitford, 2002, 2006).

*The Promotion of Social Cohesiveness
at the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival*

Each year, thousands of people attend the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival for an array of reasons including participation in cultural demonstrations, competitive sporting activities, and/or to socialize with family and friends. Indeed, all the interview respondents agreed the festival focused on strengthening family, friends, and community. According to one interview respondent, the festival developed a “sense of togetherness with the community (where) lots of indigenous people come together to celebrate indigenous culture and sport.” Therefore the festival arguably develops social capital by promoting social cohesiveness as “it’s a good binding festival because it brings people together” and promotes “participation across sociocultural economic areas and racial barriers,” reiterating the notion that the festival has the capacity to bind society together (Galt, 1973).

Indeed, most respondents indicated that every year they used the festival as a main “meeting place” to catch up with friends and relatives who do not live in the same local area. Meeting up with friends and family was generally seen as more important to those who travelled from regions such as North Queensland or from interstate. Indeed, one interview respondent noted that:

I think it’s just the opportunity to catch up with the mob and to really display the culture and to find out where everyone is and what they are up to, in general, in their lives and family. . . . A lot of the participants bring their wives and children; which I think is great. So it’s always good to see a new little bub or an aunt. . . . And sometimes they have travelled. . . . They have taken the opportunity to come up and have a holiday in Queensland and I

think for me that’s special. . . . Yeah, it’s a time to get together and have a bit of fun and let your hair down a bit and yeah, just catch up with everybody . . .

This social occasion then, which occurs on a recurring basis, provides an opportunity for all members of the community to unite and share a worldview through ethnic, linguistic, historical, and cultural bonds, while providing an important occasion for a unique experience in peoples’ social lives (Earls, 1993; Falassi, 1987).

*The Promotion of Celebration at the Annual
Sports and Cultural Festival*

The Annual Sports and Cultural Festival also enhanced social capital by providing the community with the opportunity for public celebration which can be identified by four essential characteristics: (1) performance of cultural symbols, (2) entertainment, (3) undertaken in a public place, and (4) community participation (Salamone, 2000). There is little doubt that the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival met this criteria as many interview respondents noted that the festival provided them a sense of “togetherness and community spirit at a mass gathering of people celebrating our culture and our well-being” in an open public space. Importantly, a number of the respondents also believed the community festival was “a celebration of the community coming together on the one platform, which is sports and culture.” Indeed, interview respondents said that the use of sport was a good mechanism to facilitate indigenous community celebration as sport has historically brought the Indigenous community together.

Respondents did acknowledge that the celebration of Indigenous culture was as a key element of the festival, but respondents also claimed that they also enjoyed the entertainment, the sports games and sportsmanship, the camaraderie, the positive atmosphere, and the sense of community togetherness. Importantly, some respondents also believed that because the festival is drug and alcohol free, “it sets a good example for the community and at the end of the event everyone has enjoyed their time here and have had a good dose of sport and enjoyed the culture and the food.” Moreover, it demonstrated that indigenous people can have a good time

and enjoy sport and culture in a family, friendly, and safe environment. Overall, it appeared that participants came away from the festival with increased knowledge and awareness that the festival is a celebration of cultural events and achievements and this celebratory nature of the festival undoubtedly generated a feeling of goodwill and community or a spirit of “communitas” (Salamone, 2000).

Building Community Resources at the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival

The Annual Sports and Cultural Festival also builds social capital by developing community resources. It is “actually seen as one of the great and significant events on the indigenous calendar across the country.” First Contact Inc. was responsible for the administrative aspects of the festival and thus interacted with the local business and the general community to make arrangements about the festival, which “creates a resource base support for teams and people so that they can attend the festival itself.” First Contact Inc. was considered an important element of the festival due to their long experience with the festival and their professional administration of the festival. Other respondents noted that First Contact Inc. branched out into the wider community to ensure they have the skills to participate in and attend the festival and also to advertise the festival through word of mouth. This was commonly referred to by interview respondents as the “Murri Grapevine,” a unique but typically indigenous means of communication. This interaction over the period of the festival’s organization raised awareness of community resources and expertise, produced social links between previously unrelated groups and individuals, and generally encouraged a stronger interaction between existing community organizations.

Additionally, the festival was not only used as a catalyst for revitalizing existing partnerships, but also for developing new ones. For example, the festival used many volunteers to set up tents, marquees, fencing, stages, lighting, and parking. The involvement of volunteers provided opportunities for training and development in a variety of skills and encouraged more effective use of local educational, business, and community spaces (Sirianni & Friedland, 2000). Thus overall, “the local community

benefit(ed) from the influx of people who come” to the festival as these community networks not only ensured a high level of social connectivity by reintroducing a healthy relational dimension to the community but also increased peoples’ pride in their heritage and culture.

The Preservation of Culture

As a result of the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival, “more people are getting to view and see and be a part of the richness of the culture.” Cultural performances (50%) and bringing together groups of people (50%) were cited by respondents as important roles of the festival in preserving cultural heritage. Moreover, in 2007, 58% of festival attendees were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage (reference from author). Considering that indigenous peoples currently represent 2.5% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2006), it would appear safe to suggest that the festival is primarily an indigenous festival. Not surprisingly then, indigenous dance troupes, artists, and singers were viewed by interview respondents as vitally important components of the festival. Overall, the respondents felt the festival placed as much importance on culture as it did on sport. For instance, interview respondents said that the inclusion of performing artists at the festival not only provided a valuable means of preserving indigenous arts and culture but it also provided a vehicle with which to educate both indigenous and nonindigenous people about indigenous culture.

While most respondents agreed that the festival had a strong focus on showcasing local and indigenous talent, one interview respondent said that the festival showcased the indigenous culture very well to indigenous people but it did not come into the spotlight of mainstream Australia. Nevertheless, the festival was viewed as an important means of bringing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people together and creating a sense of pride. In fact, the vast majority of interview respondents (91%) claimed that the festival enhanced indigenous community pride. As one respondent said, “(it was) about individuals having a pride of self and a pride of community and a mass group of people sharing a vision makes me feel proud of the Indigenous community.” Importantly, in 2007 most

of the festival attendees were aged between 18 and 24 (29%) and 25 and 34 (22%) and respondents noted that the festival provided younger indigenous people with access to the older members of the community which in turn facilitated the passing on of cultural information (reference from author).

Key Critical Factors for Sustainable Community Development

The study results demonstrate that the festival had a positive sociocultural impact, in particular for the indigenous individuals and communities that participated, the festival contributed towards the development of social capital, cultural preservation, and reconciliation. Yet, to what extent do these positive sociocultural benefits arising from the festival contribute more broadly towards sustainable community development? Altman (2007) insisted there were five basic requirements that should be met for sustainable indigenous development to progress, and these include 1) recognition of Indigenous diversity and difference, 2) a need for partnerships with communities 3) realistic local and regional investments, 4) planning at the local and regional levels for sustainable outcomes, and 5) building local intercultural organizations and institutions and capabilities. Arguably, the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival is fulfilling these requirements to varying degrees.

First, there is little doubt that the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival recognizes indigenous diversity and difference. According to an interview respondent, the festival is “the most unique and biggest Indigenous event that I know of and have been to . . . it is definitely the biggest that I have seen in Australia and I think it is quite unique and different.” Importantly, it celebrates the idea that “indigenous culture has a strong cultural element to it so it’s important that community people are engaging in that and that it is showcased.” Second, there is a growing recognition that community participation is essential for effective community development (Dyck, 2002). The Annual Sports and Cultural Festival is a community based festival and to varying degrees draws upon the skills of the community at different levels. Thus, there is an array of different types of partnerships developed amongst the community in relation to the festival

whose survival is arguably, dependent upon on the development and maintenance of such community partnerships. Indeed, one respondent maintained that “indigenous community organizations should be the main facilitator in any emerging cultural festival and also looking at what other community groups are in the area to ensure that they have a wide range of support.”

Thirdly, Altman (2007) said there is a need for realistic local and regional investments to facilitate sustainable community development. However, a major factor that has been shown to impede indigenous communities from developing enterprises is an inability to access the funds needed to start up, or run their own business. Nevertheless, there were a number of government and nongovernment funding mechanisms available to the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival. Funding sources included Federal government (30%), First Contact Inc., (20%), State government (20%), registration fees (20%), local government (10%), and a small amount from donations (<1%). According to First Contact Inc., “with the funding agreement there are obviously specific outcomes so we work with the government agencies to develop an on the ground plan to ensure that the outcomes occur from the event.” Obviously, the ability to access long-term debt or equity for financing new ventures or major expansions is critical for any business (Lindsay, 2004) and any form of community development will require access to adequate funding resources (Krishnamoorthy, 2007). Therefore, sourcing adequate and continuous funding remains a significant hurdle for many indigenous communities and/or organizations that are often required to seek innovative means of securing this financing.

Innovation more often than not requires effective and efficient planning at the local and regional levels which is the fourth requirement for sustainable community development (Altman, 2007). Indeed, communities often lack effective “whole of community” planning and training for development initiatives to be sustainable. Yet overall, the results suggested that the tactical and long term planning of the festival, in conjunction with both the local community and government has generally been successful. First Contact Inc., were seen to be “doing a good job on the management of the event. Its laid back but its well run and it’s timely.” “The

challenge is still there but not as much as say 10 years ago.” For instance, quite a few years ago before the festival was made a zero alcohol event there were some issues relating to substance abuse.

Additionally, there were cultural tensions between various tribes but these incidences are becoming less and less due to, among other things, effective planning to overcome potential deviant behavior. Indeed, in 2009 with the festival in its 16th year, drawing participants from all over Australia and overseas, the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival has evolved from, among other things, effective planning to become a “a top-level event and it just happens that it is coordinated by an Indigenous group.”

Indigenous communities and individuals often require capacity building in order to realize and sustain development (McGinty, 2002) as capacity building is the process and means through which communities develop the necessary skills and expertise to manage their environment and natural resources in a sustainable manner within their daily activities. The fifth and final requirement according to Altman (2007) is building local intercultural organizations and institutions and capabilities. According to the World Bank (1994), capacity building refers to investment in people, institutions and practices that together, will enable countries in the region to achieve their development objectives. In order for any community development project to be effective, it must involve equal collaboration between government, project stakeholders, and local community representatives (Lindsay, 2004). Yet, some government respondents were not cognizant of what constituted capacity development; however, the respondents who were aware of what constituted capacity development described it as the building up of abilities, skill levels, and knowledge of both individuals and communities.

The results revealed, however, that First Contact Inc. was seen to have developed the necessary skills and abilities to a level where the festival is now efficiently run, widely recognized, and quite successful. In fact,

First Contact as an organization has built up over time and developed their capacity to run a successful program and a successful festival. They have over the years and a lot of that has been through experience and working with other providers that

are going to support them to deliver what they are wanting to deliver and what the community wants as well.

First Contact Inc. maintained that capacity development can occur differently across the various sectors of the community. For instance, First Contact Inc., work with local touch football associations all year round to organize teams for competition, which not only builds capacity at the community level but also facilitates the provision of opportunities to the community which they would not have access to otherwise (i.e., sporting career pathways). Therefore, capacity building can be about developing individual players, coaches, and teams so that they can achieve higher grades and develop higher standards when they compete at the festival.

First Contact Inc. also claimed that capacity building is about encouraging participation from teams in remote areas of regional Australia. Developing capacity in these regions may simply be about providing assistance to organize teams, training, and practice sessions or importantly, transportation to the actual festival. First Contact Inc. also seeks to facilitate the development of other indigenous community organizations. For example, an indigenous community in the Brisbane suburb of Inala not only enters teams into the festival, but now they also conduct their own mini festival just prior to the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival. Thus, the community is not only developing capacity to host their own festival but they are also improving the standard of their teams, which in turn, reflects on the overall standard of the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival.

Conclusion

Over the last few decades a varied array of festivals and events demonstrated their capacity to generate economic growth and provide a point of differentiation for a host region in a globally competitive marketplace. Increasingly however, many festivals and events are also proving to be significant sociocultural phenomena that have the capacity to generate positive sociocultural outcomes for host regions (Van de Wagen, 2005) through, among other things, the generation of social capital (Arcodia

& Whitford, 2006). Not surprisingly then, festivals and events are increasingly being used as instruments for sustaining local economies (Chang, 2006). Thus, the role of festivals in enhancing the economic and social well being of a host region is contributing to the growing importance being afforded to festivals in countries such as Australia (Jago & Shaw, 1998).

Indigenous festivals such as the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival are an important part of this phenomenon. Yet, while there is a small body of work that has examined indigenous tourism events more broadly, the extent to which such festivals and events promote positive sociocultural benefits and facilitate indigenous community development is underrepresented in the literature. Thus, this article addressed a gap in the literature by examining Brisbane's Annual Sports and Cultural Festival as a case study and critically analyzing: the sociocultural benefits of an indigenous festival, and those key critical factors that promote positive sociocultural benefits and sustainable community development through the staging of indigenous festivals. Through a qualitative research approach, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were undertaken with 18 Queensland local and State government actors and key stakeholders of the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival. The findings revealed that the festival does create positive sociocultural benefits not only for festival participants and attendees but also for the wider indigenous community. Such benefits include the development of social capital, cultural preservation, and reconciliation, all of which are arguably significant factors in the facilitation of sustainable community development.

The second objective of the study was to identify the extent to which the festival's sociocultural outcomes can contribute towards sustainable community development. Based on Altman's (2007) five requirements for sustainable indigenous development, the study findings demonstrated that, to varying degrees, the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival is meeting many of these requirements. Consequently, the significance of indigenous festivals and the role they can play in the development of sustainable communities should not be underestimated nor undervalued. For instance, in countries such as Australia, indigenous people are socioeconomically disadvantaged; arguably a direct result

of colonization and the postcolonial impacts on their communities and their countries (Dodson & Smith, 2003). In Australia, the indigenous population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is the most disadvantaged group in the country in terms of income, employment, imprisonment, child protection, health and well-being indicators, life expectancy, and education (Oxfam Australia, 2007).

Further, the importance of "connection to country" for Australian Aboriginals is a complex and pervading part of the Aboriginal psyche. However, in urbanized societies such as Australia where 32% of indigenous Australians live in capital cities (ABS, 2006), individuals may be disenfranchised from their family, country, and culture. As a result, the sustainability of indigenous culture, language, and tradition is considered under threat, and some have claimed that Aboriginal languages run the risk of "dying out." A federal government funded initiative, *Our Language*, has the objective of "protecting our country, protecting our land, protecting our culture, protecting our language, and protecting our people" (n.d.). Arguably, festivals offer one of few alternatives to provide a forum for connections with extended families and communities and one of few opportunities to connect with, and participate in cultural traditions such as dance, art, and craft.

The research has a number of important management implications for festival organizers and indigenous communities. Arguably much of the success of the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival is the result of the entrepreneurial vision of the late Robbie Williams, director of First Contact Inc. and creator of the festival. A strong champion who tirelessly drove the festival forward, as well as a supportive broader community, including local residents, indigenous participants and sporting competitors, and public and private sector sponsors, have all contributed towards an event that is viewed so positively. The Annual Sports and Cultural Festival can provide benchmark indicators for other indigenous communities who are seeking a vehicle to facilitate the development of social capital via festivals, in their respective communities.

The significance of this study then can be attributed to its attempt to bridge the theoretical gap between social capital theory and the use of festivals as a community development tool. Arguably, the study has strengthened theoretical links between

festivals and social capital studies and has provided useful insights for academia, government, and industry into the debate on the utility of festivals as a vehicle for indigenous community development.

While this research has demonstrated the viability and significance of indigenous festivals by identifying the positive sociocultural benefits of an indigenous Australian festival and its facilitative role in sustaining community development, further research opportunities have emerged that would help to better understand the role of festivals in Indigenous communities and how they can be improved. Firstly, comparative research needs to be undertaken examining the sociocultural impacts of other indigenous festivals in order to promote increased understanding of the role and utility of indigenous festivals in the facilitation of social capital and sustainable community development. This should increase knowledge relating to the development, staging, and management of indigenous festivals. Such research would ideally result in revised benchmark indicators for indigenous communities wishing to stage their own festivals.

Secondly, research examining the extent to which the successful staging of indigenous festivals is dependent upon social entrepreneurialism needs to be undertaken. Arguably, the growth of the festival can be attributed to the entrepreneurial vision of the late Robbie Williams, CEO and founder of First Contact Inc. and the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival. There has been much discussion pertaining to entrepreneurship and economic development within indigenous communities (Anderson et al., 2006; Hailey, 1992) highlighting the importance of entrepreneurs in developing business opportunities, sourcing start-up finance, and developing partnerships with other business as well as government and nongovernment agencies. According to Anderson et al. (2006), this process is referred to as “social entrepreneurialism” and is arguably the primary critical factor identified at the festival as a facilitator of sustainable community development. Social entrepreneurialism distinguishes itself from other forms by emphasizing social purpose as the principal driver of the activity, with organizational sustainability as a core objective. The social purpose of the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival has been achieved primarily through entrepreneurship and there has been little if

any distribution of profit to individuals as any surplus has been reinvested for the long-term benefit of the community. Importantly, it is providing a means to an end including the creation of social capital, cultural preservation, reconciliation, the creation of wealth, and increased capabilities amongst Indigenous communities (Anderson et al., 2006). While this does not represent an exhaustive list of research opportunities, it illustrates that there is still much left to explore in the field of Indigenous festivals.

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