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Published online: 22 Oct 2014.

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Adventure Territory: An Action Evaluation of an Outback Australian Performance Project

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The space between project goals and project outcomes is a rich location for reflection and learning. This article explores that space in relation to Adventure Territory, a youth theatre performance project that involved residencies at two secondary schools in the remote Northern Territory town of Katherine. The 12-month project was facilitated by Australian Theatre for Young People, a Sydney-based youth theatre company located some 3,600 kilometers away from Katherine. This article describes the action evaluation of that project and provides an analysis of what was learned when delivering this "fly-in, fly-out" (FIFO) project. The evaluation demonstrates that although there were positive outcomes for some young people, the project did not go according to plan and many goals were not achieved or became irrelevant. The reasons for these varied outcomes are explored, and we propose that future FIFO projects would benefit from adopting a community cultural development approach to youth theatre work. Such an approach demands that we take time to understand the context, build relationships and participation, and develop goals with, not for, the communities with which we work.

Introduction

This article is an exploration of what was learned in "the gap" between a planned youth theatre project in outback Australia and the real-life version of this project. Using an action-evaluation framework, we describe and analyze a "fly-in, fly-out" youth theatre program delivered in a remote town by a city-based youth theatre company. In this article, "fly-in, fly-out" (or FIFO) refers to the practice of organizations delivering projects in distant locations and flying in and out of those locations. Three cycles of the action-evaluation process are presented and reflect the three phases of the project. We found positive outcomes related to student confidence, increased communication across diverse groups, and skill development. We also found significant challenges related to the "top-down" development of the project. The evaluation reminds us that the formation of meaningful project goals requires an in-depth understanding of local context, trusting relationships, and the participation of all stakeholders throughout the project. These are principles found in community cultural development (CCD) work. Adventure Territory (AT) was not framed as a CCD project; however, we propose that future, similar projects would benefit from such an approach.

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Context

From June 2011 to August 2012, the Sydney-based company Australian Theatre for Young People facilitated the AT project in the remote Northern Territory town of Katherine. Katherine has a population of 9,800 people and services a large catchment area including a number of Indigenous "bush" communities and cattle stations. Almost one-third of the population includes Indigenous Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

AT is one of three interconnected components of a 3-year project, *Kicking Up Dust,* which came about when Fraser was invited by the Australian government to review opportunities for youth theatre projects in the Northern Territory. Through engaging with a range of organizations and community leaders, the town of Katherine was identified as a location for youth theatre development. Two years after the initial consultations, AT began. AT was a one-year performance program delivered by Australian Theatre for Young People in partnership with two Katherine high schools and Corrugated Iron Youth Arts (a community arts organization located three hundred kilometers from Katherine in the city of Darwin). A set of goals were developed by Australian Theatre for Young People in the project-planning stages. These goals were:

1. to increase Indigenous and remote-region high school student confidence, self-esteem, and engagement with schools in the Katherine region, Northern Territory;
2. to develop literacy and performance skills in students from the two high schools involved;
3. to increase students' capacity to overcome challenges by sharing their experiences through theatre;
4. to establish relationships between students, schools, and Darwin-based arts groups who can provide continued support and ongoing collaboration; and
5. to give Indigenous and remote Australian youth a voice and platform to be heard.

These goals were to be achieved via the development of an original musical theatre production involving both schools, which would be performed at the annual Katherine Festival. The production was to be developed through a series of theatre and music workshops. The workshops would be delivered in each school once each term, for four terms, by tutors from Corrugated Iron Youth Arts in Darwin and Australian Theatre for Young People in Sydney. As will become clear, this project did not unfold exactly as planned.

Background

There is a growing body of literature demonstrating both the intrinsic and the instrumental value of participation in theatre for young people (Beare and Belliveau 2007; Cathers and Schniedewind 2008; Fredland 2010; Jensen 2008; Mattingly 2001; Ogunleye 2004; Queensland Performing Arts Centre 2012). However, young people in remote Australian communities have extremely limited access to community arts activities of any kind (Fishel 2003; McHenry 2009). When such opportunities arise, they often come from outside the community and in the form of FIFO, short-term programs (or visiting artist residencies) based in schools. Although there is often an assumption that *any* access to community arts programs is positive, the literature shows a more complex picture of the benefits and challenges of visiting programs. Less well-acknowledged challenges include: feelings of abandonment and breaking of trust when visiting artists leave, weak linkages between arts programs and school curriculums, and community reluctance to engage with people from "outside" (Daykin et al. 2008; Hager 2010).

Drawing on research literature, Hager (2010) argues that positive, lasting outcomes from visiting arts programs require "new models of sustained partnerships" (113). Such models are based on a "symbiotic relationship" between teachers and visiting artists, so that arts work complements school curriculums and builds teachers' capacity to continue the arts work after the visitors have departed (Zakaras and Lowell 2008, 23, in Hager 2010). Others have emphasized "time" as the key factor for meaningful school residency projects, particularly when working with vulnerable groups of students. For example, Davidoff (2007) believes it takes significant time for students to mentally and socially prepare for engagement with the arts residency providers, for newly formed relationships to grow, and for new skills to develop.

Taking time and developing meaningful partnerships are familiar ideas to people working from a community development (CD) perspective. CD principles are based on empowerment and social justice ideals and demand broad community participation at every stage and every level, from project planning to project management and evaluation. CD is a collaborative process by which all stakeholders are equal contributors, working together using inclusive processes that support project goals (Kenny 2011). These ideas also form *part of* the foundation of CCD practice. CCD uses art in all its forms in a unique type of creative practice that involves community members working with artist organizers to "express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts and communications media. It is a process that simultaneously builds individual mastery and collective cultural capacity while contributing to positive social change" (Goldbard 2006, 20). Overt links between theatre, education, and social change can be traced to the ideas of Boal (1979), who drew upon the work of Freire (1970). Boal (1979) utilized theatre as a way of educating, consciousness raising, as well as engaging with, and challenging, oppressive social and political structures.

The rationale for using CCD approaches in arts work with community, education, and well-being goals comes from an understanding that the causes of many individual and community problems have cultural, historical, political, and economic roots. To alleviate the symptoms of structural issues, social change is necessary. Although this can be difficult work, the use of CCD principles in arts projects with well-being, education, and community-building goals has been demonstrated in various locations, using a range of art forms (Archer-Cunningham 2007; Kay 2000; Lowe 2000; Matarasso 2007; Sloman 2012; Sonn and Quayle 2013). Two key ideas become clear when reviewing this literature: Firstly, CCD requires time for the development of trusting relationships, shared understanding of local issues, and maximum community participation. Secondly, linking personal problems to broader social structures means CCD projects have the capacity to foster whole-community change.

A critical issue in Northern Territory communities is the colonization of Indigenous people. The impacts of colonization on Indigenous Australian communities have been devastating and are well documented (Atkinson 1990; Taylor and Guerin 2010). Understanding the historical and lived realities of Australian colonization and its manifestations in particular communities is critical for community arts programs to avoid reproducing already existing social inequalities. Dwyer and Syron (2009) remind us of the need to take CCD principles seriously—in particular, the need to take time for long, meaningful engagement prior to CCD projects. They make the point that by applying "a ready-made community cultural development toolkit" to any given community, we risk being colonizing in our actions (Dwyer and Syron 2009, 189). Arts workers need time to understand local cultures, relationships, issues, and concerns before intervening with programs, no matter how well intentioned they are. Although such insights are crucial, sometimes the scarcity of arts funding in Australia means that programs are developed before meaningful engagement with communities has occurred. It also means that arts organizations are increasingly required

to demonstrate a range of "non-arts-related" health and well-being outcomes to compete for what little funding exists. This can be difficult terrain to negotiate, and there is very little literature concerning youth theatre in remote, culturally diverse locations to guide practice.

Evaluation Methodology

The aim of the AT evaluation was to understand the progress toward project goals and to explore the benefits and challenges of the project. We selected an action-evaluation method because it involves an ongoing cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection—from the outset to the completion of a project (Stringer 2007; Wadsworth 2011). It is a systematic method where new learning can be integrated into action as a project progresses (Stringer 2007, 1). This approach to the evaluation of community arts projects has been recommended by a number of authors as a way of addressing problems as they arise, sharing new learning among stakeholders, and integrating new learning while the project is still under way (Bradbury Huang 2010; Checkoway and Richards-Schuster 2003; Jennings and Baldwin 2010; Simons and McCormack 2007). Ethics approval for the evaluation research was received from the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee and the Northern Territory Department of Education Research Ethics Committee.

Within the action-evaluation framework, we collected and analyzed a range of data. In total we undertook twenty-one interviews with fourteen adults (teachers, tutors, and AT team members), observed three terms of workshops and a performance, and held two focus groups at the end of the project involving sixteen young people (seven from one school, nine from another). We initially attempted to use preworkshop and postworkshop surveys with the students to gather quantitative data during the first workshops; however, they were quickly deemed inappropriate. Many students struggled with English (as it was not their first language) and with scaling questions. Most crucially, many students who completed the "preworkshop" survey were not present for the "postworkshop" survey.

All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a general inductive approach (Thomas 2006). This involved reading through all the written transcripts multiple times to locate themes in relation to the evaluation aims. We then considered the emerging themes in relation to each another and refined them by eliminating overlap and redundancy. Focus-group data were recorded with handwritten notes that were later analyzed using the same principles as those used for the interviews. We recorded workshop observations by hand using an observation guide as per Creswell (2007, 134). These notes were summarized and we discussed them with teachers, tutors, and focus-group participants to further explore what was occurring and to check that our observations and interpretations were accurate. All evaluation information was organized in a database to allow for cross checking of themes between data sources (Yin 2009). The information and ideas emerging from the data were reported back to stakeholders via written evaluation reports after each workshop. We present the evaluation processes in three sections, which reflect three cycles of action evaluation. Following this, we draw together the overall new learning and consider the extent to which project goals were met and the challenges and strengths of the project. Participant quotes are used to demonstrate specific ideas.

The Evaluation Processes

First Workshops (June 2011)

In the weeks prior to the first school-based workshops, the AT team and lead teachers developed workshop plans via phone and e-mail. The aims of the first workshops were: firstly,

to introduce students to the AT project and team members; secondly, to build relationships between students, AT tutors, and school teachers through providing theatre activities; and finally, to begin developing ideas for the musical theatre production with students in both schools. Two AT tutors (one Indigenous man and one non-Indigenous woman) traveled to Katherine to begin the workshops. Unfortunately, a music tutor willing to come to Katherine for the required time could be not located, so the music aspect of the project was put on hold.

At School 1, the workshops were held with one "English as a Second Language" (ESL) class. This was a group of approximately ten students of evenly mixed gender. Approximately three-quarters of the participants were Indigenous. We say "approximately" because attendance varied each day and often within a day. Many of the Indigenous students did not attend school regularly, and students in the class sometimes left during the day for sport activities or family obligations. At other times, students were removed by the class teacher for behavioral reasons. The ESL class had one regular teacher and two support staff (tutors), all of whom were supportive of the AT project. The students participated in a range of improvisation activities and learned how to storyboard an idea for a short film. It was the first time the ESL class had taken part in drama activities, as the school did not have a drama teacher, and most students appeared to enjoy it.

School 1 interviews and workshop observation indicated that participants had gained skills in improvisation and theatre games and the AT tutors were well liked by the students. The combination of different tutor genders and ethnicities helped the students relate comfortably to them. Yet some students seemed so shy they were unable to look at the AT tutors and were clearly uncomfortable with any activity that required being the focus of attention. When asked about how they were feeling or why they would not participate, students would respond that they were "too shame." Shame is a well-known concept in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. It is a form of embarrassment that can involve a person avoiding situations or being unable to speak or interact with others due to a complex mix of emotion, shyness, feelings of inadequacy, and social or cultural norms (Harrison 2011). Shame can be crippling for young people in educational and other social contexts (Hughes, More, and Williams 2004). By the end of the first workshops, School 1 staff believed the AT workshops were beginning to foster a new class culture of "less shame," as some students were attempting activities previously considered "too shame."

The story unfolding at School 2 was very different. School 2 was much larger, and the workshops were delivered to a diverse range of classes (compulsory and elective drama classes, as well as a class of all-male Indigenous students who were part of a football scholarship program) with eight to twenty students in each class. AT activities did not progress beyond warm-up games, as class times were generally too short to do more. Regular class teachers were rarely present during the workshops, and with large and often disinterested classes, the workshops were difficult for the AT tutors to manage. Feedback from teachers and AT tutors pointed out the difficulty of working with so many different classes and with students who had little interest in drama. The issue of shame was also present in many classes. AT tutors reported feeling "exhausted" with trying to cater to so many different classes with varying levels of knowledge and/or interest in drama. By the end of the first workshops, the AT tutors were concerned that little progress toward any kind of production had occurred.

Reflecting upon the first set of workshops, it became clear that it was going to take more time than originally planned for individuals and organizations to get to know each other (especially in School 2 where there were so many student participants). Additionally

the AT team felt that there needed to be fewer classes involved in School 2 and that the issue of shame needed to be explored and addressed with students in both schools.

Second Workshops (September and November 2011)

In response to the information learned from the first workshops, the next round of workshops was planned 2 months apart so that AT tutors could work intensively with each school. The AT team had liaised with the schools about how the project could best be integrated into their regular programs. It was agreed that teachers at both schools would be more involved in the drama activities so they too enriched their drama skills and so the work might be conducted outside of workshop time as well. Despite attempts to restructure the School 2 program, school management was reluctant to remove any one group of students from their core curriculum for too long and remained keen to include as many classes as possible. Although all stakeholders wanted the involvement of a music tutor, none could be located, and this element of the project again remained on hold. The plans for the second round of workshops became focused on consolidating relationships, building students' performance skills, better understanding shame, and developing ideas for the Katherine Festival performance.

The first 5-day workshop was held at School 2. Although the AT tutors were feeling pleased with some individual student gains in terms of self-confidence and improvisation skills, they felt there was no real sense of continuity or "building" in the work being done overall. As in the first workshops, class times were short, and it was difficult to sustain most students' interest for long enough to do anything other than warm-up games. All feedback pointed to there being too many different classes, no consistent cohort of young people involved in the project, and very little engagement with the idea of a festival production. Interview participants speculated that a music tutor might be able to engage students, as music was an art form with which they were more familiar.

Another issue specific to School 2 was becoming clearer to the AT tutors. Teachers described a student culture of "not being seen to try too hard or care too much" about school-related things. This was so complex that teachers themselves struggled to understand and explain what was going on. They believed it was possibly a form of self-protection against bullying or other forms of exclusion, or perhaps a fear of failing or showing vulnerability. It was such a pervasive force with some students that they were unable to cope with any success and would self-sabotage their work or disengage if things were going too well. This had a huge impact on the workshops and AT tutors spent a lot of time talking through these ideas with students and encouraging them to challenge their thinking about success and peer approval. In addition to these issues, the teacher leading support for the AT project at School 2 advised that she was leaving.

The School 1 workshops were held with the same ESL class group as the previous term, so staff and students were familiar with the AT project and were able to quickly pick up where they had left off in the previous workshop. The ESL class had made a photo collage of the previous AT workshop and kept it on their classroom wall as a reminder of what they had achieved, and the connection between workshops was overt. Workshop time was spent with warm-up games and improvisations before moving into learning and rehearsing a short script. Students developed a storyboard for a film, and the class rehearsed and filmed the story. Things were progressing steadily when the class teacher advised that this class was going to "disband" at the end of year and there would be a new ESL class the following year, with only a handful of the current students in it. No ideas for the festival performance had been developed at either school.

The observation and interview data again showed two different stories unfolding in each school. At School 1, there was a sense of progress, with most students reporting they were enjoying the activities and teachers reporting increased student participation in class and less evidence of shame. However, the same teachers advised that they did not believe the planned festival performance was a realistic option for the ESL class. Although feelings of shame were being overcome in the classroom, being in front of a large, unknown audience was another matter. The lack of consistent student attendance was also an issue when trying to develop a performance, as one teacher explained:

> The nature of our students is that they go away, they go away for ceremony, they go away for sorry business (funeral-related obligations), they are here sometimes and they are not here sometimes, and so doing anything long term is just plain difficult.

There was also a sense of frustration expressed by some interviewees about the "come and go" nature of the project. Some felt more work could be done if the workshops were longer or structured so that AT tutors were able to be there more often. This is expressed in the following quote:

> In a dream world you need people here to work with the kids for the whole term with skills development. Maybe even two terms. Because just coming here for a week or two, it's going to be good, but it's not going to be brilliant. (*AT team member*)

Interestingly, some school staff believed the onus was upon the schools to integrate workshop ideas into the classroom. The following quote demonstrates a desire to add value to the opportunities presented by the AT workshops:

> I think it comes back down to how we, as teachers, incorporate what has been done this week into our program to keep that going. I think that's the more important thing 'cause you can get the kids there, but if you don't follow it up nothing really changes. (*Teacher*)

Reflections about the second workshop can be summarized into three main themes: Firstly, issues of student shame and "not caring too much" required attention. Secondly, creative ways of working with student and staff turnover were needed. Lastly, gaining project momentum through integrating AT learning into school curriculums and maintaining cross-country relationships "in absentia" was crucial for progressing AT past the introduction stage.

The Final Workshops and Performance (June 2012)

In conjunction with the schools, some major changes were made to AT. It was decided to abandon the plan for a Katherine Festival production and to delay the next workshops until the new teachers and students had settled in. In School 2, it was agreed that only one group of interested students was to be involved in the project, rather than continuing with attempts to engage a wide range of classes. During this time, a young, non-Indigenous music and video tutor was located for the project. A growing understanding of the student and school contexts meant that more meaningful goals of reducing shame and providing

young people with an experience of theatre and music making were formed in collaboration with all stakeholders. Activities for the final workshops (one week in each school) centered on developing songs and music videos and hosting a combined-schools event at the local cinema. The event would involve a demonstration of theatre improvisation activities and a screening of the music and video products made with students.

Attendance patterns at both school workshops were similar to the previous two workshops, with approximately three-quarters of each class attending each day.

At School 1, approximately one-third of the new ESL class included continuing students from the previous year's ESL class. Their familiarity with the project and enthusiasm to participate helped the newer students feel at ease. Strategies for providing students with an experience of theatre and music making included tutors' facilitation of class improvisation and theatre games. Small-group brainstorming sessions were used to develop ideas for the song and video, which were later recorded by the music tutor. To reduce shame and increase self-confidence, tutors purposefully acknowledged the continuing students' skills and experience by inviting them to lead activities they had learned the previous year. Leading on from this, discussions about the experience and consequences of shame were facilitated by the AT tutors. AT tutors shared their stories of becoming actors and musicians, despite the negative attitudes of some of their school peers. Tutors linked their experiences to the strengths and growing talents they saw in each student. These stories became "touchstones" throughout the week to support and encourage participation and to challenge shame. Discussions also explored students' experiences of life in Katherine, and guided by the music tutor, they developed lyrics based on their reflections. The following lyrics provide an example of some of the topics explored ("K-Town" refers to Katherine and "grog" is an Australian slang term for alcohol):

> We are from K-Town NT,
> A place where change can come for free,
> We need respect for harmony,
> Don't show no shame K-Town MCs. . .
> Shut it all down, lose the grog for good,
> Imagine if we could make it good in the 'hood,
> Respect each other, have an open mind,
> let's all live this life with pride.

Students at School 2 also worked intensively with the music tutor to brainstorm, cowrite, and sing lyrics about their lives in Katherine to pre-recorded backing tracks. Strategies for reducing shame again involved AT tutor-led group discussion and story sharing; however, in this school, there was a focus on challenging the "not trying too hard" culture. Students were asked to think about the idea of "approval" —whose they were seeking and why. Theatre improvisations tackling the concepts of "stereotypes" and "difference" were used as strategies for helping students unpack the various school cultures and their impacts. These discussions led to the development of lyrics about the challenges of cultural and ethnic diversity in their class. The lyrics reflect their experiences and their new learning, as the following sample of their lyrics demonstrates:

> Hip-hop brings you the lessons of this land
> Listen close to my story and then you'll understand . . .
> Far from home couldn't handle the different faces

Racist haters and I'm not seeing changes
Place to place and right from wrong
From NZ to Bagdad, we're dropping the bomb
In a song, with the groove from UK to N-Zed
Truth is brother, we all bleed red.

The music tutor recorded the lyrics with the students (each singing different parts of the song), mixed them with the pre-recorded backing tracks, and produced a video for each school. Videos featured students performing together in a range of local locations from school ground to national park.

Approximately fifty friends and family of the school students attended the final event, along with the students themselves. Certificates of achievement were presented to all participating students, and a celebration was held in the cinema foyer. For the majority of students, the final event was a positive experience where they could demonstrate their new skills to others and receive public acknowledgement of their work. However, for a few of the Indigenous students, the experience was overwhelming. The idea of public performance was "too shame," and at the last minute, they chose not to participate. Despite this, interviews with staff from both schools highlighted a range of mostly positive outcomes. Teachers acknowledged that most workshop participants had benefited in some way, primarily in terms of increased confidence and, perhaps most importantly, a reduction in shame. The following comments are indicative of the general feeling:

> For the students to have less shame, that was my goal, and they have achieved that really well. (*Teacher*)

> The last two weeks, the performance, has all been overwhelmingly positive for the kids and for me as a teacher. (*Teacher*)

Students expressed a sense of pride and achievement in having been part of something that was perceived as "cool" and "professional" by their peers. Students attributed this "coolness" to having AT tutors with film, television, and theatre experience and also because of the hip-hop genre of the songs and videos. At one school, almost half the class reported an increase in their own confidence, which they attributed to the AT workshops. Some students pointed out that the music videos made them feel they had achieved something concrete that they could show to others:

> Performing is a bit hard at first 'cause people laugh at you, they tease you. But it was cool, we showed the song, the video was cool. (*Student*)

The following student quote demonstrates how making the music videos also opened up new possibilities for thinking about herself:

> I wanted to do this stuff, making songs and that—it's your dream, you look at yourself and think "I can't be like that," but it showed us you can. (*Student*)

The focus-group data also demonstrated the development of relationships between students in different social groups. Students at both schools come from a wide range of socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and many had never interacted with each

other before the AT workshops. One class tutor pointed out that a "unique safe environ-ment" had been created by the AT tutors, so it was possible for them to interact in a way they had not been able to previously. The following quotes highlight the importance of this environment for encouraging participation and communication:

> It was getting out of our comfort zone, I like it, but I didn't like it! The tutors helped you, they encouraged you, not forcing you, they say "you can sit out," but it looks fun so you want to do it. (*Student*)

> Some [students] would never talk to each other normally, but they have bonded over the project. All the kids feel more comfortable with each other, they have grown more trust. (*Class tutor*)

At School 1, staff discussed how the project had complemented "ordinary class learn-ing" through providing intensive opportunities to create and consolidate positive, supportive relationships. This was a theme the ESL classes were focusing on, both prior to and during the year of the AT project. One teacher was particularly enthusiastic about AT's contribution to student learning:

> They (AT team) need to know the project has been fantastic, positive, amazing. A perfect fit for the class. (*Teacher*)

All teachers, tutors, AT tutors, and many of the students acknowledged that workshop participants had learned new drama and performance skills as well as some script- and song-writing skills. The following quotes articulate this clearly:

> I have certainly seen an improvement in some of the kids' drama skills, their actual skills, not just their socializing and talking, but their technical skills. (*Teacher*)

> I had an opportunity to do something different, learn new things; I would like to do it again. (*Student*)

> I think I learned I could do stuff like that, like music and theatre. (*Student*)

Despite positive outcomes in the areas of student confidence, communication, and skill development, there was a feeling expressed by some of the AT team that more could have been achieved. What was meant to be a theatre-focused project ended up being focused on two music videos made in the last two weeks of the project. Although the students and teachers were excited about the music videos, only the song lyrics, vocals, and perfor-mances on the videos were the students' actual work. The backing tracks, music, and video recording and editing were all completed by the music tutor, not the students. Some of the AT team felt that although they had left the participants with these music videos, they had not left them with the skills to actually create any further music or videos.

There was frustration too at not having been able to engage some of the more vul-nerable student groups in School 2, specifically Indigenous students who were at risk for disengaging from school. The project had set out with ambitious goals concerned with engaging young people in education, improving literacy, and helping them overcome their

challenges. The questions of whether they had delivered "enough" and how they might "do it better" were troubling some of the AT team.

New Learning: Reflecting on the Project as a Whole

By the end of the yearlong project, a total of six workshops (three in each school), involving 86 young people aged 11 to 17 years, had been completed. Of these 86 young people, only 15 had participated in all three workshops and the final performance. After the project ended and we had time to reflect on all the data together, it became clear that the main achievements of the project were in relation to student confidence, improved communication and connection between different social groups, and the development of some theatre and lyric-writing skills. The project challenges were centered on turnover of school staff and students, the FIFO nature of engaging with the schools, the large number of (often disinterested) classes in School 2, grappling with shame, and the lack of music tutor availability until the end of the project.

Important learning also involved reflection on the relevance of original project goals—how they were developed, who they were developed with, the assumptions they contained, and their links to specific strategies. Although self-esteem was improved and some skills were learned, other goals had barely been addressed, and there had been no clear strategy for doing so. We summarized our key learning in the following way:

- Meaningful goals can only formed after getting to know all stakeholders, and this requires substantial time and trusting relationships.
- Goals related to literacy, school engagement, and individual and community well-being require specific strategies to achieve them. Articulating how the arts work will contribute to these goals is critical.
- Related to this is understanding that some goals require the alleviation of problems caused by colonization, poverty, and disadvantage related to remote living. It is difficult to make changes in these areas without adopting an approach that attempts to clearly link the personal to the political.

This learning has pointed us in the direction of adopting CCD principles when working with similar projects in the future. Using CCD principles would involve seeking broad community participation in understanding the hopes and issues of concern to young people, the schools, and the community; articulating these hopes and issues; formulating goals and exploring arts-based strategies to address the issues; and working in partnership with all stakeholders to achieve the goals.

Discussion

The aims of the AT evaluation were to understand the extent to which the project goals were met and to explore the benefits and challenges of the project. When the original goals of the project are revisited, it becomes clear that those focused on confidence, self-esteem, and relationship development (Goals 1 and 4) were achieved. This is not unexpected, as existing literature shows similar outcomes (Daykin et al. 2008; Fredland 2010; Mattingly 2001). However, there was no evidence of improved literacy or of increased school engagement (also part of Goal 1 and Goal 2). We argue that there are structural factors surrounding Indigenous students' (English) literacy and school engagement in remote parts of Australia. Perhaps using theatre to explore these factors, raise awareness, and inspire change could be

one approach to tackling this (Boal, 1979). Innovative thinking in these areas could perhaps have been achieved if the AT project had been developed in stronger consultation with the school communities.

The development of a "symbiotic" relationship between the arts organization and the school, as discussed by Hager (2010), is one way to sustain and add value to arts residency programs. There was some evidence of such a relationship developing with School 1 as the workshops became a place to practice and reinforce the regular class curriculum. Although it was not entirely purposeful in the case of this project, it was a good outcome and helped to create and strengthen bonds between diverse groups of students. School 2 would have benefited from more consistent "in-between" workshop strategies for keeping school staff and students engaged with the project (such as the posters used in School 1). This kind of strategy may have helped to maintain links to the AT project when AT team members were not physically present.

Developing students' ability to "overcome their challenges" (another of the original goals) is difficult to evaluate, as "challenges" is such a broad term. "Challenges" could involve anything, from a personal issue between friends to the experience of institutionalized racism. Upon reflection, we believe a more useful approach would be to provide time and support to students so they could identify their own challenges and explore and articulate their causes. From this understanding, meaningful goals and strategies could be formed to begin to address student challenges. This is the sort of preparation discussed by Davidoff (2007), who found that significant time is required for students to mentally and socially prepare for engagement in arts residencies so that they can get the most out of them. Clearly, the issues of shame and "not caring too much" were challenges for many students involved in AT; however, strategies for addressing them could only be developed once the issues were understood by the AT team.

Another AT goal needed to be completely reconsidered: *to give Indigenous and remote Australian youth a voice and platform to be heard*. Some of the AT team had grown uncomfortable with the concept of "giving voice,": as it contains assumptions that these young people did not *have* a voice and also that an organization could *give* someone a voice. The idea of cocreating a platform for multiple and diverse voices to be heard became a far more relevant issue. It could be argued that the platform ended up being music videos that expressed young people's feelings, concerns, and hopes for their community and themselves.

It has been argued that meaningful community cultural work comes from the ground up, with projects being generated from within a community and the community inviting others to participate on their own terms (Dwyer and Syron 2009). AT did not come about this way; its activities and goals were developed by "outsiders" and agreed upon by schools keen to provide arts activities for their students. This is less a criticism of the project partners and more a reflection of funding arrangements that do not encourage long development time frames. In the case of the AT project, the consequences of this were that a great deal of time was spent exploring, understanding, and then incorporating local contextual issues during the workshop timeframes when ideally it would have happened prior to this.

Conclusion

The evaluation sheds light on a range of project achievements, problematic issues, and new learning in relation to FIFO youth theatre work. Student achievement of a stronger sense of self, a reduction in the experience of shame, and increased exposure to theatre performance

and lyric writing are all positive outcomes. Other outcomes were not achieved at all, and some became unimportant. One year was simply too short a timeframe to engage with these school communities deeply and develop good processes for working within an FIFO context.

Upon reflection, it appears that "good processes" for FIFO youth theatre work may be drawn from CCD principles. In the context of this project, these processes involve: taking time to understand and learn about the community from the community, developing strategies for maintaining links and relationships with the community from a distance, and facilitating understanding of the links between individual or local issues and the broader socioeconomic, cultural, and political context. These ideas are familiar to CD and CCD practitioners, and through this evaluation process, we have been reminded of their value and application in youth theatre work with young people from culturally diverse groups in remote communities.

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Translation of Abstract

El espacio entre las metas de un proyecto y sus resultados es un ámbito rico para la reflexión y el aprendizaje. Este artículo explora ese espacio en relación a Territorio Aventura, un proyecto de representación teatral juvenil que involucró residencias artísticas en dos escuelas secundarias en la remota ciudad de Katherine, en el Territorio Norte. El proyecto, de doce meses de duración, fue facilitado por el Teatro Australiano para Público Joven, una compañía de teatro con sede en Sídney, situada a unos 3.600 kilómetros de Katherine. Este artículo describe la Evaluación-Acción del proyecto y ofrece un análisis de lo aprendido en este proyecto de teatro "con comunidades a larga distancia" (FIFO). La evaluación demuestra que a pesar de que hubo resultados positivos para algunos jóvenes, el proyecto no resultó de acuerdo al plan y muchos de los objetivos no se alcanzaron,

o se volvieron irrelevantes. Las razones de estos diversos resultados son exploradas, y proponemos que los futuros proyectos FIFO se beneficiarían de adoptar un enfoque de desarrollo cultural comunitario para abordar el trabajo del teatro para jóvenes. Un enfoque tal exige que nos tomemos el tiempo necesario para entender el contexto, construir relaciones y participación, y desarrollar metas con (y no para) las comunidades con las cuales trabajemos.