Going Walkabout Together
Through The Suburbs (GW3TS)

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A compilation of Published Refereed Journal Articles, others currently awaiting publication, an Overarching Essay and a Series of Reflexions, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy ‘Submitting By Publication’

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented here is my own original work, except where other sources have been quoted. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Signed:

Robbie Lindsay Lloyd

Date:

Dedication

I hereby dedicate this work to my son William Lloyd, my adopted nephew Tom Elenor, my ‘study buddy’ Rachel Morley, and my wife Margaret Bailitis.

Acknowledgements

This work only came about due to the generosity and active engagement of participants in the GW3TS project from 2004–6, and those community members who participated in various community mental health rehabilitation reform activities in Central Australia and ‘the Top End’ of the Northern Territory (NT) from 2007–2010. Along with those people, an equal group of volunteer buddy peers, and professional mentoring ‘aunties and uncles’ (especially Margaret Bailitis, Mishae Bailitis, Virginia Kaufman Hall, Allison & Jim Baensch, and Rachel Morley), plus my doctorate supervisors from UWS (particularly Adam Possamai, Sheridan Linnell, Debbie Horsfall and Susan Murphy), all of whom helped to bring this work about. I thank them all for their inspiration and generosity, in helping to model better ways to be together, for the social and emotional wellbeing of all. I wish them all well in pursuing lives of creativity, freedom, imagination and wonder-and mystery-filled eccentricity without stigma.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF ACCEPTED PAPERS

ABSTRACT

GLOSSARY & ABBREVIATIONS

PREFACE

Describes the 1. Rationale; 1–8
2. Structure, Methods & Paradox; 8–10
and approach to 3. Gathering Evidence in this compilation presentation 11–13

INTRODUCTION

4.1 Summarises how the Structure of this compilation document links the articles, essays and Reflexions together 14–23
4.2 Summarises the Informing Literature (prior to full Lit. Rev. on pp 167–192) 24–29
4.3 Introduces a summary of the Methodology (prior to the full Methodology section on pp…) 29–35

1. REFLEXION 1 – The Trouble with Troubling 36–46


3. Overarching Essay – SECTION ONE

Framing this work; the Concept behind GW3TS; How it all started; the Idea; the Motivation; the Objectives; the Context 62–89

4. REFLEXION 2 – Rite of Passage 90–99

6. **PAPER** – Paper accepted for 2011 National Conference of the Australian Health Promotion Association, and subsequently to be considered for the Health Promotion Journal of Australia: ‘Challenging Western Biomedicine’s “Headhunting” Habits as Negative Midstream Social Determinants of Health’ 111–132

7. **REFLEXION 3** – We’re All Fruits 133–140

8. **Overarching Essay** – SECTION TWO

Theoretical and Methodological Perspective; Stories telling us into being known; The seductive power of the great yarn; The Informing Literature; Psy-ed & how health and supported living practices have dealt with people of different consciousness; Academic critiques raised against such practices; Some other Alternative Perspectives; Methods and Data Gathering 141–209


10. **REFLEXION 4** – Moments of Light 222–231


12. **PAPER** – RANZCP 2010 Paper (Accepted for Publication by RANZCP for 2010 Creating Futures Volume of *Australasian Psychiatry*): ‘Forming a whole-community, multidisciplinary restorative network to collaborate on “Creating Cultures for Wellbeing”’ 251–273

13. **REFLEXION 5** – Emotional Syntax 274–284

15. **Overarching Essay** – SECTION THREE

The All Fruits Theory; The Rhythms between the Work and the People; Analysing the Process and its applied implications 302–328

16. **REFLEXION 6** – Chronic or Chthonic? Echoing the unbearable cadence of being 329–338


19. **REFLEXION 7** – Endpoint: Reflections on a Ten Year Journey 381–395

20. **CONCLUSION** 396–402

21. **APPENDIX ONE**

GW3TS First Live-in Weekend Workshop May 2004 – Facilitators’ Briefing Sheet 403–405

22. **REFERENCES** 406–425
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: GW3TS Summary Table of Activities 2004 – 2006 184
Table 2: Five Sample GW3TS Flow-on Applications in other settings 191
Table 3: Evidence of GW3TS’s Efficacious Outcomes 362

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation takes the form of a compilation of papers, an overarching essay, and seven interconnecting reflexion pieces. It aims to celebrate the value in diversity of human consciousness, and to model and argue for reform in the way people of difference are treated in community mental health and disability support settings. It seeks more poetically inspired, person-valuing and self-determining autonomy and risk-taking in mental health rehabilitation and disability support settings.
The purpose of the original study on which the whole work is based was to illustrate how people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability could successfully support each other in a peer support, self-help way in community settings, along with volunteer buddies and mentoring professional ‘aunties & uncles’. By forming a community of belonging, or ‘open urban tribe’ (Watters 2004), the 60 multicultural participants (18 – 35 years of age) from all over the city of Sydney, in New South Wales, Australia, came together at first as strangers and then as friends, over a three year period (2004–6), sharing their structure of feelings and experiences (SOFE, Lloyd 2005) in mutually affirming and nurturing ways. This tribe stayed in active interaction well into 2007, when the author moved to the Northern Territory, to continue applying these sorts of approach to community nurture of social & emotional wellbeing (SEWB) in both Central Australia, in the Northern Territory (NT) – in Alice Springs (2007-2009) – and Darwin and ‘the Top End’ of the NT (2009-2010 & continuing).

Meeting for a live-in weekend workshop in May 2004, and again in June 2005, the original GW3TS group formed into a vitalizing, supportive ‘open urban tribe’, which exercised the interactive energies which I argue help to develop and sustain healthy balance in human awareness: conversation; relating; imagination; discernment; mystery and wonder (MCRIDW, as this author has written about before; Lloyd 2003/2005).

Beginning with the intention of using regular life journal recordings made by buddy pairs, plus film and photographic recording of the tribe’s time together, as the main ‘field work data collection’ processes, the project soon altered its focus. Because participants
chose not to undertake journalling, and the film & photographic processes were more anecdotal than systematic, the author chose to use autoethnographic reflexive journalling, as the main way of exploring the dynamic interaction between participants and himself. Ultimately it was the action of ‘poesis and noesis’ that informed the inter-relational dynamic between participants and researcher – as was the case subsequently when the author applied this approach in other community settings in the Northern Territory. This was about each being a metaphor for the other in ‘how to be.’

Originally combining a participative action research approach to supported collaborative inquiry, with post-positivist reflexive autoethnography, the author explored how this tribe created its own dynamic rhythm of personal narrative sharing and support, plus interactive symbolic ritual cycles of companionship, contemplation, communion and celebration. Through establishing a cycle of witnessing and testimony, with mutual mirroring and feedback, the group developed a process called ‘working the business of life’ (WTBOL), which gave each person an identity, sense of belonging, and vital engagement in their healing and development. This built on Ethan Watters’ finding in his book *Urban Tribes: Are Friends the New Family*, that “my tribe helps me be the best me I can be (Watters 2004).”

The author subsequently applied similar approaches in multicultural community mental health settings in the remote central Australian outback town of Alice Springs, and later in the ‘Top End’ city of Darwin, both in the Northern Territory of Australia. Both these locations were effectively ‘urban’, in that all participants lived in regular suburban-type
precincts, just located in the central desert and the top end of the Northern Territory. A key finding from the work is that mixing up people of different consciousness is efficacious for their rehabilitation, leading to the All Fruits Theory (Lloyd 2009), akin to Queer Theory, advocating for greater valuing of diversity in consciousness and more mixed-group, self-help, risk-taking in peer support rehabilitation.

Combining forces between multidisciplinary human service professionals, for better collaborative rehabilitation and SEWB outcomes, plus bringing intergenerational groups of young people and elders together, are also advocated from the author’s successful follow-on work in Central and Northern Australia, creating such collaborative groupings in community settings. The paper advocates applying awareness of the importance of a four-way framing of human agency and interactive vitalizing energy: Truth, Love, Form and Change (T, L, F, C), which can be applied in new community settings to achieve healing, growth and development among diverse peoples.

GLOSSARY & ABBREVIATIONS

All Fruits Theory (AFT) (Lloyd 2009) – The argument that mixing up people of diverse consciousness (ie. people living with mental illness, intellectual disability etc) in rehabilitation settings is efficacious for them, as they gain from their diversity of consciousness, giving and receiving multiple ways of how to be (‘dasein’) in life.

Communities of Belonging – Groupings of people who provide unconditional positive support for each other, while also giving mirroring and feedback about things individuals
may need to change about themselves in order to heal, grow and develop. From the work of Etienne Wenger (Wenger 1991).

I³R⁴C⁵ – Interactive, Intuitional, Intentional, Rhythmical, Ritual, Relational, Ritual Cycles of Contemplation, Companionship, Communion and Celebration. I claim that these activities are natural, balancing and healthy human ways for getting together, which should be part and parcel of rehabilitation programs.

MCRIDW – Mystery, Conversation, Relating, Imagination, Discernment and Wonder: the six parameters of human engagement that nurture and sustain balanced awareness among people, and that constitute the essence of the Structure of Feelings and Experience (SOFE). These can be exercised to improve people’s psycho-social and spiritual interaction, generating healing in awareness and sustaining improved relational skills, personal development, and general vitality & motivation.

Noesis – To perceive through metaphor, making stories of life (Lloyd 2005: 316).

Open Urban Tribe – A community of belonging grouping of non-blood ‘family’ members, who provide unconditional support for each other, while also giving constructive feedback about aspects that may need improving, such that: ‘My tribe helps me be the best me I can be” (Watters 2004 Urban Tribes).

Poesis – To create harmonious compositions, making life a story (Lloyd 2005: 317).
Psy-ed – This term is a coverall reference to the managerial, technocratic, reductionist and behaviourist approaches now dominating health, education and human services (what I call the ‘psy–ed’ industries).

Structure of Feelings and Experiences (SOFE) – The framework of feelings and experiences which people regularly go through in life, including six parameters of awareness that have shown to be efficacious for healthy balanced awareness (Lloyd 2005): Mystery, Conversation, Relating, Imagination, Discernment, Wonder (MCRI/DW).

TLFC – Truth, Love, Form and Change: The four-way framing of human agency and interactive vitalizing energy, which can be applied in community settings and rehabilitation contexts, to achieve and sustain healing, growth and development among diverse peoples.

Working the Business of Life (WTBOL) – the activity of providing unconditionally positive feedback to each other, aiming to ensure people know they belong, they are valued and have an identity, and they will receive feedback on how they are going in life from those who care.
1. RATIONALE

This PhD combines applied, theoretical and reflective work from over ten years of research and community engagement (2000–2010), among multicultural people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability plus their carers, and professionals and volunteers who work with them. This document represents a ‘fruit salad’ of textures and tastes. It is a combination of records of personal feelings and experiences, professional outreach and networking attempts, academic articles, challenges to mainstream theoretical and practical models, and observations of participant contributions in several locations.

Presenting this compilation as a Submission By Publication Dissertation is a deliberate attempt to reflect the on-going, aggregating nature of my work, and its sequence of reflexive thought and personal interactions with people of difference and professionals working with them. There is a deliberate attempt to combine the outer formal presentations, represented by refereed articles and presentations, and the inner more contemplative consideration of my own position while undertaking this work. While experimenting with community development for mental health rehabilitation outcomes, I am reflecting on my inner state, and sometimes the story is not a confident or even balanced one. I am vulnerable to fears, repetition, sense of failure, and ongoing doubts.
But the combination presented here is meant to reflect that mixed-up and sometimes paradoxical effect.

The key to following this set of collated pieces is that I am trying to record an aesthetic experience, not to analyse data – that is, one that engages with the beauty and art of human feelings and experiences in an appreciative way, exploring the beauty of ‘being’ among people of difference. And between people, and within myself. Which makes this not just a record of ‘qualitative research’. It is more a compilation of noetic cameos. ‘Noesis’ being defined here as “perceiving through metaphor, making stories of life” (Lloyd 2005: 316). And its stable partner ‘poesis’ is defined as “creating harmonious compositions, making life a story” (Lloyd 2005: 317). So for me this work is a record of a series of poetic motifs, and noetic ways of being, that give glimpses of the feelings & experiences involved during interactions between people of difference. And it includes the impact these ways of being and knowing had on my own feelings and experiences, reflected in my Reflexion pieces.

In this thesis there is not a single set of experimental designs, or theoretical analysis – the structure here is designed to gradually combine records of interactions between people and myself, and the reflections arising, and then to link the experiences and feelings undergone in different places. The ‘evidence’ is not about the results of a Method, but about Witnessing the Testimony of Experiences – my own and those I have observed. I am not trying to refine a technique through this ten year period, but to open more to the transitional space created when people of difference come together. That leads to substantial repetitive engagement along this journey, to echoing impacts, and a sense of spiralling back into the same space over and over again.
In this process, I argue that ‘progress’ is in the awareness of how we are all ultimately similar in our intertwined connections and transitions, but we can also help change each other for the better – ie. people living with mental illness or intellectual disability, and those working with them. And that our journeying is not to find an answer ‘out there’ (read ‘objective knowing’), as Ralph Waldo Emerson’s words in ‘Self-Reliance’ indicated, but to experience the transition inside ourselves that is necessary to grow fully: “He who travels to be amused, or to get somewhat which he does not carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things (Emerson 1985: 198).” This work explores the type of shared inner transition that Emerson recommended, among people of difference and those who work with them. My own Reflexions explore the only real evidence I can share of all of this engagement, which is the record of my own feelings and experiences, in a journal kept during the years of research.

What occurred during the ten years this work was being compiled was a process of repeatedly creating openings of space in which people could share their feelings and experiences. My work continues this way, and it is not about refining a set technique to achieve specific outcomes. It is about trying to help people reach their best personal potential in each moment of coming together, by removing the obstacles in their own natures or ‘selves’, and at the same time realizing the true potential in those same inner natures. As Jonathan Levin observed about the impact of Emerson’s work on ‘transition’:

Emerson’s ‘abandonment to the nature of things’ serves less to indicate the possibility of arriving at an essential nature or core of being, than to figure abandonment and transition as the nature of things. Transition and abandonment figure a power that at once supports and shatters the self… mark the limit of the
self’s agency and self-control… Transition should instead bring the familiar into contact with the unknown, a process that extends knowledge further into the mysterious margin of things, even as it defamiliarizes the very categories through which that movement is conducted. By maximizing the available ‘transitional surface,’ the great artist incessantly familiarizes the strange, and, at the same time, estranges the familiar. (Levin 1999: 3)

This work is a record of attempts to maximize the transitional surface between mixed groups of people within a suburban coastal city, in a central desert suburban precinct, and in a ‘top end’ tropical suburban zone. So that such transitions could occur, among ‘consumers & carers,’ and among the professionals who are supposed to facilitate their wellbeing. It was ultimately the same process in all these places – open the space, share, and reflect.

The Title: ‘Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs’ (GW3TS) was originally chosen to reflect two factors:

(i) The contexts in which all of this work has been undertaken have been suburban, whether in the Greater Sydney Basin in New South Wales, Australia, or in two suburban precincts in the Northern Territory of Australia - the central desert town of Alice Springs, and the ‘top end’ city of Darwin (both these places are configured in the same suburban streetscapes and community dynamics as the cities and towns along Australia’s coastal fringe); and

(ii) The Australian Aboriginal practice of ‘going walkabout’ traditionally means communing with one’s ancestral country and its ancestor spirits, in order to be fully in tune with one’s heritage and responsibilities for stewarding sacred places. As I have written in earlier work, this process involves perceiving metaphorically, through poesis
and noesis – (respectively) “to create harmonious compositions, making a life story”, and “to perceive through metaphor, making stories in life (Lloyd 2005: 316-317).”

So this Walkabout trope has formed a thread throughout all of my work, inviting all of us to consider our relations to place, one another and our inner selves, in shared metaphors for each other in how we ‘be’ together, in the interests of better balanced Social & Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) and mental health.

Also, I use the expression ‘going walkabout’ deliberately, because of the pejorative use of this term historically in Australia’s modern era. Here ‘going walkabout’ is still used to ‘put down’ Aboriginal people, portraying them as unreliable, likely to walk away at the drop of a hat, for some unpredictable reason. Even if an explanation is given, such as needing to ‘return to my country’, or ‘to go for a funeral’, these reasons are taken as excuses for laziness. So again this trope expresses for me the way people can too easily dismiss people of difference, especially those living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, as ‘unreliable, not up to it, or not able to cope with normal hard work’.

What I believe to be the truth, is that all of us need ‘down time’ to commune with our own inner soul territory, and to reconnect with our deeper motivations for being, in order to achieve better balanced lives. That is ‘the walkabout path’ to true mental health, and social & emotional wellbeing, that I advocate. So the ‘together’ part of the title expresses this need I feel for all of us – people living with different consciousness, carers, professionals working with these people, and the general community – to join together in greater acceptance and celebration of difference, and what it can teach us about how ‘to be better’ (just like Heidegger’s ‘dasein’, Fealy 2007), for all of our mental health.
The Submission By Publication Approach: Because of the on-going nature of this work, and its eclectic, community-informed, spontaneous and evolving format, I felt it was more relevant and reflective of the dynamic process involved, to combine a number of reports in this compiled document. After writing a Masters (Honours) Thesis, through the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney from 2000–2003, which then became a book of the same title, Going Walkabout Through The Suburbs: Valuing the lessons from alternative consciousness (Lloyd 2003/2005), I proceeded to apply the hypotheses formed in that work in field situations. That led to an attempt at a PhD field work project from 2004–2006, through the School of Social Sciences at UWS, trialling a model of community-based, peer supported, self-help rehabilitation. And that work kept evolving and eventually fed into more applied approaches in the new, but still suburban, settings of central and northern Australia.

So the work goes on, and this document is a progressive reflection of that emerging process. It is not an approach focused on ‘collecting data’, but on an experiential process engaging with ‘the poetry of being’ of people of difference – as New Zealand novelist Janet Frame wrote to her friend Bill Brown: “I am just lonely for my own kind who care for the poetry of existence (Frame in King 2000: 356).” It’s about more than just existing, because of the beauty and mystery we human beings can feel and share. This is where my work differs from other qualitative field work among people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability. I am not trying to ‘capture data’, or ‘measure’ anything. I am helping to create a web of feelings & experiences within which people can experience each other’s magic and mystery of being, and I believe that is an essential complement to clinical treatment regimes. Then I try to express that in poetic ways, which celebrate the participants’ beingness, and the central place of creativity and imagination at the heart of their being, healing, growth and development (Lloyd 2005: 301).
Combining Articles and Reflexions: Choosing to thread together a series of published, or forthcoming refereed articles, plus a series of Reflexions on the feelings and experiences arising from adopting this whole approach, was also a two-stranded decision:

(i) The Structure of Feelings and Experience (expressed as an acronym which I used in my Masters Thesis and subsequent book, “SOFE” Lloyd 2003/2005) is a key framing device for the whole of this work, so it makes sense to apply expressions of my feelings and experiences during the implementation of the varied field work represented here; hence the use of the term Reflexions, deliberately spelt in its older form, to echo both the critical concept of ‘reflexivity’ and a slower, more considered, even dreamy and repetitive approach to mulling over what this all felt like; and

(ii) Generating multidisciplinary conversation about hands-on, person-valuing (as against system-valuing, or medical model-valuing) reform in community rehabilitation among peers in the various fields (mental health, disability support, empowering consumers and carers, allied health & psychosocial rehabilitation, special education) touched by this work, has been a major motivation. So the published articles represent that outreach to the wider world of practice and research, to seek more empowerment for those living with difference in consciousness and their carers and communities, while seeking to pass the test of peer review to illustrate its valid evidence-based approach, based on self-reflexivity. And the Reflexion pieces try to combine observations of the feelings and experiences of those I have worked with, as well as my own feelings and experiences (SOFE) while undertaking the work in community settings, so as to honour the processes of poesis and noesis that are at the heart of the walkabout concept and practice.
The idea of the Reflexions is to provide a stream of consciousness type commentary on my inner experience, while facilitating these outer events and interpersonal connections. Their main point of reference is the work undertaken to create the approach I summarise as “GW3TS”, ie. the “Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs” approach to person-valuing, self-help, peer-supported rehabilitation. This has been the core thread of my thinking throughout the seven years of applied work in community. So my references in these reflective essays centre on that set of feelings and experiences, as the researcher as reflexive participant.

2. STRUCTURE, METHODS & PARADOX

The articles collated here reflect a staged, hopefully progressive process of hypothesizing new person-valuing approaches, then inviting and engaging in shared exploration, among voluntary community and professional participants. That exploration has been about exploring applying new ways of helping each other ‘to be’ together, in ways that I believe are better for the interests of everyone’s social & emotional wellbeing, and mental health – that is, the participants living with difference, their carers and community members, and the professionals ‘working with’ them. The aim being to acknowledge all people of diverse consciousness, to celebrate their identity and purpose in the group (ie. ‘the open urban tribe’ Watters 2004), and to explore the effects of shared witnessing and testimony, as a rhythm of narrative exchange and ways of being, developed among all.

Some of this work has been undertaken in formally constituted field work in suburban Sydney (NSW, Australia), as planned for the first stage of this research in 2004–6. Other aspects have come from workplace activities linked to community mental health and disability support, principally in the Northern Territory (NT) – in the suburban
precincts of Alice Springs (in the Central Australian desert part of the NT) and Darwin (in ‘the tropical Top End’ of the NT). It also includes voluntary community collaborations aiming for better interactions between multicultural people of difference. The overall emphasis in all this work has been on poetic ways of being (see Overarching Essay Section Two), combined with creative and imaginative ways of expressing individuality and group identity.

Modelling multidisciplinary professional collaborative approaches to valuing people of difference also needed evidence, towards more person-valuing and empowering mental health and disability support practices. This came from my own observations as a practitioner (as described in Overarching Essay Section Two), and they aimed to add illustrated weight to the all-too-common rhetoric of multi-disciplinarity used in so-called health reform. This has been, in my view, sadly not backed up by changes on-the-ground in practice, among professionals still guarding their vocational niches in mental health, disability, allied health and education (Hickie 2009).

So the logic linking these various refereed articles, overarching essay and Reflexions, is aiming to present a narrative, which reflects the journey I have been on, and continue to follow, in developing this body of collaborative ideas and practices. It is all based on the SOFE, the Structure of Feelings and Experience, and searching for better ways to be myself in valuing people of difference. It also includes setting the ‘expert’ knowledge of professionals into a context where that set of skills and knowledge serves people, rather than corralling them into passive receipt of someone else’s determination of what is best for their lives.
The paradox in this approach, is that I might be critiqued for not representing the participants with whom I have worked in the foreground of this ‘set of evidence’ or ‘data’. My defense to that critique is that in the applied experience of the work, the only real observations I could ultimately make were those about myself, in the company of these people of difference, not about them. We were involved in a shared experience, but their chosen experience in the end did not include wanting to be ‘subjects’ of my researching them. They wanted to ‘just be’, with me ‘just being’ alongside them (See Overarching Essay Section Two). So my only valid concern in the end had to be recording what this set of feelings and experiences felt like for me, and then to try to represent the overall dynamic we shared (See Introduction section 4.3 on Methodology below, re “Autoethnography AE cf. Participative Action Research PAR”).

In the articles submitted to various journals, during the seven years working on this whole compilation of experiences, I have referred to the observed outcomes of the work to date. That could be critiqued as inconsistent, since I set out originally to collect certain ‘data’ and ended up not consistently collecting and analyzing that type of evidence. Again, my defence is that the nature of the work changed as it unfolded ‘in transition’, and I found that the best way to track progress and changes was to continue with my own journal, not to try to get others to keep a journal, as they clearly didn’t like this option; or to be interviewed or ‘focus grouped’ (again, see Overarching Essay Section Two). Then, when I applied the processes in new situations in the Northern Territory, ie. in Central Australia (Alice Springs) and the Top End (Darwin), I continued using the personal self-reflexive journalling approach and dropped other data collection aspects altogether.
3. GATHERING EVIDENCE

Originally, in the field work for GW3TS in Sydney (2004–6), I set out to collect ‘data’ in the form of life journal entries by participants, plus film and photographic recordings. All three of these forms failed to work out well in practice, as the participants chose not to make journalling a priority, preferring to focus on their unrecorded, spontaneous interactive relationships. Then the film and photographic exercises proved to be inadequate, in reflecting the quality of feelings and experiences participants went through. But by the time I had reviewed the material it was too late to start again with more professional direction, and I had no budget to pay for that anyway.

Also, the aim of applying Participatory Action Research (Wadsworth 2006: 322-334) to this first field work was greatly altered in practice, to a form of Supported Cooperative Inquiry (Heron & Reason 2006:144-152), and my own autoethnographic self-reflective inquiry (Marshall 2006: 335-341) (See quotes from my Journal scattered throughout this compilation, and Overarching Essay Section Two). All along in my field work activities, and ever since, I have been recording my own journal each day (now running to about 4000 pages, kept in A4 Arch Files for the period 2004-7, then in smaller quarto size notebooks since). And this has reflected my experience in the role as the facilitator of the original ‘open urban tribe’ (Watters 2004), and all the other ‘tribes’ of participants and multidisciplinary professionals I have worked with since and with whom I continue to collaborate. So the decision to foreground an autoethnographic approach seemed the natural way to go, despite my feelings of having somehow ‘failed’ in not bringing about a more prominent and rigorously ‘proven’ PAR exercise in the 2004 –6 field work project.

In the Northern Territory, my work was not positioned as a discrete set of research projects, but as my own personal reflective journey while working in health, education,
disability and multicultural paid and voluntary community settings. I was applying many of the lessons I had learnt in the earlier GW3TS field work in Sydney, in contexts of community mental health, disability support and education, in similar concentrated suburban contexts, despite being located in the central desert and the tropical ‘top end’ of Australia. So I continued to approach this process of ‘evidence gathering’, or ‘data collection’ as an autoethnographic one – reflecting my personal experiences in facilitating attempts to improve the contexts, within which people could seek more balanced social & emotional wellbeing (SEWB) and mental health.

One of the patterns of my engagement with the world of academic research has been a sense of “not fitting in.” My eclectic, multi-source way of drawing on indigenous and other ways of knowing has not always been well received as appropriate analytical framework or methodology. But after some years I realized that, instead of being permanently self-critical about that sense of “failing to fit in,” I could adopt a style that matched my personality. This was the advice I received from Dr Gill Coleman, at the Bath University Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP) gathering at Hawkwood College in Stroud, UK in September 2004, when I was still very new to the whole Participative Action Research (PAR) journey.

Dr Coleman was part of a small workshop group (including Dr Peter Reason, Director of CARPP at Bath University) listening to me describe my field work project, and showing a short film about this work. She advised that I should consider whether the work was ‘about them or about me’ (Coleman reported in Lloyd 2004, Personal Journal, recording direct conversation). At the time I dismissed this as irrelevant, not knowing how true it would prove to be later on, when PAR proved to be inappropriate and self-reflection a much more valuable tool for me. So, taking that advice much later on, I was able to proceed with autoethnographic recording, while trying to work with people in
ways that seemed effective for them and me, according to direct feedback I got from them. That is how it has unfolded over the past decade, and continues today.
4. INTRODUCTION

4.1 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS COMPILATION

This section attempts to provide a summary outline of the informing literature for this work’s critique of the mental health system, as well as an overview of the guiding theory and methodology that positions its post-positivist perspective. Before that section begins, the structure of the whole dissertation is outlined below, to provide a guide to the “by publication” format. This section links the various pieces of the compilation into a linked narrative. It outlines each item and tries to connect it with the next, so a flow of ideas and perspectives represents the way my work has unfolded over the past decade.

Reflection on activities is sometimes more telling than the actions themselves. So the Reflexion pieces interspersed here try to capture something of that reconsideration of efforts, intentions and outcomes, as a post-positivist way of exploring ‘outcomes’. These are mainly aligned to what the earlier work in Sydney showed up as possible approaches, which were then built into (and continue to be used in) the Northern Territory activities.

(1) Reflexion 1 ‘The Trouble with Troubling’: explores my current view of how I have felt in the journey of exploring myself and others in the field of mental health and disability support reform. I found I clashed with the expectations of ‘scientific research’, because my work was much more about poetic exchange and creative expression than measuring data. While trying to find common ground, I more often than not just got lost in a conflicted space with the positivist scientific world, so I ended up getting depressed myself about this journey.
(2) The Introductory Overarching Essay (Section One): outlines how my body of work has come together over ten years and more. It discusses the process of my journal work, collaboration with people of difference (ie. living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability), and my attempts to facilitate community-based, self-help, peer support groups. It does not focus on the Central Australian or Top End experiences very much, as the interactive, transitional processes developed early on in this journey are the same ones I try to facilitate today. So I didn’t want to repeat a description of this process.


This paper describes the initial approach to my early exploratory field work on the overall ‘Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs’ (GW3TS) project from its very early days in 2004 into 2005. The hope then was to collect ‘data’ in the form of journal entries, in an interpretive ethnographic approach within a Participatory Action Research (PAR) milieu, but this did not end up producing an effective outcome. So the major usefulness of this early project report is to portray the overall intention and general direction of my early GW3TS work.

The subsequent published and forthcoming refereed articles reflect a series of engagements with ‘the mainstream’ in mental health and social science arenas. They are reflective of the tension between my eclectic approach and the more restricted parameters of what is judged to be appropriate ‘evidence’ in these sectors.
(4) Reflexion 2, ‘Rite of Passage’: explores in a contemporary reflection the process of journalling and the contradictory feelings it has given rise to in me. It explains the tension between writing about the processes of our tribe’s interaction, and the mundane offerings within the mainstream mental health system. My ongoing battles with the mainstream academic process, and the ‘rite of passage’ that this whole PhD journey has been for me, are placed in the context of this whole collection of work. This article is followed by one of my first serious acknowledgements by the world of mainstream mental health, in the Journal of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. This acceptance gave me great hope for going on with my work.


This paper describes how the interactive process of mutual narrative sharing had developed through the full GW3TS project field work in Sydney. It outlines how this work gave rise to ‘the All Fruits Theory.’

Because of the continuing struggle with mainstream attitudes towards my work, ie. as being somehow illegitimate in true medical science circles, I felt akin to indigenous friends, who had described the colonialising influence of ‘whitefella’ storytelling in science, anthropology, history and other areas of knowledge. So I connected with the notion of ‘headhunting,’ when used an inverted trope to challenge this mindset.

(6) The third paper, Lloyd, Robbie (2010) ‘Challenging western biomedicine’s ‘headhunting’ habits as negative midstream social determinants of health,’ has been accepted for presentation at the Australian Health Promotion Association
20th Annual Conference in Cairns, 10-13 April 2011, ‘Strengthening Action: Health Promotion and Determinants of Health.’

This paper deliberately is juxtaposed with the previous piece, because it challenges the dominant approaches still active in most clinical settings. It compares these to the way indigenous people have applied the headhunting trope to attack predatory developments over colonized peoples, which I equate with the treatment of those living with different consciousness by western biomedicine and behaviourist education practices.

(7) Reflexion 3, ‘We’re All Fruits’: describes how my work since teenagehood has been in getting people together to share the feel good experience of community. But that belief in people also took a lot of ‘energy in to get energy out’, and this piece troubles that process. It examines the notion that M. Scott Peck described as “community integrates diversity” (Scott Peck 1990: 245), in the context of the open urban tribe formed by the GW3TS participants.

That perspective seems an appropriate point at which to launch into the more descriptive chronicle of what happened in my field work with the GW3TS open urban tribe in Sydney, where I learnt about that process of integrating diversity through community, and how that relates to other more empathetic schools of thought.

(8) The Introductory Overarching Essay (Section Two): continues describing the GW3TS processes, and looks at related research, the theoretical context in which this work sits, and the role of narrative in nurturing healing. It also brings in the parallel perspectives of indigenous community cultural development, working against the destructive nature of western colonizing, and the contemporary ‘hearing voices’ movement, rejecting pathologising medical modelling.

This approach then links well with the formal acknowledgement by RANZCP of my ‘All Fruits Theory,’ akin to Queer Theory, which argues for greater acknowledgement
and acceptance of diverse forms of consciousness, as rich sources of mutual healing and nurture, through their very diversity of ways of being and knowing.


This paper describes how the GW3TS field work and my reflections on it led to the development of the self-help, peer support model of community rehabilitation, and the All Fruits Theory, which I then applied in other settings in Central Australia and ‘The Tope End’ (ie. Darwin and surrounds in the Northern Territory).

While this official acknowledgement helped my journey enormously, it was still hard work struggling through the environments of academic conferences and workshops, where negative judgments and patronizing silence in response to my papers left me feeling ‘on the outer’ most of the time, except of the odd conference participant who came up to me afterwards to congratulate me on my ‘courage’ in promoting these ideas. So the next Reflexion echoes those feelings of tension, between ‘the magic’ I knew we had created together, and the unacceptability of much of this approach in the mainstream.

(10) Reflexion 4, ‘Moments of Light’: gives a perspective on how to record the process of community interaction without ‘killing the spirit’ or ‘the magic’. It reflects the agony of trying to report on interactive experiences that were not prepared or ‘collected as data’, but were spontaneously ‘felt’ and ‘generated’ from within the group unconsciously.
What happened by default, in the Northern Territory settings where I worked from 2007 onwards to today (ie. Alice Springs in Central Australia, and Darwin in the far north), was that I just kept taking the same approach to community building I had used in GW3TS, and applied that to new multicultural community settings, as the next paper reflects.


This paper describes how I facilitated a multicultural young people’s and elders’ group in Alice Springs, under the auspices of headspace Central Australia, modelled on the GW3TS ‘aunties & uncles’ grouping and interactive process. It outlines how the GW3TS model, of mentoring ‘aunties & uncles’ can apply in wider community settings, to help create a nurturing environment in which young people can receive unconditional support, and feel a sense of identity and belonging. This ‘lay’ community member aspect is then complemented by the next paper, which describes how professionals can also be brought into similar nurturing collaboration, as happened in GW3TS with the ‘aunties and uncles,’ if they work in cooperative networks or Communities of Practice (Wegner 1991).

There was a need to formalize the informal processes that I had established in GW3TS, so I recorded the later process of professional and community network building, also known as creating a Community of Practice (Wenger 1991), that achieved success in Alice Springs in 2009. The following paper outlined that process, using my journal as a record of events and the feelings & experiences arising during it.
The sixth paper, Lloyd, Robbie (2010) ‘Forming a whole-community, multidisciplinary restorative network to collaborate on “Creating Cultures for Wellbeing”,’ was also accepted for presentation at the ‘Rural, Remote, Indigenous & Islander Mental Health RANZCP Conference’ in Cairns, 20-24 September 2010:

It outlines how I facilitated a whole-community gathering of professionals and business people in Alice Springs, with the aim of creating cultures that would nurture social and emotional wellbeing among young people in this community.

While these activities were progressing effectively, I was feeling increasingly depressed by the lack of engagement with my ideas among mainstream health and education managers. So doubt was a constant partner on the walkabout journey, and my journal reflected this continuously. But I also had the echo of the magic shared with GW3TS tribe members, and those peers in the Northern Territory who shared my feelings about how we could bring about appropriate people-valuing reform in mental health and disability support. This was my conversation with myself throughout the process, and remains so today, reflected by the following piece.

Reflexion 5, ‘Emotional Syntax’: gives voice to the personal context of trying to pursue ‘research’ in this area dominated by the aesthetics, the poetry, of personal interaction. While engaging with people of difference (ie. those living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability), this Reflexion says it is more about ‘expressing’ than ‘capturing’ feelings and experiences. From the GW3TS open urban tribe in Sydney, to the groups I worked with in the Northern Territory, there was a flow of interpersonal exchange that revitalized participants in what I call an emotional syntax (ie. the set of connections and relations linking people’s feelings and experiences). It was this perspective that led me to try to write a journal article that would ‘capture the spirit of place,’ that we had achieved with GW3TS, and that I saw in some circumstances in Alice Springs (such as the Mental Health Carers Support Group, and
the Day To Day Living Group of the Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA). Hence the following paper.


This paper aims to describe the special affects created in gatherings of people of difference sharing their feelings and experiences. It compares the sporting experience and spirit ‘in the zone’ with the shared spirit of ‘great good places’, such as people’s favourite pubs & coffee shops. The paper argues that this sort of environment of welcome and unconditional acknowledgement, whatever our idiosyncrasies, along with a protocol of generally considerate behaviour and non-differentiation between ‘experts and non-experts,’ is what is needed in revitalising rehabilitation contexts. While I was working to find an audience for this sort of perspective, I was also struggling with finding the right words to describe the zone where this healing effect happens, as is reflected in the following reflective piece.

(15) Reflexion 6, ‘Chronic or Chthonic? Echoing the unbearable cadence of being’:

looks at the personal experience of being involved in ‘soul work’, compared to the medical model’s objectifying coldness. This exercise in Robert Frost’s ‘work of knowing’ (Poirier 1977: 278) comes from the place in the soul where our deep unconscious energy of being resides. That is where I claim healing begins and needs to be nurtured, the chthonic zone.

Having tried to describe that particular ‘vibe’ and ‘intentional precinct,’ I then proceeded to use the language of ‘social poetics’ to carve out some ground where these new approaches could be valued for themselves. Not, as one academic sadly said during
a feedback session on my work, “Oh that’s just community development!” As if that ‘put down’ dealt with the matter once and for all, as a piece of trivia compared to formal academic process recording. So the following article tried to give voice to a more person-and-poetry-valuing perspective.


This paper extends the concept of the ‘great good place’ as a model for improving personal healing and nurturing in rehabilitation settings, through encouraging the social poetics that GW3TS modelled.

Once that perspective had been aired, I wanted to try to express the deeper rhythms of symbolic interaction that we achieved in GW3TS, and which I continue to see in the multicultural communities of healing, growth and development I work with today: ie. among young adults living with intellectual disability in Darwin and beyond across the Top End of the Northern Territory; and among people living with mental illness (ie. ‘consumers & carers’ in the system’s nomenclature); and among the Multicultural Elders Group, which I founded and which is trying to achieve a listening ear and mutual respect for people from Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, who have felt no one cared about their deeper knowing and ways of being, until we set up this intentional gathering. So the following paper tried to give voice to the earlier GWT3S rhythms, ‘for the record’.
(17) The ninth paper, Lloyd, Robbie (2010) ‘Revitalizing rehabilitation practices by using rhythmical interactive symbolic rituals’ is also currently being considered by the editors of Disability & Society Journal, for the Special Edition on ‘Disability: Shifting Frontiers and Boundaries,’ in 2011:

This paper shows how the GW3TS open urban tribe (Watters 2004) illustrated how to generate the vitalizing energy of interpersonal interaction. It outlines the elements involved in the interactive exchange of symbolic rituals of the shared energy of being, telling and listening. Being repeated today in the multicultural context of the Top End.

(18) Reflexion 7, ‘Endpoint: Reflections on a Ten Year Journey’: rounds off this whole process of exploration, with some reflections on the way it has shown me more about myself and others, than about the ‘science of rehabilitation’. The GW3TS project created evidence that ‘forms combine’, as Australian art theorist Bernard Smith has noted (Lloyd 2005: 108), only this time it was in the context of mental health development through shared narratives of personal feelings and experiences, which are now being repeated in multicultural contexts of Australia’s most northern city, Darwin, and surrounding regions of the Top End of the Northern Territory.
4.2 SUMMARY OF THE INFORMING LITERATURE

While a full Literature Review is provided later in the document (see pp 137–163), this summary is provided as a short guide for the reader, in terms of placing the thinking behind this critical approach to the mental health system as it predominantly operates today. The key perspective underpinning all this work is that it is critical of “the medical model”, or “medicalisation,” which I claim is the dominant discourse influencing how mental health rehabilitation and intellectual disability support are managed and implemented.

“Discourse” is taken to mean the way people’s thinking, speaking and acting are influenced by a set of ideas that has become commonly agreed to. As Tim Woods puts it:

‘Discourse’ is a slippery word, but it is often understood as the institutionalized practice through which signification and value are imposed, sanctioned and exchanged. In other words, discourses are the variety of different linguistic structures in which we engage in dynamic interchanges of beliefs, attitudes, sentiments and other expressions of consciousness, underpinned as they are by specific configurations of historical, social and cultural power (Woods 2009: 14-15).

I argue that medicalisation discourse and its positivist perspective have come to dominate all aspects of mental health policy, program and service delivery, as well as intellectual disability support, education and life development. This comes from my time working in adult mental health community rehabilitation, and in managing headspace youth mental health services, plus working in schools in special education, and on social & emotional wellbeing. But such a perspective has been commonly
agreed across the human services sector for more than a decade, with mixed levels of adherence. As Julianne Cheek and her colleagues argued in 1996:

Medicalisation refers to the expansion of medicine into ever-increasing areas of human existence, such that more and more, life experiences are defined in terms of health and illness, and hence given medical meaning… where they might previously have been seen as stages in the life cycle, social problems, or moral/religious concerns (Cheek et al 1996: 196).

The reason why post-positivist perspectives fit my work so well is that they seek to trouble the assumptions inherent in positivist discourses like medicalisation. The concept that “scientific” analyses of all human situations will automatically produce results that are “positive” for all concerned is a very loaded one. And my work argues against this “capacity to reveal ‘positively’, that is, with scientific certainty, what is socially good and bad… this logic of positivism” (Cheek et al 1996: 3).

Patti Lather has spent her career debating with this positivist system of knowledge, and seeking alternative ways to research truth and enhance empowerment for people, in how their lives and experiences are reported and assessed. Luckily, nowadays Lather’s views are well acknowledged among teachers in health and social sciences, although not yet incorporated into the way social policies and programs are managed and/or funded. We need to keep arguing the case, if people are to be served more fairly by the discourses of power.

The way in which any individual approaches the study of a social situation or system depends on the type of theoretical assumptions that that individual makes about society, its institutions, or any aspect of the social milieu. As Patti Lather
puts it, ‘we are both shaped by and shapers of the world… research paradigms inherently reflect our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in’ (Lather 1985: 8) (Cheek et al 1996: 163).

I argue that medicalisation has invaded so many aspects of our society, that we are now battling to escape from its obsessive measurement and hierarchical authoritarian top-down ways, of categorizing, monitoring and running surveillance on people – from health and welfare environments, to education, training, “human resources management,” and even child care. How did we get into this mess?

The reasons for medicalisation are complex and include the alleged ‘medical imperialism’ of professionalisation… and the shift from a religious to a secular, rationalized, professionalized and bureaucratized society… In this transition it has been argued that the faith in religion is replaced by a faith in secular science… Medical science plays a particularly important role in the symbolic ordering and understanding of the human condition… Yet it is a role which is in no sense free of ritual and magical elements, nor does the practice of medicine reflect simply the application of objective, value-free, technical information (Cheek et al 1996: 197).

So GW3TS is among those efforts to challenge the endemic value system and applied discourse dominating mental health and disability support, with a view to bringing more people into the field of determining what aspects of the human condition are being missed by this system. And what ways can we bring more balance into the theory and practice of health, education, welfare and community services, to better serve the majority of citizens. That includes the policy and program development process, among politicians, business people and bureaucrats, who represent today’s dominant decision-
makers. Post-positivism brings a more reflective, self-challenging way of considering what is going on in a research interaction, and how can all parties be ‘honest’ in their admission of power structures and exchanges that occur in research processes.

Added to the informing post-positivist perspectives represented by Patti Lather and her peers (listed in more detail on pp 137–163), are the views, social networking actions and advocacy efforts of the mental health “self help” movement – most effectively represented by The Hearing Voices Network, linked with Mad Pride, championed internationally by Ron Coleman. This group of eclectic “consumers and carers ” (as the medical model sees them) has begun to develop a body of work representing their own theoretical and methodological base, which also forms a strong informing body of work for my theoretical exploration and applied practice.

Adam James’ Raising Our Voices (James 2001) chronicles the development of the Hearing Voices Movement, and outlines its experience-based rationale for challenging the medicalised version of people’s consciousness. Similarly, the early psychosis collective’s Trips & Journeys (Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre 2000) illustrates how much stigma and discrimination arise from the medicalised mindset. Such “experience-based theory” needs to inform the next phase of mental health reform. As does its equivalent in the field of disability support, especially intellectual disability support.

Other titles informing this area of theory and practice include Mad Pride: A Celebration of Mad Culture (Curtis, Dellar, Leslie & Watson: 2000), Understanding Voices: coping with auditory hallucinations and confusing realities (Romme: 1998), and Recovery: An Holistic Approach (Reeves: 2000). They all represent the sort of “troubling” of the medicalised version of people’s experiences of different states of consciousness, which
I claim is the basis of how we need to reform mental health. And how post-positivism approaches reinterpreting what we have been told is “the truth,” by coming more alongside, and where possible from inside, the experience of those being so diagnosed and assessed.

Similar approaches in the disability studies area have broken down the power hierarchies that dominate discourses in this field. Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell’s groundbreaking *Disability in Australia: Exposing a Social Apartheid* (Goggin & Newell: 2005) is the pre-eminent text here. It represents a thorough expose of a set of ideas, values and practices that are better suited to the Victorian era. In fact, in some places there were kinder conditions applying then, than in many contemporary support services.

In our audit of disability in Australia, our focus has been on power, how it is exercised, and the form it takes. We wish to offer an account of the main ways that power works in shaping disability, and the lives of people with disabilities. This is important, we believe, so to understand how disability comes about – and how it is as much social and cultural as it is related to impairment, embodiment, biology and nature (Goggin & Newell 2005: 200).

This approach to shining a light on the ‘disability shaping perspective’ of mainstream practices crosses the same territory as the Hearing Voices Network, and GW3TS was founded in the same tradition. Its post-positivist credentials come to the fore in breaking down the paradigm that dominates so many lives, by allowing people to be heard and to break out of the silos created by medicalised thinking and practices.

Whatever the reasons for medicalisation, its effects include the disempowerment of ‘consumers’ through the mystification of diagnoses and treatment, and
through the construction of what constitutes a legitimate definition of a situation. In addition it exacerbates the possibility of iatrogenesis – the development of new problems as the result of treatment – by bringing more and more human experience into the medical domain (Cheek et al 1996: 197).

More detailed analysis of literature in these fields is covered in the latter part of this document (see pp 127–192).

4.3 OVERVIEW OF GUIDING METHODOLOGY

Adopting a post-positivist approach to the applied aspects of mental health and disability support reform also requires some explanatory positioning. So this short section aims to guide the reader into the theory and methodology informing the praxis of GW3TS – ie. the way my work has unfolded in community settings over the past decade, and why I chose this set of approaches. This section is a forerunner to the later section on Methods and Data Gathering (see pp 163–192), and aims to create a sense of the context within which my thinking and practices have emerged.

John Shotter has described how post-positivist applied interventions in psychology can be used to create a shift in focus that creates a more empowering, collaborative methodology. His *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: Social Constructionism, Rhetoric and Knowing of the Third Kind* (Shotter 1993) argues for moving away from objectivising detachment to an involved, participatory engagement with people: “A shift from a way of knowing by ‘looking at’ to a way of knowing by being ‘in contact, or in touch with’… the adoption of an involved rather than an external, uninolved standpoint (Shotter 1993: 20).” That is the informing starting position for GW3TS and my on-going work.
Arising from this shift are several other changes of attitude and aims in investigative procedure: there is a shift from the dominance of abstract and theoretical knowledge to the practical and everyday; a shift from an interest in things to an interest in activities and uses; a shift away from individuals’ thought processes to a focus on the social environment and what this ‘allows’ or ‘permits’; from isolated observational procedures to those negotiated with others; from starting points in reflection to local ones embedded within the historical flow of social activity in everyday life… (moving towards) pragmatic modes, which allow for spontaneous error-correction and find their warrants in locally constituted situations or circumstances… (attempting) to get at the ‘cultural politics of everyday life’ (Shotter 193: 20).

And there is also the applied knowing that comes from working with members of community rehabs, and in supported living with disabled groups. This led me to a deep valuing of the way people living with different consciousness see and express their worlds. Included among the guides from these “consumers and carers” (and those who work alongside them), who can show health professionals a lot about how to change their practices, are: eg. *Psychiatric First Aid in Psychosis: A handbook for nurses, support workers, carers and people distressed by psychotic experiences* (Mike Smith ed, with Ron Coleman and John Good: 2003); *Working with Voices: Victim to Victor I* (Ron Coleman & Mike Smith: 2003); *The Social Construction of Intellectual Disability* (Mark Rapley 2004); and *Constructions of Disability: researching the interface between disabled and non-disabled people* (Claire Tregaskis 2004).

My aim in evolving the methodology used in this work has been to honour those I worked with, and to be honest when things didn’t work. One aspect of that methodological quandary was admitting when Participative Action Research (PAR) was
not the preferred approach among the participants. Here is where Authoethnography (AE) allowed me the freedom to step alongside the whole process and reflect (in the post-positivist way) as we went along – making my experience part of the major learning occurring, and NOT trying to “work it all out” by applying a way of assessing the interaction between the participants themselves. At the same time, my theoretical reflection on these ‘practices’ took me into the linguistic arena, to a field explored long ago by Mikhail Bakhtin.

Bakhtin’s concept of “the dialogical imagination” echoed what I imagined I had heard coming from the GW3TS group as we met time and time again, in a spiralling sense of vital energy exchange of consciousness. His view expressed what I had been playing around with, drawing lots of spirals and models of single consciousness and group consciousness sharing, trying to “put my finger on it”, to “capture” what was happening within these people and their group interactions.

Every utterance participates in the “unitary language” (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces). Such is the fleeting language of a day, of an epoch, a social group, a genre, a school and so forth… the authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accentuated as an individual utterance (Bakhtin 2004/1981: 272).

So after trying for a long time, I finally gave up the idea of using PAR approaches, in following my own instinct that the GW3TS participants would have a more genuine empowered experience by not being involved in having to record their responses to
some set of measuring criteria I might throw into the mix. Their lived exchanges were theirs, and my responses were mine, and I was actually most interested in observing my reactions to their shared energies of interaction. So better to stick with my own zone and what came up for me in the company of these folks. Autoethnography (AE) was the best method for recording such personal process, whereas Participative Action Research (PAR) required that, as Stephen Kemmis has expressed it, “the legitimacy of any conclusions and decisions reached by participants will be proportional to the degree of authentic engagement of those concerned (Kemmis 2006: 104)”.

I felt the most legitimate engagement happened without requiring a reflective process by the participants to be the central measured outcome. We were creating a zone of free speech, and it honoured Bakhtin’s vision:

Bakhtin often talks about ‘speech life’ or the ‘life of signs’, indicating first that language and communication cannot be understood only from an abstract perspective, but must be considered as part of what people do in their lives. Second, he is indicating that speech, words and signs take on a ‘life of their own’, not subject to the control of individual speakers and their wills. Speakers may attempt to bend speech to their will, but speech is an intersubjective phenomenon; that is, the meanings that speech takes on are the result of not just speakers but listeners, and a variety of social forces (Bakhtin, quoted in Schirato & Yell 2000: 134).

Stephen Kemmis has been on a similar journey to me, with PAR and critical theory. His career has meandered along in an ongoing dialogue with the work of Jurgen Habermas, or “uncle Jurgen”, as I like to respectfully call him, in the indigenous way. Kemmis’ three stages of reflection on the value of PAR in the context of critical theory echo my
own perspective, and why I ultimately chose to move into AE rather than PAR as the main vehicle for evaluating this GW3TS journey of inquiry.

I have described a broad journey through the territory of critical action research, informed by the perspectives from the critical theory of Jurgen Habermas. In the first stage, my view of the action research group was of a 'critical community’, bound together to work on some common problems or issues in their own situation… In the second stage, my view… was changing. It was defined less in geographical or local terms, and more in terms of shared engagement in communicative action. Nevertheless, the concrete image of a face-to-face group of members continued to inform my thinking… In the third stage, the critique of the social macro-subject began to have real force in my thinking about the action research group. I have come to see a critical action research project as more open and fluid, as a ‘self-constituting public sphere’ (Kemmis 2006: 104).

So too, my view of PAR widened, to accept that AE may be a better focus for my role, while PAR still continued among the GW3TS participants, in their own lived experiences, without needing me to interpret them. My job was to interpret what happened for me on the journey with my fellow wanderers, as Michael Herzfeld has commented on AE:

The intimacy of the ethnographic encounter generally prompted ethnographers to adopt an affirmative attitude toward the people studied… This largely arose from the idea that the anthropologist should “adopt the native point of view.”… a view that has resurfaced today in the explicit genre of “autoethnography,” which allows a measure of self-examination to the anthropologist who is willing to listen to local theorisings of society and culture and to acknowledge them as
such... (showing that it is in fact possible to bring local commentary to bear on the limitations of professional discourse, and to find in it also a critique of locally oppressive conditions.) (Herzfeld 2001: 25-26).

This adoption of a self-reflective ‘mulling’ approach, combined with the shared ‘tribal’ context of a group lifeworld experience with fellow participants on a journey together, felt more authentic for the context that evolved under the influence of our GW3TS group dynamics. As Norman Denzin put it, AE can combine both gazes:

Autoethnography: Traditionally, “the cultural study of one’s own people” (Van Maanen, 1998, p. 106…) but more recently a turning of the ethnographic gaze inward on the self (auto), while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography, looking at the larger context wherein self experiences occur (see Ellis, 1996) (Denzin 1997: 227).

I tried to follow this value system and praxis. And when it came to recording the whole journey, AE echoed as the most valid ‘theory of praxis’ process for honouring all of our contributions. Ultimately, it became the best way to represent the social poetics & semiotics, that were the core ‘meaning making’ activities we were involved in together. This was the form of expression that the GW3TS tribe created, in their own spontaneous way of being together (Heidegger’s dasein). And that exchange created a social semiotics that transfixed my attention for over three years:

Social semiotics talks about meaning making as a social practice, carried out by social agents in a social (and cultural) context… (it0 draws on the semiotic notion of communication or language as a system of signs, which provides a range of potential meanings to its users… like Bourdieu, social semiotics sees
social meaning making as about behaviour or practice. Meaning system are never closed or finite, but always open, dynamic and changing (Schirato & Yell 2000: 106-107).

So the AE perspective provided a methodological vehicle for my personal reflections to engage with the social and realpolitikal context of the GW3TS participants’ lives.
1. **REFLEXION 1: The trouble with troubling**

Reviewing my *GW3TS Journal*, kept from the 1st of January 2004 and continuing into its seventh year, from one perspective it feels like an extended conversation, about myself and those with whom this work brought me in touch. A bit like ‘metafiction’ (Hutcheon 1980), it could be construed as a massive exercise in self-indulgence, raising the paradox of all reflexive researchers: are they just ‘legends in their own lunchtime’ (the common put down used in media circles, about politicians and business people, who think they’re more important than they are to the average person), or genuinely involved in seeking new understandings?

Waking this morning to a grey-cloud woven southern sky, literally like ‘the grey matter of the universe’, I feel like I’m a surgeon looking out on the inner epithelium of the mind of the universe. Clouds full of heads and heads full of clouds. Beneath these, the apartment block Lego-city, with its blinking super-crane and their plane warning lights. Knowing that soon dozens of planes will come flying in through those clouds, full of early morning commuters, who’ve just had brain for breakfast – the universal brain of the universe, in their skyway university. Lucky them, swimming through grey matter to work this morning.

“It is the way we live the relationship between the world into which we are born and the world we have a hand in making that defines the field of existential anthropology (Jackson 1993: 28)” (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal* 4am 22/11/2004).

This daily journalling project for me was about trying to consciously reflect, during the experience, on what was happening to *my* feelings and experiences, and learnings, as I tried to facilitate those of *others*. So it was very much ‘the story about the story’, or what Linda Hutcheon called “fiction about fiction – that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity (Hutcheon 1980: 1).”
Many may think that approach is simply narcissism, in its most cynical usage. But I hope the *GW3TS Journal* has been more about “textual self-awareness… the ironical allegorical reading of the Narcissus myth… (where) Freud… conferred on narcissism the status of the ‘universal original condition’ of man (Hutcheon 1980: 1).” I take that to be normal self-consciousness, where people conduct a stream of consciousness commentary on their life as it unfolds, only here it is recorded in my journal. Moreover, I hope that my reflections have a wider social resonance – aspiring as they do to that synthesis of personal reflection and reflexivity that has been aptly named “reflexion” (Davies and Gannon 2006: 109).

But there is another dimension of the *GW3TS Journal* that has equally influenced its role and content. In this perspective it is like a very long prayer to ‘the higher power’. That power may be interpreted as ‘my God’ (in the same sense as the Irish comedian Dave Allen used, when he signed off from his 1960s TV show at the end of each episode, with the epithet ‘May your God go with you’ – i.e. to paraphrase, ‘It doesn’t matter what brand you believe in, I wish you well with your higher power’). Or it may be seen as the universal human spirit or unconscious that Jung promoted. Whichever way, the GW3TS journal is like a vulnerable record before a higher force, and one prone to swing from being excitedly grateful and celebrating one day, to pathetically pleading for help the next, in the middle of feelings of chaos or lostness. It all began with a prophetic opening statement:

> Finishing reading Barry Hill’s massive exploration of the life and work of Ted Strehlow, *Broken Song* (Hill 2002), on this new year morning, is a salutary warning. My polemical, protesting, over-personalising nature is ‘on notice’ in this exercise. God help me open to the energy of balance and compassion, to
investigate wisely, express discretely, and argue fairly. Make me the servant of all the souls who join this tribal journey, so that their collective exegesis may express the common good in action. Bring me into contact with authorities, agents of change, and collaborators for growth and development in human community. Show me the way to friendship and cooperation and beneficence, rather than conflict, competition and jealousies. (Lloyd: *GW3TS Journal*, Very First Journal Entry, 01/01/2004)

The personal motivation and intention in beginning this journey was to build community, a better healing and on-going nurturing community environment for people of different consciousness to live in. At the same time, my own reflective process while attempting to facilitate this open urban tribe, or community of belonging as I variously called it, was to record personal feelings and experiences. And that was the original plan to involve all participants, ie. the GW3TS people living with challenges and their volunteer buddies – they were going to keep journals together over the first twelve months of the project (2004–5), and then we would see what showed up at the end of twelve months. That was the first ‘failure’ of the research plan, in my self-critical judgement: they didn’t want to do it! So I blamed myself for having not planned it well enough, or structured the process well enough, or whatever. The truth was, they just didn’t like doing it, so they dropped it. With hindsight, perhaps I was inadvertently attempting to impose my agenda as a reflexive researcher on the participants by getting them to generate written ‘data’, albeit in the cause of promoting a collaborative approach.

So, in the narrative thread to this work, there is a continuing autoethnographic narrative exploring and expressing my own reflections, especially about issues such as this fundamental change in the project from very early on. The GW3TS Journal is a one
way, yet reflexive, conversation with my own sense of the numinous (i.e. the higher power, or ‘the gods’), recording my testimony of feelings and experiences (SOFE) in the process of trying to steward the GW3TS tribe’s journey. And then in trying to steward the continuing application of, and writing up of, the project and its sequels over several years since. That split experience, between being facilitator and recorder, leader and equal participant, fits well with Dwayne E. Huebner’s expression, when describing the conflicts in teaching as a vocation:

Three voices call, or three demands are made on the teacher. Hence the life that is teaching is inherently a conflicted way of living. The teacher is called by the students, by the content, and by the institution within which the teacher lives… Spiritual warfare is inherent in all vocations (Huebner 1993: 9).

(Which I paraphrase to mean the battle between different fundamental belief systems, among those involved in tertiary teaching, learning and research – my comment).

My life as a teacher, which began in 1972 and continues on and off today, has been through these conflicts many times. GW3TS involved a teacher’s role as well, but it was in a slightly different dynamic than the classroom. We were all ‘teachers for each other’ in a continuous process, deliberately foregrounded in the conditions of coming together. ‘Working The Business of Life’ (WTBOL) was an active exchange of mirroring and feedback between all participants. One that empowered people to say what they felt and to give as good as they got. All within the limits of consideration and mutual support, which were foundational conditions for being in the tribe. And this WTBOL process fuelled decisions that sometimes meant rejecting what I had originally intended to be in the research project, such as the buddy journaling component.
So how does this exercise in reflexivity trouble the process I went through, and the GW3TS tribe participants went through? “Because of the rejection of the so-called objective all-seeing eye/I of positivist research, it is not acceptable to write as if the author were not present at each stage of the discursive constitutive work of research (Davies & Gannon 2006: 89).” Yet there is a danger of slipping into narcissistic narrative. Perhaps that danger can be averted through a recognition that the self – myself in this instance – is also a ‘subject’ who is both caught up in and able to resist the dominant discourses that shape relationships with people of difference.

As Davies and Gannon note, “the subject both does and does not exist in reflexive social scientific writing. It is the slippage between… two ends of the spectrum of reflexivity (Davies & Gannon 2006: 89-90).” From this perspective, my ‘reflexions’ challenge the separation of the individual and the social, making visible the slippages and tensions between the autonomous, responsibilised and isolated individual, and the more relational and intersubjective modes of being to which this project aspires.

Nevertheless, what often happened in my inner experience of the shared process of facilitating and joining in the tribal interactive dynamics, was that self-consciousness often overwhelmed natural engagement. Being conscious of having to steward everybody’s experience, so it went ‘nicely’, I became stuck in my own stream of consciousness, rather than swimming in the river of life where everyone else was splashing around.

(At the Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Conference in Brisbane Nov. 2004) Meeting senior academics, Ann Dale from Canada and Maria Humphries from NZ, here has been a real boost to the sense of global community. Both women have lost a dear one to mental illness, and abusive
misunderstanding. It was like “meeting the tribe” who believe in other ways of knowing. But both decided not to speak publicly about their experiences, most likely because it is just too painful and brings up the wrong feelings when you’re having to present in academic company (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal* 28/11/2004).

The exposure to people with like experience, who also suffered from a kind of disablement in the company of academic peers, reinforced a problem with this work that continues. Personal involvement can disarm professional handling, and give rise to feelings of inadequacy, as happened to me when I experienced regular bouts of feeling a failure, as the tour driver and guide for the GW3TS tribe’s journey together. But the truth was, the participants were usually having a ball, and they didn’t need me to agonize over any of this. As Davies & Gannon observed: “The moral gaze restricts, binds one’s thoughts, defers and refers constantly to the discourses of respectability, of morality, of discipline, of method. The unwanted guest at our table was unequivocally there, however (Davies & Gannon 2006: 102).”

I would say that the GW3TS journal has been both a burden and a life raft, with its inevitable readiness to ‘hear me’, receiving each day’s testimony like a hungry tape recorder, and its equally inevitable ‘gotcha’ effect – the repository of evidence that can be used against me, most of often by myself, in feeling guilty for having failed in something I’ve now ‘put on the record’. Combine that effect with the on-going battle I have had with the mainstream medical and educational systems, about my challenging, risk-taking, chaos-inviting, approaches to bringing together people of difference, and you have a powerful recipe for fermenting what could be perceived as inadequacy. Davies & Gannon sum it up nicely:
Reflexive writing can be passionate and emotional. It can be writing in which mind, heart and body are all engaged. Yet once those words are out there in the world, objects themselves of reflexion by others as well as ourselves, they can become weapons to turn against us (Davies & Gannon 2006: 109).

I do this to myself continually, which is probably one reason why I didn’t want to ‘look back’ into the GW3TS journal as I came to write up this final compilation. Combined with the fact that several deaths and on-going suffering among the tribe during our time together left me with deep grief, over the tragic mishandling of people’s suffering by the dominant medical system, which I felt totally failed at least one of these people, as well as my own son (ongoing). Whenever I went back and read my words, it would upset me too much to be able to go on, until after leaving a number of days to recover, by walking away from anything to do with this work.

“In each case where spoken and written words become dangerous, we find a humanist rationality is at work in the reader (Davies & Gannon 2006: 109).” This was the curse I lived with throughout the GW3TS project, and only felt relieved of when I began working on community-based projects using its models, but not depending on an ultimate ‘assessment’ by the academic world and its dialectical rational brutality, as it felt to me.

It is assumed by the one who looks and judges that the words reveal a true self who exists independently of the text and yet who can be revealed by the text… The figure of the essential self who lurks behind or is ‘revealed’ by the text becomes the dominant image – the text is secondary – a transparent window on the soul (Davies & Gannon 2006: 109).
Hence ‘the trouble with troubling’ expression, with a capital T that rhymes with D, that stands for dialectic – was my way of trying to ‘lighten up’ about this whole tense battle, in the ‘spiritual warfare’ process, where dialectics cancelled out exchange of stories as a way of gathering evidence: ie. without having to adhere to mechanistic proofs of ‘thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis’ processes. So for me this has mostly stemmed from the tension between wanting to join the GW3TS tribe in ‘just being’, and still desiring validity for them and this work in the academic world. If the GW3TS project and its recording quality will ultimately be judged in the dialectical terms of disinterested knowledge, I need to let go of ‘the text’ and let the process be judged by those with independent viewpoints.

Reflecting on the days leading up to and during our second weekend workshop (3-4 June 2005 at the Salvation Army’s Collaroy Conference Centre on Sydney’s northern beaches), I take heart from the practice that was dominant then and remains so for me now – just ‘trusting the process and handing it over to the participants’ in community based, self-help rehabilitation.

Approaching the weekend, and the usual sleepless nights combine with over-busy thoughts, of everything that has to be done. I’ll be glad to see a nice gathering concluded, and everyone gone on their way: feeling our tribe has achieved its immediate mission – and set up the basis of its own survival beyond my coordination. We’ll see. …“The light by which we see in this world comes out of the soul of the observer (R.W. Emerson, The Spiritual Emerson, p 263).” I absolutely believe this, and realize how often I turn off my own light unnecessarily, by getting distracted by negative people and events (Lloyd GW3TS Journal, Journal Entry immediately prior to second GW3TS weekend workshop, 01/06/2005).
This was a time of exhaustion and elation together, and the consequent lack of control resulting from such energy loss was ultimately a boon. “Feeling worn out by all the preparations right now, I am looking forward to the phenomenon of ‘handing it over’ to the GW3TS community’s own process, once we get underway on Friday (3 June 2005) (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal*, 01/06/2005).”

What I reflect on about all this processing is the ‘strength in weakness’ it evidenced. Compare that with the medical model’s insistence on control and certainty, and you end up with what I believe is wrong with the system, in terms of person-valuing rehabilitation: it doesn’t allow for enough self-determined recovery through taking risks with freedom.

What has unfolded in GW3TS is something for the WHOLE, which serves the lives of each. Every person involved is enriched by being in the tribe – and each brings to the experience a special offering at different times. (Following are some of our GW3TS participants’ initials and their archetypal identities, as I saw them at the time of our second gathering) AG – the little buddha. VS – the silent watcher. CM – the broken hearted princess. TE – the big hearted bloke. RF – the waiting friend. DP – the willing diva with the gift of seeing people. We have many souls with lots to offer, and the people living with Down Syndrome were our stars this weekend: their openness, directness, and truth conquer all stigma. LD’s dancing queen was show stopping. ES’s quiet earnestness humbling. These guys were the leaders (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal*, 05/06/2005).

At the concluding session of the GW3TS second weekend workshop, I ended our gathering by reading a quote from *The Support Economy*, by Shoshana Zuboff and
James Maxmin (Zuboff & Maxmin 2004). This book, subtitled ‘Why corporations are failing individuals and the next episode of capitalism,’ reports on the authors’ study of the factors working behind ‘the chasm,’ between where individual people are seeking psychological individuation, and where business is still operating in a megalithic way. It expressed an eclectic understanding that was typical of the multidisciplinary collaboration among our ‘aunties & uncles.’ This group of volunteer professional human service workers, who acted as unconditionally positive supporters for all our participants living with challenges, and each other, were all part of a new grouping of people wanting to come together and self-develop at the same time. Several people rang me after this event, asking for the quote to be emailed, so they could use it in their own work.

These studies suggest that when people can successfully maintain and verify the most valued aspects of their identity, they live longer, healthier, and happier lives. The findings imply that when social experiences affirm, support, and contribute to the activities associated with constructing and maintaining personal identity, people experience the opposite of stress. They encounter, instead, sources of meaning, pleasure, nourishment, and energy. Identity-affirming experiences are, quite literally, life-giving. This study (ie. the collated views gathered in The Support Economy – this author’s comment) also reminds us that the quest for psychological self-determination is not the same as the need to feel ‘in control’ of everything. Psychological self-determination describes the ability to exert control over the most important aspects of one’s life, especially personal identity, which has become the source of meaning and purpose in a life no longer dictated by bloodlines and tradition (and RL would add ‘patterns of consumption’ – my insertion). The sense of a meaningful existence is intimately linked to the possibility of hope and optimism, which have also been shown to
be predictors of health. If stress can kill, then psychological self-determination appears to be its opposite – it can quite literally keep us alive (Zuboff & Maxmin 2004: 135).

Emailed to the group email tree we used for GW3TS on Monday 6 June 2005 (walkabout@yahoogroups.com), with the comment: “hope that gives you some more sense of hope and purpose in our mutual journey to greater community, connection and investment in the common good for a higher purpose (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 06/06/2005).”
Indigenous-style "Working the Business of Life" as tools for Active Growth and Healing Reflexivity

ABSTRACT

Sub-Theme: The 'voice' of the researched in mental health and intellectual disability 'rehabilitation'

Key Words: Intellectual disability; mental illness; rehabilitation; action research.

This paper describes Interpretive Ethnography and Participatory Action Research being applied in community, as tools for participatory rehabilitation and community empowerment, among young adults living with intellectual disability and/or mental illness. It shares participants' perspectives from a UWS Action Research project involving 30 pairs of buddies, keeping a fortnightly journal of their feelings and experiences for one year (2004-5). The project includes clustered peer support groups, an overseeing 'consumer' advisory group, documentary film and photographic essay, and an 'in community', on-going conversation valuing diversity in consciousness (onto-diversity), and 'working the business of life', using a structure of feeling and experience to stimulate awareness.
The paper describes some creative narrative sharing strategies, among journalling buddies, and in the peer support community of belonging. The philosophy grounding this work values intersubjectivity and diversity in consciousness (onto-diversity), which translate into a project designed to nurture a community of belonging, and practical empowerment over prejudice. Through voicing feelings and experiences, and sharing perspectives to achieve balanced self and group awareness, participants learn from and grow with one another. Theory advocates relationship, and practice illustrates that 'in relationship', growth, healing and development can occur. The *Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs - Life Journalling with Volunteer Buddies* (GW3TS) project aims to achieve change in the lives of its participants, while modelling cost-effective, local community, self-help approaches to rehabilitation.

**BIOG. NOTE:** Robbie Lloyd is interested in reforming rehabilitation practices, applying indigenous ways of knowing in daily exchange in community, and sharing stories for healing, growth and development, particularly among people living with intellectual disability and/or mental illness, and addiction. His new book, *Going Walkabout Through The Suburbs: Valuing the lessons from alternative consciousness*, will be out in a few weeks, Sid Harta Press, Melbourne 2005.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Valuing diversity in consciousness (what I call 'onto-diversity') over socially constructed notions of intellectual ability/disability, or mental illness/wellness, this work aims to contribute to improvement in community-based rehabilitation. Acknowledging and applying people's ability to help themselves heal, grow and develop, through applying 'other ways of knowing' (Broomfield 1997/2008), the project formed a self-help, peer-supporting community of belonging (or 'open urban tribe') in May 2004. Pairs of buddies kept a journal of their feelings and experiences over more
than twelve months (1), and the whole community gathered regularly to share stories and perspectives on this journey.

This supported collaborative inquiry approach was not exactly full action research, but a guided process of exploration shared by all involved. Coordination and facilitation was needed to keep the process rolling, and the life journalling conversation was guided by a set of prompts, designed to assist balancing of awareness, or mindfulness among the buddies. Based on the Structure of Feelings and Experience work I completed in my Masters Thesis in Cultural Inquiry (Lloyd 2003), this model was based on the work of Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith, plus my own research in diverse communities (addicts, indigenous, people living with intellectual disability and mental illness).

Applying an inter-relational, inter-subjective dynamic, based on an indigenous-style working 'the business' of life, the project applied philosophy and metaphysics in lived experience. The acknowledgement of the role of mystery and wonder, surrender to not knowing, and sharing our creative imagination of what life can be like, became a core rhythm for the tribe. This resonating sharing and caring process, combined with discerning feedback from peers and elders, made for a feeling of 'coming home' each time the group re-formed. It applies metaphor and playfulness (Meares 2005) to the process of re-engaging with our full inner selves, to find our way into growth.

Exercising social imagination and sharing stories in the oral tradition (i.e. that each story is brand new each time it is told), the Waminda Tribe became a place for healing, growth, recuperation and development. This is self-help rehabilitation in practice,

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1 (This was the journalling project that I abandoned subsequently, when it became clear not enough participants wanted to do it to make the exercise worthwhile – Footnote inserted 11 Sept 2010)
aiming to achieve a wiser way of being (what I call 'suss-tainability') (2)\(^2\), not connected with 'rational' 'intelligence', but built on trust, sharing and caring, and re-inspiring connections within and between the participants. Autonomous individuals meeting across the gaps of their difference (Irigaray 2002).

These person-valuing approaches to rehabilitation show that cost effective rehabilitation can be achieved within communities, in the non-blood, extended family dynamic of 'open urban tribes'. These combinations of hearts, minds and souls show a pattern for the universal human condition, that just as biological diversity is essential for sustainability, so too onto-diversity is the key element in achieving suss-tainability – a wiser society sharing other ways of knowing than just rationality and mechanistic reason.

2. METHODOLOGY

This on-going 'supported action inquiry' project (Heron 1996 p.24) aims to explore and record new perspectives on healing, growth and development among its two participant groups, by applying creative narrative sharing strategies, peer support feedback conversations, and a shared dynamic of the 'community of belonging' (or 'urban tribe') (Watters 2004). This is modelled on indigenous-style 'working the business of life', which means participating in taking responsibility for oneself and one's role in the group.

The method used carries elements of participative action research, cooperative inquiry and emancipatory praxis. Begun in January 2004, in the Critical Social Sciences section

\(^2\) (The term ‘ontodiversity for suss-tainability’ was a deliberate play on words, to emphasise that, just as we need biodiversity for ecological sustainability, we also need diversity of being & knowing for ensuring sustainability in how we ‘suss out’ our best way forward as a sentient species – ie. ‘wiser ways of being for more sustainable ways of knowing’). Footnote inserted 11 Sept. 2010.
of the School of Applied Social and Human Sciences at the University of Western Sydney, the project is due to be completed by December 2006, and addresses three aims:

(i) Acknowledging and valuing diversity in consciousness, to get away from logico-positivist, pathologising models of difference among human beings;

(ii) Applying the spirit of indigenous “working the business of life” to active healing, growth and development among peers and elders in contemporary urban non-indigenous settings; and

(iii) Illustrating and modelling in collaboration with “the system”, more efficacious and cost-effective self-help methods of rehabilitation, among these two groups of health and community services “consumers” and their potentially supporting communities.

Involving approximately 30 pairs of buddies, keeping a fortnightly journal of their feelings and experiences for one year (2004-5), the project also includes “aunties and uncles”, who are voluntary facilitators and elders in the community of belonging we have formed. The project includes clustered peer support groups, an overseeing consumer advisory group, and parallel documentary film and photographic recording, plus a DVD/CD-ROM collation at its conclusion, to share the self-help process with other communities.

Starting by advertising for volunteer participants in local newspapers, and through community mental health and intellectual disability organisations, recruitment took about four months, from February to May 2004. Then police checks, shared induction session and general commitment assessments were carried out, in time for inviting participants to a weekend start-up workshop on Friday 28 – Sunday 30 May 2004, at the Salvation Army Collaroy Conference Centre. About 100 people attended this event, which included small group workshops, large group sharing, video documentary
filming, photographic recording, celebrations, celebratory music and dancing, a scrapbooking demonstration, and lots of individual conversations.

The dynamic was in the participative, cooperative inquiry mode, with voluntary facilitators and participants working through an “organic” planning-reflection-action-reconsideration style process at each major break in proceedings. Mixing young adults living with Down Syndrome, with others living with mental health challenges, was a “large ask”, and many people were pushed out of their comfort zone. But basic goodwill on all participants' and facilitators' parts led to a major success, with everyone going home feeling uplifted and encouraged by their experience.

After that weekend, some buddy pairings formed rapidly, and began to meet on their own terms and times, based around a fortnightly goal. Other participants were not able to find a suitable buddy, but they remained welcome in the larger community of belonging. Peer Support groups were gradually distilled from the regional suburban spread, and the “Consumer” (sic) Advisory Group began to meet about every six weeks to consider progress, strategic interventions and plans.

3. CREATIVITY AND CRITIQUE IN 'ART DIRECTING RECOVERY'

While applying the 'working the business of life process', in shared feedback about each participant's progress and dealing with life problems, there is also an imaginative engagement with 'art directing our recovery of life', which applies in three ways:

(1) Through the 'in community', on-going conversation between buddies and peers, valuing diversity in consciousness (what I call 'onto-diversity for suss-tainability'), and encouraging feelings of safety, belonging, acknowledgement and 'coming forward' with feelings, experiences and ideas. This activity consciously 'art directs', or gives practical
expression to, recovering the previously suppressed self, and regaining dignity, freedom to be, and choice in life expression;

(2) Exercising 'the business of life' conversation creates a community sharing pattern, which builds connections, creates a framework for self-reflexivity, and a context for trying out expression and risking opinion that otherwise might be withheld. Using a creative means to gain political ends, the project shows practically how self-help can work in community-based settings. It emphasises that starting with self and peers, it is possible to move to modelling societal levels of change, for an increasing group of 'sufferers' (sic). Showing how people can relate to each other and share growthful conversation 'art directs' new healing approaches, by acknowledging that we all have problems and need each other's help to grow through them, or adjust to living with conditions that may not be solvable, or benefit from allopathic symptom-suppression;

(3) Buddy partners exercise an interchange of reflections, based around a balancing Structure of Feelings and Experience, which is used as a set of six prompts for the fortnightly journalling conversation starters. These 'art directing' parameters for exploring feelings and experiences were developed from research into Art & Literature, from the work of cultural theorists Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith (Lloyd 2005). The parameters are used to create a balancing framework for the buddies' conversation, stimulating aspects of awareness which arise across literature and art, as signs that all humans need to exercise regularly, in 'art directing' our consciousness into more mindful awareness.

4. PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy and ethics of this project combine Cooperative Inquiry (Heron 1996), Participative Action Research (Reason 1994) and Feminist, Communitarian, Public
Ethnography (Denzin 1997). By valuing intersubjectivity and diversity in consciousness, the work embraces Luce Irigaray's post-structuralist, phenomenological views on shared autonomy and relationship being the grounds for human life (Irigaray 1999).

Translating these perspectives into an 'art directed' experiential project, designed to nurture a community of belonging and practical empowerment over prejudice, requires openness to process and organic flow, rather than set ideas and ideals. It also involves realpolitikal expression of a value system based on reclaiming the common good, over managerialist, economic rationalist, surveillance-style administration of health and community services. When cost-cutting and mechanistic adherence to budget restrictions put people beneath the bottom line, this seems to have little to do with the stated rhetoric in departmental literature.

Using Interpretive Ethnography and Participatory Action Research as tools for participatory rehabilitation and community empowerment, among young adults living with intellectual disability and/or mental illness, is a concept and process that is not new. Many proponents of person valuing approaches to healing in mental health were arguing long ago for such approaches (Goffman 1961, The Radical Therapist Collective 1974, Illich 1973). But the prevalence of logic-positivist practices meant no real long-term progress was achieved.

More recently another wave of objection to this dominance of the neurotransmitter model of consciousness, and the rational materialist medical model, has led to calls for more holistic approaches to healing, growth and development (Read, Mosher, Bentall 2004). Similarly, in the field of disability rights, people have been calling for more respectful engagement with the needs and aspirations of people living with many types

The postmodern challenge to meta-narrative domination of various sectors of society is a useful tool, for informing our investigation of storytelling in ways that add value and respect to people's lived experience. Emancipation, empowerment and community-building can all combine with liberation philosophy and practice, without necessarily toppling any power structures, but more by educating “the system” about cost-effective ways for people to help themselves, given better direction of resources into the hands of the people who need them most.

5. THE METHOD

Already participants are exercising their intersubjective muscles, in regular exchanges with their buddies, and with others among their peers and 'aunties and uncles'. As one participant (living without either of the life challenges of mental illness or intellectual disability) put it recently, at a weekend sharing workshop and documentary filming session, 'this feels like home'. The community of belonging is a deliberately 'art directed' creation of community, and participants love it. As ethnographer Michael Jackson has expressed it, 'No human being comes to a knowledge of himself or herself except through others. From the outset our lives are an intersubjective experience... Identity is a by-product of modes of interrelationships.' (Jackson, 1995: 118)

This project is illustrating that people can make their lives more fulfilling and energised, by coming together with the purpose of valuing each other's shared stories, and testimonies of suffering, success and challenge with addressing their resistances to changing behaviours.
The element added to our conversation, without entering into any sectarian perspective on 'belief', is that we share the human spirit in this community of belonging, and that is crucial to the healing and growth that occurs within the group. Valuing that, and protecting people's rights to share risky aspects of their lived experience, is at the core of how and why people find efficacious results through the project.

The Structure of Feelings and Experience that I developed, informs the journalling conversations, through applying six parameters of balanced awareness, as stimuli for shared reflection between buddies. They cover:

(i) Creativity and Imagination - Exercising the parts of ourselves that give expression to the spontaneous energy of creation;
(ii) Sharing and Caring in Relationship - Practising care for one another in relationships;
(iii) Discerning Feedback in a community of peers and elders - Giving perspective and knowledge that one belongs in the group, with a feel for how one is going;
(iv) Telling our Stories in conversations of Sharing;
(v) Exploring Mystery about Life - Knowing that we can't always be in control, and it's alright to surrender to life and go with the flow regularly;
(vi) Expressing Wonder at the awe inspiring nature of the universe, and knowing that our egos are not all it's about, giving a sense of humility.

Using this model gives expression to practical application of a spirit of exchange in life experience as equals, with different things to offer each other. That is, we ‘art direct’ (ie. we are the architects of our life growth processes & experiences) our recovery and growth through our life challenges, and thus create our future together. The model is still emerging, but is gives expression to Heron's almost ten year old reflections on the value in cooperative inquiry:
'The challenge after positivism is to redefine truth and validity in ways that honour the generative, creative role of the human mind in all forms of knowing. This also means, I believe, taking inquiry beyond justification, beyond the validation of truth-values, towards celebration and bodying forth of being-values, as the transcendent and polar complement to the quest for validity.'

(Heron 1996, p.13)

6. EVIDENCE OF THE EFFICACY OF INTERSUBJECTIVE REHABILITATION

Feedback from the participants, advisory group and observers, has shown a number of indications of effectiveness. These give strong evidence of the project's success, in achieving acknowledgement and self-esteem, while developing balanced awareness and nurturing growth and development among participants:

● Feeling 'at home' - People coming together in the Life Journalling project feel 'at home'. Belonging, and feeling acknowledged for who we are, warts and all, is a simple but critical part of the uplifting experience of joining this community of healing and growth.

● Sharing the simple spirit, mystery and wonder - No one is trying to impress with any skills, talents or performances. We are all just 'sharing where we're at', and being there to witness that among caring friends. The undefined force of this esprit de corps creates its own healing and strengthening power.

● Telling our stories in conversation - Sharing personal stories of challenges, successes and small meaningful steps helps everyone to feel acknowledged, 'heard' and that they belong.
● **Giving and getting discerning feedback** - Like indigenous elders, who don't judge or preach, but reflect what they see, our peers and elders share responses to stories and create a sense of communal engagement with growth.

● **Caring, relating, sharing and collaborating for the 'common good'** - Our participants all share: ideas, feelings, worries, and intentions for new directions. This creates an organic sense of evolving towards the common good, open to problems and strengths in the project.

● **Using our imaginations and creativity** - Exercising imagination is a core aspect of getting well and growing. We encourage everyone to engage in 'singing up' the future, and having fun in the process of seeking new models for rehabilitation for the wider community.

● **'Working the business of life'** - This indigenous cycle, of exchanging feelings and views about how best to proceed, for individuals and the group, is the core organic process of creatively engaging in an active community of belonging. We all need to accept there is a higher power working without our knowing, or having to have a label on it, or the process.

● **Being able to be vulnerable** - Feeling safe to be, that is a foundation element of the project. Safe vulnerability is when we open for allowing healing, through hearing more, accepting change, and believing in possibilities in ourselves and others.

● **When we're not in celebration, we're preparing for the next** - This borrowed indigenous cycle is what keeps the life force going in our group. No calendar listings are necessary. We have a purpose, to celebrate life and being together. That's it, our
7. CONCLUSION

While the project is only half completed, and further trialling hopefully will happen in cooperation with 'the system' - in a public housing estate, vocational rehabilitation service, and two community mental health services – there are already indications of dissatisfaction with the way things are, and enthusiasm for finding better ways to achieve rehabilitation:

- 'The System' sucks - Managers, workers and participants are aware that the current biomedical, materialist model of mental health is not achieving a growthful benefit.

- People want to be people, not 'patients, consumers, clients or statistics' - Getting away from labels and back to being equal people is a key element in nurturing healing and growth.

- We want abundance, not scarcity, as the context of our growth - Holding the positive and the hopeful in the forefront of our beliefs, about each other and our world, is also a priority.

- Pathology implies removal, not healing - Not what's 'wrong', but what's 'right', heals.

- Allopathy forces suppression of symptoms, not recovery of balance - Allowing natural energy to flow and harnessing positive aspects will regenerate, rather than retard.

- Biomedical logic requires mechanical outcomes, when we live a biocultural world.
The model we use acknowledges all aspects of the human condition, not our machine-likeness.

- Atomised, individuated models don't work for social beings - We before me.

These findings are not definitive, but they are certainly indicative of a pattern, and promise to offer further enhancements for a community-based, peer supported approach to more person valuing ways of achieving self help rehabilitation.

8. REFERENCES


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OVERARCHING ESSAY

SECTION ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 FRAMING THIS WORK

This essay attempts to position, frame and interconnect the compilation of documents presented in this Submission By Publication PhD dissertation. It introduces the author’s experience over a ten year period (2000–10), which included completing a Masters Thesis in Cultural Inquiry (2000–3, through the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney), that led to development of a book (Lloyd 2005) describing an hypothesis subsequently tested in field work in Sydney from 2004–6. The applied findings from that work, about intersubjectivity and sharing personal narratives, were then used in a range of community-based mental health support situations in the Northern Territory between 2007–10.

So the overall nature of this document is as an aggregating record of evidence from theoretical, reflective and practical explorations of valuing diversity in human consciousness. There are a number of published (and awaiting publication) journal articles, which explore what can occur when people of different consciousness are mixed together, in circumstances of safety and unconditional mutual support; and when professionals and elders come together to join in collaborating to improve the way we all nurture social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB). Also interspersed throughout are selections from my own daily journal entries (Lloyd, GW3TS Journal), recorded throughout and beyond the experience (2004–2010). So hopefully the whole document reflects, and reflects on, a body of work conducted over ten years, with mixed age, mixed life challenges, multicultural communities, in settings varying from inner city
Sydney (in New South Wales, Australia) to outback Alice Springs (in the Northern Territory of Australia).

“Form and reflection view each other” (Susan Murphy in *Upside Down Zen*, Murphy 2005: 145) could well be an observation of the meeting of souls (minds) in GW3TS. This view of human beings and our potential for change is present in every encounter with others. And the added potency in meeting people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, is that facing those aspects of ourselves and each other that need healing, growth or development, we are being brought closer to the ‘dharma’/learning road automatically. This is the potential in the sharing aspects of GW3TS. That participants can help each other address their resistance, and begin to grow towards a more open heart and mind – and therefore come from the soul more (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 30/11/2004).

Woven through the document are also a number of ‘Reflexions’: retrospective, self-conscious mullings-over of the experiences and feelings attached to being ‘the researcher’ over different periods in this ten year journey. They are written in the spirit of post positivist autoethnography and reflexivity, and also draw inspiration from the in-depth explorations by Michael Jackson in his existential/phenomenological anthropology, where he investigates modes of being and interpersonal relationships in various cultural settings (Jackson 1992, 1995, 2006). These reflexions are short pieces designed to provide some contemporary troubling of what occurred for the researcher, during the various stages of the overall body of work reported on here.

Coming from a critical social science perspective, much of this work undertaken over the past decade has certainly included both the following senses of the definition of ‘reflexivity’ provided by *The Social Science Encyclopedia*: 
(i) characterizing general features of (modern) social life… (where) reflexivity refers to the fact that modern societies are now reaping the negative results of their mishandling of the environment, and to humankind’s increasing awareness of these negative consequences…

(ii) benign introspection. Social scientists are encouraged to reflect upon the social circumstances of the production of their knowledge… to develop a practice in which the interrogation of methods proceeds simultaneously with, and as an integral part of, the investigation of the object. (Comment: the GW3TS experience was to engage in continuous interrogation of what we were doing with each other – Comment inserted 11 Sept. 2010) (The Social Science Encyclopedia, 2004: 858).

My work as a joint collaborator with GW3TS’ participants, sharing in “the research,” has been subject to collaborating with them in trying to deal with the negative results of reductionist approaches to people living with mental illness and intellectual disability. The environment in which these people live has been directly compared with ‘social apartheid’ by Gerard Goggin and Chris Newell in their seminal work Disability in Australia: Exposing a Social Apartheid (Goggin & Newell 2005).

But at the same time, my own behaviour in the project facilitating role has been prone to my overtaking the agenda and ‘organizing for’ rather than ‘with’ the participants. Whether this was in the pursuit of pragmatic practicalities, or was a more unconscious brand of disempowering control, I have at times slipped into assuming myself to be the proxy representative of the tribe when making decisions on the run. All that requires reflexive unpacking and troubling, which is what the Reflexions attempt to do.

(Comment: the GW3TS experience here was definitely that ‘modern medicine’ treated consumers and carers as objects to be treated in a mechanistic way, leading to feelings of having been abused – Comment inserted 11 Sept. 2010)
Like a field ethnographer living among ‘exotic’ people from another culture, recording this work was largely done ‘from within the without’ – ie. coming from the perspective of the facilitator and enabler of those whose lives are largely invisible to the mainstream world, thus giving them the “provenance of absence” (Lloyd 2005). Interacting with individuals of diverse consciousness and experience, while facilitating their regular interactions over three years (2004-6), was an all-encompassing participant observation process. But it was always vulnerable to collapse, and was continuously uncertain. So its level of ‘benign introspection’ was questionable at all times, as the results were often painful and continue to be, for an author trying to ‘find an outcome’, only to know in the end there is no such thing – just a process of transition.

As Patti Lather points out, this is the way of postfoundational practices: “Moving across levels of the particular and the abstract, trying to avoid a transcendental purchase on the object of study, we set ourselves up for necessary failure in order to learn how to find our way into postfoundational possibilities (Lather 2001: 202).” GW3TS tribe members were not compliant, cooperative objects of study. They were unpredictable, uncooperative agents of self-determining activity, who could also be ‘angels on their day’ (ie. fit the researcher’s agenda perfectly for one fleeting moment). So this didn’t always suit the researcher’s desire for particular outcomes for individuals or the tribe as a whole.

The task becomes to throw ourselves against the stubborn materiality of others, willing to risk loss, relishing the power of others to constrain our interpretive “will to know,” saving us from narcissism and its melancholy through the very positivities that cannot be exhausted by us, the otherness that always exceeds us. (Lather 2001: 202)
This author’s journal entries throughout the period of facilitating the GW3TS tribe demonstrate a rhythm, alternating between the extremes of full entrancing engagement and apparent silent resistance to any communication exchange. It is a story full of “the moment of loss where much is refused (Lather 2001: 202),” but at the same time regularly celebrating expressions of intimate connection, which are clearer because they magnify where the limits lie. “The task is to meet the limit, to open to it as the very vitality and force that propels the change to come (Lather 2001: 202).”

“(About parenting adolescents) I am reminded of Chogyam Trungpa’s famous adage that meditation is just one insult after another!” (Susan Murphy in Upside Down Zen, Murphy 2005: 146) This is so apt for the experience of engaging with ‘the health system’ and a bunch of mentally ill and disabled people, to try to produce a worthwhile reform. What a combination!… But being back at high school teaching in the summer heat is a strong reminder of how important it is to be able to come back into each moment… tiredness challenges the sense of ongoingness, but relaxing into it gives a sense of surrender to the process (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 01–02/12/2004).

GW3TS was a never-ending challenge to coping skills, energy levels and patience with ‘inappropriate’ behaviours (mainly from those in the system, rather than ones living with challenges). “It is this outside that gives us to hear and understand that which is ‘already coming’ (Derrida 1996: 64). Placed outside of mastery and victory narratives, ethnography becomes a kind of self-wounding laboratory for discovering the rules by which truth is produced (Lather 2001: 202).”

Being ‘within the without’ is my way of describing this process, which felt just like breathing – respiring in and out the feelings and experiences of this organism, our tribe.
And at the same time, my own mental state was very vulnerable throughout this project to moving through regular highs and lows. Ultimately I went into a long period of depression, arising from the twin motivations of grief over deaths of people in the larger tribe, and the constant battle with mainstream medical model approaches to GW3TS participants, including my own son.

1.2 THE CONCEPT BEHIND GW3TS

Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs (GW3TS) is a metaphorical expression for a creative and critical study of a group of young adults living with the challenges of mental illness and/or intellectual disability. The term arose from my earlier work exploring diversity in consciousness, among people living with mental illness, intellectual disability, addiction, and Indigenous people (Lloyd 2003, 2005). That work ended up in a book called Going Walkabout Through The Suburbs: Valuing the lessons from alternative consciousness (Lloyd 2005), and it concluded with the intention to explore practical shared expression of people’s Structure of Feelings and Experiences (SOFE, Lloyd 2003/5), as a means to improving rehabilitation.

This notion of SOFE became central to GW3TS, as it acted as a reminder of what can be real for many ordinary people, despite the reductionist medical model’s lack of engagement with such parameters of consciousness. SOFE comprises six elements of feelings and experience that showed up as consistent indicators of human experience and awareness according to my research into the combined explorations of the cultural theorists Raymond Williams (Williams 1958, 1961, 1962, 1987) and Bernard Smith (Smith 1997). After investigating Williams’ and Smith’s whole oeuvres, I deduced recurring elements of human awareness that showed up as essential contributors to healthy perspectives on life. They included Mystery, Conversation, Relating, Imagination, Discernment and Wonder (MCRIDW), as essential components of healthy,
balanced awareness (Lloyd 2005). This MCRIDW configuration makes up what I
dubbed SOFE, and it has informed much of the facilitation work I included in the
GW3TS weekend workshops in 2004 and 2005, and subsequent work in community
mental health support settings, for ‘consumers and carers’.

For three years (2004-2006) a group, or ‘open urban tribe’ (Watters 2004), met up
voluntarily every two or three months, to go on a journey of learning together (hence
the walkabout analogy). Sharing this experience with them were a group of volunteer
‘buddies’, who joined to form friendships, and another group of ‘aunties and uncles’
(borrowing the indigenous sense of older, caring mentors: in this case, multidisciplinary
professionals), who came to offer support and partnership in exploring new ways of
being together.

For me as ‘the researcher’, facilitating this journey of learning was a bit like being the
driver/tour guide on a discovery trip. We were all going to share in experiences that
couldn’t be totally predicted, and I was the one responsible for guiding everyone into
this study. Even with all the ethical clearances and ‘risk assessments’ completed in
advance, there was still a dominant element of the unknown, of mystery, involved in
bringing people of such diverse consciousness together. Effectively we were being
brought together in one vehicle, the open urban tribe. Our members eventually decided
to call this community of belonging ‘Waminda’, believed to be from a Wiradjuri (NSW
Aboriginal) word meaning ‘journey with friends’.  

In figuring this combined group of research participants as ‘people of diverse
consciousness’, I am drawing attention to the challenges and possibilities of difference
and the potential for learning from each other, while refusing to reinforce the dominant
hierarchy of worker (or researcher), carer, and client/consumer.
By sharing, listening, caring and celebrating just being together, the participants claimed to have achieved a positive and life-enhancing effect on each other and the group. Relationships of trust formed the framework for the group’s work. The group process generated a humbling power of shared wellbeing, which became the on-going effect of our coming together.

One of the most disturbing things to witness, in relationship with those living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, is the boredom and loneliness that besets these guys. They get frustrated, feel trapped, and can ‘act out and be non-compliant’, because of the sense of being put away from the intercourse of feelings & experience everyone else is having (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 07/12/2004).

This thesis is the story of that gathering of people, and what transpired from our journey together. As reported by participants and researcher alike, it was a multifaceted experience, of mind, body, feelings and spirit. This field study was also a socially critical exploration of alternatives to the consumer-based, materialistic model of ‘health and human services’, which tend to sell people (and governments) services, rather than empower people to help themselves achieve wellbeing (Bolzan, Smith, Mears & Ansiewicz 2001; Geanellos & Fry 2001; Geanellos 2005; Hansen 2005; Foster, McAllister & O’Brien 2006; Hickie 2007, 2008, 2009; Gault 2009; Cross & Bloomer 2010).

The study set out to use a version of the Supported Cooperative Inquiry approach, a derivative of Participative Action Research (PAR) (Heron and Reason, in Reason &
Bradbury 2006), because the aim was to involve participants in deciding how each stage of our experiences together would unfold. This approach rejected the labelling and pathologising practices of positivistic science and ‘the medical model’, which appear to dominate the field of disability, learning support and mental health, ultimately patronising the participants (Bolzan, Smith, Mears & Ansiewicz 2001; Geanellos & Fry 2001; Geanellos 2005; Hansen 2005; Foster, McAllister & O’Brien 2006; Hickie 2007, 2008, 2009; Gault 2009; Cross & Bloomer 2010). I call that paradigm the world of ‘psy–ed.’

So the study was not only a ‘story’ of this gathering of the tribe, it was also an exploratory action research process, which was intended to help participants move beyond what was medically ‘wrong’ with any of them, on to the notion that they were all part of realising their best selves, by participating in shared interactions with each other. This process of ‘self-actualisation’ within a group setting was a major focus of the study. But the evidence-gathering for it became problematic.

Setting out to enquire into how people of mixed consciousness (ie. living with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, clinical depression, Down Syndrome etc) could assist each other’s healing, growth and wellbeing, the study explored the assumption that it is not only by ‘treating conditions’, or ‘understanding symptoms and syndromes’, that people with a disability and/or mental illness can improve their states of mind, body, feelings and spirit, but also through their interaction within a group.

The evolving nature of the project meant that its original design, to have buddies sharing in journalling together over a twelve month period (2004–5), did not appeal to participants, so it was dropped. This was because there wasn’t ‘enough data’ for such a collection process to be valid, nor did it feel intuitively valid to collect material that was
not motivating participants. All part of the ‘transition effect’ that shone through this whole journey – ie. that we are unfolding and re-storying ourselves throughout life, and part of that storying may not be in neat journal entries, but in the much more ether-based relational exchange of friendship and shared emotions.

The GW3TS participants were much more interested in just relating together than stopping to record the experience. So the author’s journal became, by default, the main repository of ‘evidence’. And it invariably reinforced the lessons emerging from the participants themselves, and the conflicting nature of the researcher’s own perspectives. As one of the early entries in the GW3TS Journal (begun 01/01/2004) illustrated:

(My brother) Peter Lloyd’s 53rd birthday, and I felt it very strongly this year. Got him the usual cricket book and went with (my wife) Margaret to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (in Sydney) to deliver it to him at work, and to discuss going to Avoca Beach (on the NSW Central Coast, just north of Sydney) next week to spend a night and day with them at the beach… so after a week mostly alone last week, feeling dizzy and nauseous and missing Margaret, next week will be very social. It is weird how the fluctuations in mood, motivation and meaning shift from moment to moment, week to week, era to era, in us as individuals and in societies. I am really affected by my reading at the moment, on tribal methods of reconnection, and considering its lessons for the GW3TS Introductory Weekend Workshop (to be held in May 2004). The whole exploration of how we’ve lost rituals, feelings of belonging, ways of recognizing and valuing each other and our groups – it’s all so relevant now (Lloyd GW3TS Journal, 17/01/2004).

As it turned out, this tribal ritual aspect of GW3TS’s dynamic became one the major outcomes of the whole exercise. And while this sort of belongingness was a major
benefit, it only exacerbated the experience of supporting my own son (living with schizophrenia) in his battle the NSW mental health system, which proved just how isolating and disowning a so-called health system can be to ‘consumers and carers.’

Finding a balance and perspective through such trials can be elusive, despite our best conscious intentions. In retrospect I would try to embed any future work in the system before starting, rather than just beginning independently in community, in order to get as many people ‘on side’ as possible, and to encourage them into engaging with alternative approaches from their own side of the fence. That would benefit more people currently suffering from isolation and disempowerment. The fuel for such an approach was reinforced in this same entry, by my reflections at the time, on how my own family’s dynamic operated in an emotionally stuck way.

What has come up strongly for me is the lack in our family’s rhythms of a sense of maintaining connection through generational interchange. In my own attempts with my nephews and nieces, and with my grandchildren, it feels as if I’m disabled – don’t know what to do, how to do it, and also basically unable, just can’t get it together to bring about appropriate connections. This experience of GW3TS is bringing up some pretty big stuff for me, and I pray to be able to stay open to learn it, and stay awake to be able to move with it when required (Lloyd GW3TS Journal, 17/01/2004).

2. HOW IT ALL STARTED

2.1 THE IDEA

The seeds of the GW3TS project began in late 2002 on the beach at Pondicherry, in Tamil Nadu, India, as I was finishing my Masters Thesis (Lloyd 2003), which explored the combined territories of consciousness and cultural inquiry. In that thesis I discovered the importance of valuing the diversity in consciousness of people living
with challenges, which led me to think of going further with such research, by putting this discovery into practice with my own personal and extended-family-tribal life, through a type of structured social group experiment.

Called *Going Walkabout Through The Suburbs* (GWTS), my previous research was a cultural inquiry into the Structure of Feelings and Experience, derived from the work of two cultural theorists, Raymond Williams and Bernard Smith. Their bodies of work (see below) explored the lessons from art & literature, culture and society, about how humans seek and express feelings and experiences to balance their awareness. The original Masters thesis was developed into a book by the same name (Lloyd: 2005).

Raymond Williams’ best known non-fiction work, in starting the field of modern cultural and communications inquiry, was *Culture & Society 1780-1950* (Williams: 1958). He also wrote a series of novels exploring the nature of change in western lifestyle and values in the second half of the 20th century, the most famous of these being *Border Country* (Williams: 1960).

Williams’ works taught me that the Structure of Feeling and Experience (SOFE) is common to all people. SOFE is a framework of consciousness that includes feelings, realpolitikal actions and shared ways of being together (call them traditions, cultural rhythms or rituals). This framework combines emotions, imagination, creative expression and social engagement. It resists dividing and ranking people according to normative ideas of intelligence and mental health.

Williams used the Structure of Feeling as a foundation for exploring modern change dynamics in the 20th century, which were rapidly transforming Britain’s old industrial and remnant agricultural society into an urban consumerist culture. Williams’
perspective held that there were dangers in discarding the social and emotional consciousness inherent in the old ways of life, and that modern people needed to take heed of deep structures within their lived beingness, as individuals and groups of people. His ideas influenced me greatly, and I began to think about how to apply them in the work of helping people of difference, to achieve and receive more respect and inclusion across society.

It felt to me like something we all needed – to gain a more balanced perspective in how we see ourselves, as well as our place and role in society, and our priorities for achieving happiness. These are both felt and practically expressed values, based on the notion of supporting the common good over self-interest. They involve valuing traditions in an evolving celebration of human rituals of togetherness, which change form and shared expression with each generation. Not to say that we always find a comfortable way of being in that dynamic:

Men’s group last night, and I found myself dissatisfied – frustrated that the dynamic seems slow and shallow. This must be saying something more about me than the other guys. Especially since I found myself similarly unengaged teaching at high school this week, and in the community groups I’ve been attending. Hope I can now relax and let things open up a bit more, to get into the listening, not judging mood (Lloyd, GW3TS Journal 08/12/2004).

Then I found the work of Bernard Smith and it added another dimension to my view of how humans ‘fit together’ in our individual and social experiences – and therefore how we can work to improve the lives of people who live with different consciousness (ie. mental illness, intellectual disability etc). Smith wrote about the perspective that came to the notice of Europeans once they began to explore the culture and art of the Pacific
This showed them something different about themselves, and he argued that it changed the European sense of self from then on. This could be compared with the famous photo of ‘Earthrise,’ taken from the 1968 Apollo 8 Mission to the Moon (image at www.bobthealien.co.uk), which is said to have changed many people’s view of our species’ vulnerability and that of Mother Earth, giving rise to a new chapter in the development of ecology.

My educated guess was that engaging more respectfully with people of different consciousness required a similar distanced perspective to that gained from spaceships, which could see humanity and the earth together as all part of one vulnerable organism floating in space. Breathing in rhythm, respiring and sharing the same spirit of life. And potentially all equally victims to the greed and despoilation that has degraded much of this shared living space, that no one can ever ‘own’ (ie. the whole globe as Gaia, mother earth). So my mental explorations began to scan this territory of mutual perspective and feeling, which could form the basis of some greater valuing of people of difference.

Smith taught me that history doesn’t repeat, it echoes, and that what I have come to call ‘echology’ means we are all carrying around and swimming in the echoing consciousness of our ancestors, as well as in the effects of the actions they perpetrated. In this view, our job is to act and effect changes for the common good, to correct mistaken directions and influences, especially towards the most vulnerable members of our society.

By combining the influences from ‘Uncle’ Raymond and ‘Uncle’ Bernard (in the indigenous sense of revered elders), I was able to develop a framework for exploring a practical expression of the Structure of Feelings and Experience (SOFE). I based this framework on six main parameters of consciousness drawn from the works of Williams...
and Smith – MCRIDW (Mystery, Conversation, Relating, Imagination, Discernment and Wonder) (Lloyd: 2005). I believed it was possible to use these aspects of human awareness in ways that would help people balance their ways of being, as individuals and in groups. I also believed that it was possible to achieve efficacious outcomes for healing, growth and human awareness by actively stimulating and expressing such aspects of the SOFE. This was as true for ‘professionals’ as it was for ‘the disabled’. So I developed the proposal for this doctoral exploration, as an applied flow-on from the earlier work.

Behind this decision was the view, as the poet Rainer Maria Rilke famously put in his letter to a young poet, “to be patient towards all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, then gradually you will live into the answers” (Rilke: 1994). My belief was that helping people reach their full potential, in being themselves, required as much learning by those in the helping role, as it did by the ones ‘being helped’. Together, we all needed each other’s help, to explore life and what we had to teach each other – about how to be in balance within ourselves, with each other and the environment.

Preparing the ethics clearance material for GW3TS, while gearing up for this year’s two programs with the Up Club (of Down Syndrome NSW) and Best Buddies (Anthony Kennedy Shriver’s international friendship program for people living with intellectual disability, then just beginning in Sydney), feels strained and slightly surreal. The well-intentioned, overly-formal, surveillance-style, regulatory approach developed by the authorities, feels a long way from the lived reality of the participants. But I will happily go through the motions of completing this exercise, to provide every formal structure possible to guarantee an effective process. (Lloyd GW3TS Journal Entry, 13/01/2004).
Reflecting on this perspective, it seems both honest and self-destructive. Although ethics clearance happened quite smoothly for GW3TS, challenging the system as a bottom line position is conflict-laden, which creates conditions of resistance from those within the system. These people are the very agents one needs onside, to influence change in the way things are done. So I see in retrospect that seeking more mainstream incorporation from the outset may have benefitted the overall outcome, more than our independent way of going on with GW3TS did in the end.

2.2 THE MOTIVATION

I had already worked in a number of activities in community nurture (in disability support and youth work, Aboriginal reconciliation and community cultural development, and drug & alcohol programs), before deciding to combine this work experience with the research results from my Masters, to explore the application of the SOFE model ‘in the field’.

This body of work over ten years explored how such an applied model challenges the dominant approaches to health and rehabilitation. Through my lived experience, I had seen how reductionist the medical/psy model can be, and how patronising the disability and learning support processes can be. Hence my use of the term psy–ed for this industry. I have seen the pain it caused my own son, living with schizophrenia now for eleven years, since he first got sick during his HSC year in 1998. He frequently rings me, having just had an evening medication supervision visit from his mental health team, and he is desperately depressed, after being told continually: “You have an illness just like diabetes, and just as diabetics need insulin for life, you need Clozapine!” This sort of negative, punitive feedback has been a continuous part of his life since he first
came under the legal control of the NSW Health system, which continues today after more than 11 years of automatic six-monthly renewed Community Treatment Orders.

Similarly, friends in the Waminda tribe living with mental illness have told me of their experiences ‘on the ward’, of being treated like zombies, as if they had nothing to offer the world except being told to follow orders. Yet they are all competent people, who are now operating in responsible roles in the regular world. It is frustrating that ‘healers’ should treat people that way, when they are in the very circumstances that one would assume should stimulate nurture and respect for their personhood.

Many friends with relatives living under this patronising mainstream model have told me of similar pain. I have seen my ‘adopted nephew’, now 27 and living with Down Syndrome, being patronised and treated in a dismissive way by people who are supposed to be there for his care. Similarly, I have been with his parents when we have all been treated as if we were ‘behaving badly’, because we tried to work out better conditions of respectful engagement with his wishes in his supported living arrangements. It has been as if ‘only the experts know best’ what is good for this person.

My commitment to this project was also strengthened through my relationship with four other special friends, who had lived with and recovered from forms of mental illness for some years. They told me often of how they’ve been ‘put down’ and ‘ignored’ by psych nurses, social workers and others in psych wards in mainstream NSW hospitals, all under the medical model. And they also told of receiving kind and supportive treatment from other professionals, who simply had chosen to apply a more person-valuing approach.
I consequently came to believe that the mainstream, dominant paradigm approach is too objectifying, and that ultimately it does not help enough people get well, stay well, grow and develop, to justify the massive preponderance of funding that has been poured into its different forms, despite evidence that they are not so ‘efficacious’ (Hickie 2007, 2008, 2009). As Professor Ian Hickie recently pointed out, the trend has been to talk big about reform in mental health, but generally to act small. As he said:

When the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) committed to national mental health reform in 2006, it began to look as though the stars were lining up... A few years later, and the wheels on the bandwagon of national mental health reform are looking dangerously wobbly. From where I sit, a large part of the blame should be borne by those professional groups and narrow clinical services that have not stepped up to the plate. To improve services available to people with mental illness, governments have to be prepared to take on influential groups in psychiatry and general medicine, as well as psychology and nursing. (Hickie 2008)

Something has been lacking in the people and places I have visited over the past decade, since my own son got sick with schizophrenia, and in the services where I have subsequently worked, in disability support and mental health rehabilitation. These organisations were not affecting or effecting the lives of their ‘clients’ in a dynamic way, that nurtured their personhood and added vitality to their lives. I saw people in rehabs being treated in demeaning ways, professionals talking down to them, not bothering to sit alongside and listen to their genuine concerns and interests. I saw people living with disability being shunted here and there like dumb animals, going on social outings that held no benefit for their own life growth, other than taking up time. So this on-going work in different community settings over ten years has been about testing
how such findings from my lived experience could be answered, by adopting new techniques that value people just as they are.

When members of the day program Food Services Unit cooking group of the Pioneer Clubhouse mental health rehabilitation centre (part of the Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW, based at Balgowlah on Sydney’s northern beaches, and linked to 400 other member-influenced Clubhouses around the world), which I coordinated for a time in 2001, were given responsibility for planning and executing the menu, the shopping, the preparation and serving of a meal for everyone in their ‘rehab.’ they responded with pride and joy. When people’s stories were celebrated in the listening, and then converted into art forms and displayed for all to appreciate, they lifted their spirits and joined more such expressive activities. Then new energy emerged for trying out new voluntary and paid work experiences.

I had felt the need for more such person-valuing approaches to rehabilitation for some time, sensing the potential for applying more tribal ways of being together. This sense had developed during my time in voluntary work among indigenous communities, and in disability support reform work with people living with Down Syndrome. Seeing people relate in personal ways, interacting with a sense of mutual respect and affection, I wanted to repeat these sorts of respectful approaches. It seemed to me that effective person-valuing support dynamics could be easily applied in environments of safety, trust and equal exchange of feelings, experiences and feedback about personal development.

By setting up a ‘Panel’ of non-family volunteers supporting the life of one young man living with Down Syndrome, we were able to create a personalized process of honouring his dreams, aspirations and passions. Even when the specific plans didn’t
work out, it was the joint effort of addressing life’s usual challenges that led to his increased sense of self, and a more responsible shared exploration of life options.

People who had become my friends, and effectively my extended family, from when I met them ‘working with’ their family members in mental health rehabilitation centres or disability support services, had shared with me and each other how they wanted things to be. They wanted more respect and equal engagement with their loved ones living with difference in consciousness. They wanted more real engagement in activities that were passionately interesting to their loved ones. So, with that in mind, GW3TS set out to explore whether such ways could be achieved in a self-help, peer supported, community-based model, set up from scratch among a group of strangers.

3. THE OBJECTIVES

The original GW3TS social experiment was aimed at modelling an alternative approach to the mainstream mental health and disability support systems. There were three original objectives:

(i) to identify the active attributes of consciousness among those living with intellectual disability and/or mental illness, which could be acknowledged, nurtured and developed, to strengthen their self awareness, help them gain a balanced perspective on themselves and their lives, and assist them in taking more responsibility for their lives;

(ii) to identify how these aspects of self awareness could be used to inform improved individual and group empowerment, and improved rehabilitation practice, in communities of intersubjective relationship and belonging, and;

(iii) by exploring collaborative engagement with ‘the system’ serving these two groups of people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, to identify how they could be more effectively empowered to manage the planning, policies, programs and service delivery which largely determine their quality of life.
In working toward the objective of mutual empowerment and shared decision-making in the field work component of this project, the research also sought to clarify how this sort of person-valuing approach could be applied, in a complementary framework, offering community-based, self-help, peer-supported rehabilitation suitable for mainstream health and disability support systems. The aim was to model practical ways people could come together and share their lives in uplifting ways; ways that could also happen anywhere, among any group, through exercising the Structure of Feeling and Experience (SOFE).

I believed that by applying shared expressions of these parameters of consciousness, in practical group sharing sessions, it would be possible to stimulate positive energy for growth, healing and development, among people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability. This model needed to be used in an exploratory way in the field, and this is what the research fieldwork in the GW3TS project aimed to achieve.

Subsequent field applications in various work environments since have reinforced its efficacy, as can be seen in the journal reports elsewhere in this compilation.

Measuring the group’s sense of its satisfaction with pursuing and meeting these mutually agreed objectives would require a qualitative assessment process, that included becoming a reflexive researcher myself, tracking the whole journey, and recording the feelings and experiences of members of such a modelling group – participants living with different challenges, and their ‘aunties and uncles’, carers and extended non-blood family supporters – along the way. And that included me, especially when things weren’t going all that well:
Some sort of ‘overwhelment’ came over me yesterday, so that I felt unable to help – especially my own son and daughter, and all the many people in GW3TS I’m trying to be of service to. I felt exhausted and emotionally strung out – and had to cancel an appointment with one of my supervisors re the GW3TS project. What’s happening?... Like living in the indigenous numinous way – communing with the land, ancestors, ritual responsibilities and roles among my people – I need active reminding of being in connection continuously. I am convinced this is how we are meant to live – not disconnected, separated, atomized, and passively receiving whatever the consumer capitalist world tells us to (Lloyd, *GW3TS Journal* 14/12/2004).

My own personal experiences had contributed to the main aim of GW3TS, which was to establish practical ways to improve mental health rehabilitation and supported living for people with intellectual disability, through community-based, peer-supported, self-help strategies that ordinary community members could apply themselves. Sure, they may need ‘expert help’ at times – eg. when the onset of psychosis requires short-term, drug-based intervention; or when fantasy-driven behaviour requires psychological assessment and behavioural support planning. But generally, I believed and set out to prove that more efficacious outcomes were achievable in ordinary community settings, by applying more indigenous, open urban tribal ways of creating communities of belonging and nurture. This resonated with the findings Ethan Watters made, in his seminal work *Urban Tribes: Are Friends the New Family?*, where his respondents from all over the world told him: “My tribe helps me be the best me I can be (Watters 2004).” By providing unconditional love and support to each other belong, with a reason and a purpose to be together, these groups had become more important than family to thousands of people worldwide.
4. THE CONTEXT

Being the father of a young man living with schizophrenia, and also being involved with the Down Syndrome community, it was a natural step to bring together young adults living with a variety of challenges to see if their mutual exchange of feelings and experiences could assist life growth, healing and development. Volunteers were also sought from the general community in an attempt to model ways for people of mixed life challenges to support each other’s self development.

Given the environment of crisis in clinical mental health provision across Australia over the past 10 years, particularly in NSW (Hickie 2008), there is a need for more widely available, cost-effective, community-based models of mental health rehabilitation and supported living approaches for adults with intellectual disabilities (Goggin & Newell 2005). This study was premised on the belief that, as in indigenous communities operating with well balanced personal support and responsibility protocols, all people benefit from knowing they belong, from feeling acknowledged, and from having their testimonies witnessed in environments of safety and trust.

Mental health reform and disability support reform, for both ‘consumers’ and ‘carers’, have risen higher on the political agenda over the past decade. But their placement higher up on funding lists and program allocations may be a waste of time, if the only response is more of the same, as Professor Ian Hickie stated in his 2007 Grace Groom Memorial Lecture.

We have now reached a critical point in the most recent cycle of mental health reform. For the first time we have two of the major elements for success... real new resources,... high-level political leadership required to cut through the bureaucratic and professional barriers... Unfortunately, we do not yet have the
third critical element – real structural change. The bureaucratic systems are the same... We have no national community-based or independent body responsible for reporting on progress... organising those professionals into coherent and accountable health care organisations. (Hickie 2007)

This body of work aimed to explore that issue in practice, and to provide the results of a study that might offer an insight towards a solution, based on the lived experience forming the foundation of our work in GW3TS. We tested and explored our own capacities to listen, open the space of acceptance, and to share and relate in ways that both uplifted and allowed our tribe members to express their feelings of pain and sorrow. This is a contrary process to the dominant paradigm of medicine and social services, the psy–ed model. It fits into a ‘DIY’ (Do It Yourself) type of operation, which challenges the ‘expert’ role of doctors and social workers to know best what is good for us.

GW3TS took the tack of self-inventiveness, and risked the interaction of a whole bunch of people living with different challenges. The outcome was one of multifaceted shared experiences, all of which were not comfortable all the time, but most of which were ‘successful’, in that participants felt better about themselves and their place in the world after each experience, as they told me regularly throughout.

So, it’s up to us, the people... to do the sort of careful consideration that is called for... to read, and think and reimagine in our turn... In a culture organised around ‘systems’ that are powerful precisely because they are independent of human individuals, what difference does the individual or his pain make so long as the system is preserved? (White 2004: 138)
GW3TS was more than just telling stories together. The processes involved were full of rich cultural elements that were generated through interactive rituals, the time honoured processes that all cultures have developed to share our mutual sentience. Combining humility in the face of mystery, wonder in the face of narratives of creation and on-going sustenance, and shared respect for traditions and processes of rhythmical nurture in our togetherness, these rituals are vital to human health (Lancaster 2004; Weeks 1994; Corker & Shakespeare 2002; Cohen & Rapport 1995). Modelling how a group of strangers could generate their own rituals of belonging, communion and celebration, this work argued that such approaches could add to or even replace the current consumerist sales pitches and spin-doctoring of the medical/psy industries.

What the poet Robert Frost called “the work of knowing” is our shared human heritage (Poirier 1977: 278). This work argues that we are meant to explore the way our lives intersect with each other and nature, as part of our daily living, and certainly part of the potential ways of establishing balanced ways of being. We are meant to engage in the “vibrant intersection” (Poirier 1977) of nature’s components, of which we humans are a significant one. And we are all meant to be involved in knowing ourselves and one another.

My belief in setting out to facilitate the GW3TS project was that this “work of knowing” ourselves and each other should become a part of what keeps us balanced and well, through shared rituals such as those that GW3TS set out to model. In my work alongside people in education, health and community welfare organisations, I had seen that many teachers and healers had lost sight of this necessity in human experience. As a teacher in ‘alternative school’ settings in the 1970s, I came across many educators who believed children learnt best when free to explore, not when they were slaves of a lock-step curriculum and tests and authoritarian classroom obedience requirements.
had gone on to become a journalist writing about education in the 1980s, and many times came across educators calling for more ‘play’ in early learning situations, sadly now replaced in too many schools (and even preschools) by a return to ‘the 3Rs’ and endless tests and competitive scores. The clear priority for me was to value people before tests and measurements, whether of knowledge, illness, capacity or incapacity. Playing with life held much more hope than rigid categories.

So this whole body of work has explored if it is possible to generate interactions and rituals that uplift people together, and if they are healthier than the other option, the “culture of pain” (Morris 1998), which results from failing to measure up to those endless tests and scans. Like the trailblazing Irish-American educator and child analyst Michael O’Loughlin, I claim that such emphases have made human feelings and experiences into the source of sales for an industry, selling products and generating professional careers, designed to mask feelings, and in too many cases denying healthy pain that is telling us something real about our experiences. O’Loughlin’s prolific work chronicles the disasters arising from reductionist medical model and behaviourist treatment of adults and children, and the deep damage done to generations as a result. Saddest of all, this pandemic of positivist madness is on the increase in places like America and Australia (eg. O’Loughlin 2003; Whitaker 2002; Read, Mosher & Bentall 2004). It seems to fit well into cultures like these two, with deep histories of colonial oppression and abuse of indigenous peoples. While punishing others with missionary certainty in one century, followed by scientific certainty in the next, such nations proliferate their own psychic fault lines, leaving scars such as those O’Loughlin describes in the Irish heritage of “malignant shame,” from centuries of being put down by the English (O’Loughlin 2003).
It was that cycle of negativity I wanted to stop with approaches like the GW3TS model of interaction, by creating freedom for people to “just be”, and to be able to relax and play around with expressing feelings and experiences. As Frost said, “Give us immedicable woes – woes that nothing can be done for – woes flat and final. And then to play. The play’s the thing. Play’s the thing. All virtue in ‘as if’ (Poirier 1977: 49).” I had my serve of the woeful feelings during this journey.

Winding this ninth month of GW3TS journalling up, I feel defeated right now – by the forces of compromise, lack of courage and imagination in our mainstream society, especially self-serving Sydney. The focus on whatever goes easiest, and serves the rich and powerful, not the disadvantaged, just sickens me. I know this defeated feeling will pass, but right now I need to sit with it, and remember the feeling (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 30/09/2004).

REFERENCES


2. REFLEXION 2 – Rite of Passage

The lonely journey of the PhD dissertation invites reflections that seem to my socialized self to be indulgent. For one steeped in family values of ‘just get on with it,’ of unapologetic pragmatism and practicality as the only worthwhile ways of being in the world, journalling was never going to ‘sit well’. And after seven years my GW3TS Journal is still a daunting and threatening creation in more ways than one, ever since I first began recording and compiling its arch files full of thousands of handwritten A4 pages on New Year’s Day in January 2004.

On the one hand, such interior monologue feels incredibly self-absorbed and unnecessarily internally focused, in my enculturated value system, for someone working with the big picture of people’s problems with mental illness and intellectual disability in the wider community. On the other hand, it is overwhelming to consider diving back into this record, because all the events recorded there are too overladen with intense feelings and memories to be able to bear revisiting.

That paradox has challenged this whole exercise. “Why do it, if you can’t even hack revisiting it?” might be the opening devil’s advocate question. This is why I so related to Anastasia Kamanos Gamelin’s reflections, in her essay ‘The Sand Diaries: Visions, vulnerability and self study’ in the book Just Who Do We Think We Are?:

My cultural, social and educational experiences had taught me that to nurture oneself was narcissistic, self-centred and indicative of a personality stuck in a sort of post-adolescent limbo. I know better now to reject this. My writing, I understand, was a tool for the building of meaning in a world that offered no interpretations for a life like my own. Yet, the writing was never good enough,
the experiences too crude. I kept writing in such a deep, dark place that retrieving it was painful (Gamelin 2005: 189).

Everything about GW3TS has been painful, even the joyful moments. Because they have underlined what’s missing for most people living with different consciousness – that they aren’t honoured by mainstream rehabilitation & disability support environments. So even though we were modelling a better way, a new approach, we knew it would not bring results in time for these participants, beyond the moments when the GW3TS tribe was together. They all had to go ‘home’ afterwards.

Similarly, I had a long and lonely journey, that was mainly fuelled by painful self doubt, and continues to be. Which tells me that the strength of positivism and evidence based practice in the health system can still overwhelm any individual’s intention to promote aesthetically based approaches to facilitating social & emotional wellbeing (SEWB). It also tells me that the marginalization of people of difference is so endemic in the current system, that it equally marginalizes those of us trying to challenge it. We are seen as ‘warm fuzzy wankers’ by mainstream medical model operators. It tells me that, even while I am not in any way claiming to experience the same degree of oppression as those living with difference/disability, I too felt marginalized.

Reflecting on my own ideas and practices, that keep setting up these binary oppositions between myself and various institutions and systems, I am aware of feeling constantly under attack for the way I choose to be. While people give me personal feedback about how effective and energizing and uplifting my approaches are, they also keep quiet when in the company of ‘expert medical people’. So while I have met a few allies within the academy and other systems, who agree with my values and approaches, there are too few to make a difference yet. So, if there is some value in reflecting in a deep
way about my practice, it is mostly about how I could better interact with ‘the enemy’, and how I could better promote person-valuing approaches from within the health, community services and education systems.

When I was facilitating GW3TS, it felt like I was directing and producing a major, magic play each time we came together. We created our own world, we played in it, and then we all had to pack up and go home. So were we authentic or fake (in efficacious rehabilitation terms)? Were we kidding ourselves, or creating a new way? I still don’t logically know, because I don’t have any power to argue for this logic in the system that dominates how rehab’s are managed and people’s lives corralled by the system. Yet Foucault’s observations about ‘surrealism and truth’ (McKerrow 2001) are spot on here, pointing to the ‘games of truth’ that dominate our social practices.

So, even though there was an element of the grief around my on-going feeling of ‘not making it in the system’s terms’ – and a strong reason why I haven’t been able to ‘pick up the journal’, because it just underlined the ‘failure’ I felt in not having really made a difference in these people’s lives – in fact, the very ‘fiction’ we created together did have a most efficacious effect. And despite my doubt, I knew I had, and we had, and the whole GW3TS phenomenon had had that effect. Hence the paradox continued/s.

Yesterday a form of terror began to grip me about the whole GW3TS project. Its scope, practical demands and possibilities of failure. This feeling stayed with me all day and night, waking me early today in a sweat, with dreams of being the Australian test cricketer Darren Lehman (DL) after his Sri Lankan Test Century (dedicated to David Hookes, another test player, now departed after a bashing outside a pub). DL was shown on TV last night desperate to get a fag into him,
and basically as an overweight, not-very-sporty sportsman. It’s like a metaphor for the part of me that feels a fraud (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 16/03/2004).

All the way GW3TS has felt like a Rite of Passage – for the tribe member participants, and for me, as the continually questioned ‘researcher’ having to ‘prove this thing.’ It has been like a prisoner’s electric monitoring & surveillance bracelet, permanently in place, always tracking my whereabouts in the journey towards some justification for what this was all about – when it was all about exactly the opposite of having to justify itself on terms like that.

Yet I wanted it to ‘succeed in the world’s terms’, and so I felt a failure all the way along, knowing it was all too ‘out there’ to qualify within the system’s lock-step compliance models of rehab., which this chaos-prone, anarchic ‘let ‘em rip’ philosophy and practice totally rejected. I was seen to be ‘a researcher’, but in fact I was ‘an artist’ – an artist of community-building; weaving strands of magic between people’s hearts and souls, and making a net of mutual belonging that was gossamer thin but totally powerful when in place. This creation held amazing possibility, bringing about a communion between the two identities of ‘artist & researcher’; one that I hope to build on with more acceptance in mainstream environments.

Then, after we ‘explored the magic’ together, it would be as if it had all fallen away, like melting snowflakes, when we disbanded each tribal gathering. No wonder I didn’t want to delve back into the journal that was the record of this apparent fairytale – it would be too painful to be reminded that it ‘wasn’t real’.
Such has been my cycle of feelings and experiences in the role of researcher/journal writer. I still battle a continual tension between knowing the power of what we did, and what I still see happening in community settings I facilitate today with this approach, and the fact that the system still denies this stuff has any valid place in the medicalized scheme of things. So the journal became another lifeline then. A place to record my inner dialogue with my numinous reference point (aka ‘higher power’), exploring about how this all seems totally insane. Anastasia Gamelin helps again:

My challenge in my writing was to find a form that accommodated the messiness of the creative life. In order to flourish in my work I need to maintain a connectedness between my personal and public worlds, a dialectic relationship between artistic and intellectual ways of knowing, between the mundane and sacred, between emotion and reason. Indeed authenticity, integrity and creativity are the alpha and omega of artistic as well as knowledge-making activity… Writing allowed me to capture the twinkle and preserve the stardust of the encounter between the natural world and the child (Gamelin 2005: 189).

It helps for me to hear this, because my writing feels as if it has been knobbled by this seven year rite of passage, battling with different views about what constituted ‘evidence’. What the GW3TS Journal has ultimately done for me is to be a place, space of creating and honouring my voice while working with the disempowered, whom I have always intended to honour and empower. Not in the process of formal recording and transmitting of their voices ‘as evidence’, but in creating the zone where they did their sharing together, and felt the feelings of unconditionally free acknowledgement and belonging, that were missing in the rest of their lives. We were always more like guerilla warfare exponents than regular army troops. That showed up starkly in the period just before our first weekend workshop in May 2004, when the parents of some
potential participants in GW3TS living with Down Syndrome created a ruckus over their concerns about how GW3TS was coming together.

Last night the Down Syndrome Association of NSW (DSA) management committee met for its monthly meeting. Letters of complaint about GW3TS were tabled, attacking the communication protocol, content and thrust of GW3TS. The DSA officer for the young people’s social group, the Up Club, and I got very negative remarks from some committee members, who had also received a critical email from another parent. The criticisms were an OK part of the GW3TS process, but the personal attacks and lack of trust about the intention and approach were really offensive. I walked out of the meeting in disgust, rode my bike to Parramatta train station and got home at about 11pm…

Feelings-wise, I am hurt by the negative Down Syndrome parents’ response, but also by the thought that people found my approach inappropriate (a number of others were fine with it) (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal* 02/04/2004).  

Perhaps it would have been better just to film it all as a documentary? Yes, but the film we did make was a clunky amateur effort, and didn’t capture or communicate that magic element, which we all knew happened each time we met. In retrospect it is easy to be critical of this aspect of the exercise, but at the time, in the middle of massive logistics organising about sixty people living with challenges, we did our best to try to record the process and experiences. There is an element, which shows up in art therapy

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5 (Comment @ 03/06/10: The DSA NSW was in the middle of a change of organizational culture at this time in 2004, and GW3TS became a scapegoat activity, for a war between the old guard and the new emerging reformers of DSA, who were already sided with me, in seeking more freedom to take risks for young people living with Down Syndrome. In the end all families involved with GW3TS were extremely happy with the outcomes for them and their children).
situations, where the relationships light up from the inside and won’t necessarily show up on film.

The rite of passage in this perspective is the very disappointment and serial rejection that has been inherent in how the whole project has been received by those in academia (in both mental health and intellectual disability research circles, where I have attended conferences for nearly a decade witnessing this effect), who remain stuck like barnacles to the medical model’s reductionist, rationalist agenda. At the dozens of conferences I have attended to share this approach, the regular reaction has been enthusiasm by the brave few who relate to the feelings shared and the social justice implications. But otherwise there have been disinterested blank looks among ‘research peers’ who have not ‘got it’, because I somehow didn’t approach it the way they would have – ie. the way of the more distanced dialectical knowledge game. Yet anyone among the ‘consumers and carers’ category has been very enthusiastic, but they don’t carry any weight with the gatekeepers of the academy.

This phenomenon reflects the power game inherent in the worlds of academia, research and science/medicine. Here Foucauldian perspectives apply absolutely – in that knowledge held by elites makes them the gatekeepers of particular worlds, such as mental health, psychology, social work, occupational and diversional therapy. Because I chose not to agree with that way of operating, I challenged their power base, and therefore was not a comfortable person to mix with.

As Julianne Cheek and colleagues have described it, “As individuals we internalize the scientific concepts of normalization that these various professions have generated, thus shaping, manipulating and controlling our own behaviour.
Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge suggests that the knowledge of these disciplines is used by the State as a powerful form of social control over the behaviour of individuals and the population as a whole… Further, we come to define ourselves, as normal or otherwise, using the categories of these disciplines. (Cheek et al 1996: 154)

I rejected the prospect of joining in this power game, and therefore was often “on the outer” when among my peers. Hence this journal record has acted as my own private sink hole, or black hole, swallowing up the inherent negativity in feeling rejected by the mainstream, by allowing me a voice in my own mindspace, as part of a reflection on what has been going on around us all on the GWT3S walkabout journey. And knowing that truth doesn’t exist solely among the powerbrokers. And the test of resilience required of people living with different consciousness is also my test.

So, my work is a salvage operation of sorts. It means putting what has been buried into a historical context. It means understanding the circumstances behind the sinking of women’s treasures and examining what has been uncovered in some contextual light. At times, the feelings of fear and insecurity return, and the conflict between artist and academic resurfaces. Do I really know what I know? Who do you think you are? An inner voice whispers; of this much I am sure: whether painter or poet, writer or weaver, becoming an artist is a continuous process. It is lived daily. It is akin to feeling, loving, and breathing. And once we experience the process unobstructed, we cannot return to a former state of being. The transformation is never complete, the process always ongoing, the freedom bottomless. (Gamelin 2005: 189)
Ultimately the rite of passage in GW3TS was for me to learn that nothing mattered, beyond the truth of the experience I had with the tribe members. Even though ‘knowledge may only be knowledge if shared by others’ (as the GW3TS tribe did together; and I am doing here in this thesis), there is another kind of knowing that has equal validity, I now realize: the deep inner understanding that what we felt and experienced was real, it worked, and it continues to reverberate today, in how I operate and in how many of the GW3TS tribe members live their lives. So even if I feel like an under-achiever as an academic story teller, in the ‘power/real world’ of mental health and intellectual disability research and management systems where my work has been received by a deafening silence, I know what we achieved in the GW3TS tribe, and no one can take away from me the artistry of having created that realized potential among all those lives.

Moving into ‘delivery’ mode for GW3TS is ruffling feathers and stirring prejudices in many areas. My feelings right now are of disaffection with the way people build empires around their activities, and the desire to ‘cut and run’. I know that is just a passing feeling, but I need to genuinely go through it, to be able to find some better balanced view on: (a) what is currently going on; and (b) how I can best proceed in the immediate circumstances and the longer term future. Perhaps it would be better to be more ‘distanced’ from the subject groups, rather than participating too closely in their community dynamic. But this may just be distorted perception, due to the hard process of finding our way with one another, among two groups of vulnerable people (ie. people living with mental illness, and others living with intellectual disability). Whatever happens, I will maintain the aim of engaging with the lived reality of these two communities (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 05/04/2004).
After ongoing battles with the mainstream academic process, and limited acceptance among ‘professionals’ in mental health and intellectual disability research and community support settings, I had an unexpected engagement with ‘the psychiatrists’, in 2007, courtesy of the community of people involved in the biennial ‘Creating Futures’ Conference of the RANZCP, on ‘Rural, Remote, Indigenous and Islander Mental Health,’ held in Cairns under the overarching stewardship of Professor Ernest Hunter, a legend in holistic community mental health practice and innovative research. So the following article was my first serious acknowledgement by the world of mainstream mental health, in the Journal of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. This acceptance gave me great hope for going on with my work at a time when I was seriously depressed about it all.

In this article I adopted the RANZCP formal format to explain the GW3TS more informal process, aligned under the usual sub-headings of Abstract, Objectives, Methods, Conclusions etc. This was markedly different to the earlier QRIP/RIPPLE paper, which tried to summarise the more indigenous aspects of the approach to creating the community feeling for GW3TS.
Modeling community-based, self-help mental health rehabilitation reform

Objectives: The research used supported collaborative inquiry in participative action research to record the effectiveness of peer support and narrative therapy, in an indigenous-informed community of belonging, or open urban tribe. There were three objectives:

(i) to identify the active attributes of consciousness among those living with intellectual disability and/or mental illness, which can be acknowledged, nurtured and developed to strengthen their balanced self awareness, and assist them in taking more responsibility for their lives;
(ii) to identify how these aspects of self awareness can be used to inform improved individual and group empowerment and improved rehabilitation practice, in communities of inter-subjective relationship and belonging, and
(iii) by exploring collaborative engagement with ‘the system’ which serves these two groups, to identify how they can more effectively be empowered to manage the planning, policies, programs and service delivery which largely determine their quality of life. The research also seeks to clarify how this person-valuing approach can be applied, in a self-help, peer-supported, community-based rehabilitation system.

Findings: People living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability experience improved quality of life and self-determining sense of self when they are included in mixed open urban tribes, or communities of belonging. The predominant way this
comes about is through the diverse shared metaphors of being which the participants provide for each other, through their energy of life and testimonies of experience which give each other encouragement and stimulation, generating motivation and strengthened intention for life.

It is not the cognitive or social ability to perform particular skills in individual or group exchange that determines the impact of this open urban tribal model; it is more the spirit and essence of the people, and their way of exchanging loving interaction and generous caring, listening and feedback that enhances participants’ quality of life experience.

Successful psychosocial rehabilitation depends on people’s motivation for recovery, growth and development, and this happens best in communities of belonging, not in isolated ‘group homes’ or patronizing ‘professional’ service delivery that pathologizes its recipients.

Improvement in mental health and supported living services will accelerate and create cheaper bottom line costs, with the provision of equitably facilitated, self-help, peer-supported, open urban tribe models of mutual support and motivation for ongoing life development.

**Key words:** community of belonging, mental health consumer, narrative therapy, recovery, rehabilitation.

The climate of mental health in Australia was disturbed throughout the 1990’s and into the new millennium with calls for reform in clinical and community services, and several major reports were released criticizing the status quo. This study set out to explore the potential in creating community-based, peer-supported, self-help rehabilitation processes, based on an indigenous-informed, open urban tribal model of a ‘community of belonging’. Its origin lay in voluntary work among indigenous communities, and the respect arising from observing effective person-valuing support
dynamics in environments of safety, trust and equal exchange of feelings, experiences and feedback about personal development.

**CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

Given the environment of crisis in clinical mental health provision across Australia over the past 10 years, particularly in NSW, there is a need for more widely available, cost-effective, community-based models of mental health rehabilitation and supported living approaches for adults with intellectual disabilities. This study arose from the researcher’s years working voluntarily in Aboriginal communities in NSW, in community cultural development. It was premised on the belief that, as in well-functioning indigenous communities, all people benefit from knowing they belong, feeling acknowledged, and having their testimonies witnessed in environments of safety and trust.

Being the father of a young man living with schizophrenia, and also being involved with the Down Syndrome community, it was a natural step to bring together young adults living with a variety of challenges to see if their mutual exchange of feelings and experiences could assist life growth, healing and development. Volunteers were also sought from the general community in an attempt to model ways for people of mixed life challenges to support each other’s self development.

**STUDY PURPOSES AND PROCEDURES**

Subjects for this study were selected by public promotion (through articles in suburban newspapers) of the opportunity to join a voluntary community of belonging, and to pair up with buddies in keeping a fortnightly ‘life journal’ of feelings and experiences for 1 year. The project was to be a participative action research approach to ethnographic recording, with the particular application best described as supported collaborative
inquiry, since not all participants were comfortable keeping written journals and determining all their participative activities.

The purpose of recording feelings and experiences among 18–35-year-olds living with psychosocial challenges (mental illness (MI) and/or intellectual disability (ID)) was twofold: to encourage their expression and to witness their dynamic effects, as well as to track the effects of forming such a community of belonging, or open urban tribe, on the lives of its participants.

Observations were conducted by video and photographic recording, contributing facilitators’ observation and feedback, and the principal researcher’s daily journaling and observation. After the first year it became clear that not all participants wanted to pursue journal-keeping in buddy pairs. But they did want to maintain the rhythm of the open urban tribal gatherings, which occurred about every 6 months, with two major live-in weekend workshops in May 2004 and June 2005. Other gatherings were generated to celebrate being together and having the chance to catch up on each other’s progress.

These events were facilitated to enable participants to re-experience their community of belonging and to exchange testimonies in their life journeys living with challenges. The ultimate recording process was the researcher’s ongoing tracking observations of the whole group, its participant pairs and individuals, sharing in the rhythmical, interactive exchange of a grace-filled communion, arising from cycles of mutual acknowledgement, conversation, companionship and celebration.
METHODOLOGY

The project involved gathering a group of strangers together in May 2004, beginning a regular series of meetings in which people shared their feelings and experiences.

Eligibility criteria were simply to be living with a psychosocial challenge (MI or ID), or volunteering to be a buddy of someone with such a challenge, and to be able to approach every participant as an equal in the tribe (i.e. not making cognitive ability or performance of any particular ‘skill’ more valued than any other personal capability).

The source population was a group of 18–35-year-olds from among the general public, in a mixed gender group, with same gender pairings of buddies.

After initial expressions of interest, participants of all types (i.e. living with mental illness, intellectual disability, experienced facilitators, carers and volunteer buddies living without the identified challenges) were inducted into the project at training workshops. From then on, some of the participants also met regularly (some monthly, others less frequently) in pairs of buddies, keeping journals of their feelings and experiences, which were handed to the researcher at the conclusion of 2 years of meetings. A video documentary film was recorded of the various gatherings, and still photographs taken of participants and buddy pairs. After 1 year of shared individual buddy pair get-togethers, another whole-group tribal gathering was held at the same weekend workshop venue in June 2005, where stories were once again shared and recorded, and other creative and celebratory activities entered into.

Ethnographic analysis was conducted of the cyclic interaction of the group and its rituals of listening, sharing and providing feedback. The participative dynamics and emerging effects and affects in the lives of the participants were recorded and analyzed, to reflect the efficacy of creating a community of belonging among people living with challenges and others without. After 2 years of gatherings, the whole project was
celebrated at a screening of the digital video documentary film in July 2006, and participants were officially farewelled from the project. Journals were collected and the researcher began the final formal analysis.

The methods used for locating, selecting, extracting and synthesizing the data were principally: written journals of feelings and experiences, kept between buddy pairs and by individuals; documentary film and photographic recording; contributions from an advisory group (including consumers, carers, facilitators and the researcher) which met regularly throughout the project; and the researcher’s own daily journal kept throughout the first 2 years and intermittently after that.

Qualitative research methods applied in this work included a supported collaborative inquiry approach to participative action research, and recording of the interactive symbolic rituals in the cycle of gatherings of the tribe. Indicators of effectiveness in achieving the positive outcomes from the project included: the recorded experiences of the participants from their verbal comments and journals, the shared observations among the group during their meetings about how well participants were going in their lives and how their life choices were expanding and/or feeling more self-determined.

New or modified methods applied in this work were the application of spontaneous sharing and group dynamic to a mixed group of psychosocially challenged people. This was done in an attempt to remove the pathologizing effect of categorization of individuals in determining what happened. It was also to build group belonging as the main reason for coming together, and trust as the main determinant in how people proceeded to share whatever came to heart and mind.
PROCESS AND FINDINGS

The methods used to bring people together were group-facilitated workshops covering ways of being with each other and about how to engage with someone living with a psychosocial challenge respectfully and equally. Despite initial awkwardness, participants soon began to relax and share more openly. Then, what many participants called ‘the magic’, started to flow. People began to inspire each other with their stories or just their way of being, through different forms of sharing, until everyone felt ‘in’ the whole group. Procedures adopted included group discussion, shared exchanges of personal experiences, and reflective, deliberative conversations, about life with a psychosocial challenge. Ways to assist people’s empowerment in making more self-determined choices about how their lives unfolded from day to day, were discussed and debated in these induction workshops.

From a start-up group of about 100 interested participants of all types, about 60 went ahead to the first weekend workshop stage in May 2004. There were about 20 people living with Down syndrome, 20 living with a mental illness (mainly schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and clinical depression), and 40 volunteer buddies living without these challenges (but often with other challenges of their own, which arose later in the project). About 20 volunteer experienced facilitators were also included in the advisory group and those attending the first weekend workshop; these included professional counsellors and therapists, social workers, yoga teachers, and lifetime carers who had been leaders in generating person-valuing reform of community services in mental health and disability support.

Ethnographic recording of the personal experiences and group dynamics in an interactive symbolic environment elicited important information about practical ways to assist the daily lives of people living with psychosocial challenges. It revealed that
people with mental illness and/or intellectual disability feel better about themselves, and express more confidence and independence, when they are in a community of belonging, where respectful, equitable relationships of safety and trust are established, and openness and caring exchanges are encouraged.

The spoken and written testimonies of the participants, their carers and voluntary buddies living without the same challenges, plus professional facilitators working as voluntary aunties and uncles in the tribe, showed that this process produced efficacious results in the lives of all participants. People reported feeling well, showed evidence of finding more energy for life, and began pursuing more diverse activities and creativity.

The researcher became totally embedded in the community of participants, and assumed the role of ‘tribal leader’, to call together regular gatherings, encourage participants to contribute roles at different occasions, and to record the whole project in a daily journal reflecting on the observed interactions, personal and group dynamics, and emerging effects on individuals and the group.

The process of undertaking this research and the observations emerging from it has led to a series of further hypotheses:

(1) The project has led to the development of what may be termed the ‘all fruits theory’, which says that mixed psychosocially challenged groups of people can assist each other’s recovery, growth and development, when they are enabled to come together in vulnerable, safe and trusting environments of sharing and caring.

(2) This sort of person-valuing approach to psychosocial rehabilitation, which creates and facilitates open urban tribes for the purpose of ongoing mutual support, in an equitable and non-labelling or patronizing way, can create much more cost effective forms of community-based rehabilitation than current medical models (e.g. one
facilitator to 60 participants over 2 years, with average time commitment of 2 days a week EFT).

(3) Mixed challenges among psychosocial participants can actually provide a benefit from their diversity, rather than a magnified difficulty because of the multiple challenges they live with. This provides evidence that shared metaphors of challenged ways of being can enhance motivation for life among peers.

(4) The health and community services systems can generate cost-effective improvements which also value the individuality and group solidarity of people living with psychosocial challenges, by adopting open urban tribal models of person valuing rehabilitation.

DISCUSSION
While people living with psychosocial challenges often require clinical assistance to get their lives into balanced and self-aware states after experiencing psychosis or other disturbances, their ongoing wellbeing depends equally on community settings of shared, affirming energy and daily living feedback, mirroring and support. By creating a community of belonging, or open urban tribe, it was possible to generate increased wellbeing and confidence for more independent living among such people and their peers living without such challenges.

An important finding of this open urban tribe’s functioning was the power of its regular, rhythmical gathering and interactive sharing process. By creating safe, trusting and respectful conditions, the shared testimonies of participants had an enlivening effect on their peers. People sought to return to this communal space of sharing, and when they came together again they regularly expressed ‘the feeling of coming home’. By accepting each person as an equal, and listening to their contributions with patience and a sense of equal respect, the result was that each person showed they had an equally
valuable contribution to make to the group. It was as if each person’s being was a metaphor for the others to learn something from. At different times in the cycle of tribal gatherings, different individuals showed they had a special contribution to make, often just by being there. Their effect on the group was not to do with written, verbal or cognitive skills, but simply in their way of being there. This was regularly commented on by participants and by their uncles and aunties (facilitators).

The lesson for community-based mental health care (and supported living for intellectually disabled people) is that more respectful treatment of ‘consumers’, and facilitating their gathering together in open urban tribes for shared life growth and development, can lead to efficacious outcomes for people currently ‘costing’ clinical mental health services a lot in service support. In terms of providing the facilitation required, this approach could offer many people an effective life support experience, which will save on recidivism, improve quality of life outcomes, and generate more involved, enriched and enriching community members.

The project set out to model person-valuing ways of achieving community-based rehabilitation. It succeeded in creating a repeatable model of mixed-group experience, which did provide uplifted motivation and self-determining intention among its participants.

This also showed that the selection of particular psychosocial challenges within one group were not the key determining factor in efficacious outcomes, but more the establishment of an open, equitable, trusting, safe and vulnerable space for sharing and feedback. However, this personal and group effectiveness faded, when the researcher was unable to devote so much time to facilitating the get togethers and had to ‘go off and write up the thesis’.
The message for health and community service system managers is that there is a bottom-line of facilitation required permanently, to assist people to assist themselves. The approach adopted in this study articulates with conventional approaches in most of its implementation strands – from group get-togethers facilitated by a professional, to journal and video recording of shared experiences and feelings. What was different was the indigenous-style adoption of ‘aunties’ and ‘uncles’, in the supporting team of voluntary experienced ‘elders’, and the establishment of a culture of mutual respect and equity among all participants. Avoiding ‘expertology’ and domination by any individual led to spontaneous sharing and exchanges, which then gave rise to further flow-on contributions from all participants.

This formed the core motivational energy, and a communion of souls that inspired each other, for further gatherings, to go on sharing and growing together. This also gave rise to enriching experiences for the ‘professional’ voluntary aunties and uncles, who testified to the impact it had on their own growth and development and sense of self. Further research into the efficacy of such approaches seems warranted by this exercise, and from the point of view of working within the system, it is an attractive option, given the repeatability and cost-effectiveness of its community-based, self-help, peer-support model.

This sort of approach can easily complement clinical services, generating the ongoing motivation and self development intention among consumers and carers, which can assist clinical outcomes with low demands on professional facilitation time. The following article was written to highlight how different rehabilitation outcomes could be, if consumers & carers were treated as equals in the process, rather than as equivalents to the ‘primitive peoples’ (aka ‘headhunters’) dealt with by ‘experts’.
Lloyd, Robbie (2010) ‘Challenging western biomedicine’s ‘headhunting’ habits as negative midstream social determinants of health,’ has been accepted for presentation at the Australian Health Promotion Association’s 20th Annual Conference in Cairns, 10-13 April 2011, ‘Strengthening Action: Health Promotion and Determinants of Health.’

‘Challenging western biomedicine’s ‘headhunting’ habits as negative midstream social determinants of health’

ABSTRACT

Rethinking concepts of ‘the social’ and ‘agency’ in western biomedical environments can complement acute clinical, or behaviourist educational interventions, by valuing interpersonal dynamics over the ‘headhunting’ clinical trend, emphasising ‘expert’ diagnoses and symptoms over the personhood of ‘clients’. This paper extrapolates from the author’s own PhD field research modelling, and subsequent community mental health practices in city and remote locations in Australia, to argue for an end to the indeterminacy in social relations in mental health and disability environments, by learning from the reform of anthropology’s colonialist past ways.

It uses a reflexive autoethnographic approach to reflect on causes and propose redefinitions and remodelling of social relations in ‘the clinic’ (which includes ‘the training room’). By rethinking the social imaginary in these contexts, the paper asserts that much greater equity is needed, and can be achieved through encouraging more shared social dynamics across difference, and by opening up the cultural politics of emotion (Ahmed 2004). Challenging the politics of significance and identity, and the metaphysics of political economy in western health and education settings (Herzfeld 2001, Weeks 1994), the paper argues for applying the social politics of health reform.
Instead of allowing continued domination by the professionals who have been “seduced by the vanity of expertise” (Miner 1956), the paper proposes a change of perspective and priority-setting. Just as ‘headhunting’, as a trope for indigenous peoples stigmatized as ‘violent pagans’ (Hoskins 1996: 42), has been turned in on itself, to become a term indicating ‘predatory development’ (Hoskins 1996: 43) over colonized peoples, this paper argues that western biomedicine has exercised an equivalent headhunting practice deserving an equal reversal of terminology. Alternative approaches are proposed, by reflecting on evidence from the author’s PhD research field work, with an open urban tribe (Watters 2004) of multicultural young adults (18-35 yrs) living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, in Sydney from 2004-6, and in various community mental health support groups in the Northern Territory since then (2007-10).

Modelling person-valuing, peer supported, self-help rehabilitation among diverse consumers & carers, operating as equals with professionals from health & disability fields who acted as ‘aunties & uncles’ (in the indigenous sense of older unconditionally supportive mentors, who also won’t take any excuses), the paper argues that ordinary human interaction among mixed up people of different consciousness (All Fruits Theory, Lloyd 2009) can be as valuable in nurturing mental health and wellbeing as expert knowledge. It argues for replacing ‘the vanity of expertise’ with the humility of shared humanity in healing zones. So that once medical expertise has done its acute job, balanced socio-spiritual dynamics can nurture and sustain social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) thereafter.

KEYWORDS
Headhunting; social imaginary; western biomedicine; politics of significance and identity; mental illness; intellectual disability; open urban tribes; peer support rehabilitation groups; all fruits theory.
INTRODUCTION

This paper argues for greater acknowledgement of the recipients of medical support and disability rehabilitation training as equals in the healing, growth and development transaction. Based on the notion of the All Fruits Theory (akin to Queer Theory, Jagose 1996; Lloyd 2009), the argument proposes that mixing up people with diverse consciousness, in circumstances where it is safe to share their structure of feelings and experience (SOFE, Lloyd 2005), is a strength in forming peer support rehabilitation groups, which exercise health-nurturing social agency.

The paper refers particularly to the author’s experience collaborating in community-based peer support, with people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, and with multidisciplinary professionals interested in equal agency for ‘clients and carers.’ The case is made for rebalancing social relations in ‘healing environments,’ which are currently dominated by diagnostic labeling, humiliating stigma and vocational silo-building by ‘experts’ (Parker 1995; Read, Mosher, Bentall 2004; Goggin & Newell 2005; Hickie 2007, 2009).

Involving health and disability service participants in the shared dynamics of individual and group nurture of social & emotional wellbeing (SEWB), can improve efficacy and equity, it is argued here. The case is made for more effective outcomes to be achieved, and better quality social environments created, through valuing each participant living with difference. This is said to be a strong potential method for repairing the social production of indifference by western biomedicine, where expertise overrules shared life story rhythms and cycles of mutual support.
METHODOLOGY

This author has spent most of the past fifteen years (1995-2010) working in community settings with children and young adults living with different consciousness – either mental illness (schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, clinical depression) or intellectual disability (Down Syndrome, autism spectrum), and with Indigenous peoples (Australia, New Zealand, Bali, South India). His focus has been on facilitating person-valuing, people-empowering, emancipatory ways of decision-making and shared life growth among the people themselves, once their initial engagement with any clinical intervention has passed.

Principal in this work was the PhD field work in Critical Social Sciences (through the University of Western Sydney) that the author undertook from 2004–6 in Sydney, followed by community mental health support work since, in Alice Springs, in the Northern Territory from 2007–2010. From 2004 to 2006 the author facilitated a community-based, multicultural, ‘open urban tribe’ of about 60 young adults (18–35 years) living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability (predominantly Down Syndrome), plus volunteers living without those challenges, and a group of older professional mentor ‘aunties & uncles’ (Lloyd 2010), who all came together initially as complete strangers. They first met formally at a live-in weekend workshop at the Salvation Army’s Collaroy Conference Centre on Sydney’s northern beaches in May 2004, and then returned one year later in June 2005 for a review of developments.

The notion of ‘open urban tribe’ was developed following reading Ethan Watters landmark book *Urban Tribes: Are Friends the New Family?* (Watters 2004), which described the international phenomenon of non-blood ‘families’ forming among predominantly 30-year-olds around the world, replacing the traditional central role of family as people’s closest network of support. Such ‘communities of belonging’ provide
unconditionally supportive, honest feedback on how individuals are going in life. So much so that Watters ended up concluding that: “My friends help me be the best me I can be (Watters 2004).”

In this author’s project, called ‘Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs (GW3TS)’ (a play on the common Australian term, based on Aboriginal traditional communing with one’s home country and ancestor spirits; but turned into a term of abuse by racists, to imply ‘slacking off and just wandering away from work’) the participants living all across the urban city of Sydney, in NSW, Australia, met for regular informal peer support sessions between 2004–5, establishing a vitalizing dynamic interaction, based on sharing narratives and engaging in mutual witnessing and testimony of their structure of feelings an experience (SOFE, Lloyd 2005). They also gave each other regular mirroring and feedback, within this group context of unconditional support, called ‘Working The Business of Life’ (WTBOL, Lloyd 2005a).

Their community of belonging formed with an open invitation to join the tribe, so long as everyone respected each other equally and there was no exclusivity about the group (hence ‘open urban tribe’, ie. it was in no way exclusive of others). The predominant approach was one of Participative Action Research (PAR), in a supported Collaborative Inquiry style (Heron & Reason 2006; Reason & Bradbury 2006), and a life journalling approach was also initially included, between buddy pairs, but this was dropped due to lack of take-up by participants.

Reflecting several years later on that journey together, and subsequent community mental health projects modelled on this community-based, self-help, peer support approach (in both a city location, such as Sydney, NSW, Australia and a remote
community setting such as in Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia), the project shows up as a model for an emancipatory way to nurture and sustain social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB). By breaking free from disempowering western biomedical rhetoric, and the resulting ‘superior’ treatment of ‘consumers and carers’, plus the silo mentality behaviours they breed (Hickie 2007, 2009), it is argued that better outcomes can be achieved for ‘patients and professionals’.

The author’s personal self-reflexive, post-positivist autoethnographic journal formed the main body of evidence for the whole project of GW3TS (2004–6), and that approach has continued in his community mental health work since (2007–10). The work has followed social poetics, the metaphor of play, the poetics of transition, and narrative mapping and sharing (Levin 1999; Herzfeld 2001; Collins 2004; Meares 2005; White 2007) as guiding dynamics of symbolic interaction, working to ‘hold’ this open urban tribe in a rhythm of shared nurturing rituals. There were also documentary film and photographic records kept throughout the PhD field work project.

**HEADHUNTING IN THE REHAB.**

Just as ‘headhunting’, as a trope for indigenous peoples stigmatized as ‘violent pagans’ (Hoskins 1996: 42), has been turned in on itself, to become a term indicating ‘predatory development’ (Hoskins 1996: 43) over colonized peoples, this paper argues that western biomedicine has exercised an equivalent headhunting practice deserving an equal reversal of terminology. ‘Expert jargon’ terms for people’s conditions have intimidated them and their carers into passive submission to ‘expert treatment’ in the ‘medicalisation’ of life, and social apartheid towards disability (O’Brien 1997; Rose & Keigher 1996; Rose 1998; McLellan 2007; Goggin & Newell 2005; Hansen 2005), as dozens of people have reported to this author (in both PhD field work and community mental health support settings). And questioning of the assumptions behind such expert
labelling is rejected, using the very jargon-dominated diagnoses as proof of lay-
people lacking insight or lucidity to know any better (as has happened and continues to
happen to this author, regarding his own 30 year son, living with schizophrenia for 12
years 1998-2010).

But those labelled people in the ‘rehab’s’ (ie. mental health rehabilitation centres, and
disability support and training centres) are now turning that sort of ‘internal
colonialism’ (Hoskins 1996: 42) back on the medical and rehabilitation industries, as
the author’s direct community experience (Lloyd 2007, 2009) has shown. Reading Janet
Hoskins’ anthology on *Headhunting and the Social Imagination in Southeast Asia*
(Hoskins 1996), many parallels appear between the participants in this author’s PhD
field work study (GW3TS, Lloyd 2010) and the indigenous subjects of Janet Hoskins’
collection of essays.

The colonial agenda included remaking native consciousness and bringing indigenous
peoples into the realm of civilized discourse (Dirks 1992; Thomas 1994). The idea of
violent savagery was part of the script that legitimated conquest, but that violence was
then supposed to be tempered by a new Christian conscience and Protestant work ethic.
Instead indigenous peoples have stolen the script and rewritten it. (Hoskins 1996: 43)

In similar ways, reductionist medical-model-dominated attitudes and practices in
rehab’s have made the recipients of ‘expert care’ into the equivalent of people from
another culture. And as Michael Herzfeld observes, just as anthropologists were
shocked when their own colonialist methods were turned on their profession, so medical
practitioners are uncomfortable having the microscope aimed at them.
Those whose authority may be compromised by such revelations do not take kindly to becoming the subjects of anthropological research. Calling themselves modern, they have claimed above all to have achieved a rationality capable of transcending cultural boundaries. (Herzfeld 2001: 3)

The argument here is that biomedical rationality has reached an equivalent stage, where its assumptions have lost contact with areas of human being that are vital to healing and sustaining health and wellbeing. “Long after the demise of evolutionism as the dominant theory of society & culture, this evolutionist assumption sustained the categories of modernity and tradition as the basis for teaching anthropology.” (Herzfeld 2001: 3) Sadly, the same attitude remains true for western biomedicine, as this author has seen in practice environments repeatedly over the past decade.

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES & PARADIGMS SUSTAINS DEVELOPMENT

Similar to the ‘indigenous script thieves’ Janet Hoskins mentioned above, the open urban tribe in the GW3TS study under reflection here (Lloyd 2010) chose to redefine itself, according to a different set of criteria than the symptoms and diagnoses they had all been given by western biomedical experts. Each person had a unique profile and place in the tribe, and the shared witnessing and testimony exchanged at each meeting gave evidence to all attending of the value each participant brought to this community, as attested by the participants themselves (Lloyd 2007). The exercise of such agency and voice was contrary to the usual effects of expert labelling, that participants reported had previously disempowered and devitalized them.

The reversal of predator and prey in the countermythology of headhunting presents a critique of colonialism and state domination: the violence of the periphery is turned around and said to prey on the victims of political centralization. This reversal has
continued into the age of independent nation states, and has come to focus on predatory development… (Hoskins 1996: 43)

This perspective was similar to that of Australian art and cultural theorist Bernard Smith, one of this author’s inspirations for the earlier masters research work (Lloyd 2003, 2005) that led to GW3TS. Flowing from Smith’s classic title *European Vision and the Pacific* (Smith 1960; Beilharz 1997), chronicling the antipodean effect on changing understandings of perspective in art, from Gaugin’s south pacific works to the wave of influence on Europeans through ‘discovering’ Australian Aboriginal art, there was a new respect for ‘the primitive’. The claim of this paper, arising from the author’s own experience in community health settings over the past decade, is that too many western biomedical ‘experts’, and disability support rehabilitation trainers, are preying on the ‘primitive’ (ie. in comparison to their expertise) lives of their clients, by perpetuating their own self importance in the transaction with clients, at the expense of these people’s personhood. With a more respectful acknowledgement of the efficacious role of people’s own agency, and their shared social & emotional wellbeing (SEWB), true whole-life healing could be much better nurtured and balanced in an holistic way, as happened in the author’s field work in Sydney, and community mental health and disability support work in the Northern Territory since.

The main source of this balance, this author claims, is through respecting and facilitating expression of every person’s Structure of Feelings and Experience (SOFE, Lloyd 2005), a concept which the author developed from the work of cultural, social and communications theorist Raymond Williams (Williams 1958, 1961, 1962), combined with Bernard Smith’s already cited work.
This perspective, of respecting the basic SOFE of all people, is not dissimilar to the challenge to old anthropological colonialist methods and thinking, that Michael Herzfeld has recorded (Herzfeld 2001). Using jargon terms, applying patronizing approaches, and exercising a lack of respect for people’s individuality and eccentricity, means that clients are turned into passive victims of such expert professional ‘headhunting’ processes.

In fact, this author argues that the only beneficiaries of such ‘headhunting’ are those professionals who gain status and substantial income from it, a position supported by John Ralston Saul in *Voltaire’s Bastards* (Saul 2002). Especially compared with the poverty of most disability pension recipients, after they have been diagnosed and labelled and thus stigmatised for life, and most unable to find mainstream vocations. So maintenance of this expert labelling does little to benefit its recipients, and a lot to prop up professions “seduced by the vanity of expertise” (Miner 1956, quoted in Herzfeld 2001: 2), and pharmaceutical companies profiting from selling symptom-suppressing drugs.

It is argued here that by undervaluing the social and individual agency of people living with different consciousness (mental illness and/or intellectual disability), western biomedicine has established a debilitating cycle. Ensuring that stigmatizing labelling and expert dictation to its ‘clients’ are the dominant dynamic, western biomedicine is not in the view of this author honouring its alleged dedication to the process of nurturing healing and development, and ‘doing no harm’. On the contrary, the open urban tribe in the GW3TS study experienced powerful healing through empowering exchange of stories, rhythmical interactive celebrations, and quiet rituals of communion and invigorating companionship.
The argument here is not against clinical intervention where it is needed – ie. when treating psychosis and totally out-of-balance individuals. But once the immediate stabilizing has occurred, it is on-going nurture in psychosocial settings that needs to empower individual and group agency, voice and shared responsibility for wellbeing.

By holding regular gatherings, where individuals got to express their feelings and experiences, this approach to peer support in the GW3TS project generated a group dynamic that participants reported had revitalized them (Lloyd 2007, 2009). They could go into the wider world with a greater sense of self and confidence to tackle new activities (Lloyd 2007, 2009). Along the way people often shared their latest experience of feeling put down, ignored or left out by ‘the experts’, as if they were ‘just a bunch of fruits’.

This again echoed the experience of indigenous peoples using the headhunter trope to challenge their modern oppressors. “The headhunter is a stubborn image of violence threatening from the outside. His bloody knife cuts through to the secret regions where power is transferred and vitality is stolen.” (Hoskins 1996: 43)

Members of the open urban tribe in GW3TS reported that they had been enabled to reclaim their vitalizing force, through relationships of unconditional support and belonging, plus ceremonies of interactive rhythmical rituals, which empowered them through mutual caring and sharing (Lloyd 2009). The experience was also reported to have given participants and carers mirroring and feedback, about how each person was travelling in their lives. This formed a kind of ‘reality check’ and ‘not tolerating any bulldust’ from each other – called ‘Working the Business of Life’ (WTBOL, Lloyd 2005, 2007). That phenomenon meant participants were not fooling themselves about
what ‘being well’ really meant. All this was part of a cycle of larger group meetings, dovetailing with one-on-one relationships and small group get togethers.

**ENDEMIC CLINICAL RATIONALITY**

Harvard anthropologist Michael Herzfeld has been pushing to reform his profession for decades. The biggest area needing to change was the assumption of superior rationality, over the ‘other cultures’ that were outside the centre of western expertise and common sense (Herzfeld 2001). This scenario applies equally well to the disciplines of western biomedicine, only they have a lot further to catch up, to reach the place Herzfeld describes for anthropology:

Anthropology is a discipline that has thus developed an ironic sense of its own social and cultural context… (It) is often about misunderstandings… because these are usually the outcome of the mutual incommensurability of different notions of common sense. (Herzfeld 2001: 2)

Unfortunately, the author’s own observations working in community mental health and disability support environments for the past decade, show that western biomedical ‘clinical’ perspectives continue to dominate these fields of so-called healing, at the expense of people’s agency and voice to participate in determining their own wellbeing. So, to paraphrase Herzfeld, “why should the supposed rationality of western lifestyles (read, biomedicine) escape the sardonic eye of the anthropologist?” (Herzfeld 2001: 2)

Managing headspace Central Australia in Alice Springs in 2009, the author struggled against a funding model biased totally to the clinical approach. Even then, it provided only minimal support for western biomedical services as early intervention. And nothing for community-based, socio-spiritual support for nurturing long term SEWB,
that would have sustained any health outcomes arising from the clinical intervention, let alone people’s own self-help. This meant there was no official funding for the headspace Elders–Youth Program, or the multidisciplinary professional network collaboration program (called the Alice Springs Wellbeing Hub), that aimed to achieve hands-on community support for mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

In another related context, when the author was coordinating the Day To Day Living (DSDL) adult community rehabilitation program at MHACA (the Mental Health Association of Central Australia, a national leader in community-based mental health support services) in Alice Springs in early 2008, it was a struggle to gain adequate, sustained mainstream funds, to provide holistic, creatively-inspired psychosocial support for consumer-run programs.

Only recently, in the 2009-10 period have funds begun to flow in Australia into consumer and carer organizations, to allow the beginnings of adequate person-valuing, culturally-informed community mental health and disability support programs. But I argue that they will still operate as the poor cousins of the dominant western biomedical model, which attracts far too many of the scarce funds for more ‘professional clinical positions’ (as against community-based approaches), which this author argues are currently achieving dubious outcomes.

Just as Michael Herzfeld has argued that “a practice-oriented anthropology can and must also be a critique of practicality… a discourse of critical resistance to the conceptual and cosmological hegemony of this global common sense” (Herzfeld 2001: 14), so must holistic community health advocates resist the clinical model’s continuing hegemony.
GW3TS proved people can get well and stay well in circumstances of complementary socio-spiritual nurture of SEWB, alongside clinical services. But the domination of clinical diagnoses and resulting stigma continues to retard progress in nurturing full inclusion of those living with challenges, by this author’s direct experience in the field (Lloyd 2010). Participants in GW3TS told many stories of being ignored by the experts, while calling for more support for community cultural and vocational developments, as the principal areas relevant to consumers and carers, and the ones needing most support. But economic rationalist service managements did not see beyond the need for clinical service provision, as if the other areas were too ‘warm fuzzy’ to warrant attention. This echoes Herzfeld again:

If, for example, economic rationality can be seen as the driving force behind current representations of rationality, local conceptions of economic wisdom make it clear why many of the world’s people will not be persuaded… (which) underscores the importance of maintaining a strong sense of the conceptual and social diversity that still exists in the world. (Herzfeld 2001: 14)

That diversity sits in the middle of western culture as well, but it is invisible to many of the current health and disability service hierarchies, by this author’s direct observation.

**MOVING TOWARDS COLLABORATIVE HEALING**

By exercising more historically aware and self-reflective practice, it is argued here that western biomedicine could undergo a similar transformation, as that which has occurred in anthropology over the past few decades. Instead of defensively holding onto out-dated notions of superior knowledge and healing practices, true healing professionals could embrace holistic approaches while retaining ‘scientific methods’.
This could lead to more effective, collaborative approaches, such as those illustrated in GW3TS and others mentioned here. The ‘clinical experts’ currently holding the power in this situation would just need to expand their criteria, of what constitutes valid evidence of effective practice.

Questions of truth are largely predicated on relations of power, as Foucault (Foucault 1982) and others have taught us. Thus, the other side of the task is to define the political context within which such assessments are made. Much of what authoritative discourse represents as ‘ignorant’ might more precisely be seen as a form of resistance – or at least deliberate recalcitrance – in which the terms of a dominant historiography are recast by a subaltern population, for whom the capacity to decode the discourse of the powerful may be a matter of life and death. (Herzfeld 2001: 57)

This scenario could well describe those in the community mental health field who have been sounding warning bells, about the clinically-tilted priorities in mental health funding since the national reform program began a decade ago. And just as colonialism needed long-term challenging, before people began to see its endemic presence in western consciousness, so too western biomedicine’s colonising domination of community health needs to be unpacked and the story retold, so new directions can be plotted, it is argued here.

We must develop a history of the conditions that created the concepts of domination, which means a more exhaustive historical anthropology of colonialism... That task also applies to the analysis of the uses people make of the past in their everyday lives… how do we respond to accounts of the past crafted according to criteria of relevance that do not fit our notions of truth? (Herzfeld 2001: 56)
So the role of projects like GW3TS, D2DL, and the headspace Elders–Youth Group, is to reposition community health in a more central, community-owned place. And one where stories of stigmatised lives, of isolated and lonely subjects of medical diagnoses that cut off any respected place in the community, are able to inform daily practice. This is professional silo-owning territory, where the mental health reform strategy has yet to enter (Hickie 2009).

What has been shown by the community-based projects referred to here, that this author has helped to create, is that all parties can have important, respected places in a truly holistic community health service environment. But it will take a long time to shine a light into all the corners where the old ways still dominate. To paraphrase Michael Herzfeld again, “I shall ask what anthropologists (read ‘community health workers’) can do to illuminate the processes that take place in the shadows of (‘western biomedical’) colonialism rather than under its heel.” (Herzfeld 2001: 57, this author’s inclusions in italics).

Those shadows still cast their influence across most of Australia’s mental health and disability support services. So what this author argues is needed, is a strong, affirmatively-empowered community presence in the management and budget-deciding bodies, that control the resourcing and channels of power to these services. No real change will occur while the same vested personnel control the ‘silos of self interest’ (Hickie 2009).

And the other area needing to be incorporated, into a true holistic positioning of health reform, is that the social determinants of health are fully factored into how health services are managed. Preventive health should not just be based on the three current pillars of nutrition, physical exercise and preventing chronic disease.
Equal to those must be SEWB, as the foundation for community mental health.

REVIVING COMMUNITY AGENCY IN SUSTAINING COMMUNITY HEALTH

Having established a number of community-based mental health projects, this author knows the hurdles facing reform, having battled vested interests in management a number of times. The ‘headhunting’, ‘elite’, ‘expert’ trope used here reflects a problem spread across western society. John Ralston Saul has portrayed it well in a number of recent books (Saul 1993).

In reality there is now a desperate need among technicians, manipulators of systems and profiteers to destroy any remaining evidence that Western society could function on the basis of humanist cooperation. Our elites need to be pessimistic about us in their own best interests. The establishment of self-interest as the prime driving force of the human character is the key to their approach. (Saul 1993: 628)

GW3TS expressed the opposite value system. It was about unstructured sharing and caring of mutual concern, rather than expert-driven scientific certainty. Taking time out, just being together, in an ordinary way. Can this approach bring improvements? “We are now crossing one of those difficult moments in history when any sensible approach seems unexciting and ineffective, while the forces of self-interest and structure appear tempting and unstoppable,” Saul says (Saul 1993: 628).

What hope can the singular considerations of an individual have when this rhetoric of false individualism is being shouted loud by those in power, leaving humanism with no mythology apart from that of the fringes? What hope there is
lies precisely in the slow, close-to-reality enquiry and concern of the humanist. (Saul 1993: 628)

While unashamedly including the universal spiritual sense of being in its approach, GW3TS embraced the secular humanist perspective that Saul describes. The shared conversation of GW3TS participants was one of emancipation for people of difference: for realising personal growth and development in the context of the tribe, ie. an open community of belonging, not a clique and not an exclusive group. Plus a place at the table of mental health and disability service management, and in the wider society as citizens with something to offer, together. This was a simple approach to valuing the consciousness of people of difference, and one which challenged the self-interested, rationalist elite ‘headhunters’.

... first he, and perhaps more hopefully she (ie. the ordinary citizen), must stop believing that the accomplishments of the last few centuries are the result of rational methods, structure, and self-interest, while the failures and violence are those of humanity and sensibility. In spite of the rhetoric which dominates our civilisation, the opposite is true.... Those who have confidence have always argued that consciousness is the key to improvements in the human condition. Saul 193: 628)

Investing belief in the consciousness of the citizenry, and their capability to oversee effective community health services, alongside professionals, is a central part of the solution. GW3TS offered an open invitation, for all comers to join in and go walkabout together with people of difference. I argue that the result was a project showing people can heal, grow and develop together successfully, with some simple collaborative energy put into facilitating that coming togetherness. “But power structures have always
treated consciousness in the citizenry as a danger which must first be lulled, then
canalised towards the inoffensive through the mechanisms of language, mythology
and structure,” Saul warns. “Societies either roll on blindly to disaster or they find the
inner strength to stop themselves long enough to find ways for reform from within.”
(Saul 1993: 629) This paper aims to assist that process coming about.

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3. REFLEXION 3 – We’re All Fruits

Since primary school days in the 1950s I have been attracted to ‘building community’, ie. bringing people into groups to ‘be together’, to (a) have a good time, and (b) get along well. At least, that’s what I thought I was doing. After seven years of facilitating GW3TS and its subsequent flow-on community self-help projects, I was not so sure. While people have evidently enjoyed the events and gatherings I have invented and facilitated into action for them, I have been gripped by doubts. Might it be that they just ‘went through the motions’ without any sustained benefit for having experienced ‘being in community’? Or that they came along with another motive, such as meeting girls at the youth fellowship that I re-established in the late 1960s at my up-till-then worn out local church? And who am I, anyway, to prescribe one form of human connection (‘being in community’) to another (‘meeting girls’)? Research appropriately includes a process of questioning one’s assumptions and methods. However, since embarking on ‘reflexion’ as a form of research, it has sometimes been difficult to honour the forms of knowledge that have emerged from this project, rather than to inadvertently reproduce the marginalisation of different ways of working with people of difference.

While at times I question the central role I have played in this project, I know that the predominant understanding I have brought from my experience with GW3TS is that, for community to work and be sustained in working well, there has got to be ‘energy in’ to get ‘energy out’: ie. someone has to facilitate the coming together, or else it all fizzles out into nothing. Something similar was said by the Northcott Public Housing community group to the NSW Department of Housing in the early 2000s, when they sought continuation of funding for the facilitation of their community arts activities in the Surry Hills/Redfern public housing precinct, of which I was an immediate neighbour and voluntary contributor. The Department was following usual economic rationalist logic when it argued with the public housing residents, “if this means anything to you
all, you’ll find a way of funding its continuation yourselves.” Luckily, political lobbying changed that reasoning and extra funds for facilitation were found.

As a self-reflexive researcher, if I want to trouble the phenomenon of GW3TS’s ‘energy in and out’, I need to try to get around the other side of it to see how it looks. So I can ask what that ‘energy in’ was about. I can imagine people perhaps agreeing to join such an activity because they were urged into it. Or they came because their mate was coming. Or they wanted to suss out what this initiating guy was doing, because they didn’t quite know or trust that it was ‘the right thing’ (he having a reputation for being a bit edgy and risk-taking in some of the things he’s done in the past). These are all ‘reasons’ that one might doubt, if one came from the perspective that the only valid individual motivation is an autonomous decision, full of its own ‘integrity’. However, GW3TS was always about relationship and ‘being in community’, so it seems fitting that ‘enrolment’ into the community was itself a relational process, emergent from pre-existing connections, with all their messiness.

Moreover, even when the initial decision to ‘come along’ was contingent on or incited by others, people came into the GW3TS tribe and stayed. They kept coming back. One could reasonably presume they were getting enough out of the experience to warrant going on with it. So while my self-critical side relentlessly questions the value of what went on, my other, more self-reflexive side proposes that maybe these folks and I were involved in creating something great. As several participating consumers, carers, buddies and mentors said to me throughout our time together, GW3TS changed lives.

There seem to be two forces at work here – integrity and transformation. Having read M. Scott Peck’s *The Different Drum: The Creation of True Community – the First Step to World Peace* (Peck 1990), I am drawn to the perspective that GW3TS did achieve
community, and in that formation together, people both found their integrity and were transformed.

Community is integrative. It includes people of different sexes, ages, religions, cultures, viewpoints, life styles, and stages of development by integrating them into a whole that is greater – better – than the sum of its parts. Integration is not a melting process; it does not result in a bland average. Rather, it has been compared to the creation of a salad in which the identity of the individual ingredients is preserved yet simultaneously transcended. (Scott Peck 1990: 234)

So it is interesting that GW3TS led me to develop the All Fruits Theory, and to present a paper entitled “How the All Fruits Salad Creates Sweeter Futures in Rural and Remote Mental Health (Lloyd 2009).” Regardless of whether I felt things were working out well or not, they actually may have been doing just that. When participants exercised WTBOL, they were expressing their diversity and pluralism, while testing their integrity as individuals and as a group. “Community does not solve the problem of pluralism by obliterating diversity. Instead it seeks out diversity, welcomes other points of view, embraces opposites, desires to see the other side of every issue (Scott Peck 1990: 234).”

My own questioning of the experience brought about in GW3TS was a reaction to the pain that sometimes came up in its dynamic interaction. People didn’t always get on, and some went home with hurt feelings after the exchange of WTBOL. But this was also a reflection of the group’s healthy community process, if Scott Peck’s work reflects a truth:

Since integrity is never painless, so community is never painless. It also requires itself to be fully open, vulnerable, to the tension of conflicting needs, demands,
and interests of its members and of the community as a whole… Community continually urges both itself and its individual members painfully, yet joyously, into ever deeper levels of integrity. (Scott Peck 1990: 234-5)

I sweated over individuals’ feelings and experiences, only to see them come back next time grateful for what someone else had pulled their leg about last time. It was a paradox that this interaction could be healthy and actually nurturing, when it looked like conflict as it unfolded. “Perhaps the essence of that skill (in community-making) is the capacity to discern between the sound of integrity and the sound of its absence… if all the dimensions are integrated and colored in, then in all probability you will be looking at a paradox (Scott Peck 1990: 235 & 238).”

Often I would be confused by the paradoxical nature of the interactions between GW3TS tribe members. I would leave events feeling disheartened, and get a phone call later from one of the chief proponents of apparent conflict, only to hear how much they had learnt from the interaction. It was a classic pattern of ‘trust the process’.

The experience of GTW3S was, overall, one of a kind of transforming alchemy. “Remember that community is a state of being together in which people, instead of hiding behind their defences, learn to lower them…a true alchemical process that transforms the dross of our differences into golden harmony (Scott Peck 1990: 170).” In moving back and forth, between the lived reality of GW3TS’s interactions and dynamic exchanges of feelings and experiences, and the compartmentalized and relatively isolated world of academic work on the subject, I got confused and distracted from the bigger picture of what was emerging from the whole community’s experience. It was difficult to hold on to my knowledge of what emerged from community, when working in isolation from it. I even reacted badly to Scott Peck’s words, finding ‘golden
harmony’ just too warm and fuzzy. Moreover, other dimensions of my personal and familial experience are so steeped in disappointment at how people treat each other, that when GW3TS saw people rise to be their best selves (Watters 2004), I was continually surprised.

What has come up strongly for me is the lack in our own Lloyd family’s rhythms, of a sense of maintaining connection through generational interchange. In my own attempts with my nephews and nieces, and with my grandchildren, it feels as if I’m disabled – don’t know what to do, how to do it, and I’m also basically unable, just can’t get it together to bring about appropriate connections. This experience of GW3TS is bringing up some pretty big stuff for me, and I pray to be able to stay open to learn it, and stay awake to be able to move with it when required. (Lloyd GW3TS Journal, 17/01/2004).

As I have continued to watch my own family dynamics over the period of the GW3TS tribe’s journey, it has been further hammered home that these family members ‘isolate’ as we get older. My parents did it, after living ‘public lives’ in business and local government, and I am beginning to see my brothers doing it (we are all in our late 50s). So if we don’t force ourselves into relating communally, we will end up isolated and lonely as well. This paradox applies powerfully to me, who ‘loves humanity, can’t stand people’. If I let my natural tendency overtake me, I will drift away from the very dynamic that I’ve seen save others from themselves. It is paradoxical that being together can be painful, and cause me, as the facilitating agent of community, to doubt myself all the way, yet it brings joys that come from that very pain.

…because it integrates diversity, in community partial ideas tend to become whole ideas, and the individually simplistic thinking of community members
tends to become increasingly complex, paradoxical, flexible, and sane (Scott Peck 1990: 245).

I can hold that knowing from the GW3TS tribe’s experience, because it was stronger than my doubt, or ego-driven aspirations, or fear-driven anxieties. The bottom line reassurance about this came from my daughter Heather’s experience, when playing viola with the Australian Youth Orchestra in 2004, and being conducted by the visiting conductor Benjamin Zander, from the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Zander has a unique way of teaching, he values failure as our greatest strength, and he became an inspiration for me in the GW3TS work.

All the Lloyd kids slept over last night at our flat and our downstairs neighbour’s flat on loan for the night, and Heather now has her big AYO Opera House Concert tonight, with Benjamin Zander – who has appeared on The 7.30 Report (ABC TV nightly current affairs show) during the week extolling the importance of embracing FAILURE, and finding our true PASSION & MOTIVATION in life, rather than COMPETING TO WIN. It’s so great to hear Heather engaging with these values, in a highly valued and celebrated musical leader, who has also become an international management guru (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 10/04/2004).

The Zanderian perspective on paradox is one so missing from rehabs, in my direct observation. When we remember that people are paradoxical, and not always “ill” because of showing their paradoxical side, we can probably be more useful in helping them heal from real areas of social & emotional damage. Zander promotes absolute belief among leaders that their followers can realize their vision. That was a part of leading the GW3TS process, in that I did believe in our all making the dream come
alive (ie. of mutual self help rehabilitation, and magic interpersonal sharing). And the paradox of passion and motivation being able to achieve progress, including making mistakes. And the power of words being a key to our shared involvement in progress, which is what GW3TS was all about (Zander 2008).

That set of synchronous connections just prior to the first GW3TS weekend was typical of what occurred throughout our tribe’s three years of involvement with each other. My journal became a repository for the thoughts and feelings associated with receiving those synchronous interactions. And it was the archive for ‘historic’ moments, such as my letter of thanks to the participating facilitators over that first weekend. One was Sarah Orgias, a young music therapist studying for her degree and experimenting with various musical expressions, that would work with different vulnerable audiences. She came as a volunteer to facilitate some of our musical sessions during the weekend, and they were literally ‘magic’ when they happened.

Dear Sarah, Whatever the guiding spirit is in the universe, we just shared it, in one of the most remarkable experiences of my life. Thank you, deeply, for your gift of unconditional love, compassion, creative engagement and thoughtful practicality, before during and after Stories with Friends (the title we gave our first weekend workshop at Collaroy).

Sharing friendship is a precious thing, and being able to combine that with such world work for the common good, is rare in a lifetime. We just shared that in a long, magic moment. Thank you for trusting the process, stepping into the unknown, and building the context for that magic to occur – through loving stewardship.

Combining younger and older, belief systems, racial and class origins, sexuality, suffering and joy – the weekend took us all into another level of awareness,
about each other and ourselves. I want to thank you for your generous gift, and
honour you as one of the crucial elements in a precious alchemy. Thanks for the magic! Margaret and I got home and found ourselves in floods of tears… it was from being so deeply moved… by your finesse, in the mix that contributed to a miraculous sharing for so many people.

This experience alone is a piece of personal history for us all to record in our own journals. So I’d like you to have this personally signed copy of Stephanie Dowrick’s *Living Words* volume, as part of remembering what we have just shared. (Sample ‘Thank You Letter’, sent to all voluntary facilitators after the first GW3TS weekend workshop at Collaroy, Lloyd GW3TS Journal 31/05/2004).
INTRODUCTORY OVERARCHING ESSAY

SECTION TWO

Much of the work behind GW3TS happened at odd hours of the day, often between 3am and 7am, before I would head off on my pushbike and the train to work, wherever my part-time, casual worker’s existence was based at the time. This cycle of waking meant I spent a lot of time in what John Fowles famously described as ‘the hypnopompic’ zone (Fowles 2005), half way between sleeping and waking. And that zone often informed my thoughts and feeling regarding the GW3TS project, as the following dream record shows:

I just had a dream where the whole human race was plummeting towards its (and the earth’s) self destruction. The only way to avoid total annihilation was to have a group of people, whose job it was to focus entirely on this inevitable outcome, and to accept it, willingly. Not as self selecting suicide bombers, but as participants in the direct paradox of being most alive in the moment of accepting death.

Meanwhile, those who had joined the self-serving, ultimately self-destructive ways of the vast majority, would spend all their free time mocking those who had chosen ‘to be stoned to death,’ by the inevitable forces of destruction these people in the majority were generating. Joining those ‘heading for the stoning’ required complete self sacrifice, without complaint. Just like the knowledge that giving up life willingly, by accepting its dark paradoxical nature, meant those responsible for the darkest side of human nature would survive.
Self selecting annihilation, to prevent ignorance’s inevitable mass destructiveness, which would in its very ‘stoning to death’ preserve (and perpetuate?) those responsible for the ignorance.

As it all came to a conclusion, and the stoning happened – suddenly a moebius loop-style fractal flip in the whole universe turned itself inside out. Such that reality changed, and ‘the stoned ones’ were now permanently living in the light, and the majority groped forevermore in the darkness of their own creation. So be it. Stone me. I cannot accept this world as it is choosing to go (Lloyd GW3TS Journal, entry on waking at 2am from a disturbed sleep, 29/09/2004).

This dream reflected my on-going inner battle with a value system and set of practices that I felt were counter-productive to the very goal they espoused – good health outcomes, empowering their recipients. That sense of being ‘stuck in the loop’, or ‘the Catch 22 effect’ dogged most of the journey of GW3TS for me. So the following section on theory and method tries to grapple with the challenge of honouring my own values, while respecting the academic tradition by which I am hoping to be acknowledged.

5. THE THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

5.1 POSTPOSITIVISM

As a researcher, I am “committed to research approaches that challenge the status quo and contribute to a more egalitarian social order [having] made an ‘epistemological break’ (Hesse 1980: 196) from the positivist insistence upon researcher neutrality and objectivity (Lather 1992: 92).” This perspective has informed the field work for GW3TS (2004-7), and all the community mental health facilitating roles in which I have worked since then. Like Patti Lather, “I am part of a movement that is reinscribing
science ‘otherwise’, reshaping it away from a ‘one best way’ approach to the generation and legitimation of knowledge about the world (Lather 1992: 87).”

The work I undertook in Greater Sydney from 2004–7, and then in the Northern Territory from 2007–10 and continuing, combines this emphasis on the post-positivist challenge and on reinscribing egalitarian ways. I do not detail every interaction in the recent work here, because it all applies the same strategies as the earlier work – creating narrative sharing spaces, facilitating witnessing & testimony, working the business of life (WTBOL) in mirroring & feedback for each other’s progress, and eliciting the Structure of Feelings and Experience (SOFE) from all participants (ie. WCRIDW – Wonder, Conversation, Relating, Imagination, Discernment and Mystery).

Within the domain of the social sciences, “positivism refers to Comte’s (1798-1857) efforts to extend scientific methods to the study of society (Thompson 1975)”. According to Lather, “Positivism… has become a pejorative term for the dominant mode of social science inquiry… Those approaches to science based on identifying facts with measurable entities (Lather 1992: 89).”

Despite “the loss of positivism’s theoretic hegemony in the face of sustained and trenchant criticisms of its basic assumptions (Lather 1992: 89)”, the dominant approach to ‘treatment’ for people with a diagnosis of mental illness or intellectual disability is situated within the medical model. And I argue that it remains a repository of positivist, ‘evidence based’ treatment practices that systematically discount the subjective and interpersonal experiences of ‘consumers’ and their allies, thereby minimising their own involvement in determining new possibilities for their lives, because of the domination of ‘the medical expert’. GW3TS challenged this approach to treatment by critiquing and expanding notions of evidence to foreground subjective and relational practices.
Within the social sciences, post positivism is closely linked to critical social science, “a science intended to empower those involved to change as well as to understand the world (Fay 1987). The various critical theories are informed by identification with and interest in oppositional social movements (Lather 1992: 87-88).” GW3TS shared this critical orientation. ‘Consumers’ and carers’ rights’ might be one description of the social change movement this project is most closely allied to.

Lather asserts that “critical inquiry, (is) inquiry that takes into account how our lives are mediated by systems of inequity such as classism, racism and sexism,” (Lather 1992: 87), I would add that the medical model’s categorization and domination of ‘consumers’ in the area of mental health and disability is another major inequitable part of today’s social infrastructure that calls for critical inquiry.

Thus my research takes up a critical, post-positivist approach – critiquing the ways in which the medical model has positioned the participants in my research, and producing an alternative form of ‘evidence’ in favour of what I claim is rich, meaningful and life-enhancing, for people living with diagnoses of mental illness and/or intellectual disability.

My confidence in the relevance of a critical, post-positivist paradigm for my research stems from my experiences of working directly with those within the GWTS3 project community itself, rather than purely relying on arguments of principle or theory. The empowerment and joy expressed by individual GW3TS participants, and among the whole tribe as a dynamic self-supporting group, as I observed and they reported directly to me throughout the project (Lloyd 2005, 2007, 2009), was a major inspirational factor in going on with this work. In the face of systemic and professional lethargy, and positivist medical model status quo inertia in both NSW and NT, I remained committed
to the “change-enhancing, advocacy approaches to inquiry based on… ‘enabling’ versus ‘blinding’ prejudices on the part of the researcher (Lather 1992: 92)”.

By enabling participants in community mental health rehabilitation settings and disability support environments to freely express their feelings and experiences in rhythmical patterns of witnessing and testimony, I aimed to emancipate the stories of a group of people who are all too often the passive subjects of compliance requirements. This method of loose narrative sharing and feedback in relaxed informal gatherings, fitted with post-positivist research methodology.

Narrative research… differs significantly from its positivistic counterpart in its underlying assumptions that there is neither a single, absolute truth in human reality nor one correct reading or interpretation of a text. The narrative approach advocates pluralism, relativism, and subjectivity. (Lieblich et al 1998: 2)

It allowed participants to feel valued and heard, as co-contributors to the shared narrative development and exchange of feelings and experiences, that both generated and reflected on the learning we were all doing.

Saturday and Sunday of the “Stories With Friends” live-in weekend workshop for GW3TS were like a stage play unfolding. After a tentative Friday evening start, things woke expectant and nervous on Saturday, for participants, volunteers and facilitators alike. The Friday focus had been more light and lowest-common-denominator determined, with a need to remind facilitators at the briefing together, that our aim was to ‘raise the bar’, not patronize people by too much childish playfulness. This created obvious tension and hesitation from mid-Saturday morning, but by mid-afternoon it was clear we had been given the
gift, of bridging the gap between facilitators and the twin peaks of those
living with intellectual disability and mental illness awareness. Then a real
blending started to occur (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 29-30/05/2004).

This approach, to gently and casually eliciting and audiencing the stories of the GW3TS
participants, was in tune with a post positivist commitment to “generate and refine more
interactive, contextualized methods in the search for pattern and meaning rather than for
prediction and control (Lather 1992: 92).” This methodology also followed post-
positivist philosophy in its “turn more and more to interpretive social theory, where the
focus is on constructed versus found worlds (Lather 1992: 89).” By constructing our
own ‘open urban tribe’, or community of belonging, in GW3TS, we “opened up
paradigmatic alternatives for the doing of social science (which) is ‘post-positivist’
(Lather 1992: 90).”

The two main tools for this process were the open expression of people’s Structure of
Feelings and Experiences (SOFE, Lloyd 2005), and the active exchange of mirroring
and feedback following these expressions, which I called Working The Business of Life
(WTBOL, Lloyd 2005).

This process was adapted from Indigenous communities’ ways of combining sharing of
unconditional supportive feedback, with humorous chiding to deflate egos, and honest
detached observation of individuals’ challenges arising from their own attitudes. It was
also part of narrative therapy practice, principally that developed by Michael White at
the Dulwich Centre in Adelaide (White 2007). Both of these approaches had formed
strong threads in my approach to field work (Cowan, 2001; Jackson, 1995; White
2007).
5.2 STORIES TELLING US INTO BEING KNOWN

“Post-positivist approaches are interpretive, and this has led to an emphasis on meaning, seeing the person, experience and knowledge as ‘multiple, relational and not bounded by reason (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine 1998: xviii, quoted by Ryan 2006: 16).” Alongside my commitment to a critical and post-positivist paradigm, I was interested in approaches that opened different possibilities for the narration and witnessing of consumers’ and carers’ stories.

I found myself drawn to the work of French poststructural theorists. After working in health, education and community service environments for more than four decades, battling the overbearing bullying rationality of management and policy/program systems, I had had a gutful of dominant systems that denied people’s humanity. Poststructural theory assisted me to challenge the assumption that a deep universal structure lay within the narratives of my research participants and to be open to the accounts of difference they offer:

For such French poststructuralists as Barthes, Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, structuralism’s basic thesis of the universal and unconscious laws of human society and of the human mind was part of the bureaucratic and technocratic systems they opposed. Their interest was in the ‘gaps, discontinuities and suspensions of dictated meanings in which difference, plurality, multiplicity and the coexistence of opposites are allowed free play’ (Bannet 1989: 5, quoted in Lather 1992: 90).

That sort of free play was de rigueur for GW3TS, where participants all played with the process of forming and reforming their tribal community, and relating their individual and shared stories, in the context of the overall on-going ‘holding story,’ which we were
all part of creating and telling ourselves into. This dynamic, noetic narrative perspective echoed James Cowan’s work with Indigenous communities across the globe (Cowan 2001), and Michael Jackson’s two ethnographic classics *Minima Ethnographica* and *At Home In The World* (Jackson 1995, 1998). Both of these works had significantly informed my earlier research (Lloyd 2003, 2005), which led to the field work included in GW3TS and variously since then.

One of the elements GW3TS had at its core from the beginning was the use of story in meaning-making. This paralleled “the research traditions in interpretive sociology and anthropology, alternative practices of educational research… (with a focus on) the overriding importance of meaning making and context in human experiencing (Mishler 1979)… (and) advocacy approaches to research that are openly value based (Lather 1992: 91).” GW3TS participants told their stories, shared their responses, and worked together to challenge systemic abuses that they previously found daunting. The combination of aesthetic expression and political action was energizing and dynamic. Oral storytelling was the main vehicle for exchanging feeling and information.

Once everyone shifted more to being themselves, than trying to ‘do something for others’, there was a real movement into the groove. Saturday began to deepen its penetration of everyone’s outer shield of apprehension and caution. Then the skits, music and dancing on Sat. night brought surprises, archetypes and new combinations out of the crowd: eg. V’s belly dancing; C. in her drag queen outfit; the musicians getting off on everyone enjoying themselves… there were great vibes all around, and relations between all sorts of people began to cement (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal* 29-30/05/2004).
There is a parallel here with Anna Grimshaw’s “pursuit of ethnographic knowledge by means of visual techniques and technologies” (Grimshaw 2001: 73). Grimshaw’s cinematic approach followed film-maker Andre Bazin’s notion of cinema as a process, not of creation, but of exploration and discovery (Grimshaw 2001: 73). “Bazin argues for an approach towards reality which, in encompassing its width and depth, is able to reveal its fundamental ambiguity… the attempt to evoke ‘the integral unity of a universe in flux.’” What Grimshaw tried to do with her cinematic aesthetic, GW3TS attempted through a social poetics (Herzfield, 2001), consisting of the affective sharing of feelings and experiences within a dynamic collaborative exchange. From companionship, to communion, to celebration, and back to contemplation – we shared all the versions of mutual consciousness, all mixed up together.

People shared, responded, absorbed and reflected in GW3TS’ narrative gatherings. It was a dynamic of witnessing and testimony that created certain tensions. As Michael Herzfeld has observed: “the tension between convention and invention… permits the application of what I have called a ‘social poetics’; tensions between official and intimate norms may similarly underpin a whole range of semiotic domains.” (Herzfeld 2001: 53) This leads to Herzfeld’s clear description of the pragmatics of field engagement:

… all social production is necessarily also a matter of process, not of static forms… effective knowledge is to be sought in the dialectical space in which neither positivism nor deconstruction predominates, but where the pragmatics of the field experience open up our readiness to accept and embrace surprising concatenations. (Herzfeld 2001: 53)
The GW3TS experience generated testimonies of how people endured their lives; and it created witnessing of those testimonies, which gave substance to the social poetics by an exchange of knowing between the participants. This was evidence of what Michael Jackson wrote about in *The Accidental Anthropologist*: “the justification of anthropology lay… in its capacity to explore, in a variety of contexts, the ways in which people struggle… to manage the immediate imperatives of existence.” (Jackson 2006: 149)

By combining consumers and carers, volunteer peers, and volunteer multidisciplinary professional mentor ‘aunties & uncles’, GW3TS “emphasized multiplicity and complexity as hallmarks of humanity (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine 1998: xviii, quoted in Ryan 2006: 16).” That perspective made GW3TS complex in its makeup, vulnerable in its expression, and rich in its potential for opening new fields of knowing through not knowing, as well as being open to collapse without sustaining facilitation. As Patti Lather describes the “doubled task” of “doubled practices”, there is a “deconstructive logic” involved, that:

… must disable itself in some way, unmastering both itself and the pure identity it offers itself against… to gain new insight into what not knowing means toward the telling of not knowing too much, and rigor becomes something other than asserting critical or interpretive mastery (Lather 2001: 199).

This echoed the GW3TS’ informing model of the Structure of Feelings and Experiences (SOFE, Lloyd 2005), where Mystery and Wonder are major parameters of the way human consciousness operates (along with Conversation, Relating, Imagination and Discernment), when it is in its balanced, healthy state.
So, rather than seeking precise ‘factual evidence’ in the positivist way, GW3TS entered the space Patti Lather described, “as the concept of ‘disinterested knowledge’ implodes, collapses inward… inquiry becomes… a much contested cultural space, a site of the surfacing of what it has historically repressed (Lather 1992: 91).” GW3TS participants were free to express and explore individual and group feelings and experiences that, in their very expression, created contested cultural space.

As a participant observer myself, I was part of the mix of contesting perspectives trying to make sense of our shared interactions. And while there was no one moment when everything became clear, over the space of many years, numerous aspects of understanding fell into place, creating a pattern that made sense overall.

5.3 **THE SEDUCTIVE POWER OF ‘THE GREAT YARN’**

GW3TS participants often ‘held court’ in our large and smaller group gatherings. Someone would begin their story sharing and a kind of mesmerising effect would come over the whole group. This power of the testimony is directly akin to that shared by witnesses in the witness stand in court. They are the sole focus of attention while answering the questions put to them. But there was also a performative aspect to the GW3TS testimonies, which gave them more magnetic power than simply recording facts onto the public record.

Sunday saw a new set of souls gather for breakfast, and the anticipation of sharing again was palpable. Having both totem/circle of friends groups mixed in together in mini-groups, and focus groups, concentrating on the needs and interests of those living with intellectual disability and/or mental illness, was a wise move. They met three times, and the sharing got stronger and more universally applicable as time went on (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal* 29-30/05/2004).
This was a series of kinds of ‘narrative performances’ that finally honoured what were often very painful experiences for the participants at the time they had occurred. There was something seductive about the telling, and about being among the listeners. Especially when this was usually a story about someone regarded by the mainstream world as a person of virtual invisibility. The very inversion of power relations created by GW3TS’s narrative forum was part of its post-positivist stance. And the seductiveness of this form of sharing added something to this form of Participative Action Research (PAR) that made it even more anti-reductionist.

The claim to seductive power is… a claim of perlocutionary force, another kind of power. It is not self-directed but other-directed; and it is definable as the power to achieve authority and to produce involvement… within a situation from which power is itself absent… it is the instrument available to the situationally weak against the situationally strong (Chambers 1994: 211-12).

6. THE INFORMING LITERATURE – WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This section covers some of the key literature in areas relevant to this work, although it is not intended to be comprehensive, as the areas I have explored have been wide and eclectic, and each of the published papers has a reference list. GW3TS is placed in the zone of paradigm change, in the ways people can possibly heal, grow and develop together, living with different consciousness. Coming from the perspective of post-positivist thought, and originally applying Participatory Action Research (PAR), in the Supported Collaborative Inquiry mode (Heron and Reason 2006), it involved all participants in influencing how their experiences progressed. There was a degree of facilitation required, to bring about the gatherings and to encourage participation. But beyond that I tried to keep things as open to change as possible. And through the whole
journey regular conversations with participants were held, to ascertain whether we were ‘on the right track’ and to critique the approach I was taking.

Because of its eclectic nature, the informing fields of study in the background of this work are very diverse. They include mainstream and alternative health; chaos and complexity theory; forms, networks and rhythms in nature; cognitive and social psychology (including symbolic interactionism); education; the philosophy of metaphor and morals; social science; narrative therapy; musicology; ethnography/biography; action research; grief, loss & trauma; and poetics. But the original PAR methodology created the framework within which things occurred, albeit that I ended up not applying this as the main ‘data gathering’ device, as the experiences were more about social poetics than sociological evidence collecting.

Thankfully, qualitative research into the lives of people living with mental illness and intellectual disability is growing. The Adelaide-based Dulwich Centre’s ongoing leadership in this field is well known, and its major report *These are not ordinary lives* (Dulwich Centre: 2003) highlights what narrative therapeutic approaches can do in acknowledging and celebrating ‘consumers’’ feelings and experiences.

Likewise, the New Zealand work by the Just Therapy Team also focuses on a new relationship between consumers and professionals, in an equal, cross-culturally respectful way (Just Therapy Team New Zealand (2003) *Towards a Just Therapy*, Dulwich Centre, Adelaide). This honouring of indigenous ways of approaching health from a spiritual viewpoint, and seeing therapy as a sacred encounter, deeply informed the work of GW3TS. That was from the time I worked in collaboration with Mana Forbes, a Maori elder from the Te Wananga o Aotearoa, Maori University in Hamilton, NZ, from 1999. This work included collaboration with the Nari Nari Aboriginal Tribal
Council in Hay, NSW, on community cultural development. This work was also based on honouring elders, valuing narrative sharing, and bringing young people in touch with elders for improving SEWB outcomes.

My main informants in the participant observer, autoethnographic journal-keeping field were Gelya Frank, Nancy Mairs and Lorna Hallahan. They are all authors reporting on aspects of either living with a disability, or supporting someone living with a disability, while recording the experience. I found their work inspiring and daunting in its precision and confidence. But further reflection makes me realize they were also ‘going through hell’ during much of the process.

Lorna Hallahan’s direct attack on warm fuzzy, stagnant notions of community, and her determination to find ways out of the zone of ‘rescuers’ and into the much more pragmatic and active concept of ‘communio’ (Hallahan 2004: 36-38), echoed with my experience with GW3TS. The process of recording and sharing thoughts about how to ‘be in community’ was a prime topic for me in the early years of this project. So Hallahan’s shared presence at a sociology conference gave me heart, at a time when I felt intimidated by the ‘appropriate processes of social science’. Her anger and sharp definition of what our role is as witnesses and testimony givers inspired further work on this approach, along with a stronger sense of community being a verb, not a noun:

Communio is: verb rather than noun; praxis rather than goal; activity rather than product; participation rather than membership; embarking rather than arriving; fickle rather than fixed; insecure rather than stitched up; adventure rather than feat; desire and disappointment, rather than destination. (Hallahan 2004: 38).
Nancy Mairs’ work is famous for setting the standard in self-talk about “being a cripple” (Mairs 1996: 12), and her way of recording a stream of consciousness-like journal-style story gave me hope for my bumbling early attempts. *Waist High In The World: A life among the nondisabled* (Mairs 1996) is a classic text for disability researchers, and it records the pains and pleasures of journal-style recording. The lesson for me in Nancy’s work was that confession, self-declaration and challenging the neat historians of suffering, are important non-compromise issues in this field. Otherwise it is just a disinfected process of seeking approval from mainstream status quo merchants.

Likewise Gelya Frank’s record of working with Diane DeVries, a woman born without arms or legs who became a hero of disabled advocates worldwide, is an exemplar of how to mix personal recording and attempted arms-length observation. *Venus on Wheels: Two Decades of Dialogue on Disability, Biography, and Being Female in America* (Frank 2000) showed me how to honour my own view, that WTBOL was a valid process to have identified among my GW3TS tribe. I had lost faith in my own ability to assess substantial truth through my journalling, due to being intimidated by ‘scientific social science’. Frank put it squarely:

> Anthropology’s reconsideration of empathy must move beyond a narrow technical definition of the immediate intuition of a shared feeling (although it is sometime only that) to a wider appreciation of the mirror phenomenon in human understanding… we need to clarify how we construct others through imagination, as well as through immediate flashes of intuition. Empathy takes many forms… Because of the analytical bias of our scientific worldview, and a corresponding passion for technological control, we insist on breaking down these “processes” into finer and finer distinctions without returning to a more synthetic appreciation of the overarching phenomenon. We need a term –
mirroring – to grasp what happens when concrete individuals confront and experience others as like or unlike themselves (Frank 2000: 99).

This perspective on recording personal experiences and extracting valuable and ‘scientifically worthwhile’ information form them, gave me great encouragement at time when I was despairing about the ‘relevance’ of my approach to journalling, which was very similar to Frank’s way of reflecting on what she saw.

When the objects of study are other persons, an empathic element may be irreducibly present, conditioning the tone and attitude with which one confronts and engages with an alternative reality, the very inability think, feel, and perceive like a native can be a source of insight. It is often the failure of conventional empathy that forces an anthropologist’s effort to understand things “from within” (Frank 2000: 100).

This perspective led then to how others swathe predicament of the ‘service user’. Such as Iris Gault’s recent UK study of “Service-user (SU) and carer perspectives on compliance and compulsory treatment in community mental health services (Gault: 2010),” which highlights the importance of person-valuing approaches. Gault’s finding, that “respectful relationships” are key to consumers’ progress, is a bottom-line value of GW3TS. She also found that “loss of credible identity, playing the game, medicalization, therapeutic competence and incompetence, and increased control” were primary factors determining loss or gain of self-empowerment for consumers. GW3TS had all five of these elements of rebalancing the scales between consumers and professionals within our gambit (ie. treating everyone as equals; honouring each person’s identity; not requiring compliance as evidence of ‘wellness’; allowing people to self-determine their situation; and not playing the ‘medical model’ labelling game with symptoms and diagnoses). But the GW3TS participants wanted to focus most on
sharing their witnessing & testimonies, along with joining the symbolic interactive ritual cycles of our gatherings, as mainstay support for personal SEWB.

Wendy Cross and Melissa Bloomer in Victoria have also recently explored the significance of communicating respectfully across cultural differences, among people suffering from mental illness (Cross & Bloomer: 2010). Their findings, that “respect and cultural understanding” were the two main drivers of effective professional support for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations, aligned totally with GW3TS’s approach. “Showing and maintaining respect” was the bottom line behaviour that “impacted on the development of the therapeutic relationship” (Cross & Bloomer: 2010). This approach seems novel to some clinical model practitioners, but my argument is that it should always have been a given in any effective rehabilitation, education, or community development setting.

Kim Foster, Margaret McAllister and Louise O’Brien, from the UWS School of Nursing, have also explored the use of autoethnography as a tool to improve professional practice in mental health nursing (Foster, McAllister & O’Brien: 2006). This work reinforces the importance GW3TS placed on recording the Structure of Feelings and Experience (SOFE) of the researcher, as a platform for respectful and responsive engagement with participants.

Louise O’Brien’s and Rose Cole’s earlier work, using Participatory Action Research (PAR) to identify qualitative and quantitative measures of activity in close-observation psychiatric units (O’Brien: 2004), also underlined elements that GW3TS made central to its project implementation: the importance of environment where people gather; the need for structured activity; and the essential importance of “care” as the main game. GW3TS made these elements foundation practices in the original preparation and implementation of our start-up and review gatherings, and all our meetings along the shared journey (2004–7).
This perspective was backed up by Louise O’Brien’s earlier work on the relationship between community psychiatric nurses and clients with severe and persistent mental illness (O’Brien: 2001). Phenomenological exploration of the relationship between nurses and clients found that, from the consumers’ point of view, the three main elements they felt gave the relationship meaning were: “having someone to look out for me; working in collaboration; and being understood and gaining understanding” (O’Brien: 2001). Such views echo what GW3TS placed beneath our whole set of relationships – friendship, trust, shared care, humour about our challenges, and exchange of views on each other’s progress in respectful way.

Natalie Bolzan, Meg Smith, Jane Mears and Rhonda Ansiewicz also focused on the consumers’ views of self-help groups, in their UWS-based work on “Creating identities: mental health consumer to citizen” (Bolzan et al: 2001). This set of findings, that consumers don’t want to be constructed as “consumers”, but they want equal significance “as experts” in the treatment and management of mental illness, reinforced GW3TS’s approach to self-expression and peer support among our participants. The exercise of “Working The Business of Life” (WTBOL) was an expression of equal status among participants, and the need for more respect for consumers’ views about their own and peers’ mental health status and possible ways to improve SEWB.

Jane Mears’ and Natalie Bolzan’s study of the significance of support groups for effective, sustained continuity of care in mental health, also reinforced GW3TS’s approach to peer support (Mears & Bolzan: 2002). Our style was different to this mainstream-based study, due to the social poetics style that developed out of our interactions, but it reflects the same bottom line fact: people living with difference want respect, empowerment, and support from peers to be able to feel an identity, sense of belonging and motivation to keep going with their recovery.
Rene Geanellos’ study of the development of resilience arising from living with schizophrenia (Geanellos: 2005) is a reminder that the processes GW3TS applied being lifetime benefits. Geanellos found that by hermeneutically interpreting first person accounts of living with schizophrenia, he could track the main elements in resilient living arising from this life state. GW3TS echoed these elements, seeing them emerge from the WTBOL mutual exchange process we nurtured every time we met. Geanellos’ three factors were: “Facing the adversity of schizophrenia means living – (i) wisely: understanding the nature of self-with-schizophrenia and of life-with-schizophrenia; (ii) mindfully: keeping understandings in conscious thought; and (iii) purposefully: acting deliberately. Doing all this results in a stable and meaningful life and in a different, more resilient self.” (Geanellos: 2005). What GW3TS achieved was a self-help, peer support process that emphasise these elements in a simple, enjoyable exchange between people, building confidence and fun on the way to recovery.

Another excellent piece of work in 2001, by Rene Geanellos, Anne Fry et al, found that case management in mental health worked best when it was applied from the very first acute episode in the inpatient psychiatric unit. This then built trust, relationships of mutual exchange, and “a therapeutic alliance through which interventions are implemented and which results in clients experiencing personal (re)integration and enhanced wellbeing.” (Geanellos, Fry et al: 2001) GW3TS emphasized a similar basis of trust and mutual exchange, but it did not feel the necessity to focus on expert clinicians as the necessary other half of the equation. Too many of GW3TS’s participants were totally skeptical about mental health nurses and psychiatrists to engage in that way, as reported directly to me continuously during the project’s main ‘field engagement’ years (2004–6), where several participants (including my own son) were in and out of psych units throughout. But our mutual self help approach provided an equivalent nurturing base for individual and group development.
All the above qualitative research exercises were high quality parallel activities to what GW3TS was attempting. The main points of difference in our approach were:

(i) GW3TS encouraged more free expression of the poetic, aesthetic aspects of each person’s being, as the core of our narrative sharing; (ii) The GW3TS tribe generated its own interactive rituals (eg. spontaneous singing, dancing, quiet sitting and sharing with a ‘pass the stone’ kind of ordering), which created a sense of engagement in the ‘magic’ of our shared gatherings, where people felt supported and uplifted by each other’s creation of a special zone of nurture; and (iii) GW3TS was strongly political in our conversation about the realpolitiks of mental health and disability support, and thus empowering in our way of critiquing the system and supporting each other in challenging the system’s dominant pathologising, stigmatizing ethos.

This survey of sources also attempts to both position the work in the ‘psy–ed’ debate, and to show how it relates to health and disability support practices, in how they have so far dealt with people of different consciousness. I use ‘psy-ed’ rather than ‘psy’ (as per Nikolas Rose in *Inventing Ourselves*, Rose:1998) because I want to emphasize how the world of education & training is also deeply influenced by this positivist, behaviourist paradigm, in the creation of Individual Education Plans and Individual Care Plans.

Focusing mainly on people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, GW3TS has intersected with the predominantly positivist, reductionist paradigm that still defines the mainstream Australian health, welfare and education worlds. The aim has been to establish some transactional and hopefully transformational dialectic with this field. And the trajectory of the work is headed beyond this field, into the diverse world of holistic, community-driven, culturally and spiritually based approaches to healing, growth and development, working in collaborative alliance with mainstream medicine.
The remainder of this chapter surveys academic critiques and alternatives that have been raised against the above-mentioned mainstream approaches. As well, it explores how forms of participative action research (PAR, and particularly Supported Collaborative Inquiry), using creative, expressive arts have been used in related research, and how that has worked. It also explores how a range of complexity, natural science, aesthetic, spiritual and metaphorical perspectives can better inform understanding of different ways of being, among people of diverse consciousness, and therefore efforts to nurture wellbeing.

6.2 PSY–ED AND HOW HEALTH AND SUPPORTED LIVING PRACTICES HAVE DEALT WITH PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT CONSCIOUSNESS

The term ‘psy–ed’ is a shorthand way that I use to summarise the combined approaches of the medical model, psy–sciences, and the behaviourist–dominated, disability and learning support disciplines. These are well summarised by Fiona McDermott and Graham Meadows in their chapter in Mental Health in Australia (Meadows & Singh 2001: 4-10). Their common denominator is based on a positivist, reductionist version of people living with different consciousness, which I claim effectively disempowers these “consumers and carers”.

Nikolas Rose ‘problematises our contemporary regime of the self’ when he describes how the disciplines used to study and teach people have joined forces, to create an image of humans as objectified processes of thought. “The psychosciences and disciplines – psychology, psychiatry and their cognates – form... ways of thinking and acting brought into existence by these disciplines since the last half of the nineteenth century... (which I collectively refer to) as ‘psy’.” (Rose 1998: 2)
Rose argues that the application of the “‘intellectual technology’ (of psy), (is) a way of making visible and intelligible certain features of persons, their conducts, and their relations with one another” (Rose 1998: 10-11), which has led to consequences of systemic-objectification and self-humiliation. Under the dominant regime “of the intellectual and practical technologies of psychology in Europe and North America (and Australia) over the period since the late nineteenth century... (these have been) intrinsically linked with the exercise of political power in contemporary liberal democracies” (Rose 1998: 11).

The story for the majority of people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability in Australia has been one of little improvement in the past 20 years, and prior to that, of abusive and patronising neglect (Goggin & Newell 2005: 17-21). Christopher Newell and Gerard Goggin have written eloquently “exposing this social apartheid”, with many other authors challenging the dominant paradigm (eg. Hallahan, Clapton, Calder, McGrath et al, in Newell & Calder 2004).

While ‘consumers and carers’ may receive polite treatment by the managers and care workers in the mental health and disability support systems, they are basically being regularly reminded that “the experts know best”, as I have directly experienced when working alongside such people, and in trying to influence them on behalf of consumers and carers. There is a stalemate of power relations, where the system cannot afford to give way to acknowledging the equal nous and potential among those with whom it works, because the logically conclusion of admitting that would be a loss of authority.

Recently things have begun to shift a little (Meadows & Singh 2001: iii & 72). More funds have been made available since “the adoption by all Australian Health Ministers of the National Mental Health Policy and Plan in 1992” (Wier & Rosen in Meadows & Singh 2001: 72). More staff have been employed, and some more person–valuing
approaches have been applied in the fields of disability and mental health. But this has been driven more by the political acknowledgement of the need for reforms, in both mental health and disability, than by the elite groups that run these fields.

So some health and disability support systems are beginning to get beyond simply recording empowering rhetoric in policy documents, to engage “consumers and carers” more in their own care (eg. MHACA the Mental Health Association of Central Australia, based in Alice Springs, helping to lead the way in community-based MH reform). But there is still a long way to go, in achieving person-valuing, consumer-determined recovery and care programs. The emphasis remains of people being “worked on”, not being empowered to undertake their own decisions and risk-taking. In fact, “risk management” has become such a catchcry that it often leads to more restricted activity than in the previous more discardant patterns of the past.

For most people living with these challenges, the pattern remains one of medical model and professional elite domination of care, under the guise of political and policy impression management. “There is a continuing tendency to identify the individual consumer with her or his diagnosis, resulting in dehumanising of the person.” (Meadows & Singh 2001: 9) And hence there is still little resourcing of real consumer-driven service provision, policy and program design and management.

Working as manager of headspace Central Australia, I know the problem at first hand, of trying to give young people “room to move” in exploring life’s possibilities, against the constricting way they are treated by the mainstream health system. Similarly, the disability sector is still dogged by patterns of coralling and confining individuals, so they will be “safe”, as against allowing more risk-taking activities and encouraging self-development.
Arguments for reform in mental health service provision have been going on for decades, but it was not until the ground-breaking Australian work by Yoland Wadsworth and Merinda Epstein, in their landmark project on “Understanding and Involvement (U&I)”, The Essential U&I (Wadsworth 2001), from 1989–1996, that real ground-up evidence began to show up. This work included mental health consumers, service providers and policy makers in Victoria, in a longitudinal attempt “to bring consumer knowledge into the practice of direct service staff and policy people.” (Wadsworth 2001: iii)

The idea behind “U&I” was that people need to be the inherent foundation of their own solutions in the field of mental health. Not dumb recipients of experts’ views and instructions. This evidence also showed empowering for staff, who felt likewise that they wanted consumers and carers to have more say in how things were run and done.

More recently the Western Australian “Disseminate” Project has emphasised “leading edge applied research and cultural community development practice on issues in arts and disability.” (Lewis & Doyle 2008) Proving The Practice: Evidencing the effects of community arts programs on mental health “focuses on arts interventions for people with a mental illness” (Lewis & Doyle 2008: inside front cover notes). This work uses applied arts and creative explorations by consumers and carers, to build from a strengths-based foundation towards more empowered ways of being and healing. GW3TS comes from the same place.

In the field of disability support, the leading analysis of Australia’s state of play was by Christopher Newell and Gerard Goggin in their historic Disability in Australia: Exposing a Social Apartheid (Goggin & Newell 2005). This work described “the systematic exclusion, the profound and disturbing oppression and the lack of freedom
and equality that Australians with a disability experience in the early 21st century.”
(Goggin & Newell 2005: 19)

Thankfully, changes have begun to occur in service provision in some parts of
Australia, and the leading example of this is the “Voices for Change” project:

Participatory action research in partnership with young adults with Down Syndrome in
NSW (Stevenson 2008). Miriam Stevenson’s current PhD project through Sydney
University illustrates how people living with an intellectual disability can become key
determiners of their quality of life. This happens when consumers and carers are given a
voice, through “circles of support”, which also invite the involvement of non-blood
“significant others” in the lives of people with a disability.

GW3TS differed from Miriam’s work, by focusing on mixing up consumers with
different consciousness (ie. Down Syndrome, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, clinical
depression etc), and allowing them to explore shared space in all our gatherings. We
have all been pioneers, in the work to break down stereotypes and illustrate self-
determining approaches, that model revisions to the dominant health and education
paradigm of psy–ed.

6.3 ACADEMIC CRITIQUES RAISED AGAINST SUCH PRACTICES
Surveying the academic critiques and alternatives, which have been raised against these
‘psy–ed’ approaches, the work of Tom Shakespeare and Mairian Corker stands out, in
disability/postmodernity (Corker & Shakespeare 2002), as does John Read, Loren
Mosher and Richard Bentall’s Models of Madness (Read, Mosher & Bentall 2004).
Both these works survey historical trends, critique the medical or ‘illness’ model, and
problematise the loaded language of the mainstream systems, in medicine, welfare and
education.
The uncritical nature of ‘psy’ is attacked in many of these writings, evidenced best perhaps by Jay Joseph’s conclusion, in his article on ‘Schizophrenia and heredity’ (on studies with twins):

That the genetic basis of schizophrenia is a virtual proven fact in psychiatry speaks volumes about the discipline’s failure to critically analyse the methods and assumptions of its own research... Moreover, genetic theories are very useful to the social and political elites’ desire to locate the causes of psychological distress within people’s bodies and minds, as opposed to their social environments. (Joseph in Read et al 2004: 79)

Similarly, disability studies that objectify people using so-called ‘scientific’ tools of measurement, come in for stern criticism in Corker and Shakespeare’s collection of essays (Corker & Shakespeare 2002). This is best shown in Tanya Titchkosky’s essay on ‘Cultural Maps: Which Way to Disability?’ where she highlights the ‘thingification’ of people with disabilities:

So common is it to map disability through a series of negations that it might be easy to miss the strangeness of such a process. This strangeness is revealed when we try to map others in a similar fashion, for example, a man is a person lacking a vagina. It would seem ridiculous to conceive of gender in terms of negation. However, it is still common to regard the disabled body as a life constituted out of negation of able-bodiedness and, thus, as nothing in and of itself... The social practice of measurement always needs to measure some thing, in this case we were making and measuring what Taussig (1980: 3) refers to as ‘biological and physical thinghood’...(which) produces a ‘phantom objectivity’,
and ‘denies’ and ‘mystifies’ the body’s fundamental nature as a relation between people. (Titchkosky in Corker & Shakespeare 2002: 103 & 105)

Two practitioners who have been critical of the mainstream ‘psy’ approaches have chosen to challenge such perspectives in their own applied practices. They are the American doctor Patch Adams, and Australian psychotherapist Michael White. Adams has illustrated how practical general medical (including largely ‘psy’ type) care can be provided in person-respecting ways, where the ‘patient’ is part and parcel of finding healthier outcomes. This is described in moving and entertaining detail, in his book Gesundheit! Bringing good health to you, the medical system, and society through physician service, complementary therapies, humour and joy (Adams & Mylander 1993). And White’s narrative therapy techniques have revolutionised much therapeutic practice, by getting people to take charge of ‘externalising the problem’, in re-telling and re-framing their stories (White 2007). This has led to shrinking the pathology and magnifying the role of each person in their own recovery and re-storying of their lives.

Other critiques that have problematised the dominant paradigms in mental health and disability include Robert Whitaker’s Mad In America (Whitaker 2002), which surveys, in the words of the book’s sub-title: Bad Science, Bad Medicine and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill. Whitaker tells the story of how ‘asylum medicine’ included a societal context embracing eugenics in the early 20th century, all determining an approach that saw the patient as someone to be worked on.

...eugenics provided a societal context for asylum medicine, and that context dramatically influenced the type of medial therapeutics that were adopted in the 1930s for psychotic disorders. At that time, psychiatry embraced a quartet of therapies – insulin coma, metrazol convulsive therapy, electroshock, and
prefrontal lobotomy – that all worked by damaging the brain. And from there, one can follow a path forward to the therapeutic failure documented by the World Health Organisation in the 1990s, when it determined that schizophrenia outcomes were much better in the poor countries of the world than in the United States and other “developed” nations. (Whitaker 2002: 73-74)

This series of invasive approaches indicated the underlying attitude, that “shocking and removing the bad tissue” would assist the patient. Sadly, as I know from my own experience with my son William, who has been “living with schizophrenia” since he was first diagnosed in 1998, the psy–ed system is still not doing much better than this. It remains focused on clinical treatments “working on” the problem, rather than respecting and acting on the “consumer’s” own views of their life.

Michael White achieved a lot of change in community-based practice, as I have witnessed in my own work in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, where his narrative therapy techniques are being applied in remote communities, adapted for use in Aboriginal cultural contexts. His technique is now being locally applied, to assist people’s self-determination of their recovery using re-framing ways of telling their stories.

The development of... dividing practices, of ... scientific classification, and of this mechanism of normalising judgement fostered the objectification of people’s identity. In this objectification of identity, many of the problems that people encounter in life come to represent the “truth” of their identity. For example, in the context of the professional disciplines, it is not uncommon for therapist to refer to a person as “disordered” or “dysfunctional”, and in wider culture it is not uncommon for people to consider themselves or others
“incompetent” or “inadequate” by nature. Externalising conversations, in which the problem becomes the problem, not the person, can be considered counter-practices to those that objectify people’s identities. (White 2007: 25-26)

These are the sorts of perspectives that informed GW3TS. And many more critical views of psychopathology, questions of competence, constructions of disability, that all record the woeful way people of difference have been treated by the elites, whose living is made in patronising and ruling-it-over those with less power – some of these other authors include: Claire Tregaskis *Constructions of Disability* (2004); Richard Jenkins ed. *Questions of Competence: Culture, Classification and Intellectual Disability* (1998); Mark Rapley *The Social Construction of Intellectual Disability* (2004); and David W. Jones *Myths, Madness and the Family* (2002). These authors are all exploring how people of difference (and their ‘carers’) have been labelled and corralled, and then have begun to work out of these categories of subjugation, to reclaim their autonomy, independence and freedom to decide for themselves. GW3TS was informed by such perspective and practices of emancipation.

Another major field of critical analysis applicable against the psy–ed world is post-colonial, or decolonizing standpoint knowledge. From the early writing of Frantz Fanon (1990), to recent works by Martin Nakata (2007), Deborah Bird Rose (2004) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2006), there has been an increasing move to liberate indigenous peoples from the whiteman’s gaze. This decolonizing perspective is directly relevant to those living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, who also live in lifeworlds determined by the precepts of mainstream ‘knowledge’. We need to help get the consumers and carers out of the gaze of the psy–ed experts and back into a field of view where they hold equal respect for being part of positive, people-empowering reform of mental health.
Just as Deborah Bird Rose applies the term ‘wounded space’ (Rose 2004), from Blanchot’s work (Blanchot 1986: 30), to the only place that ‘Australian settlers can inhabit’ (Rose 2004: 36), so it is as well, in the living conditions for those with different consciousness. People living in psych wards and special education classrooms can be virtually “absent”, in terms of being respected as valued individual lives, rather than “consumers”.

Much of the past can be known in the present as absence – the mammals that are no longer here, the plants that are gone; or as danger – all those species that are on a trajectory towards extinction (Bird Rose 2004: 36)... our legacy includes both genocide and ecocide (Bird Rose 2004: 35).

There is a parallel between the effects of the psy–ed domination of lifeworlds, among those of different consciousness, and the colonised spectra of indigenous peoples around the world. The colonised space within which people’s spirit can be crushed is described by these writers in terms equating to those living beneath the certainty of the labels of the pathologising reductionist medical model. Bird Rose tells of Freya Matthews’ journey of ‘becoming native’ (Matthews 1999a), where “Matthews acknowledges that becoming native in a settler society requires reconciliation between colonisers and colonised... Rather than looking for a lost wholeness, she walked through a shattered land, gathering a narrative that became a relationship and a testimony.” (Bird Rose 2004: 190-191) So too the GW3TS tribe sought our own witnessing and testimony to the results of psy–ed colonising, thus reclaiming agency in safe and transparent territory of mutual respect.
Frantz Fanon described how the Algerian war of independence from France led to serious ‘mental disorders’. He argued for detachment from the western mindset that could operate in such a dehumanising way.

We cannot be held responsible that in this war psychiatric phenomena entailing disorders affecting behaviour and thought have taken on importance where those who carry out the ‘pacification’ are concerned, or that these same disorders are notable among the ‘pacified’ population... Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly” ‘In reality, who am I?’ (Fanon 1990: 200)

This work aligns with such a perspective, on behalf of those colonised by the psy–ed industries. And it also aligns with the arguments for ‘indigenous standpoint knowledge’, where the colonised reclaim the agenda and begin to determine the terms of the debate, as Martin Nakata eloquently argues in his Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines (Nakata 2007).

Standpoint accounts, then, depend on reflexivity and the distinction between experience and standpoint (Pohlhaus 2002). Bringing the situation of ourselves as ‘knowers’ into the frame does not make ourselves the focus of study but will ‘involve investigating the social relations within which we as “knowers” know’. (Nakata 2007:214)

Echoing with this viewpoint is the Maori health perspective, known as the “whare tapa wha” construct (a four-sided house), which Mason Durie explicated in 1994 in his book Whaiora: Maori Health Development (Durie 1994). “The problem was... that medical interest in physical disease greatly outweighed an interest in the person as a whole
within a sociological and ecological environment.” (Durie 1994: 69) Durie drew together the traditional understandings of Maori culture and spirit, to form a paradigm that paralleled western medicine, to show the areas lacking in it.

The ‘whare tapa wha’ model compared health to the four walls of a house, all four being necessary to ensure strength and symmetry, though each representing a different dimension: taha wairua (the spiritual side), taha hinengaro (thoughts and feelings), taha tinana (the physical side), taha whanau (family)... (this) broadly based view of health ... seemed to combine the four basic ingredients for good health. Importantly, a notion of balance between them was also introduced... firmly anchored on a spiritual rather than a somatic base. (Durie 1994: 70-71)

These perspectives informed the GW3TS approach to empowering people’s own sense of themselves and what could be good for their healing, growth and development. While not being indigenous in their identity, the GW3TS tribe members represented multicultural origins exposed to a monocultural incarceration – within the corrals of psy–ed ‘expertise’. This experience carried echoes of the invalidation of Maori knowledge, aspirations and cultural practice that Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Smith 2006).

The whole process of colonization can be viewed as a stripping away of *mana* (our standing in our own eyes), and an undermining of *rangatiratanga* (our ability and right to determine our destinies). Research is an important part of the colonization process because it is concerned with defining legitimate knowledge. In Maori communities today there is a deep distrust and suspicion of research. (Smith 2006: 173)
Similar perspectives were covered by Thomas W. Cooper in *A Time Before Deception: Truth in Communication, Culture, and Ethics – Native Worldviews, Traditional Expression, Sacred Ecology* (Cooper 1998). The focus in this work emphasised the tragedy of misrepresentation of native messages, and reinterpretations into hostile intent. Similar misrepresentation continues today, for my own son, who cannot express his everyday feelings without being interpreted as being “unwell, and lacking insight”. People of difference are under a double whammy expectation to “be normal”, or every word they utter and gesture they use can be interpreted as whacky, dangerous or “at risk”.

### 6.4 SOME OTHER ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES AND SOLUTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN PROPOSED

The following section covers some perspectives on ways of seeing healing, recovery and development among people living with different consciousness – be it through experiencing mental illness, trauma, intellectual disability or any other form of varied ways of being and knowing.

- **ETHNOGRAPHIC/BIOGRAPHIC APPROACHES TO RECLAIMING LIFE – Stories that Re-tell our History and Potential**

  Michael White’s narrative therapy work, along with his colleagues based at the Dulwich Centre in Adelaide, over the past three decades has mapped a pathway, towards more emancipated self-expression and discovery, for people trying to find balance and perspective in their life journeys living with different consciousness. Sadly Michael passed away recently, but his story-based work lives on among many people around the world, who apply the principles in community settings, and who have used this process to achieve balance in their lives. The titles tell well what White’s work encompassed and practically achieved in people’s lived ‘outcomes’: (*MAPS of Narrative Practice*, White 2007; *Re-Authoring Lives: Interviews & Essays*, White 1998; *Narrative Means to...*)
In 1997 the Dulwich Centre’s Community Mental Health Project was written up, after five years of “creating and re-creating an alternative community mental health project.” (Dulwich Centre Newsletter 1997 No.1: 3) This work involved collaborative sharing between consumers and therapists, in “exposing the tactics and effects of the voices and visions (often referred to as the auditory and visual hallucinations of schizophrenia”).

GW3TS shared this approach as well, without homeing in on particular stories for intensive periods, but allowing people to air and share their fears, obsessions, paranoias, fantasies and lessons from interacting with each other and the mainstream system.

Many representatives of the hearing voices movement also informed the GW3TS work, especially Ron Coleman and Mike Smith, in *Working With Voices: Victim to Victor I* (Coleman & Smith 2003), and *Recovery An Alien Concept* (Coleman 2004). These trailblazers have promoted respectful engagement with people who hear voices, and the need to help those who want to work with their voices to be able to do so. GW3TS did not go into that sort of intensive process, but the value system applied in these groups was an inspiration to our work together.

Adam James’ *Raising our Voices: An account of the Hearing Voices movement* (James 2001), and Ted Curtis et al’s *Mad Pride: A Celebration of Mad Culture* (Curtis et al 2000), also recorded the process of honouring people’s lived experience, and giving voice to their inner process. Similarly Marius Romme’s *Understanding Voices: auditory hallucinations and confusing realities* (Romme 2000), showed the sort of perspective that gave hope to the work we undertook in GW3TS.
Psychiatry should realize that a lot of people who hear voices never visit a psychiatric service because they develop their own way of coping and solve their own problems. While those who ask for help in psychiatry are diagnosed with an illness and treated accordingly. They are not sufficiently helped with their specific personal problems. (Romme 2000: 56)

Romme’s perspective is that “the psychiatric idea that the illness is inherited and is only triggered by the stress or trauma might still be true. It is only a pity when psychiatric care should conclude that the person cannot be helped otherwise than by suppressing psychotic symptoms.” (Romme 2000: 56) GW3TS tried to illustrate a way that such circumstances could be prevented, by creating a context in which people could express themselves, and seek peer support, as well as having access to psychiatric (or disability support) services if needed in serious cases.

The efficacy of allowing people to follow through with sharing their voices, thoughts, worries and ‘highs’, was witnessed in GW3TS, just as Romme expressed the findings of the hearing voices work: “… we have met cases who changed their attitude towards their voices and towards their problems and could take their own life in their own hands again. Voice hearers, family and society could profit from such changes.” (Romme 2000: 56)

In the area of ethnography dealing with difference and disability, and community-based empowerment for people living with disability, several works stand out as major influences on GW3TS. Nancy Mairs’ *Waist High in the World: A Life Among the Nondisabled* (Mairs 1996) chronicles Nancy’s amazing journey through living with a wasting impairment and being challenged to justify herself in the mainstream world.
Gelya Frank’s story of her journey with Diane DeVries, “a woman born with all the physical and mental equipment she would need to live in our world – except arms and legs” (Frank, *Venus on Wheels: Two Decades of Dialogue, on Disability, Biography, and Being Female in America*, 2000), gives notice to those who believe ‘the disabled’ can’t fully participate in our world.

Jean Vanier (1989) remains a great inspiration for this work, as he has been for many decades around the world. The simple and complex achievements of the L’Arche movement of households combining severely disabled and non-disabled, give witness to the importance of spirit-based interaction. Vanier’s words inspired much of the preparatory work to form the GW3TS tribe, and then to track its dynamics. And Nancy Eiesland’s *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Eiesland 1994) provided an inspirational chorus, on the importance of connecting with “the disabled God” while exposing the inadequacies of paradigms focused primarily on “the psychological state or functional limitations of disabled individuals” (Eiesland 1994: 57).

A number of individual books, written by people who recorded their own (and loved ones) journeys of recovery, also propose a post-positivist approach which has informed this work. *An Awkward Fit*, Helen Maczkowiack’s story of the life and suicide of her son Stephen, who struggled with mental illness and expressed some amazing insights during his many years of journalling. (Maczkowiack 2006)

Clive Williams and Kristine Sodersten discussed the relationship between therapist and client in their book *Both Sides of the Door* (Williams & Sodersten 1981), that was paralleled in the way our GW3TS tribe’s participants acted as mirrors for each other in our growth. Rob McNamara’s story in *Touching The Corners: An autobiography of a*
disability activist (McNamara 2005) modelled the sort of courage we saw each month in the GW3TS gatherings. Tony Moore’s story of a doctor joining in the journey of self-discovery and self-reflection, in *Echoes of the Early Tides: A Healing Journey* (Moore 1994), showed that some medically trained people can engage with the humility to learn from life’s rich diversity, and those who may seem ‘less than’ on first viewing.

*The Centre Cannot Hold: a memoir of my schizophrenia* by Elyn R. Saks (Saks 2007) also showed the value in sharing personal story and reflecting on how social position, intellectual achievement and status in the academic world, make no difference to one’s susceptibility to experiencing mental distress. Likewise, Shaun Matthews’ story of the experiences of many ordinary people he has worked with, interviewed and encountered, who have all found ways to achieve quality of life, while living with diverse challenges. *Journeys in Healing: How others have triumphed over disease and disability* (Matthews 2003), is a great encouragement for us all, to go on engaging with alternative ways of seeing people, the world, and possibilities for healing and growth.

*holding on, letting go: Sex, Sexuality and People with Learning Disabilities* (Drury, Hutchinson & Wright 2000) is a direct sharing of hope, potential and opportunity for empowering people living with intellectual disability, and those who care for them, to achieve more fulfilled and self-determining lives, if the people living with difference are respected and heard, and allowed to explore their world.

And finally, Mark Haddon’s (2004) inspiring story of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* is a beacon for those of us trying to encourage more sharing and dissemination of the life experience of people living with different consciousness. This is a story said to be about a boy with autism. Whether people are labelled with
'Autism’, ‘Down Syndrome’, ‘Bipolar Disorder’, or whatever, the issue is not the label but the person’s experience and how they are treated in trying to get a life.

What this brief Literature Review has tried to do is to reflect the eclectic nature of ‘sources’ for GW3TS’ informing patterns of thought. These have evolved and transitioned over the years of ‘field work’, moving more and more into the arena of social poetics than medicalised subjects. The emerging ‘logic’ of GW3TS was that illogic is the territory needing much more attention in healing and recovery work, as well as in exploring and expressing ‘relational development’ for people living with different consciousness. My work has been concentrating on this area, of exploring new relational ways of being and knowing (ie. ourselves and one another), in the period of completing this dissertation compilation.

I believe that all these varied pieces of ‘evidence’ add weight to my argument – that there are more efficacious ways of assisting people to feel they belong, have an identity, and can grow and develop in healthy, empowering ways, than slavishly following the medical model alone. Or the behaviourist, reductionist approach to people living with intellectual disability that still dominates the worlds of special education and disability support – as I directly experience in my work to this day (30-10-10 in Darwin, NT).

7. **METHODS AND DATA GATHERING**

7.1 **INTRODUCTION**

This section summarises the methods that were used in GW3TS to gather ‘data’, and the on-going work in the Northern Territory (NT) in suburban community support settings. It includes descriptions of the ways I have encouraged people to come together and be together, and the procedures which have helped bring that style ‘being together’ about. But there is no intention of purporting to offer ‘a system’, that can be mechanically applied to others. The managerial, technocratic and behaviourist approaches now
dominating health, education and human services (what I call the ‘psy-ed’ industries) have shown that top-down approaches are not efficacious. The argument of this work is that each group of people needs to discover its own pattern and rhythm.

GW3TS has added to our life, and made demands on it. But the rich engagement with spirit that it involves overrides the negatives. All the flowing ideas, connections with others’ hearts, minds and souls, feels like real, active community – ie. ‘of inquiry’, curious about the mysteries of life and active in addressing imbalance and injustice… It is beginning to feel like the project is nearing it core. The configuration of wisdom, shared exploration, opening to mystery, and openness to listening, that will show us all new things (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 13/06/2004).

7.2 USING PAR, SUPPORTED COLLABORATIVE & APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Originally the project was envisaged as a Participative Action Research (PAR) exercise, but as the participants came together it became clear that a more focused approach would be to combine Supported Collaborative (Heron & Reason 2006: 144-154) and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivasta 2006) methods. These approaches honour where each person is coming from, without expecting them to ‘perform’ at some level of ‘competence’, in terms of verbal, written or group presentation skills. These methods of inquiry shaped the processes of GW3TS, although ultimately they did not dictate ‘data collection’.

The ethos and practice throughout the project saw participants’ roles and responsibilities as equally contributing, without differentiating between cognitive capacities, or skills in recording or expressing information being gathered, considered, altered and evaluated. GW3TS was about ensuring equal contributions by all, in ways that celebrated all sorts
of different elements in the mix – from silent observation and presence, to high spirited laughs, to quiet asides, to brilliant quips.

Participative Action Research (PAR) works on a cycle of thinking-doing-considering-changing-doing, and we adopted this approach in the supported collaborative and appreciative inquiry modes as aspects of PAR. Such approaches may best be represented, in a way parallel to the concerns of this project, with reforming rehabilitation and supported living strategies for people living with psycho-social challenges, by the methodology adopted for *The Essential U&I* (Understanding & Involvement; staff-consumer collaboration, for enhancing mental health services) project in Victoria from 1993-1996.

This methodology draws on a ‘critical constructivist’ or ‘dialogic’ (or participatory action research) approach. This is one in which the views of consumers (of the hospital) and of staff’s views (of what they are doing for consumers) are collected and then exchanged between the groups to answer the questions that staff and consumers have posed. This informs further discussion and generates new ways of seeing things, and in turn leads to even better understanding of the problems and of the barriers to change. Ultimately, new and better ways of acting are identified by the ongoing process of dialogue. These changed practices are then built into the research process and further evaluated and changed by participants. (Wadsworth 2001: 213)

GW3TS was, within the broader PAR methodology, a Supported Collaborative Inquiry (Heron & Reason 2006) exercise, because differing attributes among our participants meant complementary involvement by different members of the tribe – from participants themselves, to aunties and uncles, to ‘friends of the caravan’ (ie. people we picked up along the way, who became part of our extended family, eg. the St John
Ambulance woman who came to both of our weekend workshops in 2004 and 2005). But as a generic term, PAR best describes our overall process, because it was cyclical and reflective, all the way along our walkabout journey together.

The approach meant that not every participant had to take equal responsibility for their role as recorder, presenter, or critic of the process. Many of our tribe members were there just as themselves, ‘being’ (as per Heidegger’s ‘dasein’ (Fealy 2007)) – in ways that enriched the sharing dynamic, challenged the process, and uplifted the spirits of all involved. It was not that we needed people ‘competent’ at all the cognitive, rational skills that add to dialectical analysis of issues and events. We needed what humourist and linguist Ruth Wajnryb calls “Happsicles” – “(n) The smallest unit of happiness, as an icicle is to ice.” (Wajnryb 2006) Not to be simplistically Pollyanna-lish about our experience, it was a very serious business, and required a lot of laughs, along with the fears and tears.

People living with Down Syndrome, or with schizophrenia, may not wish to go into a lot of explanatory detail about how they feel, or why they have reacted some way. They may just wish to be there, contributing when they feel inclined. This is where Supported Collaborative Inquiry (SCI) works best – because it is a method that accepts different levels of contribution and allows for a variety of expressions, without making discriminating judgements about levels of competence in any particular area.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is allied to Supportive Collaborative Inquiry (SCI), and it too focuses on the ‘generative capacity’ (Gergen 1978) of giving affirmation and appreciation to those who have been taken for granted, while being critical of the assumptions that may have been taken for granted within a social science exercise (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, in Reason & Bradbury 2006: 155). Along the way, it
acknowledges the contributions of all participants, and encourages more input, by receiving all levels of participation as equally valuable. It also focuses a lot on reflective group feedback, and shared ‘mulling over’ of what has been occurring as group sharing proceeds, and as the overall project goes along. This happened in our large group gatherings, and in all our small groups (eg. break-out discussion groups at the two weekend workshops in May 2004 and June 2005; and the Advisory Group, and Film & Photo Project groups).

The criticism that SCI and/or AI can tend towards patronising ‘control’ by facilitators (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, in Reason & Bradbury 2006: 155-165), may be a valid one. But in the case of GW3TS our group was so large, and our participants so used to being heard and allowed to criticise anything they found inappropriate, that the emphasis was always on person-valuing, ‘don’t give me crap’ approaches. This was even when an ‘aunty or uncle’, or buddy, intervened in a meeting to help someone express what they hadn’t felt comfortable to jump in with. Or if something needed to be brought up in a subsequent meeting, after someone’s feelings had been hurt in an earlier gathering, by what someone else had said or done.

The general approach to our gatherings was to begin with an introduction by me, or whoever else was facilitating that meeting. One or two GW3TS tribe members would talk about film or photo arrangements, or catering, or whatever subjects our discussions were covering. Then we would open the floor to discussion, attempting to involve everyone equally, seeking everyone’s ongoing input into decision-making as we went along. Then we would seek feedback at regular moments, to alter the way we proceeded with things. This often led to comments, challenges, changes to arrangements, according to the group consensus. Going by the feedback from participants at each event, it worked well most times. People said they felt included and heard, and that their
opinions were able to influence proceedings. When someone had a problem with the interaction, they would tell me afterwards and the dynamic of group interaction would be altered next time, to ensure that person felt more included.

Which is not to say there weren’t trying moments, when individuals and small subgroups felt dissatisfied, unhappy, disgruntled with peers, or just generally shitty. We had a healthy cycle of ups and downs, which was generally monitored by me in my journal – reflecting on the processes as they occurred. That led to one of our main findings: that too much risk assessment and management, in the name of due process and duty of care, may well disempower people from joining in. Too much control represses the expression of true feelings, and the ability to reach out to new experiences. Getting out of their comfort zone, to challenge themselves to keep growing, required loose and flexible meeting dynamics, able to allow room for people to find their way forward into the shared space of connection.

I have seen disability support environments and mental health rehab. settings, where rigid control, in the interest of risk avoidance, can lead to bland experiences, dull gatherings, and ultimately degraded attempts at healing. This was, in my view, because the ‘clients’ and ‘consumers’ were totally disempowered, and ultimately lonely and isolated in their passive role as ‘recipients’, or ‘consumers’, of the services.

If people say that being in community, belonging in relationship with others, is a sign of someone’s ‘dependence’ – then they are reflecting the sickness in our society of isolated individuals. TheGW3TS experience just shows how much people need the experience of belonging, to maintain a balanced, healthy sense of self. Independence and individualism have become curses – full of emptiness, meaninglessness and lonely isolation. Especially for people living with mental
illness and/or intellectual disability, but really for all humans, the need for we not just me is crucial. The people can set boundaries for their identity and personal approach to life – but ‘coming from somewhere’, rather than floating apart in the universe (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 04/07/2004).

In the context of the Northern Territory, a refreshing combination of ‘outback logic’ and ‘fierce independence’ remains close to the surface of community life – eg. people confidently park on the footpath at public events, not fearing parking tickets; ‘thongs & stubbies’ (ie. the most informal footwear and shorts) dominate the clothing choices at most eating establishments; and first name basis is assumed wherever you meet people. This climate created a welcome change from the NSW bureaucratically-dominated, politically-correct context in which my work occurred.

So the methodology continued in the NT (both Alice Springs and Darwin) with a relaxed, informal, risk-taking style, that community members saw as ‘normal’, not in any way challenging authority. But ‘professionals’ had been told to adopt more lock-step approaches, defined by what I saw as patronizing parameters. So after a while I realised that my approach just naturally assumed it could continue on from the more intimate setting of the original GW3TS tribe, to the various groups I was facilitating in the NT. Without taking any notice of artificial ‘boundaries’ between professionals and participants (ie. clients, consumers, carers, patients..), I had proceeded and set out to get to know everyone using the same relaxed approach that was dominant in the general community of NT. And it ‘worked a charm’, people just took to it naturally.

Methodologically this reinforced my belief that we need more human-based approaches to rehabilitation and disability support, that can enhance people’s own capabilities to relate to each other and professionals in a relaxed manner, and to run their own affairs. I have applied this in special education settings with senior high school students with
learning disabilities, as much as in circumstances shared between mental health consumers and carers. Feedback from parents, the students themselves, and colleagues whom I have encouraged to join me in sharing such team teaching approaches, has been not only enthusiastic, but seeking further collaboration and requesting my mentoring for their development of such skills. Ways of relating and sharing responsibilities, which I see as natural aspects of respecting people of all ages, are interpreted as unusual and refreshing ‘new techniques’ in the professional circles which have been corralled off by mechanistic risk-managed rules and methods. Yet in these professionals’ own community lives the relaxed style dominates NT living. It is a paradox equal to any GW3TS created.

So this whole journey has given me encouragement to continue exploring the more natural ways people can relate, as participants in health, community and education services, as well as colleagues seeking better ways to work together with their clients and each other. The logic is one of simply making human dignity the core value, and working up from there, as Martha Nussbaum has eloquently encouraged us with her ‘capabilities approach’, in *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*:

Thus the capabilities approach feels free to use an account of cooperation that treats justice and inclusiveness as ends of intrinsic value from the beginning, and that views human beings as held together by many altruistic ties as well as by ties of mutual advantage. Together with this, it uses a political conception of the person that views the person, with Aristotle, as a political and social animal, who seeks a good that is social through and through, and who shares complex ends with others at many levels. The good of others is not just a constraint on
This person’s pursuit of her own good; it is a part of her good (Nussbaum 2006: 158).

This is the logic behind the continuing methodology I have adopted in the NT, to keep challenging ‘expertology’ and mechanistic, insurance-industry-fuelled, professional-dominating, risk-management methods, and stay in the space that values each person to be just themselves, and to play an equal part in determining their health, education and community service provision, management and outcomes.

Without a spirit of shared respect and collaborative endeavour, such approaches fall by the wayside of professional self-serving, bureaucratic power broking, and the natural human tendency to default to the line of least resistance. I argue, and try to illustrate that affirmative, person-valuing approaches need to keep challenging this set of attitudes. Which is why the All Fruits Theory forms a foundation perspective on which to build the re-education campaign that is needed – based on respect for and celebration of people of diverse consciousness, as equals in the creation and delivery of human services. Just as has happened in the fights against racism and sexism, two processes still needing continual ‘topping up’ with new education and behavioural change programs around the world.

7.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY IN PEOPLE, IDEAS AND PRACTICES

Eligibility criteria for GW3TS were simply to be living with a psychosocial challenge (mental illness or intellectual disability, MI or ID), or volunteering to be a buddy of someone with such a challenge. And to be willing to approach every participant as an equal in the tribe (i.e. not making cognitive ability or performance of any particular ‘skill’ more valued than any other personal capability). Also eligible were those who
volunteered to be aunties and uncles, in the indigenous sense of offering unconditionally supportive mentoring.

Part of the strength of GW3TS was that it modelled diversity as a strength, not a problem to be handled by ‘specialist’, ideologically sound and politically correct means. In fact, one of the terms I used frequently throughout the years of facilitating this conversation, was that “a bunch of ‘spazos and loonies’ could be better teachers for the health system, that any number of experts”. This was deliberately challenging the politically correct rhetoric, which ultimately masked the patronising way ‘experts’ protect their turf and defend their silos (Hickie 2008). Ultimately, such approaches talk down those they are meant to be especially trained to assist, from my direct experience working with both these ‘client groups’ (ie. people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability).

GW3TS aimed to illustrate the processes of interaction between diverse consciousnesses, that could show how rich and vitalising being with people of difference can be. From our work together, I ended up developing an expression, for what is needed for longer term solutions for health and human services reform. It uses the slang term ‘sussing things out’ (ie. ‘gaining a better understanding of what’s going on’) to create a play on words linking with the ecological concept of ‘sustainability’. So GW3TS argues that, just the global environment needs ‘biodiversity to ensure sustainability’, so we humans need ‘onto-diversity for suss-tainability’ – ‘wiser ways of knowing for more sustaining ways of being.’ That is, just as biodiversity is necessary for ecological sustainability, so GW3TS illustrates the human side of this shared equation.
This perspective is dialectical as well, since it challenges the way our current approaches to rehabilitation and supported living end up being predominantly patronising and disempowering (Goggin & Newell). I believe we need to critically unpack how much this imbalance, in valuing aspects of our humanity, is behind the problems in our mainstream health and social services.

The psyche of the patient is inseparable from the social forces and symbol systems that constitute human culture, so that selfhood, like illness, is a biocultural construction. This very postmodern idea makes no sense to some psychiatrists and to many nonpsychiatrists who see it as denying the everyday flow of consciousness in which our thoughts, feelings, and selves appear distinctly our own. There is no denial, however. Instead, postmodernism reconceives the inner life of consciousness as in large part generated through the social operations of power. (Morris 1998: 75)

GW3TS challenged this constitution of pathological selves, offering an opportunity for participants to experience themselves and each other differently. It did not focus so much on ‘recording their voices’, and ‘gathering evidence’, a on having an experience together and allowing the dynamic interactive rhythm we created to show its effects without being restrained by a parallel focus on ‘evidence gathering’ (and similar approaches have informed my work in NT since):

Members of the GW3TS film & photo projects came for dinner last night, to have a catch up and explore progress and further options for GW3TS. It was a warm, thoughtful and moving interaction, with all parties sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences that enrich the group. Everyone was strongly of the view that we have formed a GW3TS community now, and we have to ‘work it
for it to work’: ie. to exercise the connections, the relations with one another, and those things we all have to share with, and teach one another. Hearing their strong sense of this gave me great heart, to know that people feel OK about me following them up with GW3TS, and that it’s not just being pushy (Lloyd, *GW3TS Journal* 16/07/2004).

### 7.4 THE LOGISTICS OF BRINGING THE TRIBE TOGETHER

Preparations for the first GW3TS event were carefully orchestrated, and plenty of advance planning was conducted, between January and May 2004. Beginning with the ethics clearance process, permission arrangements and protocols were developed before a media release was put out to Sydney, suburban and regional media, inviting members of the public to express interest in joining the project.

Inquiries about a venue for our first residential gathering were made early in 2004, and approaches were made to potential ‘aunties & uncles’, and an Advisory Group to oversee the whole project on behalf of ‘consumers and carers’. The aim was to invite experienced counsellors, rehabilitation and social work professionals to join the congregation of strangers, along with experienced carers (some of whom were also key players in the fields of disability reform and advocacy) for the first gathering in May 2004.

The predominant mood and principle applied was one of relaxing, and letting things find their own rhythm – which is one reason I believed it would succeed. The preparations for and the first event itself were not overly dependent on having everything risk assessed and pre-prepared. Believing in the participants’ own ability to determine their own lives, and likes and dislikes, was at the heart of the whole exercise. All due precautions were taken, but the dominant energy was relaxed engagement with
participants as equals, with all the appropriate personal, medical and therapeutic supports invisibly in place (through the presence of skilled aunties & uncles).

This trust in the participants seemed to help shape the process, and it appeared to give rise to a sense of welcome and celebration, which was the whole reason we were there. The final checklist for facilitators reflected this sense, of knowing the broad direction but each relying on our sense of collaborative spirit to guide us, in the step-by-step unfolding of the experience. (See Appendix 1)

7.5 THE APPROACH

• GETTING EVERYONE TOGETHER

Participants were selected from responses to public promotion of the invitation to join the project, and from members of community groups I already had contact with. These included people living with Down Syndrome in NSW and their carers, plus people associated with the mental health rehabilitation centre, Pioneer Clubhouse, in Balgowlah on the northern beaches of Sydney, where I had previously worked as manager of the communications unit (in 2001 and 2003 separately).

Through articles which appeared in suburban newspapers, stimulated by the general media release sent out by the UWS media unit in February 2004, hundreds of phone calls came to my home. There was also an ABC Radio interview over the phone, and this went to air in regional NSW, as well as across Sydney. The general invitation offered an opportunity to join a voluntary community of belonging, in which there would be pairing up of buddies, who it was hoped would keep a fortnightly ‘life journal’ of their feelings and experiences for one year. The aim was for volunteer buddies to help their partner with the recording, if that was not their particular capability or personal preference.
What transpired after the media coverage was that about 300 responses came in from all over NSW (including the far and central west of NSW, outer suburban Sydney, and even Queensland). The criteria for selection were: that people were around 18–35 years of age, living with a mental illness and/or an intellectual disability; not living with those challenges but wanting to be a volunteer buddy, to become friends with a partner living with a challenge; or volunteering to be an ‘aunty or uncle’ for the project.

So the sample was constructed of ‘a bunch of strangers’, mainly from across the Greater Sydney Basin (ie. Blue Mountains to the Coast) with some from further afield (eg. Bundanoon and Bathurst). Some were ‘consumers’ or ‘clients’ of mental health rehabilitation services, or supported living disability services, and others were ‘carers’ (people whose children or siblings lived with one or more of these challenges).

There was really no exclusion criterion, people were invited to come to an induction briefing session, and after that both parties (participant and researcher) would have a chance to decide how we felt about joining up. In the end, a number of people effectively excluded themselves, once they had come to the induction briefings and understood properly what was involved. More than half of the original 300 inquirers did not proceed, mainly due to being daunted by the emotional and time demands, that they perceived would be involved, as they said to me in follow-up exit phone calls.

This was a new approach for most people, according to what they said as they made initial contact. They enthused about being more personally involved in people’s recovery and development. Many (about 50% of volunteer buddies, of whom there were c. 20 in total, and aunties & uncles, c. 20 in total) had had contact with people living with some sort of psychosocial disability, but had never been actively engaged in relationships established deliberately for mutual exchange. So there was a need for
extensive briefings, to explain the rationale, and the way to ensure ‘cultural safety’
(McMurray 2003: 294-5) – ie. that participants would feel respected and show respect
to each other, in terms of awareness and sensitivity of accepting differences between us.

The induction meetings were designed to encourage discussion about people’s queries,
concerns and hopes. They were forums for airing perceived problems or challenges, in
joining an activity which would be full of mystery and unknown pathways for most
people. Even those aunties and uncles who had senior roles in disability organizations
told me later that they had felt tentative about how to proceed, now that we were
entering the ‘go zone’. This was healthy and welcomed, as it was seen as the beginning
of changing the paradigm of how support and recovery could be implemented.

Different tribe members came to different induction sessions and preparatory meetings,
simply due to time scheduling differences. Between January and May 2004 there were
half a dozen different gatherings, at which bonding began to occur among the
participants, as I observed through watching people interacting and some even arranging
to meet before the start-up event.

Because the focus was on caring and relationships, rather than ‘capturing’ information,
the ideas of buddying up and sharing personal stories began to dominate the early
conversations and exchanges between participants and their carers. People wanted to
find new friends, as I observed in the interactions between participants and their carers.
And initially the buddy arrangement seemed the clearest way that would happen. Later,
things shifted from that perspective.

One thing that comes to me more confidently this time, after all the events we
have had (over the previous year), and the mixed showing of people each time,
is that trusting the process is the only way to go. Last time I had so much uncertainty about just letting it flow’ – but now, there has been so much good evidence from previous occasions, that I have finally learnt to trust. This is ultimately to trust the spirit of the people. And ‘blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth’ is spot on with regard to how our guys do inherit this virtually instant wonderful feeling – and that does have a strong link to the presence of the people living with Down Syndrome, our ‘open heart specialists’ (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 04/06/2005).

• ESTABLISHING OUR MODUS OPERANDI

Applying the philosophy of the Supported Collaborative Inquiry (SCI) form of Participative Action Research (PAR) meant that the project had to be flexible in how ‘results were recorded’. My daily journal, kept over the whole four years of the original GW3TS project (2007–8) and ever since in the Northern Territory (2007-10), was the main reflexive locus for the whole GW3TS journey. The original intention for all participants was to form one-on-one buddy partnerships, and that each pair would meet regularly during our twelve months together (May 2004 – June 2005) to record a journal together. This ended up not being the dominant approach, but several participants did buddy up and share journalling for some of the first year. At the end of the GW3TS journey, the few journals that did result were not used as substantive ‘evidence’ for the project, but as personal records of what occurred between those buddy pairs who kept their own dialogic records. Hence they were ultimately not appropriate to be included in this record.

We also made film/video and photographic records of our gatherings throughout, until the final screening in June 2006 (showing the documentary film, and scrolling single shot digital photo images).
The aim was for all participants to be active, equal planners and on-going managers of the whole experience. This was measured by numerical involvement in planning meetings, my observations and facilitation (plus that of other aunties, uncles and mentoring participants) of shared contributions by all participants, to discussions and other activities (meals, games, dancing, craft activities). Predominant in our eventual shared focus was what became the name of our first weekend gathering, “Stories With Friends” – the emphasis being on narrative sharing among a safe group of supporters.

This combination of Stories, Sharing and Support began to define our tribe, and our Process. We were homing in on what Kim Etherington described as: “Narrative analysis treats stories as actually constituting the social reality of the narrator(s)... (it) views life as constructed and experienced through the telling and re-telling of the story.” (Etherington 2005: 81).

Sometimes participants would be confident to share in the group circle (large or small), other times they might be lacking confidence. At those times their buddy, or friend, or aunty or uncle might enter into a quiet aside conversation, to help bring out what they were feeling, without confronting them with having to address the whole group. Then that message would be relayed to the group on their behalf.

Sometimes it was clear to the group that those living with the greatest ostensible individual and interpersonal challenges were actually leading the group. This could have been in terms of how they communicated what everyone later said was the dominant energy being experienced by the group. Often our later reflections would highlight the ‘awkward moment’ when someone spoke their truth, and it came out as the dominant message that needed to be said for everyone.
It is humbling, and at the same time exciting, re-energising and renewing, to experience this spirit and feeling, all based on and coming from the common good. It is a phenomenon of love in action – without show. And illustrating the power that runs the universe... as Emerson says: “So the reason we must give for the existence of the world is, that it is for the benefit of all being (R.W. Emerson, The Spiritual Emerson p.243). So, our effectiveness is because, in investing totally in the common good, we are tapping into the energy that runs the universe – love. Only we’re not sucking it ‘out of’ somewhere, we are creating it by caring, then sharing. It is a self-fulfilling phenomenon – when we work at it (Lloyd, GW3TS Journal 04/06/2005).

So our sharing was a mixture of leading and following, taking turns at being the bearers of testimony and the witnesses. And much of this bearing was done without many spoken words. The evidence was recorded in my journal, and on film, showing various gatherings where the dynamic worked as much with silence as it did with one dominant voice.

Meanwhile, the journalling aspect of the project took on a different profile than what had been originally envisaged. Not all participants were comfortable keeping written journals, or with determining the detailed arrangements for all their participative activities. This was because there were some who did not feel confident with writing, or with expressing themselves for recording that way. Others were very shy, and others may have been suspicious of what might come of things that they ‘put down in writing,’ due to their mood at the time. So the contributions of tribe members ended up being complemented by a combination of buddies and aunts and uncles, who all ‘spoke for’ different people at different times, with their permission.
The original purpose of the journalling had been to recording feelings and experiences, on a template based on my earlier work on the Structure of Feelings and Experience (SOFE) (Lloyd 2003, 2005), which had informed the development of this whole project. This template tried to stimulate reflection on the six parameters of the SOFE: Mystery, Conversation, Relating, Imagination, Discernment and Wonder (MCRIDW). The concept behind this approach was to try to encourage the expression of this MCRIDW framework of feelings and experiences, and then to witness their dynamic effects, on individuals and the group. This was going to be recorded in my journal and those of the buddy pairs, but it ended up being my own reflexive recording that carried the bulk of the analysis. As well, the intention was to track the effects of forming such an open urban tribe on the lives of its participants, and this was to be reflected on among the whole group. Given that PAR is a reflexive process, it is both ironic and totally appropriate that the dialogical process allowed the participants to abandon a collaborative form of recording, in order to immerse themselves more fully in the experience.

Following on from that experience in Sydney, my NT work began on the premise that I would not pursue such an evidence-base, but concentrate instead on establishing the same sort of interactive rhythm, and then use my own autoethnographic journal recording as the recording technique.

• **GENERATING THE RHYTHM**

Table 1 summarises the major events and activities through the first year (May 2004 – June 2005), and the follow-on year (June 2005 – June 2006) of the GW3TS field work project, when friendships and group meetings kept happening, due to our bonded tribe’s desire to keep meeting. Overall, there were two years (May 2004 – June 2006) that
GW3TS participants shared their walkabout journey, and another year of informal friendship-relating through most of 2007, before I moved to NT.

While not indicating the magnitude of personal interactions spreading out from the major occasions involved, this Table 1 reflects the ‘busyness’ of our tribe doing its business (à la ‘WTBOL’ – ‘Working The Business Of Life’), and hence the way our interactive ritual rhythm got going and maintained momentum.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Our program of Sydney GW3TS gatherings ‘evolved’ as we went along. Nothing was set in concrete from the outset, except our initial gathering weekend and a plan to meet in another year, with an intention to determine our routine once the ‘leaders’ emerged from our first few gatherings. The rest of the journey remained open throughout, although we had a loose agreement for some of the more involved people to meet monthly in different sub-groups (Advisory, Film & Photo group, and some of the aunties and uncles, who were part of friendship groups anyway).

The energy level of participants, the enthusiasm of facilitators and volunteer buddies, all contributed to monitoring how best to proceed from month to month, and when it might be necessary to call a meeting (which usually meant, organise a social event with food and celebration). It was an organic process, with phone calls, emails, personal meetings, and small group discussions all contributing to how the journey was monitored, assessed and altered.

The Advisory Group and the Film/Photo Group were both powerful places of ‘group think and speak’ about our process. Their deliberations went on regularly, and their decisions to proceed or not informed my own plans and actions. We would meet up for
meals at my place, and sometimes other people’s places, and generally reflect on the progress of our relationships, and those life events and experiences that were informing our desire to go on sharing together, for mutual support and development. A lot of discussion centred around the inadequacy of the ‘psy–ed’ mental health and disability support systems in Sydney, and how we were happy to be modelling a different way to be with each other for mutual benefit.

When someone had been in hospital for a while, they might come out and share about the experience on the psych ward. Or someone under a supported living care regime would share about the behaviour of their ‘carers’, and how much less ‘fun’ it was than this group, where they felt just as much the boss as anyone else.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY &amp; DATE</th>
<th>NO. PEOPLE</th>
<th>TYPE OF INTERACTION</th>
<th>FEEDBACK ON IMPACT</th>
<th>EVIDENCE OF EFFICACY</th>
<th>FUTURE SIGNIFICANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Media/PR Invite to Join</td>
<td>c. 200 inquires</td>
<td>Phone calls &amp; emails making first contact</td>
<td>Input from cold calls was hope for a new way</td>
<td>Enthusiasm for self help as a fresh approach</td>
<td>People said they wanted to “be part of it all”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contact with researcher</td>
<td>c. 180 contacts</td>
<td>People rang up, emailed, faxed, met with RL</td>
<td>General grief over past neglect, desire to have a say</td>
<td>People came &amp; volunteered time to join in developments</td>
<td>Self-help can empower thru ordinary hands-on engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial explanatory induction sessions</td>
<td>c. 100 people incl. carers, fac’s &amp; part’cpts</td>
<td>Small group presentations, Q&amp;A sessions &amp; workshops</td>
<td>People wanted to get their hands on the process</td>
<td>Common line of argument: ie. system ignores us, you hear us</td>
<td>Involve people from the outset: to plan, run &amp; evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitators’ induction &amp; planning/training Sessions</td>
<td>c. 30 people</td>
<td>Shared talks on varying views of rehab. and equal partic’ptn</td>
<td>Saw listening, witnessing &amp; testimony as heal’g levelers</td>
<td>Professionals said they felt free to be in the experience too</td>
<td>More shared experiences create discern’g equal spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Group Establishment</td>
<td>c. 12 people</td>
<td>Assertive bunch wanting a strong say</td>
<td>Feeling power of input into the story recording</td>
<td>People happy when changes were made after input</td>
<td>Have consumer and carer gr’ps overseeing the rehab. process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film/Photo Group Establishment</td>
<td>c. 12 people</td>
<td>Tentative group to begin, and this showed in filming style</td>
<td>Interview and doco style were missing narrative angle</td>
<td>Record of acts and ideas was positive, but not growthful</td>
<td>More narrative aim from outset will capture the essence more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Start-Up Weekend Workshop</td>
<td>c. 110 people</td>
<td>Meetings in person and via teleconf. honed the process</td>
<td>People nervous but keen to be able to have input</td>
<td>Organic flexible approach adaptable to conditions</td>
<td>Safety &amp; trust allow great movement in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-Up Wkd Wkshp Stories with Friends</td>
<td>c.100 people</td>
<td>Lagre group narrative sharing; small grp interaction</td>
<td>Nervous start then party together &amp; make friends</td>
<td>Personal confidence and group bonding</td>
<td>Process for rehab’s to adapt to their conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Interviews &amp; Group Discussions</td>
<td>c. 80 people</td>
<td>Small group meetings over picnic lunches bonded tribe</td>
<td>More we were together, more intimate the sharing</td>
<td>Telling stories was major release &amp; two-way healer</td>
<td>Uncond’tl care interactns more healing than drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Party 2004</td>
<td>c. 45 people</td>
<td>BarBQ picnic &amp; Games in Syd. Centennial Park</td>
<td>People had started to see each other as</td>
<td>Uplift in spirits as soon as we met</td>
<td>Heal’g happens best in mutual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Acceptance Groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
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<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Filming &amp; Buddy Interviews</td>
<td>c. 75 people</td>
<td>Circle Story Telling and Buddy Pair Interviews</td>
<td>Strong cameos, but needs longer narrative line</td>
<td>Edited into a storyline, it showed our progress</td>
<td>Telling stories helps to “heal as you go”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aust/OS Confrncs &amp; Workshops, GW3TS Partc’nts’ Interactns</td>
<td>c. 80 at CARPP 10&amp;11,ANZTSR, AQR,RANZCP</td>
<td>Sharing project story at major events drew public quest’ng &amp; private disclosure of pain</td>
<td>Personal expr’nce of sen. scholars moved by direct relevance of this approach</td>
<td>Critical dialectic analysis used in public, but strong persnl endrsmnt privately</td>
<td>More personal, exp’ntial, disclosing talk helps all ‘levels’ of healing benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Wkd Wkshp</td>
<td>c. 70 people</td>
<td>Large &amp; small grp workshops</td>
<td>All reported major exprncs</td>
<td>Ongoing reltnshp warmth</td>
<td>Model for rehab’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Advisory Group Mtg</td>
<td>c. 8 people</td>
<td>Home-hosted dinner saw film</td>
<td>Rich affections and grief at end</td>
<td>Most said it had changed their lives</td>
<td>Ordinary people make extraordinary managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Film/Photo Screen’g/Celebration</td>
<td>c. 60 people</td>
<td>Celebratory drinks, food &amp; band at a hotel</td>
<td>Participants &amp; friends all felt + &amp; empowered</td>
<td>Many lives put on stronger &amp; + footing</td>
<td>Self-determn’tn can combine with rehabilit’n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLANNING & FACILITATOR INDUCTION SESSIONS

Bringing together groups of ‘expert’ facilitators, as part of the aunties and uncles group, was a daunting exercise. As they came with long years of experience and diverse skills, it was daunting for me to be their facilitator. But as things progressed, I found we were all on a steep learning curve, as coming together in such an organic, dynamic way had not been in their previous experience either. This was part of the original rationale, that ‘perturbing the norm’ (as described in Complexity Theory, Lewin 1992: 61-62) would be good for both ‘the system’ and the participants – even those experts who were out of their depth when they became equal players with the rest of the ‘spazos and loonies’ in our tribe.

The idea was that healing, growth and development could happen best when everyone faced the same level of challenge, and therefore came to respect each other’s engagement with difference. While some brought long experience and training in psy–ed disciplines, they hadn’t necessarily been ‘in the ward’ as recipients of ‘just hanging out together’. It was a strong equaliser for us all.

Very quickly we found everyone was equally daunted by what this project offered – to combine people of diverse challenges, and ‘let it rip’, in the sense of not controlling the process, beyond setting up safe, secure and trusting circumstances in which to allow interaction. Many of these people were experienced facilitators in mainstream settings – from counselling training and running therapeutic workshops
with adults, to yoga teaching, probation and parole work, occupational therapy, to
hospital social work and multicultural community disability support.
No one had been in circumstances like this before. So the agreed approach was
welcomed, to allow openness, space and time for listening, witnessing and
testimony, to determine how things proceeded. In this sense the Supported
Collaborative Inquiry had a group of diverse ‘watchers’ holding the space. And for
those living with challenges, there was a protective agreed surveillance happening,
from all the participants but particularly the facilitators and carers, to make sure no
one felt uncomfortable with how things unfolded.

The concept was to try to model what might happen if people had the freedom to
establish a natural rhythm for their lives. Such a freedom is denied my own son
William, who lives with schizophrenia and has been living under six-monthly
renewed Community Treatment Orders (meaning he has to be home every night by
9pm, to be supervised in taking his medication by the mental health team, or else
they get the police to ‘bring him in’ to the lock up psych ward). This is due to his
mental health service’s inability to envisage a better quality of life for William, or to
spend any time reflecting on their own professional practice. That is, in having
failed to manage any better outcome for their ‘client’, other than keeping him under
continuous surveillance and control.

Similarly oppressive practices have affected my adopted nephew Tom, who lives
with Down Syndrome (he adopted me when I was his carer for a while, some years
before we began this project). Tom lives under a supported living regime for
disability support, and his ‘carers’” operating method can fluctuate wildly between
being grossly discardant of his wellbeing (in terms of diet management, or using
imagination to determine better activities from week to week), to being super
controlling and not wanting to ‘take risks’ in what he is allowed to do.

PARTICIPANTS’ & CARERS’ INDUCTION & TRAINING SESSIONS
Using public housing premises in Surry Hills, near where I lived throughout the
Sydney, NSW, fieldwork for this project, we met and discussed the nature of this
experiment in social interaction and the social imaginary. Many of the participants
lived in public housing, and were familiar with these sorts of environments.
Participants, carers, friends and interested inquirers could come and hear about the
process, and thus see if it suited them to engage further.

Of those who initially inquired (about 200) (and came to briefing meetings, about
140), about 60% decided to proceed. Of those who pulled out, most just
disappeared, apparently nervous about explaining why they didn’t want to go ahead
with the experience, even though no expectation was ever expressed, and the whole
project was always on a voluntary ‘walk in-walk out’ basis all the way along.

Parents were sometimes nervous about what would be expected, as they showed me
in conversations outside the main meetings, seeking further clarification of what
might occur. Despite being nervous, about the possible effects of this experience on their child living with a challenge, most decided to proceed.

**ADVISORY AND FILM GROUP MEETINGS**

These groups became the inner core of participating members, and aunties and uncles. They were selected by interest and desire to participate more directly in running things. Because they were the most consistent in meeting, and the most involved in determining events, priorities and angles for the story telling, they shaped the project more than anyone else. The main emphasis people had, in planning and then shaping the events, buddy interactions and film/photo developments, was on enhancing the life experience of the participants living with challenges. This entailed addressing issues which were prevalent for each person, in ways that would support them in facing their fears, shyness, or sense of inadequacy.

**7.5 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

The original Sydney GW3TS project became such a massive logistical undertaking, and so overwhelming of my working and family life, that eventually it was impossible to hold it all together any longer. So many relationships were linked together, and so much change occurring within the group over three years – literally births, deaths, marriages and ‘break ups’ (in friendships and live-in relationships) – that it had to be ‘wound up’ so I could regain some of my life.
As far as the original intended ‘data collection’ went, the life journals I proposed in the beginning did not turn out to be popular ways of people recoding their feelings and experiences. It was in their ways of personally relating that the project expressed its main ‘content’. And participants weren’t really interested in ‘recording’ the nature of their friendships, so much as just having them.

So after trying and failing to record the ‘data’ in a PAR format, I decided the best way to approach the evidence was in an autoethnographic way – recording what I experienced while facilitating this ‘open urban tribe’. The ‘data’ for that exercise was my own journal, now into thousands of pages, kept daily since 1 January 2004, tracking my feelings and experiences since starting this journey. What I have also done is to write regular conference papers, workshop presentations, and shared conversations with personal and professional peers, on the nature of this eclectic style of work – in order to be collaboratively developing the field approaches, while still conducting the original work, and then its flow-on adapted forms.

Since moving to the Northern Territory in late October 2007, I have implemented the same style of facilitation in various community settings – from community mental health, to disability support, and youth mental health; plus multi-disciplinary professional network facilitation, multi-cultural elders’ grouping, to integrated education programs among mixed groups of senior high school students. The approach has been the same at its core, with narrative sharing, cycles of
contemplation and celebration, and rituals of interactive exchange that uplift, generate shared reflection, and create vitalizing energy for growth.

Table 2: X5 SAMPLE GW3TS FLOW-ON APPLICATIONS IN OTHER SETTINGS – ALICE SPRINGS, NT; AND DARWIN, NT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SETTING and TIMING</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>METHODS FROM GW3TS</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 – Day to Day Living (D2DL) rehab. program at MHACA in Alice Springs</td>
<td>Young adults (18-35 yrs) living with mental illness attending a daily rehab.</td>
<td>Community based rehabilitation using creative expression and narrative sharing</td>
<td>Witnessing &amp; Testimony to express SOFE; WTBOL sense of role, identity &amp; belonging</td>
<td>Ongoing benefits for individuals and group in Alice Springs; moving in/out as progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10 – Alice Springs Wellbeing Hub Multidisciplinary Collaborative Professional Network</td>
<td>Professionals and business people from education, health, justice, business and NGO sectors</td>
<td>Multi-disciplinary collaboration for SEWB outcomes for staff &amp; public</td>
<td>Modelled on ‘aunties &amp; uncles’ from GW3TS – unconditional support, not expert distance</td>
<td>Ongoing way of relating with people as equals in the healing work &amp; community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 – Alice Springs headspace Central Australia Youth – Elders Group</td>
<td>Young people (12-25 yrs) and Multicultural Mentoring Elders from the Community</td>
<td>Giving youth non-blood family support &amp; cross-gen. exchange</td>
<td>GW3TS’s peers’ and aunties’ &amp; uncles’ way of WTBOL to give feedback and encouragement</td>
<td>In limbo, due to manager not invested in sustaining its facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 – Nightcliff Wailers and Permaculture Community Garden</td>
<td>Community people &amp; new refugees, plus cross-cultural groups seeking non-partisan, ecumenical sharing/interaction</td>
<td>Expressing non-verbal grief over life’s sad aspects &amp; shared helplessness</td>
<td>GW3TS had a rhythm of witnessing &amp; testimony that gave grief a good airing, then celebrated bonds</td>
<td>People need to grieve together before they can regain energy, hope &amp; renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 – Darwin Multicultural Elders’ Group</td>
<td>Cross-generations build empathy &amp; collaboration to meet challenges</td>
<td>Community harmony &amp; alliances to empower</td>
<td>GW3TS brought together ages, cultures, diverse challenges</td>
<td>Hands-on action brings relationships of joy with it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While wanting this process to be valued by mainstream agencies, I am wary of it being ‘discovered’ and turned into a product, which can be touted as ‘a solution’. The process of exploring mystery and wonder, conversation and discerning judgement takes small groups, private settings, and comfortable intimate sharing. That could be easily squashed by too much official attention. It’s almost a case of it being better to ‘keep the eye off the ball’ and let this process unfold among people who agree with its simple mutual valuing.

After having worked in the NT for more than twelve months, I once again attended the Creating Futures, RANZCP ‘Rural, Remote, Indigenous & Islander Mental Health Conference’ in Cairns, in September 2008. This gave me an opportunity to share about the work undertaken in Alice Springs (at the Mental Health Assoc. of Central Australia, ‘Day To Day Living Program’; and at the Centre for Remote Health), as well as the earlier work on GW3TS Sydney.

The NT provided a smaller and more easily accessible environment in which to try innovative approaches. The community’s sense of entitlement to influence bureaucratic process was stronger there, and the whole environment was more relaxed and personal. This suited my style, and the philosophy and practice of GW3TS rang true for many of those I encountered in community, health and education circles. That experience gave me more hope and energy for continuing with this body of work.
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How the all fruits salad creates sweeter futures in rural and remote mental health

Objective: This paper outlines evidence of efficacious outcomes from mixing people living with diverse mental health challenges and/or intellectual disability. The intention was to show how mixing up people who are differently challenged can be efficacious in (re)habilitation terms. Two separate experiences of sharing personal narratives were involved, along with creative expressions in music, art and filming, combined with group gatherings providing discerning feedback for each other on members’ day-to-day progress.

After 12 months of ‘open urban tribe’ gatherings in Sydney, where participants formed a community of belonging, the model was adapted for use in Alice Springs. The original group developed a cycle of interactive ritual rhythms, and these became a special feature of their self-help, peer support approach. The Sydney project modelled community-based rehabilitation, and that process then informed the processes initiated in a rural, remote location.
**Methods:** Regular whole tribe gatherings ‘in the circle’ combined with mentoring ‘aunties and uncles’. By sharing stories and giving personal feedback on their progress, participants developed skills and confidence in self expression. Relating to each other and the group, and sharing creative expressions (group craft activities, dancing, small group performing) added depth to the experience of participants. Stories and celebrations were filmed, along with meetings to discuss progress and reflect on how to improve our process of sharing together.

Ways for individuals to work on improving their life experiences were shared across the group, which generated a combination of forms of inquiry: supportive, collaborative and appreciative. These were combined with reflexive qualitative ethnographic recording by the researcher, to report and reflect on the whole process.

**Results:** The original 12 month open urban tribe formation (May 2004–June 2005) in Sydney led to regular gatherings where participants sought to come together and celebrate their being with each other until 2007. From that model further work was undertaken in Alice Springs in early 2008, applying a smaller version of this approach to a new community group. The narrative testimony and witnessing in the first group formed one element of what participants called ‘the magic’, which they commented on throughout their time together. It was their way of just being together (what this author calls their ‘metaphorical energetic presence’ alongside each other) that carried the power of this tribe’s interactions.
Mirroring and feeding back messages to each other that they belonged, that they had an identity, role and purpose together, was a key influence on wellness. That they were seen and loved by all participants was a vital element in the dynamic. These combined to create an effect dubbed ‘Working the Business of Life’ (WTBOL), a group sharing process providing practical feedback on how to maintain balance in life. By giving everyone a sense of being nurtured in their day-to-day lives, WTBOL showed that people of mixed consciousness can assist each other’s healing, growth and development. The value in mixing people of different challenges was that it created a rich field of exchange of their beingness, and mutual appreciation and support. Each had compassion for the other’s challenge, and this helped their own process of growing beyond their own challenges. The process has now been successfully applied in Peer Support Training Workshops for Consumers and Carers (November 2008 in Alice Springs).

**Conclusions:** Arising from this work, the All Fruits Theory (AFT) argues that mixing people of diverse consciousness, in contexts of trust and safety with each other, can lead to enriching personal acknowledgement and a sense of belonging. By sharing stories, joining celebratory activities, it is possible to generate interactive rhythmical ritual cycles of companionship, celebration, communion and contemplation. The project thus stimulated purposeful motivation and intention to engage in new activities. Individual and group social and emotional wellbeing were enhanced by participating. The author argues that these results show that, just as biodiversity is essential for ecological sustainability, ‘onto-diversity’ (i.e. valuing
diverse ways of being and knowing) is what is needed in rehabilitation settings. When applied across cultures, ethnicity, gender, class and capability differences, these wiser ways of knowing can lead to more sustainable ways of being (i.e. what this author calls ‘onto-diversity for suss-tainability’, playing on the modern slang term for ‘sussing things out’ – meaning gaining better understanding of what’s really going on).

**Key words:** all fruits theory, community-based self help, intellectual disability, mental illness, onto-diversity for susstainability, peer support, social and emotional wellbeing, structure of feeling and experience, working the business of life.

**INTRODUCTION**

The original study for this paper was held in Sydney from 2004–2006 with about 60 multicultural participants living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability (aged between 18–35 years). It aimed to model self-help, peer support approaches to valuing each person in an ‘open urban tribe’, or community of belonging. This was formed from a group of strangers, who came together after public promotion asking for volunteers. The project informed later community-based work in Alice Springs, where applying the earlier findings proved successful in practice in a totally different, rural and remote setting, within the Mental Health Association of Central Australia’s (MHACA) Day to Day Living Program, and later with community workshops on Peer Support Training for Consumers and Carers (PSTCC).
These were combined consumer & carer gatherings, sponsored by Mental Health Carers NT, where everyone shared their own challenges in living with mental illness, and we worked through narrative techniques to explore ways people could assist each other to get along with a feeling of greater empowerment, and more appropriate boundary setting (by applying the ‘Working The Business of Life’ mirroring and feedback approach, developed in the earlier Sydney project).

Creatively critiquing the positivist medical model, which still dominates mental health and disability support environments, and creates silos of professional turf protection as identified by Hickie (2007), the project aimed to show that focusing on pathological labels does not help people heal and grow. The All Fruits Theory (AFT) arising from this work, like the Queer Theory, argues that the point of ‘healing’ is not about the labels, but about how we relate to each other as human beings.

Combining critical social science perspectives and creative qualitative research methodologies, the project modelled ways to enhance mainstream rehabilitation, and supported living for people with disabilities. Instead of seeing diversity in consciousness as a set of pathologies, AFT sees this diversity as a rich source of difference, which can inform cross-fertilizing interactions between people. Through creating interactive symbolic ritual cycles, the original tribe illustrated how humans need regular rhythmical experiences of shared interaction, to enrich our being. Their experiences showed that diverse consciousnesses enrich others, simply by the way
we are all metaphors for each other, in how to be our true selves more completely.

In the Alice Springs application, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous rural and remote participants joined the Day to Day Living (D2DL) activities built around this original model. Participants in both D2DL and the PSTCC showed uplifted spirits and motivation to relate more.

**RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVE**

Valuing diversity in consciousness, and honouring the healing power in both the social imaginary and the root metaphors of people’s embodied lived experiences, were the central rationales of this work. Aiming to value people ‘just being’, as Terri Fealy (Fealy 2007) has observed Martin Heidegger did in his concept of ‘dasein’, the original project created a model for equitable nurturing of social and emotional wellbeing among vulnerable communities. The project was called Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs (GW3TS) and it applied a paraphrase of Lakoff and Johnson’s famous work *Metaphors We Live By*, (Lakoff & Johnson: 1980) which became ‘metaphors we live as’: where participants’ individual and shared beingness together, plus their stories, became the focus for appreciation.

Modelling community-based, peer-supported reform of rehabilitation and supported living approaches, the project was informed by Indigenous ways of being and knowing together. It ran over 2 years (from 2004 to 2006), establishing a community of belonging (or open urban tribe) among about 60 young adults (18–
35-year-olds) living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, plus volunteers living without these challenges.

The main emphasis was on person-valuing, a core principle of the Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA, a community Mental health service working closely with the mainstream health system, and the wider community). So the MHACA ‘Day to Day Living Program’, comprising daily activities for adults living with mental health challenges, suited my GW3TS-style approach from the outset. As start-up coordinator, from March 2008, I was able to introduce creative expression, narrative sharing, and involvement with mentors as core parts of the program. Also, the Peer Support Training Workshop for Consumers and Carers, was supported with funding from ARAFMI NT (ARAFMI, Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill) and MH Carers NT, plus Frontier Services (Uniting Church social services organisation) and MHACA. This one day experiential workshop, which I ran on Saturday 22 November 2008, at ‘Campfire in the Heart’ in Alice Springs promoted approaches which were person-valuing and group building, as against system-valuing. These approaches to group healing, growth and development were direct follow-ons from the GW3TS earlier work in Sydney.

The original GW3TS project set out to explore three main questions:

1. What are the active attributes of consciousness, among those living with intellectual disability and/or mental illness, which can be acknowledged, nurtured
and developed, to strengthen their balanced self awareness, and assist them to take
more responsibility for their lives?

2. How can these aspects of self awareness, of thoughts, feelings and experiences,
be used to inform improved individual and group empowerment?

3. By exploring collaborative engagement with ‘the system’ which serves these two
groups, how can they be more effectively empowered?

METHODS

The methodology in the original GW3TS project applied a mixture of techniques for
sharing feelings and experiences. These included supported collaborative and
appreciative inquiry, as described by Heron and Reason (2006), in the participative
action research tradition. Here participants gave their input, sometimes assisted by
buddies, and feedback was given from the group. The effect was like that of
Michael White’s (2007) narrative therapy, where ‘externalizing conversations’
helped put people’s problems and triumphs into perspective among the group. This
worked well in pairs, small groups and the whole tribe. Recording was through
interpretive ethnography, in a reflexive qualitative research style. Here the
researcher traced the tribe’s journey, and his reactions as facilitator, along with
individuals and buddy pairs keeping journals.

This approach foregrounded a cultural inquiry approach in a para-clinical context,
as it clearly helped participants feel better about themselves, and more able to live
with their challenges. Also arising from the shared dynamic of the tribe’s gatherings
was a pattern of symbolic interactive rituals. Described by Randall Collins in *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Collins 2004), these shared dynamics replaced the original life journalling focus of the project. The way the group came together, and rhythmically shared and celebrated, became the dominant cycle of exchange and efficacious outcome among all the participants (i.e. those living with the identified challenges and without).

Methods used in the GW3TS project included two major weekend residential workshops, involving whole group narrative sharing circles, in large gatherings and smaller break-out sessions exploring feelings, experiences and views about how best to reform the mental health and disability support systems. There were many small group gatherings over the 2 years, from inducting participants and carers into the project, to documentary filming and photographic recording of shared narrative conversations.

In the later applications, in the 2008 Day to Day Living (D2DL) and Peer Support Training for Consumers and Carers (PSTCC) programs in Alice Springs, simpler goals were set – joining in group activities built around creative expression, and sharing in narrative witnessing and testimony sessions. The focus was on sharing personal stories, and giving each other feedback on ways to achieve greater balance in life, following the externalizing conversation style in Michael White’s (2007) narrative therapy and the Structure of Feelings and Experiences (SOFE) in the present writer’s earlier work *Going Walkabout Through the Suburbs* (Lloyd 2005).
RESULTS

The findings of the original GW3TS project were that people of diverse consciousness can assist each other’s healing, growth and development, in environments of unconditionally supportive interaction. Each person being treated as an equal, regardless of their life challenge, helps healing and growth. This outcome mainly arose from the metaphorical power of participants just being together (‘dasein’) in relationship. It was not from the level or intensity of their cognitive or linguistic exchanges. The interactions worked best in a rhythmical cycle, incorporating repeated elements that generated vitality, motivation and intention to keep growing.

Those elements were summarized in the acronym IIRRCC: Interactive, Intentional, Intuitional, Reciprocal, Rhythmical, Relational Rituals of Companionship, Contemplation, Communion, Compassion and Celebration. These showed up as positive social determinants of health and wellbeing, which can be incorporated into mainstream care environments.

CONCLUSIONS

Concluding the original GW3TS project was a major rite of passage for all involved, but it also produced the strong conviction that the evidence-based
approach showed that mixing together people of diverse consciousness, in environments of safety and trust, was efficacious for their social and emotional wellbeing. Arising from the evidence of the rhythmical tribal interactions came the AFT, which argues that what matters in rehabilitation and supported living practices is creating shared, safe, trusting, and unconditionally supportive environments in which people of mixed consciousness can interact.

By valuing other ways of being and knowing, these two projects showed that celebrating diversity in consciousness can lead to more sustaining ways to assist recovery from mental illness, and to support self-empowered lives among those living with intellectual disability. Just as ecologists argue for nurturing biodiversity for sustainability, the All Fruits Theory (AFT) argues for ‘onto-diversity for sustainability’ – wiser ways of being together, for more sustaining ways of knowing. As Darlena L’Orange and Gary Dolowich (2002) have quoted Max Planck as saying: ‘Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature, and it is because in the last analysis we, ourselves, are part of the mystery we are trying to solve’. This work embraced that mystery, and found efficacious ways of healing and growth that are now being applied in day-to-day community settings.

**DECLARATION**

There was no funding for this project outside the original UWS PhD scholarship 2004–2006, and the support in hosting participants’ attendances at D2DL and PSTCC activities, through MHACA, ARAFMI NT MH Carers and Frontier Services in Alice Springs.
REFERENCES


After the work in NT began to take root in Alice Springs, I felt more inclined to hope this approach could find a home in the system. While still not embraced by mainstream agencies, it was certainly echoing with community groups. Yet I battled depression continuously, mainly because of the dominant feeling that my values and practices would never find substantive support, despite all these years of working to ‘prove them’. Reflecting on this experience sometimes felt like being stuck in a cracked record, but it at least gave me a forum in which my voice felt ‘heard’.

4. **REFLEXION 4 – Moments of Light**

Somehow the GW3TS tribe’s experience in Sydney had been like working in the same secret midnight street theatre group. We all carried around with us the knowing that we were part of this tribe, and that we had already created some extraordinary times together, and there were more to come. But while we did film many gatherings, and my journal was a large compiling record, there were really no general public displays by the group. It was a story occurring and being simultaneously told and recorded within our own lives.

So where that put me as ‘the researcher’ I’m not sure. Yvonna Lincoln (1997) has reflected on the “text” that results from this sort of exercise:

> The idea that we can think consciously about presenting and representing the stories we tell proffers an enticing invitation to think reflexively and self-consciously – not just about the fieldwork we do, but also about the means
we choose and use to relay our fieldwork tales to audiences. The choice implied in reflexivity leaves open the possibility that we can consciously take out our narrative voice and reframe it. We can speak in narrative voices which represent our different selves, or which may have special meaning for particular audiences (Lincoln 1997: 38).

For me an important self I want to speak is the desperate, vulnerable, inadequate and fearful person, stuck in an exercise he doesn’t want to perpetuate, but being so far in already that he has to head towards the exit at the other end, rather than turn back in despair. That’s not referring to the “text production” that occurred when the GW3TS tribe was together, but to the next iteration of text production: that of trying to represent my own and the tribe’s experiences in ways that are consistent with academic definitions of validity. Even though I have turned toward methods of enquiry that broaden notions of validity beyond the narrow definitions of positivism, I still find myself caught up in a disciplinary form of power that is ironically parallel to the forces that GW3TS has tried to resist. The academic and institutional conventions of doctoral candidature inevitably involve surveillance of one’s work not only by others, but by oneself. Sometimes it feels like the whole process puts things into formaldehyde – killing the light and life spirit, but keeping the body of the subject for the purposes of dissection.

“Somehow, without violating privacy, we have to find a way to help those we study and study with to move from private meaning-making to public communication
(Lincoln 1997: 44).” It felt like we did do that in GW3TS, by holding our events in public places, and involving members of the public who came along and joined at different times. But overall the lasting effect feels more private than public, which goes against what I had hoped for at the outset – ie. to influence health care practice, publicly. This became another reason to feel like a failure, yet deep down I knew it was not really a valid judgement. In my true inner assessment, I know what impact we had on each other’s lives. Beyond the binary of private or public, we became a community. Deep down it does feel like that was enough in itself.

“[W]e also have to search for ways, with them, for them to co-create our joint texts and in so doing, find ways to ‘be’ with us, whether in communion, consensus, or conflict (Lincoln 1997: 44).” I truly believe we in the GW3TS tribe did achieve that. Our cycles of communion, contemplation, companionship and celebration were in themselves ‘joint texts’- were literally the rhythmical patterns that we created together. And they included times of conflict, as we ‘worked the business of life’ (WTBOL), rubbing our differences up against each other, to get a real take on where we stood in the world.

So why do I feel so unsatisfied with my attempts to reflect on this experience? Why does the undercurrent of failure hang around the whole exercise for me after seven years? Maybe I’m unconsciously stuck, still looking at it all in the old paradigm? Maybe in truth I never left the enemy camp? While encouraging the wagon train to head west, I stayed back home in the east, loyal to the old regime? I still don’t
understand it, but I do know it’s exacerbated by feeling that the academic process of analysis does not value the way I prefer to tell and record stories, the way I am trying to tell the story of GWT3S, with multiple voices from all the ‘elders’ from all over giving their two bits worth.

“Readers and theoreticians alike ask that texts ‘come clean’ with the author’s partial, situated, but authentic self, preferably the ‘self’ that showed up to begin the fieldwork, the self that accomplished the fieldwork, and the self who left changed (Lincoln 1997: 47-8).” This implies that the researcher, rather than assuming a disembodied position, has the task of narrating this process of self-transformation. Yet, while I felt uplifted, clear and confident in sharing the actual experience of GWT3S with all the participants, I have become depressed, confused and ‘defeated in the telling’.

Ultimately, the participants in this research didn’t want to be involved in the usual participative action research (PAR) recording processes. They just wanted to be. It would, of course, have been deeply uncollaborative to insist on the conventional practices of collaborative research, against the stated and/or enacted wishes of the participants. Faced with this dilemma, I tried various ways to record the experience (my journal, filming, photography), and then had three separate goes at writing up a dissertation. Throughout all of these attempts, I struggled to find a form of expression that would do justice to the richness of the experience we shared.
It was like I was on stage with the participants, then walked off into the dark backstage area as soon as we stopped performing together. That ‘play’ therefore became irrelevant in the scheme of ‘research reporting’. And I was stuck trying to figure out if I’d made a huge mistake, in choosing that form (PAR) to try to record or capture the essence of what we were trying to illustrate and model.

“[W]e will have to try to find or invent a form. The ‘form’ may be a literary genre with which we are familiar and comfortable (plays, short stories, novels, poems), or it may be a textual/print format that we ‘design’ whole cloth… Or it may be subjectivizing and making reflexive and systematic the informal tales we tell of the field, long after the seminar rooms are closed and the restaurants and bars attract us for one last conversation. It may mean spending evenings and weekends, not hiking or sailing or catching new plays, but working with our research participants, looking for form, structure, meaning, and coming to terms with what elements of that will become public knowledge (Lincoln 1997: 52).

I agonized over ‘the form’ for years, while in effect repeating what GW3TS had achieved in several different settings, and I am continuing to do this. The form of GW3TS was a process of light generation that required no system-heavy structure or arrangement, no focus on recording, but all energy freed up to just ‘be together’. It took the form of circles of narrative sharing, witnessing and testimony, and exchanging ‘working the business of life’ mirroring and feedback (WTBOL), as
people shared their structure of feelings and experiences (SOFE, MCRIDW). And that led to the ‘magic zone’ of interactive symbolic ritual cycles (I3R4C5), where a respiring exchange showed each other how to heal, grow and develop.

Something in my being has changed, and many of those I’ve worked with and continue to work with change, in the presence of this open dynamic interaction between equals, who are very diverse and different. But if you ask me for ‘concrete evidence’, I can only say ‘you had to be there’. I know that we were framed in the pattern of Truth, Love, Form and Change – which I tracked over the seven years, and which I know for certain operates in every valid gathering I facilitate today. That is, I believe we won’t get change without love, and we won’t get new forms without truth and love together, and we won’t get any of it by making our main focus ‘watching what we’re doing’. We have to first ‘be’, and then secondly to reflect on what that being together produced.

I feel fake in trying to fit some expectation of ‘reporting’ that doesn’t sit with my experiences and feelings. I don’t feel right trying to ‘defend’ this approach or the theory arising from it, except to say that the All Fruits Theory that I have developed in this process (Lloyd 2009), reflects something of that madness, chaos factor, spontaneous combustion and alchemy that can’t be formularized. Yvonna Lincoln says:
In the interest of locating voices, both our own and those of others, in the
text, the private side of research – the unrecorded conversations, the shifts,
the changes, transformations – will move into our texts. The othering of our
own selves will cease to become a useful tool for achieving an obsolescent
objectivity. It is the only way I see to manage the vicarious experience,
which precedes believability and ‘a feeling for the organism’ (Keller 1983)
(Lincoln 1997: 52).

I don’t feel ‘vicarious’ in reflecting on this journey. I feel right about the way we
interacted, and the validity of what we achieved together. What I’m having agonies
about is how to honour the way we did it. The thing that keeps coming to me is that
film was always going to be best for this process. But it didn’t work out well for us,
and that was a pity. In hindsight, I would have asked for funds to pay a professional
dedicated person to do a proper job of fly-on-the-wall, cinema verite filming
throughout, and also professional editing without my involvement, to capture the
spontaneity and interactions, in a way that was free of my biased involvement in the
observation process.

Perhaps, though, in wanting this, I am succumbing to the idea that some objective
truth of the experience could be captured, once and for all. Whatever I might feel
now in this ‘academic moment’, there were enough embodied experiential moments
of magic to cement into my deeper knowing a certainty about the value of the
GW3TS approach. And John Bloomfield gave me some encouragement about that,
at the very time it was all first proving itself, which I only found in reviewing my journal many years later (03/06/2010):

Reading John Broomfield’s (JB) *Other Ways of Knowing*, I am so heartened to hear an historian who challenges linear chronological notions of history, cause and effect, and determination of ‘facts’. Taking all the mystery and wonder out of the whole equation not only makes for a dead boring existence, it also creates a fake image of how the world works. JB reclaims discontinuity, and this very perspective actually feels like a lifesaver in the process of GW3TS – as I am unable to cope with the time scheduling, priority setting, competing interests and any sense of linear organizational perspective, unless I keep stepping off the linear, sequential treadmill and hand it back to the gods. There’s just too much in the whole thing to be able to hold it all in such a limited conceptual package. (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal* 11/06/2004).

This sort of perspective was fundamental to the success of GW3TS. Trusting in the dreamlike aspect of our gatherings, our synchronous connections with facilitators, community friends, and our ‘best selves’ meeting each other ‘on the GW3TS job’, was so much more important than any process of rational, logical arrangement, planning or execution. Of course we had to do all those things, but they weren’t the dominant forces of serendipity.
All the processes of logic and worldly prioritizing cannot replace the basic foundation of knowing, that this experience came into my life through no decision of mine. It was the dream about the North Katoomba Valley, the Catalina Park Methodist Mission removal of Aboriginal people, and the trip to Kandos and being shown the Capertee Valley, that all led to here with GW3TS. If I forget to keep watching for my dreams and listening to the simplest messages, as shown in action by the people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, I am out of touch with my whole reality (Lloyd, *GW3TS Journal* 11/06/2004).

That reference was to the sequence of life events that originally led me to decide to explore the significance of ‘totems’ in my book (Lloyd 2005), that gradually transformed itself into a work on exploring varieties of consciousness (among people living with intellectual disability, mental illness, addiction, and indigenous consciousness).

During those early days of GW3TS, I was confident and open about ‘my dreams’ being uppermost in the process of realising this project. But the gradual engagement with academic ways crushed that out of me, with continual reminders of needing ‘objective proof’ for everything, and that conjecture and opinion were my greatest enemies. All this in the time of world governments being drawn into the following-on madness of the ‘War in Iraq’, all fuelled by conjecture and opinion, twisted into political decisions that were taken as based on ‘facts’, which subsequently were
clearly shown to be total lies and fabrications. I found this global context ironic, given that I was struggling with the validity of my own ‘subjective’ experiences and my expressions of them. Even now, having found methodologies that support enquiry into my own experience, as a valid form of research, I struggle with the ghost of positivism as it re-emerges in dominant notions of validity. The research I am continuing to do fits within the post-positivist paradigm, but my more poetic ways of expressing these processes keeps bumping up against the positivist within myself and among academic networks. I hope to overcome this by continuing to evidence the proof among the increasing number of people sharing this work with me.

I find that members of the ‘community’ whom I value – ie. consumers and carers, and professionals working to break down the dominant positivist medical model paradigm – validate my research when I present it in person to sympathetic others. That has been the case at each of the RANZCP ‘Creating Futures’ conferences I have attended in Cairns in 2006, 2008 and 2010. The First Nations delegates I have met there have been very supportive of my approach and values, as have consumers and carers, and some mainstream mental health practitioners. That was one reason for deciding to present two papers, on my work facilitating elders and youth coming together in Alice Springs, in ways similar to the work in Sydney for GW3TS, and creating a Multidisciplinary Collaborative Network, or Community of Practice (Wenger 1991). These were both concepts put into practice in GW3TS in Sydney, and they worked well in Central Australia.
ABSTRACT
This paper outlines reflections on the in-progress outcomes from an exercise establishing a Youth and Elders Group to support the work of headspace Central Australia, young people’s mental health program, in Alice Springs from March–October 2009. Informed by the author’s earlier PhD field work, in Sydney from 2004–6, the project recruited multicultural ‘aunties & uncles’, to provide unconditional positive support and collaborative modelling for young people undergoing challenges in a remote community setting. Having already formed into the headspace YAG (Youth Advisory Group) for about nine months, the 15 or so young people were already loosely “together”, and the 15 elders then came along to meet them and hear their views, before exploring together how they could collaborate.
Combining personal support, face-to-face in small groups and one-on-one, the Youth Elders Group began establishing a shared cross-generational and cross-cultural “social enterprising” approach to community health and wellbeing. The author’s earlier work had modelled shared witnessing and testimony among 18-35 year olds living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, from across the Sydney basin. This work applied a less intense approach, but with equal impact for participants, in their mutual exposure to different feelings and experiences across age groups, and exploring ways of mutual support.

There was Active Mentoring in hands-on activities, such as “the Stock Car Project” (encouraging disaffected youth to learn mechanical skills and teamwork while preparing old bombs for stock car racing), and Multicultural Cooking, both of which gave older and younger a focus away from “problems”, while sharing informally their inner concerns. Also, the adults sharing support assisted them as well, in their own working through of life’s problems. Professional shared support & networking also grew among those facilitating this approach to non-clinical nurturing of social & emotional wellbeing (SEWB). The author’s journal from this period became the evidence source for this autoethnographic, self-reflexive paper.

**Keywords:** elders and youth; headspace; social and emotional wellbeing; going walkabout together through the suburbs; mental health.
THE CONTEXT

Alice Springs is a remote community. But it is still a pretty typical suburban community, only located in Central Australia. It has a multicultural population (increasing due to Federal Government forced migration programs for contemporary refugees), fluctuating between about 25,000 and 30,000 people, depending on the socio-economic conditions prevailing at any time. In 2009 headspace Central Australia was one of 30 youth mental health services scattered around Australia, all undergoing extreme stress, due to budget constraints and tensions with the national head office in Melbourne. This regime had adopted managerialist bullying tactics in how it treated its “branches”, which were in fact voluntary collaborative combinations of local agencies, who came together to form consortia to serve local community need by offering headspace services.

The author managed headspace Central Australia from March to October 2009, in which period he instigated a number of initiatives designed to complement the predominantly clinical nature of headspace. According to its original model, headspace was supposed to generate Medicare income from bulk billing for young people’s clinical and allied health services (GPs, psychologists, sexual health, alcohol and other drugs AOD). This was supposed to support an on-going, youth-friendly, one-stop-shop free service.

However, Central Australia was never going to be an easy context into which to introduce a model based on risk-taking, person-valuing, community-empowering
approaches (such as the GW3TS approach). And it was definitely going to need subsidised funding to survive. But aside from that challenge, which remains a critical one, there was the inappropriate nature of a purely clinically driven logic. The author argued at the time of his appointment, by the headspace Central Australia lead agency, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC), that “clinical” should only be 20% of headspace’s operation. The other 80% needed to be “the web of support” in the community, that would nurture young people’s sustained recovery from mental distress. Otherwise they would be stuck in a revolving door, due to no change in the prevailing circumstances of their lives.

A direct comparison with the British experience at Bromley-by-Bow, a multifunction community-run health service in the poorest parts of London, described in Andrew Mawson’s (2008) book *The Social Entrepreneur: Making Communities Work*, was apposite for this developing service in an equally challenged community in the Central Australian desert.

**THE NEED**

Central Australia has a high indigenous population, suffering some of the worst poverty and ill-health in the developed world. Coupled with that, there is a growing population of refugees and asylum seekers, who have been made to locate there by the Federal Government. Many of these people have suffered years of torture, trauma and living in refugee camps. There are also numbers of long time migrant families, who came to the Centre trying to make a new start over the past half
century. Young people of indigenous families, refugee, earlier migrant and mainstream families are all prone to the same levels of mental illness as the rest of young Australia (12-25 yrs); but their chances are high of experiencing more than the normal level of stressors.

Going by the author’s own observations of the effectiveness of the purely clinical model in mental health, from years working in the system in Sydney, he decided that headspace Central Australia needed more than just free provision of access to the doctor, psychologist, sexual health nurse, alcohol & other drugs support, Centrelink, or youth emergency accommodation.

So he designed a model that aimed to include networked community support for young people and their families. This included an Elders and Youth Group, to bring the generations together in an exchange of perspectives on life. Such an approach had been part of the author’s PhD field work, in Critical Social Sciences at UWS, between 2004-6 (Lloyd 2010). In that project, called “Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs” (GW3TS) about 60 young people (18-35 yrs) living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability combined forces with a group of volunteer peers, and a group of “aunties & uncles” (ie. professional human service workers who became volunteer elder mentors, in the indigenous sense of providing positive unconditional support). The result was a strong bonding and nurturing connection throughout the life of the project, with many people continuing their connection over years afterwards. Such an approach seemed sorely needed in
Central Australia, where many young people felt disconnected, unsupported, and lost for a place to begin rebuilding their sense of self and possible futures.

**THE RATIONALE**

This was a deliberate “culture-building” exercise. Culture defined as “the ensemble of social processes by which meanings are produced, circulated and exchanged.” (Thwaites, Davis & Mules 1994: 1) The Elders Group was going to share an exploration with young people, of what cross-generational exchange could look like, in Central Australia in 2009. Together they would be exploring what they each had to learn from the other. It was a matter of starting from mutual respect, and then seeing what the exchange brought forward.

Just as with the author’s PhD project, something was created out of nothing, in order to fill a gap. It was not seen as anything particularly special, but it was also “magic”, because of the invaluable nature of unconditionally loving and supportive human exchange. Especially across generations, which are often separated by age, prejudice or misperception.

Just as with the earlier field work in Sydney, volunteers were sought by the author on a one-on-one basis. People were approached with the question, “Would you like to contribute to a project offering unconditional support to young people, by a bunch of us oldies, who may have something to contribute, in giving them an ear to listen and some feedback on their own plans and frustrations in life?” No one was to
be under any obligation, but their own sense of propriety suggested not to start, unless they meant to go on – or else they would be letting down the youth of their area. People were hesitant and nervous even after saying yes. Probably because of their age and experience they knew this exercise would require some special elements to be a success. And its focus was to address new meaning, in a context and an atmosphere of great loss of meaning for many young people – in Central Australia in the middle of the Australian Government’s Northern Territory Intervention (instituted in late 2007, on the eve of calling an election, by the John Howard conservative government. This was after the release of the report into treatment of children in outback Aboriginal communities, whose recommendations the Federal Howard Government totally ignored, while it aggressively proceeded to enter into communities, without consultation, in a manner similar to decades earlier episodes, when the Stolen Generations were first removed).

Culture is the site of the production of meanings, not the expression of meanings which exist elsewhere. Meanings come about in and through social relations, those among people, groups, classes, institutions, structures and things. And because they are produced, circulated and are exchanged within the social world, these meanings are never entirely fixed. (original emphasis)

(Thwaites et al 1994: 2)
At the time, the author knew this was a culture-building experiment, but his experience of the earlier Maori success in NZ fuelled a confidence that “things would work out OK on the night”:

Tomorrow night’s Elders–Young People gathering will really show if we can build some unique, multicultural approaches here; and generate new energy of togetherness among all ages and socio-economic positions (22/04/09)… the headspace Elders Young People Group met for a barbecue at the Telegraph Station (in Alice Springs) from 5–7pm, on Thursday 23 April 2009, and it felt great… (we) have upped the ante on the headspace outreach work now, so that projects engaging with youth supporting activity (Stockcar project; Narrative Group; Elders & Youth; Dance–HipHop –Rap; Drug & Alcohol and Youth Advisory Group networking etc) are all coming along, to build a web of nurturing activities that can engage young people. (Lloyd 2009, Journal: 22-29 April 2009)

After an initial awkwardness, the Elders–Youth exchange began to relax, and individuals in both age groups introduced spontaneous suggestions. Such as cooking together, to share multicultural lessons across the ages of how to prepare people’s favourite foods. Then there was the suggestion of bush camps, where the different ages could share a whole lot of different activities, and in that process get to know each other in more natural settings than the pre-organised, round-the-campfire gatherings that started the project off.
Such dynamics reflected what Andrew Mawson described as “organic growth that puts people at its heart has a way of mushrooming” (Mawson 2008: 177). That was the author’s experience in the GW3TS project in suburban Sydney (Lloyd 2010), and it held true in the remote but similarly suburban environment of Alice Springs.

At the same time, Mawson urges people to go beyond simply believing in “process”, as the solution to any social problems. He strongly favours investing in people who have already proved they can produce results: “Don’t buy process: buy results” (Mawson 2008: 168). The trouble is, just as with his Bromley-by-Bow experiment, someone has to start, to be able to prove anything is possible. That was what the author and these Elders and Young People were doing from a cold start in Alice Springs.

Here is where the Andrew Mawson experience supports what occurred in this project: “I believe that the government should put less blind faith in system and process, but offer us more opportunities to take more personal responsibility for social issues.” (Mawson 2008: 157) The elders and Young People were doing exactly that, exploring ways of thinking and sharing about things, and then stepping into strange new territory to see what was possible to do together to take things forward.
THE PROCESS

The concept was to meet about every 4–6 weeks in the early evening (5–7pm), most often over a meal, and when appropriate around the campfire. The young people would come from the headspace Youth Advisory Group (YAG), comprising about 15 members between 12-25 yrs who had been meeting monthly for about 7 months when this project began. There would be no costs or payments, just volunteering to turn up and contribute in whatever way felt right. Formal written protocols for ensuring protection for all parties, and especially in the child support area, were under exploration as the project took off – but the emphasis was to start first, and figure out the details as things went along, while making sure all duty of care and due process was applied along the way.

There was no funding to establish a formal research process to monitor and evaluate the project, especially in an organisation already strapped to survive, so the author decided to keep a personal journal that would become a reference for reflexive autoethnographic reporting later on. Hence this article, which includes excerpts from that journal between March–November 2009.

The general gist of ‘what we were there for’ was the same as for the ‘aunties & uncles’ in the author’s ‘open urban tribe’ in Sydney from 2004-7: ie. to provide mirroring and feedback to the younger tribe members, about how they were seeing
themselves and their lives, while ‘not taking any bu….it from anyone’: ie. they were going to ‘call’ messy thinking and/or behaviour for what it was. (Lloyd 2010)

Once the group began to meet, the idea was ‘let it rip’, in determining its own priorities and projects. And that was what occurred after the first three gatherings had established a momentum.

DEFINITIONS AND OUTCOMES

My first day at work at headspace Central Australia, and I rang a few elders to ask them to think about coming in occasionally to meet the young people and see what’s going on here. (Lloyd 2009: Journal 06/03/09)

From the outset of his time managing headspace Central Australia (from 6 March 2009) the author began networking with elders in the community, even though some thought they didn’t even rate under that category. So began a debate about ‘elders’ that has remained unresolved, as the term has become over-used in situations where it can be vulnerable to abuse. It has been alleged that some ‘elders’ have been found to abuse their positions of power in communities, while others have claimed stewardship for places that are not their tribal country. These were views put to me during my time in community management in Alice Springs, just as similar views had been expressed in earlier years in NSW. This author uses the term he has experienced in Maori contexts in New Zealand, where these are people who are seen to be guardians of the conscience of their people. Those who carry cultural
weight because of their standards of behaviour and valuing of traditions in contemporary expressions, and thus have respect and “mana” (power/charisma) among their people.

Learning more and more about resilience, perserverance, humility and patience – both in the way I need to work, and in relating to colleagues. Seeing how we all get hurt, complain, feel ignored, have a bad week, and need mutual understanding – is teaching me to say less and support more. By observing and only acting when circumstances call for it. Madly trying to find more money, to build the web of activities that can ‘hold’ young people, while we try to assist their own SEWB, through positive life choices. (Lloyd 2009; Journal 19/04/09)

The initial response from a number of those approached to become elders was similar to that shared with the author by his Maori friend and colleague in multicultural mental health and community development, Mana Forbes, one of the three founding elders of the Maori University (Te Wananga o Aotearoa TWOA) in Hamilton, in New Zealand’s north island. There Mana had invited people to join the “Elders School Program”, which now runs across NZ. Many replied they had “forgotten all that” (referring to cultural knowledge and family history) since going the pakeha (whitefella) way. But as soon as they came along and sat down with peers, they all began share stories and remember many things about their cultural traditions, moral values, and evolving understandings of life in contemporary times.
After a while they began to enjoy this sharing, and suddenly many realised it wasn’t about them, the oldies, it was about the young people who were sitting at their feet, dead keen to hear these stories and perspectives about life from their elders. Nor was it about chronological age. It was about respect. This was the author’s experience with the “aunties & uncles” in the PhD project GW3TS: they had a lot of knowledge and experience to share and exchange, but they were content to sit quietly alongside their youngers, until the time came to make a contribution according to what was needed at the time – in terms relevant to today’s societal conditions. (Lloyd 2010)

It all took a shared spirit of mutual endeavour, and that was and remains a major missing factor in too many government-funded programs, run by people jealous of their territory and defending their own patch, under the guise of preserving the integrity of “programs and policies” that must be adhered to, rather than more loose collaborations that allow bottom-up spontaneity. The author had spent many restless hours contemplating this conundrum during the first few months of managing headspace:

Reflecting on what can be learned from Peter Bourke’s magnificent contribution to headspace Central Australia as he leaves (the first community education and awareness officer appointed in mid 2008): passion and respect for young people’s (YP) involvement; intelligence and contemporary feel for what ways to engage with YP’s interests and
concerns; friendly, laid back, respectful manner with everyone – no superior airs and graces as “a professional”. All these things are essential in building a network of trusting relationships, and grapevine effects in messaging, that can draw more YP into this positive environment. (Lloyd 2009 Journal: 11/07/09)

The combination of personal energy and group solidarity was what “held” the Elders and Young People together. It had been described by one of the headspace-overseeing bureaucrats in the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA) in Canberra as “the community glue” that “keeps the shared work together in a process requiring facilitation of the collaborative networks (Lloyd 2009 Journal 11/07/09).”

Five perspectives showed up as the dominant messages for sharing with future funding decision-makers, from the experience of running such an eclectic mix of hands-on processes:

The elements of an effective socially inclusive, linked-up government and community service, that can be maintained and sustained as a public investment in preventive health, would be:

(i) Improved focus on community-wide solutions to chronic social problems – ie. through schools, universities, health and community working together in communities like Alice, through locally delegated funds that can be placed where needed through locally accountable networks like the Alice Springs Wellbeing Hub;
(ii) Break down the silo mentalities and self-interested behaviour of health, education and community service professions;

(iii) Social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) whole-school programs in every school in town;

(iv) Actively resourced, organisation-free Elders–Youth Group, combining cross-generational, cross-cultural interaction, that can happen away from family and organisational self-interest; and allow community conscience interaction, that can restore truly collaborative cross-generational development;

(v) Provide patient investment funds, on at least a five year grid, so that sustainability can be established and proper feedback, on social inclusion and addressing social determinants, gathered and then evolved. (Lloyd 2009 Journal: 11/07/09)

This set of priorities was always going to be a struggle to present and achieve. But the attitude of CAAC, the lead agency of headspace Central Australia, was that such perspectives were essential in Aboriginal controlled community health services, so why not within headspace?

After dinner with two headspace Elders last night, I realise the high value in shared wisdom. That multiple perspectives can illuminate issues many ways, and the problems and opportunities can all be better assessed… what (the DOHA Bureaucrat) called “the community glue” is the vital and so far missing element in creating a living, engaging “web of support” for young people here. (Lloyd 2009 Journal: 12/07/09)
While battles continued with Canberra and Melbourne over funding for headspace CA, the Elders–Youth project took on a background contextualising role. Meanwhile the Alice Springs Town Council asked if the headspace CA Youth Advisory Group could become the town youth advisory group, and discussions were held, about how to integrate a whole-community youth social & emotional wellbeing focus into the subsequent considerations.

There was a combination of stress and excitement that produced extraordinary energy during this period of headspace’s development. The national chairperson of headspace rang the author on 10 October 2009, and encouraged further promotion of the model developed in Alice Springs to the national CEO of headspace, when he visited on 15 October 2009. But this attempt ended in cynical feedback from headspace national office, that too much effort and money had been spent on the attempt to coordinate whole-community collaboration, when individual professional development should have been offered.

Such conflict of interest will remain a stumbling block for projects like headspace, until such time as government funded activities are given more autonomy at the local level. As well as being given enough time to develop the fine webs of community heart strings, that form the underpinning web of support for young people, by their families and elders. Such is the neglected area of the real social determinants of health, when massive preventive health funding is targeted solely at nutrition, exercise, and prevention of chronic disease, in this author’s view.
FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

As with the author’s original exercise (GW3TS, 2004-6, Lloyd 2010) there is potential in culture-building to generate new cross-generational links, which can be sustained in personally-supported, local settings. That sort of development has the chance to occur in Alice Springs, if local people of goodwill can stay the distance and keep sponsoring it, in the face of inadequate bureaucratic attitudes.

Meanwhile, the multicultural Young People and Elders Group has now expanded to include NT Respite Carers, and Mental Health Carers NT, to bring more families into the loop of shared support. These multi-age collaborators are investigating how best to support each other’s desire, to see better shared work for youth development and community harmony in Alice (Springs). (Riedel 2009 ed.: 35)

The future looks rosy in this light. But Andrew Mawson’s (2008) warning sounds a strong message of the need to be watchful and determined, in not allowing others to capture the agenda, as has occurred too often in the Northern Territory, with capital city funders and administrators driving their own power-seeking agendas over the needs and aspirations of local people:

When government got involved… bringing in civil-service culture to adjudicate on matters, the smaller shoots were suffocated with bureaucracy, audit trials and government structures. Now the situation truly was equal: equally mediocre. (Mawson 2008: 157)
REFERENCES

Lloyd, Robbie (2009) *Personal Journal* kept while managing headspace Central Australia and coordinating pastoral care at Living Waters Lutheran Primary School, Alice Springs


NOTE ON SUPPORT

This paper describes an activity that would not have been possible without the financial and management support of the headspace Central Australia Consortium, chaired by Ms Donna Ah Chee (also Deputy Director of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, the lead agency of headspace CA); and with the key voluntary involvement of the headspace Central Australia founding Elders Group members, and headspace CA staff.

Given the Federal Government’s general health and mental health reform agendas, which got an added push with the arrival of the Rudd Labor Government in November 2007, it seemed an important moment to share my work on building
multidisciplinary collaboration across health, education, justice, business and community services. While a lot of political rhetoric has been directed at this subject, very little action has happened on the ground, from my viewpoint as an actively engaged community health and education worker.

The following paper was written to acknowledge the good work undertaken by a group of people, who formed a multidisciplinary collaborative network in Alice Springs in 2009. In bringing the network to fruition, I used the model of GW3TS’ combined talents of ‘aunties and uncles’ who were all multiskilled professionals, as well as effective mentors for the participants in the project. A similar spirit of collaboration quickly came to the fore in Alice Springs, which says a lot for remote community solidarity and shared purpose.
Forming a whole-community, multidisciplinary restorative network to collaborate on “Creating Cultures for Wellbeing”

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the author’s experience of initiating a whole-town collaborative network (akin to a Community of Practice, Wenger 1991), that occurred in Alice Springs from March–October 2009, aiming to create a multidisciplinary collaborative social enterprise for mental health and wellbeing across the community. The project was informed by the author’s earlier field work, applied towards his PhD from 2004–2006 in Sydney, creating a group of about 20 senior multidisciplined volunteer facilitators (“aunties & uncles”), for a self-help “open urban tribe” of 60 multicultural mixed participants (18–35 years), living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, along with supportive volunteer peers.

Starting off by seeking volunteer workers from schools, health and community organisations, business and justice agencies, the author established the Alice
Springs Wellbeing Hub (ASWB Hub) in March 2009, while managing headspace Central Australia (hCA). This informal network met monthly and began to focus on how to improve social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB), for young people and families across the community. Highlighting Restorative Practice and Whole-School Cultures of Wellbeing as the main vehicles for achieving sustainable change across the community, the group then decided to hold an event to develop such skills and encourage wider community involvement.

The two day “Creating Cultures For Wellbeing” (CCFW) Conference, held at Charles Darwin University’s Alice Springs campus on 21-22 October 2009, was principally sponsored by headspace Central Australia, which the author managed, with the support of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (the lead agency for hCA). This event featured practitioners from Sydney, Melbourne, Alice Springs and Wodonga, who specialised in SEWB and Restorative Practices, illustrating how to create sustainable multidisciplinary networks for whole-community change towards health and wellbeing. The author’s reflexive journal from this period highlights the background experience of facilitating such a cross-community enterprise, and how to work towards sustaining such activity in a remote community setting.

**Keywords:** Alice Springs wellbeing hub; community of practice; professional network; social entrepreneurship; restorative practices; whole-school culture of social and emotional wellbeing.
THE PROBLEM

The author’s original field work was in Sydney from 2004-6 (Lloyd 2010), with individuals living with challenges and their carers, plus volunteer human service professionals (“aunties & uncles” in an indigenous mentoring way) and volunteer buddies. These participants had reported in the preparatory stages of the project that they were frustrated with “not being heard”, whether consumers, carers or friends of those living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability. So the original project (known as “Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs” GW3TS) aimed to break down this barrier created by the medical model’s objectifying clinical expertise structures and processes.

In the current project, professionals in Alice Springs had reported to the author (who was coordinating pastoral care in a Lutheran primary school two days a week; and managing headspace young people’s 12-25 yr old mental health program for four days a week) that they felt there was no coordination, or effective communication between individuals and agencies in the human service fields. As one clinical psychologist put it, “there’s a lot of committed people but no synergy in this town” (ie. as far as professional collaboration went).

So the author decided to try to bring people together in a voluntary network, which could do informally what was not happening formally, in the official interagency gatherings and case management meetings between agencies. His observation was that people “strictly kept to the script’ in these meetings, and did not dare to go
outside the policy boxes or program specifications, in case they were stepping out of line with their management.

Having already helped to establish a Community of Practice, in Balmain in Sydney during 2007 based on the work of Etienne Wegner (Wenger 1991), the author believed that caring professionals would soon appreciate the value in sharing their personal experiences and feelings, in a zone free from workplace and/or management constrictions and policy/program boxes.

After beginning the individual networking to establish the ASWB Hub, the author was appointed manager of headspace Central Australia – a one-stop-shop free mental health and allied services program for young people, based on a model of youth-friendly early clinical intervention and supposedly thereafter community-based psychosocial support. But immediately after starting with headspace, he found a group of extremely unhappy, stressed out individuals, at war with one another. An early journal entry pointed to the problem:

I can’t create solutions overnight: it will take time. The perspective I see is one of a fragmented set of processes, not operating in concert, and creating confusion and unhappiness. That has led them (the staff) to out-and-out conflict, and a breakdown in staff relations. (Lloyd 2009: Journal 14/03/09)
THE PROCESS

So a series of phone conversations was held in February–March 2009 between the author and professional peers in education, health, justice and community services around Alice Springs, to invite them to consider joining the Alice Springs Wellbeing Hub (ASWB Hub). The first of these gatherings was hosted by Living Waters Lutheran Primary School on Thursday 19 March 2009, under the principalship of Paul Weinert, an educational leader committed to fostering social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) across his whole school community. Living Waters was already in its third year of running the Kidsmatter (KM) mental health program, as one of the leading pilot schools in the country (as reported by the KM officers themselves).

Given the way people expressed concern about the time demands this exercise would make on their already stretched routines, when they agreed to ‘try it out,’ the author knew there was no advantage in setting up a formal research process, on top of the demands of getting people to relax into informally sharing outside the work environment. So he decided to keep a personal journal that would become a reference for reflexive autoethnographic reporting later on. Hence this article, which includes excerpts from that journal between March–November 2009.

Big day today, with the Wellbeing Hub (ASWB Hub) meeting happening at Living Waters School. Hoping to form a network aiming to achieve whole-
school cultures of wellbeing across Alice Springs. What I’m learning is that people want these sorts of outcomes, but we’ve forgotten how to be together to bring them about. (Lloyd 2009: Journal 19/03/09)

This initial indication was in concert with the author’s earlier finding in his PhD field work, where the participants (consumers, carers and professionals alike) reported feeling uncomfortable but relieved to come into a group that nurtured expression of feelings and experiences, with no “expert diagnosis” or “policy/program box” to be adhered to. And it also echoed the finding of Andrew Mawson, the founding facilitator of the Bromley-by-Bow one-stop-shop community health centre in London, that:

My task was to begin a conversation: as simple, and as difficult, as that. This community would flourish only if the people in it began talking with each other and taking more personal responsibility together for the area in which they lived. (Mawson 2008: 69)

While the first half an hour of the first ASWB Hub meeting was awkward, people gradually began to explore sharing more personal views, and having alcohol and nice food available increased the sense of relaxed informality. After a couple of hours people were beginning to warm to the notion of exchanging personal feelings and experiences, that related to professional roles and responsibilities in community. By the third meeting in May 2009, the ASWB Hub had reached a momentum of exchange, which allowed them to begin forming some clear ideas about the group’s
shared priorities. People had come because they felt strongly that young people were being ‘wasted’ in Alice Springs, by not finding the right places of nurture, to keep them healthy, optimistic and engaged in local careers, that would both answer their own life potential and the need for renewing the town’s workforce.

Yesterday afternoon had the ASWB Hub meeting, and it felt very positive & focused on the sorts of challenges we need to practically engage with now: SEWB, Prof. Dev.; Information Sharing/Facebook Group; supporting struggling teachers, especially on indigenous issues; Using Kidsmatter & Mindmatters to be more multidisciplinary on building cultures of wellbeing; and making SEWB practice placements a reality. (Lloyd 2009: Journal 22/05/09)

So the process for this group had become a sharing and mulling one. Letting feelings and resulting ideas mull around in the group consciousness between meetings, and then to begin coming up with mutually agreed priorities for shared action. This again echoed the experience of Andrew Mawson in Bromley-by-Bow, who initially saw an apparently vacant social landscape, but then began to discern patterns of connection between its disparate members.

What (was) needed – relied on – was a community within which (we) could have a role and be valued. Written reports and expensive medication, certainly in isolation, were of little or no help to (our) sense of worth as
individuals, as human beings… I realised just how deeply we all depend for our sanity on relationships with other people. They give us our sense of reality and equilibrium. Without them we stumble. (Mawson 2008: 21)

The active constraints applying to human service professionals (ie. in health, education, community & justice settings) in this setting were threefold: a combination of management practices, legislative & regulatory requirements, and personal adoption of fear-based way of working, where individual discretion and decision-making had been replaced by adherence to lock-step compliance. The ASWB Hub was hoped to be able to do something to address this endemic problem of modern human service constriction.

MAKING PROGRESS

People who came to the ASWB Hub shared with the author privately that they felt constrained in their workplaces and work roles, by rigid management and inflexible requirements of policies and programs. Their sense of professional identity, integrity and autonomy had effectively been removed or curtailed, by rigid rules and bullying management practices, under the managerialist and economic rationalist paradigms that dominate today. But they couldn’t speak out about that, or they would be targeted as whistleblowers against this very “Emperor’s New Clothes” value system. So the ASWB Hub gave them a chance to be more personal and authentically themselves, while also networking with colleagues in what constituted a professional forum.
Like Andrew Mawson, the author “… began to see, behind closed doors and in people’s passions and skills, there was real beauty to be found… a sense of real hope and ambition.” (Mawson 2008: 21) This came initially from comments made by participants outside the ASWB Hub meetings. But as time went on, they began to share directly in the meeting itself their truly innermost perspectives.

That was when the author began to realise that he was a social entrepreneur, as this project, his PhD field work, and sundry other community activities he had organised in the past, showed the same pattern: “What marks out social entrepreneurs… is that they are not driven solely by financial profit or ideology, or by a career or pension scheme… they feel they have something important to share that must be demonstrated both emotionally and practically.” (Mawson 2008: 7) This was “no big deal”, but something forgotten in the powerbroking circles of government and corporate influence. Hence it is easy to become disheartened and give up, if one does not have access to like-minded souls sharing hope.

Returning from the NT Kidsmatter/Mindmatters Reference Group yesterday, the news is that the program has been nominalised, with no funds for teacher release or whole school professional development etc (instead they will do Train The Trainer) … everything is being done on a shallow, nominal level, and it’s hard to see much changing while (this economic rationalist value system prevails). While the Federal Government talks Preventive Health, it appears to be doing nothing to seriously address the root causes of illness –
ie. when people’s SEWB is not supported, especially among children and families. (Lloyd 2009: Journal 21/05/09)

This disheartened perspective, arising from attending a Territory-wide group, which comprised mainly pragmatists who couldn’t see themselves challenging the political status quo, was answered the next day by a positive collaborative discussion at the quite separate group of the ASWB Hub on 22/05/09 (see quote above). So personal despair was answered by a process of peer support and sharing in hopeful collaboration. This was the same sort of pattern that the author had experienced with his Sydney GW3TS project participants, in an interactive symbolic ritual sharing pattern he described as “I3R4C5: interactive, Intuitive, Imaginative Rhythmical, Relational, Reciprocal Ritual, Cycles of Celebration, Contemplation, Companionship and Collaboration.”

Andrew Mawson identified something similar in his work at Bromley-by-Bow: “I had a sense that building up a sense of community in an area where so many people were isolated would mean creating some kind of rhythm around which they could orientate themselves.” (Mawson 2008: 68) The ASWB Hub began to develop such a rhythm, despite being in a community where transitory jobs and changing workplace dynamics were the norm.
After the first few months of meeting and sharing personal experiences and perspectives, the Hub began to focus on specific activities that people could “get their teeth into”. These emerged in sharp focus at the August 2009 meeting:

Biggest day since joining headspace yesterday, with ASWB Hub and headspace Consortium meeting on the same day… The ASWB Hub met in the next door premises of Hub members CASA (Central Australian Supported Accommodation). There were too many people (c. 40) to fit in their training room, an excellent response, and scary! We broke up into five groups and worked on different projects: (i) Prof. Dev. Event in October 2009; (ii) Schools First Submission to find funding for this Hub model; (iii) Education, Training & Employment strategies for young people; (iv) Narrative Group; and (v) Anti-bullying/Girl Fight group. It was an uplifting energy of positive engagement, and everyone ran overtime and didn’t get time to report back to the big group (a sign of how much they were “into it”)… the general goodwill, the mix of men and women, and the involvement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal together was very pleasing. We just need to get these sub-groups working nicely together now, and using the googlegroup network effectively to communicate between meetings.

(Lloyd 2009: Journal 07/08/09)

Because the author was able to manage some budgetary support for these on-going initiatives, there was a unique moment of opportunity to initiate change across the
community. That happened through hiring a project coordinator for the ASWB Hub Professional Development event in October 2009. Elaine Garrison was a young social work graduate from the USA, who came to work for three months within the headspace Central Australia offices to facilitate this event. Elaine’s energy, passion and humour in drawing together the diffuse elements of this event were a model for social entrepreneurship and true community development.

As the 21-22 October event (titled “Creating Cultures for Wellbeing” CCFW) took shape, a whole series of official obstacles sprang up at each step. Once again echoing Andrew Mawson’s experience at Bromley-by-Bow, these had to be overcome with determination: “None of this would have happened if we had not been strong willed in the face of initial opposition.” (Mawson 2008: 82) Likewise, the CCFW project took on stuck attitudes and limiting mindsets of negative bureaucrats and bosses. These people were naysayers and know-best types, who had little interest in seeing real change from the ground up.

They did not engage, like I did, in any meaningful way with people… their concern was for policy, strategy, process and structure. The professionals seemed to me at the time to have erected a very high wall behind which they could hide and detach themselves from the ordinary realities. (Mawson 2008: 83)
This was the same pattern experienced against Creating Cultures For Wellbeing.

What this author described as “rules not rhythms” dominating – ie. when people remain stuck in a rule-bound paradigm, rather than ‘going with flow’ of relationships of collaboration and innovation. Whereas the ASWB Hub had generated a strong rhythm of mutuality and collaboration, that led to an energy build-up, towards a collaborative gathering of souls determined to see things shift, in the “town with no synergy”, there were some who kept choosing the negative perspective on the potential of this gathering. A similar pattern of risk-managed caution and top-down decision-making control existed and still does, by the direct observation of this author, in the NT Intervention process. Here highly paid bureaucrats have walled themselves in to freshly built air-conditioned “dongers” (portable buildings trucked into remote communities), while their rigid sticking to the policies and rules fails to produce changes of any tangible benefit to the Aboriginal people they are “administering”.

While the preparations for CCFW were underway, the author’s experience in managing headspace Central Australia, within the national dram unfolding around headspace’s funding and business-based franchise model, was showing the opposite set of values to those being nurtured in the ASWB Hub:

The headspace national stuff-ups are just another example of business dominating, managerialist approaches being the worst approach to human services. Public investment in wellbeing will always be the most cost
effective preventive health measure; saving billions in lost working hours, lost lives to suicide, and lost social relationships that form the substrate of a healthy society. For headspace to pursue a business churning franchise model over a public good model is just dumb. (Lloyd 2009: Journal 06/06/09)

However, the local management of headspace Central Australia, under the lead agency auspices of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC), supported this social entrepreneurial approach to fostering activities like the ASWB Hub and its flow-on effect CCFW Professional Development event. This felt to the author like a small window of opportunity, so he “went for it”, spending the local organisation’s total annual education and training budget on sponsoring one event. This event ended up providing 150 people with two days of free professional development, and invaluable social and professional networking, as well as hands-on skills exchange with community facilitators from across the country, NSW, Vic, NT and Qld.

The process that was underway was a rhythmical exchange of mutual support and networking. The ASWB Hub was up and away with personal and professional exchange of contacts, ideas, collaborative way of working, and hence creating a web of social infrastructure that can’t be created by decree, but has to come from people’s goodwill.
Budget cuts to headspace nationally meant stress and staff turnover occurred everywhere across Australia. This happened at headspace Central Australia as well, while the author was trying to manage an emerging service into a new collaborative place in its community.

Staff changes are about to greatly change the culture – but I hope we can manoeuvre that period deftly and wisely; and compassionately; so that mechanistic expectations and numbers-only focus don’t outweigh relationship and trust-building, internally and externally, that will ultimately be the making or breaking of the service, and its life-supporting symbiotic networks across the community (Lloyd 2009: Journal 05/07/09).

While the battles went on over policies, budgets and program details of headspace’s national network, the ASWB Hub and CCFW activities just kept rolling along through the months building up to October 2009. A small committee of voluntary professionals coordinated the planning and implementation of the CCFW event, facilitated ably and imaginatively by Ms Elaine Garrison based in headspace Central Australia. It took a lot of effort to quarantine this process from the battles over money being waged with headspace national office. But in the end it worked.

Struggled through this week, trying to hold together the multifaceted vision while feeling everything is totally fragile… But I can only find the motivation to go on through all this stress if there feels like there is a chance of really achieving properly linked-up government and community: with real
social inclusion happening through breaking down the silos and establishing collaboration between agencies, NGOs, families and young people (Lloyd 2009: Journal 23/07/09).

What the author noticed, in working with a range of bureaucrats and service providers, was that some had a value system based on their own way of surviving within the economically rationalist, managerialist environment of “doing what you’re told”, and others played a game with that mentality from management and tried to get away with more personal ways of working despite “the official line”.

These local Alice Springs people in the ASWB Hub were of the same mindset as the special guest presenters brought to the CCFW event in October 2009. The visitors were all of the same ilk, and they promoted operating that way – ie. networking for the common good, by collaborating to get around official restrictions in ways that valued people’s lived experiences and feelings. It was an inspiration in the work the author was attempting, in trying to make headspace Central Australia relevant to the lived experiences of young people and families in the area. To share with others choosing to find a way around the rules that prevent spontaneity and people-responsiveness was refreshing, and it gave hope to a situation all too often buried in red tape and shortsighted management. The trend here was one of embracing more socially inclusive approaches to community development, which links people together to be able to support each other’s wellbeing:
More and more the message I am getting is to work with families and communities as well as young people. We all need to belong, and the problem for many of our guys is “to what?” So I’m hoping to develop some models that can work in Aboriginal community settings – to address Girl Fights, Put Downs, and the general Social Dislocation that leads to young people’s mental distress. So that means whole community solutions, “re-connecting” (same as “Kanyini” from Bob Randall), and introducing some positive ways to re-relate. (Lloyd 2009: Journal 02/08/09)

THE OUTCOMES

After seven months of voluntary, out-of-working hours operation, the ASWB Hub held a major event for over 150 people, which brought together workers from all fields of human service – education, health, welfare, business, NGOs, churches, justice agencies etc. This proved to be a milestone in local community moves towards collaborative development in human service provision. It led to major discussion around the community long afterwards, that such approaches were preferable to the dominant paradigm of top-down managerialist systems, driven by “bottom-line budgeting, quality control and accountable assessments of key performance indicators”.

These indicators were said by many participants in the ASWB Hub to usually lead to lip-service-only provision, through nominal paperwork and little change on the
ground. Compared with the inter-personal, interactive ways the ASWB Hub operated, there was little to be said for the stodgy, compliant approach.

Tried to do some tidying up and catching up at headspace yesterday, and to work with Elaine (Lainey) Garrison on the Prof. Dev. Event details for October 21-22. Deeply tired, but conscious that we are in a place where we can level out and consolidate on what we’ve got started – mainly networking with others… The whole array of influences affecting headspace can fall like a house of cards, or it can develop creative tension and find strength, as Bucky Fuller (ie. US design scientist of the 20thC, Buckminster Fuller, who invented among other things the Geodesic Dome, an energy-transferring breakthrough in architecture and design generally) showed, in Tensegrity. We need to all push together and meet at strategic points of ephemeralisation, like points on the geodesic dome. headspace’s network hub needs to be a linking of energy and intention to form a mutually supporting scaffold – as the Restorative Community people argue. I can feel the rightness in the combination of people arriving together around our activities now – but I don’t know how to link them up yet. It will have to evolve over the coming months. (Lloyd 2009: Journal 16/08/09)

Andrew Mawson expressed a similar perspective in the Bromley-by-Bow experience, when he said that “Our aim was to empower local people to make choices and ultimately take responsibility for their own lives. It was run by a
committed, integrated team of people working collectively, rather than simply co-locating their services on the same site.” (Mawson 2008: 109)

headspace Central Australia began to move in that direction while the author was manager there (March–October 2009). But more importantly, the ASWB Hub began to bring an active network into rhythmical operation, creating events and a communication web that gave voice to the real concerns and aspirations of community members.

These all came to a head on 21-22 October 2009, when the CCFW event was held at CDU Alice Springs. The result (gleaned from evaluation sheets collected afterwards) was 150 people sharing concerns and aspirations, such that they were inspired by the visiting presenters, and went away determined to make a difference in working better together in future. The main elements of the event that fuelled these aspirations were:

• Creating whole-school cultures of social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB), by working with children, families, teachers and community members to allow free expression of feelings and experiences, in a no blame way, that helps people take responsibility for themselves;
• Exercising Restorative Practices in communities, so that people who are experiencing distress can join with others in seeking to create mutually collaborative
solutions, that are not based on rewarding some and punishing others, but on valuing everyone as being part of the solution;

- Bringing justice, health, education, business and welfare workers, and young people and families together in local community settings, to create better pathways for young people who may be in distress to find support in engaging with education, training and employment that is relevant to their lives and offers positive futures.

The general consensus at the time of this major occasion was one of unanimous celebration. The author’s on-going problems behind-the-scenes, with headspace funding and battling a managerialist head office mentality, were sadly a dampener on this unique event. However, the prospects looked good for the future in Central Australia.

What reflection I can scrape up now – in total exhaustion – says that a very valuable & meaningful sharing began at CCFW. It will fade immediately if not followed quickly by flow-on energy for change continuing, and collaboration being at the heart of that change. (Lloyd Journal: 24/10/09)

At the time of writing, five months since the event, the ASWB Hub has held another, smaller one day Professional Development event for 20 people (11/03/2010), and maintains its local, ground-up approach. This again echoes Andrew Mawson’s views on the elements needed for effective local social entrepreneurship.
(Having) a real feel for people and great empathic insight into the lives and problems of local residents… (understanding) the inner dynamics of the dependency culture that dominates the lives of many in surrounding estates… caught in the benefit trap… it began to create a rhythm to the day for many people… a reason to come together and care for each other. (Mawson 2008: 122-3)

The hope of this author is that such community dynamics, and applications of local shared knowledge and passion, can be supported by more of the officially sanctioned policies and programs, and their associated budget lines. These are currently misapplied in his view, in an economic rationalist, managerialist paradigm open to bullying, fear-induced compliance, and over-accounted impression management exercises. That compares with the ASWB Hub’s philosophy.

The work of the ASWB Hub will now go on to develop more links between employers and community groups, to work together with schools and health services to improve how we all combine forces to solve problems and build new opportunities for young people and their families (Riedel, ed 2009: 34–35)

At the 11 March 2010 Professional Development event, facilitated by the ASWB Hub Management Group, the workshop took participants into deeper engagement with socially inclusive strategies for use in schools, health & community services,
as well as business environments. The sessions included: “Restorative Practice, Narrative Therapy, Family Group Conferencing and Choice Theory… provid(ing) a good back bone for professional support.” (Vandermolen & Dearman, 2010: 3) This list indicates the scope of concerns and applied strategies the ASWB Hub is continuing to develop.

Such practical approaches promise improved collaboration and shared practice, in a context removed from the lock-step style of inter-agency meetings as they have developed in the age of managerialist domination. People attend ASWB Hub events largely in their own time, and they seem to commit more of their sense of self and group identity-building to the shared processes there. This indicates a return to shared work for the common good, rather than management-driven focus on “measurable outcomes’ and ‘Key Performance Indicators”.

REFERENCES

NOTE ON SUPPORT

This paper describes an activity that would not have been possible without the financial and management support of the headspace Central Australia Consortium, chaired by Ms Donna Ah Chee; and with the dynamic project facilitation of Ms Elaine Garrison; and with the on-going dedicated work of Carmel Vandermolen (Youthtrax Group Training NT) and Valerie Dearman (Women’s Information Centre, Alice Springs).

The experience of managing headspace Central Australia was a strong reminder of how important it is to put people and relationships before money and system hierarchies. The GW3TS tribe had shown me how to operate in a special zone of relating, and in all my work since, I have focused on expanding the notion of ‘relational learning’, as a key strength in humans’ ways of growing and developing in each other’s company.
5. REFLEXION 5 – Emotional Syntax

If ‘syntax’ is the ‘grammatical arrangement of words, showing their connection and relation’ (Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary 2008: 1450), then I choose to use ‘emotional syntax’ to represent the way our GW3TS tribe arranged itself, showing its connections and relations. My own place in that web of connections was always in flux, shifting from playing my own necessary role facilitating arrangements and interactions, to receiving feelings, gestures, observations and direct comments from across the syntactical space, whether I liked it or not. In the Northern Territory context of this work, relations were not as intimate as those in the field group for GW3TS in Sydney, but they were still very connected and gave rise to strong collaborative engagement and personal interactions.

And reflecting on that experience, it was not always my preferred choice, to receive or have to give energy to emotional exchange in this tribe. I had as much ‘bad attitude’ on some days as anyone else, in the scratchy group of souls that made up our community of belonging. But the inevitable result of being forced into engaging by my coordinator’s and facilitator’s position, was to create a movement in me. The movement of unconditional love ultimately, as the witnessing of others’ contributions, and their response to my contributions, made me come out of my shell and interact – even when that interaction felt weak or inadequate.

This was actually living out what I had described as the ‘electric current effect’ in my earlier work leading up to GW3TS: “Confusion and entrapment in the mix of
states called schizophrenia are alluring aspects of ‘the disease’, which can turn on and off like a faulty electric plug… It is like getting emotionally electrocuted over and over, and going back for more because parts of it feel so good (Lloyd 2005: 141).” What GW3TS aimed to do was redress the imbalance that states like schizophrenia cause. I just didn’t know how powerful the effect of our group dynamics would be, on my own fluctuations in sense of self and affect. It was regularly overpowering, and remains a source of instant emotion, whenever I spend a few moments reflecting on the qualities we shared in the zone of our intimate symbolic ritual exchanges.

Often I didn’t know what to do, and I didn’t have the intention to try to control anything, or to predict how things should work out. It was a risky, scary business. A mystery, and almost always wonderful in its vitalizing outcome. We had a strong experience together, and we all took away from it the full value of whatever was going to inhere in our lives.

While I have agonised in earlier reflexions about the various ways that I tried to ‘capture’ this experience for the purposes of this research, maybe the essence of the experience wasn’t truly available for recording. Perhaps the essence lay in invisible, transitional moments – in the energy exchange of consciousness that participants went through when sharing these experiences together.
Reading William Johnson’s *The Inner Eye of Love* (Johnson 1978, Collins, London), on mysticism and religion… this feels like it’s into the zone of GW3TS, the spiral/vortex model of consciousness (Note @ 03/06/10: which I developed to picture what was going on energy-wise between the GW3TS participants), linked to “the conclusion that mystical nothingness (and in particular the apparently negative non-action) is dynamite. It is the power that moves the universe and creates revolutions in human minds and hearts. For mystical nothingness, properly understood, paves the way for the dynamic action of grace. ‘When I am weak, then I am strong’.” (Johnson 1978: 10) This leads on to exploration of the appropriate word for what GW3TS is aiming to achieve, for ordinary people living with intellectual disability and/or mental illness. It is beginning to feel like this could be, not ‘reconciliation’, or even Deborah Bird Rose’s ‘recuperation’, but more like *redemption*… ‘to recover possession’ (of yourself)… ’to reinstate in someone’s estimation or good opinion’… which crosses over with Husserl’s transcendental experience, and its experiencing self (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal* 28/10/05).

Something in this process was also about the essence of community, and how its interactive alchemy is centrally involved, in our ways of transforming ourselves and being transformed in relationship. ‘Recording’ that might have destroyed the very spontaneity which made it work – in an eco of Aboriginal people’s criticism of whitefellas’ obsession with the written word, ‘the official record’, ‘the his-story’: ie.
(to paraphrase) ‘When you write it down on paper like that, it kills the life of the story, which needs to come alive in each telling by the storyteller.’ What is more, the distraction of ‘getting it down on disk’ can create a barrier to some people even ‘coming out to play’. I don’t know the answer to that quandary, but I believe GW3TS entered the zone frequently where transformation occurred.

Our transforming energy came from our interactions, which were akin to Chaos theory in being everywhere and interconnected at the same time. “This capacity we have been given to change – to transform – ourselves is so extraordinary (Scott Peck 1990: 179),” that it’s not always capturing repeatable patterns that is the most important outcome of research, I would argue. More, the value lies in knowing how to create and enter the zone where the transforming chemistry is likely to happen. GW3TS did model that, even if I sometimes forgot our effectiveness at it. And it wasn’t always about neat, or even pleasant connections.

Yesterday morning’s burst of creative integration (coming up with a spiral model of individual and group consciousness for what was going on in the GW3TS tribe) immediately had an interruption due to Margaret (my wife) and I having an argument – over arrangements with the children re where to have Christmas. It’s so interesting how closely the threads of grace and anger can be wound. Unpacking the binaries, unwinding the threads of vital force flowing up and down our lives, requires steadiness and focus. Without that to calibrate what we are attempting… we can get thrown off balance…

This perspective, on valuing love over rational control, but also as a source of better mind function, provides a counterpoint to the recording obsession of the mainstream research process. That feels to me just like the ‘testing and assessment’ fetish of most education environments. ‘Where is the proof if you can’t test them against something?’ is the mantra of mainstream educators and their media allies. As a lifetime ‘freeschooler’, I believe we experience our learnings and express them when we’re ready, regardless of what’s recorded about our ‘performance,’ according to someone’s set of criteria to measure our knowing/feeling/imagining/believing etc. Even writing down autoethnographic reflexive texts can be seen in one light as ultimately restrictive of the spontaneous transforming alchemical process.

This is a challenge for me, as I try to interact with the politics of representation in mainstream health and education environments, which require ‘evidence’ to justify on-going funding. It is a quandary, but one worth continuing to grapple with, where I hope my contrary views may help to widen debate and reflection, by those managing the resources that fund and equip or disempower the processes of community healing, learning and development.
Something of this perspective is what Bronwyn Davies was getting at when she and her colleagues reflected on the double-sided impact of the act of ‘writing’: “Cixous says of her own writing: ‘Writing is good: it’s what never ends. The simplest, most secure other circulates inside me’ (1991: 4). While we assent to this as an idea(l) that we imagine when we write:

In our memories we also find that writing can be dangerous, even ‘bad’ in terms of the consequences. Writing is always writing in context, and each context (itself constructed) invites particular readings. Particular contexts can make the writing dangerous, no matter how good or true the impulse to write (Davies & Gannon 2006: 109).

So for GW3TS and the Northern Territory follow-on projects, rational processes of writing down, recording and analyzing interactions between people can end up preventing the very process it is meant to valuing and evaluating – due to the corralling effect of recording. The free spirited nature of people’s spontaneous interactions are themselves the essence of what is most important to protect.

So it is ironic that, while the sharing of stories was crucial to our journey with each other, GW3TS has struggled with its storytelling to a wider audience. In the context of academic research, I often feel that our worst enemy in that struggle has been the positivist prescription to ‘write’ effective outcomes-based evidence. In contrast, Indigenous storying, as I have often witnessed and tried to learn from, requires
ongoing narrative ‘wrapping’, not capturing of information that is then ‘recorded’
for the duration as a set of captured ‘facts’. GW3TS was much more like that,
wrapping us all in the emotional syntax and then letting that soak through into our
beings – each one of us taking from the experience what we would. And the whole
thing being added to each time we met in the circle.

Vitalizing dynamics are difficult to re-present, in a static form like written text.
GW3TS was such a spontaneous interactive phenomenon, that I often felt guilty for
being there in this role as ‘the researcher’, and not just giving everything over to
having the experiences and leaving it at that. But I know this process of sharing is
valuable in linking with others interested in broadening our ways of doing this work
in community.

Catherine Derry’s thoughts, on her use of drawings to reflect on childhood
experiences of bullying, echo something of what I’m battling with in this context of
GW3TS’s emotional syntactical aesthetic:

Artistic forms of representations have been seen as a challenge to prevailing
modes of discourse, ‘Indeed, it is this emphasis on “embodied praxis” (ie.
performance art) and “visual narratives” (ie. autobiographical art) that, we
have argued, provides an important counterweight to the predominantly
textual forms of representation’ (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 206). It is
very important to me that my work engages my audience emotionally. In my
own academic experience, lines of black and white text may help me
intellectually to understand feelings and emotions, but I do not emotionally
connect with them (Derry 2005: 40-1).

The message here is one of initiating and facilitating a process that can then run by
itself, without having to focus on evidence-recording while involved in the activity
itself. Perhaps I would have been better to leave the whole assessment of this work
to a series of focus workshops, after everyone had had time to digest what
happened. At least then I would have been freed from feeling the contradictory
tension between expectations of evidence-gathering and desire to maintain the
spontaneous essence of interactions.

By now it must be ‘evident’ that somehow I still carry a sense of failure with regard
to GW3TS, a concern that I didn’t ‘capture’ well enough the aesthetic experience
we shared every time we met. But I can also reflect on that non-outcome as having
actually preserved something precious in the lived, embodied, and what I regard as
the publicly invisible and spiritual, experience of the participants alone. Elsewhere I
have called this ‘the provenance of absence’ (Lloyd 2005: 167-8) – ie. the way
people living with disability are invisible to the mainstream world, giving them the
advantage of largely being able to define their own world ‘living under the radar’.

So, even when I feel ‘short on’ in the dialectical evidence gathering stakes, I know
we know what we went through (in GW3TS and the NT on-going community
interactions).
I say this not as an attempted excuse for ineffective research methods, but as a private honouring of largely private business. It was something ineffable, something beyond words.

I am feeling as if, right now, ‘the theory, the concept, the integrated model of GW3TS’ has gone behind a cloud, behind my head. This leads to a slightly panicky feeling, but also a sense of just needing to maintain direction and faith, and allow the spirit to ‘guide my mulling’… “He will make an inner journey into the unknown. He will travel into ever new states of consciousness, passing through successive stages of the psyche and moving towards the ground of being, where dwells the great mystery which we call the Spirit of God (Johnson 1978: 97).” (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 06/12/2005)

Whether we identify with the Spirit of God, or with a shared universal human spirit, I believe GW3TS tapped into that source each time the tribe came together. It was palpable among the aunties & uncles when we shared after each event, and it remains strong in my emotional memory as one of the most powerful aspects of GW3TS. But talking about it here makes me scared, of the usual critique from dialecticians, that there isn’t enough rational evidence for such deductions. I can only fall back on some heavyweight uncles who have studied this territory deeply.
William Johnson’s descriptions of the East:West, embrace:release, of notions of Nothingness:Emptiness, aesthetic:ascetic etc (Johnson 1978), all lead to the space where contemplating what is mad and what is sane opens widely. I have an increasing sense of the free range-ness of life, compared to the neuroscientists’ notions of the degenerate, being the same energy but different wave functions. Something is forming into a more dense cloud right now – to become the essence of GW3TS’s on-going message of healing, growth and development… From ‘scared’ to ‘sacred’ means changing from ‘ca’ to ‘ac’ – ie. from ‘this’ (in the French version) ‘certainty’, to ‘reciprocal energy’ (ac = alternating current, in the physics usage). On the basis that the universe is made up of Truth, Love, Form and Change – with nothing at the core of all these, and surrounding it and us all – then our job as sentient beings would seem to be to get into balance with, knowing of and harmony with these aspects of our world (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 09/12/2005).

Taking up the metaphor of sport as a means of communicating the notion of ‘playing in the zone’, it is useful to recount how often members of the GW3TS tribe helped each other to realize they needed to ‘get their hands off it,’ when any individual started to get carried away with their own concerns and to forget the group.
One of the strongest messages in the GW3TS project and its NT follow-on activities has been that people work best in collaborative combinations, not going solo alongside each other, as is too often the case in community rehab’s – where each ‘client’ receives the service and gets shunted home after the day’s activities. There was spirit of teamwork and shared endeavour that we created together, and this has become a hallmark of the flow-on work I continue to undertake. One In: All In is the motto for effective personal results, through interpersonal engagement and relationship-building.
Lloyd, Robbie (2010), ‘One In–All In: Matching the Social and Spiritual Dimensions of Sport and Rehabilitation’, Paper under consideration for Special Edition of *Disability & Society* 2011:

**One In–All In: Matching the Social and Spiritual Dimensions of Sport and Rehabilitation**

**INTRODUCTION**

Being a sports fan and former rugby player himself, the author understands something of the special experiential dimensions of sport, and how they can transcend the purely physical aspects of hand-eye coordination, strength, prowess, speed and teamwork. Having carried a lifelong value from school days playing rugby, ‘One In–All In’, he has often compared this perspective with the spirit that applied in community-based rehabilitation (rehab.) groups he has facilitated. The first of these was in Sydney, Australia from 2004-7, with a group of about 60 multicultural participants between 18-35 years of age, and their volunteer buddies, and mentoring ‘aunties & uncles’. Then there were smaller groups in the remote suburban setting of Alice Springs, in the Northern Territory from 2007-2010.

This paper argues that applying a similar understanding to the sports phenomenon known popularly as ‘playing in the zone’, could improve the quality of rehab. group experiences and efficacious outcomes. This is said to be because the socio-spiritual motivating force, the vitalizing transcendent energy, of being engaged in a shared group experience of mutual focus and shared narrative, can be transforming and sustaining for those involved – both as participants, and as committed observers or
‘fans’. The author compares his experiences with Andrew Cooper’s work on sport’s ‘secret life’, “the realm of inner experience beyond the constraints of the ego’s habits of perception… the ever-present support on which everyday consciousness rests… the Life we have lost in living” (Cooper 1998).

All of us are to some degree ‘players’ and ‘fans’ in the sport of ‘getting a life’. This author’s PhD project formed an ‘open urban tribe’, in what was titled ‘Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs’ GW3TS. Here 60 young adults between 18-35 yrs, from multicultural backgrounds and living with mixed challenges of mental illness and/or intellectual disability, met regularly between 2004-7 in Sydney. They shared a journey of witnessing and testimony of their personal life narratives for three years, and they gave each other feedback and mirroring on how they seemed to be going in life (called ‘Working The Business of Life’ WTBOL). They met in a sustained rhythmical cycle of events, and shared their structure of feelings and experiences (SOFE). It was, according to direct feedback to the author from participants on each occasion, and the author’s own experience, a remarkable time of mutual belonging, acknowledgement and support.

This process is argued to be very similar to the pattern of each sport’s seasonal set of matches, including the cycle of return matches (ie. home and away games). And the history of sports teams’ and fans’ experiences is said to mirror the GW3TS tribe’s narrative about itself, as the whole group came to belong together and create its own story of the journey together. Some were players one day and viewers/fans
the next time they met. Some were volunteer buddies, who then became just as involved in sharing their SOFE as the original target group of ‘consumers and carers’. Others were human service professionals, acting as volunteer older mentors or ‘aunties & uncles’ (in the indigenous sense of unconditionally supportive non-blood relatives); and they too were drawn into the energy of exchange of SOFE and WTBOL.

The author journalled throughout the original GW3TS period and ever since, to record his own on-going SOFE, and to inform subsequent autoethnographic reflexive analysis of what transpired for him and the groups he has facilitated. Out of that on-going process of reflexive analysis findings like this paper have been drawn.

**SHARED SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF SPORT & REHABILITATION**

Humans are social creatures and we form into groups according to all sorts of motivations – from cultural and religious, to political and sporting allegiances. Michael Herzfeld has observed that “new ‘communities of imagination’ that may be larger than national identities are sometimes quite local or cut across existing allegiances” (Herzfeld 2001: 310). This was the author’s experience, in forming an ‘open urban tribe’ from a bunch of strangers, based on the motivation of helping each other. By forming unconditional friendships and active mutual support, for people living with the challenges of mental illness and/or intellectual disability, plus their carers, volunteer buddies and mentoring ‘aunties & uncles’, an ‘open urban tribe’ was created.
These participants were both ‘players’ and ‘observers’ (or ‘fans’, to use the sports audience equivalent term). People came to share their feelings and experience (SOFE) at each gathering, so they alternated between presenting (or ‘playing’) and listening & watching. This process created a pattern of witnessing and testimony, where each person’s story felt honoured in the telling, and also invited feedback. The sharing of unconditionally supportive mirroring and feedback became known as ‘Working The Business of Life’ (WTBOL), which acknowledged each person as belonging in the group, and let them know if they were seen to be heading ‘off track’. As Ethan Watters put it in his book *Urban Tribes*: “My tribe helps me be the best me I can be.” (Watters 2004)

All this was a shared ‘community of imagination’ (Herzfeld 2001: 310), because the participants needed to invest their attention and emotions in the shared storying that the group was creating. It was ‘the story that’s telling us’, which arose from a shared imaginative experience. Similar to what sports fans do when they invest their belief in their team, and attend or watch matches on TV rooting for their team to do its best. The GW3TS tribe were all therefore each other, and in so doing they created a spirit of togetherness that they wanted to return to each time, as they regularly told this author.

This process was very similar to what Andrew Cooper says of sport: “Sport entails history and memory… there is something cumulative about a sport. But it is much
more than that. A sport is a repository of tradition, lore, aspiration and craft.”

(Cooper 1998: 5) The GW3TS tribe told its own story, formed its own history, and then referred back to that story, to ‘remember the good times’ from former gatherings, thus creating its own ‘lore’ as the journey unfolded together.

Rehab. gatherings of ‘consumers’ (ie. people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability) have similar experiences to those of staff teams in workplaces, prison inmate groups, or passengers on long journeys together with many difficulties and interruptions. They all develop a set of characters and a story linking them altogether. So it is with sports teams and groups of fans.

This author has shared decades of fandom with his two brothers, each only a year apart in age from him, and all supporters of Australia’s national rugby team, the Wallabies. Since the 1960s the fortunes of this team have ebbed and waned, sometimes being world champions, more often being also-rans. The history and lore that has gathered around that team has kept a passionate conversation going over three lifetimes. Most of it not about success, but more the psychology of individual and team performance, the failure of effective coaching and teamwork to produce success, and the mirroring of our personal fortunes in life to that of this team.

Such passion and commitment could be likened to a religious fervour. In fact, Michael Novak’s *The Joy of Sports* describes the phenomenon eloquently:
I am saying that sports flow outward into action from a deep natural impulse that is radically religious: an impulse of freedom, respect for ritual limits, a zest for symbolic meaning, and a longing for perfection… sports drive one in some dark and generic sense ‘godward’… a faith without explanation.

(Novak 1976)

This description could also cover the experience of the rehab. tribe in GW3TS. Participants reported to the author that they felt ‘freer’ than most other times in their lives, when they were active in the group sharing process. They showed active respect for maintaining and not interrupting the rhythmical cycle of symbolic interactive rituals, which was established in the group’s meetings. This was despite many of the tribe being well known for non-cooperation and loud expletive outbursts in other rehab. settings, as this author had observed directly himself, when working as one of their rehab. coordinators in earlier years than the GW3TS project. The pattern would be one of participant detachment from activities they felt left out of, then protesting disruptive behaviours, followed by more attention in response to their negative behaviours. So the cycle would reinforce itself. Whereas the GW3TS rhythm was one of participants creating the flow themselves, then managing it themselves, then working to incorporate any others having problems by appealing to their own experience of feeling uncomfortable ‘in the group’. So individuals would be invited to share their story on some group topic, and invariably they would join in with an anecdote that entertained, and even informed the majority in a fresh way. And so this way, they showed an energetic engagement with the symbolic value of
each person’s personal narrative, as a metaphor for how to be for each member of the group. And these ‘pieces of evidence’ were also reported to the author in regular asides from consumers, carers, buddies and mentors alike.

The fact that GW3TS was formed on the foundation of people’s own stories and shared mutual support established an equivalent element of choice to that in the area of sports playing and supporting. Contrary to other rehab. settings, this one did not have compulsory rules and expectations confining the participants. They were there by choice. That element of voluntary involvement and engagement was a crucial aspect of the group’s success, according to this author. And it mirrors the sports players’ and fans’ choice to be involved in their team’s life.

GETTING INTO THE ZONE – PLAYERS, FANS & REHAB’S

Many people experience alienation in the modern suburban life that has arisen from post-war urban development. “Life in the subdivision… rarely offered the sense of place and belonging… the suburb is ‘merely a base from which the individual reaches out to the scattered components of social existence.’” (Oldenburg 1999: 4) This is one major cause of mental distress, as the author has heard from many of the rehab. group participants he has facilitated over the past two decades, in Sydney and in the Northern Territory. Urban living, whether cosmopolitan or remote in location, has a deep gap in its social heart. “Though proclaimed as offering the best of both rural and urban life, the automobile suburb had the effect of fragmenting the individual’s world.” (Oldenburg 1999: 4)
Bringing things back together, reconnecting the individual with a sense of belonging has been the author’s main pursuit in the field of community mental health and wellbeing – whether with young people, families, elders, carers or interested voluntary community supporters. Even individual employers and business associations have expressed concern about the alienation factor, leading to high staff turnover, as people suffer from a restless inability to settle, when they can’t find somewhere to belong.

Sport, and the places where sports players and fans meet (whether in the stadium, on the local oval sideline, or in front of the big screen TV in pubs and clubs), provides both spectacle and shared belonging. Conversation associated with the spectacle is an essential element in the sports fan’s experience. Sharing views, analysis and running commentary, that includes humour, insult and pulling the legs of peers who may have different allegiances. Sports anthropologists like Robert Sands (2002) and Kendall Blanchard (1995) have described the various perspectives of ‘players’ and ‘observers’ in different sport zones. But the common finding has been that participants in sport, whether players, supporters, coaches or journalists, become part of the larger whole in a validating framework of performance stages, or a series of doors, through which a form of rite of passage occurs for everyone who engages in the experience. This can be supportive, critical, humorous or detached, but it is mostly fully encompassed in a shared ‘community culture’.
Such was the experience with the GW3TS rehab. tribe, where the group would regularly ‘take the mickey’ with each other, and used humour to break through with comments on personal attributes and attitudes, that could otherwise have seemed critical and negative. This was what GW3TS called ‘Working the Business of Life’, providing mirroring and feedback in an informal, unconditionally supportive way, that helped each other get a realistic sense of themselves, while also knowing they belonged and were valued by the group.

The social potential of games was nicely illustrated in Laurence Wylie’s account of life in the little French village of Peyranne. Wylie had noted the various ways in which the popular game of *boules* was played in front of the local café. ‘The wit, humour, sarcasm, the insults, the oaths, the logic, the experimental demonstration, and the ability to dramatise a situation gave the game its essential interest.’ When those features of play are present, the game of *boules* – a relatively simple one – becomes a full-fledged and spirited social as well as sporting event. (Oldenburg 1999: 31)

This was a strong parallel between the sporting and rehab. groups’ experiences. It depended critically on ‘getting the vibe right’, or creating a shared mood that was not infected by personal preoccupations, conflicts, or attempts to dominate the social space. Everyone gave over to the all-embracing feeling of sharing in the experience of the game, and the colourful exchange of banter that went along with it. In the case of GW3TS, the group’s shared preoccupation could have been one
person’s moving story of their feelings and experience (SOFE) in quite a harrowing situation. But just as likely would be a pseudo-cynical aside from another group member, who had had a similar experience and had learnt valuable lessons (of commission or omission) from it.

The ‘X-factor’ in all these occasions was ‘being in the zone’ – whether for players having found their peak performance moment, or for fans being captured by the flow of events and forming into one mind among the whole group. And for GW3TS rehab. group members, it was being in the shared narrative exchange of witnessing and testimony that spoke a mutual language of imagination and feeling that cemented all present into one. This equated to what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi described in his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (Csikszentmihalyi 1990):

Csikszentmihalyi sets forth his findings on the nature of human happiness…

What do people feel when they are most happy? What is their state of mind?... all described the experience in essentially the same words. Its characteristics include deep concentration, highly efficient performance, emotional buoyancy, a heightened sense of mastery, a lack of self-consciousness, and self-transcendence. Csikszentmihalyi calls the experience *flow*. Today’s athlete calls it being in *the zone* (Oldenburg 1999:21).
This paper argues that such effects are possible and repeatable in rehab. settings, if those facilitating them are allowed to generate interpersonal exchanges which give people freedom. Freedom to be themselves, and to find the self-transcendence that comes from being able to take risks, and to feel safe to openly share feelings and experiences. This is not happening in the author’s experience of most rehab. settings, which are dominated by formal medical model clinical frameworks, and expert-driven exchanges. Until people are able to get ‘into the zone’, in a holistic process honouring their whole being, they won’t get much real benefit from such rehab. experiences, this author believes.

ONE IN–ALL IN: SAFELY SHARING FEELINGS & EXPERIENCES

Current clinical model domination of rehab. settings has increased the fragmentation felt by both consumers and carers, let alone practitioners seeking more holistic approaches, according to this author. Participants in GW3TS reported feeling lonely, ignored and invisible in their experience of mental hospitals and even community rehab’s, before joining this tribe. There were no personally-felt benefits in their participation in these settings, despite whatever diagnostic treatments they may have been subjected to.

This scenario can be starkly contrasted to the benefits accruing to those who join ‘great good places’ (Oldenburg 1999), those ‘third places’ (ie. not home or work)
where people socialize publicly, congregating voluntarily, often around shared playing, viewing and humorously commenting on sports and games.

Precious and unique benefits accrue to those who regularly attend third places and who value those forms of social intercourse found there… The benefits of participation both delight and sustain the individual, and the worth of the third place is most often counted in personal terms. Yet, even those profits of participation that seem most personal are never wholly so, for whatever improves social creatures improves their relations with others. What the third place contributes to the whole person may be counted a boon to all. (Oldenburg 1999: 43)

It is the argument of this paper that such individual and shared group effects don’t have to be limited to clearly identified public social leisure spaces. They should be achievable within the shared spaces where people living with challenges gather, to exchange perspectives and hopes for healing, growth and development. That is what happened with GW3TS, and its subsequent community-based rehab. equivalents in other settings, in the author’s recorded experience: such as the Day to Day Living Program at MHACA in Alice Springs (the Mental Health Association of Central Australia) in 2008, and the Elders –Youth Group at headspace Central Australia in 2009. The elements that are needed for success in such rehab. facilitation are the same ones Ray Oldenburg has described in his portrayal of great good places or third places:
The essential and pervasive rewards attending third place involvement include *novelty* (which is characteristically in short supply in industrialized, urbanized, and bureaucratized societies), *perspective* (or a healthy mental outlook), *spiritual tonic* (or the daily pick-me-up attending third place visits), and *friends by the set* (or the advantages of regularly engaging friends in numbers rather than singly. (Oldenburg 1999: 43-44) (italics this author’s emphasis)

These four elements are sadly missing in most rehab. environments which the author has encountered. They require the leveling or equalizing effect of great good places, which professionals all too often are uncomfortable risking in the company of their ‘clients’. But GW3TS showed this author that, once people were all feeling equally respected and acknowledged for being themselves, just as they are, ‘magic’ happens (as GW3TS participants, and others in the different settings facilitated by this author, reported themselves). And no one needs to fear being shown up, or losing self-image.

*Novelty* – we all need to get outside our own heads, and having spontaneous input from those around us, including humour and the unpredictability that sports matches provide, all contributes to the element of surprise that revitalizes us;

*Perspective* – hearing from others, about things outside ourselves, gives us a view of life, the world and ourselves that can refresh our being;
Spiritual tonic – whether religious or not, the shared human spirit produces vitalizing element in all of us, and this is needed to stop us from retreating into lonely ennui;

Friends by the set – having a group of people to relate with helps us to avoid any too intense exchanges with individuals, while giving the benefit of easy social interaction uncomplicated by any personal expectations.

Contrary to the common critique of sport as a training ground for cannon fodder, the notion of One In—All In can communicate teamwork, shared purpose and belonging together through a common bond. That was the experience this author had on the sports field, and when using this philosophy to inform practice in rehab. settings. When participants feel they belong and they have a purpose, their sense of self improves, and their energy for individual effort and resilience increases. This is not producing robots, but fuelling relationships and personal motivation.

WHAT’S MISSING IN THE CURRENT SCENARIO

Today’s consumer society is posited largely on targeting individuals to consume more, and to be active exponents of a personalized lifestyle. That trend is aped in health circles as well, where ‘patients and clients’ consume the diagnoses, drugs and directions given to them by clinical experts. No wonder so many GW3TS participants felt lonely when they joined the group. They were graduates of modern life.
In the absence of an informal public life, living becomes more expensive. Where the means and facilities for relaxation and leisure are not publicly shared, they become the objects of private ownership and consumption. In the United States, about two-thirds of the GNP is based on personal consumption expenditures. That category… contains the ‘alienated substance of mankind.’ (Oldenburg 1999: 10-11)

What is needed is a redefinition of what constitutes effective rehab. practice and settings. Removing rigid risk-management constraints, and actually taking more risks with allowing people spontaneous individual and group expression. These are not radical steps, but they challenge the antiseptic, silent and ‘expert’ professionally dominated atmosphere of the clinic.

People are meant to be social creatures, living and growing in relationship with each other. But the current atomized lifestyle we have allowed to dominate, and the ‘lonely consumer’ profile that results for so many people, is a major cause of mental distress. So this paper argues that we need to break the ‘perverted consumption’ cycle and enter into shared places of unpredictable human exchange – ie. fun.

In our society… leisure has been perverted into consumption… The paucity of collective rituals and unplanned social gatherings puts a formidable burden upon the individual to overcome the social isolation that threatens (Oldenburg 1999: 11).
When people are able to access the sort of group experiences described above, they can ‘get into the zone’ on a regular basis, and find new energy for going on in life. The revitalising and respiriting effects of such shared exchange is where human resilience is nurtured, according to the evidence of this author’s work in community over four decades.

It is argued here that, by mixing the diverse consciousnesses and attitudes of people from all over, mental health and wellbeing will be nurtured, recovered and sustained in our world. Currently we have no such ecumenical spirit informing the world of public health or rehabilitation.

The cosmopolitan promise of our cities is diminished. Its ecumenic spirit fades with our ever-increasing retreat into privacy… daily life, in order to be relaxed and fulfilling, must find its balance in three realms of experience. One is domestic, a second is gainful or productive, and third is inclusively sociable, offering both the basis of community and the celebration of it.

(Oldenburg 1999: 13-14)

Australia is often said to be ‘sports mad’. But this alleged ‘national obsession’ is currently not converted into an advantage in our places of healing. The argument of this paper is that the common elements illustrated by sports participation and viewing, taking people into transcendent places of uplift, need to be brought more
into the officially-sanctioned places charged with nurturing wellbeing. Then we can hopefully all ‘get into the zone’.

REFERENCES


INTRODUCTORY OVERARCHING ESSAY

SECTION THREE

This section aims to examine the theoretical, analytical and practical implications of the GW3TS project – ie. the overall body of work reported on here, in Sydney and NT, and its implications for community practice. The first section engages with the theory developed from this on-going field work, giving rise to new conceptions of what people can offer each other in nurturing healing, growth and development.

8. THE ALL FRUITS THEORY – OR, BREAKING FREE OF THE PSY ARTIFICE AND GETTING FRUITY

After working with the GW3TS tribe in Sydney, I caught the essence of how difference in consciousness has a way of bringing people together from vastly different life experiences, viewpoints, and expectations of life. This ‘mulling’ process proceeded over many years, and eventually led me to engage with the notion of ‘stickiness’:

Stickiness then is about what objects do to other objects – it involves transference of affect – but it is a relation of ‘doing’ in which there is not a distinction between passive or active, even though the stickiness of one object might come before the stickiness of the other, such that the other seems to cling to it. (Ahmed 2004: 91)

Sara Ahmed’s inspiring work in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, and the social concept of ‘stickiness’, provide a perfect introduction to this work’s principle
finding, The All Fruits Theory – ie. that human beings operate best in mixed combinations of people of diverse consciousness, and that by respecting this difference and avoiding the current reductionist medical model’s domination by pathologising labels (ie. of symptoms and diagnoses), it is possible to achieve a healthy way to nurture SEWB, balanced awareness, and individual growth & development.

My thinking about this subject came from bringing together threads from many different ‘disciplines’ (ecology, quantum physics & chaos theory, aesthetics, social poetics etc). And the eventual rationale arose when reading Brian Greene’s *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (Greene 2000). Greene’s argument convinced me of the validity of mixing up different energies of human consciousness, as just another natural part of the universe’s way of operating, as he described with regard to ‘superpartners’:

… when spin is considered, there is precisely one more symmetry of the laws of nature that is mathematically possible. It is known as supersymmetry…. ‘supersymmetry can be associated with a change in observational vantage point in a ‘quantum-mechanical extension of space of and time.’… if the universe is supersymmetric, the particles of nature must come in pairs whose respective spins differ by half a unit. Such pairs of particles – regardless of whether they are thought of as pointlike (as in the standard model) or as tiny vibrating loops – are called superpartners… if the universe
incorporates supersymmetry, then every known particle must have an as-yet-undiscovered superpartner particle. (Greene 2000: 173, his emphases)

This perspective opened up new ways for me to see the interactions between GW3ST participants between 2004-7, and those in the NT since then, from 2007-10. I noted in my Journal that: “If every known particle has a superpartner particle – then how we be determines how our partnering form of being ‘be’s’. And the change in observational vantage point can be ‘worked’ by our intention and motivation (ie. WTBOL) in being. And, like ‘stickiness’, this creates a field of relationality that allows much greater diversity in options of ‘how to be’ – ie. onto-diversity. That’s the rationale for the All Fruits Theory.” (Lloyd, Personal Journal 03/03/2008, in Alice Springs)

That perspective then began to colour much of my reflecting and exploration of facilitating human interactions – from mainstream school pastoral care settings, to Aboriginal community mental health workshop facilitation in Alice Springs and Katherine, NT, with visiting Maori colleagues. The patterns began to blossom out into my view of many different ways people interact, and how different traditions of thought equate to different patterns of human consciousness.

In the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet (Werner
Heisenberg, one of the founders of Quantum Physics, quoted in L’Orange & Dolowich 2002: 245)

So the theoretical position of All Fruits Theory (AFT) directly challenges the patronising ‘social’ categories, and pathologising ‘medical’ labels of different forms of consciousness, that currently dominate rehabilitation and supported living policies, programs and services. Just as ‘Queer Theory’ (Jagose 1996) challenged notions of gender, sexuality and desire, AFT follows the same tack into the realms of consciousness. And, as Annamarie Jagose described the queer project:

Like early gay liberationism, queer confounds the categories that licence sexual normativity; it differs from its predecessor by avoiding the delusion that its project is to uncover or invent some free, natural and primordial sexuality. (Jagose 1996: 98)

So too, AFT argues there is not some definable state of human consciousness to ‘uncover’, nor a special ethnic-like category of being to claim special treatment for. It wants to unpack the rationales that have overdetermined how people’s difference in consciousness can be alleged to veer from the ‘normal’. And to challenge in a positive way the ongoing labelling that limits our ability to ‘be’ our full selves, in how we express our inner feelings and experiences, and how we relate across our differences in consciousness in fully appreciative ways.
So the claim of this work is that the combined notions of consciousness, intelligence and behaviour have effectively been corralled into a normative zone, which now limits humans’ ability to be and to relate. And AFT is a theory wanting to break out of this corral. Again, Queer Theory sets a precedent here:

By rejecting what Michael Warner... calls ‘the minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation’, and favouring instead ‘a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal’, it demonstrates its understanding that sexuality is a discursive effect. (Jagose 1996: 98)

Likewise, AFT claims that diversity in consciousness, and the so-called intelligences and behaviours that result from it, have been turned into discourses that are shared among power brokers in the health, welfare and education fields. They are also ‘discursive effects’, aspects similar to the ‘performativity’ that Judith Butler used to describe gender (Butler 1990/2006). That is, they are processes of ‘iterability, a regularised and constrained repetition of norms’ (Jagose 1996: 87). Only AFT argues that instead of performativity, it is the ‘artifice’, the ‘mannerisms’ of the elitist cliques who manage the psy labels, which have been used to decorate the lives of the ID/MIs. This has then turned them into an industry, providing rich pickings for the ‘experts’, or ‘elites’ (as Raulston Saul calls them) in the helping professions, and the pharmaceutical manufacturers paid ‘to suppress these symptoms’.
What AFT aims to create is an invitation to get beyond these labels, and to explore active engagement with different consciousness, in ways that allow relating and interacting with equal respect. Thereby resulting in surprises, in experiencing the wonder and mystery of human being in transition, when we actively set out to appreciate each other’s diversity in consciousness.

To achieve this, AFT seeks to ‘denaturalise’ notions of consciousness, intelligence and behaviour (CIB), in the same way that ‘queer confounds the categories that license sexual normativity.’ (Jagose 1996: 98) And in the same way that queer refuses to take on an identity, and invites ‘an open-ended constituency, whose shared characteristic is not identity itself but an anti-normative positioning with regard to sexuality,’ (Jagose 1996: 98) so does AFT open relations between consciousness, without labels.

In the fields where constraint, regulation, protection and intervention are most extreme (except perhaps in ‘penal/correctional’ environments, which non-coincidentally are occupied in over-representative numbers by those living with Intellectual Disability and/or Mental Illness), there has developed an industry around difference in consciousness. Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, psych nurses, special education teachers, supported living care workers and sundry other jobs now hang off the lives of people of difference. This would be tolerable if these people were enhancing the life experience of their subjects. But they predominantly ‘do to’ not ‘share and explore with’.
And in that industrial zone, where many careers hinge on the continuing subjection of people of difference, to the expert opinions and interventions of professionals trained in how to ‘treat’ them, the dominant concept is one of compliance. This is the term most used in my own son’s case, whether he is showing compliance with the requirements of the system (ie. to take his medication; and to speak with respect to his supervising mental health team, about the fact that he has to take it, otherwise he is labelled as ‘non-compliant’; not to mention the fact that he is now mandatorily made to pay for the drugs he doesn’t like taking, but is legally forced to take). This is the chief indicator of whether he is to be regarded as ‘well enough’ to earn any freedoms, or to remain under the effective house arrest, which an on-going ten year Community Treatment Order regime has dumped onto his life. And he is one of thousands living like this across Australia.

But rather than war with these dominant forces of compliance, AFT chooses to declare open relations, and to invite embracing of each other’s mutual diversity in consciousness, just as Queer Theory did with fields as diverse as gender, sexuality, desire and identity-formation and fracturing:

Since queer does not assume for itself any specific materiality or positivity, its resistance to what it differs from is necessarily relational rather than oppositional... its denaturalising project is being brought to bear on other axes of identification than sex and gender... (including) ‘the fractal
intricacies of language, skin, migration and state.’ (Sedgwick 1993: 9)

(Jagose 1993: 99)

So AFT’s anti-normative positioning invites more ‘consumers’, ‘carers’, doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers and all the other professional categories, to embrace more open-ended versions of what human consciousness can include, both affectively and effectively. And to see the mannerism, the decorative artifice of psy’s labels for what they are: contingent versions of how humans may be, at times.

The origin for the expression Mannerism lies in an Italian word: maniera...

(it) is derived from one particular usage only: the absolute one. Maniera may in all cases be translated into English word style... a desirable quality of human deportment... a courtly grace. (Shearman 1965: 17)

This comparison with psy is very close to the bone. Because it has become like a set of courtly mannerisms that runs much of the psy world. The expert languages, the assumed superiority of those ‘in the know’ is very similar to the courtly world of Versailles, where how one performed the courtly graces was all that mattered. And ultimately Marie Antoinette’s total loss of connection to ordinary life left her remarking “Let them eat brioche!” which was something most ordinary people never even got to taste (Saul 1992: 488).
Marie Antoinette and her companions had lost all sense of what constituted reality. They had no sense of the limitations of court ritual (Saul 1992: 488)... Ritual always carries with it a directness and immediacy... Ritual creates a sense of heightened reality through the abstraction of concrete elements... (Saul 1992: 490)

It is the domination of psy ritual, and the denial of any healthy mix of other ways of sharing celebrating being with the mysteries of life, that needs to be challenged. What has happened is that an artificial set of descriptors has been given authority over how we should be, behave, and be regulated in our behaviour. Yet all we are talking about is an artificial creation, a form of decoration. Psy labels are labels, not factual things. They are meant to be guides to thinking, not objective truths. Yet they have now gained the weight of virtual authority over millions of lives. The ‘way it should be done’ has become ‘the way it is’. Echoes of an earlier time resound, especially in the world of ‘nip and tuck’ and ‘extreme makeovers’.

Maniera, then, is a term of long standing in literature of a way of life so stylised and cultured that it was, in effect, a work of art in itself... It was understood that maniera, whether in people or in works of art, entailed a refinement of and abstraction from nature... (similarly) ‘artifical’ which is now normally perjorative, implying something meretricious.. was not originally so, and in the 16th century the word artifizioso was wholly
complimentary, and to a great extent concomitant with maniera; books ought to be written, and pictures painted, with artifice. (Shearman 1965: 18)

This is chillingly resonant in a world of virtual living, and where pursing the perfect look through plastic surgery is becoming the norm for many people. AFT declares in such a world, dominated by psy’s labels, that we can all “lighten up”, about how to talk about mental illness and intellectual disability as different states of consciousness. To give permission to those of difference, to be celebrated equally along with everyone else, and to be released from the limiting descriptors of the elites.

Meanwhile, those elites have left millions in a state of complete neglect, as failing health and education systems across the western world illustrate. The rule of experts has left the masses unable to even access their so-called expertise, or only at a stupendous and unreachable price.

... if you begin to add such facts as that forty million Americans do not have access to medical care, you are also obliged to wonder if the problem lies not with the population but with the elites, their expectations and their own education... never has such a magnificent elite failed so miserably and done so with such little grace, insisting as it does upon blaming the lowest end of the social scale for much of what is wrong. (Saul 1992: 142-3)
The social justice implications of this situation are clear: large numbers of people are having their lives ‘done in’, while others are reaping the benefits of being ‘the experts’ who are the only ones capable of and allowed to decide what should be done with them. This stems from the expert psy silos that dominate health and community services – from psychology and psychiatry, to occupational therapy and social work.

The obsession with the particularity of the various professional groups is so strong that even when people wish to criticise their elites they cannot. There is no language available for outsiders who wish to criticise intelligently... this self protective, self-satisfied provincialism resembles, if anything, the dialect and mannerisms of declining aristocracies. (Saul 1992:122)

Unfortunately there is no sign of decline in the silos of psy. Their dedication to maintaining expert control, and their detached distance from the lived experience of those they control, mean they never question what they’re doing from the other’s perspective. Too much is at stake to allow questioning of their expertise, and besides, all their entitlements are built into the industrial framework that rewards them for behaving this way.

Meanwhile activists for mental health reform have promoted an inversion of the so-called symptoms that define madness. Such as the Hearing Voices Network (HVN), which directly challenges the medicalised symptom approach. This turns the
concept upside down, and claims that all people can hear voices. It resonates with Queer Theory again, in challenging assumed positions and the meanings of terms that have become artifices.

Like the deconstructive (narrative) therapy (of Michael White et al 1987,1991), the reality of voices is taken seriously, and the ‘symptoms’ are ‘externalised’ so they can be addressed by the hearer as part of their reality, as harmful or helpful to them. Rather like ‘queer’ politics, which draws in ‘normal’ perversions into the range of experiences that the movement is fighting to have recognised as valid as part of the variety of humanity (Butler 1990), so ‘hearing voices’ is reconceptualised as something that everyone is affected by. (Parker et al 1995: 126)

What AFT wants to achieve is a liberation from the psy labels, and a new discourse and set of power relations, around how people of difference in consciousness can be understood and acknowledged in our society. “... we are concerned with the practical relations between the pathologized and the pathologizers, with the relations of power, with politics.” (Parker et al 1995: 127)

All Fruits says it is OK to be different, to have different experiences, and to be in the world in a different way. And at the same time, it is not OK for psy labels to load people up with the responsibility for ‘not being normal’, when we know such a notion is a fiction anyway.
... when the individual person ‘having the problem’ turns up in front of the
social worker, doctor, psychiatrist or psychologist, they are treated as if they
individually contain all those characteristics which obtain to their
community. This process is one of ‘subjectification’. You will recognise the
foucauldian theme here of the person in contemporary psychiatry being
forced to take responsibility for their distress. The position that is made
available to subjects of this psychiatric gaze is one where they must display
appropriate cultural attributes to be normal. (Parker et al 1995: 45)

This is exactly what I have observed with many members of the GW3TS tribe.
These young men and women would challenge the person in authority, and let them
know when they were not happy with what they were being told. And this action
was then turned against them, as something needing to be effectively ‘punished’, to
ensure future compliance, ‘for their own good’. The impact of class dynamics is
also undeniable here, where middle class operatives assume their ‘rightness’ and
professional superiority over the self-determining capacities of the less empowered
disability pensioners.

... explanations are haunted by the familiar dualism: it is class that both
causes misdiagnosis by professionals (who are likely to be middle class) and
causes psychological distress. (Parker et al 1995: 45)
AFT joins Queer Theory in sitting out in the open and declaring it’s time we ‘got over’ the problem of difference (in this case in consciousness), and just let people ‘be’. Then the alleged value in professional training and diagnostics needs to offer something more than working to ensure ‘compliance’ to a norm.


While generating a rhythmical process of interaction and ritual exchange between tribe members, GW3TS also created a pattern that could be used to inform the dynamic of other rehabilitation settings. This relates to the concepts of ‘fit and flow’, linking the familiar with the strange.

I believe that GW3TS exercised some of the same energy exchange that occurs between the therapist and client in psychotherapy. As Russell Meares reflected, about Anais Nin’s remark in her diary (musing on her progress in psychoanalysis with Otto Rank), “‘Analysis has to do with flow, I am flowing again.’... The therapeutic conversation might now show the elusive, capricious, associative shape of the flow of inner life.” (Meares 2003: 210)

What GW3TS witnessed, generated and celebrated, was the flow of the individual and shared ‘inner life’ energy of mixed consciousnesses. We did not concentrate on making up a scientific predetermined set of conditions, or analytically determined set of criteria to be assessed. We just ‘let it go’, being together, and observed how that felt and seemed on reflection. The result was that a pattern emerged, a rhythm
of flowing inner life connections, between us all and within us. Not everyone ‘got it’ all the time, but most people got it a lot of the time, because that’s what they kept saying they came back for, “the magic.”

A baby cannot exist in isolation, independent of a human environment. Neither can consciousness stand alone. It is an aspect of an ecology, or dynamism, of which the environment, particularly the human environment, is an essential part. (Meares 2005: 202)

Our tribe used to bring together our life energies as a set of gifts to one another. Sometimes we might be withholding, due to insecurity, fear or hurt about something – this happened for T., D., me, N., A. et al (various participants not identified), depending on the previous day’s events. At other times we might all be flowing freely, into a growing pool of energy that spread out like a ripple in a pond, washing over everyone sitting in the circle.

The most important part of the sensory environment, in terms of the experience of selfhood, comes from other people... the experience of the self arises in the context of a particular form of relatedness. This particular form of relatedness is mediated by conversation. (Meares 2005: 202)

So our conversations went into the pool. People shared about recent ups and downs, funny things buddies had shared together, or sad events in their families. The effect of this exchange was to draw everyone together into an energy field of shared
humanness, vulnerability, and openness to one another. Something like the effect American poet Wallace Stevens described as the mixing of the vital energies of writing poetry, with the cosmic energies that circulate through the world.

‘The world is a force, not a presence,’ he (Stevens) comments in one of this Adagia... Writing does not reflect or correspond to a world of things, but rather contributes to and extends the active processes and energies that flow through and thereby constitute that world. (Levin 1999: 2)

Something about this energy flow just felt intuitively right in the GW3TS tribe’s interactions. It felt natural, to allow people to just be, with whatever was coming up. The phenomenon I wrote about in my earlier work, what I called “echology” seemed to be playing out in practice here.

Listening to the echoes of thought was a process Uncle Bernard Smith (Australian art theorist and author of European Vision and the South Pacific) spent sometime reflecting on. His work explored the waves of Experience and Feeling passing across history, and he came up with the notion that echoes repeated ideas and perspectives through humanity. This is what I call ‘echo-logical’ thinking. It is a negotiative process, whereby new and old exchange energies in the distillation of knowledge... the echo-logical concept implies that humanity is in an on-going conversation with itself,
about itself. This is not narcissism, but the natural result of mindfulness.

(Lloyd 2005: 111-112)

None of it had to make sense in the rational system of judging conversation. In fact we always operated better when there was a strong sense of being ‘out there’, playing around with ideas, notions of how to be with life, or ways we observed the madness that is called ‘rational civilisation.’

Winnicott and others advertently or inadvertently challenged the hegemony of Western preoccupation with reason or rationality in relation to “reality”, character, mental health, and by implication, vitality. Traditional views of sanity and madness were deconstructed or turned on their heads, which was a step toward the growing acceptance of the paradoxical nature of human living. (LaMothe 2005: 11)

It was the very mix of eclectic consciousnesses in the GW3TS tribe that gave this exchange its vitality. Without that dimension of spontaneity, unpredictability, and ‘madness’ in whatever might crop up, we would not have had such a good time, nor I believe, had such frequent moments of self realisation and group awareness-raising. The feedback I got from all our meetings, varying in who gave the comments each time, was always how people had been moved, shaken with some realisation about themselves and the world, or generally uplifted into a place of
higher awareness, or hope about being human together. And that pattern continues in the NT today.

When I came to reflect on this phenomenon I was often overcome with a sense of inadequacy in trying to describe it. It was too big a thing to ‘record’, like you could ‘get it down on paper and show the evidence base’. It was a spiritual experience, too essential to classify and corral into some case study. Something happened in these times that was a combination of abandonment and design – but not conscious design, more like divine design, from somewhere we were not in charge of. Something of this understanding was shared among the American pragmatist philosophers, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William James, John Dewey and George Santayana.

Emerson’s “abandonment to the nature of things” serves less to indicate the possibility of arriving at an essential nature or core of being than to figure abandonment and transition as the nature of things. (Levin 1999: 3)

Something used to take us over in GW3TS meetings, even the small gatherings in my lounge room. We might have come together to discuss the documentary film, the photo exhibition, the next big gathering of all the folks, or to consider what our Advisory Group had to reflect on, about the whole project. But what would inevitably happen was that someone would share some feelings or experience and ‘we’d be off’. The mood would shift, the group focus would suddenly gather all
energies into the central pool, and we’d be into it – exchanging a sense of shared abandonment to mixing our consciousnesses. This phenomenon felt like the lived and embodied reality of what Chinese medicine teaches about the balance of our energies. Something about our sharing created a force for balancing all of us.

The teachings of yin and yang reveal a cardinal principle of Chinese medicine – that of moderation. It encourages us to embrace our wholeness and accept the rhythms of nature. Whenever there is a one-sidedness, it upsets the natural order and can lead to illness. Thus health derives from a flow between rest and activity, play and work, relationship and solitude. (L’Orange & Dolowich 2002: 30)

Hence the on-going work tends to take risks where others may adhere to set policies and program guidelines. I argue that the rhythm won’t rise is such controlled settings.

10. ANALYSING THE PROCESS AND ITS APPLIED IMPLICATONS

What I learnt from this work shows up in the answers to the three original research questions (a, b and c below) that drove the development of the original GW3TS project. I believe these have been answered clearly, in the way that the original open urban tribe operated, and in the way the continuing NT work is unfolding:

(a) What are the active attributes of consciousness, among those living with
intellectual disability and/or mental illness, which can be acknowledged, nurtured and developed, to strengthen their balanced self awareness, and assist them to take more responsibility for their lives? Plus those people who share this investigation with them. I believe this work has shown that people have elements within their consciousness that can form the basis of balanced self awareness. These are:

10.1 Structure of Feelings and Experience (SOFE) is made up of Mystery, Conversation, Relating, Imagination, Discernment and Wonder (MCRIDW) – Giving expression to these six parameters that stimulate, motivate, balance and support the intention of all humans:

- Mystery – the fact that we don’t know, and humility keeps us in healthy perspective;
- Conversation – Sharing our Stories Together;
- Relating – Caring & Sharing for each other is necessary for healthy balanced living;
- Imagination – Expressing our Creativity and sense of personal expression and exploration of life;
- Discerning Feedback – knowing that we belong, have an identity & purpose, and that we will get feedback form our peers, youngers and elders, giving us a sense of being held in our growth and development throughout life;
- Wonder – knowing that we are a tiny part of the whole picture of the universe, and that we need to keep reminding ourselves of that for healthy balanced living.
10.2 Working The Business Of Life (WTBOL) requires exercising through mirroring and feedback every day. I believe GW3TS has shown that this approach keeps us all in balanced engagement with our inner selves, our social selves and our larger responsibilities, for stewarding the sustained future of our world. This is a natural and healthy way to ‘be human’, and it requires taking personal and group responsibility for ourselves in an active engagement with our own tribe, not isolating and looking after number one, at the expense of any social relationships.

10.3 Interactive, Intuitional, Intentional, Rhythmical, Ritual, Relational, Ritual Cycles of Contemplation, Companionship, Communion and Celebration (I^3R^4C^5). I claim that these activities are natural and healthy human ways for getting together. And if we factor these sorts of approaches into more of our personal and community activities, social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) will result.

10.4 Truth, Love, Form and Change (TLFC). For any human healing and development activity to work in a sustaining way, it must be given the freedom and support to go through regular cycles of change, and to face its problems truthfully, without fear of ‘the program being scrapped because it didn’t work’. This kneejerk response cycle has dogged so many good programs in this field, that I believe we need to hold the line, and establish long-term programs that can weather the longer time spans needed to evolve and grow. So long as they are held to account in a truthful way, based on visions and principles that support the person and the group,
then they should be able to keep forming and changing, in a healthy expression of human adaptability.

(b) How can these aspects of self awareness, of thoughts, feelings and experiences, be used to inform improved individual and group empowerment for these two groups, and improved rehabilitation practice, in communities of inter-subjective relationship and belonging?

10.3 The answer in GW3TS was that we formed a circle of support, where people’s feelings and experiences were taken seriously, and where their ideas were heard in shaping how the project unfolded. This created from the outset a sense, not only of ‘ownership’, but of active participation, because it was fun and the core of the sharing. WTBOL meant sharing all sorts of business, not just what might be happening when anyone ‘had a problem’.

So if someone worked as a ‘consumer representative or advocate’ and was finding his work with the mental health consumers’ network a trial, others would share in the conversation that considered other ways to approach the project. Or a young man living with Down Syndrome might be having difficulties with his workplace, and discussion would proceed about how best to handle the relationship with his boss. Topics varied, from going shopping, to watching TV, to politics, sport, and personal crises. The messages from these findings, for future programs to factor in, would be:

- More engagement for participants in tribes like this with the general
community, in supportive contexts of equal respect, would be the first step to realising what the GW3TS and the NT projects have proved can work effectively. We did have general community members in our community of belonging or open urban tribe, and they did form meaningful and reciprocally-valuing relationships. This is what I believe becomes the basis for respiriting people who have been neglected and feeling invisible in the wider world.

• More respectful interaction with professionals is an essential part of improving health and human services. The ‘expert’ model has to be broken down, and people made the centre of their own recovery and growth, so that they have the main say in what happens, and the professionals are their allies in helping them realise their own goals.

• More rights to self-determination and having a major say in their own program management and staff selection. This is a key indicator of whether organisations are serious about person-valuing approaches. What GW3TS did was put ‘the client’ in the centre of everything, and then worked around their needs and desires, to form a supportive network, to help them realise their own goals. This should be a bottom-line default position of any future person-valuing rehabilitation, supported living or any other sort of human service support program.

• More accountability by staff and management needs to be assured when
anyone joins a program that claims to be person-valuing. This means more than rubber-stamping organisational accrediting arrangements, although they should be provided as well, only with checks on the accrediting organisation that are more rigorous than the ones it applies itself. Not, as I have directly witnessed myself, where an Accreditation Agency got an automatic tick off by its accrediting body, while its management had bred a bullying culture towards its own accrediting staff, totally contrary to the values and practices that its standards were meant to ensure and enforce.

- The elements of SOFE, MCRIDW, WTBOL, I^R^C^S^ and TLFC need to be reflected in how organisations are run – i.e. we need to see more fun, joy, taking time for stories, stopping to chew the fat, rituals that celebrate mystery and wonder, creative celebrations and communing, all the things that make for healthy human relationships. These need to involve management (in planning and hands-on running) as much as participants, to ensure these ‘leading’ people are not divorced from the core business of their organisation.

- Rehabilitation and supported living programs should always be evolving, so that as changes take place in participants capabilities, the processes that support their growth and development also evolve in new ways, to support their changing needs. The GW3TS project lasted long enough to be showing that its longer-term potential would have required more delegation among the group itself. We tried to do this, in forming smaller peer support sub-groups.
But this needed more facilitation than I had time to ensure then, and it failed to eventuate. Such approaches are essential to ensure participants get full opportunities to be themselves and still have a say in their lifeworld – determining program.

(c) By exploring collaborative engagement with ‘the system’ which serves these two groups, how can they be more effectively empowered, with appropriate support and resources, to manage the planning, policies, programs and service delivery, which largely determine their quality of life? And how can this sort of person valuing approach be applied in self-help, peer-supported, community-based rehabilitation within the system?

Having worked on setting up the Day-To-Day Living (D2DL) Program, for the Mental Health Association of Central Australia in Alice Springs in early 2008, I was able to witness how programs directly akin GW3TS can be set up, both successfully and unsuccessfully. D2DL started with a bang, and consumers got involved as soon as they felt the vibe of person-valuing approaches. But the association with a clinical service close nearby, and the tendency to defer to ‘duties of care’ regimes and ‘confidentiality requirements’ etc, put a dampener on the full evolution of the scheme.

Creative arts encouraging personal story sharing, and group witnessing and testimony were applied. But the latter was on the GROW model of 12 Step-based
community mental health self-support, and this was implemented in a stiff and complicated manner, which put a lot of people off. When it was done informally, personally, and with humour and mickey-taking, the story-sharing process worked seamlessly, just as GW3TS did, and subsequent work in the Top End has. The lessons were salutary – don’t take yourself too seriously! So what this indicated about future criteria for establishing such schemes was:

- Programs need to be recurrently funded, appropriately staffed, and given at least five years to prove themselves, before being significantly amended. Piecemeal changes every year or two make it impossible to establish continuity or adapt effective changes into programs needing amendment.
- ‘A Panel for Everyone’ should be the aim of all rehabilitation and supported living schemes. This would include members of friendship groups, different ages, and perhaps some blood family members, so long as they are assured of being supportive of independence for their loved one (ie. not controlling their every decision).
- Managers should be required to do at least 25% of their work on or near the front line every week, so as to stay in touch with clients, families, community and staff
- Ethical guidelines and accountability arrangements must be more than rhetorical rubber stamp devices. Monitoring, evaluation and enforcement of accountability must be on the basis of collaborative and client-empowering practices.
• Mixed groups of challenges, and ages, across the whole community should be encouraged.

• Humour should be built-in, and no one should be allowed to take themselves too seriously, especially management

• Regular, rhythmical rituals must also be part of the program, to ensureself-sustaining energy generation, along with all participants being given the opportunity to take a turn to leading, if they are ‘up to it’.

These were the main reflections on what lay at the heart of these community interactive projects, which could hopefully be developed in other settings, with appropriate political and bureaucratic support, and adequate resourcing.
6. REFLEXION 6 – Chronic or Chthonic? Echoing the unbearable cadence of being

One thing I have reflected on continually, as the ultimate source of GW3TS’s power and revitalizing essence, is that it was always about ‘soul work’. While this concept does not fit well within a conventional academic/dialectical framework, I have found supporting echoes in the work of the intellectual elders or ‘aunties’ and ‘uncles’ of my project – those writers who refuse to be confined by narrow notions of rationality and proof.

All of our problems, personal and social, are due to loss of soul… soul is lost in our everyday lives whenever we try to force ourselves to fit some norm of health or correctness. When the ever-creative soul is allowed to rise up from the deep reservoir of life that is its home, we become unpredictable and not easily squeezed into narrow expectations of what a person we should be. In the flush of the soul’s vitality, we become eccentric (Thomas Moore 2000: v-vi).

Thomas Moore’s words echo my feelings, about the core issue beneath the problems GW3TS’s ‘eccentric’ participants (uppermost being me) experienced with the mental health and disability support systems. And they echo my feelings about the journey of trying to fit this project within academic research confines. This issue introduces a key perspective on my reflective process, ie. that “we become an individual by following the lead of the soul (Thomas Moore 2000: vi).” And I
believe the soul can’t be captured by measuring, reporting, recording or even
describing. It is an ‘experience of being’ for each of us to explore. GW3TS did ‘soul
work’ by creating an environment where participants got to ‘just be’ together, at
their best when unconscious of others’ expectations.

Reflecting on my part in that, I believe GW3TS achieved a great thing, by simply
creating the environment in which the participants felt comfortable enough to forget
their problems and ‘be unconscious of themselves’, if only temporarily. And not
every time, by any means, but significantly enough to create real exchanges of their
‘inner stuff’. “The soul leads us into unconsciousness, and that for own benefit…
The soul takes over and from a dimmer place takes the lead. We don’t know exactly
what we are doing or whether we should be doing it (Moore 2000: 88).”

At the beginning of our third year together, in January 2006, I reflected on what had
shown up as the dynamic of exchange between GW3TS participants. At the time I
was reading William Johnson’s *The Inner Eye of Love* (Johnson 1978), in which he
reflected on the combined energy work conducted by our bodies and our spirits
together, when communicating on the level of the heart and soul.

“It is as though the body is spiritualized or sensitized in such a way that
one’s faculties penetrate beyond time and space and into the hearts of others
(Johnson 1978: 195).”… I know there have been many times when the
GW3TS tribe members have shown sparks of this ‘ability, gift, or
exchange’. Whatever the origin, purpose or supposed initiation of this phenomenon, I feel it is not limited to “those who have reached perfection” (Johnson quoting from St John of the Cross’s Ascent 2:24, 14). It seems to me to be something achievable by all of us, in the right frame of heart, mind and spirit, and in the right circumstances… GW3TS is an attempt to explore and describe simple, available ways that people living with challenges, and ostensibly without challenges, can come together and support each other’s healing, growth and development, through such exchanges. The gifts we each have to share with each other are not dependent on ‘reaching perfection’. They are available to all who choose to ‘work the business of life’ (WTBOL) (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 07/01/2006).

It felt ‘right’ to me whenever the GW3TS tribe got into this zone, even though it ‘looked like nothing in particular’ was happening – that was exactly the point. As Michael Jackson reflected in his memoir The Accidental Anthropologist: “Life is never more rare and precious than when it is simply lived. Everything is an adventure then, and time loops back on itself, endlessly renewed (Jackson 2006: 24).”

Something in my work for GW3TS tapped into this deep seam of soul among the tribe, and that included the professional aunties and uncles as much as the participants living with challenges. We all ‘felt the magic’, as we came to call it. I believe that my work continues with this element, and it has brought comments
since GW3TS finished that “you have created something extraordinary here” (from several Alice Springs community mental health project managers and participants).

I didn’t create anything, I just helped to facilitate the ground in which I and others could ‘go deep,’ and come up with our real soul-based being. That is what Thomas Moore calls the ‘chthonic’ territory:

To live from the mind is to balance in uncertainty on a high wire. The soul is more grounded, and indeed its proper territory seems to be somewhere beneath the ground. There is a fine word for this particular soul and its spirituality – chthonic. It is the level of ground where we plant our seeds and bury our dead. Maybe this is good ground for personal growth, rather than the kind that is full of intention and from where we can see what is going on (Moore 2000: 88).

I believe GW3TS achieved that sort of outcome, which is not one that can be recorded and measured in any dialectical process. It is the fruit of SOFE (Lloyd 2005), which reflects and celebrates our Structure of Feelings and Experiences by combining Conversation and Sharing with Imagination and Discernment, all topped off by Mystery and Wonder (forming the acronym MCRIDW that I used throughout the GW3TS journey). A pretty rich combination to fertilize our chthonic grounds of being. We have traversed the rich ground of hope.

The interactions that constituted GWT3TS were not, however, some wafting, ineffable essence. They were neither solemn nor abstract, but on the contrary were
specific, painful, moving, messy, and sometimes very funny. They occurred around my dinner table, crammed into my living room, around the meeting tables in public housing meeting rooms, and in public parks where we gathered to share our stories. They were very grounded and pragmatic. But at the same time, something ‘unaccountable’ was happening. As Thomas Merton points out: “The very essence of comic art – the stasis of comic ‘joy’– is found in the living balance, the poise between vital uncertainties and unanswered questions, which constitute, for a classic temper, the authentic mystery of life.” (Merton 2007)

I make no apology for deliberately entering this territory of the grand comedy in order to facilitate healing among GW3TS tribe members, and myself. I was more engaged in ‘being in it’ than reporting on its outcomes in a ‘scientific’ way. This was what the process asked of me. Moreover, an investment in logical, rational, ‘proven evidence’ would only have ended up in the same clichéd, mickey-inviting place that Bloom occupied in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*:

The moral and cultural death which Joyce found so stifling in the Dublin of 1904 consisted precisely in a mania for prescription and foreclosure, this fanatic closing of doors and throwing away of keys, this craze for decreeing that all problems are hereby solved and all questions answered (Merton 2007: 151).

Perhaps this project was only ever meant to be a modelling of possibility within mystery, to encourage more development among different communities – as has
happened successfully in several different contexts now. Troubling my own process, I can see I was too deeply involved, too overcome by the experience, to comment on it as though from a distance. I was just as much a recipient as a facilitator. But that was basically what I suspected would be the case all along. I have asked myself how the project could have been better represented, given my immanence to it.

While autoethographic writing has allowed me to narrate and make sense of my own experience as the facilitator of GW3TS, I still struggle to do justice to the mystery and wonder of it all. Words seem inadequate to describe the energy field we generated together, and the way that energy lifted the sights of us all, so that each of us could “be the best me that I can be” (to return to Ethan Watters’ finding in *Urban Tribes*, Watters 2004).

Something of that vitality was our secret: “this deep force of vitality, not intention and by all means not consciousness, that grants personality. In fact, a certain self-forgetfulness may be just the item that allows the soul to break through with forcefulness and creativity (Moore 2000: 89).” I believe GW3TS was exactly in this territory, and people who stayed the distance over the three years, many of whom remain in the loop today (ie. still showing interest in how each other have fared, since we were more regularly together), still refer to ‘the magic’.

What Robert Frost describes as ‘the work of knowing’ (Frost, in Poirier 1977) is simply this: that ordinary people share their stories of watching our
lives shift and change from one form to another. And in that dynamic, of FORM and CHANGE, lie the moments where our handle on TRUTH and LOVE, flowing within and between us, with our particular personalities and challenges, makes up our quality of life – and whether it is renewing, restoring, respiriting us regularly, or not (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 07/01/2006).

This meditation on the energy shifts between Form and Change was a thread throughout the GW3TS journey (along with Truth and Love). It remains a connection with my work today, and the strengthening message from GW3TS in retrospect is that we had continuity and sustained connection in the GW3TS tribe. Most community-based rehab’s don’t have secure, sustained connection between people, and certainly not in personal, spirit-building ways.

In an alternating current, respiring, systolic/diastolic way, this ‘work’ of GW3TS is the business of human life. As Eugene Stockton says (about Aboriginal culture, but it is equally applicable to all human interactions seeking health, growth and development): When we are not in celebration, of the mystery and wonder of life, we’re preparing for the next one – that’s the rhythm of life (Stockton (1995) The Aboriginal Gift: Spirituality for a Nation, Millenium, Sydney). To be reminded of this on the first day of this new year, on our walkabout journey together, is a great inspiration (New Year’s Reflection in Lloyd GW3TS Journal 01/01/2006).
I argue that those GW3TS experiences are like the ‘inspirations’ or ‘in breaths’, and the reflexions arising are like the ‘expirations’ or ‘out breaths’ – leaving a trace, not of positivistic ‘evidence’, but like steam on the windowpane of life. And my slow reflexion, on that thought from over four and a half years ago, is that it was prophetic in its simplicity, and dangerous in its complexity. Because when I tried to tell that story as ‘direct evidence’ I seemed to miss the essence of it. And when it came to deciding to go with an autoethnographic reflexive record from my GW3TS Journal, that approach seemed ‘forced’. It was like I chose to make it hard on myself, just as William Johnson said it is for those who go on that walk:

“In the Sino-Japanese tradition, spiritual training is called ‘gyo’ and is represented by the character which means going and walking, and which originally pictured a road or a crossroads… In other words, at the very core of Buddhism is the awakening or enlightenment so gyo includes anything that carries one along the way to this goal (Johnson 1978: 179).” All along, since the original masters thesis and then the book Going Walkabout Through the Suburbs (Lloyd 2005) emerged, I have had a sense of being guided on this journey. And the other reinforced message, that “mysticism is the gift of God and the work of grace (Johnson 1978: 197),” has been similarly reassuring: as all the dynamic rhythm of the GW3TS interaction ritual is about this, the work of grace. Flowing directly from ‘working the business of life’ (WTBOL) and Robert Frost’s ‘work of knowing’ (Frost in
Poirier 1977) – i.e. that we all need to participate with each other, in giving expression to the interwoven strands of the work of being, knowing and grace (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 01/01/2006).

So, by “going walkabout together” we all agreed to take on this challenge, to grow and develop alongside each other, with all the hassles that would entail. I believe that part of the success of the venture was the very ‘unconsciousness’ of all of us participants – the aspect of this work that I still call “letting it rip”: i.e. not strangling the process by having so much duty of care and due process restriction, that it is barely started before caution and fear-based, risk-averse stopping-and-starting have killed the spontaneity that creates ‘the magic’.

Ironically, the process of ‘doing research’ has demanded that I either stand back from my experience in order to evaluate it (as in positivism), or, conversely, that I subject that experience to minute investigation (as in autoethnography). My struggle then, in offering this iteration of the GW3TS journey within the varying conventions of social science research, is that I have been forced to encounter once again the very monsters who threaten to annihilate the “interwoven strands of the work of being”: rationality and self-consciousness. Perhaps, by contextualizing this as part of the modern constitution of self, autoethnography moves things to a level beyond mechanistic recording. At least in its post-structuralist iteration, autoethnography gets beyond navel-gazing and its prescriptions of failure.
My ‘writing self’ is a relational self – not every aspect of writing can be known and made conscious. So while deconstructing my self, I am exploring my self, as I have been in the experience and company of the GW3TS tribe members. There is an inter-weaving of these different strands of the self, and the painful journey of exposing them to the fresh air on the long GW3TS walkabout path, will hopefully give others heart to continue opening up such felt territory in the interests of improved health and wellbeing for us all.

In terms of future research, I can only argue for more person-valuing, embodied and witnessing & testimony style narrative sharing, as the foundation of strong new medical and educational aesthetics.

In the continuing spirit of exploring feelings and interactions of a ‘poetic’, ‘aesthetic’ nature, the following article tries to capture that aspect of the GW3TS work, and the on-going NT community development work. It explores the way people’s interactions create places that attract more people, if they share a special set of elements, which the GW3TS tribe called ‘the magic.’ Such invisible, ‘vibe-based’ aspects of cultural zones are the subject of social poetics (Herzfeld 2001), and my claim is that this area needs to be brought much more into focus in health and educational contexts, for better wellbeing outcomes.
Lloyd, Robbie (2010) ‘Using voluntary social poetics to transform ‘non-places’ in community mental health & disability services into ‘great good places.’ This paper has been accepted for presentation at the 10th Biennial ANZTSR Conference, 15–16 November 2010, UTS, Sydney – ‘The Third Sector as Civil Society in Australasia: Identity, Role and Influence in the New Century.’

Using voluntary social poetics to transform ‘non-places’ in community mental health & disability services into ‘great good places.’

ABSTRACT

The third sector should abound with ‘third places’, or ‘great good places’, which are not home or work but communal gathering spaces where people feel ‘at home being themselves’. Sadly that’s not the case, this paper argues, with many third sector, community-based rehabilitation and disability support centres practising ‘professionalized caring,’ resulting in their becoming not unlike the hollow ‘non-places’ of supermodernity – airport departure lounges, supermarkets and freeways. Dominated by mechanistic ‘duties of care’ and ‘due processes’, many third sector places have lost the sense of people relating equally, sharing mutual support across their differences, as this author’s work advocates.

KEY WORDS

Great good places; non-places; third places; All Fruits Theory; rehabilitation; disability support; supermodernity.
1. INTRODUCTION

Using a reflexive ethnographic style, this paper argues for transforming the third sector places of community-run mental health rehabilitation and disability support spaces (summarized here as ‘rehab’s’), by building on the voluntary spirit of welcome and unconditional acceptance that exist in ‘great good places’ (aka ‘third places’) (Oldenburg 1999).

By replacing the dominant professionalization of rehab’s, and mixing up people of diverse consciousness, as he did in his field work in Sydney from 2004-6 (in Critical Social Sciences at UWS), the author says that their social isomeric and mixed perspectives of consciousness can help respirit the ‘non-places’ that professionalized rehabilitation spaces and disability training rooms have become. And similarly, the way refugee populations and recent migrants are brought into contact with mainstream groups can also be rapidly improved with more attention paid to social poetics, as the author has been involved in creating in the NT from 2007-2010.

Such professionalization is a product of the same ‘supermodernity’ (Auge 1995) that created airport departure lounges, this paper argues, along with many other critics of ‘medicalization’ (Rose & Keigher 1996; Fitzpatrick 2002; Hansen 2005; Metzl & Herzig 2007). The same reductionist, minimalist approach that designs and manages spaces around a dominant paradigm of ‘the professional’, works across human services. In the particular case of rehab’s, dominant medical/clinical
and behaviourist training models for people living with different consciousness, due to mental illness and/or intellectual disability, have put the expert at the centre of things and buried the client under a mountain of objectifying jargon and distancing practises.

But it doesn’t have to be that way, according to this author, whose own field work modelled self-help peer-support. By ‘valuing the picture rather than the picture frame’ (Herzfeld 2001: 291) this paper argues for moving away from the arid abstraction in professional diagnoses and symptoms, to create vital, freed-up social spaces for mutually supported healing and development. That is, if the third sector agencies responsible for such care are able to reverse themselves out of the cul de sac of the monoculture of professionalization over person-valuing approaches.

By encouraging participants and professionals alike to ‘work the business of life’ (WTBOL, Lloyd 2005), by giving each other friendly mirroring and feedback about their feelings and experiences, the author’s work promoted a voluntary social poetics of transition, which nurtured vital healing and development forces among people of different consciousness. Just as our favourite coffee shop, pub or sports club promotes warm unconditional welcome & hospitality, so can healing spaces become ‘great good places,’ by revaluing people over the cargo cult of expertise.
2. HOW REHAB’S BECAME NON-PLACES

In the semiotics of modernism’s history, anthropologist Marc Auge argues that the progression from modernism to post-modernism to supermodernity reflected an increasing abstraction of places and spaces where humans can end up (Auge 1995). Three ‘excessive’ trends moved our society towards a distorted experience of identity and reciprocal relations, which previously made up ‘normal life’, according to Auge. People now experience an overabundance of events, spatial overabundance, and excessive individualization of references (Auge 1995: 18-21, 34, 39). All leaving us detached from a sense of belonging anywhere.

Auge argues that airport lounges, supermarkets and freeways are the ultimate examples of this effect of supermodernity. He says that “culture as text” is about “localised society” where people can relate to the scale of events, numbers of people, and activities (Auge 1995: 49-52). What he calls “anthropological space” is one where the “concrete and symbolic construction of space” can serve the needs of people. Such a perspective contrasts with what has happened in ‘the clinic’ or rehab’s, where too often people living with mental illness or intellectual disability get treated under a professionalized regime that is locked into treating them as packets of symptoms and diagnoses. And because of the domination of third sector community services by government-funded, assessed and accredited professional ‘duty of care’ and ‘risk management’ frameworks, such rigid coralling of clients has become both accepted and expected, as if it has to be the norm because there is no other way to ensure ‘standards of care’.
Patricia O’Brien and Ray Murray pointed this out over a decade ago:

Disability has been perceived as a disease-like condition infiltrating not only the physical but intellectual capacity of the person (Sullivan 1991). The sick emphasis of the medical model (Hunt 1995) negates life opportunities for disabled people who are viewed as health and safety hazards not only to themselves, but to others. The disability of the person is seen as a personal tragedy (Oliver 1990, 1996) that requires specialized intervention (O’Brien & Murray 1997: 67).

The argument of this paper is that necessary and essential elements for personal comfort and interpersonal connection do not need to be removed from rehabs, because of the dominance of the objectification the medical model, such that they are actually unhealthy for people who are meant to be there for purposes of healing and development. Rehabs can be rescued from becoming equivalent to places like airport departure lounges, supermarkets and freeways, in their depersonalized anonymity (Auge 1995), by third sector agencies reclaiming their ownership of core values investing in people first.

Currently, once ‘consumers and carers’ walk past the door of a rehab, they disappear as ‘people’ and join the same process that engulfs identity-less airport lounge travellers, supermarket customers, and freeway drivers spread across the suburban prairies, as this author has observed in numerous situations. ‘Professionals’ scurry here and there, the only ones ‘in the know’, dominating
decision-making, priority-setting, and budget allocations for how these places are run, and therefore how they feel for those receiving their services.

James Hansen also described the “devaluation of inner subjective experiences (ISEs)” by even the counselling profession ten years ago (Hansen 2005):

   The helping professions have become strangely medicalised over the last 3 decades as problems of living have increasingly been redefined as medical pathology (Barney 1994; Shorter 1997)… One would think that with the fundamental humanistic identity of the counseling profession, counselors would have reacted strongly against medicalization. After all, the medical model, with its emphasis on categorization and biological determinism, could hardly be more opposite from the humanistic ideals of the counseling profession that emphasise subjectivity and freewill (Hansen 1997, 2003). (Hansen 2005: 408)

Sadly, even after ten years of ‘reform’ in Australia’s mental health system, community-based organizations which form the core of the third sector, and a large part of mental health and disability support, have been forced into ‘compliance’ with regulatory and accreditation requirements, which echo the professionalization and medicalization that crush their former personalized values, as this author has observed directly working in this industry (eg. running a Day To Day Living community mental health program; managing a headspace youth mental health service; and managing units in a Clubhouse community rehab.).
Training in this field is also increasingly emphasizing the same mechanistic, objectifying, medicalized approach, under the guise of ensuring competencies are consistent across ‘the industry,’ as this author has directly experienced as a trainer, resisting the insistence on such approaches in training materials. Compulsory lock-step modularized skill sets reinforce depersonalized ways of treating people, who were formerly identified as personalities and valued for their eccentricities in third sector organisations. Now they are increasingly categorized and their treatments assessed according to objective sets of criteria based on the medicalized framework.

This increases the intimidation of workers in third sector agencies charged with a ‘duty of care’, as this author has also observed repeatedly and increasingly, working in the industry over the past 15 years in Australia. And the trend flagged in the US over the past 20 years is now emerging in Australia, where equivalents of managed care contracts (individual care plans) are further removing individual worker discretion, and replacing it with formularized ‘behavioural health care plans’.

The enormous growth in managed care… has staggering implications for people with mental illnesses… and for social workers employed in the mental health field who recognize the value of familiarity, affordability, and personal compassion… an oligopoly has emerged among key corporate players in the managed behavioural health care agenda in the past five years (Rose & Keigher 1996: 1-2).
The situation is heading in this same direction in Australia, as this author has seen in action on the ground in third sector community settings. The person-valuing philosophies and practices that inspired people to work in the third sector need to be assertively reclaimed if this trend is to be reversed.

3. HOW ‘A BUNCH OF FRUITS’ RECLAIMED AUTONOMY WITH THE SPIRIT OF GREAT GOOD PLACES

Using the cheeky expression ‘a bunch of fruits’ (in the tradition of Queer Theory (Jagose 1996), deliberately turning upside down the pejorative slang term ‘fruitloops,’ often used to refer disparagingly to people living with mental illness or intellectual disability), this paper argues for using voluntary social poetics as a refreshing, uplifting way to respirit the spaces known as rehab’s or disability support services. As occurred in the author’s three year fieldwork project from 2004-6 in Sydney, the gathering of people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability created a new energy of welcome and celebration together, wherever we gathered. And in the NT from 2007-2010 similar gatherings of people of difference (whether living with mental illness, or combining experiences of multicultural refugees and asylum seekers, who have been through multiple traumas).

This project was called ‘Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs’ (GW3TS), after the author’s earlier master’s research and book Going Walkabout Through The Suburbs (Lloyd 2003/2005), which projected trialling this model of
community-based, self-help, peer support. And it was built on third sector-style voluntary participation of about 60 multicultural young people (18-35 yrs) living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, and volunteer buddies and elder mentors (‘aunties & uncles’ in the indigenous sense).

Using personal narrative sharing, in a witnessing and testimony cycle, this ‘open urban tribe’ (Watters 2004), of about 60 participants living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, ‘worked the business of life’ (WTBOL, Lloyd 2005) together in a self-help peer support group.

Their experience echoed the story in Ray Oldenburg’s 1989 classic book on informal public places, *The Great Good Place* (Oldenburg 1999/89), which celebrates places where people ‘hang out’. He describes the demise of informal public gathering places, or ‘third places’ (after home and work) in western suburbanized communities. But the decline of such gathering places isn’t only a concern for sociologists and demographers.

It is argued here that those interested in nurturing healing and development in third sector rehab. places need to reassess the spaces they have created. If these have become places where people have been commodified into ‘patients, clients or consumers,’ passively and almost anonymously consuming an objectifying clinical culture created by the medical model, then that seems anathema to third sector foundation values.
Marc Auge’s “introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity”, *non-places* (Auge 1995) unpacks the phenomenon of “anthropological place”. This is the “concrete and symbolic construction of space… which serves as a reference for all those it assigns to a position… (and) is a principle of meaning for the people who live in it.” (Auge 1995: 51-2). Such a perspective is enlightening when one considers the impact of types of place on how well people heal and/or develop in health and rehabilitation spaces. The argument of this paper is that currently such places and spaces are emptied of the essential elements of hospitality, that create a sense of belonging and identity, and nurture the social relations that are a vital part of a healthy human condition. These are the core elements of third places, or informal public gathering places.

GW3TS generated ‘a principle of meaning’ and a spirit of mutuality that fostered relaxed identity-reinforcement, sense of belonging, and spontaneous engagement in fun and celebration on a regular basis. Along with moments of deep shared grief and pain, which became more bearable for being shared with a group of unconditionally supportive peers and elders.

4. **HOW SOCIAL POETICS CAN REVITALISE REHAB’S**

Linguist Roman Jakobson’s Six Functions of Significance included the ‘poetic’ as a “capacity to convey meaning by creatively playing with a recognizable form (Herzfeld 2001: 280).” ‘Social poetics’ are taken here as those relational interactions between people that combine expressive, emotive, and informative
exchanges. But they equally include the transition process, inherent in people’s lived experience. This was what the author’s field research tribe explored in GW3TS, which they then celebrated through shared expression of what had happened to them. And similarly, refugees and asylum seekers share extreme experiences requiring deep emotive exchanges to work through the trauma to healing.

The argument here is that this process is not essentially about retrospective understanding in our thinking, as reflected in the professionalized typology of symptoms and diagnoses, as much as it is involved in the moment by moment transition of our being. This fits with R.W. Emerson’s work on the processes or events that make up human being.

Emerson’s “abandonment to the nature of things” serves less to indicate the possibility of arriving at an essential nature or core of being, than to figure abandonment and transition as the nature of things. Transition and abandonment figure a power that at once supports and shatters the self...

(they) mark the limit of the self’s agency and self-control. (Levin 1999: 3)

Participants in the GW3TS tribe, or community of belonging, came to know one another and share their being with each other, in an environment of exploration and abandonment to being, more than thinking. They shared feelings and experiences, which then generated an energy field that had its own fit and flow, and form. This then influenced the on-going nature of each person’s Structure of Feelings and
Experience (SOFE, Lloyd 2005), according to this author. This was as far removed from the medical model as we could manage, with everyone participating equally in exploring the mystery and wonder of our SOFE. The experience of refugees and asylum seekers has an equivalent potency in the poetic exchange of beingness in moments of transition.

“Everything teaches transition, transference, metamorphosis: therein is human power, in transference, not in creation; and therein is human destiny, not in longevity but in removal. We dive and reappear in new places.” (Emerson in ‘Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of R.W. Emerson’)...

The originality of Emerson’s poet and scholar is a function of their transference of prior energies. Transition thus locates human power in a fated destiny of perpetual removal. (Levin 1999: 3)

This perspective came close to the GW3TS process, as directly observed and recorded by this author. People in the GW3TS tribe went through a process that involved their intention to join in, their motivation to engage, and their openness to experience. But it was in the actual dynamic of that encounter that ‘the magic’ occurred (as many named it and commented on it throughout their journey together). The tribe generated an energy field of exchange of being, which was seen and felt to be efficacious in itself, as it caught and renewed the vital energy within each of the participants (consumers, cares, volunteer buddies and professional mentor ‘aunties & uncles’), as observed and recorded by this author.
Transition should... bring the familiar into contact with the unknown, a process that extends knowledge further into the mysterious margin of things even as it defamiliarizes the very categories through which that movement is conducted. By maximising the available “transitional surface”, the great artist incessantly familiarises the strange and, at the same time, estranges the familiar. (Levin 1999: 3)

The eventual result of this set of observations was the All Fruits Theory (Lloyd 2009), akin to Queer Theory (Jagose 1996), arguing for mixing up people of diverse consciousness in communities of belonging, as they can assist each other’s healing, growth and development through the very transitional diversity of their mixed consciousnesses. It is therefore the argument of this paper that, by generating the sort of social poetics of transition that occur spontaneously in great good places, health and rehabilitation environments may be able to revitalize their roles through nurturing such diversity. While professional diagnoses and care plans have an important place in acute care and clinical planning, the long-term rehab. process requires much more affective support processes.

So that where collectivities of people gather for the sake of seeking healing, their main experience should be one that nurtures goodwill, fun, mutual concern for one another, and a shared sense of belonging and identity. Such was the outcome of the
three year journey of the GW3TS tribe, and continues to be my experience in continuing to create zones of mutual support in different settings across the NT.

The role of voluntary participation in community-based rehabilitation groups and socially entrepreneurial community health ventures, such as modelled by Andrew Mawson’s Bromley-by-Bow project in London (Mawson 2008), could be to heal the split-off that has occurred due to lock-step clinical and regulatory frameworks. By removing the spontaneous human sharing of the Structure of Feelings an Experience (SOFE, Lloyd 2005), reductionist medical and managerialist practices have inappropriately made clinics and rehabs into ‘non-places’.

5. **HOW GW3TS MODELLED A GREAT GOOD PLACE**

By creating a rhythmical, symbolic, interactive, cyclical pattern of gatherings, where shared personal stories created a narrative context of witnessing and testimony, GW3TS illustrated a different way of creating shared spaces for healing (Lloyd 2009). This tribe was able to generate a vital healing energy field, full of spontaneity and ‘permission-giving’ to be one’s natural self, as the author directly observed. This is the essence of Ray Oldenburg’s ‘great good place’, where we can most easily be ourselves among others. Each participant in GW3TS (Lloyd 2005) had their own identity and sense of purpose, role in the group, and reason for coming – ie. they belonged there.
Marc Auge on the other hand says that the ‘non-places’ created by supermodernity actually attract a number of people, who go there deliberately seeking and appreciating the very anonymity that spooks many of us. “What is significant in the experience of non-place is its power of attraction, inversely proportional to territorial attraction, to the gravitational pull of place and tradition.” (Auge1995: 118)

That may be true for people who feel totally comfortable within themselves, and who have the security of home and family settings to return to. They may appreciate the de-personalized escape of the airport lounge, to get away from the hurly-burly for a while. But those who live with mental illness very often may not have such comfortable and secure settings, or senses of self, and have often been institutionally traumatized along the way.

Ray Oldenburg says that the attributes of third, or great good places are simple to identify: “Third places exist on neutral ground and serve to level their guests to a condition of social equality.” (Oldenburg 1999: 42) So far that is no different from airport lounges or supermarkets, except:

Within these places, conversation is the primary activity and the major vehicle for the display and appreciation of human personality and individuality. Third places are taken for granted and most have a low profile… the character of a third place is determined most of all by its
regular clientele and is marked by a playful mood, which contrasts with people’s more serious involvement in other spheres. (Oldenburg 1999: 42)

Many people use the anonymous airport lounge to escape into some ‘me time’, where being identity-less is a welcome relief. But participants in the author’s GW3TS tribe, and in groups facilitated in the NT, reported feeling that way in the very places they were supposed to be ‘recovering’ – ie. mental hospital wards, rehabilitation and disability support centres (Lloyd 2007, 2009). Hence they and their carers showed great appreciation of the opportunity to ‘just hang out’ in the GW3TS tribe, and to share their Structure of Feelings and Experience (SOFE) (Lloyd 2005) in a narrative sharing process that generated a rhythm of witnessing and testimony.

Marc Auge says that, “the community of human destinies is experienced in the anonymity of non-place, and solitude (Auge 1995: 120)”. This is an understandable reaction to the overwhelming individuated consumer-on-the-prairie experience of the shopping mall, our ant-like presence on the freeway, and the Mulholland Drive (Lynch 2001) trance-inducing effect of the ticky-tacky sameness of our suburban wastelands.

But for places claiming to offer healing and recovery to vulnerable people, such specters are downright scary. We need something injected into this non-place, this Twilight Zone, to nurture our universal humanity with some hope and purpose.
Such as comes from having an identity, a role in the group, and sense of belonging – all elements of the ‘great good place’.

6. **A TRAGIC CASE IN POINT**

The Australia dream of the quarter acre suburban block may have turned into a nightmare for many people. US experience, of what they call “the automobile suburb”, shows that “the suburb is ‘merely a base from which the individual reaches out to the scattered components of social existence.’… the suburb had the effect of fragmenting the individual’s world.” (Oldenburg 1999: 4)

This was this author’s stark experience when he visited the family of one young member of the GW3TS tribe, who had fled his outer western Sydney suburb and its nearby up-to-the-minute mental hospital, to commit suicide by jumping off Sydney Harbour’s famous suicide location, the South Head headland cliffs.

Isolated and unable to connect outside the GW3TS group he joined every time we gathered, this young man felt alone and invisible. So much so that he took his own life before being able to reach out for relationships outside home, which could potentially have filled his emptiness. Despite a loving family, his inner world was unable to find a place to connect with the wider world in a way that gave him reason to go on in life.
After an unsuccessful attempt at suicide and subsequent hospitalisation, he was discharged quickly and went home to a shocked family. Soon after he readmitted himself, knowing he was not well. But despite the hospital’s brand new facilities, somehow it was unable to reach this young man, or to engage with his context. That was not immediately obvious, when the author visited him there and felt he was seeming relaxed and ‘clear’ about how he wanted to be.

After he ‘disappeared’, the tragedy of this failure of the clinical environment was reinforced when the author inquired into what they had done to explore his family circumstances and personal context. No contact had been made, and they in fact asked the author to notify them if he happened to make any contact, because they had no way of knowing what had happened to him. He was allowed to just walk out, because he had come back in as voluntary patient.

This exercise in clinical ‘duty of care’ and ‘due process’ reached the Catch 22-like stage, when the author inquired about speaking with his fellow patients (with whom he had told the author he had spent intensive quality time in hospital, before leaving to commit suicide), and he was told this would be an invasion of patient confidentiality. This paper argues that such objectifying, distrustful ways of treating people, in the name of ‘duty of care’ are exactly the interpersonal equivalents of the ‘non-place’s’ emptiness. As Marc Auge says:
If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places... i.e. (where) identity and relations lie at the heart of all the spatial arrangements classically studied by anthropology.

(Auge 1995: 77-78, 58)

According to the feedback from participants (i.e. consumers, carers, and volunteer buddies and professional mentors) (Lloyd 2005, 2007, 2009), GW3TS created the voluntary interpersonal exchange that created ‘our great good place’ wherever the tribe met. Everyone belonged, had an identity, and enjoyed the shared purpose in being there – i.e. to hang and have fun relating together. Even though this was a mental health and disability rehabilitation peer-support, self-help modelling project, it still generated “identity and relations” (Auge 1995) that made it a place of welcome and relaxed openness.

In terms of the duty of care that could have been exercised better by the hospital in question, I am arguing that, had the hospital engaged with this young man’s family, the situation would have been very different. If the mental health team (doctors, nurses and social workers) had gotten to know the whole context of his life, and had he himself known that they knew what was happening for him, his sense of belonging and identity would have been totally different. His whole sense of being
seen and heard would have changed. And the due processes of the health system would be much more integrated with the whole person, than just recording his vital signs and listing him as a self-admission, and therefore someone free to “walk” whenever he liked. His family would also have been much more likely to be part of the healing process along with the hospital, if they had felt invited in and included as partners in the process of his rehabilitation. The monitoring and articulation of “duty of care” would include ongoing conversation between the person, the family and the medical team – with a shared ownership of what transpired in this whole event.

7. **HOW THE AUSTRALASIAN THIRD SECTOR CAN IMPROVE THINGS**

It is argued there that applying the social poetics of transition to more community-based rehabilitation and disability support environments would create hope, remotivation and purpose for many consumers, carers and concerned professionals. When people can share stories together, create dreams together, and experience the social poetics that come from spontaneous exchange of natural being, they find a new form of welcome and nurture – recipients and care providers alike.

This old fashioned ‘hospitality’ is simply the exchange of the structure of feelings and experiences (SOFE, Lloyd 2005), in unconditionally ‘safe’ environments, that constitute the same elements as great good places, it is argued here. Just as great good places have people who rib one another, ‘take the mickey’, and give immediate feedback that won’t allow bad moods or long-held resentments to dominate the shared space, so too did GW3TS exercise ‘working the business of
life’ (WTBOL, Lloyd 2005). This sort of mirroring and feedback helps participants to know they belong and are wanted, but that they can’t get away with messy behaviour in this place or this company. This is the same effect that US journalist Ethan Watters identified in his classic book, *Urban Tribes: Are Friends the New Family?* (Watters 2004), where he found correspondents from around the world told him that “my tribe helps me be the best me I can be.”

“We need to pay some attention to the changes affecting the major categories people use when they think about their identity and their reciprocal relations (Auge 1995: 40).” This is the core problem in current objectified settings for mental health and disability rehabilitation. Even if people are treated ‘nicely’, and have lots of activities and outings, the argument here says that they are basically being told in the subtext of every interaction, “you are less than, and we are here to help you receive a service you need, because we are experts who know best.”

There is no reciprocity, no exchange as equals, which great good places ensure, and which this author believes is the foundation value system beneath the third sector. Currently it’s become all one way traffic in the rehab., which contrasts with what Andrew Mawson found were the most important elements in the Bromley-by-Bow community resurgence:

I realised just how deeply we all depend for our sanity on relationships with other people. They give us our sense of reality and equilibrium. Without
them we all stumble… a community within which (we) could have a role and be valued (Mawson 2008: 21).

The author’s GW3TS group created that relationship base, and it all came from voluntary participation and resourcing. At the end of the project the author realized he could not afford to keep paying for the venues, catering and facilitation process, so it had to come to an end. But with the dedication of some of the health system’s massive resources to that sort of organizing, resourcing and support function, the rest of the process could be fully served by the same voluntary contributions through the third sector, that made GW3TS such a success.

“Someone has to make the coffee, and provide the seats where you can drink it, and open the doors so people can come in and meet.” (Lloyd Journal 2007) Apart from that, the role of voluntary social poetics in generating community healing is a much-neglected one. And the main reason to be challenged is the system’s obsession with experts and duty of care. Professional responsibility has been taken to such an extreme that ordinary human exchange and feedback has been denied a role in the lives of ‘the vulnerable’.

GW3TS showed that participants got into what they called a ‘magical’ rhythm of sharing and caring whenever they came together. All this came about through voluntary, informal reciprocal exchange. The author summed up its elements in the acronym “I³R⁴C⁵: interactive, intentional and intuitive, rhythmical, reciprocal,
relational ritual cycles, of companionship, contemplation, communion and celebration.”

Such symbolic interaction occurs everyday in great good places, but it is not officially studied or recorded as an efficacious part of society’s makeup (except in extraordinary cases such as Ray Oldenburg’s book). The argument of this article is that the voluntary elements operating in such places can easily be transferred to third sector community health settings, if one barrier is removed. The expert-dominated, over-regulated, risk-averse field of rehabilitation needs to “chill out”, and allow more active exchange of our natural human attributes of relationality. Then, this paper argues, the social poetics of transition would contribute untold benefits to overall community health, along with job satisfaction among human service workers.

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One of the ways I have tried to model the sort of processes that can revitalise rehab settings, and those who visit and work in them, is to include a lot more imagination and creativity in how they are run, and how daily patterns of life are formed there. The Sydney tribe of GW3TS created its own rhythm of interactions after about six months of first coming together (Lloyd 2007, 2009). There were patterns of relating, sharing conversation, allowing stories to create a flow of ‘witnessing & testimony’ among participants, that would be called interactive symbolic rituals in the language of Erving Goffman (Goffman 1972). And Randall Collins has extended Goffman’s perspective with his work *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Collins 2005). What the following paper explores is how this approach can be ‘mainstreamed’ into hopefully helping to restore currently ‘disinfected’ environments, where any ‘nitty gritty’ real life relational rhythms have been removed by clinical expertise and disciplines of compliance among ‘consumers and carers.’

**Revitalising rehabilitation practices by using rhythmical interactive symbolic rituals**

**ABSTRACT**

This paper argues for more holistic, spirit-informed approaches to community development for mental health rehabilitation, and supported living for people living with intellectual disability. Referring in a reflexive ethnographic way to his experience facilitating 60 participants in a self-help peer support group, in Sydney from 2004-6, and to subsequent community-based group support projects in the Northern Territory 2007-10, the author proposes that performative ethnography (Herzfeld 2001: 284) has much to teach health and education agencies. Through enactment and performance of shared interactive symbolic rituals (Collins 2004), he argues that people of different consciousness can become rich sources of stimulation, inspiration and on-going nurture for each other. By describing the way his ‘open urban tribe’ used to meet in regular gatherings, to share their structure of feelings and experiences (SOFE, Lloyd 2005) in narrative sharing through mutual witnessing and testimony, creating rhythmical rituals generating social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB), the author says that such engaged phenomenology can revitalise rehabilitation settings.
INTRODUCTION

Humans are social, storytelling creatures (Cowan 2001, Jackson 1995, 1998), who operate best when they feel seen and heard sharing stories. That was the author’s experience in facilitating a three year PhD field study in critical social sciences, with a group of about 60 multicultural participants between 18–35 years of age, living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability, plus volunteer buddy peers and older mentors (‘aunties & uncles’ in the indigenous sense of unconditionally supportive non-blood relations). The project was called Going Walkabout Together Through The Suburbs (GW3TS), and it formed what the author called an ‘open urban tribe’ (named after Ethan Watters’ work in Urban Tribes, Watters 2004).

After starting off as strangers, and first getting to know each other over a live-in weekend workshop (May 2004), the tribe’s pattern was to meet every few months for group sessions. There they gradually developed a rhythmical interactive pattern of sharing stories of each other’s structure of feelings and experiences (SOFE, Lloyd 2005). This form of witnessing and testimony generated a strong sense of personal and group acknowledgement and belonging. This proved to be a powerful form of nurture and on-going support, for participants and facilitators alike, as they reported to the author regularly at the tribe’s gatherings (Lloyd 2007, 2009, 2010).

The resulting cycle of meetings and sharing became an informal source of individual and community healing, growth and development, which the author recorded in his journal throughout the three year project. He claims it is a model for
potential revitalization of approaches to rehabilitation, for those recovering from mental illness and those living with disability. Since completing the original fieldwork in Sydney, the author has continued to apply this sort of community-based group dynamic, of peer and mentor support, with shared narratives, witnessing & testimony, and the symbolic interactive rituals that result, in work he has conducted in community groups in the Northern Territory (2007-10). This paper summarises some of the main implications of that combined work.

**INTERACTIVE BEINGS**

Without interactivity there is serious limitation to human life, as attested by the ‘inhuman’ reputation of solitary confinement tactics in prisons. Humans are social beings and we need each other to express our full humanity. So this author argues that it stands to reason that ways of getting well should include exercising this faculty of our humanness. The GW3TS tribe operated in such an interactive way, whether participants liked it or not. This was an ‘in your face’ experience, in terms of relating, engaging, and ultimately generating the motivation to be together. And in so relating, the author argues participants were assisted in healing their whole selves, not just their cognitive faculties, as Mark Johnson points out: “... cognition is not some inner process performed by ‘mind,’ but rather is a form of embodied action... located in organism-environment interactions, instead of being locked up in some alleged private mental sphere of thought.” (Johnson 2007: 147)
The author’s reflection on his tribe’s purpose showed group work was undertaken, in an effort to find better ways of being themselves.

We had work to do with each other in GW3TS, we all knew that. We were there for each other, not selfishly as some closed tribes might seem like cults of self-obsession. It was a universal type of shared engagement in the battle for social and emotional wellbeing, that we were all troops in and for. This was the raison d’être of our tribe, and everyone took it seriously. (Lloyd 2010)

That experience echoed psychiatrist M. Scott Peck’s description of ‘Stumbling into Community’ in his book *The Different Drum* (Peck 1990: 25-45). Here Peck recalls his experience in an army camp on Okinawa in 1968-69, participating in an all-weekend ‘marathon group’ modelled on the Tavistock Institute work of Wilfred Bion. He found the participating therapists bonded into a community, after initial reservations and then outright conflicts.

After everyone had expressed his feelings of anger, frustration, and resentment – the elements of depression – mirth and the spirit of joy returned to the group… having become what… Bion called a ‘working group’… we agreed to disagree, set our differences aside, and successfully got on with our work… it was the joy of community. (Peck 1990: 37-40)
Interaction was at the heart of that joyful outcome, according to this author. As one of the GW3TS tribe’s shyest participants showed, when he would quietly float around the most retiring souls and just sit with them. After a while they would start up a conversation. Later on they could be seen both laughing. Little things, little connections. Interacting. An outspoken young woman living with Down Syndrome would join a GW3TS group and wait until she heard the drift of the conversation, and then she’d pipe in with her own special view of the world, and all would be turning their heads to hear this unique soul’s perspective. No big deal, just sharing. Interacting, caring. That was the lesson from GW3TS, and in Scott Peck’s much publicised stories.

Occasionally, the GW3TS volunteer peer buddies, ostensibly living without any ‘challenges’, would be overwhelmed by their involvement in some group, the author observed then, and continues to in the NT, where this work with ‘intellectually disabled’ young adults continues on the same daily interactive basis (Lloyd 2010). He would find them having a quiet weep away from the others. Moved. Processing their own structure of feelings and experience (SOFE, Lloyd 2005). They were interacting within, with what interacting between had brought up for them.

Such experience is interactive, according to this author, to the extent that it gives permission for each person to ‘do some homework they don’t normally do in the world’. In GW3TS the strongest teachers of these lessons were those living with
different consciousness, as the author’s observations showed frequently (Lloyd 2010).

For humans, a very large and distinctive part of (our engagement with the world) involves interacting with other humans. In other words, human understanding and thinking are social... We must recognise that cognition does not take place only within the brain and body of a single individual, but is instead partly constituted by social interactions, social relations, and cultural artifacts and practices. (Johnson 2007: 147)

PERFORMING RITUALS AND MYTHS

What happened in the gatherings of the open urban tribe in GW3TS was a deliberately constructed but unscripted set of experiences, which this author calls rituals. They needed energy in to get energy out. And they contained what the participants themselves called ‘magic’ – the energetic influence shared among participants that resulted in uplifted spirits, exchange of emotion and mutual understanding (Lloyd 2007, 2009, 2010). This process was in effect a performance each time it came about. As Michael Herzfeld commented on Johannes Fabian’s “observ(ing) and participat(ing) in the practice of popular musical theatre in Zaire to provide a model for what he term(ed) a performative ethnography;” (Herzfeld 2001: 284)

This performative – as opposed to informative – ethnography is based on recognition that much practical as opposed to discursive cultural knowledge
can be illuminated only through enactment and performance (Fabian 1990: 6). The approach appears, in fact, to have some intellectual common ground, not only with practice theory, but with the kind of engaged phenomenology – ‘radical empiricism’, as Michael Jackson (1989) has termed it – that insists on this kind of engagement. (Herzfeld 2001: 284-5)

The author’s subsequent work, in community mental health in Alice Springs between 2007-2009, and Darwin and ‘the Top End’ of the NT in 2010, has also involved deliberate construction of the circumstances where performance rituals created the grounds for consumers, carers and professionals alike to share their feelings and experiences in an open and vulnerable narrative ways (Lloyd 2009, 2010). This included the Day To Day Living (D2DL) Program of the Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA) in 2008, headspace Central Australia young people’s mental health program, and the Alice Springs Wellbeing Hub (ASWB Hub) network of professionals supporting whole town social & emotional wellbeing in 2009.

These dynamics echoed what Randall Collins has observed about versions of ritual, coming from Erving Goffman and Emile Durkheim: “Putting Durkheim together with Goffman reminds us that rituals not only show respect for sacred objects, but also constitute objects as sacred; and if ritual is not carried out for a time, the sacredness falls away (Collins 2004: 17).” Such is what happened when the author was no longer able to facilitate the GW3TS tribe, its activities dissipated and many
members expressed sorrow that the dynamic exchange had come to an end (Lloyd

The author claims that this tribe had created a ‘sacred object’ in the GW3TS tribal
rhythm of meeting and sharing. But when he stopped facilitating these gatherings,
the rituals ran out. They needed continuous organising to happen, and the
participants weren’t able to be the organisers, due to their vulnerable social &
emotional states. Which is why this author argues it is counterproductive for
economically rationally motivated decisions, from managers of health and
community services, to apply ‘user pays’ philosophies and practices to these sorts of
contexts are ill-informed and counter-productive.

For example, the message of “We’ve got you started, now do it yourselves, or it’s
obviously not important enough to you!” that the Inner City Sydney Northcott
Public Housing community received, about their community development program,
in a closure decision by the NSW Dept of Housing in 2006, until protests kept it
going.

People, especially vulnerable people, need help to maintain the rituals that make life
more worth living, according to this author. And that’s not just church business, or
sporting club, or service club business. It relates to parliaments, board rooms, school
councils, bikie gangs etc.
All group participation in religious ritual is a form of communion between participants just as much as it is, or may be, of communion with Spirit... the small scale society tends... to disperse ritual behaviour, even corporate ritual behaviour throughout the week or year. Rather than consecrate a specific day or date, it consecrates a greater number of occasions... On top of this the individual ritual practice in such systems still further adds to the pervasiveness of the belief system, which is essentially communal rather than individual. (Turnbull 1983: 273)

The rhythm of the rituals among the GW3TS tribe, and among those community members gathering in the NT under the author’s facilitation, have achieved personal life improvement for many participants, as has been affirmed to the author many times when these groups have met. This was during the original GW3TS tribe’s three years together (Lloyd 2005, 2007, 2009), and the more recent community based gatherings in NT (Lloyd 2010). But these processes take effort, to organise cycles of gatherings (for facilitators), and on the participants’ side, to turn up and join in. This evidence gives weight to arguments for building such processes into the reform of rehabilitation and supported living systems, according to this author. They need ‘working at,’ which requires resources of time, skill, facilities and sustenance.

... situations are rituals calling for cooperation, in keeping up the momentary focus of attention and thus giving respect both to the persons who properly
take part and to the situational reality, as something worth a moment of being treated seriously... in effect the front stage is the situation where attention is focused. the backstage is where work is done to prepare so that the focusing can be effectively carried out. (Collins 2004: 24)

GW3TS had lots of both frontstage and backstage activity. Very few wanted to stop coming to the group, but the author had to ‘call it quits’ when he could no longer afford the voluntary effort of personally resourcing it all, at the expense of his own family life. The role of facilitation could have easily been transferred into a community mental health service, but no one in ‘the system’ showed any interest. Yet, without hesitation this author says that the rhythmical ritual cycle of GW3TS was its greatest healing force. And, it needs time and dedicated responsibility to come about appropriately, in collaboration with the participants. “The frontstage is the performance of a ritual; the backstage, Goffman reminds us, is usually there because rituals... don’t just come off by themselves but have to be worked up to.” (Collins 2004: 24)

Similarly, the myth-making involved in these group dynamics is an invaluable and ethereal component of effective nurturing of SEWB, that is invisible to the current reductionist medical model thinking that dominates community rehabilitation in Australia, this author argues. Scott Peck talked about his Okinawa ‘working group’ of therapists in 1968-69 as experiencing the ‘joy of community’ largely because of its “eagerness and openness” (Peck 1990: 41). Peck saw the importance of mythmaking as a key element in his group’s success.
Mythmaking seems to be a frequent characteristic of true community… our weekly group… began to weave the myth of ’Albert’… the deformed, illegitimate son of the mayor of Fresno. He was so deformed he had only one hand, and that grew out of the center of his forehead… Albert had become a dramatically successful labor organizer, the first ever to be able to unionize the homosexual shrimp fisherman of Fresno. (Peck 1990: 41-44)

This hilarious scenario among a group of serious military psychotherapists in the late 60s shows the way group myth can play around with notions, and give permission for people to get outside their comfort (ie. fear) zones. Similarly, the possibility of getting into another zone altogether, where everyone experiences a heightened level of awareness, feeling and togetherness, also comes from sharing group myths. Such was the author’s experience with GW3TS, and with D2DL and ASWB Hub, and Scott Peck’s experience with his group:

It was a lovely thing to witness the self-acceptance and acceptance of each other in this weekly community, which allowed the crippled Henry and the crippled enlisted men (remember, they had all been college failures) and crippled me to participate together in the weaving of this wonderful myth…I will always remember (this group’s) camaraderie and creativity. (Peck 1990: 44-45)
Whatever we choose to call the results of our rituals, whether Durkheim’s “collective effervescence” (Durkheim 1912/1965: 250-2) or the mood of the crowd, or the spirit of the occasion, this author argues that it is around the symbols which are the focus of the ritual that participants’ energy gathers during them. In the case of GW3TS it was the symbol of the combined tribe’s embodied presence – the GW3TS troupe itself. For others, it may be the sporting team running out onto the field, or the Choir of Hard Knocks standing up to sing together.

What is mutually focused upon becomes a symbol of the group. In actuality, the group is focusing on its own feeling of intersubjectivity, its own shared emotion... Durkheim underlines, sentiments can only be prolonged by symbols... it is worth stressing how dynamic his conception is. Society becomes patterned by symbols, or more precisely by respect for symbols; but the symbols are respected only to the extent that they are charged up with sentiments by participation in rituals. Sentiments run down and fade away unless they are periodically renewed. (Collins 2004: 37)

The GW3TS myth was its group mission to reform community mental health and disability support. It kept the members motivated to come together over three years, so long as the author provided the coordination and facilitation. But the group energy faded once the author stopped bringing these symbolic gatherings about. And Peck’s group ended after a year of weekly gatherings when these American military personnel all got stationed elsewhere. But that’s not to say that equivalent
activities can’t start up anywhere, anytime, so long as a belief in their value is still strong among a core group of members, as was often communicated to the author about GW3TS.

**IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION**

One year after the original GW3TS tribe members met as strangers for a live-in weekend retreat in May 2004, they met again in the same way in June 2005. This second gathering consolidated the pattern of interactions, where participants had formed bonds of trust and safety, over regular organised and spontaneous small sub-group get togethers in the intervening twelve months.

In the run-up to the second weekend gathering, there was anticipation of “getting back into the zone,” as Andrew Cooper described the special feeling for sports people, when they are performing in peak team interactive, collaborative moments (Cooper 1998). As one volunteer buddy peer in GW3TS put it: “Every time I come here, I feel like I’ve come home.” (Lloyd *Personal Journal* 2010)

So, if such powerful feelings can be sustained by group interactions like GW3TS (when they are resourced with coordination time and logistics to keep going), and the other activities this author has helped to facilitate and witnessed first hand, how can ‘the system’ (ie. community mental health, education and disability support) better adapt to bring more benefit to those it is trying to heal and sustain in empowerment?
This author believes the answer lies in more mainstream engagement with evidence like that presented here. As Michael Herzfeld has purported, anthropological, ethnographic “methods for comprehending societal dynamics in an increasingly globalised world” (Herzfeld 2001: viii) have a lot to offer the process of reform. More models of community-based, community-run tribal, mythical, ritual processes need to be embraced by mainstream health, education and disability professionals. And that means engaging themselves in the experience, not just setting something up and ‘watching the others’ participate. It has to be One In–All In for any of these approaches to work effectively and to be sustainable, according to this author.

Herzfeld’s ‘global’ reference covers the continuing domination of health services by reductionist ‘clinical’ logic, ie. of objectifying ‘scientific’ distance from the subjects of research and/or clinical practices. This needs to be removed before any progress can be made in empowering healing and sustained development among people living with mental illness and/or intellectual (or other) disabilities, according to this author’s hands-on, participative work with those communities. Effective reform work will “question global assumptions that increasingly dominate political and economic decision-making.” (Herzfeld 2001: viii).

**CONCLUSION**

Efforts to reform Australia’s mental health and disability support systems have been stalled by professional silo protection (Hickie 2008, 2009), and the inertia of a
system stuck in old clinical ‘expert’ ways of treating consumers, carers, staff and ‘the system’ itself. Not enough respect has been shown to the participants in these ‘tribes.’ The argument of this paper is that relatively simple steps can be taken to rejuvenate healing environments, based on mutual respect for all participants, as equal ‘players’ in the symbolic ritual interactions that come together in such environments. The hangover from western rationality’s rejection of ‘primitive’ human patterns of interaction needs to be removed, and replaced by full celebration of our rich diversity of ways of being and knowing, which this author celebrates in The All Fruits Theory (Lloyd 2009). Valuing diversity in consciousness in society is just as important as valuing biodiversity in nature, this author argues. Without it we cheapen ourselves into compliant functionaries in medicalised system of reductionist processes.

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7. REFLEXION 7 – Endpoint: Reflections on a Ten Year Journey

In my final Reflexion on this work, I feel like I’m emerging from a deep forest of conflicting sounds and sense experiences. Earlier feelings of failure, arising from an agonized, fear-laden, and often ‘stuck in a zone of conflict’ encounter with the values and approaches required by the academy, have given way to more relaxed feelings of ‘enough evidence’ having been gathered to show the efficacy of the approaches advocated in this whole body of work. I believe that the original three aims of the GW3TS project in Sydney (as outlined in my first published paper from QRIP 2005, included above), were achieved within the GW3TS field work project in Sydney (2004–6), and that they have been continued successfully in the Northern Territory settings subsequently (2007–10). The table below summarises some evidence for that claim:

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<th>TABLE 3: EFFICACIOUS OUTCOMES FROM GW3TS APPROACHES</th>
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<td>GW3TS APPROACH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acknowledging and valuing diversity in consciousness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applying indigenous-style ‘Working the Business of Life’ (WTBOL) to healing &amp; development among peers &amp; elders</td>
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<td>Modelling with ‘the system, efficacious &amp; cost-effective self-help rehabilitation</td>
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So the things that were removed from these experiences were “the logico-positivist, pathologising models of difference among human beings,” the compliance-based, patronizing of ‘consumers & carers,’ and the lack of collaboration towards mutual ends (ie. of improved social & emotional wellbeing, among consumers, carers and professionals).

Whether the ‘evidence’ I have gathered is in a form that others will accept as valid, or whether I feel comfortable about having met the requirements of disinterested knowledge, no longer seems to matter. I feel the project has succeeded in modeling a way of ‘being together.’ And at the same time it feels like a paradox, since it has been a conflicted situation from woe to go, ie. within myself, among the participants, and certainly with ‘the system’ and its controlling values and practices.

Yet, despite the fears, failings and follies I have put myself through along the way, I believe the embodied experiences of participants in these sorts of communities of belonging have shown and continue to show efficacious outcomes, in terms of improved rehabilitation, and improved ways of building multidisciplinary collaborative communities of professionals interested in better forms of preventive community health and SEWB.

The overall body of GW3TS work has created four outcomes that continue to reverberate across multiple ‘community’ settings. Most recently being taken up in the Nightcliff Uniting Church community in Darwin, for offering to the wider
general community: with a Multicultural Elders School project (launched in May 2010); a Wailing Project (launched in March 2010) offering deeply embodied expression of the grief people feel, over how we have treated the environment and ourselves; and a Permaculture Community Food Garden (launched in January 2010) offering shared community collaboration in organic mini-garden allotments. This also includes enviro-education, collaborative modelling of nurturing sustainability, and working with the Transition Towns movement worldwide (we have just farewelled one of our number visiting Italy, to continue the conversation about this initiative there and report back in August 2010). All these projects include deeply embedded elements modeled by the original GW3TS tribe.

Reviewing those GW3TS outcomes, they are:

(i) Acknowledging and valuing diversity in consciousness - this has occurred, among GW3TS participants in Sydney, among the Day To Day Living community mental health program participants in Alice Springs, among the headspace Central Australia Youth and Elders participants in Alice Springs, and now among the multicultural, multigenerational mixed community participants in Darwin;

(ii) Applying the spirit of Indigenous Working The Business of Life (WTBOL) to active healing, growth and development among peers and elders – this has continued in the above activities, and is expanding in the current setting in Darwin,
where mirroring and feedback provide the strength of regular ‘reality checks’ for all involved;

(iii) Modelling, in collaboration with ‘the system’, more efficacious and cost-effective self-help methods of rehabilitation – this is also continuing, but has yet to be ‘costed in’ on the system’s own terms, as they have not yet formally appointed staff against these sorts of activities, and have only given verbal support for their on-going application (eg. Wendy McCarthy, national chairperson of headspace, in personal communication to this author August 2009); and

(iv) Publishing and presenting, in the researcher and practitioner ‘communities’, a series of papers (some represented here) that acknowledge, value and celebrate the diversity in consciousness of those involved in the projects mentioned here, and others emerging as this document comes to its conclusion.

Reading back over the QRIP 2005 paper (Lloyd 2005) that projected these aims, I am struck by how easy it is to critique the process of enablement, when applying dialectical analysis to such descriptions. Without the spirit of self-fulfilling prophecy, of ‘singing ourselves up’, the GW3TS project would not have come off at all. So too the current projects I am involved with in Darwin. I argue that they depend most importantly on people actively believing in each other, and in the higher purpose we are pursuing together, in a context that remains in many cases a
mystery to us all. And keeping it a mystery is part of protecting its precious essence – otherwise we kill it with too much rationality and will power, ie. individual egos.

Sudden shyness and inadequacy overwhelms me… something of this shy, retiring sense fuels the process of meditation, contemplation and reflection – from which is emerging the GW3TS ‘model’, around which I hope to write the story… “Nothingness is truly a mystery, a mystery in the strictest sense of the word… all the great religions point to a mystery which hovers over human life yet lies beyond a cloud of unknowing. It is precisely this sense of mystery and the ineffable that we all have in common… We are all reduced to silence in the face of mystery (Johnson 1978: 114).” This is the base on which I hope to build the GW3TS story. Doing less and stopping more feels right just now… Waiting…

(Lloyd GW3TS Journal 11/12/2005).

So it was (and remains) both ‘the story we are telling ourselves’, and ‘the story that is telling us’ into being in this new way, that was the resulting essence of GW3TS. Something like Linda Hutcheon’s description of the role of the “active participation of the reader in detective fiction. The act of reading is here an act of interpretation, of following clues to the answer of a given problem. The hermeneutic gaps are textually functional in an explicit manner here, but the process is emblematic of that of reading any novel (Hutcheon 1980: 72).” So the GW3TS tribe invented its own story as it went along – one about self-help, peer supported rehabilitation through
interactive symbolic ritual creation, witnessing & testimony, and ‘Working the Business of Life’ mirroring and feedback to each other – and then it filled in the gaps, as it progressed through the feelings and experiences of forming into a community of belonging. All the while surrounded by a mystery and wonder, that were part of the magic of mutual belonging together. And those rhythms were repeated in the NT settings, in slightly different ways in each circumstance and ‘tribe’.

Picking up a yoga book for the first time in years, as part of my plan to return to a regular yoga practice, I’m struck by how many of the integrating messages in yogic teaching really feel like they have “gone in.”… Stephen Cope’s *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self* (Cope 2000, Bantam, NY) feels just right… to incorporate this practice into a more integrated sense of balancing self, service, the common good, and tribal responsibility: “Americans suffer inordinately with what therapists call problems of the self… ‘Self-estrangement’ is the curious new word we’ve devised to describe this particular brand of suffering. We live deeply ensconced in the cult of the individual… We live cut off from a sense of our true deep mutual belonging and interdependence, and we suffer from a painful sense of separation… from the life-giving roots of human community (Cope 2000: xii) (Lloyd *GW3TS Journal* 11/06/2005).
Despite my insecurities, and feelings of temporary failure as things progressed, the direct evidence from participants as we were actively meeting together, was that they fully appreciated the value of this approach to ‘belonging together’, clearly telling me after each meeting. My feelings and experiences were part of the story-making, but only part. The overall value came from the combination of WTBOL, SOFE and the resulting interactive symbolic rituals, which only came about when energy was put in each time to bring them about. That was one of the key pieces of evidence in the end: energy in for energy out. We need sustained facilitated rehabilitation in self-help community settings, or they won’t work. So governments need to drop ‘users pays’ practices and replace them with investing in the common good on an on-going basis – and thus creating truly preventive health services, which save billions in the long run in avoiding acute care.

What I saw happening, when I wasn’t buried in my own self-doubt, was a community building process that was inclusive and whole-making. People felt ‘right’ about themselves and about being in the tribe, and they weren’t worried about whatever I was preoccupied with. They were just getting it together among themselves. I sometimes got overwhelmed by the “mystical” nature of this phenomenon. Even when the SOFE had included Mystery and Wonder as part of the original equation (Lloyd 2005), from well before starting the GW3TS project, it still surprised me when it showed up in action. I was strong in my hope for others, those participating in GW3TS, but shaky and vulnerable in myself, about whether GW3TS was ’really working’.
Maybe deep down I doubted everyone, just like I doubted myself? But something bigger than me was at work in this tribe. There were forces moving in a rhythmical cycle that overtook whatever insecurities I might have been suffering from. And it feels now like part of that was because of the very diversity that we enjoyed. It filled the hermeneutic gaps, when a group of ‘same souls’ would have quite likely failed to do that, causing them to fall apart at the seams and all go down in a heap together.

My undercurrent discomfort with myself as facilitator, and my fears about ‘going off half baked’ (as some critics among my family and friends had pointed out to me over the years), were actually healed themselves by the diversity/chaos factor of the tribe: “… because it integrates diversity, in community partial ideas tend to become whole ideas, and the initially simplistic thinking of community members tends to become increasingly complex, paradoxical, flexible, and sane (Scott Peck 1990: 245).”

This perspective reverberated with what I had learnt from ‘uncle’ Bernard Smith, the Australian art theorist and cultural historian, who was one of the two main inspirations for my earlier work (along with British social and communication theorist Raymond Williams) that projected this current work (Going Walkabout Through The Suburbs (GWTS), Lloyd 2005). Smith’s worldview kept inserting itself into my thinking along the GW3TS tribe’s journey.
Getting ready for a small GW3TS gathering over dinner (at my home) tonight, I am concentrating on both the film/photo project and the contents list/chapter outline for the GW3TS dissertation. This reinforces how much has happened with this community over the past two years, and how form and change, or form and stuckness, describe the rhythm of human psychosocial life, as much as “nature’s way”. The GWTS story (Lloyd 2005), including Bernard Smith’s perspective, on how history echoes (it doesn’t repeat) and forms combine, can hopefully add a dimension, to help us see ways to balance our ways of relating, mixing differences, healing and growing: “Perhaps then it will be possible to imagine positive outcomes from Uncle Bernard’s other perspective: that forms combine. By imagining new forms of social development, and providing inclusion and engagement in mainstream activities with those who live with intellectual disability, there may be great potential for growth and for healing known, as well as unknown, social wounds (Lloyd 2005: 108).” (Lloyd GW3TS Journal 12/01/2005).

Just as I wrote that reflection in my journal, West Australian Premier Geoff Gallop announced his retirement from politics, due to suffering from depression. His brave public announcement and decision to radically change his life helped to reinforce the essential importance of having a community of understanding to fall back on. Especially when one is living with difference in consciousness, but I believe it applies basically at all times for all of us. GW3TS modelled such a supportive
psycho-social environment of peer support and elder-younger mentoring. But we were still a long way from gaining mainstream adoption of such approaches. I left the first three years of GW3TS activity depressed by the tiny shifts in community mental health practice. So it became a decision to just keep going, in building our own models of self-help reform, and letting the system catch up.

On reflection, that has caused a lot of heartache, as I have been rejected in a number of environments, because of threatening well established careers, which are at risk when ‘consumers and carers’ gain more power in the mental health services cycle. However, the journey of working with community members on their own methods of mutual support has given me some satisfaction. It remains to continue the modelling of community-based, self-help, peer support, and to hope for greater ‘take up’ by a system still dominated by the medical model, and all the vested professional and product marketing interests tied into that.

As far as being a self-reflexive researcher, I would nominate myself as at my most effective when I am operating more as a dreamer. Along the lines of what novelist John Fowles acknowledged as one of his greatest gifts – the ability to operate when half asleep. “Sleepless nights never troubled John Fowles. He welcomed them. In particular he liked the semi-conscious haze between slumber and waking, when the sights and sounds of dreams still hover within reach and can be captured.” (from an Obituary in The Economist, reprinted in The Australian Newspaper 05/12/2005: ‘Time & Tide Section’ p.9) Fowles admitted that “It was while he was in this
hypnopompic state that his novels, which he always spoke of as independent beings, knowing and mysterious, would suddenly reveal themselves to him.” I would assert the same story about writing up GW3TS, when the tribe members would emerge from the dream space, and occupy pages of the massive journal that they spawned, and which continues today.

Ultimately, I can only advocate ongoing investment in the equivalent essential importance of biodiversity for ecological sustainability, by arguing for ‘ontodiversity for suss-tainability – ie. wiser ways of being for more sustainable ways of knowing.’ If we can create environments of shared exchange of feelings and experience (SOFE), giving each other honest mirroring and feedback (WTBOL), we will enjoy the benefits of better balanced consciousness, topped off with a touch of Mystery and Wonder (MCRIDW).

The task now will be to try to integrate these approaches into more community settings, so that all ages, all cultures, and varieties of people and practitioners can share the joy of truly working together in healing and nurturing communities of belonging.

**Cloudfields**

The clouds are rough on their front edge
And smooth on their horizons.
Where shadow is nearer they show out their mess
While distance firms – in their inscrutable intention – being.

Up close, in myself, I’m hairy and loose,
Uncertain, contingent and lost.
From afar I’m determined and stable and able
Not mixed up and messy in anticipation.

Then the light of morning arrives through the scene
Showing brilliant perspective and patterns up close
While the stable backdrop forms a wash of regret
That it no longer juggles the moments in waiting.

Come sunrise, and show what’s edgy and forming,
So we can marvel at change in its origin;
For every messy outburst is moving to merge
Its lessons of chaos with mystery and wonder in awe.


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CONCLUSION

Completing this ten year journey, as part of an ongoing project in working for emancipation from psy-ed’s positivist domination with peers in social change, I am humbled by the lessons given by those who are so often seen as “lacking” or “less than” in today’s competitive world. I believe these people are our greatest teachers, in that their own lives reflect the true paradoxical nature of what it is to be human – strong and weak at the same time; stubborn and flexible; funny and sad; wise and foolish; full and empty; energized and drained of all energy; transcending and descending in their links with the sublime. The post-positivist perspective embraces such rich territory, for it promises gifts of complexity, depth and humour.

What I need to do in bringing this dissertation to a close, is to finally reflect on how to promote the “vibe” that I have helped create and share, and that I am advocating is central to reform in rehabs, and education & training centres, for people living with different consciousness (along with the rest of us, if we’re honest about what’s missing in most of our lifeworlds). It has been remarked that perhaps “this jokey blokey culture” evidenced by GW3TS may ultimately be harmful to such vulnerable participants. To that perspective I offer the reflections of Ray Oldenburg, in his book on third places, The Great Good Place:

Third place association is upbeat because of the freedom of expression that it encourages. It is a freedom from the obligations of social roles and the styles and demeanor with which those roles must be played. Here, individuals may
uncork that which other situations require them to bottle up. The timidity which the workplace imposes upon those with families to support does not extend to the third place. Here one may bellow like a street preacher or wail like a new widow, boast with gusto or assume the authoritarian pomp of a high court judge (Oldenburg 1999: 58).

I claim that GW3TS took the best of the third place culture and inserted into a rehab environment, as the psy-ed model would see it. We just claimed the territory back from the experts, and made it a place where we could have fun and be ourselves totally naturally, just as we would do “down at the pub, or our local coffee shop.”

The difference here is not about how to behave in particular places, but how to reclaim our natural sense of integrity in being ourselves. Using the rhetoric of emancipation means challenging the politically correct closing downness, that has created openings for the likes of John Howard, Tony Abbott, Joe Hockey and their retinue of neoconservative politcians to demean well intentioned social equity ideas and ideals, which had become immersed in too much language control and thought policing, in the name of the very equity they sought to generate. We’ve got to allow people to remain human and faulty and cheeky and rude, if they’re going to exercise humour in their healing and growth and development. I say that “jokey blokey” is OK, if it is in the spirit of emancipation, not cruelty and demeaning others. As Oldenburg says of third places:
Even the pose of adulthood may be abandoned. Grown men and women may taunt, tease, leer, and giggle in the manner of mischievous schoolchildren. Both men and women, in the secure and liberating presence of understanding cronies, may behave in such a way as would seem alien to their spouses and children who know them as far more reserved and serious people. Release from the airs and aura of responsibility and its attendant mood of sobriety, when coupled with the company of appreciative fellow-sufferers, is a heady tonic (Oldenburg 1997: 58).

Why wouldn’t that be an equally essential ingredient in helping to heal those with mental health challenges? And in assisting growth and development among those with learning differences, or attitude problems? I claim that is a matter of understanding the rhetorical context within which social change occurs, especially for emancipating groups who have been historically diminished by the way power goes round in our society. And psy-ed is one of the dominant power systems running our world right now.

Just as black power needed to use rude rhetoric in its move “out from under”, so too do those challenging psy-ed’s domination need to use cheeky language and ways, to prove their point, and to have enough fun along the way to refuel their resilience, and to make it worth the trouble of taking on such seemingly powerful hegemonic forces. As Oldenburg says, we need third places to help keep our spirits up:
The effect of the third place is to raise participants’ spirits, and it is an effect that never totally fades. Third place interaction is a matter of “making other peoples’ day” even as they make one’s own in a situation where everyone gains (Oldenburg 1997: 55).

This is what I believe GW3TS achieved, and it added strength on our journey to challenge dominant forms of what Goggin and Newell called “social apartheid” (Goggin & Newell 2005: 17-22). The rhetoric we used along the way in GW3TS was the same process that black power used in the sixties. Daniel Smith-Christopher has reflected on this historical process in his book *Jonah, Jesus and Other Good Coyotes: Speaking Peace to Power in the Bible* (Smith-Christopher 2007):

The point I wish to draw… is the actual power of the rhetoric of violence and its various “functions” within a social context. Words express anger, and as such are considered a release of emotion, but they also express a verbal form of force, and thus rhetoric itself has a certain kind of power – as Strain pointedly observes, words about guns were arguably more powerful than the guns themselves (Smith-Christopher 2007: 158).

In adopting the cheeky, “jokey blokey” way of GW3TS’ interactions, we were not only enjoying mucking around together, we were also following the same logic as Stokely Carmichael at the peak of his “black power” days. It is a tactic of using rhetoric to challenge the dominant cohort’s hold on language, and therefore on the
ways people talk and think about an issue, an ultimately about themselves. Our tribe appealed to many people who came across this cheekiness for the same reason Carmichael appealed to Afro-Americans:

“For most black folks, the appeal of Black Power lay in its excitement and energy, not its threat… Black Power was an Afro-American expression of political and social empowerment, rather than an ideology of racial supremacy. It is worth noting that, for most activists being pro-black did not mean being anti-white (Christopher B. Strain 2005, in Pure Fire: Self-Defense as Activism in the Civil Rights Era)” … the black psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint observed that those who used the phrase Black Power “appeared to be seeking a sense of psychological emancipation from racism through self assertion and release of aggressive angry feelings (A.F. Poussaint 1967, ‘A Negro Psychiatrist Explains the Negro Psyche’).” What is undeniable, however, is the power of the rhetoric itself (Smith-Christopher 2007: 156-7).

Likewise, we used humour and cheeky language to challenge the “social apartheid” most of the group were living in. That sort of risk-taking is what I advocate is needed more in rehabs and disability support environments. Let people express their inner frustrations and grief over living under a patronizing and demeaning system. And hence let them heal and grow. This is social poetics in action, as Michael Herzfeld has stated:
The tension between convention and invention… permits the application of what I have called “social poetics”; tensions between official and intimate norms may similarly undergird a whole range of semiotic domains… Such models also permit the identification of practices and above all uses people make of the codes – they are pragmatic rather than formal, heuristic rather than predictive, and responsive to meaning rather than semantically deterministic… for all social production is necessarily also a matter of process, not of static forms… effective knowledge is to be sought in the dialectical space in which neither positivism nor deconstruction predominates, but where the pragmatics of the field experience open up our readiness to accept and embrace surprising concatenations (Herzfeld 2001: 53).

So, combining the epistemological and ontological views applied in this work, I would argue that “consumers and carers” be given much more say in how rehabs are formed, staffed and run. And in how education, training and support for people living with mental illness and/or intellectual disability are constructed and delivered. The duties of care involved need to be built on empowering models of risk-taking, and consumer-led versions of what is OK to expect in person’s day-to-day program of healing and development.

This all boils down to the opposite of what happens now, where the psy-ed “experts” dominate the agenda with their pre-trained positivist approaches, and the
managerialist regimes that go with running their top-down systems. We need equal-sided humility in approaching people’s healing, where professionals come to listen as much as to speak, and where individuals and families can help design the best ways to enhance opportunities to heal, learn and grow. Ray Oldenburg reminds us of the Chinese proverb underlining why great good places are great models for good rehabs, and for overall reform of psy-ed’s positivist excesses and mistakes:

There is a Chinese proverb that holds that “a humble friend in the same village is better than sixteen influential brothers in the Royal Palace.” That epigram is a tribute to one of the most important characteristics that friends may possess – availability. Even the best of personal friends are often unavailable. One of the great advantages of the informal affiliation of the third place is the routine, daily steadiness of the friendly association it affords (Oldenburg 1999: 64).

May this work help contribute to building more “great good places” for those who most need and deserve them.
APPENDIX ONE

STORIES WITH FRIENDS

LIFE JOURNALLING WEEKEND WORKSHOP – 28-30 MAY 2004
Salvation Army Conference Centre, Homestead Ave, Collaroy Beach

FACILITATORS’ BRIEFING SHEET & JOB ALLOCATIONS

FRIDAY 28 MAY

FACILITATORS & ADVISERS IN BOLD – ASSISTING VOLUNTEERS IN REGULAR TYPE.

(N. Names were listed against each item, but have now been removed)

• REGISTRATION, PAYMENT, GENERAL INQUIRIES
• MEET AND GREET – ORIENTATION AND FIRST ENGAGEMENT WITH GROUP
• SAFETY CHECKS – MEDICAL, DIET, PERSONAL CARE
• ROOM DECORATION, JOINING-IN, WARMING-UP, HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES
• MUSIC AND CELEBRATION
• VOLUNTEER BONDING AND BRIEFING – Explaining Confidentiality, Duty of Care (Reporting ‘At Risk’ or Abusive Disclosures only) and Due Process; plus general need not to ‘Rescue’ or Try to Solve, but ‘Mirror’ for reflective Skills.
• ID (Group Living with Intellectual Disability) BONDING AND BRIEFING
• MI (Group Living with Mental Illness) BONDING AND BRIEFING
• FILMING & PHOTOGRAPHY

SATURDAY 29 MAY

• NEGOTIATE ANY CHANGES OF PARTNERING & GROUPS
• CIRCLE OF FRIENDS WARM-UP AND “Six Steps to Balanced Awareness”
• OUTLINING JOURNALLING PROCESS, FOLLOW-UP PEER GROUP SUPPORT AND INTERNET GROUP ON-GOING CONNECTION
• CIRCLE OF FRIENDS TOTEM GROUPS FIRST GET TOGETHER – Group Facilitators

• CIRCLE OF FRIENDS FIRST EXERCISES – Group Facilitators

• STORY STARTING AND SHARING IN CIRCLES OF FRIENDS – Group Facilitators

• PERSONAL REFLECTION MONITORING – General informal groupings

• SCRAPBOOKING – Sitting in Circle of Friends Groups with Scrapbook Teacher

• MUSIC – the Musicians

• MUSIC AND DANCING – Group Facilitators help encourage joining in

SUNDAY 30 MAY

• LARGE GROUP RECONNECTION – Sit in Circles of Friends Groups

• CIRCLES OF FRIENDS REGATHER – Story Sharing

• PLANNING FOR JOURNAL PROCESS IN PAIRS AFTER THIS WEEKEND – Circles of Friends meet and Discuss Options

REQUEST FOR FACILITATORS’ HELP WITH EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

ALL CLEARLY MARKED WITH YOUR NAME TAPED ON PLEASE.

Anyone who has materials and equipment that can help make the event even more fabulous, your loan would be most appreciated, with guaranteed return of all goods.

1. ELECTRICAL

   Extension cords

   Multi-plug power boards

   CD Players for multi-station music spots
Mixed music style CDs - DANCING MUSIC and GOOD BACKGROUND MOOD MUSIC

2. MUSICAL

Instruments and Percussion things

3. ART & CRAFT

Materials for room decoration, ‘special space creation’, and journal beautification.

4. DRESS UPS & BODY ART

(Temporary) Henna Tattoos

Make-up

Mad Clothes

5. PHOTOGRAPHIC & FILMING - Polaroid Camera and Film for instant shots and notice boarding, plus journalling
FINAL FULL LIST OF REFERENCES


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