Welcome to this edition of the Indigenous Economic Development Update.

As the new Minister for Regional Development I look forward to the challenges and exciting opportunities that this portfolio holds.

I would like to take a moment to share a little about myself. My electorate of Stuart is the largest in the Territory, extending from Pine Creek in the Top End to beyond Ti Tree in the South. My grandparents are from the Roper River and Yuendumu Regions of the Territory. I was born and raised in Alice Springs and I currently reside in Alice with my wife and three sons.

Along with Regional Development I also hold the Ministerial portfolios of Sport and Recreation, Information, Communications and Technology Policy and Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Major Projects and Economic Development.

There are a number of exciting major projects happening across the Territory including the recently announced Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP) and the Arnhem Fibre Optic link project. The SIHIP housing project is a joint project between the Australian and Northern Territory Governments and is an important step in closing the gap of indigenous disadvantage.

This is the largest housing program ever undertaken in remote Indigenous communities in Australia and will deliver not only housing opportunities but associated employment and training programs across 73 communities in the Territory.

I would like to congratulate all involved in the positive stories that are featured in this IED update and I look forward to continuing to work with all Territorians to strengthen Indigenous Economic Development opportunities.

Karl Hampton
Minister for Regional Development
The chance to supply fresh fruit and vegetables to the King’s Canyon Resort lies behind the development of a market garden project in the tiny community of Ulpanyali.

This cluster of family homes on the edge of the resort is now firming up its plans to grow and sell produce on land that has already been reticulated from water drawn from King’s Canyon Resort.

Ulpanyali’s market garden project is headed by sisters Julie and Linda Klien, who have reached an agreement with the resort to supply fresh produce as soon as the market garden goes into full production.

At present King’s Canyon Resort imports its fruit and vegetables through major centres such as Alice Springs, so there is a ready market just waiting to be tapped for the families at Ulpanyali.

Longer-term plans include selling produce to the Central Fruit and Vegetables Wholesalers in Alice Springs.

The ladies at Ulpanyali have drawn up a business plan with the assistance of the NT Government’s Indigenous Economic Development (IED) unit, which now comes under the newly-structured Department of Regional Development, Primary Industries, Fishing and Resources (DRDPIFR).

Ngurratjuta Aboriginal Corporation based in Alice Springs has provided assistance and support to the ladies at Ulpanyali to help them realise their goal.

Since the first seeds were literally planted in March 2008, the community business has successfully trialled tomatoes, cucumbers, melons and capsicums.

“The Klien sisters have been very energetic in driving this business project,” says Regional Development Officer Tanya Barsch. “They’ve got the young men in the community to build a shade house, install irrigation and put up the poles and stakes for the tomatoes and other vegetables. Before that the young men cleared the land, the women planted the seeds provided by the Ngurratjuta corporation and they tend the crop daily.”

Market gardens in desert climates have often proved difficult to establish and maintain, but the Ulpanyali experiment is slowly gaining ground.

Helping to boost community confidence are the regular visits from a horticulturist provided by Ngurratjuta, whose advice on planting and caring for the produce has been invaluable.

“The tomatoes, capsicums and cucumbers are doing fine,” says Tanya Barsch. “But they did have some initial problems with rabbits and mice when they planted rock melons, and needed to do some replanting.”

Many of the community members looking after the market garden are also studying land management through the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in an effort to improve their knowledge and skills.

A similar market garden project is under way on the other side of King’s Canyon at Sandy Bore, where Syd Maloney lives with his family.

Mr Maloney has been given funding from the IED unit to fence off his market garden to prevent camels straying in and destroying crops.

“A sandy Bore is in the trial process,” says Tanya Barsch. “The market garden is growing pumpkins and watermelons.”
Joint Park Management Begins at Rainbow Valley

For the past few decades it has been known as Rainbow Valley to locals and the thousands of tourists who have visited here, but for millennia it was known as Wurre to the Upper Southern Arrente people of Central Australia. That traditional Indigenous knowledge of the site is now taking greater precedence than it has in recent memory because the Territory Government, the land councils and traditional owners of the land have agreed that some of the NT national parks become jointly managed. Here in Rainbow Valley the Aboriginal traditional owners have become the first to engage under the new arrangements.

The traditional owners of the place they called Wurre are four families related through kinship laws. Ricky Orr, a member of the Kenny family, has developed a cultural tour that showcases Rainbow Valley through an Aboriginal perspective. He sees joint management as a valuable opportunity for his family. “I define Joint Management as two partners working together to get things right,” states Mr Orr. “It gives us employment opportunities like this. It gives us access to our country again. And the Parks and Wildlife people listen to us.”

Mr Orr’s tour takes small numbers of visitors by troop carrier or Coaster to the Rainbow Valley area 75 km south of Alice Springs. There the sandstone bluffs have become famous for their stunning color change and glow in the late afternoon. But Mr Orr’s tour takes his visitors much further. They take a track behind the valley in a place where Aboriginal people have gathered for centuries. “Following significant rainfall events, people used to come from across the region to that area,” explains Dianne Scopel, NT Parks and Wildlife Service. “Archeological evidence includes rock art where there are motifs displayed over and over again which could link to the area being a significant bush tucker dreaming site.”

The fact that the site was occupied for generations is evident everywhere you look. Stone tools were manufactured at the site with spearpoints and hand cutters in evidence. Grinding stones that women used to grind wild grass seeds into bread patties, shine in the sun, as if they are waiting for the seed gatherers to return. Mr Orr and his family know the area to be of great cultural significance. “My Grandfather told me the story of the rain dreaming track that runs from Koolpinya Springs, (near Hermannsburg) and goes from there to Rainbow Valley, then to Deepwell Station, then up to Ewaninga and up to Harts Range, covering hundreds of kilometers,” recounts Mr Orr.

Enigmatic petroglyphs have been pecked into the sandstone, and ochre designs decorate the rock walls, often carrying messages and patterns whose meanings have been lost to the ages. Visitors taking the tour, organized by tour operators, Alice Wanderers, experience the Indigenous view of the landscape, a layer that is sometimes missing in some park interpretation.

The only noticeable difference of Territory parks coming under joint management should be a stronger Indigenous view of parks and reserves like Rainbow Valley. “The vision is now a shared vision between traditional owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service,” says Ms Scopel. “We’re looking at greater outcomes than traditional park management. We’re looking at economic outcomes in employment, training and business. It’s really about meaningful traditional owner involvement in our parks and reserves.”

Joint management also brings families together. Leading up to the initiation of new joint management plans are a host of meetings where Aboriginal families discuss their views on how the land is to be managed and what cultural values can be shared. “In Rainbow Valley, those four families might have seen each other on occasion, but the whole planning process has really brought people together,” observes Ms Scopel. “Old people that had not visited the reserve for many years are now visiting regularly with family. There’s great inter-generational exchange as well as with the rangers.”

A visit to Wurre with Ricky Orr’s tour will appeal to the many visitors to the Northern Territory who seek an opportunity to meet Indigenous people and discover more about their culture. More and more Aboriginal people are involving themselves in tourism, providing a product with a unique view. “We live out in this area and we want to look after the place,” says Mr Orr. “They talk about contracts for traditional owners. And I can see, one day, managing this park as being a contract for us. We’re the best people for the job.”
The Indigenous Economic Development Unit in the Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources, has been working closely with the music industry and Northern Territory and Australian Government agencies to develop a comprehensive employment and business strategy for the NT music sector.

In July 2008 Northern Territory consultants Agentur were engaged to produce a report, entitled ‘Music that Works’. The report has formed the basis of a strategy to be published before the end of 2008 which contains initiatives aimed at better engaging the industry’s many talents, particularly in regions and remote communities.

Currently under consideration is the implementation of one or more Public Address (PA) hubs in key regions in the Territory.

The concept being currently used at the Winanjjikari Music Centre out of Tennant Creek contains a number of strong components that can be further built upon. These include the co-ordinated use of musical instruments and equipment, as well as a recording studio, computer hardware and software and training for Indigenous and non-Indigenous technicians and musicians.

It is anticipated that the PA hubs will provide a number of outcomes for regions, including opportunities for:

- communities situated near the hub’s to make use of this facility for their local events and performances (including touring and festivals);
- employment relating to the running, technical maintenance and use of the PA system;
- training and mentoring;
- fostering of musical talent and creativity;
- creating pathways from school to employment.

Further anticipated outcomes identified within the strategy include: higher school retention rates; return-to-school opportunities; and constructive entertainment opportunities for young people and their communities.

“This is a lot of rethinking occurring about the challenges facing people in the desert, especially those trying to make a go of business and economic opportunities,” says Mr Crowe. “The symposium and its activities are a chance to listen to all kinds of desert voices, look at models for the future, see what is working and what the research indicates needs to be done.”

“This year one of the themes will be about remote governance – how we run things and the structures we use to do it. There will be a lot said about how governments administer and interact in the desert.”

Guest speakers include Desert Knowledge Australia chairman Fred Chaney, Indian academic and industrial strategist Dr Amit Kapoor, Professor Jeannie Herbert, vice-chancellor of the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, and water and environmental expert John Scanlon.

Getting Started workshop at Mutijulu community

With a new viewing platform to open near the world renowned Australian landmark of Uluru, the community of Mutijulu is keen to discover what business opportunities they may be able to develop to capitalise on the large number of tourists that travel from the four corners of the globe to view this natural wonder.

The Indigenous Economic Development unit recently held a workshop at Mutijulu to help members of the community understand the ins and outs of getting started in business.

Around 20 community elders attended the workshop, where they expressed a very keen desire to establish some sort of business that would provide jobs for the younger generations.

Gina Smith facilitated the workshop and quickly pointed out that many tourists spend considerable amounts of money just to travel to central Australia, and a portion of those tourist dollars could be tapped into with the right business.

Gina explained that starting a new business is not easy and that a lot of hard work is involved, but the rewards are there for that hard work. She explained the basics of running a business and outlined some of the ups and downs.

She outlined what business support services are out there and that grants can also be made available for small business ventures and market research.

The community members who attended understand the importance of creating jobs for the younger generations and that they need a way of replacing welfare with real wages.

It was a well received meeting and the community is now enthusiastic to speak with a business consultant to brainstorm about what type of business would suit the area and the community.

Future meetings are being planned for Mutijulu where business plans will be mapped out which will hopefully lead to new economic outcomes for the community.

A first for Charles Darwin University

Charles Darwin University has scored a national first with the appointment of an Indigenous person to the position of Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership.

Steven Larkin is currently the Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies in Canberra. He will commence his new Darwin-based position in January 2009.

Mr Larkin has extensive leadership experience in Indigenous organisations including the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, The Aboriginal Health Unit of NT Health Services and the Community Development and Social Health Branch of the Federal Department of Health and Aged Care.

CDU Vice-Chancellor Professor Helen Garnett says Mr Larkin will join the university’s executive and will be responsible for the Indigenous components of all CDU activities.

“We believe this is the first time in Australia that an Indigenous person has been appointed to such a high university position,” she explained, “Mr Larkin’s appointment is a demonstration of the commitment the university has for Indigenous participation across all schools.”

Mr Larkin says he wants to see CDU as the university of choice for students, academic staff, researchers and significant others who work or research in the discipline of Indigenous studies throughout Australia.
It’s not often a car crash is looked back on fondly. But for the owners of Red Centre Panel and Paint, Linton “Harry” and Loretta Harris, a rear-end accident during Darwin’s wet season marked a pivotal point in their life.

In Harry’s opinion the damage to his car was minimal. However, the insurance company foresaw the repairs costing more than the car was worth and wrote it off.

Seeing lucrative potential in the panel beating industry and a gap in the Alice Springs market, Harry and Loretta along with their baby moved from the Territory’s top end to the middle of Australia.

Four months later Red Centre Panel and Paint opened for business.

The couple were assisted through the Northern Territory Government Indigenous Business Development Program (IBDP) to purchase computers and equipment for the business.

Today, just four months after opening their doors, Red Centre Panel and Paint is drawing in a healthy profit. “It would have taken a lot longer to get to where we are today if we hadn’t gained the grant,” Harry said.

Opening positions specifically for indigenous workers had always been part of the game plan for Red Centre Panel and Paint.

The business currently employs five full-time workers, four of which are from indigenous backgrounds.

David “Ziggy” Brown, an Aboriginal apprentice in the second year of a panel beating trade, dreamt of working in the industry since he was a child. “I’ve always loved cars, I couldn’t imagine myself doing anything else,” he said.

As the business continues to prosper, Red Centre Panel and Paint will look to employ more aboriginal workers and in light of the success of the business Harry and Loretta are confident doors will continue to open for indigenous people.

“We don’t feel we’ve held ourselves back by making the conscious decision to employ more indigenous workers and hope we are an example to other businesses to give indigenous people a shot,” Harry said.
High-speed broadband for Arnhem Land

People and businesses in Arnhem Land will be able to receive high-speed broadband internet access thanks to a partnership involving the Northern Territory Government, Telstra, Rio Tinto, and the Northern Land Council.

The Territory government has committed $6.8 million to the $34 million project which will see 800 kilometres of fibre optic cable laid between Jabiru and Nhulunbuy. This 800km roll out will form the backbone of project. Links will then branch out from the main cable to connect with coastal and other remote communities such as Oenpelli, Maningrida and Gapuwiyak.

It's expected that the backbone component will be completed by November this year, with work on the links to begin at the end of the wet season in 2009.

Access to broadband services in the Arnhem Land region will bring a number of benefits by overcoming the tyranny of distance and allowing businesses to utilise on-line banking services, video-conferencing and quicker download speeds.

For health services it will provide the ability to access remote diagnosis from doctors in larger centres, professional training and support and better lines of communication with major hospitals and health service providers.

Education delivery will also benefit with the potential for virtual classrooms, e-learning and greater access to information from the World Wide Web.

The people of Arnhem Land will be able to communicate with the world in the same way the others do in larger cities as they will now be part of the information superhighway.
S T A F F   P R O F I L E S

Lorraine Corowa is Director Regional Development in our Darwin office.

Born and bred in country Queensland and now a Territorian after 21 years here, she has a real passion for regional and Indigenous economic development. Lorraine has a background in utilities (power, water, sewerage), having spent 17 years with Power and Water Corporation in a variety of roles including economics, financial modelling, regulatory affairs and corporate strategy. In 2005 Lorraine joined Business and Employment to work in Commercial Services, managing industry development and Indigenous business grants and providing strategic commercial advice within Government on a range of projects. Lorraine also had a short stint with the Land Development Corporation working on their 5 year plan and facilitating industrial land development. Lorraine has a Bachelor of Business (accounting) and is currently completing a Masters in International Management. Lorraine was a finalist in the Telstra Business Woman of the Year in 2007 in the Government category. Lorraine has been with Regional Development since August this year and has a program of regional and remote visits lined up, hoping to meet as many people as possible over the coming months and years to further the work of Regional and Indigenous economic development.

Sue Harley is Acting Manager Regional Development in our Alice Springs office.

Sue co-ordinates the Economic Development Committees in Central Australia and regional development projects such as the Alice Springs Economic Profile which was published earlier this year. Sue has also lived in Nhulunbuy and fully appreciates the development potential which exists in our regional areas.

Tanya Barsch is the Regional Development Officer located in our Alice Springs office.

Tanya’s main role is working with Indigenous businesses in the start-up phase. On her journey’s around Central Australia Tanya has been working with a broad range of start-up businesses including small horticulture ventures, tourism and construction businesses. Tanya works one-on-one with small Indigenous businesses and refers them to other appropriate support programs available from both the Territory and Commonwealth Government. One of the most rewarding aspects of Tanya’s job is when businesses actually start to grow and are able to employ more staff.

Leeanne Caton is a Kalkadoon/Eastern Arrente woman who grew up and went to school in Darwin.

As the newly appointed Director of Indigenous Economic Development, she brings to the role a wealth of experience in Indigenous affairs.

Leeanne has worked in the indigenous health, education, employment and social justice arenas throughout the past 25 years and is passionate about enhancing the overall status of indigenous people.

“Yes, the role of the Director of IED will be a challenging one however, where there is a will there is a way. I look forward to working with people on their Country and on their terms”.

Did you enjoy this edition of the IED Update?

Do you want to register to receive the IED Update straight to your inbox or mailbox every quarter?

Contact Anne Pearce
ph: (08) 8999 6908
fax: 8999 2090
e-mail: anne.pearce@nt.gov.au