

From: Denise Goodfellow [<mailto:goodfellow@bigpond.com.au>]
Sent: Tuesday, 20 May 2014 4:20 PM
To: Jones, David
Cc: Denise Goodfellow
Subject: Re: Chamber of Commerce NT Breakfast Forum [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Dear David

My apologies for taking so long to answer. It's coming into the fire season so we're busy trying to clear Gamba and other fire-prone grasses from our property.

However, here is an outline of my submission. It doesn't directly deal with competition policy, but I hope you and your panel find it helpful.

I've lived in the Top End since 1975. In 1981 I was elected to Darwin City Council as an alderman, on the platform of conserving mangroves - I wasn't a rabid greenie, as some described me, but I was concerned that in clearing mangroves we were removing an asset (birdwatching tourism is a large industry), and a bulwark against cyclone storm surge.

While on Council I set out to win the trust of Aboriginal (Larrakia) people living on a reserve within my ward. They just saw me as a hated white and so I set out to win their trust. Firstly I began running makeup classes on the reserve. While running the classes I was approached by a woman who'd lost most of her fingers through leprosy. I painted her nails. So then the women, who'd been very reluctant to talk to me, came forward and told me of various problems. Then the President, a large, fierce lady, Mrs. Paula Thompson, told me to catch her a snake That I did, after spending four hours in the waters of a large billabong with the crocodiles.

One of the ramifications was that I was threatened with prosecution. The Aboriginal women, now seeing me as a victim, adopted me so that, like them I could hunt legally. Thirdly, about a year later senior women came to me about a police officer in Arnhem Land they said was a serial rapist. Together we went after him, at some risk to all of us.

Aboriginal relatives, most Larrakia and Kunwinjku, came to live with me at times. Many were semi-traditional people and it took a lot of patience on both sides for this to happen successfully. But it did. I learned firsthand just how deep their mistrust was of non-Indigenous people. But a great deal of the issue was their lack of self-confidence around such people.

One lesson here, I guess, is the importance of intelligent trust, Reagan's "trust by verify". It works, but as you've probably realised there was quite a lot of risk in what I did. But Aboriginal women in particular were also in danger, and so my actions became trust-building. And through that trust I was able to gain some insight into the reasons why Aboriginal people behaved in certain ways. And I found those reactions weren't foreign at all; that they had much in common with many in our, and other societies. For example they behaved collectively as do many women, and people from largely collective societies e.g. those of China. They hated confrontation particularly with white professionals, and lost confidence when confronted with bureaucracy.

They lacked confidence when expected to speak or put a case. So few would attend meetings expecting me or someone else to speak on their behalf. I once read a paper on how the

Communist Party of Italy learned to break down barriers that prevented women from joining (Alastair Davidson), and combined with my understanding of the strategies of the great community worker Saul Alinsky, was able sometimes to get around this. However, getting non-indigenous public servants and business people to come to the party was very difficult.

In 1988 Kunwinku relatives asked me to help them start a little tourism project on their country, Baby Dreaming, in western Arnhem Land. I had a little funding from the Department of Business and Resource Development. I'd met a senior public servant, Graeme Kevern, who was very taken with my approach saying that the Board had been puzzling over how to reach Aboriginal people that very morning. He showed me publications that aimed to aid Aboriginal people in starting a business. There was absolutely no way that most of the Aboriginal people I knew could make head nor tail out of those booklets.

I put together a program that started from where Aboriginal people were at. For example training built upon their knowledge and skills and the whole family took part. My first aid course was like an episode of The Goodies, but all, including those who'd completed such courses before, said it was the best one they'd ever done. I aimed to fit visitors to the country and my relatives rather than the other way round.

One issue was that parents and elders considered themselves "too stupid" to learn computer skills, or unqualified to teach their children English, a bit rich seeing their kids were already fluent in several languages. I got over that hurdle by bringing in my 16 year old son and visiting American students. Then elders began training others. We produced a newsletter which I then sent to a friend, a prominent businessman, in Singapore. His wife, a High Court translator, translated the text to characters, and posted it throughout China. The newsletter also reached people in the USA and UK.

I won't go into great detail about all that we did, except to say that it succeeded. Other outstations were becoming involved, and then the funding that allowed me to hire vehicles was cut. This was because neither I nor the elders had a Certificate 4 in training. The gaps still exist as I witnessed last year - Indigenous rangers felt they had no choice but to resign over the way they were treated. Yet when I spoke on their behalf at a workshop, a Parks and Wildlife employee compared these elders, many of whom loved their jobs, to recalcitrant children who dropped out of school. A national tour operator stormed out saying that I was being "too negative". "Too negative" about Indigenous rangers, experts in their fields, feeling they had no choice but to resign, some after well over a decade in the job?

Aboriginal people I know up here, learn as young children to take responsibility for others. This is particularly strong among the Kunwinjku of western Arnhem Land - this is how their children grow to become competent parents and responsible members of society. To give an example my son Rowan, when only three, was presented with a newborn baby and told he was now a "little daddy". Watched over by adults and older children he began to learn the skills needed to raise a child.

Now, Rowan never fitted into school, but as a working adult those skills came into their own. While still in his teens he was promoted to acting assistant manager of a large department store because of his "people management skills". However, in general, both at school and at work those skills were not appreciated.

Today Rowan is a successful chef at a large, grand hotel in Norway. According to his partner he has even cooked for the Norwegian Prime Minister.

The skills and values needed to work successfully with Indigenous people are similar in many ways to those needed to build relationships (including trade relationships) with India and China. I believe that the skills and values that Indigenous people still retain, particularly up here in the Top End, are the building blocks that business should be using. That way, I also believe, is the path to success.

Best of luck with the review.

Kind regards

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