

Inspire

Issue Two April 2009

Bob Blair

A tribute to hard work

*Innovative housing
for families*



*Support in a time
of uncertainty*



IBA respects Indigenous cultures and has attempted to ensure that no material that is offensive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been included in this magazine.

IBA IN DIGENOUS
BUSINESS AUSTRALIA

Welcome

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) has a vision for "A nation in which the First Australians are economically independent and an integral part of the economy," and we are working hard to achieve this by assisting Indigenous Australians to purchase their own homes, create businesses and own companies and investments to build assets and wealth and fulfil their aspirations.

October 2008 saw the launch of Inspire, the economic development magazine of IBA. As the title suggests, the purpose of this publication is to excite, influence, stimulate, motivate and arouse feelings through the promotion of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander success stories in the business and economic sectors.



Inspire aims to add to the discussion about Indigenous economic development and how it can provide opportunities to participate in the mainstream economy by way of home ownership, jobs, self employment, small business and asset development.

My goal is to inform elected Members of Parliament at the State and National level, industry representatives and Indigenous Australians of what is happening across the breadth of the country to improve our opportunities to enjoy the freedom that comes with economic independence. I want to showcase this freedom and the positive outcomes that economic development can have for Indigenous Australians, their families, friends and communities.

The global economic crisis is impacting on the Australian landscape in many ways and this year we will be closely monitoring the trends and ways in which the economy and the future arrangements for creating wealth might change and how we can continue to be a part of the prosperity of this country.

Even in these tough economic times, as a commercial organisation, we have to ensure that we get positive returns from our investments. Equally important though are the social and economic dividends that flow to Indigenous Australians from our activities. Throughout this issue, we will showcase how Indigenous people throughout Australia are experiencing amazing economic breakthroughs at individual, community and corporate levels. These are the practical examples of what has been done by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in a variety of differing circumstances.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Inspire and look forward to receiving your feedback, so that we can provide you with information that is helpful, relevant and insightful. For any comments or suggestions, please email: IBA_Corporate@iba.gov.au

In the meantime, we look forward to bringing you more exciting news and initiatives in the next edition of Inspire, later this year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Morony'.

Ron Morony, General Manager IBA

Innovative Housing for Families

Along with food, water and air, adequate housing is universally recognised as one of the most basic human needs. The United Nation's Global Shelter Strategy defines adequate housing as "providing adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities-all at a reasonable cost."

Too many Indigenous families live in overcrowded and sub-standard houses that don't satisfy basic requirements. Indigenous children are not getting the start in life that they deserve and with the Indigenous population significantly younger than the overall Australian population the need for adequate housing will continue to rise.

The Innovative Affordable Housing (IAH) project was designed to examine, develop and trial housing models and housing construction options which would ultimately lead to the provision of more affordable and higher quality accommodation for Indigenous Australians living in remote locations.

Through funding from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), IBA commenced this housing construction project in June 2007. The project was split into two parts, construction of 20 houses at Wudapuli and Nama - outstations located near Wadeye, Northern Territory, and then the construction of 13 houses at Nguuiu on Bathurst Island.

The houses built at Wudapuli and Nama utilised a design that took into consideration the local environment, community feedback and expert advice from Paul Pholerios of 'Healthabitat', a leading Indigenous housing expert.

Ten four-bedroom houses were built in each of Wudapuli and Nama, currently housing 20 families, approximately 165 people. Construction commenced in August 2007 and following completion in August 2008 the houses were handed over to Territory Housing.

Each house has a number of innovative aspects including a structural system that reduces the weight of steel required lowering associated transport costs, external cooking areas, secure breezeways, open verandas and passive climatic control systems.

IBA General Manager, Ron Morony, spoke of the importance of engaging the local community in this project. "We worked closely with BlueScope Steel Limited to ensure local labour was engaged on the project. This collaboration resulted in over 2000 hours of work for the local community".

"The project also succeeded in reducing the cost of housing construction in remote Indigenous communities while delivering design innovation and employment opportunities to Indigenous Australians".

The collaboration of government agencies, private industry and the local Indigenous community has enabled people in these remote communities to live in a brand new, innovatively and appropriately designed house. The houses provide a safe, comfortable living environment and contribute to the strong sense of pride evident in these vibrant communities.

The second part of the project involving the construction of 13 houses in Nguuiu, commenced in June 2008 and is due for completion in mid June 2009. This project is testing the use of two

other alternative designs and delivery methods and has achieved good local workforce participation through the use of the Bathurst Island Housing Authority as the main works contractor.

Adequate housing is a right of all people whether in urban, rural or remote settings and IBA is working hard to ensure Indigenous Australians have access to adequate housing, no matter where they live.



A man called Blair

Like Greek philosophers and Roman generals, Bob Blair was simply known as Blair for 21 years of his adult life. You are addressed by your surname in the Australian Army, and for Acting Chair of IBA Bob Blair, life in the Army laid the foundations for his future successes.

Bob Blair was born in Wondai (in the South Burnett area of Queensland) in 1942. At the age of two, he was relocated to the Cherbourg Aboriginal mission. He spent a year at the mission, a very unpleasant experience and was fortunate enough to spend the rest of his childhood raised by his aunt and uncle in Hervey Bay, Queensland.

At 14 years of age, Bob decided that he was ready to tackle the workforce. There were few employers who agreed that he was ready, however one man provided with him with an opportunity to work for the forestry service which he grasped with both hands. For five years Bob worked from Sunday to Friday, developing the work ethic that would drive him throughout his life.

At the age of 19, with five years work experience, Bob had itchy feet. He dreamed of exploring outside of his local area and the opportunity presented itself in the form of an advertisement in the local newspaper. The ad was for the Australian Army and to this day, Bob is unsure why he applied. He travelled to Brisbane for the tests that would land him the job and set him on his career path.

In June 1961, Bob left the Sunshine state and arrived in "freezing cold" Wagga Wagga, Western NSW, ready for basic training. Following the "yelling and mental abuse" of basic training, Bob was assigned as an infantry soldier to the barracks

in Ingleburn, NSW, before spending 18 months with the 1st Battalion at Liverpool, not far from Ingleburn.

Bob is a proud Indigenous man who has always asserted that colour has not been an inhibitor to him in his life, it has actually assisted him. "I believe that my colour in the Army was the only thing that got me where I was as a Warrant Officer 1st Class. There were 80 in our platoon when we first went through Kapooka. When I used to come in first in a 15k run, people would notice me. My white mate probably was as good as me but didn't stand out."

Bob stood out and the future leader emerged, earning him a return to Wagga Wagga as a Corporal. He was now delivering the training to cadets from their first day for 13 weeks, instilling the hard work ethic and discipline they needed in the Army. It gave him a deep satisfaction to see "a raw recruit coming in not knowing his right foot from his left and then 13 weeks later he's going out, can keep in step and do rifle drills and all the other drills."

Bob and his colleagues lived and breathed discipline. "We would never sit down all day because we didn't want to crease our trousers or our shirt. There was one fellow there who was worse than ever. He just never sat down all day and he was doing all the paperwork so you can just imagine him standing up all day because he didn't want to crease his trousers". It was at this time Bob learned what he considers to be the three cardinal rules which he has applied his life, "attention to detail, discipline, and bullsh*t baffles brains".

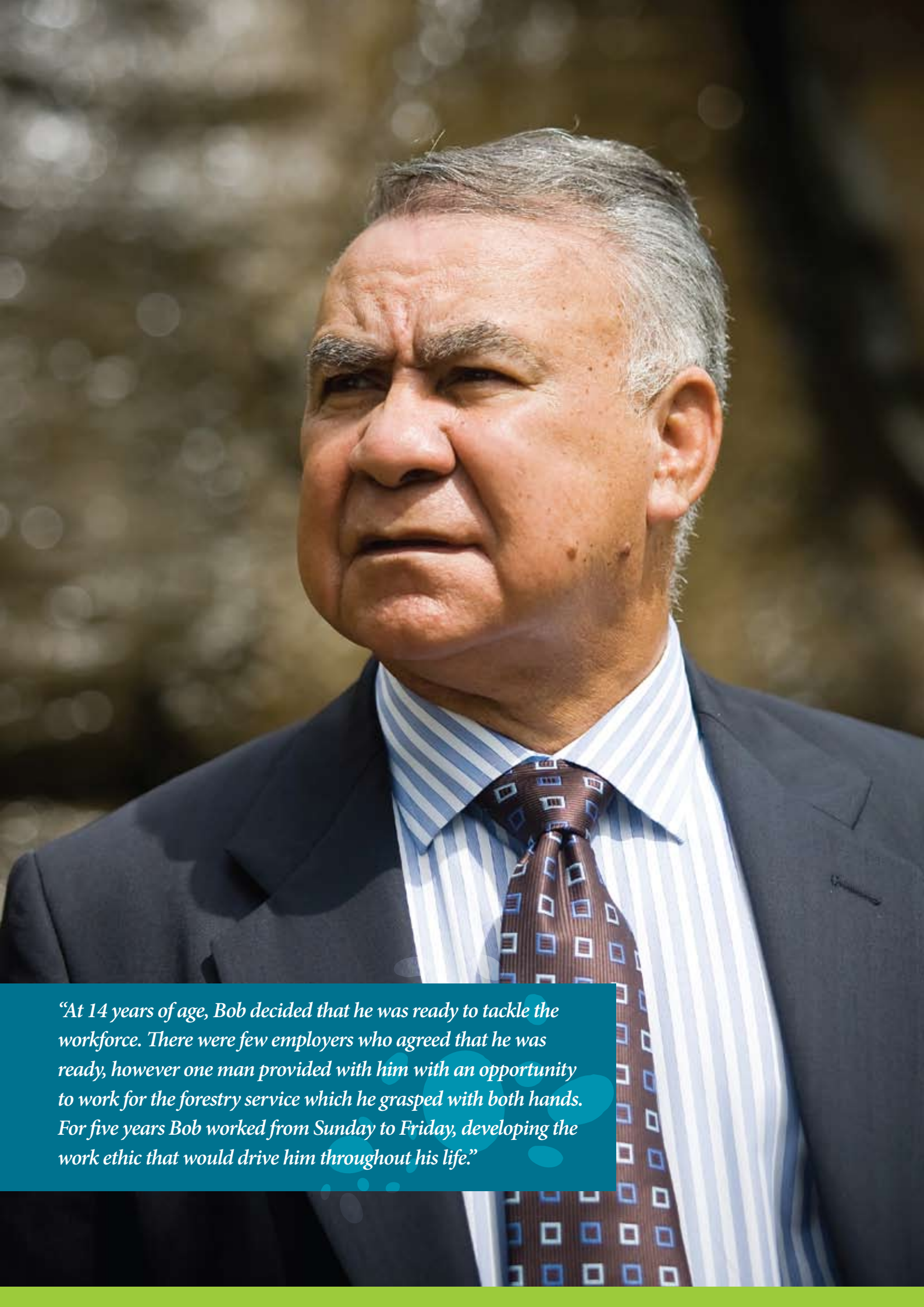
Training now formed an important part of Bob's life in the Army and he

is convinced that he was "the best driller (drill instructor) in the Australian Army. My drill was spot on". Following a 13 month stint in Vietnam and postings in NSW, SA and Brisbane, he commenced teaching military law at the Land Warfare Centre, Canungra, Queensland.

During his posting as the Regimental Sergeant Major of 42 RQR in Rockhampton, Bob started to consider his career and the impacts it had on his family. He had been in the Army for 21 years and had lived and worked throughout Australia. The Army was important to him but his two daughters and a son had attended 11 schools in three states. Army life was dynamic but stability was needed. While pondering this decision Bob strolled by the local taxi rank in Rockhampton and inspiration struck him. He took a months leave from the Army and spent his hours at the taxi rank learning the tricks of the trade. Cab 40, a Ford Falcon, was purchased, a discharge certificate was collected from the Army and Bob was a bone fide cabbie.

The Army had always provided a security blanket for Bob so the change in lifestyle was daunting, challenging but also rewarding. The hours were long so he didn't see much of his family, but the family had stability which was important. The money was also good but the monotony of discussing the same subject matter all day was wearing, "I could have had a tape recorder and pushed a button and I would have given the same answer, 21 times a day, about the weather."

Although Bob enjoyed his being his own boss, after three years driving cabs he was presented with an opportunity to train again. The cab was sold and Bob started work as



"At 14 years of age, Bob decided that he was ready to tackle the workforce. There were few employers who agreed that he was ready, however one man provided with him with an opportunity to work for the forestry service which he grasped with both hands. For five years Bob worked from Sunday to Friday, developing the work ethic that would drive him throughout his life."



“Bob’s legacy is as an inspiration to others, he is truly the phoenix who rose from the ashes. Born to parents incapable of looking after him, he spent time in a mission, performed adult work from a young age, fought a war on foreign soil, all the while learning and working hard.”

a training officer with the Central Queensland Aboriginal Corporation of Training Resources that involved visiting Aboriginal organisations, assisting with the administration and finances of the business; skills he had learnt in the Army.

In 1987 Bob was approached to manage a Cultural Centre (would become Dreamtime) in Rockhampton that had received Bicentennial funding. Upon commencing at the Centre he set about organising the finances, hiring and training of staff and reorganising the structure to remove the committee. Bob has a cheeky view that the best committees, “were made up of three people; one on long service leave, one on extended sick leave and you’re the only one left making all the decisions”. The committee was replaced by forming a Proprietary Limited company with a board.

The official opening of the Cultural Centre was in 1988 and Bob recalls, “we had Bob Hawke come to open it, and David Gulpilil doing the dancing. On the day that we opened it was clear weather and all of a sudden David was dancing and it started to rain. So we said that David had performed a rain dance.”

With solid leadership and dedicated staff, Dreamtime continued to expand with the addition of the Darambal Conference Centre in 1994, the Ted Mitchell Gallery and Dreamtime Lodge Motel, a 32 room motel with restaurant, conference facility and swimming pool which was officially opened in February 2000 by Senator John Herron.

Dreamtime has profited from the vision of Bob and the pioneers of the Centre including, but not limited to, Nola James, Margaret Lawton and Ted Mitchell. Their vision was for a place where the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures could be celebrated, but also have an economic focus on harnessing the tourist and conference markets. Bob’s business acumen and leadership enabled Dreamtime to grow so that it now hosts conferences and events all year round and leases out the motel complex as well. The Indigenous ownership and management of the Centre has its own unique challenges in that the staff have to work harder and provide better service to break down some of the stereotypes. This commitment and the results of their hard work are evident when you visit Dreamtime.

In 1997, one visitor in particular was struck by the quality of the facilities, the professionalism of the staff and their leader in particular. The visitor was the then Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Senator Herron.

He approached Bob and asked whether he would be interested in being a board member of the Commercial Development Corporation (CDC). Bob asked what it involved, and was told that CDC – the predecessor to IBA – was into business and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues so he thought “if we’re running a cultural centre and we’re into business, this would be an opportunity for me to get more experience at the higher level.”

Bob joined the Board of CDC, now IBA, in July 1998. He found it assisted his work at Dreamtime but also his skills assisted CDC (IBA) to achieve its objectives and grow into a national organisation assisting Indigenous Australians to achieve economic independence. He was appointed as the Deputy Chair of IBA and has been Acting Chair for the past 12 months. The experience gained from being an IBA Board member has helped Bob with his work at Dreamtime and in his other Indigenous organisation appointments.

In 2001, Bob was awarded the Centenary Medal for service to the community through cultural awareness activities. He is proud of what he has achieved, but is humble when praised, knowing there are important lessons to teach the younger generations including the need for a strong work ethic. “In the forestry service I was learning from my elders

about their work ethics. I learned from a very early age that you went to work on Sunday night and you came back on Friday night.”

Bob stresses that every day he and his staff are in the business of reconciliation. “When the fellow comes to the front counter and he’s served, that’s reconciliation. When they go to the motel and that blackface serves them at the counter, that’s reconciliation. We’re doing reconciliation every day of the week.” He knows that there is a long way to go but he feels he and his team are working hard for a positive future.

Bob’s legacy is an inspiration to others, he is truly the phoenix who rose from the ashes. Born to parents incapable of looking after him, he spent time in a mission, performed adult work from a young age, fought a war on foreign soil, all the while learning and working hard.

When asked of this legacy Bob was typically humble, “I’m not quite sure what the Aboriginal people think of me. When I go they will probably think he’s done something there. I think we’ve done a good job here.”

A good job: something we can all aspire to.



IBA Board – Back row (l to r): Leah Armstrong, Jenny Boddington, Gail Reynolds-Adamson, Judy Hardy, and Priscilla Collins.
Front row (l to r): Ian Trust, Bob Blair and Peter Thomas

Designing a brighter future

"After working with Dion for some time, retired school teacher Joie Boulter noticed that he was extremely fond of drawing. The majority of Dion's work included dogs of all descriptions. It was through his drawings that Dion began to communicate with others."

Art has always been an important communication tool in Indigenous culture, used to record history, tell stories of the Dreamtime and share knowledge. For Dion Beasley art allows him to communicate his passion to the world: dogs.

Born with muscular dystrophy, Dion contracted meningitis when a baby which left him profoundly deaf. He grew up in the small Aboriginal township of Owairtilla, also known as Canteen Creek, about 300 km from Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory.

In need of extra care he relocated to Tennant Creek in 2002 to live with his Aunt, where he attended Tennant Creek Primary School. At that stage he had minimal communication skills, was shy and withdrawn. Dion's story could have ended here but has an inspirational twist. It is at this stage that Dion's guardian angel appeared and his development began.

After working with Dion for some time, retired school teacher Joie Boulter noticed that he was extremely fond of drawing. The majority of Dion's work included dogs of all descriptions. It was through his drawings that Dion began to communicate with others.

With Joie's assistance Dion began to learn basic sign language, became more settled and started to grow in confidence. The drawing continued, often depicting daily life, with dogs as the prominent characters. Joie noticed the quality of his work and "considered what a wonderful thing it would be if Dion was able to develop and use his talents in making a better future for himself." An ambitious plan was hatched.

Initially, 40 t-shirts were printed in Tennant Creek with Dion's dog designs. The unique styles of Dion's drawings were well received so Joie and her husband Tony committed to forming and funding the "Cheeky

Dog" company. Darwin based designer Stan Whiting was approached to see if Dion's drawings were marketable. Stan saw the potential and assisted to 'clean up' the original drawings, prepare them for screen-printing and design the company's logo.

Having no previous experience in the business field, Joie and Tony 'limped along' and needed professional assistance, fast. A report was developed on the state of the business at that time and an application was made to the Northern Territory Department of Small Business for assistance.

Joie and Tony were encouraged to contact IBA for further advice. Staff in the Adelaide IBA office, in conjunction with a business consultant, assisted in:

- reviewing the trust arrangements set up on behalf of Dion in order that his future needs would be met through the business
- the areas of contracting of the manufacturing, marketing and distribution of the products in consideration of a royalty and/or licence fee
- ensuring that trade mark and copyright requirements were suitable for the business and that protection would be provided through the Intellectual Property licence
- researching markets for the product and contacting a range of potential distributors

Tony and Joie arranged for the "Cheeky Dog" products to be supplied and printed by a company in Queensland, instead of Darwin, saving on costs.

The result was the formation of a unique company, created to provide support for Dion and ensure he has a financially stable future. The company pays royalties per item to Dion for the use of his designs and pays a dividend into a trust at the end of the financial year.

The art world soon tuned in to Dion's work. In 2005, Dion was awarded the Best Indigenous Memento Award. The Memento Awards showcase fresh, contemporary and commercially viable craft, art and design that reflects unique characters and the Australian spirit. He was also a finalist in the 2006 Northern Territory Young Achiever awards.

In 2008, Dion was given a grant by NT Artback to produce a limited edition of prints. 10 screen prints were exhibited in Darwin, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. Dion's drawings were also exhibited in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, in mid-2008.

Joie swells with pride as she speaks of how Dion's work is appreciated by a cross section of the population and this has resulted in raising Dion's profile within the community. "I feel it is important that Dion is valued as a contributing member of the community and is treated with the respect he deserves. Many people have been won over by the twinkle in his eyes and infectious smile. A comment often passed is 'his drawings make me laugh'".

Joie was honoured as the Citizen of the Year in the 2009 Australia Day Presentation in Tennant Creek for her tireless work with Dion and the Cheeky Dog label. Every effort is being made to ensure Dion is able to pursue his love of drawing. It is hoped that his artwork will provide him the greatest long-term benefit.

Dion Beasley has been dealt a pretty tough hand but with the assistance of his guardian angel, Joie Boulter, friends, family and IBA, he is endeavouring to make the most of what is available to him.

Certainly an inspiration to us all.

Dion's designs can be viewed at www.cheekydogs.com.au

Walking in the footsteps of ancestors

Hauntingly beautiful to the naked eye, the semi-arid Willandra Lakes Region of South Western NSW is an amazing landscape of dunes and lunettes stretching as far as the eye can see. This region houses Mungo National Park, one of the earliest known sites of human civilization and one of the most important archaeological sites on the planet.

Mungo became a National Park in 1978 with the aim to preserve and maintain a sample of the Willandra fossil lake system. It is a World Heritage Area covering over 240,000 hectares currently co-managed by the Traditional Owners, the Paakantji and the Ngyiampaa tribes through the Joint Management Committee.

Traditionally a destination for scientists, Mungo attracted a worldwide audience with the discovery of Mungo Woman in 1969, and Mungo Man five years later on the western shores of Lake Mungo.

Mungo Man and Mungo Woman are skeletal remains dating back more than 40,000 years and are some of the most famous in the world because of the rituals associated with the burials. Mungo Man's body was sprinkled with red ochre, in what is the earliest incidence of such an artistic burial practice. This aspect of the discovery is particularly significant to Indigenous Australians, inferring a sophisticated social structure and belief system had existed on the Australian continent for much longer than previously thought.

When the lakes of this area dried up 15,000 years ago, Aborigines stayed on, drawing water from soaks along the old river channel and quarrying stone from rock outcrops on the lake floor. Now dry, these lake systems contain the oldest fossil trackway of modern humans with 450 fossilised human footprints of men, women and children, animal prints and a spear mark, stone tools, ancient hearths and middens, some dating back 40,000 years.



The fossilised remains of extinct animals such as Tasmanian tigers, giant kangaroos, hairy-nosed wombats and an animal called the zygomaturus have also been found at the site.

Like an ancient walled fortress the lunette known as the 'Walls of China' rises out of the flats and is one of the main highlights of Mungo National

Park. It is a 30 km long dune formation which protects many thousands of years of human history. A boardwalk has been constructed to protect this incredibly fragile and sensitive environment.

Located within the World Heritage Area, Mungo Lodge was acquired by IBA in 2003 and is a 100% owned and managed property. The Lodge first opened its doors in 1994 to provide very basic accommodation for visitors to Mungo National Park.

More widely known amongst scientists and academics than the wider community, the no-frills operation of the Lodge was adequate for its purpose. However, as the parks reputation grew, so did the sophistication and corresponding expectations of visitors to the area. It became apparent that the only way to attract more affluent visitors and maximise the Lodge's income potential was to undergo a redevelopment to lift the standards of the facility to a four star level.

Utilising a local builder, redevelopment works commenced in October 2007 and were completed in November 2008. Approximately 98% of the capital injection into the Lodge has flowed into local businesses and community support has been tremendous.

The park is of great significance to Indigenous Australians both locally and across Australia. It provides a direct connection to their ancestors, who were adaptable people that

survived in a harsh climate, had a connection to the land and developed belief systems.

The Willandra Elders (Paakantji and the Ngyiampaa tribes), National Park, Landholders and the Scientific Community have a unique relationship. They are all committed to the protection and preservation of cultural material and values for future generations. It is this unique partnership that makes a visit to Mungo memorable as you can experience such a monumental amount of history in a natural and undisturbed setting.

It is the aspiration of the Willandra Elders to establish a Keeping Place to hold the remains of ancestors and artefacts that have been taken away to be studied and now remain in Universities and Museums across the world. The repatriation of these artefacts and remains would enhance what is already a breathtaking place to visit.

Mungo is not your average tourist experience, and that is its charm. It is a unique experience that stimulates your senses, invites you to travel back in time, to walk in the footsteps of our earliest ancestors and to see first hand the sophistication of Indigenous life. It is simply a place you must visit.

For further information on Mungo Lodge visit <http://www.mungolodge.com.au/>



An artist's impression of Mungo Man



Images courtesy of Rod Moffatt

Rendering a world class product

With a background in finance and the local building industry, Fiona Wegner and Russell Boston combined their families' experience and knowledge to establish Render One. Render One is a family owned and operated manufacturing company with three Indigenous employees whose core business is developing high quality textural coating systems (render).

Fiona's husband, Joni Wegner, and business partner, Russell Boston, have a combined 35-years experience in render systems and during this time have used most render products available on the market. Russell's career includes owning and operating his own business and roles across Australia, the United Arab Emirates and South East Asia.

Joni's knowledge comes from his father, Werner, who had a background in industrial chemistry which spanned over 40 years. This knowledge and Joni's experience in the building industry led to him to research and develop a render system that utilises the latest chemicals and technologies available, suitable for all climates and a complete range of surfaces.

In the 11 years prior to the establishment of Render One, Fiona worked as a financial controller at an Indigenous antenatal women's shelter in Cairns. This role allowed her to establish a network of business contacts that later provided vital support and advice.

"In this role, I identified the need for society to recognise strong, independent Indigenous women who can be role models for our Indigenous youth. I believe that we need to challenge ourselves to become better people. Too many Indigenous people get

comfortable in their environment when they can be so much more. I believed in what we wanted to do and wanted to take that step to challenge myself and my family. What better way to be recognized than to develop a company that offers a product to meet the needs of the market and make a commitment to give all that you have to offer to make that company a success".

It was this vision that led her, in 2007, to step out of her comfort zone and explore other avenues.

"The products that Render One manufactures had been used by our family for years and were a proven success, we knew this was something that we could stand behind, but just needed support to get started".

Fiona was put in contact with Michelle Cochrane from IBA's Cairns office. Michelle introduced Fiona to business consultant Dean Rowley of Future Solutions Townsville. The wealth of knowledge and support provided by Michelle and Dean was instrumental in seeing an idea grow into the manufacturing company that is now Render One.

Render One's product has many advantages over their competitors; it is economical, versatile, water resistant, fire-resistant, non-toxic and long lasting, but they do not rest on their laurels. IBA's support has assisted them to grow in other areas. They are dedicated

to in-house research and development, ensuring continuous growth as they aim to be a leader in the architectural coating industry. They aim to control all aspects of the business internally from sand extraction to the end product supplied and delivered to the customer. To promote future growth and alleviate the shortfall of skilled applicators in the industry they plan to incorporate a training program and facility centre.

Fiona is philosophical about the future. "Our journey so far has seen many highs and lows fraught with obstacles and constant learning. Having the ability to adapt with the ever changing economical environment, I believe, is the key to a successful business. Working as a team is the key to overcoming the obstacles facing today's business owners".

Business support and planning advice, such as offered by IBA, is critical to business success, an idea supported by Fiona. "I believe that without the right support and guidance the most planned and proficient business ideas would have an extremely hard time developing. Due to the support and advice that we have received from IBA I believe Render One can overcome any obstacles that may come our way".

With commitment and business acumen like that, Render One is well positioned for a bright future.

To contact the staff at Render One please call 07 4035 6886.



www.iba.gov.au/inspire

The coordination of collaboration

Australia is a country of staggering geographic size, offering significant challenges for IBA to have effective representation across the country. To address these challenges IBA established State Coordinator roles in 2007 to identify and coordinate a collaborative approach to Indigenous commercial opportunities, and assist Indigenous business people, private enterprise and Government to achieve the best economic outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Wendy Hills, State Coordinator for NSW, Victoria and Tasmania sees her role as a critical one for IBA. "Through our relationships and networks we are keen to provide assistance to identify Indigenous business opportunities and gaps in the marketplace, and then action these opportunities".

Wendy is one of the four IBA State Coordinators who are all highly experienced and skilled business facilitators, sharing coverage across Australia's states and territories.

Relationship building and bringing key people to the table are central to the role of the State Coordinators. In November 2008, the State Coordinator for Western Australia convened the *Business Conversations* in Western Australia. This forum brought together key private sector, industry groups and Indigenous Australians to develop a strategic approach to economic development in the State. Emerging from this forum will be the establishment of a Western Australian Indigenous Chamber of Commerce to continue advocacy, information sharing and commercial partnerships.

There are a wide variety of government programs that are specifically designed to assist Indigenous economic development through asset creation, business support, and employment and training opportunities. State Coordinators assist government by providing advice and analysis on strategies to maximize investment.

Andrew Plate, State Coordinator for Northern Territory, sees advocacy as another important aspect of his role. He and his colleagues are able to represent IBA and harness and coordinate IBA resources to provide tailored solutions to asset and wealth building for Indigenous Australians.

State Coordinators work hard to establish Indigenous economic development results on the ground, in their local regions. A current priority is to develop collaborative housing solutions, including home ownership, with government, private enterprise and Indigenous groups that will assist in the resolution of the housing shortage in Indigenous communities.

State Coordinators are available to share their Indigenous economic development experience at public speaking engagements, conferences and events and can coordinate forums on specific issues pertaining to Indigenous business.

The State Coordinators work in a dynamic environment, full of challenges, agendas and opportunities. It is an environment they are confident in and a role that IBA requires, working side by side with Indigenous Australians to help build an economic future.

Support in a time of uncertainty

When the global economic crisis struck in late 2008, inflicting financial damage worldwide, Australia was not immune. Many Australian businesses and individuals were adversely affected and in need of assistance and reliable advice.

IBA closely monitored the crisis and in response developed a Business Briefing initiative, which was held on Tuesday 25 November 2008 at the Hilton Hotel in Sydney. The aim of this initiative was to host an open forum where financial sector representatives, Indigenous business leaders, Indigenous partners and IBA representatives could discuss issues relating to the current economic situation, opportunities that could arise and develop strategies for the future.

The one day forum was attended by over 30 delegates who received

economic and analytical insights from speakers such as Mark Rider and Bernie Connolly from financial firm UBS, and Richard Facioni from Shearwater Capital Group. Both Greg Pawson from the Commercial Banking Sector and Graeme Paterson, Head of Group Sustainability represented Westpac.

IBA was privileged to have international guests in attendance, including Consul and Senior Trade Commissioner, Consulate General of Canada Mrs Ellen Ruth Zeisler and Mr Richard Jones from Poutama Trust, New Zealand.

Darryl Pike, an independent analyst and business mentor, presented an historical perspective and stressed that leadership, management and sound business practice during this period of economic downturn was essential. He encouraged attendees to network and stay in touch with colleagues and to use this as an opportunity to renew business plans and cash flow. Darryl also stressed that "if your

business is in a good cash position, that this is the time for exploring new opportunities for business expansion".

Delegates outlined how the economic situation was affecting their business and economic situation, and took the opportunity to explore potential areas of diversification and joint ventures.

General Manager of IBA, Ron Morony, spoke of the need for Indigenous Australians to embrace economic development. "We can't keep sitting around waiting for government handouts. That river is drying up very much and the real visionaries in Indigenous affairs have been those who have gone out there and started to pioneer, and move into commercial and economic development".

A number of the delegates at the forum reported that they had not seen any serious decline in their businesses and that there was a lot of optimism about the future.

"I am seeing an increasing number of Indigenous Australians building an economic base in local and regional areas and recognising the opportunities that flow from this economic base. This suggests a significant amount of interest will develop in 2009 and, provided the economic climate is right, there could be opportunities to move forward and build strong asset bases in various areas over the next 12 months", said Mr Morony.

John Hicks, Secretary of the Tiwi Land Council agreed, "I think there are fundamental things in Aboriginal society that I believe are just so healthy and so strong and so business corporate orientated. If organisations like IBA can touch and strengthen those connections, there is a mighty future here."

The day was hugely successful, with plans to hold similar events in other locations around Australia in 2009. For further information please contact Janet Higgins on 02 6121 2630 or email janet.higgins@iba.gov.au



Top left: Darryl Pike
Top middle: Craig Dalzell, IBA Deputy General Manager —Commercial speaks with Sean Gordon, Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council
Top right: Richard Facioni, Shearwater Group
Left: Paul McGuinness, Aboriginal Development Benefit Trust & Alfred Sing, Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council

From the ocean to the capital



Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step". Douglas Pungana is an inspirational Karriyarra man who has embarked on his journey with one significant step from Port Hedland to our nation's capital.

The eldest of five boys, Douglas was born 22 years ago in Derby and raised in Port Hedland, a world away from Canberra. He spent a happy childhood at the beach, fishing and camping.

In September 2008 Douglas joined the Indigenous Youth Mobility Program (IYMP), a federal government funded initiative that supports young Indigenous people between 16 and 24 years old who live in remote localities. Participants who want to pursue further studies and work opportunities are invited to participate in a location that is close to training and education opportunities.

For Douglas his location of choice was Canberra so he could study for a Certificate II in Business Administration. With the assistance of Luke Jefferies, Project Manager of IYMP and Indigenous Success Australia (ISA), Douglas commenced a traineeship with IBA in October 2008.

Although participating in the program involved relocating across the country, Douglas says it came down to opportunities. "My dad was really supportive of me in taking up this opportunity. The thought of living in our nation's capital city and the opportunity to do something good for myself and to make my family and myself proud in what I can achieve was what motivated me."

It is hard for most of us to appreciate the changes that Douglas has undergone since arriving in Canberra. For the first time in his life he is away from his family, his people and his homeland. He misses his family, especially his two nephews, Nykiem and Alphonse Jr, but he knows they are proud of him and the path he has chosen.

Life in Canberra may be very different to life back home, but it suits Douglas. "I must admit, I fell in love with the place, especially the landscape, and the country town feeling really made me feel really comfortable. The weather is better here and there are more things to do when I do have the weekends to myself."

Working at IBA has opened Douglas' eyes to the work that IBA does in assisting Indigenous Australians to build wealth and assets. Douglas remembers thinking to himself, "Wow, this place called IBA actually helps us Indigenous people in getting home/business loans. Man that's so cool".

With his traineeship incorporating a variety of different roles within IBA, Douglas is getting on-the-job experience to complement his studies. "My certificate is in Business Administration and the experience of working in the public sector is a great stepping stone for me. I really would love to continue to work for IBA once my traineeship is completed."

Douglas has made the break that so few of us are brave enough to even consider. To leave behind your whole life to pursue an opportunity is a daunting prospect and one that Douglas should be commended on taking. His presence at IBA has not only had positive affects for him, but also for all who have had contact with Douglas as he is an inspiring figure.

For further information on the IYMP please contact Luke Jefferies on 02 6299 3223 or email ljefferies@isagroup.com.au

Indigenous art commissioned for hotel makeover



The Holiday Inn Townsville is a local landmark, one which the locals refer to as the “sugar shaker”. In June 2008 IBA acquired the hotel and committed to a extensive refurbishment program.

IBA General Manager, Ron Morony, knew the refurbishment and subsequent hotel operations presented IBA with an opportunity to involve the local Indigenous community and businesses.

“One of the outcomes that IBA wants to achieve is to generate and support employment, training and business development opportunities within the region,” Ron said.

To support the local Indigenous community and personalise the hotel with some local flavour, IBA commissioned Umbrella Studio, a Townsville based not-for-profit contemporary arts organisation, to produce original artwork.

This commission involved the production of a series of 276 limited edition works on paper (final production includes lino-prints, screen prints and monotypes) which were purchased by IBA. Each individual artist retains the copyright of the artwork and receives re-sale royalties should the artworks be sold on.

To fulfil the production of such a large body of work, Umbrella Studio brought together nine Indigenous artists for an intensive six-week workshop from October to December 2008 to develop ideas and produce works that met the design brief. As part of this process masterclasses with well known artists Arone Meeks, Alick Tipoti, Donna Foley, Dani Mellor and Theo Tremblay were held for the Indigenous artists.

The artists were Maverick Fox, Ian Kaddy, Gail Mabo, Shirley Collins, Aicey Zaro, Susan Peters, Marilyn Kepple, Rannietta Lind and James Billy.

Vicky Salisbury, the Director of Umbrella Studio, said the artists invited to participate are highly regarded for their abilities and work ethic.

“This project has expanded the level of arts practice for Indigenous artists who live and work in the region. The majority of participants exceeded far beyond their own expectations, reaching a new benchmark in productive capacity.”

The works will be displayed in prominent areas of the hotel including the foyer and bar, offering the artists exposure to a captive international audience.

There have been many positive outcomes from IBA’s investment in Townsville including employment and training opportunities, donations to local charities and the involvement of the Indigenous community in the hotel redecoration. Local Indigenous artists have their works displayed, IBA have unique works of art to adorn the hotel and guests can appreciate genuine Indigenous Australian art.

From craftsman to businessman



Samuel with a raw Yidaki (didgeridoo)

When Christine Anu dazzled the worldwide audience watching the Sydney Olympic Games Closing Ceremony in 2000 with her rendition of “My Island Home”, few would have known she was singing about Elcho Island.

Elcho Island is an island off the coast of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, approximately 550kms north east of Darwin. It is home to the largest Aboriginal community in North East Arnhem Land, with approximately 2000 residents living in the main settlement of Galiwin’ku and across many outstations including Matamata, Ingliss Island, Maparru and Gariyak.

One of these residents is Samuel Badikupa Gurruwiwi, an enterprising Aboriginal man who is considered a master traditional Yidaki (Didgeridoo) maker.

When Samuel was born on Yarrnga, a small Island off the coast of Galiwin’ku, the population was around 20. These days the island is uninhabited and used as a hunting spot so Samuel considers himself a “real bush baby”.

For many generations Samuel’s people travelled the land finding good hunting spots, searching for waterholes and a good place to rest. Samuel’s family were no different so from a young age he became very attached to the land. While travelling with his family, his mother and father educated him on the wide variety of plants and trees, their berries and other edible foods including a tree called the Gadayka (stringy bark tree). It is this tree which is used to make Yidaki.

Little did Samuel know that this tree would become one of his life passions. When he was about 10 or 12, Samuel and his family moved to Galiwin’ku. At this time it was a Methodist mission and remained under Church direction until 1974 when it became self-managed.

Members of his clan were already on the mission. One day while playing with his cousins, Samuel learnt how to play the Yidaki and because he was familiar with the tree it was made from he wanted to learn how to make one.

Samuel used to sell his Yidaki to various art centres, for retail to the public. An entrepreneurial type, Samuel could see greater opportunities for his craft through direct sales to the public.

Samuel became aware of a new program in the community that had placed a business consultant on the island to assist Indigenous Australians to start their own businesses. This program was a collaboration between IBA and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, assisting community members to explore and develop their business aspirations.

An entrepreneurial type, Samuel approached the appointed business

consultant Colin Tidswell with the idea of developing his own Yidaki business.

An IBA business support process was commenced with Colin working with Samuel on business concepts, development and marketing strategies. Through this process Samuel became a sole trader and registered his business name of Lightning Didgeridoos.

After honing his Yidaki making skills for over 50 years, Samuel now controls his own small business. Local advertising adorns the airport, guest houses, shops and offices and he sells directly to the public. A web site designer was appointed and a Lightning Didgeridoo site developed to raise the profile of Samuel’s products and provide another outlet for him to sell his products.

Who would have dreamt that so much could develop from a young boy, his hobby and a stringy bark tree? With the assistance of IBA and Colin Tidswell, Samuel Gurruwiwi realised his dream.

Samuel’s products can be viewed at www.lightningdidgeridoos.com.au



A finished Yidaki

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