

8/4/03 Tabled :
Aboriginal Housing
Company.
Mr. Grant Christian

ISSUES TO CONSIDER - Parliamentary Committee on Capacity Building

CAPACITY BUILDING
INQUIRY
Submission No. 63

1. What is good community leadership, how important is it for communities, what qualities do good leaders have, what more needs to be done to support leaders and encourage new ones?
 - Good community leadership is critical for a community's prosperity.
 - Long term corruption, negligence or incompetence on the part of the leadership can result in mismanagement of funding and the deterioration of living standards for the community.
 - Good leadership is one that represents the holistic interests of the community while managing the competing interests of the individuals.
 - A good Aboriginal leader is compassionate, fair but tough. He/she must manage conflict well while maintaining a level of impartiality.
 - Common sense and a positive forward thinking attitude and someone who respects all people's opinion.
 - The younger generation should be encouraged to rise through the ranks and assume a leadership role through mentor programs. The next generation doesn't seem to hold the old grudges and politics.
 - 50 years ago the strategy of civil revolt and aggressive pursuit of civil rights was appropriate. In the 21st century, direct partnership and cooperation with government and the wider multicultural community is the only way Aboriginal communities can prosper.

2. What do Indigenous people think makes a well run community, what do governments and the wider community expect of well run communities?

A well run community is one that:

- has good leadership
- has respect within the community
- has respect for its neighbours
- has positive thinking toward the future
- focuses on the needs of the next generation.
- interacts well with the wider community.
- consists of a mix of skills and capacities.
- manages its internal conflicts before they spill over into other communities.
- is alcohol free and drug free.

3. How important is community capacity building to the communities themselves, how do Indigenous people believe their communities can be strengthened (in urban as well as regional and remote areas)?
 - The ability to build capacity is critical to most Aboriginal communities as this is possibly the only opportunity these communities have to achieve any social equality.
 - To strengthen our communities there must be greater interaction with the wider community providing access to opportunities previously unavailable.
 - There must be a stronger direct partnership between government and the grassroots organisations that truly represent and protect the interest of the communities.
 - The focus of any community rebuilding should be on the next generation.

4. How best can community and regional organisations do business and make decisions in traditional ways while meeting wider governance and accountability standards, what can governments do to help more Indigenous organisations remain, stable, well managed and successful?
 - Diminished is the need for "middle-men" like ATSIC, community organisation have the skills, capacity and desire to partner directly with Government.
 - ATSIC has demonstrated an agenda designed to protect its own interests and not that of the communities and Aboriginal people.
 - Funding from ATSIC seems to be reliant more on whom you know rather than on actual need and merit.
 - ATSIC has pursued an agenda of undermining the autonomy of communities and their organisations, dismantling the doctrine of self determination and replacing it with the ATSIC dictatorship using funding and strangling the capacity and growth of communities through the use of caveats over community assets.
 - The solution is to bypass ATSIC and to facilitate greater cooperation directly between regional representatives of government and grass roots organisations.
 - Greater capacity and accountability at the local level will facilitate the capacity building at the community level. This strategy will eliminate the competing agendas of organisations like ATSIC that often are at odds with the needs of the communities.

5. How successful are regional structures of Indigenous governance? Should there be fewer community based organisations and more regional ones? Or are there other and better structures of governance?
- The model that has achieved the best results is one where local community based organisations work closely together toward holistic outcomes for the community, and these organisations then partner directly with regional mainstream representatives of government, bypassing organisations like ATSIC.
 - Community based organisations have an intimate insight into the true needs of the community which would be lost if that level of governance was eliminated or merged into regional representation.
 - Each community is unique in its problems and solutions, however there are key communities that are considered main watering holes and their prosperity would have a domino effect regionally.
6. What additional skills and resources do community members and organisations think they need in order to run their communities more effectively?
- Not having to defend themselves against attempts by ATSIC to undermine them would free up a lot of critical resources for community organisations.
 - Education is also a key here. Community organisations set up in the seventies were never provided with the necessary skills to make the communities a success. They have suffered as a result ever since.
 - Under-funding of key organisations is always an issue
 - Working towards community organisations being self-sufficient and no longer reliant on government handouts should be a primary goal.
7. To what extent are governments and their agencies building genuine partnerships with Indigenous groups, are these partnerships leading to better services and improvements in communities?
- At the state level genuine direct partnerships are being formed and Aboriginal specific peak bodies are being bypassed with great successes for the communities.
 - Genuine efforts are being made to enable the community organisations to become self-sufficient where possible.

- Unfortunately this level of cooperation is not being witnessed at the Federal level.
8. How well are governments coordinating their work at the community and regional level, does it make a difference?
- A whole of government approach is critical to achieving holistic and sustainable solutions for Aboriginal communities.
 - At the state level this program seems to be working exceptionally well. Again at the Federal level we have not witness this level of activity toward greater coordination.