Strengths, support and self-determination: Indigenous tourism planning and the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

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Strengths, Support and Self-Determination: Indigenous Tourism Planning and the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

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Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

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Abstract

Research shows considerable demand for Australian Indigenous culture by international and domestic tourists. Few empirical studies, however, have explicitly examined how Indigenous tourism can promote economic development and self-sufficiency for Aboriginal people themselves. Further, in mainstream (non-Indigenous) tourism planning, Indigenous engagement and consultation is often marginalised, given only scant concern or content in final plans.

In light of these gaps, this thesis presents a case study of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative (BDC), the first Indigenous-driven tourism planning organisation in North-West New South Wales, Australia. The overall objective of the research was to investigate the appropriateness of a regional framework for Indigenous-led tourism planning. To meet this objective, and the study’s concomitant aims, the development of the BDC was followed over a period of six years (2003-2008, inclusive).

A qualitative, action-based approach, influenced by the ‘critical turn’ in tourism studies and Indigenist methodologies, was used to guide the case study of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. In-depth interviews and participant observation were the key methods employed to gather evidence for the case. A total of 19 in-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders and members of the BDC, while participant observation occurred throughout.

Interpretive analysis of the interviews, coupled with my insider observations as a participant, revealed five key issues for regional Indigenous tourism planning. These were the need for processes to be Indigenous-driven; recognition of the positive potential of engagement in Indigenous tourism; the requirement of culturally-appropriate support; the benefits of regional collaboration, and the need for good governmental facilitation.

These issues drive the central model at the heart of this thesis, which is that regional planning for Indigenous tourism should be based on a framework of strengths, support and self-determination. As the case study findings support, it is now critical that Indigenous people take the lead in tourism, facilitated in their ongoing struggle for self-determination by academics, industry and government organisations alike.

The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative
List of Publications

The following papers are based on the thesis research, and were published during the PhD candidature:


Acknowledgments

This thesis has been a long and adventurous journey, and many people have helped and inspired along the way. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the willingness of the members of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, who invited me so openly into their process of starting an Aboriginal-run tourism planning organisation. The thesis is entirely dependent on their support and the sharing of their lives over the last six years.

Roxanne Smith, from the Department of State and Regional Development (NSW), is also due most special thanks. Roxanne has been my mentor and inspiration. Here is someone who took an unknown PhD researcher under her wing to work with over several years. She worked tirelessly to support Aboriginal business development over an area of the state so large that a plane would have been a more suitable form of transport! Roxanne battled on the ground to get Aboriginal business and tourism enterprise recognised in the North-West region. She did the work of many, with a practical efficiency and an ever-present smile.

Thank you also to my primary supervisor, Associate Professor Jeremy Buultjens, and co-supervisor, Professor Judy Atkinson, both at Southern Cross University. Jeremy and Judy provided academic guidance, but they did so with great trust and interest in my project. They believed in me to make considered and responsible decisions, treating me as a mature, knowledgeable researcher. For these reasons I am very grateful to them.

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Thanks also to my fellow PhD colleague, Gabrielle Russell-Mundine. As we were both involved in Aboriginal tourism projects, Gaby was a sensible sounding board, and our long, enjoyable chats were very valuable in helping me to think in new ways. It was great to have someone like Gaby who seemed to know what I was talking about, and who was similarly inspired to strive for a better world.

Finally, an acknowledgement to my partner, Erica Wilson. Without her encouragement and support, this thesis would have been much more challenging. Erica has been an academic role model and inspired me to think deeply about my ideas and actions. As others who work in the same field as their partners would know, separating life and work is a tricky balance, but with her assistance we always seemed to manage. Both of our children, Maya (now 4 years) and Solomon (1 year) were born during my doctoral work. When the members of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative talked about “doing it for our kids”, I did not fully understand what they meant – until these two lovely babies came along.

I dedicate this thesis to my children.
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VIGNETTE 1: What do you see?

During one of my first visits to the North-West region I was taken to a place on the Darling River. The Darling catchment collects and channels the vast majority of water from New South Wales and southern Queensland and drains down to where it joins the Murray River, and finally exits out at the Coorong in South Australia. This is one of the world’s longest and largest river systems. The Murray-Darling is also associated with one of the major political and environmental management issues in Australia today, because it is drying up. Yet that is another discussion to have, and was not the reason for my visit.

I was there with Herb, a local Aboriginal business facilitator who you will meet a little later in this thesis. Herb took me to several spots along this riverbank and at this point I stopped to take a photo.

At the time I didn’t really know what I was looking at. I could see a few things that looked interesting to me, in a ‘that might make a good photo’ sort of way. I have since used the photo many times in presentations and lectures and I ask people to look closely and think about what it is they see.

So, what do you see?

Often, people pick out the bits of an old car. At one academic presentation I made, a woman actually knew the year and make of the car; her family had owned one. Others look and see a river, rocks, some trees, perhaps a road in the background – these are also there.

When you finish reading this thesis, look again....

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Indigenous people live in all parts of the world, continuing to assert their right to be recognised as the original inhabitants of their lands. The diverse cultures and ways of life of Indigenous peoples – both traditional and contemporary – also continue to attract the interest of travellers. Since the development of modern leisure travel in particular, Indigenous people have been an important motivating factor for tourists (Elder, 2005; Ryan & Huyton, 2000), and in the promotion of tourist destinations (Hinch & Butler, 1996, 2007; Ryan, 2005).

Although it is difficult to accurately define the role that Indigenous tourism plays in generating global travel, estimates in Australia suggest that anywhere between 40 to 80 percent of international visitor markets (particularly Germany, the United Kingdom, the USA and ‘other’ Europe) are interested in learning about and interacting with Australian Indigenous people (Australian Tourist Commission, 2003; Commonwealth of Australia, 2003, 2009; Foo & Rossetto, 1998). Obviously, only a small percentage of visitors engage in such activities. For example, in 2007, international visitor participation in Indigenous tourism activities was estimated at only 16 percent of visitors (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). However, Indigenous tourism plays a significant role in Australia’s current tourism branding and is seen as one of the country’s key competitive advantages (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009; Zeppel, 2007). Further, Indigenous tourism is particularly important in Australia’s regional areas, where many Aboriginal tourism experiences and products are located (Zeppel, 2001).

Over the past two decades, Indigenous tourism has also become a focus of academic and policy research, where the role of Indigenous people in tourism is debated, discussed and critiqued. Responding to calls by postcolonial, anticolonial and Indigenous authors about who really benefits from Indigenous tourism (Akama, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), many now agree that it must be planned in an inclusive way, where Indigenous people control and drive their own involvement (Fuller & Gleeson, 2007; Hall & Tucker, 2004; Hinch & Butler; 2007; Mercer, 2005; Ryan & Aicken, 2005). Only within this type of framework can Indigenous tourism be a sustainable and viable tool in the social and economic development of Indigenous people.
This thesis explores the planning of Indigenous tourism in regional Australia, through a qualitative, action-based case study of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative (BDC) in the North-West of the state of New South Wales. The BDC is one of NSW’s first Indigenous-driven regional tourism planning organisations. This thesis tells the story of how the BDC was formed, stakeholders’ experiences of involvement, as well as the organisation’s first years of operation.

1.1 Indigenous Australians and Self-Determination

Australian Indigenous peoples are among the world’s oldest cultures. The history of Australia’s Indigenous people goes back, at the very least, some 60,000 years; others argue they are much older than this (Mercer, 1998). Not wanting to enter into contentious and unnecessary debates about ‘how long’ Indigenous peoples have inhabited Australia, it is enough to say that Aborigines themselves know they are the country’s original inhabitants, and their connection to land is strong and evident.

Indigenous people in Australia are diverse, made up of more than 700 nations/language groups (Roberts, 1994). Prior to European ‘settlement’ (or ‘invasion’, as it is perceived by some, e.g., Behrendt, 2003; Bourke, 1994; Reynolds, 2007), anywhere from around 300,000 to perhaps two million Indigenous people lived across the island continent of Australia, including Tasmania (Mercer, 1998). While each group was different, they were guided by a complex cultural lore that dictated all aspects of life and their relationship with ‘country’ – their traditional lands. Australia’s Indigenous peoples (Aborigines) come from country and have customary responsibilities to manage and look after country; there is no separation between lands and people (Atkinson, 2002).

Starting with the landing of Lieutenant James Cook in 1770 in Botany Bay and the claiming of Australia as part of the British Commonwealth, Indigenous people were forced on a new trajectory, with often tragic consequences. One of the most detrimental policies of the British colonisation of Australia was the doctrine of terra nullius. Terra nullius (literally, empty land) established a legal land use policy which did not recognise Indigenous people’s claim to sovereignty (Behrendt, 2003; Bourke, 1994). Colonisation began in earnest in 1788 with the landing of Governor Arthur...
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Phillip and his ‘First Fleeters’ (Elder, 1998). From this point on, the country’s original inhabitants were subjected to colonial and racist policies which would result in bitter warfare, murder, and massacre (Kidd, 1997; Elder, 1998; Reynolds, 2007), leading to an almost complete annihilation of Australia’s Indigenous people. It is not uncommon among many Indigenous writers to hear the word ‘genocide’ as a description of Australia’s treatment of Indigenous people (Dodson, 2007). A host of other assimilationist regimes and practices, such as the ‘White Australia’ policy, have similarly led to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their land and culture (Sanderson, 2007).

The civil rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s, following on the heels of similar action in the United States, reflected growing dissonance with the treatment of Australian Aborigines (Hemming, 1994). This led to several significant protests, such as the 1964 Freedom Rides across Northern New South Wales, which aimed to publicise racism and the maltreatment of Indigenous people in Australia (Roberts, 1994). In 1972, the Aboriginal ‘Tent’ Embassy was established on the grounds of Parliament House in the nation’s capital, Canberra, and remains one of the world’s longest-standing protests on the status of Indigenous people (Rowley, 1986; Sykes, 1998).

Some would argue that one of the most important changes in Indigenous affairs was the 1967 Referendum. On the 27th of May, 1967, just over 90 percent of Australians voted in favour to give the Commonwealth power to override State discriminatory laws and funding practices, and to include Aborigines in the census. However, as Larissa Behrendt (2007, one of Australia’s first Indigenous professors of Indigenous Law) points out, the Referendum did not necessarily “usher in [the] era of non-discrimination for Indigenous people” that so many thought it would. For a number of complex legal and historical reasons surrounding the ability of Aboriginal people to access their legal citizenship, the Referendum did not make it easier for them to enact their voting rights or access equal power in society. It merely allowed Aborigines to be counted in the census, and for the Commonwealth to make laws (which were often still discriminatory) with regard to Indigenous people (Behrendt, 2007).

Although many of the grossest atrocities occurred during colonial times, others are recent and live on in the everyday realities of Indigenous Australians today. The
impacts of these atrocities have affected all future generations of Aborigines, leaving an indelible ‘trauma trail’ (Atkinson, 2002). Today, claims of genocide, the ‘stolen generation’ (left through the forced removal of mixed-race Indigenous children from their families), deaths in police custody, land rights struggles and native title, and intervention of governments in Indigenous communities remain top agenda items in Australian law and politics, as does the continued desire for recognition of Indigenous rights to self-determination (Behrendt, 2003; Hinkson, 2007).

Despite the tragedies of the past, and the continuing legacy they have generated, Indigenous Australia remains a strong, vibrant and growing contemporary culture. Currently, Australia has around half a million Indigenous people counted in the census (approximately 2 per cent of the Australian population), with Indigenous people in all states and territories, most of whom live in urbanised situations (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Despite recent changes in political power that have positively addressed Indigenous people, such as the 2007 ‘national apology’ made by the new Rudd Labor Federal Government, the Aboriginal struggle for racial equality and self-determination is still very much alive in Australia.

Indigenous ‘self-determination’ (a term often used interchangeably with ‘self-sufficiency’, ‘autonomy’, ‘self-governance’ and ‘self-definition’) refers to the idea that Indigenous people have direct control over their own lives, their futures, and the decisions that affect them (Behrendt, 2003; Peters-Little, 1999; Roberts, 1994). Self-determination has a historical use in relation to the Indigenous quest for decolonisation. As Maori professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 150) argues, “indigenous communities have struggled since colonization to be able to exercise what is viewed as a fundamental right, that is, to represent ourselves”. The quest for Indigenous self-determination is central to the United Nation’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Davis, 2007; Panzironi, 2006). In a landmark decision in April 2009, the current Federal Labor government under Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, overturned the previous Howard government’s conservative approach by signing this UN declaration (Rodgers, 2009).

The concept of self-determination has predominantly been discussed in the areas of legal governance, sovereignty and land rights. It is outside the scope of this thesis to
explore self-determination in all of its legal complexities. However, Behrendt’s (2003) rights-based explanation is useful here:

The rights enmeshed in the concept of ‘self-determination’ include…everything from the right not to be discriminated against; the rights to enjoy language, culture and heritage; our rights to land, seas, waters and natural resources; the right to be educated and to work; the right to be economically self-sufficient; the right to be involved in decision-making processes that impact upon our lives; and the right to govern and manage our own affairs and our own communities (p. 139).

Government policies centred on Indigenous ‘self-determination’ came to the fore in Australia in 1972, with the election of the short-lived Labor Whitlam government. In a significant policy shift from previous conservative governments, Gough Whitlam made some effort to address rising calls for recognition of Aboriginal citizen rights and the ability of Aboriginal people to determine the course of their own lives, education opportunities and economic development (Behrendt, 2003; Roberts, 1994). In an Australian context, Indigenous leader Lois (Lowitja) O’Donoghue (1992) was one of the first to define self-determination for her people. She described it as “Aboriginal communities deciding the pace and nature of their future development as significant components within a diverse Australia” (p. 212).

While the concept of self-determination has been predominant in Indigenous affairs and policies since the Whitlam era, it has been a contestable and heavily politically loaded term. Each successive government seems to appropriate the term to suit its own political desires (Roberts, 1994; Sanders, 2002, 2007). For example, much of the Howard Liberal/Coalition government’s (1996-2007) federal agenda for Indigenous policy was based on its neo-liberal interpretation of economic ‘self-sufficiency’. This meant that Indigenous people would achieve autonomy and independence by no longer being ‘dependent’ on government monies and welfare (Behrendt, 2003; Sanders, 2007). Such policies and programs were delivered under the premise that self-determination had not previously been effective. The Howard Government’s approach in particular was that of ‘mainstreaming’, or treating Indigenous people as no different from any other Australians. By this premise, Indigenous Australians would no longer require separate treatment, attention or funding (Behrendt, 2003). The Howard Government’s rhetoric of Indigenous ‘self-sufficiency’ has been heavily...
criticised by many Indigenous leaders, by those in the Left of politics, and by people working in Indigenous communities – for its emphasis on ‘equality for all’, its neglect to address historical wrongdoings, and the silencing of calls for Indigenous rights (Behrendt, 2003; Sanders, 2007).

In late 2007, the Howard Liberal/Coalition Government was voted out of parliament and the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was returned to government after more than a decade in opposition. As suggested above, it was the ALP under Whitlam that instigated self-determination as a government policy towards Australia’s Indigenous people. In the ALP’s first year in power, under Kevin Rudd’s leadership, two substantial changes were made to differentiate its approach to that of the previous Howard Government: An official apology was made in parliament to the ‘Stolen Generations’, and the UN’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was signed. However, since this time, it has been argued by some that these statements have delivered little real change were in policy and to the lives of Indigenous Australians (Seth-Purdie, 2010).

1.2 The Study of Indigenous Tourism

Indigenous tourism has attracted substantial research and government interest over the past few decades. One can no longer claim that Indigenous tourism as a field of study is in its infancy as there are now many research texts, publications and reports on the topic. Since 2000 alone there have been published at least five edited texts on Indigenous tourism (Butler & Hinch, 2007; Buultjens & Fuller, 2007; Ryan & Aicken, 2005; Smith & Brent, 2001). The study of Indigenous tourism can also be seen in an increasing number of research theses, academic journal publications, conference presentations, government reports and consultancy studies.

Much of the early literature focused on researchers’ attempts to define and quantify demand for Indigenous tourism. Authors such as Hinch and Butler (1996), Smith (1996), Sofield and Birtles (1996), as well as Australian government departments (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), 1997; South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC), 1995), have attempted to define what Indigenous tourism is. Some of these definitions have centred on ‘cultural’ presentational issues.
and authenticity, while others suggest that Indigenous ownership and control are most important. More recently, scholars have taken to talking about Indigenous tourism from a tourism systems approach, whereby Indigenous hosts in the ‘destination region’ interact with visitors, within social, political economic and physical environments (Hinch & Butler, 2007).

It is deliberately not the purpose of this thesis to focus at length on the many definitions, debates and contentions surrounding the terms ‘Indigenous’ or ‘Indigenous tourism’ (Ryan, 2005). It is my view that an academic fascination with the structural makeup of what is or is not an Indigenous person runs the risk of oversimplifying the diversity and ever-changing nature of human culture. It is also not my role, as a White researcher, to determine what counts as ‘Indigenous’; this is also up to Indigenous people themselves, and what they see as ‘traditional’ and ‘authentic’. The same contentious risk is present in trying to define and reduce a concept like ‘Indigenous tourism’. I would instead tend to agree with Hinch and Butler’s (2007, p. 5) assertion that:

One of the limitations of [these definitions] is that culture is dynamic…it must also be recognized that there is an ever-changing contemporary dimension to [Indigenous] groups that does not invalidate their indigenous status although it may complicate it. The use of ‘indigenous’…is meant to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

Perhaps a broader and more inclusive view of Indigenous tourism is that it refers to any facet of the tourism industry that involves Indigenous people (ATSIC, 1997). This would then allow Indigenous people to define and determine the scale and nature of their involvement. Hinch and Butler’s (2007, p. 5) definition of Indigenous tourism is also helpful: “tourism activities in which indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction”. Hinch and Butler’s perspective is important here in that it recognises Indigenous agency and control, rather than Indigenous people being merely the passive producers of tourism experiences.

However it may be defined or debated, tourism based on Indigenous peoples and cultures has attracted growing attention, both in Australia and internationally. A number of comprehensive research overviews and texts (e.g., Boyle, 2001; Buultjens & Fuller, 2007; Butler & Hinch, 1996, 2007; Pitcher, van Oosterzee & Palmer, 1999;
Chapter 1: Introduction

Ryan & Aicken, 2005; Smith & Brent, 2001; Zeppel, 1998a, 2007) reflect the wide range of topics now under investigation within the field of Indigenous tourism. Such areas include Indigenous engagement in tourism, benefits and challenges of Indigenous tourism businesses, impacts of Indigenous tourism, industry perspectives on Indigenous tourism, marketing and representation of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous intellectual property rights, strategic planning and visitor demand studies.

In Australia, much of the recent interest in Indigenous tourism stems from the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1991). The ‘Royal Commission’, as it will be known from this point forward, was a national response to the alarming rate of Aboriginal people’s deaths while in jail or police custody (greater than 100 deaths over a ten year period were investigated). The Royal Commission was the first of several government investigations aimed at initiating a new approach to Indigenous affairs and to better reconcile strained relationships between Black and White Australia. In allowing the Royal Commission, the then Keating Labor government opened itself to investigations into the country’s prior management and treatment of its Indigenous people.

The Royal Commission report (Commonwealth of Australia, 1991) made many recommendations beyond the issue of deaths in custody. It was groundbreaking in that it also investigated the social and cultural factors contributing to high incarceration rates of Indigenous people. The Royal Commission Report set out a number of key recommendations for social and economic development that might be suitable for Indigenous Australians. Tourism was among these development options, as was natural resource management, the pastoral industry and arts and crafts. The recommendations of the Royal Commission spurred both State and Federal governments to initiate and support Indigenous business/tourism development activities. Of particular concern was the right of Indigenous people to have control and self-determination over their lives, including their involvement in tourism.

One of the deepest legacies of history for Aboriginal people, and one that has contributed to deaths in custody, is that their lives have been controlled, and in many cases still are controlled, by people who share neither their culture nor their perspectives, because they have not shared their history. Self-determination, or the gaining by Aboriginal people of control over the decision-making processes affecting their lives and gaining the power to make the ultimate
decisions wherever possible, is, therefore, a key underlying issue considered by the Commission (p. 340).

1.2.1 Planning for Indigenous tourism

Following from the recommendations of the Royal Commission, State, Territory and Federal governments in Australia all wrote strategic plans aimed at increasing, facilitating and coordinating the development of Indigenous tourism. Indigenous tourism was given national emphasis in 1997 with the development of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Industry Strategy (NATSITIS) (ATSIC, 1997). This National Strategy was the first wholly-focused Indigenous tourism plan for Australia (Whitford, Bell, & Watkins, 2001), but it has not been updated or revised since that time. Further, while the National Strategy was useful in its focus on Indigenous participation in the tourism industry, it was never funded, staffed or implemented in terms of providing a coordinated National approach to planning (Parkin, 2001).

In wanting to capitalise on demand for Indigenous tourism, many individual States and Territories (South Australia, Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia) followed suit and developed their own specific Indigenous tourism strategies (Zeppel, 2007). A number of researchers, including Buultjens, Waller, Graham and Carson (2003), Whitford et al. (1999) and Zeppel, (2001, 2007) have examined these national and state plans. All have criticised such documents for their ad hoc strategy development and over-concentration on economic benefits at the expense of social and community-capacity building. Further, such Indigenous tourism planning has been criticised for not including the very people whom the plans are meant to advantage (Burns, 2004; Gunn, 1994; Pitcher et al., 1999). These gaps and critiques emphasise the importance of an Indigenous-driven, self-determined approach to Indigenous tourism planning.

Despite increased policy and research attention, and an evident demand for Indigenous tourism by visitors, Indigenous operators are still struggling to develop sustainable tourism business and visitor experiences (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; Zeppel, 2007). Indigenous tourism has the ability to provide some of the benefits that are being desired by Indigenous communities, such as assisting them to
start their own enterprises and become economically self-sufficient. However, these desires can only be achieved if tourism is planned to facilitate Indigenous efforts for self-determination (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). When concepts of self-determination and self-governance are applied to Indigenous tourism, there may be greater opportunities to increase Indigenous engagement and provide structures for effective planning partnerships.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

Building on calls for more sustainable, self-determined and inclusive approaches to Indigenous tourism planning and research, the overall aim of this thesis was to investigate the appropriateness of a regional framework for Indigenous-led tourism planning in North-West New South Wales, Australia.

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore key stakeholders’ experiences of, and attitudes towards, Indigenous tourism planning;

2. To actively facilitate and support the development of a regional, Indigenous-driven tourism planning organisation;

3. To tell the story of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative;

4. To develop a conceptual framework which can assist regional Indigenous tourism planning.

After examining the literature and communicating with practitioners of Indigenous research, I wanted to develop a study of Indigenous tourism that was ethical, personally meaningful, and aligned with my ontological and epistemological viewpoints. One of the paramount issues in setting this study’s direction was that the research, through appropriate methodologies and methods, needed to make some direct contribution, benefit or application to the lives of Aboriginal people.
1.4 Overview of Research Methodology

Indigenous tourism research has predominantly been conducted by and for non-Indigenous people (Ryan & Aicken, 2005). A useful body of literature in its attempt to highlight and critique Indigenous involvement in tourism, it provides little voice to Indigenous people themselves. The complex issues surrounding Indigenous/Indigenist research will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3 (Methodology).

By way of a brief overview here, however, it is useful to point out that action-based, Indigenous and Indigenist methodologies are beginning to infiltrate many areas of tourism research. This has resulted in a more active Indigenous presence and voice, often with direct benefits to Indigenous people (Russell-Mundine, 2007; Nielsen, N., 2007). This is an overdue process in some regards, as Indigenous scholars have been advocating for decades that in this postcolonial age, we must recognise Indigenous people and the impacts of our research. It could now be considered unethical to continue to research in a manner which simply reinforces colonial inequalities and further silences Indigenous power (Rigney, 1997; Tuhiai Smith, 1999).

As a White researcher about to become involved in Indigenous research, I was aware of these debates. I became acutely conscious of my role in the research process, and I wanted to include Indigenous voice and expression as much as possible. There is an increasing recognition for researchers working with Indigenous projects to actively facilitate Indigenous goals for self-determination (Ryan & Aicken, 2005). As a result, this thesis deliberately took an action-based, interpretive approach, influenced by Indigenist research principles. It is also grounded in the ‘critical turn’ in tourism studies (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005; Ateljevic, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2007), in that it engages with the ontological, epistemological and rhetorical underpinnings of the research (Jennings, 2001). I also use a reflexive technique in Chapter 3 (Methodology) which outlines my motives and positionality in the study, and how they impact upon the thesis findings and overall style of presentation.

Further, the study was framed as a case study because I wanted to tell a rich and detailed story of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, as a context for regional Indigenous tourism planning. Under this approach, the thesis drew on a range of methods and action-oriented tools, and can perhaps best be described as a ‘qualitative,
action case study’. Case study evidence was gathered and used to communicate the
story of the BDC. This evidence was generated through naturalistic, qualitative
techniques, predominantly in-depth interviews and participant observation. Participant
quotes are used extensively throughout the empirical chapters of the thesis (4, 5 and 6)
in an effort to give a thick description and to allow the reader to get a naturalistic
sense of the people involved in the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative.

1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis tells the story of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. Writing primarily to
an academic audience, it takes a fairly standard approach in terms of presentation.
However, in wanting also to engage a richer and more personal narrative style where
appropriate, small vignettes are included between each chapter. These mini-stories tell
the ‘other’, more private, side of the study, allowing the lives and realities of the
research and its people to shine through (King, 2003). They also provide me room to
speak in a reflexive voice, explaining my thoughts, emotions and reactions (Hall,
2004; Harris, Wilson, & Ateljevic, 2007; Sparkes, 2002). These ‘private’ stories,
based on my reflections and interactions over the study period, are important in that
they emphasise how people’s public lives are very much influenced by their intimate
joys, losses and histories (King, 2003).

This introduction has set the scene for the research story, providing a brief historical
and political backdrop regarding Indigenous people in Australia, as well as the
essential concepts underpinning the thesis, such as self-determination. Chapter 2, the
literature review, provides an overview of the academic work on Indigenous tourism,
drawing in particular on Australian contexts and insights. This chapter takes a
deliberately critical examination of the role that Indigenous people themselves have
played in the body of research on Indigenous tourism. It also reviews the tourism
planning literature, highlighting the need for an Indigenous-driven approach in
regional contexts.

Chapter 3 outlines the major paradigmatic and methodological influences of the study,
placing the research at the outset firmly within the ‘critical turn’ in tourism studies.
Further, it borrows from Indigenist and postcolonial concerns with the impacts of
Chapter 1: Introduction

social and scientific research on Indigenous people, and explores ethical and reflexive options for non-Indigenous researchers such as myself. The final sections of this methodological chapter describe the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative case study, and the qualitative methods used to gather ‘evidence’ about the case.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 comprise the results (empirical) section of the thesis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of initial in-depth interviews with key stakeholders involved in regional tourism in North-West NSW. Chapters 5 (based on subsequent interviews) and 6 (based on my participant observation) go on to discuss the formation, development and operation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, from 2003 through to 2008, inclusive. The discussion chapter (Chapter 7) draws attention to the lessons that can be learned from the BDC case study as well as linking to tourism planning literature and theory. Here a framework is offered which places strengths, support and self-determination as the central tenets of sustainable regional Indigenous tourism planning. The thesis concludes in Chapter 8, through a summary and reflective review of the study aim and objectives.
It is my second trip to Bourke in North-West New South Wales, and I am beginning to feel confident that I know my way around the centre of town. There are only four main streets, with shops along two of them. I meet up with Paul, who has been my main Aboriginal tourism contact in the town up until this point. He currently works for the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, and his office is full of files and folders, piled miles high.

Paul has the computer on but the email is not working. A person comes in and tries to fix the email problem: apparently Paul has too many emails, and has not deleted enough of them. Or perhaps it is another issue? It’s not really clear, but there is no quick answer to the problem, so we decide to go for a drive around town.

The first thing Paul shows me is Bourke’s main mural, which sits above the post office, right in the middle of town. It is a mural showing the ‘development’ of Australian society. At the mural we get out of the car. Paul asks me to look closely at the picture and tell him what I see. On the far left-hand side of the mural is an old Aboriginal man. Next in line, to his right, are the White explorers, followed by White farmers, a White man flying a plane, and then a White man at an office desk.

I have only met Paul on a few occasions before this time, but several things are obvious. Paul is Aboriginal, and he is a big man (not only physically, but also in terms of his role as a leader in the community). As we stand looking at the mural, I start to think that he has taken me here for a particular reason.

Bourke has a substantial Aboriginal population, and while there are debates about whether it is 40 percent or 60 percent, Aboriginal people clearly make up the majority of the Bourke town centre presence. Here I am: looking around at the town, looking at the mural, looking at Paul, noticing those who are constantly trying to wave him down to talk to him, then looking back at the mural. Paul is trying to tell me something. There is a message being told in this humble town mural.

First, of course, there were the Aborigines, living in the ‘Dreamtime’. Yet after that initial period, the mural suggests that everything beyond it is based on White people. I now know why Paul took me here. He brings all the non-Aboriginal people here. Several years later when one of my younger brothers came out West with me, Paul made sure he was also taken to see the mural.

The reason he takes us here is to remind us that Aboriginal people – despite what the mural may portray – did not disappear once the Whites came. Aboriginal people have played key roles in the development of the pastoral industry and continue to play significant roles in modern Australia. It’s just that this role is rarely recognised and often not included in our history, in the tourism brochures, and in the general imagery of our country. This was one of my first introductions into the way that Aboriginal people of the North-West were excluded from tourism planning and imagery in the region.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the key debates and discussions surrounding Indigenous tourism. The first section takes a relatively practical stance, summarising academic definitions of Indigenous tourism, as well as outlining research on visitor demand and the challenges and opportunities faced by those wishing to become involved in the Indigenous tourism industry.

The second part of the chapter offers a more critical review of the academic literature on Indigenous tourism. Engaging perspectives from the critical, Indigenist and postcolonial schools, a spectrum is developed to examine the role and voice (or neglect thereof) of Indigenous people in Indigenous tourism research. Finally, Indigenous tourism is considered in the context of tourism planning, with particular emphasis on the need for regional, Indigenous-driven planning processes which aid the goals of self-determination.

2.1 Indigenous Tourism

Tourism is a complex phenomenon which has been defined and considered from a variety of perspectives depending on which field of study or discipline is used as a lens (Leiper, 2004; Tribe, 2007). Many conceptualisations have been put forward in relation to what constitutes ‘tourism’ and a ‘tourist’, including length of stay, trip motivation and purpose, behaviour, and nature of travel. Attempting to overcome an apparent “wide range of overlapping and contradictory meanings” (Leiper, 1990, p. 2), Leiper broadly encapsulates tourism as the “set of ideas, the theories or ideologies, for being a tourist, and…the behaviour of people in touristic roles, when the ideas are put into practice” (p. 17). Taking this further, Leiper (1990, 2004) posits a more useful and inclusive model of the tourism ‘system’, which outlines the interaction between the ‘traveller generating region’ and the ‘tourist destination region’. This tourism system is affected by a number of human, socio-cultural, economic, technological, physical and legal environments, among others.

Not surprisingly, given its wide ambit and influence, tourism lends itself to a multi- and interdisciplinary nature, and has been studied from many perspectives, including
anthropology, psychology, sociology, geography, economics and history (Tribe, 2004). Each comes with its own focus and associated methodological approach (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Leiper, 2004).

Over the past decades, tourism has emerged as its own ‘field of study’ (Airey, 2008; Tribe, 2004). Within this field of study, there is a growing body of research, both industry-led and academic, investigating the phenomenon of Indigenous tourism. Investigations into the topic come from a range of perspectives, but particularly anthropology, business management and marketing. A number of edited books have been published in the last decade on the topic of Indigenous tourism (for example, Butler & Hinch, 1996, 2007; Buultjens & Fuller, 2007; Ryan & Aicken, 2005; Smith, 1977, 1989; Smith & Brent, 2001). These texts provide both theoretical and practical considerations of the phenomenon of Indigenous tourism. Further, many articles have been published on the topic in academic journals, as well as in other types of publications such as occasional papers, theses and government papers. Within the Australian context, at least, there have been three key comprehensive reviews of the literature on Indigenous tourism (Boyle, 2001; Pitcher et al., 1999; Zeppel, 1998a).

What this body of work makes apparent is that Indigenous tourism as a field of study has advanced considerably from its early conceptualisations. A range of contemporary definitions, debates and re-conceptualisations surrounding Indigenous tourism has seen the field become more mature and complex in nature. For example, scholars now have a better understanding of what visitors want out of their Indigenous tourism experiences (McIntosh, 2004; Ryan & Huyton, 2000), and the constraints that face Indigenous people in starting business enterprises (Russell-Mundine, 2007). Hinch and Butler (2007) argue that the body of work on Indigenous tourism has reached such a level that it is no longer necessary to legitimise it as an area of inquiry.

That said, there is still healthy argument about what is most important in the study of Indigenous tourism, how it is studied, and from what paradigmatic viewpoint. The following sections review the key debates and issues arising from the field of Indigenous tourism, as well as the role that self-determined, Aboriginal-driven planning takes in this literature.
2.1.1 Defining and conceptualising Indigenous tourism

In early anthropological works, such as Valene Smith’s (ed., 1977) seminal book Hosts and Guests, tourism was divided into five forms of leisure activity: ethnic tourism, cultural tourism, historical tourism, environmental tourism and recreational tourism. Indigenous tourism was considered largely to be part of ‘ethnic tourism’, and was promoted in terms of ‘exotic peoples’ and activities such as visits to ‘native’ homes, observation of dances and ceremonies, and the shopping for primitive wares.

Conceptualisations of Indigenous tourism have become more sophisticated with an increasing recognition of Indigenous people’s role and engagement in tourism. In a later consideration of her work, Smith (1996) re-posited Indigenous tourism as a phenomenon involving four interrelated elements, or the four H’s, that sit within a culture-bound visitor experience. These elements are the geographic setting (habitat), ethnographic traditions (heritage), effects of acculturalisation (history) and marketable products (handicrafts). Smith argues that we must assess a combination of all of these elements, but discussed for the first time the importance of Indigenous communities developing and driving their own tourism opportunities.

Building on the increasing awareness of Indigenous involvement in tourism, Hinch and Butler (1996), in their first edition of Tourism and Indigenous Peoples, define Indigenous tourism based on the role of cultural themeing (present or absent) and Indigenous control (low to high) in a particular visitor experience. Using this model, then, the authors identify four types of Indigenous tourism activity: culture dispossessed tourism (cultural themes present; low control by indigenous people); Indigenous culture-controlled tourism (cultural themes present; high control by Indigenous people); diversified Indigenous tourism (cultural themes absent; high Indigenous control), and non-indigenous tourism (cultural themes absent; low Indigenous control).

In a later edition of the same book, Butler and Hinch (2007) borrow from Leiper’s (1990, 2004) systems thinking, proposing an Indigenous tourism system. The fundamental elements of this system are Indigenous destination hosts; generating region visitors; cross-cultural interactions/filters and ‘other players’. These elements, argue Hinch and Butler (2007), sit within a sphere which includes the economic,
physical, social, cultural and political environments that influence and shape the Indigenous tourism system. Such a conceptualisation is useful in the discussion of Indigenous tourism, because it at least recognises the major sectors and bodies involved in Indigenous tourism management. In this later edition, however, Hinch and Butler (2007) admittedly recognise the ethnocentric nature of their earlier book and the absence of Indigenous author voice, attempting to redress this gap through the inclusion of more Indigenous-centred case studies. However, the majority of their contributors remain non-Indigenous.

McIntosh, Zygadlo and Matunga (2004) suggest an Indigenous values-based approach towards defining Indigenous tourism. As the authors argue, “the majority of existing definitions have failed to incorporate unique Maori cultural values and have not been derived from an approach that is culturally acceptable to Maori” (p. 331). In their paper, they introduce a definition of ‘Maori-centred tourism’ based on the Kaupapa Maori (Indigenist) research approach. This definition is centred on the following identified Maori values (by no means an exhaustive list):

- *nga matatini Maori* (Maori diversity);
- *kotahitanga* (unity, solidarity);
- *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination);
- *whanaungatanga* (relationship, kinship);
- *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship);
- *manaakitanga* (hospitality);
- *wairuatanga* (state of being spiritual);
- *tuhono* (principle of alignment);
- *puawaitanga* (principle of best outcomes), and
- *purotu* (principle of transparency).

Within an Australian context, definitions of Indigenous tourism take on more specific and localised meanings. A commonly referenced definition of Indigenous tourism in Australia is that by the South Australia Tourism Commission (SATC, 1995, p. 5), who stated that Indigenous tourism is “a tourism product which is either Aboriginal owned or part-owned, employs Aboriginal people, or provides consenting contract
with Aboriginal people, culture or land”. This definition again draws attention to Indigenous ownership and contact with Indigenous people and culture. A more complex and meaningful definition of Indigenous tourism is given by the (former) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC, 1997). Rather than referring to Indigenous tourism operations in terms of ‘culture’ and ‘ownership’, ATSIC’s (1997) definition is based clearly on the involvement of Indigenous people – in all aspects of the industry:

[Indigenous tourism] includes all forms of participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in tourism: as employers, as employees, as investors, as joint venture partners … providing Indigenous cultural tourism products, and providing mainstream tourism products (p. 4).

ATSIC’s definition arguably has the broadest appeal, because it goes beyond the immediate visitor experience, recognising the wide range of other factors and influences which surround and impact upon Indigenous tourism.

### 2.1.2 Visitor interest

As mentioned in the previous section, much of the early research on Indigenous tourism came out of disciplines such as anthropology (Smith, ed., 1977, 1989), focusing on issues of cultural authenticity, commodification and perceived impacts on Indigenous peoples. Such research described Indigenous tourism as a force for cultural change, modernisation and social transformation. The voices and experiences of tourists themselves, however, are notably absent in these early descriptive case studies. That is, ‘visitors’ were described in relation to their potential and actual impacts on the hosts, or defined in terms of visitor numbers and economic significance (see, for example, Crystal, 1989; Greenwood, 1989; Urbansowicz, 1989). Even in Butler and Hinch’s (ed., 1996) first text on Indigenous tourism, a description of visitors was considerably lacking, or at least secondary to general discussion of tourism development.

During the 1990s, however, academics, governments and industry groups began to question how Indigenous tourism could be better understood and managed. With this came a call for more in-depth understanding of the Indigenous tourist market, beyond
mere visitor numbers and their economic contribution (ATSIC, 1997; Finlayson, 1991a). Later studies on Indigenous and ‘ethnic’ tourism started to turn attention to issues such as tourist demand, motivation and satisfaction in an effort to better understand visitor interest in Indigenous heritage and culture (McIntosh, 2004; Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; Ryan & Huyton, 2000, 2002).

Aboriginal culture continues to attract considerable attention, in Australia and internationally, as it is seen as a unique tourism ‘asset’. At a broad level, research shows that tourists are increasingly seeking alternative and ‘special-interest’ tourism activities (Douglas, Douglas & Derrett, eds., 2001; Robinson & Novelli, 2005). People now desire experiences outside of the mainstream tourist offering, wanting rich and informative activities based on culture, heritage, history and the environment. In terms of this special interest conceptualisation, ‘Indigenous tourism’ would sit within the niches of cultural tourism, ethnic tourism and heritage tourism, or a combination of these (McKercher, 2002; Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; Robinson & Novelli, 2005; Zeppel, 2001). Indigenous tourism also has close links with nature-based tourism and ecotourism, given Indigenous people’s historical and contemporary connection with the land, as well as the fact that many Indigenous tourism activities take place in the natural environment (Weaver, 2001).

Indigenous cultural ‘product’ comes in a variety of forms. Pitcher et al. (1999) suggest that visitor experiences should centre on key products such as cultural centres and keeping places, heritage displays, festivals, cultural tours, arts and crafts, and national parks. Further, Zeppel (2007) identifies a range of Indigenous ecotourism visitor offerings in the form of boat tours, accommodation providers, cultural tours, cultural attractions and wildlife attractions.

A number of studies show that tourists to Australia are indeed interested in Indigenous culture and heritage, and want some sort of Indigenous interaction or experience as part of their visitation. Growing interest in Indigenous tourism among international tourists has also been reinforced in widely-published travel guides, such as *Lonely Planet’s Guide to Aboriginal Australia* (Hollinshead, 2007a). Indeed, the former Coalition Government Federal Minister for Tourism, Joe Hockey, stated that up to 80 percent of international visitors were interested in having Indigenous tourism experiences (Kelly, 2000).
Several government-funded and consultancy projects confirm international demand for Indigenous tourism experiences in Australia. Such studies have directly interviewed or surveyed actual or potential visitors to Australia, investigating their interest in, and awareness and likelihood of, Indigenous tourism experiences as part of their travel itinerary. For example, the 2000 International Visitor Survey (cited in ATC, 2003) showed that the greatest participation rates in Indigenous tourism experiences are by Western European visitors, especially Germans, English and ‘other Europe’. North American and Japanese tourists also showed strong participation in Indigenous tourism activities. A later report by the Australian Tourist Commission (2003) showed similar findings, with very high interest (over 80 percent) in Indigenous tourism experiences by visitors from Germany and the USA. The most popular activities were Indigenous dance and purchasing arts/crafts. German tourists have a particular interest in cultural experiences within Australia.

Asian interest in Indigenous tourism experiences has also been noted, particularly among the Chinese market. For example, the China Strategic Study (1999, cited in ATC, 2003) found that more than half of Chinese visitors to Australia were interested in Indigenous-related activities, especially in the form of tasting food and learning about ‘folklore and customs’. However, a similar study by Product Experience Research (1999, cited in ATC, 2003), conducted with residents in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia, found generally low levels of awareness and interest in Indigenous tourism in Australia.

In an effort to summarise existing research on Indigenous tourism, Tremblay (2007) drew together more than twenty research reports from Australia, Canada and New Zealand. He proposes several key findings, concerns and actions for further study:

1. Indigenous tourism experiences tend to be secondary motivators for travellers when choosing a holiday destination
2. ‘Authenticity’ and meaningful interactions with people are aspects of Indigenous tourism ventures that are important motivators for visitors
3. Western European and North American tourists are the primary markets, Japanese to a lesser but important extent
4. Older, wealthy, educated people are likely to be most interested in Indigenous cultural tourism
Chapter 2: Literature Review

5. International visitors more interested than domestic visitors

6. Indigenous tourism is usually associated with particular regions within a country more than others

7. Reported interest in Indigenous tourism tends to be much greater than participation levels.

Despite an increased focus on Indigenous tourism both in Australian and overseas, tourists’ perspectives and experiences of Indigenous tourism are still a surprisingly understudied area (McIntosh, 2004). In fact, it has been suggested that a lack of research regarding visitor demand is ‘handicapping’ Australian Indigenous people in developing their tourism operations (ATSIC, 1997). Further, Ryan and Huyton (2000, p. 54) have argued that "the promotion of aboriginal tourism without a better understanding of the true nature of tourist demand is irresponsible, socially dangerous and obscene. It is a denial of any form of ‘sustainability’ however theorised in the tourist academic literature”.

A number of academic studies, however, have attempted to fill this gap, contributing to a more sophisticated understanding of the Indigenous tourism market. For example, Moscardo and Pearce (1999) identified psychographic market segments of visitors at the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Centre, which is considered to be one of Australia’s most successful Indigenous cultural attractions. Ryan and Huyton (2000) similarly segmented visitors to Katherine Gorge, Northern Territory. Both of these studies used quantitative cluster analysis as their key method, based on a range of structured psychographic survey questions.

In an edited book on Indigenous tourism, Ryan and Aicken (ed., 2005) published four papers which specifically investigated the visitor experience. These studies included phenomenological perspectives (Ingram, 2005), quantitative segmentations (Ryan & Huyton, 2005), as well as interpretative/critical approaches (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2005; McIntosh & Johnson, 2005). Gale and Buultjens (2007) have also taken a visitor-centred focus in their examination of visitor attitudes to, and awareness of, Indigenous culture in Mount Warning National Park, Northern NSW.

In summary, research demonstrates some interest and participation in Indigenous tourism experiences in Australia, however estimations of demand consider variably.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Certain researchers have expressed concern at the very high Indigenous tourism demand levels being bandied about in government and marketing circles. Some feel that such estimates are inflated and hard to prove (Boyle 2001; Ryan & Huyton, 2000). Cautiously, Tremblay (2007) has argued that interest in Indigenous culture is often much higher than actual participation in Indigenous tourism activities. In other words, citing high demand figures is fine, but translating these into real Indigenous cultural tourism experiences remains problematic. Further, there needs to be support and mentorship for the development of sustainable Indigenous tourism enterprises (Fuller & Gleeson, 2007), and the opportunity for Indigenous people to determine and drive their own tourism engagement.

2.1.3 Opportunities and challenges

There is now an increased recognition that any study of Indigenous tourism should be used to facilitate Indigenous people in determining their own engagement and the means by which this engagement is managed (ATSIC, 1997; Nepal, 2004; Rigney, 1997). As Sofield and Birtles (1996) have said, the choice for many Indigenous people is not whether to engage in tourism, but how to manage that engagement, particularly with White Australians and ‘mainstream’ tourism organisations and government departments. As discussed in the previous section, Indigenous culture and people are seen as important motivators for travellers to visit Australia. Yet ironically, there are still only a limited number of ‘successful’ Indigenous tourism businesses (Notzke, 2004; Zeppel, 2007).

Nepal (2004) has put forward that Indigenous people wish to see the development of tourism, but as much more than an economic opportunity. Tourism can also be a chance to strengthen Indigenous people’s position in society, as well as aiding indigenous control, empowerment and self-reliance. Similarly, from an Australian perspective, Indigenous tourism is seen as complementary to Indigenous socio-economic development and self-determination (ATSIC, 1997; Hinch & Butler, 1996, 2007). In setting out some of the challenges for Indigenous people in developing and managing their own tourism operations, Ryan (2005) proposes a network of Indigenous tourism. In this network, Indigenous tourism initiatives are positioned in terms of relationships with government, the tourism industry, tourists, government as
well as a wide range of other policy areas such as general public processes, arts encouragement, economic development, social policies and tourism policies. At each of these network positions there is potential for conflict and challenge.

Much of the early research identified Indigenous tourism as based on *ad hoc* tourist interactions, and did not interrogate the intricacies of the businesses and the management issues involved. However, if recent edited texts such as Ryan and Aicken (eds., 2005), Butler and Hinch (eds., 2007) and Buultjens and Fuller (eds., 2007) are anything to go by, the research on Indigenous tourism has changed to be more orientated towards the need for management of Indigenous tourism enterprises. This need has driven investigations that deal with visitor experiences, management, events, artefacts and aspirations of those involved in the sector.

As part of this new focus, the attitudes of Indigenous communities are also being investigated and, in turn, fed into tourism planning activities. For example, Hodgson, Firth and Presbury (2007) investigated perceptions of the impacts of tourism by the community of Manyallaluk in the Northern Territory. McIntosh and Johnson (2005) provide insight into the experiences of both visitors and Maori in a Marae in New Zealand. Moreover, Nepal (2004) reports on Indigenous-driven research that was used to set planning strategies for his Nation’s ecotourism development in Canada.

There has also been considerable research into the challenges of Indigenous communities in developing sustainable tourism ventures. Authors such as Buultjens and Fuller (2007), Zeppelin (2001), Pitcher et al., (1999) and ATSIC (1997) have identified a number of barriers for Indigenous tourism development, focusing on the key issues of training, product, partnerships, ownership, finances and marketing (see Table 2.1).
Table 2.1: Key Issues for Development of Indigenous Tourism

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Key Issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>• Limited business management skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lack of tourism trained staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Industry-based training providers</td>
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<td>• High staff turnover</td>
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<td>Product</td>
<td>• Deliverable tour products</td>
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<td>• Concentration on development of major cultural attractions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Competing cultural centres</td>
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<td>• Need for development of diverse attractions</td>
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<td>Partnerships</td>
<td>• Need to develop better links with government agencies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Limited links with business sector</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Few links with the public (membership, sponsorship)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Opportunity for better links with education providers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Opportunity for better links amongst Aboriginal attractions</td>
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<td>Ownership</td>
<td>• Complicated ownership of land and resources</td>
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<td>• Social/cultural goals versus profits</td>
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<td>• External costs of businesses</td>
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<td>• Communal vs private/family entrepreneurs</td>
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<td>• Limited infrastructure</td>
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<td>Finances</td>
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<td>• Reliance of government grants</td>
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<td>• Lack of corporate sponsors</td>
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<td>• Limited use of business shares/structures</td>
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<td>• Potential loss of community control</td>
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<td>Marketing</td>
<td>• Engagement with mainstream tourism organisations</td>
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<td>• Collaborative agreements with other private tour operators</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Internet marketing opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conventional advertising and media engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: ATSIC, 1997; Buultjens & Fuller, 2007; Pitcher et al., 1999; Zeppel, 2001)

Despite lingering debates among academics about challenges, market demand and authenticity, Indigenous people are continuing to develop and lead tourism experiences. There is a real desire by many Indigenous people to present their story to visitors, and they work towards that goal regardless of what the research community is reporting. For these people, their tourism engagement is about survival, cultural pride and a means to change their lives and those around them (Foley, 2006; Nepal, 2004).
2.2 From Invisible to Indigenous-Driven: A Critical Spectrum of Indigenous Tourism Literature

As discussed in the previous section, research on Indigenous tourism has grown considerably over the past two decades. Recent research has moved towards the management of Indigenous tourism as a valid sector within the industry (Butler & Hinch, eds., 2007; Buultjens & Fuller, eds., 2007; Ryan & Aicken, eds., 2005). Thus far, however, this review of literature has not discussed in any real detail the role of Indigenous people themselves within the research.

This section presents a critical framework, or spectrum, within which Indigenous tourism literature can be considered. The spectrum centres in particular on the role, presence and engagement of Indigenous people in tourism research. Examples from Australia and overseas are provided to illustrate and support the spectrum. The *Critical Spectrum of Indigenous Tourism Literature* (see Figure 2.1) is based on a critical review of key literature, and focuses on elements such as the presence of Indigenous voice, Indigenous involvement, Indigenous co-authorship, and level of benefit to Indigenous people. The spectrum is illustrated as a continuum, using four ‘positions’ of researcher engagement with Indigenous people.

![Figure 2.1: Critical Spectrum of Indigenous Tourism Literature](image)

These positions range from *invisible*, where indigenous people are objectified and excluded from the research (often inadvertently, just by the choice of topic and methodology used), through to *Indigenous-driven*, (where the research is driven by Indigenous people and their own methodologies). Two mid-positions of *identified* and *stakeholder* representations are also illustrated, to show the increasing involvement of Indigenous people within the research processes.

Table 2.2 provides a more detailed overview of the four positions on the spectrum, as well as giving examples of published research which best demonstrates each position.
It should be noted that these are only select examples, and this list is certainly not an exhaustive one. These positions will be discussed in greater detail in the following sub-sections.

**Table 2.2: Positions on the Critical Spectrum of Indigenous Tourism Literature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Role of Indigenous People</th>
<th>Research focus</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invisible</td>
<td>Indigenous people are the objective focus, but their voices and experiences are invisible.</td>
<td>Early anthropology/fieldwork in developing countries; academic definitions; visitor/market research; desktop/review studies</td>
<td>Altman &amp; Finlayson (1993); Graburn (1989); Smith (ed., 1977, 1989); Tremblay (2007); Zeppel (1998a, 2001);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified</td>
<td>Focus on advocacy for Indigenous people through tourism, but Indigenous peoples still ‘objectified’ and voices not usually included.</td>
<td>Authenticity; tourism development advocacy; some market research and visitor segmentations</td>
<td>Dieter &amp; Huuva (2009); Moscardo &amp; Pearce (1999); Ryan &amp; Huyton (2000, 2002); Swain (1989); Smith &amp; Brent (eds., 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder</td>
<td>Indigenous people are the focus of, and often participants in, the research. Indigenous voice sometimes used, but still limited.</td>
<td>Opportunities and barriers; challenges to Indigenous engagement; documenting Indigenous attitudes and experiences; business development case studies.</td>
<td>Buultjens &amp; Fuller (eds., 2007); Nielsen et al., (2008); Ryan &amp; Aicken (eds., 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous-driven</td>
<td>Indigenous people driving tourism research that facilitates their own needs and wants.</td>
<td>Indigenous self-determination through tourism; capacity-building; action and Indigenist research methodologies.</td>
<td>Amoamo (2008); Bennett (2005); Bennett &amp; Gordon (2007); Bunten (2006, 2008); Foley (2006); Russell-Mundine (2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main argument at the heart of this Critical Spectrum is that the voices of Indigenous people, and their engagement in the industry, are still barely heard beneath that of academics. As Indigenous authors have asserted (Martin, 2003a; Martin, 2003b; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; S. Wilson, 2003), the Indigenous voice continues to be the last to be heard (if heard at all), in the academic research process.
As the following discussion will demonstrate, much contemporary Indigenous tourism literature is still entrenched in the earlier positions on the Spectrum. Further, researchers do not necessarily advance along the spectrum over the course of their careers. Their paradigmatic viewpoints – or the confines of the institutions within which they work and write (Ateljevic et al., 2005; Hall, 2004) – mean that they may stay within the one phase or level throughout their work on Indigenous tourism. Those working at the latter stages of the spectrum are, on the other hand, often Indigenous themselves, or are at least aware of debates in postcolonial social sciences about the impacts of what and how we study, and how we represent the ‘Other’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

2.2.1 Invisible

The invisible position refers to research that has been produced and presented without involving Indigenous people. As shown in Section 2.1, early texts like Smith’s (ed., 1977, 1989) *Hosts and Guests* largely presented anthropologists’ viewpoints and philosophies on Indigenous tourism. The role and voice of Indigenous people and their engagement in the tourism industry were not primary foci or concerns. Terms such as ‘marginal men’ (Smith, 1989, p. 79) in referring to Indigenous culture brokers in Eskimo tourism ventures, are typical in this early phase.

Invisible research is also disembodied from Indigenous voice, in that it is based primarily on definitional debates, desktop studies or philosophical works. While there may be references to Indigenous authors, there seems little attempt to co-author with Indigenous authors or to consider Indigenous epistemologies and the usefulness of the research to Indigenous people themselves. Over the past few decades, many have tried to identify, describe, and define Indigenous tourism (Hinch & Butler, 1996; Graburn, 1989; Greenwood, 1989; Smith, 1996). There has also been extensive musing as to whether Indigenous tourism is a ‘stand alone’ industry or part of a broader classification (e.g., cultural tourism). Such conceptualisations of Indigenous people are useful in furthering academic discussion, but ultimately, they sit separate from the everyday realities of Indigenous people themselves. In this way, purely theoretical and definitional discussions work to limit Indigenous people’s role in the tourism industry.
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Hinch and Butler’s (1996) categories of Indigenous tourism (cultural content vs control) provide for distinctions to be made about the sector. However, they do so without attempting to describe the more intimate nature of actual Indigenous tourism experiences. The focus instead was on quantitatively describing the sector and impacts from tourism on Indigenous peoples (e.g., Cukier, 1996; Gurung, Simmons, & Devlin, 1996; Wall & Long, 1996). Smith’s (1996) later fours H’s (Habitat, Heritage, History and Handicrafts) also help to theorise Indigenous and cultural forms of tourism, but ultimately fail to portray the full range of Indigenous experiences. Again, in such conceptualisations, the voices of Indigenous people – as they experience, define and engage with tourism – are largely ignored and thus remain invisible.

Another example of research that might be placed in the invisible phase is the foundational work of Altman and Finlayson (1993). The authors are well-cited in the Indigenous tourism literature, and identify a range of considerations for the development of sustainable Indigenous tourism in Australia. Although the researchers do talk and work with Indigenous communities, the focus is on the authors’ identification of a set of principles that they feel are crucial for sustainable Indigenous tourism development. In this way, it is not evident if ideas come directly from the Indigenous people themselves. Altman and Finlayson’s recommendations are no doubt of significant value to a policy and academic audience, but they reproduce generic notions of ‘Indigenous’ peoples and their engagement with tourism.

At a more contemporary level, there is a wealth of visitor experience and market research that treats as invisible the Indigenous people who participate within the industry. In some of these studies, the focus is on non-Indigenous people (for example, visitor studies by Ryan & Huyton, 2000, 2002; Ryan & Pike, 2003). Occasionally, such as with Moscardo and Pearce (1999), the research is at least conducted within an Indigenous tourism operation, but most commonly it takes place in areas removed from Indigenous participation, such as at airport lounges or even in other countries (see ATC, 2003). Generally, there is little to no involvement of Indigenous people within the research, other than as a passive focus in relation to how visitors might be interested in them.
Of course, it could be said that there is value in market research because it aids Indigenous people in developing their products and experiences. However, much of the visitor experience and market research is conducted solely for either academic or policy purposes, rather than for end use by Indigenous communities. It seems that with each subsequent study, further academic interest in market research is generated, which in turn spurs yet more debates as to the accuracy of such visitor demand findings (e.g., Ryan & Huyton, 2000, 2002) and the need for more sophisticated tools and techniques (McKercher, 2002). Again, these debates are included in the invisible phase because they are removed from actual Indigenous people and because their viewpoints are not represented.

There has also been much discussion on the representation of Indigenous people in tourism promotions, in response to postcolonial critiques of traditional, ‘essentialised’ images of Aboriginal people in promotional material (Edelheim, 2007; Hollinshead, 1996a; Whittaker, 1999; Zeppel, 1998b). Zeppel (1998b), for example, examines the marketing of Australian Aboriginal spirituality in brochures published by state tourism organisations. Though Aboriginal people are referred to, and a critical perspective often taken, their voice and presence in the research remain absent. Hollinshead has also written extensively on the use of essentialised Indigenous images in the marketing of visitor experiences in both Australia and North America. Hollinshead (1996a) calls for more “informed sensitivity in the cultural tourism travel market place” (p. 308) towards Indigenous people and culture. While his goal is heartfelt, there is still an obvious absence of Indigenous voice.

A broader approach towards discussing Indigenous tourism is given in studies by Pitcher et al. (1999) and Zeppel (1998a, 2001), which review previous literature on Indigenous tourism. These reviews describe the varied types of tourism experiences offered by Indigenous people, moving the focus beyond purely cultural experiences into festivals, events, ecotourism, and other mainstream tourism activities. Although still invisible in terms of Indigenous people’s engagement, at least such projects widen the perceived opportunities for Indigenous tourism experiences.
2.2.2 Identified

Research in the identified position moves past the invisible phase, advocating and arguing for greater Indigenous engagement with tourism, or recognising the impacts of tourism on Indigenous people. In this phase of the spectrum, Indigenous people are included, talked about and identified in relation to tourism and its impacts, but their voices are still heard via the researcher’s words and study goals.

To begin with, identified research could be shown in the early work of Swain (1977), who was one of the first authors to examine gender roles in Indigenous tourism. Her anthropological fieldwork was based in Panama, investigating how local Kuna women made and sold artefacts (molas) for visiting tourists. In this study, Swain introduces readers to her Kuna research participants, and describes their engagement and experiences in intimate and informative ways. Similarly, in Sofield’s (1996) case study, we are introduced to the Indigenous people involved in tourism in the Solomon Islands. Sofield relays issues and concerns from the Indigenous people on which he is reporting. Though both of these case studies identify and name Indigenous people, Indigenous voices are not particularly present, and their experiences are described in the terms and voices of the writers. Swain readily admitted this fact in a later, reflexive piece on her role as a researcher in Indigenous tourism (Swain & Hall, 2007).

Notzke’s (2004) more recent study of Indigenous tourism operations in Canada is also reminiscent of the identified position. In this research, Notzke applies Butler’s tourism life cycle model, as well as Smith’s (1996) four H’s of Indigenous tourism to examine the development of Indigenous tourism operations. Notzke’s research focuses on a preview of the Indigenous tour business as well as presenting the results from visitor surveys. Indigenous business and key staff are named, yet their voices within the research are silent.

The focus of much of the identified Indigenous tourism research is on the impacts of tourism on Indigenous people, and the advocacy role that tourism can play in bettering their lives. Reminiscent of Jafari’s (1990) ‘cautionary’ platform of tourism research, many authors in the identified phase are clearly concerned with Indigenous rights and see tourism as a way of overcoming previous oppressions (for example,
Muller and Huuva’s 2009 study of the Sami in Sweden). Yet these studies and their methodologies still put the researcher’s concerns and assumptions as central. Indigenous people are not asked for their comment or direction in the research process.

For example, Higgins-Desbiolles’ (2007) study of the Ngarrindjeri people’s role in tourism in the Coorong region of South Australia speaks of the need to recognise self-determination in the context of global human rights policy. She demonstrates how Indigenous people can enact control over their own involvement in tourism, and how tourism can promote reconciliation between Black and White Australia. However, I would place her work within the identified phase because she does not draw on or use ‘live’ Indigenous voice in the presentation of her research.

Another example of identified Indigenous tourism literature would be Hinkson’s (2003) review of Indigenous tourism opportunities in Sydney. Based on her own guidebook, Aboriginal Sydney: A Guide to Important Places of the Past and Present, Hinkson has used her Western anthropological knowledge of cultural sites to advocate opportunities for Indigenous tourism. Her research, however, identifies such opportunities, as well as the ‘challenge’ of getting involvement from Indigenous people, without Indigenous tourism operator engagement.

In summary, the identified phase talks about, and advocates for, more ethical engagement of Indigenous peoples. It reflects literature that is situated primarily within theoretical and other non-Indigenous academic forums. While such advocacy speaks about Indigenous communities and provides useful considerations, Indigenous people are identified in generic and broad-sweeping terms. Further, the writings and any associated findings are for non-Indigenous and government/policy audiences, with little consideration for what they might mean for Indigenous people themselves.

2.2.3 Stakeholder

Research in the stakeholder position of the Indigenous tourism spectrum includes and deliberately focuses upon Indigenous people, their experiences and concerns. This phase is termed as such because Indigenous people are seen primarily as ‘stakeholders’ in the Indigenous tourism industry. Stakeholder researcher is most
noticeable perhaps in the early part of this century, as tourism research simultaneously moved beyond the ‘advocacy’ and ‘cautionary’ platforms advocated by Jafari (1990), into a more ‘adaptancy’ era where the benefits and challenges of Indigenous tourism are put forward.

In the stakeholder phase, it becomes more commonplace (but not always) for the Indigenous voice to be included. Stakeholder researchers have made a conscious decision to conduct studies that involve Indigenous communities and peoples. Stakeholder research is often very practical and case-study oriented, and at least professes to be of use to Indigenous communities (although this is often only discussed towards the end of such papers, as a kind of afterthought). This phase of research is typified by a focus on description and sometimes illustrated with Indigenous quotes and excerpts. The studies, however, are still driven by non-Indigenous researchers and their particular academic interests.

An early example of the stakeholder phase is the case study research by de Burlo (1996). De Burlo discusses cultural resistance in ethnic tourism on the South Pentecost of Vanuatu. Throughout his paper, de Burlo emphasises the way in which the ethnic Sa control and manipulate their engagement with tourism. Similar in style to other ethnographic case studies, de Burlo provides verbatim excerpts of the Indigenous voices, via passages of conversations with traditional leaders. These passages help to provide insight into the realities and worldviews of Indigenous people in the tourism industry.

Several national case studies of Indigenous operators in Australia are also included in this phase of research, including A Talent for Tourism (Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994) and Miles Ahead: Arts Marketing that Works in Regional Australia (Australia Council, 1998). These publications, while primarily promotional, at least showcase positive examples of Indigenous tourism operators and cultural arts businesses. They include photos of named Indigenous operators as well as stories of their ideas, attitudes and experiences within the tourism industry.

Researchers working in the stakeholder phase seem particularly interested in documenting the opportunities and challenges faced by Indigenous people entering the tourism industry. Finlayson (1991a), for example, uses qualitative research to
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interview commercial Indigenous tourism operators about their experiences and challenges of engagement in tourism. Similarly, Mapunda (2001) examined three Indigenous tourism enterprises in South Australia and their contribution towards community development. Challenges were also raised, such as the dominance of government, lack of education and training, racism, regional biases, indigenous community dynamics, preservation of culture and identity and scarcity of resources. Within this stakeholder research, the businesses are named, as are many of the people they interviewed and spoke with. Indigenous people’s voices and excerpts from interviews are included to demonstrate their lived experience in the tourism industry.

Finlayson and Madden (1995) discussed the development of two Aboriginal cultural tourism businesses in detail and examined some of the pitfalls of joint partnerships with government bodies. Schaper’s (1999) case study of several Indigenous tourism businesses also identified a range of challenges such as education, raising money, land tenure, lack of role models, remote location, while also noting the absence of non-Indigenous private sector involvement. As opposed to the invisible and identified phases of Indigenous tourism research, these case studies provide insight into the issues concerning real and actual Indigenous tourism operators.

An additional recent example of stakeholder research is that by N. Nielsen, Buultjens and Gale (2008). Their study examined attitudes towards and experiences of Indigenous engagement in tourism in Queensland Australia, using qualitative in-depth interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism operators. This study relied upon Indigenous voice and verbatim representation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism operators’ experiences. Indigenous attitudes to tourism have also been shown in McIntosh and Johnson’s (2005) study of Maori experiences at Marae throughout New Zealand, and in Dyer, Aberdeen and Schuler’s (2002) examination of the development of the Tjapukai theme park in North Queensland. Both of these case studies identify Indigenous people as the focus of their research, and present at least some of their concerns and attitudes, as expressed by them.

In the stakeholder research position we are introduced to the idea that Indigenous people have attitudes, concerns and ideas about tourism. Indigenous people are indeed the focus of the research, and they are given more explicit attention and voice than in the earlier phases. However, a focus on Indigenous people as stakeholders does not
necessarily place Indigenous people in control of the research nor allow them to directly benefit from its outcomes.

2.2.4 Indigenous-driven

Whittaker (1999) argues that in postcolonial research, there is an obligation to stop talking *for* Aboriginal people, and to let them speak for themselves. As Whittaker states, Aboriginal people are asking that the tourist industry lift itself out of an “outdated theoretical commitment” (p. 41) to let Indigenous people’s voices and philosophies drive debates on what is needed for successful Indigenous tourism.

Within the *Indigenous-driven* phase of Indigenous tourism research, we see Indigenous people driving the research process. In this phase, there is considerably more Indigenous authorship, and Indigenous people are the end users of research outcomes generated by them, and relevant to their everyday lives and tourism planning activities. Indigenous self-determination is an overt goal throughout the entire research process. In the small, but growing, *Indigenous-driven* phase, a range of topics has been investigated, including Indigenous tourism development, cultural information protection, and cross-cultural/reconciliation activities.

Most often, the work presented in the *Indigenous-driven* phase is centred on qualitative, non-positivist and, sometimes, anti-colonial approaches, as these best allow Indigenous voice to come through. The approaches used by Indigenous researchers are not all necessarily based on *Indigenist* research principles, however. As will be shown more clearly in Chapter 3 (Methodology), some Indigenous researchers have not pursued Indigenist epistemologies and approaches but rather have relied upon more positivistic and traditional business-style approaches. For example, Canadian Indigenous researcher Beverley O’Neil (Williams & O’Neil, 2007) reports on business research driven by Indigenous steering committees, but does not attempt to provide Indigenous worldviews. Similarly, Carr’s (2007) work on Maori tourism development is more commensurate with *stakeholder* research, in that it provides an interpretivist’s overview of the Maori tourism businesses and their connection to their land, rather than aiding Maori people to determine their own tourism quests.
The *Indigenous-driven* phase does not assume that only Indigenous people conduct this style of research. Although several of the authors discussed in this phase are Indigenous, others are not, but their studies are of Indigenous-driven businesses and include extensive consideration of Indigenous voice as well as their own reflexive pieces. The focus of *Indigenous-driven* research is as equally broad as the earlier phases of the spectrum, but what is different is the focus on a new tourism relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, and on concepts of self-determination, self-reliance and the need for healing (Parker, 1993).

Aboriginal Australian researcher Denis Foley’s (2006) study is a good example of *Indigenous-driven* tourism literature, in that it clearly demonstrates Indigenous authors driving the research process and its outcomes. Foley explored the much under-investigated area of business entrepreneurship in urbanised Indigenous people. Using an Indigenous-centred epistemological approach, Foley (2006) provides insights that are often missed and/or misinterpreted by non-Indigenous researchers. Foley highlights through his case studies how Indigenous entrepreneurs overcome disadvantages, welfare dependence and the need to escape poverty drives their business development. Further, Foley moves discussion beyond the focus of ‘culture’ in Indigenous business, paying attention to Indigenous people themselves and their experience of being in business.

In the Indigenous tourism case study work of Collard, Harben and van den Berg (2007) in Western Australia, the authors provide considerably more Indigenous voice than is present in much of the *stakeholder* phase. More importantly, these authors are all Indigenous and have links to the region in which the study was conducted. Collard et al.’s focus is on demonstrating the variation of views, attitudes and experiences of their Indigenous participants. In fact, the authors’ words are used to link the extensive dialogue by participants.

Alexis Bunten’s (2006) doctoral research builds further on the works of these other *Indigenous-driven* contributors. Bunten, who is herself of native Alaskan Indigenous heritage, took an ethnographic approach based on her own employment within an Indigenous tourism company. She examined how Indigenous employees in the company, including herself as a cultural tour guide, actively managed their interactions with tourists, aware of their own attempts at ‘Indigenous authenticity’ and
self-commodification. Bunten’s work brings a new and more complex Indigenous-driven perspective to much of the previous anthropological literature, which viewed commodification and unauthenticity only as negative concepts. In this way, Bunten’s thesis places Indigenous people as active and powerful agents in their chosen tourism professions.

Like Bunten, Maori researcher Maria Amoamo’s (2008) doctoral studies moved away from White-Other binaries, towards a more complex and inclusive discussion on how Maori construct themselves in tourism. Amoamo’s central argument is that the New Zealand tourism industry must resist the temptation to market a Maori ‘identity’; rather, Maori must negotiate a multitude of social and cultural identities. Only in this more inclusive way, Amoamo (2008) argues, can tourism “act as a medium for offering postcolonial counter-narratives that reclaim cultural power and political discourse in the wider domain of indigenous self-determination” (p. i).

Non-Indigenous authors have also taken on Indigenous/ist research approaches in their studies of Indigenous tourism development. While my own published work (N. Nielsen, 2005, 2007) has been based around the development of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative (the focus of this thesis), Russell-Mundine (2007) reports on her collaborative work with Jagun Aboriginal Corporation, also in Northern NSW. In a similar vein, Beck and Somerville (2002) report on their collaborative research project of developing interpretive material with the Yarrawarra Development Corporation for their ecotourism centre.

White researcher Judy Bennett (2007) takes the Indigenous-driven perspective even further, using participatory action research to engender capacity building and mentoring with Indigenous tour guide Wilfred (Willie) Gordon of Hope Vale, North Queensland. Bennett’s thesis takes readers through the stages of Willie’s developing sense of community and enterprise establishment. In working with Willie as a co-collaborator in the research, Bennett acts as a mentor for his tourism goals, and demonstrates the practical solutions to facilitating Indigenous entrepreneurship. Bennett’s thesis is based on the capacity building process of ‘Building Willie’ (self-esteem, focus and direction, effective decision making skills, action planning, learning by doing together), ‘Building support groups’ (moral, personal and business support),
and ‘Building empowerment through social capital’. Following on from her PhD, Bennett and Gordon (2007) have gone on to co-author a publication.

In summary, Indigenous-driven research provides depth and insight into the world of Indigenous tourism that is absent in the earlier phases of the spectrum. These approaches are rich, personal and provide intimate perspectives based on deliberately reflective and participatory approaches. This work heralds a new approach to Indigenous tourism research, which is driven by concerns about the lives of Indigenous people, and which encourages engagement from an empowered and self-aware perspective. Ultimately, those working from an Indigenous-driven vantage point would suggest that research on, and planning for, Indigenous tourism should always act on or facilitate Indigenous people’s desire for positive change and self-determination. Any other type of research and planning is, arguably, of little direct use to them. However, this will come with a new set of challenges and responsibilities for the researcher and the research process.

2.3 Indigenous Tourism Planning

This section deals specifically with issues of tourism policy and planning and argues for the importance of an Indigenous-driven approach to planning for tourism. It is argued here that Indigenous people are generally marginalised, if not excluded, from non-Indigenous (mainstream) tourism planning activities. In saying this, it is thus important to outline the approaches taken within mainstream tourism planning, at national, state and particularly regional levels. These traditional planning styles are then contrasted with a more recent push for ‘new’ and sustainable forms of regional tourism planning, which tend to fit better with Indigenous tourism goals.

2.3.1 Tourism planning

While the origins of modern land use planning can be traced to the late nineteenth century, planning for tourism has only emerged in the period since World War II, in parallel with a rapid growth in tourism and leisure activities (Gunn, 1994; Hall, 2000). Tourism planning has evolved considerably from its origins in the 1950s (Dredge &
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Jenkins, 2007). Planning is now a mainstream, yet multi-faceted, process that is applied to many aspects of the tourism industry.

Tourism planning can be discussed from a micro, or individual business, level through to the macro arenas of community, destination, region and country. Planning occurs within both public and private spheres, and includes a diverse set of activities undertaken by many groups representing different interests (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hunter, 2002). Due to complexities in scale, type and level, planning is an ambiguous term and has multitudinous meanings (Hall, 2000). To add to this ambiguity, ‘planning’ as a process is often confused with ‘plans’ as the physical documents. Planning as a process is best described as “a set of decisions for action in the future” (Dror, 1973, in Hall, 2000, p. 7). Perhaps tourism planning is best viewed as not one or the other; it encapsulates both the processes and the plans that are produced. Like other forms of urban and land-use planning, tourism planning has been influenced by major philosophical changes within governments and academia. Table 2.3 outlines the major political and ideological phases through which tourism planning has moved, as outlined by Hall (2000).

Table 2.3: Hall’s Tourism Planning ‘Traditions’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tradition</th>
<th>Planning Assumptions</th>
<th>Examples of Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boosterism</td>
<td>• Tourism is good, needs to be developed; advocacy • Industry as expert and key voice</td>
<td>• Promotion, advertising • Growth targets • Numbers of visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>• Tourism is equal to other industries – creates employment, trade, encourages development • Planner as expert</td>
<td>• Supply-demand analyses • Benefit-cost analyses • Market segmentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/spatial</td>
<td>• Tourism is a resource user, environmental, spatial, and regional components</td>
<td>• Ecological studies • Regional planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>• Need for local control, search for alternatives to mass tourism • Concern for impacts of tourism • Planner as facilitator</td>
<td>• Community development • Attitude surveys • Impact analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>• Holistic planning, integration with economic, social and environmental goals • Environmental and social impact assessment</td>
<td>• Strategic planning • Community awareness-raising and input • Policy analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Hall, 2000, pp. 22-24)
When considering Hall’s (2000) phase approach, which presents a summary of the tourism planning literature over time, it should be noted that the traditions are not mutually exclusive. In fact, within a single planning project, several phases may be present throughout the process and need to be negotiated. Further, many tourism planning projects and communities never move through the phases to the ultimate goal of sustainability. Like other phase techniques and ideal models, however, Hall’s traditions are useful in examining how approaches have changed over time within the tourism planning field.

During the 1950s and ‘60s, tourism planning was directed by the influence of scientific positivism and the drive for economic development (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). This early, traditional phase of planning has been labelled *boosterism*, due to the focus on promotional and advertising activities and growth of tourism visitor numbers. Like Jafari’s (1990) *advocacy* phase of tourism scholarship, *boosterism* places emphasis on the industry as the major stakeholder within planning activities. This conventional style of planning, according to Gunn (1994), employs little consultation with the community, and the planner is seen as a ‘value-neutral expert’

Hall (2000) refers to the second phase as an *economic* stage, in which tourism is viewed as part of the economy and as a facilitator for regional development. In this phase, we see post-positivistic critiques in which there is a focus on market-driven activities and analyses (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). Economic and technical tools such as cost-benefit analysis, supply-demand modelling and market-segmentation analysis are features of an *economic* tradition in tourism planning. The well-known Harris, Kerr, Forster & Co. Report (1966, cited in Hall, 2005) on ‘Australia’s Travel and Tourism Industry’ would be a good example of this economic phase. According to this report, which was written for the ten Australian National Travel Association in Sydney, Australia’s tourism industry “should be regarded as an industry requiring co-ordination, planning and research and a high level of co-operative action by State and Commonwealth Governments and private enterprise organizations directly engaged in the travel industry” (cited in Hall, 2005, p. 223). It was this report that led to the development of the Australian Tourist Commission, and the promotion of Australian Aboriginal images as a selling point to international tourists.
Moving beyond the boosterism and economic focuses of early phases, there are geographers considering tourism in terms of physical and spatial land use planning. These traditions were driven by the early tourism planning texts of Gunn (1979, 1988) and Inskeep (1988). Within this tradition, researchers and planners were interested in applying technical models to tourism planning, such physical carrying capacity, environmental thresholds, and limits to acceptable change (LTAC) (Hall, 2000; Mason, 2003). Social and cultural features have also increasingly become a feature of this tradition of planning, particularly in the more recent embracement of sustainable development principles (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000).

During the late 1970s and 1980s, tourism planners became aware of the need to engage more effectively with the community and the “human side” of the planning process. Further, many communities started to become aware of the negative impacts resulting from tourism, taking a much more ‘cautionary’ approach to mass tourism in particular (Jafari, 1990). At the same time, we saw the rise in critical social sciences, where scholars and planners began to speak of an unfair distribution of power between rich and poor (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). In the community engagement tradition, sustainability became central to any discussion of tourism planning, as did concepts of local control over the development process (Hall, 2000). Community tourism planning emphasises a bottom-up approach, where “residents are the focal point of the tourism planning exercise, not the tourists” (p. 31). That said, it has been argued that the community approach to tourism planning is still rarely taken on wholly by government and tourism authorities, though at least some elements of community participation are making their way into mainstream tourism planning processes (Dredge & Lawrence, 2007; Keogh, 1990; Murphy, 1988; O’Connell, 1998).

Linking with the community tradition is sustainable tourism planning. This approach is based on the sustainable development philosophies espoused in the Brundtland Report (United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), such as intergenerational equity and limits to growth. Hall (2000) suggests that sustainable tourism planning is ultimately concerned with cooperative and strategic forms of planning, environmental and social impacts and the consideration of how today’s tourism development will affect future generations. While the focus on
sustainability has been largely environmental and physical, sustainable tourism planners have also made attempts to reach out to minority groups, indigenous people and marginalised communities, in their efforts to be more socially inclusive (Mowforth & Munt, 1998).

Within the sustainable phase there has been considerable debate regarding tourism’s ability to actually meet the elusive goals of sustainable development. This is compounded by the fact that being ‘sustainable’ in tourism means different things to different interest groups, depending on where they sit philosophically, politically and ideologically (Hunter, 2002; Jafari, 1990, 2001; Weaver & Lawton, 1999). It could safely be said that sustainable tourism is one of the most debated and deconstructed topics in the literature today, but there is no doubt that the tenets of sustainable development now influence the practical business of tourism planning.

The above discussion has outlined a range of traditions with tourism planning, yet it is fair to say that there is still no one ‘standard’ approach (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). However, what is obvious is that considerations of sustainability, consultation, partnership and communication have become fundamental in the ‘new’ tourism planning process (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Gunn, 1994). Many authors now agree that what constitutes ‘good’ and sustainable tourism planning is strategic and staged planning, flexibility and responsiveness, promotion of democratic and active citizenry processes, as well as accountability, equitability and social inclusion (Burns, 2004; Costa, 2001; Dredge & Lawrence, 2007; Gunn, 1994; Mowforth & Munt, 1998). Further, a sustainable approach must integrate tourism in all other processes of planning – economic, community and environmental (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Murphy, 1988).

2.3.1.2 A regional approach

Adding to the ideological debate on tourism planning is the consideration of which level is most appropriate. On the ground, and in practice, tourism planning usually takes place along policy or political lines, such as national/federal, state, regional or local/community levels. Mowforth and Munt (1998) argue that the main responsibility for tourism planning, strategies, policies and programmes has occurred at a national level. This has been encouraged from an international perspective as political and
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economic globalisation occurs and the influence of organisations such as The World Bank, The World Trade Organisation, The World Tourism Organisation increases. These organisations, in working with governments around the globe, decide on the tenets of tourism planning, promotion, product identification, financial investment and infrastructure development.

In Australia, federal tourism planning occurs in national promotional tourism organisations like Tourism Australia (formerly the Australian Tourist Commission, established in 1967). The chief role of this Commonwealth tourism organisation is promotion and marketing Australia, largely to international visitors (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007). In line with the boosterism and economic phases (Hall, 2000), which are grounded in neo-liberal approaches to public policy, Tourism Australia’s key goals are to increase visitor numbers and maximise benefits in relation to overseas tourists (http://www.tourismaustralia.gov.au). At the time of writing this chapter, the federal ministerial portfolio for tourism is held under the Department of Energy and Tourism, under leadership by the Hon. Martin Ferguson.

The Australian government is also informed by research coming from Tourism Research Australia (formerly the Bureau of Tourism Research). At a policy level, one of the main ways the Federal government influences tourism is through broadbrush strategies such as the 2003 Howard Government’s Tourism White Paper, written by the then Minister for Tourism, Joe Hockey (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). Again, the key drivers of the White Paper were the economic significance of tourism, importance of economic development, need for sustained growth as well as key administrative reforms (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007).

Tourism development and planning in Australia is also influenced by each of the states. In Australia, each state has its own tourism Ministry, as well as state-based tourism bodies, such as Tourism New South Wales, Tourism Queensland, Tourism Victoria, etc. Dredge and Jenkins (2007) posit, however, that because of the competitiveness of tourism in today’s economic climate, as well as political differences, there is limited coordination between state tourism organisations and the Commonwealth.
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Given a heavy focus on national and state tourism planning, there is an increasing recognition to consider the importance of regional, local and community level tourism planning (Gunn, 1994; Murphy & Dore, 2000; Van der Stoep, 2000). Regional tourism planning is also important from an economic perspective; tourism in regional NSW, for example, accounts for a fifth of all visitor nights in Australia (Tourism NSW, 2000).

In line with a call for regional tourism planning, we have seen the development of regional tourism organisations (RTOs) in Australia, as well as in other countries (Pforr, 2007). From the mid 1980s, Australia has divided its states and territories into several marketable regions. Regional tourism organisations (RTOs) were established to act as intermediates, and primarily for the coordination of marketing activities. Tourism NSW, for example, divides the state into eight tourism regions (see Appendix A). Each of the regions includes a number of Local Government Areas, and is generally supported by membership from their tourism industry, local, state and Federal governments.

Regional tourism organisations have seen limited attention by researchers, which is surprising given their important role in tourism development activities (Jenkins, 1995; Pforr, 2007; Zahra, 2006). Indeed, Pforr (2007) argues that individual RTOs have been able to draw together local government initiatives, as well as building partnerships between public and private sector agencies. While regional tourism planning has allowed a more local voice, in Australia at least it has become consumed with the ‘regional development imperative’ (Pforr, 2007, p. 272). That is, like the national tourism bodies, RTOs have emphasised promotion and marketing to increase ‘sustainable’ tourism development in their areas.

RTOs have also been plagued by regionalistic, ‘top-down’ approaches to governance, characterised by high levels of policy intervention and decentralisation (Pforr, 2007). Further, RTOs have not been allocated the powers of coordination and integration granted to national level planning and policy (Pforr, 2007). Other challenges faced by regional approaches to tourism planning are limitations to policy coordination, lack of mandate, governance and staffing issues, available research and information, as well as respect from other collaborative partners (Zahra, 2006). Because of this, many people and organisations that care deeply about a region or locality are rarely included
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in, or given voice to, tourism planning processes (Gunn, 1994; Pforr, 2007; Zahra, 2006).

To add to these challenges, some argue that RTOs have become too focused on marketing and promotion of their region, and that there is considerably more scope in terms of their roles in product development, stakeholder collaboration, governance, capacity-building and the integration of tourism into other related sectors in terms of policy and planning (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Pforr, 2007). To address these weaknesses in regional tourism planning, authors have espoused the importance of involving a wide range of regional stakeholders (Gunn, 1994; Murphy & Dore, 2000; Hall, 2000). The concept of collaborative tourism planning has become particularly important (see, for example, Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; de Araujo & Bramwell, 2002; Gunn, 1994; Murphy, 1988; Van der Stoep, 2000). Collaborative regional tourism planning attempts to throw the net wide, inclusive of a variety of voices and stakeholders particularly residents who will be directly affected by tourism and the planning process. As Hall (2000, p. 279) has stated:

To fulfil the sustainable goal of equity, decision-making processes will need to be more inclusive of the full range of values, opinions and interests that surround tourism developments and tourism's overall contribution to development, and provide a clearer space for public argument and debate.

Regionally and locally, councils and community tourism action groups across Australia are involved in tourism planning and networking (such as through Northern Rivers Tourism in Northern NSW, or via the Byron Bay Tourism Plan, written in conjunction with the Byron Shire Council and based on extensive community consultation) (Dredge & Lawrence, 2007). Ultimately, collaborative regional tourism planning must not be divorced from other regional and local development processes and debates. As Gunn (1994, p. 111) has so eloquently put it: “plans will bear little fruit unless those most affected are involved from the start”.

The formation of regional or industry collaborations are not new. It has been recognised, however, that RTOs have often had difficulty in providing the collaborative planning activities for which they have been established (Jenkins, 1995; Pforr, 2007; Zahra, 2006). In saying this, these researchers are really talking about
collaboration among non-Indigenous communities, without even reference to the lack of engagement of the Indigenous interest groups.

That said, regional Aboriginal tourism organisation is an area which has seen even less study. This is somewhat surprising, given that many of Australia’s key Indigenous experiences take place in regional and outback parts of the country (Zeppel, 2001). Further, regional tourism opportunities can provide Indigenous people with access to improved economic and social development, and can aid their struggle for self-sufficiency. As Zeppel (2001) points out: “the growing tourist demand for an indigenous cultural experience is matched by the need of indigenous people to derive income from land, cultural resources and new economic ventures” (p. 233).

2.3.2 Indigenous tourism planning in Australia

It is widely thought that the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Commonwealth of Australia, 1991) was the impetus for much of the Indigenous tourism planning which has taken place in Australia (ATSIC, 1997; Boyle, 2001; Pitcher et al., 1999; Zeppel, 2007). While the focus of the Royal Commission was on examining deaths of Indigenous people in police and prison custody, it also investigated the general social, cultural and other factors associated with these deaths. Of the Commission’s 315 recommendations, a number focused on the need for economic development opportunities for Indigenous people.

Four economic development areas were identified that were considered to have the most potential: tourism, arts and crafts, natural resource management and the pastoral industries (Commonwealth of Australia, 1991). Further, there was recognition of the need for Indigenous communities to exercise caution and self-determination regarding their engagement with these industries. According to the Royal Commission, Indigenous engagement in tourism could occur at a variety of levels: employee, owner, investor or joint venture partners.

In 1993, the first Australian Indigenous tourism conference was held in Darwin. This conference highlighted the diverse nature of the industry and recommended an agenda of high quality research, good policy formulation and a national Indigenous tourism strategy (Altman, 1993). Between 1993 and 1997, the Commonwealth governments
of Australia (firstly Federal Labor and then Liberal/National Coalition), in association with the then Australian Tourist Commission and Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), began to develop a national Indigenous tourism strategy. The 1997 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Industry Strategy (ATSIC, from this point forward referred to as ‘the National Strategy’) was largely developed as part of the Federal Government’s response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission (Altman & Finlayson, 1993). This was the first national strategy for Indigenous tourism in Australia, and in the twelve years since its publication, no other national Indigenous tourism strategy has been developed.

The National Strategy had a clear focus on cultural interpretation, permits to visit Indigenous lands, employment in national parks, ecotourism as well as strategies to increase participation in tourism planning at state and regional levels (ATSIC, 1997). In this strategy, ATSIC made the first attempt to quantify the size of the Indigenous tourism industry in Australia, arriving at a figure of around 200 cultural tourism businesses earning around $5 million per year. In addition to this, the National Strategy included a much larger number of mainstream Indigenous tourism businesses earning in excess of $20-30 million per year. Further, the National Strategy (p. 6) stressed that these existing cultural tourism businesses were “fragile in terms of their long-term sustainability” because they employed few people or operated only occasionally. In the decade or more since the National Strategy was produced, there is thought to have been significant expansion in the Indigenous tourism sector, but this is a difficult claim to support because there have not been any national figures estimated since this time.

Currently, Tourism Australia has not published a new Indigenous tourism policy or national Indigenous tourism strategy, and has been criticised for the lack of encouragement of Indigenous people to join important management committees (Zeppel, 2007). There have been several national Indigenous tourism bodies established under previous approaches to national Indigenous tourism management. Following on from the 1997 NATSI tourism strategy Aboriginal Tourism Australia (ATA), a members-based association, was established which operated until recently. Under the more recent Tourism White Paper (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003), Indigenous Tourism Australia (ITA) with Indigenous representatives was formed as a
government advisory group. ITA has primarily focused on marketing activities with principle focus on developing product audits and manuals as well as a 2009 international road show of Indigenous tourism products which travelled to the United States of America and several European countries.

At the state level, it seems that there is now a dedicated Indigenous tourism officer for each state (other than NSW). Further, there are at least two Indigenous tourism operators associations with the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Corporation (WAITOC) and the Victorian Aboriginal Tourism Association with the Northern Territory operators planning to establish an Indigenous tourism association sometime in the future (Zeppel, 2007).

In terms of Indigenous tourism planning, most states have developed at least one specific Indigenous tourism plan in the last decade or so (Zeppel, 2007). These plans have been state-wide and there is limited evidence of significant involvement of these above-mentioned Indigenous tourism bodies or other Indigenous tourism operators or interest groups. In fact, the Indigenous tourism bodies are small and generally not mandated by state tourism bodies to assist with policy formulation. Thus, while the existence of these organisations shows some commitment to Indigenous tourism, they remain limited in geographic and mandated scope.

Few researchers have systematically investigated Indigenous engagement in tourism planning and strategy. Smith (2001) argues that Indigenous people and their interests are generally systemically absent from tourism planning texts and therefore it is not a surprise to see their absence in the field. Similarly, Zeppel (2007) states that Indigenous groups are as overlooked in tourism planning processes as they are in land-use planning. In Australia, some authors suggest that there has been marginal inclusion of Indigenous voice within national and state-based mainstream tourism plans (Whitford et al., 2001; Zeppel 2007). Mercer (1998), for example, speaks of the marginalisation of Indigenous people within mainstream Northern Territory tourism planning processes. Zeppel’s (2007) argument seems to be the most recent and lasting one: that while there are plans and tourism policies addressing Indigenous cultural heritage, there are limited means for Indigenous people to become involved in, control or manage tourism themselves. Rather, the focus is on Indigenous people as “cultural heritage custodians rather than land-owners” (p. 425).
In the context of regional tourism planning, Indigenous people and their interests are often considered outside of the scope of many RTOs. Engagement with Indigenous people is often seen as ‘too difficult’, or RTOs feel unsure as to how to best pursue a sustainable and long-lasting relationship (Nielsen, Buultjens, & Gale, 2008). Mainstream regional tourism organisations have thus had limited Indigenous engagement (ATSIC, 1997; Nielsen, 2005, 2007; Nielsen et al., 2008; Zeppel, 2007), and planning for Indigenous tourism has therefore been conducted primarily at a national or state level. As can be seen from such arguments, there is a much greater need for Indigenous engagement in tourism planning bodies, and Indigenous employment in regional, state, and federal tourism agencies.

In noting the limited study of Indigenous engagement in tourism planning, some authors have at least examined Indigenous content in tourism plans and strategies. Whitford et al. (2001), for example, conducted a thorough review of Federal and Queensland tourism plans and policies, with the aim of critically assessing their political perspectives and ideologies. Indigenous content as a percentage of the plans and strategies was also quantified. From a sample of seventy-two plans, published between 1975 and 1999, seventeen were selected for analysis. In terms of an overview of the results of the study, Whitford et al. found that the average Indigenous tourism content of the plans, excluding the National Strategy, was only 2.7 percent. The period with the greatest number of publications was 1985-1997, a time in which Australia was governed by the Labor party, leading up to the 1996 election of John Howard as the leader of the Liberal-National Coalition (see Appendix B for a more detailed outline of this study’s analysis). Although Whitford et al.’s study was published over eight years ago, it is interesting to note that the National Strategy still has been the only plan – state or Federal – that has focused solely on Indigenous tourism.

As part of their review, Whitford et al. (2001) also conducted a qualitative analysis of the Indigenous content relating to economic, social, environmental, political and ecological environments. Their findings showed that economic issues (employment, business) dominated the documents (16 out of 17 plans). Social policy issues related to increasing education (8/17), self-determination (7/17) and growth opportunities (6/17). Political environmental issues revolving around government recognition of
needs of Indigenous people (17/17) and land rights (5/17) were most common. Ecological environmental issues were the least commonly represented theme in the plans, with sustainable tourism (10/17) and conservation of natural and cultural heritage (5/17) being the most frequent issues.

It should be noted that the trends of Indigenous content in tourism plans remains relatively unchanged. In the previous Federal Government’s *Tourism White Paper* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003), Indigenous tourism was included under a section on ‘Lifting Capability’ and was limited to less than two pages. Further, the discussion primarily focused on administrative changes and funding for Indigenous Business Australia – to pursue joint ownership of businesses with Indigenous Australians for the commercial and business development. The White Paper also criticises the unsustainability of many Indigenous tourism businesses and calls for a more ‘demand-focused’ approach. Zeppel’s (2007) more recent review of state-based Indigenous tourism plans shows that the focus is still on business opportunities and development, partnerships, training and business support including mentors, and the promotion of export-ready Indigenous tourism businesses.

In another review of Australian Indigenous tourism programs, Buultjens et al. (2003) reviewed 20 state and 10 federal government programs aimed at assisting Indigenous people and their communities to enter the tourism industry. Their study aimed to evaluate each of the programs against an Aboriginal Tourism Enterprise Management Potential Task-list (ATEMPT) framework to determine the type of assistance provided. The ATEMPT framework was based around the business development processes of visioning, assessing environmental opportunities, capacity/feasibility issues, management and monitoring. Other criteria were also developed to assess how funds were allocated and managed, such as face-to-face consultation, the provision of example cases (e.g., for applications) and whether cultural differences were specifically accounted for. Based on the ATEMPT evaluation, Buultjens et al. (2003) came to several conclusions, namely that there was generally poor coordination between programs; that most initiatives promoted participation rather than facilitating participation with resources; that programs were considered to be difficult to access due to lack of support service or technological issues; and that programs provided limited assistance for the ‘visioning’ and feasibility assessment or ongoing support.
In conclusion to this section, then, a number of assertions can be made in regard to Indigenous tourism planning in Australia. In mainstream (non-Indigenous) tourism planning, Indigenous engagement and consultation is marginalised at best, and often given only scant concern or content in final plans (Smith, 2001; Whitford et al., 2001; Zeppel, 2007). Such marginalisation from planning processes brings into question the ability of Indigenous people to benefit from such planning processes or to be able to use the plans that are developed. Further, Pitcher et al. (1999) and Zeppel (2001) have pointed out that there has been limited research into Indigenous people’s experiences in mainstream tourism planning processes or the implementation of plans. There is also a notable lack of coordinated and supported Indigenous tourism planning (until some recent initiatives) at national, state and regional levels, with limited ability for Indigenous communities and entrepreneurs to take advantage of the tourism potential that clearly exists. Based on these findings, the importance of Indigenous-driven tourism planning approaches becomes even more crucial (Zeppel, 2007).

2.3.3 The need for Indigenous-driven tourism planning

It is evident from the review above that there are a growing number of Indigenous tourism plans and planning bodies, at state, regional and national levels. However, these initiatives have limited effectiveness in providing a coordinated planning approach or appropriate support to facilitate the development of a sustainable Indigenous tourism industry. Professor Mick Dodson, one of Australia’s leading Indigenous academics and activists, and who was recently voted 2009 Australian of the Year, commented some time ago that the primary reason for this is related to the lack of Indigenous inclusion in planning at all levels of society:

The track behind us is littered with relics of policies, programs and projects that failed, that wasted taxpayers’ money and failed to deliver real outcomes to those crying out for them. They failed mainly because they did not include Indigenous people in making the decisions (cited in Pitcher et al., 1999, p. 1).

Whittaker (1999) argues that another issue for Indigenous tourism planning centres on tourism organisations limited understanding of Indigenous social and cultural issues. Nielsen et al. (2008), in their study of interactions between Indigenous tourism operators and mainstream tourism operators in Queensland, revealed that both groups
felt there was significant divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities as well as feelings that racism worked against the formation of good relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous tourism operators. Findings by Nielsen et al. (2008) have reinforced earlier observations by Finlayson (1991a) and Zeppel (2007), who noted the absence of Indigenous tourism operators from RTOs. Generally, Nielsen et al.’s study found that RTOs were unsure as to how to engage Indigenous communities and tourism operators into mainstream tourism activities.

From research into Indigenous engagement in environmental planning processes we can see the identification of similar criticisms to that of Indigenous tourism planning processes. Interesting, Indigenous engagement in environmental planning in Australia has also been driven by the recommendations of the Royal Commission (Lloyd & Norrie, 2004). Lloyd, Van Nimwegen and Boyd (2005), for example, found from their research on Indigenous engagement in environmental planning that there is a lack of provision for Indigenous community engagement, and that institutional and social processes for engagement are ineffective. From similar investigations into Indigenous environmental planning, Lane (2002) has identified seven key issues that seem to work against effective engagement of Indigenous people in environmental planning activities:

1. Tendency to overlook, ignore or misinterpret Indigenous perspectives;
2. Constraints on capacity of Indigenous participants and need for facilitation;
3. Land ownership issues;
4. Confusion around conceptions of Indigenous social organisations (custodial, locational);
5. Misconception associated with a tendency to confine interests to cultural concerns;
6. Perception that Indigenous conceptions of environment and traditional management practices are not respected or recognised by mainstream agencies;
7. Indigenous social organisations: require consensus and direct involvement of all concerned.

These issues are not new, and the need to facilitate Indigenous peoples to control tourism planning brings us back to where the discussion started. In Australia, it was the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; in Canada, it was the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Peoples, in which Indigenous tourism was
identified and stated as a significant opportunity with potential positive impacts. The Canadian Royal Commission developed four ‘touchstones’ that were seen equally important in this Indigenous tourism development. They were: the new relationship (between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal); self-determination; self-sufficiency (sustainability); and healing (Parker, 1993). In terms of Indigenous self-determination, an increasing number of studies have interrogated its application to different areas of Australia’s economic and social development (e.g., Hughes, 1997; Panzironi, 2006;) and while at least Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) has applied this to a local South Australian level, no others have attempted to do so in a regional tourism context.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has reviewed much of the literature regarding Indigenous tourism, both in Australia and internationally. It has explored major debates concerning the advances and limitations in defining and conceptualising the sector. The main contribution to thought in this chapter was the development of the Critical Spectrum of Indigenous Tourism Literature. This spectrum illustrates that much of the research on Indigenous tourism has been conducted by non-Indigenous commentators, with focus remaining in the invisible, identified and stakeholder phases. In this way, Indigenous tourism research is, largely, divorced from Indigenous people’s viewpoints and their lived experiences.

It was then necessary to explore how mainstream tourism planning has embraced involvement with Indigenous people. Although there has been significant movement within tourism planning towards greater collaboration, community engagement and sustainability, Indigenous involvement in these processes is still lacking. In general, it can be claimed that planning for Indigenous tourism still takes place predominantly at broad National and State levels, with local and regional voices often left unheard.

There is also an evident lack of engagement of Indigenous people in mainstream tourism planning processes and organisations. What was also clear from much of the literature was an increased call for Indigenous-driven approaches to tourism planning. This fits within the ‘new’ tourism planning’s emphasis on the need to have those
affected by the plans involved, as well as Indigenous people’s desire for self-determination and the recognition of Indigenous rights.
**VIGNETTE 3: Death seems much too normal out here.**

I realise that death is considered a ‘normal’ and unavoidable part of life, and recognise that we all must die at some stage. But why is it that so many of my Aboriginal research participants were dying?

I’m in Brewarrina (colloquially known as ‘Bre’), in North-West New South Wales. This is the place of the oldest ‘man made’ construction in the world – the Aboriginal fish traps, dated at about 8,500 years. I am visiting an Aboriginal man named Edward. He is an established artist, wood carver and artefact maker. His family, he says, has lived on this house block site for six generations (a couple of them are still living there, his son and grandkids – I think – we see but don’t meet them). We get a brief tour of the workshop/shed, vegetable patch and have a quick cup of tea. He is a busy man. He is very involved in tourism. That is, he makes artefacts and people in the know come and buy them. His art is widely sold and he has photos of himself and State politicians around the house. He feels that tourism is important, and while he is no longer interested in being involved in the politics of running organisations, he wants to be kept informed.

On my next trip out West I hear that Edward had died. When I question people as to what happened, the common reply is, ‘oh, he got a cold’. Edward was the first of my potential research participants to die. The second death was another, but much younger, wood carver, whom I was told I had to meet. Sadly, that opportunity was gone.

The third Aboriginal person to die in the first year of my research project was another artefact maker. I didn’t get to meet him either. He was the younger brother of Paul, who you have already met in this thesis. Prior to Paul’s brother’s death, I was out in Bourke one afternoon, and a dust storm descended on the town. At the time, I was at Paul’s place just ‘hanging out’, and he decided that we should go and close up his younger brother’s house. His brother was away that weekend visiting his kids, who lived with their mother a few hours away. We arrived at the brother’s house and Paul, being a typical older brother, commented on the latest renovations and the “mess”. He also borrowed a few CDs as we moved through the house, closing all the windows and doors to help keep out the dust. He showed me some of his brother’s artefacts – they were going to set up in tourism together: Paul as the guide and his brother as the artist.

Several months later, at one of the meetings in another town, I see Paul and he looks like he is having a hard time. Several weeks before, I had heard, he had to take time off work as he had been stressed from ‘burying too many young relatives’. He had just returned to work from stress leave, and then his own brother died.

After this visit to the region, and as I drove the thousand-odd kilometres home, I dreaded that more would die while I was working out there. It was one thing losing people who I didn’t really know, but losing people who I knew and had become friends with was something that I had not really experienced. In my life, I had not lost anyone close to me. As a first generation Australian without older relatives around, when they died I was not really affected because I didn’t know them.
Over the coming years of working with the BDC, none of those with whom I was working died, but many of their relatives did. Meetings and activities were cancelled when elders died. Several of the towns seemed to be having funerals whenever I was there. My observation was that many of those who died were much too young. Similarly, the death of elders seemed an all too common discussion subject amongst those in the group. Members often had to make decisions between attending BDC activities and going to funerals.

During the 2006/7 period, the three main directors of BDC, all in their 40s and 50s, lost their mothers. Clearly, such considerable personal loss greatly impacts everything that we do, not only at the individual level, but also in the communities and organisations within which we live and work. Out here, death seems much too normal.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the paradigmatic and methodological influences underpinning the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative case study. It also discusses the practicalities of the methods used to gather evidence for the BDC case. The chapter engages with wider debates regarding qualitative research, action research and working within Indigenous communities. In the field of tourism studies, such debates are largely influenced by what Tribe (2005) calls ‘new’ tourism research – a critically-influenced approach which stretches beyond the binds of positivism still entrenched in tourism studies and business schools today. In the new/critical tourism movement, there has been a move away from what Jennings and Junek (2007) term the ‘hegemonic methodological praxis’ in tourism studies.

The discussion of tourism methodology in this chapter, then, must go deeper than the ‘quantitative vs qualitative’ divide. The distinctions between qualitative and quantitative approaches are still important, but are somewhat irrelevant in an increasingly postparadigmatic, postdisciplinary era in tourism (Hollinshead & Jamal, 2007; Airey, 2008). Within the new tourism era, I can now draw from a wide range of methods, methodologies and paradigms to achieve my research aims. Reflexive and narrative approaches are more common in qualitative academic work, allowing both the researcher and the researched voice to be heard. For these reasons, lengthy justifications defending and justifying the use of qualitative research are not supplied here. Attention is paid instead to the methodological and paradigmatic considerations impacting on the thesis, myself as the researcher and the members of the BDC.

3.1 Methodological and Paradigmatic Considerations

In this chapter, ‘methodology’ and ‘methods’ are used as distinct terms. Methodology refers to the philosophical influences underpinning the study overall, whereas methods are the tools used within the overarching methodology to collect and analyse ‘data’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Exploring issues of methodology means that as a social science tourism researcher, I must engage paradigmatic considerations of reflexivity, ontology, epistemology, rhetoric and axiology (Ateljevic et al., 2005;
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Jennings, 2001; Sparkes, 2002). The case study methods, such as in-depth interviewing and participant observation, are discussed in more detail in Section 3.4.

Whether conscious of it or not, all researchers approach their studies with inherent paradigmatic positions (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ponterotto, 2005). That is, we all have “a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide [our] inquiries” (Creswell, 1998, p. 74). These assumptions relate to our self and our emotions (reflexivity), the nature of our reality (ontology), how we construct knowledge (epistemology), the language used (rhetoric), our set of values (axiology) and the processes by which we conduct research (methodology). These assumptions cannot be separated from one another, but for the purposes of this chapter such a separation is made and I discuss these methodological and paradigmatic influences in separate order.

3.1.1 The critical turn: Changes in tourism research methodologies

The methodological influences in this thesis align most closely with the new tourism agenda, referred to as the ‘critical turn’ in tourism studies (Ateljevic, Pritchard, & Morgan, eds., 2007). In a piece examining the philosophical changes in tourism research and scholarship, Jafari (1990, revisited in 2001) proposed that tourism studies had evolved though four platforms: advocacy (the ‘good’), cautionary (the ‘bad’), adaptive (the ‘how’) and knowledge-based (the ‘why’). Jafari posited that with each successive ‘platform’, scholars have developed more mature and complex understandings of tourism, moving from practical studies to scientific approaches. Written nearly two decades ago, Jafari has not developed any subsequent platforms to his model, but recently Macbeth (2005) added ‘ethical tourism’ as a further stage. Ethical tourism has the potential, argues Macbeth, to elicit a more values-conscious and sustainable way of studying and researching tourism. Macbeth draws particular attention to researchers’ engagement with local communities and those in the less-developed world. While such platforms are useful as ideal models for how we understand the emergence of tourism scholarship, issues of methodology and criticality are not discussed in any great detail. Beyond the knowledge-based and ethical platforms, there is a movement of tourism scholars that is critically pondering such issues and deconstructing how tourism has been, is, and continues to be ‘known’. 

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As its own ‘field of study’ (Leiper, 1990; Tribe, 2004), tourism now reaches back some forty years (Airey, 2008). Clearly, tourism studies is a relatively recent area of inquiry, in comparison to established disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and the sciences. While those in the latter disciplines – and even in leisure studies (e.g., Aitchison, 2000; Rowe & Lawrence, eds., 1998) – have been debating and deconstructing the research process for several decades via their own critical/cultural turns, tourism studies has only recently confronted this transformation (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson & Collins, 2005; Ateljevic, Morgan & Pritchard, 2007). This ‘crisis in representation’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) has significantly changed the way we do tourism research. Much of this crisis has been led by qualitative, critical and interpretive tourism researchers.

To support these claims, it is important here to briefly consider Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) ‘moments’ of qualitative/interpretive research in the social sciences. According to Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) initial platform, as set out in the first edition of their *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, qualitative research in the social sciences has evolved through a series of five ‘moments’. Presented as a chronological model, Denzin and Lincoln suggested that research (and researchers) can move in and out of these different phases, or can become stuck in one particular stage throughout the course of their careers. Not all scholars, that is, make the transition through the full gamut of ‘moments’.

The early, positivistic moments of qualitative research were defined by a reliance upon, and defence of, positivistic approaches and formalised language. This was done in an effort to keep research scientifically ‘rigorous’. The first moment (the traditional period) was characterised by objective, colonising accounts of fieldwork, and was dominant in the anthropological work of the early 1900s. The second moment (the modernist phase) still drew from the traditional period, but focused more on ‘slice-of-life’ ethnographies of social phenomena. This was very much a post-positivist stage, centred on finding external validity and reliability, and it carried on well past WWII into the 1970s. Later moments (third: ‘blurred genes’, and fourth: ‘crisis of representation’) demonstrated a cross-fertilisation among disciplines, with qualitative researchers having a full set of paradigms and methods from which to choose. Social...
scientists also began to play with more artistic, creative and reflexive forms of narrative to tell their research stories.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) went further to suggest that a ‘profound rupture’ occurred for the social sciences in the fourth moment (around the mid-1980s), which centred on deep questioning of the validity of qualitative research. Critical theory, ethnic research, epistemologies of colour and feminism are characteristic of this fourth moment ‘crisis of representation’. The fifth moment (postmodernism) showed a continuing struggle, borne of the previous moments, in understanding how we ‘do’ research. Scholars began to challenge their own authority as ‘object experts’, and continued to deliberate over how to represent the experience of the ‘other’. Smaller-scale, richer and more detailed theories emerged in replacement of the grand narrative.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000, 2005) have since added further moments with subsequent editions of the Handbook. In the sixth (postexperimental) and seventh (the future) moments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Denzin, 2000), ethnographic poetry, autoethnography and Indigenist are upon us and are increasingly seen as the norm – at least in the ‘newer’ social sciences (Sparkes, 2002). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) speak of post-2005 as the ‘fractured future’, where we see the eighth and ninth moments “become critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalisation, freedom and community” (p. 3). In sum, the moments have shown a progression from tradition to a methodological backlash, where now, “the qualitative research act can no longer be viewed from within a neutral or objective positivist perspective” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 18).

Riley and Love (2000) were the first to examine qualitative tourism research using the ‘moments’ as a platform. They assessed all of the qualitative articles published within four major tourism and leisure journals (1970s to 1990s), focusing on the methodologies and methods utilised. At that stage, Riley and Love’s (2000) analysis showed a particular concentration of tourism research within the first two moments. A similar, but later, study by Phillimore and Goodson (2004), examined tourism publications on the same basis, but between 1996-2003. Their findings echoed Riley and Love’s, by showing that much of the qualitative tourism research existed within the traditionalist moment. Wilson (2008), in her review of the current state of
qualitative/interpretive tourism research, also argued that while qualitative research has achieved a modicum of acceptability, much of it is still stuck in the traditional and modernist phases. That is, there is an acceptance of multiple realities but also a strong focus on ‘formalising’ qualitative research into clear steps and procedures which can be documented, trailed and replicated.

Since 2004, however, tourism studies has witnessed a small movement of ‘critical’, postcolonial and poststructural scholarship which has moved beyond the positivistic confines of the first, second and even third moments (Hall & Tucker, 2004; Jamal & Everett, 2004; Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Wilson, 2008). We now see a range of studies where academics scrutinise what we know and how we know about tourism. This change has made space and support for voices to come alive (both participant and researcher).

Studies addressing a variety of issues such as power, ‘Othering’, gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality, embodiment, subjectivity and alternative methodologies (Aitchison, 2001; Hollinshead & Jamal, 2007; Johnston, 2003; Pritchard, 2001) demonstrate that we are now following the lead of the qualitative social sciences, moving into the field of new tourism research (Tribe, 2005), towards our own ‘critical turn’ in tourism studies.

In the new/critical tourism arena, academics start to use reflexive and critical forms of presentation, keen to seek the stories behind the data and search for more complex understandings about themselves and the research process (Ateljevic et al., 2005; Hall, 2004; Swain & Hall, 2007). But what does this mean for Indigenous tourism research? It suggests that no longer can the researcher – particularly the White, Western researcher involved with Indigenous people – ignore the important questions which have been asked in the qualitative social sciences for many years: how do I affect the research process? What are the impacts of my research on those who I ‘study’? Does my research actually assist the people involved? Is my research ethically conducted (and, further, who decides that)? How do I write about what I see in the tradition of third-person style? (Ateljevic et al., 2005; Pernecky, 2007; Sparkes, 2002). These are particularly important questions for the post/anti-colonial, White researcher working with contemporary Indigenous people, who must ensure that tourism research does not keep echoing previous colonial regimes and oppressing...
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Indigenous peoples (J. Nielsen, 2005; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Tucker & Hall, 2004). Answering such questions meant I needed to engage discussions of methodology, reflexivity, ontology, epistemology and axiology.

### 3.1.2 Methodology

This thesis fits best within the constructivist/interpretive paradigm of qualitative research. Qualitative research refers to a broad overarching grouping of methodologies that inductively collect words, pictures and other non-numeric forms of evidence about particular social phenomena (Creswell, 1998; Neuman, 1997). In this manner, qualitative research is a direct challenge to the positivism of quantitative research. In a social science or tourism setting, quantitative researchers use survey or questionnaire instruments, while qualitative researchers use other methods, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation and analysis of text (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004; Veal, 2006).

Qualitative research is often used interchangeably with terms such as hermeneutics, interpretivism, phenomenology, grounded theory, naturalistic research and ethnography (Creswell, 1998; Jennings, 2001). Each of these methodologies has its own historical contexts and ways of knowing, but central to these qualitative approaches is how people construct their experiences and life-worlds. Thus, a qualitative researcher pays attention to the ‘lived experience’ of social phenomena and how these occur throughout peoples lives (Kvale, 1996). Qualitative researchers and interpretivists prefer rich, thick description/narrative, often sourced directly from participants’ words (Creswell, 1998; Janesick, 2004).

In tourism research, qualitative approaches have been particularly useful for White researchers working with Indigenous people. Finlayson (1991a, 1991b), for example, recommends the use of qualitative forms of data collection when examining attitudinal and experiential issues for Indigenous tourism operators. She argues that such a methodology enables better levels of rapport between researchers and participants, while strengthening the researcher’s ability to delve deeper into Indigenous people’s personal experiences of tourism. Cole (2004) also advocates for qualitative case study techniques such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, because these methods allow a sharing of information in a two-way dialogue, and
often in participants’ own comfortable settings. Similarly, Ingram (2005) has used a phenomenological approach, based on in-depth interviews, to explore visitors’ perceptions of Aboriginal culture in outback Australia. She felt these techniques were the best to tap into how tourists’ “emotions and feelings are stirred by the human experience of Indigenous culture in the desert environment” (p. 23).

While centred in the qualitative methodology, this study is constructivist in nature. This is because I believe that the ‘realities’ of Aboriginal people working in tourism in North-West NSW are socially constructed by those who come in contact with them, multiple and complex in nature – as is all of the social world. I do not think that using structured, a priori variables and testing pre-established concepts will help to understand BDC members’ experiences, or allow them to tell their stories. That is, I can only seek meaning about the BDC based on how its proponents experience their involvement in tourism, and in their own words. This is done via an interactive researcher-participant dialogue (Ponterotto, 2005), continued long term over a number of years.

While the study is influenced by critical, action-based elements, I do not fully engage with the critical school (that is, seeking outright to change and challenge oppression in Aboriginal communities). However, like many modern methodologies which cross-fertilise and draw from several paradigms and disciplines (Hollinshead & Jamal, 2007; Jafari, 2001), the thesis is still influenced by the emancipatory and action-oriented tenets of the critical turn and Indigenist research approaches. That is, the study aimed to uncover the structural constraints facing Indigenous tourism development, facilitate participants with tools for their own empowerment and self-determination and enable social and economic development opportunities of Aboriginal peoples’ own desire.

3.1.3 Reflexivity

Sparkes (2002) states that qualitative research has “loosened the grip of specific styles of writing with the social science community” (p. 9). Reflexive styles of writing are popular within feminist (Reinharz, 1992) and Indigenist research (Atkinson, 2002; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2003), as a way of recognising self and our role in the research process. Until quite recently, however, tourism researchers’ first-person
experiences of the research process have been largely ignored and deemed unacceptable in the mainstream publishing world. This is because they supposedly ‘bias’ the positivistic goal of objective, generalisable research (Ateljevic et al., 2005; Hall, 2004). Colin Michael Hall (2004), a professor of tourism studies, has reflected personally on his own career as a teacher, academic and postgraduate supervisor:

I … wish the graduate students I supervise and advise to be more reflexive in their own work, as I think it is a very important and valuable part of the research process. Yet taking such positions or making personal value statements in their dissertations may also upset some examiners as they do not support the inclusions of reflexive statements… In terms of what we do, one cannot ignore the personal. … The personal is therefore critical in determining the kind of research we follow, though in ways we barely acknowledge (pp. 148 & 149).

As a non-Indigenous researcher, I feel that it is important and appropriate to include my own reflexive voice, as well as the voices of the Aboriginal people with whom I worked. In doing so, I aim to ‘embody’ the study, making this academic research more real, more human and, perhaps, more relevant to a wider range of audiences (Ateljevic et al., 2005; Hall, 2004; Swain, 2004; Swain & Hall, 2007).

It is often said that when Australian Aboriginal people meet each other, rather than beginning their conversation with the typical Western question of “what do you do (for work)?”, they ask “who is your mob?” (Martin, 2003a). Such a question necessitates a sharing of history, experience and relationships between two people, well before other issues are discussed. In academic circles, Indigenous researchers such as Shawn Wilson (2003), Judy Atkinson (2002), Karen Martin (2003a) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) also stress the need for researchers to be ‘known’ by readers so that their work can be properly situated and contextualised. I definitely agree with Cree Canadian Shawn Wilson’s (2004) statement that “you [must] know a lot more about me, before you can begin to understand my work” (p. 11). Of course, there are varying degrees to how much someone is known within research theses and documents. As outlined in Chapter 1, I adopt a traditional, scientific style throughout much of the thesis (literature first, followed by methodology, results and discussion of results). To provide insight into some of the more personal experiences that I have had in the development of this thesis, I use a number of reflective stories and
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vignettes. The reader has already been introduced to several of these vignettes. These personal inserts, often drawn from my post-fieldwork journals, are common in case studies as they assist readers to get ‘the feel of’ the social situation at hand (Creswell, 1998).

In the next sub-section, I introduce myself and my family in a more extensive manner than what might be considered the norm in traditional tourism research. I do this for well-thought out ontological and axiological reasons. This reflexive piece is not simply a bit of descriptive self-promotion, nor is it an irrelevant story about my family history. I think it is important for the reader to understand how my experiences impact on the entire research process, particularly on my relationship with the Aboriginal people with whom I worked. This, hopefully, will help readers of this thesis to understand the epistemological and ontological decisions with which I have grappled.

3.1.3.1 Noah’s story

The above discussions have focused on the personal and academic need for reflexivity, but there was also a significant influence from the Aboriginal people I worked with. For example, early in the research fieldwork, I was sitting on the riverbank in Bourke one day getting to know Paul, a central Aboriginal participant in the development of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. Paul looked over at me and said, “Look at your grandparents, and you will understand who you are”. So, to answer Paul’s very thought provoking statement, I start with my grandparents.

Both sides of my family were among immigrants to ‘new world’ countries. Three of my grandparents were first generation Americans and then my parents came to Australia as young adults. I am a first generation Australian, with American parents, but am also a mix of Danish, Russian, Hungarian and Cherokee Indian heritage.

In introducing my family story, I will start with my maternal grandparents. Three of my mother’s grandparents immigrated to the United States of America (New York) in the early 1900s, from what was then Russia. I am unsure of much of the detail and have very little information on who they were, or what situations they were leaving. This is not an issue that this side of the family speaks about. My maternal grandparents were both born in the USA, were, unusually for the time, university educated, and worked in the public service. My grandmother was a schoolteacher and librarian and my grandfather worked on public housings and was involved with the
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Civil Liberties Union. I never knew my grandfather as he died when I was seven, and we grew up in Australia. I got to meet my grandmother on the three or four visits she made to Australia. My grandmother went to university at fifteen years of age. When I knew her, she had retired and was materially modest. Grandma was interested in reading, travelling, natural history and anthropology.

My paternal grandparents, neither of whom I ever met, lived in Norman, Oklahoma, where my father was born. My father’s paternal grandparents played a significant role in his life. They were well-educated; his grandmother was a medical doctor and his grandfather was a nuclear physicist. They immigrated to the USA from Denmark in the 1930s. His grandmother was of Hungarian decent and left Transylvania at university age. These great grandparents moved to the USA where they had three children, of whom my grandfather was the middle child.

Knowledge of my father’s maternal grandparents is limited. I do know that my father’s mother was of Cherokee Indian descent, and had been orphaned during the 1930s depression: one of the ‘dust bowl kids’ of Oklahoma. My grandfather received his PhD in agricultural sciences in his early thirties. Although a successful and award-winning academic, at the age of 34 my grandfather committed suicide after long struggle with manic depression. My father was 16, and it was around this time that he left home and met my mother.

Thus, if I am to do as Paul asked and look at my grandparents to know who I am, I would say that I have fairly limited information to draw upon, nearly all of it second-hand and experienced vicariously through my parents. It is clear though that education was a strong focus, as was serving the public in an ethical and democratic way. These values, I believe, have been passed on to me by my own parents. I will continue my story with an introduction to my parents and our family life in Australia, as well as how I came to be interested in Indigenous issues.

My parents met in New York on the day John F Kennedy was assassinated. They married young (dad was 19, mum 21), and the following year, 1964, they were on an ‘assisted passage’ to Sydney, in search of adventure. After living in Tasmania, north Queensland and Sydney, and having their first child (Zoe) in Sydney, my parents moved to the north coast of NSW and participated in the Aquarius Festival in Nimbin in 1973. Just after the Festival they purchased several hundred acres near Nimbin, which is where my three siblings and I were blissfully raised. My parents embraced an alternative, rural lifestyle, and still maintain this today.
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Travel was always encouraged and highly valued by my family. At sixteen I spent a summer as a Rotary exchange student in Malaysia and at seventeen, Zoe and I lived and worked on Beagle Bay Aboriginal Community for six weeks. Once a mission, now an independent community, Beagle Bay was several hundred kilometres North-West of Broome in Western Australia. This was my first real experience of living, working and engaging with Aboriginal people. This period on Beagle Bay community established Aboriginal peoples as an important part of my life.

Education was a high priority in my family. I was encouraged to view study as an enjoyable end in itself, as a way of broadening my understanding, self-improvement, and allowing involvement with diverse people, ideas and ways of life. When completing high school it was my maternal grandmother who suggested tourism as a new field of academic inquiry. I followed this suggestion and in 1992 left home and moved to Townsville in North Queensland (almost 2000 kilometres away) to study a degree in tourism, at James Cook University.

While my family situation goes only a little way towards explaining how I ended up on the riverbank in Bourke conducting interviews with Aboriginal people, my own work history has also played a significant role. With a great love of travel and a sustained interest in Aboriginal people, I pursued professional work as a tourism planner and researcher. My first professional job was with the Sutherland Shire Tourism Association, working with an inspiring and entrepreneurial businesswoman who quickly became my mentor.

This work allowed me insight into several projects that have relevance to developing my interest in Aboriginal tourism. The first of these was an Indigenous cultural tourism traineeship program that we developed and piloted for the State and Federal training agencies. Twelve of the trainees completed the year’s traineeship and many went on to better things. The other Aboriginal cultural tourism project was the development and management of the Festival of the Sails at Kurnell, which celebrated the landing of Lieutenant James Cook in 1770. Under our organisation, the Festival was developed to include a major Indigenous component, while also facilitating the local non-Indigenous community’s fascination with Cook. Also, while working at the tourism association, I got to know a number of heritage consultants and was subsequently invited to work on projects all over the state, from the far Western areas to the Northern Rivers.

After living in Sydney for three years, I left and moved back to the family farm just outside Nimbin. I was keen to carry on the principles with which I grew up – sustainable living on the land, as
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well as my tourism planning activities. Over the following years my partner moved to the farm and I initiated this PhD. Midway through the research we had our first baby and I started to build a sustainable, rammed earth house for us to live in.

As can be seen in my story, this thesis draws on a range of my lifelong interests in collective action, Indigenous peoples, community/economic development and travel. This reflexive piece highlights some of the life experiences that have led me to this PhD and to the development of this research project. In summary, I have tried to link myself to my family and my personal place in the world and to demonstrate how this links me to the research at hand. I also hope I have sufficiently answered Paul’s question!

3.1.4 Ontology and epistemology

The ontological stance refers to how the researcher conceives of his or her ‘reality’, or worldview. One’s ontological position influences the research process, from its conception, through to operation, interpretation, analysis, discussion and the final conclusions or ‘theory’ reached (Creswell, 1998; Ponterotto, 2005). As discussed above in 3.1.2 (Methodology), I deliberately chose a non-positivist, qualitative ontological position to guide the thesis research. I reject the positivist tenet that a single reality exists ‘out there’, one that can be known through ‘rational’ and ‘objective’ research, and independent of one’s worldviews and values. Using a constructivist, interpretive approach, I recognise that there are many realities held by individuals and that these can change over time.

As with other constructivist/interpretivist research, the reality(ies), truths and concepts generated from this thesis have been generated by me, in dialogue with the other participants. As such, the results found would no doubt be different to those found by other researchers, but this is not a problem given that I recognise upfront that my individual views and values are part of the research process (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004; Ponterotto, 2005).

Further, I came to realise that there were ontological differences not only between participants and myself, but also between participants themselves, who come from a range of backgrounds and Aboriginal Nations/tribal groups. Karen Martin (2003b)
suggests that there is no ‘one’ Indigenous ontology or way of looking at the world, just as there are many non-Indigenous ontologies. For Martin, as a Quandamooka (Noonuccal) woman, her ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing are related to her connection to country. In this ontology she places herself as much a part of the ‘country’ as the other elements of geography, weather, plants and animals.

Aboriginal people involved in this thesis also talked about their connection to country. It was important for me, as a researcher and facilitator, to maintain a vigilant openness to such worldviews and to be aware of how they differ from my own Western ontologies, which are admittedly steeped in concepts of land ownership and scientific objectivity of the landscape. Such differences have justifiably led Indigenous people to being concerned about White research and White use of land (Martin, 2003a; Martin, 2003b; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

Epistemology explores the theory of knowledge, in particular “the limits and scope of ‘knowledge’ and what constitutes a valid claim to know something” (Tribe, 2004, p. 46). Linked with ontology, the epistemological perspective focuses on how knowledge is known, constructed and re-constructed. In essence, the epistemological question is what counts for knowledge? (Merriam, 1998). Tribe (2004) suggests that particular cultures and groups of people experience the world in different ways and thus will obviously have “competing claims as to what is knowledge” (p. 52). In this way, knowledge loses its claim of objectivity and we must recognise that there can never be a universal epistemology or ‘way’ of knowing.

Shawn Wilson (2003), in a PhD devoted entirely to Indigenous research methodology, suggests that the major difference between Indigenous and Western epistemologies is their concept of ‘knowledge’. He claims that in Western/positivist research, individuals seek to gain, record and reproduce knowledge. In contrast, in research by Indigenous people, knowledge is much more relational (that is, between the researcher and all of creation), and thus not able to be singled-out and ‘found’. Moreover, Shawn Wilson argues that the dominant Western research paradigm puts empirical evidence above cultural knowledge. This can lead to Indigenous people feeling that their cultural knowledge is denigrated or made inferior in the Western system.
I wanted to avoid epistemologies and methods that would place me as the centre of knowledge construction, or as the ‘object expert’. I feel uncomfortable with the term ‘expert’, and am often painfully aware of the status, privilege and colonial power that such a word invokes (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). As a result, I wished to base my so-called academic knowledge on the experiences, voices and stories of the Aboriginal people themselves. For these reasons, talking methods like interviews and participation were much more suitable and helped to establish relationality and rapport (Atkinson, 2002; Wilson, 2003). What was most important was the relationship between me and the BDC participants, our varied ‘lived experiences’ and the dynamic interactions between us. There was no concern for the positivist fear of ‘going native’ (Ponterotto, 2005), but rather a desire for intense interaction and dialogue over a good deal of time. There was a mutual recognition and wish for action and change through the development of positive tourism business opportunities.

In an effort to better understand Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, I sat in on a postgraduate research unit with the Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples at Southern Cross University, titled Indigenous Research Theory and Practice. This course was written and led by Professor Judy Atkinson, an Australian Aboriginal woman who was also my thesis co-supervisor. It was refreshing to see a methodology unit like this run and presented by Indigenous scholars, where students’ experiences were as valid as the teacher’s. The unit content greatly added to my understanding of Indigenous research methodologies and ways of telling Indigenous research stories. In addition to taking the class as a postgraduate student, I was also invited to present and be involved in the unit in two subsequent years. It was here that I was introduced to the Indigenist work of scholars like Karen Martin and Shawn Wilson.

3.1.5 Rhetoric

Rhetorical influences refer to the language used in research, and the ways in which knowledge is written and voiced (Creswell, 1999; Jennings, 2001; Sparkes, 2002). Language is incredibly powerful and tourism researchers need to be aware of the audiences for whom we write, and the messages that we are promoting or reinforcing through the way that we write (Ateljevic et al., 2007). A rhetorical discussion makes researchers think consciously about the act of writing, the power of authority and
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“authorial representation” (Creswell, 1998, p. 171). Rhetorical choices also influence how much of the ‘self’ is present in the research narrative or thesis. These rhetorical choices link to our ontological and epistemological positions, requiring us to ultimately be conscious of the impact of our research, and the relationships with those we ‘study’.

Rhetoric and language use becomes even more important in my context, of a non-Indigenous person doing Indigenous research. Firstly, I will never be able to write as if I were Indigenous, but I must remain conscious of the language I use and its power to empower or disempower. I believe that language sets the basis of relationality (Wilson, 2003) and therefore I must be conscious of the meanings that I attach to terms and phrases that I use (or deliberately do not use). This does not only refer to the written language and presentation of the thesis, but also to how I speak and interact with Aboriginal people at meetings, in phone calls, and throughout the research process.

I have made a deliberate rhetorical choice to avoid generic terms that are often used to describe, and discuss issues surrounding, Aboriginal people. Such terms include ‘the welfare mentality’, which has been used negatively to infer a system of dependence on government payments. I have also avoided terms implying ‘tribalism’ and ‘nepotism’, which often seem to be bandied about in White writing on Aboriginal people to show why ‘they’ (Aboriginal people) will not work together, or how ‘they’ mis-spend government money by apparently spending it on their families (Neutze, 1999). I avoid discussions of the so-called ‘Aboriginal problem’, a term which stems from a negative discourse on racism and positioning of the ‘Other’ (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), relying on reporting Aboriginal people as the ‘most disadvantaged’ in Australia (Hinkson, 2007). As Kidd (1997) points out, when we continually speak of ‘the Aboriginal problem’, there often seems no resolution.

Further, language that draws simplistic cultural distinctions (like ‘traditional’ vs ‘non-traditional) is also avoided as it is considered to be colonial and denigrating, rather than reinforcing contemporary images of survival, agency and change (Hinch & Butler, 2007; Bunten, 2006; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). There was also a considered choice to use the word ‘Aboriginal’ rather than ‘Indigenous’ when describing the people specifically involved in this research. The terminology regarding ‘Indigenous
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peoples’ is problematic in the postcolonial and anticolonial movements (Hall & Tucker, 2004; Tuhinai Smith, 1999). I use the term Indigenous when discussing the literature and academic concepts as this provides links with international writing on Indigenous rights and development, and is the terminology used by global institutions such as the United Nations (Hinch & Butler, 1996). It also helps to link to other Indigenous tourism activities around the globe. However, the people involved in this case study see themselves as Aboriginal people, so I employ this term when referring directly to them or talking about their involvement in the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative.

Taking this one step further, being referred to as ‘Aboriginal’ was not always the participants’ first preference. In fact, several people found the term generic and somewhat offensive, considering themselves members of a particular Nation, such as the Ngemba, Kamilaroi, Uralarai or Waitwan, or a family group within these Nations. As Tuhinai Smith (1999, p. 6) notes, “for many of the world’s indigenous communities there are prior terms by which they have named themselves”. In using Nation and tribal affiliation, they see themselves in a relationship to country (land), people and the world around them.

In wanting to present the BDC case study in an ethical way, I also struggled continuously with how to write, in what ‘tone’, and about which story. Firstly, I have chosen to tell participants’ public and professional lives through their involvement in the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, rather than anything about their personal lives and histories. Thomas King (2003), a Cherokee Professor, says that there is a proper place and time to tell a story. King speaks of the distinction between public and private stories. Public stories are meant to be read by many, whereas private stories need a specific time, audience or occasion to tell. In telling the BDC story as best I could, and from a ‘privileged’ (White, academic, male) vantage point, I did not want write anything that was too private, defamatory, or was potentially damaging to

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1 ‘Indigenous peoples’ is a relatively recent term that emerged out of the civil rights struggles/movements in the 1970s in the US, with the American Indian Movement and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood (Tuhinai Smith, 1999). The plural ‘peoples’ is important as it shows the diversity between Indigenous groups (Smith, 1999).

2 For a more detailed insight into Aboriginal people’s lives in the North-West region, refer to the oral history Bourke Yarns (Cowlishaw & Mackay, 2006), a book of life stories and experiences of Aboriginal people, as told in their own words.
relationships between members, or members and myself. Readers will thus find that this thesis largely tells the ‘public story’ story of the BDC. However, as readers would have seen by now, I do include some private stories, where necessary and relevant, via the series of inter-chapter vignettes.

I also decided early on that I would take a ‘strengths-based’ approach (Kana’iaupuni, 2005) in telling the BDC story, building on Aboriginal people’s positive ideas, visions and the tourism project opportunities. Working from this strengths-based perspective, I have deliberately avoided attention or language focusing too heavily on the negatives, limits, constraints or problems faced by Aboriginal people in developing tourism enterprises. In an era when it seems that all we hear about Indigenous people are the problems they face, writing in this manner is important for it recognises the agency that Indigenous peoples already have and know how to use (Martin, 2003b; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). It became obvious from years talking with BDC members that Aboriginal people are tired of being discussed as a deficit or problem in White people’s reports, or being told that they ‘can’t do it’. Because of this awareness, I did not want to take the authoritative tone as yet another White ‘expert’, pointing out how ‘they’ will have to change, go through extensive training, relocate to develop a business idea, et cetera (J. Nielsen, 2005).

This is not to say that we should ignore the constraints and oppressions that Indigenous peoples face all over the world in their everyday lives, as well as in their attempts to enter the tourism industry. Kana’iaupuni (2005) highlights this point in his call for a strengths-based and Indigenous-led research approach for Native Hawai‘ians: “I do not mean glossing over problems in favor of a rosy picture” (p. 35). Nor do I think we should ignore that there is indeed a need to develop capacity in certain areas to overcome disadvantage. What I wanted to do, and what I felt they also sought, was a positive story of opportunity and action.

3.1.6 Axiology

Axiology refers to the values of the researcher. In positivist and postpositivist research there is no place for the scholar’s opinions or values. In constructivist-interprettivist and critical research, one’s values cannot be divorced from the process (Ponterotto, 2005). Indeed, the aim is to identify those values overtly, not try to
conceal or eliminate them (Jennings, 2001; Wilson, 2003). Some of my values have already been seen by the reader in previous sections on reflexivity, ontology and epistemology. To reiterate, I value greatly the tenets of social justice, human rights, and the ability of individuals to have freedom in the activities they pursue. I also value self-determination, and the right of people to make and follow their own destinies, as long as they do not put others in harm.

In an academic sense, I wanted to pursue a methodology that reflected these values. I wanted to be an ethical researcher, and to write something that held integrity and meaning for the Aboriginal people who gave so much of their time and energy. I realised that the research needed to be for their benefit and based on their own tourism goals and aspirations. Commitment and long-term involvement to the project thus needed to be demonstrated on my part, and I was happy to do this as it fitted with my own personal values. I did not feel comfortable with merely ‘taking’ data and then writing my thesis to achieve my own academic merit and standing.

As it turned out, the fieldwork for this thesis took place over a period of five years, and I made more than 30 road trips to the North-West region (around 60,000 kilometres of driving). From my point of view, this long-term commitment to being in their space and region added greatly to the development of rapport and relationality between us (S. Wilson, 2003). This is crucial for White people doing research with Indigenous communities, who are already feeling over-studied and over-reported (Aboriginal Research Institute, 1993; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). As will be shown later in this chapter, the provision of ‘real outcomes’ by me in the form of facilitation and planning assistance provided BDC members with at least some sense of my commitment, values and integrity.

### 3.2 Indigenous People and Research

There is a well-founded statement that Indigenous people are amongst the most researched in the world (Schuler, Aberdeen, & Dyer, 1999; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; S. Wilson, 2003). White scholars have been the ‘researchers’, and Indigenous people the ‘researched’, the latter group holding little voice as to how studies will be conducted, and results used. In response to feeling over-researched and under-heard, Indigenous
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scholars and writers have recently begun to ‘talk back’ (hooks, 1992), publishing their own ideas and versions of how research on, about and with Indigenous peoples should be done.

Indigenous research approaches and other ‘methodologies of colour’ stemmed from the fourth and fifth moments of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2005; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), challenging ideas of (White) researcher representations of the ‘Other’ and ensuring that issues of race, ethnicity and class could no longer be dismissed and/or ignored. Emerging in the 1990s, the concept of Indigenist research has gained popularity and increasing awareness, particularly in the Australian context (Martin, 2003a; Martin, 2003b; Rigney, 1997; S. Wilson, 2003). Indigenist research offers both Aboriginal and White scholars a means to conduct research more ethically and to be more aware of the negative impacts that can occur (J. Nielsen, 2005). It is also centred in the concept of an action-oriented, strengths-based approach, where the purpose is to “benefit the people involved in the study by giving them voice, insight and political power” (Kana’iaupuni, 2005; p. 35).

3.2.1 Research on/about Indigenous people

Karen Martin (2003a), a Noonuccal woman from Stradbroke Island in Queensland, has developed an Australian Indigenous research chronology (see Table 3.1). In this chronology, Martin examined research conducted on Australian Indigenous people since the European colonisation of Australia in 1770. Using six phases, from Terra Nullius through to Indigenist Research, Martin outlines key policies applicable during each phase, as well as the content being studied and the position of Indigenous people in the research.

In Martin’s Terra Nullius phase, Australia was invaded and colonised by Europeans. ‘Research’ on Indigenous people was limited to their identification and categorisation, so as to remove them from their lands in an effort to aid colonisation. The Traditionalising phase viewed Indigenous people as mere bodies for scientific research, where Aboriginal people were regarded as one more floral or faunal species to be studied before they would apparently ‘die out’.
Table 3.1: Martin’s Phases of Research on Australia’s Indigenous People

The Assimilationist phase saw the categorising of ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ Indigenous people, based on essentialised images of the romantic and ‘noble’ savage. Tuhiwai Smith (1999), in line with Martin’s chronology, echoes similar sentiments regarding the earlier phases of research on Indigenous people around the world. At this time, she argues, many researchers were in fact missionaries whose goals were to ‘record’ aspects of Indigenous life. Over time, these views have been “taken for granted as facts and have become embedded in the language and attitudes of non-indigenous people towards indigenous people” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 79). Further, Tuhiwai Smith argues that in many cases, early missionaries would conduct research to justify their own needs; that of requiring financial support for their activities on the other side of the world. Therefore, the more ‘horrendous’ and ‘evil’ the Indigenous people were made out to be, the more important the need to carry out ‘God’s work’
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and to convert them. Tuhiwai Smith suggests that as a result of these early missionary
and research activities, Indigenous people are fearful and suspicious about the aims
and impacts of White research.

In Early Aboriginal Research, Indigenous views were being heard to some degree, but
only through the voices of non-Indigenous people. It was only when presented in
‘whitefella’ ways that research was considered valid. Recent Aboriginal Research has
been characterised by several major government reports and activities that focused
critically on the relationships between Indigenous people and the government. This
would include, states Martin (2003a), The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths
in Custody (1991), Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act (1991) and the National
Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children (the
‘stolen generation’) (1997). Collaborative research between Indigenous and non-
Indigenous researchers began in this period, however it was not until the Indigenist
Research phase that Indigenous people took power over their own research agendas,
rather than trying to speak to a White audience and satisfy White ideas of what
constituted ‘good’ research.

Although Martin’s phases are presented chronologically, she does not suggest that all
research – and researchers – have necessarily moved in this manner. That is, many of
the earlier approaches are still firmly entrenched today in some fields and disciplines.
Ultimately, Martin argues that it is the position that Indigenous people hold in the
research process that is critical, and which must always take precedence over White
goals and end use.

3.2.2 Indigenist research

This section focuses on the key writers who have been most influential in the recent
rise of what is known as Indigenist research. Lester-Irabinna Rigney (1997), a
Ngarrindjeri man from South Australia, coined the term ‘Indigenist’ research, a
methodology “which attempts to support the personal, community, cultural and
political struggles of Indigenous Australians to carve out a way of being for ourselves
in Australia which there is healing from the past oppressions and cultural freedom in
the future” (p. 118). In setting out Indigenist research, Rigney drew heavily on
critical, emancipatory/liberationist epistemologies, such as feminism and anti-
The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative
change process and people access other inner stories. The researchers provide courage and hope and assistance with the finding of new life meanings to participants.
7. Researchers to act with fidelity in relations to what has been heard, observed, and learnt and reflect back the interpretations of the data to the participants.
8. Researcher holds ethical responsibilities as vitally important.
9. Researchers stay with the flow of the research participants—sometimes slow and deep at others fast and turbulent.

Cree researcher Shawn Wilson (2003) positions Indigenist research similarly to those above, but defines ‘relational responsibility’ as the guiding concept of Indigenist research. This concept is contingent on the three Rs of respect, reciprocity and relationship, between the researcher and those with whom they work. Tuhiwai Smith’s (1999) work with the Maori Indigenous research group Kaupapa Maori provides a specific example of an Indigenist research agenda. The agenda identifies potential research areas in relation to the four phases of Indigenous self-determination starting with survival, recovery, development and finally self-determination with topics such as decolonisation, mobilisation, healing and transformation aspects identified. Through this model, Kaupapa Maori can guide research from both its internal Maori researchers as well as other government and academic researchers, ensuring that the goals are driven from within their community, rather than outsiders.

3.2.3 Non-Indigenous people doing Indigenist research

There are varying views amongst Indigenous researchers as to the ability of non-Indigenous researchers to do Indigenist research. In his thesis, Shawn Wilson (2003) pondered extensively whether a non-Indigenous researcher can ever sufficiently understand Indigenous worldviews and thus undertake Indigenist research. Taking a somewhat pragmatic approach, Wilson concludes that a non-Indigenous researcher may be able to conduct respectful research if, as stated above, they ensure that the three Rs of respect, reciprocity and relationality guide the research.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) also outlines a ‘new relationship’ with non-Indigenous researchers, one which is much more responsible and ethical. In doing so, she
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discusses the relatively recent abuse of Indigenous people in a 1988 New Zealand health study on cervical cancer, as an example of how non-Indigenous researchers often ignore or overlook the needs and concerns of their Indigenous participants. She argues that extra caution must be taken in research with Indigenous people and communities, through meeting ethical standards and approvals. The goal is not to stop all research by non-Indigenous scholars, but to encourage them to “proceed with far more caution when entering the domain of [Indigenous] concerns” (p. 176). Similarly, Rigney (1997) does not entirely dismiss the role that non-Indigenous people can play in beneficial research and in aiding Indigenous struggles for self-determination and control. In fact, he states that:

I am not suggesting in any way that critical research by non-Indigenous Australians should not continue, or that such research cannot serve to inform the struggles of Indigenous Australians for genuine self-determination. I am saying that Indigenist research is research by Indigenous Australians which takes the research into the heart of the Indigenous struggle. In so doing, it makes the researcher responsible to the Indigenous communities and its struggle (p. 119).

As a non-Indigenous researcher, then, it would seem that there exist opportunities to do ethical and culturally sensitive research with Indigenous people. There seems a willingness and eagerness for this relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to develop, when guided by principles of respect, reciprocity and relationality. Methodological approaches which empower Indigenous participants to drive the research process, or at least be actively involved in the interpretation/action of the research, have been deemed most appropriate by Indigenous scholars themselves (Kana’iaupuni, 2005; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

It should be noted here that there too are cautions raised by non-Indigenous researchers. These cautions have come to support Indigenous researchers’ concerns and raise political awareness about the research process, methodology and how Indigenous people are involved. Schaper, Carlsen and Jennings (2007), for example, provide a useful summary of the key issues in White people researching on Indigenous tourism:

1. Do not assume heterogeneity of Indigenous populations’ experiences, culture and attitudes.
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2. Use generic term Indigenous with caution and many people may prefer their cultural identity, e.g., Wiradjuri, Gangulu.
3. Care with over-sampling, and over researching the same groups as other researchers.
4. Reciprocity: giving and sharing during the research process.
5. Compliance with formal ethical requirements such as that of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHRMC).
6. In many situations there may be an inability to provide written archival sources.
7. There is often a need to focus on non-written sources of data and/or empirical materials such as semi-structured interviews with successive interpretations and interactions with participants.
8. Be aware of the challenges of reaching the full gamut of opinions, as certain voices may be considered more public than others.
9. Ensure that you seek permission to share and use information that you have collected especially if held in a communal fashion.
10. Is there an Indigenous methodological perspective, epistemological or ontological stance with regard to the research and what does this mean for the research?

As a non-Indigenous researcher working with Indigenous people, Schaper et al’s (2007) advice was particularly useful. As has been explained earlier in this chapter, all of these principles have been taken on board in this study of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. The ultimate goals was a more ethical, relational and meaningful thesis – for myself and for the Aboriginal people involved.

3.3 The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative Case Study

This thesis is a based on a qualitative, action-based case study of the formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative (BDC). The BDC is a regional Indigenous tourism organisation which is based in the North-West region of New South Wales, and which formed during the time of this thesis research. This section builds on the methodological and paradigmatic discussion in previous sections, but moves forward to introduce the practical case study context.

As a qualitative researcher working in an increasingly postdisciplinary period, (Hollinshead, 2007b), I worked through several methodological approaches and methods, never seeming to fully ‘fit’ any one of them. Rather, as the research project developed I took advantage of the best methods needed to achieve the particular goals.
of the study, and to deal with the changing relationships and lives of the Indigenous people with whom I worked.

This led to me feeling most comfortable with the role of a *bricoleur* (Hollinshead, 1996b). Hollinshead argues that the *bricoleur* is someone who is widely knowledgeable of approaches to enquiry, is able to conduct diverse tasks (from interviewing to introspection), and is aware of the interactivity of methods and paradigms. The *bricoleur* is suitable to tourism research, says Hollinshead, because of engagement with a variety of cultures, ethical issues, regional identities, heritages. Adopting the role of the *bricoleur* is not an excuse for lack of rigour, nor is it simply ‘mixing methods’. It is, rather, a “creative application of suitable approaches and tools, rather than the thoughtless subservience to intellectual fashion or methodological haute couture” (p. 70).

Under this approach, the thesis research centred on a range of methods and action-oriented participatory approaches, perhaps best described as a *qualitative action-based case study*. The study was framed as a case study because the focus was solely on telling a rich and detailed story centred on the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, as a context for regional Indigenous tourism planning.

### 3.3.1 The qualitative case study

There appears to be a certain broadness to the use of ‘case study’ in relation to academic research. The term case study is often used interchangeably with case history, case method, or case record (Merriam, 1998). The case study is perhaps best described as a research process, or “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). Case studies draw on a range of methods to build theory and detail on a particular phenomenon, entity or event; these may be quantitative, qualitative or a mix of both (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998).

What best defines a case is its boundaries. As Merriam states, case studies are *bounded systems* (Merriam 1998), allowing researchers to see a social phenomenon as a single entity. These ‘cases’, then, could be an individual, a group of people (e.g., a tour, or a class), a community or an organisation. Miles and Huberman (1994) talk of
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the use of a bounded system to identify the “edge of the case, (or) what will not be studied” (p. 27). This boundedness allows a distinction between who and what is in the case and what is outside of the case. Further, a phenomenon that cannot be bounded is not then appropriate to be studied as a case. It is this ability to identify the phenomenon and those who are involved which enable researchers to select ‘cases’ for in-depth study.

Merriam (1998) defines (qualitative) case studies as being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. Case studies are particularistic because they focus on a particular phenomenon, event or program. Qualitative case studies are descriptive because they seek rich, thick description, “including as many variables as possible and portraying their interaction, often over a period of time” (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Qualitative case studies are also heuristic in nature because they aim to bring about the discovery of new meaning surrounding a particular bounded phenomenon, or confirm what is already known.

Indigenous tourism case studies began in earnest within the anthropological tourism research of the 1970s. Valene Smith’s (ed., 1977) Hosts and Guests was the first major legitimising work on tourism in America. The text drew on twelve global case studies documenting the impact of tourism on Indigenous populations. Since then, Smith has updated and represented the works and provided new interpretations in two subsequent edited editions (1989; Smith & Brent, 2001). Moving past initial concerns of tourism as an ‘evil’ cultural force, these case studies provided insight into the impact of tourism in different parts of the world (but not Australia).

More recently, Butler and Hinch’s Tourism and Indigenous Peoples (eds., 1996, 2007) and Ryan and Aicken’s (eds, 2005) Indigenous Tourism: The Commodification and Management of Culture, present a series of Indigenous tourism ‘case studies’ and research chapters. Collective case studies of Indigenous tourism operations have also been conducted by researchers such as Finlayson (1991a, 1991b), Finlayson and Madden (1995), Schaper (1999), and Mapunda (2001). A range of other case study approaches to Indigenous tourism are outlined in Buultjens and Fuller’s (2007) edited ‘Striving for Sustainability: Case Studies in Indigenous Tourism’. Examples of case studies within this text include Higgins-Desbiolles’ (2007) investigation into Kungan Ngarrindajeri Yunnan Indigenous rights and tourism in South Australia, and
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Much of this case study work has been qualitative in nature. Authors have relied on ‘thick’ descriptions of Indigenous people’s experiences with and attitudes towards the tourism industry. It is also firmly centred in the stakeholder phase of the Indigenous tourism spectrum. However, few of these case studies could be described as truly ‘Indigenist’ in approach. That is, while qualitative in nature, much of the case study literature on Indigenous tourism has not stemmed from answering questions coming from Indigenous communities themselves. Nor have the research activities and results necessarily aimed to facilitate change in Indigenous communities or participants to solve their own tourism challenges.

3.3.2 Action influences

As mentioned above, case study research can be a useful tool with which to study Indigenous tourism issues. However, qualitative case studies in and of themselves do not necessarily facilitate the sharing of information between participants and the researcher, nor do they directly encourage Indigenous people to drive the research process. In fact, within case study research, the epistemological norm is somewhat positivistic in that (White) researchers select, identify and define the research aims and outcomes, and determine their end use (Creswell, 1998; Wilson, 2003).

Action research as a methodological approach suggests that participants are far from naïve, or that they lack the understanding about their social situation. They have the skills and agency to direct their futures and plan their own goals and actions. As such, action research is particularly useful in research situations where participants wish “to make changes thoughtfully” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 573). The researcher can then use a variety of methods which are deemed as most appropriate to facilitate this change. Importantly, posit Kemmis and McTaggart, the emphasis is not on the methodology but more on how the practices are “understood in the field” (p. 600) and how the research empowers participants to make changes in their lives.

The action research process is best viewed as a ‘spiral of change’, and includes the stages of planning a change, observation, reflecting and then action. However, as
many researchers have found, action research rarely works in such a neat fashion (Simmonson & Bushaw, 1993), as it is much more likely to be “fluid, open and responsive” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 595). The criterion of success in action research is not whether the steps have been followed, but whether participants have a strong sense of evolution in their situations.

Action research approaches have been used with some success in Indigenous health research projects. Several doctoral theses illustrate how this methodology has been applied to facilitate Indigenous groups to take a stronger role in health monitoring and the establishment of their own health organisations. Dickson (2000) used a participatory action research methodology to engage in a ‘grandmother health project’ in Canada working with Canadian Indigenous elders to conduct health assessment, support the grandmothers through health promotion, facilitate leadership development and build a network with other relevant services. Mardiros (2001) also conducted an action study where partnerships were forged between the mainstream health industry and Australian Aboriginal people, and where “the community [was] involved in all aspects of the research, to ensure the practicality and relevance of outcomes” (p. 64).

Action research is not nearly as common in tourism and leisure as in other fields such as social policy, education or ethnic affairs. There are, however, some notable examples of action research in critical (Veal, 2006) and Indigenist-influenced tourism studies (Cole, 2005; Russell-Mundine, 2007). Several authors (e.g., Belsky, 2004; Guevara, 1996) have suggested that there is a greater role for participatory/action research in tourism studies, particularly in the field of community-based planning where participants can be fully involved in decision-making.

A recent Australian example which makes this point is the doctoral work of Judy Bennett (2005). Bennett’s thesis focused on Indigenous entrepreneurship, and used a participatory action research approach with Wilfred Gordon, an Indigenous tour operator in Cape York, Far North Queensland. Over the research period, Bennett and Gordon worked together using theories of social capital, mentoring and mutual empowerment to facilitate the development of Gordon’s cultural tour business. In a subsequent joint paper, Bennett and Gordon (2007) speak of the benefits of action research approach in the ‘fostering of Indigenous entrepreneurship… whilst generating a powerful and practical new knowledge that bridges the Indigenous and
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Western world” (pp. 334-335). There are few other examples of action research used in Indigenous tourism development in Australia.

At the outset of this thesis, I had a strong desire to ensure that Aboriginal people themselves would be the drivers of their tourism opportunities. As stated previously, I wished to tell a positive, strengths-based Indigenous tourism story, using Aboriginal peoples’ own words and voices. I now needed to find a suitable ‘case’ for studying and/or facilitating, but most importantly, a group of people who wanted to seek change and action through the opportunities presented by Indigenous tourism. That group would come to be the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative.

3.3.3 Developing the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative: The research context

This research began with my desire to conduct an action research project facilitating Indigenous engagement in regional tourism planning. Leading up to that time, I had been working as an independent tourism and community-planning consultant. While based in North-Eastern NSW, I was prepared to travel to wherever was necessary, though the closer the project, the easier it would be to regularly access the field over time.

I began my research quest with a list of around a dozen existing contacts I had in the Indigenous and regional tourism industry. I phoned all of these people, as well as contacting others who they suggested in a snowball fashion (Neuman, 1997). At times, thinking that the leads could produce a suitable research project, I organised meetings and visited people. I talked to everyone I could about my potential research plans. In the end, it took several months to find someone who was interested in working with me on this type of project.

This person was Roxanne Smith, then the Aboriginal Business Manager for the Department of State and Regional Development, and she has been a central and essential part of this thesis and the BDC’s development. Roxanne had recently been directed to examine the Indigenous tourism potential in the Western region of NSW. Roxanne had only been employed in this position for about one year. She was Aboriginal, born on the bank of the Darling River in Bourke, and had family contacts
across the region. Roxanne had moved back to the region after living in the eastern part of the State for many years. She was one of three Indigenous people that the Department had hired to facilitate Indigenous business across the State as part of a trial – in the past these roles were part of non-Indigenous positions (the Department had one Indigenous business client when she started, and after four years with her facilitation, they had over eighty). Roxanne had considerable experience in running her own businesses as well as managing local Aboriginal Land Councils and having been a Local Government Mayor and Councillor. However, she had, admittedly, limited tourism experience and was therefore interested in having me assist in her activities with my suggested research activities.

In her position, Roxanne was managing a substantial 75 percent of the state. On my first trip to meet Roxanne, we spent a week together, travelling around, meeting Aboriginal people who were either involved in tourism or wished to be. On this trip, I drove over 3,500 kilometres. We met people in Brewarrina, Bourke, Wilcannia, Broken Hill and Wentworth. During these meetings, many Aboriginal people showed a great level of interest in developing tourism activities in the North-West region. Roxanne and I found each other very easy to communicate with, and so we committed to working together to facilitate both the regional Aboriginal tourism planning and my PhD.

Over the next few months, a regional Aboriginal tourism workshop in Bourke was developed by Roxanne. Back in Lismore, I set about achieving formal research ethics approval so that the doctoral project could begin. Upon returning to the region for the first workshop, I was pleasantly surprised by the interest shown by those whom I had met on the earlier visit. In fact, Roxanne and others working with her had managed to conduct another trip around the region and found substantial interest from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the community. It was at the end of this workshop, after two days of tourism presentations, that the discussion of what should happen next took place.

It was unanimous amongst the Aboriginal participants that they wished to establish an Aboriginal organisation to manage the regional tourism opportunities that existed. This organisation was to be restricted to Aboriginal membership with non-Aboriginal people being encouraged to be involved and associated. The development of this
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organisation was now to be the focus of my thesis – it had no name, members or direction yet. Simply the idea of a regional Aboriginal tourism organisation was to be established and they were interested and keen to have my involvement.

Over the next few months, the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative was initiated and I began regular visits to the region to facilitate activities as an action research project. As the BDC developed, more new people became involved. Once the project was initiated, my role as a planner was integral to the project and I felt obligated to remain active in the setting. In this sense, the research setting selected me as much as I selected it. That is, if the participants had not wished for me to be involved then the research setting would not have existed.

3.3.3.1 North-West New South Wales

The North-Western region of the Australian state of New South Wales is a large, yet relatively sparsely populated area (see Figure 3.1). Regional census statistics provide a broad level of insight into the Aboriginal community and can be useful to identify trends (see Table 3.2). While the Indigenous population of NSW only makes up around 2 percent of the state’s population, within the North-Western region Indigenous people constitute around 40 percent of the total population (ABS, 2002). In the main towns from which BDC members came, Indigenous people range from 40 to 95 percent of the towns’ populations. Indigenous presence in these towns is therefore significant in terms of nature, culture and atmosphere.
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Figure 3.1: Map of Study Region

Table 3.2: Overview of Regional Indigenous Statistics, North-Western New South Wales (2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Indigenous population/ total pop.</th>
<th>Median Age (yrs)</th>
<th>Unemployed (%)</th>
<th>CDEP*/work force</th>
<th>Main employment sectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bourke</td>
<td>847/2559</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>59/231</td>
<td>Govt., Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewarrina</td>
<td>733/1199</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>27/209</td>
<td>Govt., Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonabarabran</td>
<td>352/2736</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonamble</td>
<td>702/2658</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>59/203</td>
<td>Govt., health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>342/1826</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>42/122</td>
<td>Health, retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walgett</td>
<td>759/1817</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>41/219</td>
<td>Govt., health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: 2001 Census, Commonwealth of Australia, 2002)

*CDEP stands for (Community Development and Employment Project, a government employment placement initiative that provides Aboriginal people with a living stipend)
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Another feature of Indigenous populations in the North-West region are the relatively low median ages (between 17 and 24 years), compared with the non-Indigenous median (between 34 and 44 years). While the non-Indigenous population has an unemployment rate of around 3 to 5 percent in these towns, the Indigenous rate is much higher, around 20 to 30 percent (without counting the CDEP workforce that represents a further 15 to 40 percent of the workforce). The main sectors providing Indigenous employment are government bodies, health and education sectors.

Economically, North-West NSW is largely dependent on agriculture and cropping (wheat and cotton). Tourism, however, is increasingly becoming important as an alternative or complement to these industries, as a result of serious droughts over the past decade. Increased emphasis on tourism promotions has also attracted people into the region. Several towns across the region attract several hundred thousand visitors annually, such as Lighting Ridge (famous for its opal), Bourke (well-known in Australian heritage) and Coonabarabran (popular for natural attractions and diversity). Most of the other towns in the North-West region attract relatively small numbers of visitors and have less tourism infrastructure. At the time the research project began, there were no active Aboriginal tourism experiences within the region.

Figure 3.2 shows the traditional lands and language boundaries of the Aboriginal people of NSW. Descendants of a number of Aboriginal tribal groups, including the Wailwan, Wiradjuri, Murawari, Kamilaroi and Ngemba (part of Wongaibon), were very involved in the establishment of the BDC. Due to the practices of previous governments, including the removal of Indigenous people from their lands and ‘missionising’ them, there are somewhere between five and seven different tribal groups in each of the towns within the region (this figure is based on personal conversations with BDC members). Aboriginal people involved in this study were very aware of their own Nationhood, and that of others. Further, discussions of genealogy were commonplace amongst members of the BDC, as the members came together and identified how they were related and gathered additional information from across the region.
Aboriginal people of the North-West region, as in other areas of NSW and Australia, have had to survive government policies of removal, missionising, assimilation, removal of children as well as other forms of racism and abuse (Atkinson, 2002; Elder, 1998; Kidd, 1997). However, it was not the aim of this thesis to delve into this history at a sociological level, though I was very much aware of it. As a White person wanting to ensure culturally safe and ethical research (Atkinson, 2002), I did not feel that I would able to support participants with delving into these personal and often emotionally difficult issues. Rather, the focus was on facilitating Aboriginal people to examine their tourism potential, with a recognition and acknowledgement of the wrongs done to Aboriginal people since ‘colonisation’.

In recognising this limitation, however, a brief historical context of the North-West NSW region is provided here, based on the historical work of Frances Peters-Little (1999). Peters-Little is a Kamilaroi woman and documentary maker from Walgett, who investigated the meaning of ‘community’ to Aboriginal people in the North-West. While her account is primarily historical, it also sets the scene for the contemporary life of many people in the region. Peters-Little discusses pre-European
invasion history, as well as the atrocities of colonial rule including murders, massacres, separation from lands and families, segregation and assimilation.

European engagement in the region began around 1826, when Governor Darling gave directions to White settlers in the region to “take vigorous measures for their own defence against the natives in the north-west” (p. 4). This resulted in land grabs by Whites and many Aboriginal people were massacred. As in many other areas in Australia, Aborigines retaliated with a form of guerrilla warfare resulting in deaths on both sides. By 1836, the new squatters, ignoring the Aboriginal resistance, were granted the right to graze on the plains. The North-West had “some of the longest and bloodiest massacres on the north west plains of New South Wales, such as the notorious Hospital Creek and Myall Creek massacres in 1838” (p. 5). However, the descendants from the Weilwan, Uralarai, Kamilaroi and Ngemba have continued to survive and retain their Aboriginality with “their own concepts of social and geographical boundaries” (p. 5).

Peters-Little (1999) argues that “Aboriginal descendants living on the north-west plains... have maintained ongoing relationships to their sacred sites and traditional lands, having never left it” (p. 5). She also believes that “while recent memories of assimilation policies and segregation practices have perhaps caused them internally to reject ‘white society’, memories of ‘survival’ and ‘resistance’ to whiteness are an essential component of Aboriginality. In this way, Aboriginal people actively participate in the construction of their own Aboriginality; they have control over those issues and harness them for their own benefit” (p. 6).

It was obvious to me that the Aboriginal people involved in this BDC tourism case study live with this traumatic history on a daily basis. Many spoke of how they viewed the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative and its tourism initiatives as a means to ‘tell their stories’, right their historical oppressions, and share their culture with others.

### 3.4 Case Study Evidence and Analysis

In qualitative case study research, commonly used data gathering methods are in-depth interviews, participant observation and secondary textual analysis (Creswell,
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In building the BDC case study, I utilised two qualitative methods: participant observation of the BDC formation process, and in-depth interviews with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal proponents.

The action research ‘spiral’ I was using was decidedly messy, however. I had to become the *bricoleur*, and continually adjust my research approach so as to facilitate activities and stay attuned to participants’ desires and issues. As a result, the way research methods were utilised changed as the research project progressed, the BDC developed and as my relationship with participants grew. In line with interpretivist ontologies, this is viewed as a benefit, rather than a weakness, of the study (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998).

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was sought through the Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). As with all human-related research projects conducted through the tertiary education sector, ethical clearance was taken seriously by me and the university (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2003). However, issues of ethics and responsibility became even more important for my research given that it would involve Australian Indigenous peoples. The Aboriginal Research Institute (1993) has stated that research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples often continues to be “exploitative with little or no value being accrued by Aboriginal people or their communities” (no page).

I wanted to avoid this occurring, and, as stated in the previous sections, it certainly did not fit with my personal and axiological values. For these reasons, particular attention was paid to the ethical guidelines provided by such institutions as the Aboriginal Research Institute (1993), the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS, 2000) and the NHMRC (2003). AIATSIS (2000), for example, outlines three key principles for the conduct of ethical research on Indigenous Australians: 1) consultation, negotiation and mutual understanding; 2) respect, recognition and involvement; and 3) benefits, outcomes and agreement. I worked to incorporate all of these into my research design and action.

A research proposal was developed and submitted to SCU’s HREC in early 2003 (ethics clearance granted on the 11th of August, 2003). This proposal outlined the methodology and methods to be used, interview questions, sample of participants, as
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well as the intended benefits to the Indigenous community. Particular emphasis was placed on the following ethical considerations:

- Discussing research proposal with participants before conducting interviews to allow time for participants to consider whether they wished to be involved;
- Ensuring participants signed letters of informed consent prior to interviewing and at time of interviewing (see Appendix C);
- Enabling participants to review their interview transcripts prior to analysis;
- Presentation of draft results to participants for confirmation and additional feedback;
- Provision of electronic copy of the thesis to all participants upon completion;
- Establishment of good working relationships with Aboriginal people;
- Ensure that results resonate with participants, and are of some use to them in directing their own futures and tourism enterprises.
- Following the completion of the thesis, continue to support participants' development of collaborative tourism activities to the best of my abilities.

3.4.1 Participant observation

Sometimes referred to as ‘field research’, participant observation allows for the study of people in their natural setting, often using direct interactions with those individuals to derive meaning about social phenomena (Neuman, 1997). Participant observation as a research method can elicit rich, detailed and first-hand understanding about a particular phenomenon, and is especially popular with case study and ethnographic researchers (Creswell, 1998).

Participant observation has been used extensively for research on Indigenous peoples in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology (Cole, 2004), where researchers have traditionally spent long periods in the field, immersing themselves ‘naturalistically’ within cultures so as to develop a more intimate (emic) understanding of the people in that society. Shawn Wilson (2003) states that participant observation has the potential to be an appropriate Indigenist research tool as it involves watching, listening and action. Like other methods, participant observation must ensure relational accountability and the forming of respectful relationships. Bunten’s (2006, 2008) participant observation in an Alaskan Indigenous tour company shows how the
method can be applied ethically, as she herself was an Indigenous guide and could seek in-depth insights into how other Indigenous workers experienced their roles.

In aiming to be an ethical participant observer, I had to be clear to myself and my participants about the role I would be taking (Neuman, 1997). Reinharz (1998) suggests that participant observers can take on differing levels of ‘participation’, from no participation, through to complete participation. Further, she explains that their identification as a researcher can vary from researchers being covert to overt with all participants being fully aware of the researcher’s observations goals and practices. Merriam (1998, pp. 100-1) outlines five participant/observer choices for the researcher:

1) The **complete observer** who does not take part in the activity and whose status as a researcher is unknown to the participants.
2) The **participant-as-observer** does take part in the activities and their status as a researcher is known to the participants.
3) The **observer-as-participant** does not take part in the activity but their status as a researcher is known to the participants.
4) The **complete participant** does take part in the activities however their status as a researcher is not known to the participants.
5) The **collaborative partner** where the investigator is involved and their status is known to the participants, further participants are equal partners in the research.

The role I took within the BDC case aligns most closely with participant as observer. That is, I took part overtly in all of the activities and my role as a researcher was known to those involved. The idea of not participating in the development of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, and simply being a silent and covert observer, was not considered an ethical or appropriate option (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2003). What was important was that I took on a responsible and conscious level of participation. While the ethics clearance through HREC was a necessary and useful procedure, I found that once in the field being an ethical researcher became much more about the personal relationships that I established and needed to maintain, and my role within the BDC.

The identified roles that I took on were that of an academic researcher, and, over time, consultant tourism planner and co-facilitator. When I came to the PhD, I had around eight years’ previous experience in the field as both a private tourism planning
consultant and tourism organisation employee. When the BDC became aware of this, they asked questions, sought my knowledge and encouraged my role as a facilitator (not expert). This role was supported by Roxanne Smith, who acted as an Indigenous mentor and colleague throughout the process.

In my accepted role as tourism planner and facilitator, my observation activities became almost secondary and I became a full participant within all BCD activities (Neuman, 1997). I was not a BDC member, however, because membership belonged to Aboriginal people only. These dual functions – researcher and participant – added greatly to the time that was spent with the BDC, rather than simply being a one-off academic visitor. I also tried to ensure that my role in the BDC was useful to them, not just for my doctoral research.

The main observation techniques included taking notes at BDC meetings and workshops, which were then developed into organisational minutes. These notes facilitated the keeping of the organisation’s history and development activities. I also kept a personal reflective journal. This was done electronically and I would often record observations, feelings and other comments on the long drive home after participating in workshops and interviews. In total, I made around 30 trips to the North West region to participate in BDC activities.

**3.4.2 In-depth interviews**

In-depth interviews are a popular and effective method used in qualitative case study research. Janesick (2004, p. 72) defines interviews as “a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic”. Neuman (1997) adds to this by claiming an additional relationship development element and “a mutual sharing of experiences” (p. 372).

While interviews provide a space for interviewees to express themselves in their normal language and to focus on their own experience (Neuman, 1997), they are subtly different to normal conversations. The in-depth interviews used in this research are perhaps best represented as *guided conversations* (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). As Rubin and Rubin (1995) state, guided conversations and in-depth interviews vary...
from general conversations in several ways, including conversational depth and that they are recorded in some manner. In general conversations, people’s responses to questions are often abbreviated and short, with considerable non-verbal interaction and assumed understandings while in guided conversations the interviewer requires the dialogue to go deeper than mere descriptions.

A number of White tourism researchers such as Finlayson (1991a, 1991b), and Cole (2004, 2005) have espoused the benefits of using qualitative interview techniques when conducting research with Indigenous people. It is claimed that such personal techniques, if used respectfully and to Aboriginal people’s benefits, can make participants feel more comfortable and the relationship can be more empowered.

3.4.2.1 Phase one interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted in two phases. The first phase of in-depth interviews was conducted in the initial year of the research project (late 2003). These early interviews set the research scene, allowing the collection of information about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people’s experiences of tourism planning in the North-West region of NSW. These initial in-depth interviews were semi-structured, asking a range of pre-determined, though broad, questions (see Appendix D for interview guide). Question areas focused on participants’ previous engagement in tourism planning activities, factors likely to affect the success of Aboriginal engagement in tourism, visions for Aboriginal tourism in the region, and interest in being involved in Aboriginal tourism planning activities.

This first phase of interviews included 13 key tourism stakeholders involved in some level of Indigenous tourism planning in the North-West, and enlisted views from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals. Of the total interviews, four were held with Aboriginal tourism proponents in the North-West region. These Aboriginal people had a range of interests and ideas regarding cultural tours, cultural centres, arts and crafts and farmstays. All of these Aboriginal people were interested in establishing tourism experiences within their traditional lands and nations.

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3 At the time of interviews in 2003 and 2004, there were no full-time operating Aboriginal tourism businesses in North-West NSW. The closest established Aboriginal tourism experiences were in Broken Hill or Wentworth, both further than 500 kilometres away to the West/South-West.
Three interviews were also held with Aboriginal business facilitators. These individuals were employed in a range of organisations, including local government, ATSIC and a community working party funded by the then Coalition federal government. These individuals were by no means employed to simply assist Aboriginal people to develop their businesses; their jobs covered an extensive arena of Aboriginal advocacy, economic development and social justice. They each had an interest in facilitating, in any way they could, the development of Aboriginal business capacity and supporting organisations that shared that goal. These three Aboriginal people were from the North-West NSW region, though not all of them were traditional owners of the lands there.

The third group of first-phase interviewees included six tourism/economic development officers, all of whom were non-Aboriginal. They worked for local government, tourism associations as well as State government agencies such as National Parks and Wildlife Service. These people were key stakeholders in the Aboriginal tourism industry and were in positions that were able to support the development and marketing of tourism in the region. Several of these non-Aboriginal people had lived in the region for a long time, while several others had been there a few years or less.

These first-phase interviews allowed me to spend time one-on-one with this initial group of research participants, and ensured a “mutual exchange of information” (Jennings 2005, p. 108). The interaction was mutual because not only did I gain information for my study, but they could also question me about who I was, my knowledge as a tourism planning consultant and other Indigenous tourism projects in which I had been involved. On many occasions it seemed that those being interviewed were using the time to find out who I was, as much as the other way around.

Interviews were tape recorded with participants’ permission, but were deliberately kept informal and lasted as long as the conversations were staying focused (generally about 45 minutes to 1 hour). Mostly, they were held outdoors or in other places identified and chosen by those being interviewed. In some cases, interviews were conducted in participants’ homes; for others it was their workplaces, cafes and or in the parks besides the river. Such interview settings ensured that people were in their most comfortable place, which aided the naturalness of the conversation.
Interviews were only conducted with participants after a level of trust and rapport was developed. This meant that both of us felt comfortable in holding a taped conversation focused on issues of tourism planning and Aboriginal tourism in the region. In general, interviews were held after at least one good general conversation and were never initiated before this trust and interest was developed. For some of the interviewees, this happened quickly; with others, it naturally took some time and a level of ongoing rapport and interaction.

Despite interview schedules, it soon became clear that most being interviewed had their own agenda of issues for Aboriginal tourism planning which they wished to talk about. These ‘burning issues’ obviously needed further exploration and discussion, so flexibility of topics outside the interview schedule was necessary. Clearly, these were the issues important to people involved in Aboriginal tourism in the North-West, and they needed to be heard and recorded.

3.4.2.2 Phase two interviews

The second phase of interviews were conducted in late 2004, after the formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, and were used to formally elicit, collect and record BDC members’ ideas regarding the developing roles and functions of the BDC. This phase involved interviewing the inaugural Board of the BDC and thus included only Aboriginal people.

Six people were interviewed, most of whom were well known to me by this stage as we had been seeing each other roughly every month for at least a year. Two of these people had already been interviewed in the first phase, when an Aboriginal tourism organisation was an idea in inception. All but one of the six people interviewed in this phase were Inaugural Board members on the BDC. Interviewees lived in North-West NSW, from the towns of Bourke, Goodooga, Lightning Ridge, Coonabarabran and Coonamble.

A less structured approach was applied in this second round of interviews. Discussions centred on how members thought the organisation was developing, key issues and challenges and their own vision for the organisation. As outlined above, by this stage I knew many of the people involved, had made several trips to the region,
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and they had accepted my role in the organisation. Thus, my goal was to conduct these later interviews as if they were any other conversation with the participants. While the interviews were still tape-recorded, it was important to recognise that this action project was now about BDC members and their experiences, and they needed to be able to tell their stories in their own words, in a comfortable setting, and on their own terms. The following reflexive excerpt from my fieldwork journal illustrates this point:

In some ways, structured interviews seemed more appropriate the less I knew someone. Once I had developed a relationship and had many conversations, discussions and general dialogue, taped, structured and timed interviews felt too formal rather than part of a natural relationship or conversation. That is, once you have been working with participants on a project such as the BDC and had many in-depth conversations, the idea of organising a conversation (an interview) so that it could be taped seemed so artificial.

3.4.3 Analysis of evidence

Social science researcher and feminist Shulamit Reinharz (1995) has stated that once one becomes involved with a group of people for a research project, “contrived neutrality is difficult if not impossible in social settings” (p. 142). These relationships influence not only the collection of evidence as discussed above but also the style of the study’s findings and presentation. As explained previously, I took on a dual researcher-participant role (as tourism planner/academic and facilitator) in the development of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. This role meant that at times I was assisting in the organisation of BDC meetings and workshops as well as helping them to prepare tourism plans and government grant applications. In the reporting of these ‘observations’, I had to make decisions on the types of information to collect and how it should be presented.

The observations that are presented in the following results chapters tell of the BDC development, and are a description of individual meetings and activities given in chronological order. All major activities, whether they were meetings, workshops and seminars are reported on, even if only very briefly, to show the types of events that led the organisation to where it is today. These notes and observations are also seen to supplement minutes that have been collected by the organisation, and have been used
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to show new members where the organisation has been, and the activities it has conducted. In this way these observations are not only used in this formal thesis but also have a practical use for BDC members and Aboriginal people themselves.

In terms of the interviews, all were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. After transcripts were written, they were read at the same time as listening to the interviews on audio. The process of listening to interviews is a process of re-living the interviews in an oral form. This process allows the transcripts to feel much more alive and real as the researcher is able to remember the themes and issues that provided more animated responses from participants. As some interviews were conducted outside or with people with particular accents, the transcription was sometimes unclear.

Following transcription of interviews, participants were contacted and their interest in reviewing the transcripts was investigated. In most cases, there was limited interest in reading over the long interview transcripts. Instead, there seemed an assumption on their behalf that the trust and reciprocity in the relationship meant that I would represent them in a respectful and accurate manner. As I analysed the interviews I discussed the themes and concepts with members of the group. As I was participating in regular discussions and development activities, this process provided an informal review of important concepts.

All interviews were analysed in a relatively similar manner, using an emergent theme technique. That is, I examined the material for the discovery of themes and concepts embedded in the interviews. To distil key meanings, transcripts were read word by word, page by page, line by line, many times over. This technique is similar to a 'grounded theory' technique that generates codes and themes in the real-world context of those being interviewed (Jennings, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This coding continued in several stages; initially many varying codes were generated as 'coding units' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). These initial coding categories were then brought together under broader themes and given names. The codes were then often re-named, re-assigned and re-coded depending on the new meanings that were elicited as I immersed deeper into the interview evidence. Code names were changed as needed to more clearly represent the themes and concepts that emerged during the process. The
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The final process was the development of ‘overarching themes’ (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) to provide a clear description of the topic.

The analysis of the interviews is presented in the following results chapters in a style typical in interpretive, action-based research. That is, direct quotes and ‘thick description’ (Denzin, 1989; Merriam, 1998) are used, as a means of telling the BDC story. Participants’ voices and experiences are kept central in this way. This thick description technique allows readers to gain a better insight into the emotions and experiences of the study’s participants.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has situated the thesis within the critical turn in tourism studies, adopting a constructivist-interpretative paradigm and a qualitative, action-oriented case study approach. The methodology and methods used differed from positivistic tourism research, deliberately including space for auto-biographical reflexivity, participants’ voices, and more equal and ethical relationships with the members of the BDC. It was also important for my ontological, epistemological, rhetorical and axiological stances to be made transparent.

As a non-Indigenous researcher working with Indigenous people, I looked to Indigenist research methodologies and explored approaches which address the concerns of Indigenous people. Particular issues discussed were my relationship with the Aboriginal participants, the need for the research to facilitate Indigenous self-determination efforts, and the provision of direct benefits to research participants.

Finally, the chapter outlined the interview and observation techniques used to construct, analyse and present the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative case study story. The following three ‘results’ chapters now tell that story.
In 2005, I was sitting in a small Aboriginal community development office in Lightning Ridge, with three middle-aged Aboriginal women. I was there to conduct an interview with one of these women about the development of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. Soon, however, the other women joined in the conversation. We were chatting about everything from the weather of the past few weeks to our respective families. I had been visiting the region for about a year but had not yet had a chance to talk with these women in this relaxed manner.

I was telling them about much earlier trips to the North-Western NSW region with my family when I was about ten years old. I recalled our old car breaking down on a deserted stretch of road nearby and then spending a week in the garage owner’s bus while we waited for car parts to arrive. The women were telling me similar stories from their own childhoods. Apparently, the same garage owner from my childhood memories is still there and well-known to everyone within the region.

We talked rather jovially about life, the weather and our families. Here I was, a first generation Australian with American parents; one of four children, all of whom are university educated, spread around the country and the globe, none of us with kids (at that stage). These women were telling me about their own children – six or more in each of their families – many of whom still lived in the same town, with their own families. One of these women had spent the night before looking after six grandchildren, all under the age of five years. Another spoke of her mother who had in excess of seventy grandchildren! Coming from what I thought was a ‘big’ family of four, the size of these women’s families and extended families was beyond my comprehension, as was the amount one would have to interact with them when living so close by. How would you remember all their names, birthdays, partners, personal issues, I wondered?

Then, one of the women suddenly looked at me and asked quite bluntly: “so, why do you work with Aboriginal people?” I was a little taken back and lost for words. It was not in line with the flow of our conversation, and seemed somewhat ‘out of the blue’. They were asking why I, a White man, would want to work with them, Aboriginal people. It made me stop and think for a few seconds.

Were they going to judge me harshly if I did not give the ‘right’ answer? There were other White people who they clearly did not respect, as they had spoken of a few. Was this question going to put me on that list? They had been friendly up until this time. What was I doing there? I could not say I was there because they had invited me there, because that was not true: I had arranged the meeting and interview. Neither could I say that I was there because I wanted to ‘help’, because no one had asked for help. My life and theirs were so different in every way. These women were struggling to get the funding for their projects while I was on a generous scholarship.

I felt compelled to justify why I was there – yet another White person, conducting yet more research on Aboriginal people. On paper, my research sounded good and was approved by the university ethics committee. It was meant to be ‘action-based’, and
‘facilitatory’, but they probably would not care about these academic terms. These women wanted to know about me. I looked over the coffee table at these women and simply talked about my family and my interest in Indigenous peoples. I talked about my hopes for doing research that made a positive ethical impact on the world and the lives of those I ‘researched’.

Somehow, it seemed that what I was saying was okay. Perhaps they appreciated that I spoke about myself, my life and my family, and it helped them understand my motivations for undertaking the research. The mood soon softened again and the conversation resumed its jovial and relaxed tone.

On reflection, this interaction made me realise the importance of ‘the personal’ in academic research. It helped to put in real perspective the necessity of establishing good relationships and rapport with the people I am ‘researching’ and working with.
CHAPTER 4: STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON INDIGENOUS TOURISM AND PLANNING IN NORTH-WEST NEW SOUTH WALES

This chapter, the first in a suite of results chapters that build the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative case study, explores broad stakeholder views towards Indigenous tourism and planning in North-West New South Wales. To reiterate from Chapter 3 (Methodology), prior to the actual formation of the BDC, a first phase of in-depth interviews were conducted with thirteen key stakeholders who played an important role in the development of Indigenous tourism in the region. These individuals were both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. What is presented in this chapter is a grounded analysis of those first-phase interviews, which sought stakeholders’ general attitudes towards, and experiences of, Indigenous tourism in the North-West NSW area.

The first-phase interviews were conducted during 2003. During this first year of my doctoral work, I made several visits to familiarise myself with the region and to build rapport with current and potential Indigenous tourism operators, as well as with non-Aboriginal people working in the Indigenous tourism industry. As the area is roughly about 800 kilometres away from my home, interview visits were generally spread about a month apart, lasting anywhere from a few days to a week.

Of the thirteen stakeholder interviewees, seven were Aboriginal (four proponents of the Aboriginal tourism and three business development facilitators), and six were non-Aboriginal people involved in tourism (local economic/tourism officers, tourism centre manager, ranger). Table 4.1 shows a list of who was interviewed, as well as the broad stakeholder group that they represented. It should be noted that all names included in this table are aliases, to ensure participants’ anonymity as promised in the ethics application and original covering letters inviting their involvement.
Table 4.1: Phase 1 Interviewees: Key Stakeholder Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal Tourism Proponents</th>
<th>Aboriginal Business Facilitators</th>
<th>Non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>Pete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rod</td>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Steve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Amanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rebecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Al</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Claire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grounded analysis of interviews produced a rich source of data from all participants, with commonalities and shared experience noted across both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cohorts. However, as indicated in Table 4.1, results are divided in this chapter into two parts: Aboriginal viewpoints are given first, followed by the perspectives of non-Aboriginal interviewees. The main reason for this was that the Indigenous participants felt it was important to identify themselves upfront as ‘Aboriginal’; their stories and experiences resonated quite obviously with those of the other Aboriginal tourism and business stakeholders. Second, it was clear that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities were viewed quite separately from one another, both physically (often based on where people lived within their towns) and economically. As such, two thematic analyses of interview data were conducted: one for Aboriginal stakeholder views, and one for non-Aboriginal perspectives. Both similarities and differences between the two groups will be discussed in the later parts of this chapter.

4.1 Aboriginal Stakeholder Views

As stated above, seven Aboriginal stakeholders were interviewed: four Aboriginal tourism proponents (Paul, Rod, Charlie and Dawn) and three Aboriginal business facilitators (Julie, Herb and Joe)\(^4\). *Aboriginal tourism proponents* were termed as such

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\(^4\) In the year following these interviews, all of the Aboriginal business facilitators had left their respective employment positions. Two left the region while the other remained in the region. It should
because they had a range of interests and ideas for tourism, including cultural tours, cultural centres, arts and crafts and farmstays. All of these Aboriginal people were interested in establishing tourism experiences within their traditional lands and nations. The *Aboriginal business facilitators* were employed in a range of organisations, including local government, ATSIC and a community working party funded by the then Coalition federal government. As noted in Chapter 3, all had a keen interest in facilitating, through their positions, the development of Aboriginal business capacity. A brief biography of all of the Aboriginal participants is given below, with the aim of positioning each person within their own community as well as in the general context of Indigenous tourism in North-West NSW.

**Paul:** At the time of interview, Paul worked for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service as the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer. He wished to set up a tour into one of the National Parks close to Bourke. His brother was a carver and artist, and was going to be involved in the tour, as were several of Paul’s children. When I first met him, Paul was in his mid-40s and it was evident that he was seen as a community leader. Soon after conducting the first interview, Paul was awarded the New South Wales Aboriginal Community Justice Award for his community leadership.

**Rod:** An Aboriginal man in his 60s from Goodooga, Rod was keen to see tourism assist his small village in creating economic development opportunities for young people. Rod was a quiet man, but involved in the local government as a Councillor – one of very few Aboriginal Councillors in New South Wales. He was also involved in developing a community cooperative and general store. In his younger days, Rod had been a sheep-shearer and stockman.

**Charlie:** Charlie was a non-Aboriginal man in his early sixties, though he has been included here as an Aboriginal tourism proponent because he managed an Aboriginal family-owned organisation based in Walgett. When I met him, Charlie had been married to his partner, an Aboriginal woman from the area, for over 40 years. They had several children, as well as grandchildren, and played a significant role in the Aboriginal community. Their family corporation was in the process of purchasing a large pastoral property on which they wished to establish tourism and other activities.

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be noted that none of these positions was replaced by similarly qualified or experienced Aboriginal people.
Dawn: An Aboriginal woman from Bourke, Dawn was interested in developing tourism and arts and craft activities with an Aboriginal cultural organisation with which she was heavily involved. This organisation had been negotiating with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service over several years to get access for youth and other cultural activities. At the time of interview, Dawn was investigating the opportunity for developing an arts and cultural centre in Bourke. Dawn also worked in the health sector, providing and organising homecare services.

Julie: Julie was a young woman employed as a river town coordinator in small village of Brewarrina. She had a varied job that covered facilitating activities on community justice, health, to economic development. She saw that there were many opportunities for the development of tourism in Brewarrina associated with their famous fish traps, the oldest built structure in the world, an existing Aboriginal cultural museum, the local people and the natural assets of the region.

Herb: In his 60s at the time of interview, Herb worked for the local government in Brewarrina facilitating Aboriginal economic development. He was born and raised there in the Aboriginal part of town, though his mother was not from Brewarrina but the Torres Strait. Herb had been a successful business person, owning several hotels and motels and returning to Brewarrina to spend time with his aging mother, and to grieve the loss of one of his sons. Over the years he had spent a great deal of time working with the local government in the area to encourage the development of Aboriginal tourism.

Joe: Joe lived in Bourke and worked for ATSIC as an Aboriginal business adviser. He was in his early 40s when interviewed, and optimistic about the potential for Aboriginal economic development in the region.

These seven Aboriginal stakeholders raised a wide range of issues in relation to developing Indigenous tourism experiences and engaging in regional tourism planning activities. Three dominant themes, however, emerged from the grounded analysis of their interviews, namely: 1) tourism as opportunity; 2) White-dominated tourism planning; and 3) the need for facilitation and support.

4.1.1 Tourism as opportunity

In general, tourism was viewed by Aboriginal participants as an ideal opportunity for business development because of its “suitability” for Aboriginal people. That is,
tourism was seen as an industry, unlike others, where being Aboriginal was an advantage; Aboriginal people were the ‘product’ that people were coming to see and spend time with. As Joe articulated, Aboriginal people’s knowledge of special places was an asset that could be capitalised upon.

*I think that tourism is a fantastic opportunity. It’s sort of like, there’s some industries that lend themselves to Aboriginal participation, because in many cases, like here, the Aboriginal people are the product, or the focus of a lot of what tourists want to come out and see.* (Joe, Aboriginal Business Facilitator)

Capitalising on Aboriginal people’s knowledge, places and hospitality, tourism was seen to provide a vast range of experiences. Potential activities that interviewees listed included tours to historic and contemporary sites, cultural education, camp and storytelling, dance performances, music and arts and crafts, cultural centres, accommodation, among others. A feeling of pride and excitement could be detected when these Aboriginal people discussed bringing visitors to see their region.

*We could go on day trips, and bring them back home at night and star gaze, telling stories, things like that. It would be fantastic. And there are people in the community that can tell quite a good yarn!* (Rod, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

I’ve always known that it would happen, but it’s only in the last twelve months or so [that] we’ve started talking about the ways that our organisation would like to go. And it’s becoming that we’d like to go into tourism. *(Dawn, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)*

It was felt that through tourism, visitors would become aware of and recognise the regional diversity among Aboriginal people. Across the region, Aboriginal interviewees’ listed the many distinct cultural experiences, artistic features, and landscape that provided potential opportunities for building understanding with visitors.

*These artists are painting and delivering products to be sold to the people here, about here, not about this generic notion of Australia. It’s about the cultural experience that they have here.* (Charlie, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

Rather than talking about the potential individual economic gain from Aboriginal people’s involvement in tourism, there seemed a strong focus on the benefits for
bridging reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. As Paul noted:

> It's not just about the economic side – it's about trying to build understanding. See, at the moment, Australia is going down an economic path and they think it's going to fix everything, but it won't fix nothing, won't fix it. That's my thought. (Paul, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

Some also believed that tourism could help with a wide range of other social issues and problems in Aboriginal communities in the region, including welfare dependency and crime. These people felt that the establishment of Aboriginal tourism business would provide their people with greater ownership and responsibility in their communities.

> If we're not doing [tourism] business development, then we're looking at providing welfare services. And if you really want to change, you know, all these social factors that's happening now. And I think people have a right to have a chance in life, too. You've got to be looking at opportunities that are sustainable for enterprise, whether it be tourism, whether it be supermarkets, or something else. (Joe, Aboriginal Business Facilitator)

> You'd find with law and order, it would decrease crime. Because you'd show some ownership, a visual ownership. ... So what more could you have to give people but ownership of the streets? Once you do that, you beat the crime. You'll beat the crime because they see us. (Herb, Aboriginal Business Facilitator)

### 4.1.2 White-dominated tourism planning

Although tourism held numerous opportunities, interviews with Aboriginal stakeholders also revealed a perceived separation between ‘Black’ and ‘White’ in relation to tourism planning in the North-West region. This racial divide related to almost all aspects of how Aboriginal people viewed their own involvement, as well as to how they judged others’ activities. One of the biggest challenges relating to the development of Aboriginal tourism was a perceived lack of understanding between White and Black communities. As Paul said, the White community controlled tourism promotions activities, leaving the “Aboriginal side of the story” behind.
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*The Shire and people, or whoever wants to promote Bourke, have got to really understand what they're promoting. And they don't understand that yet. They don't really understand that... You're not going to tell the whole story if you're only going to talk about the European side. There is another side.* (Paul, Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

The issue of White-dominated tourism planning was also demonstrated through Charlie’s recollection of a local government tourism workshop, where participants were meant to show their support for a range of pre-determined tourism initiatives. Charlie raised the issue that there were no Aboriginal tourism projects. Trying to get his Aboriginal community’s tourism project onto the list of priorities was met with what he perceived as “unfair resistance”. For Charlie, this further isolated the Aboriginal community’s attempts to develop tourism activities.

*Whitefellas didn't want to hear about a Black project; that's the history of white Australia, mate... Come on board with White ideas but don't bring your own ideas along, 'cause that's bloody too complicated. You've got to fit into the White system. Nobody wants to know about blackfellas coming up with ideas to fix problems or do a good deed.* (Charlie, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

Although a White-dominated approach to tourism planning was evident, there was also a recognised need to develop “meaningful partnerships” between White and Black. Further, Aboriginal people felt that their lives were inextricably linked with Whites’, and that both communities needed each other. As two interviewees stated, Aboriginal people needed the White system to assist with tourism and economic development, while White people needed Aboriginal knowledge(s) and engagement to have a better understanding of the Country and its history.

*There's the White Council-run tourism operations and the Aboriginal community-based operations. And I really think that in such a small town it's time for people to get some meaningful partnerships, maybe to try and work together. Not in every case, but just generally.* (Charlie, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

*See I can't live without them, the whitefellas. I need them because they've got this economic base... They can bring us out of the gutter. So I need them. But they can't live without me either. They need me as much as I need them.* (Paul, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)
One of the first steps in building an understanding between Black and White was to recognise Aboriginal people and the significant role they play in past and present Australian society. Several interviewees, such as Paul for example, felt there was a need to recognise Aboriginal people (“those that come from here”) as distinct from non-Aboriginal people (“those that live here”). Tourism in particular was seen as a tool that could facilitate Aboriginal people to tell their story, at the same time as assisting non-Aboriginal people to understand.

Really, there are two different types of people in this country. The people that come and live here, and the people that come from here, and we're the ones that are not being recognised. I think through tourism we can actually do that – we can actually get people to understand because we're touching on different sorts of people coming to places like Bourke, Bre [Brewarrina], Wilcannia, we are able to touch on individuals. (Paul, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

Aboriginal people also spoke of the importance of non-Aboriginal people understanding their connection to ‘country’, and the social and cultural responsibilities that this entailed. The connection to country concept provides many Aboriginal people with a responsibility to land, even if it is not theirs. Several Aboriginal people discussed how their people in the North-West region were removed from their country and brought into the town missions. As a result, connection to country had been broken; White people thus needed to understand more comprehensively the Aboriginal desire to re-establish this important link.

Taking the land away has also taken a lot of other things away. You've taken away ownership, pride, dignity. You've taken away the spiritual aspiration, that connection to country... You've taken the other half of the country. There's two parts of it – the human side of it and there's the country side of it. And the country side can't survive without the human side, it can’t. (Paul, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

There was also a desire for Whites to understand that not all Aboriginal people in the region were traditional owners, and that many Aboriginal living in the region had been moved there by government programs of assimilation and relocation and therefore their country was elsewhere. It was considered important to recognise and involve these non-traditional owners in tourism planning activities.
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There’s a lot of Aboriginal people here who don’t traditionally come from here, see, and when they came to Bourke, they were trucked to the missions at Bre. They come to Bourke and that’s as far as they got to go home, to where they come from to go home, which was South-West Queensland. And so they come with their own ideas and thoughts about how things should happen... So we have to captivate that and take hold of that and draw them in, because they are a resource on their own. They still have a story to tell and there are people to hear their story. (Paul, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

As Paul noted, the result of government-enforced programs of removal, assimilation and relocation, was that the region had a great variety of Aboriginal Nations and families living within it. This mix, along with very limited resources, has led to considerable conflict and competition amongst some groups. “Community politics” and “in-fighting” were viewed by all of the Aboriginal interviewees as counter-productive to tourism development. To counteract this, many felt that different groups needed to come together to build a base of appreciation and respect, and for tourism to be shared by all – not just the “traditional owners”. As Paul reflected, if one group received all the benefits of tourism, it would add further conflict within the communities:

I think first of all, Aboriginal people have to get themselves together. That's the key to it. It's no use our mob arguing and fighting amongst each other about whose culture should be promoted and whose should be left out. I think we just need to come together and find commonalities with each other, and appreciate and respect each other. Then I think after that, you've got your base. The Ngemba people could pick it up and run with it, and go with it, but we will leave all the other people behind and they will get angry. That's already been done in the past, you know. I think we need to get the foundation firmly fixed. (Paul, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

4.1.3 Facilitation and support

Another emergent theme from analysis of the Aboriginal interviews was that they required a great deal of facilitation and support to enter the tourism industry. Even though there were several Aboriginal business support people currently working in the region, it was perceived that individual tourism business support was the arena of non-Aboriginal people, as had been the practice in the past.
Again highlighting the need for Black and White to work together, the Aboriginal people interviewed saw that guaranteeing business support for tourism meant building good relationships with non-Aboriginal people and organisations. For this support to be effective, however, it would have to be delivered in a manner appropriate for Aboriginal people. To these interviewees, support meant ensuring benefits for engagement, being aware of culturally appropriate issues, establishing ongoing relationships, and seeking continued funding, as required.

Building upon the perceived separation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, a major issue for Aboriginal people was how the benefits of their engagement in tourism were distributed. In certain tourism planning activities, such as town beautification, some felt that Aboriginal people were only included as an ‘issue’ that needed to be ‘dealt with’. It was argued by Julie, for example, that mainstream community activities such as these, which provided no tangible benefits to Aboriginal people, would not facilitate greater Aboriginal engagement in tourism.

You know, ideas get thrown up about – getting the streets cleaned up, making it look better, not having people drink in the park, those kinds of issues that a lot of people would like to see stopped in Brewarrina, and they see that as barriers for tourism. Both, from the whole community, but depending on who presents it and how it’s presented makes a difference... But if it’s done in terms of employment and positive benefits for Aboriginal community and that's meaningful, and that they will really have a bite of the cherry, then I think people would be really keen to be involved. But, that has to be meaningful otherwise it won't work. (Julie, Aboriginal Business Facilitator)

There was a view that support driven by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people, would have greater chance of ensuring success. Additionally, if the support was constructed around the expressed needs and characteristics of the Aboriginal people, it would be more useful. Minimum numbers for courses and availability of suitable training were mentioned as issues restricting the facilitation of Aboriginal engagement in tourism.

We want to do it Aboriginal style; we need to do it so that Aboriginal people will fit in... You know the Grey Nomad, and the Baby Boomers... I don’t believe that’s the right sort of research. I’ve got a lot of people just from suburbs... It doesn’t mean they have to
specifically be graded and I really don’t think the grading is what it’s all about. (Herb, Aboriginal Business Facilitator)

Everything here seems to revolve around you having a minimum twelve, or sometimes you have to have fifteen or something like that to have a TAFE course. Now, we’re talking here a group of dedicated people who are really keen. That is, maybe five. There may be another five that are sort of, that express interest in it but not be entirely dedicated. We are still below the number, so then we have to bring in two or three people just to stack it, to get the numbers. And straight away the stress comes and that starts to put pressure on the training. (Charlie, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

Aboriginal people were seen to be at the mercy of government organisations for business development funds or White businesses for jobs. As highlighted in the previous section, tourism was perceived as an economic development activity that could provide Aboriginal people with economic independence. However, finding suitable government funds remained a challenge.

Aboriginal people are not financially viable, I suppose is the word, not independent. They’re not like that – they’re not entrepreneurs or nothing like that. They have to rely on the government grants and that sort of stuff. I really want to get our people away from that, because that’s the one that’s been putting us down. But we have to start somewhere and the financial base needs to happen and once that starts, once we can get a bit of a start on it. Then we can say, ‘alright we can do it’. And for me, personally, if you look at the economic dynamics of how the communities work out here, for a lot of blackfellas, there are no Aboriginal businesses. We’re at the, I suppose, the whim of businesses and employers as to whether we get a job or opportunity. (Joe, Aboriginal Business Facilitator)

Further, there was a view that despite obvious opportunities for tourism development, limited access to money, power, and decision-making compounded to constrain Aboriginal engagement. The facilitation of Aboriginal people to develop businesses with funds and support was seen as critical, as discussed by Joe, an Aboriginal business facilitator in the region.

Most people aren't looking for a free hand, they're just looking for the chance to have a crack at business, an opportunity to run a business... there are a large pool of people out there who are willing to back their own skills if they only had the chance. (Joe, Aboriginal Business Facilitator)
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There was also an issue with the appropriateness of the support that Aboriginal people could access. In some cases, those interested in tourism were offered business planning assistance from consultants, long before they really felt ready to adequately use this information. For Paul, real support should first come at a more “foundational” level, such as broader advice about business skills.

They’ll come on and say let’s do a feasibility study about tourism. That’s fine, we’re here [puts hand down low] and the feasibility study’s there [puts hand up high]. They’re taking a step, but already this foundation is sand; it’s going to sink because they haven’t put down the foundation. (Paul, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)

Joe identified the need for regular face-to-face support. He argued that assistance programs of the type that produced ‘quick’ business plans were not desired by Aboriginal people.

You’ve virtually got to be in contact with people all the time. It’s sort of like, you can’t say, ‘we went there, we seen them, we’ll go back in three months time’. If people are enthusiastic about the idea, we need to be encouraging that. (Joe, Aboriginal Business Facilitator)

While the development of Aboriginal tourism was discussed in relatively optimistic terms, there was also the recognition of the considerable challenges ahead. Some of these challenges were societal, others were organisational, and some just the individual “baggage we carry”. The need to focus on people’s strengths, and to work together in a unified and supportive manner, was considered fundamental to the facilitation of Aboriginal people to engage in tourism.

We’ve all got bad problems and bad histories, the whole lot of us. We’ve all got this bad stuff, baggage we carry around with us, but we don’t need to focus on that, because that will bring us down again, we need to focus on the good stuff we’ve done and tried to do, and build on that. There’s a road there brother, this is a path we’ve got to go down, it’s a bumpy road, it’s a rough road and we’re going to find more bumpy roads to travel down. That bumpy road is going to still be there. But if we travel unified the road is going to be much easy to go over, to travel over, you know. That’s the way I see it. (Paul, Aboriginal Tourism Proponent)
4.2 Non-Aboriginal Stakeholder Views

Six non-Aboriginal people were also interviewed as part of the first phase of research. These non-Aboriginal stakeholders consisted of tourism officers from Walgett (Al), Lightning Ridge (Rebecca), and Bourke (Steve); a regional economic development officer (Claire); a major tourism centre manager (Pete), and a ranger with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (Amanda).

**Al:** Al was a middle-aged man, who, at the time of interview, had recently taken the position of tourism promotion officer in Walgett. He had over twenty years’ experience in tourism wholesaling, promotions, packaging and public relations. Al had considerable experience in working with major in-bound and out-bound tourism operations, national tourism organisations and multinational tourism operations. Al has since left this position.

**Rebecca:** Rebecca was in her mid 20s and was managing the tourism information centre in Lightning Ridge. She was very motivated to see Indigenous tourism develop across the region. Rebecca had also been involved in the region for several years, and had been employed with the local newspaper.

**Steve:** In his early 40s at the time of interview, Steve had been the manager of the Bourke Tourism Information Centre for several years. He was also on a number of regional tourism marketing and economic development boards and organisations, as well as busy running a small tour of his own.

**Claire:** Claire was in her early 40s when interviewed for this research, and coordinated a regional economic development organisation covering six local government areas in the Western region of New South Wales. This organisation facilitated a range of activities across the region, including planning, development and traineeships in tourism. Claire had lived in the region for a long time and had raised her children there.

**Pete:** Pete was in his early 30s, university-educated and managed a large visitor/tourism centre being developed in Bourke. Pete was trying to raise approximately $6 million to build the centre that he was managing for the local government. At the time of interviewing, several stages had been completed. The centre planned to incorporate a significant Indigenous tourism component, and currently had around 50 percent Aboriginal employment. He had lived in the area for several years and had worked for several Aboriginal corporations.
Amanda: Amanda was a ranger working for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. She was in her early 30s, university-educated and relatively new to the region. Amanda had the responsibility for a large National Park that had significant Aboriginal involvement. She saw many opportunities for Indigenous tourism development both on- and off-park. She was involved in the local and regional tourism organisations.

Like their Aboriginal counterparts, these non-Aboriginal stakeholders were asked a series of general questions about their attitudes to, perceived opportunities for, and experiences of, Aboriginal tourism in the North-West region. Based on a grounded, thematic analysis of the non-Aboriginal stakeholder interviews, three main issues emerged: 1) Aboriginal culture an asset; 2) challenges of engagement; and 3) ongoing business support.

Many of these issues overlap with those identified by Aboriginal people in the previous section, however, they were viewed and explained in slightly different ways. Further, most of these non-Aboriginal facilitators had spent many years working in the region, and often knew at least some of the Aboriginal people interviewed and had obviously considered these issues during their work.

4.2.1 Aboriginal culture an asset

Interviews with non-Aboriginal stakeholders suggested a considerable demand for Aboriginal tourism experiences. This claim, they felt, was backed up by numerous research reports and their own personal and professional experiences. Some commented that the high Aboriginal population of the region was a distinct advantage for tourism. Indeed, Aboriginal tourism experiences were viewed as having a considerable competitive advantage over non-Aboriginal tourism in attracting visitors to the region.

Like the Aboriginal people interviewed, all of the non-Aboriginal stakeholders spoke of opportunities for Indigenous tourism development in the NSW North-West. Aboriginal culture was generally perceived to be a unique and important part of Australian society, both historically and in a contemporary sense. As Rebecca stated, Aboriginal people had “something wonderful” to add to tourism. Many spoke of how
the Aboriginal cultures of Australia were one of the country’s most “unique”, “rich”, and “alive” tourism assets, but which currently lay under-utilised.

So we have to say, where are we in tourism? What's unique to Australia? We've got Indigenous Aboriginal people who have got something wonderful to tell. They're not just about the corroborees. They're not just about the artwork. They're about everything – it's about their total culture. (Steve, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

The culture's just so alive out here. It’s all sitting here, it just needs to be developed. (Amanda, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

Further, the White tourism stakeholders spoke of the richness and diversity of Aboriginal culture across the North-West. This diversity and difference was seen as a distinct advantage for developing tourism experiences.

The Walgett Shire, which we’re a part of, is very rich in Aboriginal tourism, that has up ‘till this point not been exploited at all... So from my own personal perspective, it’s something that Walgett could really tap into, because Lightning Ridge is already an established tourism icon. And it's something that I perceive could be a real feather in a cap for another community that might be struggling a little bit more to create a tourism identity. (Rebecca, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

I think that we have to identify different places for different experiences. This place is good for didgeridoo, Brewarrina, Walgett’s good for emu egg carving, I know they do emu egg carving all over Australia, but you look at the quality of what you've got here. (Al, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

To capitalise on this potential, a range of Indigenous tourism development ideas were mentioned. For example, Rebecca saw many opportunities which could be developed between Aboriginal people and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Aboriginal involvement with NPWS would not only provide tourism potential, but also access to significant cultural and community resources.

Well I think that we've got potential there to tap into the Culgoa National Park and I thought Bre would have the opportunity to tap into that. (Rebecca, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)
Building upon the richness and diversity of Aboriginal culture in the region, non-Aboriginal interviewees saw a high, “untapped” potential for international visitor demand in particular.

*There are so many diverse languages and so forth. So it's the same richness that we have to offer and this is what I believe the overseas markets want... They don't want to see what the Europeans are doing here, because that's their own background. They are so hungry to see what the Indigenous history and cultural factors are. And it's as simple as that. A very strong component of that market is the German market... they want to learn about the culture, it's fascinating, it's interesting. It has a mystique about it.* (Al, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

*There's plenty of information out there and Indigenous tourism and environmental tourism, in general, are seen as an untapped markets for the whole west.* (Pete, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

*I know that overseas tourists will come... The overseas market, you've got what they want, you've just got to put it all together.* (Claire, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

In contrast to the favourable views regarding demand by international visitors, domestic interest in Aboriginal culture was seen as less pronounced. It was perceived by Al, for instance, that young Australian travellers in particular were more interested in going overseas before looking “at their own country”.

*I wanted to go overseas. I wanted to see the rest of the world first then, I could come back and study and see Australia. And I think that's the reason why people dart off rather than looking in their own back yard. And that's what Europeans do, too. They want to see more of the outside.* (Al, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

However this view was not held by all of the interviewees. Claire, for example, saw considerable domestic Australian demand for meeting and going on tours with Aboriginal people.

*People from Sydney, when they come out here, they just want to talk to someone who is Aboriginal... People would prefer to come and see an Indigenous person doing Indigenous tourism than a non-Indigenous person. I mean you've got examples of non-Indigenous people doing Indigenous tourism and the tourists are still coming and paying. That's how keen they are to see it. They'll even take it*
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from someone who is not Indigenous, because there's no other option. (Claire, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

Aboriginal people themselves were seen as an important drawcard, or “product”, of the region’s cultural tourism. As Claire argued further, Aboriginal people conjured up a particular image that was a great advantage in delivering something different from the “standard” tourism experience. This was seen in contrast to other industries, where being Aboriginal was not an advantage.

Indigenous tourism will have a huge advantage over standard tourism out here. Huge advantage, because they’ve got all that value adding, they’ve got the knowledge, or perceived knowledge, that the tourism market is looking for, and they’ve got perceived skills that tourism is looking for. They've got the image, they’ve got the physical looks, which are an advantage when you go into Indigenous tourism, to look Indigenous... You know, high Indigenous population: that's our big strength in tourism. In a lot of other industries, it's a disadvantage because in our area there is also a lot of unemployment, a lot of low literacy, but in the tourism industry, in arts and craft, low literacy is not any sort of code for low intelligence and opportunity. (Claire, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

Indigenous tourism also held potential for assisting with “social problems” in the wider community, and therefore garnered significant support from non-Aboriginal people working in the industry. Tourism was viewed as a tool to support other activities that the Aboriginal community wished to pursue, such as teaching their young people to be proud of their culture.

Tourism is an obvious one sitting there waiting to happen. Tourism is labour intensive. It employs a lot of people, and not just in direct face to face, but all those jobs that come after that. So we've got the perfect background, we've got the environment for it, the people for it, and it’s going to give us a result that we really, really need. So yeah, for us, swinging in behind tourism, especially Indigenous tourism, is one of the big things that are going to answer a lot of our problems out here. (Claire, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

Hopefully they can then take people out and use that as a teaching centre for their own people. They can take school groups or whatever, young people in the community that need a bit of pulling in line. And they can just go out and teach them about their culture. That will be their own little thing that they can do. (Amanda, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)
Finally, there was a perception that tourism could assist with reconciliation between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population. As Al noted: “It has to be through the tourism line. I don't believe that there is any other way that would be effective”. Through tourism, Aboriginal people would be able to “tell their story”, in their own words and terms.

4.2.2 Challenges of engagement

Despite identifying a range of potential opportunities, non-Aboriginal interviewees spoke candidly about the separation between Black and White communities in the region. This perceived separation led to a number of challenges in working with and engaging Aboriginal communities from the outside.

Many of the White people interviewed were well aware of the racism and prejudice noted by Aboriginal people in the previous section. They saw this as a constraint in effectively developing cultural tourism opportunities, and wanted to understand it better. As Rebecca discussed:

Well, to be honest, the whole prejudice that exists amongst the white and black people in the western region of NSW is your first hurdle. And that's the honest truth...You know, like I sat with the elders down there and they said that there are people that still live in this community that used to round the Aboriginals up off the streets by 5 pm, at night, or whatever it was, you know. They weren't allowed past here. They used to get on back of their horses with stock, bull whips and round them up like cattle. And those people are still alive in our community... You know like its, and so that ingrained hatred... so it's not an old history. It's very, very new, very raw. It's that "they've got/we want" or "we don't have and why do they have?" sort of stuff. (Rebecca, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

While not as overtly destructive as racism or prejudice, a noted lack interest by the non-Aboriginal tourism industry in the “Aboriginal side of things” further compounded the divide between White and Black. Amanda spoke of how many tourists were unfortunately “not interested” in Aboriginal culture, and the challenges this presented:

I think, yeah, people coming together and really showing some sort of interest in it [Aboriginal culture], it just hasn't happened in the past. You know a lot of the few tourist organisations in town haven't
Some of the non-Aboriginal interviewees spoke of the challenges of working with “Aboriginal community politics”. There was a feeling that Aboriginal people saw tourism planning as part of “whitefella way”, and they struggled to understand Aboriginal people’s apparent reluctance to be involved in their tourism initiatives.

We only had two applicants, and we were quite disappointed, actually… the Aboriginal organisation is one of the largest employers and we thought, and obviously a lot of participants on CDEP, and we sort of thought that we would have quite a few applicants for our job, but we had two. (Rebecca, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

Recognising the complex nature of the Aboriginal communities and language groups in the region, others spoke of the challenges of finding the ‘right’ person or ‘elders’ who could represent the whole community. For these tourism officers, getting ‘rival’ groups together to reach consensus on Aboriginal tourism initiatives was seen as a major challenge.

We work hard trying to finding elders to have a meeting with, someone who wasn't, you know for themselves so much... who represents the whole Aboriginal community... Unfortunately, what happens is you get factions of people, and they say well, they should have it. So you get lots of nepotism, you get lots of problems involving families taking over. In Aboriginal communities the big problem is actually getting the rival people together. (Steve, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

I think… on a local level, even in yesterday’s workshop, there was only one local group represented. In Bourke there are five or six different local groups. They don't necessarily get on all of the time. (Pete, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)
I think ‘community’ gets bantered around too much, like let’s do this great community thing and when it comes down to it, there’s one or two people involved. (Rebecca, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

At the same time, it was also acknowledged that if the Aboriginal community did not take ownership and drive their own tourism initiatives, such proposals would not be successful.

I guess selling the concept to the community is one of the biggest challenges, because if the community doesn’t take ownership or if they don’t believe in the possibility, then it’s not likely to happen. (Rebecca, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

If they’re [the Aboriginal community] not driving it then it’s bound to fail after some period of time. (Pete, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

4.2.3 Ongoing business support

There was recognition by the White stakeholders that Aboriginal people entering into tourism require ongoing facilitation, skills training and business support. In fact, many of the tourism officers were generally very supportive of the development of Aboriginal tourism experiences and appeared to go to great lengths to involve Aboriginal people in activities. Building on Aboriginal people’s strengths, stories and interests was seen as crucial. As Al observed, “I'm quite amazed at how much talent isn't harnessed here”. There was a view that Aboriginal people could, for example, capitalise on their hunting, fishing or cultural knowledge, in developing interesting tourism experiences.

Ok, let’s go and find out who wants to make a bit of money while they're fishing. Greg Norman loves playing golf and gets paid while doing it. Find out what Aboriginal people are good at and let's do it. Let’s get them out there. Focus on what they are good at. Some are good at talking about Aboriginal culture, some aren’t. (Steve, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

It’s all got to come down to one point and that is, these people have to capitalise on their ability, you know, and if they are artistic, you know, or creative in some way, they do have something to offer… Because they feel suppressed in relation to their literacy problem, they haven't been out and seen how the Western business thing
works and that's why you'll find they'll withdraw from participation in tourism. (Al, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

It was also considered important for White people to offer positive encouragement for Aboriginal people as they developed their activities: “Don't force them to be something they don't want to be. Just let them go along, don't knock it” (Steve, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder). Many believed that Aboriginal people required regular face-to-face support and ongoing encouragement in developing their own tourism ideas. On several occasions, the non-Aboriginal interviewees raised the issue of the great distances Aboriginal people had to travel to seek such support, and how this limited their involvement.

You've virtually got to be in contact with people all the time. It's sort of like, you can't say, “we went there, we seen them, we'll go back in three months time”. If people are enthusiastic about the idea, we need to be encouraging that. (Claire, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

They do need support on a local level… Like a very personalised sort of service level to get them up and running… It's not like they can go travelling everywhere to get a business up and running, that's more effort than it's worth. (Amanda, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

The issue of face-to-face support was stressed further by the perceived reluctance of Aboriginal people in the region to use technology, such as telephones. The need for personal ongoing relationships between Aboriginal participants and support personnel was deemed as crucial for successful tourism/business development.

You can't meet and explain things to people for the first time on the phone, because they put the phone receiver down and you're forgotten and what you've talked about is forgotten. And a lot of people out here, you can't – even on the second, third or fourth time – talk to them on the phone… they like to look at you, and see who you are, so they can work out where you're coming from, which angle you're coming from, whether you're government, or this, or that, and what you do, and whether you're going to come into town and go out and they'll never see you again, which is a big problem we have here. Not that anyone does it on purpose, but particularly government departments. A move is a promotion so you take it. (Claire, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)
In supporting Indigenous tourism developers, consideration of language and skill levels were viewed as critical. For business support to be effective there was the need for facilitators to ensure a common understanding of terms and concepts.

*Imagine someone who is of Aboriginal descent and they’re living here in Bourke and they’ve never been in business, they’ve never done anything like this before and they [consultants] come in here talking about ecotourism… So people probably don't even know what it is… It’s just gone swish, straight over the top of their heads.*

(Steve, non-Aboriginal Tourism Stakeholder)

Finally, non-Aboriginal interviewees expressed the need for Aboriginal people, particularly the children, to feel pride in knowing their culture, art, and dance. If Indigenous tourism was to be successfully developed across the region, Aboriginal people needed to understand how and what to provide for visitors.

*I’m talking about those kids – 8, 10, 12 year olds – they have to understand their culture, through art or dance or some display, that's most important. And then pride about that is the other important thing. If you have pride you’ll have responsibility and the third thing is the understanding how you're going to cater for that to make sure it gets done properly so it will guarantee an ongoing situation for yourself… So that's the first stepping stone, don’t even plan, you know. Have the concept, but don’t even work on it, until you start your education.*

(Al, non-Aboriginal Tourism/Economic Development Officer)

### 4.3 Summary

This first results chapter canvassed a broad range of stakeholder views and attitudes regarding the development of Indigenous tourism in North-West New South Wales. Outlining these perspectives is important in establishing the regional context surrounding the formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. These initial interviews with 13 stakeholders in the Indigenous tourism industry demonstrate differences, but also shared experiences and concerns between Black and White.

At the time of the first phase of interviews in 2003, there was a feeling that a new approach to Indigenous tourism planning in the North-West was about to begin. Aboriginal people were showing great interest, and White tourism and business development officers were also excited. As the interviews demonstrated, both groups
Chapter 4: Stakeholder Views on Indigenous Tourism and Planning

noted great potential for Aboriginal tourism based on the cultural assets of the region and the planned experiences, and both felt there was the visitor demand to support such activities. They also discussed the need to capitalise on Aboriginal people’s strengths and knowledge bases, allowing Aboriginal people themselves to drive their own tourism ideas. The need for adequate, ongoing and culturally appropriate support and facilitation was also identified by both Black and White tourism stakeholders.

While there were similarities between the two groups in the core themes that emerged, a foremost concern raised by the Aboriginal interviewees was that tourism planning activities had been predominantly White-dominated and that Aboriginal people had generally felt excluded from mainstream planning processes. Non-Aboriginal people spoke of the challenges of Aboriginal tourism engagement in a slightly different manner. For them, the difficulty was about getting Aboriginal people to engage with the mainstream tourism industry. While some spoke of racism and the separation between the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal communities, for others it was “in-fighting” amongst the Aboriginal communities, or their disappointment in the lack of Aboriginal interest in programs that non-Aboriginal people had developed.

It was following these interviews that the formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative gained momentum with a number of regional Aboriginal tourism workshops and planning activities. It was through these activities and discussions that the Aboriginal people involved made a clear and considered decision that the BDC was to be an Aboriginal-run organisation.
VIGNETTE 5: I remember your people!

In 2004, many new faces were coming to Biamie Dreaming Cooperative activities. At each new workshop, several new people would come from the town in which it was held and sit quietly in the background until they felt comfortable enough to participate. At one of the meetings in Lighting Ridge, there were a couple of middle aged males who attended; both seemed very shy, and they did not come from Lightning Ridge, but from the small village of Quambone, several hundred kilometres away. The two men sat silently through all the other meeting business.

They then asked to make their presentation. One of the men had brought with him a small photo album filled with pictures of a burial ground and ceremonial site that he had uncovered during recent earthworks on a nearby property. They had come to the meeting to talk about the site and to see if the BDC could assist with its management, and whether it had any tourism potential. These men were very unsure as to what to do. Their local Aboriginal Land Council was currently not operational but they had heard about the BDC.

It turned out that most of the sites had been previously identified, but had not been protected from cows, cropping and farming practices. The burials had been examined and carbon-dated by National Parks and Wildlife staff and archaeologists, who estimated their age to be around 12,500 years old. In fact, it was a relatively famous site, which one of Australia’s early anthropologists had visited during a major corroboree and taken many photos of Aboriginal people living traditional lives. The photos of this collection had toured the state several years before and many of the members recognised the sites quite readily.

The presenter had only found out several years before that he came from the people who had made these burial grounds, the Wailwan. He had been raised by his White father and not told of his Aboriginality. As he spoke, others in the meeting also identified themselves as Wailwan, and expressed great interest in the site and what he was saying.

One of the elder members then recalled how, when in the Brewarrina Mission as a young girl, the last of the Wailwan people were removed from the area on the edge of the Macquarie Marshes. She spoke emotionally about how she saw these terrified people being trucked into the Mission, not able to speak any English or the local languages. At this point, the meeting almost went to tears as most people were overcome by the sadness of this event.

As I drove home from this workshop, I was very moved by what had occurred, and so proud to be involved. I could see how positive tourism could be for the region, its potential to bring people together, to work, to share and to heal.
CHAPTER 5: THE FORMATION OF THE BIAMIE DREAMING COOPERATIVE

The previous chapter (Chapter 4) presented a range of general insights and perspectives, from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders, in relation to planning for Indigenous tourism in North-West New South Wales. Building on that first phase of interviews, this chapter discusses the formation and incorporation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, a regional tourism organisation developed in late 2003 to aid Indigenous tourism and networking in the area.

The first section focuses on the formation of the BDC, and its key activities during the first nine months of its organisational life. This section is fairly ‘thick’ in its description (Creswell, 1998), and is based largely on my role and experiences as participant observer. The goal here is to allow the reader a detailed and informative insight into the events leading up to the official formation of the BDC. As discussed in Chapter 3, I was directly involved in the inception and development of the BDC, in that I offered facilitation and tourism planning skills to the group and its associated activities, where required.

An analysis of the second phase of in-depth interviews is presented in the second section. These six interviews were limited to the newly elected board members of the BDCs, some of whom (but not all) were the Aboriginal tourism stakeholders interviewed in the first phase.

5.1 Formation Activities of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

As stated earlier in the thesis, my doctoral research became focused in the North-West after I made contact with Roxanne Smith, the Aboriginal Business Development Manager for the NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD). My continuing collaboration with Roxanne allowed me to participate in most of the activities leading to the development of the BDC. Fortunately, the nature of Roxanne’s work meant that she was continually based in North-West NSW and facilitating a wide range of businesses. My visits, however, were more temporary and focused around particular events and meetings. Some additional consultation and
facilitative activities were also conducted through regular phone and email communications with members of the BDC.

The major activities and events leading to the formation of the BDC (September 2003 to June 2004) have been organised around five key stages: the first Aboriginal tourism workshop; visionary workshops; working party meetings; awareness-raising activities, and incorporation. Each of these stages usually involved several collaborative events organised in different towns around the North-West region. Table 5.1 gives a summary of these events, their location and timing, and any major outcomes.

**Table 5.1: Overview of Biamie Dreaming Cooperative Activities: Inception to Formation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Development</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Focus of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Aboriginal tourism workshop</td>
<td>Bourke</td>
<td>Sept 2003</td>
<td>Major two-day seminar covering Aboriginal tourism. Attendees committed to formation of a regional Aboriginal tourism organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary workshops</td>
<td>Coonamble</td>
<td>Oct 2003</td>
<td>Workshop concepts relating to the structure and objectives of a regional Aboriginal tourism organisation. Established working party to develop rules of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walgett</td>
<td>Nov 2003</td>
<td>Identified the name, structure, membership qualifications and primary activities of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working party meetings</td>
<td>Coonabarabran</td>
<td>Dec 2003</td>
<td>Meeting was attended by the NSW Cooperative Registrar to assist with the development of the rules and operation guidelines for cooperatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walgett</td>
<td>Apr 2004</td>
<td>Working party met to finalise co-operative's rules and guidelines, membership fees, number of directors and date for formation meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness-raising</td>
<td>Bourke</td>
<td>May 2004</td>
<td>‘Tackling Tourism’ workshops, included sessions on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>May 2004</td>
<td>- Setting up a Business: Developing marketing plans, SWOT analyses, market research;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coonabarabran</td>
<td>May 2004</td>
<td>- Developing your Network: Identifying the key players and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brewarrina</td>
<td>June 2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation</td>
<td>Coonamble</td>
<td>June 2004</td>
<td>The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative formation meeting and the selection of board members, plus a special presentation from Tourism New South Wales regarding their model of support delivery to Aboriginal tourism businesses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.1 First Aboriginal tourism workshop

In 2003, one of Roxanne Smith’s jobs through the DSRD was to develop a regional Aboriginal tourism strategy, the guiding objective of which was to identify enterprise and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people across the region. More specifically, it aimed to assess the market potential for Indigenous tourism ventures and Aboriginal arts and cultural products, and to develop strategies to support new or more viable Aboriginal businesses. The development of this Indigenous tourism strategy involved an extensive review of existing tourism plans for the region, as well as comprehensive consultation with Aboriginal people and organisations, including Aboriginal Lands Councils, language groups, elders’ groups, visitor centres, tourism organisations, local governments and a range of other community and government agencies.

Between May and September, 2003, Roxanne undertook an extensive community consultation process which identified considerable interest in Indigenous tourism amongst Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. What she found was that in nearly every town in the North-West, there were Aboriginal people working towards developing some type of Aboriginal tourism experience. Because of this great interest, a workshop was organised by Roxanne and the DSRD to draw people together with the aim of developing an Aboriginal tourism strategy. This event would be the beginnings of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative.

In September, 2003, a two-day workshop organised by Roxanne was held in Bourke, providing the region’s first major Indigenous tourism planning event. This event attracted over 46 attendees from around the North-West region of NSW. It brought together Indigenous tourism operators and proponents, Aboriginal lands councils, local tourism organisations, local government Councillors and other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders. The majority of these participants were Aboriginal, and interested in either developing or facilitating Indigenous tourism experiences.

The workshop included presentations and discussions on various topics, such as marketing (Tourism NSW consultant), developing linkages with National Parks and Wildlife Service, as well as extensive Aboriginal tourism product audits from across the region (Roxanne Smith). Linking these regional Aboriginal products together was
a regional touring proposal, the ‘Aboriginal Experience Super-Highway’. This idea was based on routes that would leave from Sydney and visit Aboriginal products and experiences throughout the towns of Lithgow, Mudgee, Gilgandra, Nyngan, Coonamble, Coonabarabran, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Goodooga, Weilmoringle, Brewarrina and Bourke. This regional tour ‘super-highway’ proposal, and the establishment of a regional collective to manage its development, was the major focus of the second day of the workshop.

At the conclusion of the workshop, discussions began to focus on ‘where to now?’ There was overwhelming consensus among all participants that a regional Aboriginal tourism organisation needed to be formed to assist with the management and development of Aboriginal tourism experiences across the region. Before this workshop, Aboriginal people developing tourism had been doing so alone and without any coordination. When talk turned to the make-up of the organisation, the desire was to have an Aboriginal organisation made up of Aboriginal tourism operators, with associate (non-voting) membership/support for non-Aboriginal stakeholders.

During these discussions there were several non-Aboriginal people who were concerned about the creation of yet another Indigenous organisation. For the Aboriginal people present, however, this was not viewed as a problem, but a strength. Among the Aboriginal people present, there was overriding consensus that Aboriginal people should hold the power in this organisation. In saying this, though, they recognised the important support and facilitation that non-Aboriginal people could provide, through association membership or some other appropriate arrangement. At the conclusion of the workshop, a date was set in the following month for a ‘visioning’ meeting to examine the idea of a regional Aboriginal tourism organisation.

5.1.2 Visioning workshops

The first visionary workshop, a month after the seminar in Bourke, was held in Coonamble in October, 2003. This workshop attracted 41 participants from across the region and explored the development and management of a regional collective for the super-highway concept, which was referred to initially as the Aboriginal Dreaming Trail. Even after the decision to restrict organisational membership to Aboriginal people, most of the non-Aboriginal stakeholders continued to remain involved and
actively participated in the visionary discussions. Even though they were non-voting members, they were still recognised for their supportive role.

At this first visionary meeting, discussion topics covered the purpose of the organisation, roles and responsibilities, membership, as well as suitable formal structures. At this point, some tourism operators spoke about the nature of the industry, their experiences, perceived demand, and tried to give people realistic expectations about what working in tourism involved. Following general discussion, workshop participants brainstormed objectives. Considerable debate and input from those present allowed the development and acceptance of a set of key objectives on which to focus the collective’s activities.

There were at least fourteen main objectives listed for the BDC, including preservation of Aboriginal culture and history, acknowledgment of traditional owners, authenticity, quality assurance, product development assistance, as well as the ‘upskilling’ of Aboriginal people (see Table 5.2). While broad and wide-ranging, these objectives were based around two primary issues: cultural preservation and skill development/business facilitation. These themes are presented separately in Table 5.2, but they were seen as interdependent. That is, any skill/business development activities proposed also had to meet the cultural preservation objectives.

Table 5.2: Objectives of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Preservation</th>
<th>Skill Development and Business Facilitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• develop, promote and preserve Aboriginal culture and history;</td>
<td>• ensure quality products are delivered;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• acknowledge traditional owners of the land and the ancestors that walked the land</td>
<td>• focusing on skills and indigenous culture of each community;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for them;</td>
<td>• develop individual and regional plans for businesses;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure that culture is preserved and passed on;</td>
<td>• facilitate the spread of products across the region and assisting filling of gaps;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• defining tourism/retention of culture and boundaries of each;</td>
<td>• provide ongoing business support;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• authenticity;</td>
<td>• provision of training and distribution of material and information;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• negotiating access;</td>
<td>• upskilling Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• develop a unified front.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: The Formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

As well as outlining the objectives of the new organisation, this first visionary workshop in Coonamble also identified the need for a technical working group to assist with ideas relating to visions and objectives, suggested names for the group, options for membership, and funding options. The working group included four Aboriginal people (Shane, Rob, Paul, Sarah) and three non-member support people (Roxanne Smith, Indigenous academic Dr Bob Morgan, and myself).

Following the Coonamble workshop, another was held in Walgett in November, 2003. Like Coonamble, this event attracted more than 20 participants. Many of these people had attended earlier activities, but others were participating for the first time. It was at this Walgett workshop that the name Biamie Dreaming Cooperative was suggested and adopted. Biamie is an Aboriginal word for 'the Creator/Spirit' and is used throughout several of the region’s language groups.

Participants at the Walgett meeting also, after extensive deliberation, adopted a cooperative operational structure, as opposed to an association, company or trust. Several issues influenced this decision. A limited company was considered a possibility as the group wished to operate tours and other businesses. However, the costs and requirements of registration, insurance and the rigidity around membership discouraged such a formal structure. The company structure also restricted the group’s desire to keep its membership open, continually building it as new Aboriginal people became interested in developing tourism activities.

An association structure was also discussed, as many tourism and community organisations take this form. In contrast to company structures, associations were considered to have very flexible membership requirements. However, participants believed that the BDC was not really ‘business orientated’, being more associated with community organisations and community-based activities. A cooperative structure, with its ‘active membership requirements’, (the members have to participate in several activities to retain their membership), was ultimately seen as the most appropriate to serve the needs of the collaborative organisation. Further, the cooperative structure seemed a relatively well-accepted means for independent businesses to work together. One of the limitations to the cooperative structure was the absence of ‘associated members’. At an earlier stage there had been a desire to provide non-voting ‘associated membership’ for non-Aboriginal individuals and
organisations. While this was considered a limitation of the cooperative structure, the benefits outweighed the constraints and this structure type was accepted.

At the Walgett meeting, there were also discussions around membership qualifications and criteria. It was decided that to be a member of the BDC, one had to meet two criteria. Firstly, he or she must be Aboriginal. Secondly, he or she must be directly seeking involvement in tourism and the associated objects of the Cooperative. The group felt it was important to restrict membership to Aboriginal people interested in tourism, as a means of limiting involvement by individuals or groups who did not share this interest. This decision to restrict membership followed on from discussions about the number of committees in which some members were involved; one person, for example, participated in around twenty voluntary committees and organisations. Perhaps an extreme example of how stretched some participants were, it is safe to say that people wanted the BDC to be focused and mindful of their other responsibilities.

There was also a desire to allow members from across the North-West region. At this point there had been involvement from people from Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Coonabarabran, Coonamble, Nyngan, Gilgandra, Dubbo, Cobar and Mudgee, as well as from a number of other towns and villages. Depending on where meetings were being held, participants could have had to drive several hundreds of kilometres in each direction to take part.

The costs of membership provided three different levels of fees depending on members’ employment situations: unemployed/CDEP, not for profit organisations, and businesses. The fees were $20, $50 and $100, respectively. Members were required to participate in at least two meetings or one training day per year to remain an active member. Such activities were included so that members took on the development of the co-operative as well as their own tourism business activities. Further, it was decided that there would be up to ten board members: one from every town or area. Meetings were to rotate around the region. The Board member from the town at which a meeting was held would Chair and was expected to organise the venue and catering. Costs for the meetings would be covered either by sponsors (local governments, CDEP organisations) or paid for by the BDC if funds were available. Travel costs for participants were not at this stage available to assist members to participate.
It was at this Walgett meeting that participants developed the BDC’s vision statement. This statement brought together many of the objectives that were identified at the Coonamble meeting the month before. The BDC vision statement was created on a whiteboard with vocal input from nearly all of the 20 participants:

> To respect, protect, promote and celebrate the ongoing traditional cultures, language, natural environment, history and philosophies of the Aboriginal peoples of North-Western New South Wales through the assistance and development of authentic and culturally appropriate tourism. (BDC, 2003)

In summary, following the Coonamble and Walgett workshops, there was agreement on naming, objectives, membership and structure. It was then given to the working party to take this information and draw it together into a workable organisational structure and present a proposal back to the broader group for formation. As it was coming up to summer in the region, which can be extremely hot (over 40 degrees Celsius), there was an expectation of a break in the group’s activities for several months. The working party did meet occasionally, however, during these break months to keep the momentum going and to develop the organisation’s constitution.

### 5.1.3 Working party meetings

Following the Walgett meeting in November 2003, the working party met several times at around monthly intervals. The first meeting was in Coonabarabran in December 2003. At this meeting, the NSW Cooperative Registrar attended to discuss suitability of cooperative structures, and to encourage this developing organisation to adopt this type of structure. The group was assured that the co-operative regulations and model rules would be very suitable for the stated purposes outlined in the vision and objectives. Model rules were provided as well as assistance with the development of the BDC’s own membership obligations and conditions.

The second meeting was scheduled for Bourke in March 2004 after the summer heat had receded. However, this meeting was cancelled due to the death of an elder in the town and was rescheduled for the following month. The working party met again in Walgett in April 2004. This meeting examined and discussed the draft constitution for
the BDC. A proposed formation date of June of that year was discussed with the idea to allow for promotion across the region.

### 5.1.4 Awareness-raising workshops

To assist with the promotion of the forthcoming formation meeting, a series of workshops were conceived, called ‘Tackling Tourism’. These awareness-raising workshops aimed to promote the formation of the BDC as well as providing a day of skill development activities. The ‘Tackling Tourism’ workshops were conceived to have two primary goals: to provide practical tourism marketing exercises and information, and to promote the formation of the BDC.

The workshop included the presentation of market research information and what this meant for their regional context, and further advice on how to conduct their own local marketing research. Participants were shown how to conduct a SWOT analysis for their own towns and how these analyses could be used to do the same for their own businesses. These workshops were seen as a way of bringing Aboriginal tourism stakeholders together and informing them about the oncoming formation of the BDC. These meetings also aimed to build capacity around preparing marketing plans and business networking.

Roxanne Smith and I delivered four ‘Tackling Tourism’ workshops across the BDC region in Bourke, Brewarrina, Lightning Ridge and Coonabarabran. Each attracted substantial interest, with between ten and fifteen participants. While some of the Aboriginal participants had been to earlier BDC activities, many were new. These workshops were aimed at increasing interest in the Cooperative, as well as generating attendance for the formation meeting in June, 2004.

### 5.1.5 Incorporation

In June 2004, the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative held its formation meeting in Coonamble. The meeting attracted high numbers – around 20 people from across North-West NSW. While there were many Aboriginal tourism proponents at this meeting there were also several non-Aboriginal people present who had a keen interest in developing and supporting Aboriginal tourism.
Prior to the official formation proceedings the (non-Aboriginal) Aboriginal Tourism Manager from Tourism New South Wales presented her organisation’s newly proposed model for Aboriginal tourism facilitation. Using the state-based Business Enterprise Centres (a network of business incubators), Aboriginal tourism operators would be able to access particular support based on the level that their business was operating at (for example, ‘emergent’ through to ‘established’). Unfortunately, several days before the presentation, the State government’s funding of BECs had been changed dramatically, reducing the number of Centres around the State from 125 to around 18 ‘super centres’ (Anonymous, 2003). Discussions were held about the model’s similarities to the BDC model – though at a very different scale. It should also be noted, however, that while there were several Business Enterprise Centres in the Western NSW region, the staff had not participated in the BDC’s development nor were members aware of any support that these Centres could provide.

The official formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative was then held. Nominations for board members were called and the voting in of the inaugural board of eight directors was held in an informal and non-competitive manner. One director was chosen from each of the main towns that had members. There was an obvious level of optimism and excitement surrounding the official formation of the BDC. At a practical level, the group wanted to focus on upcoming activities, determining that they should try and meet each month to keep it moving and ‘alive’. The group’s next meeting was set for Lightning Ridge the following month. The meeting was closed and the new members set out on their respective (several hours) drive home. Following the formation of the BDC, meetings were held generally monthly over the next few years.

5.2 Members’ Attitudes Towards BDC Roles and Functions

In the months following the formation of the BDC, a second phase of 6 in-depth interviews was conducted. Five of the original Aboriginal board members (Paul, Shane, Gabrielle, Sue and Sally) were interviewed, as well as an Aboriginal regional business facilitator (Ruby). The interviews were conducted across the region at members’ places of work or houses, and held in towns such as Bourke, Lightning Ridge, Goodooga, and Coonabarabran. Of the six interviewees in this phase, only one
was also included in the earlier phase of interviews. All but one of the inaugural board members was interviewed here, and this was due to his total absence from activities. There were no non-Aboriginal people interviewed during this phase, as it was a requirement that all members of the organisation be Aboriginal. Each of the interviewees is briefly introduced below, with a short biography that places them in their roles in their community, and providing Aboriginal Nation affiliation where available.

**Paul:** Paul was a Ngemba man in his 40s, and he worked for the National Parks and Wildlife Service as the Aboriginal community liaison officer. He was interested in setting up a tour business within one of the region’s national parks. His brother who was an established carver and artist, was going to be involved, as were several of Paul’s kids.

**Shane:** Shane was a Kamilaroi man from Coonabarabran. He was in his early 30s at the time of interview, and had many ideas about Aboriginal tourism. He was primarily interested in purchasing, in partnership with the Indigenous Land Corporation, a large property with considerable Aboriginal and natural assets, making it ideal for tourism potential.

**Ruby:** Ruby was an Aboriginal woman in her early 40s. She was working as an Aboriginal business facilitator across the Western region of NSW. She has considerable private business experience and was motivated to see more Aboriginal people engaged in business activities.

**Sue:** An Aboriginal woman in her 40s, Sue lived in Lightning Ridge, and managed a large Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP). Cultural tourism was one of the CDEP’s business activities and they have had a gallery selling arts and crafts for several years.

**Sally:** Sally was in her 20s, and also lived in Lightning Ridge. She worked for the CDEP and was involved in the gallery and sales of Aboriginal arts and crafts. She was originally from outside the region.

**Gabrielle:** A Wailwan woman in her 40s, Gabrielle was a regional Aboriginal Arts promotion worker, and had been in this position for several years. She was the only Aboriginal arts promotion officer out of 14 such positions in NSW. Gabrielle was also an established artist in her own right.
Chapter 5: The Formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

As the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative had just formed at the time of this round of interviews, there were varying ideas as to what was going to be achieved; the net was open wide, so to speak. Through grounded analysis of this second round of interviews, however, five key themes could be delineated, which best represent members’ collective views on the core goals, roles and functions of the BDC. These themes were: 1) collaboration; 2) autonomy and empowerment; 3) business support and networking; 4) real outcomes; and 5) leadership and facilitation.

5.2.1 Collaboration

For all of the members interviewed, the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative was an important collaborative voice for Aboriginal people developing tourism across the North-West region. Other business facilitation programs had focused on individuals without providing any support structure, and this left people feeling isolated. Members felt that the BDC would play a crucial role in allowing them to secure both individual business support as well as network with others facing similar challenges.

*There is a whole group of people who really need that sort of support that regional bodies should be able to provide.* (Ruby)

*With the way that it’s been developing the Co-op at a regional level, obviously has great appeal, rather than say ‘let’s just go and find one individual business and set it up without that regional structure’... I think that regional structure is crucial. It’s the lynchpin. You take that regional structure away, then there’s nothing, there’s no champion to support the individual business – he’s on his own, so he needs a champion. The regional structure is good, because that gives him a champion.* (Paul)

It was also perceived that the BDC could bring government agencies and support services to the group. The Cooperative would now be able to act as a business support centre, or ‘incubator’, for its members, linking them with other business support services in the region.

*It's got a huge potential I believe, for facilitation, for supporting and so forth. Especially across the region where everybody is wanting to get into tourism this can join it all up and support each other. Whereas without Biamie each community would be facing an uphill battle by themselves because, government agencies, you know, the workers that come out from the government, they are just one*
Chapter 5: The Formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

person to cover a huge area and it's just impossible for them to do properly. (Shane)

The BDC was also seen to be able to act as a resources centre where it could collect and hold information and resources related to tourism and business. This information could then be distributed via databases, or other methods, to members around the region.

One thing that Biamie could look at is creating a list of all the knowledgeable people within the communities that's doing it and if one community don't have that knowledge then they could just ring up and say 'we need some help over here', or 'we've got a bit of money for somebody to come over and do it'. You know it's a good stepping-stone for the communities to break into tourism. I reckon it's deadly! [great]. (Shane)

As a regional collaborative organisation, the BDC was seen as offering a more local source of information and assistance. As explained previously, the Western region of NSW, as defined by government departments and organisations, is very large, comprising over half of the state. BDC members still had to drive for up to four hours to attend many organisational activities. As the activities were currently rotated around the region, members felt that the BDC provided support that was much easier to tap into. “It's more accessible for those further out … Regional stuff puts a closer feel and easier access”. (Shane)

Another issue with the BDC membership covering such a large area was that it encompassed several traditional Aboriginal Nations and different language groups, mainly as a result of previous governments’ assimilation and removal policies. BDC members felt it would be important to view this as a positive, rather than a barrier; inclusiveness of all groups would be essential, regardless of people’s traditional lands and boundaries. Members showed significant respect for each other’s country.

Because of the region we're working in, and because of assimilation, it’s really difficult to actually out pick out language groups these days. Because even in a town like Bourke, you have seven individual language groups in Bourke, and so to actually try and focus on one particular language group or another is difficult. You've just got to try and make sure that everybody knows what's going on. (Ruby)
Chapter 5: The Formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

This regional thing: it’s different. If you go to Arnhem Land, then you’re going to see all things about Arnhem Land, and that’s all… it’s just about one group of people. But this is about communities right across, probably ten to fifteen different communities, a different way of doing business, different way of expressing their culture, ten to fifteen different ways. So that’s the beauty about it, so when they [visitors] come, if they come on the trail, that’s what they're going to see. They're not going to see the same thing, all laps-laps and dancing – they’re going to see a whole range of things and the Co-op will support that. (Paul)

The thing I like about Biamie and its region is that it’s involving four different Aboriginal cultures and each one is very specific in dealing with the areas. Like, here – we mountain-bred, we know the mountains off by heart. You know, take me out to Bourke and I’d be able to barely survive, but put them up here and I wonder how they’d go. (Shane)

Expressing further the desire for the BDC to be a truly collaborative tourism organisation, all Aboriginal groups in the region were welcome, including community organisations and Lands Councils, traditional owner groups, elders groups as well as young people. There was a strong notion that all Aboriginal people in the region should be aware of the BDC, its activities and the opportunities it offered.

I think the idea is to be inclusive. Don’t shove them out, leave the door open to new members. (Paul)

You’ve just got to try and make sure that everybody knows what’s going on. (Ruby)

5.2.2 Autonomy and empowerment

Interviews with Aboriginal members showed a great sense of pride in that the BDC was developed by them and would work for them in developing their tourism ideas. The BDC was strongly perceived by its members as an ‘Aboriginal’ organisation, and to them its formation was an act of Aboriginal empowerment and self-determination. The hope was that the BCD existed solely to provide Aboriginal people and communities with resources to assist their social and economic independence.

I think that if it’s done properly, it can actually be one of the best forms of empowerment for Aboriginal people. It’s been developed for them, by them, with them. But it’s going to be a lot of work in these early stages to actually get that process right. (Ruby)
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Members felt positive about the fact that the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative was an Aboriginal organisation independent of government, which could negotiate their involvement with the bureaucracy on its own terms and according to its own wishes. This independence was greatly valued, as Aboriginal members could drive their own agendas and desires in relation to developing tourism businesses.

_I don't want it tied up with them [government tourism agencies]. If they're going to help, they're going to help. If they're not, then they're not. They can be a good asset for us, but that's all we want to use them as – an asset. I don't want to get tied up in the bureaucracy. So we'll pull away from them and say, ‘listen if you want to help us, here we are, but if you don't want to help us, that's fine, we'll go this way’. I think we have to be independent of that somehow. That will teach our businesses to be independent then… so if we can be independent and promote it a little bit more, it would be better for us._ (Paul)

_[There’s] not enough of independent and community-owned businesses, you know. It's a good way for regional self-autonomy by supporting each other and that. Self-empowerment all that stuff we were aiming for through ATSIC we can do it through businesses, I believe._ (Shane)

_I wouldn't mind our people move away from government handouts and get into the private sector._ (Paul)

Through the establishment of independent Aboriginal tourism businesses, it was seen that significant benefits would flow to those individuals, as well as to the Aboriginal community as a whole.

_If individuals are taking the initiative and running with it and as far as the language and cultural diversity and things like that I think that if people are wanting to run their own businesses they'll do it. That's the whole purpose and if people don't want to do that well, that's their problem. I can't see any barriers… I mean, obviously it's good to have community back-up, but I think, you know, what is actually going to happen is in the long run people are going to be basically business-focused. If the community could support that that would be great but even if they don't have community support they can still go ahead with it anyway. So it's really self-determination and I guess if they can actually promote themselves as a business and what can happen in their community as far as even Aboriginal culture within that community there is going to be a lot of benefits._ (Gabrielle)
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Although it was recognised that relationships with ‘mainstream’ tourism organisations and councils were going to be essential, several BDC members reflected on previous difficulties in developing such ‘partnerships’. Linking with the results of the first phase of interviews, interactions with White tourism organisations had generated levels of “mistrust”, feelings of being “turned off”, and a general feeling that they did not really understand Aboriginal people. Despite these challenges, the BDC was seen as an important and empowering tool in bridging the gap between White and Black.

I think it’s going to be really difficult creating partnerships with those organisations, true partnerships. I think it will be easy to go along to the meetings and just sit there but to have real input for Aboriginal people I think it's going to be a long process … but I think it’s really important and it is actually part of that process of building those businesses, building the Co-op and getting that Aboriginality out there. And it may be that we're going to have to be very careful about who we pick to be representatives on those organizations so that the people don't get destroyed or lose heart when they go into these meetings and I'm not sure how we're going to work with that. I think it's going to be very important that we maintain the information links with those people, so that we invite them to meetings sometimes, when they're in their town. (Ruby)

I went down and met them [tourism officers]. The coordinator or whatever you want to call him, he turned me right off them… But I'm also involved on a personal level with other people that are involved with the tourism association... They want us to break into tourism here, but you can't put people off straight away... They can even turn you off it. You know, you just turn around and say ‘stuff it, they don't want us in it anyway’, but then you've really got to think, well if we don't get into it, what are we going to have? (Shane)

As a further effort towards reconciliation, some thought it was important for the BDC to deliberately involve non-Aboriginal people and organisations in their activities. In this way, Aboriginal people themselves would be taking control of the reconciliation process, rather than the other way around. As Ruby reflected:

I remember Paul once said to me once that one of the most important things about reconciliation for Aboriginal people is that we're going to have to do it. He said we're going to have to be not so judgemental of what's gone down in history, that we actually go out and say, ‘I'm here, acknowledge that I'm here – I want to be part of what you're doing’, so I think we have to actually be the ones to make that move and say ‘okay, please come to our meetings, please guide us’, otherwise it won't happen.
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Ultimately, developing good relationships with mainstream tourism organisations would assist in “giving NSW an Aboriginal face”, as Ruby put it: “I believe that these regional bodies would have the ability to act as advocates in the strategic planning that’s done”.

5.2.3 Business support and networking

Support for members through their involvement in the BDC focused on two issues: networking with other members and organisations and business/training activities. For many of the members, developing a tourism business or enterprise had been a dream, or at least a major interest for many years. With the formation of the Cooperative, they now had a support agency to assist them and others within their community to capitalise on that potential. As Gabrielle noted:

*I mean, it’s about building people up, supporting each other, and encouraging people in things that there are great potential for. I guess with Biamie Dreaming we can be that body.*

BDC as a network was seen as a vehicle for inspiring people to realise the community’s tourism potential, and members felt confident that their tourism ideas could come to fruition.

*A lot of the young fellas have got nobody to help support and push them, and young girls. So my belief is that if they got nothing better to do they might hit the grog, they might hit the yandi [marijuana], might get pregnant, they might even leave town. Which is all a shame because we have a lot to offer and a lot to learn. This [the BDC] puts a lot of faith back into us. (Shane)*

*It's just basically people seeing their potential in what they've got to offer and getting up there and saying I can do it. I think it's got a lot to do with the self-confidence bit as well – people just being motivated. (Gabrielle)*

While members spoke about how their Aboriginal families and communities provided considerable support in terms of family and relationships, business support was still lacking. Their involvement in the BDC provided such support, through an active and established network of Aboriginal business people.
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Well as far as I can see with the Co-op, we actually, as a group of people, we can network, we can encourage each other. We can have a strong network in Aboriginal communities at the moment... like, in government organisations at the moment there isn't that, from my position, I'm one of thirteen people in a network of arts development officers and I'm the only Aboriginal person in NSW... So if we can actually, through Biamie Dreaming, build a greater network of Aboriginal people with similar interests -- so we can actually sit and talk with each other about our potential, about possibilities, about even furthering our ideas and things like that. That's all about potential isn't it? Just trying to work out what we want to see at regional level happening in our communities. (Gabrielle)

The BDC facilitated the development of a network across this region which did not previously exist. Further, involvement in the organisation to this point in time had already helped individuals to develop new friendships, meet unknown members of their extended family, and feel able to speak more freely than in other business support activities.

I mean, we've been meeting since the start-up of Biamie, and yesterday I just found out that Paul is related to my in-laws in Walgett! Which in any sort of community, you might as well say it's your family. You know, it was good, we didn't know each other before that, so it's created good friendships... and then you start realising that everybody's facing the same thing, and then it's a lot more workable because you know a lot more people, and you can really express yourself easier and open up. (Shane)

Members spoke about the potential of the BDC to provide business support and training activities such as assisting with product development, building self-esteem, lobbying, facilitating information sharing and assistance with the distribution of visitors between Aboriginal tourism experiences. For many people in the BDC, developing a tourism business was still seen as quite a daunting experience.

Most of the stuff we are going to be facing is going to be very daunting, considering that a lot of the communities will be going into tourism for the very first time. (Shane)

Making sure that those individuals are able to run their own individual businesses, get the support that they need to build those businesses. (Ruby)

The BDC was seen to be able to provide and coordinate a range of training courses that would assist with members’ establishment of Indigenous tourism businesses.
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Suggested courses and topics included marketing Indigenous tourism products, customer service and sales, community governance, among others.

*I think training should focus on, should wholly be focused on, Aboriginal people selling products, marketing products, knowing about the products and that kind of thing. They have to, when someone comes into this room, you have to know how to approach that person, know about the artwork, and you have to know how to sell it. And the people need to know that. There is no use tourists coming into your shop and you don't know how to talk to them, you know.* (Sue)

Similarly, some participants spoke of the desire for the BDC to assist with the building of self-confidence among young Aboriginal people.

*I think in tourism we have to teach them not to be shy, because tourism is about being out there.* (Paul)

*I guess we need to work on the confidence and getting peoples self-esteem up and saying ok we can make this work.* (Gabrielle)

Members spoke strongly of the need for training to be presented in an ‘Aboriginal’ way, and in their own towns. Courses and content “developed by Aboriginals for Aboriginals” was seen as most appropriate and having the greatest chance of positive effects. Experience showed that when people had to travel and study in unfamiliar places, the training was much less effective.

*A lot of these government departments say ‘well, let's send 'em to a course at Dubbo’... but actually taking that back and applying that to your community is nearly impossible. Because you sit there and think, ‘God, what did she say there? how did this work? gee this looks different to what this form says’. So you really need that sort of official type training and stuff, but a lot of the training they provide is not even relevant to Aboriginal people, it just doesn't fit in with our community structures and our needs.* (Ruby)

It was generally suggested that the most appropriate business support and training for members of the BDC would come in the form of “hands-on” office assistance, in their place of business. While classroom training worked for some things, many Aboriginal businesses required one-to-one facilitation by facilitators.

*Nobody actually wants to get down on the ground and really help people with what they really need, so I will actually go through and*
Chapter 5: The Formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

pull out all the files from the filing cabinet and develop a filing system with people. I will actually set up an accounting structure with them. I'll actually show them how to fill out books for bookkeeping, show them how to fill out their BAS forms because it’s what they need. They need somebody to give them the skills. (Ruby)

5.2.4 Real outcomes

It was evident that members thought that the BDC needed to produce “real outcomes” at an early stage of its development. This was seen as an important way of maintaining members’ interest and attracting additional members. The Cooperative’s formation and constitution were seen as important, but did not necessarily count as practical tourism outcomes, or the establishment of tourism businesses.

Definitely in the next couple of meetings, we will need to show outcomes. People will lose interest and stop turning up. Unfortunately you have to go through all the rigmarole – constitution etc. If you can get a facilitator, then that would be wonderful. (Sally)

I think one of the key things we have to do is get a couple of wins. I talked about it in that meeting down at Coonabarabran. Let’s get a couple of wins, get some things happening and the passion will still be there and it won’t blow away. And when people can see that we have a couple of wins on the board, then they will come. (Paul)

While there was an urgency associated with getting outcomes, there was also the recognition that significant projects like developing an Indigenous tourism business could take years. Additionally, establishing these Aboriginal tourism experiences and businesses would be easier in some towns than others.

I think once we get a couple of runs on the board we’ll see a lot of people involved. I’ll give it a time: in three to four years’ time we’re going to have about thirty members, or thirty different places to see and I mean literally thirty different places to see in our region. Thirty! At least thirty! (Paul)

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5 BAS refers to the quarterly Business Activity Statements which are part of Australian Taxation Department’s collection of Goods and Service Tax.
Lightning Ridge has got a big advantage really, big advantage, Brewarrina has got a big advantage because it's got that museum, you know. (Sue)

Some of those smaller towns have got stigmas attached to them see. People won’t stop in Walgett, you know... Those small towns are at a disadvantage. (Sally)

### 5.2.5 Leadership and facilitation

A final role of the BDC which was perceived as important related to leadership and facilitation. All BDC members admitted they were already “over-stretched” with other business and family responsibilities. As such, they had limited time to develop the Cooperative, and recognised that the BDC would require its own full-time facilitator to be successful. This facilitator would have the time and dedication to assist members with their needs, as well as acting as a ‘champion’ for the organisation.

We are all busy people and it needs somebody with that focus to keep it going and make us aware of opportunities and things like that. (Gabrielle)

I think it's a crucial part. If we don't have that person bringing it all together – like I was saying, the champion – the champion brings it all together. So Roxanne at this moment is sort of like part of the Co-op, she's bringing it all together. If we don't have that, then we're nothing, we're ineffective. We really need someone there to drive it, to pull it all together and drive it, and drive the process. (Paul)

I reckon they need to pay someone... It would definitely be a fulltime paid position. That would warrant that easily. (Sally)

It would be easy for BDC members to rely on the facilitator to run the cooperative, but many felt it was important to continue to take an active and committed role in the organisation. Paul reflected this sentiment in his statement that “I think now, Roxanne is still doing a good job, but more and more we need to take that responsibility... And that's where the commitment comes into it”.

Finding a suitable facilitator for the BDC was indeed a key challenge, not only because of the nature and size of the region but also the way in which this person
Chapter 5: The Formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

would have to work with members. It was suggested that the facilitator be someone who could work with the BDC “without pushing them”.

I think some of the major challenge is actually going to be facilitating the ideas of the Co-op and really nutting out what it is going to do and how it's going to do it with all those people. I think we're going to need someone whose really good at facilitation and who's got a really good head on their shoulders for guiding people without pushing them to assist that process. And if we don't have that, if it’s not mostly driven by the people with really good guidance, I think it might fail, because there is a whole group of people who really need that sort of support that regional bodies should be able to provide. But if … If you get the Co-op becoming a gung-ho organisation that thinks it can go in and boss people around, you've lost it. (Ruby)

As BDC membership was spread far and wide around the North-Western part of NSW, the location of the facilitator was also discussed. It was proposed that somewhere central to the region would be most suitable.

I think that one thing that we'll have to sort out, is a central place for meetings. Walgett or Coonamble are central places – you'll get people there then. I don't have to travel 5 hours; I only have to travel 2 hours to get to Walgett. (Paul)

I'd like to push for a place for Biamie, be it an office... It will be a little bit conflicting because everybody would want it in their area. (Shane)

Finally, it should be noted that people were optimistic about being able to get funding for the facilitator position as well as collaborating organisations providing support in terms of office space and other facilities.

5.3 Summary

This chapter has described and analysed key issues in the formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. What was revealed was a great interest in Indigenous tourism across the region, with the first Indigenous tourism workshop in Bourke drawing over 50 participants. It was also at this early workshop that a new, Aboriginal-driven organisation – the BDC – was formed to help facilitate the development of Indigenous tourism in the North-West.
The in-depth interviews with board members just following BDC’s incorporation show an optimistic view towards Indigenous tourism and the role that the organisation could play in its development. As the results of both Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate, there was an evident need for the BDC to be collaborative while being independent and autonomous. Yet there was also the recognition that good ongoing business support and networking with the mainstream tourism sector was equally important. Leadership and effective facilitation were also going to be key issues in the organisation’s future, as well as the achievement of some ‘real’ outcomes.

The next chapter describes the main activities and outcomes of the BDC over the next five years. It was during this time that I took on an even greater role in actively facilitating the planning of members’ tourism ideas and projects.
VIGNETTE 6: I have a baby, too!

I am again in Lightning Ridge, sitting across a kitchen table from Julie, a young Aboriginal woman. I was at Julie’s house to help her develop a business plan for her artwork ideas. I think she is about the same age as me: early thirties? Julie has a young child with her, about the same age as my new daughter, Maya, who was about six months old. There are no other kids around and thus I assume it is her first child.

I know Julie a little; she has been to a number of the Biamie meetings. However, we had not spent enough time together to become close. I saw her as someone who knows what she wants and was quite forthright. Julie had put herself through a four-year distance arts degree, 3,000 kilometres away in South Australia, which required study visits four times a year. She told me that each visit to South Australia required many different transport links; a bus, then train, then another bus etc. I think for a moment, that morning, that we must have a lot in common: similar age, both having our first babies, both educated.

I started the conversation trying to show our similarities, not wanting to get straight into business. “How do you like having a baby?” I asked Julie, expecting a similar response to how I was feeling. Like many new parents, I was sleepless, but happy. I was 750 kilometres away from home and had spent the night in a hotel; it was one of my first sleeps without the baby beside me for the past six months, and I was keen to chat about what I assumed would be our ‘common’ parenting experiences.

“Great”, she said. “This is my fourth”.

Well, at that moment, all of the similarities I had been imagining went out the door. “Where are the others?” I asked? This question opened up a life story that was so different to mine, that I was left wondering what was similar after all. Born in a little village to the North-West of Lightning Ridge, Julie had been adopted out to a White family in the city when she was quite young. She had her first child at around 17, which her parents made her adopt out. A few years later, she got married and had another two children. When this relationship ended, the father kept the children. After the marriage broke down she returned ‘home’. As she set about re-establishing herself she found she had many family members – brothers and sisters – that she had never even known about.

During these first years at home she put herself through her degree. Nearing the end of her degree, her then partner destroyed most of her artwork. Somehow she managed to finish her course and received awards for her academic performance. Now in a relationship with her ‘soul mate’, she had just had her fourth baby, who was here in the kitchen with us.

I am recounting this story about Julie to remind us that our lives are so racially influenced; beyond many White people’s imagination. It also reminds me of the amazing resilience that people have, despite life’s circumstances. Some experiences are shared across races, or ages, and some are based on the location in which we live. But what I learned most from Julie is that simple assumptions are often incorrect, and that life is much more complex than what first stares us in the face.
CHAPTER 6: POST-FORMATION ACTIVITIES OF THE BIAMIE DREAMING COOPERATIVE: OBSERVATIONS OF A TOURISM PLANNER

The previous two chapters presented an analysis of the formation and development of the North-West region’s first Aboriginal tourism planning organisation, the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. This chapter, which is the final in the series of case study descriptions, provides an overview of the activities and outcomes arising from the BDC’s official formation in mid 2004, through to completion of the Cooperative’s business plan in late 2007 and the development of the Biamie Dreaming Trail in 2008.

This post-formation part of the case study is based primarily on my ongoing participant observation and involvement with BDC activities during this span of time. While the previous two chapters presented mostly thematic analyses of in-depth interviews, the only voice in this story is mine. For a number of methodological and personal reasons, such as wanting to avoid repetition and wasting people’s valuable time, I did not conduct any more interviews with BDC members beyond 2004.

As outlined in the methodological and rhetorical discussions in Chapter 3, I choose a variety of narrative styles to tell the BDC story. For this chapter, I have chosen a different narrative strategy, one that is based on my observations over many years working with the BDC and its members. It is deliberately ‘thick’ in its description, allowing the reader a level of versimilitude, where the BDC becomes more real and alive in its everyday ordinariness (Creswell, 1998; Richardson, 1994). My goal here is to build a detailed, qualitative account of the workings of the BDC over time, and in doing so ‘demystify’ (Janesick, 2004) the development of the organisation. This is not an unusual decision in many case studies, where the aim is to tell a descriptive account of ‘what happened’.

6.1 Overview of BDC Meetings and Activities (2004–2008)

The BDC’s intention was to hold collaborative activities monthly. These meetings and workshops were to rotate around the region to the towns where members lived. In most years, around six meetings occurred. During these formative years, considerable
effort and time was spent on developing the organisation, identifying members’ Aboriginal tourism projects and instigating the BDC’s own business plan.

Members of the BDC were already familiar with processes of good governance and organisational operation. To some degree or another, all of them had been, or were still currently, involved in Aboriginal corporations. Thus, meetings were held in a relatively formal manner, with minutes reviewed, business arising and agenda items discussed. As the meetings rotated around the region, the board members of the particular town in which the meeting was held would chair. While each chair had his or her own operational style, the processes were always efficient, relaxed and open to general discussion and new ideas.

In summary, between July 2004 and the end of 2008, the BDC met more than 24 times in the region. Activities had been held in Lightning Ridge (9 times) and Goodooga (2) in the north, to Dubbo (3) in the south and Bourke (3) in the west, as well as meetings in Quambone (1), Brewarrina (2), Coonabarabran (2), Gulargambone (1), Baradine (1) and Coonamble (2) in the central area of the BDC region. Table 6.1 presents an abbreviated chronological outline of the main activities and achievements of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. In the following sections, these key activities are discussed in more detail to allow the reader a deeper insight into the organisation’s operation and development.

Table 6.1: Key Meetings and Activities of the BDC (2004-2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Major Activity/Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>Jul 2004</td>
<td>First post-formation meeting; general meeting held with around 20 participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukerbarley, Coonabarabran</td>
<td>Nov 2004</td>
<td>Meeting held at Ukerbarley, a property that members wished to purchase and establish as an Aboriginal tourism venture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodooga</td>
<td>Dec 2004</td>
<td>Presentation by current owners of Ukerbarley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourke</td>
<td>Apr 2005</td>
<td>Developed strategic planning workshop to be held at the end of the month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baradine</td>
<td>Apr 2005</td>
<td>3-day strategic planning workshop – applied for funding for ‘keeping places’ and a BDC facilitator (ATDP) and a business plan for the BDC (ISBF).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Chapter 6: Post-formation Activities of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Major Activity/Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunderbooka NP, Bourke</td>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td>2-day workshop reviewing keeping place designs and management structure. Paul gave cultural tour of the Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourke</td>
<td>Jun 2005</td>
<td>Funding received for BDC business plan, general discussion about calling for tenders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonamble</td>
<td>Aug 2005</td>
<td>General discussion of tenders for the business planning project (9 tenders received).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quambone</td>
<td>Sept 2005</td>
<td>AGM, and general meeting. Election of new Board. Discussion of Wailwan cultural burials heritage project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubbo</td>
<td>Nov 2005</td>
<td>Small meeting, no quorum. Discussion about tender selection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubbo</td>
<td>Apr 2006</td>
<td>Selection of planning consultant for business planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>Jun 2006</td>
<td>Directors’ meeting to re-establish signatures for new Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonamble</td>
<td>Jul 2006</td>
<td>General discussion of Wailwan burial project and media mishap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulargambone</td>
<td>Sept 2006</td>
<td>Workshop of business plan structure and content. Tour of Gulargambone CDEP art gallery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubbo</td>
<td>Dec 2006</td>
<td>Workshopped business plan development. Presentation of draft BDC logos. Selection of members for ISBF funded business plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>Feb 2007</td>
<td>Presented draft BDC business plan and strategies, logo and regional brochure. Developed presentation for members on history and development of the BDC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>Jun 2007</td>
<td>Workshopped the conceptualisation of the Biamie Dreaming Trail regional tour proposal. ACC consultant presentation on marketing and branding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>Sept 2007</td>
<td>Board decided to change from a Cooperative to an Incorporated Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>May 2008</td>
<td>Discussions focused on establishing the Biamie Dreaming Trail (regional tour).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewarrina</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
<td>Meeting to discuss the regional Biamie Dreaming Trail. Sample tour of the Brewarrina Fish Traps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewarrina</td>
<td>Aug 2008</td>
<td>Discussion of the Trail and potential loss of Ridge CDEP.</td>
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Chapter 6: Post-formation Activities of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

6.1.1 The Ukerbarley property (2004)

Following on from the formation meeting in June, 2004, several meetings were held across the region, from the north at Lightning Ridge and Goodooga, and in the southern part of the region in Coonabarabran. The main thrust of activity during the latter part of 2004 was members getting to know one another, and the discussion of several members’ potential Aboriginal tourism ideas and projects.

At the first post-incorporation meeting, which took place in July at Lightning Ridge, more than 20 people interested in Aboriginal tourism attended. This number included most of the Board, local CDEP artists, several non-Aboriginal tourism officers and a non-Aboriginal Aboriginal Community Working Party (ACWP) manager. This meeting focused on outlining the processes of the BDC to its new participants and a general discussion of what the Cooperative hoped to achieve.

The focal point of the next two meetings was on a property called Ukerbarley, located near Coonabarabran. Ukerbarley was a 1,472 hectare property which held a number of interesting Aboriginal cultural features, including art sites and rock shelters. One of the members, Shane, had been developing a relationship with the current non-Aboriginal owners to purchase the property from them with the assistance of the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC). The owners were a couple at retirement age who had been operating a small, low-key Aboriginal cultural tour on the property for over a decade. Given the cultural significance of the land, they were keen to sell it to local Aboriginal people if possible.

To progress the Ukerbarley purchase idea, BDC met on the property in November, 2004. On arrival, we were given a tour of the land by the owners, which included a number of Kamilaroi art sites and caves, as well as stunning natural views and ecological resources. Following the tour, we gathered at the owners’ small rustic house for lunch and the meeting. Although this meeting attracted only around 10 members, plus the local non-Aboriginal tourism officer, those present were excited by Shane’s enthusiasm for the idea, and for the rare opportunity to purchase the land to ensure it would be held in Aboriginal hands.

Ukerbarley was viewed as a way of offering a unique range of activities and a significant base for the Cooperative’s vision for regional Aboriginal tourism. There
were discussions as to whether the BDC should actually pursue the purchase of the property itself, or simply support the local community’s desire to buy it. The decision was made to support Shane and other local BDC members in their attempts to establish an organisation to acquire the property.

Keen to ensure that the Ukerbarley project be assisted, the owners were invited to make a presentation at the following meeting in Goodooga in December, 2004. Some of the attendees had been unable to take the property tour and were grateful to see the presentation. Again, there was overwhelming interest in the property and the need to facilitate its purchase. Subsequently, Shane decided to champion a property management plan and funding proposal through his own dedicated organisation. This idea, unfortunately, never progressed for a number of reasons which shed insight into the challenges of regional Aboriginal tourism planning (see Vignette 8 ‘Shane’).

### 6.1.2 Strategy and funding (2005)

Eight BDC events took place during 2005. Activities were held around the region from Goodooga in the north, Dubbo in the south, west to Bourke and to the tiny village of Quambone in the south-west. The first major meeting for 2005 was in Bourke in April, and centred on the need to get some “real outcomes” for the BDC – an issue which had emerged to be quite important for members (see Chapter 5). The result of this Bourke meeting was to develop a strategic planning workshop to bring together members and interested individuals to map out potential tourism projects.

In April, 2005, 10 members participated in a three-day strategic planning and visioning workshop at Baradine. Regrettably, the timing of this workshop coincided with a number of other regional meetings including catchment management committees, regional CDEPs, and Aboriginal Community Working Parties. Several members were unable to participate, while others had to simultaneously divide their time between the BDC and these commitments. Despite the lower attendance, this workshop was viewed as successful because it started to move forward on providing BDC members with desired outcomes and tangible benefits.

The group worked on completing two proposals and funding applications through the Australian Tourism Development Program (ATDP), about which Roxanne had
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previously informed members. The first application was for a series of three ‘keeping places’ across the region, which would be built in Bourke, Quambone, and Goodooga. These centres were planned to be small, multi-purpose buildings which would provide an Aboriginal cultural tourism ‘hub’, a space for art and craft sales, and perhaps café facilities and information for visitors. A funding application was also completed for a BDC coordinator, in recognition that the group needed a dedicated facilitator outside of the roles that Roxanne and I played. The ATDP funding applications were examined and completed, allowing members to take an active part in how such processes worked. At the same workshop, members also applied for funds through the Indigenous Small Business Fund (ISBF), through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), to prepare a series of BDC business plans and marketing tools.

Another workshop was held in May, 2005, this time at Gunderbooka National Park, about 50 kilometres south of Bourke. Gunderbooka National Park was a newly created property with considerable Ngemba art sites, as well as unique ecological assets. The park also includes the Gunderbooka Range that rises out of the surrounding flood plains and is visible for many kilometres around. The traditional owners from the region had been working on access to the park for cultural activities, as well as for meetings like this one which was held in an old homestead in the National Park. Ten people participated, plus several teenagers from the Brewarrina Aboriginal youth economic development group. The key aim of this workshop was to provide members who missed the previous meeting with an opportunity to give final input into the development of the keeping places/cultural centres proposals. Since the last workshop, an architecture-graphic design student had also been consulted with to develop drawings of the proposed buildings, and he was invited to this meeting to present his designs for discussion.

Gunderbooka National Park was also the site of one of Paul’s tours, in his role with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. As part of the workshop activities, he provided his guided cultural tour to the group to gain critical feedback on his interpretation skills. The tour took several hours, most of which was a walk through a dry gully that comes off the Gunderbooka Range. As we walked up the gully, Paul pointed out plants, tracks and artefacts scattered around old campsites from the past
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thousands of years. At the major art site, Paul spoke of his connection to it, as well as the effects of European colonisation and Aboriginal peoples’ forced removal from the land. Back at the parking lot, there was excited discussion about the tour and ideas that people had on how to improve it. That night was spent around the campfire with guitar and songs.

The BDC were excited to find out in June that they had been successful in their ISBF application (but not the ATDP funds). This money was to be used for the development of a business plan for the Cooperative as a whole and two of its individual members, as well as for a logo and regional tourism brochure. In that same month, a meeting was held in Bourke to discuss the process for inviting consultants to tender. By the next meeting in Coonamble in August, nine expressions of interest had been generated from consultants around the country. In my capacity as a tourism planning consultant, I was one of those expressions. Here, members were given the task of preliminarily examining the tender documents. Due to the considerable amount of material received and the lack of a quorum, the directors engaged only in a general discussion at this point. As it was soon necessary for the organisation to hold its first AGM, they decided to delay any decisions until then.

The BDC held its first AGM in Quambone, in September, 2005. This meeting was well attended, attracting over 25 people from across the region. Along with BDC members, attendees included several non-Aboriginal tourism and business development officers, consultants and government development representatives. Just prior to the start of the AGM, a non-Aboriginal AusIndustry representative gave a brief presentation about funding available to assist with business marketing and development, especially targeting international marketing activities. Following this, the BDC held its AGM and election of board members. After the AGM, there was an open discussion with a group of local Wailwan people from the neighbouring town of Warren, regarding identified 12,500 year old burial and ceremonial sites located nearby. These Aboriginal people had not previously been involved in the BDC, but

6 AusIndustry is a federal government agency that provides funding support for businesses establishing international markets and promotional activities.

7 The BDC constitution states that there is to be one director from each town or area involved. At this AGM there were six directors appointed: one from each of the towns of Bourke, Goodooga, Lighting Ridge, Coonamble/Quambone, Gilgandra and Coonabarabran.
were keen to assist with the protection of the burial sites. Decisions were made for the BDC to pursue and auspice conservation funding for the site’s further protection. The non-Aboriginal Coonamble tourism/economic development officer also agreed to support these activities. Given the unplanned focus on the burial sites, the discussion of tenders for the BDC business plans was postponed until the next meeting.

In November, the final meeting for 2005 was held in Dubbo, in the very south of the BDC membership region. This meeting failed to reach a quorum, so no decisions could be made regarding the business planning activities or the selection of consultants. To assist with selection of preferred consultants, a checklist for evaluation of the expressions of interest was formulated by those present and posted to all board members.

6.1.3 Progressing business plans (2006/7)

During 2006/2007 there were ten gatherings of the BDC (6 in 2006 and 4 in 2007). Much of these years’ activities centred on developing further the business plans for the Cooperative and its members. The first meeting for 2006 was held at Dubbo in April. The selection of the business planning consultant was finally made at this meeting. After the selection process was conducted amongst the Board members, I was pleased to find out I was the preferred tenderer, and I began negotiating with the group to begin working on the plans as soon as possible.

In June, a ‘quick’ board meeting was held in Lightning Ridge (I unfortunately missed this due to the birth of our first child in late May). This meeting was held primarily to gather signatures for the establishment of a new bank account and post office box in Lightning Ridge. In July, the BDC met in Coonamble. This was supposed to be the launch of the business planning activities, however as the meeting again did not reach quorum, this was postponed. The members present were from Coonamble and the neighbouring town of Quambone. The meeting focused instead on the Wailwan burial site protection, for which funding had been received from the federal Department of Environment. This project had started badly with a communication mishap with the funding organisation, the media and the projects main participants. It was unfortunate that two of the key applicants were out of town when the media were notified of the funding success (rather than applicants). Keen to get the story out, the media
contacted the one of the applicant who was there to do the story. As a result, only one applicant was featured in the newspaper article. This caused considerable tension amongst the group, followed by a complete breakdown in relationship. Two of the three applicants left the region, completely ending their involvement in both the restoration project and the BDC. The project was eventually completed by the remaining applicant.

In September, 2006, the BDC met at the Gulargambone CDEP. Gulargambone (‘Gular’) is a small village within the Coonamble Shire, and was close to the more visited tourism areas of Dubbo and Gilgandra. The visioning workshop for the BDC business plan was workshopped at this meeting. It was good to see that several non-Aboriginal tourism officers from surrounding Shires were present, as well as people from surrounding arts organisations. At the time, Gulargambone was starting to undergo a small revitalisation. The Gular CDEP was a new BDC member and was then developing an Aboriginal arts and crafts gallery, which was interested in including a Visitor Information Centre in their facility. Following the meeting, the group was taken on a tour of the CDEP’s art workshop and gallery as well as some of the other galleries developing in the village.

The foci of the two remaining 2006 meetings (Lightning Ridge in November; Dubbo in December) were on the identification of current tourism activities of the region, visitation, and establishing agreement on the strategic goals and directions for the BDC. At the Dubbo meeting, a draft logo for marketing the BDC was presented and discussed (see Appendix E), as well as potential regional marketing activities. It was also at this Dubbo meeting that two individual members’ businesses located in Lightning Ridge (Murriwarri Artworks and Garrawal Cultural Centre) were selected for the ISBF-funded business plans. Both of these members were very active in the Cooperative and respected for their engagement. As such, they were considered to be in the best position to be able to benefit from such assistance.

Despite momentum around the achievements of funding, the Cooperative held only four gatherings during 2007, all of which were in Lightning Ridge. The 2007 meetings were mostly engaged with workshopping and progressing the business plans and other tourism project ideas. This was an open, public process where other members were encouraged to be involved. I presented a copy of the BDC business
plan to the February meeting, and to all members subsequently. In line with funding requirements, the BDC business plan used fairly standard strategic planning approaches, including situation analyses, objectives, SWOT analyses and action plans. It was hoped that such a structure could then be used as a template for the individual members’ plans, which I also assisted with during that year. The BDC plan was accepted by the Board at the March meeting.

In June, 2007, the BDC looked specifically at the idea of a regional Aboriginal cultural tour, taking in much of the Northern area. An Area Consultative Committee (ACC) consultant also gave a presentation at this meeting on business marketing and branding. At the September meeting, the organisation explored the option of changing from a cooperative to an incorporated structure, as well as bidding farewell to Roxanne Smith, who was leaving to take up a position elsewhere with the DSRD.

### 6.1.4 The Biamie Dreaming Trail (2008)

There were three gatherings over 2008, all of which were held in either Lightning Ridge or Brewarrina. By this stage, most of the southern members had stopped attending meetings due to difficulties in transport and the distances required in travelling. Therefore, the focus of the meetings in 2008 was on the establishment of the proposed cultural tour, which would link Aboriginal tourism experiences in the northern parts of the BDC region. This regional tour idea had previously been worked on at the Lightning Ridge meeting in June, 2007, and had also been discussed under many other guises at previous meetings. A two-day tour itinerary was developed, which would provide visitors with Aboriginal cultural experiences in Lightning Ridge, Goodooga, Weilmoringle, Brewarrina, and Gunderbooka National Park. This tour was named the ‘Biamie Dreaming Trail’.

The first meeting for 2008 in Lightning Ridge attracted a newly appointed local government business development manager, based in Brewarrina, who saw the potential in the Biamie Dreaming Trail idea. At her request, the second meeting for the year was held in Brewarrina where several local Aboriginal tour guides attended and expressed great interest in the regional tour idea. This meeting drew in most of the partners of the regional tour. After the meeting proper, an Aboriginal trainee tour
The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative guide who operated out of the local Visitor Information Centre (VIC) gave a tour of the ancient Brewarrina Fish Traps.

The third and final meeting for the year was held again in Brewarrina. Several members from Lightning Ridge attended, however those from Bourke had not been informed of the meeting and thus did not attend. Further, the trainee tour guide from the previous meeting lost his position (traineeship had ended) at the VIC and did not participate. While a small meeting, those who attended still felt optimistic about the tour, and planned out the next stages of the project.

In October, 2008, my partner and I had our second child, thus I was unable to facilitate or attend any other gatherings for the remainder of the year. At this stage, the BDC had to confront the impending issue of having to re-tender for the management of the local ‘Ridge’ CDEP (Murrumay Murrila), which had been in operation for almost 25 years. As the manager of the CDEP, and one of the Cooperative’s regular and most active attendees, Sue was obviously consumed by this task. Not only did she have to re-bid, but that there was a chance that the entire CDEP would disappear under the new Labor Commonwealth Government’s approach to funding these projects. As a result, the CDEP did not feel comfortable with organising any further BDC activities until an outcome was decided.

6.1.5 Key outcomes

In summarising the outcomes and achievements of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, it can be seen that nine key plans and projects were facilitated through members’ involvement in this tourism planning organisation (see Table 6.2). Two of these were collaborative plans (the BDC business plan and the Biamie Dreaming Trail), while the others were prepared to assist individual members or organisations. These plans were used by members to guide their own tourism activities, as well as to attract funding where appropriate. Members who had plans developed seemed proud of their achievements, and were excited to see the real, final and tangible documents based on their own ideas.

It must be mentioned that most of these plans were written on very small funding sources (around $1,000-$5,000), and there was usually no further money available to
support these activities beyond the conceptualisation stage. As a result, some projects developed into ongoing concerns, others did not. For example, the ‘keeping places’ did not receive any further work or attention from members after their funding was rejected. The Ukerbarley property plan also did not progress, due to individual members’ constraints and challenges.

Table 6.2: Plans/Projects Produced through the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project/ Organisation</th>
<th>Key Goals/ Desires</th>
<th>Activities Conducted</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biamie Dreaming Cooperative  (collaborative)</td>
<td>To outline the key goals, actions and strategies of the BDC, to aid its business development and to support members in their tourism projects.</td>
<td>Business plan</td>
<td>Business plan developed and accepted by Board in March 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gund-ah-myro Cultural Resource Centre, Bourke</td>
<td>Through education, cultural workshops, arts and crafts, dance and music, build self-esteem in the Aboriginal community, skill our Aboriginal community to become more involved, and decrease our isolation.</td>
<td>Business review &amp; SWOT analysis</td>
<td>Business review and concept document completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrawal Cultural Centre, Murrumay Murrila, Lighting Ridge</td>
<td>To promote Lighting Ridge as a place to buy authentic Aboriginal arts and crafts and to provide a main street presence for the sale of locally produced products.</td>
<td>Business plan</td>
<td>Cultural centre/art gallery developed and additional funding sought for renovations and site development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Enterprise Centres (collaborative)</td>
<td>Develop cultural resource centres and keeping places.</td>
<td>Funding proposal (through ATDP)</td>
<td>Funding declined. Individual members then developed their plans further</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukerbarley Aboriginal Corporation, Coonabarabran</td>
<td>Prepare a funding application for the purchase Ukerbarley a 1,472 ha farm for eco/cultural tourism activities</td>
<td>Property management plan</td>
<td>This project was developed but not progressed due to organisation not being formed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yaamma Festival, Organising Committee, Bourke</td>
<td>Bring together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the community and region to celebrate Aboriginal culture in Bourke via a festival</td>
<td>Yaamma Festival Management Plan (2006-2008)</td>
<td>Yaamma Festival held in 2006, 2007, 2008. Plan was also used to source funding and support from government/other stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A number of ‘real outcomes’, however, have been provided for members because of their involvement and participation in the BDC. The BDC business plan was adopted in March 2007, together with the business plans for the Garrawal Cultural Centre and Murriwarri Artworks. All of these plans have been put to good use, conceptualising and cementing members’ tourism ideas. The Yaamma Festival of Bourke has operated successfully from 2006 onwards, and remains a strong and uniting community festival with a focus on the celebration of Aboriginal culture. The Garrawal Cultural Centre in Lightning Ridge is still operational, but the Murrumay Murrila (or ‘Ridge’) CDEP has lost its funding. In both of these cases, the Aboriginal tourism projects were community-owned, not just an enterprise of an individual member of the BDC. Individuals’ projects such as Murriwarri Artworks are conducting arts and crafts activities and aiming to produce a range of merchandise in the coming years.

### 6.2 Impacts on the BDC’s Development

The previous section has outlined the key activities undertaken by the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative since its formation. Its goal was to allow the reader a deeper insight into the operations and achievements of the BDC case. This next section,
however, presents a more analytical and critical analysis of the impacts and influences on the BDC’s development. This analysis, based on my participant observer role until 2008 when I essentially ‘left the field’, is centred on four main themes, or impacts, namely: 1) organisational structure; 2) maintaining participation; 3) limited agency involvement; and 4) changes in facilitation.

6.2.1 Organisational structure

At the last meeting of 2007, held in Lightning Ridge in September, those present embarked on a process of changing from a cooperative structure to an incorporated association. This decision was made for several reasons and constraints that had been building over the past few years. Members had considerable experience with Aboriginal incorporated associations, and it was felt that their operations would be greatly simplified via this structure.

In initial discussions concerning the most viable organisational structure for the BDC, the cooperative best suited members’ desires. At this time, Cooperatives Australia was keen to support Aboriginal organisations to take on cooperative structures and the Cooperative Registrar even came to one of the early meetings (Coonabarabran, December, 2003) to promote and discuss its applicability to this organisation. Over time, however, it became increasingly difficult for members to be able to make administrative changes under the cooperative structure. For example, like many Aboriginal words, the word Biamie can be spelt in several ways, such as Bhiamie with an ‘h’. A seemingly trivial matter at first, this became a long and protracted issue when members wanted to officially change the spelling of the organisation’s name from the original Bhiamie to the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. This simple change under the cooperative structure resulted in a great deal of paperwork and administration, lasting more than twelve months. By September 2007, the name change had still not been accommodated.

On top of this issue were other onerous restrictions and conditions. For example, it had become increasingly difficult under the cooperative structure to reach a quorum, maintain membership fees, and change directors or auditors. Under a cooperative structure, members had to attend at least two activities per year to remain active, as well as paying their annual dues (from $20 to $100 per year). These requirements
were proving constraining and detracted from the functionality of the BDC. Additionally, individuals employed within Cooperatives Australia who were originally helpful had moved on, so that good working relationships were lost.

Given members’ considerable experience with the incorporated association as a useful and more simplified structure for Aboriginal organisations, it was decided in late 2007 that the BDC would revoke the cooperative and become incorporated. Upon the reformation of the BDC as an incorporated association in early 2008, membership fees became more affordable and changes could be more easily made. Within the new structure, the organisation also changed its name to the Biamie Dreaming Trail Incorporated.

6.2.2 Maintaining participation

BDC membership and participation went through a process of change during the six year period in which I was involved. While several people remained consistently active, others participated only at particular times, such as when their activities were the focus or when gatherings were held close to home. This participation issue was flagged as early as 2004, when those present at the Ukerbarley meeting voiced their concern about the low turnout. At this point, they stressed the need for the organisation to begin to produce outcomes for members, or risk losing support. There was further comment that the organisation had now been through the formation period, and should be producing ‘outcomes’ for members. The business plans prepared over the ensuing years went some way in building confidence that the BDC could provide real and tangible benefits. Despite this, participation waxed and waned from 2004 onwards, most likely for a number of reasons including the passage of time and associated enthusiasm, travel, size of the region, the vast number of other activities members were involved in, as well as members’ personal interest in the BDC activities.

Travel was obviously a serious factor affecting members’ ability to participate in activities, particularly in terms of cost and distance. As has been discussed previously, the North-West region of NSW stretches across a vast distance, with ‘neighbouring’ towns often more than 100 kilometres apart. Being the only Aboriginal tourism organisation in this large area meant that if participants wished to engage in activities,
then they had to attend meetings. Further, the desired structure of the Cooperative was for regular, face-to-face meetings. Under these structures, the size of the region was a critical issue and strained members’ ability to be involved. In the end, what was seen was that members would generally not travel for BDC events on the other side of the region, if it was possible to hold the activities closer (e.g., 150-200 kilometre drive away, rather than 300–400 kilometres).

This meant that for each meeting or event, at least some members would have to organise transport and accommodation. Accessing transport over such distances was obviously an ongoing factor impacting on BDC members’ ability to attend meetings regularly. Compounding this issue was the cost of fuel, as well as the time away from everyday work and family commitments. For example, four people never made it to the workshop at Gunderbooka National Park in May, 2005, because of car problems on the way (some had to drive in excess of 400 kilometres to attend).

It also became apparent in the first years of operation that when meetings were held in Lightning Ridge, attendance was higher. On the contrary, when events were held in Dubbo, at the very south of the membership region, participation was considerably lower. One obvious reason for this was that the majority of members lived in the north of the region (Goodooga, Walgett, Lightning Ridge and Bourke), and when meetings were held here they had the benefit of assistance from the local CDEP. The Lightning Ridge CDEP had a strong focus on arts, crafts and tourism, and the northern participants seemed to be motivated to pursue these and thus drive more meetings there. Because of these factors, meetings in Lightning Ridge became more popular, and attracted the greatest attendance. Although this was a good thing, over time it meant that members in the south felt more restricted in their engagement and ability to attend (a region this size could have, realistically, supported two Aboriginal tourism planning organisations).

Several additional challenges came to the fore during the latter period of this study. A core group of individuals remained relatively constant in their involvement with the BDC. Others were optimistic about tourism, but their levels of engagement waned over time. In some cases this related to them pursuing other interests or to increasing family commitments, but in others it was the result of their workplaces becoming less supportive, or losing jobs that had enabled them to maintain involvement. The issue
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of members’ workplaces sanctioning and facilitating their engagement in the BDC greatly impacted on participation. In some cases, members had to organise their participation as leave from work, or secure private transport. In other cases, work simply had to take preference.

Further impacting on the decreasing attendance was that several motivated and interested members left the region, and others took jobs or CDEP positions that restricted their participation. Younger members especially, who were either unemployed or not secure in their employment, found it challenging to participate in the Cooperative’s activities when not in their own towns. Shane, for example, the young Aboriginal man who played an important and vigorous role in the earlier years of the BDC, took on a CDEP placement job with a local tourism office. His work days now clashed with most BDC activities, and the lack of a driving licence made long distance travel virtually impossible.

As a result of these compounding issues, attendance throughout 2007 dwindled further, and was now revolving around the regular participation of six core members, four of whom were on the executive as directors. While still under the Cooperative’s rules, three directors needed to be present at each meeting to achieve quorum. If only two of the four core directors could not attend, then there were obvious constraints in administering normal business and operation. One of the directors had taken up a job which restricted involvement, and another had lost her job so travelling to attend became too expensive. On a personal level, several directors had, sadly, lost their mothers during 2007. It was obvious that these losses put great strain on their professional lives and ability to meet organisational goals.

A final issue which affected membership and participation was conflict between Aboriginal members of the BDC. I had very little insight into this dilemma, as it was kept relatively well hidden from discussion and in meetings at which I was present. For some, it was related to long-term distrust or angst resulting from participation in other Aboriginal regional organisations and activities. For others, from what I could gather, there seemed issues related to the fact that many active members of the BDC were ‘traditional’ owners in their respective towns. Aboriginal people who were not ‘from’ the areas traditionally, or who did not have familial and historical links to the land, rarely got involved in BDC activities. I could see other conflicts also affected
members negatively, as they said they would not visit certain towns or areas because of “fears for their safety”. It remains quite unclear to me as to why this conflict occurred, and how it played out in the development of the BDC. However, this is not an issue which I feel is necessary or appropriate to pursue within the confines and goals of this thesis.

In the end, it turned out that only those in ongoing, government-funded positions with access to transport could viably participate in BDC activities. The only exception to this was the one member who was retired, and decided to place involvement as a high priority. By the end of the 2008, the long-term core group of six board members had dropped to three.

### 6.2.3 Limited agency involvement

The BDC aimed to establish itself as the sole, peak Aboriginal tourism organisation in the North-West region of NSW. The results presented in Chapter 4 show that Aboriginal tourism was of ‘interest’ to mainstream tourism officers, RTOs and government agencies, yet their involvement with the BDC was surprisingly limited.

Over the study period, several local tourism officers were involved in the BDC. Given my action-based, participatory role in the BDC’s development, and my own interest and background in tourism planning, I established contact with many of the region’s local tourism officers, and kept them informed of BDC activities as much as I could. In some cases, local tourism officers travelled across the region to participate, but in most situations they only attended when the focus was on their own local government area, or a project by a BDC member living in their region. It is important to note that the people in these tourism officer positions changed considerably over this time. Of the six tourism officers involved initially, only two were in the same position two years later.

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, and based on my own observations and involvement over a six year period, the relationship between local tourism officers/organisations and the BDC did not prove to be very productive. Even with continual encouragement and relationship-building efforts, members of the BDC did not seem to be able to develop effective relationships with these tourism officers. As
these tourism positions were generally marketing focused and the members were still in early product development phases there was often a view that when they were ready to begin marketing they would pursue the relationships later on. The continual change in representatives merely added another layer of complexity and uncertainty to these potential relationships.

The limited involvement of government tourism/business agencies is also worth evaluation here. At several different times government agencies such as Tourism NSW, Area Consultative Committee, AusIndustry would send representatives/consultants to the BDC activities and meetings. All of these organisations were on email and communication lists which received all the minutes and notices of BDC activities. Roxanne, through her work in the Department of State and Regional Development, had close links with both State and Commonwealth agencies and was continually keeping them up-to-date with the concerns of the Cooperative. However, these agencies’ engagement with the BDC was sparse, to say the least. At best, each of the three agency organisations named above did provide a consultant to attend one BDC meeting and speak on business development issues. Although members found these presentations interesting and enjoyable, the consultants generally had little understanding of the nature of the region, the members or their projects. Because of this, there was always a noticeable mismatch between presentation content and members’ needs.

For example, the AusIndustry presentation on marketing programs and funding at the 2005 AGM inspired considerable interest, but its main focus went far beyond the needs of the newly formed Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. The presentation was aimed at businesses that were able to engage in international marketing activities. Clearly, the members of the BDC were not yet able to take advantage of such programs, and were at a loss as to how to apply the concepts. As another example, the meeting in June, 2007 included a presentation by a non-Aboriginal marketing consultant hired by the Area Consultative Committee. The ACC had organised this person to deliver a two-hour workshop aimed at assisting the BDC members in branding, marketing and developing their tourism businesses. Unfortunately for the members, the consultant was not at all familiar with the region or members’ ideas (he was from Tasmania). While the presenter was obviously skilled in the general field of
product promotion, it was evident that people wanted to discuss its direct relevance to their own projects. Without being condescending to either this consultant or the BDC, members were simply not yet at the stage of formally branding their businesses. Again, there was a mismatch between the members’ needs and the government-funded consultant, who had little understanding of the nuances of these regional Indigenous tourism projects.

It is important to note that Tourism NSW, as the state tourism organisation, did engage in two BDC activities. The first was funding a marketing consultant to present to the Bourke workshop in 2003. The second was a presentation from Tourism NSW’s (non-Aboriginal) Aboriginal tourism development manager at the BDC formation meeting in 2004. During this presentation, the Aboriginal tourism manager presented her own model for Aboriginal business support, involving Business Enterprise Centres (BECs) which were funded under the DSRD. Under this proposed model, qualifying Aboriginal tourism businesses could receive levels of support from their local BEC. The local BEC in this region was based in Dubbo, in the far south of the region, and was thus difficult for most members to reach. Interestingly, several had already tried to seek assistance for other matters through this Centre and had been unsuccessful. Tourism NSW did not attend any other BDC activity throughout the study period.

6.2.4 Changes in facilitation

It became clear from the BDC’s inception that to be a working and functional organisation, it needed to be facilitated well at a local/regional level. This had been shown already through the initial interview analysis provided in Chapters 4 and 5. The facilitatory role was taken on largely by Roxanne Smith, and assisted through my presence as participant observer and as a tourism planner with experience that seemed to be relevant to them. Our facilitatory roles were supposed to be temporary until a dedicated Coordinator was employed to run the BDC, thus it was unfortunately outside both of our capacities to provide the support that was required. In the later years some of the individual members took on this role, however this also was seen as only ‘temporary’.
Arguably the biggest impact on the organisation’s development was the departure of Roxanne in 2007. Roxanne had provided a substantial four years to economic development in the region, often covering more than 2000 kilometres per week to do so. She had also increased the number of Aboriginal business clients for the Department of State and Regional Development from one to over eighty. Her new job would allow a break from the long distances and workload necessitated by the sheer size of the region for which she was designated responsibility. Roxanne’s leaving was, understandably, a blow to the organisation, primarily because she had taken on the main administration of the BDC. It was obvious that all of the members were very sad to see her go. She had provided assistance not only to the BDC, but also to individuals’ other business activities across the region.

People clearly seemed to find this change difficult, and were unsure how to proceed without her leadership and facilitation. Roxanne was to be replaced with another Aboriginal business development manager who had been working with her for some time. From my perspective, he had a much more ‘hands off’ approach, and it seemed an interesting juncture now for the organisation. To this point, members from the Lightning Ridge CDEP had taken on a substantial coordination and secretariat role after Roxanne’s departure. Unfortunately, in April 2009 the Ridge CDEP was told that it was unsuccessful in its application to continue operation of the local CDEP. All funding was to expire in June, which meant its ability to keep the BDC going was now abolished.

Although I have stayed involved and actively participated over the six year period, my engagement also lessened around the same time as Roxanne’s departure. This was due largely to my increasing family commitments and the practical requirements of writing the PhD. However, I am still in contact with some of the members. What happens to the BDC after the loss of support from its current facilitators is, as I write this, yet to be seen. Funding for a coordinator has not yet been achieved, despite several funding applications and interest shown by government agencies. In spite of the many external constraints and changes that the BDC has recently faced, there remains interest from both members and mainstream tourism organisations in taking the Biamie Dreaming Trail Incorporated forward.
6.3 Summary

This chapter has outlined the main achievements and outcomes of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, based on my involvement and observations as a participant. In general, the BDC was viewed by its Aboriginal members as a useful and appropriate place to seek support and advice about tourism. This was largely because it was seen as ‘their’ organisation: a North-West cooperative driven by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people, where they could sound out ideas, talk on their own terms and be provided with relevant, ongoing support.

The key BDC events were usually structured meetings or AGMs, though most deliberately involved some type of practical workshop or business planning activity. The number of participants varied greatly depending on what was being discussed and where meetings were being held.

In total, nine Indigenous tourism projects were planned and facilitated, providing members with a sense of some ‘real outcomes’. Four major issues impacted on the BDC’s development and were discussed in detail. These factors related to organisational structure, maintaining membership and participation, a perceived lack of mainstream agency involvement, and changes in facilitation.

This chapter is the final in the suite of three results chapters. Analysis of in-depth interviews with Indigenous tourism stakeholders and members of the BDC, as well as my observations as an active participant in the case study, have demonstrated a number of important issues and challenges which are present in planning for regional Indigenous tourism. The next chapter discusses these issues, and offers a new framework for regional Indigenous tourism planning.
VIGNETTE 7: Roxanne is leaving

From my field notes:

**December, 2005:** Just spoke to Roxanne on Friday. She is having a couple of job interviews next week. She has so much experience now, I think; she should have no problem. Roxanne has done an amazing job in her current position and no doubt needs the break that will come from having perhaps a smaller region to deal with and less direct involvement with such a wide range of clients.

But what will happen with the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative? There are decisions that need to be made, business plans to be developed, consultants to be appointed, facilitators to be found. I wonder also who else has been told about Rox leaving. Probably Paul, Rod and Gabrielle, but everybody else will find out after the next meeting. What will they think? How will people like John and Lisa and Shane feel? For them, this has been their big break.

I also contact Shane. He is going to speak to his people about the Ukerbarley property. He has been ‘about to’ chase them up since June. Fantastic opportunities abound for him, but I think about how he is going to make it happen. It is not about getting someone else to do it all, but others helping him feel secure and confident in his ideas. How can he be facilitated to feel it is okay to make decisions? Shane is continuously going to the community to seek reassurance, which is good, but in the end only he can make the decisions to ensure things happen.

**January, 2006:** Surprisingly, Rox did not get the jobs. She’s staying on in the West. I cannot imagine why she wasn’t successful, but it was something to do with a “lack of qualifications”. Roxanne is now trying to enrol in some university courses, and executive development training through her department.

**September, 2007:** Rox is really leaving this time. She got a job with the same department, but in a different town. Now what? The BDC needs another facilitator. What are members going to do and think? Rox’s replacement is taking over, and this means another person to get used to and establish a relationship with. Without Roxanne’s leadership, we all wonder about the direction and future of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative.
CHAPTER 7: STRENGTHS, SUPPORT AND SELF-DETERMINATION: OUTLINING A FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL INDIGENOUS TOURISM PLANNING

Well over a decade ago, the National Strategy on Aboriginal tourism (ATSIC, 1997) stressed that engaging Indigenous people in tourism must begin with Indigenous control. The academic literature on Indigenous tourism has generally made much the same statement (Bennett, 2005; Hinch & Butler, 1996, 2007; Pitcher et al., 1999; Ryan & Aicken, 2005). More recent examinations of Indigenous engagement in tourism (Nielsen et al., 2008; Russell-Mundine, 2007; Zeppel, 2007) have reinforced this point, but have gone on to show that the mainstream tourism industry still has difficulty in effectively engaging Indigenous people.

Despite calls for Indigenous control in tourism, it appears Indigenous people remain marginalised and isolated in accessing and developing tourism enterprises. The case study of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative highlights these constraints, but also shows the power and positive potential of tourism as a tool for social and economic development and self-sufficiency. The BDC case study outlined in this thesis provides an example of Indigenous peoples coming together, pooling their ideas and aspirations to create their own Indigenous-run tourism planning organisation. For the BDC, tourism was seen as providing a range of interesting and exciting opportunities for Aboriginal people in the North-West region.

This chapter pulls together key themes and summations derived from the case study evidence presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. It then discusses the application and meaning of these results, as applied to the wider literature on regional tourism planning, Indigenous business support, and capacity-building. What can be learned from the Biamie Dreaming case study is that a number of core principles must drive a regional Indigenous-driven tourism planning. These principles are discussed in the following section. The later part of this discussion chapter argues that the essence of regional Indigenous tourism planning is based upon a framework of strengths, support and self-determination. These ‘pillar’ concepts help drive a new Indigenous tourism planning agenda: one where Indigenous people have the choice, empowerment and control to direct their own engagement in the tourism industry.
7.1 Core Principles for Regional Indigenous Tourism Planning: Learning from the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative

Based on the qualitative, grounded analysis of the case study material outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, it can be seen that five core ‘principles’ are important for guiding Indigenous regional tourism planning. Namely, these principles are that regional Indigenous tourism planning should be Indigenous-driven; focus on positive potential and strengths; offer culturally-appropriate support and business training; allow for regional collaboration and networking; and, finally, be supported by good governmental facilitation.

7.1.1 Indigenous-driven

The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative case study shows the desire by Indigenous people that Indigenous tourism planning activities be Indigenous-driven. This issue was raised at the very first tourism workshop in late 2003, and remained an essential feature and discussion topic for the BDC throughout the study period. The need for the BDC to be ‘Aboriginal’ related to several factors, including control over the organisation, cultural and personal safety, development of programs for and by Aboriginal people, and the provision of an Aboriginal-focused business network.

In the BDC case, the divide between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people in tourism was evident, and goes some way in explaining why Indigenous autonomy was viewed as so important. The separation between Black and White (at least at a local/regional level) was a systemic issue, related to prejudice, Aboriginal marginalisation in tourism planning and the absence of adequate facilitatory measures. Both groups were obviously keen to develop Indigenous tourism however non-Aboriginal people were generally the providers of support, services and funding. The Aboriginal people interviewed in both phases of this study wanted to turn this around, forming a body which would be Aboriginal-directed and run, with a focus on facilitating Aboriginal people to develop their own structures and tourism ideas.

As was also demonstrated in the empirical chapters, Aboriginal people felt that the benefits of mainstream tourism were, more often than not, lost on them. Similarly, non-Aboriginal tourism professionals spoke of the difficulties of getting the ‘right’
Aboriginal people involved in tourism projects. These challenges were seen as fundamental to the divide between the groups, and strong motivating factors behind Aboriginal people wanting their ‘own’ organisation. This finding resonates more widely with the concept of self-determination, which suggests that Indigenous people be in control of decisions and policies related to their lives (Behrendt, 2003; Commonwealth of Australia, 1991; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). In this manner the BDC was seen as providing a space for Aboriginal people to focus tourism discussions and decisions.

From the outset it was important that BDC membership be restricted in voting rights to Aboriginal people only. All of the members were involved in other Aboriginal organisations where this type of structure was normal, and they felt most comfortable with it. Several non-Aboriginal people did not initially agree with this “restrictive” structure, but not one Aboriginal person shared this perspective. For them, Aboriginal control was the only way that their lives, issues and ideas would be understood. This is not to say that there was no desire to work with non-Aboriginal people; only that the Executive should remain Aboriginal.

On many occasions, BDC members spoke of the importance of involving White regional tourism organisations, tour operators and government support personnel. As pointed out earlier, my engagement as a non-Indigenous person was actively encouraged and considered critical to the organisation’s development. Good relationships with non-Indigenous people and mainstream tourism and governmental organisations were viewed as essential.

Once the BDC was formed, it was clear that members were proud of their tourism organisation and the fact that it was Aboriginal-driven. Members began to use the Coop’s logo in their business planning and promotions, as well as in other organisations in which they were involved (Land Councils, youth development, CDEPs, event organisations). The BDC and its incorporation was proof of the interest in Indigenous-driven enterprises, and something they could tangibly promote and identify with.

The Indigenous-driven structure of the BDC also provided a degree of cultural and personal ‘safety’. Several members spoke of the discomfort, conflict or
embarrassment they had experienced in previous working relationships with non-Aboriginal tourism organisations. In fact, very few Aboriginal people seemed to feel comfortable in contacting or interacting with their local tourism organisations. In the BDC, however, Aboriginal people could set the tone of language, the style of workshops and discussions, and the content and the context for all activities.

Many of the members had considerable experience with strategic and community governance. While Roxanne and I played a role in directing and facilitating activities, these were always primarily driven and endorsed by the members of the BDC. More importantly, perhaps, Aboriginal people felt much more open in talking about issues of land, culture, family and business, without feeling conflict or the need to justify to a White audience. The BDC provided a space for Aboriginal people to talk about business and tourism activities, but without having to separate it from other aspects of their everyday lives.

7.1.2 Positive potential

The case study evidence, both prior to and after the formation of the BDC, shows that Aboriginal people viewed tourism as a positive opportunity. This related not only to economic development, but also the potential for social benefits and cultural resilience. In the Biamie case, the focus was on sharing experiences with others, telling stories and healing through tourism. This was an optimistic view shared by the non-Aboriginal people interviewed, who spoke of the North-West’s significant Aboriginal population as an “asset” for tourism, rich in history, contemporary culture and local talent.

Traditional cultural knowledge and historical sites were an obvious focus for the BDC in planning for Aboriginal tourism, but contemporary life and art were perceived to be of equal value in developing tourism experiences. Depending on individuals’ interests, for example, it was seen that visitors could spend time fishing with Aboriginal people or visiting the 8,500 year old fish traps at Brewarrina. Visiting missions where many Aboriginal people had been placed was not only seen as a part of Australia’s colonial ‘past’; it also offered contemporary tourism opportunities and stories. Further, some Aboriginal people in the North-West had only moved from the missions in the last decade or so, and others still remain on missions today. In these
ways, history and contemporary life were inextricably linked and provided interesting tourism experiences.

In the BDC case study evidence, no ‘one’ Aboriginal tourism experience or activity was deemed more important than another. It was accepted that depending on the individuals involved, the experiences on offer would differ. This cultural complexity and diversity was seen as a great strength of Indigenous tourism potential in the region, and the BDC was well placed to drive it.

This view that there is a wide range of potential Indigenous tourism experiences is an important strengths-based finding given the broader debates about whether there is enough ‘demand’ to warrant investment in Indigenous tourism in Australia. Often such demand studies have quite narrowly conceived ideas about what constitutes Indigenous tourism experiences, compared with how Indigenous people see it. Schaper, Carlsen and Jennings (2007) and Zeppel (2001) support this claim, suggesting that there has been too great a concentration on the demand side of Indigenous tourism research, at the expense of exploring what Indigenous people themselves want out of tourism. For the Aboriginal people involved in this study, large-scale demand forecasting has limited use at a local and regional level, and some argued that such research often seems trivial and total out of their context. As the case study demonstrated, a vast – almost endless – range of tourism ventures were seen as possible.

Taking a positive and ‘strengths-based’ approach toward Aboriginal tourism planning was thus critical to the development of the BDC. A strengths-based approach is one that challenges previous ‘deficit’ approaches to Western constructions of knowledge concerning Indigenous peoples. Rather than focusing on the negatives, challenges and disadvantages so often espoused in White discourses on Indigenous communities, a strengths-based approach talks about competence, empowerment, expertise and resilience: “drawing on the strengths of the individual is the best way to reduce the negative and increase the positive in individuals and families” (Kana’iaupuni, 2005, p. 36). As Kana’iaupuni (2005) argues, strengths-based perspectives “bring to the fore [Native Hawaiian] strengths that have long been misrepresented, misrecognized and undervalued” (p. 32). This issue is described in more detail in the next section.
7.1.3 Culturally-appropriate support

Another essential principle of a regional Indigenous tourism body like the BDC is its ability to focus on training and business support. Linked with the need for an Aboriginal-driven, opportunity-focused tourism organisation, the BDC case identified that culturally-appropriate business support and training was also crucial to successful Indigenous tourism planning. The need for Aboriginal business support was clearly recognised by everyone involved in this study and was in many ways the primary focus of the establishment of the BDC.

Other researchers have similarly commented on the need for Aboriginal businesses to be supported at all stages of their development (Finlayson 1991a, 1991b; Zeppel 2001, Buultjens et al., 2003). In a recent Northern Territory Aboriginal tourism plan (NTTC, 2004), for example, business support and mentoring were stressed throughout the document as critical to the sector’s development and the focus on two Indigenous business hubs currently being established. Similarly, in the Tourism White Paper (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003), the focus was almost solely on capacity building efforts for Indigenous tourism businesses. During the early part of this thesis, the Howard Government launched the Business Ready Program for Indigenous Tourism (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004). This program was to ‘mentor’ ten Aboriginal tourism businesses to reach targeted annual turnovers of $1 million per annum. There were ten mentors initially funded around the country to support Indigenous tourism businesses. Indigenous capacity-building and training for sustainable business development is obviously a topic on which there is considerable agreement from tourism and government organisations alike.

However, what the BDC case study shows is the necessity of business support being offered in a meaningful and culturally appropriate manner. Interestingly, at least two of the BDC members were involved in the Business Ready mentoring program, but only for limited periods. They reported difficulty with the mentor style and program. Further, their businesses were only at an early development stage, rather than being operational; because of this they were actually dropped from the mentoring program. Business support and mentoring on its own, as can be seen, is not enough. As the BDC case study and interviews revealed, support needs to be timely, relevant, culturally-sensitive, and delivered in ways meaningful to Aboriginal people. Members
as well as other Indigenous tourism stakeholders felt that Indigenous business support should be framed around their views of the world, mindful of cultural values, knowledge and histories as well as people’s contemporary interests and experiences.

Much of this sentiment was related to the entrenched feeling that White organisations did not understand what is important to Aboriginal people. Several of the BDC members had expressed their business ideas to local and regional tourism organisations in the past, but faced conflict, contempt and a lack of understanding. In her work in the South Pacific, Berno (2007) has made similar assertions. She outlines the need for tourism education to be designed in an Indigenous fashion; only then can it truly address issues of sustainability, empowerment and self-determination. As Berno states, any Indigenous tourism training should incorporate “cultural nuances... [be] adaptable and flexible ... and blend the modern and the traditional” (p. 39).

For the BDC members, support for tourism ideas needed to be ‘culturally-appropriate’. Aboriginal people knew their country and the tourism experiences they could offer, but only spoke about these when they felt comfortable and safe in expressing their views, without judgement or prejudice. Much has been written in the Indigenous health and medical literature around inter-related terms such as ‘cultural security and safety’, ‘culturally appropriate’, ‘culturally aware’, ‘culturally valid’, and ‘culturally competent’ (Phillips, 2004, p. 8). While each is a complex concept in itself, being culturally appropriate generally refers to “ensuring that individuals and systems … are aware of the impact of their own culture and cultural values on the delivery of services, and that they have some knowledge of, respect for and sensitivity towards the cultural needs of others” (p. 8).

Further to these cultural features, there was a call for business support to attend to practical, ‘on the ground’ training in the areas of administration, business planning and finance. This was highlighted in presentations where consultants (e.g., from Tourism NSW, ACC) provided marketing and branding workshops for BDC members. Many members felt that these ‘outside experts’ had little understanding of the region, its tourism opportunities or their Aboriginal audience. Again, this demonstrates the need for training and facilitation to be delivered in a localised, culturally-appropriate manner. This issue was emphasised time and time again, as each new consultant or presenter was invited to speak to the BDC.
What was also evident in the BDC case is that people preferred face-to-face contact and business support, with regular and ongoing contact. In a regional area like the North-West of NSW, this means significant travel requirements, which was one of the key positives of Roxanne Smith’s approach to business management. Research has demonstrated that regular contact between business support personnel and Indigenous people entering tourism is essential; without it experience has shown that success is infrequent at best. Judy Bennett’s (2005) study of Indigenous tourism in Cape York is worth noting here. In her capacity-building project, Bennett worked closely and over a long period of time with Willie Gordon, mentoring, building social capital and assisting his own Aboriginal tourism ideas. It was because of this supportive and Aboriginal-driven process that Gordon’s cultural tour is still now an ongoing success.

Another critical issue relates to Aboriginal peoples’ ability to access sufficient finance to aid tourism business development. Indeed, this factor has been the topic of several papers on the challenges in Indigenous tourism development (e.g., ATSIC, 1997; Buultjens et al., 2003; Finlayson, 1991a; Finlayson, 1991b; Zeppel, 2001). Aboriginal people in the North-West NSW region, as in other areas of Australia, feel considerably handicapped in terms of their ability to access funds for tourism development. Studies such as that by Buultjens et al. (2003) have outlined that in NSW in particular, there are limited funds beyond the initial planning stages. BDC members often enquired about funding opportunities only to find decreasing opportunities. Over the life of this research project, several of the members’ Aboriginal organisations were themselves de-funded, either losing CDEP contracts or their funding programs expiring.

BDC members also needed support from their own workplaces so that they could participate. Many BDC members already had jobs and were highly involved in a number of other Aboriginal and community-based organisations. Because of these time constrictions and ‘committee-overload’, it was crucial that their workplaces supported the BDC and the development of tourism enterprise. While other ‘cultural’ or ‘bureaucratic/ government related’ meetings and workshops were supported, there were several participants for whom being engaged in regional Aboriginal tourism planning was considered a ‘conflict of interest’, or simply a personal interest of the participants. In such cases some members had to take leave from their workplaces to
attend workshops or not use their government cars to attend. Such issues of organisational support seem critical to Aboriginal peoples’ development of an Indigenous tourism sector.

Finally, the BDC was seen as providing a forum for Aboriginal people to network with other Aboriginal businesses/tourism operators. This networking allowed members to share ideas, build on others’ experiences and build collaborative regional tourism experiences. Across the North-West, there are very few Aboriginal people involved in tourism, either in their own businesses or other mainstream activities. Therefore, it is easy for individuals to feel isolated. The BDC played an important role in overcoming this sense of isolation and marginalisation.

### 7.1.4 Regional collaboration

The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative was proud of its success in bringing collaboration across the North-West region – collaboration between Aboriginal people and mainstream organisations, as well as among different Aboriginal Nation groups. In addition, a regional collaborative tourism organisation was valued because of its ability to act as a ‘resource centre’. In this manner, the BDC became a focal point of tourism discussions, business ideas, as well as for sharing cultural knowledge and stories. On behalf of its members, the BDC could gather information about funding opportunities (e.g., ISBF, ATDP), training, and other government programs that were considered useful to an emerging Indigenous tourism sector. It was viewed by members and others interviewed that a local, regional focus would help to boost interest and participation in Aboriginal tourism activities. In fact, the BDC proved to be a forum that could pull many Aboriginal people together to discuss tourism and participate in workshops in a culturally-appropriate and safe manner. This is shown by the large number of collaborative activities which took place between 2003 and 2008.

Prior to the formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, there were no organisations dedicated to developing or supporting Indigenous tourism in the North-West region. While the Department of State and Regional Development employed Roxanne Smith to facilitate Indigenous business enterprise at large, she was stretched across a vast distance of the state; tourism was only one part of her job. Therefore, she
was often operating outside her role in working with the BDC. Besides Roxanne, there existed mainstream tourism organisations and local council tourism bodies, however none of these was specifically mandated or supported to take on the role of Indigenous tourism development. Indigenous tourism in the region was thus quite fragmented and ad hoc, without strategic collaboration among organisations; the BDC attempted to fill this gap with a level of regional coordination.

Research has shown that regional tourism organisations (RTOs) and business networks in Australia do not readily involve or collaborate with Aboriginal people, and thus they remain isolated from mainstream regional planning for tourism and business. For example, Zeppel (2007) has recognised the general absence of Aboriginal people in regional tourism networks. Nielsen et al. (2008) found a similar result in their Queensland-based study of Indigenous engagement in tourism. These findings help explain why the collaborative functions of the BDC were so highly valued. In fact, it was almost out of sheer desperation for the need to be heard that the BDC was formed. The BDC gave an autonomous, empowered Aboriginal voice on tourism which in turn could communicate with a range of government, tourism and community bodies across the region. In this sense, the BDC became seen as the peak organisation for Aboriginal tourism in the North-West of NSW, representing Aboriginal views and ideas. It is safe to say as I write this that no other organisation within the region could perform this role.

In this way, ‘collaboration’ meant much more than the mainstream tourism industry ‘consulting’ with Aboriginal people regarding tourism planning or developments. This is often the way that Indigenous collaboration is viewed in the tourism and planning literature. Taking a critical view, Berno (2007) argues that tourism planners and researchers merely see collaboration, consultation and/or partnership as a way to get Indigenous people ‘on side’ to ensure that tourism developments happen. Berno warns that such approaches rarely lead to empowerment and self-determination of Aboriginal people.

The BDC was also collaborative at a different level, in that it drew together members and participants from at least four major tribal/language and traditional owner groups within the region (Waiwan, Nyampa, Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi). Members were proud of their people and nations, their country and their communities and further and most
importantly, they were proud of the BDC being able to encapsulate such a vast array of cultures, landforms, peoples and experiences. While in some cases members knew each other, despite living considerable distances apart, in others it was through the BDC network that they met relatives, identifying and discussing their own genealogy and histories. Ultimately, the BDC was unique in that it brought people together across tribal and language boundaries. These connections added substantially to members feeling culturally safe and comfortable (Atkinson, 2002; Phillips, 2004).

Hall (2000) has recognised that collaborative tourism networks take time to establish and to garner trust among those involved. Despite their potential challenges, however, he suggests that the benefits of collaborative efforts far exceed those of individual businesses operating on their own. This was definitely validated in the case of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. The collaboration between White and Black, Black and Black, and tourism and other industries, was a crucial principle that aided the BDC’s development and made it so appealing to its members.

### 7.1.5 Governmental facilitation

Studies have shown that RTOs, whether mainstream or Indigenous, require funding, support and facilitation by local, state and national governments (Dredge & Lawrence, 2007; Gibson, Lynch, & Morrison, 2005; Jenkins & Sorenson, 1996; Zahra, 2006). In Australia, local and regional tourism planning often takes place within government funded authorities, such as local councils, tourism and events committees, tourism bureaux, or under the banner of state-funded bodies like Tourism NSW and other government departments (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hall, 1991). Governments provide a range of essential tourism-related services, including visitor facilities and infrastructure, tourism strategies, visitor centres, marketing, and land use planning (Dredge, 2007). They also provide the funding to staff and facilitate tourism organisations. In these ways, the important role that all levels of government play in assisting regional tourism planning cannot be underestimated.

As discussed previously, Indigenous tourism is not facilitated well under current governmental structures in Australia. Often, state-run organisations like Tourism Queensland and Tourism NSW will have one dedicated person to deal with all Indigenous tourism matters (Zeppel, 2007). Sometimes, these people are Indigenous,
but often they are not, as was the case with Tourism NSW at the time of the BDC formation. Organisations like the BDC can thus find it confronting to access the benefits that governments might be able to provide. As many BDC members reflected, none of them had ever been involved in formulating regional tourism plans. Several had been involved in local tourism activities, however they spoke of feeling marginalised and noted a sense of resistance to their engagement.

This is why dedicated government support and facilitation is so critical for the establishment and ongoing success of Indigenous tourism organisations like the BDC. One of the key enablers in the formation of the BDC was the support provided by Roxanne Smith in her role as Indigenous business manager for the DRSD. Her presence and facilitation of the Cooperative made governmental information much easier to access, and funding opportunities were highlighted such as that for workshops and planning activities. As mentioned throughout this case study, however, Roxanne was already stretched in her very busy position. Roxanne has now left her role with the Department in this region, and while she has been replaced, there is some uncertainty as to the direction and facilitation of the BDC.

The Cooperative’s members felt they needed someone to ‘champion’ the BDC, a person who could dedicate their time and effort to managing the organisation, as well as assisting its members in the development of their tourism initiatives. This facilitator would work for and with the members of the BDC, providing local, accessible and ongoing business support. This staffing issue required governmental attention and funding, as the BDC could not privately support such a structure.

In this context, it should be noted that in other developed countries, Indigenous tourism has become more highly recognised and supported by government at all levels. Both Canada and New Zealand, for example, have dedicated regional Aboriginal tourism organisations and include substantial references to their respective Indigenous peoples within national tourism strategies (KPMG, 2002; Zahra, 2006). Aboriginal Tourism Canada, for example, has a board of executives which is made up of members of various Regional Aboriginal Tourism Associations (RATAs). These RATAs play a critical role in all strategy areas, including developing, marketing and supporting Aboriginal tourism in Canada (Aboriginal Tourism Canada, 2003). Australia has apparently not followed suit.
Chapter 7: Strengths, Support and Self-determination

The National Strategy on Aboriginal tourism, for instance (ATSIC, 1997) did not recommend the establishment of regional Aboriginal tourism organisations. Rather, it stated that Aboriginal operators in Australia simply join existing mainstream tourism networks. The BDC case study has demonstrated that Indigenous people in North-West NSW, at least, feel that autonomous, Indigenous-driven organisations are essential in supporting the region’s Indigenous tourism sector.

7.2 Strengths, Support and Self-Determination: Outlining a Framework for Regional Indigenous Tourism Planning

The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative case study has shown how, in the absence of adequate regional support, a group of Aboriginal people in the North-West region of New South Wales came together to form their own tourism planning organisation. We have learned from the BDC that a number of guiding principles are important for sustainable Indigenous tourism planning at a regional level: the need for Indigenous-driven organisations; a focus on positive potential and opportunities; culturally-appropriate business support; regional collaboration, and appropriate facilitation by the government sector and regional tourism organisations.

Distilling the essence of these five concepts, it would appear that regional Indigenous tourism planning rests upon three core ‘pillars’: strengths, support and self-determination. That is, regional Indigenous tourism planning should be built upon Indigenous peoples’ positive strengths and capabilities; it should be adequately supported at a regional and governmental level, and it should be self-determined by Indigenous people themselves, who direct and control the tourism planning process and its outcomes.

7.2.1 Strengths

The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative case study has demonstrated that Indigenous tourism engagement should be conceptualised on a strengths-based approach. This means taking into account Indigenous peoples’ views of the world and building upon their positive achievements, skills and potential. A strengths-based perspective also means moving beyond an authoritative, ‘deficit’ approach which for too long has...
dominated Western mindsets in thinking about, engaging with or studying Indigenous peoples (Kana’iaupuni, 2005; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; S. Wilson, 2003). According to Kana’iaupuni (2005, p. 35), speaking within a Native Hawai’ian context:

Strengths-based research...begins with the premise of creating social change. In contrast to the expert-driven, top-down approach assumed by deficit models, it means treating the subjects of the study as actors within multi-layered contexts and employing the multiple strengths of individuals, families and communities to overcome or prevent difficulties.

The strengths-based perspective has found recent favour in critical, resilience-focused approaches to social work (Benard, 2004; Saleebey, 2000), education (Kana’iaupuni, 2005), and medical pedagogy (Phillips, 2004). In advocating for strengths rather than deficits, researchers and practitioners have had to rethink their methods, working to debunk any myths that Indigenous societies are ‘primitive’ or ‘less developed’ and need to be ‘improved’ (Phillips, 2004). Ultimately, a strengths-based position is about giving empowerment, voice and political power to those involved in research and development activities (Kana’iaupuni, 2005; Phillips, 2004). Strengths-based and action oriented projects go hand in hand, as Saleebey (2000, p. 128) notes: “the strengths perspective is ... about uncovering, naming, embellishing, and celebrating abilities, talents, and aspirations in the service of desired change”.

Taking a strengths-based approach is most appropriate for non-Indigenous people working with Indigenous individuals or communities. This is because it is non-Indigenous educators, planners and researchers who need to move beyond the deficit approach into which they have been cultured to thinking about Indigenous people. As Kana’iaupuni notes, most Indigenous people are already aware of their strengths and achievements; it is others who have had to redefine their paradigms and ways of thinking. Phillips (2004, p. 15) shares a similar sentiment, linking firmly to postcolonial critiques:

Indigenous Australian identities, while changed irreparably as a result of colonisation, are not forged by the process of colonisation alone ... Indigenous Australians existed before colonisation in healthy, functional societies, and continue to exert many strengths, unique talents and survival skills.
Chapter 7: Strengths, Support and Self-determination

It is argued here that the deficit approach has dominated much of the Indigenous tourism literature, particularly in the ‘invisible’, ‘identified’ and ‘stakeholder’ research phases outlined in Chapter 2. Returning to these stages of the Critical Spectrum of Indigenous Tourism Literature (see Figure 2.1), the early literature of the mid 1970s and into the 1990s endeavoured to document Indigenous ‘culture’ and define Indigenous tourism. While this period provided great excitement about the newness of the sector, an over-abundance of definitions and conceptualisations were offered without any real engagement with, or voice from, Indigenous peoples themselves. In these ways, Indigenous people and their accounts of being involved in tourism and/or the research process were – and arguably still are today – rendered invisible.

The invisible approach has also facilitated a considerable amount of market research, which centres on the assessment of demand for a pre-determined vision of Indigenous tourism. To argue about whether there is or is not sufficient demand insinuates that Aboriginal people do not have real and interesting stories to offer to visitors. The demand exists because the BDC does, and because Aboriginal people exist and will continue to do so. Further, demand forecasting at a national or state level had limited use to members of the BDC, when most of their tourism opportunities involved capitalising on local and regional networks already established. When such restrictive views are taken towards Indigenous tourism, it is at the expense of Indigenous peoples’ strengths and existing skill-bases, and does not recognise their agency and control.

Responding to the invisibility of Indigenous people, we saw the development of the identified and stakeholder phases. These phases moved towards research that at least included and advocated for Indigenous voice and content, showing Indigenous people as real, live individuals taking part in the tourism industry. A number of studies and reports in these phases (ATSIC, 1997; Pitcher et al., 1999; Zeppel, 2001) highlight a broad range of tourism opportunities, but still a fairly narrow view of Indigenous engagement prevails. The stakeholder stage in particular emphasises the barriers and challenges of developing Indigenous tourism (e.g., Buultjens et al., 2003; Finlayson, 1991a; Zeppel, 2001).
A new Indigenous tourism planning framework, underscored by the learnings of the BDC, would move away from the invisible, identified and stakeholder phases, towards an Indigenous-driven approach which builds on strengths, confidence and support for business-development activities, rather than on deficits and constraints. As BDC members discussed, they already drew from a wide range of life experiences and talents, and had a number of ideas for tourism businesses. They were more interested in talking opportunities than difficulties or constraints; the ‘shoulds’, rather than the ‘should nots’. What they needed were the structures and supports to be able to drive their tourism planning ideas.

### 7.2.2 Support

A new agenda for regional Indigenous tourism planning must be built on strengths, but it also needs strong and culturally-appropriate support. This support is required not only in terms of general business development, training and capacity-building. These are important factors, as shown by the case study evidence in the BDC, but Indigenous tourism organisations should also be places of healing, sharing and cultural safety.

The Biamie Dreaming case demonstrated that gaining support from ‘mainstream’ institutions and governments was required, but how to do this effectively remained a challenge. Finding the right balance between support and self-reliance is a complex issue for Indigenous peoples around the world (Peters-Little, 1999; Pearson, 2004). Peters-Little (1999), in her study of Aboriginal self-definition in North-Western NSW, argues that support for Indigenous governance always needs to be recognised within the goals of self-determination. Further, that ‘support’ must be clearly linked to Indigenous peoples’ cultural and professional knowledge. The establishment of a dedicated, Indigenous-driven organisation like the BDC went a long way in overcoming these challenges and finding a balance.

Research has repeatedly argued that state and federal governments in Australia take a fragmented, *ad hoc* approach to the facilitation of Indigenous tourism businesses (Buultjens et al., 2003; Whitford et al., 1999). As in other countries, like New Zealand and Canada, regional Indigenous tourism organisations are ideally placed to provide business mentoring, as well as coordinating a range of other support mechanisms to
developing Indigenous tourism operators. Facilitating a regional, local level of Indigenous tourism governance would help in delivering a more strategic approach, but it still requires support from government, as do mainstream tourism organisations (Jenkins, 1995, 2000; Pforr, 2007; Zahra, 2006). Until the formation of the BDC, Indigenous people in the North-West region had never had a forum, structure or space to talk about tourism. During my five-year study period with the BDC, I was also unaware of any planning by Regional Tourism Organisations in which members were invited to be involved. A regional Indigenous tourism organisation like the BDC then, can offer better support, facilitation and coordination for Indigenous tourism development.

The BDC research has made clear the importance of local, regional, and Indigenous-driven tourism planning. The role of RTOs like Tourism NSW in supporting such developments is crucial, as it is at all levels of government across Australia. Unfortunately, this support was not forthcoming in the BCD case. As in other states and territories in Australia, New South Wales has had established tourism regions and regional tourism organisations (RTOs) since the mid 1980s (Jenkins, 2005). The primary goals of these RTOs have been regional tourism promotion, product development and planning and coordination at a local level (Jenkins, 2000). However, more than a decade on from the recommendations of the National Strategy (ATSIC, 1997) there has been limited support from RTOs for Indigenous-driven tourism development and networking opportunities (Buultjens et al., 2003; Nielsen et al., 2008; Zeppel, 2007). While some State Tourism Organisations (STOs) have dedicated Indigenous tourism officers whose roles are, partially, product development, the main focus is still with the promotion of established Indigenous products.

Tourism NSW, for example, has not developed an Indigenous tourism strategy, although it does offer a product manual for promotion of existing tourism operators. The STO has developed a document titled *Principles for Developing Indigenous Tourism* (Tourism NSW, 2006). The focus of this report is to provide advice to non-Indigenous tourism operators on how to develop Indigenous products and best consult with Indigenous communities in doing so.

While it is evident that good governmental relationships are important, the BDC case also emphasised the need for practical business support, training and mentoring. In
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terms of the Indigenous Tourism Research Spectrum outlined in Chapter 2, much of the ‘stakeholder’ research (e.g. Finlayson, 1991a; Finlayson, 1991b; Mapunda, 2001; Schaper, 1999) has examined the skills needed to enter into tourism. Stakeholder planners and scholars suggest a strategic approach to business skill development, supporting programs through the different stages of business development, from initial visioning through to establishment and operation (Buultjens et al., 2003). For example, business mentoring of Indigenous tourism operators was trialled in Australia via the Business Ready Program (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004). Such support programs, however, do not necessarily start from a strengths-based approach, nor do they clearly advocate for Indigenous self-determination. Authors like Whitford, Bell and Watkins (1999) have argued that business support programs of this nature are too focused on the rationalist goals of economic development and commercial potential. That is, there is little emphasis on recognising or facilitating Indigenous entrepreneurs to develop their own ideas of tourism or how they should engage with the industry. As attested by several BDC members’ forced withdrawal from the Business Ready Program, this type of business support can often alienate, rather than facilitate Indigenous tourism entrepreneurship.

Judy Bennett and Willie Gordon’s (2007) ideas again offer useful insights into the best methods of supporting Indigenous-driven entrepreneurship. They advocate a close, two-way learning process where both mentor and mentee are educated in working with each other. That is, the non-Indigenous mentor is educated about Indigenous forms of entrepreneurship and business development, while the mentee learns about building social capital and capacity via support from non-Indigenous organisations. In this way, deficit/authoritative approaches which centre on challenges and hurdles which need to be crossed, are replaced with strengths-based relationships which are more localised and culturally meaningful (Bennett, 2005; Berno, 2007).

It is also important that any business or governmental support is delivered in a culturally-appropriate and safe way. From the outset, those involved in the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative were keen to say that tourism development must be viewed in terms greater than mere economic potential. Colton and Harris (2007) have recognised that Indigenous business is more complex than simply jobs or money; it is also about empowerment, wellness and learning. Johnston (2003) has made a similar
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point, in that “successful partnerships with indigenous communities occur when both parties take a sincere interest in relationship building, placing people and not business at the centre of discussion” (p. 122). In this regard, other issues such as tourism’s potential to assist with cultural preservation, pride, and reconciliation are equally as valid as any economic benefits. Further, as discussed, business development, marketing and branding workshops led by people with limited understanding or awareness of their Indigenous perspectives often produced limited benefits. What Aboriginal members wanted were facilitators and mentors who made them feel comfortable, safe and understood.

Cultural safety is a crucial factor in Atkinson’s (2002) work on Indigenous trauma and healing. She argues that Indigenous people are often used to perceiving the world as unsafe, due to previous and current practices of colonial societies. Cultural safety, as defined by Atkinson is “the identification a person makes with factors that are derived from the culture, belief systems or worldviews that allow them to feel safe while being with those to whom they have gone for help” (p. 193). Any support for Indigenous-driven tourism and business development needs to be cognisant of this point, remaining aware to how Indigenous people are responding to that support.

7.2.3 Self-determination

To this point, the BDC case study has shown several times over the need for regional Indigenous tourism planning to be Indigenous-driven, where Indigenous people themselves drive the planning process and receive the benefits of their business efforts. Stemming largely from the Whitlam government policies in the early 1970s and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991), ‘self-determination’ in Australia has been the rhetoric of governments and academics for almost thirty years now.

Behrendt (2003, p. 140) refers to self-determination in saying that “the most exciting and transforming activities within the Indigenous community are not propelled by government policy but have been facilitated by Indigenous people themselves”. However, as stressed by Peters-Little (1999), this does not mean that Indigenous people should completely distance themselves from government. What it does mean is that they can capitalise on their own strengths and skills to set future directions and
programs. Therefore, to achieve effective Indigenous self-determination, economic development, and self-governance, Indigenous people and communities must strive for it, and the struggle must be recognised by governments and the wider non-Indigenous community.

Behrendt (2003) argues that what is most needed in terms of Indigenous self-determination is a “short term solution with long term goals and that this includes an understanding of the relationship between rights, economic development and governance.” (p. 135). Behrendt argues further the links between the economic development and Indigenous rights. Similarly, though with their perspective, Indigenous leaders such as Pearson (2004) and Ah Mat (2001, 2003a, 2003b) from Cape York, Queensland, have been calling for the links to be recognised between Indigenous rights/self-determination and economic development. They are not asking for a form of separatism; in fact they are calling for levels of Indigenous governance which combines traditional authority with western notions of political power. These structures they suggest would then allow and facilitate Indigenous peoples to negotiate their participation in the society and economy with non-Indigenous Australians (Behrendt, 2003).

The application of self-determination in the context of Indigenous tourism and business has been less common. It is well recognised, however, that Indigenous people have largely been excluded and/or marginalised from engagement in the mainstream tourism industry (Altman & Finlayson, 1993; Smith, ed., 1989; Whitford et al., 1999). Maori-based research in particular seems much more advanced in discussing the role and importance of values like self-determination in tourism (McIntosh, Zygadlo, & Matunga, 2004).

Higgins-Desbiolles (2005, 2006, 2007) and Johnston (2003) are but a few who have explored Indigenous self-determination in a sustainable tourism context, and both are keen to point out that any such discussion entails issues of land rights. Johnston (2003, p. 121), for example, argues that self-determination is “the right of a community to decide whether it wants to have a tourism economy, which parts of its culture will be shared and which will remain private, and what type of protocols will govern access to and use of cultural property”. Higgins-Desbiolles (2007) suggests that tourism can only be truly beneficial to Indigenous people when it is developed in
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accordance with them, when it enhances self-determination efforts, and when it works to end conflict and build reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

What is suggested here is that it is time that Indigenous peoples are facilitated to take control of their decisions around their engagement with tourism; to “enter tourism on their own terms and in their own ways” (Butler & Hinch, 2007, p. 327). Without effective tourism planning structures, Indigenous peoples will not be able to access, plan or manage their own engagement in tourism. There has not been effective Indigenous control over Indigenous tourism planning to this point in time within Australia, and Indigenous engagement in mainstream tourism planning agencies remains negligible (N. Nielsen et al., 2008; Zeppel, 2007).

A regional approach with emphasis on localised support and collaboration has best suited the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, and has been important in its self-definition as a tourism planning organisation. At the heart of self-determination is the rejection of authoritative and top-down governance. As Behrendt (2003) puts it, self-governance of all decisions affecting Indigenous people’s lives – which would include tourism and business development – is best supported when it has a strong local, regional and community focus. While speaking of politics and local governance, Behrendt’s (2003, p. 147) ideas have resonance for regional tourism planning.

Smaller political units become more responsive as they allow for more active participation from interested community members who feel alienated from large-scale political institutions. This community-based focus would also enable Indigenous community groups to take responsibility for decision-making processes on issues that affect them.

Behrendt (2003) argues that there are two essential elements required to link rights, economic development and governance. These are a need for the “vision to be based on self-determination as Indigenous people see it”, and “an expansion of the jurisdiction, a filtering down of decision-making power, to communities and Indigenous families” (p. 146). This second principle of smaller, more community-based forms of decision-making is seen as critical to allow a sense of involvement and inclusiveness that larger, more politically-based decision-making does not allow. Behrendt cautions the reproduction of dominant (White/mainstream) institutions
without critical examination. Cultural and traditional values and practise need to be considered in the establishment of governance procedure to ensure that the new structures are appropriate.

7.2.4 A framework for regional Indigenous tourism planning

Based on the pillars of strengths, support and self-determination, as discussed above, Figure 7.1 outlines a conceptual model for how regional Indigenous tourism planning might work. This model is based on the grounded learnings and findings gained from the case study of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, but its application can go much further beyond North-West NSW. Although the model stems from a regional case study in one state of Australia, it arguably has relevance for all regions engaged in tourism planning, and how they might best incorporate, include and involve Indigenous peoples. Further, such a model provides support for other Indigenous groups looking to become involved in tourism and tourism planning at their local/regional level.

These pillars of strengths, support and self-determination represent the essence of the five key themes discussed in Section 7.1. That is, regional Indigenous tourism planning needs to be Indigenous-driven to allow for a self-determined process, where Indigenous people decide upon and control their role in regional tourism planning. It must also be built on positive potential and the strengths of Indigenous culture and people. Culturally-appropriate support and training for Indigenous tourism business is necessary, as are good regional collaboration and networking. Finally, none of this can work well without strong support and governmental facilitation provided by bodies such as RTOs, local governments and tourism promotional organisations.
Figure 7.1: A Framework of Regional Indigenous Tourism Planning

As demonstrated by the dotted-line circle in Figure 7.1, the Indigenous tourism planning framework sits within the wider arena of ‘mainstream’ regional tourism planning, and cannot be divorced from it. The key roles and functions of regional tourism organisations are product development; marketing and communication; capacity-building and coordination (Jenkins, 2000; Pforr, 2007; Zahra, 2006), and Indigenous tourism planners should be able to benefit from and take part in these mainstream planning activities. The BDC case has demonstrated the necessity of Indigenous planning occurring as a separate and self-determined process in its own right. That said, RTOs and planners should be aware of Indigenous people and Indigenous tourism opportunities within their ambit, and inclusive of them in regional planning processes and policies.

This framework for regional Indigenous tourism planning builds on the tenets of regional tourism planning but challenges the position of the Indigenous people and general consultative roles (Berno, 2007). By placing Indigenous tourism within the ‘mainstream’ regional tourism planning agenda, it encourages a greater level of collaboration between the mainstream and Indigenous members of the community.
Similarly, by highlighting the need for strengths, support and self-determination, it reinforces the need for Indigenous tourism planning to be Indigenous-driven and Indigenous focused but facilitated and collaborative with the mainstream tourism organisation and their regional activities. Moreover, by placing the Indigenous-tourism planning framework at the centre of the regional tourism framework it attempts to highlight the significance of an issue that all Australian regional tourism organisations should recognise. As stated many times, there is a general absence of Indigenous membership and participation in regional tourism organisations. In a different way, this framework places Indigenous tourism as central to regional tourism issues, and means that we can no longer afford to maintain this absence.

7.3 Summary

This discussion chapter has put forward a new framework for regional Indigenous tourism planning. The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative case study evidence demonstrated the importance of five core principles for the planning of Indigenous tourism and the involvement of Indigenous people within the sector. Namely, these principles were: Indigenous-driven; positive potential; culturally-appropriate support; regional collaboration, and governmental facilitation. All of these facets were of equal importance, interacting together to form a basis of appropriate regional Indigenous tourism planning.

Taking these concepts further into a more theoretical arena, a model was posited which suggests a new agenda for Indigenous tourism planning that is dependent on the three pillars of strengths, support and self-determination. In this framework, Indigenous peoples’ strengths and tourism opportunities are emphasised. The support they receive is culturally appropriate, inclusive and relevant, based on their needs, desires and ideas. Ultimately, Indigenous people are in control over their involvement and engagement in tourism; they drive the tourism planning process as it suits them, and as it pertains to them.

The conceptual model developed in this discussion chapter placed Indigenous tourism issues firmly back within the arena of regional tourism. However, it is not the sole responsibility of mainstream tourism organisations and nor should it be controlled by
them. By placing it within the mainstream regional tourism planning framework, Indigenous tourism is recognised as equally important and central to all activities of regional tourism development and planning.
VIGNETTE 8: Shane

I wish here, towards the end of this thesis, to insert a private story about Shane. Shane was one of the younger members of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative, and I got to know him quite well over the course of my PhD research. I tell this story because it shows the amount of motivation, energy and enthusiasm that exists for positive social change. It also shows, however, that without the ongoing support required, it is difficult to overcome often insurmountable personal challenges.

I met Shane in late 2003 at the regional Aboriginal tourism workshop in Bourke. He was one of only a few who were around my age (probably early thirties), and seemed very keen and interested in the discussions and presentations about tourism. I had met many of the other people before this conference, but I had not yet met Shane and over the few days of the conference introduced myself and my general reason for being there.

Shane was well-dressed, with pressed shirts and pants, and gave the impression of being interested but maybe a little shy. He introduced himself as a writer with an interest in developing and facilitating tourism development in his town. We spoke only a little over these first days, even though we were staying in the same hotel.

He came from one of the South-Eastern towns of the region, in the mountains rather than the plains around the Darling River, where many of the other participants came from. Over the previous years, Shane had been involved in several tourism activities, such as setting up walking tracks in National Parks to caves and art sights, as well as developing a good working relationship with the local tourism organisation. It was with the assistance of the tourism organisation that he gotten to the workshop several hundred kilometres from his town.

After the first few workshops, Shane and I began to work together a little more closely. Shane was nominated, as was I, to be part of the original steering committee for the establishment of the BDC. He was still shy, but in the smaller meetings seemed more confident about the issues he thought important. Shane raised issues about the need for his kids to be able to part of the organisation as they got older (he had three children under 10, with another on the way). Shane did not want his kids to be excluded because their mother was White. This was an issue that others had no problem with and everyone was quite supportive. Over the years we became closer, as I would often pick Shane up as we travelled to meetings.

Shane’s town had no CDEP, no local Aboriginal Land Council and he was on some form of unemployment benefit. He was constantly looking for work in natural/cultural resource management as well as language teaching (he had recently conducted a diploma in linguistics), but often his lack of a driving licence made him ineligible for the jobs he desired. I asked him why he had no licence and his reply was that it was related to “unpaid fines”. I thought maybe that meant traffic or parking issues, but these fines related to other
Vignette 8: Shane

charges, or what Shane called the ‘trifecta’. This means being charged for (#1) drinking in public, (#2) resisting arrest, and (#3) trying not to get put in the lock-up for assaulting a police officer. Shane had no money to pay the fines so it was transferred to the State Recovery Department and they cancelled his licence. And because he had no licence he couldn’t get a job. However, he was optimistic about the future and the opportunity to create a cultural ecotourism project on the Ukerbarley property.

Shane had developed a great relationship with the owners and he and some others of his tribal group wished to apply for its purchase. I was simply there to help with the application. Over the next few months we worked up the proposal to buy and manage the property. Part of the proposal required the development of an Indigenous company to hold the property and this became a major sticking point. Shane was unable to secure enough other people from his clan who he was comfortable working with. In the end we could not submit the proposal because of this issue. As this proposal became less active, so did Shane. He was also under increasing pressure from the Department regarding his unemployment benefits and was being urged to get a job.

Luckily for Shane, the local tourism organisation took him on as a trainee for twelve months in the local visitor information centre. I spoke to him several times over this period, generally on the phone, because due to his work commitments, he found it increasingly difficult to participate in BDC activities. He was liking the work, and he was developing an Indigenous youth training project focused on riverbank restoration and tourism. There was funding for Shane and several others to work on repairing a river and park area at the entrance to town.

By now, however, we were speaking less frequently; BDC activities were slowing down and my time in the region seemed to be reaching its natural end. In an attempt to encourage more members to attend the Biamie AGM in 2008, I called Shane and spoke, as I had on many occasions, to his partner. She told me that he wasn’t there; he had just checked himself into a re-hab program. She said that the river project had been going well until the funding was cut, the stress of which caused him to start drinking. His partner was optimistic that he should be “out in a few months”, and that they would probably move to another town where he might be able to get some better work.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative is an Indigenous-led organisation dedicated to providing a space for thinking about, planning and developing Indigenous tourism in regional Australia. Tourism planning is a context where the goals of Indigenous self-determination can be usefully applied, but little research has explicitly or empirically attempted such aims. Through a detailed case study of the BDC, this thesis has addressed this gap, demonstrating the importance of Indigenous-driven tourism planning where Indigenous people are the drivers of decisions which affect them.

In concluding this study, it is important to review the research aim and objectives. It is also necessary to make clear the key contributions of the thesis, particularly in terms of theory, methodology and practice. Embracing a qualitative action-based approach, the BDC case study has attempted to facilitate benefits to the people involved, at the same time as contributing to the body of knowledge in the field of Indigenous tourism. This dual purpose is inherent in much of the discussion on Indigenous/Indigenist research, but it is not an easy task. The complexities and joys of the research process are also reflected upon in this conclusion chapter.

8.1 Review of Research Objectives

As outlined in the Introduction chapter, the overall aim of the thesis was to investigate the appropriateness of a regional framework for Indigenous tourism planning in North-West New South Wales, Australia. Four inter-related research objectives guided this aim, and it is necessary to briefly revisit them here. These four objectives were to: 1) explore the attitudes towards, and experiences of, key stakeholders involved in Indigenous tourism planning; 2) actively support and facilitate a regional, Indigenous-driven tourism planning organisation; 3) tell the story of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative; and, finally, 3) develop a framework to guide sustainable regional Indigenous tourism planning.

The first research objective aimed to canvass a broad understanding of stakeholders’ attitudes towards, and experiences with, Indigenous tourism planning. This objective was addressed via the first phase of in-depth interviews with a group of thirteen
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Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals involved in Indigenous tourism in North-West NSW. What emerged from these initial interviews was that there was considerable interest in Indigenous tourism from all stakeholders, both Black and White. Both groups felt there was considerable demand for Indigenous tourism experiences in their regions, and that Indigenous culture was a positive asset in developing tourism opportunities. At the same time, however, the Aboriginal proponents felt marginalised from mainstream, White-dominated tourism planning activities. The interviews also revealed the challenges inherent in developing Indigenous tourism, highlighting in both groups the need for ongoing support from government, business and the community. When these interviews were conducted in 2003, there were no regional tourism organisations working to build Indigenous tourism, and certainly none that were Indigenous-driven. This is why the formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative was so important to Aboriginal people in the North-West, and to this project.

The second objective aimed to address this gap, by actively facilitating the formation and development of what became the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. The BDC case study has shown how Aboriginal people came together, pooling their ideas and experiences to form a regional Indigenous tourism organisation. It was at this point that the BDC invited me to participate in, observe and facilitate that process. The formation of the BDC evolved through the stages of Aboriginal people setting a vision, and negotiating its missions and objectives. This process involved a series of regional workshops and working parties, discussions, and monthly regional events, leading to the formal inception of the BDC in June, 2004. Efforts then focused on monthly meetings, and on planning for individual members’ tourism business ideas. In total, nine plans and proposals relating to keeping places, arts and crafts, cultural centres, cultural festivals and property acquisitions were written. These outcomes, although still in the development stage, were very much driven by the action elements of the research project. The goal was that the benefits and outcomes of the BDC flow directly to its Indigenous members, grounded in a long-term vision for their sustainable business development.

The third research objective was to tell the story of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. Of course, it could be said that all theses obviously need to tell a story, so why would
it require its own objective? Positivistic tourism research has been criticised for not questioning the assumptions upon which it is based, and for silencing researcher/researched voices through depersonalised writing styles (Hall, 2004; Harris et al, 2007). Through an interpretive, critical perspective, both the private and public stories of the BDC could be – needed to be – told. One of the benefits of using a conscious ‘audiencing’ and narrative strategy is that I could tell a number of stories within the academic thesis. I could also tell those stories in a variety of ways, using different styles and directed at different audiences (King, 2003; Sparkes, 2002). As Harris et al. (2007) assert, the strategy of audiencing:

> shows the multiple meanings and plurality of research and avoids an assumption of our research findings as objective ‘truth’. It further implores us to recognise the broader relevance and impact of our research for our study participants (p. 54).

The ‘public’, academic story is primarily written in the thesis chapters presented previously. The academic story of the BDC has also been told by me in various edited book chapters, at research workshops, and at domestic and international conferences. In wanting readers and participants to know who was writing this academic story, and from which ontological and epistemological perspectives, I included ‘private’, reflexive stories about myself and my experiences. Elements of the private story surrounding the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative and its members were also presented, via a series of inter-chapter vignettes. Throughout all of these stories, both private and public, the central message of self-determined Indigenous tourism planning was actively promoted.

The final research goal was to develop a conceptual framework for regional Indigenous tourism planning, based on the grounded findings and evidence in the Biamie Dreaming case study. This framework for Indigenous tourism planning abstracted and applied the key principles developed through the BDC case, and was presented in Chapter 7. These key principles were that planning should be *Indigenous-driven*; focus on *positive potential*; provide *culturally-appropriate support*; build *regional collaboration*, and have good *governmental facilitation*. Distilling the essence of these five tenets, the framework for regional Indigenous tourism planning came down to three core elements: *strengths, support* and *self-
determination. This new agenda has practical application for how Indigenous people are positioned, involved and engaged in regional tourism planning, but it also offers theoretical insights about how we study Indigenous tourism.

8.2 Key Findings and Contributions

A number of theoretical, methodological and practical contributions have resulted from this thesis. These contributions are the outcome of the research ‘findings’, as well as the research process itself during a six year relationship between me and the people involved in the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative. The study’s findings and contributions have impact on Indigenous tourism planning as a field of research, but also on Indigenous people themselves and their practical engagement in the tourism industry. By way of a summary, the key contributions relate to the development of a critical ‘spectrum’ through which to view the literature on Indigenous tourism; a new framework and model for guiding sustainable regional Indigenous tourism planning; and an action-based case study approach that is led by, and directly benefits, Indigenous people.

The Critical Spectrum of Indigenous Tourism Literature (see Figure 2.1) represents a new and useful critical tool with which to examine the role, voice and involvement of Indigenous people in Indigenous tourism research. While some authors working in Indigenous studies (Martin, 2003a, 2003b) have presented phases of research applicable to general studies in the social sciences, none have yet applied this concept to the study of Indigenous tourism. This spectrum provides four key approaches which have dominated in Indigenous tourism publications: invisible, identified, stakeholder and Indigenous-driven. The applicability of the spectrum was illustrated by placing a broad range of Indigenous tourism publications upon it. What was revealed is a concentration of research in the ‘invisible’ and ‘identified’ stages, with low levels of engagement with Indigenous people and provision of Indigenous voice. Both White and Black researchers have been calling for Indigenous-driven research for well over a decade (Martin, 2003a; Rigney, 1997; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), so it is surprising that this has not been more forthcoming in tourism studies.
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Indigenous people are still considerably under-represented and non-Indigenous researchers, such as myself, remain the contributors (Hinch & Butler, 2007; Ryan & Aicken, 2005). This is not an easy situation to reverse, however, and I am well aware that in the end, I am the one who gets the PhD and any associated privileges. What the spectrum shows, though, is the need to move beyond Indigenous people being merely a passive focus of tourism studies, to a position where they have a role in driving research projects and their outcomes. This is in line with calls for Indigenous tourism research to direct more attention to the supply side – the Indigenous people, and their ideas, concerns and issues – rather than continuing to focus on whether or not there is suitable demand from visitors (Schaper et al., 2007; Zeppel, 2007).

However, the spectrum review did reveal some evidence of a small movement towards Indigenous-driven approaches. These new strategies involve considerably more engagement with Indigenous participants, a wider range of research topics, more Indigenous authorship or co-authorship, and a greater level of Indigenous focus and empowerment in all aspects of the research process.

This thesis has demonstrated the importance of Indigenous-driven and Indigenist research approaches. Indigenous and Black researchers in many disciplines have now begun the anticolonial process of ‘talking back’ to their histories, re-writing them in their own terms and using their own methods, in an effort to bring out that which has long been ignored, misunderstood or misrepresented (hooks, 1992; Kanai’aupuni, 2005; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Similarly, in the field of tourism studies, it is increasingly being recognised that Indigenous people themselves need to be supported in conceptualising and researching tourism in terms of what it means to them. Thus there is a need for tourism academics and their institutions to develop more collaborative, reciprocal relationships with the Indigenous people with whom they work in the name of tourism research (Ryan & Aicken, 2005). Using a qualitative, action-based perspective, influenced by Indigenist tenets, this thesis deliberately and actively facilitated Indigenous self-determination through regional tourism planning. The formation of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative reflects a substantial positive outcome, and attests to the value of action-based approaches which are Indigenous-led.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Though I do certainly do not take sole claim for the development of the BDC, in my role as participant-observer over the long-term I was able to use the action research platform as a way of helping to facilitate the organisation and its outcomes. In establishing a participant-observation methodology, Reinharz (1995) talks about the need for the researcher to take on a clear ‘role’. As a somewhat qualified and experienced tourism planner, I made myself available as a facilitator to the BDC and its members for a period of six years. Through being continually present, and drawing on my own tourism connections and ‘social capital’, I was able to facilitate discussions and connections not previously available in the North-West. From my background in regional tourism planning, I was equipped to network with local tourism organisations, keep them informed of BDC activities, and encourage better relationships between BDC members and mainstream tourism organisations. Throughout the research period, many individual tourism/business plans were also developed. On reflection, I think perhaps it was this ability to aid these individual, ‘on the ground’ activities that provided the greatest direct benefits to participants.

Further, I used deliberate strategies of researcher reflection and reflexivity, which are common in, and indeed can benefit, Indigenous research approaches. That is, as the researcher, I was present and voiced as an active person, directly involved in the research process (Ateljevic et al, 2005; Hall, 2007). I made myself visible (rather than invisible) in terms of my opinions, history and previous experiences. It was important that research participants, whether Indigenous members of the BDC, government representatives or others, were always aware of who I was, where I came from, and were as clear as possible about my roles in the research (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

This study has put forward a new framework for Indigenous tourism planning in regional Australia. The pillars of this framework are strengths, support and self-determination: the strengths of Indigenous people and culture, aided by culturally-appropriate and relevant support from tourism organisations and government, and assisting Indigenous people’s efforts for self-determination, autonomy and control over their own lives. A conceptual model was then developed based on this framework, showing the role of Indigenous tourism within the wider ambit of ‘mainstream’ tourism planning. While recognising the need for Indigenous-driven and
Indigenous-focused tourism planning, the goal is not to further isolate and separate. As the conceptual model revealed, Indigenous tourism is placed firmly within regional tourism planning and its associated activities. As many of the Aboriginal people said throughout the study, Black and White need to work together; it is just that we need to recognise the Black first.

Finally, the theoretical framework of strengths, support and self-determination offered in this thesis was generated from a grounded analysis of the BDC case study, and in the particular context of regional Indigenous tourism planning in Australia. That said, it has wider application to tourism planning and Indigenous people around the world.

This thesis has shown through its review of literature and method that Indigenous people everywhere share similar struggles for self-determination, land rights and a desire for equality. Tourism planners, communities and researchers would find that working from a base of strengths, support and self-determination will, in most cases, lead to a more inclusive and sustainable way of engaging Indigenous people in tourism.

8.3 Final Reflections

This thesis has resulted from my participation with the members of the Biamie Dreaming Cooperative in North-West New South Wales. My travels out West have ended and I have officially ‘withdrawn from the field’, but my relationship with the people there will - I hope - be ongoing. I have learned a great deal from the Aboriginal people with whom I have had the pleasure to work over the last six years.

It is my view that those of us with access to resources, institutions and political ‘know-how’ have a responsibility to promote change through our research. As suggested throughout, the benefits of research on Indigenous tourism should flow to Indigenous peoples, aiding their ongoing struggle for self-determination. At the same time, it is hard to gauge what the long-term outcomes and benefits will be for the individuals involved. There were many times when I wondered if this research was the best contribution I could make to the lives of the people with whom I was working. Was regional tourism planning the best place to focus my (and their) energies? And further, was doing a PhD the best way to achieve such outcomes?
Chapter 8: Conclusion

I was happy to see that the thesis process enabled at least some positive social change amongst participants. It facilitated Indigenous people to come together and talk about tourism where there had been no space for such discussion before. Through this process, BDC members were able to talk about their ideas in a comfortable, safe and supportive manner, and to attain professional assistance with the development of their concepts and ideas. I hope that this study has, at least to some degree, helped do what Indigenous people have long called for; for “research and its designs to contribute to the self-determination and liberation struggles as defined and controlled by their communities” (Rigney, 1997, p. 630).

However, it should be pointed out that there was no opportunity to take the final results or summary of thesis findings to BDC members. As outlined previously in Chapter 7, at the time this thesis was being finalised, the BDC had lost much of its collective energy due to disrupting changes in leadership and governance, thus it was difficult to reconnect with and present findings to the group.

Now that we are at this point, and I have only a few words left, I wish to direct readers back to the picture shown in the first vignette. I return to this story now.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

When I first took this picture it was a nice afternoon – the setting sun’s glow on the river, a rusty old car ... and, then, a canoe tree. ‘Canoe tree?’ you may be thinking. Where? The scar is on the tree in the middle. See - just behind the car. You can only see about half of it as the ground level has changed. More to the right is another scarred tree where a little coolamon (bowl) was cut. I have always liked canoe trees. They are one of the more obvious reminders of past Aboriginal times.

And then in the background: the river and all those rocks. This is part of the Brewarrina fish traps. The system of fish traps is enormous and covers several hundred metres of river. While there are others, this is considered amongst the most significant in the country and is particularly important in this region and to its Aboriginal people. The fish traps have been dated to over 8,500 years and are considered one of the world’s oldest human-made structures, though for local people they date back to the Dreamtime.

The fish traps were the real reason Herb took me here. Herb was showing me how they needed work. He was telling me about how they used to hold an annual Festival of the Fisheries that brought people from all over the state to visit. It was one of their key tourism assets and a key source of town and regional pride.

But there is more in the photo, the more you look. What it illustrates for me now, is the way in which it shows the layers of history, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal; the intertwining of these two histories, the connectedness and distance between them. It also brings to the fore the incredible significance of Aboriginal people in the region, in the way they created it and the way in which they have been separated from their country.

Yet the other thing that this picture makes me think of is the amazing cultural resources that abound in this country, the interest that they generate in people and visitors, and the opportunity that tourism has as a facilitator for celebrating Indigenous cultures.
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APPENDIX A

Tourism Regions in New South Wales
Tourism Regions in New South Wales

1. Sydney
2. Sydney Surrounds
3. North Coast
4. South Coast
5. Snowy Mountains
6. Heart of Country
7. Outback
8. Lord Howe Island

Source: Tourism NSW (www.visitinsw.com.au)
APPENDIX B

Content Analysis of Indigenous Tourism Plans and Policies
**Federal and Queensland State Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Policy (1975-1999)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parameter of policy</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Report of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Tourism</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Report 109 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 23-26&lt;br&gt;ATSI content: 3.75%</td>
<td>Dept of Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>Fraser (Federal Liberal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Aboriginal Bicentennial Objectives</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Discussion Paper: 69 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 46-47&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 2.8%</td>
<td>Aboriginal Development Commission</td>
<td>Hawke (Federal Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Employment Development Policy</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Plan: 17 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 7, 10&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 11%</td>
<td>Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Employment, Education and Training and Employment Services and Youth Affairs</td>
<td>Hawke (Federal Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions for Tourism</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Discussion Paper – 97 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 82-84&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 2%</td>
<td>Industries Assistance Commission</td>
<td>Hawke (Federal Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Report – Vol 4, 492 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 403-406&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 0.81%</td>
<td>Dept of Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>Keating (Federal Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism: Australia’s Passport to Growth (Summary)</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Strategy – 15 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 11.13&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 0.13%</td>
<td>Dept of Tourism</td>
<td>Keating (Federal Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access and Equity Plan: Tourism Portfolio</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Plan – 15 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 42-45&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 4%</td>
<td>Office of Multicultural Affairs in the Dept of the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>Keating (Federal Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Ecotourism Plan</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Strategy – 68 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 20-21, 100&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 3%</td>
<td>Dept of Tourism</td>
<td>Keating (Federal Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Nation</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Plan – 101 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 17, 55&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 2%</td>
<td>Dept of Communications and the Arts</td>
<td>Keating (Federal Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Queensland Ecotourism Plan</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Strategy – 88 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 17.55&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 2%</td>
<td>Dept of Tourism, Sport and Racing</td>
<td>Goss (QLD State Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National ATSI Tourism Industry Strategy</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Strategy – 76 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 1-76&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 100%</td>
<td>ATSIC and Office of National Tourism</td>
<td>Howard (Federal Coalition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland Ecotourism Plan</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Plan – 81 pages&lt;br&gt;ATSI Ref: pp. 29, 52&lt;br&gt;ATSI Content: 2.4%</td>
<td>Dept of Tourism, Small Business and Industry, Dept of Environment and Dept of Natural Resources</td>
<td>Borbidge (QLD State National Coalition)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Whitford et al., 2001, p. 163)
APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Letter to Research Participants
Appendices

SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Human Research and Ethics Committee (HREC)

Name of Project: Developing A Collaborative Regional Aboriginal Tourism Planning Frameworks: A Participatory Action Research Approach

You are invited to participate in a study of attitudes towards Aboriginal tourism planning. The main purpose of the current study is to investigate regional Aboriginal and tourism industries’ attitudes towards collaborative Aboriginal tourism planning and the requirements for an Aboriginal tourism planning framework. This study is being conducted as part of a PhD thesis at Southern Cross University.

This interview will be recorded, transcribed, analysed with a range of other participants from within the tourism industry. These interviews will be presented in full within the thesis and other academic presentations. So that your quotes are not readily identifiable by readers of the thesis, no name will be attached to any of your statements.

Procedures to be followed:
The following indepth interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will include questions about your involvement in tourism, your experiences with tourism planning, and your thoughts towards collaborative tourism planning for Aboriginal tourism. This interview will be tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis. You will be sent a copy of the transcription to check before the analysis is taken place to make sure that your comments have been interpreted correctly and make any other changes you think are necessary. The researcher should have the transcription back to you within a couple of months.

Possible Discomforts and Risks
As with all activities this research has the potential to expose participants to certain risks. The researcher will minimise these risks by ensuring that interviews are kept confidential and that presentation of results will not include specific remarks, or descriptions that could be used to identify specific participants in any incriminating fashion. If for any reason you do feel uncomfortable with the tape recorder, feel free to ask the researcher to either turn the recorder off or adjust the line of discussion.

Responsibilities of the Researcher
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be used to identify participants will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with participants’ permission.

Added precautions will be taken to ensure that tapes used for interviews will include only first name initials rather than full names as identification and full transcripts of interviews and tapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

Responsibility of Participants
Participants have the right not to answer any question they wish to avoid and request to have the tape recorder switched off at any time.

Freedom of Consent
If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time. However, we would appreciate you letting us know your decision.

Inquiries
If you have any questions, we expect you to ask us. If you have any additional questions at any time please ask:

Supervisor
Dr. Jeremy Hydén, Senior Lecturer, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Southern Cross University
Phone: 02 6020 3382, Email: jhyden@scu.edu.au

The Biamie Dreaming Cooperative
Appendices

Researcher

Naomi Nielsen, PhD Candidate, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Southern Cross University
Phone: 02 6620 3031, Email: nielso10@scu.edu.au

who will be happy to answer any queries you may have. OR if you have any problems associated with this project, please contact: Mr John Russell, Graduate Research College, (02) 6620 3705. jrrussell@scu.edu.au

I have read the information in the Southern Cross University informed consent form for the Developing A Collaborative Regional Aboriginal Tourism Planning Framework: A Participatory Action Research Approach project and agree to participate in this study.

I am over the age of 18 years.

Name of participant: ______________________________

Signature of participant: ______________________________ Date: __________________

Name of witness: ______________________________

Signature of the witness: ______________________________ Date: __________________

I certify that the terms of the form have been verbally explained to the subject, that the subject appears to understand the terms prior to signing the form, and that proper arrangements have been made for an interpreter where English is not the subject’s first language. I asked the subject if she/he needed to discuss the project with an independent person before signing and she/he declined (or has done so).

Signature of the researcher: ______________________________ Date: __________________

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.
APPENDIX D

In-depth Interview Guide: Phase 1
Appendices

Phase 1: In-depth Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your role in the regional tourism industry?

2. Have you been involved in any regional organisation or regional tourism planning activities? What do you get out of this involvement? What were the best/worst features of your involvement? What would you change and how?

3. What is your vision for Aboriginal involvement in tourism in your area?

4. How do you think all the different tourism interests (community, business, government etc) in the area should be brought together so that there is a planned and coordinated approach to developing Aboriginal participation in tourism? And, how can we ensure that the planning process is driven by the Aboriginal people who wish to participate in the industry?

5. What are the key factors that will make a planned approach to facilitating Aboriginal tourism succeed or fail in your region?

6. How would you like to be involved in coordinated planning activities for Aboriginal participation in the tourism industry?

7. What would be the critical features of the process so that you would feel that it is worthwhile for you?
APPENDIX E

Biamie Dreaming Cooperative Logo
Figures removed due to copyright restrictions

The BDC logo above was developed based on Gail Naden’s (BDC director) original artwork, shown below