

Results Based Accountability Case Study & Conversation

*Written by: Matt Thorp 2007
North Richmond Community Centre Inc*

A note to readers:

- This paper was written as part of the 'Community Development in an RBA Context' Action Research Project, May to July 2007.*
- The author would like to acknowledge the group effort of everyone participating in the action research process and their contributions to the thinking that helped in the development of this paper.*
- Group participants also acknowledge the contributions of the individual authors of tools and papers produced as part of the project.*
- As a group we do NOT promote a 'one size fits all' approach and offers this material as only an example of one area's thinking processes to date*
- This information is offered in the spirit of co-operation and in recognising the value in sharing information and resources.*
- The material is available for others to re-use and/or adapt for their own purposes if desired.*
- If you would like to directly use the information provided please contact the original author and acknowledge the original source work.*

RESULTS BASED ACCOUNTABILITY Case Study

The following article is a case study of the monthly Band Nights that have been running at North Richmond Community Centre over the past 5 years or so. It is an attempt to *make visible the outcomes that have been achieved* through the running of these events, and to record it as an evidence base for the future.¹

The organisation

North Richmond Community Centre (NRCC) is a local community-based, non profit organisation that exists to *“create opportunities for enrichment and growth in the lives of individuals, groups and communities.”* As implied in that mission statement, NRCC works from a

strengths based position, seeking to resource the development of the strengths and assets in the lives of people who it works with.

In thinking further about that mission statement, it doesn't *really* have a goal. It talks about enrichment and growth, which imply progress towards a goal, without really saying anything about what the goal is that they're moving towards – eg. growing towards being healthy, safe, connected, supported, skilled, resilient.

Established in 1986, the organisation has grown from its original primary function of hall hire to also include a community development project, a youth development project (which includes a middle school transition project) and an out of school hours care service.

The event

Band nights at North Richmond have evolved over the years until they have taken on their current incarnation as *Northo Band Nights*. Northo Band Nights are organised and run by the staff and volunteers of North Richmond Youth Project (NRYP) and have been running once a month on a Friday night. The events create the opportunity for local young bands to perform to their peers in a semi-professional, safe, supervised, drug and alcohol free environment.

The theory (or, the evidence-base for practice)

As already noted, NRCC works from a strengths based approach. This is a very broad description for approaches to practice that can take a variety of forms and expressions. However, within the Youth Project it is based on a specific model of positive youth development, called 'the Circle of Courage.'

This model was developed by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern and is outlined in their book, *Reclaiming Youth At Risk*.² It is a

model (pictured to the right) based on the child rearing practices of Native American Indians and it identifies four developmental need areas that are required in young person's life in order for them to be a healthy and resilient individual. According to the model, these areas of

That's a much more clearly articulated an outcome – “healthy and resilient.”

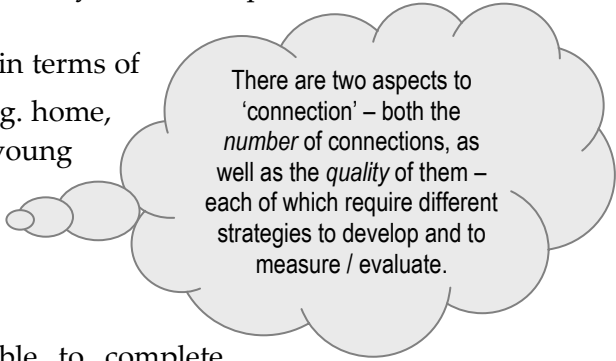


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developmental need are belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, and are consistent with what is identified in other literature on resilience and positive youth development.³

Belonging is about feeling a part of a community – both in terms of the people (eg. family, friends, peer group) and place (eg. home, work, suburb). When there is a sense of belonging in a young person's life, feelings of security and significance result. At NRCC, the term that is used for this is *connection*.

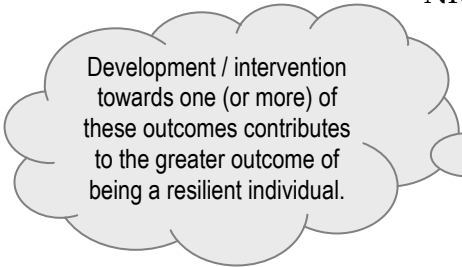


There are two aspects to 'connection' – both the *number* of connections, as well as the *quality* of them – each of which require different strategies to develop and to measure / evaluate.

Mastery is about *competence* – feeling and being able to complete something successfully, which is a strong self esteem and self confidence builder.

Independence is about being able to make choices and also bearing the responsibility for those choices, whatever the consequences might be. At NRCC, this is about having the *confidence* to be in control of one's own life.

Generosity is about giving back to the community, in whatever shape or form that that may take. Because it's all about mindfulness of, involvement in and contributing to the local community, at NRCC this developmental need is referred to as *community*.



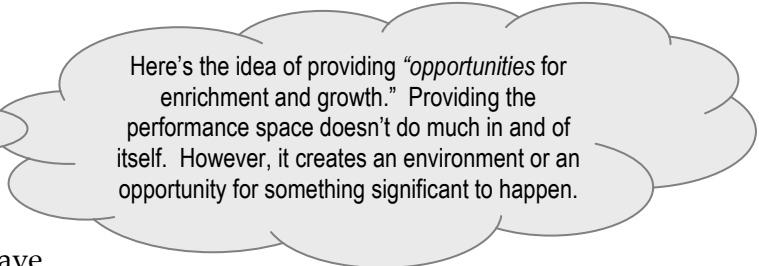
Development / intervention towards one (or more) of these outcomes contributes to the greater outcome of being a resilient individual.

The Circle of Courage model encourages development at any (and/or all) of these areas; there is no one right place to start. Likewise, development in just one of the areas will have effects on the other areas as well.

The outcomes

The stated intention of Northo Band Nights is to *give young local bands a performance space where they can develop their musical skills and confidence*. There are at least 3 outcomes included in that statement.

The first, and simplest to measure, is the provision of a *performance space*. Band nights have been a

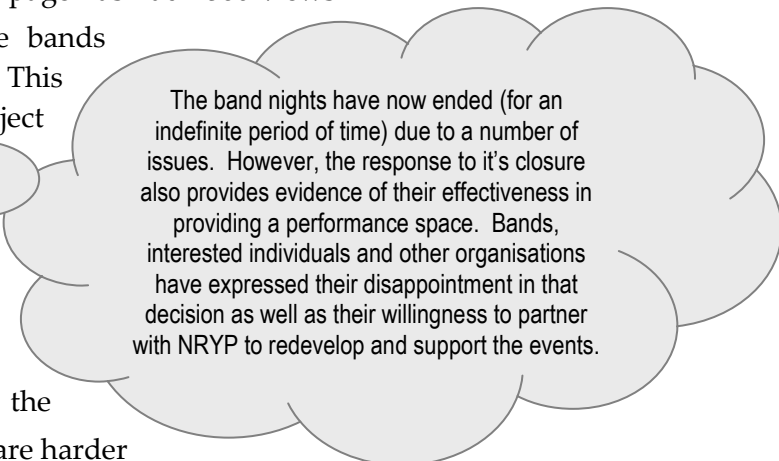


Here's the idea of providing "opportunities for enrichment and growth." Providing the performance space doesn't do much in and of itself. However, it creates an environment or an opportunity for something significant to happen.

regular, monthly event for at least the past two years, though certainly for longer. They have been attended by as few as 5 young people (numerous factors contribute to that low attendance) and by as many as about 200. Four or five bands perform each night, with all the sound equipment provided along with an in-house sound engineer. The event is manned by Youth Project staff and volunteers, as well as hired security personnel.

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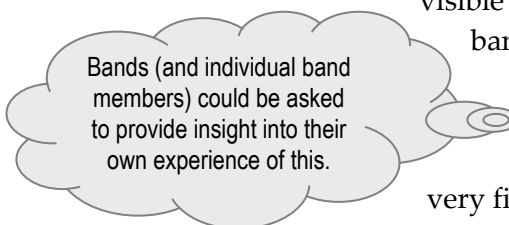
In addition, local youth volunteers developed a myspace webpage for the band nights (see www.myspace.com/northobandnightnrcc). This page has had 1580 views and has 93 friends,⁴ most of whom are bands wanting to play at a Northo Band Night. This too is evidence that the Youth Project successfully provided a performance space for young bands.



The band nights have now ended (for an indefinite period of time) due to a number of issues. However, the response to it's closure also provides evidence of their effectiveness in providing a performance space. Bands, interested individuals and other organisations have expressed their disappointment in that decision as well as their willingness to partner with NRYP to redevelop and support the events.

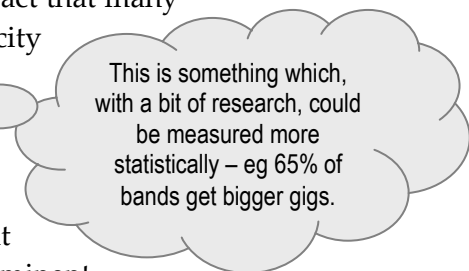
The other two stated outcomes are musical *skill* and *confidence*. This links to the area of *mastery* (or *competence*) within the

Circle of Courage model. These outcomes are harder to measure – especially in a ‘scientific,’ statistical manner. However, there is still evidence (or visible signs) of development in these areas in the bands. For instance, as bands continue to play at North Richmond, the development of skill and competence is seen from one performance to the next. This is hard (impossible?) to measure, but it is an obvious thing to see and hear, especially when comparing a later performance to their very first.



Bands (and individual band members) could be asked to provide insight into their own experience of this.

Another way that development in this area is visible would be the fact that many of the bands who started ‘gigging’ at NRCC are now playing in city venues and have attracted followings there. To get regular gigs in these venues requires a certain level of skill and confidence – both in the music itself and also in the performance. They have gained this through their experience at Northo Band Nights (and, to be fair, through other events and activities), and it becomes visible when they are being lined up to play at more prominent venues.



This is something which, with a bit of research, could be measured more statistically – eg 65% of bands get bigger gigs.

An unexpected outcome of the band nights has been in relation to the area of *community* or, as it is referred to in the Circle of Courage, *generosity*. This has already been seen in the participation of local young people in the development of the myspace webpage for the North Band Nights. This was not something within the realm of experience for the Youth Development Worker who coordinated the band nights, though she recognised it as an effective means of communicating and connecting with young people. A local young woman, who attended the band nights, volunteered to develop the myspace page, as she recognised the value of band nights for herself (and her peers) and wanted to give something back that would contribute to their overall success.

More significantly though, this same young woman and some of her friends wanted to raise funds to purchase a stage for the Community Centre, so that the bands would have an even better performance space. This was entirely of their own initiative, and the way that they planned to raise these funds was through organising an outdoor, daytime music festival (called *Rock Across the River*). The funds raised through the event would be put towards getting the stage for the more regular band nights.

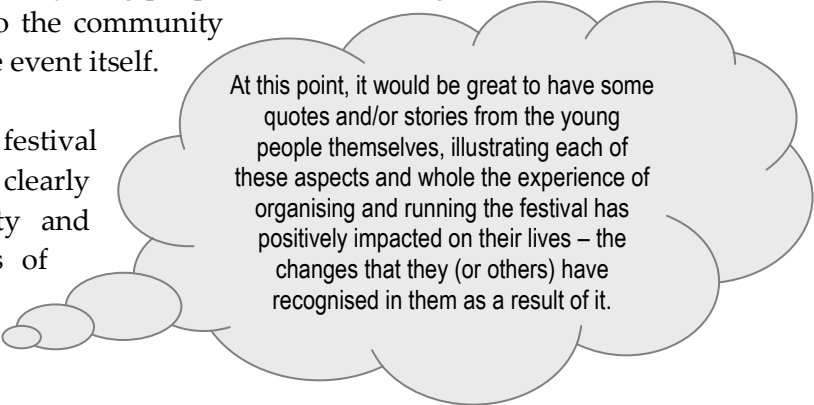
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These young women, plus other young people who they recruited, applied for funding to hold the event through Indent. They were successful in their application... but the funds from Indent did not cover the total costs of their planned event (which continued to grow the more they discussed it!). They raised additional funds through raffles and barbeques, as well as seeking sponsorship from local businesses.




In addition, they attracted stall holders for the day, partnered with TAFE to provide sound engineers, developed and distributed promotional material, recruited volunteers to man the event, and did everything else that was needed to hold a successful community event.

And that's exactly what it was. Approximately 200 people came on the day and they raised around \$1400. Not only is this money that the young people have raised to give back to the Youth Project, they also generously gave back to the community through their organising and hosting of the event itself.

Rock Across the River, as a music festival organised by local young people, clearly demonstrates this outcome of generosity and *community* spirit. But the whole process of organising it also achieved positive results in the other aspects of the Circle of Courage model:



At this point, it would be great to have some quotes and/or stories from the young people themselves, illustrating each of these aspects and whole the experience of organising and running the festival has positively impacted on their lives – the changes that they (or others) have recognised in them as a result of it.

-  It fostered *connection*, in that the young people felt like a valued and significant part of their local community, able to make a meaningful contribution to it. It also resulted in new social connections as they made friends and partnerships with new people.
-  It developed their *competence* as they were involved in all aspects of planning and running the festival – be that planning, budgeting, fund raising, volunteer management, letter writing, networking, forming partnerships, event management, or whatever other skills they were utilising. These were skills they already had that were put to use, or skills that they learnt and developed throughout the whole process.
-  It also grew their *confidence* in their own abilities to achieve something of significance. This confidence is born from the success of the event but also, maybe more importantly, from the belief in them evidenced by the Youth Development Worker and other adults, who entrusted them with the power and responsibility for the festival. The confidence that they gained through the experience is something that is transferable to other areas of their lives.

In reviewing all of this, it is evident that providing a monthly band night achieved much more than just providing young people with “something to do.” Rather, it fulfils a significant function in fostering the development of connected, competent, confident, community oriented young people who are healthy, resilient and significant members of their community.

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Endnotes

¹ The comments within the thought bubbles indicate further reflection on and 'conversation with' the initial document. They offer both a critique as well as ideas and directions for further development to make the results that much clearer. All such comments are written by the original author.

² Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, 1990, *Reclaiming Youth At Risk: Our Hope For the Future*, Solution Tree, Bloomington. See also www.reclaiming.com for further information and resources.

³ See, for instance:

Brendtro and Larson, 2006, *The Resilience Revolution*, Solution Tree, Bloomington.

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Search Institute, 1997, *40 Developmental Assets*, Search Institute, Minneapolis.

Worsley, 2006, *The Resilience Doughnut*, Alpha Counselling Services, Eastwood.

⁴ As viewed at 4pm 14th June 2007.