

Ch 9 The Nhunggabarra 'Recipe' for Sustainability

Respect – One of the Ingredients

A striking feature of the Nhunggabarra society is their knowledge-based economy. Because food and a few personalised tools were the only tangible production that scientists and economists recognised and were able to measure, these scientists and economists long dismissed Aboriginal economy as producing very low value. What they missed was more than half the economy – that is, Aboriginal society's very high production of intangible value: education, knowledge, art, law, entertainment, medicine, spiritual ceremonies, peacekeeping and social welfare.

The 'Recipe contains eight main ingredients: #1 being the Mission: 'Keep All Alive'. Below is the second ingredient: Respect.

Core Value: Respect

- For knowledge itself (learn about the responsibility required before access given)
- For knowledgeable individuals (defer to more knowledgeable people)
- For all individuals (do not impose your own view on other people)
- For knowledge diversity (learn from foreign people)
- For the rights of foreign people and countries (do not conduct conquests)
- For the leadership role of other individuals (do not usurp the role of another person)

Mutual respect – sideways, upwards and downwards – was the glue that kept society together and functioned as a check and balance against power abuse. At the core was the absolute respect for the integrity of the individual – which was balanced by the requirement of the individual to respect the community.

Both the mission and the value of respect furthered peaceful relations with neighbouring countries. Because people and animals were one and the same, the requirement for respect was extended to all living beings and also extended to respecting other people's opinion – that is, a respect for diversity.

How the Nhunggabarra arrived at their model is less important for us than their accomplishment. Their organisational architecture proved virtually impossible to break from within. The only way to crush it was intervention from the outside.

The Nhunggabarra model may be the 'original blueprint' for organising, the 'natural' design for human society. Is this how governance of sustainable societies in general might have looked if the societies had been allowed to evolve undisturbed by outside aggression and influences of competitive and self-serving power seekers?