

## **Indigenous Tourism – A Passport to Development for Indigenous Australians?**

Nan Song, Beijing Foreign Studies University

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in Indigenous tourism in Australia. There has been enthusiastic encouragement of expansion of Indigenous tourism and a push in further Indigenous participation in the tourism industry is rooted on the belief that tourism holds the potential for bringing economic gains for local Indigenous people. This belief has been largely based on mere quantification of economic indicators such as tourist numbers, income increases and employment rates in Indigenous communities, with a lack of qualitative analysis of potential challenges and problems beyond figure increases. Against such a background, this thesis provides a qualitative analysis of the impacts of Indigenous tourism in Australia from the perspective of Indigenous Australians. While acknowledging the economic gains that Indigenous Australians have obtained from tourism, it challenges the popular over-optimistic perception by exploring the challenges and problems behind economic increases and identifying and analyzing some of the problems from the perspective of Indigenous communities that arise from association with tourism expansion.

The growth and development of tourism is one of the most significant cultural, social and economic phenomena in the decades after the Second World War. According to the peak global tourism industry organization, World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) (2004), tourism is now the world's largest industry in terms of economic output, capital investment, taxation contribution and employment; and tourism has also become an integral part of modern life to large numbers of people. The size and rapid growth of the tourism industry have made it widely promoted as a tool for development with an overwhelming focus on its potential for economic growth.

One sector of Australian tourism industry that has received widespread attention in recent years is tourism involving Indigenous people. "As home to one of the world's oldest living cultures, Australia is well placed to harness this international interest" (ONT, 1998).

*In Australia, "Indigenous tourism" is a broad term formerly used largely to refer to all tourism products, controlled by either the Indigenous or the non-Indigenous, which focus on an Indigenous theme. These include cultural tours, festivals, arts and crafts production, Indigenous heritage interpretation, cultural centers<sup>1</sup>, and dance and theatre performances. Some Indigenous tourism enterprises provide tourists with opportunities for direct contact with Indigenous people, while others are "passive" exhibition-based displays. While many Indigenous-themed tours and attractions focus on presenting Indigenous culture, in recent*

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<sup>1</sup> Indigenous cultural Centres include historical exhibitions about local Aboriginal cultures, make and/or sell Indigenous artefacts, and provide visitor services such as cultural tours, didgeridoo playing or bush tucker walks.

*years Indigenous involvement in other mainstream tourism enterprises, such as accommodation or visitor service facilities, has been growing. This expansion from culture-based to service-based business ventures is termed “diversified Indigenous’ tourism” (Hinch & Butler, 1996, p. 12). In this broader view, “Indigenous tourism can be defined as any form of participation by Indigenous people in the tourism industry, in either a direct or indirect way” (Office of Northern Development, 1999, p. 23).*

The interest in Indigenous tourism is largely driven by two factors. The first is that Australia’s Indigenous people and their unique culture and heritage are regarded as a draw-card for the national tourism industry for market expansion as more and more national and international tourists are attracted by exotic and minority cultures. The second factor is a belief that Indigenous involvement in tourism is an important means of development for Australian Indigenous people. The enthusiasm is exemplified in different government and non-government tourism strategies designed for Indigenous tourism expansion as well as by the encouragement and pressure placed on Indigenous communities to increase the level of involvement (for example, NCSTT, 1994a; OND, 2003; ONT, 1998; ONT, 2002; SATC, 2000).

In the academic field, although there is an increasing range of materials on cultural tourism and Indigenous tourism which are of particular relevance to this research (see for example, Bruner, 1991; Handler, 1986; Kessing, 1989; Lea, 1993; Rattner, 1990; Robinson & Boniface; 1999), the literature specifically on effects of tourism upon Australian Indigenous people is still in its infancy – in fact more has been written on the its effects to the national tourism industry as a whole than those upon Indigenous people (Brokensha & Guldborg, 1992; Gillespie, 2000; Horton, 1994; Stockton, 1995; Sullivan, 2004). Even within existing relevant studies, most of them focus mainly on the analysis of economic development strategies and policies associated with Indigenous tourism, though credit of relevant studies on this subject should be acknowledged. For example, the work of Altman (1987, 1988, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2002), Altman and Finlayson (1992, 1997, 2003), Finlayson (1991, 1999), Zeppel (1998, 1999, 2001, 2004) and Harkin (2003), among others, provides a sound basis for further research with their studies on specific cases.

Yet, in most discussions on the association of Indigenous people with tourism, economic concerns have been dominated and much less attention or emphasis has been given to non-material impacts that have also emerged with tourism involvement of Indigenous communities. Moreover, the economic optimism in Indigenous tourism is largely based on a mere quantification of tourism-related economic indicators, such as overall employment rates, tourist arrival numbers, tourist expenditure in Indigenous destinations and on purchasing Indigenous-themed arts and crafts. At the same time, many of the obstacles, challenges and dilemmas Australian Indigenous people have encountered in the growth of tourism are largely overlooked or neglected.

## Methods

As Altman claims, “the overall aim of any government choosing to pursue Indigenous tourism development is its economic advantages” (1998), and the Australian government is

no exception. In the promotion of Indigenous tourism, the economic objectives are paramount and clear. This paper provides an overview of the economic value of tourism through an examination of its economic benefits and costs. It goes beyond the largely impressive-looking economic indicator increases and evaluates the economic effects of tourism upon Australian Indigenous people from a quantitative approach. It tries to explore the forces underlying government optimism for Indigenous tourism expansion and raises some adverse questions from under the impressive government statistic evidence. Obstacles, dilemmas and sensitive issues in economic development through tourism for Australian Indigenous people are explored and analyzed. In this light, the over-optimistic and unquestioning popular perception about tourism as an effective and quick tool for development of Indigenous Australians is challenged.

## Results

The nature of the tourism process in general, and many previous examples in particular, have indicated the potential of tourism for generating economic benefits in the host society. The most obvious and immediate benefits of tourism are believed to be the creation of jobs and thus the opportunities for people to increase their income and standard of living (Kadt & Emanuel, 1979).

Developing tourism for economic concerns is further motivated by the fact that in Australia Indigenous people have long remained one of the most disadvantaged social groups economically. The poverty of Indigenous people can be demonstrated through the standardized official social indicators, despite the shortcomings of such measures. For example, in the 2004 Census of Population and Housing, the average income of Indigenous Australians over the age of 15 was only 41% of that of the average non-Indigenous in Northern Territory. In 2003, about 25% of the Indigenous population over 15 was formally employed, in contrast to 65% of non-Indigenous Australians (ABS, 2003). Therefore focus has been put on the search for economic development options by the governments (Altman, 1988; Altman & Finlyason, 1992; BTR, 1996; Craik, 1991; Finlayson, 1991; McIntosh, 2004; Ryan & Huyton, 2000).

The growth of tourism seems to be posing such an option. The economic benefits for Indigenous communities of engaging in tourism are generally believed to generate from such sectors as employment, enterprises, manufacturing of artifacts, provision of hunting and ritual culture, and lease and sale of resources. These sectors will be individually discussed.

### *Employment*

It has been widely held that the most obvious and immediate benefit of tourism to the Indigenous communities is the creation of jobs, and thus the opportunity for income increase in the host society (Altman, 1991; Altman & Finlyason, 1993; Kesteven, 2002; ONT, 1999, 2003; Whitford, 2000; Zeppel, 1998). Admittedly, in Australia, tourism holds potential for increasing employment opportunities and financial betterment. The tourist demand for contact with Indigenous people has provided job opportunities such as tour guides on bush tours and

camping trips, dancers in ceremonial and ritual performances, and arts and crafts manufacturers.

Despite regional variations, tourism-related employment overall is evident. Statistics provided by Northern Territory Tourism Commission (2002) indicate that up to 56 percent of all employed Indigenous Australians in Northern Territory are in tourism, either directly as tour guides or indirectly as Indigenous arts and crafts manufacturers and that such employment is an important income source. Employment case studies at Uluru<sup>2</sup> and Kakadu National Park<sup>3</sup> are two distinctive examples. At Uluru, two employment surveys were undertaken in May and November 2002. In the former, 29 Aborigines were employed by Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS) and 3 by Maruku Arts and Crafts, a regional community-owned craft enterprise. In the latter, 10 were employed by the park service and 5 by Maruku. While these figures appear small, they represented 72% and 47% of jobs and 60% and 48% of employment income during the respective months. At Kakadu, in December 2000, of 58 Indigenous people employed, 25 (43%) worked with ANPWS and a further 6 (10%) with the Gagudju Association in tourism-related activities. Overall, tourism related activities accounted for over half the jobs filled by Indigenous people. ANPWS wages alone accounted for 26% of total cash income and 38% of employment income (Altman, 2003).

### *Enterprises*

There are around 200 Indigenous tourism businesses in Australia, with an estimated value of \$5 million a year (ATSIC, 2003). Diversified Indigenous tourism enterprises generate \$20 to \$30 million (ATSIC, 2003). Such enterprises include hotels, boat tours, souvenir stores, trading companies and arts and crafts shops and factories. Some financially successful Indigenous-owned or joint venture enterprises are displayed as role models in the Office of National Tourism (2002) publication, *A Talent for Tourism*. Among them, an oft-cited example is Tjapukai Dance Theatre<sup>4</sup>. According to the official web page of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Queensland (2005), since its inception, Tjapukai as a business has paid more than \$30 million dollars in wages, royalties, profits and purchases into the wider Djabugay community.

### *Sale of Artifacts*

At the core of Indigenous involvement in tourism is the production of Indigenous arts

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<sup>2</sup> Uluru National Park was originally proclaimed as the Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park in 1958. It was vested in Indigenous ownership in October 1985 but was immediately leased back to the ANPWS and ANPWS now manages it on a day-to-day basis.

<sup>3</sup> Located at the northern fringe of Northern Territory, Kakadu is the largest terrestrial national park in Australia.

<sup>4</sup> Tjapukai began in 1987 as Australia's first Indigenous dance theatre company in the rainforest village of Kuranda, in North Queensland. It has built up international fame as a successful joint tourism enterprise with 55 per cent of the ownership in Indigenous hands. In 1997 it moved to Cairns.

and crafts for sale to tourists (Butler & Hinch, 2007). For the majority of visitors the encounter with Indigenous culture involves buying Indigenous art products or viewing rock art sites. This sector of the industry has a very high profile. The current income from selling Indigenous arts, crafts and souvenir products is estimated approximately \$200 million per annum, with half of this amount estimated from tourist sales (The Office of National Tourism, 1998). Tourists alone spend \$50 million each year on Northern Territory Indigenous arts and crafts sold in galleries around Australia (AIAS, 2002). Indigenous art tours fly visitors directly to Indigenous communities in Arnhem Land, East Kimberley and the Western Desert region<sup>5</sup> to purchase paintings from well-known Indigenous artists (Zeppel, 2001).

#### *Sale of Hunting and Ritual Culture*

This is a new Indigenous tourism activity developed to cope with tourism demand to observe Indigenous ritual (in the form of open ceremonial dance) and Indigenous hunting and gathering practices. In some Indigenous communities that are involved in tourism, small camps are built and Indigenous people, though in a small number (Strang, 2003) at the moment, are employed to demonstrate hunting, fishing, and gathering to tourists. This kind of enterprises is just beginning and though their financial viability is not proven yet, it has been highly promoted by the tourism industry about its income-generating potential (CCNT, 2003; ONT, 1996; Ryan & Huyton, 2002).

#### *Lease of Tourism Resources*

On lands owned by local Indigenous people, such as Indigenous national parks, traditional owners receive lease fees of resources, charging of entry fees, or levying of bounties on animals hunted on safari<sup>6</sup> tours. Most Indigenous tourism sites and national parks at the moment charge entrance fees and/or administrative fees (Altman, 2003). For example, at Melville and Bathurst Island<sup>7</sup>, an entry fee of \$10 per visitor per day was introduced in the early 1990s in association with a fishing lodge established at Port Hurd. At Gurig National Park<sup>8</sup>, traditional owners receive lease and license payments from the Northern Territory Government, and tourist visitations (Altman, 2003).

#### *Dilemmas and Challenges in the Economic Value in Indigenous Tourism*

The statistical evidence on economic advantages to Indigenous people, stated above and

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<sup>5</sup> They are all Indigenous regions in Northern Territory.

<sup>6</sup> Safari is an Indigenous tourism operation form in Australia. Grouped tourists go to Indigenous inhabits to experience Indigenous bush lifestyle and participate hunting and fishing activities in an Indigenous way under a guide.

<sup>7</sup> Located 80 kilometres directly north of Darwin, Melville and Bathurst Islands are the home of the Tiwi people, a linguistically homogenous group that numbers about 1,650 persons. Melville and Bathurst Islands are under the Land Rights Act with full Indigenous ownership.

<sup>8</sup> Gurig National Park is located on the Cobourg Peninsula, some 200 kilometres by air from Darwin.

the alike, serves as the basis for the popular advocacy for Indigenous tourism and government public rhetoric in Australia. Participation in tourism then has been identified as a potential major source of economic growth for Indigenous communities. Perceived successful enterprises are frequently cited as role models for other Indigenous communities to follow.

The positive image that is presented of the economic benefits of tourism, however, fails to point out some disadvantages and dilemmas. It is acknowledged that through diverse means of Indigenous involvement, tourism has the potential to increase the income of Indigenous people and improve their standard of living, and possibly to positively affect the quality of life through increases in social status and empowerment. At the same time, it should also be noted that quantification alone does not reveal the whole picture of the quality of such potential opportunity or the wider social worth of the industry to the people at the receiving end of the tourism system. On the basis of qualitative analysis, the positive economic impacts of tourism may be problematic from the point of view of Indigenous people, with various limitations and constraints for economic benefits. This section of the paper presents some of the dilemmas and problems that are worth noting in the assessment of economic impacts of tourism on Indigenous communities.

The term dilemma as applied to Indigenous tourism outcomes is used in its dictionary sense. It refers to “a position that leaves only a choice between equally unwelcome possibilities” (*Macquarie Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition). In the tourism area, these choices can be made at individual, group, or community levels, as well as the traditional Indigenous people as a whole. Also worth mentioning is that the involvement of Indigenous people in economic aspects of tourism shares many characteristics with other Indigenous involvement in the mainstream economy. There are, indeed, features of the industry that make it even more difficult for Indigenous interests to be commercially successful in tourism than in ordinary enterprises. The discussion in this section will focus on aspects of tourism that make these dilemmas more acute for Indigenous people as a whole.

The principle dilemma is whether tourism provides Indigenous people with a means to alleviate their relative poverty and high welfare dependence. Generally, the economic opportunities at remote Indigenous communities are extremely circumscribed. In many ways, tourism represents a difficult choice for Indigenous interests: it is tourism or nothing. While greater Indigenous involvement in tourism provides access to cash that is independent of welfare agencies and government departments, the dilemma is that with the net economic effect Indigenous people may still remain relatively poor compared to the average Australian and extremely poor in comparison to domestic and international visitors. The possibility for Indigenous Australians to eliminate poverty through tourism can be demonstrated when both the economic benefits and costs of tourism are examined.

Furthermore, some economic impacts of tourism on Indigenous communities, though positive, are limited. This is due to a number of factors. The two avenues for economic advancement mostly advocated are the ownership of enterprises and employment in the tourism industry. This section is mainly concerned with these two aspects.

### *Problematic Enterprise Option*

One of the main recommendations first made by Miller (1995) and then taken by successive Australian governments is the need to broaden the economic base of Indigenous communities. Tourism enterprises may appear to be an ideal means to achieve this end, especially on Indigenous land where such enterprises may enjoy commercial concessions and location advantages. However, these advantages need to be weighed against the comparative disadvantages faced by Indigenous community enterprises and some of the distinct features of the tourism industry.

The enterprise option for Indigenous people in tourism has been problematic on a number of accounts. The major problem is linked to the corporate structure of such enterprises. Many enterprises are community-owned instead of owned by individuals (Altman, 1993; Altman, 1995; Altman & Finlayson, 1997; Butler & Hinch, 2003), and policies are made by management committees. This means that any profits from enterprises, most of which are not large, have to be widely distributed and therefore per capital earnings tend to be diminished.

Furthermore, there is a frequent tension between commercial and social objectives in the running of these enterprises. On land owned by Indigenous people, the majority of tourism enterprises are managed by non-Indigenous people (Butler & Hinch, 2003; Zeppel, 2001) while owned by Indigenous Australians. Owners and managers frequently pursue divergent and incompatible objectives. Many managers, predominately non-Indigenous, see commercial success as the primary consideration, as their performance is usually measured in these terms. However, owners, like the Indigenous population as a whole, many of whom are poor and have a limited understanding of commercial realities, frequently have other social or cultural priorities. They are generally more concerned with their cultural integrity and authenticity than with marketing strategies that are often the priority of enterprise managers. This tension mainly stems from a real shortage of competent Indigenous entrepreneurs, and thus reliance on outsiders (in this case non-Indigenous managers).

Although there are examples of commercial success in Indigenous tourism, the number is small and most of them are joint ventures between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous partners where the sensitive issue of equity often emerges. The oft-cited successful model of the Tjapukai Dance Theatre in Kuranda is an example of partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous parties in tourism cooperation. One of the reasons for the theatre's success is that it operates on the basis of division of labor by specialization: Indigenous men focus on their specialty as dancers, and their non-Indigenous partners concentrate on financial and other management. Despite the commercial success of such joint ventures, there have been objections on ideological grounds from other Indigenous groups to such business partnerships. This issue is also linked with the employment options of Indigenous people in tourism.

### *Constraints and Challenges in Indigenous Tourism Employment*

Employment improvement is another factor leading to the government's persistence on Indigenous participation in tourism. Empirical evidence suggests that tourism can provide Indigenous people with some employment opportunities, but this potential can be juxtaposed

Table 1.

<b>Employer/institution</b>	<b>August 2001 (number)</b>	<b>May 2002 (number)</b>	<b>November 2002 (number)</b>
General tour guides	9	11	8
Safari guides	5	3	5
Performing enterprises	2	0	3
Education departments	2	29	10
Safety offices	2	0	5
Community offices	1	2	0
ANPWS	6	6	4
Manufacturing enterprises	6	4	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>50</b>

Source: *The Economic Impact of tourism on the Mutitjulu Community, Uluru National Park* (p.39)

with a number of supply-side factors that make Indigenous involvement in tourism limited. Tourism-related employment usually requires both a high level of literacy and communication skills. Despite variations across Australia, there is little doubt that Indigenous people are at a distinct disadvantage in meeting many of the requirements of the tourism industry. Such a disadvantage is partly caused by the lower educational level of Indigenous people and their lower proficiency in the English language. This is especially the case in the most remote and rural locations, precisely the regions that are most attractive to growing numbers of tourists. Such disadvantages inevitably confine Indigenous participation in the tourism industry to unskilled or semi-skilled and low-paid work in the service sector. Few Indigenous employees in the tourism industry hold managerial positions, which, as mentioned above, is also a concern in enterprise-ownership considerations.

Another problem of tourism employment for Indigenous people is about the statistics provided by governments and the tourism industry on increased employment opportunities. These statistics are, to a certain extent, misleading in that few attempts are made to differentiate full-time from part-time or casual employment. Tourism Employment at the Mutitjulu Community, 2001 and 2002 jobs conducted by Indigenous people in their tourism-affected regions are provided on an "hours by request" basis. Like the Gurig National Park, Mutitjulu is an Indigenous community close to Uluru in Northern Territory (N.T.). Table 1 is used in the N.T. Indigenous Employment Report (2002) to present information on the number of Mutitjulu people in tourism employment. However, it does not specify the nature of each employment category. According to an ensuing survey report by Altman and Taylor (2003), most of the jobs listed are of an unstable nature on casual bases.

Furthermore, various cultural dimensions can also inhibit Indigenous participation in tourism employment. Australian Indigenous people lived in monadic groups before European settlement and had no concept of employment at all. In recent decades, even though more Indigenous people have been involved in mainstream society and sought for jobs, the employment rate among all Indigenous population is a lot lower compared with the non-Indigenous population. Therefore as western notions, job punctuality and work ethics are

antithetical to traditional Indigenous culture and thus difficult for Indigenous employees to understand. On the other hand, such notions of time punctuality and service provision are requirements of special importance in tourism that is a service sector with high service demands.

Another difficult demand of Indigenous employees participating in tourism-related services is the direct and intensive social interaction with tourists which many Indigenous people are unwilling to undertake. Apart from wider class barriers and a generally different educational status of many Indigenous people to the non-Indigenous population, Indigenous cultural preference is also attributable to Indigenous reluctance to embrace tourism employment options. For example, forms of Indigenous participation, such as bush food tours or camping trips, require intense social interaction with tourists. The interpersonal aspects of such involvement can be both uncomfortable and confronting experiences for many Indigenous people. In national parks, like Kakadu (Kesteven, 2002) and Uluru (Altman, 2003), most Indigenous people have avoided employment opportunities in tourism for reasons of this kind and have shown a definite preference for indirect economic participation in the industry<sup>9</sup>, as is possible with manufacturing arts and crafts for retail sales (Altman, 2001).

However, it should be noted that while there are Indigenous people who could be termed “tourist avoiders,” there are others who are “tourist seekers” (Dyer & Aberdeen, 2003). These gregarious individuals have been willing to enter tourism and undertake both training and employment, especially for park ranger positions. On the whole, however, such individuals constitute only a small proportion of the Indigenous population and the communication and inter-cultural problems between Indigenous people and visitors provide a partial explanation for Indigenous preferences for indirect tourism that requires no direct contact with tourists.

### *Benefit Leakage to “Outsiders”*

While community members may own the land that comprises a major tourist destination (for example, the Uluru National Park), they do not always gain substantial direct economic benefits either from employment or increased income largely due to benefit leakage to “outside interests.” Altman (2003) estimated that Indigenous communities in the N.T. only receive between 1 and 2 percent of total tourist expenditure, yet Indigenous people comprise 22% of the population and own about 34% of the N. T. land base. While in many areas, Indigenous people are principally involved in indirect cultural tourism through the manufacture and sale of artifacts, due to inadequate government funds and their disadvantages in management and other enterprise aspects, their manufacturing enterprises are consequently small-scale. In addition, due to the remoteness of such producers from the market and the operation of standard pricing practice in the arts (AACIRC, 1997; Ryan & Huyton, 2002; Spring, 1990), in many cases, Indigenous people receive only a minor share of the final retail gains. Meanwhile it is non-Indigenous people who are primarily involved in

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<sup>9</sup> Indigenous contact in tourism can be divided into direct and indirect types. This typology is frequently used with reference to tourism multipliers. The terms ‘direct tourism’ and ‘indirect tourism’ have been used by Aspelin (1977) in his study of the impact of tourism on Indians in Brazil.

the industry and subsequently accrue the benefits. Thus income from the sale of artifacts often amounts to little more than a cash supplement to welfare. This, in turn, reduces the incentive of Indigenous people to seek employment in tourism.

### *Economic Costs of Tourism Involvement*

In assessing the economic benefits of tourism, the economic costs are frequently overlooked.

1. *Reduced Indigenous Access to Their Land.* One potential cost is the reduced Indigenous access to the land being utilized by tourists. At most tourism locations, Indigenous people continue to participate in hunting, gathering, and fishing activities to varying degrees and such activities remain of cultural and economic significance. However, there are indications that Indigenous people are reluctant to participate in such activities within view of tourists both for safety and public relations reasons. Some Indigenous people feel that “their hunting and fishing rights are not adequately protected” (Gillespie, 2000). Being a cost in an economic sense, it is also related to violation to privacy.

At other times, in tourism-affected areas, local Indigenous people may find that they have lost their legitimate right to their traditional land due to the imposition of tourism. For example, at Lake Condah in Victoria, the present tourism venture is run by the Victoria Tourism Commission (VTC) under a two-year lease agreement with Indigenous landowners. Many of the local Kerrup-jmara people were ignorant of the leasing agreement and surprised that they now need the prior permission of the VTC if they wish to visit the area for recreation purposes. In this way, they were excluded from control over activities on their own land.

2. *Reduced Welfare Benefits.* Another potential cost to Indigenous communities is linked to the operation of the “needs criterion” used by the federal government as the basis for funding Indigenous communities. The consequence of this funding regime is that where communities gain access to additional financial resources, this usually results in reduction in normal program support (Miller, 2002). Hence while impressive economic benefits from tourism in per capita terms occur at Gurig National Park, a relatively successful example of Indigenous tourism involvement mentioned earlier, these positive financial effects are offset by a restricted Indigenous access to normal government funding of community welfare and infrastructure. Many Indigenous people are left with two options – either taking tourism by taking part in it or taking government welfare incomes but not both of them. This policy is intended to help increase the level of self-reliance among Indigenous Australians through encouraging tourism participation. But for many people the economic situation cannot improve much if it ever does, as they are not eligible to take benefits in both ways. This is another reason for low participation in tourism among Indigenous people in some parts of Australia when some choose not to take tourism and remain welfare receivers, as they cannot get double benefits anyway. Australian Indigenous people are left with yet another dilemma.

3. *The Danger of Over-dependence on Tourism.* While it can be argued that tourism does offer an important alternative form of economic activity, it should not be seen as only one component of a larger series of development initiatives within any economic system. That is

not to say that tourism in selected circumstances cannot be the major source of income and jobs in a community or region, but rather that the impact and role of tourism may take many forms and meet a number of tourist motivations. Experience has shown that destinations can rise and fall in popularity, driven by various factors in the destination's internal and external environment, such as changes in international tourism trends, natural catastrophes, and demand or supply-side problems (Cohen, 1989; de Kadt, 1979; Franklin, 2003; Metelka, 1990). In Australia, tourism has been the main economic involvement for many Indigenous communities. While tourism has always been regarded as the major leverage of Indigenous economic development, the danger of over-reliance on this single activity requires caution in both the part of local Indigenous people and the part of tourism policy makers. Regions that are entirely dependent on tourism are much more vulnerable to above-mentioned shifts than an economy that is diversified and has tourism as only one of its industries.

### Discussion

Tourism has provided an opportunity for economic gains for involved Indigenous communities. It should be acknowledged that though with verifying degrees on a case-by-case basis, tourism has brought about positive economic gains to involved Indigenous communities as a whole. These positive effects could, to a certain extent, be reflected by economic statistics based on which governments and the tourism industry advocate further Indigenous participation. However, it should be equally noted that Indigenous communities contemplating tourism to economic betterment face enormous dilemmas and challenges as well and that the economic gains are often problematic and with the danger of being offset by costs associated with tourism growth. Such dilemmas and costs result from both the reality of a power imbalance between Indigenous people and the outside interest groups and from cultural conflicts that exist between Indigenous lifestyle and culture and the tourism industry.

The issue of Indigenous participation in tourism is a complicated one. So are its impacts. When the over-optimistic view sees tourism involvement as an instant and efficient means for development for Australian Indigenous people, it fails to take into account different angles of the involvement or to fully comprehend the complexity of its impacts. Because of the kinds of constraints identified in this paper, participation in tourism cannot be automatically converted into financial returns or be immune to any costs. Tourism brings about a set of problems and dilemmas as well as opportunities.

In regard to the complexity of the Indigenous tourism development and that of its impacts mainly in economic terms, two important points need to be made. Firstly, when tourism occurs, two different cultures are brought into contact, which is likely to bring about changes to the host culture as well as the guests. Changes to the former are usually more significant than those to the latter as the host culture is exposed to different guests and thus cultures much more frequently. These changes are not necessarily wrong or undesirable, and may have been inevitable anyway, with or without tourism<sup>10</sup>. However, the nature of tourism

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<sup>10</sup> Tourism is only one of several modernizing influences, such as the mass media, education, and

determines that it is a business that needs special caution. The goals and expectations of the tourist and those of the host are often different. This difference may cause conflicts between different tourism interests. For example, cultural priority for social outcomes of the locals may be incompatible with commercial market demands; and tourists' desire for Indigenous cultural experience poses threats on the local environment.

While the first point is basically universal in the tourism domain, some special characteristics of Indigenous Australians make their tourism even more complex. The Indigenous people are not a part of the same socio-cultural environment as the tourist as they do not generally take part in the western economic system. Tourism for them is affected from outside and Indigenous communities are, to some extent, a passive recipient of impacts determined by extraneous forces. So, while they are a target for the tourist experience and therefore likely to be a part of the environment the tourist wishes to experience, they are also generally outside the core economic sphere where the financial benefits of tourism are to be found. Factors arising from European colonization, such as political powerlessness, cultural conflicts and economic isolation, have also left Indigenous Australians in a highly disadvantageous position in harvesting the gains, where there are some, of tourism involvement.

There are no straightforward solutions to these problems and challenges. In fact, the identification of these problems is a logical step in the process of finding relevant solutions. It should be recognized that it is unrealistic to view tourism as a means of getting Indigenous people off all their problems and leading them to development, that some Indigenous communities are justified with their caution in entering tourism and that it is unwise to urge them to rush into the industry.

In dealing with tourism, Indigenous people may take different options<sup>11</sup>, though in the contemporary society where tourism, like the western economic system as a whole, has already become an economic and social reality, it is probably not easy to wholly reject or avoid it. If tourism is to stay, for Indigenous people to get more control over it may be a more realistic option in relieving negative consequences and maximizing gains. "The factor of control is a key one in any discussion of development" (Hinch & Butler; 2003, p. 9), and tourism is no exception to this rule. Only with a significant level of control over the extent and nature of their participation and over the role they play in the industry, Indigenous Australians would have more time and resources to evaluate effectively in their own terms the implications of tourism for their environment and their way of life and then probably make approaches to development through involvement on a fuller footing.

There is an obligation for all those involved in Indigenous tourism. Governments and tourism agencies should take a long-term view and evaluate tourism's economic effects on Indigenous people from a balanced perspective. This way, any initiatives for Indigenous tourism development will recognize the problems that are usually neglected and sometimes

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urbanization, that significantly affect the attitudes and values of people in all societies (Ryan; 1997).

<sup>11</sup> According to Altman J. C. (1988, 1998 & 2003), there are three options commonly postulated for Indigenous Australians. They are direct involvement, indirect involvement, and aversion. These options are the result of the perceptions and expectations that people have of tourism.

even ignored, so that undue pressure is not to be placed on Indigenous people to meet the needs of the tourism market. In short, healthy and sustainable tourism in relation to Australian Indigenous people will be largely dependent on cautious consideration of all impacts through an appropriately slow rate of tourism development and careful nurturing of its impacts in all aspects.

Email address: catherinesnnn@yahoo.com

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