

# RETHINKING CAPACITY BUILDING

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# Issues To Be Covered

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- The Rise of the Community
- The Concept of Capacity Building
- Four False Assumptions
- The Development Crisis
- Reflect on Our Assumptions
- Reflect on Power Relations

# The Rise of the Community

Mineral companies:

- focused on engaging the community (1990)
- adopted the **9th ICMM principle** (2003):

“Contribute to the social, **economic and institutional development** of the neighbouring communities”





# Community Development and Capacity Building (CB)

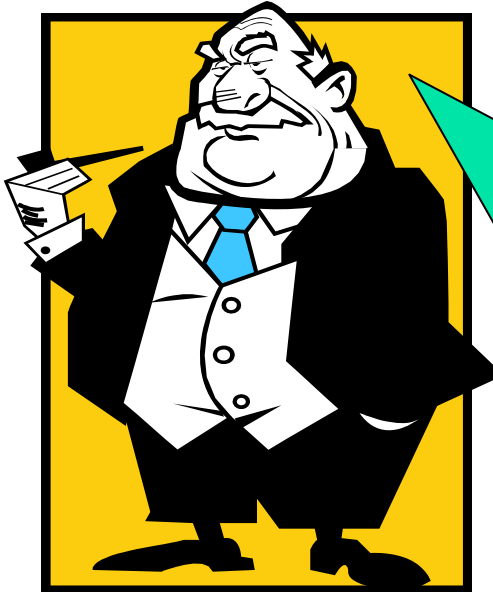
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## Capacity Building:

- was a central concept in the community development literature
- originated as building self-help capacities within rural communities
- = institution building and technical assistance

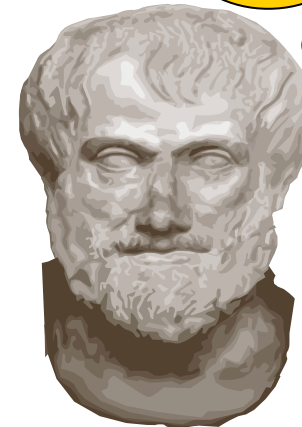
# The Early Concept of Capacity Building (1950s-1970s)

## Early CB as “technical assistance”



“Simply transfer **capital and know-how** to other countries, and swift economic growth will follow”

This concept contains a series of **false assumptions**





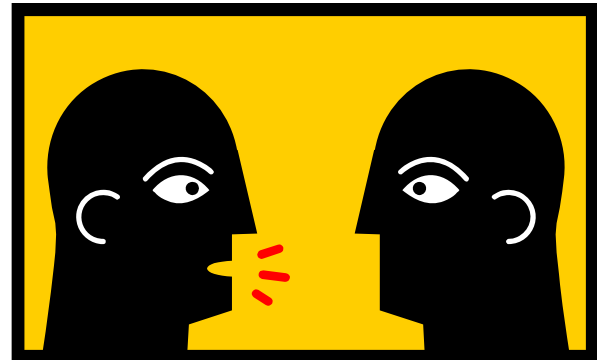
# False Assumptions

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- CB is a **one-way** flow of information from the “developed” to the “developing” countries
- Western knowledge is **superior** to the local/indigenous knowledge
- Local/indigenous communities are only made up of **needs** and capacity gaps
- The community lacks capacity because it is “traditional”, “primitive” or “**backward**”

# False: CB Is a **One-way** Flow

- from the donor countries/development agencies to Third World countries
- necessary for the local community and government **but not for the companies**





# True: CB Is a Two-way Flow

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- **Government and industry** themselves may **lack the capacity** to comprehend **cultural and social issues**
- **Engineers or employees** of mineral companies **are seldom trained in communication skills**
- For a successful collaboration, **these skills are as necessary as the understanding of technical matters**





## False: CB Is a **One-way** Flow

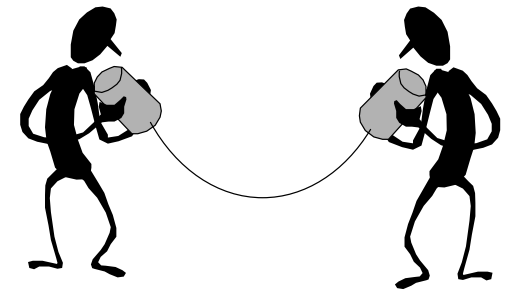
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- The company provides
  - **technical knowledge**
- The community representatives provide
  - **values, beliefs and emotions**

# True: CB Is a Two-way Flow

- **Both** inputs can come from **both** sides:
  - the **community** often has technical knowledge
  - the **mineral company** has values, emotions or constraints that affect communication

*"a successful risk communication must incorporate **exchange of information and opinions**"* (National Research Council 1989)





# False: Western Knowledge Is Superior

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## False

- Western knowledge is “scientific” vs. the “non-scientific” indigenous knowledge
- Traditional/indigenous knowledge is
  - an obstacle to the developing country’s “modernization”

## True

- Western knowledge is just one knowledge system among many
- Traditional knowledge can be **a major resource for development**



# False: Western Knowledge Is Superior

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## False

- There are differences between Western and indigenous thought
  - in their subject matter and
  - in the way they investigate reality and order phenomena

## True

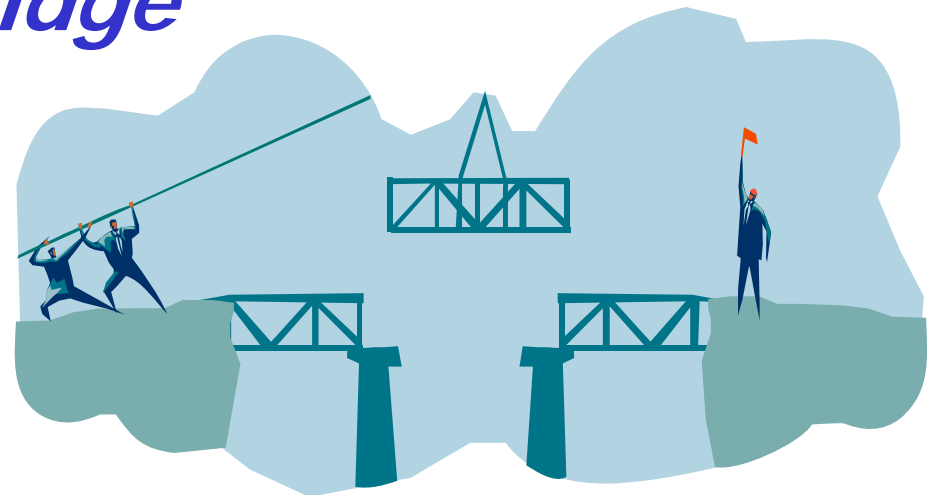
- The **critical** difference is not at an epistemological level but in their relationship to **power**



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*- Can a bridge be built between  
**scientific and indigenous knowledge?***

*- Sure, but indigenous people know:  
**the scientists will surely be the guys  
designing the bridge***





# True: Integrate both knowledge systems

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- It is necessary **to integrate as equivalents** indigenous and Western forms of knowledge

*“Capacity, in the new thinking, involves the integration of two parallel knowledge and production systems - ‘indigenous’ and ‘modern’ ”*



# False: Local Communities Are Only Made up of Needs

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- The community is defined in terms of **needs and capacity gaps**
- Community members are **passive recipient/consumers** of services - not producers
- Only outside experts can provide real help

# True: Local Communities Are Also Made up of Strengths

- **Community strengths** will lead to change rather than a focus on needs and problems
- Communities are **empowered** and become self-sufficient
- Communities **drive the development process** themselves

(Asset Based Community Development)





*Richie Ah Mat, Executive Director,  
Cape York Land Council*



*"...the concept of 'capacity building' is the idea that Aboriginal people are innately deficient, or incapable, or ...lacking  
we have had 40 to 60,000 years of survival and capacity! The problem is our capacity has been **eroded and diminished**"*

*"...our people do have skills, knowledge and experience! And our people **are not imbeciles***

*We are fully-fledged human beings who are quite capable of looking after our own children and fighting for their future*

***So when we talk about capacity building –  
keep this in mind... "***



# False: Indigenous Communities Are Primitive

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- All countries should follow **the same path to development** as the countries of North America and Western Europe
- Underdeveloped or developing countries are “**late**” in their development stage



# True: Indigenous Communities Are Marginalized

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- Local communities need capacity building **not because of inherent inability to comprehend**, but because:
  - they have been **historically excluded** from participating in decision-making
  - they have been **marginalized**
  - they may be **unfamiliar** with the character and nature of mineral operations



# The Development Crisis

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Both the WB and the UNDP:

- admit that the history of development is filled with more failures than successes
- have realized the need to reflect on:
  - assumptions
  - power relations

***Challenge mindsets and power differentials***

(4th Principle for Capacity Development, UNDP 2003)



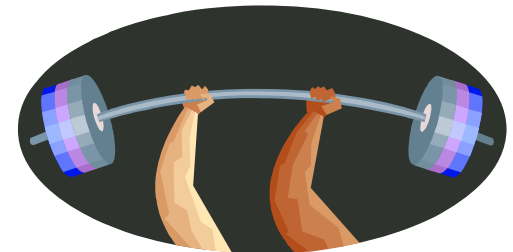
# The Need to Reflect on Our Assumptions

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- The **terms and concepts** we use
  - play an important part in **shaping and framing solutions**
  - may imply **hierarchy** rather than partnership
  - have an effect on the **funding and design** of programs

# The Need to Reflect on Power Relations

- *“In capacity building projects different stakeholders have*
  - *different levels of power*
  - *different interests*
  - *different resources*
- *For these reasons, arrangements are needed*
  - *to level the playing field*
  - *and enable different stakeholders to interact on an equitable and collaborative basis”*



(World Bank, 1996)



# Conclusions...

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- Mineral companies hold a great amount of **political and financial power**
- When setting up consultation projects they should be aware of **power dynamics**
- Being aware of power relations **is not only for social scientists or radical thinkers**
- On the contrary, it is essential to address this issue in order to achieve **a sustainable partnership**

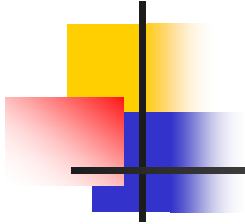


# Conclusions

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- If mining companies wish:
  - to remain committed to the 9th ICMM principle
  - to use the concept of capacity building in an effective rather than decorative manner
- Then they should reflect
  - on their **assumptions** and
  - on the **power relationships** that underlie engagement with the local communities





*“While intangible*

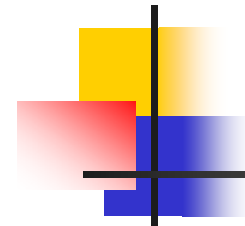
- *mindsets*
- *vested interests*
- *and power differentials*

*may make the biggest contribution to  
development success or failure”*

*(UNDP 2003)*

Thank you





- *“We need to examine further **the basic assumptions** that underlie the old model of technical cooperation-*
- *including assumptions about*
  - *the nature of development*
  - *the role of capacity within development*
  - *the aid-donor-recipient relationship*
  - *and knowledge and capacity...” (UNDP 2002)*

