

28/16

IDEA TO SET UP KOORI PUBLISHING COMPANY

INTRODUCTION

In the past ten years Australia has seen a dramatic upsurge of interest in the stories, both cultural and personal, of Aboriginal people. This has been reflected in the success of distribution companies like Black Books in Sydney and CAAMA in Alice Springs. The current outbreak of interest can be traced back to major administrative changes to support programs for Aboriginal writers and artists from the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council in 1983-87. The so-called Mabo debate and government policy of Aboriginal Reconciliation have also significantly increased general community interest in Aboriginal affairs.

So far in most parts of Australia it has been occasional, individual, relatively high profile Kooris, who have had their stories published. One of the reasons for this is that non-Aboriginal publishers, whilst on one hand beginning to realise that a wealth of stories exist out there, are handicapped by their almost total lack of knowledge or contact with, the Koori community. Certain Koori community organisations are in daily contact with, and have a unique understanding of the extent of peoples stories that need to be told. Furthermore, we in community organisations realise the contribution to greater broader community understanding that the personal histories of many Aboriginal people can make.

A problem therefore exists for both publishers and the Koori community. That problem can be, we propose, overcome by a Koori community organisation entering into an agreement with a publishing company to create a **Koori Community Publishing Company (KCPC)**.

THE IDEA

That Yuroke Students Aboriginal Corporation (or similar Koori group), seek an agreement with an established publishing company to jointly establish a **Koori Community Publishing Company (KCPC)**. The YSAC would seek to own a 51% share in the KCPC.

The YSAC would bring to the **KCP C**the following :-

1. Knowledge, expertise and contacts with the Aboriginal community nationally.
2. Credibility within the Aboriginal community which would encourage otherwise reluctant, shy Koori writers to produce.
3. An ability to understand the special needs and desires of Koori people with extraordinary stories, and an ability to ensure that their interests are protected.

4. A door to the extraordinary talent that is hidden within the Koori community. There are many Oodjeroo Noonuckles, Archie Roach's and Jack Davis' in our community.
5. An equitable and mutually beneficial means by which an outside, non-Aboriginal company to have honourable relationship with the Aboriginal community.

The Publishing Company would bring to the **KCPC** the following:-

1. All necessary initial capital to establish the company and commission and publish the first 20 authors.
2. The publishing company's presence as a shareholder would enhance **KCPC's** ability to attract the numerous array of potential government subsidies.
3. Access to a broader distribution network than normally available to Koori community publishers and writers.
4. Access to publishing facilities.

The **KCPC** would function as an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation which would :-

- a) Actively seek out and encourage potential Aboriginal writers, songwriters, artists, musicians in our communities through sponsorship, commissions, grants and other means.
- b) Establish equitable contracts which operate to both encourage and stimulate talent and to protect the interests of community members.
- c) To act as a management agency for those Koori community writers, artists and performers who might require those services.
- d) To provide legal and artistic advice to those writers, artists and performers in the community who seek it.
- e) To publish works produced by artists and writers contracted to **KCPC**.
- f) To operate high profile Koori Shops in Brunswick St., Fitzroy in Melbourne and Bondi Beach in Sydney. These outlets would sell products of contracted writers and artists, as well as other Kooriabilia.
- g) To research and publish stories of legendary Koori people from history.
- h) Operate in conjunction with other Aboriginal community publishers, distributors and recording companies to maximise opportunities for Aboriginal community writers, artists and performers.

- i) To actively seek contracts to provide material for school curricula in Aboriginal studies nationally.
- j) Regularly conduct workshops, seminars and training programs for aspiring Koori writers, artists and performers.
- k) Commission and stage performances of plays, musicals, revues by Koori writers, artists and performers.
- l) Seek sponsorship to stage Koori cultural festivals where Koori community talent can be fostered.
- m) Sponsor tours by interstate Koori community writers, artists and performers to enhance broader community understanding.
- n) Operate at times as a consultant to government agencies such as ATSIC, Aboriginal Arts Board, Australian Tourism Commission etc.

KCPC FUNCTIONS

It is envisaged that the **KCPC** would, through its intimate knowledge of the Koori community, identify and commission certain artists, writer, performers etc to produce material which **KCPC** would then have first option on selling, producing etc. This would mean the artist would not have to go through the demeaning and demoralising process of applying for government grants, and would have a much speedier result to any request he/she made for support. It would also mean that if ultimately additional financial support were required to publish or otherwise produce material, then the **KCPC** would be the applicant to bureaucracy, thus again removing the artist or performer from the soul-destroying task of seeking support from public servants.

The **KCPC** would, through its bookshop/coffee shop/theatre, give priority to the publishing, performing or selling of products of local community artists, writers and performers, thus providing a forum and income for local talent. At the same time the artists would be able to totally concentrate on what they do best, without the hassle of fronting complicated funding procedures.

It is also envisaged that once the commercial viability of the **KCPC** was established, the company should then branch out into creating the first fully Koori-community owned offshoots, such as printing presses, recording studios, rehearsal space, theatre/cinema complex, public relations and advertising. All of the potential developments could be significantly financed by both Federal government Aboriginal enterprise, education & training subsidies and private merchant banks. It could be anticipated that both commercial and government interests from overseas would be very interested in financially supporting such a venture.

So there are a wide variety of exciting alternative financing sources for such a proposed venture, and it would also be of wide short and long term benefit to a range of Koori community commercial ventures and community organisations. It is only through the development of community economic self-sufficiency and independence that we as a community will survive with our cultural integrity intact, and this project embraces and consolidates opportunities for both economic and cultural development.

INTERIM BUDGET

Establishment Costs (Sydney)	
Office/Coffee Shop/Bookshop/Theatre (Sydney)	
Rent -12 months @ \$3000/mth.....	\$ 36,000:00
Renovations and fittings.....	\$100,000:00
Phone, fax, postage etc.....	\$ 30,000:00
Salaries (Executive)\$50,000+ \$10,000 exp.....	\$120,000:00
Salaries (Sec. office staff) 3 X \$30,000.....	\$ 90,000:00
Operating Expenses (inc grants).....	\$150,000:00

SUB TOTAL \$526,000:00

Establishment Costs (Melbourne)	
Office/Coffee Shop/Bookshop/Theatre (Melbourne)	
Rent - 12months @ \$2500/mth.....	\$ 30,000:00
Renovations and fittings.....	\$ 50,000:00
Phone, fax, postage etc.....	\$ 25,000:00
Salaries Exec.)	\$ 50,000:00
Salaries (Sec., office staff) 3 X \$30,000.....	\$ 90,000:00
Operating Expenses (inc grants).....	\$100,000:00

SUB TOTAL \$345,000:00

TOTAL \$871,000:00

POTENTIAL ANTICIPATED INCOME (1st 12 MONTHS)

ATSIC subsidies.....	\$250,000:00
DEET subsidies.....	\$500,000:00
Loans etc.....	\$250,000:00
Publishing Company invesment.....	\$500,000:00
Sales and income.....	\$ 75,000:00

PROJECTED TOTAL \$1,575,000:00

PROJECTED PROFIT 1st 12 mths \$ 704,000:00

CONCLUSION

Even if these projections were optimistic, the fact remains that interest in all things to do with Aboriginal Australia is booming. That can be expected to dramatically increase even further as we approach the year 2000 and the debate over the Australian Republic intensifies. Most Australians are going to realise over the next ten years that the foundations of any "Australian" culture which is going to be the cornerstone of any Australian Republic is necessarily Aboriginal.

By the year 2000 we can expect to see a far more confident, mature Australian society in which there will be not only a deep interest in Koori culture (traditional and contemporary), but also a pride in it as part of the common heritage all Australians will then understand they share.

In other words, we can expect a commercial bonanza for those people best placed to take advantage of the sudden increase in interest in Koori-abillia. My personal opinion is that it would be a historical tragedy if Koori people were not the ones to benefit first, hence this proposal to ensure that we do!

Yours Sincerely,

GARY FOLEY

**Former Director, Aboriginal Arts Board, Australia Council 1983 -87.
President, Melbourne Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (MAEAI)
President, School Council, Northland Secondary College, Vic.**

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