

## We make the road by walking

The metaphor of a journey seems to best represent ideas about how organisations are moving along various paths towards relationships based on the Treaty's intentions. The emphasis is on travelling together rather than reaching a pre-set destination — each organisation will determine its own destination and it may seem like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The direction may be clear but it is never actually reached. The course of the journey will be mapped through dialogue and negotiation between the parties in the relationship.

Also, the paths are constantly evolving, developing, and shifting as external and internal factors change for each organisation. It is different at different times, in different regions, for different participants. We do not want to suggest that there is only one way, or even a preferred way — to the frustration of some, there is no prescribed route. In fact, it is far too early even to decide whether there is a particular order to any of the steps which makes it easier — in some ways, the Treaty journey is quite unique. In the words of Horton and Freire (1990), we are actually making the road by walking it. We will only see the path by looking back, not by looking forward. We hope that you will be able to relate to, and learn from, the experiences of others as they create their own journeys through this relatively uncharted territory.

### Community of Practice Blog

We have created a weblog for those participants who continue with the rest of the course.

The blog will be a 'private' site where:

- Course organisers will post new information, resources, and electronic copies of handouts
- Members can share ideas and get help
- Members can discuss application issues and events

You can visit the site at:

<http://treatyapplication.wordpress.com/>

However it will become a members only site once it has been finalised who is continuing with rest of the course (approximately the end of January).

## Walking together: communities of practice

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 2001). What holds communities of practice together is a common sense of purpose, joint enterprise, a need to know what other members know and a desire to share and learn from each other. It is a concept based on the idea that people are the best channels for information and learning.

Communities of practice function to:

- foster a sense of community
- enable the exchange of information
- act as a repository of 'tacit' knowledge (the things we learn as we go about our work together, that we take for granted)
- foster shared identity

Features of a community of practice are:

- shared practice and commitment
- deliberate mutual learning
- informed connections
- shared activity

Potential benefits can include:

- problem solving
- developing new capabilities
- leveraging good practices
- saving time
- avoiding mistakes

As individuals we may currently be operating within more than one community of practice. Consciously or unconsciously we are already encouraging mutual learning, sharing information, ideas and activities and providing a focus for new practitioners and groups in our fields of work.

### Further Reading

Horton, M. and Freire, P. (1990) *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*. (B Bell, J Gaventa & J Peters, Eds). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Lave, J., Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community\\_of\\_Practice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_Practice)  
<http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>  
[http://www.infed.org/biblio/communities\\_of\\_practice.htm](http://www.infed.org/biblio/communities_of_practice.htm)