The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the South African Context


October, 2003

Relationship Timeline:

- 1999 – South African delegates meet with FNTI staff at the National Conference in Vancouver, BC.

Relationship Timeline:

- 2000 – FNTI is invited by the Joint Education Trust to present their model of RPL in Pretoria, South Africa.
- 2001 – South Africa sends 21 delegates representing various stakeholder groups to FNTI/CAPLA’s PLAR Conference in Belleville, ON.

Relationship Timeline:

- 2002/03 – FNTI is contracted by the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Education & Training Authority (MERSETA) for one year.
- 2003 – FNTI participates in the 2nd International Conference on RPL sponsored by the Joint Education Trust.

Nature of Our Work:

Since 2000, we have:

- Consulted on the development of the SAQA policy on RPL.
- Drafted an RPL Training Manual.
- Conducted RPL Advisor/Assessor Training based on a holistic approach to assessment.
CAPLA – Recognizing Learning Conference, October 20, 2003 – Fairmont Hotel, Winnipeg, MB
Aboriginal Super-Session – Panel Presentation

Nature of Our Work:

- Presented FNTI’s holistic model of RPL before various employer groups, such as the MERSETA & SEIFSA groups and at two International Conferences.
- Discussed strategies for Workforce development using a holistic approach to RPL that respects Indigenous Knowledge systems. Slide #29

Nature of Our Work:

- Assisted in the Planning and Delivery of an International Conference on RPL that hosted delegates from the U.K., Holland, France, Canada, Australia, and the United States. Slide #30

The South African Context Needed:

- RPL for Healing.
- RPL for Redressing the Social inequity created by the previous Apartheid system.
- RPL for Ensuring that the majority of South Africans could Access an educational system that had previously been denied. Slide #31

What FNTI Gave:

From our 20 years of PLAR experience:

- Knowledge and practical experience in the community-based implementation of PLAR strategies.
- A strong belief & conviction in the Principles of Adult Learning and Learner-Centred Education.
- An understanding of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Slide #32

What FNTI Received:

- The opportunity to think outside of the “box” in applying PLAR principles & strategies in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual context.
- A challenge in developing a RPL process for the collective rather than just the individual. Slide #33
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What FNTI Received:

- Validation of our own Aboriginal worldview and the importance of validating Indigenous Knowledge systems.
- Confirmation of PLAR & Portfolio Development as Processes of Healing and Transformation. Slide #34

Lessons Learned:

- We accepted the validity of PLAR theory from the outset and then worked on the harder issues related to implementation and practice of PLAR within a particular social context. Slide #35

Lessons Learned:

- We gained a partner in the struggle for the development and acceptance of a PLAR model that could emancipate learners by focusing on “what they have”, rather than on “what they don’t have.” Slide #36

Lessons Learned:

- We supported the importance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and came to understand how PLAR through portfolio development processes helped to develop and enhance both a traditional form and a contemporary body of Indigenous knowledge. Slide #37

Lessons Learned:

- We surmised that the policy document governing the Recognition of Prior Learning in the context of the South African National Qualifications Framework is theoretically a better policy. It provides for a holistic approach to assessment that is more suitable for a multi-cultural, multi-lingual environment. It puts PLAR into a framework that is larger than the one that we have in Canada. Slide #38
Future Considerations:

- **For Us:** To work at refining an Aboriginal perspective and approach to PLAR & Portfolio Development that respects and focuses on the importance of oral text and that may be amenable to a Canadian context that is becoming increasingly multi-cultural & multi-lingual.

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Future Considerations:

- **For Them:** To develop RPL strategies that can support the healing, development and assessment of not just individuals, but of whole groups and collectives that constitute an Indigenous majority ie. The Worker’s College in Durban.

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