

AFRIKABURN 2019

Observations and Reflections from the Managing Director

INTRODUCTION

We've grown more confident and accomplished in our approach to the event. Each year is an exercise in fine-tuning to improve systems and processes and reduce the burden carried by the core teams. Subtle adaptations or tactical interventions respond to challenges faced the year before as we work to strengthen the invisible support structures that hold our community and contain Tankwa Town in her exuberant creative enterprise.

Our attention turns to deepening our engagement with the principles – this year channeling our efforts further into getting to grips with what Radical Inclusion means and looks like in our specific South African context, and taking steps towards a deeper and more pro-active embrace of Leave No Trace in our production environment.

INCLUSIVITY

Everyone is invited to participate. But an invitation is not inclusion and we have recognized that not all are able to participate on an equal footing. It's become progressively clearer that relevance as a social movement requires that we acknowledge the barriers to participating in our community and take steps to lower them.

At a foundational level we have revisited the principle of radical Inclusion, expanding it to articulate more clearly what inclusivity means in the South African context. We've made a start at inculcating the drive for greater diversity across all levels of the organisation, providing tools for bettering diversity literacy in site teams with the development of an Inclusivity Handbook. We've taken steps to break out of the echo chamber of our dominant social network and made active effort to engage in conversation with communities outside of our primarily white middle-class population. We've taken our show on the road, with the Blank Canvas Express, to introduce AfrikaBurn to the people of the Northern Cape, seeding creative collaboration that is blossoming in Tankwa Town. We've reached out to those who are already part of the AfrikaBurn community to deepen their engagement, extend the invitation and make consciously inclusive spaces. We're continuing the work of fostering participatory diversity through amplifying the Anathi tickets program and accessibility grants, and through formalising the intentional support of process-driven work in the creative grant allocation.

THE COMMUNITY

TICKETING

The 2019 ticket sale cycle saw three significant departures from previous years in an attempt to address barriers to entry by simplifying the ticket purchase process.

- There was only one general sale without a predetermined end date and time which remained open for 7 months until tickets sold out.
- The Burner Bio was uncoupled from the ticket purchase process.
- Direct Distribution tickets were suspended and only allocated on request or after the general sales had sold out.

While these initiatives achieved their aim of improving access to tickets, the uncoupling of the Burner Bio from ticket sales enabled over a quarter of our community to bypass the Burner Bio entirely, disabling a critical mechanism for communication, acculturation, engagement with the principles, community mapping and participant information.

The two have been coupled again for MayDay sales, and the API has undergone stress testing and has been re-activated.

The Communications team are driving consistent registration of a Burner Bio across the community ahead of the general sale. And Quicket is putting mechanisms in place to ensure a Burner Bio is necessary for the formal ticket transfer and resale platforms.

The community

- 3987 Returning Burners (34%)
- 4548 New Bios Registered (39%)
- 3165 had no Burner Bio (27%)
- South African (62%)
- International (38%)
- Kids (157) (1,3%)
- Minors (81) (0,06%)
- Anathi tickets (187) (1,6%)
- Subsidised tickets (609) (5%)
- Artist tickets (151) (13%)
- Total subsidised tickets (910) (7,6%)
- Mayday tickets (653) (5,5%)

Kids

There's been a steady decline in the presence of children and minors in Tankwa Town, dropping noticeably after the 2017 event. This is troubling for a number of reasons that imply challenges around inclusivity, longevity, and culture spread beyond the event.

The 2019 survey included questions around children at the event, and we are looking to understand what is happening and if / how to reverse this.

Soberland

Soberland has run for three years, driven voluntarily by members of the AfrikaBurn team.

This was a shaky year with less operational and team support than usual, and this was felt and noted by those who rely on similar spaces to support their sobriety.

Making safe and welcoming space for those outside of the dominant social standard – especially where attending AfrikaBurn puts them at risk - speaks to Inclusivity and Civic Responsibility, so we are considering if and how to provide organizational support for a sober space. And this is being weighed against the principles of Self-reliance and Communal Effort.

If Soberland receives financial support from AfrikaBurn it would likely be seed funding, possibly from the theme camp grant pot, in the hopes that those community members for whom the space is relevant will take custody of it going forward.

TICKET SALES

Ticket sales rose by roughly 8% (from 11 052 in 2018, to 11 909 this year).

The number of Mayday tickets sold rose by just under 9% (from 600 to 653) despite a 17,5% price increase. Ticket stats indicate that 7% of the community are opting to purchase a Mayday ticket, which speaks to a willingness to support the work of AfrikaBurn financially where one is able.

Revenue from vehicle passes rose by around 25%, also off an increased price.

Given what appears to be general tolerance for the vehicle passes and an increased willingness to pay above the general sales price, the decision has been made to allow for substantial increases in the vehicle pass and Mayday ticket prices for 2020, in an effort to accommodate the increased budgetary demands while containing as far as possible the price of General Sales and subsidized tickets.

GATE

Gate times were adjusted this year – from a 24/7 shift to a 1am – 8am closure. This was primarily to support more manageable hours for the crew and volunteers at both Gate and Greeters.

The biggest change was the closing of the Gate at 7pm on the Sunday before the official start – to discourage driving on the R355 after dark, to mitigate against last minute land-grabs, and to allow Tankwa Town and the teams that hold it to get ready for the onslaught of Burners that flood through the gate on Monday. These changes were for the most part well received by the community, with just two exceptions (both seeking access to the site between 1am and 5am).

The Gate shut down at 7pm on Friday night, only remaining open for egress. Just one person sought random entry at the gate after this point.

Gate is committed to maintaining this practice and is proposing bringing closure forward to 1am on Thursday morning. Philosophically this is a strong proposal, but it must be considered in balance against other factors.

The majority of people entering through the Main Gate did so on Monday (22%) and Wednesday (25%), with around 12% entering as early arrivals on Work Access Passes.

Similarly the Airport Gate saw a large influx of people on Monday and Wednesday, with a notable spike of entrants on Friday, which speaks to concerns around the overlap between air transfer, weekend warriors, and potential plug and play scenarios. However the small number of people entering through Airport gate indicates that “consumer” culture continues to enter predominantly through the main Gate. Our strategic interventions to address plug and play have made a significant impact and will continue - but we may well need to look to take a more stringent and active

approach to intercepting suspected plug and play operators not just in the registration process, but also on arrival at the Supplier Gate, and if identified already in situ on site.

SUPPLIERS

The Supplier Process rolled out for the third year, along with the introduction of the planned 5% surcharge on hired goods and services for private camps. This was well communicated and met largely without complaint from the community and suppliers.

Despite an improved process we faced significant challenge with one supplier, whose team was ultimately removed from site, leading to further complications for their clients and our team, which continued beyond the event.

Although AfrikaBurn was within its rights, this lesson carried a cost to all involved – the supplier, their clients (who are AfrikaBurn’s community), the site team, and the organisation - and going forward no supplier team can be permitted on site that is not pre-registered, fully compliant with the process, has a team sufficient to their volume of work and adequately provisioned, and has met all of their financial obligations to secure entry.

There are also instances that came to light this year of external vendors taking advantage of the Burn community through inflated charges, poor delivery, and deliberate misrepresentation. For this reason we are introducing a matrix for grading suppliers and will publish a list of “Suppliers in Good Standing”, so the community can make informed decisions or take calculated risks.

COMMUNICATIONS

AfrikaBurn has an astonishing presence on Facebook, which continues to be a major vector for discussion, inspiration, acculturation, education, collaboration and post event nostalgia. Not only have the groups grown dramatically, but most information sharing happens there now (far outstripping every other medium except the Facebook page this year).

The AfrikaBurn website continues to enjoy long visit times, and this year showed a massive upswing in the amount of engagement by new visitors. Other channels include Twitter, which continues to tick over quietly, Instagram which grows exponentially, and the AfrikaBurn YouTube account, which is gaining traction.

Now in its 4th year, Radio Free Tankwa (RFT) has seen steady growth in numbers of listeners both during our Tankwa event (an approximate 3,000 listeners this year) and year-round on its stream. The RFT team has also expanded, with 8 new faces behind the mic this round, including 2 new crews that both hosted regular daily shows.

We continue to face a significant amount of IP piracy, in the form of brands, companies and influencers that seek to make use of our identity, imagery and content in order to leverage our community and culture for profit. These are handled swiftly and deftly by volunteer admins on facebook, by our Comms team where it needs to be escalated, and through legal recourse if all else fails. We are currently fighting commodification efforts in Germany, and will register our own copyright claim on our nomenclature across the EU. This comes at significant cost, but is critical to maintaining the integrity of our community identity and guiding principles.

International coverage of AfrikaBurn continues to grow and we remain selective about media accreditation, rejecting requests where representation is unlikely to align accurately with our ethos and the spirit of the AfrikaBurn invent.

We are also now firmly underway with the commissioning of the AfrikaBurn documentary that was initiated in 2018, with some 6 months-worth of footage having been shot during planning, set up and strike, as well as over the extended event week.

The launch of the Blank Canvas Express this past year included a variety of public speaking opportunities introducing and explaining AfrikaBurn to communities in the Northern Cape and Free State.

Heading into the 2020 event cycle, the aim is to continue expanding our audiences and to broaden the pool of speakers, so as to increase the diversity of voices representing AfrikaBurn.

ICT / CIA

Crucially, the ICT team stabilised Tribe this cycle, effectively eliminating most of the headaches and heartaches of the 2018 event cycle.

The first priority for our ICT team is generating a platform that supports the ops team in service to the community. But the vision is bigger than that – a platform that connects the community – and they have also begun to make headway in the planning and development of T.M.I, the open source system redesign, which will both catalyse and be accelerated by volunteer engagement. There is interest in the concept from Burning Man and 15 other regionals, and a presentation of the platform is planned. This will be the development focus for the 2020 event cycle – with the priority being to address the operational needs of the AfrikaBurn event team, and then expanding functionality in modules, ultimately aiming to support the community as a creative social network.

The hackathons are gaining traction and growing in popularity, proving a valuable mechanism both for accelerating the work and as a vector for meaningful contribution by skilled volunteers.

A number of new software systems were introduced this cycle, and while not all have been actively embraced across the board they have survived the pressure test and we will address the issues and respond to the challenges identified.

Looking to the new cycle we are working hard to map out our complex data routes, storage points, and uses, to support adherence to GDPR requirements. We will need to expand our server capacity to better support both our wrangler teams and the community as they engage with our platform, especially at high activity periods like the grant application window, project registration closing dates, and tickets-go-live.

OUTREACH

As practice of the guiding principles deepens in AfrikaBurn's core community we see this reflected in acts of giving, volunteering and civic responsibility beyond the confines of Tankwa Town.

Now in their third iteration, Spark Grants kickstart community initiatives and social development projects that bring the principles alive in some way, to positively benefit communities across South Africa. Annually we award 11 grants of up to R5 000 each - one for each of the principles – and this year received applications from 29 projects. Outreach assigned budget to 2 more of the applicant projects as a general grant.

We introduced the Get A Hand Up Guide in a soft launch this year, supporting 3 projects with more substantial grants – 2 of these projects being identified from within the Spark Grant applicants.

Outreach has been building relationship with Namaqua Tourism, the Tankwa Karoo National Park, and the people of the Tankwa River.

We've taken steps towards the Tankwa charrette, with two preliminary community meetings held with the broader community, and smaller meetings planned within the marginalised communities of the Tankwa.

THE CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Tankwa Town is bursting with creativity. Creative contributors are committed to the project, engaged with the principles, and both exhausted and elated by their volunteer efforts.

Over 300 registered projects were made manifest, and many more unregistered projects added to the creative landscape.

The estimated cost of all this creative expression runs to tens of millions. The value is of course far greater still.

We aim to allocate around 10% of the total annual budget, or 20% of the AfrikaBurn event budget, to creative enterprise. We include in this calculation the value of all spend on creative enterprise for the AfrikaBurn event – which includes grants (creative, DMV, tech) and the Clan. We provide additional financial support through subsidized tickets and free vehicle passes, we provide technical support through our network of experts (and moral support whenever it's needed) and we help network creative contributors within the community and beyond.

Cape Town remains the primary point of origin for the creative community and the center of their efforts, followed by Gauteng and then the greater Western Cape. The international community are no spectators though, contributing 15% of the creative landscape.

ART

85 creative projects materialized in Tankwa Town this year, with 17 of these being the further development or new iteration of existing projects. This speaks to the multi-cycle funding approach ArtCom has adopted, to support projects with an ambitious scope, as well as ongoing support for returning projects of special interest.

Of these projects, 16 had a performance element, and 11 were projects with a strong community development component and/or process-driven projects.

ArtCom intends to make visible to the assessment community the value inherent in process-driven work, which we believe is fundamental to two of AfrikaBurn's key aims

- establishing AfrikaBurn as a legitimate Arts development platform that supports and stimulates the creative economy, allowing room for experiment and space to fail and try again, and
- facilitating participative inclusivity and diversity through supporting creative enterprise in marginalized communities.

We awarded R1 200 000 in creative grants (sculpture and performance pieces) this year; an increase of 37% from 2018.

Of the 62 creative projects that applied for funding (for a total request of just over R4 000 000, on project costs in excess of R9 500 000), 36 projects received funding, and 47 were actualized on the binnekring. Grants were supplemented with Artist tickets, representing an additional R234 000 in financial support. Additionally, Tech grants were awarded to creative projects as further funding where appropriate.

Funding centered on process-driven work (all 11 applicants received a grant), multi-year funding projects (9 out of 10 applicants), and large-scale projects (16 out of 18 applicants).

The drop-out rate on funded projects was low again this year, reconfirming the approach of providing substantial support to fewer projects (rather than spreading the grants too thin).

There were 21 burns this year. Of these 11 constructed their sculpture primarily from alien vegetation, waste wood or reclaimed wood. Just 2 of the 13 large-scale projects that were burned used new wood. In contrast, most of the smaller burns used new plywood. The Clan used 30% reclaimed waste wood from movie production.

THEME CAMPS

The introduction of the Camp in Good Standing matrix this year supports more effective and objective management of theme camps (and associated challenges) going forward.

The number of registered theme camps reduced year-on-year from 114 in 2018 to 99 in 2019. But with a lower drop off rate there was not much difference on the ground (89 this year vs 92 last year). 53 of these were returning camps, and 36 were new.

The number of support camps (org, art and DMV) increased from 18 to 27.

The number of visible plug and play camps has decreased dramatically over the past two years, as our position and the potential consequences become more widely known. This does not stop the odd uninformed operator from entering Tankwa, as happened this year, but it prevents them from easily returning.

In the new cycle we will formalise the criteria to register a support camp, and seek to differentiate between infrastructure and services that support the associated creative project and those that are purely for personal comfort.

Theme camps constitute a significant outlay for the creative contributors, both of time (with contributors gifting an average of 150 hours each over the course of a year) and money – the latter representing a substantial injection into the economy of the Western Cape.

We will pilot a theme camp grant in the 2020 event cycle (offering funds to identified projects rather than an open call out for applications, in a soft launch), funded by the net surplus generated through the Supplier surcharge.

MUTANT VEHICLES

There were 118 mutant vehicles on site – 78 returning and 40 new. Of these 19 were mobile sound rigs and 12 were powered without fossil fuels.

8 problematic MV drivers presented in Tankwa Town this year. Just 2 of these were repeat offenders - and also long-standing deep participants and creative contributors.

This speaks to the challenge of entitlement that can present where accommodations are repeatedly made on the basis of creative contribution, and how this can undermine community.

A team of 6 assessed the grant applications, allocating R140k in funding that supported 20 mutant vehicle projects. Going forward DMV must make visible their funding strategy for the cycle, and the assessment criteria. This will better support the proliferation of public transport (vs personal vehicles) and mitigate against dissatisfaction within the MV community.

The number of e-bikes, e-skateboards, e-scooters and other non-vehicular motorized transport exploded on site this year. AfrikaBurn will define a position around this as they are becoming increasingly popular modes of transport but add nothing to the creative landscape and are

hazardous in a pedestrian environment. Black Rock City shows us we need clear and visible policy and consistent application.

BURNER EXCHANGE

The exchange program has expanded to include all Burns in the Great Lakes region, and brought Canadian photographer Andrew Miller to Tankwa Town this year. Andrew set up two exhibitions of his Burning Man photography, and made gifts of the images.

Our ability to participate in this exchange program is being undermined by American immigration law – for the past three years we have struggled to secure visas for our envoys, and it has reached the point where having a valid visa to enter the US may well need to become a requirement of the application process. This limits who can reasonably apply in a way that does not align with our values and does not support representative diversity, which is profoundly problematic in a cultural exchange.

THE CREWS

VOLUNTEERS

The number of event volunteers fell for the second year in a row, declining by 17,5% to less than 1000 participants this year, and dropping below 10% of the community.

While this is worrying, conversely, those volunteers deepened their commitment to volunteering, filling an average of 3,39 shifts each (up from 2,8 in 2018 and 2,12 in 2017) and collectively gifting around 10 000 hours of voluntary service.

10 Volunteer Work days were held through the course of the year, generally aligning with Ranger training and the Hackathons and creating a hive of activity at The Junction that generated palpable community spirit.

DMV

DMV's deeply committed core of volunteers (averaging 20 a time) met for 15 work days over the course of the year, expanding their activity centers to include Helderberg and Bloemfontein as well as Woodstock, Gardens and Strand.

On site the registration crew functions like a well-lubricated machine. As does Skollie Patrollie, despite crippling capacity issues on Burn nights.

AIRSPACE

With Captain Tom's resignation as Airspace lead post 2018, the incoming lead made major changes in an effort to simplify process and reduce handling. However this approach raised safety and liability issues in the crossover between CAA regulations and the National Events Act. These were identified and addressed in the weeks before the event, which also saw a late change to the Airspace team. We are very grateful to Jacqui Middlewick for stepping back into the breach to lead the Airspace team, supported by Tom and Twilight, Glen and Amy, ANS, and Dan Caravan and Dogpilot, two long-standing BRC airport team members. Without this team's concerted efforts Tankwa International Airport was set to close for the year.

Changes made to the fees structure resulted in a 38% reduction in revenue. This can be attributed to three factors - a 45% reduction in the number of people using the airport (572 this year, versus

1040 in 2018 and 1500 in 2017); the significantly reduced cost to the charter companies; and the fact that general aviation only had to pay the Airport usage fee.

There was a 31% reduction in flights this year, with 85% less charter flights taking place and an increase of 191% in general aviation flights.

While the concentration of flights within one long-standing charter company meant improved safety and compliance in the commercial sector, the huge increase in the number of private aircraft increases the risk at the airport and in the aviation space, and appears also to have created a loophole some pilots exploited to bring in paying passengers without having to pay the fees associated with openly commercial flights.

The number of private planes that overnights also caused additional challenge – parking space became an issue, the security requirement increased, and the amount of private (pedestrian and vehicular) traffic to and from the airport increased, increasing the risk factor commensurately. Suffice to say the approach to fees will be reviewed and overhauled under the new Airspace lead, with especial consideration where this intersects with safety and compliance.

The decrease in aviation traffic since 2017 also warrants consideration, given our intentions to reduce traffic on the R355 (though much of this reduction could reasonably be attributed to the success of the plug and play communications and ongoing efforts to underline that AfrikaBurn is not festival experience but a participant-driven event).

DPW

Restructure of DPW leadership worked well, with responsibilities spread across 3 shoulders This will expand to 4 in the next cycle, given the additional work associated with planning and implementing a move to new land. This will also allow for a level of systems and process evaluation with a view to identifying ways to improve efficiency (without diluting the skills incubation aspect of DPW) and ultimately reduce the time on site (reducing the physical and psychological strain on the crew, and reducing the significant crew and associated costs commensurately).

Introducing a leadership role that focused primarily on crew and crew welfare has been a critical step towards addressing the complex social factors and inherent challenges at play in the DPW environment over a protracted period of time. While a solid step in the right direction, it is clear we underestimated the scope and complexity of work, and we will invest energy and resources in defining processes that better support positive outcomes in the face of social challenge.

DPW remain committed to achieving greater diversity in crew structure and this year POC comprised 24% of the total crew, and one third of the South African crew members.

Two thirds of the crew were between the ages of 25 and 35, and just under a third of the crew presented as female.

Half the crew were returning crew (with between 2 and 8 AfrikaBurn events behind them), and half were new to DPW, showing both good retention and throughflow.

The crew pay scale has been revised to reflect DPW's structure as a skills incubator – with the pay scale rising along the learning curve and plateauing at the top, to support retention through the progression and designate a clear expected point of exit, which should mitigate against burn out of long-serving team members and support active succession planning.

KITCHEN

A crew of 29 people staffed Kitchen over a period of 74 days. Half of these were returning crew members and the other half new to the crew. Kitchen is a diverse space with 48% of crew being POC. 58% of crew are under the age of 30.

Of those new, 3 were students from Eziko Catering School in Langa, on a work experience placement. This first foray into working with skilled students was a successful placement and we hope to repeat it – by the end of their 2-week placement the 3 were able to cater for 100 crew on their own, with a Kitchen lead in support. These 3 students will return next year as Kitchen hands, and provide cultural mentorship to the next batch of students.

Kitchen spend this year came in at just over R950 000,00

With 18 852 meals served, the cost per head per day averages out at R153 per person per day. Just over 59% of the spend went to food and beverages (with 70% of expenditure happening in the Western Cape and the rest in the Northern Cape), and 29% went to crew stipends.

Planning remains the key to reducing this spend but is particularly challenging in the face of significant variables, which include a 36% variance between the number of people requesting to be fed (392) and those who arrived to be fed (250), and a tendency towards randomized dietary preferences in many of those expressing a preference.

It's a complex exercise catering for an event crew that expands from a small start-up team of 10 or so people, through a pre-production and strike crew of around 70, and an event crew of 250 – 400, before contracting again, and is made more so by the challenges presented by such a remote site.

RANGERS

The Ranger Crew program, now in its third year, again succeeded in meeting the community support requirements for Tankwa Town, for which we are very grateful.

This initiative has been both a positive factor in raising AfrikaBurn's profile at "the big Burn" (with a specific shift scheduled at BRC for all who've served "the orange" now a regular feature, and an iteration of the Ranger Love Lounge making its debut on playa this year), and a vector for increased interest from the international Burner community. But it has also proven to be controversial within the AfrikaBurn community, with the unintended consequences of generating a perception of culture imposition (based on skills import rather than skills exchange), and impeding the uptake of senior shifts by local leadership who are unable to commit to the full 30 hour shift requirement.

Rangers embraced the drive to inculcate diversity throughout AfrikaBurn's various bodies and included in the crew program a small group of junior local POC Rangers. Despite good intentions, there were integration challenges in the Ranger space, with unconscious bias surfacing.

A Ranger Indaba is planned for October, to unpack some of these challenges, looking to redefine the approach to the Crew program to better support the sharing of AfrikaBurn Ranger culture and the growth of a committed local Ranger body, and to map out how to deepen inclusivity and improve diversity literacy so as to better create an inclusive and welcoming environment that supports integration of divergent people in the Ranger space.

SANCTUARY

89 volunteers (20 returning) provided support to 159 vulnerable and overwhelmed participants. Of these 23 bring relevant professional skills to the space, with the majority of sitters being lay-people.

Roughly a third of the guests coming to sanctuary required support for issues not directly related to personal recreational alcohol and drug use, which is similar to previous years. Around 20% of Sanctuary guests experienced overwhelm as a result of personal, inter-personal or social challenge. However, the total number of Psych (11) and STAR (6) incidents presenting at Sanctuary increased, and speaks to the need to expand capacity for specialised support.

The instances of these special cases (Psych, STAR and dosing) reflect a pattern of increase from Thursday through the end of the event, which speaks also to the need to extend the period this support is available beyond the last day of the event.

The range of time guests spend in Sanctuary varies from minutes to days.

Sanctuary conducted over 200 unique substance tests this year. Advice on the pharmacology and clinical presentation of substances was provided to medics throughout the event, with good impact on care provision.

DIRECTORS

The Director-on-call system worked well, though those who carry portfolio responsibilities felt the weight of multiple roles.

Events this year made clear that the shifting of directors must extend beyond the last day of the event as specific and sensitive community-centered psycho-social incidents tend to peak towards the end of the event and carry through into the days immediately following, putting a significant strain on the teams.

SITE SAFETY SERVICE PARTNERS

We have an exceptionally strong, competent and committed site safety team. Long-standing relationship with Rob Erasmus and Enviro Wildfire Services, Anne-Marie and Event Safety Solutions, Lee Sharples and Orion Security, and Jules Smullan and the Bengatouch VOC crew, has stood us in good stead – these are individuals and teams who understand what AfrikaBurn is about and actively work with us to support the project, giving far more than is standard or required.

This year saw the introduction of a new medical provider – Geoff Bettison and Medics in Motion, working in collaboration with Doctors in Motion and Air Mercy Services. The medical team provided a very high standard of service and care, quickly got to grips with the balance in which we hold our duty of care to the community, and have integrated easily and positively into the ops and site safety teams, mapping across well with the nurses, Sanctuary and Green Dot.

SAPS integration with our team this year was exceptional, and we will make a specific request for the return of W/O Swift and his team going forward. The support from local Traffic has also increased, with vehicles actively patrolling the R355 and assisting with Exodus.

Our site managers – Shaye Harty, Lee Sharples and Leigh Ludditt – held Tankwa Town gently but firmly, rolling out well-refined operating procedures (SOPs) like clockwork.

SUPPORTING THE TEAM

Our team work hard to hold the community at AfrikaBurn, spending long hours in challenging conditions dealing with multiple moving parts and complex social challenges on a daily basis. AfrikaBurn's Health Services Coordinator, Catherine Williams, provided Challenging Behaviour / Low Arousal training to the team, laying the foundation of an approach to interaction and community management that serves to contain rather enflame.

This included a formalized approach to trauma debriefing, equipping the team with tools to quickly acknowledge and address the emotional response to challenge, as a distinct and necessary step separate from problem-solving.

Support is critical for the team, and we benefitted from the skilled professional counsel of Lisa Triani and Jono Hoffenberg over the event period.

THE ENVIRONMENT

LNT

The MOOP map reflects a deep uptake of LNT in committed creative contributors which is not similarly reflected in the free-camping community clustered in 10ish. Strategic interventions under consideration for the new cycle include MOOP activations as the end of the event approaches, Rangers as a vector for Each One Teach One, and the “tiny camp” initiative which will be seeded in the 10ish zone, modelling the standard.

RECYCLING

Blikkiesfontein, our waste management center on site, processed 1800kgs of our production waste over the full period, and recycled twice that volume (800kgs of steel, 1500 kgs of glass, 402 kgs of P.E.T plastics, 105kgs of soft plastic, 498kgs of aluminium cans, 278kgs of cardboard). A further 5500 liters of organic waste were donated to a local farmer over the production period.

In addition to our own waste management, 37 theme camps opted to take part in a pilot phase of expanded recycling. Of the total volumes processed, theme camps account for 35kgs of cardboard, 150kgs of P.E.T plastics, 40kgs of H.D plastic, and 190kg of aluminium.

This is a positive result and a fair turnout for a first effort, and we hope to expand the project. But given the costs associated with transport from our remote location this would roll out as an ethical initiative rather than a potential revenue stream.

RENEWABLES

Our commitment to using renewable energy is ongoing. Although our use of fossil fuels remains high (some 6000 liters of diesel to and 3000 liters of ULP, to power generators and fuel vehicles), we make conscious use of solar wherever possible. Gate, Security and Accommodation (including crew and on-site service partners) were powered on a 50-50 split across solar and generators. Airport and the airport tower were 50% solar and 50% UPS (with a back-up generator on standby in case of emergency power outages). Crew showers, all toilets, all street lights, and the emergency points were powered 100% solar. And DMV, who have been the frontrunners in this charge with their photo voltaic station, run their camp and registrations entirely off grid.

HUMANURE

This year we completed the cycle of processing the community’s effluent – over a quarter of a million liters (generated over two event cycles) was composted in troughs over a 30m x 60m area, breaking down over a period of weeks into 30 cubic meters of top quality humanure. While we’ve been approached by many wanting to purchase this potent organic fertilizer, we will retain all of it to use as starter for the processing of the 2020 event’s effluent.

THE COMPANY

Despite budget pressures we came in at breakeven on our spend and have achieved a surplus of just under R500 000. This stands us in good stead as we look towards a future move and the likely need for investment in infrastructure on the new site.

This surplus notwithstanding, we continue to navigate an uncertain space financially. We managed the immediate challenge presented by the steep decline in ticket sales for 2018, knowing that this 2019 cycle would be the real test. Ticket sales did recover some ground this year, and the sense is that they'll increase again for 2020. But we have yet to fully understand what "the new normal" is and must be prudent while the picture is still emerging.

We continue to be challenged by the gap between what we seek to do in the world and the resources we can call upon in order to achieve it. This is a perpetual balancing act. We are held taut between what we must do operationally, to ensure the integrity of the AfrikaBurn event, and what we must do developmentally, in support of our broader objectives and to ensure the integrity, relevance and longevity of the organisation.

The team experiences this same challenge.

While we are mostly strong and solid and in a good place, we continue to feel the strain of balancing a fast paced production cycle with a process-driven work practice, and making space for the work that expands our reach beyond the event footprint.

It's not easy, but we get better at it, and we will keep at it – onwards to 2020!