



Strategic Indigenous Awareness Program

Workbook

*“To understand our Present
We must understand our Past”*

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Welcome

Grant Sarra Consultancy Services has developed a high standard in the provision of consultation, facilitation and training nationally.

We provide a range of training, facilitation and consulting services to public, private and community-based organisations throughout Australia.

We are committed to the delivery of high quality training and consulting services in collaboration with Indigenous communities and in response to industry and Governments needs.

Grant Sarra Consultancy Services also responds to training initiatives generated by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and local industries.

Our Code of Practice articulates the intention of Grant Sarra Consultancy Services to ensure quality in the delivery of training, facilitation and consulting services.

We have in excess of twenty-five years experience in areas that deal exclusively with Indigenous people. The developers of this program have detailed knowledge and understanding of the issues that impact upon Indigenous Australians and public and private sector organisations in areas such as:

- Cultural Communication
- Consultation and Negotiation
- Cultural Heritage
- Native Title Mediation
- Employment and Career Development
- Economic Development
- Reconciliation
- Recruitment, Selection and Training.

In writing this program the authors would like to point out that the views, material and information contained herein does not represent all Indigenous Australians – no one person, be they Indigenous or non-Indigenous, can effectively do that given the enormous diversity among Indigenous people and communities throughout Australia.

Certain terms may be used in this program that are derogatory and offensive to Indigenous Australians. These terms are not used so that you may increase your vocabulary. They are used to assist in the overall education process and to highlight the day to day realities for many Indigenous Australians.

We apologise in advance, particularly to our Indigenous colleagues and ask that you don't become offended.

This program is not designed to be a Guilt Trip. What has happened in the past is not your fault. The authors personally don't expect people to feel that they need to say Sorry.

Our hope is to put the past into the right perspective so that we can create a more balanced and productive future.



Grant Sarra
Principal Consultant

Preface

This interactive program provides you with a unique learning approach. The program provides a simulation of Indigenous* Australians' experience, supplemented with information exchange sessions and allows you to walk briefly in Indigenous footsteps.

The program journeys through the three stages of Indigenous society and delivers you with a greater appreciation, understanding, sensitivity and respect for the plight of Indigenous Australians.

At completion of the program you will have increased awareness and knowledge of:

- The three stages in which Indigenous society has evolved - Traditional, Transitional and Contemporary;
- The impact of past events and issues confronting Indigenous Australians today;
- The core issues and concerns of Indigenous people, and the factors that contribute to their disadvantaged position;
- The diversity of Indigenous Australian people living in urban, rural and remote communities;
- The cultural and structural barriers that inhibit effective communication, negotiation and consultation with Indigenous individuals and communities.

You will also become more aware of:

- Why diversity should be valued;
- Why racism + ignorance = insecurity; and
- Why discrimination and harassment should not be tolerated in any workplace or society.

We hope that you can take something from this program that you can transfer into your work, social or family life – and in so doing contribute in a small way to the healing of OUR Nation.

* *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are two distinct cultural groups. In recognition of this, and as a sign of respect, this program does not attempt to explain the culture or traditions of Torres Strait Islander people. We strongly recommend that organisations employ the services of recognised Torres Strait Islander presenters/consultants to develop and deliver separate programs relating to this distinct cultural group.*

This program also acknowledges that "Aboriginal" and "Indigenous" are introduced terms. In this respect recognition is given to the traditional names of the original inhabitants.

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Program Outline

There are five (5) elements associated with this program:

Element 1	Traditional Society
Element 2	Transitional Society
Element 3	Contemporary Society
Element 4	Key Factors in Communication
Element 5	Protocols

Program Objectives

At the completion of this program participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate an increased appreciation, understanding and respect for the diversity and importance of Indigenous culture to Australian society;
- Demonstrate an increased understanding and sensitivity toward the problems and issues that impact upon Indigenous Australians;
- Demonstrate an increased appreciation, understanding and respect for multi-culturalism, cultural diversity and Australian culture in a global context.
- Demonstrate an increased awareness of key factors in the communication process.
- Identify problems and work through cultural and structural barriers that inhibit effective consultation and negotiation with Indigenous Australian people living in urban, rural and remote communities;
- Understand the personal and organisational impacts and costs of racism and discrimination in the workplace.

Introduction

This program consists of five elements related to Strategic Indigenous Awareness.

It is called "Indigenous Awareness" because it takes on the view of the world through Indigenous eyes and takes you on a journey through history/time walking in Indigenous footsteps.

Element 1 goes back to the beginning; it briefly looks at the history and connection to the land, the concept of "creation", and the features of "traditional" society.

Element 2 progresses the journey from the time of contact with Europeans, the introduction of a new culture - different values, different beliefs, conflicting ideas and the impact on Indigenous culture.

Element 3 looks at the situation of Indigenous Australians since 1967 - the laws, policies, practices, values and beliefs that affect them in their day-to-day lives.

Element 4 gives an insight into effective communication, negotiation and consultation with Indigenous communities, organisations and individuals, and the barriers that affect effective communication.

Element 5 deals with protocol issues that need to be considered when communicating, negotiating and consulting with Indigenous communities, organisations and individuals.

Elements 1, 2 and 3 are supplemented by a hypothetical.

The Hypothetical - "To Understand the Present – We Must Understand the Past", has achieved national recognition as one of the best Indigenous Awareness Workshops available to public and private sector organisations.

This is a practical and intensive workshop which provides a high-level training experience. The program is challenging, however it allows participants to feel comfortable and relaxed while dealing with sensitive issues.

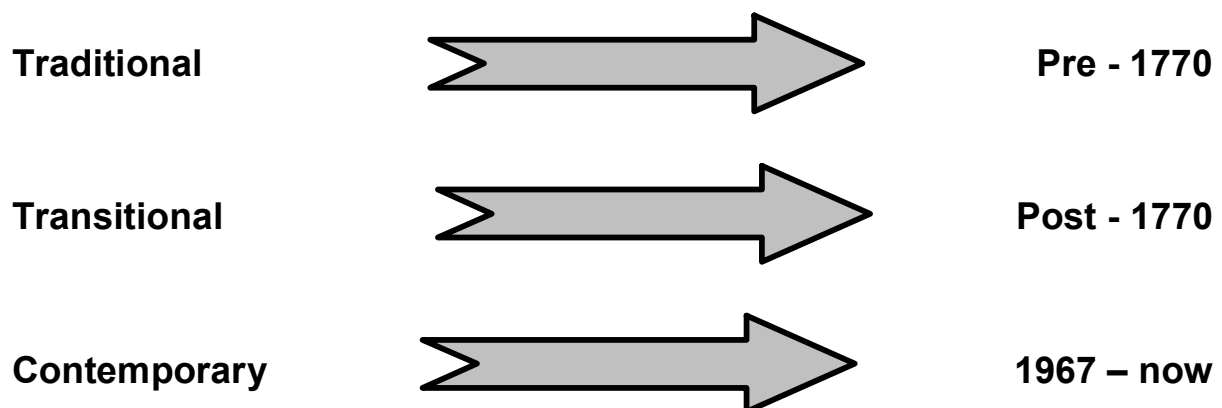
Australia – Past and Present

Indigenous people are often referred to as the most disadvantaged group in Australian society. Significant rhetoric supports this position.

If we are genuinely committed to addressing the disadvantaged position of Indigenous people - we must put our history into the right perspective.

From an Indigenous person's point of view, you cannot, and will not understand the present until you acknowledge and understand the past.

Australia's Indigenous society and culture has evolved over three stages –



Element 1 Traditional Society

Traditional society was characterised by:

- Time of Creation - Dreamtime
- Strong spiritual beliefs and respect for the ancestral beings – the creators of the land, rivers, plants, animals, and the people
- Spiritual connection to the land – the mother
- Oral tradition of learning
- Sacred songs, stories, ceremonies, dance and artwork which contribute to the recording or passing on of information
- Kinship systems that linked families through skin and language groups
- Systems of lore and punishment
- Intimate knowledge, understanding and deep respect for the environment
- Traditional medicines
- Ceremonies for birth, death, initiation, marriage
- Sacred sites and places for men and women
- Designated areas for burial sites, meeting places, initiation grounds
- Sacred places and features linked to the ancestral beings
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for men, women and children
- Clearly defined land boundaries
- Technology and trade suitable for a subsistence economy

Traditional society was based on survival. To survive, people understood and respected their connection to the land, the plants, the animals and the environment.

Respect, responsibility and relationship were important elements relating to the land and the environment.

Respect, caring and sharing were important values relating to the people.

Element 2 Transitional Society

Transitional society was characterised by:

Introduction of:

- new cultures
- the Doctrine of Terra-Nullius
- forced removal from land
- religion
- massacre
- missions and reserves
- genocide
- protection
- assimilation
- diseases
- poisoned flour and water holes
- government policies - systems
- new laws
- education systems
- new technology and trade
- racism and discrimination

No recognition of:

- prior existence
- kinship systems
- connection to the land
- spiritual beliefs and values
- land boundaries
- status as human
- lore and punishment

Disruption to:

- culture
- land boundaries
- kinship and language systems
- sacred sites and places
- song, dance and ceremonies
- relationships to the land
- plants, animals, environment
- traditional hunting grounds

Breakdown of:

- language
- spiritual self
- lore and punishment
- land boundaries
- culture and society
- kinship system through physical abuse of women and forced removal of children

Indigenous people were not recognised or treated as human beings. There were many atrocities performed, and many attitudes and behaviours shaped during this period. Traditional Indigenous lores and customs were not recognised and new laws were introduced.

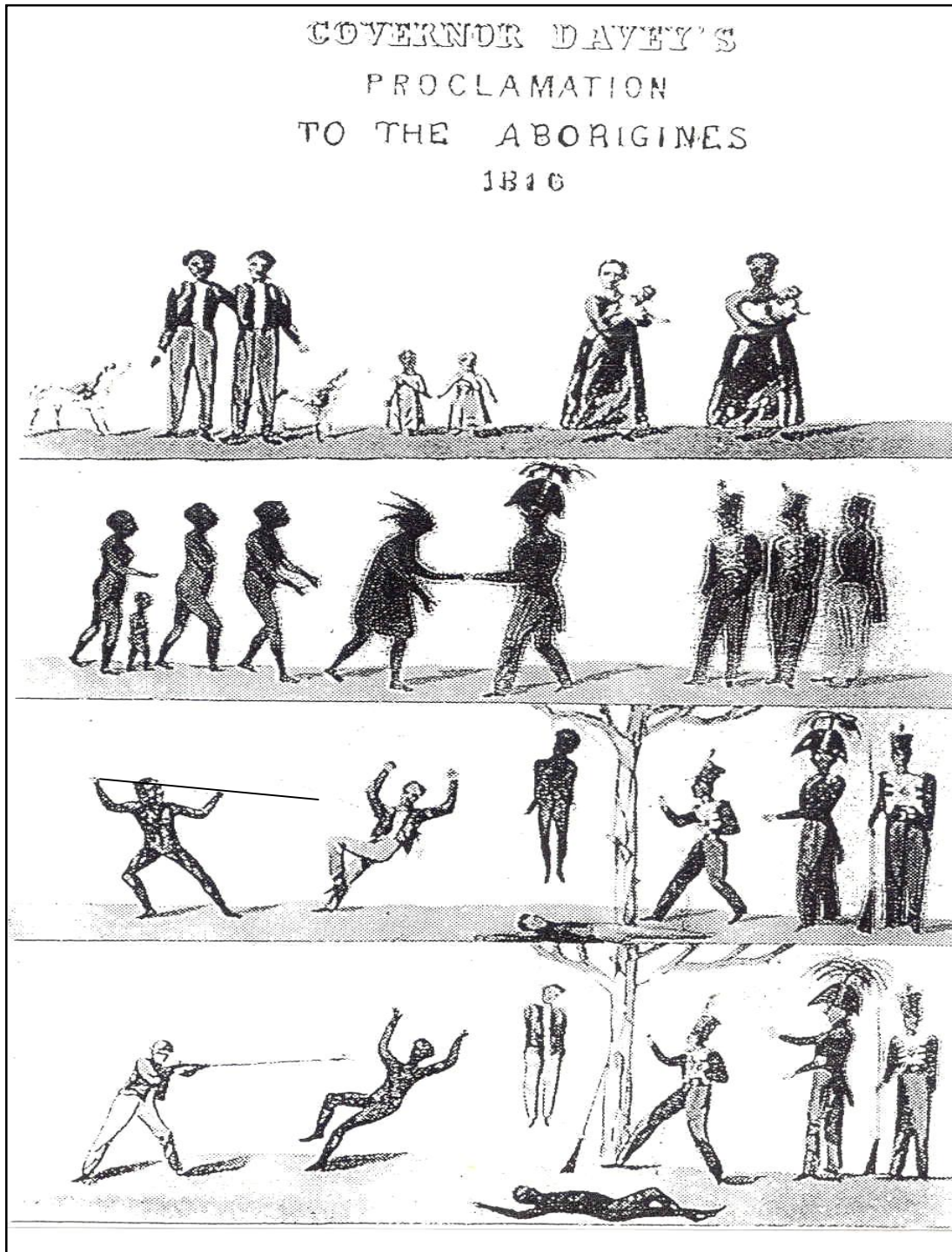


Figure 1 - Governor Davey's Proclamation to the Aborigines, 1816

The following quote refers to the settlement period in Tasmania and reflects the attitudes and behaviours of the day:

"For the Aboriginal communities living along Tasmania's northern shores, the presence of the economic pioneers was catastrophic. The sealers not only depleted traditional Aboriginal food sources, but in time, triggered a total dislocation of Indigenous social life.

Skilled in the techniques of seal catching, the Aboriginal women were eventually regarded by the sealers as an essential part of their operation.

Violence, sometimes of the most brutal kind, became endemic in their relations. A group of sealers, for example, was recorded to have punished one runaway female by tying her to a tree, cutting off her ear and the flesh from one thigh and then, forcing her to eat them.

An index of their endemic hatred and casual violence towards the Aborigines was provided by one of their number, who told a Tasmanian historian that he 'liked to kill a black fellow better than smoke a pipe,' adding 'and I am a rare one at that, too.'

Another confessed that he would 'as leave, shoot them as so many sparrows'. Despite his innocent-sounding name, a man called Lemon was accustomed to use them as target practice, while others confessed to feeding their dogs on Aborigines shot specifically for that purpose. Their relish for murdering the men was more than equalled by their sexual appetite for the women, and a bushranger called Carrot found a way of satisfying both urges almost simultaneously. After slaughtering a Tasmanian man, he then abducted and raped his widow and forced her to carry her husband's severed head around her neck 'as a play-thing'." ¹

During the transitional stage, the survival of Indigenous people and their culture was seriously threatened.

The Myth of Homogeneity

Prior to 1770, the original inhabitants of the land lived in different sized groups across the entire land. This was determined and managed through the kinship system.

Post 1770, the original inhabitants, considered to be Stone Age or "primitive beings" by the new settlers, were eventually named Aborigines and identified as all belonging to one group.

The "Aborigines" were further categorised as follows:

"... the reality is that for thousands of years the original inhabitants of Australia maintained important cultural distinctions. Indeed never in Australia has there been a single cultural identity; never has there been a single generic name. It was the Europeans who imposed their pseudo-scientific latinised word Aborigine on the total population of the original inhabitants. This has the unfortunate effect of classifying them all as one cultural group. Certainly, traditional Aboriginal people do not accept this concept.

In his essay introducing the section on contemporary issues, Basil Sansom stresses that, since the Aboriginal population is so heavily sub-divided into distinct types of communities, it is no longer possible to think about Aborigines as if that word stood for a set of people who are all alike. The categories are important because they are lasting. He quotes Professor C.D Rowely's categorisation of Aboriginal people into different social contexts, as follows:

- 1. Aborigines of the settlements established either by missions or governments.*
- 2. Aborigines working on cattle stations forming small station communities.*
- 3. Aborigines of small town Australia, usually living in fringe camps and social separation from the local whites.*
- 4. Aborigines of the cities who may be either*
 - a. fringe dwellers, or*
 - b. suburban householders"²*

Forced removal from traditional lands, massacre, poison flour and water holes almost decimated Indigenous people. While total decimation did not occur, this period significantly disrupted Indigenous cultural and spiritual connections to the land.

In 1946,

"...Queensland politicians still talked of Aboriginal inferiority and extinction. Consequently, they talked of ways of protecting and preserving Aborigines, and finding some form of employment for them, as second class citizens.

G Devries: My concern is to see that the native labour is educated to the extent that the aboriginal becomes a useful citizen. I do not say that he should be placed on the same level as the white man and I do not for a moment think that

*there are many in this Chamber who believe that should be so. I do not admit for a minute that the nigger, is as good as I am. The fact is that he is a human being and he is entitled to that measure of respect, which helps him to overcome his inferiority complex, and to become an asset to the nation.... I hope that the aboriginal race is never exterminated - and I do not think we shall live to see the day when it does disappear - but I cannot allow natives to intermingle freely and unfettered with the white community."*³

Indigenous people were forced to live on government "settlements" or religious-based "missions". Sacred sites and places were destroyed and for those not destroyed, access was denied.

Introduction of Protection Acts

In the late 1800's, Governments had started to introduce legislation for the protection of the Aborigines.

Under Protection Acts, Indigenous people were not allowed to

- marry unless it was agreed by the Chief Protector,
- conduct ceremonies,
- practice culture,
- speak language,
- mix with whites.

The Acts were designed to assist and protect Aboriginal people who had become oppressed and disadvantaged.

Exemption certificates were given to Indigenous people of mixed racial percentage so that they could mix with white people and have access to employment and housing.

Wealth Creation

All political, resource, infrastructure, agricultural and other development completely disregarded and exploited Indigenous people.

This was particularly the case in Queensland, as highlighted in the following quote:

"In Queensland our Aboriginal reserves total 6,000,000 acres. I do not want hon. Members to think that they have 6,000,000 acres of choice farm land. In keeping with the attitude of the whites toward the aboriginals, there has always been an urge to take the best land from them. I have had to resist agitations for the removal of the aboriginal settlement from Barambah Creek, simply because there is excellent farm land – which the white people desire to exploit in the Barambah Creek settlement. I do not subscribe to the belief that we should be kind enough to the aboriginal to segregate him in the desert where he must simply die out for want of food..."⁴

Cultural and spiritual connections to land were not acknowledged nor considered.

Most importantly, whilst many new settlers immediately prospered through a range of economic developments, Indigenous people were denied opportunities to benefit in wealth creation.

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UNCONDITIONAL EXEMPTION FROM THE PROVISIONS OF THE ABORIGINES ACT, 1934-1939.

In pursuance of the powers conferred by section 11a of the Aborigines Act, 1934-1939, the Aborigines Protection Board, being of opinion that _____ of ... by reason of his character and standard of intelligence and development, should be exempted from the provisions of the Aborigines Act, 1934-1939, does hereby unconditionally declare that the said _____ shall cease to be an aborigine for the purposes of the said Act.

PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER

Signature of Bearer.....

The Seal of the Aborigines Protection Board was hereunto affixed on the 17th day of OCTOBER 1902, in the presence of

J.S. Cleland
Chairman

Constance M. Cooke
Member

Acting Secretary

Exemption Certificate⁵

Assimilation Policies

In 1951, the Federal Government convened an Australian Council for Native Welfare composed of various responsible Ministers and their advisors. At the inaugural meeting in September, Tasmania and Victoria declined to attend, claiming to have no real Indigenous problem. The policy of Assimilation, in part, was formulated as follows:

That all Aborigines “shall attain the same manner of living as other Australians, enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and being influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians.”⁶

From a non-Indigenous people’s point of view, this period in Australian history is seen as the time of settlement, and celebrated on an annual basis.

In contrast, Indigenous people view this period as a time of invasion and for many, it is mourned on an annual basis.

Element 3 Contemporary Society

Contemporary society is characterised by:

Continued lack of genuine recognition toward

- prior existence and rights
- injustices and mistreatment
- sacred sites and places
- connections to land
- psychological scaring
- sociological impacts
- spiritual values and beliefs
- lores and punishments

Continued disruption to:

- culture and society
- traditional survival process
- sacred sites and places
- oral traditional of learning
- land boundaries

Continued breakdown of:

- family structures and kinship
- spiritual self
- language groups
- culture and society

Ongoing conflicts over:

- political systems
- land rights
- cultural heritage
- exploration and mining
- government policies
- Native Title
- resource development

Contemporary society is seeking RECONCILIATION, yet ongoing confusion, chaos, double standards, political and other propaganda, ignorance, insecurity, anger, bitterness, mistrust and the lack of genuine and responsible leadership, understanding, recognition and respect provide the backdrop to what is now the favoured theme.

In 1961, the right to vote in Commonwealth elections as extended to all adult Indigenous people – although registration was voluntary.

Up until 1967, Indigenous people were not counted as citizens and therefore not included in the Census - in their own land. They could not own land, they were not required to vote, could not drink in pubs, and had controlled interaction with non-Indigenous people and society.

Two Referendums are being held on the same day on two separate proposed laws for the alteration of the Constitution. At the Referendums each voter should indicate separately his vote in relation to EACH proposed law as follows:

IF HE APPROVES the proposed law—by writing the word YES in the space provided on the ballot-paper opposite the question; or

IF HE DOES NOT APPROVE the proposed law—by writing the word NO in the space provided on the ballot-paper opposite the question.

The two questions will be set out on the ballot-paper thus:

DO YOU APPROVE the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled—

“An Act to alter the Constitution so that the Number of Members of the House of Representatives may be increased without necessarily increasing the Number of Senators?”

DO YOU APPROVE the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled—

“An Act to alter the Constitution so as to omit certain words relating to the People of the Aboriginal Race in any State and so that Aboriginals are to be counted in reckoning the Population?”

YOU MUST VOTE IN RESPECT OF EACH PROPOSED LAW VOTING IS COMPULSORY

1976 Referendum ⁷

Summary of issues

This program only scratches the surface of Australia's history and relationship with the original inhabitants of this land.

There are so many things that have gone wrong, and continue to go wrong in Indigenous society today – to the point where many of our communities could well be described as dysfunctional.

The general socio-economic position of Indigenous Australians is appalling. This is despite the fact that considerable funds have been, and continue to be channelled into Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Australians are continually referred to as being the most disadvantaged group of people in Australia society suffering far worse outcomes across a range of social and economic indicators including, health, housing, sport and recreation, employment and education.

- Many live in extreme poverty. In many of our remote communities, they are living in worse than third world conditions.
- Because of a general ignorance and insecurity among many non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous people are still being socialised by sections of mainstream society, as being money hungry bludgers, abos, niggers, coons, boongs, alcoholics, and no-hopers.
- In the eyes of many mainstream Australians, Indigenous people are simply an on-going burden to the taxpayers of this country because the governments of Australia appear to give them everything for nothing.
- Many Indigenous communities remain divided as a result of being removed from traditional lands and forced to live together as homogeneous people on missions and settlements.

- Many of the people forced onto missions were from different family and kinship groups.

This has resulted in generations of Indigenous people who have formed historical connections to non-traditional lands, subsequently causing enormous confusion, tension and disruption among the people.

- The role of Indigenous elders has suffered because of the historical psychological and sociological impacts of settlement.

Unfortunately, in many cases, elders are not afforded traditional respect by our young people.

- We have new generations of young Indigenous people who are formally qualified within a western education system.

Yet they have not and perhaps never will be afforded the opportunity to learn traditional ways of life, culture, values, lores and customs.

This is not a criticism, rather it highlights the ongoing impact on Indigenous society, values and customs.

- The advent of technology has also meant that many Indigenous people are now able to gain regular and expedient access to other Indigenous people's traditional lands.

While this is mainly for positive and productive reasons, if there is no basic understanding or respect for traditional society, customs, lores, values and connections to country, this inevitably will cause problems and conflict.

- There are so many young Indigenous children living in urban, rural and remote communities who are confused and feel they have no hope in life.

Consequently they choose petrol sniffing, chroming, drugs and alcohol abuse and suicide as alternatives.

- There has been an enormous psychological scarring among Indigenous people as result of history. Yet, no genuine effort has been made to accurately acknowledge and make honest sense of our past.

And there has been very limited effort, understanding or commitment to heal the obvious psychological wounds.

- Since 1967, Indigenous Australians have been expected to speak with a unified voice, despite the enormous diversity among Indigenous people.

No Australian political party can do this.

No one Australian woman can speak for all other Australian woman, as

No one Australian man can speak for all other Australian males.

Why should this unrealistic expectation be placed upon Indigenous Australians.

- Indigenous people are constantly dealing with double standards.

To non-Indigenous people, Anzac day is an important day, as is Australia Day, the Queen's Birthday, and the Commemoration of Federation.

There are many Indigenous events, both negative and positive, that also need to be put into the right perspective, justifiably acknowledged, understood and appropriately remembered.

- With respect to the original inhabitants of this land, Australia has not been about a “Fair Go”.

The great Aussie culture and spirit is very young compared to other cultures throughout the world – as a nation we are still evolving.

- The original inhabitants of this land have been forced into a welfare society and constantly receive criticism from ignorant sections of the mainstream society for perceived government-subsidised opportunities in employment and other initiatives.
- Despite numerous Government funding initiatives being delivered over the past thirty or so years, Indigenous unemployment rates are unacceptably high, health status, numeracy and literacy levels, access to wealth creation, living conditions and death rates are absolutely pathetic.

Who actually gets the real benefit from government expenditure?

- Australian governments need to develop more culturally appropriate and community sensitive ways of delivering services and they also need to become more accountable.

Today, far too many Indigenous Australians remain on an ongoing cycle of poverty and unless this is addressed properly, this will continue to affect future generations of Indigenous people.

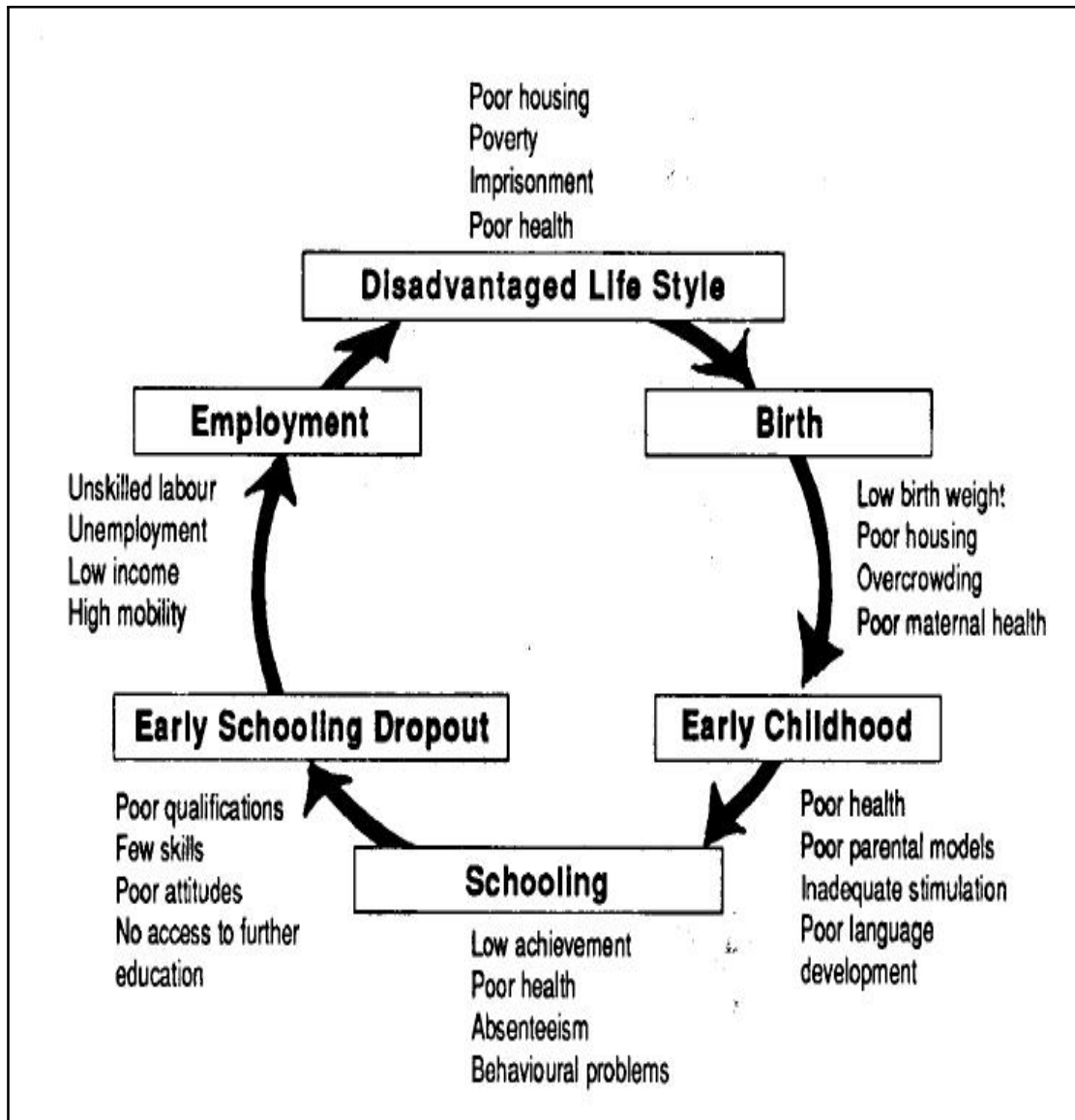


Figure 3 - Cycle of Poverty⁸

This cycle becomes further compounded as a result of racism and discrimination in our society.

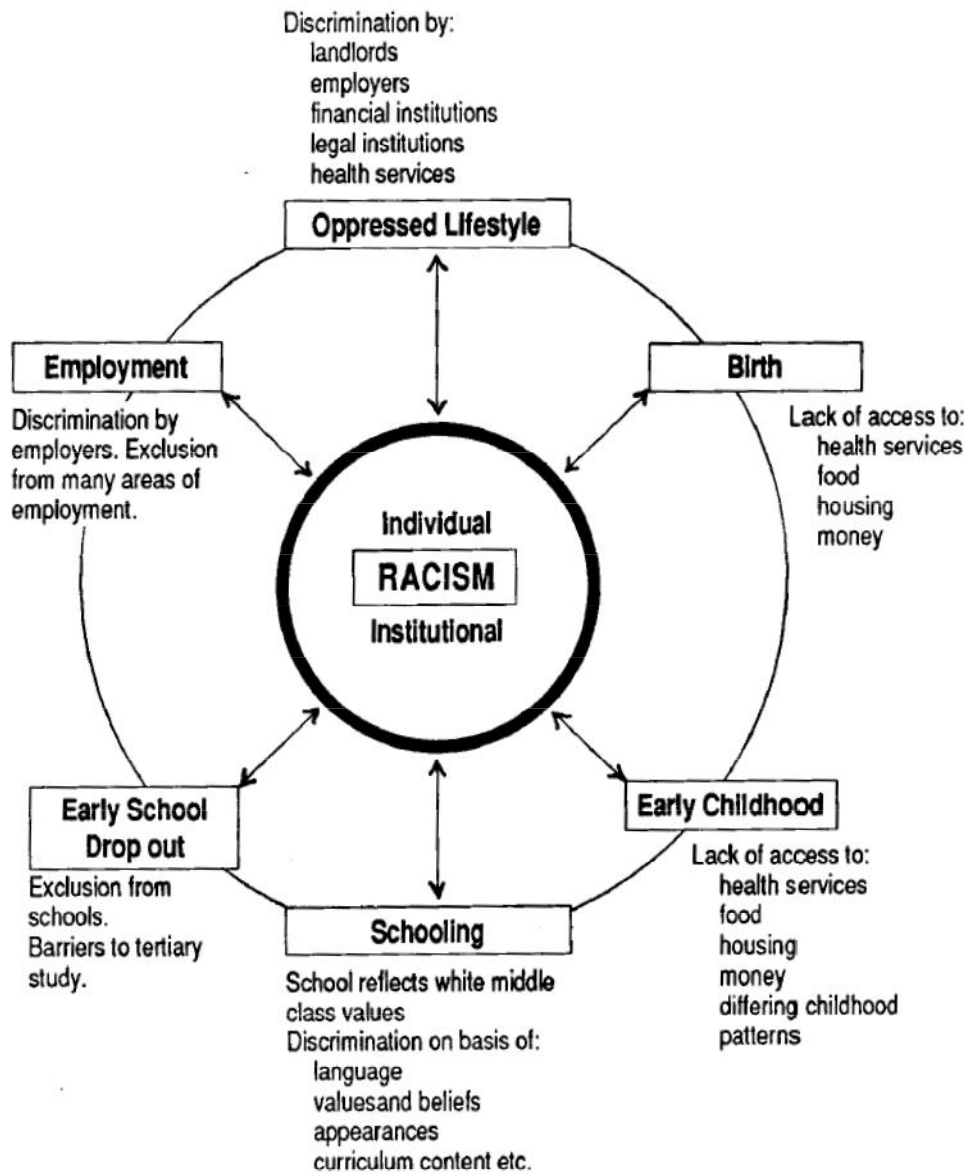


Figure 4 - Wheel of Discrimination⁹

Element 4 **Key factors in Communication**

Communication is the vehicle we rely upon to carry information from one person to another. The most common method of communication is speech. All methods of communication are made up of three components:

- **Sender**, the person passing or sending the information
- **Receiver**, the person accepting, or receiving the information
- **Message**, or information

A number of factors can determine the effectiveness of communication, including:

- The clarity of the message
- Communication styles, such as non-assertive or aggressive communication
- Appropriate introduction
- Cultural background or specific needs regarding communication, eg. Language
- Touch and non verbal messages
- Distractions, often environmental, such as loud traffic or a noisy social function

The successful transfer of a message from one person to another depends on an awareness of these factors.

Communication Matrix

The level of skills in communication and the person's attitude about the exchange can result in quite different outcomes.

The communication matrix outlines possible outcomes in relation to different levels of communication skills and commitment to the process.

THE WAY I FEEL	POOR COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES	GOOD COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES
I Don't Care	ABUSE	MANIPULATION
I Do Care	MISUNDERSTANDING	ANYTHING YOU WANT

- If you don't care and use poor communication - it can lead to abuse, e.g. an irate client.
- If you don't care and use good communication - it can lead to manipulation, e.g. a deceptive person.
- If you do care and use poor communication - it can lead to misunderstanding, e.g. a sensitive but confused, and eventually frustrated client.
- If you do care and use good communication - it can lead to anything you want, e.g. a mutual and rewarding outcome.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication includes the way information literally comes out of your mouth. This includes:

- **Dialogue** – the actual words said
- **Tone** – the pitch of voice used
- **Volume** – how loud or soft the words are said
- **Expression** - how words are used to convey meaning
- **Tempo** – how fast the words are said

All components of verbal communication are perceived by the receiver, together with non-verbal messages, in interpreting the meaning of what is being said.

Non-verbal Communication

Body Language

Although most people don't do it consciously, we all communicate through body language.

Different postures, facial expressions and positioning of the body transmit important messages about what or how a person is feeling about the exchange of information. For example, a shy person might hold their head down and avoid eye contact, or an angry person might have their jaw and fists clenched.

Observing the body language of others can provide valuable information about how they might be feeling.

Being aware of your own body language can allow you to have an increased understanding of how effectively you communicate with others.

Personal Space

Everybody has a personal space. To stand in close to a person you are not familiar with can make the person feel quite uncomfortable.

There are certain distances that are appropriate for people to be from one another depending on the nature of their relationship i.e. it is appropriate to stand closer to someone you have an established relationship with than with a total stranger.

The appropriate distance will vary according to cultural and personal differences, and the situations (e.g. in a crowd).

Touch

Touch is a form of body language and can be an excellent tool of communication. In some cases a touch on the arm can relay warmth and understanding.

While benefits may apply to using touch within communication there are many instances where touch is inappropriate.

Factors including the context or environment of the conversation and your relationship with the person will dictate the appropriateness of touch. Where you touch on the person's body also affects its acceptability.

Components of Effective Communication

Effective communication involves the ability to demonstrate the most appropriate verbal and non-verbal messages to achieve your desired outcome.

The highest regarded outcome in terms of working with people is that of win-win. The communication style you employ in the work environment should be respectful at all times. The aim is to reach agreement between all stakeholders.

This does not necessarily mean you will like what is being decided. It means you will agree on the most suitable outcome for all those involved.

It is important that you separate your personal values and emotions from the workplace. Your primary concern is to make sound, logical and democratic decisions that:

- 1) are consistent with the your organisation's aims, goals, purpose and codes of practice, and
- 2) effectively involves all stakeholders.

All people involved must be respectful and sensitive toward the thoughts of others. This means being able to share ideas and solutions in the pursuit of outcomes that are appropriate and inclusive of all.

Three styles of communication and the behaviour related to each

Communication Style	Verbal Component	Non-Verbal Component	Effectiveness
ASSERTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear dialogue ▪ Active Listening ▪ Calm and respectful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-threatening ▪ Open and relaxed ▪ Mirror and confirm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most effective ▪ Two way process ▪ Win-Win outcome
AGGRESSIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abrupt and loud ▪ Not listening ▪ Own interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Threatening ▪ Stand over/ close ▪ Intimidate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aggressor usually wins ▪ Others wounded
PASSIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stay silent ▪ Unsure how to talk ▪ Always agree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retreat, arms crossed ▪ Avoid eye contact ▪ Intimidated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Passive loses ▪ Avoids the fight ▪ Self wounded

Active Listening

Active Listening works to improve the effectiveness of the exchange of information.

Active listening involves:

- Engaging the person with comfortable eye contact i.e. not too intense, or staring
- Open body language i.e. facing the person, a comfortable distance, arms relaxed, mirroring the person's body position
- Encouraging the person's contributions through verbal and non-verbal prompts i.e. nods, "mmm", "go on"
- Clarifying information through questioning e.g. 'What I am hearing you say is..' or 'Are you asking me to...' or 'I understand that as...'
- Rephrasing other's statements to check meaning or feeling e.g. "You feel angry because..."

Individual Differences and Needs

There are a number of factors that need to be considered when dealing with all people, particularly Indigenous people.

All people are individuals. The way individuals perceive and process information can vary. Each person will think, feel and behave as a consequence of how they have become socialised.

The ways Indigenous people perceive and process information can vary greatly according to their individual needs and past experiences.

Some factors that influence the way people perceive and process information include:

- Age, eg, current slang versus slang from 50 years ago;
- Sex - men and women communicate differently e.g. women tend to talk through their problem whereas men tend to think things through;
- Language and accent can make people difficult to understand;
- Disability or impairment;
- How they have become socialised – to think, feel and behave;
- Culture - includes traditions, religion, political beliefs and personal values.

Each individual will have a preferred method of communication to overcome the barriers resulting from a cultural or language difference. In order to communicate effectively with others, it is important that you are aware of their individual needs and circumstances.

Obviously if you are having difficulties or if you are unsure of the appropriateness or success of your communication, seek assistance.

Seek Assistance

Assisting someone in the communication, negotiation or consultation process can be a difficult task. There are many situations where you can influence the content of the message rather than establish the meaning of the person's communication.

For instance:

- When you know a person quite well it is possible to anticipate what they will say. However, your preconceived idea might be wrong.
- The way you phrase a question or emphasise a word may influence a person's decision, eg, "Would like to go to the park or the Movies?"
- Offering too many options can confuse people and decrease their capacity to make clear decisions.

Given the complexity of communication and the possibility of ineffective communication having a negative impact, it is important that you seek assistance if you are unsure.

The following acronym is a summary of the components of effective communication:

- S** – Show respect and be aware of cultural differences
- T** – Touch only when appropriate and respect personal space
- E** – Ensure communication is always clear and relevant
- P** – Provide active listening
- S** – Seek assistance if necessary

Communicating with Indigenous people and communities

Factors that inhibit effective communication

- Entering communications with preconceived ideas, prejudices or stereotypes.
- Assuming all Indigenous groups are homogenous.
- Trying to incorporate “urban” concepts to address remote or rural area issues and vice versa.
- Disrespecting traditional communication processes and protocols.
- Expecting decisions to be always made in accordance with corporate/government timelines – trying to force the outcome to meet deadlines.
- Sending junior staff to speak at meetings where crucial decisions need to be made.
- Sending men to talk about traditional women’s issues and vice versa.
- Trying to communicate with people at inappropriate times, eg. deaths, funerals.
- Turning up unannounced at communities or organisations.
- Looking down your nose at, or judging the community, the people or their situation.
- Assuming that you know it all - and they know nothing.
- Becoming an “over-night expert” on all things Indigenous.
- Being rude, disrespectful or arrogant.
- Patronising people.
- Playing one person, group or faction against the other.
- Promising things that can’t be delivered.

- Pulling the wool over people's eyes and having the wool pulled over your eyes.
- Speaking above "or below" the people - using inappropriate language.
- Not using appropriate go-betweens.
- Trying to speak traditional language or dialects when you don't know how.
- Pretending that you are interested when you are not.
- Imposing your own values and beliefs where they not be appropriate.
- Misinterpreting non-verbal communication cues.
- Inappropriately touching.
- Failing to promptly follow-up or provide feedback.

Factors that improve effective communication

- Acknowledge the two cultural groups as distinct.
- Try to put yourself in the shoes of the other person to better understand their situation.
- Prior to visiting a community, take the time to consider where the community and its' people have come from socially, economically, culturally and spiritually.
- Keep your eyes and ears open, your mouth initially closed out of respect for people and country, and your heart in the right place.
- Without being disrespectful – read the non-verbal communications processes and cues.
- Recognise that the people will read your non-verbal behaviour and actions.
- Be respectful of all people in the community.
- Be clear about what positions people hold within the community and according to culture.
- Recognise that conflicts do exist in some communities - don't judge them, work with all groups.
- Speak with the right people. Ensure that only appropriate community representatives make decisions.
- Be aware of the “protective do-gooder” personalities in some communities.
- Recognise that there will be levels of anger, bitterness and frustration - don't take it personally.
- Remember that you are dealing with “real people with real problems and issues”.
- Establish a common purpose – what are the mutual outcomes/goals.
- Be patient - stay focused on the bigger picture.

- ☑ Highlight the need and encourage leaders to progress within a mutually agreed time-frame.
- ☑ Balance western and Indigenous ways of doing business – seek out the common or middle ground.
- ☑ Use effective/respected go-betweens.
- ☑ Keep the people in the communication process consistent – don't chop and change.
- ☑ Through your action and your commitment show that you care and that you are genuine - don't become known as the "Johnnie Long Socks" people.
- ☑ Be comfortable and confident in your own self and cultural identity.
- ☑ Treat others as you want to be treated - be sensitive, honest, courteous and polite.
- ☑ Build relationships that are based on honesty, sincerity and trust.
- ☑ Recognise that once your meeting has finished, you can leave and go home - the community and the people remain.
- ☑ If you make decisions, create hope or agree to outcomes – make sure that you respond within a reasonable timeframe.
- ☑ Don't ever promise anything that cannot be delivered. Don't bullshit with people's lives - be honest and upfront.
- ☑ Develop a list of contacts - including their contact details and location. Build your own Indigenous networks.
- ☑ Build your own organisational networks.
- ☑ Encourage and build cross-agency partnerships to avoid duplication and minimise community disruption.

Element 5 Protocols

Protocol means doing the right thing according to the customs and lores of the people.

Community Visits and Formal Meetings

Plan your meeting

- Provide advance notice via the telephone or letter depending on the nature of your visit (regardless of how well you know the individual or the community);
- Check to see that your meeting date does not interfere with other important community events;
- Try and speak directly with who you are intending to meet;
- Ask whether they would like to have other people in attendance;
- Forward any relevant information out prior to the meeting.

Prior to organising your visit

Make sure that you have communicated your travel itinerary:

- expected arrival and departure dates;
- how long you expect to be in the community;
- where you will be staying;
- who else you might wish to speak with; and
- whether anyone else is travelling with you.

Confirm this information in writing if specifically required.

Recognise

That to visit some communities throughout Australia, you may need to contact the appropriate agency to obtain permission to visit. In some cases you may also have to contact/advise/involve the local Native Title Representative Body.

Speaking at meetings

- Don't try and cross-examine;
- Be patient and respectful;
- Don't force the issues;
- Don't present yourself as "the expert" – there is no such thing;
- Don't criticise or deliberately try to embarrass or shame people;
- Learn to read your audience while you are speaking;
- Recognise that speaking to people informally, or outside of the meeting room, is also a means for useful gathering information, giving and obtaining feedback, providing that it is not designed to be devious or deceitful;
- Listen to what people are saying and develop their ideas or visions – don't claim their ideas or visions as your own.

Conducting your meeting

Conduct the meeting like any other meeting while respecting the cultural differences.

- Take minutes;
- Record attendance;
- Record decisions and decision makers; and
- Be punctual and respect the traditional communication process.

Follow-up

After you have held a meeting with the community, make sure that you follow up, provide minutes and feedback and keep them informed about the progress of their decisions.

Establish a common purpose

- Work hard to understand where the community or individual is coming from – Put yourself into their shoes;
- Emphasise but Empathise;
- Respect the way in which the community operates and how it organises its discussions and formal meetings;
- Understand and respect the different communication styles that are used by the community; and
- **Be Patient**

Involve the right people at your meeting

- are they the elders or traditional owners?
- are they formally elected to the Council?
- are they associated with a particular group that is important to the whole community? or
- are they the appropriate people to make a decision on behalf of the community?

Demonstrate that you have the community's interests at heart

Be

- ❖ open;
- ❖ honest;
- ❖ caring;
- ❖ sensitive;
- ❖ respectful; and
- ❖ sincere

in your communication.

Recognise that you are not the first and you won't be the last government representative to visit the community.

Acknowledge - that in certain situations there will be varying levels of frustration, anger and bitterness. Where this occurs, let people speak – give them respect and listen, don't try to speak over them.

Apply basic conflict resolution procedures to resolve the situation.

Understand - that sometimes you may visit a community to discuss matters relating to your organisation and when you arrive the community may raise issues that are extremely important to them yet have no connection to your organisation or the matter you are there to discuss.

Take note of their issues, and if possible, follow these up with the appropriate person in the appropriate agencies. Build your organisational networks as they will come in handy.

Respect - the traditional decision making processes that exist within the community. Make sure that all decisions made, must be made by and/or with respect for the traditional owners.

Give people the time to properly consider the issues before making their decision.

Use of appropriate language

- ❖ Without being disrespectful, read your audience to establish whether or not they understand you;
 - ❖ Don't use language that people do not understand;
 - ❖ Don't speak too quickly;
 - ❖ Don't use jargon;
 - ❖ Don't speak down to people ;
 - ❖ Don't rely on heavy written documents to communicate your message;
- AND**
- ❖ Don't try and make out that you can speak traditional languages or dialects with the people.

Don't be gammin and don't insult the people.

Double check - to make sure that people understand what is being discussed – without being patronising.

Ensure - that where appropriate, confidentiality is maintained throughout the process.

Go-Betweens - where English is the second language, you are unknown to the community or you are unsure of the culture, language or customs make sure that you employ (and pay) appropriate Go-Betweens.

Make sure that the Go-Between you use is someone who can speak the language, and who is respected and accepted by the community.

Also respect the fact that communities may choose to send their own Go-Between to meet with you on their behalf.

Funerals

When funerals take place in communities,

- Respect the need for the people and the community to mourn and grieve for their loved ones.
- Stay away unless you are specifically invited by an appropriate person to be in attendance.

Questions

- Don't be too direct or confrontational.
- Avoid asking leading questions.

When asking questions, recognise the person you are asking may well be taking into account what others may be thinking in terms of the appropriate response.

Eye contact:

Where there is a problem with eye contact, don't try and force the issue.

Work on other ways to communicate your message –leave the information with the person for them to look at in their own time, use a Go-Between.

Although there are traditional reasons for not establishing eye contact in some situations, this can sometimes be misconstrued with basic shyness, shame or the fact that the person may feel uncomfortable with the situation.

Men and women's business:

Where it is clearly established and understood, don't send men to speak about business that relates to women and don't send women to speak about men's business.

Be respectful of the two genders.

Final Word

Always focus on developing positive solutions and creating tangible outcomes.

Non-Indigenous people in today's society often state that what has happened in the past is not their fault, and therefore, they should not be blamed.

It is not their fault and no, they should not be blamed.

They do however, need to put the past into perspective to understand the psychological scarring and sociological disruption that continues to impact on Indigenous people.

Indigenous people in this country will always hold a very unique place. Each person, despite what has taken place can be linked to a particular land, sea area, or kinship group. Others are still fortunate to be linked to a specific language group.

This association has been passed on through birth. While history has disrupted the association, many Indigenous people have been able to retrace their cultural and spiritual links to their traditional land, sea, kinship or language groups.

With these links re-established, Indigenous people are better able to feel a sense of belonging, more at peace and closer to their spiritual self.

This is an important factor in today's society, particularly when it comes to governments and resource developers wanting to negotiate with the right people from a particular land area.

Governments and resource developers must always ensure that they consult and negotiate with the traditional people from that area. Other Indigenous people who try to speak for country, which is not their own, will not be welcome.

Indigenous people who know who they are and where they come from, will automatically respect the responsibilities and rights of Indigenous people from other land or sea areas.

In this respect, they will not interfere with land or family matters, conflicts, problems and issues and nor will they try to dictate terms to that particular Indigenous group.

It is also important to acknowledge that non-Indigenous Australians have a cultural and spiritual connection to this country through their birth.

While many non-Indigenous Australians can rightly claim to have a spiritual connection to the land, the country and the people here in Australia, they may realise that through their ancestors, they have spiritual connections to other lands, seas, and kinship and language groups throughout the world.

Through developing this empathy, they will be in a much better position to understand Australian Indigenous people's connections to the land, the sea and the environment.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people don't expect you to know all there is to know about their culture, their society or their issues. They do however expect you to be committed, honest, genuine and sincere, particularly when you are dealing with their business.

Recognise and understand that in many instances Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are no different to other people, including yourself. They too, have dreams and aspirations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can and will forgive the appalling mistreatment of the past. However, they should not be expected to forgive the appalling mistreatment if it continues into the future.

Always put yourself into the person or community's shoes to better understand their situation. Picture yourself as being the one who is being consulted or negotiated with and ask yourself how you would like to be treated. What level of service would you expect?

Recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will read you like a book.

Be true and honest to your own conscience. Don't try to be someone that you are not.

Be yourself. You are not expected to all of a sudden change your own culture, values and beliefs.

If we are genuinely committed to addressing the disadvantaged position of Indigenous people, we must put our history into the right perspective.

We need to develop an accurate knowledge and understanding of Australian history, culture and society and understand the psychological and sociological impacts on Indigenous Australian people.

We need to move beyond blaming, individual fear and ignorance.

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Endnotes

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- ² Office of the Commissioner of Community Relations, Lets end the slander, 1979, p.37
- ³ W. Ross Johnson, A Documentary History Of Queensland, 1988, p.143.
- ⁴ *ibid*, p.142
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- ⁶ W. Ross Johnson, *op.cit.*, p.146
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- ⁸ W. Ross Johnson, 1988, p.37
- ⁹ *ibid*, p.38