



THE
AUSTRALIAN
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ABORIGINAL ISSUES NEWSLETTER Sept 1997

Newsletter of the 'Aboriginal Issues, Aboriginal People and Psychology' National Interest Group of the Directorate of Social Issues of the Australian Psychological Society.

Editorial Committee: Pat Dudgeon, Harry Pickett, Ross Williams, Jennifer Keen

NATIONAL CONVENOR'S MESSAGE

Members,

We are proud to publish this second newsletter for 1997 and are looking forward to the APS National Conference in Cairns.

The APS Conference will provide an opportunity for us to come together for information exchange and strategic planning on our activities over the next twelve months.

We are sending this newsletter out to all who were listed as members of the Interest Group prior to the new additional APS fees being charged for membership of all Interest Groups. Our membership numbers varied from nearly 600 then to about 300 after the segmented fees were introduced for this year. I would urge those of you who haven't formally joined the Interest Group to consider staying with us by doing so, as an exciting year is before us and our success in the profession can only be as good as your involvement and support.

Over the next 12 months we plan to strengthen our efforts in implementing the 'Guidelines for the Provision of Psychological Services for and the Conduct of Psychological Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People of Australia' and need help in doing that. Graham Davidson informs that the Guidelines were ratified in February, 1996. They have since been reprinted, if you don't have a copy of these Guidelines please ring Jennifer Keen.

We also intend to produce a booklet on ways of working with Aboriginal people and issues - a practitioners cultural handbook.

Also, we will be continuing our activities in facilitating the formation of further regional groups of the Interest Group.

The current Executive continue for the next year and will be arranging for elections for these positions at/by the next AGM in 1998.

Patricia Dudgeon.
National Interest Group Convenor

SUMMARY FOR THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY: as at July 1997.

NATIONAL INTEREST GROUP

'Aboriginal Issues, Aboriginal People and Psychology' (Members 559)

Convenor: Patricia Dudgeon - Curtin University of Technology

Treasurer: Ross Williams - Victoria University of Technology

Another successful Forum on Aboriginal Issues and Psychology at the Annual Conference in Sydney '96. Another Forum is also planned for Cairns this October.

The active WA Group convened now by Joyleen Koolmatrie, Aboriginal Psychologist, continues to hold regular monthly Work In Progress Seminars and InterUniversity Postgraduate Group meetings.

A deadly series of addresses was presented in National Aboriginal Week by Aboriginal people, facilitated by the Interest Group, on the first day of the Fifth International Symposium on the Contribution of Psychology to Peace 'The Psychology of Reconciliation' at the International Conflict Resolution Centre at the University of Melbourne.

Newsletters happen, support continues for the development of Interest Groups and activities in other regions, and there is developing collaborative involvement in in-service training for Psychologists and allied professions.

INDIGENOUS MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGY

The Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University of Technology was successful in its application for funding from the Indigenous Higher Education Program of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) and has established an Indigenous Research Centre. Four other Centres have been established around Australia, each with a different focus.

The Curtin Indigenous Research Centre has several areas of focus, - one of direct interest to the discipline and profession of psychology being 'Indigenous mental health and psychology'.

"Australian colonisation has negatively affected indigenous peoples and communities. The resultant impact on the physical and psychological health and social and economic wellbeing of Indigenous Australians has been extensively documented. Numerous studies have emphasised the need for healing processes and programs which assist individuals and communities to pursue positive goals and enjoy the benefits of health, employment and wellbeing, according to indigenous standards, within the broader Australian mainstream." (proposal document)

The main outcome that this focus of the Curtin Indigenous Research Centre endeavour is working to achieve is the production of a published text on Aboriginal counselling, mental health and psychology. The significant developmental outcomes of the continuing work in Indigenous mental health and counselling training by the Counselling and Mental Health team of the Aboriginal Health Unit of the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University will form a basis, around and through which will be integrated developments in psychology and allied professions as they relate to Aboriginal and Islander people, communities and issues of social/emotional (mental) health and wellbeing.

Under the direction of Aboriginal Psychologist Patricia Dudgeon and an Indigenous mental health working group, the project facilitator will work with the Counselling and Mental Health team and Centre staff, postgraduate research students, family and community representatives/carers, and Indigenous and mainstream professionals involved in Indigenous mental health across Australia.

ACCORDINGLY WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO CONSIDER AND TELL US WHAT YOU WOULD FIND USEFUL IN A TEXT OF THIS NATURE TO ASSIST IN YOUR WORK WITH INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS WITH THEIR ISSUES IN MENTAL HEALTH.

WE INVITE APS MEMBERS AND OTHERS TO CONTACT US WITH PUBLISHED MATERIAL, CONFERENCE PAPERS, RESEARCH, COMMENTS OR ISSUES OF CONCERN THAT YOU FEEL WOULD USEFULLY CONTRIBUTE TO A TEXT IN THIS AREA.

Contact: Harry Pickett, Research Fellow, Curtin Indigenous Research Centre,
Curtin University of Technology, Kent St, Bentley WA 6102.
Phone: (08)9266 3588 Fax: (08)9266 2888
Email: h.pickett@gunada.curtin.edu.au

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INTEREST GROUP

Hello Everyone,

The Aboriginal Interest Group has held meetings once a month at the Centre For Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University this year. The meetings have included guest speakers whose names and topics are listed below :-

March: Danny Ford, Acting Manager, Family and Children's Services Dept, Scarborough. Topic: "Aboriginal Constancy Support to F&CS" and "Cultural Co-Professional Development for Psychologists".

April: Open Forum -Topic: "Aboriginal Men and Mental Health": Outcomes of the Aboriginal Men's Community Meetings at Wandering, Mogumber and Albany.

May: Tracy Westerman, Curtin University/Family and Children's Services. Topic: "Aboriginal Youth Suicide Project".

June: Dean Collard, Chairperson, Perth Aboriginal Medical Service and Director, Manguri Aboriginal Corporation and David Higgins, Consultant.

Topic: "Best Practice: Aboriginal Mental Health":

a) National Constancy Project to the Office of Aboriginal and Islander Health (Mental Health) Commonwealth Department of Health Housing and Local Government.

b) Report on the Constancy Project for the Office of Aboriginal Health, Health Dept of WA - Marjorie Thorpe and Jane McKendrick.

August: Darren Garvey, Counselling and Mental Health program, Aboriginal Health Unit, Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University.

Topic: "Not a Problem: The Role of 'Denial' in Good and Bad Indigenous Health". Paper presented to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Conference, "Uniting Our Voices", Sydney April '97

September: Patricia Dudgeon, Sandra Collard, Darren Garvey and Harry Pickett, Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University. Topic: "Hearts, Minds and Memories: Depth Dimensions to Reconciliation". Paper presented at the 5th International Symposium on the Contribution of Psychology to Peace 'The Psychology of Reconciliation'. Under the auspices of the Committee for the Psychological Study of Peace of the International Union of Psychological Science. Held at the International Conflict Resolution Centre, Department of Psychology, University of Melbourne, July 7 -11 '97.

October: No APS Work In Progress Seminar or InterUniversity PostGraduate Research Group - due to the APS Annual Conference, Cairns.

The next Work in Progress Seminars planned are:

November: Nytungga Phillips, Regional Centre for Aboriginal Mental Health. Topic: "Fundamental Theory and ATR Practice of Co-Counselling: Aboriginal women's experience and perspective - and where it fits in with Aboriginal mental health".

December: Tracy Westerman and Christobel Charmarette Sexual Assault in Families Program. Topic: "The SAIFCare Program (Sexual Assault in Families): An Indigenous Cultural Look".

Coming for 1998:

Michael Wright, Manager, Aboriginal Community Support Service. Topic: "Reconciliation - Working in the Mental Health Field". Paper presented at the THEMHS (The Mental Health Services) Conference, Sydney, August 1997.

Wendy Casey and Darren Garvey, NASAS (Noongah Alcohol and Substance Abuse Service) and Aboriginal Health Unit, Curtin. Topic: "What Can Mainstream Learn From Indigenous Australian Approaches to Mental Health". Video of the 'hypothetical' conducted at the THEMHS 7th Annual Mental Health Services Conference, 'Tapestry: Weaving the Threads Together', Sydney '97.

Currently the WA Group membership is approximately 214. We are endeavouring to expand the Interest Group with other States. This may be possible at the Cairns conference this year. Any interested parties reading this from another state, please feel welcome to contact us.

Thanks to Jenny Keen who is currently acting as secretary for the local and national Interest Groups. Thanks to Harry Pickett and Darren Garvey who have stood in for me when I haven't been available this year due to other engagements.

This year has been exciting, although frustrating in some ways for Aboriginal people. The report for The Removal of Aboriginal Children from Their Families "Bringing them Home" was released. I was fortunate to have been able to be involved in a small way, giving support to Aboriginal People as they told their stories.

Following this, I have with Peter Dunlop and Dennis Bonney been conducting Grief and Loss National Workshops around Australia. Much unresolved grief and loss has been and still is an important fact in the lives of Aboriginal People. These workshops have been able to provide support and help soften some of the grief and loss.

Hopefully I will be presenting a paper at the conference in Cairns. Hope to see you there!!

Joyleen Koolmatie, Local Convenor.
Tumbewarrin Ngangalli Wuri.
Ph: (08) 9354 9771 Fax: (08) 9354 9772

VICTORIAN SECTION REPORT

The Victorian Section made a slow start to 1997 and gradually picked up speed. We meet in the Flemington Library for regular presentation/discussions - well, pretty regular.

Our first speaker for the year was Mark Millard, on his way through from a stint at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin, returning to Cairns. He talked about issues arising from his research into the role of white mental health professionals operating in Aboriginal communities, with particular reference to the Yarrabah community just outside Cairns.

The next meeting viewed a rare video of the historic Wave Hill strike, a central event in the development of the struggle for land rights.

The August meeting was entitled "The Night Sky of the Boorong". John Morieson of Swinburne University talked about his research in reconstructing an Aboriginal zodiac; he outlined the mnemonic functions of Aboriginal astronomy and its connection to the cycle of seasons, food availability etc., offering us a chance to appreciate the intellectual effort that goes into the preservation of an oral culture.

At the September meeting, Linda Lethbridge will talk about her research evaluating Link-Up, an Aboriginal organisation that helps Aboriginal people separated from their community and brought up in white families to re-connect with their original families. Link-Up also offers counselling for problems arising from childhood experiences and after separated families reunite. Linda is an Aboriginal psychology student completing fourth year at Victoria University.

The October meeting will be a story-telling session in which members will be invited to talk their own experiences of interactions at the meeting point of Aboriginal and mainstream cultures, looking to deepen our understanding of the issues which arise in the intercultural encounter. We will also spend a bit of time planning our activities for next year.

November - not so much a meeting, more a gastro-cultural interface experience. We're going to Tracks Cafe for our end-of-year dinner. Tracks is a bush tucker restaurant run by Carolyn Briggs, an elder of the Bunnerwong people and a pretty good cook, as many of our members already know. It should be a great finish to a year in which the Section has made good progress.

In August 1998 the International Council of Psychologists will hold their annual conference in Melbourne; two months later the APS Conference will also take place in Melbourne. Preliminary planning is taking place and the Victorian Section expects that the Interest Group presence at both events will be memorable

Ross Williams
National Treasurer
Victorian University of Technology
Ph: (03) 9216 8107

PSYCHOLOGY AND RECONCILIATION

In Victoria a series of papers organised by the WA Group was presented on **'Reconciliation and Psychology: Indigenous Australian Perspectives'** at the Fifth International Symposium on the Contribution of Psychology to Peace. The Symposium was held at the International Conflict Resolution Centre of the University of Melbourne, under the auspices of the Committee for the Psychological Study of Peace of the International Union of Psychological Science.

Prior to a Keynote Address in the evening by Noel Pearson, Aboriginal leader and spokesperson on Native Title and land rights, there was a position paper on the relation of the profession and practice of Psychology to Indigenous Australian reconciliation, that was then followed by several presenters on a range of different current key issues that bear on reconciliation. We have listed them with the Abstracts below:

"Hearts, Minds and Memories: Depth Dimensions to Reconciliation".

**Pat Dudgeon, Sandra Collard and Harry Pickett, Centre for Aboriginal Studies
Curtin University of Technology.**

Abstract:

Reconciliation implies social justice if it is to have a reality of integrity and honesty and not be a hollow plaything of political expediency. For the voices of Aboriginal people for empowerment and self-determination to move beyond the rhetorically acknowledging postures of the majority culture where actions and attitudes increasingly bely entrenched unintention, 'agency' must be reclaimed for it will not be given. Such a sense of a reasonable degree of mastery in ones individual and collective life is the central key to mental (psychosocial) wellness, especially in circumstances of massive and persistent social change.

Aboriginal direction and control of Aboriginal life is an ideal of a liberated position from which a just reconciliation can reasonably begin and a just partnership developed. Here we examine some steps along the realities of this path in the form of successful initiatives in Aboriginal mental health derived from the diversities of contemporary Aboriginal life. It begins an overview of the contextual breadth and depth to reconciliation which will develop in broader perspective in the addresses that follow.

"Reconciling with the Past: Healing the Effects of Removal". Joyleen Koolmatric, Tumbewarrin Ngangalli Wuri, Removal of Aboriginal Children Counselling Support Program

Abstract:

There can be no understanding without honest history. There can be no partnership within the nation without hearing and acknowledging the voices of accumulated pain, anguish, frustration of the victims of colonisation. And there can be no reconciliation without empathy and a reaching out and healing together.

This is a story of a part of that process; the beginning of the telling of the stories, the coming together and the healing of the Aboriginal people removed as children from their families.

"Developing Reconciliation Processes for Aboriginal Families and Communities in Conflict". Robin Thorne, Aboriginal Alternative Dispute Resolution Program, Ministry of Justice (WA).

Abstract:

From an historical overview of how past Government policies and practices inevitably set up

Aboriginal people for conflict between each other and with the wider community, current developments in mediation will be described that derive from local Aboriginal cultural ways together with the ways of the non-indigenous culture. Part of this are the current processes of reclamation and reconstruction of the role and authority of elders and customary law.

“Reconciling the Disjunctions of Cultural Processes and Government”. Dean Collard and David Higgins, Manguri Aboriginal Corporation/Higgins and Associates.

Abstract:

Mainstream processes of government (consultation, management, accountability and funding) interface poorly with Aboriginal cultural processes. For there to be the equality that reconciliation implies, the awareness, respect and protection of Aboriginal cultural ways of community must be factored into bilateral relations with a sincerity and honesty that develops a partnership of integrity worthy of being called reconciliation.

NEW REGIONAL INTEREST GROUPS

In Cairns, Mark Millard and colleagues in Far North Queensland have expressed an interest in getting a group going there - which would be most appropriate initiative to come out of the Cairns Annual APS Conference.

We have hope that Sydney and Adelaide won't be far behind!

What's happening in other regions? If interested, please contact Jennifer and we can help with some ideas and guidelines for getting going. Remember, it only takes a handful of interested people to begin.

ABORIGINAL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS GROUP

The APS continues its generous offer this year to waive the Registration Fees for Aboriginal students of Psychology courses who wish to attend the Annual Conference in Cairns. We encourage all students to enrol as Associate Members of the APS, but even if you are not enrolled you may belong to and attend your local Interest Group. Any way, you are all encouraged to prevail on your local Centre and Psychology Department to get the wherewithal for your fares, accommodation and meals costs so you can come. If each State/region could get at least one or two there it would keep the national group active and allow feedback from the Annual Conference to the others at home. We are hoping for a good roll-up from the student psychs in north Queensland!

As the national Interest Group and APS no longer has the capacity to contribute, beyond the waiving of fees, the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University has dug deep into its consultancy earnings fund and is financing two of its students to attend - Zeta Binge and Tracy Westerman. You might be able to use this as a precedent with your local Centre/Department!

National Convenor:

Tracy Uink, Community Corrections, Ministry of Justice, Maddington WA.

Ph: (08) 9493 9444

APS POSITION PAPER ON RACISM

Anne Sanson, APS Director of Social Issues, has been instrumental in getting together a draft APS Position Paper - "Contributions of Psychology to the Understanding of Racism and Prejudice". This is one of several APS Position Papers. There have been many contributors, and thanks especially to those of the Interest Group such as Darren Garvey who managed to take the time to add to and comment on one of the several progressive drafts. It has been previewed by the APS Board and will be the subject of a FORUM for discussion at the Annual Conference in Cairns.

NATIONAL GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES/ACTION PLAN IN INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN MENTAL HEALTH

Dean Collard and David Higgins have completed a major mental health consultancy for the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in Canberra. This is in the process of being released as Good Practice Guidelines and will be followed by a Report in due course. It is somewhat of a sequel to the earlier 'Ways Forward' consultancy of Pat Swan and Beverly Raphael that benchmarked the subsequent Commonwealth's 'Action Plan' on Indigenous Australian mental health. Each of these will be the subject of an address in the Aboriginal Issues FORUM at the Annual Conference in Cairns. These are the landmark documents that mark the working agreement between the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation(s) at both federal and state levels. They provide the current framework for Psychologists and others working in the field of mental health with Indigenous Australians. Also, at the time of the development of the Second National Mental Health Strategy it is important that this time that the issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health achieve some recognition.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE: CAIRNS

Enclosed is again an Integrated Program of what is on at the Conference that deals with Indigenous Australian issues in psychology and mental health. Importantly, there is a Cultural Tour the day after the close of the Conference, so if you can possibly stay the extra day (many of you will be taking the once -in-a-lifetime opportunity to staying an extra week in Cairns!!) the Yarrabah Visit will be a must. During the Conference there is the FORUM on Aboriginal Issues and Psychology and several interesting Individual Papers and Posters. For those with a significant proportion of Indigenous clients, - or communities in need but few Indigenous clients! - attending this selection of conference contributions promises interesting and hopefully useful material for your practice, research and teaching.

Contact:

Jennifer Keen
Curtin Indigenous Research Centre
Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University
Phone: (08)9266 2644 Fax: (08)9266 2888