

Schedule 2 – Cultural awareness programs

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1	Undated	Tracey Whetnall Consultancy (used in 2013)	Full release		Full release
2	2012	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Workshop material (used in 2014)	Exempt in full	S43 FOI Act 1989	Exempt in full (S43 FOI Act 1989)



An Indigenous Cultural Awareness
Training Program

For staff of

ACT Housing

TRACEY WHETNALL CONSULTANCY

ACT Department of Health, Housing & Community Care

ACT Housing

AGENDA

1 Day Program

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 9.00am | <i>Welcome and Introductions</i>
Self-introductions, sharing of stories and expectations of the program. Also a brief explanation of what the program is about and the approach we will take. |
| 9.45am | <i>Culture, Kinship & Community</i>
An interactive role play which explores and compares the structures of indigenous societies prior to and since contact. The diverse nature of indigenous societies, the importance of kinship systems and community structures and the historical and contemporary relationships which exist between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples all are viewed from a very different perspective in this interactive experience. |
| 10.30am | <i>Morning Tea</i> |
| 10.45am | <i>Culture, Kinship and Community role play continued</i>
Includes a video and discussion |
| 12.00pm | <i>Group Discussion: "What is Culture"?</i>
A group discussion where participants explore the meaning of Culture and determine that we all have a culture. |
| 12.30pm | Lunch |

1.30pm

Group Exercise/Discussion: "Stereotypes".

This session provides the opportunity for participants to discuss the harshness of stereotypes and learn how these may disadvantage Indigenous people

2.00pm

Group Discussion/Exercise: "Hope and Fears"

A group exercise where participants are split into smaller groups and given a work related scenario to discuss and solve.

3.00pm

Afternoon Tea

3.15pm

Group Exercise/Discussion: Looking, Listening and Touching

A group exercise which gives participants an opportunity to explore differences communication styles.

4.30pm

Question and Answer session

5.00pm

Evaluation and Close

CROSS CULTURE AWARENESS

It would be impossible to provide a crash course in cross-cultural awareness within the confines of the time-frame available. Rather this program approaches the issue by providing opportunities for participants to look at their own behaviours and belief systems.

Learning the details about other cultures provides little more than entertainment value or superficial knowledge. On the other hand, a process of cultural awareness gives insights which cannot be gained by reading a book or hearing a lecture.

If we are to deal with people from other cultures, we must understand something of our own. This way we learn some of the every day assumptions which underpin our perceptions and therefore our behaviour.

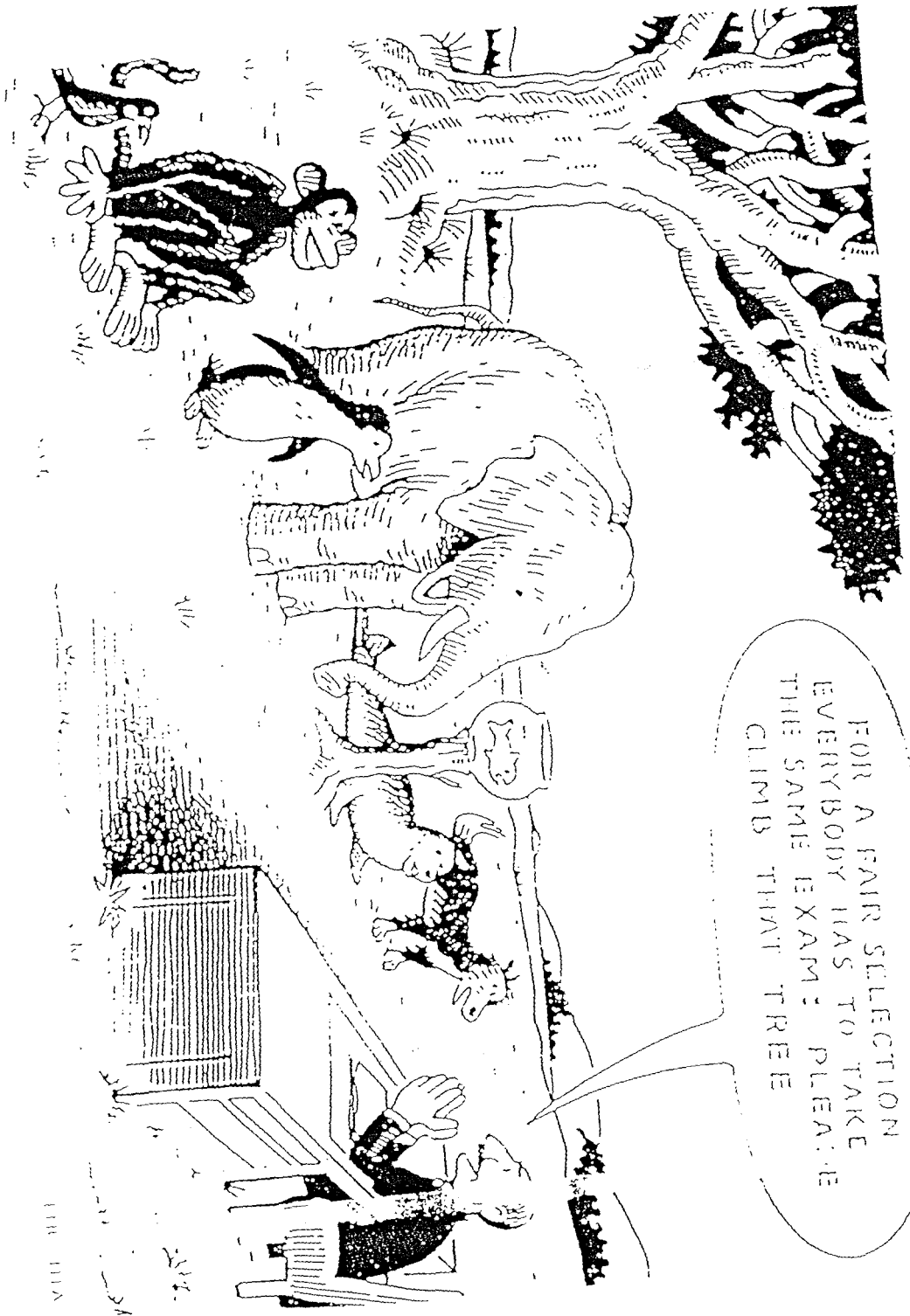
Because culture is largely acquired automatically as a result of growing up in a particular social setting, it is not often the subject of scrutiny or assessment. As an outcome of undergoing a cultural awareness process however, the very notion that some cultural expressions are normal is challenged.

The agenda of those who advocate mono-culture is based on ignorance and is misplaced when dealing with humans. Comparisons about whether one culture is better than other, reflect the lack of maturity of the maker who is unable to respect the differences s/he encounters.

A process of discovery assists the understanding that differences in cultures are no more than the expressions of common human values. Comparisons made to the detriment of the other culture or quaint notions of cultural superiority become irrelevant as an appreciation of this, is gained.

Remember, when it comes to culture - DIFFERENCE IS NORMAL

FOR A FAIR SELECTION
EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE
THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE
CLIMB THAT TREE



Something About TEACHERS:

The Harvard Potential Intelligence Test – in this psychological experiment in the 1960s, teachers from a number of schools were told that their students had done special aptitude tests to see how *potentially intelligent* they were (as opposed to what the teacher's were presently observing about the children).

At the end of a year, all the children who the teachers now believed were potentially very intelligent, were assessed. The results were remarkable in that every child's marks had gone up significantly – some as much as 80%.

The most remarkable thing about this however is that only the teachers were told about the students. They had never actually been tested or knew anything about what their teachers were told about them.

This proved that if people have low expectations of you, (based on racist beliefs say), it does effect how you are actually treated, not just how you feel about yourself. This is what determines your performance level, not your race or cultural background.

IT IS NOT THE STUDENT, BUT THE TEACHER - IN EVERY
CASE!

Many apologies

Thank you for building us new homes since you took from us our original homes when you have come in and vandalised, destroyed or took us from ours

Thank you for bringing in the doctors and nurses who do an excellent job of trying to cure the woes of diseases you brought in, of alcohol you brought with you and the heartache of family separations

Thank you for allowing us to survive even though you did you damndest to wipe us out

Thank you for allowing us to survive, so that we can demand, like all Australians, the right to health and happiness and the right to determine our own futures

Thank you for teaching us to read and write, even though our world did not need the written language because we did not need pieces of paper to make us hold true to our word

And thank you for teaching us the English language, it is almost like we never had one of our own

Thank you for exposing us to European civilisation, and teaching us how to exploit our own people, and thanks for teaching us the value of the individual over the family unit. We were so backward-looking we thought the family unit was important.

Thank you for building farms and large properties so we could work on them as slaves for a blanket and tobacco as pay

Thank you for denying us access to our traditional foods so we became dependent of your farms. But your food is so good that it has allowed us to enjoy the benefits of diabetes and cardiovascular disease and the occasional poisoning

Thank you for taking us off our lands and feeding us rancid foods or forcing us to eat dirt even when we were not in drought, because we could not leave the reservation

Thank you for building roads and rail so that you could move us quicker and farther away to where you needed us to build your farms and properties. It saved us so much walking between slave camps

Thank you for making yourself rich from the mineral wealth of Australia while you never shared with us the wealth you earned from this land

Thank you for working hard to develop this country and making sure that all Australians, of which we never were, were able to enjoy the fabulous wealth and riches which you have pulled out over the past 220 odd years.

Finally, we should apologise:

For feeding your starving first settlers when they arrived on Eora land, even though your diseases most likely killed the last of them many years ago.

I must apologise for David Unaipon developing your first mechanical shears which helped lift Australia on to the sheep's

back, along with other patents, which have all added to Australia's wealth

I apologise for the black trackers who help you find and stop Ned Kelly, even though you never paid them for the work

I apologise for keeping some of your explorers alive, even when they went against the advice we gave them

I apologise for you as well. You could not have known that the Good Samaritan that you are would have meant that we would survive and now are in a position to claim that which is every Australian's right

I apologise for looking after this land and keeping it alive, so that when you arrived you could kill it with salt and removal of forests

I apologise for giving you a culture to claim as your own, that you now flaunt to the world as its oldest living civilisation

I apologise for advancing your understanding of humankind, much the same as the Hebrew must thank Hitler for advancing human medicine all those years ago. The experiments you ran, the tests you conducted, could not have happened if we had resisted you and your ways

I apologise for the sporting stars of the past, the Roses, Mundines, Kicketts and Ellas, who have brought glory to Australia even though they were second-class citizens

I apologise for the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion, which in World War II had a sign-up rate twice that of any other town or community in Australia. Or the other Torres Strait Islanders who still hold the world record for laying rail track by hand at your Port Hedland mine

I also apologise on our veterans' behalf for wanting to get paid the same as the white soldier, even though a bullet does not care if you are black or white

Or to those veterans who guided ships through the treacherous waters of the Coral Sea, fed your coast watches as they watched the Japanese ships, or worked with our Fuzzy Wuzzy brothers to get your people back to a hospital.

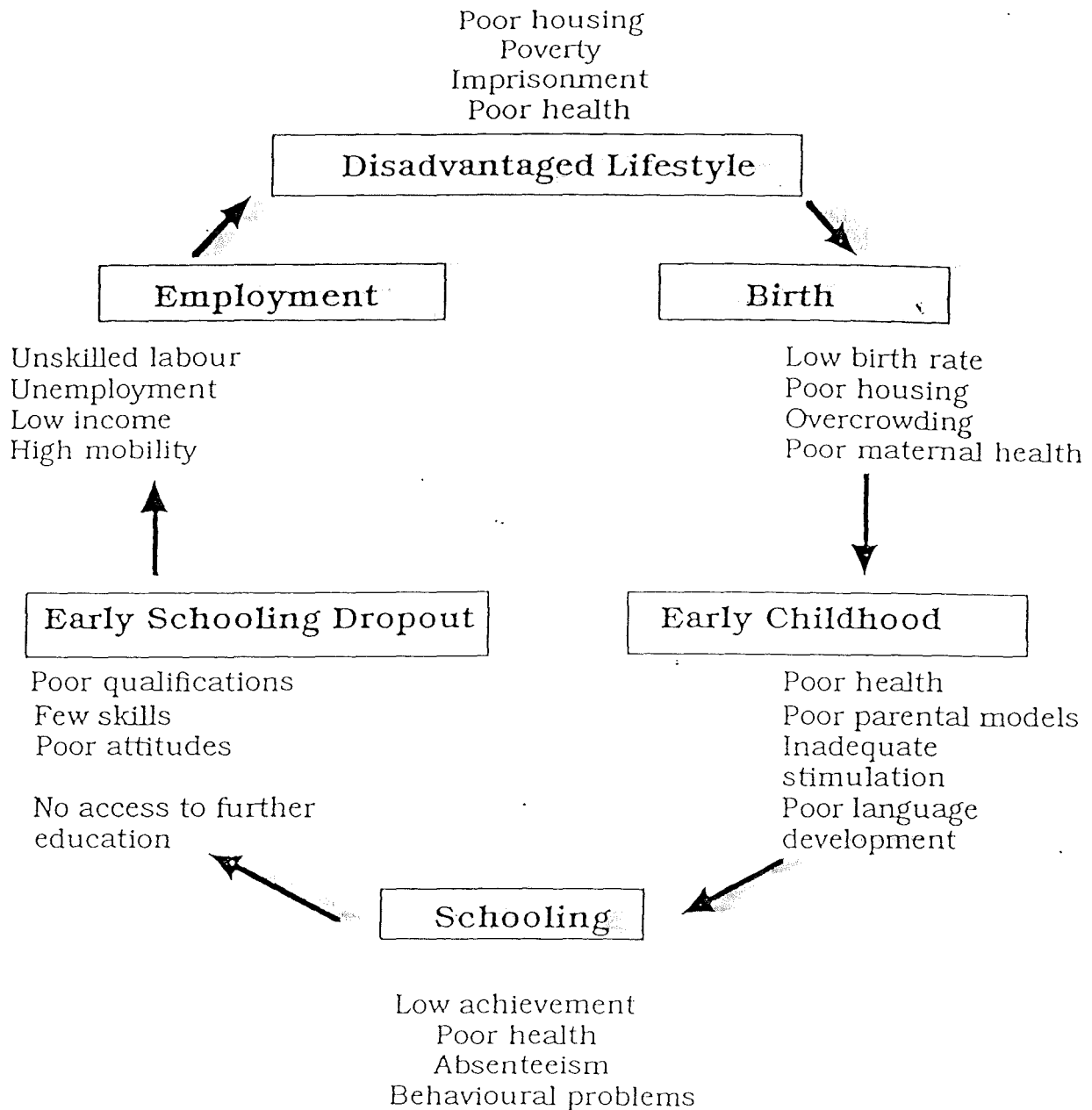
I apologise for cutting cane, cleaning your houses, rounding up your cattle or building your railways. We should have known that you made us work, poisoned us, separated us from our families, and denied us the right of self-determination for our own benefit. You were never looking at feathering your own nest, you only had our best interests at heart

Finally, I apologise for being in your way. How were we to know that when you say that you care about life you only consider life as white? We had always thought that man was man, no different to each other. But we were wrong. There is white man, then everyone else.

NOEL BON

Vice-chairman, ACT TSI Corporation

THE CYCLE OF POVERTY



This diagram charts the effects of 'unhealed' trauma (as in post trauma stress disorder — PTSD) over six generations within an Aboriginal Community. Traumas of various kinds have been 'handed down' the generations. History can often help us understand characteristics which we might otherwise see as stereotypes.

History

1860-1940
massacres
removals

1880 - 1960
removals
reserves

child
removals

1940
Government
interventions

1970

1. Healthy food/clean water
Shelter 3. Nurturing family/social
relationships 4. Knowledge for life.

2. Safe

sa
vpv

1860 1937

1883 1956

1910 1987

1942

1943

sa
vpv
ppv
su/a
a/d
mi

sa
vpv
ppv
su/a
a/d

sa
su/a
a/d
vpv
ppv

sa
su/a
mi
vpv
ppv
a/d

sa

sa
vpv
mi (d)
su/a

sa

sa
vpv

Willie

Dobbie

- (sa) Sexual assault: (vpv) victim physical violence
(ppv) perpetrator physical violence (mi) mental illness
(a/d) alcohol and drug misuse (su/a) suicide attempts

STEREOTYPES & DISCRIMINATION

STEREOTYPES

such as

Aboriginal people go walkabout
Women should be at home
Asian people work too hard
Young people are dole bludgers
People with disabilities are dependent by nature

can lead to

PREJUDICE

such as

All Aboriginal people are absent a lot
Women should love being barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen
Asian people will take our jobs
Young people don't want to work
People with disabilities are a nuisance

can lead to

DISCRIMINATION

such as

We won't employ Aboriginal people because they are unreliable
Women can't do men's work, so we won't take on any apprentices
We won't employ Asian people because they
can get jobs in their own sweatshops
We avoid employing young people in positions with any authority
We won't employ people with disabilities

INTERNALISED OPPRESSION

Kerrie Tim describes how the racist attitudes prevalent in the dominant Anglo-Australian society are often internalised by Aboriginal people, with devastating results.

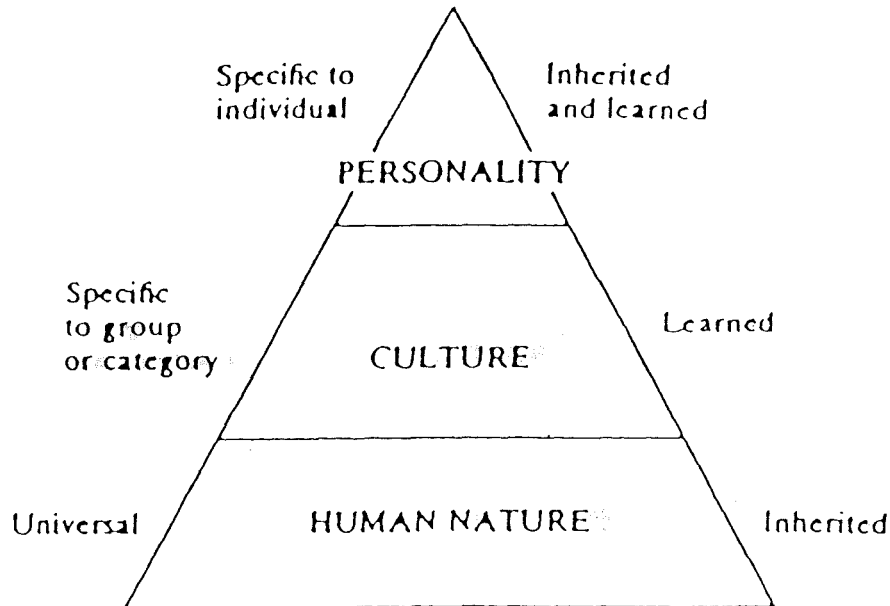
"Facing overt and covert racist attitudes and practises every single day of our lives means the level of restimulation and hurt is constant. The way the internalised oppression affects us (that is, the internalised racism) is that we act out the hurts on ourselves first (drugs, alcohol, violence), then on others most like us, other Aboriginal people, (violence, attacking leaders and each other every time one of us steps forward, flogging our children) and finally if we ever get to feel safe enough, we get to take our anger out on the majority culture. Our patterns of behaviour are so based on fear that we spend a considerable amount of our time making it easy for the majority culture, taking care to ensure their dealings with us are comfortable (so the level of restimulation is reduced) and acting out destructive patterns of behaviour on ourselves.

Patterns of internalised oppression cause us to take our feelings of anger, fear, frustration and powerlessness out on each other, particularly those closest to us. We are using drugs, alcohol and other addictions, and acting out other forms of violence and compulsive and hurtful sexual behaviours. Despite the good work by many individuals and communities to deal with these oppressive patterns of behaviour, violence within families is still a key issue for us to address. It is important to remember that these patterns of behaviour are not part of our culture and they are not the nature of our people. They are the results of our hurts.

The racism and internalised racism which results from it have led to patterns which cause us to become rigid in defining ourselves and our cultural practises. Real Aboriginal people don't use guns to hunt, only spears, real Aboriginal people live on their traditional lands, real Aboriginal people belong to community organisations, real Aboriginal people don't succeed in the wider community. These patterns cause us to hang on rigidly to definitions of Aboriginality which don't allow for growth. These rigid patterns mean we are not able to let go of the practises which hinder our individual and/or community growth. These patterns are no longer useful and do not serve our interests or liberation.

Although most of our communities know the patterns, and in most cases know the solutions, because we don't trust our thinking, we don't support the ideas put forward by other Aboriginal people and we do nothing. We become despairing and powerless. When we have a great indigenous leader, who, despite the level of despair and powerlessness, despite the oppressions and internalised oppressions that affect us, steps forward and acts powerfully in the world, the majority culture usually pulls this lead back very quickly - "uppity black", "getting beyond his or herself", "trying to be one of us (white)", and excludes this person from decision making or from participating in the system owned and established by the majority culture".

SOFTWARE OF THE MIND



Every person carries within him or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting which were learned throughout their lifetime. Much of it has been acquired in early childhood, because that's when we are most susceptible to learning and assimilating. [Once] patterns of thinking, feeling and acting have established themselves, a person must unlearn these before being able to learn something different, and unlearning is more difficult than learning for the first time.

1. Human Nature

What all human beings have in common, inherited with our human genes. The ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness; the need to associate with others; to play and exercise oneself; the facility to observe the environment and to talk about it with others - all these belong to this level of mental programming.

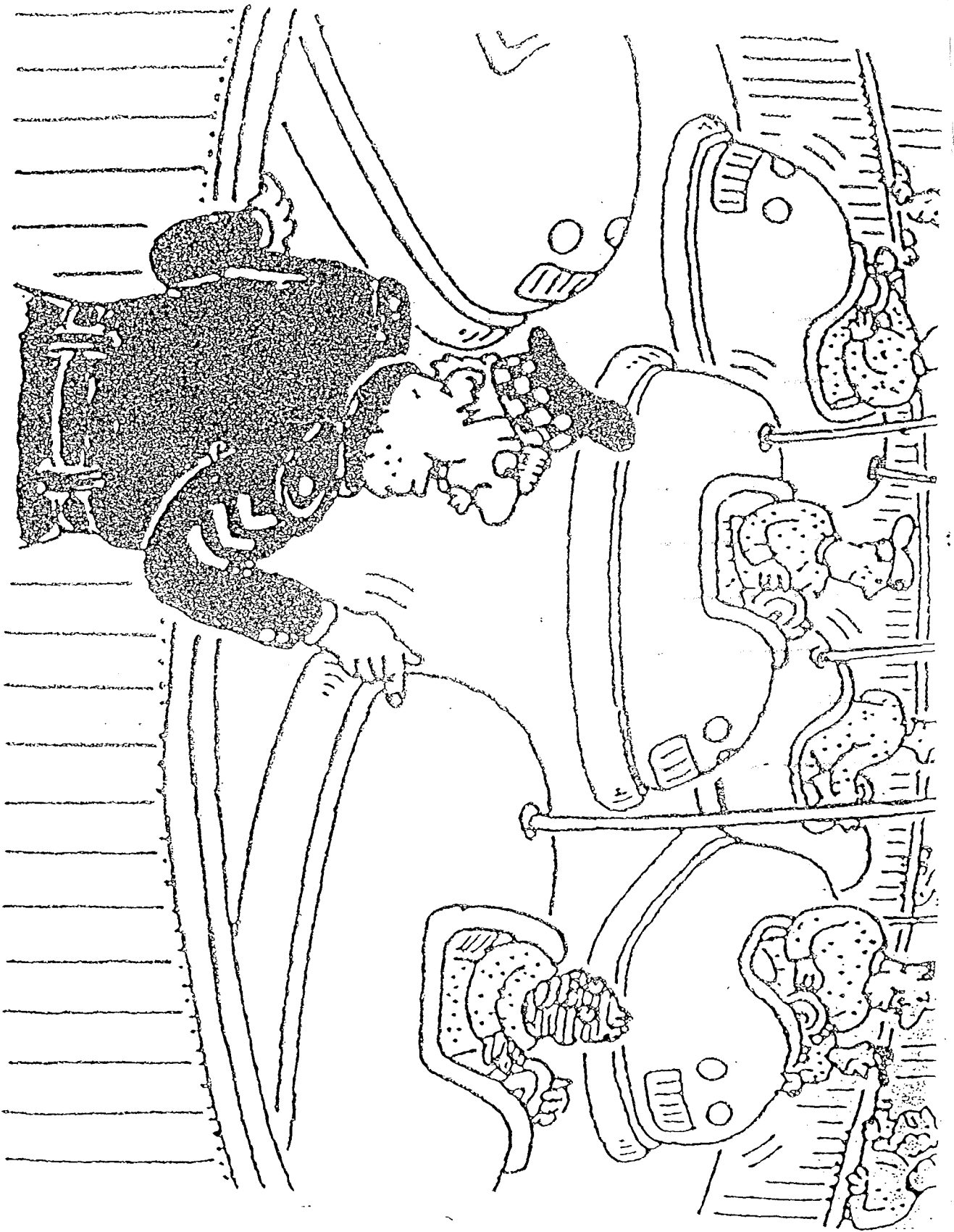
2. Culture

What we do with these abilities, how we express our feelings and observations, etc, is modified by culture. Culture is always a collective phenomenon: it is about what we have shared with those who have lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned.

3. Personality

The personality of an individual is his/her unique personal set of mental programs which (s)he does not share with any other human being. It is based on traits which are partly inherited and partly learned.

[Adapted from Geert Hofstede, Cultures and Organizations: Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival, Harper Collins]



"Excuse me, sonny — is this your vehi1,?"

Gaining Knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures: Some Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History

There are two major groups of indigenous cultures in Australia, the Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Aboriginal peoples. Torres Strait Islander peoples are culturally different from Aboriginal peoples. They are Melanasian, closely related to the peoples of Papua New Guinea and nearby South Pacific Islands. They are the only indigenous Melan Asians in Australia.

The movement of Melan Asian peoples south from what is now known as Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya occurred somewhere between 8000 and 70000 years ago. The southern migration seems to have stopped near the tip of what is now called Cape York. It is not clear why this southern movement stopped at this point. It is perplexing given that a land bridge was almost certainly in place until approximately 8000 years ago.

Aboriginal peoples have lived on mainland Australia for at least 50000 years or approximately 2000 generations.

By contrast non-indigenous Australians have been resident in Australia for 200 years or about eight generations.

During these almost unimaginable periods of time in almost complete isolation from the rest of the world, a remarkable period of cultural and social development occurred. Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies were varied with differences in lifestyle, religious and ritual practices and economic behaviour. There was **not** only one Aboriginal culture **nor** was there only one Torres Strait Islander culture.

Different cultures developed their own responses to different and changing environmental conditions and the particular needs of local groups. Both on the mainland and within the Torres Straits these groups distinguished between one and another in terms of the land or islands which they occupied, the languages they spoke and the individual responsibilities they took for religious and ceremonial practices relating to their lands and islands.

Traditional Aboriginal peoples lived in relatively small extended family groups and belonged to one of hundreds of distinct communities. They lived by hunting and gathering, a lifestyle which was semi-nomadic, following definite patterns according to season and ceremony.

All of mainland Australia was owned, or rather each distinct Aboriginal group **belonged to and had responsibility for** particular areas of land. Social relations were elaborate and based on highly complex kinship systems.

Traditional Torres Strait Islander peoples also lived in relatively small extended family groups or **clans** and belonged to a number of distinct family communities, which occupied various islands or parts of islands within the Torres Straits. They combined hunting and gathering practices with cultivation. They also followed definite patterns according to seasons and ceremony. All of the islands within the Torres Straits were owned and each Torres Strait Islander group **belonged to and had responsibility for** particular islands or parts of islands. Social relations within the Torres Strait Islands were also elaborate and based on complex kinship systems.

It has already been emphasised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies were **not** the same. There was variety between groups which occupied the inland areas of the mainland and groups which occupied coastal areas as well groups which occupied different islands. Within both Aboriginal groups and Torres Strait Island groups men and women had different roles to fulfil and older people had more status and responsibility than younger members. The groups were highly personal; organisation was largely communal; behaviour was largely non-materialistic and based on religion; and everyone knew where they belonged - to group, land or island.

Within both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures there was a very high level of social organisation. There was some contact with non-indigenous peoples prior to the settlement of Sydney Cove in 1788.

Aboriginal people living on the northern coasts of what are now called Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory had regular contact with various Melanesian groups of Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait Islands over some thousands of years.

More recently Asian sailors visited Australian territorial waters to pursue various maritime activities. An interesting example was the Macassans from Indonesia, who visited the northern coasts of the mainland and the Torres Strait Islands to catch the sea slug for trade with Chinese gourmet markets. The Torres Strait Islanders traded regularly with peoples from New Guinea and the South Pacific Islands. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people acquired new items through trade, travelled to Indonesia for visits occasionally and picked up elements of other cultures. In many cases there was intermarriage between groups. However the traders always left after the visits, avoided offending local groups and generally had little impact on local communities.

Conflicts were rare and physical differences between groups were not considered particularly significant. This amicable multi-culturalism came to an abrupt end in 1788 with colonisation of the Australian mainland.

The impact of colonisation was to seriously disrupt the lives and lifestyles of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders over the two hundred years which followed.

Meanwhile very different societies were developing in the northern hemisphere. By 1788 the industrial revolution was well under way and capitalism and colonisation were two of its driving forces. As time went on it generated ideas of progress, competition and victory which served its restless materialistic ambitions. Free enterprise saw children as young as five years being sent to work in factories and coal mines in England; and popular social theories of the time were used to justify the conquest of indigenous peoples in Africa, the Pacific and Australia.

English language and culture had for a long time been loaded against *persons of colour*. White carried mainly positive valuations and black negative valuations, which were established far back in history. Blacks were first condemned as heathens and savages; denied humanity and used to rationalise Great Britain's involvement in the slave trade and in pursuit of its own ambitions.

And so at the time of colonisation, the differences between English and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures could not have been greater. The strength of the indigenous societies; the self-governing, self regulating order which rested on religion and consensus and the relationship between people and land, became weakness in the face of English invasion.

There were no cities; there were no factories; there was no large scale agricultural production, which could provide proof (in English terms) of ownership and industry. There were no governments nor armies which could be mobilised rapidly against the British. Isolation had provided its own defence.

On contact there was no defence against the men, the guns, the religious views, the animals or the diseases which the Europeans brought to Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples **did** not stand by helplessly and watch the seizure; **nor** did they simply fade away. The history we have been taught is one in which the British became the owners of Australia instantly and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the trespassers.

The story of widespread, continuous and valiant resistance mounted by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has only recently been retrieved from the past. Only recently have we come to know how **resilient and adaptable** many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were in the face of such catastrophe.

The invaders, who were labelled loosely *British*, were a mixed lot; convict and soldier; doctor and domestic servant; Irish Catholic and Presbyterian; with ethnic and class divisions in their societies. They came over the decades; as escapees from poverty, revolution or persecution; they came for adventure and opportunity; or because they were sent. Whatever their motives, they came as culture carriers. They held ideas and values in their heads. Those who had the power set about enforcing those ideas and values on all - including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The consequent destruction was not simply a result of ignorance between differing cultures or even British ethnocentrism and racism. What was fundamentally at stake was a competition for resources: **for control of land and seas**. **Dispossession** was the inevitable consequence of white settlement; growth; the development of an Australian economy and political system necessitated it. The different types of land use were incompatible.

The **lie** which forms the moral and legal basis of the occupation of indigenous lands and seas, that Australia was **uninhabited** in 1788, guaranteed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership could **not** be acknowledged.

The conflict, the resistance and the destruction of *contact* was repeated over and over as the frontier rolled unevenly across the Australian continent and the Torres Straits over a period of one hundred and fifty years. Frontier conditions existed up to the 1920s and 1930s in some parts of central Australia and the northwest. The last recorded large scale massacre of indigenous people occurred in 1928.

But it was not only the violence and dispossession which wrought its toll. Once victorious the process of justifying the occupation through myth and racism continued. As did the displacement of surviving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; through confinement in reserves or missions run by white managers or pastors. Under the so called *Protection* legislation of most of this century, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were increasingly subject to total control bound in a legally enforced inferior status. They needed white permission to leave or return to a reserve; to get a job; to marry; and were subjected to a range of intimidating restrictions and harassment which resulted in crimes only indigenous people could commit.

The narrow mindedness of white officials, the lack of any kind of accountability and the powerlessness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who were already grieving for loss of land and kin, makes a wretched and shameful history.

The reserves operated as *labour pools*, as a source of labour in the pastoral north; but also to provide rural workers and domestic servants in the southeast and divers and ship crews in the Torres Straits.

Protection legislation restricted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mobility and legal rights and permitted the exploitation of indigenous labour under conditions dramatically inferior to those of other Australian workers. *Protection* legislation also retarded the growth of indigenous protest. For example in the 1930s it was used to stop the political organisation of indigenous peoples.

Protection is not distant in the past. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not counted in the Australian Census until 1967. Many indigenous people throughout Australia are still living in gross squalor with appalling rates of illness and early death. The conditions stem directly from the **loss of land, fighting and incarceration, the loss of resources and the loss of control over their own lives.**

Some grasp of the history, those social processes which created the position of indigenous people in Australia today, is necessary if we are to understand those conditions and the immense social and personal problems associated with them. It helps us to understand the widespread anger and despair of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who have been organising themselves and protesting against their plight with little effect for far longer than we have realised.

It can provide explanations which are more realistic than the *blame the victim* ideology often used to explain it all in terms of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander weakness or inferiority. It also helps us to re-examine our own stereotypes and views, to see where they are simply wrong. For example, the belief that indigenous people have *simple* cultures or undeveloped languages.

Whilst some non-indigenous peoples battle to re-assess Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, so do indigenous peoples. Peoples whose claim to land rights and self-determination rest upon a history of dispossession and cultural destruction.

Perhaps we can learn from such troubles. Racism is not solved by ignoring it. It is necessary to identify it and take positive steps to fight it.

We have begun with history, for it can tell us how we got to be the way we are. The process of colonisation, early contact and conflict between Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander people and the invading Europeans generated a whole array of race relations, which while changing are still with us.

Our image of race, the stereotypes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we hold, the language we use concerning them, our view of their place in the land or our lack of it continue to shape race relations today.

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Cultures in Australia today -
Some Aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Australia in the 2000s*

Remarkably Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are still thriving today. As a result of their different histories over the last two hundred years and their different responses to change Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now live a variety of lifestyles and in a variety of societies. Some still live in their traditional areas and retain strong allegiance to traditional knowledge and customs. Others live in urban situations as minority groups with only some knowledge of the traditions of their ancestors. The comment is often made that those living in urban environments have lost their culture.

However as all human beings belong to groups and all human societies have cultures, these people still have cultures, even though their cultural patterns have been drastically modified as they have adapted to the changing environments in which they have found themselves.

It has been easy and often convenient for non-indigenous peoples to assume that because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people no longer live traditional lifestyles that they have lost their culture. That is, they have assimilated to the cultural practices of non-indigenous people. Surviving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, like all cultures, are **dynamic, that is they have the ability to adapt.**

Colonisation of Australia forced many indigenous societies to adapt. Often those who did not adapt, did not survive. Adopting components of another culture, does not necessarily cause cultural loss, it causes cultural change.

For example, non-indigenous peoples do not consider that because they no longer drive a horse and cart, they have lost their culture.

They rightly presume that the development of motorised transport is part of their cultural development and motor cars have become part of their culture. The motor car was not invented in Australia and yet to deny that the motor car is now an important component of non-indigenous culture would be absurd.

Similarly many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples now use motor cars. Both indigenous and non-indigenous cultures have adopted the components of other cultures so to enhance and modify their own. This has resulted in **cultural change**.

Notwithstanding these comparisons it is clear that over the last 200 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have had to undergo a far higher level of adaptation than non-indigenous cultures. The rate of speed of that change has resulted in many problems for indigenous peoples as well as benefits.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been pressured to assimilate to the majority culture during this period of change identity has become an issue. In the past non-indigenous administrators have defined the term **Aborigine** and **Torres Strait Islander**. They have identified some people as indigenous and others regardless of their descent as being non-indigenous. Legislation has had the effect that the same person has been declared to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander at some stages of life, but identified as non-indigenous at other stages.

For example differing definitions have applied in different States. A person identified as indigenous in one State may have been defined as non-indigenous on crossing a State border. Within a State a person identified under **Acts of Parliament** as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander may have been encouraged to apply for exemption from the provisions of the Acts and thereafter assumed to be non-indigenous.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons making this application had to prove themselves worthy of being regarded as Australian citizens and capable of accepting responsibility.

Non-indigenous Australians have often failed to understand the pressure and problems such legislation imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. What administrators perceived as giving people responsibility often involved Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people having to deny their own culture; deny their own identity and often deny their extended family groups. Non-indigenous Australians should be sensitive to the anger and mistrust as times expressed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a result of past policies and practices.

As indigenous people, whose identity as such was denied during the eras of **protectionism and assimilation**, assert their right to lay claim to their ancestry and heritage; they naturally resent continued attempts to deny or ignore this claim.

Even today many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are questioned about the depth of their culture. This is particularly the case for indigenous people living in urban environments, who may be fair skinned or who lead lifestyles that are considered as similar to the lifestyles of non-indigenous people. Many of these people are not only resentful of having their heritage questioned but puzzled by what doubters see as the advantages to claiming an indigenous identity.

After all 92% of indigenous people are in the poorest 10% of Australian peoples. At the start off the third millenium Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the original owners of Australia, suffer the highest rate of infant mortality; the lowest life expectancy; the worst level of general health; the lowest level of retention within the schooling system; the lowest level of housing ownership; the highest level of imprisonment and unemployment of any cultural group in Australia. **They rightfully ask why anyone would falsely claim indigenous identity?**

We have already touched upon the immense changes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies, resulting from the entry of non-indigenous people to Australia from 1788 on.

Different groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced a whole range of processes caused by the colonisation of Australia. Some groups have been totally destroyed as they have succumbed to new diseases, lost their land and the will to live (as indicated by low birth rates in some areas), and suffered death through massacres and neglect. Others living away from coastal areas which soon became urbanised had more time to adjust; while some became assimilated into the majority society of Australia; lost touch with traditions and customs; and accepted the values and habits of non-indigenous Australians.

Others while accepting many of the features of non-indigenous societies have struggled to retain a separate identity and have sought to integrate aspects of both ways of life. Continued use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in the face of pressures to abandon them and assimilate to the use of English has been a symbol of the struggle.

Also efforts to re-educate non-indigenous people about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history; demonstrate a determination to have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures considered from an indigenous point of view. Many non-indigenous people still try to divide indigenous people into two distinct groups - the **traditional** and the **urban**.

Whilst there appears to be nothing wrong with this separation of people into two categories it is a massive over-simplification of a complex issue which fails to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as individuals who may lead traditional lifestyles or who may lead urban lifestyles. In many cases they lead lifestyles somewhere in between the two.

Some 15% of Australia has been returned to its traditional owners and in almost all cases those traditional owners have opted to remain on those lands as opposed to living in towns or cities.

However most of those people now live in houses, drive motor cars, hunt with rifles, insist on their children attending school and eat non-indigenous foods. Despite this they still maintain strong cultural traditions by way of social organisation and structure, ceremony, song, dance and the maintenance of indigenous Law.

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have not been able to secure their traditional lands and have had to adapt their lifestyles to those of town and city dwellers. Nonetheless they still maintain their **cultural identity**, many still maintain their family and extended family obligations, many still hunt when they have the opportunity and retain strong cultural links through communities and networks.

Sometimes these and other aspects are not readily observed by non-indigenous people (principally because of the low level of social interaction between the two groups) and non-indigenous people often mistakenly presume that because a person does not live in their traditional environment he or she has somehow surrendered his or her culture, he or she is not a **real** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. This view is simply wrong.

Indigenous people do not abandon their culture because they no longer lead traditional lifestyles. They are still indigenous people; considered indigenous both by themselves and by peoples of other cultures.

This does not mean that adapting to town or city life was ever either accepted or easy. Most indigenous people had no choice in the matter. With their lands and access to their lands removed many indigenous people had no alternative but to become urban dwellers. This trend increased as rural employment opportunities dwindled with increased mechanisation and the advent of equal wages.

However even in towns and cities kinship systems and family networks still operate. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals still maintain obligations and responsibilities to kin.

These obligations often override other considerations such as material possessions, employment or secure housing.

Many non-indigenous people do not understand these practices and as a consequence are often critical of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who continue to follow them. How often have you heard people criticised for not holding on to their pay packet or not attending work because they have to attend a funeral or giving something of considerable value to a family member who apparently did not deserve it?

What is not understood is that for many indigenous people **not** to share their pay packet or to attend work as opposed to the funeral of a family member or **not** to surrender possessions to relatives to whom one has obligations would be unthinkable. These cultural traditions are still important today. They are still actively practiced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia regardless of where they live. They are often misunderstood by non-indigenous people who practice very different types of behaviour.

They demonstrate a determination to maintain important cultural traditions which people have followed successfully for some hundreds of generations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may adopt many aspects of non-indigenous cultures however many still maintain aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures even in new and changing environments. Of course that is why there are surviving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia today.

Many non-indigenous people are not aware of how very different their urban experiences are to those of most urban Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. They assume that indigenous people have similar experiences in town and city environments to themselves.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples usually have life histories which are quite different to those of non-indigenous peoples.

For example most life histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would include having to learn the social skills of two cultures; having to learn more than one language; having to learn survival skills outside of a town or city setting. This may involve being taught and learning from senior people. This may involve having been taken from one's home by a government agency and placed in another home. In most states almost every indigenous family has immediate experience of having one of its family members removed from its care. That would have involved living as a member of a minority group and therefore being continually exposed to discrimination and racism.

Having had no experience of most of these things, many non-indigenous people find it difficult to understand what such experience means to indigenous people.

At the start of the third millenium many indigenous people still experience difficulties that non-indigenous people do not. Simply getting through the day may be difficult. Shop assistants, bus drivers, fellow workers are often cold or off hand or even abusive. Some indigenous people do not try on shoes or clothes before purchasing them for fear of being abused or insulted. Some indigenous people only use identified shops where they know they will be treated fairly; and avoid many shops because of past experiences of discrimination or abuse.

Many indigenous people still find it impossible to secure accommodation through private rental markets because of the prejudice of landlords and real estate agents. Many indigenous people still find it impossible to secure low interest loans through banks and credit societies because of the prejudice of bank managers and building society managers; and are usually forced to secure loans through finance companies at exorbitant interest rates.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the day to day difficulties are compounded by high levels of unemployment; poor education; poor health and on-going harassment by police and other officials.

Many are facing impossible odds as they try to hold their families together and provide some security for their children. If nothing works and no one cares, some might turn to violence. Indeed it may surprise there has been so little violence directed against non-indigenous peoples.

Except that we know that those who are hurt most, who lack power and fear authority and reprisals, are far more likely to turn their anger against their own families, friends or even themselves.

Many social commentators equate the difficulties that indigenous people are facing to the **cycle of poverty**. It provides a simple, easy to understand explanation of what indigenous people experience. They say that if the cycle can be broken the conditions and difficulties they currently experience can be addressed. Break the cycle and you begin to resolve the problems.

Breaking the poverty cycle is only part of the solution. The other part is changing the attitudes and derogatory stereotypes that many non-indigenous people hold concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Improving the conditions and difficulties faced by indigenous Australians is not going to be achieved by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples working alone. It will only be achieved by non-indigenous people joining in the struggle as well, by changing their behaviour and actions towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their day to day dealings with them.

Many indigenous peoples today, regardless of how urbanised they have become or how much of their traditional culture they maintain, still retain a fundamental relationship to the land which is very different to the ways in which non-indigenous people relate to land.

For most non-indigenous people land is a tradable commodity, its monetary value is a primary consideration. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, land is not tradable and its value (in dollar terms) is **not** a consideration.

When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seek land rights it is not to accumulate land because of its monetary value. They seek land rights because **land is understood to be a central element of their culture.**

A mere eight generations ago knowledge of the land determined many factors of existence for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It provided food, health, shelter and well being. It also provided a known context in which people could act and interact with each other. It provided the framework for the maintenance of a high level of organisation and planning.

It guaranteed that the way land was divided by traditional boundaries was not only understood by everybody but also carefully observed to ensure that disagreements did not occur. The high level of social order guaranteed good health, good food, no crime, a fair and equal education and economic system and full employment. As indigenous groups around Australia were dispossessed of their land, many of these things began to fall out of kilter.

It is little wonder that most of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who now live in urban centres, support land rights both actively and passively. The loss of land rights for all surviving Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia has resulted in a massive lowering of all their measurable standards of living.

One thing remains certain. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia, regardless of their lifestyle, urban, traditional or somewhere in between; regardless of whether they are fair or dark skinned and regardless of whether they are regarded by non-indigenous people as indigenous or not;

They will continue to protest and campaign for their rights in land until opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are equal to the opportunities for non-indigenous people in all aspects of life. Today the gap between those available opportunities still remains huge.

It is normal and probably right for non-indigenous people to feel that they are not accountable for what their ancestors did to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However all non-indigenous people should consider whether they are going to perpetuate the wrongs and inequalities still occurring today.

References

- WH Edwards **An Introduction to Aboriginal Societies:** Social Science Press, Sydney 1988.
B Chambers and J Pettman **Anti-racism: A handbook for adult educators,** AGPS, Canberra 1986

Recommended Reading

- H Reynolds **The Other Side of the Frontier**
K Gilbert **Living Black**

Kinship

Early observers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies noticed that they used relationships terms in a different way to the way they are used in most European societies. Some observers concluded that this meant they did not have proper family systems and that families obligations were very loose. Others however studied the organisation more closely and found that there was an intricate system of relationships and that it was highly organised and entailed obligations to others.

An American lawyer, Lewis Morgan observed similar types of organisation amongst indigenous societies and he introduced the phrase the **classification system of kinship**, to describe this form of organisation. In most European systems of family relationships we identify a small group of perhaps 30 to 50 people as our relatives. There is a set of relationship terms to identify our relationship to each person in this group. Sometimes terms such as second cousin or sixteenth cousin are used to identify relationship to a person who is more distantly related.

A basic principle in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship is that each person in a language group can identify their relationship to every other member of that group, that is to perhaps 500 or more people. The family is thus enlarged to embrace the whole group (therefore the term extended family). This is not done by extending the range of relationship terms by using terms equivalent to second cousin or sixteenth cousin but by using the same term and including more people under each term. More people are classified as belonging to each category. Thus it is known as the **classification system of kinship**.

Differences in sex and generation are important elements in this system. A second basic principle underlying this system is **the equivalence of siblings of the same sex**, a phrase introduced by Radcliffe-Brown. This means that people who are of the same sibling line and who are of the same sex are considered to be essentially equal. Thus brothers share an identity with each other and the same with sisters with each other.

As a logical consequence of this, if a person recognises a man as his father he must also recognise that man's brothers as fathers and not uncles.

In the same way a mother's sisters are also classified as being mothers and not aunts. In non-indigenous Australian families an individual has only one father and mother. In indigenous societies they have one biological father and one biological mother but great emphasis is placed on social relationships and one has several social fathers and several social mothers. Although indigenous people do not distinguish the biological and social parents in this way, there is a closer bond with the biological parents than with others.

It may be asked if there are uncles and aunts under such a system. Father's brothers are also fathers because they are on the same generation line and are the same sex. But there is also a change of sex with a woman on this side of the family so a father's sister is an aunt. A male on the woman's side, as a mother's brother, is an uncle.*

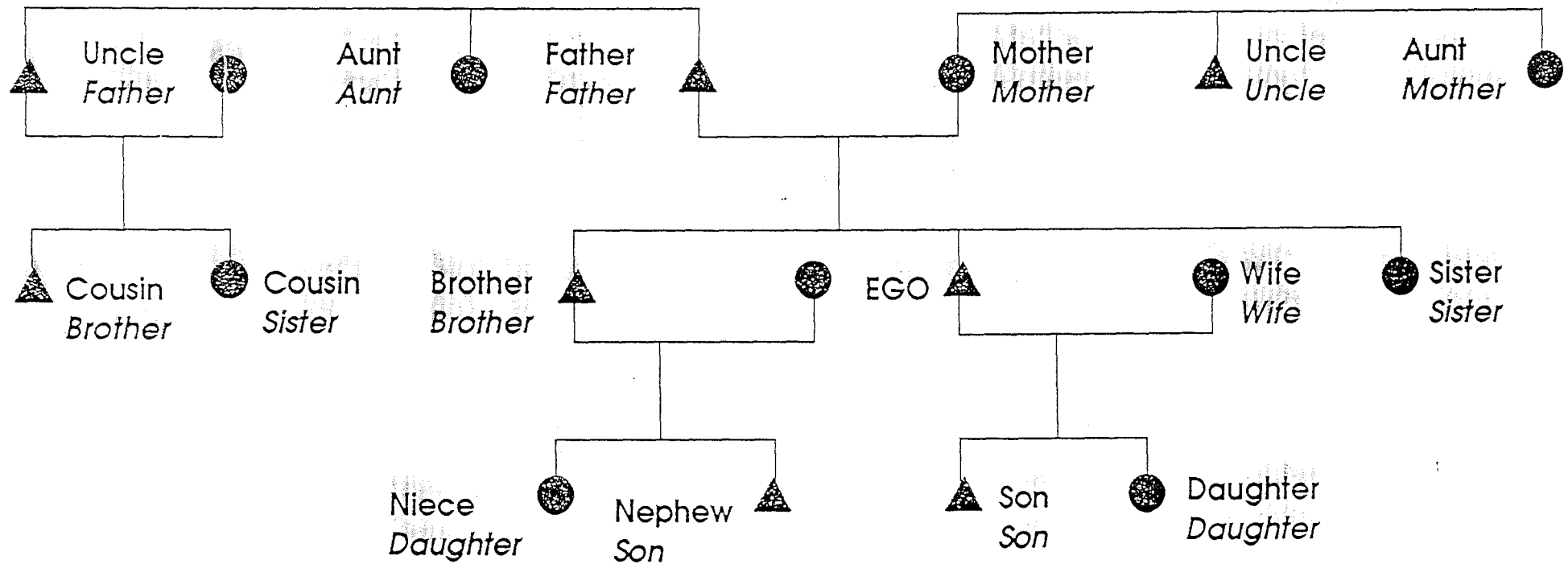
This system can be extended to include all members of the society. For example the brother of a grandfather is considered the same and also called grandfather. On the father's side of the family the grandfather's sons are called father as they are on the same line and of the same sex as father. The children of such fathers will all be brothers and sisters, whereas non-indigenous people would usually call them cousins.

Adapted from **An Introduction to Aboriginal societies**

WH Edwards

Social Organisation

Relating to others in society



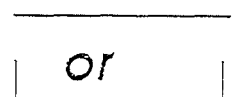
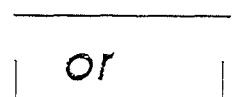
Examples of differences between English and Aboriginal kinship terms. Terms in *italics* are the English equivalents of Aboriginal terms

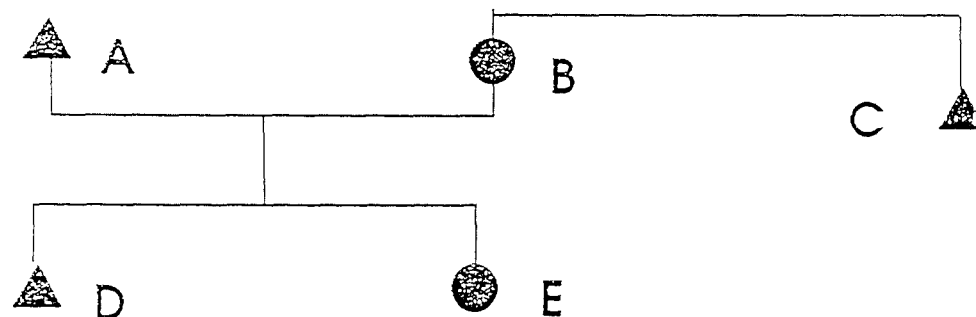
▲ = a male

● = a female

| = descent - the relationship between a parent and a child

 = a sibling relationship, that is, a relationship between brothers and sisters. The symbol for the oldest sibling is placed to the left and for the youngest to the right of the line

 or  = a marriage relationship



In this diagram A and B are married. The woman B has a younger brother C. A and B have two children, a son D and a daughter E. D is older than E

Looking, Listening Talking & Touching

In your group discuss and answer the following questions. Answer each question twice. Firstly by stating how you perform each function. (Take note of the diversity of responses). Secondly by stating how you think indigenous people perform each function. If you are not sure attempt to answer the question anyway. One person should record the responses on butchers' paper. Another should be nominated to present the information to the larger group. If you have time discuss within your group why different cultural groups have developed different types of behaviour.

1. How do you introduce yourself?
2. How do you indicate your status?
3. How do you indicate that you are listening?
4. How do you indicate that you disagree?
5. How do you indicate that you agree?
6. How do you indicate gratitude?
7. How do you indicate sorrow?
8. How do you apologise?
9. How do you say goodbye?
10. How do you indicate subject avoidance?

Looking, Listening, Talking & Touching

	Non-indigenous	Indigenous
1. How do you introduce yourself?		
2. How do you indicate your status?		
3. How do you indicate that you are listening?		
4. How do you indicate that you disagree?		
5. How do you indicate that you agree?		
6. How do you indicate gratitude?		
7. How do you indicate sorrow?		
8. How do you apologise?		
9. How do you say goodbye?		
10. How do you indicate subject avoidance?		

Elements of Cultural Communication

Body language—how we use our faces and bodies to communicate

Address systems—what we call one another

Openings & closings—how we start and finish our conversations

Topic choice—what we talk about

Helping & advising—how we interact with people who need assistance

Turn control—how we manage to take turns when we speak

Quantity & style of talk—how much we should talk and how we should do it

Paying attention—how we show that we are listening

Apologising—when we do say we are sorry and how we do it

Complimenting—how we compliment each other and how we should react

Self-presentation—what we do when we are putting our best foot forward

Politeness and face—what we have to do to be considered polite

Negotiating—how do we get what we want

Presenting Information—what is the best way of getting facts and viewpoints across

Intercultural Communication

It is seldom necessary to change your culture, although some modifications may be practical at times

It is not necessary to like the culture(s) we encounter—that may not be realistic—but a degree of respect is essential

It is not necessarily our aim to accept other cultures, but it is essential to accept that other cultures are valid (at least for their members)

It is not necessarily our aim to understand everything about the cultures we engage with—a very difficult task for an outsider. Instead we need to understand that culture influences people's perceptions, behaviour, value systems and ways of communicating. We need to try to determine which characteristics of a particular culture are the critical ones

Our aim is not to become more sensitive, open-minded people (although this would not be a bad outcome); our aim is to become more skilled

Action List

Remember cultures manage their bodies differently, requiring different behaviours and imposing different constraints on physical actions

Acknowledge that your language is not better (more precise, more complex, more beautiful) than other languages

Understand that other cultures are not necessarily trying to achieve the same things as you. They may have different values

Understand that other cultures may be trying to achieve the same things as you, but may do so in very different ways

Accept that your own behaviour stems from a set of cultural values

Accept that your perceptions stem from a set of concepts and attitudes developed by your cultural group. Your perceptions are biased and subjective

Remember that other cultures may have a different perspective on power distances—between bosses and workers, for example

Remember that other other cultures may have a different predisposition to uncertainty avoidance.

Other cultures may see the relationship between the individual and the collective differently from you

Above all, don't assume your way is the way. Be ready for different approaches

Observations List

Accept that all cultures—even your own—impose some constraints on the body

Remember that different rules about appropriate use of the body can lead to intercultural misunderstandings

Keep asking for advice about what to call people. There will generally be somebody who can get you started in the right direction

Don't automatically follow the address systems you hear. The members of a cultural group might not find it appropriate to integrate you into their system

Don't take offence when someone gets the form of address wrong—it is rarely intended to be offensive

Remember that how people open and close their conversations will differ culturally

Understand that cultures don't necessarily choose the same topics to talk about

Remember all cultures have some topics they would rather avoid

Observe how other persons join in and take turns in a conversation. The rules will probably be different from your own

Remember that, even allowing for individual differences, each culture probably has a distinctive communication style

Take care: your way of showing that you are paying attention may be considered as inappropriate by other cultures

Remember that all functions of communication, whether complimenting, apologising, requesting, inviting or offering, proceed according to different cultural rules

Understand that cultures have different goals in self-preservation, that is in the positive qualities about themselves they strive to present

Understand also that even if cultures have the same self-preservation goals, their ways of achieving them may differ

Accept that all cultures require and value politeness, but the ways in which politeness is achieved may vary significantly

Remember that the concept of face is universal. Without it there would be no politeness

Don't make the mistake of assuming that all cultures express politeness by using words like *please* and *thank you*

Native Title: A Brief Time Line

- 1967 Referendum grants Aboriginal people full citizenship rights and gives the Commonwealth the power to make laws for the benefit of Aboriginal people.
- 1971 First Land Claim by the Yirkalla over the Gove Peninsula in the Northern Territory fails. Justice Blackburn's decision states that the Yirkalla did not cultivate their land and despite having a recognisable system of land management did not prevent other peoples from entering their land.
- 1975 Commonwealth Government passes the **Racial Discrimination Act** which in effect prevents any Australian Government from enacting legislation which discriminates against any person or persons on the basis of their racial or cultural background.
- 1976-1987 First the Northern Territory and subsequently a number of the other states create various Land Rights Laws for indigenous people paving the way for indigenous people to claim their land or purchase land. Land laws vary from state to state. These are based on grants of land by governments not *native title*.
- 1982 Mabo, Passi and Rice commence action in Queensland in an effort to prove they have a pre-existing right to own and occupy land on Murray Island in the Torres Strait.
- 1988 High Court Ruling (**Mabo 1**) dismisses challenge by Queensland Government which contests the validity of Mabo, Passi and Rice claim. Ruling upholds their right to pursue their *native title* rights on Murray Island.
- 1992 High Court Ruling (**Mabo 2**) determines that Mabo, Passi and Rice indeed have *native title* rights. Ruling states that the doctrine of *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one) is a fiction
- 1993 After lengthy negotiations with representatives of indigenous people, the Commonwealth Government passes the **Native Title Act** giving effect to the 1992 High Court Ruling. (continued)
- 1993 **Native Title Act** is part of a three part package: (1) the **Act**; (2) the establishment of the Indigenous Land Fund and (3) the establishment of a Social Justice Package. The Social Justice package is to be negotiated.

- 1995 High Court Ruling on the determination powers of Tribunals (**The Brandy Ruling**) severely limits the ability of the Native Title Tribunal to operate as it was intended. It limits the power of the Tribunal to reject native title claims.
- 1996 High Court Ruling on the extinguishment of *native title* on pastoral leases (**Wik Ruling**) states that *native title* may co-exist with pastoral leases and that pastoral leases do not necessarily extinguish *native title*. However in the event of any dispute between *native title* holders and pastoralists, the pastoralists' rights shall prevail.
- 1997 Government proposes **Native Title Amendment Bill (10-Point Plan)**. Senate rejects bill in proposed form and makes amendments. Referred back to the House of Representatives.
- 1998 Government sends unamended Amendment Bill back to the Senate in March.
- 1998 Senate passes '10 Point Plan' Amendment Bill with minor modifications negotiated by Senator Harradine an independent from Tasmania in July.

Finding a Way Forward

Over the course of this program you may have discovered some things you did not know about indigenous cultures, histories and people; or even some things you did not know about yourself. It is important to recognise that this information is only useful if we use it effectively to improve the way we work with and behave towards people from cultural backgrounds different to our own. So where do we start?

We might think that we must begin by changing our attitude to differences and whereas there is some truth in this assumption it is not necessarily an easy starting point. Attitudes are usually formed over a long period of time and as a result of a range of different experiences, observations and interactions. We like to believe that our attitudes are well thought out and responsible. We therefore feel strongly about the need to preserve them and defend them. This is the same for others as well.

Perhaps an easier starting point is our behaviour. How we do things, how we approach things and how we interact are less difficult for us to change. They do not require an immediate mind shift. All they require is for us to think about trying to do things differently and then attempting to do it. There is a great deal we can do differently. We rarely pay enough attention to the relationship between what we do well or poorly and how we go about doing it. The things we do well result from the way we do them. The things we don't do well result from exactly the same factors.

So a good starting point to improving the way we do things in a cross cultural sense is to look at different and better ways of doing them. It is useful to try to be specific, so lets try and answer two key questions:

What will you now do differently as a result of what you have learned during this program?

What type of changes will you make to your work place practices as a result of what you have learned during this program?

Finding a Way Forward

Once you have decided what changes you will make, discuss how you might measure the impact of these changes.

What will you now do differently as a result of what you have learned during this program?	What type of changes will you make to your work place practices as a result of what you have learned during this program?

Evaluation Sheet

1. How helpful has this program been for you in understanding more about indigenous cultures and peoples ?

Not at all helpful		Somewhat helpful		Very helpful
1		1		1
1	2	3	4	5

2. What aspects of the program did you find most helpful in meeting your expectations of the workshop?

3. What were the least effective aspects?

4. What changes would you recommend to improve the program?

5. How would you rate your presenter(s)?

Not at all helpful		Somewhat helpful		Very helpful
1		1		1
1	2	3	4	5

Why?

6. Any other comments?

7. What will you do differently in your own area of responsibility as a result of this workshop?*

8. What changes will you make in your workplace practices as a result of this workshop?*

* Note that the answers to questions 7 and 8 will be reviewed by the Department in three months to provide a longer term view of the program's outcomes. please copy answers to these questions to the corresponding page in your folders for your own records.