

Action Points

For at least one month monitor papers, radio and TV stories about Indigenous Peoples. In particular take note of:

- What kind of stories are presented about Indigenous Peoples?
- Do they feature in particular sections of the paper (i.e. arts; sports; crime) more commonly than other sections ?
- Are the stories about achievement and positive issues or are they about problems and dysfunction?
- Are Indigenous Peoples talking about themselves, or are other people talking on their behalf, and if so what kind of language is used?
- Read the *Koori Mail* newspaper and compare the way Indigenous peoples are presented in that paper compared to mainstream media.
- Do you have a local paper? If so what kind of stories do they run on Indigenous issues?

Resources

For more information and links to organisations working on poverty in Australia:
<http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au/info.html>

Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005 - Indigenous Report Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) Productivity Commission, Canberra.
<http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous/keyindicators2005/index.html>

A Statistical Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity.
http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/statistics/index.html

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002, Linacre, S, Australian Bureau of Statistics, June 2004. Catalogue Number 4714.0
<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/4F382B35C996604BCA256EBC000170BA?Open>

Indigenous
MAKE POVERTY HISTORY.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1: Remove, by 2015, the differences in income between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

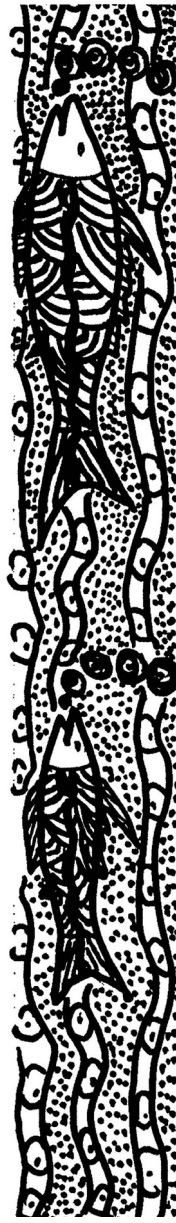
- Indicator 1: No Australian lives below the Australian poverty line.
- Indicator 2: Indigenous Australians share the same household and individual income as non-Indigenous Australians.
- Indicator 3: Indigenous Australians share the same rate of home ownership as non-Indigenous Australians.

Target 2: Eliminate by 2015, the number of people who suffer from hunger and malnourishment

- Indicator 4: No Indigenous child is malnourished or hungry.
- Indicator 5: No Indigenous Australian lives below the minimum level of dietary energy.

For more resources and further details on how to get involved in the Make Indigenous Poverty History campaign please visit the website:
www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/miph

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Indigenous
MAKE POVERTY HISTORY.

ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY

WORKSHEET ONE

“Those of us who are fortunate not to experience real poverty are often confused by what this word means. It simply does not mean “material deprivation”. Poverty of the kind that is passed from generation to generation is exclusion - a lack of power and respect - that is more often than not afflicted upon people who are controlled and bullied by the welfare machine.”

Mr Ben Wyatt,
Indigenous Member of Parliament
First speech to Federal Parliament 2006

Eradicate Extreme Poverty

Objectives:

- To outline key facts about extreme poverty in Australia.
- To highlight some of the key indicators of poverty.
- To highlight a program that is designed to alleviate unemployment.

Poverty in Indigenous Australia

People with low incomes are often disadvantaged in all areas such as health, life expectancy, education, substance abuse, social participation, crime and violence. Likewise there is a strong link between unemployment and wellbeing.

Reports show that high levels of unemployment tend to be associated with increased poverty, poor health, high mortality, low life satisfaction, low self esteem, and high levels of depression, anxiety and suicide (SCRGSP 2005).

Home ownership is also an important economic indicator of wealth and saving and is likely to be positively related to employment and income indicators.

With that in mind, the following statistics give us an indication of the situation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



Income

Indigenous Australians earn only 62 % of the income of non-Indigenous Australians and this disparity is getting worse. Statistics show that the gap widened 2 % from 1996 to 2001 (HREOC).

There is also a disparity in the kind of jobs that Indigenous Peoples are able to obtain. They tend to be employed through the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP)

or in more menial jobs. In fact 60 % of indigenous people are employed in low skill occupations. 18 % of those employed are engaged in CDEP.

Even when they do the same jobs as non-Indigenous people they earn less. For example Indigenous managers earn 81% of non-Indigenous manager's incomes and Indigenous labourers earn 53% of non-Indigenous labourers incomes (HREOC).

These disparities get worse as geographical remoteness increases.

Employment

The national unemployment rate in 2002 for Indigenous people was over three times higher than the unemployment rate for non-Indigenous people (18.1 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively). The Indigenous employment rate has decreased from 30% in the past twelve years. However, this improvement could also be attributed to changes in the classification of employment status. For example you are deemed to be employed if you have worked one hour a week. So whilst CDEP accounts for 18% of Indigenous employment, 74 % of those are only working part time.

Home Ownership

In 2002 only 27% of Indigenous people lived in a house owned by someone in their household, compared to 74% of non-Indigenous people (SCRGSP 2005).

However the ABS statistics do not show the real living situation for many Indigenous peoples.

For example, Indigenous people are more likely to live in larger households with large numbers of dependents and smaller incomes; there are more likely to be several generations in one household: there are also more likely to be single parent households. Indigenous people may also have resource commitments beyond their immediate family and those who live with them (SCRGSP 2005).



Spotlight on CDEP

Community Development Employment Programs or CDEP account for nearly one quarter of Indigenous employment. The program was started in 1977 and is now the Federal Government's largest Indigenous program. The aim of CDEP is to provide an alternative to receiving dole payments and the Government states that the focus now is on providing training to ensure employment away from the CDEP program.

Most Indigenous Communities have a CDEP and much of the work done is vital to the community's functioning and wellbeing. Many CDEPs are also developing enterprises that can provide employment opportunities. However there are also criticisms about CDEP, for example that it does not lead to employment outside the program; that other Australians don't have to work for the dole and that participants are doing work commonly done by local councils, but are not being paid the same as council workers.

Following are some comments about CDEP from NATSIEC Commissioners. The Commissioners, all Indigenous, come from communities across Australia.

"CDEP is sometimes a goal for our young people. They follow their family in. They say "when I finish school I go with my uncle" it's their real goal. But it can be dangerous because CDEP is the one thing that can qualify them for work. I don't want to see them in CDEP in the future. I want to see them advance. There is no support from our leaders to go out and train and be educated properly."

Bishop Saibo Mabo

"CDEP should be used as a stepping stone, for example Townsville entered an MOU for a sponge farm. The leadership is setting the right principles; there are things happening that you can make money out of."

Lurleen Blackman.

"Leadership needs to be redefined—not the western concept of focus on one person. We know it's diluted across the board. Men have knowledge and women have knowledge and there are certain people who have access to knowledge. We can't have one person speaking for all of us. We have to acknowledge who is responsible for what exactly. We have to look at what we have and what we can do with what we have. We need to say we will take responsibility. CDEP should be community controlled not controlled by individuals. At Hopevale, for example, they set up a system that paid for food vouchers, fines and other bills directly out of the CDEP payments. They could even buy things from Harvey Norman, all interest free with delivery organised. The payroll became their financial manager; all the bills were taken care of and they could do what they wanted with what was left over. Now it's all collapsed because CDEP is seen as bad."

Rachelle McIvor

"Like the Long Grass people, they are expecting money from me to help them from the starvation. They go to Darwin, they end up in long grass. It's not a picture of Indigenous Australia. It's not how we live. Education and training in the community is what we want. Our young people are going to our colleges, get them trained more. We are living in two worlds, we have to learn the white man's law and they have to learn from us."

Discussion Points

- What is necessary for successful employment strategies; what obstacles can people face when trying to gain employment?
- Thinking about Ben Wyatt's quote on page 1, discuss in what ways the "welfare machine" can bully and control.
- How are Indigenous peoples either empowered or excluded from participating in employment ?