

Action Points

Having read and discussed all the previous worksheets you will have gained a good understanding of the complexity of issues that impact on Indigenous disadvantage. Now it is time to assess your learning and commit to action for the future.

- As a group discuss what has been the greatest learning for you throughout this program?
- Using the information on the NATSIEC website; create a poverty pole and make a commitment to doing what you can in your life to end Indigenous Poverty.
- Make a special celebration of signing the poverty pole and display it in a prominent position to remind you and all around you that you have the will and the commitment to end Indigenous disadvantage.

Resources

New arrangements in Indigenous Affairs - http://www.oipc.gov.au/About_OIPC/

Stolen Wages http://www.antar.org.au/sw_nsw.html
<http://www.acsjc.org.au>

Stolen Generations <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~rez/Journey/>
Read the summary of the report "Bringing them home".
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen_summary/

Treaty - <http://www.australiaday.com.au/indigenous.html>

Indigenous
MAKE ^ POVERTY HISTORY.

Goal 8: Develop a National Partnership for Development

Target 13: Give Indigenous people the control over managing their own affairs

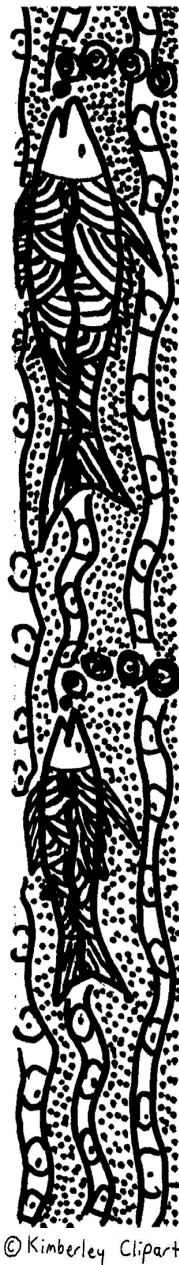
- Indicator 35: Re - establish an elected representative body.
- Indicator 36: Monitor the impact of Shared Responsibility Agreements
- Indicator 37: Truth in funding – provide adequate funding for proper implementation of programs.

Target 14: Ensure that the wrongs of the past are acknowledged

- Indicator 38: The Federal Government says Sorry to the Stolen Generation and pays reparations.
- Indicator 39: A Treaty is established and they have the full right to their lands.
- Indicator 40: Reparations for Stolen Wages are made in full.

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

Copyright NATSIEC 2006. Reproduction permitted for education purposes.



© Kimberley Clipart

This resource kit has been developed by The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission



Locked Bag 199
Sydney NSW 1230
02 9299 2215
natsiec@ncca.org.au
VER 1/06

Indigenous
MAKE ^ POVERTY HISTORY.

DEVELOP A NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

WORKSHEET EIGHT

“The general opinion of station people is that it is a mistake to take these children out of the bush. They say that the aboriginal mothers are fond of their children and in their own way look after them and provide for them and that when they grow up they are more easily absorbed and employed than those who have been taken out of their natural environment and removed to towns.

The Mission Representatives say that if the girls are left in the bush they only became the prey of white men and mothers at a very early age. My experience has been that removing them to towns and to institutions does not overcome this trouble and only accentuates and increases it.”

Chief Protector of Aboriginals to Commissioner of Public Works,
27 August 1932

Develop a National Partnership for Development

- To develop an understanding of some of the issues that need to be addressed in order to reduce inequity and disadvantage endured by Indigenous Peoples.
- To understand the historical and political context of these issues.

.....

The International Millennium Development Goals provide the parameters for better co-operation between those in need and those who have resources.

Here in Australia there are several issues that have a significant impact on the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to live their lives free from poverty. This worksheet focuses on those issues where better engagement and cooperation will contribute to a decrease in Indigenous disadvantage.

Proper Representation

ATSIC was established by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act and began operations on 5 March 1990 as a means to involve Indigenous people in the processes of government affecting their lives. ATSIC consisted of:

- an elected arm of Indigenous representatives, consisting of 35 Regional Councils around Australia and a national Board of Commissioners led by an elected Chairperson and
- an administration headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

ATSIC was dismantled in June 2005, which many consider, leaves a vacuum of Indigenous representation.

The National Indigenous Council (NIC)

The NIC was created, by the Federal Government, to replace ATSIC with the aim of providing expert advice to the Australian Government on policy, program and service-delivery issues affecting Aboriginal people and Torres

Strait Islanders. However, the NIC is appointed by the Government and is not a representative or an elected body.

Truth about Funding

Many statements are made about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia, not all of them are factual. One common complaint is that they get far more money than other citizens of Australia and that there is an "aboriginal industry" which sucks in huge amounts of tax payer's money.

This is not substantiated and this argument is usually used in political debates to sway public opinion and to muddy the waters about the true situation about our Indigenous peoples.

For example, let's look at Aboriginal health. According to the Hollows Foundation the fact is that non-Indigenous people have more spent on them by the Commonwealth than Indigenous Australians.

For example:

- In 1998 / 99 it was estimated that for every \$1.00 spent per person for the general population on MBS and PBS, only \$0.37 was spent per Indigenous person.
- Commonwealth spending on Indigenous people is about 18 % less than for non-Indigenous people .

It is especially important with the new mainstreaming of Government programs, that funding for Indigenous Peoples is not only adequate and accessible, but is represented honestly.

TREATY

A treaty between Indigenous peoples and Australia could have recognised and protected Indigenous rights and led to a just constitutional basis for the Australian Federation.

Instead, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were completely overlooked as relevant parties in the



© Kimberley Clipart

formation of the Australian Federation.

Proponents of a treaty claim it would facilitate:

- recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia and of the distinct rights which flow from this;
- agreement to the necessary reforms for a more just society
- the setting of national standards to inform local or regional treaties and agreements.

Supporters of a Treaty say it would help with unresolved issues of reconciliation.

Stolen Wages

For decades governments throughout Australia literally stole or misappropriated the money of Aboriginal people who were under their care and protection. The sums run to hundreds of millions of dollars.

The monies stolen include wages earned for forced or indentured labour, or other monies due to Indigenous people such as child endowment payments. Governments were able to do this because they directly controlled Aboriginal wages and entitlements.

The wealth of this country has been built on the back of the labour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. There are campaigns to return these wages to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their descendents.

The Stolen Generations

On 26 May, 1997, the *Bringing Them Home* report, tabled in the Federal Parliament, detailed painful evidence of the removal of thousands of Indigenous children from their families. It brought to the attention of mainstream Australia what Indigenous Peoples had known for decades; that their children had been forcibly removed from

their families and that right around Australia families had been torn apart due to government policies. The suffering that it caused is still having a deep impact on communities and individuals all over Australia.

BRINGING THEM HOME REPORT - WHO SPOKE OUT AT THE TIME?

"The policies and practices of separation and removal as described in the report were never universally approved as sometimes believed. They were in fact implemented in the face of clear and unequivocal warnings about the potentially disastrous and tragic consequences that may flow.

From as early as 1874 warnings were sounded about the threat to family structures and systems; the links were clearly identified between the removal of young girl children for domestic work, and slavery; about the lack of responsibility, authority and supervision of those involved in the forcible removal of children, and about the repressive conditions in which children were held.

It is not true to say that people "did not know". People did know, but the warnings went unheeded. Following are some excerpts from the report of some of this evidence.

... girls of tender age and years are torn away from their parents ... and put to service in an environment as near to slavery as it is possible to find. Australian Aborigines Progressive Association, 1928

... the aboriginal inhabitants are treated exactly in the same way as the wild beasts or birds the settlers may find there ... Their goods are taken, their children forcibly stolen, their women carried away, entirely at the caprice of the white men. The Queenslander newspaper, 1883

I know many stock breeders who would not dream of crowding their stock in the way that these half-caste children are huddled. John McEwen, Minister of the Interior, after visiting the Half-Caste Home in Darwin, 1937"

Taken from http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/stolen_children/who_spoke_out.html



Discussion Points

Oodgeroo Noonucal once said: "I don't hold the present generation responsible for the past but I will hold it responsible for the present and the future because it is its responsibility and mine to change things for the better."

What is our responsibility today to deal with the issues outlined in this worksheet?