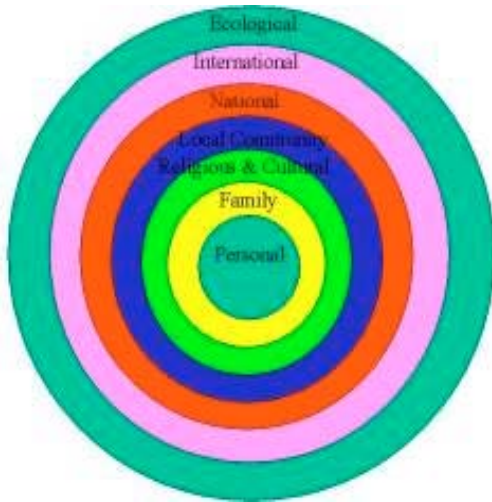


The DOV in Australia Circles

Creating Ripples of Peace

Like the sun, itself a circle of life and power, the symbol of the circle has often been used to express the eternal perfection, communion and infinity of God. In the Celtic Christian tradition for example, the circle is typically combined with the horizontal and vertical circles of the Celtic Cross. In the Indigenous spirituality of Australia, concentric circles are similarly powerful symbols of community, spiritual depth and sacred connection. Moreover, the campfire for Aborigines is traditionally the centre of all human living, joy and friendship, as family gathers together to share, not only food, but the joys and sufferings of life. Like the campfire flame shining in the eyes of those gathered in a circle around, so the Love of God burns in the centre of our sacred lives, relating us to one another and to the land. In the *Decade to Overcome Violence*, we therefore seek to honour these deep spiritual understandings: including, rather excluding, others in the warmth of our own circles of love.



The DOV in Australia approach highlights seven circles of violence and peace:

*personal - family - local community -
religious/cultural - national -
international - ecological*

This is to recognise the way in which repeating cycles of violence perpetuate evil and oppression, creating and reinforcing:

- * ever-tightening circles of fear and suspicion (such as towards refugees)
- * constricting bands, denying breath (like asthma in the human body)
- * closed-up and narrowed life and relationships

Cultivating peace in contrast involves creating and nurturing:

- * ever-widening circles of love, trust and compassion
- * ripples outward, breathing and flowing more easily (connecting with, and transforming, other aspects of life)

within these 7 circles or areas of violence, we seek therefore to share the love of Christ and create ripples of peace to bring healing and new life

Spirituality is the ultimate answer to reconciliation in Australia and everywhere else in the world.

Loving ourselves, our families, our neighbours, our countrymen and women and every living thing is the reason we are here on earth. If we follow the ripple in the pond when a stone hits the water, we can easily see that the entire pond is affected by that one little stone. If the stone represents love, and it drops somewhere in our universe, that love will send its ripple throughout the entire universe. All the people, birds, animals, insects, plants, trees and rocks will in some way be affected by it. It is the same with anger and hate.

We must choose which ripples we wish to send into the universe.

(Bob Randall: Aboriginal Elder and Songman)