

# Aboriginal Development & Peace Building

## CRAMS Symposium 14-15th November 2007 UNE

Exchanging ideas, reviewing experiences, posing questions, analysing strategies and clarifying our thinking around our work in conflict sensitive and violence affected communities

Is Aboriginal Australia a post conflict society?  
How can the development experiences of Aboriginal Australia inform improved international practice in sustainable peacebuilding and development?

Aboriginal Experiences  
in Peacebuilding



They Key Questions

# what is 'development' and what does it produce?

# What has the Australian Aboriginal Development Model produced - peace, progress or an on-going damage and disaster?

# What would a best practice Aboriginal development model look like?

# What model of development are we exporting onto others internationally?

○ There is no post-conflict as conflict and trauma is cross generational after the treaties

Key Ideas

○ Development has produced victims, passive recipients, control by others, lots of good rhetoric

○ Peacebuilding and Reconciliation has produced unintended consequences, more bickering, competition

○ The Peace development model is based on good governance and free market economies, reforms of failed / fragile states and this has failed internationally

○ the alternative model is building relationships, respect, community, shared understandings & healing unfinished business

Re-  
Thinking  
Peace

A key idea



What have we learnt

communities that feel dis-empowered and distressed experience a cycle of anger-grief - distress and this leads to poor health outcomes and 3 distinct patterns of ill-health patterns

more community distress

Take-over & reform of Aboriginal Community organisations and land titles, closing CDEP & restructuring in the name of good governance e.g Northern Territory communities



'Restructuring' of the Armidale Aboriginal Health Centre continued funding depends on accepting an outside administrator

Indigenous Counseling Program only receives short-term funding and is closed as community co-facilitators aren't funded



What about another way ahead?



1. We have initiated a conversation but we need to 'yarn' together in a way that is meaningful, occurs 'around a fire' as a safe place, as equals and is supportive of each other

2. take a local focus  
3. supports local Aboriginal community health and education workers  
4. gets the key people involved & mobilized

5. tells the stories of other NSW Aboriginal communities

Local Initiatives for  
conflict resolution in  
Uato-Lari  
Timor Leste

we need to understand the  
history of the conflict

respect and respond to local  
community agendas and needs

respect and work with  
local cultures and  
knowledge systems, languages  
e.g the role and position of women  
in Bouganville

Reflections on  
Practice  
on the role of  
women in  
peacebuilding

the need to nurture  
an attitude to reconcile  
& forgive

our role is to facilitate  
& resource not to impose  
agendas and make judgements of  
what is needed

How We Facilitate  
Peacebuilding?

there is enough funds for  
all options but the struggle is  
around wresting control  
of those resources &  
how they are allocated

the importance of programs that  
meet adult literacy  
needs that promotes peace  
& empowers the community

we need to become conscious  
of our language and the different meanings  
attached to terms like intervention

we can promote disensus, a  
diversity of views and  
local solutions, models

Reflection on  
Practice  
Adult Literacy in  
Timor - Leste

much of the existing peace - development agenda  
is around manipulating consensus, imposing  
an outside agenda and model

