


Working with Indigenous offenders / ex – offenders “down under”



changing lives
reducing crime

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Prisoner Profile

- ▶ Come from the most marginalised sectors of our communities
 - ▶ Have a myriad of complex issues
 - ▶ Experience of incarceration further isolates and disempowers
 - ▶ Leaves people less equipped to deal with life in the outside world
 - ▶ Indigenous Australians are greatly over represented
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Indigenous Incarceration


- ▶ In 2008 24% of the Australian prison population were Indigenous
(Compared to 2.3% of the general population)
- ▶ Indigenous children are 6 times more likely to be under a care order
- ▶ Indigenous youth are 23% times more likely to be in Juvenile Justice detention

Prisoner population snapshot

- ▶ 80% men, 84% women used illicit drugs
 - ▶ 78% men, 95% women one chronic health condition
 - ▶ 74% psychiatric disorders [22% general population]
 - ▶ 27% men, 18% women scored below pass rate on intellectual disability screener
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Prisoner population snapshot

- ▶ 37% men, 60% women sexually abused before 16 years
 - ▶ 45% men, 39% women experienced traumatic head injury
 - ▶ 20% men, 33% women under DOCS supervision as a child
 - ▶ 43% of the prison population return 7 postcodes
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Colonisation Process

Territory disposition / Population displacement



Breakdown of Family/tribal/community structures



Loss language/identity/self determination/esteem



Settler “Nasties”



Enforced govt policies and practices




Poor health/housing/AOD/unemployment etc

“Trauma of genocide, loss of culture, forcible removal are all unresolved and become a sort of psychological baggage.....continuously being acted out and recreated in contemporary Aboriginal culture”

- C.Wesley-Esquimaux and H.Smolewski: Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Health, Aboriginal Health Foundation(2004 p 3)


Canadian Elder Vera Martin
refers to a
“blood memory. It is a
collective memory of what
has happened and what
has not happened”.




Effective Strategies for Working with Indigenous Colonised populations

- ▶ Community based, collaborative responses
- ▶ Indigenous community–development, participation and control
- ▶ Experiential and interactive learning
- ▶ Holistic Approach


Effective strategies for Working with Indigenous Colonised populations

- ▶ Understanding historical context
 - ▶ Importance of decolonisation
 - ▶ Addressing historic trauma
 - ▶ Recognition of family, tribe, community
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Puao Te Atatu (Day Break)

- ▶ 1981 - 49.2% children in care Maori (11%)
 - ▶ Maori staff and activist groups accused CYPF Act 1974 and the department of racism.
 - ▶ Committee to enquire and report on service delivery to Maori
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- ▶ CYPF Act 1989
 - ▶ Moves towards bi-cultural practice
 - ▶ Maori C&YP be placed with family or tribal /racial group (Family Group Conferencing)

Effective Strategies for Working with Indigenous Colonised populations

- ▶ Ongoing cultural supervision
 - ▶ Knowledge of local Aboriginal culture, customs etc
 - ▶ Cultural competence vs Cultural sensitivity
 - ▶ Recognise unique status
 - ▶ Recognise the client as the expert
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Effective Strategies for Working with Indigenous Colonised populations

- ▶ Continuous review of own services policies and procedures, work practices and environment, service limitations.

Te Atawhainga Te Pa Harakeke

- ▶ Parenting model in Men's prisons
- ▶ Incorporates effects of colonisation on Maori child rearing practices
- ▶ Decolonisation process
- ▶ Focus on power and control issues
- ▶ Exploration of own upbringing
- ▶ Set parenting goals with view to connecting with traditional values to improve parenting.

Maori Focus Units

- ▶ 60 bed units
 - ▶ 5 men's prisons
 - ▶ Policies, practices and programming according to Kaupapa Maori
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