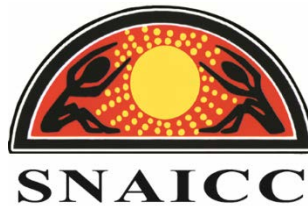


The Aboriginal Fathering Project



We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung members of the Kulin Nation, and we pay our respects to Aboriginal Elders past and present and to all Indigenous people here today.



Research Program

Action Research:

RQ1 How do the programs (MBC, Indigenous, Fathering) address the issue of fathering in the context of FV within Australia?

RQ2 How, and under what circumstances, are fathers who use violence parenting?

RQ3 What are the key fathering issues that need to be addressed within Men's Behaviour Change, Indigenous programs and Fathering programs?



Research Program Structure

Fathering Challenges – 3 program areas

- I. Men's Behaviour Change*
- II. Fathering*
- III. Aboriginal fathering/healing/family violence*

- *Interviews with program co-ordinators*
- *Interviews with program participants*
- *Interviews with women*

Aboriginal Fathering Project



What we know

There is limited documented knowledge about how Aboriginal men's programs are addressing the complex issues of fathering, violence and abuse

Knowledge is partial and the evidence of effectiveness limited



Where we want to get to

To improve the parenting experience of Aboriginal children whose fathers have used FV.

To build community-informed knowledge for those working with Aboriginal men at the intersection of FV and fathering

What this project is not

The Aboriginal Fathering Project is not evaluating current Aboriginal programs that address family violence and fathering



Interviews with program coordinators

- 14 participant interviews completed
- Attempted to contact 49 identified programs
- 9 programs located within community controlled organisations

Program by type	
Family Violence	6
Fathering	5
Healing	4
Total	15



Colonisation

- “It's not our way. It never was our way. We've inherited with our loss of our tradition, loss of our lore's we've lost that ability to deal with family violence.” (family violence 1)
- “So our lads really feel like they've lost their way over the years, so they've lost their roles whether it be hunter, gatherer or the head of the family role or whatever.” (healing 2)
- “We didn't dig this hole, It was dug for us 200 years ago and we're slowly trying to get our way out of this hole and finding that road back to self respect in our community and most importantly, being that role model within our family and with our children.” (fathering 3)



Dealing with trauma

- “I see is a lot of the men that are in our groups and carry a lot of family violence issues as children they've accumulated a lot of harm. They've witnessed a lot of behaviour not just from their father but from their aunties and their uncles, their cousins. They've seen a lot of community abuse. So it's about unpacking that and what was it like and then how are you parenting around that now?” (violence 1)
- “If they don't have love for themselves, how are they supposed to show love to those that are closest to them, particularly their partners? So you see that role again, that cycle going over and over. Here we are creating a fatherless nation but more importantly families without fathers.” (Healing 3)
- “Violence comes from trauma, you know? Violence creates trauma, but it comes from trauma.” (Healing 4)



Gendered context

- Issues of gender were complex in facilitator interviews
- Some programs spoke about the cultural issues of men's and women's business in dealing with issues of family violence
- Need to address issues of men's trauma before bringing in the gendered lens on family violence
- A perceived misunderstanding



Cultural practice

- The success of a program was perceived to be based on the cultural appropriateness of a program
“the men wouldn’t come if it wasn’t culturally appropriate, and I think that’s true.” (violence 3)
- Programs that are not culturally appropriate were perceived as being unsafe for men
“once again it creates that scene of the overseer, passing judgement on me, they don’t walk in my life, they don’t fully understand what me or my people have been through. They might have an understanding but they don’t fully understand” (fathering 4)
- Challenging myths around lore and law
“currently they think that violence is a part of the culture. But then once we start talking to them about, you know, no, it's not actually a part of Aboriginal culture, it's something that's become a normal part of Aboriginal cultural and it has to stop.” (violence 2)
- Use of narrative practices
“linking it in with story and storytelling is a powerful tool and an effective way of addressing it.” (healing 1)



Cultural practice

- Assisted with developing men's understanding of their roles in today's community

“You talk about being a strong man. What’s a strong man? It’s not physically flattening somebody. A strong man is a man who sticks up for what he believes in and is a provider and protector...You provide for your family and you protect your family. Now the way that you provide for your family might have changed over the years but that’s still the role though” (violence 4)

“When we look at culture, we have to look at what are the roles of men and we see them not only as protectors but providers, teachers, also law-makers, you know, we set the boundaries for our children, what is right from wrong so our children understand those boundaries. Also we have a role to shape the character of our children.” (healing 3)

“you build the strength base of their cultural knowledge. The stronger they feel as a black man, the stronger they’ll feel as a black dad. An Aboriginal dad.” (fathering 4)



Interrelated issues

- “I treat it as an integrated approach. If I have a housing issue I can tap into that straight away and work with it. If I have a drug and alcohol issue I can get a man into rehab straight away. So if there's virtually medical or transport or something like that I can generally support that. Having that integrated approach is a good way of finding a lot of supports around those relationships.” (violence 1)
- “There’s a number of contributors to family violence that the men experience here. Alcohol use, you know managing pain and grief and hurt” (violence 3)
- “we've got the sessions running from one to another. We've got end stuff and connection, motivation and change; anger and violence; drug and alcohol; gambling; power and control” (violence 5)



Accountability and Challenging Violent Behaviour

- Issues of Collusion

“Like mainstream programs facilitators of fv programs spoke of need to be aware of men’s attempt to collude with facilitators “they’ll often wink to me or they’ll give me a quick nudge...It’s you know what I mean brother. We all do it brother. I think no, no, no hang on a sec. You need to step back now. Tell me what you mean because I don’t. I don’t know what you mean.” (violence 1)

- Children as a hook

“We need to focus more on how the children are feeling, you know. With the dads, we need to focus more on how the children are feeling and what they’re seeing when Dad is angry. We need to focus more on letting dads know that with their loud noise and rowing and arguments and so forth and violence, if any, how it affects their children.” (fathering 3)

“that’s the actual key to it, is that men don’t want their kids really going through what they’ve gone through and the biggest motivation for change is not the love of their life, it’s actually their kids.” (violence 4)



Holding the men

- I just don't want men walking away feeling worse about what they've – you know their use of violence. I want them to feel like there's opportunities for change. (family violence 3)
- there is a lot of work working and engaging with someone when they start in the programme, because they're coming angry because they don't want to be there and they're resisting...as facilitators we've got to be quite tactful in getting their attention almost immediately and being firm and laying down the rules and stuff. (family violence 2)
- I think that emotional safety is important. If you are in a conversation with some blokes who are talking about this in a way where you can see that they're actually empathising and feeling guilt and feeling shame you really have to do a lot of support. (fathering 2)
- So we try to come from a place of support and non-judgement, but definitely not letting people off the hook or anything either. (healing 1)



What's this telling us?

- Current Sustainability questions
- Staff development requirements
- Strength of community controlled programs
- Need for evaluation to understand effectiveness of programs
- The importance of creating safe spaces for Indigenous men to be challenged and held accountable for their use of violence
- A way of working



Interviews with program participants

- Currently underway
- Some preliminary comments:
 - Sites completed



Cloaked in Strength

Aboriginal Women's Perspectives

- An embedded PhD Project
- Individual Interviews
- Possum skin cloak workshop with focus group
- Research Q's:
 1. How can Aboriginal women's voices inform practice principles for Aboriginal men's family violence programs?
 2. Do cultural practice-informed approaches support the strength and resilience of women to engage with family violence prevention strategies?



Source: University of Melbourne Artist: Mandy Nicholson, Wurundjeri

WOMEN'S VOICES. CHILDREN'S SAFETY CLOAKED IN STRENGTH PROJECT

Aboriginal mothers' voices in family violence prevention

We are looking for Aboriginal mothers who have experienced family violence and who are willing to share their story to help inform family violence prevention policy, programs and strategies.



ELIZABETH MORGAN HOUSE
ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S SERVICE INC



SNAICC



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE



BOORDAWAN WILLAM
ABORIGINAL HEALING SERVICE

A PhD Project

Exploring Aboriginal
mothers'
perspectives on
family violence
prevention.

Individual yarning
sessions and a
possum skin cloak
workshop

Would you like your
story to contribute
to family violence
prevention?

If you would like to
participate or need
more information
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