Unsettling white noise to help build stronger relationships

I acknowledge the sovereignty of the Palawa people on whose country we are meeting today and where I grew up, lived and learned for 40 years.

Dr Roslyn (Rose) Carnes
Restorative Practices International Conference

Building restorative communities - in education, justice, cities, families, faith groups, neighbourhoods, defence and workplaces

Hobart March 2015
Incarceration rates (per hundred thousand)

Comparing the imprisonment rate of Australia and Western Australia - 2002-2012 by Indigeneity; rate per hundred thousand (figures sourced from ABS, 2012: 56)

Carnes (2014: 18)
Based on ABS Stats July 2012 (no evidence of change since then)
No one way is the ‘right way’

Source: http://treatypeople.wordpress.com/2013/07/14/fairness-and-the-myth-of-equality/ original artist not known
Unsettling white noise – a restorative practice

Respecting Aboriginal Sovereignty

Agreed respectful ways to show respect for Aboriginal
1. Law
2. Country
3. Elders
4. Community
5. Culture
6. Families,
7. Futures (Martin, 2008)

Healing Historical Trauma

Approaches
1. Are community based
2. Happen with cultural safety
3. Recover stories of relatedness (Martin, 2008)
4. Focus on strengths

Strong Relationship

Becoming Informed

Whitefellas learning from Aboriginal people about
1. Australia’s history
2. Humility
3. Looking in the Mirror
4. Cultural Self Awareness

Starting with Aboriginal Agency

Aboriginal people learning about
1. Being strong in Aboriginality
2. Navigating and surviving whitefellas’ world
Some of the Big Questions

- Who decides what happens, what is important, who has access, who is excluded?
- What assumptions inform the decisions?
- Where did the assumptions come from?
- Who decided what went into the sources of information?
- How do you know when something is working and who it is working for?
- Who decides what the indicators of success are?

- Why are things done this way? Who decides?
Dealing with some common responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense of entitlement</th>
<th>Citation of exceptions</th>
<th>“Well-I can’t speak for..”</th>
<th>Sense of guilt</th>
<th>Racially neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I am in danger of losing entitlements that I have
| Some of the Indigenous people who got the rewards somehow didn’t deserve them
| Ignores that my advantage can be at the expense of someone else’s disadvantage | Indigenous people exist who have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps
| Hardships can be overcome with enough hard work
| Neglects the systemic nature of disadvantage – neglects the principles of social justice | Can look like being sensitive
| Absolves us from the responsibility of learning from the work of Indigenous people
| Sends a message to others that the issues of Indigenous people are not worth exploring, learning about, or understanding. | The focus becomes the white person’s reactions and emotions, rather than the issues of Indigenous people
| Immobilises addressing issues of social justice
| Shifts the centre of attention from points of discussion to the needs of the reactor | Stories that relate how I am not one of “those” white people
| “I don’t think of you as Indigenous….”; I treat all my friends the same, regardless of colour…”
| Absolves the speaker from any link with overt racism
| Universalises whiteness as the norm – “you are thought of as white” |


[http://www.forharriet.com/2015/01/sht-white-feminists-say-to-black.html?m=1#axzz3QFGBGZeg](http://www.forharriet.com/2015/01/sht-white-feminists-say-to-black.html?m=1#axzz3QFGBGZeg)
Unsettling such White Noise has a central premise

4 areas of support in building strong relationship
Questions - trauma

- How, in this school, town, department are relationship developed that understand the history of trauma for Aboriginal people in this state, town, country?
- Do we have the ability to provide support, or do we know where to refer in our community, Aboriginal people for healing?
- Is that healing community based?
- Does it occur with cultural safety?
- Does it recover stories of relatedness and focuses on strengths?
- Who says this is appropriate healing?
Let’s reclaim and integrate stories: Healing Trauma

**Approaches**

1. Are community based
2. Happen with cultural safety
3. Recover stories of relatedness (Martin, 2008)
4. Focus on strengths
Karen: I’ve had a couple of nephews who were normal, nice lovely young men who went to gaol. And ... they came out and they were never the same. ... They have a mental illness now and they will never, ever be the same again.
Questions

Agency

- Does this school, classroom, team, organisation, department support or offer opportunities in our prison, school, classroom, office for Aboriginal people to learn about or practice being strong in Aboriginality and how to navigate and survive in a whitefellas world?

- Who decides what opportunities there are and what is appropriate?
Let’s change the starting point: Starting with Aboriginal Agency

Aboriginal people learning about

1. Being strong in Aboriginality
2. Navigating and surviving whitefellas’ world
Let’s change the starting point: Starting with Aboriginal Agency

Marlon: ...I don’t think we really take it in much. We wouldn’t end up back in there if we did. When we get out we do the same thing and go back (pause) yeah, so much for cog skills
Questions – becoming informed

- Is our organisation, department, staff, city, town becoming informed about Aboriginal views of Australia’s history, the importance of humility and cultural self awareness?
- Who says we are getting anywhere with it? Who are we learning from?
Let’s change our knowledge base: Becoming Informed

Whitefellas learning from Aboriginal people about

1. Australia’s history
2. Humility
3. Looking in the Mirror
4. Cultural Self Awareness
Let’s change our knowledge base: Becoming Informed

Kate: Wadjelllas have so much to learn from Aboriginal people and there is so much they can teach Wadjelllas. If only Wadjelllas would just shut up and listen
Questions - respecting

- How is this organisation, school, classroom, parliament, town respecting Aboriginal sovereignty and showing respect for each of law, Elders, country, community, culture, families and futures?

- Who says so, who decides
Let’s share the spotlight: Respect

Agreed respectful ways to show respect for Aboriginal

1. Law
2. Country
3. Elders
4. Community
5. Culture
6. Families,
7. Futures (Martin, 2008)
Let’s share the spotlight: Respect

Jo: To cut a long story short, we sat there when they selected the jury, ... in the trial of eight Aboriginal men ... not one Aboriginal sat on the jury... they were all convicted.