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QUEENSLAND ABORIGINAL & ISLANDER  
HEALTH COUNCIL

**The Need to Extend  
the Knowledge Gained in  
Cross-Cultural Awareness  
Training**

# What?

- Cross-Cultural Awareness Training
- Cross-Cultural Training
- Aboriginal Awareness Training
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awareness Training
- There may be other names
- Some university content fits in this category

# Where?

- Government departments, e.g. Centrelink, housing, community services etc.
- Service providers, including government and non-government organisations.
- Sites of education, including primary, secondary and tertiary.
- Health departments and services.
- Policing, corrections.
- Numerous other areas.

# University Based Cross-Cultural Knowledge

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs Report, *Health is Life* states,

‘Within two years, all undergraduate and post-graduate health science courses should include an effective cross-cultural awareness component, as well as dealing in detail with the current health status of Indigenous Australians and the factors which have contributed to their ongoing social and cultural disadvantage’  
(2000, p.107).

# Why am I raising the topic?

Cross-Cultural education and training arose as one of the key issues in a research project exploring 'how the relationship between health services and Aboriginal women can be more empowering from the viewpoints of Aboriginal women'.

This project was undertaken in Rockhampton, Central Queensland, Australia.



# QUEENSLAND ABORIGINAL & ISLANDER HEALTH COUNCIL

ABN: 97 111 116 762

An Affiliate of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

**Legend**

-  QAIHC Members
-  QAIHC Associate Members



Queensland Aboriginal & Islander Health Council (QAIHC) Regions v QAIHC Members and Associate Members

Map produced 31 August 2005. Topographic data sourced Geoscience Australia 2005. Administrative Boundaries sourced Queensland Department of Health 2005. (Not to scale)

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**So what did some of the women  
say?**



# Linda

... sometimes I wonder about those programs. I mean it's good that people do training first of all, that they have an open mind to want to go and learn something different, but I think a lot of that stuff happens if you are committed and you make a resolution to practice those things everyday of your life and not just go off for a two day course and have a piece of paper to say I know everything there is to know about Murri stuff now ... it's more how you operate on a day to day basis ... comes down to the individual perspective, putting yourself out as an individual ...

# Julie, Grace and Sarah

Julie explained that 'in the long run the person has to change the attitude ... [they] could go to 10 classes and still not change...'. Grace stated it 'should be [a] core component of their training before they get out into the services, [it] should be done continuously, one day or three days, [is] not enough....' and Sarah asserted that 'I don't agree with two days, [it] needs to be done on a reasonable time frame ... it's gotta be treated pretty serious ... putting ideas into action is another thing'.

# Julie

Julie added that it 'might be fixing up what's there but it might not be catering to our people'.

# Mary

Mary identified that there was a difference in attitude between those people undertaking the training because they 'want to improve' and those people who do it because it 'was a directive'.

# Charlotte

‘I think it would be really good at least if they can’t get Aboriginal workers at least they would have some knowledge and understanding of someone with an Aboriginal culture’.

# Some Questions

- What has changed over the past few years?
- Is content offered over a few hours, day/s, semester/s or throughout the university course?
- How is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content governed and monitored?
- Who controls the content? Who is the trainer? Who does the teaching? Lecturing?
- If Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people are employed are they people who are seen as 'safe' versus those who are seen as too 'political'?

# Some Questions

- What preparation did the Department/ Faculty Head/Dean undertake in order to best make decisions around content, selection of lecturers, tutors, markers etc?
- Are there Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander 'guests' who provide additional content to lectures versus employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as lecturers?
- Is there Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imagery in the Faculty without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being physically present or included throughout the curriculum?

# Can it bring about change?

- It might raise awareness, understanding & show people how to better communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- In some case it may not have any impact on participants.
- In some settings it may encourage a 'social problem, social welfare, and culturalist approach'. In the words of Pettman, so 'workers (we) can understand Aboriginal people (them) better' (1992, p.36). Thus focusing on 'Otherness' and detaching decision-making from wider highly political, structures and processes.



# Can it bring about change?

Young puts forward that Cross-Cultural Training 'at the very best, might start a collective conscientisation process leading to change at an organisational level for the betterment of people of different cultures and backgrounds' and concludes that 'cross-cultural training is never going to produce, of itself, structural change' (1999, p.212).

## Does it mean...

Cross-Cultural Awareness Training may lead to some awareness of inequities and disadvantage but does this mean that participants will understand their subjective identity and their place within the stratified social order?

Does it mean that participants will act from this understanding?

# What about White Race Privilege?

‘Race privilege works to overpower us – conferring dominance – permission to control on the basis of race. It gives licence to one group of oppressors...White Race Privilege still gives us a licence – we can be ignorant, oblivious, arrogant, destructive, insensitive, patronising, paternalistic....It is through exposing our White Race Privilege that we can begin to unpack and unlearn racism’ (Jenny Tannoeh-Bland, 1997, p.10).

In Australia, White Race Privilege acts as a major barrier to building of social movements that could bring about some fundamental changes.

# Anti-Racism Training

In examining several Anti-Racism Training models/frameworks, Anti-Racism Training challenges racism, sexism, class exploitation and oppression, homophobia, unearned race privilege and supports multifaceted struggles for social justice.

The People's Institute outlines in its training package that 'racism has been consciously and systematically erected and can be undone only if people understand what it is, where it comes from, how it functions and why it is perpetuated'. Participants must reflect on themselves, their understandings, their subject positioning and their place within the social order.

# In Conclusion

- Racism maintains the continual marginalisation and disempowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Disapproving of racism and changing language is not enough to change the situation.
- Learning how to talk with us and to us in order to provide services to us or to work beside us is not enough to change the situation.
- When Australians protest against their own oppressions (e.g. class, working conditions, disability) while remaining silent about racism and White Race Privilege they become oppressors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other groups. It does not change the situation.

# In Conclusion

- I argue that we need to extend beyond Cross-Cultural Awareness Training.

We need to incorporate aspects from what is known as Anti-Racism Training and raise the issue of White Race Privilege in order to address the inequities and the continued marginalisation and disempowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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**THANK YOU**