

P A R I T Y

Homelessness and Dispossession



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Warning: This publication contains images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who may be deceased.

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2010

December: **Women and Homelessness**

2011

February: **Street to Home**

March: **Homelessness and Children**

April: **Housing Stress**

May: **Pets and Homelessness**

June: **Preventing Elderly Homelessness**

July: **Centrelink and Homelessness**

August: **Evaluating Homelessness Programs**

September: **Local Government and Homelessness**

October: **Homelessness Research**

November: **Responding to Homelessness in Tasmania**

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Contents

Editorial	3
<hr/>	
NEWS	
<hr/>	
Homelessness Australia November 2010 Update	4
By Nicole Lawder, Chief Executive Officer	
<hr/>	
FEATURE:	
<hr/>	
Homelessness and Dispossession	
<hr/>	
Introduction – Dispossession Starts at Home	5
By Noel Murray, <i>Parity</i> Editor	
<hr/>	
The Dispossession of Indigenous People: and it's Consequences	6
By Mick Dodson AM, Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University	
<hr/>	
Indigenous Homelessness in Australia: An Introduction	8
By Paul Memmott and Catherine Chambers, University of Queensland	
<hr/>	
The Roots of Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada	12
By Andrew Leach, Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA), British Columbia, Canada, and a member of the St'at'imc Nation	
<hr/>	
The Original Peoples of Australia, New Zealand and Canada and Homelessness: Are we truly living in 'Post Colonial' Societies?	14
By M. Morning Star Doherty, Turtle Island Indigenous Education Corp, Vancouver, Canada	
<hr/>	
Indigenous Homelessness: The Long Grass Difference	16
By Dr Cameron Parsell, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Institute for Social Science Research, The University of Queensland	
<hr/>	
Displacement of Indigenous Peoples in the Former White Settler Colonies of Australia, New Zealand and Canada	19
By Simon Emsley	
<hr/>	
Homeless in the Homeland: A Growing Problem for Indigenous People in Canada's North	21
By Frances Abele, Nick Falvo and Arlene Haché	
<hr/>	
SAFE TRACKS – A Strategic Framework for Supporting Aboriginal Mobility and Reducing Aboriginal Homelessness	24
By Kerry Beck and Carol Shard, Department for Families and Communities, South Australia	
<hr/>	
Indigenous Journeys from School to Work: A Canadian Perspective	27
By Lianne Britten, Macquarie University	
<hr/>	
Contemporary Displacement Pressures on Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory	29
By Simon Emsley	
<hr/>	
What Has Changed?	31
By Dan Laws, State-wide Aboriginal Homelessness Network Coordinator	
<hr/>	
Opinion	
<hr/>	
Flora Baoin-McCann – Australian Indigenous Homelessness and Dispossession	32

Editorial

This edition of *Parity* has many beginnings. Some are close to home and others are more distant.

The first beginning is the inescapable fact that all the Australian homelessness data unequivocally demonstrates that Indigenous people make up a disproportionately large part of our population. While this differs across States and Territories, it differs only in degree. In some States and Territories, for example the Northern Territory and parts of Queensland, this disproportion is even more pronounced.

An earlier beginning is the several previous editions of *Parity* that have attempted to examine and discuss Indigenous homelessness. The first was the April 2008 "Indigenous Homelessness: The Land is Our Home" edition. This was followed by the April 1999 "Indigenous Homeless Revisited" edition and then the July 2001 "Out of Sight: Homelessness in Remote Australia" edition and most recently the October 2003 "Responding to Indigenous Homelessness" edition.

All these editions looked at Indigenous homelessness in Australia exclusively.

However, during the preparation and development of the October 2007 "Responding to Homelessness in New Zealand" edition, it became clear that in New Zealand homelessness is largely, although of course not exclusively, "Indigenous homelessness". One correspondent

characterised Indigenous homelessness in New Zealand as the "elephant in the room" at the same time as explaining how Indigenous homelessness in New Zealand has become so effective "normalised" and "taken for granted" that its discussion was effectively silenced.

This led to a discussion with representatives of the New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness (NZCEH) to explore the possibility of collaborating on an edition of *Parity* that examined and discussed the nature and character of Indigenous homelessness in Australia and New Zealand and likewise the different policy and program responses in each country.

In the course of these discussions, the idea was developed and expanded to include Canada as a third "post-colonial" society that had a significant Indigenous population and likewise had disproportionately large numbers of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.

An even earlier beginning of this current edition of *Parity* was the article (reprinted in this edition) by Mick Dodson AM "The Dispossession of Indigenous People: And its Consequences" from the September 1996 edition of *Parity*.

The argument in this article provided the framework and the unifying idea for this current edition; that is, that Indigenous homelessness in post colonial societies like Australia, New Zealand and Canada cannot



be understood outside of the reality of both the original and ongoing dispossession of their first peoples. It follows from this that equally responses to Indigenous homelessness cannot hope to be effective without addressing the consequences of dispossession.

The aim of this edition therefore is to examine and discuss homelessness among the Indigenous peoples of Australia, Canada and New Zealand where homelessness is disproportionately greater than their overall proportion of the general population. Indigenous homelessness is framed as a significant ongoing and continually redefined "problem" for Government, policy makers and service providers in all three countries.

At the same time, the experience of homelessness for the Indigenous peoples of all three countries is qualitatively different from that of their non-Indigenous compatriots.

This qualitative difference stems from the central fact of dispossession; dispossession from their lands, their way of life and their culture. This initial dispossession by the colonisers was followed by various forms and kinds of ongoing dispossession including for example in Australia, racially motivated policies including forced child removal that further alienated the first peoples from their families, homes, land, culture and way of life.

This ongoing dispossession took different forms in each of the post-colonial societies under discussion here, with different state policies producing different levels, and kinds of marginalisation, and different "solutions" to the "native" problem.

This is perhaps an overly ambitious project for a relatively small NGO publication. However, I believe the quality of the contributions that follow in this edition justify that ambition.

By NOT opening for critical discussion the issues of Indigenous homelessness and the policy and program responses to Indigenous homelessness, we remain complicit in its perpetuation.

Michelle Burrell,
CEO, Council to Homeless Persons



Anne Cabrié — *Untitled* (1991). Type C photograph.

Presented by Mrs Lieselott Man through the Felix H. Man Memorial Prize, 1992. National Gallery of Victoria.

Homelessness Australia November 2010 Update

**By Nicole Lawder,
Chief Executive Officer**

At the recent Homelessness Australia Annual General Meeting, we welcomed two new Board members, Brett Paradise and Joanna Siejka. Our Annual Report is available via our website and provides a useful summary of the past year's activities.

Homelessness Australia is producing an evidence based policy paper on preventing exits into homelessness from foster care, state care, juvenile justice, prisons, hospitals and psychiatric facilities.

This policy paper is in part an attempt to draw together the limited information that we have about how the "no exits" policy is being implemented at a state and territory level and assess the adequacy of programs and services responses aimed at contributing to this core outcome of the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on Homelessness.

We are in the process of compiling case studies and overviews of programs and service responses that illustrate examples of where the policy of no exits is working well and where policies and procedures need to be improved. We hope to complete the paper by February 2011. The closing date for submissions is the 16th of December, 2010. Many people and organisations have sent very useful case studies to inform the work.

Homelessness Australia in continuing to track how the implementation of the White Paper

on Homelessness is progressing at national, state and territory levels. It is now almost two years since the White Paper was launched.

Homelessness Australia worked with Australian Greens Housing Spokesperson Senator Scott Ludlam to ask Minister Arbib where the Government was up to in terms of drafting new homelessness legislation. The Minister will provide the Australian Greens with a response in the near future (before the end of this year, in theory).

I attended the second day of the Northern Territory (NT) Homelessness Summit in early November. What a great atmosphere in the room of passionate, professional people with a common goal. Congratulations to NT



Shelter and their partners NT Families and Children, NT Department of Health and Families, NT Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services.

It was great to meet a number of HA members and stakeholders and even better to have a drink with some of them by the pool at the conclusion of the Summit. Can I point out that at that time of the year in Canberra it was not yet warm enough to sit outside with a cool drink!

Homelessness Australia continues to support the Australian Services Union's equal remuneration test case which has been lodged with Fair Work Australia. We responded to the Australian Government's less than encouraging submission to Fair Work Australia by issuing a media release urging the Government to consider fully funding organisations if Fair Work Australia (FWA) determines that the work in the NFP sector has been undervalued and a decision is made to redress that through incremental pay increases. All members would have received a copy of our media release and may have seen some of the media coverage of the issue. This is a huge issue for our sector and we will continue to keep members informed. ■



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Presented by Mrs Lieselott Man through the Felix H. Man Memorial Prize, 1992.
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International Conference

Lyceum of the Philippines University and Lonsdale Institute

Indigenous Peoples' Worldviews: Weaving the Stories in Academic Tapestries

LPU-JPL Freedom Hall, Intramuros, Manila, Philippines
April 27–28, 2011

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FEATURE: Homelessness and Dispossession

Introduction — Dispossession Starts at Home

"It begins, I think with the act of recognition. Recognition that it is we who did the dispossessing."

— Paul Keating, The Redfern Speech
December 10th 1992

The aim of this edition was to look at Indigenous homelessness and the response to Indigenous homelessness, in three "white settler" countries, Australia, New Zealand and Canada with the view to examining and discussing the consequences of the original and ongoing dispossession of their first peoples, particularly for the understanding of their experience of homelessness and for comparing their respective national responses to homelessness.

It was an ambitious and problematic project. Ambitious because an "international" project of this scope had not been attempted before and problematic because it is always problematic for white, middle class professionals (like me) to attempt to understand and articulate the meaning an experience of homelessness for Indigenous people.

The project however was entered into with the full awareness of these limitations because, despite them, to not speak against the inequities of both the historical and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous people and its consequences, involves an acquiescence in the silencing of these issues. In the face of Indigenous homelessness, silence ain't an option.

No doubt there is much great work being done by committed and dedicated people whose work should be promoted and celebrated. Nevertheless, Indigenous homelessness, whether in Australia, New Zealand or Canada is not a good news story.

My personal view is that, at least in Australia, Indigenous homelessness is about much more than a failure in public policy settings. Indeed the only language I can find that comes close to the understanding I am trying to achieve comes from the discourse of dispossession. This is why the seminal paper by Mick Dodson "The Dispossession of Indigenous People and its Consequences" from the September 1996 edition of *Parity* is reprinted here in full.

This current edition of *Parity* has an unapologetically "historical" dimension. This could not be otherwise. The narrative of Indigenous homelessness has to start at the beginning, that is, with the historical truth of the original and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous people and of its consequences for the first peoples.

In itself this is not news. If not before, then certainly after then Prime Minister Paul Keating's landmark "Redfern" speech in



Anne Cabrié — *Untitled* (1991). Type C photograph.
Presented by Mrs Lieselott Man through the
Felix H. Man Memorial Prize, 1992. National Gallery of Victoria.

December 1992, it is not possible to ignore the narrative of dispossession, despite the best efforts of the deniers of the so-called "culture wars".

Even during this period there was an acceptance that an understanding of Indigenous homelessness posed definitional issues that required recognition.

For example, the May 2006 "Indigenous Homelessness within Australia" Report¹ pointed to the 1998 "Keys Young" Report that identified "five types of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander homelessness:

- spiritual homeless (separation from land or from family)".²

The May 2006 "Indigenous Homelessness within Australia" Report makes further reference to the Keys Young Report saying that it "emphasises the homelessness

in the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander context cannot be understood without reference to the legacy of colonisation."³

Similarly the "apology" given by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in early 2008 to the stolen generations made explicit the reality of the ongoing dispossession of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

In terms of homelessness policy, the 2008 White Paper "*The Road Home*" acknowledged that "The rate of homelessness for Indigenous Australians is significantly higher than for non-Indigenous Australians",⁴ and pointed to action in terms of the National Partnerships on Remote and Indigenous Housing.

The various State and Territory Implementation Plans developed in the wake of the White Paper all to a greater or lesser degree make reference to Indigenous homelessness and in many jurisdictions there are innovative programs and projects that have the potential to make a difference to specific target groups.

There is still however, no clear and unequivocal recognition of "dispossession and its consequences" for Indigenous homelessness and the policy and program responses that need to be developed in the light of this understanding.

The aim therefore, of this edition of *Parity* is to continue "the act of recognition" voiced so clearly by Paul Keating all those years ago.

Noel Murray
Parity Editor

Footnotes

1. *Indigenous Homelessness within Australia* FACSIA 2006
2. Keys Young. *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander context and its possible implications for the Supported accommodation and assistance Program*, 1998, Sydney NSW pp 26–44.
3. *Indigenous Homelessness within Australia* FACSIA 2006 P9.
4. *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*. FaHCSIA 2008 P5.



**By Mick Dodson AM,
Director of the National Centre
for Indigenous Studies at the
Australian National University**

The following is reprinted with the permission of the author from the September 1996 Edition of Parity, "Homelessness in the Lucky Country".

This article was the inspiration behind this current edition of Parity, some 14 years on.

This article is as relevant and important today as it was then. Perhaps even more so.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody found that 43 of the 99 people whose deaths it investigated had been removed from their families as children. Most had suffered a lifetime of severe psychological distress, depression and grief caused by the trauma of this separation.

History of Removal

Between the late 1890s and the early 1970s, depending on the state or territory, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families. In every jurisdiction laws existed that allowed Indigenous children of mixed blood to be taken from their families. In some instances legislation also condoned the taking of children of full descent. In many cases these laws relied on tests of neglect. If it could be shown that, according to the dominant white standards, an Indigenous child was being neglected he or she could legally be removed from his or her family. In NSW there was an amendment to the legislation in 1915 which allowed the removal of a child simply because he or she was Aboriginal. In that state Aboriginality was automatically and legislatively associated with neglect.

All over Australia Indigenous kids anywhere from a few days old to 15 were removed by the Protector of Aborigines and placed with white families or put into institutions. From these institutions Indigenous kids were sent to work for white families as domestics or as farm labour. Many of these homes and hostels, some of which were, some of which were inaccurately called orphanages, were run by the church. In almost all these cases children were taken without consent of their families.

Indeed, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders actively resisted the removal of

The Dispossession of Indigenous People: and it's Consequences

their children. The uprooting of a child was an event of profound distress for a family and a community. It was, in effect, an act which attempted to devastate our culture and destroy our society. Across Australia it was vehemently opposed by the Indigenous people.

The forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was based on the policy of assimilation. Assimilation relied on the well-established and widely-accepted view that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were inferior and that their way of life, their culture and their language were substandard. Mixed blood children were seen as redeemable because they had some white blood. Assimilationist policies justified their removal on the basis that it gave them a chance in society by socialising them like white children thereby giving them better lives.

This policy also presupposed that the Indigenous people of Australia were a dying race and that the removal of children of mixed blood from their families and communities would speed up the inevitable demise of the Indigenous population. The answer to be perceived "Aboriginal problem" was to breed out the race by absorbing people of mixed blood into the dominant culture.

Often children were removed because of the living conditions of their families or because the behaviour of their parents was perceived as neglectful. Assimilationist policies required Indigenous people to live like non-Indigenous people. But the extreme historical disadvantage suffered by Indigenous peoples with respect to housing and infrastructure meant that it was virtually inevitable that many Aboriginal families failed to meet the standards of European lifestyle set by the authorities. The houses they were given and the places they were expected to live were far removed from the standard of those enjoyed by non-Indigenous people, and once enjoyed by Indigenous peoples.

Traditionally the provision of housing to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was not accompanied by the establishment of basic infrastructure services such as water supply, waste removal and access to goods and services such as health care and food supplies. Consequently, Indigenous families were disproportionately declared as having an unfit environment for the children who were forcibly removed.

Sometimes too, white authorities fabricated the neglect of Indigenous parents to justify

the taking of their children while apparently complying with the legislation.

Current Policies and Practices of Removal

Today the indirect operation of laws and practices continues the tradition of removing Indigenous kids from their families. Indigenous children are still removed from their families at an alarming rate. It is estimated that in NSW, for example, one in four Aboriginal children is removed from his or her family either by the welfare system or by the operation of the juvenile justice system.

The overt racist practice of removing Indigenous kids has been replaced with the covert practice of criminalising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The criminalisation of Indigenous youth justifies their removal from family and community into juvenile justice institutions and non-Indigenous families. Nationally, Indigenous children are 18.6 times more likely to be held in detention than non-Indigenous young people.

Policies remain which allow the removal of children on the grounds of neglect. The chronic unemployment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people means that, more than any other group in society, they are reliant on the welfare system. Indigenous families are, therefore subject to high levels of surveillance and intervention by welfare agencies. This ultimately leads to the removal of their children at a far greater rate than non-Indigenous children.

Today Indigenous peoples continue to experience acute disadvantage in the areas of housing and infrastructure. In 1994 an estimated \$3.1 billion was required to fund the backlog in housing and infrastructure in Aboriginal communities in rural, remote and urban areas. It is estimated that this backlog will take 20 years to address at existing levels of funding. What this means on the ground is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain acutely vulnerable to removal on the grounds of neglect.

The Impact and Effect of Removal

Few Indigenous families are untouched by the effects of the policies of forced removal. These policies affect tens of thousands Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, not only the children who were removed, but also the members of the families and communities from which they were, and are,

taken. It has been estimated that as many as 100,000 Aboriginal people were directly affected by the official policy of assimilation and recent statistics show that more than 10 per cent of living Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 25 said they had been taken away from their natural families.

The impact of removal policies on Indigenous society and culture has been profound. Removal resulted in a loss of identity for children who were taken, many of whom had their name and age changed. Many Indigenous kids lost all family ties and were alienated from their culture and language. For some, knowledge of their Aboriginality was kept secret from them for years, even decades, or until they stumbled upon it by mistake. The disproportionate levels of alcohol and substance abuse in Indigenous communities have been directly linked to policies of removal as has the high level of mental illness amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Policies of removal have also had a profound influence on the capacity of many Indigenous people to parent their own children. The effects of removal have been generational and they continue to reverberate through our communities.

A National Inquiry

The impact of policies of forced removal on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is graphically reflected in the findings of the Royal Commission. In my recent role as a Hearing Commissioner on hearings for the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and their Families the devastating effects of past and present policies of removal on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have again been brought into sharp focus. Perhaps people's accounts of their desperate attempts to hide their children from welfare agencies and the police most vividly tell the story of the profound impact of and resistance to forced separation in the Indigenous community.

The National Inquiry was established by the former Attorney-General, Michael Lavarch in 1995 in recognition of the urgent need to address the policies of removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, both past and present. The terms of reference of the Inquiry require it to consider:

1. The past and continuing effects of separation on Indigenous people;
2. What should be done by the Government in response to this policy such as changes in law, policies and practices, and the development of strategies to reunite families?
3. The justification for any compensation for those affected by removal;
4. Current laws, policies and practices affecting the placement and treatment of Indigenous children such as the operation of the juvenile justice system and welfare agencies.

The Inquiry is being carried out by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and is required to report to the Government in December 1996.

Homelessness and Dispossession

Homelessness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is directly linked to dispossession.

The collective historical experience of Aboriginal people has been one of exclusion from the lands they traditionally occupied and used. As a consequence of that exclusion Aboriginal people lost control over the location, design and function of their living spaces.

Many Aboriginal people may not officially be "homeless" by may nonetheless consider themselves as such because of their exclusion from country. The capacity of peoples to care for country is, from an Indigenous perspective, a necessary consideration in determining and explaining levels of homelessness within a community.

Homelessness and Removal

The Indigenous homeless comes from many places. For example, homelessness may result from:

- an Indigenous teenager leaving home because the non-Aboriginal family into which he or she has been adopted or fostered has been unable to cope with his or her reaction to the experience of racism;
- Aboriginal kids leaving home because of poor parenting skills of their parents who were themselves removed and brought up in institutions or inadequate private homes and subject to abuse;
- The plight of Aboriginal old people who were taken away and who had their children taken away and who now have very specific care needs. These people cannot rely on their own children to care for them because that generation is also suffering the effects of removal. For these old people the prospect of culturally inappropriate nursing homes where no one speaks their language and they are denied contact with their country is no option at all. Instead they choose homelessness.

In Australia Indigenous families are 20 times more likely to be homeless than non-Indigenous families. Although the cycle of removal, institutionalisation and homelessness is a common one it is difficult to estimate the number of homeless Indigenous people who were also removed from their families. The Royal Commission found that a high proportion of the people whose deaths it investigated were homeless at the time of their death.

Conclusion

If there is one commitment this country must make to social justice, it is that no Australian will be deprived of the basics of survival; if there is any consensus about the future of this country, it must be that

all its people have enough to eat, somewhere to live, safe water to drink. No Australian can survive without these basic goods and services. But Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have not been able to count on their availability.

Homelessness and the acute need of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with respect to housing and infrastructure require urgent attention. The continuing extreme levels of need in the Indigenous community mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians continue to be denied the capacity to exercise and enjoy their human rights like other Australians.

Any strategy to address homelessness in the Indigenous community must take into account its diverse faces. Land rights, the nexus between past and current policies of removal and homelessness as well as housing and infrastructure issues must all be considered in the development and implementation of any adequate policy to confront Indigenous homelessness. ■

Professor Mick Dodson is a member of the Yawuru peoples — the traditional Aboriginal owners of land and waters in the Broome area of the southern Kimberley region of Western Australia. He is currently Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University. He is a Professor of law at the ANU College of Law.

Professor Dodson is also currently a Director of Dodson, Bauman and Associates Pty Ltd — Legal and Anthropological Consultants. He is formerly the Director of the Indigenous Law Centre at the University of New South Wales.

Mick Dodson was Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with the then Human Rights and Equal Opportunity. (Now the Australian Human Rights Commission)

Born in Katherine, Northern Territory, Mick was educated in Katherine, Darwin and Victoria. He completed a Bachelor of Jurisprudence and a Bachelor of Laws at Monash University. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters from the University of Technology Sydney in 1998. He also holds an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of NSW. In 2010 he was awarded and honorary Doctorate from the University of Canberra. On graduating he first worked as a solicitor with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service then became a barrister at the Victorian Bar. He joined the Northern Land Council as Senior Legal Adviser in 1984 and became Director (CEO) of the Council in 1990.

Mick Dodson has been a prominent advocate on land rights and other issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Mick Dodson is a vigorous advocate of the rights and interests of the Indigenous Peoples of the world. He was the Co-Deputy Chair of the Technical Committee for the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People. He was also chairman of the United Nations Advisory Group for the Voluntary Fund for the Decade of Indigenous Peoples. He served for 5 years as a member of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Indigenous Voluntary Fund. He is currently a community nominated member (Pacific) of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Mick participated in the crafting of the text of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the United Nation Working Group on Indigenous Populations and the Inter-Sessional Working Group of the Human Rights Commission adopted overwhelmingly in 2007 by the United Nations General Assembly.

Indigenous Homelessness in Australia: An Introduction*

By Paul Memmott
and Catherine Chambers,
University of Queensland

Introduction

Increasingly since 2000, definitions of Australian Indigenous homelessness in the social science literature have become culturally specific. Pathways into homelessness for contemporary Indigenous Australians can involve longitudinal factors, including those having an impact from early childhood in Indigenous settlements and communities that have institutionalised and marginalised histories. They can also involve situational factors acting upon the lives of certain individuals, but which also arise from colonial contact histories and directed cultural change. To comprehend the definitions and pathways into homelessness some understanding of the cultural and historical backgrounds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is necessary.

Historical and Cultural Context to Indigenous Homelessness in Australia

Approximately 300,000 Indigenous people occupied the entire Australian continent when British colonisation was imposed in 1788. The most common local Aboriginal land-holding group (also referred to as a 'traditional owner' group) was the patrilineal, which held religious, hunting and food-collecting rights over its estate.

Such localised groups were organised into larger regional groupings whose members intermarried according to strict rules, and shared some aspects of social organisation, beliefs and customs. Altogether there were about 200 different languages spoken on the continent, many having numerous dialects. Religion, social organisation and language were three of the more elaborate cognitive domains of Aboriginal cultures. (Memmott 2007.)

Groups of Aborigines were nomadic in the sense that they moved between a number of contiguous ecological systems to effectively exploit seasonal foods and resources. Their territory was most often restricted by various protective rules as well as by the need for individuals to meet local religious obligations at sacred sites in their land estate (and on the coast and sea estate), and sometimes those of their grandparents and spouse(s).

So, according to the season, small local groups or bands were scattered throughout

their respective countries engaged in hunting, gathering and fishing, as well as social and ritual activities. People were conscious of their place within their own local territory, intimate with its geography, and spiritually attached to its sacred sites and sacred histories.

From the commencement of colonisation in the late 18th century until the 1890s, the inwardly moving frontier was largely characterised by the wholesale slaughter of Aboriginal people and the taking of their land and waterholes. This was met with sporadic guerrilla warfare in many regions. The British colony expanded slowly inland for 150 years having widespread impacts on Aboriginal cultures. Many of the unique, ecologically-adaptive lifestyles of the Aboriginal language groups were lost.

By the beginning of the 20th century, traditional styles of Aboriginal camping and land use were no longer found in the eastern and southern parts of the continent. Within its interior, displaced tribes people camped near newly-formed towns and pastoral stations in makeshift shelters. Here the devastation to life and culture continued through alcoholism, prostitution, disease, rape, economic exploitation and further violence. A collapse of the Indigenous population occurred, falling to about 31,000. They were spoken of as a 'doomed race' which would inevitably become extinct.

This destruction culminated in the enactment of various pieces of Aboriginal protection legislation between 1897 and 1915 in each state of Australia which empowered government officials and police to control the movements of Indigenous individuals, families and whole communities within and between settlements on newly established Aboriginal and Islander Reserves.

However, this directed movement of people was as often enforced for punitive as well as for protection reasons. Many people became disconnected from both their land and kin resulting in loss of social, psychological and spiritual well-being. This was exacerbated by the implementation of an assimilation policy in the middle decades of the 20th century, which was not abandoned until the mid-1970s. Only then were most Indigenous people able to travel of their own free will again.

By the 1980s, small groups of Indigenous people had come to live in public places in the regional towns and metropolitan cities of Australia, residing in these places despite, in many cases, the existence of formal Indigenous town camps and an increasing range of other Indigenous housing options.

Their numbers gradually increased in the 1990s and early 2000s. Although these people were often categorised as homeless, a number of them saw themselves as being both placed and homed, and preferred instead to refer to themselves by such names as "parkies", "goomies", "ditchies", "long grassers", or river campers.

However, they and their camps were largely seen by local government authorities, politicians and members of various business communities as a public eyesore and nuisance. The people were stereotyped as displaying anti-social behaviour and discouraging tourism and trade. (Memmott 2007.)

Demographic Extent of Indigenous Homelessness

According to the 2006 census, some 105,000 Australian people were identified as homeless, of whom at least 16,000 were categorised as rough sleepers or experiencing primary homelessness. The remainder were described as experiencing secondary or tertiary homelessness, meaning they moved frequently between temporary forms of shelter, and lived in boarding houses for periods of three months or more, respectively.

Indigenous people, who formed 2.3 per cent of the total Australian population in the 2006 Census (455,028 in 20.7mill), were over-represented in these homelessness figures, making up 9 per cent of the homeless population according to the census enumeration (Aust, FaHCSIA 2008:4-6). Nevertheless, the Australian Bureau of Statistics who conducts the triennial census, has conceded that there was a likely under-count of the number of Indigenous homeless people because of difficulties in locating them, particularly those in the rough sleeper category (ABS 2005:47). This under-count, which results from the mobility of people camping in public places as well as their hiding from census collectors, has been confirmed by independent field researchers.

Defining Indigenous Homelessness

One of the problems with categorisation is that when certain mainstream definitions of homelessness are applied, the composition of Indigenous groups dwelling in public spaces are oversimplified, and their needs may be at best misunderstood and minimally serviced, or at worst overlooked entirely. While government policy statements during the late 20th century frequently recognised that many structural factors can

cause and perpetuate homelessness, they largely adopted a limited or narrow definition of homelessness, one based on a lack of housing and accommodation.

The result has been that responses to Indigenous homelessness have focused on finding accommodation as a pivotal intervention, to which other interventions were subordinate. However, for many Indigenous homeless people, finding accommodation was not necessarily their most crucial support need.

Homelessness was not always simply created by a lack of housing, nor simply addressed by its provision. This was particularly true of many Aboriginal public place dwellers who had chosen to sleep out in the open, but who did not see themselves as homeless. The way Indigenous homelessness has been defined or categorised has thus influenced the types of response strategies that have been implemented by Indigenous organisations, government and non-government agencies.

This realisation has prompted a more refined set of definitions of Indigenous homeless people in Australia to be created. Three useful, broad categories can be identified from the limited empirical and literature research available on the subject:

- (i) Public place dwellers;
- (ii) Housed people who are nevertheless at risk of homelessness; and
- (iii) Spiritually homeless people.

These can be further divided into sub-categories. Each will be described in turn. (Mommott et al 2004.)

Public Space Dwellers

Public place dwellers live in a mix of public or semi-public places (including some private places that are entered illegally to gain shelter overnight), for example: parks, churches, verandahs, car parks, beaches, drains, riverbanks, vacant lots, dilapidated buildings, and even under vehicles in car sale yards on rainy nights.

Public place dwellers can be further characterised as people who do not usually pay for their accommodation, are highly visible in a public setting (sheltering, drinking, rejoicing, arguing, partying and fighting in public), have low incomes of which a substantial part is often spent on alcohol, have generally few possessions (minimal clothes and bedding), and usually frequent a beat of places where they camp and socialise.

Because Aboriginal people have a tradition of open-air camping, it is not necessarily stressful for them to adopt this style of living for a while, particularly in towns with mild climates. So the customary Aboriginal practice of camping without any roofed shelters in fine weather, contributes to the ease with which such people can readily fall into a public place dwelling lifestyle in regional centres. Although such a lifestyle may be acceptable to more tolerant citizens, such broad-mindedness may be quickly eroded by regular alcohol consumption,

subsequent intoxication and other behaviour perceived as anti-social.

Four sub-categories of public place dwellers have been identified, although they are not mutually exclusive and one often provides a pathway into the next.

- 1 The first includes those who are voluntary and short-term intermittent public place dwellers. They often comprise visitors who have come to

- 3 The third sub-category of public place-dwellers contains those who voluntarily adopt a homeless lifestyle over the long-term. They live a permanent public place dwelling lifestyle. Having cut off their ties with their home community many years previously, they accept that their homeless lifestyle will persist and retain a sense of belonging to the town and to their group.



Anne Cabrié — *Untitled* (1991). Type C photograph.

Presented by Mrs Lieslott Man through the Felix H. Man Memorial Prize, 1992. National Gallery of Victoria.

town from rural or remote communities to enjoy themselves socialising and drinking, but who intend to return home at some time. These people are relative newcomers who do not have a strong sense of attachment to the town, and include individuals who stay in conventional accommodation (such as a relative's house) and have their own residence in a rural or remote settlement, but who socialise in public urban places, and may or may not decide to camp out overnight, usually with others, despite the availability of accommodation.

- 2 The second sub-category of public place dwellers are those who voluntarily adopt a homeless lifestyle over the medium-term, residing continually in public places (including overnight) without having other accommodation. They acknowledge that they have another place of residence in a home community, but are uncertain if and when they will return. They have usually been pursuing this lifestyle for quite some months or years.

It is unclear whether reconciliation between such individuals and their home community and family is possible for a range of reasons. They have come to regard a beat of public places as their home.

This category corresponds with the definition of long-term or chronic homelessness, whereby homelessness has ceased to be a crisis event and has become an accepted way of life (Coleman 2001).

- 4 The fourth sub-category of public place-dwellers includes those who are reluctantly homeless but living as they do out of necessity. Although residing continually in public places, they wish to return to their home community where they may well have a house, but are obligated to remain in an urban area because they have a service need that can only be met in that location, or because they support a hospitalised relative or friend. Or they may wish to return home but have no funds for travel and/or the capacity to organise it. They may also be on a waiting list for public rental housing elsewhere.

At Risk of Homelessness

The second broad category of Indigenous homeless people encompasses those at risk of homelessness. They reside in some sort of housing but are at risk of losing it or its amenity. This category is sometimes referred to as hidden homelessness.

This broad category can also be broken down into four distinct sub-categories (again, not mutually exclusive ones).

The first sub-category is that of insecurely housed people, or those residing in adequate housing but under threat of losing it, through a lack of secure tenure or due to circumstances of poverty.

A second sub-category includes people whose housing is architecturally sub-standard, making it unsafe or unhealthy. However, what constitutes an acceptable quality of building needs to be carefully defined as there are issues of cross-cultural variation in such standards.

The third sub-category is those people experiencing crowded housing, however again it needs to be noted that the construct of crowding also varies culturally. It should be defined as a level of proximity between dwelling occupants that causes considerable stress and not be ascertained by density measures alone.

The fourth sub-category of at-risk homelessness is dysfunctionally mobile persons; those in a state of continual or intermittent residential mobility including temporary residence (e.g. crisis accommodation) that is a result of personal and/or social problems (e.g. violence, alcohol and substance abuse, lack of

safety or security in a social sense, personality or identity crisis, lack of emotional support and security).

The demographic research on Indigenous people in Australia has thus focused in recent years on their relatively high circular mobility as a dominant trait, in contrast to the mainstream migration patterns.

Spiritual Homelessness

A third broad category of Indigenous homelessness has been identified as spiritual homelessness, a state arising from separation from traditional land, and from family and kinship networks (noted earlier as a result of historical governmental policies), and involving a crisis of personal identity wherein a person's understanding or knowledge of how they relate to country, family and Aboriginal identity systems is confused or lacking.

Such feelings add to the already depressed emotional state in which Aboriginal people, either public place dwellers or those at risk of homelessness, find themselves.

The separation from family and community connections that these individuals experience can have serious effects on their mental health, sometimes resulting in suicide, the rates of which are disproportionately high among the Australian Indigenous population. The importance of feeling a connection to related people also explains why Indigenous Australians from a common cultural region congregate together in public places. The two basic points of introduction for a newly arrived Indigenous person are where they come from and to which 'mob' they belong. People thus tend to join public

place dwelling groups to be near people who are known to them and to feel secure.

The three broad categories of Indigenous homelessness outlined above are not mutually exclusive. In the case of those categorised as at risk of homelessness, these individuals may experience a number of episodes of living on the streets, in rental housing and insecure accommodation; moving back and forth between insecure housing circumstances and public place-dwelling. In either case, individuals may be suffering from spiritual homelessness.

Practice Responses to Indigenous Public Place Dwelling and Homelessness

Although there is an increasing comprehension of the need to ally housing responses with other policy areas such as health, welfare and the justice system, previously unrelated policy areas such as Indigenous governance, education, regional and urban planning and native title can also be significant in addressing the full spectrum of needs presented by homeless Indigenous Australians.

The term response types refers to a broad range of initiatives including philosophies, policies, programs, services, strategies, methodologies, legislations and activities that are aimed at addressing the needs of Indigenous people who are homeless and/or residing in public places. Four practice response categories that have emerged as having culturally distinct ramifications in relation to Indigenous people will be briefly described.

(1) Legislative Approaches

The law-and-order approach employs reactive policing, supported by various forms of legislation, in order to forcefully remove Indigenous people from public places. Experience in a number of urban centres demonstrates that such law-and-order approaches may only be partly successful and even totally unsuccessful in eliminating Indigenous public place dwelling.

These approaches are likely to result in temporary or local displacement, whilst overall cycles of incarceration, alcohol abuse and public place dwelling continue, and also risk breaching anti-discrimination legislation. Forced physical removal to distant remote settlements is also equally repugnant and a violation of civil liberties.

As a general principle, any movement of Indigenous people from the public spaces they occupy due to conflicting public needs should be carried out through a process of negotiation no matter how protracted, and supported by a planned set of alternate accommodation and servicing options acceptable to all parties. (Memmott 2006.)

Implementation of such a law-and-order approach has often been the result of a law-and-order crisis as perceived by politicians and the local press. However, a key finding of several studies is that the



Anne Cabrié — *Untitled* (1991). Type C photograph.

Presented by Mrs Lieselott Man through the Felix H. Man Memorial Prize, 1992. National Gallery of Victoria.

blame for such a crisis has at times been erroneously directed at Aboriginal public place dwellers.

When people, whose codes of behaviour are little understood by the general public, are leading a culturally different life-style and simultaneously enacting some visible anti-social behaviour, they are only too readily made the scapegoats for all local crime.

A key finding of recent research is that social problems impact differently on a range of cultural and urban sectors and require analysis and solutions that incorporate the social values of all groups. Cross-culturally, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups are likely to see one another's positions quite differently and a problem definition, if it is to be complete, must incorporate both perspectives.

Similarly, if there is to be a solution to the problem, it must be articulated from opposite sides incorporating values that are at least tolerable to both. Not to take such a cross-cultural position in approaching social problems is likely to fuel already existing racial tensions.

(2) Patrols and Outreach Services

In the mid-1980s a Central Australian Indigenous community invented the Night Patrol, where a group of responsible volunteer community members drove around their city intervening in alcohol-fuelled situations and caring for at-risk people. The concept quickly spread across the continent and today there are a range of Night Patrols, Wardens and Outreach Workers operating, although the precise nature of their services varies.

The functions of Aboriginal Night Patrols have included intervention in situations of substance abuse (especially alcohol) and violence, mediation and dispute resolution between people in conflict, and the removal of disruptive or potentially violent persons from public or private social environments.

Outreach workers tend to take a stronger 'case file' approach, attempting to establish links to relevant service agencies in response to the needs of their clients. Night Patrols take intoxicated, and possibly aggressive or otherwise at-risk persons, and place them in managed accommodation until they can become sober, and have a sleep and meal. The service aims to keep at-risk, intoxicated individuals out of the watch-house (where they may be susceptible to suicide).

The managed accommodation to which they are taken may be a relative's house, a Sobering-Up Shelter, a Refuge or other such facility. A variety of complementary strategies can be incorporated into this service, including follow-up 'shaming' sessions between offenders and aggrieved members of the community, the use of a detox centre within a residential alcohol treatment centre, and a day centre providing diversionary recreational or entertainment facilities.

(3) Addressing Anti-social Behaviour

Local Indigenous traditional owners may take exception to the anti-social behaviour of

certain public place dwellers (intoxication, begging, violence, etc); seeing it as 'shaming' their own people as well as their law and custom, and they may be adamant about asserting their authority in an effort to prevent it. In the few places where this has been tried, an effective approach has emerged involving the establishment of models of appropriate versus anti-social behaviour (in terms of Aboriginal value systems) to be adhered to by public place dwellers, as well as territorial rules concerning where particular individuals or groups should camp.

The public place dwelling people involved in these instances acknowledged their respect for Aboriginal Law and Native Title. This approach also involves the empowerment of an Indigenous authority structure reflecting the need to create new, as well as to reaffirm old, standards of behaviour; to acculturate public place dwellers with new behavioural norms; and to somehow maintain these standards in an active process of social reform.

One of the initial challenges has been finding the membership to form such an authority group, which would be respected and thereby legitimised and empowered by Aboriginal people to act in situations where anti-social behaviour was causing conflict.

Through the valuing of appropriate social behaviour as a distinct aspect of culture, the process of social reform can be characterised primarily as one of cultural maintenance and development and can thereby draw upon traditional Aboriginal concepts for application to contemporary problems.

(4) Regional Strategies

Regional strategies must be founded in an understanding of the cultural blocs made up of multiple language or tribal groups relevant to the communities in question, and must examine Indigenous migration and residential mobility patterns in order to anticipate why people leave their home communities and what prevents them from returning.

Regional strategies necessitate a common set of values being in place for the regional centre's service providers as well as the communities of the outer parts of the region, so as to facilitate shared decision-making in addressing client's needs. This in turn may be accompanied by a regional education program concerning urban lifestyles and values, and what might be expected of Indigenous people when visiting large cities, both in terms of mainstream and Aboriginal laws and behavioural values.

The migration of Indigenous people to urban centres generates serious political questions concerning the quality of life in remote and rural Aboriginal communities, as well as the distribution and licensing of alcohol outlets throughout such a region. This response category has seldom been implemented in Australia.

In addition to the four responses or strategies outlined above, other more conventional approaches to Indigenous homelessness, which are embedded in mainstream Australian practice and reported in the literature, can prove useful.

They include:

- (a) Alcohol and drug strategies including diversionary responses for intoxicated individuals;
- (b) accommodation strategies and options;
- (c) Dedicated service centres and gathering places;
- (d) The design of public places to enhance public place dwelling;
- (e) Public education strategies;
- (f) Telephone information and help services;
- (g) Skills and training for outreach workers;
- (h) Intensive case management;
- (i) Charismatic mentors;
- (j) Philosophies of client interaction that involve empowerment of clients, and
- (k) Partnerships between government and non-government agencies. (Memmott et al 2003.)

Collectively these responses address a wide range of needs reflecting the complex circumstances of Indigenous public place dwellers and homeless people. Which combination of responses is relevant to a particular place or group will vary across the continent depending on the local environmental and socio-economic context, and the history of culture contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Holistic approaches to Indigenous homelessness combine a significant number of these response types and address immediate problems as well as other underlying issues and causal factors, which may not necessarily be identified by the clients themselves. This involves reactive and proactive components that are both short- and long-term in their duration.

Conclusion

Holistic approaches to homelessness empower Aboriginal people with effective self-help strategies and problem-solving skills. A key component of any approach or strategy must be to promote a better style of drinking, if not complete abstinence, as alcohol consumption is a consistent factor in the anti-social behaviour of public place-dwelling Indigenous people. Such projects also must involve the development of rules and norms concerning preferred behaviour and styles of occupying residences, sustained education between town and bush communities about such appropriate behaviours and lifestyles, development of leadership and support within communities, and the strengthening of the bonds between parts of the extended family to serve as a mechanism to enforce such norms. ■

* This is an amended and abridged version of an entry to be published in the *International Encyclopaedia of Housing and Home*

References

The full list of all the references used in this article can be found on the *Parity* web address www.chp.org.au/parity

The Roots of Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada

By Andrew Leach, Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA), British Columbia, Canada, and a member of the St'at'imc Nation

AHMA is the first, and only, Aboriginal off-reserve social housing authority in Canada, setting a benchmark for devolving government responsibilities to Indigenous self-management

Introduction

Canada faces a national crisis in Aboriginal homelessness. While homelessness has also risen among the general population in recent decades, Aboriginal people are greatly over represented among the homeless.

For example, homelessness in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia, nearly doubled in three years, 2002 to 2005, and then increased another 20 per cent by 2008, when nearly 2,600 people were homeless — 1,046 staying at a shelter or other temporary housing and 1,547 living on the streets. But homelessness among Aboriginal people grew at a much faster rate (34 per cent) than the general homeless population (21 per cent). The 2008 homeless count in Greater Vancouver found that:

- 32 per cent of homeless people were Aboriginal, even though Aboriginal people account for only 2 per cent of the general population in the region.
- Almost half (45 per cent) of homeless women identified themselves as Aboriginal.
- 41 per cent of homeless youth identified themselves as Aboriginal.

Similar situations prevail throughout Canada; Aboriginal homeless are over-represented in all major cities. In some cities, more than 70 per cent of homeless people are Aboriginal. Overall, Aboriginal people comprise less than 4 per cent of the Canadian population, but more than 10 per cent of the homeless population. Aboriginal Canadians are not only more likely to become homeless, but also less likely to use shelters and other support services, and more likely to remain homeless.

Current estimates put the number of homeless in Canada between 150,000 and 300,000 people. Homelessness costs Canadians between \$4.5 and \$6 billion a year.

Two systemic changes set the stage for a massive rise in homelessness in Canada, in the 1990s:

- 1) The Federal Government began housing cuts in the 1980s and stopped developing new subsidised, affordable housing in 1993. Growth

in housing need began to outpace the number of available social housing units. Canada also made employment insurance qualifications more restrictive in the 1990s.

- 2) Residential real estate prices in major cities have more than doubled in the past 15 years, while real income stagnated or declined. Higher mortgages led landlords to increase rents dramatically.

Combined, these changes have prevented the most vulnerable Canadians from attaining affordable housing and impacted Aboriginal people more drastically than other populations.

Aboriginal History of Colonisation in Canada

Aboriginal homelessness correlates with the history of colonisation in Canada; residential schools across the country, Aboriginal wardship in the child welfare system, displacement from traditional lands, and marginalisation in Canadian society devastated families and cultural traditions.

No other Canadian group experienced this terrible legacy. No other Canadian group experiences the same degree of homelessness. On and off reserve, Aboriginal Canadians are disproportionately poor and vulnerable to homelessness.

Residential Schools

One of the most disempowering acts of colonisation was residential schooling. As many as five generations of Aboriginal families — more than one million children — attended residential schools, with devastating consequences:

- Aboriginal children and youth suffered psychological, physical, and sexual abuse in staggering numbers.
- Inadequate sanitation, nutrition and health care were common.
- The unchecked spread of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases resulted in the deaths of thousands of Aboriginal children.
- Children were not allowed to speak their native languages, and returned to families unable to communicate or learn from the oral histories of their people.
- Removing Aboriginal children from their families led to a loss of parenting skills.
- Residential schooling alienated many Aboriginal Canadians from formal education, resulting in a high rate of illiteracy.
- Children were unable to learn about their culture, but also felt alienated

from the mainstream education system, leading to a sense of hopelessness that some tried to dull with alcohol, drugs or suicide.

Land Displacement

Treaties displaced Aboriginal people from their land and moved them to reserve settlements. But Aboriginal use of land and resources was severely limited, because the Indian Act of 1876 gave government sweeping powers to control resources on reserve land. Resource extraction put additional pressure on traditional economic activities like hunting. Aboriginal people were deprived of traditional ways to earn a living *and* denied opportunities to develop new resource enterprises.

Displacement, like residential schooling, contributed to diminished health, employment, economic opportunities and cultural connections, as well as to increased addiction.

Risk Factors

Risk factors for Aboriginal homelessness include:

- Systemic barriers like poverty and lower education levels;
- Unemployment, discrimination, patriarchy and the reserve system;
- Disproportionate vulnerability among Aboriginal Canadians to family instability, addictions, foetal alcohol syndrome, poor health and social disconnection;
- A shortage of affordable accommodation for urban Aboriginals;
- Discrimination when trying to find accommodation; and
- Substance use makes people more likely to become homeless.

Faces of Aboriginal Homelessness

Homeless Aboriginal people are men and women, youth and elders, single and two-parent families. Research has shown that a significant number of homeless Aboriginal people:

- Attended residential school;
- Had parents who attended residential school or had been in jail;
- Had harmful experiences with child welfare authorities; or
- Nearly a third had been institutionalised.

Aboriginal homelessness in rural areas contributes to urban Aboriginal homelessness, with migration between reserves and cities becoming a circular

pattern. New arrivals to a city often live with friends or family in overcrowded conditions. Aboriginal people often find that discrimination, unaffordable housing, and social conditions push them back to reserves or rural areas.

In addition, homelessness among Aboriginal youth is on the rise. Canada's Aboriginal population is younger than the general population, and Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population. A third of Canada's Aboriginal population is under the age of 14, half are under 25, and they experience higher unemployment and lower educational levels than the general population, which correlate with poverty and homelessness.

Most homeless youth had to leave home at an early age, and often come from foster or group homes, where Aboriginal children are over represented. For example, a study of homeless Aboriginal youth in Toronto, Ontario, found that most had grown up in the care of the Children's Aid Society. Many experienced various forms of abuse in these homes. Everyone said street life was better than the lives they had left behind.

Government Responses to Indigenous homelessness

Beginning in the late 1990s, the Federal Government tried to address homelessness with three new programs:

- *National Homelessness Initiative* — NHI focused on three areas, urban, Aboriginal and youth homelessness. Projects were developed in partnership with municipal agencies and service providers.
- *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* — HPS includes funding for Aboriginal communities, a homelessness network, and offering surplus federal properties for projects that address homelessness. Communities must also obtain funding from other sources, such as municipal and private sector partnerships. HPS also provides emergency shelters with software to collect information about the homeless, which is currently used in about half of Canadian shelters.
- *Affordable Housing Initiative* — AHI aims to increase affordable off-reserve housing, and is currently funded until March 2011. Provinces match federal funds; each province designs and delivers its own program. The program funds rental housing, conversions to social housing, home ownership in rural and urban redevelopment areas, rent supplements, and housing for low-income seniors and people with disabilities. In BC, the provincial housing agency administers AHI funds in consultation with AHMA.

These Federal programs fall short of solving Canada's homelessness crisis. AHI has been criticised for lack of a coherent goal and insufficient capacity to meet housing needs. The National Homelessness Initiative and Homelessness Partnering



Strategy are intended to support underserved populations, but these programs increase demand for resources that communities have difficulty funding.

On the upside, these programs encourage supportive, grassroots networks. Agencies, advocates, and service providers now understand the benefits of collaborative governance, Aboriginal organisations are increasingly included in the planning process, and two HPS projects target culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal homeless people.

In addition, some provinces and major cities in Canada are tackling homelessness with programs that use both "treatment first" and "housing first" models:

- *Treatment first* — In this more traditional approach, participants progress along a continuum of housing, from temporary shelter to transitional housing to permanent housing, when they are determined to be "housing ready." People are required to abstain from drugs and alcohol and participate in mental health treatment, if needed.
- *Housing first* — This newer model provides participants with immediate access to permanent housing. Program staff make home visits; harm reduction services are available but voluntary. This approach costs less, and participants remain housed longer, spend fewer days in hospital, and are no more likely to use drugs or alcohol than in treatment first programs. Housing first appears to be the most effective model for breaking the cycle of Aboriginal homelessness.

A Call to Action: Overcoming Indigenous Homelessness

Addressing Aboriginal homelessness requires Aboriginal leadership in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. AHMA is in the best position to provide leadership in Canada, as a province-wide, independent Aboriginal organisation. AHMA has a proven track record of developing proposals with other organisations that meet government requirements for funding, while addressing Aboriginal needs and goals. AHMA can also allocate government funding to address homelessness; just as we manage subsidy payments for Aboriginal social housing in BC.

AHMA has examined existing research on homelessness in Canada, which reveals:

- Homelessness programs designed, delivered and governed by Aboriginal people have better outcomes.
- Better data is needed on the extent, causes, and demographics of Aboriginal homelessness. The findings should be used to develop an effective national Aboriginal homelessness strategy.

Addressing Aboriginal homelessness is a daunting task, will take time, and needs to:

- Involve all levels of government;
- Engage stakeholders in developing programs: people living on the streets, chiefs and councils, elders, service providers and non-profit organisations;
- Support evidence-based solutions and the research to develop evidence;
- Gather information by building relationships in communities and participating in "talking circles"; and
- Develop a database identifying numbers and gaps in services.

Culturally appropriate solutions to Aboriginal homelessness should support Aboriginal values and traditional practices, with a continuum of services that includes:

- Emergency shelter services;
- Structured intake;
- Client participation in service delivery;
- Mental health, physical health, detox and dental services;
- Affordable, supportive transitional and permanent housing;
- Culturally appropriate staffing and training;
- Peer, community and family supports;
- Discharge planning at correctional institutions;
- Education, skills development, employment and income support services; and
- Transportation for accessing employment and services.

The lessons learned from research in Canada have relevance for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in all three countries. ■

AHMA will continue to work with all levels of government in Canada to ensure programming addresses Aboriginal homelessness. Contact us at:

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The Original Peoples of Australia, New Zealand and Canada and Homelessness: Are we truly living in 'Post Colonial' Societies?

**By M. Morning Star Doherty,
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While much of the following article is based on the experience of Canada's first peoples, it is also relevant to the experience of the Indigenous peoples of Australia and New Zealand.

To forge an understanding of Indigenous homelessness in the 21st century, let us start with some of the key experiences of the 20th century.

As I write this article on the subject of Indigenous Homelessness in Post Colonial Societies for *Parity* on Remembrance Day, I cannot help but think of the sacrifices made in war by Indigenous veterans from Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

It should not be forgotten that Indigenous veterans fought for the colonial governments in World War One and World War Two; governments that had dispossessed their people of their lands, their environment and their livelihoods while systematically attempting to eliminate and/or assimilate them.

Canada's First Nations People, and no doubt Indigenous Australians and Maoris, expected that after the War, their great contributions in wartime service and sacrifices would help them to gain greater control over their own affairs, as well as economic assistance and improvements in education and health. They felt that they had earned right to claim and demand more justice and fair play as recompense, for they had fought for the sacred rights of justice, freedom and liberty so dear to mankind, no matter what colour or creed.

In Canada for most of the soldiers returning home from war, employment, financial support and educational opportunities were provided by the Veterans' Charter. However, for the thousands of First Nations women and men who served in WWII and their families, returning to civilian life meant years of hardship.

Upon discharge, Aboriginal veterans were told to return to their reserves and see the Indian agent about Veterans' benefits. The Indian agent referred the soldiers to the Royal Canadian Legion to access information about compensation and benefits. However, liquor prohibitions in the Indian Act prevented Natives from entering establishments that served alcohol.

This issue of compensation comes up from time to time with various federal governments promising to correct this 'historic injustice'. However, in Canada, Indigenous veterans and their families have never been compensated. Their hope of participating as equals in society through their patriotic contribution has evaporated. The lies, broken promises and cruelty of the governments both before and after WWII broke the hearts, minds and spirits of many veterans of that generation and their families.

There has been a long history of genuine good will from the Original peoples of the colonies towards their colonial governments. This legacy dates from the time of first contact, right through to defending Great Britain and her allies in war. This has been of enormous benefit to the non-Native people in these countries — and to millions of their kinsmen from Britain and Europe who escaped the poverty and oppression of their homelands through migration.

Where non-Native Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders created a healthy, prosperous middle-class in their societies after WWII through access to education and capital for home loans and businesses for their service to King and Country, Indigenous veterans remained poorer than ever.

The freedoms and prosperity enjoyed by each wave of immigrants has resulted in greater poverty for Indigenous individuals and communities as more and more land and resources have been required for continually increasing populations. Newcomers have been quick to shed themselves of their previous positions in their old societies — arguably, the oppressed of the "old world" become the oppressors in the new.

Native people have been and are bastardised, isolated, brutalised, vilified and ostracised by the very people and their descendants they helped in their time of need. Tragically these practices and policies continue to this day, with the baton of ignorance and injustice passed on like an evolving virus.

Geographical isolation, barriers to education and economic development, loss of traditional food harvesting and poor infrastructure, family and community dysfunction, amongst other challenges, necessitates many Indigenous people to leave their communities for urban areas.

Upon arrival, they are often not prepared for further exclusion, especially if they are Indigenous in appearance, have not completed high school, do not have a

trade or profession or intercultural communication skills.

While many Indigenous people have created good lives for themselves and their families in spite of the aforementioned barriers, those without strong family or spiritual support will often try to escape their pain by consuming alcohol and drugs, which can become addictive, triggering mild to severe mental illness, health issues ranging from malnutrition to fatal infection.

The old saying 'misery loves company' especially applies to the vulnerable and the lonely. In areas such as Vancouver, Canada's notorious downtown eastside there is an abundance of 'fast' friends with a sex, drugs, alcohol and criminal lifestyles. Once ensnared, people will take the next step to homelessness — crime — that leads to incarceration. In Australia, New Zealand and Canada, Indigenous men and women comprise inordinately high percentages of those incarcerated in youth and adult correctional institutions. In addition to her/his previous challenges, the potential homeless person now has an extra barrier to employment — a criminal record.

The Life and Death of Frank Paul

The causes and effects of Indigenous homelessness are exemplified in the life and death of Frank Paul, a Canadian First Nations man. His story is one that has been repeated countless times in countless locations across New Zealand, Canada and Australia.

On December 5, 1998 Frank Paul was found passed out on a vegetable stand in the rain with his breath allegedly smelling of rice wine. A rookie police wagon driver, Constable David Instant, brought Mr. Paul to the city drunk tank for a second time that day.

Sergeant Russell Sanderson was in command at the city drunk tank. He knew Mr. Paul was homeless and had serious medical issues including grand mal seizures. However, he refused to admit him to jail and told Instant to take him to Broadway and Maple Street and leave him there. Instant followed Sanderson's orders and dumped Mr. Paul in an alley, unconscious and soaking wet on a freezing cold night, where he subsequently died alone of hypothermia in the early hours of December 6, 1998.

Frank Paul was born on July 21, 1951, in Big Cove (now Elsipogtog), New Brunswick, a small Mi'kmaq reserve community, where he was raised for a time with two brothers and one sister. Only his sister is alive today.

Frank's father, Joseph Henry Paul, had served in the Canadian Army during the Second World War. When he came home, like many of his brothers-in-arms, he drank heavily, which led to his parents separation when Frank was very young. His mother moved to the United States, where she later remarried and began a new family. Frank, along with one of his brothers and sister, were sent to a residential school in Nova Scotia. Their father could not care for them because of his excessive drinking, so they attended residential school until it closed down for four or five years later.

Upon the Paul children's return to Big Cove from the residential school, Frank was very quiet. By then his father had a new girlfriend, who would not allow him to see his children. Frank stayed with his cousin's family or with his father's family, always unsettled. He had no interest in attending the local schools after his residential school experiences, began drinking by age 16 or 17 and before long he left Big Cove.

Frank moved around a lot in Canada and the United States, living as a migrant worker in Maine, British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba before living primarily in Vancouver from the early 1980's until his death. Frank would sometimes phone his sister, or show up unexpectedly at her home and stay with her for several days, then move on, travelling back and forth across the country by hitchhiking. She said that Frank was a good brother, was happy, and liked what he was doing with his life. He was never drinking when she saw him and his favourite thing to do was draw on canvas.

In 1986 Frank called his sister to see how she and her family were doing. She told him that their brother Andrew had recently died. A month later he called again, and she had to tell him that her daughter had passed away. Frank did not say anything, and just hung up. She never heard from Frank again. The family heard nothing more about Frank until early 1999, when they were notified of his death in Vancouver. They had Frank's body returned to New Brunswick for a funeral in the community.

Official records reveal that Frank Paul required a large number of medical and police interventions in Vancouver during his later years:

- The BC Ambulance Service responded to 121 calls between 1996 and 1998.
- He was treated at, or admitted to, Vancouver General Hospital 93 times.
- He was treated at, or admitted to, St. Paul's Hospital 63 times by June 1997.
- He had been to the Vancouver Detox Centre 82 times since 1983.
- He was taken into custody by the Vancouver Police Department on more than a dozen occasions in the months leading up to his death.

Six years after Frank Paul's death, the Canadian Government issued a news release saying the police officers would not be charged and mentioned a



coroner's report that concluded the death was an accident.

Through the efforts of Indigenous activists over the years, Mr. Paul's tragic death is currently being reviewed in the reconvened Davies Inquiry that will finally provide answers as to why police officers were never prosecuted for dumping the homeless man in a cold alley where he died.

What is the cost of wellness versus the cost of homelessness?

Given the reality of the lives of Indigenous peoples in 2010 in comparison to their non-Indigenous countrymen — shorter life spans, lower income, high infant mortality, poor education and employment opportunities,

constant exposure to passive and aggressive racism — are the Indigenous people of Canada, Australia and New Zealand truly living in post-colonial societies and in a post-colonial reality? I think not. ■

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Indigenous Homelessness: The Long Grass Difference

**By Dr Cameron Parsell,
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Introduction

Paul Memmott and his colleagues have contributed to understandings of homelessness in Australia by demonstrating some of the uniqueness and nuances in Aboriginal housing and homelessness (Memmott et al. 2003; Memmott and Chambers this issue). This work challenges us to conceptualise Indigenous housing and homelessness, not from a one-dimensional 'cultural perspective' that normalises homelessness and transience, but from a perspective that grapples with complex and pervasive issues embedded within colonisation, dispossession and attachment to land, poverty, family and identity. This literature has played an important role in positioning the meanings of home as a central focus of analysis, whereby housing and home should not necessarily be conflated.

Having spent the previous eight years at universities studying social work and conducting homelessness research, I was across some of the theoretical and empirical work that has documented the distinctiveness of Indigenous housing and homelessness. In fact, for some of this research I have engaged Indigenous people as research participants, and I have also worked with Indigenous people in service provision roles in Specialist Homelessness Services.

All of this first hand contact with Indigenous people who were also homeless, however, was in Brisbane and Sydney. On the basis of this work, and like others have done (Johnson et al. 2009), I have tried to argue that while the causes and life experiences that underpin homelessness are complex, the solutions need not be. The state of homelessness does not constitute a distinct identity or type of 'homeless person' — responses to people who are homeless should strive toward enabling them access to the material resources and options that are required to exercise self-determination and control over one's life (Parsell 2010, forthcoming a, forthcoming b).

Although I stand by the arguments and conclusions presented in this previous work, in this essay I want to try and convey some different ideas informed by my emerging understanding of 'homelessness', or public place dwelling (Memmott et al. 2003) in Darwin. I will argue that the "problem" of homelessness in Darwin is fundamentally different to that in other Australian urban

centres. The differences are many, but primarily centre on the nature and extent of the phenomena, the manner in which homelessness as a problem is constructed, and perhaps in turn, what could be argued as constituting an appropriate response to public place dwelling.

The essay is based on recent fieldwork (November 2010) I conducted in Darwin for a research project funded by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) and lead by Rhonda Phillips. The fieldwork was facilitated by many staff at the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Mission Australia Darwin.

Nature

The term public place dwelling immediately highlights the distinct nature of homelessness or rough sleeping in Darwin. Indeed, this term is used to denote that, for some people sleeping rough in Darwin's public places, they are not actually homeless, but rather feel a connection of home to the public places in which they reside (Memmott et al. 2003). These public places are referred to as Darwin's long grass, and the public places dwellers colloquially referred to as 'long grassers'. Long grassers, moreover, are nearly always Indigenous people.

The notion of public place dwelling in the long grass thus problematises objective measures of homelessness, and says something of the distinct nature of rough sleeping in Darwin. Not all, or arguably even most, people residing in Darwin's long

grassers see these areas as their home, however. For a significant number of people sleeping rough in the long grass, home is a house or land in their communities outside of the Darwin area — often in the remote Northern Territory, and to a lesser extent, remote Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia.

Many people sleeping in the long grass are therefore not homeless, in that they have a home and a usual address outside of Darwin. When they are in Darwin, however, they are without shelter. These people are referred to as temporary visitors to Darwin, and may stay in the area for days, weeks or a number of months. Anecdotal evidence from local service providers and government departments suggests that temporary visitors to Darwin constitute the largest group of people residing in the long grass.

The transience into Darwin's long grass and then back to home communities provides further insights into the distinct nature of public place dwelling. This mobility can be understood in ways that are specific to Indigenous cultural and social practices, and also in ways that are not uniquely Indigenous. With reference to the former, the temporary mobility of Indigenous people forms part of a cultural tradition that has endured for thousands of years.

Indigenous cultural mobility is a complex and contingent phenomena, that is, both opportunistic and planned. The diversity is informed by, among other factors, individual motivation, stage of the life-cycle and





geographical location (Prout 2008). Indigenous cultural mobility is not static or one-dimensional – nor is it a “product of an inherently Indigenous predisposition to wander” (Prout 2008: 5). Rather, temporary Indigenous mobility is understood within a context that includes travel to cultural festivals and sporting carnivals, seasonal conditions, participation and involvement with ceremonies, and connecting and extending family and kinship networks (Prout 2008).

The temporary mobility of Indigenous people is not exclusively culturally specific. Indeed, representatives from organisations in Darwin that respond to people sleeping rough expressed a strong view that many people temporarily sleeping in the long grass had travelled to Darwin to access or to be with family accessing medical services not available elsewhere in the Northern Territory.

Further, and similar to non-Indigenous migration and temporary mobility, service providers spoke about Indigenous people (especially adolescences and young adults) who resided in Darwin’s long grass as people who had left problems and boredom in their home communities for the excitement and prospect that Darwin offered. This includes people travelling to Darwin to access retail, services and employment opportunities not available outside of the capital city. Indigenous temporary mobility, and thus the nature of rough sleeping in Darwin’s long grass, has a structural element. Prout (2008) suggests that rather than being exclusively cultural, temporary Indigenous mobility is explained by Indigenous people’s engagement with the

Australian economy and mainstream, service systems.

Indigenous temporary mobility into the long grass is also informed by Commonwealth policy that specifically impacts upon the lives of Indigenous people living in the Northern Territory. While there is no available supporting data, anecdotal evidence from homelessness service providers indicate that the rough sleeping population in Darwin had increased in direct response to the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). The NTER, as well as other locally based initiatives, has resulted in the prohibition of alcohol and the restrictions of welfare entitlements to Indigenous people in some Northern Territory Indigenous communities. It is widely proposed that a significant number of people in Darwin’s long grass were there to avoid the consequences imposed upon life in their home communities following the NTER (see Simon Emsley this issue).

Extent

The distinctiveness of rough sleeping in the Darwin area can only be grasped by considering its magnitude. On census night in 2006, 393 people were identified in the primary homeless category in the area of Darwin and the satellite city of Palmerston 12 kilometres to the south (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2009). Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2009) suggest that nearly all of these people were sleeping rough, and the 393 people enumerated most likely represented an under count of the rough sleeping population at the time.

During fieldwork in November 2010, more contemporary numbers of the rough sleeping population were not available. Nevertheless, discussions with both government bureaucrats and service providers put the number at up to 2,000 people sleeping in Darwin and Palmerston’s public places on any given night.

It is difficult to comment on the veracity of these estimates. It is evident that some people sleeping rough in the Darwin area hide themselves to avoid intervention (and thus counting). Conversely, without approaching the numerous people observed in the long grass, it is not possible to ascertain whether they are in fact sleeping rough or just spending time socialising.

These caveats notwithstanding, the estimated numbers outlined by service providers with a detailed understanding, taken together with what is publicly observable, suggests that the extent of rough sleeping in Darwin far exceeds the numbers in other Australian capital cities. During street counts conducted in 2010, less than 400 people were sleeping rough in inner urban Sydney, less than 300 in Brisbane, and less than 200 in Melbourne. The combined population of Darwin and Palmerston is approximately 100,000 people. If the estimated numbers of people sleeping rough in the Darwin area relative to the broader population are than compared with the ratios of rough sleeping in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, the extent and thus distinctiveness of rough sleeping in Darwin is magnified to an additional level.

Displacement of Indigenous Peoples in the Former White Settler Colonies of Australia, New Zealand and Canada

By Simon Emsley*

The universalisation of capitalism through imperialism of the last two centuries has enacted violent transformations of the economies, lives and opportunities of the Indigenous peoples of the various colonies of empire. The experience of dispossession has everywhere left Indigenous peoples disempowered and highly represented in populations at risk of homelessness, ill-health and incarceration.

The resilience of Indigenous disadvantage in advanced capitalist economies such as the former white settler colonies of Britain — Australia, Canada and New Zealand — appears paradoxical. Workers in these former colonies have consistently enjoyed living standards well about average from the mid-19th century and have been supported by sophisticated welfare systems.

Why then does the challenge of 'closing the gap' in broad indicators of well-being between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples remain in such wealthy countries, when the political inequities of uneven rights seems to have been addressed and in recent decades resources have been poured into projects to build Indigenous economic capacity?

One explanation is to view the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous as the product of the inherited effects of former acts of state violence physically forcing Indigenous off their land. With the earliest encounters being among the most explicitly violent, the motifs of Indigenous dispossession are commonly drawn from acts of this nature — the genocide of Tasmanian Aboriginals, dispossession enabled by the Maori wars, the devastating impact of newly introduced diseases, the use of poisoned blankets and other devices used by settler vigilantes to establish exclusive control of production on the land.

The trauma of crude acts of displacement and the collapse of traditional forms of Indigenous productive capacity forced by displacement undoubtedly has had devastating effects with intergenerational consequences. The effects of past appropriations provide only a partial explanation however.

This article proposes that the socio-economic 'gap' between Indigenous and mainstream communities is not solely a vestige of past state mismanagement but also the product of an ongoing program of

actions coordinated and replenished by the contemporary state to sustain current regimes of accumulation. The dispossession of Indigenous peoples of the former white settler colonies is a work in progress and one that is at times coordinated by the modern state with the full gamut of its contemporary powers.

The establishment of state control through early acts of state violence and repression can be considered as but a part of a long process of settlement and Indigenous displacement, one that was arguably less significant or effective than other following acts of appropriation enabled by market, social and legal means.

The high profitability of pastoral capitalisms of the white settler colonies, fuelled by the expansive form of British capitalism internationally emboldened by trade liberalisation in the 1840s,¹ created high disproportionality between settler and Indigenous economies. In these circumstances, market exchange played an important role in the alienation of Indigenous lands in white settler colonies and the modern state forms of those countries.

A similar disproportionality was evident in the closer settling of lands in the early to mid-20th century, driven by increasing intensities of production due to the introduction of new technologies and infrastructure and the extended capacity of the states organisational powers. Australia's current mining boom presents another spectre of disproportionate wealth which now confronts small Aboriginal communities and organisations through mining proposals: the scale of wealth on offer in the face of intense material need has enormous persuasive power.

An important part of the story of land and resource appropriation can be told through the histories of so-called legitimate market transactions. The litany of appropriation in white settler colonies has been legitimised by a range of legal frameworks but nevertheless has in all cases depended, to varying degrees, on explicit forms of discrimination enacted upon Indigenous people.

These acts of discrimination have invariably had immediate practical purposes — to economically disable, legally or politically disenfranchise, culturally suppress, limit freedom of movement etc — but also a broader historical function: to naturalise the

economic superiority of the settler society derived from the acts of appropriation of Indigenous land and so validate the origin acts of appropriation. This imperative survives in countries that were once former white settler colonies whenever the rights of Indigenous people become the object of review. This argument is considered in relation to the Australian post-imperial state form.

Australia in the Post-Imperial Period

After a period of domestic industrialisation in the early 20th century, Australia returned to a reliance on land-based production with considerable force, particularly since the establishment of US dollar hegemony. A new rent-seeking sector has achieved prominence. In the fifty years to 2008 the contribution of mining has soared from 5 per cent to 42 per cent of total Australian exports.

The significance of Wool, the long-run leading export sector from 1870 to 1970, has collapsed proportionately. In 1958 wool alone produced 46 per cent of export earnings² while in 2008, total rural production contributed just over 10 per cent of exports.³ In 2008 wool accounted for \$2.3b while mining accounted for \$120b. This reversal of profitability has broad implications for the political economy of Australia and not least the capacity of Indigenous to retain economically meaningful access to resources.

Gough Whitlam may have been contemplating the rising value of mining products as he sprinkled dust symbolically into the hands of Vincent Lingiari. It was at this very point when mining definitively eclipsed wool production as the leading export sector and when it gained confidence as an independent political force.

The concerted campaign of the mining sector in Western Australia to squash any possibility of Indigenous claim to mining rights in the approach to the 1984 federal election demonstrated the arrival of a new, highly concentrated and disciplined body of interests that exerted an instrumental control over the post-imperial state form, one perhaps more blatant than had been the squatter capitalist domination of the emerging colonial state forms of the 1860–70s.

Considering the scale of current profits of the mining giants and the significance of

the sector to the wellbeing and current international superiority of the Australian economy, the mining sector's intervention of 1984 appears to have facilitated a greater transfer in the distribution of value from land-based activity than ever had the appropriations of pastoralists achieved over previous centuries. The sector's capacity to control distribution of surpluses arising from mining activity has again been emphatically established in the approach to this year's federal election.

Land Rights and Redistribution

The prominent assertion of the political, economic and land rights of Indigenous peoples in post-war Canada, Australia and New Zealand has been coordinated internationally by the international human rights movement, being initiated from the International Labour Organisation Convention 107 of 1957 and spearheaded by the International Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 1989.

The growth of Indigenous rights and redistributive interventions has nuanced the articulation of state power positioning Indigenous at the margins of participation. In all of the cases of the post white settler state forms considered, rights of Indigenous peoples have been tiered, creating dissimilarities of power and access to resources within Indigenous groups.

In Canada the Indigenous are classified according to 'Status' and 'Non-Status' Indians under the Indian Act, the Inuit and the 'mixed blood' Metis. The rights of 'Status Indians' vary according to the nature of individual treaty arrangements. In New Zealand divisions in the access to redistributions made through tribes and trusts vary by level of urbanisation and tribal affiliation. In Australia, groups holding Native Title rights have special capacities unique to the features of their holdings and potentially influenced by future legislative deliberations, while many groups have no affiliation to land held or claimed under Native Title provisions. In all cases the Indigenous 'estate' is extremely unevenly distributed across Indigenous peoples.

Another division in access to power is evident in class-affiliated unevenness within Indigenous populations which, though relatively unexplored, plays an important role in the effects and benefits of distributions made through modern forms of Indigenous organisation. Many modern forms of state sponsored Indigenous organisation are therefore ideologically complex, containing

divisions owing to tribal or regional affiliation over-layered by class position and further compounded by the outcome of individual court processes. The contemporary emphasis on economic self-determination for the remnants of Indigenous economic power issuing from land has therefore yet to present a unitary organisational and ideological object to state power.

Meanwhile, the contemporary form of these states have developed extensive new ideological and administrative capacities to express power simultaneously through skeins of political, ideological, administrative, social and military force, as demonstrated so eloquently by the Northern Territory Emergency Response of 2007.

Furthermore, while the intentions of medium scale capitalist investors and squatters played an import part in the early white settler states and held instrumental control of the state in some cases, the contemporary entities with interests in land and resource alienation — particular in relation to mining — are typically monolithic economic bodies and include some of the largest concentrations of capital in the world. The potential of the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand states to facilitate Indigenous land and resource alienation therefore continues to be a critical aspect of their roles as a maximiser of profits in those countries.



Anne Cabrié — *Untitled* (1991). Type C photograph.
 Presented by Mrs Lieselott Man through the Felix H. Man Memorial Prize, 1992.
 National Gallery of Victoria.

The Role of Discrimination

Indigenous populations in the white settler states of Britain encountered settlement driven by economic powers acting upon settling populations en masse. In these circumstances the idea of 'race' provided an appealing description of appearances to both appropriated and appropriating groups. The shared interests of white settlers to establish and make good in their

pioneering venture — be it as capitalist estate farmer employing sizeable numbers of workers, or individual owner operators — displaced Indigenous peoples from their environment and livelihood as the productive margins of landscape receded, wave by wave, under the gaze of profits.

As these capitalist economies gained autonomy from Britain and white populations in those countries rose to dominance, control of the state was dispersed through widened franchises and more sophisticated systems of legitimation. The violence of repression softened, to be replaced by the anonymous violence rendered by market power and the displacement of traditional patterns of livelihood by the consumption of commodities and participation in the labour market.

However, in contemporary forms, the imprint of a 'racial' distribution of wealth and power remains highly visible in Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Indigenous/non-Indigenous racial division is of a qualitatively different order from the racial divisions produced by the induction of migrant labour into secondary labour markets. The imprint is clearly visible in the high levels of homelessness experienced by Indigenous peoples, though its expression in these countries has been mediated by the particular welfare and distributional regimes with histories of their own.

'Race' therefore still effectively expresses central aspects of the lived realities of the oppressor and the appropriated in the contemporary forms of the white settler colonies and stands as a major challenge to their legitimacy. There are numerous current projects within these economies which aim to confront the spectre of race generated from Indigenous/settler relations. Nevertheless, the dynamics underpinning the initial appearance of 'race' continues as a viable explanation of power relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Appropriation, displacement and white settlement/invasion is still in progress. ■

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Footnotes

- 1 The repeal of the British Corn Laws in 1846 encouraged an international division of labour. By the 1880s Britain imported almost half of its grain supply, with colonies being given privileged terms of trade. Ensor, R.C.K. (1936) *England, 1870–1914*, The Oxford history of England 14, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.16
- 2 Pinkstone, B, *Global Connections*, p.379
- 3 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Trade at a Glance 2009*, Australian Government

Homeless in the Homeland: A Growing Problem for Indigenous People in Canada's North

By Frances Abele,
Nick Falvo
and Arlene Haché*

Today, homelessness and inadequate housing in northern Canada disproportionately afflicts Indigenous people.¹ This is a striking fact in a region where Indigenous people lived very independently (though of course not autarkically) until the second half of the twentieth century. In the years since then both economic development and state initiatives have transformed their lives.

Speaking to a public inquiry in the 1970s, Charlie Snowshoe explained the consequences of federal northern development for himself and his community:²

...when they started coming in with these low rental housing and welfare. The people, the native people of the north, were independent until you brought in that low rental housing, and that's where we first got sucked into that business. They subsidised the oil, the gas, taking our own houses away from us, moving us from where we used to be, where we could cut wood for ourselves in town. I was one of them. Today I am sorry. I was sorry long ago, but right now if I move out of that house, I don't know where else I have to go to.

....The only thing I can say is that change in life sort of crept upon us and we are realising now what we got into. At the time, everything was changing, and I used to say we were sleeping at the time government stepped over us. But we weren't sleeping. We were our living in the bush and didn't know what was going on in the community....

Although it is important to remember that the Canadian North is an enormous geographical area (half the size of Australia) with significant cultural and historical diversity we believe that Indigenous people in many parts of the north would recognise aspects of their experience in these words of Charlie Snowshoe.

In the years since Mr. Snowshoe spoke, much has changed. Dene, Métis, Inuit and the other Indigenous peoples of the Canadian northlands have organised successfully to bring about a major transformation in economic and political power structures. They have moved from the margins of decision-making to the centre. Over the last thirty years, they have negotiated new treaties with the Crown, established various forms of Indigenous governments, and transformed territorial governing institutions. In each of Canada's three northern territories, Indigenous individuals are political and economic leaders, and many others are in positions of influence in organisations, actively working towards positive change.³

But if there are important political and economic gains, the social transformation is far from complete. The legacy of cultural disruption and decades of undemocratic administration survives in higher rates of suicide, lower educational attainment, higher unemployment and higher rates of homelessness, among other indicators of broad social distress in Indigenous communities. Inequality within Indigenous societies is growing.

In many ways, housing is at the centre of the processes that sustain social distress. Lack of housing alternatives traps women and children in unsafe and stressful situations.⁴ For example, in the Statistics Canada *Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006* it was reported that 12 per cent of adult residents of the Northwest Territories (NWT) had experienced violence by a spousal partner as compared to 7 per cent in other jurisdictions. There are just five family violence shelters in the NWT to serve all 33 communities and 80 per cent of the women who use the services are Indigenous. Many women have to leave their home communities to find shelter accommodation, because most of the smaller communities do not have such facilities. With the lack of housing, trauma treatment programs and other supports needed to leave an abusive relationship permanently, many end up returning to their home community and their relationships.



Lack of housing of course also affects men. Christensen's work in Inuvik and Yellowknife displays the ways in which the monopolised private housing market and inadequate public housing provisions marginalise and trap working age men. Men who are attempting to recover from addictions are unable to find suitable, private accommodation, where they will not be exposed to destructive behaviour. Men without this problem may be "between jobs" in the volatile, resource-based economy, unable to qualify for adequate supported housing or to afford the high costs of private rentals.⁵

There is a need for further research on the sources of today's problems and on effective ameliorative measures, but two things seem clear:

- (1) There is a problem of adequacy — there are not enough shelters, beds, and other measures to provide relief, and
- (2) The role of the state and state programs in creating current difficulties must be recognised.

A full range of social welfare programs were introduced in Canada's North soon after they became available in the south.⁶ In 1944, Canada had brought in a cash-benefits system for Canadian children, and in 1951, it introduced a universal old age pension system. In 1956, the Canadian government brought in an unemployment-insurance system. And in the years that followed, the federal government began playing a greater role with respect to both health insurance and social assistance.

These programs were being devised for Canada as a whole just as southern Canadian decision-makers and members of the public became aware of certain areas of distress in northern societies, most due to earlier contact with outsiders. For example, there were serious epidemics of influenza, measles, tuberculosis and other diseases. While in earlier periods of Canadian development, these health problems had stimulated little response, in the period of active state policies following the Second World War, intervention seemed mandatory.

Delivery of services to the widely distributed northern Indigenous peoples who lived in a territory covering over one million square kilometers was challenging. It was soon determined by decision-makers in the federal government that settlement of Indigenous peoples into communities should be encouraged in to make education and health services available to the population.⁷ Housing was provided. The housing was rudimentary and expensive and furthermore, it entailed a sort of money trap: people who had heretofore built and maintained their own shelter were ever after expected to pay cash rent. These are the origins of a system of public housing that still exists in most of the over 100 smaller, predominantly Aboriginal communities in Canada's North.

There were a number of perverse impacts. As Indigenous people were induced, persuaded and encouraged to settle in

communities, they were literally moved away from their traditional patterns of land use and residence. Settlement of people into permanent communities that were intended to become their primary residence involved two similar processes.

Sometimes, families were encouraged to move into housing in villages located in territories that they already inhabited. In other cases, whole communities of people were moved, sometimes great distances. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples documented "dozens" of relocations of groups of Indigenous people, for administrative convenience or to make way for development.⁸ The Commission commented that "[w]e believe that relocations must be seen as part of a broader process of dispossession and displacement, a process with lingering effects on the cultural, spiritual, social, economic and political aspects of people's lives. We are troubled by the way relocations may have contributed to the general malaise gripping so many Aboriginal communities and to the incidence of violence, directed outward and inward."⁹

Community settlement, displacement, forced relocation, residential schooling, the introduction of social welfare transfers and other disempowering measures disrupted relations between women and men, as well as between generations. These externally generated processes of broad social change have created long-standing difficulties for the Indigenous societies of the Canadian north.

As we have noted, however, they have not destroyed them. Despite housing shortages and other problems, most northern communities are still very good places to live; in many, an adapted form of traditional land use, and Indigenous languages, remain strong. There has been no mass depopulation of the countryside, and where surveys have been done, Indigenous people have indicated that their preference is to remain in their home communities.¹⁰ That said, there is a need for measures that will sustain the smaller communities as good places to live, and for actions to deal with existing and emerging housing-related dangers in the cities

What is to be Done?

Outside of a few waged-work centres, including the territorial capitals, in most northern communities the private housing market is almost non-existent. There is waged work, but the community economies depend upon income from a variety of sources, including harvesting, the sale of fur, art and crafts, and the normal array of social transfer payments.¹¹ Territorial Crown corporations own most of the housing stock, and this is administered through local housing associations. Housing in the small communities is always expensive to maintain, mostly due to the need for an ongoing state subsidy to bridge the gap between what a low-income household can afford and the actual cost of operating and maintaining the housing unit (including the ongoing cost of fuel, power, water and

repairs). Tenants living in government-assisted housing units in the north pay rent that is assessed to reflect an amount that they can reasonably afford. No tenant in public housing in the NWT pays rent above 30 per cent of their income.¹²

While approximately two per cent of Canadian households are considered to be living in crowded conditions, the corresponding figure for Yellowknife is three per cent, while the figure for rural NWT is eight per cent. Likewise, eight per cent of Canadian households live in housing that (according to the federal government) requires major repairs; the corresponding figure for Yellowknife is 10 per cent, while the figure for rural NWT is 22 per cent.¹³

There is a different situation in the handful of predominantly wage-based centres. One illustrative example is Yellowknife, the capital of the NWT, and also that territory's largest municipality. At over 20,000 residents, the city of Yellowknife holds half the population of the NWT. A city that benefits from a large resident public service and an economic boom due to mining, Yellowknife frequently experiences (official) full employment. It also has a homeless population that is larger in proportion to the general population than other Canadian municipalities by a considerable margin. Indeed, while roughly one per cent of a Canadian municipality's general population typically experiences homelessness in a given year, the figure for Yellowknife is five per cent.¹⁴

Almost all of the homeless people are Indigenous. Homeless sheltering statistics and anecdotal estimates suggest that between 90 and 95 per cent of Yellowknife's visible homeless population is Dene, Inuit or Métis. Moreover, 25 per cent of the women staying in the emergency shelter operated by the Centre for Northern Families have lived at the facility for more than five years.¹⁵

There are important quality of life indicators between various groups in the NWT. For example, the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people in the NWT is more than four times greater than for non-Aboriginal people in the NWT. Moreover, an Aboriginal household in the NWT is almost four times as likely to report having more than one person to a room than a non-Aboriginal household in the NWT.¹⁶

Large numbers of people confined to homeless shelters has been conducive to the spread of tuberculosis, which already exists in the NWT at a rate that is approximately four times the Canadian average.¹⁷ A tuberculosis outbreak hit a men's emergency shelter in Yellowknife with a vengeance in 2008, leading to more than 20 active cases.¹⁸ The shelter in question was and still is — sleeping men on mats spaced out roughly 30 centimetres apart from one another.¹⁹ In addition to the distress and human misery caused by this outbreak, it also added roughly CA\$1 million in health care costs.²⁰

There is also cause for concern with respect to illicit drug use in Yellowknife's homeless

population. When it comes to injection drug use, homelessness is one of the highest risk factors in the world for HIV infection.²¹ But while Yellowknife has officially had a needle-exchange program in place for roughly two decades, public health officials in the NWT have been forbidden by their political masters from advertising its existence.²²

The smoking of crack cocaine already exists on a considerable scale in Yellowknife's homeless population. And, given that up to three-quarters of the NWT's Hepatitis C cases are believed to occur through the smoking of crack cocaine,²³ this is additional cause for concern.

These factors, and the reality that no northern settlements or cities are free of problems of inadequate housing, overcrowding and substance abuse, argue for renewed focus on the problems of northern housing. Just as housing was at the centre of the process of social change that has created today's difficulties, improvements in northern housing provision can make a major contribution to addressing them. ■

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Footnotes

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9. *Final Report*, p. 412.
10. See, for example, the results of Poppel, Birger, Jack Kruse, Gerard Duhaime and Larissa Abruтина, *Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic: Result*. (Anchorage: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska, Anchorage, 2007).
11. On the economies in the smaller northern communities, see David Natcher, "Subsistence and the Social Economy of Canada's Aboriginal North" *The Northern Review* 30 (Spring 2009) pp 83-98; Peter J. Usher, Gérard Duhaime and Edmond Searles, "The Household as an Economic Unit in Arctic Aboriginal Communities, and its Measurement by Means of a Comprehensive Survey" *Social Indicators Research* 61: 175-202.
12. Key informant interviews by Nick Falvo: 23 February 2010 and 1 October 2010.
13. Luigi Zanasi, *Discussion Paper on Expiry of Federal Funding for Social Housing: Implications for the Territorial Housing Corporations* (Whitehorse: Yukon Housing Corporation, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and Nunavut Housing Corporation). January 17, 2007, 4.
14. Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition. *Yellowknife Homelessness Report Card 2008* (Yellowknife, NWT: Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition, 2009): 1.
15. It is not possible to be sure why Indigenous people make up such a large proportion of the homeless or inadequately housed. Some of the difference is probably due to

- differences in cash income. Another contributing factor, however, is that despite the presence of a long-term non-Indigenous population, a good number of non-Indigenous residents are relatively recent migrants from the south. Quite probably some of these who risk homelessness chose to relocate to warmer parts of Canada, and places where they may have family or friends.
16. Frances Abele, "Northern Development: Past, Present and Future," in Frances Abele, Thomas J. Courchene, F. Leslie Seidle and France St-Hilaire (eds.) *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects in Canada's North*. Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2009, 55.
17. Frances Abele, "Northern Development: Past, Present and Future," in Frances Abele, Thomas J. Courchene, F. Leslie Seidle and France St-Hilaire (eds.) *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects in Canada's North*. (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2009): 54.
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SAFE TRACKS — A Strategic Framework for Supporting Aboriginal Mobility and Reducing Aboriginal Homelessness

By Kerry Beck and Carol Shard, Department for Families and Communities, South Australia

Introduction

The Department for Families and Communities (DFC), Housing SA provides program and housing responses to address Aboriginal mobility and reduce Aboriginal homelessness in South Australia. These services incorporate policy development, governance, evaluation, operational and service functions across DFC.

The SA SAFE TRACKS Strategic Framework brings together elements contributed by all levels of government and community sectors to address the mobility of Aboriginal people. It is the platform for addressing the related housing, health, safety and well being needs of Aboriginal South Australians moving between remote communities and regional centres.

The Framework operates within a culture of partnership and with well defined and clearly articulated policy, governance and service parameters. It is underpinned by a strong evidence base and the recognition that an understanding of the issues relating to Aboriginal homelessness and mobility will lead to a more comprehensive and integrated service response. This, in turn, will lead to improved outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Mobility and Homelessness

For the purposes of this paper, mobility, home and homelessness in the Aboriginal context is the movement of Aboriginal people between places of shelter for reasons including culture, health, family, education and employment. It is not restricted to patterns of mobility from APY lands to urban centres, and includes where an Aboriginal person departs a place permanently and where they intend to return to their point of departure.

Aboriginal homelessness is widely accepted as falling within one of three categories:

- Public Place Dwellers (short to long term, voluntary or necessitated by circumstance).
- At Risk of Homelessness (insecure, substandard or overcrowded housing).
- Spiritually Homeless (separation from traditional land or kinship groups).

Culturally relevant understandings of homelessness and mobility, within the scope permitted by the identified strategic objectives, are agreed, in principle, in order to draw together and implement an overarching framework centrally and locally.

What we know...

Each year, the SA Government invests millions of dollars to address Aboriginal mobility and reduce Aboriginal homelessness. Money is invested across health, housing, homelessness, child protection and corrections and is directed towards the development and implementation of policy, governance, infrastructure, services, research and evaluations.

Across South Australia, \$5m p.a. of homelessness funding is invested directly into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific homelessness and family violence service responses with an additional 16 per cent (\$4m) of all other homelessness services delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. In 2008/9, this represented a total of 36 per cent of all homelessness funding.

Identifying the gaps...

Whilst consistent service level evaluations indicate current service responses are both significant and effective, Aboriginal Homelessness across SA has significantly increased over recent years. (ABS: 2001 n=544, 2006 n=858)

To this end, Housing SA, Homelessness Strategy embarked on a process of identifying the gaps and opportunities and developing an across Government approach to ending homelessness.

Opportunities...

The increase in funding created by the Rudd Labor Government provided significant opportunities for SA to address the issues identified across the following agreements:

- *A Place To Call Home* — \$22m



Anne Cabrié — *Untitled* (1991). Type C photograph.

Presented by Mrs Lieselott Man through the Felix H. Man Memorial Prize, 1992. National Gallery of Victoria.



- capital investment in homelessness.
- *Homelessness National Partnership* — additional \$60m over 4 years.
- *Social Housing National Partnership* — \$15m for social housing initiatives.
- *Remote Indigenous National Partnership* — \$291m over 10 years.
- *Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan* — \$434m over 3 years.
- *National Affordable Housing Agreement* — \$133m for homelessness over 4 years.

Closing the Gaps...

The SAFE TRACKS Strategic Framework is a high level stakeholder engagement that links operational responses with policy initiatives across the government and community sectors. It operates within a flexible policy and operational environment and a continuing evidence base that supports contemporary responses. By drawing together the contributions of government departments and community sectors, gaps in the system are identified and inform the State's Aboriginal homelessness and housing response.

The provision of a SAFE TRACKS Strategic Framework ensures:

- Recognition is given to the inherent value in preserving traditional patterns of mobility and cultural understandings of place and home.
- Responses are culturally supportive, respectful and inclusive of the diverse populations within the Aboriginal community.
- Partnerships within and across tiers of Government are created and maintained.
- Responses are sustainable, integrated, transparent and universally understood.
- Responses support the delivery of infrastructure, regional programs

and services.

- Responses improve access to and outcomes for Aboriginal people across a range of social determinants, including housing, criminal justice, education, employment, health and wellbeing.

The Framework operates within new and existing policy, building a partnership approach to governance and operational arrangements, with a focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal clients across the state.

The Framework operates across eight key strategic areas:

Strategy 1: Strategic Policy

The SAFE TRACKS Strategic Framework is informed by national and state policy drivers, including:

Closing the Gap

A commitment by Australian governments to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians, in particular provide a better future for Indigenous children.

National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH):

NPAH facilitates significant reform to improve responses to reducing homelessness, including a commitment to a one third reduction in the number of Aboriginal South Australians experiencing homelessness.

The National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children:

A joint national and state initiative being progressed through COAG to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children by 2021.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing:

Aims at improving housing conditions to achieve improvements in Indigenous health, education and employment and contribute towards closing the gap to Indigenous disadvantage.

National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing:

To achieve:

- rental housing that meets people's needs;
- sustainable housing and social inclusion for people who are homeless or at risk; and
- reduced overcrowding.

South Australian Strategic Plan Target 6.6:

To halve the number of people rough sleeping by 2010 and maintain thereafter.

South Australian Strategic Plan Target 6.9:

Aboriginal housing; reduce overcrowding in Aboriginal households by 10 per cent by 2014.

Strategy 2:

Research and Data

Current Sources of data collection include the COAG Reform Council, ABS Census Data, SAAP NDCA, Counting the Homeless and National Census of Homeless School Children.

South Australia acknowledges the issues with current data regarding methodologies, definitions, interpretations and incompatible data sets. As such, a case management and data collection system, Homeless2Home (H2H) is being developed. Input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, clients and community leaders has been sought during the design phase to ensure the system offers appropriate and consistent case management, information sharing and data collection processes.

Strategy 3: Governance

Current governance structures include the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), Social Inclusion Committee of Cabinet, Homelessness Coordination Committee, Chief Executives' Group on Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation and the Social Sustainable Partnership Action Group.

Indigenous Homelessness South Australia			
	2001	2006	Percentage Change
Rough Sleeping	162	166	+2.5%
Friends and Relatives	171	126	-26.3%
Boarding Houses	53	81	+52.8%
SAAP	158	485	+207%
Overall Total	544	858	+57.7%

The SAFE TRACKS Strategic Framework is overseen by senior government and non-government officials and Aboriginal community leaders to address the State's responses to Aboriginal homelessness. The Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee meets monthly to provide leadership, respond to identified issues and oversee strategic development. The Committee reports to the Social Inclusion Committee of Cabinet.

Strategy 4: Workforce Development

South Australia acknowledges the importance of maximising employment and workforce development outcomes for Aboriginal people. It achieves this through collaboration across government, non government and private sector agencies with employment and training responsibilities. Core components of the workforce development strategies include mainstream qualifications and articulated training pathways for Aboriginal South Australians.

The NPAH commits funding for specific responses to workforce development with respect to Aboriginal staffing and Aboriginal homelessness. Professional development opportunities relating to service provision, performance management, and development of agency capacity are critical elements of the Framework.

Strategy 5: Operational Responses

South Australia has allocated NPAH funding to deliver regionalised specialist

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses in all regions across SA. A minimum 20 per cent Aboriginal client target across all specialist homelessness services has also been set.

Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan funding is being used to build 636 houses with homelessness support attached (funded out of NPAH). A minimum of 127 supportive housing options will be provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the State.

The Remote Indigenous National Partnership Agreement will provide 241 new houses in remote Aboriginal communities, 206 upgraded houses in remote Aboriginal communities and significant upgrades to housing in non-remote Aboriginal communities across South Australia.

Strategy 6: Partnership and Integration

The importance of a coordinated health, education, family and social response to Aboriginal people is a critical focus of the SAFE TRACKS Strategic Framework. This represents a significant opportunity for across government collaboration to provide, in addition to operational responses, partnership and integration on a governance and policy level.

To ensure outcomes in this area, the Framework will hold all key stakeholders accountable via a new homelessness reporting performance framework that is being developed and the Homelessness Regionalisation Program. This program involves a three tiered approach to regional

partnerships incorporating strategic, management and operational policy and governance systems, including the establishment and implementation of Homelessness Regional Roundtables and the introduction of Regional Alliance Plans to tackle homelessness.

Strategy 7: Aboriginal Leadership and Community Engagement

The congregation of Aboriginal people in public spaces in Adelaide has historically been addressed via program responses. While these responses have been of high quality they have not always been successful in addressing the complexities and sensitivities surrounding this population.

Leadership from the Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee has resulted in an Aboriginal Community Leadership and Engagement Strategy that will connect service providers to the most appropriate Aboriginal leaders, advisors or persons of influence to assist with improving the engagement of vulnerable Aboriginal people. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division (AARD) will provide the point of contact, however, it is expected that service providers will have utilised all internal and external mechanisms, prior to calling on AARD to intervene.

The key elements of the strategy include improved profiling of individuals and their circumstances to enable a more holistic, personalised service response; collaborative case management; protocols for language groups to be developed by the individual language groups themselves; development of information sharing protocols and client consent to be obtained.

Strategy 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

A state based homelessness performance framework is being developed to monitor, measure and report on progress in relation to the NPAH targets of:

1. By 2013, 7 per cent reduction in the number of South Australians experiencing homelessness (from 7,962 in 2006 to 7,405 — a reduction of 557)
2. By 2013, one third reduction in the number of Aboriginal South Australians experiencing homelessness (from 858 in 2006 to 572 — a reduction of 286).
3. By 2013, 25 per cent reduction in the number of South Australians who are sleeping rough (from 848 to 636 — a reduction of 211).

The SA Evaluation Framework for the National Partnership on Homelessness will provide consistent and ongoing evaluation and will have a particular focus on Aboriginal homelessness and mobility. ■



Anne Cabrié — *Untitled* (1991). Type C photograph.

Presented by Mrs Lieselott Man through the Felix H. Man Memorial Prize, 1992. National Gallery of Victoria.

Indigenous Journeys from School to Work: A Canadian Perspective

By Lianne Britten,
Macquarie University

In 2010 the world of work is an arena of constant change. Nowhere is the need for positive change greater than in the area of Indigenous employment. Indeed, programs like the newly implemented "Generation One" aim to achieve change so that Indigenous people can participate and succeed in employment.

However, research and time is needed to assess the impact and success of such programs. The exploratory research I completed in Canada has shed a sliver of light on the rarely studied phenomenon of the factors that help Indigenous young people succeed in the transition from school to work.

A review of Australian research has revealed some similarities in the experience of school and career between the Indigenous people I lived, made friends with and worked with over the past 20 years in Canada, and the Indigenous young people of Australia.

However, it is unclear whether the Indigenous young people of Canada and Australia share similar experiences. In order to understand the experience of Aboriginal Australian young people, it is important to listen to their voices so we can explore a variety of ways to make sure all young Aboriginal people can be mentored and fostered equally into a successful career of their choosing.

My research in Canada heard the voices of a few First Nations young people who identified themselves as "doing well" and who also felt "successful" in their chosen "occupation".

Canadian statistics show low rates of school completion for Indigenous young people when compared with non-Indigenous graduation rates. Graduation rates for Aboriginals in British Columbia, (B.C) were 47 per cent, 32 per cent less than non-Indigenous students, as released by B.C. Statistics, 2009. In addition, Indigenous people have high unemployment rates (22.5 per cent, 2001 B.C. Stats). However, there are some positive stories that are not broadcast in the media. Many of my good friends are examples of Indigenous people thriving in the mainstream world and I want to bring these stories to light.

The young people I interviewed identified a number of factors as being helpful in the transition from school to post-secondary school life. These positive factors

included: family, wellness, school, Aboriginality, achieving a new level of self-understanding, work experience, healthy relationships and community.

A variety of combinations of these factors served to help in the young person's success and feeling competent in both mainstream and Indigenous worlds. The interesting paradox was that these young people also felt the same factors caused them the most hindrance with their transition.

The five top factors identified as causing hindrance with transition were; family, school, Aboriginality, community and healthy lifestyles. Therefore, while it is clear that these factors work to assist young people in doing well, unfortunately, at their worst, they also hinder young people in their capacity to do well in life and work.

The Canadian Aboriginal young people I interviewed had much wisdom to share on this subject.

A major factor they identified that helped promote their success was school. For example, in terms of the helpfulness of school one participant said:

"I started playing basketball competitively when I was in gr. 6. I played... Until I was in high school... so in Gr. 12 I was playing and was competitive ..., it helped in a number of ways... physically it gave me a lot of exercise... It's nice to be part of a team to have that sort of bonding with other people in the school... I guess [it was an] outlet for frustration and stuff like that ... and then it was ... a social benefit...being on the basketball team was ...a big plus for the social realms of school..."

Another participant outlined one of the hindering aspects of school in these words:

"I ended up in [private school] it was pilot school very fancy private school and, there was very few children that attended this school but it was just the worst school because it was so slack... Too much leniency... It led me to believe...that I could do, I could slack off in every area in life because you can get away with it, you can manipulate, and do these kind of things....You can get by [by]not [being] so good, I mean there is nothing good about anything that I learned in that school... I didn't really want to do anything at all except to be a slack off..."

Yet in clear contrast, when the expectations for the young person, no matter what cultural background, were to achieve and do well, then a different ending was experienced as evidenced by this participant's words:

"If I got caught skipping I would have been thrown out of school. The thought never even crossed my mind..." or in another participant's words, "again being in a private school, being at that mentality, you are definitely in a school with students who in all of their classes are going somewhere. They are all graduating and then they are going to university..."

The message from the participants was that while some teachers, schools or even parents, might think they are doing them a favour by "slacking" off in their discipline and expectations of them, in the eyes of these young people, this attitude is far from helpful.

The dedication and high expectations to achieve as illustrated by the participants helped the young person believe they could succeed despite barriers. This belief helped them gain resilience and self-efficacy for staying on a journey toward a better future for themselves.

For example, as one participant said:

"So if I see that I'm successful in what I'm doing it's heavily encouraging. It's encouraging me to keep going and to keep striving..."

Other factors identified as being major hindrances on the one hand, were seen as helpful when they were positive and healthy. Familial support, community support and healthy relationships all featured as major areas of importance for the young people. Underscoring the importance of such things as community, education and financial support was their inclusion in the "wish list" of items that participants identified when asked what things they wanted to be available to ensure continued success.

One item that emerged that was completely distinct from the categories in the helpful and hindering categories was the need for motivation, challenge and focus. In the participant's words; "to keep focussed." From this it can be seen that young Indigenous participants voiced the need to have hope for future growth and to have some type of challenge so that feelings of stagnation and lack of progress were diminished or even overcome completely.



The participants stressed the need for continued financial assistance, continued access to further education, continued support from healthy family, friends, and the community, as well as a connection with spirituality, in whatever form that took for the individual.

As Chief Barry Ahenakew said in 2000, *“Education is our buffalo. It is our new means of survival.”* Many items in their wish-list were related to the idea of being a part of a “big picture”, of being a member of a global community that required the success of First Nations people, as well as their own community, for success to be meaningful.

The expression of such wisdom by these Indigenous young people, that doing well was not just for themselves, but for Natives all over, and the wider global community of which they are an integral part, suggested that the bridge between cultures is not as wide as is often implied.

To maintain the already improving statistics that show small but significant gains across the spectrum for Aboriginal young people here in Australia today, we need to know how to foster these helpful factors.

Statistics tell a story that rarely shows the face of positive gains for Indigenous people no matter where they are in the world. Taking these exploratory results from Canada and comparing the experience of these young Canadian First Nations people with those of the Aboriginal young people of Australia would be a next step in the process of hearing the voices of these young people.

Rather than seeing the current status quo as an impenetrable barrier when looking at the gap between current reality and the future ideal goal, it is not such a stretch to see this gap as one that can be bridged and one which can be overcome.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2006, the latest statistics for Australian Indigenous young people also show low graduation rates. In 2006 rates of completion of Grade 12 for Indigenous young people in Australia was 23 per cent, less than half that of the non-Indigenous population rates of 49 per cent.

What is not shown however, is that this was a 3 per cent increase from 2001 for Indigenous young people! In a mere 5 years that is a huge gain! Additionally Australian Indigenous young people were more than twice as likely to leave school at year 9, (34 per cent) versus non-Indigenous young people (16 per cent).

Indigenous people also experience higher rates of unemployment. 55 per cent of Indigenous people were employed in 2006, up from 52 per cent in 2001, but still 10 per cent less than the non-Indigenous population who have a 65 per cent participation rate.

Lack of education and the impact of leaving school in year nine are felt in the back pocket. Those who left in Year nine earned \$420 a week compared with those Indigenous young people who graduated year 12 earning \$605 a week. Therefore, it can be seen that retention in school is a marked benefit to Indigenous people’s income levels and can help fight the endemic poverty that is experienced. How do we keep them?

We listen to them and heed their voices.

Keeping hope alive and fostering the success of our Indigenous young people through the provision of programs which provide Aboriginal young people with the means to become confident and contribute and positive role models for ALL the community, is central to overcoming the remaining gaps

that are evident both in Canadian and Australian Indigenous communities.

The message of the voices of the Canadian Indigenous participants is simple: cultivate health, wellness and promote our families and community with meaningful programs and financial aid. It is hoped that hearing the voices of Aboriginal Australians may also lend credence to the need for such programs and funding.

To conclude, it is my hope that positives can be built upon especially if there is a foundation of respect. By staying grounded in reality and the knowledge that success comes from hope, work and commitment, then positive outcomes for Indigenous people are possible.

In closing, I believe perhaps the most important element for the future success of all young people is summed up in the words of one young Indigenous participant:

“To me respect is very important umm both in the terms of the respect I get from people and the respect I give to people. I think respect is more important than money, it’s more important than your financial situation or how you’re placed in the social hierarchy if you will. If someone respects you I think then that to me means that they kind of respect your ideas... They don’t necessarily have to like you but they realise that the ideas you hold and the values you hold and the person you are carries some weight and that to me is just having respect is important...”

All My Relations! ■

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Contemporary Displacement Pressures on Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory

By Simon Emsley*

The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), a suite of legal, regulatory and fiscal changes affecting Aboriginal communities since July 2007, has revealed a renewed interest in the project of Indigenous displacement. By comparing the salient features of the NTER with those of other state-coordinated actions displacing Indigenous people, the NTER can be viewed as implementing (among other things) an attempted displacement of a scale and intensity greater than at any time in the history of white settler /Aboriginal relations.

Intensity of displacement is here considered in relation to facts of:

- *scale* — the numbers of people affected, the range and significance of issues over which coercive forces of displacement operate;
- *timeframe* — governing the pace of implementation; and
- *saturation* — relating to concentration of means of implementation across location.

The claim for the extraordinary intensity of displacement pressure evident in the NTER measures is based in the observation that Australia's white settlement has, "in general", been enacted incrementally through an organic expansion of the settler economies. The most well-known forced removal "en masse" is that of Aboriginal peoples of Tasmania, a number of whom negotiated their displacement to nearby Flinders Island after a prolonged military campaign.

The creation of the Australian Capital Territory in 1911 required the removal of all Aboriginal people from the area (including those having been granted farming land) to the Egerton mission at Yass. Such wholesale displacements within specific areas have applied progressively throughout the history of Australia's white settlement, and have been underpinned by certain concentrations of military, economic and population pressure operating within specific localities. While systematically facilitating displacement, the operation of this type of displacement has been by increment rather than across the board. It has been supplemented by the episodic harassment of Aboriginal populations through abductions undertaken by vigilante pastoralists and fellow travellers.

Closer settlement and intensification of pastoral production drove a displacement from social and economic forces and, eventually, the production of a coordinating discourse of assimilation at the first Commonwealth-State Native Welfare Conference of 1937. The development of

state and territory regimes forcing Aboriginal people off traditional lands (where, on occasion, they coexisted with pastoralism) and onto reserves was nevertheless piecemeal and in response to specific settlement conjunctures of state and locality.

'Protectionist' legislation was in place by 1911 in all states and territories except Tasmania to allow state agencies to extensively control ('protect') Aboriginal people and to assume guardianship rights over all Aboriginal children. The use of native reserves was gradually extended to provide for the confinement of displaced Aboriginal people. A program to further fracture the population by differentiating 'full-bloods' from 'half-castes' underwrote a rolling program of removal of children from their families. Threat of removal was at times itself used to force families to take up residence on reserves. In 1940 50 per cent of the Aboriginal population of NSW was estimated to live on reserves or stations controlled by the NSW government¹ while in Queensland in 1934 one third lived on missions and settlements.

Whole populations were affected by these changes through a variety of legal, economic and social means. Aboriginal families nevertheless resisted these strategies as they could, by hiding children, moving away from reserves or across state borders, or taking up residency in settlements on the fringes of rural centres to provide a secondary pool of highly exploited labour power. The removal of children intensified with the increasing reach and capacity of state power to peak in the mid-20th century, during which time the child-removal regime has been estimated to have been applied to between one in ten and three in ten children. Though affecting nearly all families at some point, the rigors of the child removal regime passed over a significant proportion of the Aboriginal population, who escaped the experience of removal first hand.

Levers of NTER displacement: welfare, CDEP, hub-town prioritisation

The displacements implied by the measures of the NTER, enacted under the Howard government and modified by the Rudd government, have been made in the context of an unprecedented set of State/Aboriginal power relations enabled by the establishment of extremely high Aboriginal dependence on welfare transfers in the Territory.

The measures have been applied in a systematic and wholesale fashion to the remnant Aboriginal population most intimately connected to their traditional lands

and culture. (In this sense it is truly an extension of the settler imperative.) While the promise of rations has been used frequently in the 20th century as a means of corralling Aboriginal populations, the extension of access to welfare benefits to Aboriginal people in the 1960s tightened methods of control enormously.

Nowhere is the reliance of welfare transfers more complete than in the case of remote Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory, settled as they are on land proven to be of too marginal quality to be of interest to white pastoralist leaseholders over the last two centuries.

Major changes to the conditions governing access to welfare have served as the most immediate drivers of displacement. The Remote Area Exemption (RAE) was an exemption from activity testing that can be applied to income support recipients living in areas where there is no locally accessible labour market, no locally accessible vocational training course and no locally accessible labour market programme (*Social Security Act 1991*, s601(2) and s603(2)). This exemption applied to people in 61 of the 73 'prescribed areas' affected by the NTER, the reasoning being that these communities were too remote to allow people in them access to a labour market or labour market services.

Changes to the *Social Security Act* enabled by the NTER facilitated the removal of 5,325 people from RAEs. The number of people on activity tested payments subsequently increased from 3,827 at Sept 2007 to 8,806 at Jan 2008.⁴ This led in turn to an expansion of referrals to Work for the Dole and Language, Literacy and Numeracy programs and the later transfer of 1,800 on to Disability Support Pension in the year to June 2009.

A less immediate but more structural shift in the funding of the economies of remote communities was initiated by the NTER's phasing out of CDEP-funded work programs. The establishment of CDEP programs from the early 1980s had allowed the labour component of maintenance and infrastructure work in remote communities to be federally funded through payments to CDEP workers, who received payment somewhat above the rate of the unemployment benefit.

The mooted suspension of CDEP, followed by its retention at a reduced pay rate and work limit of 15 hours per week, has had important implications for the capacity of remote communities. There has been some attempt to shift jobs formerly undertaken under CDEP work to fully remunerated positions. The cost of this transfer has been

borne by the Territory government and the volume of jobs made available to absorb the 8000 workers on CDEP at July 2007 has absorbed less than a quarter of that figure. Strong initial reaction from Aboriginal organisations stayed the intended removal of CDEP, though the reduced hours of the retained scheme, its capacity to be 'income managed' and the loss of community management of CDEP have significantly reduced its viability as an element sustaining remote communities.

The third major element driving displacement from remote communities has been the roll-out of the 'hub-towns' policy. This policy, coordinated by the Northern Territory government, seeks to favour infrastructure development in twenty of the prescribed communities in order to create 'viable' regional centres around which commerce may develop and service provision orient.⁵

It has set new limits on government investment outside hub-towns, spelling the rapid deterioration of capacity of remote communities.⁶ The hub-town policy will concentrate federal investment in Aboriginal housing in the Northern Territory to create townships of critical mass, but also implies a forced urbanisation and potential loss of health and wellbeing benefits arising from Aboriginal people's close relationship to country.

Considered together, certain features of the NTER combined to create a coordinated and intensive gesture of displacement utterly foreign to the explicit goals of Aboriginal child wellbeing. Whatever the intended motives of the NTER might have been, its implementation under the Howard Government and later adoption by the Rudd Government demonstrates that the displacement of Indigenous people remains a high priority for the Australian settler state. ■

Footnotes

1. Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, (1997) *Bringing Them Home: Report into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, p.39
2. *Ibid*, p.93
3. *Ibid*, p.118-120
4. Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, (2009) *Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory: January 2009 to June 2009: Report by Measure*
5. Northern Territory Government, (2009) *Headline Policy Statement, Working Futures*
6. Kerins, S., (2009) 'The first ever Northern Territory homelands/outstation policy', *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, September/October 2009, 7 (14).
7. \$20million has been allocated for investment over four years to 500 remote communities, Kerins (2009)
8. Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, (2009)

Moments of intense Aboriginal displacement by scale, saturation and timeframe				
	Scale	Coercive means (saturation)	Locality (saturation)	Period (timeframe)
Child removals by Queensland Government	2,302	Capture by police, separation of families by mission management	State	1908 – 1971 63 years
Black-line campaign	Of estimated population of 2000 the campaign moved 200 to Flinders Island by 1835	Military campaign and negotiated settlement	State	1830 – 35 5 years
Movements onto reserves in southern Western Australia ¹	500 (25% of estimated regional population)	Mass transfers through 'round ups' of residents of pre-existing settlements; withdrawal of rations outside settlement areas	Occurring most intensely in south of the state.	1915 – 20 5 years
Establishment of Northern Territory missions	1,100 of estimated population of 21,000 ³ accommodated by late 1920s	Promise of rations, effects of drought and depression, removals sanctioned under powers of 'Chief Protector'	Missions mostly located on north coast	1910 – 1930s 20 years

Source: Bringing Them Home

NTER moment of Indigenous displacement 2007–2010			
Scale	Coercive means (saturation)	Locality (saturation)	Period (timeframe)
10,000 potentially affected	Withdrawal of infrastructure funding for remote communities ⁷	Remote communities of Northern Territory (exclusively Aboriginal communities)	Affecting forward planning from July, 2007
10,000 potentially affected	Prioritising of investment in hub-town developments	20 hub towns of Northern Territory	July 2007 (MOU transferring responsibility of remotes to NT Government)
5,325 immediately affected	Removal of remote area exemptions/increase in participation and reporting requirements	Across the prescribed areas of NT affected by NTER	July – Nov 2007 (4 months)
10,000 potentially affected	Income suspension for school non-attendance	Remote communities	
8,000	Removal of CDEP schemes	All communities affected by NTER	
71 prescribed communities	Undermining of community decision-makers through seizure of assets, compulsory leases, loss of right to refuse access		July – Nov 2007

Source: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (8)

What Has Changed?

**By Dan Laws
State-wide Aboriginal
Homelessness Network
Coordinator**

We all know what colonisation meant in the beginning for Aboriginal people. It wasn't till after a few years that the relationship between the white settlers and Aboriginal people could be put in terms of something akin to "frontier wars". Many history books will claim that the settlement of this great land of ours was "orderly and a peaceful affair". This is not so and what was to come for the Aboriginal people is characterised by violent massacres and bloodshed.

As the early settler's numbers grew they began to move out and came into more and more contact with Aboriginal people.

Slowly they began to take over more of their land and food sources and justified this by saying that, Aboriginal people are nomads who could move on and be happy somewhere else. There was total ignorance about the deep spiritual connection the Aboriginal people had with the land let alone not taking into account, denying them of access to their traditional food and water sources. Aboriginal people may have been nomadic but they travelled around one large area so as to let the land rest and replenish before coming back to it at a later date. Early settlers did not understand this type of land management and showed total

lack of disrespect for this way of life by the Aboriginal people.

The introduction of grazing also meant that much of the Aboriginal peoples land had been desecrated and their food sources inevitably were driven out and away from the land they once knew. Aboriginal people were being dispossessed of their land and fighting for their survival.

Even today when you think about what happened to both the "St Kilda Parkies" and the "Smith Street Mob"? It conjures up so many questions and makes you wonder why.

Before the St Kilda Parkies were forcibly moved on, the fact that the block where they gathered and met had significance and meaning to them was not taken into account. The block provided shelter for the Aboriginal people from the elements; it was a place that most knew about and a central point for meeting. People didn't realise to that this block was all that most of the Aboriginal people had at the time and it gave them a sense of belonging. The area also has cultural significance dating way back, as the land around Port Phillip and because of the wetlands that once were provided a good source for both food and water. And as it was explained to me the meeting place for the Aboriginal people of more recent times was not too far from where the Aboriginal people met back then, and the reason they met and gathered firstly before going

off was because you don't walk into someone's kitchen without knocking at the front door first.

The Smith Street mob is not too dissimilar in what happened to them and how they were treated. This gathering spot gave the mob a sense of belonging. Yes they had a few problems not only from amongst themselves but with local shop traders and frequent visits from the law. It was perceived by many that the mob in Smith Street displayed very much "anti-social" behaviour. Yet today I can walk down Smith Street and look at the gathering of people on the side walk outside its many cafes, restaurants and bars and still be subjected to what is claimed to be anti-social behaviour.

Aboriginal Homelessness makes up around 2.5% of homelessness in Australia with about one fifth being SAAP clients. Today there is much good work being done by Government and the programs that have been put in place but until there is a clear understanding of what "Spiritual Homeless" (separation from land or from family) as pointed out in the Keys Young report, dispossession amongst Aboriginal people will always be at the fore-front in their minds.

I leave you with this to ponder. When we talk about "Aboriginal Dispossession" have we really changed that much from the way it was when this great land of ours was first embarked upon by white settlers? ■

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Opinion — Flora Baoin-McCann Australian Indigenous Homelessness and Dispossession

The dispossession of the Indigenous people from their land and culture in the process of colonisation is a major factor in Aboriginal homelessness.

The identity of Indigenous people is based in their land and culture. Taking away this identity, along with various Acts of Government legislation, for example, the Protection Act and Child Welfare Policy has lead many Indigenous people to feelings of hopelessness and ultimately to homelessness.

Indigenous people consider the land as their home, as their mother who nurtures and keeps them safe from harm. Their land is where people and nature co-exist with humility and respect, each bounded by their spirits.

During colonisation, their land and the land of their ancestors was taken from them and they were separated from their sacred sites where they pay homage to their spiritual/ancestral obligations and their dreaming. They were denied their hunting ground and the place which is their "home".

Indigenous people have a complex culture that makes them distinct from each other, where an individual's business becomes a family and community affair, where the practice of sharing and caring for each other and caring for the environment goes hand in hand.

During colonisation, their culture became subordinate to a foreign culture of greed and personal ownership, as well as a culture of exploitation of both the environment and other people. The colonisers imposed a culture starkly in contrast to their own, where things and properties became personal, material things were worshiped and revered. In short a culture whose home is just a house.

The cultural dispossession of Indigenous people caused hopelessness and *homelessness from within* to some Indigenous people.

Government legislation took control of the lives of Aboriginal people. They were put on missions for easier control and management. This included separating them from their families. The notorious the "Stolen Generations" has a long time effect on the lives of Aboriginal people in contemporary Australia. Children were taken away from their parents by force and deceit and parents and children had to endure physical and emotional suffering and pain. There was no one to comfort the children when they were in distressed or ill and others may have died alone, with strangers and a foreign place. There was no one to comfort those that were left behind. Victims of the "Stolen Generation" in contemporary Australian society have frequently

drowned their sorrows through drunkenness and other substance abuse. As a result they lives without purpose and hope, and because their spirits are broken they experience *spiritual homelessness*.

While the former Prime Minister Mr. Kevin Rudd made an historic speech, the "Apology to the Stolen Generation", there has been no political will to address the countless issues affecting Australian Indigenous people and the victims of Stolen Generation. After all, actions speak louder than words.

The "Unfinished Business" of healing remains. While political leaders denounce the abuse of human rights to countries outside Australia, the human rights of the first peoples are ignored.

Until the basic human rights of Indigenous people, including homelessness is addressed, the situation of Australian Indigenous people will compare very unfavourably with that of the situation of other colonised people in Canada, New Zealand and America.

The Australia Government should be challenged to attend to their obligations to its Indigenous people, in order to improve its international profile as a "carer" of the original people of this land and make Indigenous homelessness history. ■

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