

Working with Aboriginal Community

Professor Harry Blagg

Settler colonialism

- ‘The magical trick that settler colonialism performs is to denaturalize the right to belong of the local population — to make them foreigners, while naturalizing the foreigner as the person who has the right to belong. Foreigners become natives and natives become foreigners.’ Suren Pillay.

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THE THREE 'Rs'

- **Resistance** Resisting oppression
- **Refusal** Refusing to assimilate
- **Resurgence** Strengthening Culture

A *Justice* System?

- Violence is inherent in the prison system.
- Physical, psychological and other forms of abuse are systemic, even for children



Don Dale NT

- Indigenous boys and girls were dehumanised through being segregated in 'cages' for 23 hours per day, treated like 'dogs', denied food, water and basic hygiene and stripped naked by guards; they were reduced to bare lifeTheir cells smelt like sewage, were dark, filthy and lacking airflow and oppressively muggy.
- The guards would swear at the children, calling them 'stupid black cunts', 'camp dogs', 'oxygen thieves', 'waste of space', 'little black poofters' and 'fucking sluts', including in conjunction with physical abuse and threatening acts...

Aboriginal Detention

Aboriginal youth are massively over-represented in the Australian criminal justice system.

In Western Australia they constitute around 73% of all young people in custody, while making up roughly 7% of the relevant population (AIHW, 2018).

In the NT all youths in detention are Aboriginal
Girls are a small but growing group

‘A fact of life...’

Aboriginal customary law is a fact of life for most Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, not just those in Aboriginal communities. This is because it defines people’s rights and responsibilities, who a person is, and it defines a person’s relationships to everybody else in the world. (Northern Territory Law Reform Commission 2005: 16)



Methods and Ethics

- Maggie Walter points to the key tenets of Indigenous methodologies and ethics, These are: *reciprocity, respect, equality, responsibility, survival and protection, and spirit and integrity*.
- Knowledge should be useful for Indigenous people and further their community-owned safety strategies. engaging Indigenous people in the research design and being accountable to Indigenous communities.
- It requires strengths-based representations of Indigenous cultures, knowledges and connections to country; and peoples, families, organisations, communities and nations. It recognises the value of Indigenous sovereignty and the right to assert and enjoy cultural distinctiveness (Walter 2016: 102).

‘Who speaks for place, who defends it?’ Antonio Escobar

Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country (Bird Rose 1996: 9).

'Aboriginal Culture Sits in Place'

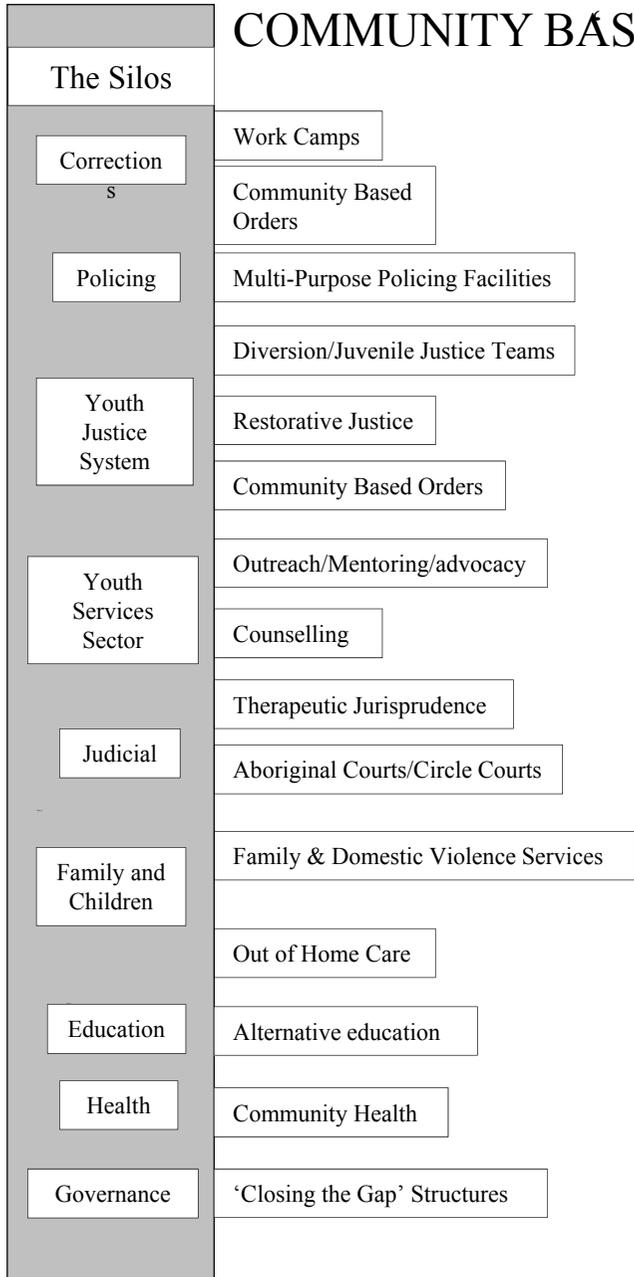
For Indigenous societies, land is peoplehood, relational, cosmological, and epistemological. Land is memory, land is curriculum, land is language. "Land" also refers to water, sky, underground, sea (Rowe and Tuck, 2017: 4).

Yiriman Culturally Secure & 'On Country'



The Yiriman Project reconnects young people to their Elders, to their Country, empowering historical and contemporary identities, strengthening identity through language and Culture

COMMUNITY BASED



Creating an Inter-cultural
Engagement Space'
WHERE?
WHO WITH?

COMMUNITY OWNED



A 'decolonising' alternative: PLACING COUNTRY IN THE CENTRE

