

## Boys as Victims, Men as Prevention Leaders

Notes from the Keynote Presentation: Mr Desmond Campbell (Desmond)

Reflecting on his position as the youngest in a family of fourteen children, Desmond spoke about his parents taking in other children within the 'blackfulla adoption' tradition. His parents followed traditional roles, with his mother as carer and his father as provider. Within his family there was violence, often during times of celebration. Desmond said he tried to moderate the violence by controlling the influence of alcohol at these times. Family violence was accepted as the norm, and Desmond spent time in shelters with his mother until he was too old to do so. He said his mother had no one to support her while in the shelter. When he grew to be a teenager he realised that violence was not the norm, and that families outside his community lived their lives differently.

Desmond spoke of the Gurindji strike for land rights. Vincent Lingiari was his great grandfather. Desmond reminisced on the Wave Hill strike for land rights and remembered the song "From Little Things, Big Things grow" - even giving a brief recital of the song! The Gurindji strike resulted in the passing of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.

At twenty years old Desmond was living away from his family and in a relationship that soon proved to be abusive. He was "outed" to his parents, who came to Adelaide to take him home to Katherine. He was stalked and his family members were victims of the violence. Desmond moved to Darwin, but he was assaulted on his way home one day. Bystanders didn't intervene as they saw it as a "fight". We were reminded that the NT has mandatory reporting as part of its legislation.

Desmond became a White Ribbon Ambassador, then went on to get a job within a men's behaviour change program. As he delivered the program in communities, he noted that the frameworks didn't include families in their plan to support men. There were also programs with no input from Aboriginal people. Desmond also was made aware that statutory organisations blamed women for not protecting their children. Further, Desmond reflected on the tragedy that family violence is the cause of the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in prison, and suggested that current models of service provision failed Aboriginal families. He asked if prisons needed to stay the way they are, and if restorative justice had a place in alternatives to "lock them up and throw away the key"?

Following framework discussions, and attendance at meetings where Desmond was the only Aboriginal person at the table, Desmond rang his mother for advice. She told him not to speak unless he wanted to be heard. At recent conferences he has been encouraged by the first common theme for better models of best practice that involve men. Desmond also spoke about adaptive frameworks, saying we need program models that work with men. He quoted the DIMS model, which works on the premise that men can heal, and which contains elements of mentor support, case management and outreach. Desmond has delivered this program to groups and included cultural activities. It is supported by DOORS and the women's shelter. The Alice Springs service uses the motto "Mums can, Dads can". The Alice Springs Tangentyere men's behaviour change program uses a strengths based approach and challenges rigid stereotypes. Partnerships are localised.

Desmond said he had been asked the 'What if?' question - if mothers wanted family violence to be handled differently, and if fathers were offered the right kind of support. He said there would be more Aboriginal people at the table if this were so.

Desmond concurred with others who have identified that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and positive people need more tailored programs to respond to the needs of victims and hold perpetrators to account. The number of LGBTIQ people involved in family violence is really high. According to Desmond there should be frameworks to ensure all people are safe. There are no shelters for LGBTIQ people, and little support. Desmond told us about using the development of a volleyball team to provide peer support and counselling. He welcomed mental health referrals and provided a place to stay when necessary. They even won a couple of championships!

Desmond added that youth are suffering more damage by not having conversations. He said adults need to involve young people for the magic to happen. He quoted the initiative of the Indigenous Hip Hop Project, which has been widely popular on social media.

In response to a question from Dr Jackie Huggins, who is patron of Black Rainbow <http://www.blackrainbow.org.au/> asking how violence against sistergirls was being addressed, Desmond said that sistergirls from the Tiwi Islands suffer high levels of violence - often from straight males. A sistergirls elder told Desmond that this has to stop, and that it should be made part of women's business.