

Men from remote Aboriginal communities reject violence against women

Aboriginal men from the remote Northern Territory communities of Maningrida, Wurrumiyanga and Ngukurr will hold a special White Ribbon Day event in Darwin today to mark their commitment to ending violence against women and children.

The Healing Foundation has partnered with men in these communities to develop and run pilot healing projects to tackle violence, reduce incarceration rates and improve health and wellbeing.

An independent evaluation of the first two years of the *Our Men Our Healing* program, released today, found “strong evidence” that it “is already creating significant and sustained change at the community, family and individual levels at each site”.

In less than two years, the program has resulted in:

- a reported decrease in the incidence of family and domestic violence and less violence generally in the communities
- women feeling safer and more supported by the men in their families and communities
- in Wurrumiyanga, where the program has been running the longest, a 50 per cent reduction in the number of men registered with the NT Department of Correctional Services and a significant reduction in rates of recidivism and reoffending over the life of the program

The program’s success is largely due to the way the projects are created and run in partnership with the men in these communities, not imposed on them from outside, according to Healing Foundation Chair Professor Steve Larkin.

“The men designed these projects for themselves, ensuring community ownership and a continued commitment to local needs, solutions, culture and knowledge systems,” Professor Larkin said.

“Reconnection to country, culture and identity has also been critical and is helping to empower men and build their confidence to take the cultural lead with younger men, provide increased safety for their families and take up employment.”

Tiwi man Kevin Baxter, who joined the Wurrumiyanga men’s healing project three years ago and is now employed in it, said he wanted to reach out to younger men to make sure they understand the impact of violence against women and how to change.

“In this program we can show you the way, that’s what we are here for. If you are having a rough day or week, you can come to the program, get support and transform,” Mr Baxter said.

Copies of the evaluation report and its executive summary are available. *Our Men Our Healing* is supported by the Northern Territory Government and an auspicing organisation in each community.

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation with a focus on building culturally strong, community led healing solutions. More information is available at www.healingfoundation.org.au

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