



Healing Foundation
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Seven years on from the Apology: how is the healing going?

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Nearly 18 years after the Bringing Them Home report was tabled in Federal Parliament this week members of the Stolen Generations, their families and supporters commemorate the 7th anniversary of the national Apology to the Stolen Generations with a forum in Canberra where prominent members of the Stolen Generations will tell their stories and speak about what is working to heal them and their families.

The Bringing Them Home report revealed the debilitating impact that the removal of children from their families had on Aboriginal communities across Australia: broken ties to family, community and country; diminished physical and mental health as a result of psychological, physical and sexual abuse; the loss of language, culture and connection to traditional land; and the loss of parenting skills.

Many of the recommendations in the report have never been implemented.

The Healing Foundation's work over the last five years has included working with members of the Stolen Generations and their families to fund and support healing programs targeted at communities, families and individuals. It is working with communities to build the evidence and knowledge base for best practice in Indigenous healing.

Healing Foundation CEO, Richard Weston, said the Foundation's programs were designed, developed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander communities. "It's critical that there is leadership and capacity in communities and that there are support workers with the skills and understanding to respond effectively to this ongoing intergenerational trauma.

"We support communities to develop their own forms and methods of healing recognising that the 'one size fits all' solutions often proposed by governments and non-Indigenous experts are not the answer," he said. "This opportunity to make choices and decisions, this self-determination, is a critical part of the healing process."

Richard Weston said collective or group healing must be included in the mix of responses provided for Stolen Generations members in the form of support groups, group therapy programs, travel on country, healing circles, healing camps and reunions.

"Collective healing broadens the scope for who does healing and who healing is for. It means moving from a model where expert professionals work with individuals to a model where our people are supported and empowered to develop their own skills and capacities to enable healing in their communities, families and in themselves."

He said it is well-overdue that governments look critically and seriously at integrating healing into policy and program responses to addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage and Closing the Gap.

“Healing offers a fresh approach to an ongoing challenge and presents an opportunity to inject new energy into the Indigenous Affairs landscape that can be led and implemented by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities themselves.

“Remembrance and commemoration, and telling the true story of our history, contribute to the healing process for our communities,” he said. “The Canberra forum and the more than eighty commemorative events occurring across Australia are themselves part of the healing process.”

Panel members at the forum Aunty Lorraine Peeters, Mark bin Bakar, Florence Onus and Ian Hamm, with MC Richard Frankland, will talk about their healing journeys, included helping others to heal and will discuss how Australians can support this momentum either through personal, organisational or government level responses.

The Canberra forum, *Telling Our Stories: Healing Our Stolen Generations*, will be broadcast over the web as a live interactive seminar. There will be a Question and Answer session where audience and webinar participants can address questions to the panel members.

The forum starts at 10.00 am on Thursday 12 February. To be part of the Canberra audience please contact rebecca@healingfoundation.org.au.

Editors and Chiefs of Staff please note that journalists are welcome to attend and/or register as a member of the on-line audience by registering at www.healingfoundation.org.au. Photos opportunities and interviews with Richard Weston or panel members can be arranged by calling Al Harris.

For a list of commemorative events in your region go to <http://healingfoundation.org.au/2015-events/>

Follow the forum on Twitter or ask a question using #TellingOurStories

**For more information contact Al Harris:
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