Beyond dominance and dispossession

lessons from Aboriginal* relations in Western Australia.

Tim Muirhead
Seeing the whole picture…

‘ethnocentricity’
‘culture-centricity’
‘seeing beyond our cultural lens’
What do each of us need to do to build good relationships between our ‘worlds’?
What do each of us need to do to build good relationships between our ‘worlds’?

- Aboriginal ‘World’
- Non-Aboriginal ‘World’
- Organisational ‘World’
Understand the Context...

Diversity in 2016
‘Genocide’ in the 1800’s


Telegram from Kimberley to Perth 1904
‘Genocide ’ and control in the 1900’s


Telegram from Kimberley to Perth 1904
‘Genocide ’ and control in the 1900’s

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

ANNO QUINTO
EDWARDI SEPTIMI REGIS,

XIV.

No. 14 of 1905.

AN ACT to make provision for the better protection and care of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Western Australia.

[Reserved, 23rd December, 1905.]

Be it enacted by the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of Western Australia, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. This Act may be cited as the Aboriginal Act, 1905, and shall come into operation on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

Aboriginal institution” means and includes any mission, reformatory, orphanage, school, home, station, reserve, or other institution for the benefit, protection, or care of the Aboriginal or half-caste inhabitants of the State, and in receipt of any annual or other subsidy or grant from the Government.

Chief Protector” means the Chief Protector of Aboriginals appointed under this Act.

Department” means the Aborigines Department.

District.”
‘Genocide ’ in the 1900’s
Through policies of forced removal of children and controlled marriages it will be possible to...

‘eventually forget that there were ever any Aborigines in Australia’

A O Neville.  
Chief Protector of Aborigines in WA  
1944
Understand the Context...

The Journey of Wellbeing...

Click here for video of this presentation

Or, go to ‘www.csdnetwork.com.au’ and click on ‘Tim’s Place (blog)’ and scroll to ‘Journey of Wellbeing’
‘Department’/Aboriginal Relations.

‘1905 Act Thinking’
Embedding disempowerment
Our realms of support

- Self
- Family
- Community
- Society

'US' 'THEM'

'ME'
Changing Paradigms can be hard:

- **Everyone** acts like current reality is only reality.
- New voices seen as “naïve/idealistic”
- Old voices seen as “experienced”
- Old voices overwhelm with numbers
- Investment into current reality leaves nothing for investment in new thinking.
- We keep on because “It’s better than doing nothing”
- ‘Confirmation Bias’ – Evidence for our reality is easy to find and present.
- Words change, but practice stays entrenched.
- Early attempts can fail (because environment is ‘hostile’)
- ‘New’ thinkers become *exhausted* trying to change the picture.

*“No problem was ever solved by the same thinking that created it”*  
Albert Einstein.
A paradigm for yesterday’s thinking?

“No problem was ever solved by the same thinking that created it”

Albert Einstein.

The old paradigm made sense in old assumptions...

- ‘Civilising’ agenda
- Assimilation into whiteness (White is right).
- ‘Protection and Care’ (1905 Act)
- ‘Legal inequality’ (by design)
- “Natural” exclusion from educational, political, social and economic systems
- Rapid transition from ‘tribal’ to ‘state’ culture.
- “Helping those less fortunate.” (Mother Theresa vs Ghandi)

Our assumptions have changed. But has the dominant paradigm?
“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together”

Lilla Watson.

DOMINANT PARADIGM

‘Solutions with Government’

“97%” opinion sets policy

Focus on problems

Support the vulnerable

“Keep people alive” (Welfarism)

“Missionary” Thinking (‘Helping’)

Blanket “Aboriginal Policy”

Outsiders (‘they’) do the change

EMERGING PARADIGM

‘Solutions with Family and Community’

“3%” opinion sets policy

Focus on strength

Support the leaders (to support the vulnerable)

“Un-wrap potential” (Development)

“Partnership” Thinking

“Person-focussed Human Development” Policy (with cross-cultural understanding)

Family and Community (‘we’) do the change
And:

Aboriginal people – do the ‘Aboriginal Work’

Non-Aboriginal people do the ‘Non-Aboriginal Work’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'ABORIGINAL WORK'</th>
<th>'NON-AB’L WORK'</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand the Context</td>
<td>Understand the Context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Move beyond history’s impacts</td>
<td>Understand and acknowledge history’s impacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>'Step up’</td>
<td>Make space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be proud</td>
<td>See, and respond to, strength</td>
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<td>Resilience (to racism)</td>
<td>Stand against racism.</td>
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<td>Lead (in Ab’l World)</td>
<td>Support Ab’l leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead (in Non-Ab’l World)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name solutions</td>
<td>Understand problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>(not just problems)</td>
<td>Be open to solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choose own destiny</td>
<td>Open up choices. Remove barriers</td>
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<td>(self efficacy)</td>
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<td>Practice or revive culture</td>
<td>Be interested in culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>See goodwill</td>
<td>Take guidance on enacting goodwill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sources: Sources of Racism</td>
<td>Solutions: Solutions to Racism</td>
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<td>Racism of ignorance</td>
<td>Information</td>
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<td>Racism of ‘woundedness’</td>
<td>Deep listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racism against the stranger</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racism against ‘the enemy’</td>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
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Reconciliation
(Healing and building trust after wrong doing)

✓ Communication
✓ Awareness
✓ Acknowledgement
✓ Reparation

(With thanks to Merle Friedman)