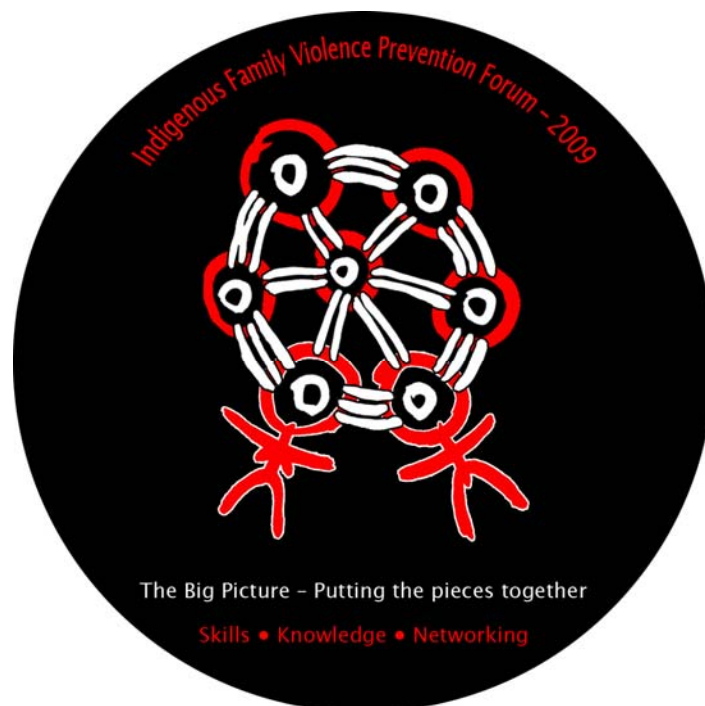




2009

## Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum



# REPORT

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It was such a pleasure, again, to convene the annual Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum, which was attended this year by 160 people. The vast majority of participants came from communities, towns and cities across Queensland. However, as has been the trend since we held the first Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum in May 2004, the number of interstate participants was higher than in previous years. They came from Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. This trend has been accompanied by increasing calls for the forum to be a national event and, as noted in the 2008 forum evaluation report, CDFVR and its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group has been considering the merits of such a proposal.

From the outset, the purpose of the forum was to highlight and celebrate the good work that is being done by Indigenous people in Queensland to end family violence; to share information and knowledge to assist the work of others; to facilitate networking between Indigenous family violence prevention workers; and to identify issues to be addressed and workshop/recommend strategies to do so. These objectives are relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people everywhere. However, there are multiple, inter-related benefits of a more 'local' focus; three of the most prominent are discussed briefly here. First, a state perspective enables participants to focus attention on the implications for their work of major, state-based policy and program initiatives. Second, the state-focus enables many initiatives operating within Queensland to be profiled within the two-day forum with ample time for more informal yarning, as well. Third, and related to the profiling of numerous initiatives within the state, is the opportunity for workers to develop skills and experience in public presentation of their work.

There is no doubt, however, that there is demand for, and much benefit in, convening a national Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum. The challenge for CDFVR is figuring out how to ensure that the benefits of a state forum are not lost by making the event truly national. To meet this challenge, and after much deliberation, CDFVR has decided to do both. Beginning in 2010, CDFVR will convene the inaugural National Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum in partnership with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and other partners currently considering partnership arrangements. The National Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum will be convened every three years, with the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum continuing in other years.



Heather Nancarrow  
Director

## INTRODUCTION

A record 160 people attended the 2009 Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum – *The big picture – Putting the pieces together*. The majority of participants were from Queensland but there was also strong representation (18%) from New South Wales, Western Australia, Victoria, the Northern Territory and the ACT. Seventy one percent of participants were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders and travelled from as far as Pormpuraaw, Mt. Isa, Woorabinda and Cunnamulla. In response to the increasing numbers of interstate participants over the years, and advocacy from participants, CDFVR Director, Heather Nancarrow, announced the introduction of a national forum to be held triennially, commencing in 2010. The national forum will be convened in partnership with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and others – to be confirmed.

Ninety five percent of participants felt that the forum theme *The big picture – Putting the pieces together* was covered well by keynote speakers, plenary panels and yarning circles. This year we had the added benefit of including filmmaker Vincent Lamberti with his film “Intervention” in the program; and the opportunity to hear film participant and researcher Audrey McCormack talk about her experiences of the Northern Territory Intervention. Forum topics responded to feedback received from last year’s forum surveys with respondents nominating (a) perpetrator programs and; (b) drugs and alcohol as contributing factors to domestic and family violence.

The inclusion of an optional third day of workshops was also in response to participants’ feedback. Over 84 percent of respondents to our 2008 survey indicated that they would like to see the forum expand to include skills development workshops. This year two workshops were included. They were: “H.E.L.P.P.” (Help Ease Life’s Parenting Pressures); and “Red Dust Healing”, with each attended by 107 participants.

Grinders Catering excelled themselves with a continuous array of treats which resulted in feedback like “this is the best food I’ve ever had at a conference”. The forum dinner and karaoke raged until the music was turned off with even the bar staff taking the stage!

At the end of the forum and workshops participants were invited to complete an evaluation form and 117 forum participants and 60 workshop participants took up that invitation. The results of both evaluations can be found at the end of this report.

***Keynote addresses:***

Keynote addresses were presented by Stephen Hagan, 2006 Naidoc person of the year, academic and social commentator; Peter Buckland, Regional Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership, Mackay/Whitsunday Region of Department of Communities; and Kerrie Tim, Indigenous Leadership and Engagement, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

*Stephen Hagan*

The title of Steve's presentation was 'Are Indigenous men homogeneous?' designed to challenge societal positioning on domestic and family violence. Steve discussed the power of observational learning and the importance of role models within families. To demonstrate his commitment to this stance, Steve recounted a story of his decision to stop letting extended family stay in his home to assure his own family's safety. He talked about the failure of political figures to adequately address the plight of Indigenous women and challenged the forum to prioritise the 12 Critical Areas of Concern for Women, identified in the Plan for Action adopted at the fourth World Conference on Women delegates in Beijing in 1995. Steve dismissed violence perpetrated in communities under the guise of traditional lore as "conveniently misinterpreted" and maintained it should be replaced with the "full weight of western law." Steve concluded his presentation with the hope that the National Council's Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, *Time for Action* will help Indigenous women and their children who suffer from abuse to find peace and happiness in a violent free and loving home environment.

*Peter Buckland*

Peter's task was to explain the Queensland Government's alcohol reforms within Indigenous communities. In response to insufficient improvement in relation to alcohol-related harm, the government reviewed the need to strengthen: supply and demand reduction, individual family and community, and service provision. The rationale for imposing restrictions was based on 'where there are high levels of harm there should be alcohol restrictions.' The decision-making process took into account a range of input

from communities both formal (through councils and community justice groups) and informal (from community visits). It also included feedback from stakeholders and key departments (eg. Qld Police Service). In early 2009 carriage limits were tightened in Hope Vale and Yarrabah and in response to community proposals, in Pormpuraaw and Doomadgee. After considerable consultation, carriage limits were also introduced in Cherbourg in March this year. Over \$100 million has been committed by state and federal governments over the next four years to support the implementation of alcohol reforms. Alcohol restrictions in communities will be monitored for effectiveness by quarterly ministerial discussions, reports, and review triggers such as a reduction in violence, child protection substantiation and improved school attendance. Peter ended his presentation by saying that “the right to drink is not a United Nations enshrined right, but the rights of women and children to be safe is.”

#### *Kerrie Tim*

Kerrie spoke about leadership and the importance of facing up to violence and doing something about it. She talked about the leadership program that she is part of running and the broad definition of what leadership is, giving the example: “Leadership is about making the decision to send your children to school.” The leadership program employs a model that works on all levels. It is sustainable because it fosters a lifetime commitment to getting the best life possible. Men were asked to bring their skills from the world back into the family – to build their families and their communities. She spoke about the widespread mistruths about how boys are best raised – messages from influential arms of society – armed forces and criminal justice systems and asserted, “if we want big lives for our men and boys, we have to change, to change the voices.” Kerrie closed by advising her audience to “take the smallest amount of encouragement, and use it.”

#### ***Plenary panels***

There were three plenary panels at this year’s forum. The first panel *Working toward healing* included speakers **Tom Powell** from Red Dust Healing and **Dorinda Cox** from Aboriginal Healing Project in Western Australia.

Tom stated that it was now men's turn to stand up – to stop the violence and lead the healing. Part of Red Dust Healing's message is that healing "begins in the heart, not the head". Tom encouraged people to look to their pasts to commence the healing "if we don't know who we are and where we've come from, how do we know where we're going?"

Dorinda outlined her pilot Aboriginal Healing Project (AHP) which aims to decrease violence in Aboriginal communities. The project uses a community development model based on collectivism – using expertise from within the community, rather than bringing in experts. The AHP covers five sites from Port Hedland in the North, to Bunbury in the south of Western Australia. Its goals are to reduce violence in Aboriginal communities, improve safety and provide better protection for women and children. Funding is provided to communities for resources to provide community healing services, workshops, conferences and consultation, camps and gatherings and training and educational programs.

Long term outcomes include:

- Breaking the cycle of violence
- Healthy habits being passed on to new generations
- Ability to sustain and promote healing in communities
- Increased reconciliation between community members and families.

Dorinda's PowerPoint included photos of a variety of healing groups running in the five sites. An example of some of the programs currently running in Port Hedland include:

- The Deadly Young Women's Group, a traditional girls' group;
- The Butterflies, a town girls' group; and
- Members Against Drugs (MAD) for women or carers dealing with drug abuse in their families.

All of these groups include education and healing sessions. The AHP was evaluated with excellent results. One hundred percent of participants in the project identified that attending AHP-funded activities made them “feel good about themselves”. The presentation concluded with the quote from Cecelia MacDonald: “To walk in this world free of violence is not a privilege – but the right of every man, woman and child”.

The second panel, “Community perspectives on the Alcohol Management Plan” was designed to give participants some feedback on how the Alcohol Management Plan (AMP) is working in communities such as Pormpuraaw and Fitzroy Crossing. It followed Peter Buckland’s keynote address. **Kurt Noble** spoke about his experiences of the plan on Pormpuraaw and **June Oscar** spoke about her campaign in Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia to restrict access to full strength alcohol.

Kurt, representing the Pormpuraaw Healing Service, discussed the effects of the Alcohol Management Plan on his community. His community imposed the alcohol restrictions themselves in 2003 so used funding for new restrictions to establish a rehabilitation centre, which will commence operation in July this year. Kurt talked about the need for a raft of measures when imposing alcohol management plans, not just the removal of alcohol.

June, from Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women’s Resource Centre in Fitzroy Crossing discussed the opposition and stress suffered by her and her friend Emily Carter as they led the campaign for a restriction on the sale of takeaway alcohol that has dramatically cut health and social problems in Fitzroy Crossing. The campaign, which was community driven, has led to a 43 percent reduction in the incidence of alcohol-related domestic violence, a reduction in foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and a halving in the number of people seeking emergency health assistance due to alcohol related injuries.

“Leadership – journeys and aspirations” was the third panel of the forum and followed Kerrie Tim’s leadership address on day two. **Jackie Huggins**, led this panel, followed by **Karen Woodley and Bill Lowah**.

Jackie, from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, University of Queensland and member of CDFVR's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group, spoke about the importance of self-care and the need to prioritise community activities when demands exceed time available. Jackie spoke about the importance of serving an apprenticeship as a leader, the requirement for hard work, sacrifice and talent and the need to stay connected to your mob.

Karen Woodley, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Department of Communities, spoke about the need for role models to ensure a progression of leaders and the important contribution that mentors have made to her life. Karen shared her experiences of the leadership program and strongly recommended it to other participants.

Bill Lowah, Qld Shelter, talked about commitment to work, the courage to make a difference and the need for creativity, enthusiasm and passion to embrace change.

### ***Yarning circles***

There were two yarning circles convened at the forum, both designed to follow on from plenary panels to give participants a chance to talk about the good work they are doing in their communities.

"Sharing successes and challenges" followed the "Working toward Healing" panel on day one and included **Sandra Patten**, Indigenous Regional Family Violence Co-ordinator from Victoria. Sandra shared some of the strategies her organisation uses to strengthen their community in Gippsland. Reference groups were set up from ten Victorian regions to provide a co-ordinated community response to decrease domestic and family violence. Some of the measures used to promote partnership and to harness knowledge and wisdom at a community level include a "Walk Against Family Violence", community dinner, and a "Sharing the Knowledge Forum". Other initiatives such as the young spirit dance group and "Us kids say NO to violence" were developed in response to gaps in service and on recommendation from community groups. A state-wide 10 year implementation plan will be ready for release later this year.

**Nicky Evans** and **Tyron Day** talked about their work on the Yeaca Dhargo (Working Together) program at Kurbingui Youth Development Association in North Brisbane. The Yeaca Dhargo program encompasses the national illicit drug strategy and provides assistance for clients subjected to domestic and family violence. The team works closely with families to assist them to understand drug addiction and offer a range of assistance for women and children subjected to domestic and family violence. Counselling at Kurbingui is offered via a brokerage model, where specialist services are outsourced while clients are still supported by Yeaca Dhargo staff. One of the national illicit drug strategies is 'Engagement Blackfella Way', which enables mainstream organisations to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in a culturally appropriate way using cultural pathways.

Other projects available at Kurbingui are the *Employment and Training Project* and the *Lifestyle Project*. The ability to refer internally enables clients who come to Kurbingui for assistance to be supported to find jobs and social networks and reclaim their independence and dignity.

**Mick Lowcock** and **Tim Shaw** discussed the "Yurru Ngartathati Murri Men's Group" in Mt. Isa. The group began as a meeting time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men referred by the Murri Court, which operates in Mt. Isa and now in Mornington Island and Doomadgee. The basis of the group is that culturally, Indigenous men can heal best when sharing with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and male Elders, whilst also being open to some education. The group meets each week where two men share their own story and discuss their addiction and what led them to the Murri Court. The second major component consists of an educational segment such as a DVD on men's health and well being, addictions, alcohol and drugs and domestic violence issues. Healing comes from a personal response to three key words; trust, confidentiality and respect. Some men have made considerable changes in their lives by listening to others' stories, reflecting on their own and being open to change. The men are their own change agents; they own the rules and set them for good procedures

and productive results. By sharing their stories and lives with older and younger men they take responsibility for their stories to be passed on.

The second yarning circle “Leadership – challenges and opportunities” followed on from the leadership panel on day two. **Sue Domic**, community support officer for the Department of Communities in Hervey Bay, talked about the evolution of the Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum since she commenced attending in 2006. Sue acknowledged how speakers such as Zac Sarra, Doug Winton, John Whop and Moogie Patu have provided leadership in her life and made her feel talked *to* not *at*. She spoke about how men attending the forum are now more inclined to ‘step up’ to lead and be role models to participants. Sue encouraged everyone who attended her yarning circle to talk about the challenges that they have experienced in their lives and to tell the group why they thought they were ‘deadly’.

Steve Larkin and his yarning circle discussed people’s experience with leadership, both good and bad, and what life experiences encouraged people to assume leadership. Participants in this yarning circle felt that leadership occurred at all levels and crossed both personal and professional domains. Participants discussed the pressures associated with being a leader; and how leadership is not something that you are always aware of modelling.

**Dolly Hankin** and **Liz Dempsey** spoke about their Women’s Program, which is similar to the Mt. Isa Men’s Program run by Mick Lowcock and Tim Shaw. Dolly and Liz are involved in “Life Skills” which encompasses “Beyond Anger” and “From the Inside Out”. Women referred from the Murri Court complete personal development programs to give them the tools they need to make good decisions. By using personal discussions women are encouraged to look at their current situation, their safety and unhealthy habits and are assisted to change negative thoughts. Proving that they are willing and able to look at making changes to their lives can lead to a reduced sentence. Centacare also run “Vision Time” a healing program which gives spiritual direction.

### ***Additional presentations***

Other forum highlights included **Chris Cunneen's** paper *Recommendations to improve responses to domestic and family violence in Indigenous communities*. Chris discussed recommendations and findings from his recent research into the use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders by Indigenous women in Queensland, particularly in rural and remote communities. The focus of the paper was how government agencies can improve their responses to Indigenous victims and offenders and the need for possible law reform in that area.

Filmmaker **Vincent Lamberti** and film participant and researcher **Audrey McCormack** presented "Intervention", a short film (made in collaboration with Tangentyere Council) about the impact of the Northern Territory Intervention on town campers. The film is based on forty interviews from a cross section of the Aboriginal community living in and around Alice Springs and discusses town camps, quarantine laws, ration cards, alcoholism and the shame and disempowerment that has ensued as a consequence of government intrusion. Audrey, one of the people affected by the implementation of the policy, shared her personal story about the impact that the Intervention had on her and her immediate family.

**Heather Nancarrow** and **Dorinda Cox** were part of an 11-member National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children selected for their knowledge and expertise in the fields of domestic and family violence, and sexual assault. They presented an overview of the recently released *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*. The plan proposes sweeping changes to reduce the incidence and impact of sexual assault and domestic and family violence perpetrated against women and their children between now and 2021. The Council's work included wide-ranging consultation, public submissions, and research, which went into developing six outcomes, delivered through 25 strategies and 117 actions. Their presentation outlined the Council's 20 priority recommendations for urgent implementation. It also gave an overview of the Government's response - a commitment of \$42 million to action 18 of the 20 priority recommendations. A copy of the National Plan to Reduce violence Against Women and

their Children can be accessed at

[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/np\\_time\\_for\\_action/national\\_plan/Documents/The\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/np_time_for_action/national_plan/Documents/The_Plan.pdf)

### ***Workshops***

**Help Ease Life's Parenting Pressure (H.E.L.P.P.)** Thelma Richards, Gindaja Substance Misuse Aboriginal Corporation, Yarrabah; Moana Harlen, Griffith University and Paul Harnett, University of Qld, presented a parenting program adapted by Gindaja, Yarrabah, from the mainstream program "Parents Under Pressure (PUP)". H.E.L.P.P (Help Ease Life's Parenting Pressure) provides alcohol and substance misuse treatment programs, including the new parenting program for clients with children. The overview of the H.E.L.P.P. program included a description of the content of the sessions that made up the program as well as the program format. Skills-based exercises were presented with the program proviso that there is no "best way" to bring up children. Adapting a mainstream program that results in community ownership and control took two years of negotiations. The workshop included a discussion of the adaptation model, including issues concerning intellectual property and the protection of Indigenous Knowledge.

**Red Dust Healing** was presented by Randal Ross and Tom Powell. It is a specific cultural healing program originally designed by Warramunga man, Tom Powell and further developed in partnership with Randal Ross. Based on ancient and traditional philosophy, Red Dust Healing is a therapeutic and transformative group program that has been delivered in New South Wales and Queensland. This workshop gave participants a snapshot of the program, which examines the intergenerational effects of colonialism on the mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing of Indigenous families; and encouraged men and women to confront and deal with the problems, hurt and anger in their lives. A key focus of the program relates to rebuilding and healing families and communities through restoring Indigenous men's identity, responsibilities and relationships.

## ***Forum evaluation/feedback***

### *Process*

As with previous forums participants were invited to complete an evaluation/feedback survey, which was distributed at the end of day two and also at the end of the optional third day of workshops. One hundred and seventeen participants in the forum (73%) and 60 participants in the workshops (56%) chose to take up the offer. The forum evaluation collected quantitative data to ascertain whether the forum achieved its objectives. It also collected qualitative information to determine the most popular theme for the 2010 national forum; and to collect feedback/ideas on what worked this year and what could be improved on for next year.

Forum objectives were to provide an opportunity for Indigenous people who are working in Indigenous family violence prevention, policy or practice across the state to:

- highlight and celebrate the good work that is being done to end family violence
- share information and knowledge about strategies and programs that could be used effectively by others
- promote opportunities for networking between workers in the field of Indigenous family violence prevention; and
- identify issues to be addressed and workshop/recommend strategies to do so

### ***Results***

Of the 160 participants at this year's forum, 106 (66%) identified as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

### **The theme 'The big picture – Putting the pieces together' was covered well in the forum program**

Of the 117 respondents, 95.7 percent either strongly agreed (53.8%) or agreed (41.9%) that the forum theme was covered well in the forum program. Four participants disagreed (3.4%) and one participant did not respond to this statement.

### **I learnt new things at the forum / can use what I learnt in my work (paid or voluntary)**

The vast majority of participants (96.5%) either strongly agreed (61.5%) or agreed (35%) that they learnt new things at the forum. Three respondents did not agree (2.6%) and one participant did not respond. Ninety seven percent (n = 114) agreed that they could use what they learnt in their work.

### **Would you come back next year?**

The survey then asked respondents whether they would *return to the national forum in 2010, and why they would come back again*. One hundred and four (88.9%) of participants said they would come back again next year with the remaining 13 (11.1%) of respondents failing to complete this question. Ninety one participants (78%) contributed reasons why they would return next year. For the purposes of analysis these have been grouped into the following themes:

“Learning” which encompassed networking and information sharing

“Networking” which encompassed information sharing, building trust, and increasing knowledge.

“Inspiration/motivation/empowerment” encompassing strengthening, pride, sharing, learning, listening, and preventing ‘burn out’.

The three most frequently recurring themes in participants’ comments about why they would come back to the forum were to:

- Increase knowledge/learning (n = 40)
- Networking opportunities (n = 17)
- Increase strength/motivation and empowerment (n = 10).

A sample of the responses received were:

- This has been a top-up to give me more strength to continue with the work I do with my mob around family violence. I want to continue to empower and bring change and to say ‘no more’ to sexual and domestic and family violence.
- To see and hear of new and exciting advances that have been made, especially from those who have brought that about within themselves.

- I will come back next year and the year after and whenever the forum is on. It gives me strength, identity, the three Cs [courage, commitment and creativity] and makes me proud to be black.
- To devise issues, strategies, learn new ones and most of all to catch up with new friends and family that I've made.
- I'd come back because it was the most inspiring and empowering conference. I met so many beautiful, strong, brilliant people who have given me so much that I can't put into words. It was just too deadly! Makes you feel so proud to be a Murri and to be involved in keeping our people strong, proud and healthy and to say no to violence.

**Name two themes you would most like to see covered in next year's forum**

The forum survey gave participants a range of themes repeatedly identified in previous years' surveys, to choose from for the 2010 national forum. Respondents were invited to choose two themes with the option of providing suggestions that were not on the list.

The results, in order of popularity, are as follows:

1. Children and domestic violence/domestic violence and homelessness (20.5%)
2. Children and domestic violence/adolescent to parent abuse; and Children and domestic violence/elder abuse (both 10.3%)
3. Domestic violence and homelessness/adolescent to parent abuse (8.5%)
4. Children and domestic violence/other; and children and domestic violence/dating violence (both 7.7%)
5. Elder abuse/adolescent to parent abuse; and Elder abuse and domestic violence and homelessness (both 4.3%)
6. Elder abuse/other (3.4%)
7. Elder abuse/dating violence; domestic violence and homelessness/other; dating violence/other; adolescent to parent abuse/other (all 2.6%)
8. Domestic violence and homelessness/dating violence (.9%)

Additional themes included: how police have an effect on domestic violence issues; community justice groups; three requests for information on the NT Intervention, where's it up to?; domestic violence and the law; internet violence; men's healing centre/shed; supporting Indigenous workers.

**Are you a service provider/practitioner?**

This question was asked to ascertain the number of practitioners and non-practitioners who attend the forum to ensure that the program responds to the needs of all participants. The majority of respondents (77%) indicated that they were either service providers or practitioners, 23 (19.7%) were not direct service providers and the remaining three participants failed to respond.

Last year's survey included the question *Would you like the Forum to expand to include skills development workshops on family violence prevention in 2009.* The overwhelmingly affirmative response (84.2%) led to an optional third day of workshops being included in this year's program. The two workshops, Help Ease Life's Parenting Pressure (H.E.L.P.P.); and Red Dust Healing; were attended by 107 participants, 60 of whom chose to respond to the six quantitative questions and provide a qualitative comment.

Sixty six percent of workshop participants were either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and 88.3 percent of survey respondents were service providers.

**Does the service in which you work provide services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?/ Were they relevant to your work**

Almost all respondents (98.3%) worked in a service which provided services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Only one participant did not. Similarly, 98.3 percent (n = 59) indicated that the workshops were relevant to their work.

**As a result of completing these workshops have you increased your knowledge and skills in Indigenous specific parenting techniques?**

**Help Ease Life's Parenting Pressures workshop:**

The majority of respondents (86.7%) responded that they had improved their knowledge and skills; one person indicated that they did not and the remaining seven participants did not respond to this question.

**Red Dust Healing workshop:**

An overwhelming 98.3 percent of participants (n = 59) responded affirmatively to this question of the Red Dust Healing workshop. One participant indicated that they did not increase their skill.

Forty eight people chose to provide additional comments on the success of both workshops. A range of complimentary comments to the presenters included:

- Excellent workshops. It was great to hear of programs in other places that are specific to our needs and to be able to network.
- Thank you so much for sharing your programs with me. The two projects *Red Dust Healing* and *H.E.L.P.P.* could only support our families out in communities. All presenters were excellent – they engaged the audience and put forward the programs very productively. Congratulations to the program presenters in putting together strong options for Aboriginal families. The collaboration approach/partnership approach is workable. Thank you.

Participants also provided us with some constructive criticism to keep in mind for next year:

- More young people's point of view. More discussion on men's issues. Men's accommodation. More clips from deadly communities/culture.
- Perhaps some movement during one of the sessions – breathing exercises (Tai Chi or Quigong or laugh yoga) to help balance our systems and regenerate.

## CONCLUSION

The evaluation, verbal feedback and anecdotal evidence indicates that participants at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum *The big picture – Putting the pieces together*, were very satisfied with this year's event. Reading feedback such as: *The whole conference was a sensational success. Congratulations to all the people who have put in so much work to bring it all together* makes all the effort from our hard working reference group, speakers, sound technicians, t-shirt printers, caterers and CDFVR staff worthwhile.

Participants met the announcement of a triennial national conference with enthusiasm. Survey respondents indicated that they are keen to hear what programs are being run in other states with one participant stating ".....the issues discussed [at this forum] are relevant to all Indigenous communities, Australia-wide". CDFVR in collaboration with its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and other interstate partners (to be confirmed) will shortly commence organisation for the national forum.

Survey responses demonstrated that participants were returning to their communities with an increased sense of empowerment, renewed motivation and a strong community bond. At the request of forum participants a contact group has been set up and distributed to participants to enable networking opportunities and information sharing to continue.

Once again, being part of the organising group to present the Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum has been a humbling and deeply gratifying experience. In the words of Tom Powell it is "an honour and a privilege" to listen to people's stories, share their successes and frustrations and to continue to build on our collective knowledge to address domestic and family violence. As one of our participants so eloquently wrote this year: *"It makes my heart feel good to see people from all backgrounds and all parts of society coming together to put the pieces together to address the big picture"*.

See you all next year.