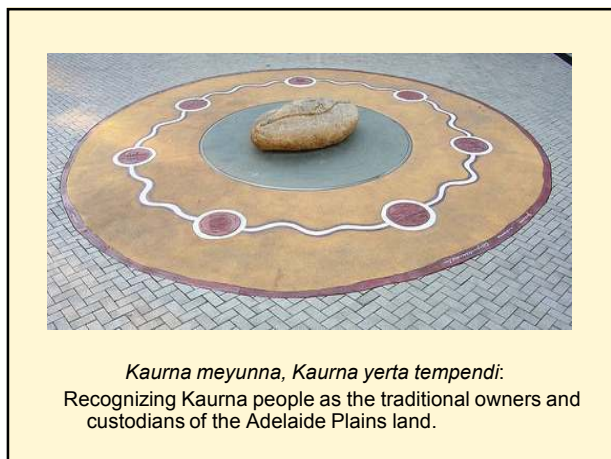





## Aboriginal Incarceration



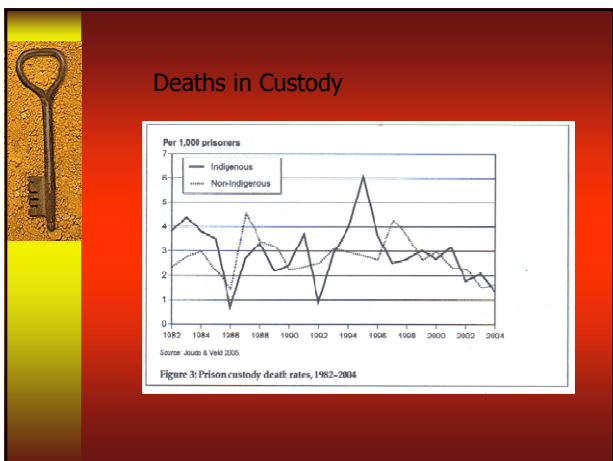

### Incarceration Rates

- Aboriginal: 1787 per 100,000
- Non-Aboriginal: 134 per 100,000
- 13 x higher
- highest rate in WA
- Similar to African American rates, most heavily incarcerated sub-populations in the world.
- Much higher than Canadian or US indigenous rates.




### Deaths and Prison

- In Custody: same rates of death in custody since Royal Commission (RCIADIC, 1993),
  - shift from police cells to in-prison.
  - Aboriginal prison population has more than doubled in last 10 years
  - Prison is an independent risk factor for suicide.
- Post-release: even higher risk than in prison.
  - drug overdose, suicide, MVA




### In South Australia

- Almost every Aboriginal family is directly affected by incarceration of one or more family members
- About 25% of all young Aboriginal men are either in prison or directly under Community Corrections scrutiny each year
- Highest increase of Aboriginal incarceration rates in Australia in SA: - 43% between 2005-2008
- About 80% have no Corrections involvement on release




### Remand Scenario

- JB is 27 y.o. Aboriginal man
- Charges: drug-related, Assault family member
- Girlfriend, 3 months pregnant
- Regular iv speed use- wants to stop, but.....
- 'Schizes out' sometimes -> aggression, brief psychosis, anxiety
- Hepatitis C positive
- Car Accident -> chronic pain
- Finances: No real jobs in the past, mostly Centrelink, \$2000 debts
- Accommodation: Living rough before admission
- On release: ?girlfriend, ?family (past violence), ?mates
- On waitlist at Housing SA



### Impact for Women and Families

- Women in prison
  - 31% Aboriginal
- Women as victims of crime
  - Family violence, homicide
- Women in relationships
- Children with absent fathers, mothers
- Trans-generational incarceration



### Juvenile Justice

- Aboriginal: 19 x non-Aboriginal rate
- Over *half* in juvenile detention are Aboriginal
- 80-90% progress to adult system
- NSW: 41% history of parent in prison




### Stigma and Discrimination

- 'criminal' (=> 'violent.... impulsive.... dishonest....')
- +
- Aboriginal
- iv drug user
- mental health client
- hepatitis C



### Police

- 'over-policing'
- in context: colonial law enforcement
- forced removal from family and country
- police discretion



'Let me say at once, it is my opinion that far too much police intervention in the lives of Aboriginal people throughout Australia has been arbitrary, discriminatory, racist and violent.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the antipathy which so many Aboriginal people have towards the police is based not just on historical conduct but upon the contemporary experience of contact with many police officers.'

Elliot Johnson  
RCIADIC 1993



**'But they must have done something wrong...'**


- 'Bad behaviour' as an expression of emotional distress.
- Crime as 'resistance'
- Colonizing practices
- Collective Trauma



**Collective Trauma**

Following mass traumatic events/ disasters...

- Leads to:
  - erosion of basic trust,
  - breakdown of social norms,
  - cycles of re-traumatization
- blurring between victims and victimizers




**Experiences of Imprisonment**  
Qualitative study 2006.

Aboriginal Prisoners' Concepts of Health:

'Health was less defined in terms of physical health, and overwhelmingly, concerns related to experiences of loss- including loss of identity and cultural connection, isolation, grief and loss of important relationships.'

*'The relationship is the lifeline'*



**What to do?**

- Solutions are in the community, not in prisons
- Alternative sentencing options: developed by Health services, in close consultation with Justice and other sectors
- Combined response to Mental Health and Substance Misuse essential
- Support whole families, mobile assertive care, 'multi- systemic therapy'
- Advocacy- RCIADIC document is now 15 years old
  - no longer has political currency



**Costs**

- Daily average cost per prisoner in Australia is \$269 ie \$98,000 per prison bed per year
- Secure Mental Health bed \$600+ a day
- Assertive community care \$40-\$100 a day
  - Residential rehab \$98 per day



*'We cannot prepare people for freedom in conditions of captivity.'*