

SUICIDE STORY

TRAINING FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TO HELP
CREATE SUICIDE SAFER COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES

Suicide Story has been developed by the Central Australian Life Promotion Program based on suicide intervention and awareness training tools, suicide research and the understandings of Aboriginal people from the Northern Territory. Suicide Story is a training tool made up of short films, audio material and animation that shares knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal people about ways to create suicide safer communities.

Topics covered include:

- Should we talk about suicide?
- Why is suicide a problem in Aboriginal communities?
- How big is the problem?
- How would you know if someone was at risk of suicide?
- What leads to people thinking about suicide?
- What can families and communities do to create a suicide safer community?
- What gets in the way of helping?
- What are good ways to support people at risk?
- How might people heal after a death by suicide?
- How can we keep the helper safe too?

Suicide among Australia's Indigenous population is significantly higher than the general Australian population. Estimates suggest that, in some years, the suicide rate for Indigenous people in specific communities is as much as 40% higher than that for the Australian population as a whole. Over the past 30 years Indigenous suicide has increased, with young Indigenous males being the most at risk.

Officially approved by
Northern Territory
Government

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT MHACA ON 08 8950 4600



Training for
Aboriginal people to
help create suicide safer
communities & families

Developed by
the Life Promotion
Program @ MHACA,
this indigenous
specific training
resource was ...

Officially launched
in Alice Springs
on 3 March 2010

Details next page ...

Listening ... sharing ... learning ...

Through a community development & action research approach that has involved listening to the stories of Aboriginal people, Life Promotions has attempted to put together a relevant contextual picture of the issue of suicide. A localised training program, developed with and for Aboriginal people living in remote communities and town camps, Suicide Story contains more meaningful training material respectful of the people, culture, language and context of people's lives in Central Australia. In development throughout 2008-2009, it draws on a collection of interviews with Aboriginal people from across Central Australia including Alice Springs, Santa Teresa, Yuendumu, Tennant Creek and also Gove Peninsula. In the past year - drawings, animation and film have been added to enhance this unique training resource which was officially launched on 3 March 2010.

For further information contact **Laurencia Grant** at
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Artist Sue McLeod with the paintings specifically developed for Suicide Story

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Suicide-Story

A new training initiative for indigenous mobs in NT

by Laurencia Grant



helping people be strong against suicide sharing our stories & understanding



Background: - One of the central strategies of the Life Promotion Program (LPP) at MHACA is the delivery of 'gatekeeper training' to workers and community members who might encounter people at risk of suicide. Research has indicated that this training is one suicide prevention strategy that has helped to reduce the rates of suicide. Adopted by the NT in 2001, the 2-day Living Works ASIST workshop (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) has consistently been in demand among those working in the community sector in Alice Springs. However, originally developed in Canada, this model does not address some of the core issues central to the needs of Aboriginal people, especially those living in remote regions and town camps. And so, over time, through engagement with Aboriginal people and discussions with other related services, the LPP team started to further develop the resources and style of training to create Suicide Story.

What is Suicide Story?

Suicide Story is a DVD made up of short films that feature the voices of indigenous people. Animation, art work and music combined with these voices focuses on nine issues relevant to suicide, and the DVD will accompany a full 3-day program. The aim of Suicide Story is to provide an indigenous specific training resource to contribute to an increased level of understanding about suicide and the skills necessary to intervene when someone is at risk.

Topics covered -

- Should we talk about suicide?
- Why is suicide a problem in Aboriginal communities?
- How big is the problem?
- How would you know if someone was at risk of suicide?
- What leads to people thinking about suicide?
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- How can we keep the helper safe too?

Local artwork & understanding

In 2006, some women from the remote community of Santa Teresa painted two banners for World Suicide Prevention Day, artwork

which portrays a local understanding of some of the causes of suicidal behaviour and ways to care for people who are displaying such behaviour. This artwork and story features throughout Suicide Story.

The more 'impersonal' statistics and data about suicide need these unique perspectives to sit alongside them. Hopefully, the contributions in Suicide Story can remind us that this issue is about raw and real experiences. And perhaps our best chance of reducing the rates and the pain of suicide for Aboriginal people is to understand their experience of it and bring new learnings to them in a proper way.

Culturally sensitive approach

The aim of this training program is to offer a culturally sensitive approach to the understanding of the issue of suicide, as well as improving skills to work with people at risk, and building a sense of hope for Aboriginal communities of Central Australia. Through comparing various training resources and research it became apparent that there were some things about supporting people at risk of suicide that were common to all training programs. These include the following facts:



Laurencia, Kristy, Liz and Charlie who have contributed to the development of the Suicide Story project

- it's important to ask if suicide is the issue
- talking helps the pain go away
- people often don't want to die, they want their problems and pain to go away
- people often give signs that they are at risk
- there are tipping points or triggers that can put people at risk
- some people might be at greater risk, but all people at risk of suicide require a safety plan
- support people need to access other resources and keep themselves safe too



It is unique because it -

- draws on learnings from specific people living and working in Central Australian and Top End communities
- acknowledges that suicide is a very recent problem among Aboriginal families in this region
- explores related issues such as impulsive suicide, suicide as a threat, blame and payback in their cultural and local context;
- recognises the importance of learning through sharing stories from other Aboriginal communities;
- shares learnings through recognisable symbols, images and language
- acknowledges the lack of formal resources in remote communities and the efforts of families
- explores the history of social injustice and legislated change and the consequent losses that are relevant to the problem of suicide
- is respectful of the different learning styles and preferred learning environments; and
- accommodates varying levels of English literacy



Sample Training DVD

A short sample of this training DVD was produced to promote Suicide Story which was screened at the launch on 3 March at the Alice Springs Town Council and everyone present received a copy to take back to their organisations. This helped all those present to see that some Aboriginal people are willing to talk up strong on suicide because they have lost too many family members this way. They talked about the importance of working together to help improve the understanding among their people and the need to learn skills that will help families to stop deaths by suicide—that we can't avoid this problem any more and that it won't go away unless we all work together and understand that this is a community issue.

Suicide Story has been made possible with funding and support by the NT Government Dept of Health & Families. It will be delivered to interested indigenous residents and workers living in remote communities. The full training DVD will be available to those who participate in the Train-the-Trainer program. If you want to receive a copy of the promotional DVD, or to receive training please contact Laurencia or Brian at MHACA on 8950 4600 or email laurencia.grant@mhaca.org.au