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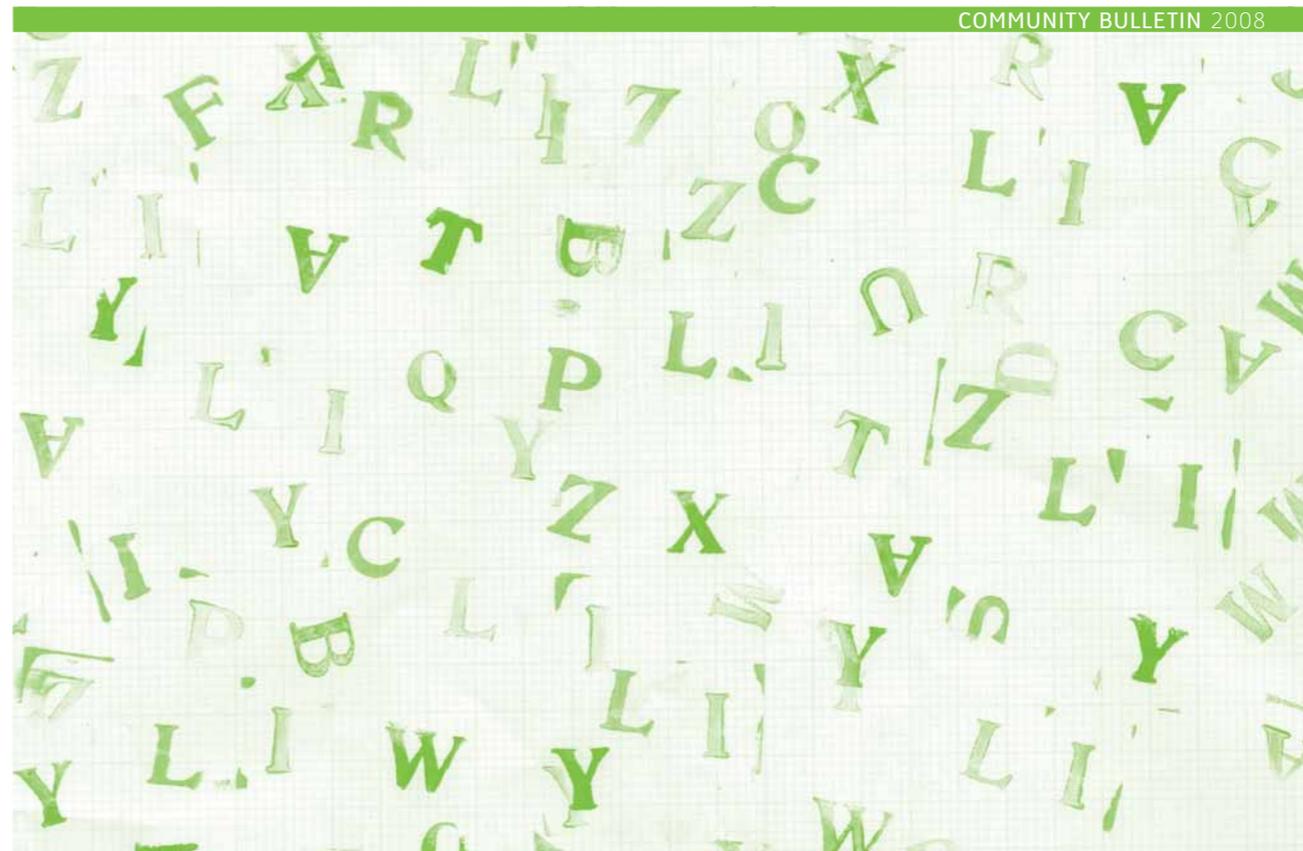


Sharing Stories is presented by Healthway to promote Relationships Australia's message 'Make Time to Talk' and is managed by Community Arts Network Western Australia Ltd.

SHARINGSTORIES



COMMUNITY BULLETIN 2008



Make time to talk.



Relationships Australia

INTRODUCTION BY LINDSAY LOVERING ARTS PROGRAM MANAGER, HEALTHWAY

Healthway's objectives in partnering Community Arts Network WA with Sharing Stories are to promote and encourage community participation and partnerships in arts and cultural activities. This, in turn, provides an opportunity to promote the *Make Time to Talk* message through Relationships Australia in particular targeting

young people and other disadvantaged sectors of the community. The *Make Time to Talk* message encourages social connectedness and the formation of social networks through communication. It creates opportunities to share, listen, ask questions and, in the case of 2007, to share life experiences.

Although the number of projects that received support in 2007 was less than in previous years, the two that did receive funding, were innovative and culturally diverse with strong long-term impacts on the communities involved.

It was perhaps fortuitous that through the connections of well-known local musician, Peter Keelan, the Indigenous community of Kellerberrin sought assistance to host a visit by the Narasirato Pan Pipers from the Solomon Islands in March 2007. The visit provided a unique opportunity for the nine traditional musicians to perform in school

... SINCE IT WAS FIRST INTRODUCED IN 2004, SHARING STORIES HAS BEEN A CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS STORY AND IT WOULD APPEAR THERE ARE STILL MANY CHAPTERS TO BE WRITTEN, WITH THE BEST STILL TO COME ...

and community settings and to participate in cultural exchanges in the spectacular native bushlands around the town. The effect on the locals, young and old, was both immediate and dramatic and has resulted in ongoing communication between the two communities.

The second 2007 Sharing Stories project was the outstanding 'World Aware' project that engaged with young members of Perth's Sudanese refugee community through the youth volunteers of Red Cross Australia.

The aim of the project was to work with young people and develop skills in music, dance,

theatre, photographic and video documentation, story telling and experience sharing. These workshops culminated in a cultural celebration on 12 August 2007 for International Youth Day to a capacity audience at the Perth Town Hall.

These two projects are testament to the dedication of the staff at CAN WA and

Relationships Australia who have developed a most productive and meaningful partnership. Moving forward, Healthway has endorsed the continuation of Sharing Stories for a further three years and discussions are taking place to make this a more effective program based on the feedback received and lessons learned.

FORWARD BY HELEN HARRISON MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA



Relationships Australia WA provides a range of relationship support services such as Relationship Counselling, Family Mediation and Relationship Education Programs through our 13 branches, which will soon increase to 30 locations across Western Australia. All programs

are operated under service agreements with either the State or Federal Governments and further funding comes from Healthway and other grants and donations.

Relationships Australia WA has long recognised the difficulties facing not-for-

profit organisations and has sought opportunities to partner similar organisations with complementary objectives and strengths. Hence, the *Make Time to Talk* message was the perfect fit for a partnership with Community Arts Network WA.

Social connectedness is a key determinant of mental health. The *Make Time to Talk* message encourages communication, which strengthens relationships and provides space to discuss issues of concern before conflicts arise. This is especially important for youth as they are in a developmental

period of their life, becoming independent, making decisions and establishing both peer and intimate relationships.

Sponsorship of Community Arts Network WA for the program Sharing Stories provides Relationships Australia with the opportunity

to promote the importance of happy, healthy relationships with friends, families and partners. The Program has encouraged participants to develop their artistic skills, as well as foster the development of new friendships in a safe environment where they can express themselves creatively.

..... 'BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IS ABOUT FOSTERING THIS DEEP CONNECTION BETWEEN PLACE AND PEOPLE AND USING THE CREATIVE TALENTS OF EVERYBODY.'

LT. GENERAL JOHN SANDERSON, SPECIAL ADVISOR ON INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS TO THE WA GOVERNMENT, SPEAKING AT THE 'SHARING CULTURES' DVD LAUNCH ON 12 OCTOBER 2007

The first Sharing Stories project for 2007 brought together two cultures, the Noongar community of Kellerberrin and the Solomon Islander Narasirato Pan Pipers, to share their language, stories and dance. The local Indigenous community was involved in all aspects of the project from planning to participation.

The two-day event involved performances at the local school, cultural dancing workshops, a community banquet and cross-cultural performance and finally a day in the bush. This gave the Noongar community a chance to talk and interact informally with the Solomon Islanders, exchanging stories and learning about each others' experiences, lifestyle and culture.

The event surpassed all expectations and achieved the overarching goal of meaningful interaction between the two cultures. Initially there was some concern about achieving this given the shyness of both groups, but this shyness soon dissipated as the activities got underway. As the banquet was served, the men of both cultures gravitated toward each other and soon there was a large circle of men talking animatedly. Throughout the two days the level of mutual respect and admiration grew.

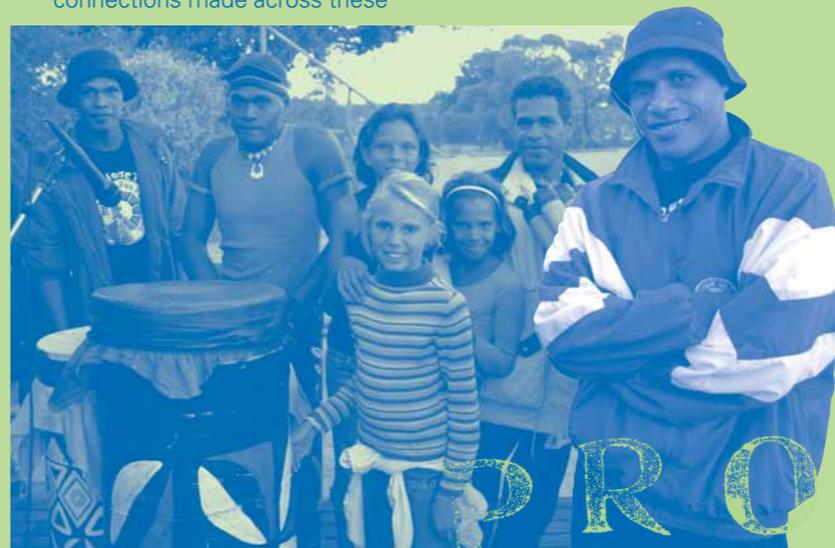
The Narasirato men received a beautiful didgeridoo presented by local Noongar man, Reynold McIntosh, who made and painted the didgeridoo especially for them. Over the course of the event, the visitors took lessons from Reynold on how to play this wind instrument, and they commented on how different it was to their own instruments.

Curtin University film and television students filmed the two day event and produced a seven minute documentary about the cultural exchange, which captured the heartfelt connections made across these

two cultures. CAN WA was honoured to have Lieutenant General John Sanderson launch the documentary at a special celebration event in October 2007.

..... 'WE MET ALL OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDERS AND THE NOONGARS AROUND KELLERBERRIN AND IT WAS A FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE WHICH OPENED MY EYES TO A DIFFERENT WORLD.'

CHERIE SEAH, CURTIN UNIVERSITY FILM & TV STUDENT



SHARING CULTURES PROJECTS



PROJECTS

..... 'I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING QUITE LIKE WORLD AWARE. IT'S GRASS ROOTS, IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE AND IT'S MOVING. I'VE LEARNT SO MUCH ABOUT SUDAN, ABOUT MYSELF AND ABOUT THE LIVES OF SOME OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE YOUNG PEOPLE I'VE EVER MET.'

VINAY MENON, RED CROSS YOUTH MENTOR

In March 2007, the Australian Red Cross Youth and Education Services and the Youth Advisory Committee conducted a number of community meetings with the Sudanese Australian Friendship Society to talk about how Sudanese youth could take on a leadership role and share their individual stories with young Australians. From these meetings, the 'World Aware' Leadership

Project was developed to engage and energise the Sudanese youth. World Aware celebrated the role of music in connecting people and communities. The language of music is universal—it crosses cultural boundaries and holds a great deal of power in its ability to heal and inspire. From Djembe drumming workshops to studio

rehearsals, to exchanging CDs with one another and hosting a youth showcase, music was at the very heart of the World Aware program. Youth engagement occurred through the Leadership Project—eight workshops focused on

self-expression and communication. The intensive period of regular meetings and activities was critical as it gave people time to get to know one another. This was further facilitated by the program's emphasis on one-on-one relationship building and the key mental health

message from Relationships Australia, *Make Time to Talk*.

The World Aware event on International Youth Day provided the group with a common focus to work towards. It also provided a platform for participants to share their stories, ideas and talents with the broader community. The event was a celebration of young people

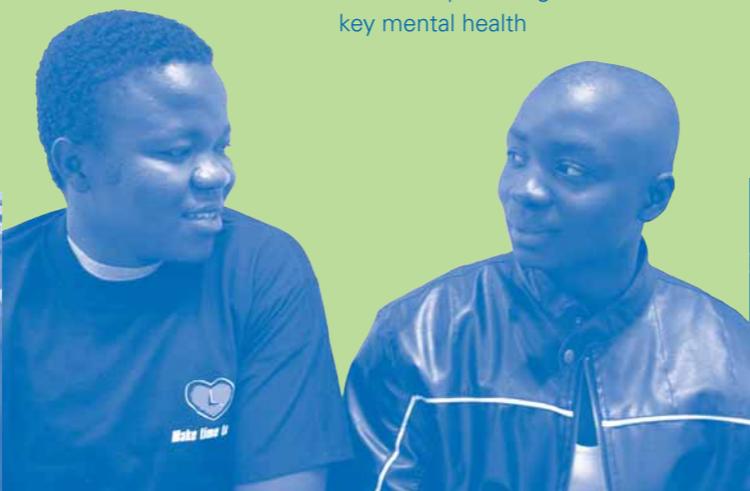
from diverse backgrounds coming together to make a difference.

The most significant outcome of the Leadership Project was the empowerment of youth to share their stories. The workshops provided the time and space for participants to build trust, confidence and communication skills with both their peers and the

mentors. The workshops also taught participants about the different ways you can share your story (i.e. digital media, music, painting, dance, oral story telling, jewellery making), giving them a real opportunity to play to their strengths.

With its focus on music, sharing stories and building relationships, 'World Aware' is a model that can be applied

to any group. The Leadership Project recognises the fact that refugee youth need the time and space to develop the skills needed to have a voice in their communities. Many young people want to share their stories and ideas but lack the confidence and communication skills to do so—'World Aware' is all about empowering young people to shine.



..... 'MEETING PEOPLE (BEFORE WORLD AWARE) WASN'T EASY. EVERYTHING WAS SO NEW. I HAD TO TAKE TIME TO OBSERVE THE CHARACTERS AND THE BEHAVIOURS AND KNOW A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THE CULTURE BEFORE I COULD START TO MAKE FRIENDS ... IT'S VERY DIFFERENT TO BACK HOME—BUT AUSTRALIANS ARE VERY OPEN-MINDED. THEY'RE EASY TO TALK TO.'

VINCENT LIKAMBO, WORLD AWARE PARTICIPANT

PROJECTS

WORLD AWARE



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COMMUNITY BULLETIN SUMMER 2008

