

INDIGENOUS TALK AND WALK

JULIEANNE MANSON

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION OFFICER

OCEANIA PROVINCE

jmmanson@edmundrice.org. Phone (02) 8762 4200

2010 09 03

Has your community started your subscription to Koori Mail? If so congratulations if not please Ring (02)66222666 Ext3

Last time I told you about Auntie Joan Hendriks. This time I would like to share something from a recent *Just Comment* from the ERC at Homebush. It featured some questions given to Cassandra Gibbs. I have added some ideas to challenge you and your community. Please enjoy. Julieanne

Ten years after the year 2000 bridge walks for Reconciliation around the country, the journey between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is still incomplete. To 'see it through', Reconciliation must be a part of our everyday lives. For Cassandra Gibbs, Indigenous Education Officer at the Edmund Rice Centre, and member of the CLRI(NSW) Social Justice Committee, small daily actions are as important as 'big picture' ideas.

How do you think non-Indigenous Australians (*Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice People*) should get involved in justice issues affecting Indigenous Australians? It depends on what they feel comfortable with, and that, for whatever degree of involvement, it is kept on their agenda throughout the year. Many people want to get involved and want to get active. If you want to be involved then work with people who are being directly affected.

Sometimes that means waiting to be invited into communities, waiting to be invited into that conversation. **It's not just an 'issue', it's not just a story... you are talking about someone's life.**

What is your advice for someone (*Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice People*) in that situation? A little bit of patience, and not to give up or to walk away. Keep putting your feelers out and keep showing your interest. The key to working with Indigenous communities is to be *invited* into those conversations.

How much emphasis should we (*Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice People*) place on the good things that have occurred so far, for example the Apology to the Stolen Generations? The Apology is the beginning. Now the healing has begun. Now we can begin our healing and now we can start to move forward. It's the start of change and change in the mentality of Australians as well.

How can those (*Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice People*) who don't feel directly affected by Indigenous issues connect to the fight for justice? I get very concerned when people say 'This doesn't affect me, this doesn't relate to me, this has nothing to do with me'. We have all benefited from the injustices against Indigenous people in this country, so how can you say you're not affected by it?

What sort of sensitivity is required of a non-Indigenous Australian (*Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice People*) when approaching these issues? One has to remember there are so many Indigenous people who do not have a lot of trust because of past injustices. Even to talk about issues happening 'over there', you are still talking about someone's life. It's not just an 'issue'; it's not just a story. We have to remember that these people, our people, are sharing our lives when we're discussing these issues.

If there was one specific issue affecting Indigenous Australians that you would like to see targeted, what would that be? Poverty in Indigenous communities. Where there's poverty there are high unemployment rates, there are low educational outcomes, the health statistics are off the charts, housing is a massive problem. The key issue is that we should be looking at poverty in many Indigenous communities. If we start to address some of the core issues then they'll start to flow off onto some of the other areas. If you can target one area, those four other areas can benefit. You don't have to come up with all the answers in order to feel like you're making change.

If you would like me to come to your community to talk to the community about Indigenous Activities please email me or ring me. Hope you enjoyed Cassandra's answers more next time. Julieanne Manson