

**Using sports for Aboriginal youth, women and family members in the community**

**REFLECTIVE OVERVIEW**

I would like describe my journey in South Australia as a case manager for Centacare (NGO) Social Service in the School Assertive Outreach Program. The following attachments for submission into *the Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring* is centred around my research thesis: *"Does the Promotion of Sports for Aboriginal youth help reduce the risk of offending behaviour?"* The research thesis refers to positive outcomes that can be achieved when using sports for Aboriginal youth development and community. What I have applied to my research area substantiated my experience and journey in the work force and in my coaching role at a local community sports club.

The premise of my Thesis is supported through my experience at a community sporting club and my employment position working with Aboriginal youth who may be at risk. My Thesis captures the important nature of what can be achieved for Aboriginal youth, family and community members. However, I will indicate from my own personnel journey, the person(s) involved or facilitating the connection between culture and community through sports must be committed, passionate, have patience, and be able to build rapport and understanding and be a strong advocate for community inclusiveness. Sports from my perspective is a 'vehicle' that has the potential to enhance cultural wellbeing, inclusiveness, unity and more importantly develop self esteem/determination and cultural empowerment. The focal point for my application for sports in my coaching and work area highlights the belief that sports can, if properly facilitated, break perceived barriers and unite together communities irrespective of culture, demographic, gender or status as well as encourage healthy activity.

I have been fortunate enough to be in a very unique situation where my employment position as a case manager working with Indigenous youth at high schools interacts with my voluntary position as a coach for the Onkaparinga women's rugby team. These circumstances have a common focal point for allowing me to work with predominately Aboriginal people using sports as a positive engagement tool. Doing my research thesis in this area has allowed me to support my personal views and approach on how sports and sporting principles can transcend into life teaching 'tools'. Research in this area has also given me further understanding of historical events as well as the social, financial, judicial and economical dilemmas and disparity experienced by most Indigenous Australians. Understanding the spiritual connection to land and the relationship to physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing, has allowed me to adapt how I teach and coach sports to encourage cultural determination and wellbeing for youth and gender.

For the youth I am involved with through my employment position, sports is used to demonstrate teamwork, unity (cultural), discipline, respect and setting career goals through education. In my

Coaching role, with a strong Aboriginal women's contingency, sport has allowed me to develop concepts that enhance self determination and have gendered empowerment. Both areas of my involvement with the Aboriginal community have allowed me to mentor and become an advocate for social inclusion and community belonging through sports participation.

### Centacare – Family Services – NGO

As a case manager for Centacare School Assertive Outreach program, there has been a realisation that a different holistic approach must be considered when engaging with the Aboriginal youth community. The one-on-one case management model does not have the capacity to fully engage clientele. The group work component that has been applied to our program creates a better holistic approach for engagement; It enables the worker to address issues holistically with students, schools, families and community members. The group work is designed to be more culturally appropriate in a setting the students and teacher feel comfortable with. The group work is divided into 2 modules; the first is a therapeutic cultural based engagement process that engages students into group conversations around culture, identity, career pathways and the ramifications of choices in life. The second component is a sporting activity that builds team skills. The group work program is designed to have a beginning, then a middle process of sports training, then has an end component that the students all look forward to participating in – The Nunga Touch Carnival. The amalgamation of the 2 modules gives students a sense of positive direction and something they need to work towards.

Stability is considered a necessary component in the Aboriginal community and as an NGO social service provider, we have established ourselves as a stable cultural supportive service that has established a recognisable connection to schools, students and community members over the last 5 years. The Nunga Touch Carnival is seen as an end of year cultural celebration to acknowledge Nunga students dedication in maintaining a connection with education. As the facilitator for this event, it is my duty to seek financial support from businesses, government bodies and community groups to facilitate this event. Our philosophy is to advocate the notion of 'Community Supporting Community', where community bodies contribute towards this event. Social and judicial issues that affect Aboriginal youth should not be seen solely as a Government or Aboriginal community concern, but in fact the general community has the capacity to support Aboriginal youth development through sports participation.

The attachments provided will highlight an overview and construction of the Nunga touch carnival and the processes put in place to create a specifically Aboriginal youth sports carnival. Within the report there is a You Tube link of the 2011 Nunga Touch Carnival, as well there are other reports on a web links provided to highlight my involvement with Aboriginal youth and sports.

**A CULTURAL JOURNEY –‘Sisters Coming Together’**

**WOMEN AND SPORTS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

**Onkaparinga Rugby Union Football Club**

I would like to briefly describe my journey as a coach in a local community rugby club in South Australia from 2010 -2012 and what I have seen unfold for Aboriginal women in this sports code at local ‘Grass Roots’ level. (*My observation is based upon my research work with Aboriginal youth and community sports*). In my capacity as coach of the local women’s rugby team, I have witnessed a unique and culturally empowering phenomenon for women playing physically demanding sports in South Australia. The phenomena is unique in three areas; firstly the large contingency of Aboriginal women players registered as playing sports on one team in the local community, secondly, the particular sport that they participate in is Rugby Union, even though SA is predominately an Australian Rules sports state, thirdly, how we as a team have created a young women’s pathway with 16-17yr old Aboriginal girls playing senior level women’s rugby

The Onkaparinga women’s rugby team entered the SA women’s rugby competition after a 10 year absence. I was asked to coach the women’s rugby team with only a small playing group of experienced players. What started out as a general inquiry from 3 Aboriginal women wanting to learn and play rugby at their local sporting club has now developed into a strong and concentrated Aboriginal women’s playing group that is supported by family and community members.

Part of my approach as a coach is to make every attempt to incorporate sports training programs inclusive of family members (children), these children come out to support Mum, Nanna and Aunty to enhance their physical fitness and it is important to make children part of the training program for their own health and wellbeing and recognise and appreciate their support for supporting their family members. Due to issues associated with domestic violence and breakdown of family dynamics, the coach is seen to be the father figure or bigger brother, mentor and role model for many and it is important to recognise that some of the roles played by coaches will exceed the normal boundaries of training hours, so as to help and assist women players, their family with social issues. Allowing you to be available when needed in the community is paramount as this builds trust and respect, and makes connecting to the community a lot stronger

## 2010 – SETTING THE FOUNDATION

Through community and family connections in 2010, we had registered 9 Aboriginal and 1 Torres Strait Islander women playing rugby at our club. (The supporting documentation will give an overview for the 2010 and 2011 sports journey for the women rugby players). Part of the role as coach is to advocate for inclusiveness for gender and culture, with the view that we all share a common goal and objective for the team to aspire too. Although the women from the team come from diverse cultural backgrounds, we are all united by the same cause, hence our motto - 'Sisters Coming Together'. Our Goal for 2010 as a new team into the competition was to win 1 game. We achieved this goal, however we came bottom of the competition table. Nonetheless, achieving our goal was our priority and more empowering was that we accomplished what we set out to achieve. This put in place a template for teaching women the benefits of setting realistic goals and objectives in their own lives.

## 2011- SETTING REALSITIC GOALS

Refer to attached report – 2011 started with an early pre season training inclusive of all family members. New goals were set by the playing group to reach the top 4 in the competition for finals. We had 12 Aboriginal women players participating in the 2011 season, a small growth from the 2010 season. Due to the low socioeconomic area, it is the responsibility for the coaching staff to help where possible help reduce the cost for fees. The coach of the Onkakapringa women's rugby team was successful in his funding application for a sports grant from the government sporting body, this grant paid for all the fee's as well as sporting equipment. To be able to encourage Aboriginal women to participate in playing rugby, you must be seen to advocate and look into on all areas that can help support sports participation for women and culture.

Having financial support to pay for fees and playing equipment allowed the women to better concentrate on training drills and game strategies. This empowered the women to concentrate on reaching their goals for 2011. The Onkaparinga women's rugby team made the grand final in 2011 but were beaten in the last 15 minutes. The important message to convey is that if you are able to support in reducing associated fees incurred with playing sports, the less players have to worry about finding the money to be able to participate and the more time they devote to training and achieving their goals.

## 2012 –GOALS ACHIVED THROUGH STRONG FOUNDATION – next generation of players

We have created a pathway for young Aboriginal women to participate in our women's rugby team for 2012. This has come about through setting the foundations in 2010 by allowing children and teenage youth to participate with training programs with their Mothers and Aunties. We registered 6 new first time Aboriginal rugby players, 4 of whom were 16-17 years of age. My observation suggested that we had created a safe and stable

## Submission 001 - Attachment B

environment in the local community where Aboriginal women and family members felt inclusive and empowered. I believe the empowerment that is experienced is the result of how Aboriginal women can compete equally on the sports field, without prejudice or disparity and know that their contribution on the field is well appreciated and equal to their fellow team mates. {This is supported in my research thesis regarding the use of community sport club as a stable and central institution that has the capacity to enhance inclusiveness and wellbeing}

Furthermore, from the nucleus of the team, Aboriginal women are being recognised and acknowledged more by the rugby fraternity and rugby community in SA for their sporting abilities and commitments. I have Aboriginal women who are senior players on our team, who now have become part of the SA women's rugby committee, this group meeting regularly to discuss the direction for women's rugby in SA (empowerment and self determination). This is the first time the Onkaparinga Rugby Union Club has experienced such a large Aboriginal contingency, especially women playing rugby and this has not been seen nor equalled by any other club in SA.

The 2012 team proved very successful and empowering for women players, we as team put some specific goals and one was to overcome our fear of the opposition and make it to the grand final. Part of the philosophic approach that was installed by the coach was to put forth metaphors about sports and how they parallel some of life challenges and adversities, irrespective of culture. Our opposition in the grand final has won the women's competition for 10 years and they were very intimidating. The coaches motivation was to encourage the women that at some stage of their lives, the need to stand strong and proud and not to be intimidated with life's obstacles, by facing your fears they will overcome.

The Onkaparinga Women's Rugby Team won the 2012 Grand final in the last 2 minutes of game time. The women never doubted their worth to the opposition and stood extremely proud and united as 'Sister Coming Together'. Out of the 4 tries scored by our team, our new Aboriginal players 16-17 yrs old scored 3 of them. The journey with Aboriginal women playing rugby at the Onkaparinga rugby club is unique on many fronts;

1. Sports has united culture
2. Strong Aboriginal women contingency paying Rugby Union in SA
3. A strong family and community support for women's participation
4. 3 years to win a grand final – from inception in 2010 to grand finalist in 2012
5. Creating a pathway for family members (youth) to participate in rugby
6. Inclusiveness at local community sports club

7. Addressing health and wellbeing for women and family members at community sport club.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xXEfsgVu5w>

### **NUNGA TOUCH FACILITATOR'S SUMMARISED BIOGRAPHIES**

**Ross Tanimu** – Case Manager – School Assertive Outreach Program – Centacare  
Bachelor of Arts – Major Criminal Justice and Sociology, Minor Legal Studies  
Bachelor of Arts- Honours in Legal Studies Honours Thesis *'Does The Promotion Of Sports Help Reduce Offending Behaviour By Indigenous Youth'*. This was referenced by the House of Representatives *Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs – 'Doing Time- Time For Doing' – Indigenous Youth in the Criminal Justice System.*

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/sentencing/report/chapter3.pdf>

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/sentencing/report/fullreport.pdf>

Ross Tanimu has been a case manager for Centacare for a period of 5 years. Ross is heavily involved with youth in local community sports club and holds level 1 rugby coach credentials. With Centacare Ross predominantly works with at-risk Indigenous Students at high schools as well as the Nunga community in Adelaide. Ross Tanimu has been a Junior and Senior coach at the Onkaparinga Rugby Union Club for a period of 10 years and presently coaches the Womens Rugby Team with a strong Indigenous women's presence. Ross has also been a Junior State coach and has been involved with the Lloyd McDermott National U16 Indigenous Rugby Development event for the last 5 years. Ross continues to work closely with the Nunga community in Adelaide and has been able to build rapport and understanding of Indigenous issues. Ross has just completed his BA with an Honours degree in Legal studies and his research topic for his Thesis was seen to portray the positive application of sports for Indigenous youth as an early intervention approach.