

Knowing your PEOPLE

‘it was one
of the best
feelings
knowing
about your
people’

‘One aspect of life that adversely affects Aboriginal people and their health, particularly people in custody, is identity. It is this lack of identifying knowledge that is often the basis of so much stress and ultimately poor health and illness for our people. I believe that if we can work towards firming up our cultural identity, we will have a solid foundation from which to address other health concerns.’

Elizabeth McEntryre, Manager,
Justice Health Aboriginal Health Unit

Many Indigenous people in correctional facilities have been separated from family and community as children. Staff concerned with their wellbeing have come to believe that the search for cultural identity is an important factor in addressing the health issues of Indigenous inmates.

Kirsten Thorpe (Archivist — Aboriginal Liaison, State Records) and Melissa Jackson (Indigenous Services Librarian, State Library of NSW) took part in a four-day joint training session at the Emu Plains Correctional Centre to introduce Aboriginal women to family and community history research. The women were shown how to access material held in archives and libraries for personal, family and community history research.

The training program, facilitated by Kim Katon, Trainer and Consultant from Indigenous Identities, had the support of managers within the Department of Correctional Services responsible for Aboriginal health, support and services. This is the first time a State or Territory archive has been involved in training with Indigenous inmates on access to government records. Further programs are planned for the future.

Participants’ comments

‘I’ve never done a course like this before and I enjoyed myself because of the atmosphere and because every Aborigine should know our history.’

‘I found the program to be excellent, especially useful to me as I knew very little about my father’s family but know a lot more now, and as my mum was adopted it has also given me a better idea now of how to go about finding out information I’d need to find her real family. Thank you.’

enquiries:

Kirsten Thorpe, ph: (02) 8247 8612
email: alo@records.nsw.gov.au

Kim Katon, mob: 0415 938 850
email: kim@indigenous-identities.com

