



Doll making: yarning with Elders about motherhood

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Introduction: The Gomerai gaaynggal centre offers an Artshealth program that is designed for young Aboriginal mums. The centre is a cultural space and a safe environment to make the mums feel comfortable. Respect of the Elders and their knowledge is an important part of Aboriginal traditions and spiritual practice. The mums that attend the Gomerai gaaynggal Centre often don't have their Elders around because they have either moved here from their own community or all of their Elders have passed on. These women miss the presence of Elders in their lives.

Aim: To make an educational DVD about female Aboriginal cultural practices.

Methods: All Elders groups in Tamworth and Walgett were consulted and all agreed it was a good idea. We thought that instead of just sitting and yarning, we could to yarn while making dolls that had stories. The doll making project gave Elders a starting point to telling their own stories. Their doll represented a person in their own lives and Elders were interviewed and filmed about their doll and lives in order to make an educational DVD about Aboriginal cultural practices. Doll making occurred weekly over a period of time with both Elders and mums together.

Results: The Elders and mums reported that they really enjoyed making the dolls and many have continued their doll making. The doll making project opened up a lot of the discussion of their upbringing, motherhood, what bush medicine and food they used and ate. The DVD will be used as a cultural learning tool for all of our young mums, school and health students.

Conclusion: Elders and mothers have requested the continuation of the doll making. Video from the doll making will be presented at this conference.