

# Kluwer Mediation Blog

## All You Need is Love – More Lessons from the Beatles and from Indigenous Australians

Rosemary Howell (University of New South Wales) · Monday, July 22nd, 2019



Aboriginal Flag of Australia. Photo credit Creative Commons

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Music and art make continuing and surprising contributions to Dispute Resolution.

Greg Bond's [June Blog](#), written as a means of keeping his promise to write about the Beatles, shared lyrics that gave conflict a new voice.

Synchronicity has been at work and suddenly the Beatles lyrics are getting a lot of exposure in the

conflict resolution space.

The Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledge Affairs in Sydney will soon sponsor the 'Great Debate'. Titled 'All You Need is Love' the debate is intended to shine a light on the representations and anxieties in our relationships with First Peoples of Australia.

While I still know all the words to this Beatles' song, it did not ever occur to me that this might be a song about a secret weapon for conflict resolution.

But it turns out that the Beatles were right and I was completely wrong.

Enter my accomplished colleague Dr Emma Lee and the remarkable conflict resolution exercise she labels 'love bombing'.

Her story is extraordinary.

Appointed last year by the Centre for Social Impact at Swinburne University, Dr Lee is working as Swinburne's 2018 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Fellow. Her doctorate assisted in establishing the first joint management plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and provided a leadership role for Aboriginal Tasmanians to engage and participate in a range of cultural, economic and conservation functions of management and governance.



Dr Emma Lee, Indigenous researcher © Jamie Graham

Dr Lee is not a lawyer and has no conflict resolution training – but she has probably achieved more and with more profound impact than most of us.

Recently the media has recognised [her remarkable story](#). Once I saw the headline -‘We ‘love-bombed’ the Tasmanian government to win Indigenous rights’ – I needed to know more. It is a significant story and it is particularly important that communities of dispute resolvers have access to it. However it is not my story and I don’t want to fall into the trap of speaking on her behalf because it is her story about her culture. So I have asked Dr Lee to join me in this blogpost.

### Over to you Dr Lee.

When Dr Howell contacted me, I soared on high emotion that our Indigenous strategy to heal the trauma of genocide may have resonance for other communities to resolve deep conflicts.



A Welcome to Country ceremony at Government House, Tasmania © Emma Lee

A little over a week ago, I attended a flag-raising ceremony at Government House, the highest office of the Tasmanian state, where the Aboriginal flag will now be flown permanently.

This represents a continuation of the efforts to use love and mutual respect to reset the relationship between Aboriginal Tasmanians, government and the broader public away from the violent governance that has characterised the past 200 years and towards healthy and functional communities of proud cultural peoples.



Raising the Aboriginal flag at Government House, Tasmania © Emma Lee

In December 2016 our peoples gained recognition within our [Tasmanian State Constitution](#) as First Peoples. This is extraordinary given that since 1876, upon the death of our countrywoman Trucanini, we were globally declared extinct – exterminated as a consequence of colonisation. However, in just under two short years, from raising the idea through to an Inquiry and a parliamentary bill, we were able to reclaim ourselves as contemporary beings away from extinction myths.

How did we do this? Well, Indigenous peoples are not known for wealth, so money did not make this happen, nor are we acknowledged as community powerbrokers, so it was not influence either. Instead, it was the love of Elders and others who demonstrated our joy and cultural values of kinship and reciprocity. We welcomed other Tasmanians to become part of our extended families and to see ourselves as brothers and sisters to each other. We thanked the government for our genocide, dispossession and exile and made a compact that in recovering ourselves and our culture we would invite other Tasmanians to join the journey with us. That way, if we fell down, or failed in the first attempt, we would have the support from the general public to dust ourselves off and keep going. We would learn together, and we would listen deeply to each other to respect the multiple opinions and views of our shared communities.



The Governor of Tasmania at our Mannalargenna Day © mtwAC

We told the Tasmanian Government that we trust them to do their jobs and make good these relationships and in return our Indigenous leadership was respected to self-determine our futures in our regions and territories. Our peoples reduced the anxiety of the broader community when we agreed on simple, but important, things, such as recognising the right of the [Westminster System](#) to make laws in return for the acknowledgement that we are First Peoples and traditional owners. This method means that we do not compromise over rights but come together to create safe negotiating environments for all future generations.

Love is powerful. When we love country, ancestors and Elders, we are able to share that belonging with all Tasmanians to find their place in relation to us. Instead of human rights becoming a toll on our peoples in the struggle for them, they became a place of shared vision, laughter and happiness – human rights can be fun! They can be negotiated from a position of mutual benefit where no one is left behind. We continue to [make gains](#) in education, land and sea management, fisheries, family care and cultural heritage – all new policies, funding, commitments and unique systems of condition-setting rather than proscribed lists of things.

When the Tasmanian Government created a whole-of-government strategy, entitled ‘Resetting the Relationship’, the cornerstone effect has been to reassure Aboriginal Tasmanians that improvement is key and open-door access to ministers means that we can continue the conversations to make stronger existing regulation and laws. Indeed, a powerful outcome has been the signing of a [Statement of Intent](#) from both major political parties to respect the functions of the reset policy and place Aboriginal affairs outside of election cycles. There is no better conflict mechanism than when we have set the protocols for respectful relations in place.

Our methodology of reducing discrimination, increasing shared power and reclaiming our histories away from trauma has reset the relationship towards trust, enduring decision-making and respectful negotiations. Above all, it has come from Indigenous leadership that is deeply rooted in cultural practices and knowledges that are tens of thousands of years old.

Old songs and old ways will always have important messages that are created anew when we really pay attention them.

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