



TRANSGENERATIONAL Epigenetic Inheritance

Stan Grant talks on why it is important to indigenous children's education.

Stan Grant is a leading Indigenous Australian journalist, news presenter, reporter and author. Earlier this year he shared some of his insights with attendees at the Rural and Remote Children's Education Forum in Dubbo. Connections was there to see his keynote speech which covered a huge range of topics including the science of epigenetics.

What is Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance ?



By the age of 12, Stan had attended a dozen different primary schools as his family lived a nomadic existence in far west NSW and he never imagined that he would end up where he is today.

Despite a background of adversity, a few basic opportunities changed his direction completely. In 1967, when Stan was 5 years old, 96% of Australians voted to include Aboriginal people in the Census. The right to vote and equal pay for Aborigines followed soon after. In the 1970's programs provided \$3.00 per fortnight to assist kids like Stan to go to school regularly. Stan cites this as the changing point. He was one of a very small number of his community who attended university and the cycle of change for him was well underway.

Although Stan's story is inspirational, we still see signs of significant disadvantage today. Indigenous Australians have the worst health and employment outcomes and despite being 3% of the population, they represent 25% of the prison population and a massive 50% of the juvenile detention population.

Perhaps transgenerational epigenetic inheritance might also influence these unacceptable outcomes.

The key for change Stan says, is early access to education. Childhood education can be a key enabler to reverse the trends of the past, lay the foundation for change and foster more Indigenous Australians to shake off inherited disadvantage created just a few generations ago.

Childhood educators can help close the gap by embracing and encouraging new stories, celebrating culture and "allowing the DNA in indigenous kids to fully express itself".

Put simply **Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance** is the memory of significant trauma or environmental change being passed on to the offspring of plants, animals and humans.

Studies have shown that the DNA of subsequent generations can be changed when parents are subjected to significant change or trauma, even though the offspring did not directly experience that trauma or change.

First discovered in the plant world, there is now strong evidence that epigenetic transmission of trauma occurs in animals and humans. Stan says that some studies have directly linked instances of heart disease and anxiety to this phenomenon.

Stan, points out that the discovery of Mungo Man and Mungo Woman in Lake Mungo, provides evidence that Australia has been inhabited for around 65,000 years yet, only a few generations ago, the oldest known society today had no rights, were not recognised and were made to feel ashamed of their culture.

He tells how his Great Grandfather was arrested and put in gaol for speaking his native Wiradjuri language, yet it was only one generation later that his father would help write the first Wiradjuri dictionary.

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