



Ms Sarah M Blake BA, MSA, Acc.M.LEADR & Nationally Accredited

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Curriculum Vitae: Sarah Blake - Cross- Cultural Mediator

I am a Mediator specializing in strategic conflict management and cross-cultural mediations and have been working in the field of conflict management for over nine years. During this time I have worked in government, community and commercial sectors – all of which have contributed to a thorough understanding of the complexities associated with strategic decision making. I bring to my practice both an analytical and capacity development approach which encourages and empowers clients to make decisions and take ownership of solutions. I am particularly passionate about working across cultures and have developed a unique ability to bridge the communication divides that can emerge between cultures. The creation of the business Greyspace: Strategic Engagement Solutions has provided me with the opportunity to specialize in the field of strategic conflict management and community engagement and continue my commitment to delivering a high standard of mediation.

Mediation Experience

I was trained as a Mediator in 1998 and have been working directly in the field of conflict management for over 9 years. Within the last few years I have acquired over 300 hours of mediation experience. As a mediator I have worked in both urban and remote communities on issues such as land, law/legal, community, government, business, workplace, restorative justice, victim offender and community education cases. The work has been about conflict management, mediation, process design and capacity development and has included anywhere between 2 – 70 parties. I also have substantial experience delivering community education about mediation and conflict management, particularly in a cross-cultural setting, and bring this experience to helping parties prepare for successful mediation processes.

I have conducted significant amounts of work within remote Aboriginal communities, mainly in the Northern Territory, Australia. These cases have included issues such as highly sensitive Supreme Court Referred cases (community feuding), burial issues, workplace and community/government relations and macro and micro multiparty community conflicts and youth issues (including youth diversion & circle sentencing). These issues are complex, usually with many competing interests and are always about cross-cultural issues. Specific topics explored have included foundational issues of culture, land, justice, law and peace-making.

Having worked with cultural counterparts, translators and cultural advisors, I understand the importance of developing space and processes which have meaning for all parties involved in a particular case. My experience and relationships with communities enables me to continue to achieve outcomes for all my clients. Consequently I have been asked to Lecturer at Charles Darwin University on the topic of doing business with Aboriginal Australia. I also continue to deliver and develop projects with specific communities.

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Without disclosing the people involved major cases which I have undertaken include:

Feuding or Disputes (inter or intra family): Inter family dispute (Clan Alliance) involving more than 70 people and multiple families. The situation was escalating to significantly violent behavior and as a direct result of the mediation process community harmony was established. This case had been referred for mediation assessment by the Supreme Court NT.

Burial Disputes: Following the death of a young person conflict has arisen between families and had escalated to community verses community conflict. As a result of the mediation the conflict was resolved and the communities (in regards to this matter) remain peaceful.

Conflict with other people, agencies or departments: Following continuing conflict, confusion and mistrust a conflict management and communication plan was developed with this community. Since this outcome other agencies have engaged with the community and they now have support and strong relationships with many stakeholders.

Disputes involving Youth: I managed, advised and supported a range of Youth Diversion projects. This included providing support to Police in how they engage with and support resolution of conflict issues regarding youth.

Community Conflict Assessments: I have conducted a number of conflict assessments for some entrenched and difficult community conflicts. Part of this process included developing a number of strategies to support conflict management processes.

Women & Peace-making: I continue to work with a group of Yolngu women exploring the role of women as peace-makers. We are learning from each other's cultural domains and developing skills, knowledge, capacity and support for each other.

Mediation Style

The challenges and needs of parties in conflict are varied and often complex, by appreciating these complexities in a framework of principles and best practice standards I am better able to fulfill the role of a mediator. My mediation style has grown out of my initial mediation training, a facilitative process based on LEADR's interest based model. Now days I draw on a range of resources including models, process and people depending on each situation. Essentially it is my ability to listen, create the right environment and ask the right questions that allows me to work across culture and in the conflict zone.

Due to my professional affiliations, I am accountable to International Mediation Institute, LEADR & Community Justice Centre NT Codes of Conduct and their relevant complaints resolution processes.

Qualifications

Mawul Rom Graduate 2009: Cross-cultural mediator & peace-maker, recognised by Dhurili Clan Alliance Elders and Mawul Rom.

Master of Indigenous Knowledge – Mawul Rom: (graduating in October 2010), Charles Darwin University

Master of Strategic Affairs (Defence, Security & Global Governance), 2004, Australian National University

Bachelor of Arts – (Anthropology, Politics and South East Asia Studies), 2001, Northern Territory University

Mediator: Mediator training – LEADR 1998

Accreditation LEADR and National Mediation Standard – over 300 hours

Advanced Facilitator: CPM: Facilitation & Representational Skills: A Master class, June 2005

Relevant Employment History

Greyspace: Strategic Engagement Solutions 2009 - (proprietor)

Mediation Coach – Solomon Islands Judicial Mediation Training June 2010.

Strategic Engagement Planning – NT Legal Aid Commission, Accountancy Firm

Mediations & Facilitations- including issues such as neighborhood, Personal Violence Restraining Orders PVROs, Burial Issues, Workplace & bullying and Family Violence Workshops.

Mediation Panels – Federal Court of Australia- Native Title Mediator Panel

Aboriginal Alternative Dispute Resolution Service WA – Mediation Panel

EASA NT and Community Justice Centre NT Senior mediator Panels.

Mediation Coach/Mentor – LEADR, CJC and privately – particularly for those doing Indigenous conflict resolution.

Cross-cultural Project Management – Mawul Rom: Cross-cultural mediation & leadership

Lecturer at Charles Darwin University (CDU) – 2010-2011: Cultural Transactions: Communication & Negotiation

Program Development CDU Master of Indigenous Knowledge -Mawul Rom.

Women as Peace-makers – on going work with group of Yolngu women about law, skills and practice of peacemaking within two cultural frames.

Mawul Rom Project Manager - 2008-2010: Management and facilitation of logistical, program and project outcomes. This position has been largely volunteer work.

Project Manager – AO7 (2008): Northern Territory Police – Youth Diversion Section; management of 16 projects funded by the Federal Government as part of the Northern Territory Intervention - Grants totaling \$1.1 million.

Senior Policy & Project Officer and Mediator - AO6 (2007 - 2008): NT Department of Justice - Community Justice Centre. Senior Mediator for CJC managing both major and minor projects relating to the delivery of mediation and conflict management services.

Other positions of relevance include Research Assistant for the AIATSIS Indigenous Facilitation & Mediation Project and Community Education & Development Officer for the Conflict Resolution Service in ACT.

Professional Development

LEADR: Coaching & Role playing 2009-2010

Mawul Rom Projects – Mawul Rom Workshops 2004 – 2010, Leadership Gathering 2009, Law & Justice Gathering 2008, Madayin Law Ceremony 2009

Paper: A Cross-Cultural exploration of our role as peace-makers in helping to calm fears during cross-cultural mediations, **10th International LEADR Conference 2009**,

Paper: ‘Cross-cultural Mediation – Foundations & Preparation’ - **Core Solutions & Turcan Connell**, Edinburgh UK, 2009

Paper: ‘Balanda & Yolngu bring fear to negotiations. How do we help to calm that fear?’ co-authored with Brenda Mutha, **Mawul Rom Association**, 2008.

Paper: ‘Mediation: Cultural Healing through Community Healing’ delivered with Rev. Dr Djiniyini Gondarra, **National Indigenous Justice CEOs Forum**, 2007.

References

Adam Black
Senior Project Officer
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Justine Davis BA BLegS MA (Peace Studies) JP
Consultant Mediator
Nationally Accredited Mediator,
Nationally Accredited Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner
PO Box 1146, Nightcliff, NT 0814
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Rev. Dr. Djiniyini Gondarra OAM
Dhurili Clan Elder & Co-chair of Mawul Rom Association
Phone: 0427140232 or 0419279258

Case Examples: Sarah M Blake

Conflict Type	Details
Feuding or Disputes (inter or intra family)	
	Supreme Court Referred Community Feuding (inter family) – Remote Arnhem Land Community Mediation
Description of Service Provided	<p>A highly sensitive court case was causing significant disharmony and conflict within this remote Aboriginal community. The Judge had asked that something be done to try and calm the fear, anger and conflict that was threatening to erupt into violence. The Community Justice Centre was approach to try to assist in creating some peace within the community.</p> <p>Sarah Blake provided conflict analysis and cross-cultural mediation services including the provision of a report that was provided to both the defence and prosecution lawyers. This report was commended by the Judge (as documented within the court transcript). The cross-cultural mediation was conducted both in English and traditional language within 15 key parties and approximately 100 participants from the community.</p> <p>Drawing on international practices and community engagement principles, Ms Blake undertook a risk & conflict assessment to determine the viability of conducting mediation in light of highly sensitive legal issues proceeding through court. During the mediation she worked with the nominated Aboriginal cultural liaison, translating both language and concepts to help Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parties understand what was going on and help them achieve mutually agreeable outcomes.</p>
Context	<p>This dispute was conflict between an extended family groups (Clan). The family groups were fragmented and fighting amongst each other – with violence escalating to impact on the wider community.</p> <p>This violent conflict was threatening community harmony and as the court case progressed the situation was becoming worse.</p> <p>The mediation itself was a process the reflected both the needs of the Aboriginal community and non-Indigenous stakeholders (Police and Lawyers). In attendance were over 70 people – representing community, Elders from other clans (intra), Police, Lawyers and general community members.</p>
Date performed	September 2007
Outcome	<p>Ms Blake was able to bring all stakeholders together including police, lawyers, Elders and communities members enabling understanding and harmony to emerge. This was done with the assistance of a community representative working as the co-mediator.</p> <p>The fact that the community members had trust in Ms Blake enabled them to have the confidence to make public and process which had never before been seen (let alone participated in by) outsiders/non-Indigenous. To participate in this traditional law process and to develop a process that was mutually respectful (both of traditional law & mediation) was a privilege.</p> <p>During this meeting the Elder of this Clan alliance was able to legitimately claim and be recognised as having authority – and responsibility for this family. As a direct result of this – the family united to create peace between them and to support each other through the court process. These conditions enabled the court case to proceed in a way which didn't threaten community harmony.</p> <p>A report was also provided to lawyers representing both prosecution and defence. This report and the work conducted by Ms Blake was recognised by the Judge as being of a high standard and highly successful and useful to the court process.</p>
Referee Details	Dr. Peggy Dwyer Barrister Crown Solicitors Office, NSW

	Peggy.Dwyer@agd.nsw.gov.au Ph: 02 92245051 Project: Court Referred Mediation
	Helen Wodak Lawyer NAAJA helen_wodak@yahoo.com.au Ph: 0405 357 856 Project: NAAJA Community Legal Education
Conflict Type	Details
Conflict Management & Negotiation	
	Milingimbi Law & Order Project
Description of Service Provided	<p>Milingimbi Community Council was to receive a grant for Night Patrol services within their community. Part of the project condition was that the community establishes mechanisms to address issues of law and order. The Milingimbi community, with NT Police Neighborhood Watch approached the Community Justice Centre to see if there were opportunities to create a community partnership in support of harmonious and safe communities.</p> <p>Ms Blake facilitated and coordinated whole of NT government discussions and community discussions to establish partnerships in support of safe and harmonious communities. Services provided included facilitation, coordination and network creation internally and externally to the Milingimbi community. Report and models of engagement were produced and foundations were created that enabled the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency to continue to build upon the safe community model developed.</p>
Context	This community is a very remote and small Aboriginal community and had a history of low levels of service by external agencies. As a result of this and due to a number of complex reasons, conflict was increasing. There was conflict occurring between community members and increasing hostility towards Government agencies – in particular the Police. This has resulted in specific conflict and mistrust between Police and community.
Date performed	August 2007 – April 2008
Outcome	<p>Utilising specialist cross-cultural communication skills, Ms Blake was able to establish strong links with senior Elders from within the Milingimbi community. After several trips to this remote community, she was able to identify and document a whole of community vision for creating a safe and harmonious community. Furthermore, a cross-cultural community engagement model was developed with the community which assisted government stakeholders in delivery of services.</p> <p>Ms Blake was involved in facilitating a number of meetings between community and agencies such as Police to discuss ways of working together. She was also able to enlist support and participation by other agencies who had previously not been involved with this community.</p> <p>Since Ms Blake’s involvement with this community there has been an increased level of engagement from external agencies. For example NAAJA has since engaged with the community to provide support and assistance in relation to legal issues. The community itself has become empowered to undertake a number of projects – based on the ideas developed with Ms Blake. These projects are culturally strong and based on Traditional Law – they also represent opportunities for mutual respect and relationship building.</p>
Referee Details	Derrick Scanlan Milingimbi Community Development Officer (at time) East Arnhem Land Shire Council derrick.scanlan@eastarnhem.nt.gov.au Ph: 08 89877024

	<p>Justine Davis Mediator justinedavis@westnet.com.au Ph: 0414440169</p>
Conflict Type	Details
Burial Dispute - Mediation	
	Katherine Region
Description of Service Provided	<p>The death of a young Aboriginal man from the region had led to escalated violence between two remote Aboriginal communities. A number of NT Government agencies had attempted to resolve the conflict and minimise the increasing risk of escalated violence. The Community Justice Centre appointed Ms Blake to attempt to resolve the issues.</p> <p>Ms Blake managed the conflict management process with support from an Aboriginal co-mediator. Ms Blake conducted a conflict risk assessment and established dispute resolution process options. Shuttle mediation was conducted between two remote communities and support mechanisms were put in place to encourage future peaceful negotiations.</p> <p>Ms Blake was responsible for the design, application and monitoring of a conflict resolution model for a specific conflict within a remote Aboriginal community. The model design emerged out of intensive consultation with relevant stakeholders from two communities. Application and monitoring of the process was managed by Ms Blake and support by an Aboriginal colleague. Ongoing monitoring demonstrated the conflict resolution model applied was successful in establishing sustained peace.</p>
Context	This case was specifically a conflict about the burial (location and process) of a young man who had strong family connections in two remote Aboriginal communities.
Date performed	2007
Outcome	<p>After consultation with both families agreement was reached about both the location for the burial and the process for mourning. Both families reached a decision that enabled them to live with peace – and not to continue the conflict.</p> <p>Follow up regarding this case confirmed that after the funeral, which was able to proceed due to the mediated agreement, people started talking again. Ms Miller (see below) stated the following; “it was a really good result. In fact since the burial, one of the parties has moved back to the community and everyone is talking to each other. It was a really good result and there is still peace.”</p>
Referee Details	<p>Ian Castillon Aboriginal Mediator & Corrections Project Officer Dpt Justice, NT Government Ph: 08 89995511 (switch) Ian.castillon@nt.gov.au Project: Katherine Region Burial Case</p>
	<p>Larna Miller Health Worker Naiyu Daly River Health Clinic Ph: 08 8978 2435 Project: Katherine Region Burial Case</p>
Conferencing	
	NT Police – Youth Diversion Intervention Projects
Description of Service Provided	As part of the Federal Governments Intervention funding for Youth Development initiatives, 16 projects across the territory were identified due to their capacity to deliver outcomes that support and build the capacity of young people at risk and their communities. Ms Blake undertook this project work with NT Police Youth Diversion Unit.

	<p>Ms Blake was responsible for project management of the NT Emergency Intervention Youth Development Projects, which entailed 16 separate projects totaling \$1.1 million dollars and focused on developing safe and strong communities within remote Aboriginal locations. Project management included liaison and partnership establishment, capacity development and conflict management support, grant release and reporting requirements.</p> <p>Ms Blake worked directly with projects in places such as Tiwi Island, Elcho Island and Groote Eylandt. Ms Blake supported on-the ground practices – though capacity development, conflict management and professional support.</p> <p>Ms Blake also worked closely with NT Police to support and advise them in their delivery of Youth Diversion services. This included advising on professional development options, best practice standards and in assist with community cultural and Elder dialogues.</p>
Context	These projects involved working directly with youth, and very often required liaison with schools. In order to achieve outcomes partnership needed to be re-established between schools, youth and even Police.
Date performed	March – September 2008
Outcome	<p>Projects successfully achieved performance requirements within difficult time frames. Youth from communities were provided with opportunities for a better way forward.</p> <p>Ms Blake’s conflict management support also resulted in the resolution of on-going conflict in particular communities.</p> <p>NT Police’s Youth Diversion Unit also developed new practices and were able to foster better working relationships between youth, Elders and themselves in particular communities.</p>
Referee Details	<p>Kristyne Love Youth Diversion Project Manager Groote Island, NT kristyne@gemydu.org Ph: 08 89876739 Project: NT Intervention – NT Police Youth Diversion Projects</p>
	<p>Jennie Renfree Senior Youth Diversion & Youth Policy Officer NT Police jennie.renfree@nt.gov.au Ph: 08 89857046 Project: NT Intervention – NT Police Youth Diversion Projects</p>
Other Relevant Services provided	
Conflict Management	
Description of Service Provided	<p>Ms Blake was appointed through the Community Justice Centre to conduct a conflict assessment and if appropriate conduct mediation.</p> <p>Following consultation with community, appointment of a co-mediator and exploration of critical issues as model of resolution was agreed.</p>
Context	This situation was a conflict situation that had arisen between Aboriginal workers from two separate organisations. These people had a requirement to work together – and the conflict was impacting on wider community harmony.
Date performed	2009
Outcome	Whilst the mediation itself did not occur – parties felt they had been listened to and valued. Through having conversation about what mediation was – and exploring its potential, clients emerged with new skills and knowledge about support mechanisms available to them.
Referee Details	Trevor Woodhead

	<p>Consultant trevor@woodconsult.com.au Ph: 0412 0799814 or 08 89484004 Project: Community Organisational Mediation/Conflict</p>
	Prison – Pre-release Conference
Description of Service Provided	<p>Ms Blake worked with Aboriginal Victims of Crime and family of deceased to assess if a pre-release prison conference with the offender would be appropriate. After difficult conversations it was agreed that a conference would go ahead between offender (who was due for release) and the deceased family.</p> <p>This conference/mediation took place at the prison (outside in the prison farm) and was facilitated by Ms Blake and another mediator. Service also included follow up discussion with Prison staff and Elders from the community to ensure that participants were supported and were ok following the difficult meeting.</p>
Context	This was a conference/mediation about the consequences of violent crime. There was a need for healing and resolution of issues between families and a community. This was also a preventative approach to conflict management – in that parties had an opportunity to decide how they would deal with a difficult situation before it could escalate into conflict.
Date performed	2008
Outcome	This was a highly sensitive and difficult mediation – however parties reached agreement and felt that the process had helped prepare both the offender and the victims (family of deceased) for his return to the community.
Referee Details	<p>Wade Jensen Corrections Officer & Liaison NT Dpt of Justice wade.jensen@nt.gov.au Ph: 08 8935 7473 Project: Pre-release Conference</p>