Gloria’s story 5

Aboriginal people go to a doctor and the first thing the doctor says is, ‘How can we help you?’

Well, sounds strange to me for a doctor to say that, coz I’m sick. Could you not ask me, ‘Hello, my name is whatever…’ Get a bit of trust between a doctor and patient and, ‘What can I help you with? How are you feeling today?’

They never ask you straight away what the problem is. They go into a lot of detail, or sign your name here, sign your name there. You gotta fill out papers and everything. Black fellows don’t like filling paper out. We like to just go in and say, ‘Well, today, I feel like not wanting to live, not wanting to be healthy. I don’t feel healthy and I don’t feel well.’

They need to know how to build up a trust and get an understanding of Aboriginal people’s language. Aboriginal people are not that educated. You got people from the desert, they can hardly talk, but if you point to parts of your body and maybe even draw a picture, pictures talk… They can tell you exactly what’s going on.

It’s coming down to the basics, with black fellows study, being on the ground, straight. Don’t talk around the bush. You gotta straight talk.

Honesty, building up a trust, learning to know the sign language… If they got a sore eye or… My ears sore and my heart… You know, that kind of thing. Pointing, drawing a picture.

Explaining to them what can happen, what can go wrong. Black fellows don’t understand with when you get sugar diabetes. If you happen to know something’s wrong with your toe, you go to the doctor. They tell you your toes got to go off and in a year their leg’s missing. After when it gets to the knee point… And I seen this in Cue three times since I’ve been here… When that knee is missing they give up, they die. And they’re only young fellows. When I say young, they’re around my age 65, 67.

We don’t understand. I don’t really understand.

If I kick my toe, I’ve gone to the doctor, I hope he’s fixed it up… With me helping to fix it with sugar diabetes.

And sugar diabetes patients go through this all the time. ‘Why do I have to cut off my ankle now?’ And then two years later, ‘Why I gotta cut off my knee?’
It’s because the disease has travelled up our body, not down our body, around, and gone out other areas. See that’s the big misunderstanding with black fellows. And a lot of them are... Only a little few are taking care of their feet now.

The first thing doctors have to learn to understand, that black fellow not always gonna talk to him in his language. They gotta talk down to black fellow language.