



Rhythm2Recovery Indigenous Lesson Plan Examples

Examples of potential lesson plans drawn from the Rhythm2Recovery Workbook Volume 1. Recognising the general preference for experiential learning in Indigenous communities. Designed to give practitioners a starting point for addressing some of the key themes covered in this manual within their group practice. Each session is designed around 50 minutes of session time. *Note these are guides only and can readily be adapted or extended. Many groups benefit from repeating exercises, expanding on their associated themes & discussions each time, and some groups will require a greater emphasis on rhythm play & the musical elements of the model – flexibility is essential.*



Starting Out – Rhythm, Rhythm, Rhythm

Preparation is key to a good session – arrive early, set up the room, know your material, and wherever possible work with an enthusiastic co-facilitator. The drums should be similar so that you don't have power struggles over who plays what. And I usually keep them behind the chairs, out of reach before we start session one.

1. Welcome people and explain the nature and purpose of the program – having fun, playing music together and looking at how people get on together etc.
2. Set up some guidelines for respectful interaction – wherever possible get the group members to come up with these and write them up to refer to whenever necessary.
3. Define the word 'RHYTHM' – a regular pattern. On drums we play rhythms, but we also see rhythms in other areas of our lives – ask for examples from: Nature, Weather, Animal behaviour, Human behaviour. *We live in a world of rhythms and we are creatures of rhythm.*
4. Talk a little bit about drums – who has played a drum before? Where do drums come from? What are they made from? What were they used for? How should we treat them? **Note the critical cultural respect owed to the drum in different cultures.**
5. **GET THE DRUMS OUT**
6. Introduce the rumble, then play some rumble games – 'Conduct a Rumble', 'Rumble Waves', 'Pass the Bass'.
7. Teach the 3 different sounds of the drum – Bass, Tone & Flam – Play the 'Bass Tone Flam Around the Circle' Game
8. Play 'Call and Response' – The Teacher Leads – then have each group member do one call and the group respond. Focus on simple, short clear calls.
9. Play the 'Focus' exercise – and talk about the need to be alert to avoid rhythms (or behaviours) that cause people problems – name some of these that you might be better avoiding.
10. Introduce the 'Heartbeat Rhythms' – play steadily through the different Heartbeat rhythms, and then try dividing the group and having one section play one rhythm while another section plays a different combination.
11. Fade to nothing and finish.
12. Ask people to put their drums behind their chairs and then summarise the learning.

If you have participants with high energy levels and who are easily distracted, you might substitute some more fun games like 'Musical Chairs' or 'Marco Polo' to keep them interested. Also, the regulation exercise 'The Rhythmic Wave' may be useful; allowing people to expend their excitable energy while at the same time providing them with a challenge of coming together to align on the slow pulse (60-80bpm).

Respecting Others, Respecting Self

It can be useful to start each session with the drums behind chairs while you talk briefly about any of the guidelines you'd like to focus on, remind them of last week's learning and introduce the theme of this session.

1. Start with some 'Rumble if....' questions related to the theme: Rumble if it feels good when people treat you well; Rumble if you have ever seen someone be disrespectful; Rumble if you've ever felt bad because people treated you poorly. Rumble if you think people get on better when they are kind to each other. *You could also ask the participants to think of things people do to show respect to others and ask a rumble if.... question about that e.g., "Rumble if you think sharing is being respectful.*
2. Do some 'Call & Response' – individually and then try breaking the group in two and having one side hold a simple foundation rhythm while you lead call & response with the other half.
3. Teach the three 'Foundation Rhythms' and then try dividing the group in 3 with each section playing a different part.
4. Introduce and play 'Rumble Ball' – every time a person catches the ball, they have to say one thing they think good friends or family members do to support each other.
5. Introduce and run the 'Speaker's Chair' exercise with a focus "Something you VALUE in your relationships with other people". At the conclusion write these answers (values) on a white-board and discuss their importance and the challenges of living up to them.
6. Introduce or remind the group of the Bass analogy and how it can represent these core values, that we looked at in the previous exercise, as these are often at the heart of healthy relationships and a grounded sense of identity.
7. Revisit the 'Heartbeat Rhythms' and then 'Layer In' one at a time and have each person play their own accent, connected by the double Bass. Try getting really quiet before 'Fading to Nothing'.
8. Put the drums behind chairs and summarise the session.

Good Relationships

It can be useful to start each session with the drums behind chairs while you talk briefly about any of the guidelines you'd like to focus on, remind them of last week's learning and introduce the theme of this session.

1. Try some more 'Around the Circle' combinations – write a combination on the white-board e.g., Bass, Tone, Flam, Clap, Click. And practice getting it moving around the circle smoothly, gradually increasing speed.
2. Start a clear Bass pulse and invite 'free rhythm play' or reintroduce a rhythm you may have been learning from a previous session – *always expand from a set rhythm piece to allowing & empowering participants to vary it (improvise) without losing touch with their Bass.*
3. Re-introduce the theme with a brief focus on the importance of good relationship in relation to happiness and meaning in our lives – as social creatures we thrive on nurturing, supportive relationships. *Use 'Rumble If...' questions to help facilitate this discussion e.g., Rumble on your drum if you have someone in your life who makes you happy; Rumble on your drum if you have someone in your life who makes you laugh; Rumble on your drum if you have someone in your life who makes you feel good about yourself.*
4. Introduce and play 'Musical Chairs' – remember this is a fun collaborative game, not competitive – make a couple of clear points about this difference and how it impacts relationships.
5. Run the 'Focus' exercise again with a preliminary discussion on some of the patterns (Rhythms) we can fall into that undermine healthy relationships. Then run the extension focusing on, and discussing some of the patterns (Rhythms) we recognise that support healthy relationships. Discuss at the end how hard it can be to stop falling into these destructive patterns, and the need to reinforce the positives.

6. Introduce and run the 'Rhythmic Wave' exercise and discuss how our emotions can impact our relationships – positively or negatively. What are some ways we can manage our feelings, like jealousy, shame or frustration, so they don't negatively impact our relationships?
7. Finish by summarising the learning

Working well with others – Teamwork

It can be useful to start each session with the drums behind chairs while you talk briefly about any of the guidelines you'd like to focus on, remind them of last week's learning and introduce the theme of this session.

1. Start with a strong 'Heartbeat' pulse on your Bass (B B - -) and then ask people to connect through the heartbeat (BB) but play accents of their choice in the space around it. Bring to a close by "Layering Out" (one by one each person in the circle stops, until all have stopped).
2. Introduce the theme 'Teamwork' and discuss the different types of teams we might belong to or encounter in our lives. Examine the way the previous exercise (1) relates to effective teams where we pull together (through the Bass) but also are allowed to bring our own strengths to the teams output (Accents). What might these two elements represent in terms of a family team? a sports team? a workplace team? *E.G., the Bass might represent common values, shared responsibilities or a mutual purpose. While the accents might represent our different personalities, skill-sets, interests.*
3. Do some rumble-waves; firstly, eyes open & then eyes closed. How did you contribute to the teamwork in this game? How did you find your place? What about 'Trust' and its importance in teams? *Listening carefully, trusting each-other and cooperating together are important parts of teamwork.*
4. Play the 'Speaker's Chair' exercise with a focus on "one thing that helps teams work well together" or "one thing that undermines a team" (*In larger groups, half can address the first question and the other half the second*). List in two columns on the white-board and summarise.
5. Run the exercise 'Layer in Your Rhythm' and afterwards discuss the importance of diversity in teams and their output. Also, explore the importance of tolerance, patience and encouragement in effective teams. Repeat the exercise with a different person initiating the rhythm.
6. Summarise the session and finish with the teamwork and regulation exercise 'The Echo Wave' going from loud to soft.

Note with some groups you will get good input into the discussion element and in others you will be basically making these points succinctly and using the 'Rumble If...' to reinforce them. Some groups will be more confident with language than others and you will adapt as necessary.

Communication

It can be useful to start each session with the drums behind chairs while you talk briefly about any of the guidelines you'd like to focus on, remind them of last week's learning and introduce the theme of this session.

1. Start with 'Pass the Bass' – having fun communicating with brief eye-contact. *You may use this exercise to explore the issue of communication breakdown in modern online communication where we often miss the vital cues of body-language and intonation when communication because we have no visual connection. Use the 'Rumble If..' to draw out responses.*
2. Play some 'Call & Response' – facilitator leading, emphasising simplicity, and succinctness. Then have each person lead with a call of their own and the group responding, one at a time around the circle.
3. Introduce the theme of 'Communication' and discuss its importance in relationships drawing on the group members experience – *use the rumble if... technique to facilitate this discussion.* Extend this discussion by connecting it to the previous exercise (2) – how important is clarity in good communication? (If possible, draw examples from the group). How important is consistency & timing to effective communication (draw examples from the group).

4. Do 'Call & Response' again as part of a rhythm – Start a simple foundation rhythm (BOBO) and then each person, one at a time, calls down the rhythm to stop (4,3,2,1, Stop) and then does a call and the group responds before going back to the rhythm.
5. If the group is bonding play the exercise 'Dialogue' – where people have a conversation with each other across the circle (*lead by example & have fun with it, adding lots of personal expression*). Discuss different elements of communication with the group drawn from this exercise.
6. Discuss the importance and challenges of listening in communication and follow by running the exercise 'Listening Deeply'. What gets in the way of good listening?
7. Teach a rhythm or do some improvised rhythm play using the exercise 'Layer in Your Rhythm'. Extend this by teaching participants how to sculpting a song from the improvisation using the exercise 'Uncover to Discover'. *In this exercise if we listen carefully, we can uncover new connections we can't otherwise recognise.*
8. Summarise the learning from the session

Managing Tough Times.

It can be useful to start each session with the drums behind chairs while you talk briefly about any of the guidelines you'd like to focus on, remind them of last week's learning and introduce the theme of this session.

1. Start with free rhythm play ('Layering In' exercise) or practicing a rhythm you may have been learning from a previous session – *always expand from a set rhythm piece to allowing participants to vary it without losing touch with their Bass. Bring in some different arrangements to change either tempo or volume or solo different instrument types.*
2. Introduce the concept of 'Resilience' and use the exercise 'The Speaker's Chair' exercise to draw out examples of the participants own experiences of resilience. *"Name one thing that has helped you get back on your feet after a setback in your life".*
3. Play the exercise 'Bounce Back' using the white-board to list common challenges across the lifespan that set people back in life and the group members ideas for overcoming and moving on from them.
4. Play the game 'Musical Chairs' with a focus on shifting perspective. How can altering our position sometimes help us find a way forward in the face of adversity?
5. Introduce the concept of 'Acceptance' in relation to adverse situations in our lives. *Sometimes there is little we can do to stop some of the difficult experiences in our lives – the betrayals, the disappointments, the losses; but finding a way to acknowledge these can often allow us to move forward, rather than being dragged down by them.* Now run the exercise 'Drop It' and discuss afterwards how it felt to let things go.
6. Summarise the session.

Managing Our Emotions

It can be useful to start each session with the drums behind chairs while you talk briefly about any of the guidelines you'd like to focus on, remind them of last week's learning and introduce the theme of this session.

1. Start the session with exercise 'An Emotional Journey' – ask people to play together, connecting through the pulse, (the facilitator provides a strong Bass pulse) but with a focus on adding feeling to their rhythm that represents how they have been since we last gathered together.
2. Introduce the theme for the week and connect it to exercise 1, and in particular, the importance of finding constructive ways to release our feelings rather than hold them inside where they may build and create tension & perhaps explode. Releasing our feelings through the drum is one way – what are some other healthy ways we can release feelings? Write these answers up on your white-board.

3. Play the exercise ‘Show some Emotion’ where everyone gets to express a feeling through the drum and name it. Discuss the benefits and challenges of naming your feelings – *‘If you can name it, you can tame it’*.
4. Play the ‘The Rhythmic Wave’ exercise; replicating a loss of control and learning to bring that under control (slowing the breath & relaxing tension in the body) and gradually coming together to align on the slow pulse (60-80bpm).
5. Run the exercises ‘The Pressure Pot’ and ‘The Pressure Valve’ consecutively, listing on the white-board things that give rise to feelings of stress and ideas from the group members for relieving or reducing these feelings.
6. Introduce the concept of the ‘Mindful Pause’ in relation to managing feelings rather than reacting to them. And then do the exercise ‘Pause Before You React’ – each time you count in the pause emphasising self-responsibility in determining when each individual is emotionally ready to re-enter the rhythm – *only you know when you are stable enough to resume communication without falling back into emotional reactivity*. Focus on soft drumming after each pause and bring to a stop one last time.
7. Finish by summarising the learning from the session

Community Harmony

It can be useful to start each session with the drums behind chairs while you talk briefly about any of the guidelines you’d like to focus on, remind them of last week’s learning and introduce the theme of this session.

1. Start the session by ‘Layering in Your Rhythm’ – improvised play where everyone’s contribution (strengths) contributes to the richness of the group (community) sound. Fade away to finish. *Bring in some different arrangements to change either tempo or volume or solo different instrument types.*
2. Introduce the theme of the session and connect it to the 1st exercise – when we drum together, we are like a community and everyone’s input either enriches or can undermine the group.
3. Play the ‘Harmony’ exercise – and look at what allows the group to find harmony (or not). How do these same things impact our own communities, families etc?
4. Revisit the analogy around the Bass representing ‘Healthy Values’ and how these underpin Healthy Communities and Healthy Community Relationships.
5. Run the exercise ‘A Pledge of Responsibility’ – where the Bass represents our responsibilities towards each other and the Tone and Flam accents represent our individuality.
6. Finish with the exercise ‘If It Is To Be – Then It’s Up To Me’ and again emphasise the importance and benefits of responsibility.
7. Summarise the learning.

Change & A Brighter Future

1. Start with free play and merge into the ‘Heartbeat Rhythms’ – ask people to connect through the heartbeat (BB) but play accents of their choice in the space around it. Bring to a close by ‘Layering Out’ (one by one each person in the circle stops, until all have stopped).
2. Introduce the theme and discuss the concept of ‘Life as Growth’ and that nothing stays the same – there is always opportunity for new opportunity, new growth and a brighter future. Just as in improvised music new rhythms and soundscapes appear each time we play.
3. Introduce the ‘4 Bass Break’ affirmation exercise, firstly working with the group to identify four things that help people break free of old patterns and find new opportunities. Examples might include – positive friendships, self-confidence, persistence, awareness etc. then teaching the break, and introducing it into the rhythm to affirm these ideas for supporting change.
4. Put group members into small groups of 2 or 3 and run the exercise ‘Find Your Voice’ on the theme of ‘Change’. They will write 2 or 3 short verses to rap between the heartbeat rhythm

(BB) talking about the challenges they face and the change needed. Showcase an example – see below:

B B I'm feeling stuck	B B I'm caught in a rut
B B Can't see a way forward	B B Sheer out a luck
B B I know I've got to persist	B B I know I've got to resist
B B Just one step forward	B B And things can shift

Finish by identifying an upbeat verse that will serve as a chorus and have each group rap their verses with everyone wrapping the chorus in-between each verse.

Alternatively run the exercise 'A New Adventure' – allowing people to practice breaking free of safe rhythms and supporting and affirming each other in the new patterns (rhythms) they realise.

5. Run the 'I've Got The Power' exercise with a focus on self-responsibility for enacting change.
6. Finish by summarising the lesson and the program as a whole.

Additional themes can be added to the ideas above to extend a program for several more sessions.

IDEAS FOR EXTENDING THE LEARNING

- Putting on a performance
- Starting a performance group to represent the school/organisation
- Having some members serve as mentors for a new group
- Integrating drumming into the school music program
- Starting a recreational drum-circle
- Bringing in Master drummers to teach more advanced technique
- Linking to an existing community drum-circle
- Making drums

Your Back-Up Plan

It is important to have a number of back up exercises you can call on if your existing plan is not commanding the groups attention or interest. In future sessions the group will often give an indication of which exercises or games they are enjoying and you can repeat these regularly. For your first sessions however, you don't have that luxury.

Some of the games and exercises I find useful to hold in reserve are:

- Call and Response
- The Echo Wave
- The Attention Exercise
- Who's Out & What's it all About.
- From Little Things, Big Things Grow.
- Musical Chairs
- Marco Polo

Behavioural Challenges

Sometimes participant behaviour can be challenging and occupy a lot of time and wasted energy. Many difficult behaviours are in response to feelings of insecurity or the need for attention. As much as possible keep it light and fun and avoid shaming, punishing or belittling people. Offer people opportunities to lead and shine – keep empowerment front of mind.

It can make a big difference to put some thought into group makeup and have a co-facilitator to help manage these situations as they arise. Remember some people are not ready for group work and will destroy it for everyone else.

Flow is also really important in managing behaviour – maintaining flow, means maintaining momentum and keeping everyone engaged at a level that is not too challenging but also not too boring – keeping it fun, keeping it moving.