

ABORIGINAL CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT



A Resource Manual
for service providers in the Inner West of Sydney

Introduction

The Aboriginal Capacity Building Project is funded through the NSW Government's Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy (ACYFS).

Marrickville Council, Marrickville Youth Resource Centre and Glebe Youth Service worked in partnership to implement the project across Ashfield, Burwood, Canterbury, Canada Bay, Leichhardt, Marrickville, Strathfield and Glebe.

The Aboriginal Capacity Building Project aim was to develop and produce a resource guide with multiple objectives including:

- Assisting local community service workers to better engage with and develop stronger relationships with local Aboriginal youth
- Providing a set of cultural protocols which address specific issues relevant to young Aboriginal people living across the inner western suburbs of Sydney
- Providing an articulated account of how Aboriginal youth and their families wish to be included and treated
- Supplying young Aboriginal people and their families with useful contacts for services which can be accessed locally.

It is intended that the resource is developed as a basic guide only and does not replace any advice or knowledge from Aboriginal elders, leaders and communities.

In conjunction with the resource guide The Aboriginal Capacity Building Project strongly recommends the use of two further documents: the Marrickville Aboriginal Cultural Protocols manual endorsed by Marrickville Council and the Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee and the Working with Aboriginal People and Communities a Practice Resource Kit (produced by the Department of Community Services).

Also recommended is, 'Our Place' a comprehensive guidebook on working with Aboriginal young people - available from South Sydney Youth Services on (02) 9318 0539. This document is a user friendly and accessible tool for all workers in the field.

The more we increase the active participation and partnership with young people, the better we serve them. And the more comprehensively we work with them as service partners, the more we increase our public value to the entire community - Carmen Martinez

Terminology

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

Terminology is incredibly important to Aboriginal people. This resource guide uses the term 'Aboriginal' as opposed to 'Indigenous' as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are opposed to the use of the term 'Indigenous' as it generalises both cultures. It is important to acknowledge that although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are both recognised as the first peoples of Australia, there is a vast difference between their cultures, spirituality, values and beliefs.

As this document is aimed at Aboriginal young people, and their families, living within the inner west suburbs of Sydney, NSW, the term 'Aboriginal' is used exclusively throughout the publication, unless quoting from a document where another term is used.

Recently Marrickville Council passed a motion stating that Council formally adopt the term "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders" as a policy decision, ensuring Aboriginal is capitalised, and discontinue the use of "indigenous" when referring to the Aboriginal peoples of Australia.

What is Aboriginality?

- An Aboriginal person is someone who is of Aboriginal descent, and identifies as an Aboriginal person, and is accepted as such by the community
- Aboriginal people do not define their Aboriginality by the colour of their skin but by their culture and community.
- It is offensive to question the 'amount' of Aboriginal blood a person has, and labels such as "half caste" or "full blood" etc. is considered racist and unacceptable. Aboriginal people do not define their Aboriginality by the colour of their skin but by their culture and community.
- Most Aboriginal people prefer not to be called an Aborigine or to be referred to by the acronyms 'ATSIs' or 'TIs'. It is preferable to say Aboriginal person or peoples and the A in Aboriginal should always be capitalised, when in reference to Australian Aboriginal people only.
- The regional terms Koori, Murri, Nunga etc. are used by Aboriginal people to describe each other according to their home country. The majority of Aboriginal people within the inner west are Koori's, however some are Murri's from Northern NSW and QLD, and some are from further away.
- Some Aboriginal people may also refer to themselves by their nation name such as Wiradjuri, Dughutti or Bundjalung. Generally it is best to avoid using the terminology Aboriginal people use to describe themselves unless you have spent time with the community and established a relationship, or you have asked them how they would prefer to be addressed.

Most Aboriginal young people are proud of their identity and cultural heritage, to question it because of the colour of their skin is highly offensive and will likely put them offside with you.

Definitions

of Aboriginality or Indigenous status

Australia currently applies what is known as the "three tier" approach to defining an individual's Indigenous status. The Census currently uses the following criteria.

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is :

- ⊙ A person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- ⊙ A person who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and
- ⊙ A person who is accepted by the Aboriginal community in which he or she lives.

All of these things must apply. A person's physical appearance or the way they live, are not requirements.

As a result of such (legal) definitions of Aboriginality, many government departments now require Aboriginal people to provide 'proof of Aboriginality' to be eligible for any financial or other assistance (e.g. public housing).

Aboriginal people can approach their Local Aboriginal Land Council, or an Aboriginal Community Organisation to apply for a 'Confirmation of Aboriginality' or a 'Certificate of Aboriginality'. Essentially, such documents state that the person is known to identify as an Aboriginal person and is accepted by that community as an Aboriginal person.

Where do Aboriginal Australians live?

International media reporting of Australia's Aboriginal people often tends to focus on remote or nomadic communities, perpetuating narrow and often stereotyped perceptions of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lifestyles.

The reality is that Aboriginal Australians live in every State and territory of Australia and in highly urbanised environments, as well as relatively remote areas. Although most of the Australian population is concentrated along the eastern and south-west coasts, the Aboriginal population is more widely spread.

While many of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live in major cities of Australia, a much greater proportion than in the general population live in remote and very remote parts of Australia. Based on the ABS Remoteness Structure and according to 2001 Census figures, the geographic distribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is as follows:

- ⊙ "30 per cent of the indigenous population live in major cities
- ⊙ 20 per cent of the indigenous population live in inner regional areas
- ⊙ 23 per cent of the indigenous population live in outer regional areas
- ⊙ 9 per cent of the indigenous population live in remote areas
- ⊙ the remainder, 18 per cent, reside in very remote areas".

The State of New South Wales has the highest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

1 NSW Anti-Discrimination Board

2 [http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/indg_overview.html - _edn2#_edn2](http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/indg_overview.html_-_edn2#_edn2)

Knowledge

of Aboriginal traditions, customs and culture

Identity for young Aboriginal people is vital and comes from an understanding of their strong history, spirituality, connection to the land and cultural practices, which are passed down from Elders and family.

In order to understand the Aboriginal communities of the inner west suburbs it is important to know that although the traditional groups of inner Sydney/Marrickville region are the Cadigal / Wangal clans of the Eora nation, most families living here today have come from all over NSW or further.

This means that although Aboriginal young people may call Sydney home and are likely to have been born here, their identities are always linked to their original Country, where their family and ancestors are from, and they may belong to more than one community. The Inner West may be their community, their home and their basic 'place' of residence, however, many people will refer to themselves as being part of another community, town or language area (e.g. Wiradjuri from Wellington, related to).

ELDERS

Traditionally, Elders are the custodians of knowledge and lore and are recognised and highly respected as such within their communities. Male and females can be appointed as Elders and they are often referred to as 'Aunty' or 'Uncle' although being an Elder does not always mean the person is aged.

Many young Aboriginal people today may live with or be in the care of an Elder.

The history of family disruption, removals and community dislocation have impacted in varying ways on younger Aboriginal community members. There can often be an assumption that older community members are available, able or willing to act as 'role models', mentors, coaches or guides whereas the reality of many families is one of profound disadvantage and a high level of competing priorities (crisis issues, emergencies, chronic health issues, housing pressures etc).

It is important when dealing with young Aboriginal people NOT to assume that they know or have positive relationships with Elders in their community or their immediate family.

The Dreaming

Spirituality still plays a key role in the lives of Aboriginal people. The Dreaming is infinite and links the past with the present to determine the future. It is the natural world, especially the land or country to which a person belongs, which provides the link between the people and The Dreaming.

The Dreamtime refers to the Creation Period when rocks, animals, valleys, rivers and all things, were formed by Ancestral Beings. All aspects of Aboriginal culture are full of legends and beings associated with this Creation Period, or Dreamtime.

kinship

The kinship system describes the relationships between people; it allows each person in Aboriginal society to be named in relation to one another. When Aboriginals accept an outsider into their group, they have to name that person in relation to themselves, to allow that person to fit into their society. This is because they need to have in their own minds the kinship relation of that person to themselves, and that person must have a defined social position.

The value of a kinship system is that it structures people's relationships, obligations and behaviour towards each other, and this in turn defines such matters as, who will look after children if a parent dies, who can marry whom, who is responsible for another person's debts or misdeeds, and who will care for the sick and old.

Common Terminology

It is common to hear Aboriginal young people refer to respected people in the community as Aunty and Uncle. This is a sign of respect towards adults whether they are Elders or not, and can also apply to non-Aboriginal people too. Care must be taken when referring to such Elders or respected people with these nouns. For instance, a senior person may prefer to be introduced according to their formal name or honorific (e.g. "Mr Charles Williams" rather than what could be construed as an overly-familiar "Uncle Charlie").

Also common terms that Aboriginal young people use today to define their relationships with other young people or to establish new friendships are:

Bruz - Brother

Tiddah, Sister, Sister Girl or Sis - Sister

"(YAPA) Youth Action & Policy Association NSW have kindly given us permission to reprint one of their Fact Sheets. YAPA have created fact sheets which you can access on the link below. It is an informative and comprehensive tool to assist workers in the field in working with Aboriginal young people".



OVERVIEW

of the continuing disadvantage facing Aboriginal youth

YAPA - Youth Action & Policy Association NSW, fact sheet

Aboriginal young people continue to face many disadvantages such as poverty, lower education and employment outcomes, school suspension, and lack of culturally appropriate service provision.

Aboriginal people also face a range of other disadvantages such as racism and discrimination on a daily basis.

Aboriginal people have a low rate of school retention (staying at school to complete their HSC). The percentage of Year 7 students who continue to the end of Year 12 in NSW government schools is 65% overall but less than 30% for Aboriginal students. (NSW Department of Education and Training, Excellence and Innovation: A consultation with the community of NSW on public education and

training, 2004)

- Only 45% of Aboriginal teenagers are still at school, compared to 70% of non-Aboriginal teenagers. (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services, How Young Indigenous People are Faring, 2003, www.dsf.org.au/papers/108.htm)
- Aboriginal young people are 3 to 4 times more likely to be suspended from school (Department of Education and Training, Review of Aboriginal Education, Growing and Learning: The Life Course 2004)
- Aboriginal young people have a lower than average school attendance rate (74%) than non-Aboriginal students (93%). (Department of Education and Training, Aboriginal Education Review 2004)
- 35% of Aboriginal teenagers are unemployed or not participating in the labour force, compared to 10% of non-Aboriginal teenagers. (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services, How Young Indigenous People are Faring, 2003 www.dsf.org.au/papers/108.htm)
- The life expectancy of Aboriginal people is 20 years less than non-Aboriginal people. (Report of the NSW Chief Health Officer 2004)
- Aboriginal people are 20 times more likely to be homeless. (Australian Government Footprints in time - The longitudinal study of Indigenous children, www.facs.gov.au)
- Despite comprising only 3% of the general youth population, Aboriginal young people make up 44% of young people in detention. (Department of Juvenile Justice Annual Report 2003-2004)
- Aboriginal young people are also significantly over-represented as victims of crime.
- Aboriginal young people are three times more likely to be victims of sexual assault and five times more likely to be victims of domestic violence or assault causing grievous bodily harm.
- Aboriginal young people whose parent or carer was forcibly removed as a child are about twice as likely to use alcohol or other drugs than other Aboriginal people (Zubrick et al 2005).

Terminology

of non-Aboriginal people on Lives of Aboriginal people

The past two centuries have witnessed the devastating impact of non-Aboriginal people and institutions on the lives of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people were massacred for their land on a widespread scale up until the 1920s and thousands of children were taken away from their families, purely on the basis of their Aboriginality, up until 1969. It is estimated that 38% of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and older were removed as a child and/or had relatives who had been removed from their natural family as a child. Young people you work with may have had a parent, aunt, uncle or grandparent removed under this policy.

Many Aboriginal people still suffer social and emotional loss from having their children taken or from being taken.

Non-Aboriginal institutions had a great deal of control over the life of Aboriginal people. It was not until the 1960s that all Aboriginal people were able to vote, be counted in the Census and have access to many public places and facilities.

Aboriginal people have faced racist practices and discrimination from many non-Aboriginal people in authority such as welfare workers, teachers, government departments, the health system, the justice system and the police. This experience impacts on the way Aboriginal people feel about and use mainstream services such as youth services.

It is important to remember this history when working with Aboriginal communities. Many Aboriginal people may, understandably, have caution, suspicion or mistrust of non-Aboriginal people who want to do things for them or control them.

This means you need to work with Aboriginal communities, and support their efforts for self-determination, rather than setting up a program where you do things for them. For most people our understanding of Aboriginal history and issues comes from non-Aboriginal experts such as politicians, the media, teachers, our family and friends. It is important to remember that many of our assumptions are based on non-Aboriginal opinions and experiences and can be inaccurate or even racist. We need to take time to hear the views of Aboriginal people.

Self-determination is an important principle. Self-determination means Aboriginal people being able to do things for themselves, rather than having other people decide what is in their best interests.

Importance of self-determination

& Working in Partnership with Aboriginal communities

The first thing to consider in working with Aboriginal communities is your motivation.

Best practice involves improving the way your service is accessed by Aboriginal people and supporting Aboriginal organisations in running their own programs for young people.

We should support Aboriginal organisations because they know about the issues facing their young people.

Don't approach the Aboriginal community with your own agenda or beliefs about what programs would help their young people and expect them to rubberstamp your ideas.

The best way to make contact with the local Aboriginal community is to be introduced by someone they know. When meeting someone for the first time you would probably prefer this too!

Each community will have their own protocol. A protocol is the appropriate way of behaving, communicating and showing respect to the Aboriginal community.

It is important to make contact with someone who can help you understand the best way to work with your local Aboriginal community.

You should be aware of the Aboriginal Lands Council area your service is located in. You can find this out by:

- contacting the NSW Aboriginal Land Council at www.alc.org.au or
- viewing the Indigenous Nations Map of Australia at www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/hsie/abstud/abmaps/nations.htm or
- purchasing the Aboriginal Australia Map from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) which shows the Aboriginal nations (www.aiatsis.gov.au).

Importance of self determination

↳ working in Partnership with Aboriginal communities (cont).

There are Aboriginal people who are employed to liaise with the Aboriginal community and they can provide you with guidance and support about local protocols. People who may be able to help you:

- ⊙ Aboriginal Medical Centres
- ⊙ Aboriginal Health Unit at your Area Health Service
- ⊙ Aboriginal Officer at your local council
- ⊙ Aboriginal Community Project Officer at your local DoCS office
- ⊙ Aboriginal Liaison Officers at local branches of government departments such as Centrelink
- ⊙ Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEAs) or Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs) at your local school
- ⊙ Aboriginal units within TAFES
- ⊙ Aboriginal Land Councils
- ⊙ Aboriginal corporations
- ⊙ Aboriginal legal centres
- ⊙ Your local CDEP - Community Development Employment Program.

The most effective way of making contact is to talk face to face, rather than sending a letter or a fax. You can improve your communication and consultation with the

Aboriginal people by remembering the following points.

spend time simply talking and getting to know more about their community and their experiences. Remember the saying "we have two ears and one mouth - spend twice as much time listening as you do talking".

- * Talk to the wider Aboriginal community before you start speaking with young people.
- * Consult directly and specifically with Aboriginal young people.
- * Take time to get to know the community and develop trust and rapport.
- * Provide food, such as a BBQ, when

running groups or consultations.

- ⊙ Don't rush the community. Decision making in the Aboriginal community is collective and inclusive, and not as individualistic as the non-Aboriginal community. This means that the consultation could take longer than you expected. Allow the community to set the pace of consultation.
- ⊙ Understand that the community may talk about a wide range of issues, and not just the issue you are interested in. This is a cultural practice of story telling and is to be respected. Develop a partnership with the community and be willing to listen and share information about a range of issues.
- ⊙ Silence is often used as a time for reflection. Don't interrupt but show respect for silence and think about what is being discussed.
- ⊙ Different individuals and communities have different values and beliefs, so consult with a variety of people.
- ⊙ Ask the broader community and young people about how you can work together to deliver the program or initiative.

- ⊙ Don't promise more than you can deliver. Be realistic about what you can offer. Always try to deliver what you have promised.
- ⊙ Regularly report back on how the program is going. Don't just come in and "pick their brains" and leave.
- ⊙ Be prepared for a long term commitment to the Aboriginal community.

The Aboriginal community is probably the most over-consulted group in our society. They are continually being asked to have their say about issues, often with very few results being delivered. Often they have been asking for the same thing from people in authority for twenty or thirty years without anything being delivered. As a result some Aboriginal people may be sceptical about your level of commitment. The above fact sheet is reprinted with permission of YAPA - Youth Action & Policy Association NSW

PRINCIPLES

UNDERLYING Successful Engagement

Now it is time to talk about the environment within which Aboriginal young people will enter when they come to your service. This is a critical point of engagement and often underestimated.

Is your service welcoming and culturally appropriate for Aboriginal young people?

- ⊙ Put up Aboriginal posters and artwork to make the service welcoming. It is a good idea if you want Aboriginal people to take your commitment to their communities seriously, to have an acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the Land (that's the Cadigal-Wangal people for the inner west of Sydney). It's also a good idea to have it somewhere obvious, so young people see it when they enter the building.
- ⊙ You could put up the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander flags inside or outside the building.
- ⊙ Don't use Aboriginal art work without permission. Where possible pay Aboriginal young people for their artwork.
- ⊙ Use your notice board to showcase brochures about Aboriginal services, and leaflets, information and general material relevant to and written by Aboriginal people. Do not assume that all Aboriginal people and communities are the same. There are over 600 Aboriginal tribes or clans in Australia.
- ⊙ In some Aboriginal communities there are internal factions and family disputes. Do not take sides and don't get involved in faction fighting.
- ⊙ It is best to consult a wide range of people, do not make one individual your spokesperson or focus on a few individuals as representative of all communities. You not only set up the Aboriginal young person in doing that but you also set up your service by alienating sections of the community.

In Promotional material include art and/or graphics that Aboriginal young people create.

Principles

Underlying Successful Engagement (cont..)

- ⊙ Include Aboriginal young people in decision making about your service. Maybe have representation on your management committee (it is always good to have two people when doing this, so the young people can have a real voice and can support each other) Your service may need to change the way your meetings operate to be more inclusive (not just tokenistic) otherwise you are expecting Aboriginal young people to assimilate to the services way of doing things.
- ⊙ Ensure you are up-to-date with what is available in the community regarding Aboriginal specific services. Check and see if someone locally produces a directory of these services, ie; like your local Council.
- ⊙ Put up a notice to say your service will not accept any discriminating behaviour, be specific maybe even put up a list of rules for young people, like "this is your space, lets keep it safe for everyone" or "no name calling, put downs or abuse".
- ⊙ Challenge racist comments and stereotypes in your service (with staff, visitors and clients).
- * Help educate other services and institutions about Aboriginal history and issues.
- ⊙ Provide workers with training and information that deals with the common myths and stereotyping of Aboriginal people.
- ⊙ Make contact and network with Aboriginal services so they may refer people to you.
- ⊙ Some Aboriginal young people may prefer to go to an Aboriginal-specific service for particular issues, eg an Aboriginal legal or medical service. This does not mean that you can shirk your responsibilities in offering Aboriginal young people culturally appropriate services.
- ⊙ Recognise the cultural differences of Aboriginal people in the way that you provide a service to young people. For example, many Aboriginal people do not relate to a formal counselling approach where they sit alone in a room and are questioned by a stranger. Finding a quiet space or having a chat at other times, eg. while giving them a lift home, may be more appropriate.
- ⊙ Because family is important to many Aboriginal people, young people may feel more comfortable in attending your program with friends, siblings or other family members. You need to be sensitive to this.
- ⊙ Build trust with Aboriginal people and spend time listening and talking. Allow them to share information at their own pace and in their own way. This process may take longer than with other young people.
- ⊙ Try and provide practical support to young people. Once you have built trust and rapport they may ask you to help with other issues. Deal with the issues that are important to them.
- ⊙ Aboriginal young people may not like attention being drawn to them so keep this

Regularly participate in cultural awareness training or organise it for your staff, volunteers, students and management committee members.

in mind while running your programs and provide other ways of talking and learning together.

Working with Aboriginal communities and people is a learning experience. Sometimes you will make mistakes, but it is important to keep trying and learning.

YAPA Fact sheet, for more information please visit the link below:
<http://www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/facts/aboriginalyoungpeople.php> (2006)

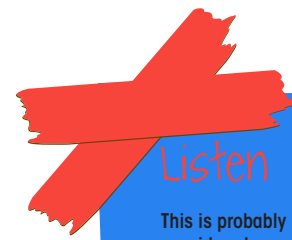
I Don't believe in charity. I believe in solidarity. Charity is vertical, so it's humiliating. It goes from the top to the bottom. Solidarity is horizontal. It respects the other and learns from the other. I have a lot to learn from other people - Eduardo Galeano

- The next section will discuss what is considered common practice in the field around engagement. However, it is important for your service to consider the added issues of discrimination, racism, dispossession, marginalisation and oppression that Aboriginal young people face, when they come to you for assistance, support, programs, resources or activities. The following principles of engagement are clear, simple and respectful actions that can seriously help services in the engagement process.

Aboriginal young people will engage if they are respected and interested and will not bother if they aren't. To make it interesting they have to feel empowered – and that the approach to engage them is not paternalistic or tokenism; and most importantly, the issue must relate directly to their lives.

The Cycle of Youth Engagement tool is a tool that highlights the structure of engagement created by Adam Fletcher (2006) who identifies 5 key actions for youth engagement. It can be used to plan, evaluate, or challenge any activity that seeks to engage young people in social change.

Below is the tool his organisation (Freechild) uses to successfully engage young people. It is for all young people but includes the key factors necessary for sustainable engagement.



Listen

This is probably considered a no brainer but "true" listening requires enormous skill.

If you want to successfully engage Aboriginal young people you need to step beyond and take responsibility for your personal beliefs/assumptions, the organisational barriers and limitations, and your/your services cultural expectations.

Young people are often not interested in sitting down in a room doing an "adult" one on one conversation with question answer structured interviewing techniques.

Sometimes the most successful engagement happens when you are driving (as they are not facing you directly), when you are doing activities, taking a walk or making things. Doing creative projects such as websites, aerosol art, printmaking, stencils, writing, recording music etc are very useful for group discussion and sometimes one on one discussions take place too.

Some Principles of Reflective Listening

Drawn from Communication in Organisations, by Dalmar Fisher; West Publishing Co, U.S. (March 1981)

- ⦿ More listening than talking
- ⦿ Responding to what is personal rather than to what is impersonal, distant, or abstract.
- ⦿ Restating and clarifying what the other has said, not asking questions or telling what the listener/worker feels, believes, or wants.
- ⦿ Trying to understand the feelings contained in what the other is saying, not just the facts or ideas.
- ⦿ Working to develop the best possible sense of understanding the young person while avoiding the temptation to respond from the listener's world views.
- ⦿ Responding with acceptance and empathy, not with indifference, cold objectivity, or fake concern.

Acknowledge and validate young people and their experiences: When young people speak, they are accustomed to being ignored, denied or ridiculed for their opinions, feelings and experiences. However, it is also not enough to just nod your head and murmur uh huh. Listening to and acknowledging young people means paraphrasing in simple terms to check that you have understood what it is the young person has said; For example "Robert it sounds like you are saying you cant take it any more, is that true?" Listening does not mean agreeing with everything young people say as a means to earn their trust either.

It is imperative that young people hear your feedback as sincere comments and this may include your criticism. Disagreeing with young people lets them know that you actually heard what was said, have thought about it, and that you have your own knowledge or opinion which you think is important to share with them. Young people must know that democracy is not about autonomous authority, and that a chorus of people, including young people but not exclusive to young people, is responsible for what happens throughout our communities.



Authorise and Empower young people

Young people are repeatedly ignored, condemned, denied, or abandoned everyday because of the identities they possess. Democracy inherently requires ability, which comes in the form of experience and knowledge. Authorising Aboriginal young people means going beyond the historical expectations you and your organisation hold for Aboriginal youth by actively providing the training, creating the positions, and allowing the space they need in order to affect change.

stimulate,
Activate
& Motivate
young
people

This may mean you have to re-arrange the way you deliver your services or look at ways to fund funding for the programs and services you deliver to realistically include Aboriginal youth.

Transitioning from passive participants to active change agents and leaders requires young people actually taking action to create change. Mobilising young people with authority allows them to affect cultural, systemic, and personal transformation in their own lives and the lives of others. It also encourages adults to actively acknowledge young people as partners throughout society.

reflection and review

Social change led by and with young people is not and cannot be a vacuous event that affects only young people or the immediate situation. Children, youth, and adults should take responsibility for learning from social change by engaging in conscious critical reflection that examines assumptions, reactions, outcomes, and change. Young people and adults can also work together to identify how to sustain and expand the Cycle of Youth Engagement by applying what is learned through reflection to the first step of the Cycle. (Cycle of Youth Engagement : The Guide to Social Change Led By and With Young People, Adam Fletcher, 2006, (page 4)

All engagement processes should incorporate key core beliefs, this is the same for all people but imperative when dealing with Aboriginal young people. There is an understanding in the sector that several values or beliefs make a positive difference to engagement and these are:

Respect

A respectful and compassionate approach helps to facilitate openness. Through your discussion with a young person, acknowledge the challenges they are facing and the efforts they have made to resolve them, focus on their strengths, skills and resourcefulness.

Acceptance is closely related to respect and empathy. Acceptance means having respect for a person for simply being a person. Acceptance should be as unconditional as possible. This means that the listener/youth worker should avoid expressing agreement or disagreement with what the other person says (ask questions- motivational interviewing) This attitude encourages the other person to be less defensive and to explore aspects of self and the situation that they might otherwise keep to themselves.

Safety

This may be the first time the young person has acknowledged the full extent of his or her feelings, challenges or crisis. Depending on the issues raised, there could be issues of trust and high levels of sadness, anger and frustration. This can sometimes be a challenge for the youth worker. It is important to know the boundary between a youth worker role and supporting a young person and a counselling role which delves more deeply into a therapeutic process. If you are not a counsellor and the young person is affected by depression, self harming behaviours, alcohol and other drugs issues and/or their daily life is affected by their mental health or emotional wellbeing it is a good idea to refer to someone who can address these more adequately. Know your limitations in this regard. You have a duty of care regarding the young person's wellbeing.

Take the time to provide information, support and encouragement so that the young person can feel more comfortable seeking support. When a young person seeks help they need to trust the worker will be:

- consistent
- punctual
- attentive
- reliable
- will follow through on what they say they will do
- is professional
- maintains confidentiality
- is upfront about legal obligations ie mandatory reporting

Empathy

Empathy should be the youth worker's desire and effort to understand the young person from the young person's frame of reference rather than from some external point of view, or the worker's preferences. The empathic listener tries to hear the other person soundly, accurately, and non-judgmentally. A person who sees that a listener is really trying to understand his or her meanings will be willing to explore his or her issues more openly. Empathy is surprisingly difficult to achieve. We all have a strong tendency to advise, tell, agree, or disagree from our own point of view.

Try to remain open, frank, and genuine as the listener/worker. Use a non-judgmental tone when pointing out discrepancies. If young people feel attacked or confronted, then they may withdraw or become defensive. Try to assume a "not knowing" stance.

Non-Judgmental

- ⊙ Use a compassionate, non-judgmental approach with language which is respectful of Aboriginal young people.
- ⊙ Validate young people's feelings and affirm them for what they are doing well.
- ⊙ Remain open to and respect other viewpoints and experiences that stand outside your own.
- ⊙ Provide full information about all aspects of the service.
- ⊙ Give attention to both the emotional and physical needs of young people and
- ⊙ Facilitate Aboriginal young people's right to make informed choices in their lives.
- ⊙ Acknowledge and actively challenge your/your organisations limitations, views and beliefs.

SUPPORT

Accept the young person's right to choose. Be supportive by:

- ⊙ Listening (see above)
- ⊙ Being non-judgmental (see above)
- ⊙ Allowing the young person to discuss what they see as important not the workers idea of what is important.
- ⊙ Focus on their strengths, skills and resources, Aboriginal young people are often quite familiar with being told they are "not good enough" or hearing from adults all about their deficits.
- ⊙ Affirming
- ⊙ Validating
- ⊙ Confirming that you have actually heard the young person the way they intended.
- ⊙ Asking what it is that they need or want.

Self Determination

- ⊙ Assist Aboriginal young people to identify their own solutions.
- ⊙ Let the young person direct the discussion about what they want to address, not what you think is the best thing to talk about.
- ⊙ Tell young people that you believe that they can change, cope and overcome obstacles. Point out examples of success.
- ⊙ Match your approach to the young person's stage of change.
- ⊙ Encourage and foster independence; do not do for others what they can do for themselves.

Other general points on Engagement and Partnership

- ⊙ Be aware that an individual's cultural experience, knowledge and connection are unique.
- ⊙ Cultural beliefs and approaches will differ within and between individuals, families and communities.
- ⊙ Specific language and terminology will be used by young Aboriginal people that may differ markedly from that of service providers and older community members. A prime example of this is the recent resurgence of potentially negative terms such as 'nigger/higgard' being used in youth music or general conversation. Terms such as this have specific usage and social rules which must be adhered to by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

one of the most important strategies to engage Aboriginal young people is to employ Aboriginal workers. Research shows that marginalised groups engage more readily with people they identify with. This in turn breaks down barriers and shows a commitment from the agency/ies to break away from paternalistic approaches and creates opportunities for respectful and sustainable engagement.

Collaboration and Transparency

- ⦿ 'Collaboration' means many different things in the community context.
- ⦿ Be precise about what funding, priorities, timing, requirements, restrictions, personnel, planning and resources you have to offer and under what conditions they are offered.
- ⦿ Many community organisations and community leaders are already over-committed and under-resourced. This must be respected when establishing collaborations and partnerships.
- ⦿ Be very clear about what is under your control or authority and what components are not. That way you can be open and honest throughout the process and maintain the collaborative approach.

Creative ways of Engaging Aboriginal Young People

It has been the experience of some services in the inner west of Sydney that arts programs that enhance a sense of cultural identity have been the most successful engagement activities.

- ⦿ Music collaborations, ie recording young peoples music, rap, hip hop, acoustic, folk, rock.
- ⦿ Others that have worked well have been:-
- ⦿ Art and painting (various styles relevant to the area)
- ⦿ Music programs (traditional instruments and styles and contemporary or fusion)
- ⦿ Dance programs (contemporary and traditional)
- ⦿ Outdoor art or sculpture programs
- ⦿ Graphic design, photography
- ⦿ Making short films in partnership with Aboriginal services, groups and film makers.
- ⦿ Development of resource libraries through which young Aboriginal people (and those supporting or working with them) can explore the variety of Aboriginal arts and culture (e.g. film, music, books, websites).

Contacting Aboriginal Communities

It is important when approaching any Aboriginal community that you start by contacting various Aboriginal workers in the area, such as community or council workers, so that they can introduce you to the community. This will help to establish trust and respect with young people as well as key community leaders or Elders.

- ⦿ It is essential to ensure that an Aboriginal young person is not used as a spokesperson for their whole community.
- ⦿ There are guidelines to be followed, you may need to ask permission to carry out your project or work, so it is imperative to involve and consult with community Elders who are considered a great source of knowledge on what is best for their young people and communities.



Enquiries should be made through local Aboriginal Advisory Committees or refer to protocol manuals, such as the Marrickville Aboriginal Cultural Protocols booklet available on the Marrickville Council website.

⦿ The concept of 'Shame' is a commonly misunderstood and often misused term. The concept varies within Aboriginal communities, however, it commonly refers to a broad cluster of feelings and actions which prevent or limit behaviour. For example, being "too shame" may prevent a young Aboriginal person from attending an unfamiliar service or address long-standing issues. Shame in this sense goes far beyond the often described elements of 'shyness' (e.g. commonly misunderstood cultural rules regarding eye contact) or feeling 'ashamed'. This is an important distinction because "shame" in an Aboriginal sense does not always denote a negative behaviour or incident (i.e. the person is not feeling ashamed about any specific action or behaviour) rather it may be a general sense of being overwhelmed, inappropriate or inadequately prepared.

⦿ When introducing yourself it is best to keep it simple and informal as offering your title and position may be daunting. A useful way to gain rapport and show genuine interest is to enquire about where the Aboriginal young person's family are from as this is a sign of respect and acknowledgement of culture and Country.

⦿ It is valuable to be aware that in some Aboriginal families direct eye contact is not encouraged, it can be considered a sign of disrespect or be confrontational. If eye contact is avoided it may be because the youth is nervous, is showing respect or is not used to communicating with non-Aboriginal people.

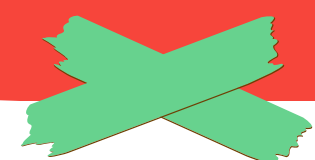
Dress

⦿ When meeting with Aboriginal young people it is important to dress appropriately as dressing formally or in uniform may be intimidating and make Aboriginal youths feel uncomfortable or threatened.

women's and Men's Business

⦿ Women and men's business is still a significant factor to be considered when dealing with Aboriginal young people and families. Young Aboriginal men and women need to be addressed separately about issues that affect each gender and should not be relied on to speak on behalf of the opposite sex.

⦿ Using swear words in everyday conversation is quite common with Aboriginal people and young people and is generally accepted more than it is in non-Aboriginal culture, therefore try not to be offended unless it is directed at you and is threatening or intimidating, this is clearly not ok for anyone to have to accept.



family

- ◎ It is important to take a sensitive approach when enquiring about an Aboriginal young persons family or living arrangements. In cases where you may need the permission of parents for their child to attend an event be aware of the fact that the youth may be in the care of another family member and any enquiries should be made discreetly, so as to not bring shame or hurt on them.
- ◎ Based on historical experiences with police, welfare and government agencies which carried out racist practices and policies that contributed to the loss of culture, the breakdown of families and communities, Aboriginal people are often suspicious and distrusting of non-Aboriginal people and workers. This still strongly impacts Aboriginal families and youth today so it is likely to take longer to establish trust.
- ◎ This care and concern is particularly relevant regarding any enquiries about children or care arrangements. Mandatory reporting, informal care arrangements and domestic violence concerns (e.g. AVO's); benefit and welfare agencies (e.g. Centrelink or CSA); and housing arrangements (leases, persons in a household) are all potentially sensitive areas and must be treated respectfully.

It is particularly critical in the engagement process that services working with children and young people are upfront with Aboriginal communities about their legal obligation to report child protection concerns to Department of Community Services.

Important Dates for Aboriginal young people

26 January - Yabun / Australia Day
/ Survival Day

26 May - National Sorry Day

27 May to 3 June - Reconciliation Week

First full week of July - NAIDOC Week

4 August - National Aboriginal and Islander Day

September (date varies) - Deadly Awards

October Long weekend - NSW Aboriginal Rugby
League knockout



CONTACTS FOR LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

AIME

Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience

An organisation that uses a unique style of structured education mentoring to link university students in a one-on-one relationship with high school Indigenous students. AIME's objectives are to increase Year 10, Year 12 and university admission rates for all Indigenous Australian students who participate in the program

Phone: (02) 9563 6813

⦿ Level 1, Wentworth Building, Corner City Road and Butlin Avenue, University of Sydney

Barnardos

Service for young people aged 12-18 years who have recently left home or are at risk of doing so. Support is provided to assist the young person and their family address issues related to leaving home.

Adolescent Support

Streetwork and Canterbury Youth at Risk ⦿ (Marrickville and Belmore)

9718 0160

Post Release Options ⦿ (Marrickville, Canterbury and Inner West)

9784 6400

Reconnect Programs ⦿ (Marrickville, Belmore, Canterbury)

9718 8645

Homelessness

Adolescent Residential Care ⦿ (Kingston House- Marrickville)

95198907

Cadigal Information Service

Cadigal Information Service, in partnership with Marrickville Council, run a Radio Training Project to allow young Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people to have opportunity to learn about media communications and to gain qualifications in broadcasting.

Phone: 9384 4000

Headspace Marrickville

Support and information for young people aged 12-25 who have general health, mental health, alcohol and other drug worries. The service can also help you with other concerns like housing, school and sexual health. You can see a GP, Psychologist or Social Worker, to make an appointment or for more information call: 91144100

⦿ Address: Marrickville Youth Resource Centre, Corner of Yabsley Ave & Northcote St
Marrickville Hours: Mon-Fri 10am to 5pm

YouthBlock Health & Resource Centre

Support and information for young people aged 12-25 who have general health, mental health, alcohol and other drug worries. The service can also help you with other concerns like housing, school and sexual health. You can see a GP, Psychologist or Social Worker, to make an appointment or for more information call: 91144100

⦿ Address: Marrickville Youth Resource Centre, Corner of Yabsley Ave & Northcote St
Marrickville Hours: Mon-Fri 10am to 5pm

Redfern Streetbeat

Free after hours (usually from 8:00 pm till 2:00 am) support and transport service for young Aboriginal people and their friends in the ⦿ Redfern, Glebe and Marrickville areas - Phone: 93194195

Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services

Provides a range of services including 10 week day programme for young people aged 14-18 who have trouble at school, a sexual assault service and Alcohol and Alcohol counsellor for 12-24 year old and family counselling for 12-24 year old and their families. A research worker can assist with advocacy and social issues.

Service Types: Counselling; Family Counselling; School Coaching; Sexual Assault Services; School Counselling; Special Education; Abuse Counselling; Child Abuse; Sexual Assault; Adolescent Psychiatry; Child Psychiatry; Behavioural Disorders; Day programme - Ph. 9560 4588

⦿ 440 Marrickville Road, MARRICKVILLE NSW 2204

Marrickville Youth Resource Centre

MYRC provide activities and opportunities for young people aged 12 - 24 years. After school activities include regular recreation and computer room. Music studio and specialised programs like hip hop dance, street art and school holiday activities.

Phone: 95643222

Hours: Mon-Thu 10am-6pm, Fri 9am-5pm

⦿ Cnr Yabsley Ave and Northcote St, Marrickville NSW 2204

References

Protocols referenced in the production of this document:
Marrickville Aboriginal Cultural Protocols, Marrickville Council
www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au

Working with Aboriginal People and Communities;
a Practice Resource
NSW Department of Community Services

Opening the Doors, a 'Do It Yourself' Access and Equity manual
for working with young people YAPA and the Access Project
Reference Group for the Nepean Better Futures Strategy
www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/facts/aboriginalyoungpeople.php (2006)

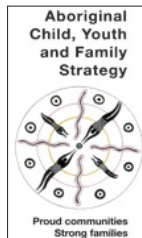
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Led By and With Young People. Olympia, WA: CommonAction.

Communication in Organisations, by Dalmar Fisher;
West Publishing Co ,U.S. (March 1981)

2008 Face the Facts, Some Questions and Answers about Indigenous
Peoples, Migrants and Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Australian Human Rights Commission

<http://www.aboriginalculture.com.au/> 2009
<http://www.indigenoustralia.info/the-dreaming.html>

Our Place, a comprehensive guidebook on working with Aboriginal young people
South Sydney Youth Services - 9318 0539



Designed by Lucy Simpson
for Marrickville Council 2010