

MACUNITY

Needs of Aboriginal Youth

(taken from consultation with MacUnity June 2009)

OWN SPACE:

- Aboriginal youth need their own space to:
 - Rebuild cultural platform to gain personal stability and identity
 - Develop ownership and create their own space (home away from home)
 - Rebuild trust with others and each other

ACCESIBLE ABORIGINAL YOUTH SPACE:

- Provision of safe transport options to services
- Centrally located
- Flexible, informal service options
- Youth services need to be attractive to Aboriginal youth (what does this look like?)
- Youth need lots of soft entry points
- Youth services to have specific days for Aboriginal youth
- Youth programs to be designed specifically for Aboriginal youth
- Increase number of Aboriginal identified youth workers
- Mainstream need to take action to accommodate Aboriginal youth needs when funding includes engaging with this target group especially with the large gaps in service provision
- Mainstream services to develop partnerships and work closely with Aboriginal organisations
- Aboriginal youth need to be engaged earlier than 12 or 13 (high school) when many of the issues have already been entrenched
- Youth services need to consistently engage with the whole family where possible

SAFE ABORIGINAL YOUTH SERVICES:

- Youth services need to be more adequately equip to maintain safety within youth centres
- Youth program development needs to consider how to be more inclusive and avoid the dominance of one cultural group
- Youth programs need to take into consideration the tensions that exist between particular cultures
- Need more stable, consistent youth services
- Need to develop trust and respect of Aboriginal youth and workers through open, honest communication

NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE:

- Important to understand and respect Aboriginal protocols and roles
- Important to understand Aboriginal family structures / households and their engagement in the community
- When working with Aboriginal youth it is essential to acknowledge the past issues and allow them to develop shared memories.
- Need positive cultural leadership and direction that has been limited to date.
- Men's and women's business still applies to youth and must be taken into consideration when using mentors
- Patience is required when building relationships of trust
- Important to always consult with Aboriginal youth to check what they want. If you push ideas onto them they are more likely to pull away.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- National Indigenous Cadet's Program
- Advertise staff vacancies through Koori networks
- Promote mainstream opportunities to the Aboriginal community and networks
- Improve strategic planning across youth services to incorporate Aboriginal needs
- Consider the needs of Aboriginal youth as part of mainstream client group (not separate but inclusive)
- Design cohesive youth program that include Aboriginal youth needs
- Design some programs specific to Aboriginal youth
- Mainstream to develop more partnerships with Aboriginal organisations to improve outcomes for Aboriginal youth
- Develop mainstream organisations to be more Aboriginal friendly
- Roll out further Cultural Awareness Training specific to youth for both staff and young people. This training needs to be consistent and on-going to address high staff turnover. This could support changing future generations perspective on the Aboriginal community
- Build significant relationships with Aboriginal workers to provide an avenue for advice (this takes time and patience)
- Run Aboriginal cultural activities for both Aboriginal and mainstream youth (e.g. art, dance, storytelling)
- Explore effective Aboriginal youth projects in other areas
- Youth services to engage consistently and appropriately with the Aboriginal community through Elders, Aboriginal networks, events and celebrations
- Set up an Aboriginal Youth Advisory Committees
- Advocate that funders more accurately measure Aboriginal youth engagement to ensure accountability for Aboriginal funding
- Use and develop Nabu Youth Council (DAA)
- Make Aboriginal youth a priority in service provision (engagement, relationships, roles of management, education)
- Aboriginal community to work more collaboratively on youth needs
- Provide opportunities to develop the skills and experience of young people and showcase these
- Use events to more effectively engage Aboriginal young people

ISSUES:

- Cultural shyness (on both sides)
- Urgent need to address Aboriginal youth issues. They are the next generation and if not addressed the community will continue to go backwards