

Young People, Reconciliation & Challenging Racism in Queensland

A scoping project

Prepared for the Youth Affairs Network of Qld (YANQ)* by Emma Davey

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* YANQ is the peak body for youth affairs in Queensland. If you would like to become a member of YANQ or find out more, please contact admin@yanq.org.au or visit www.yanq.org.au

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia's inherently racist beginnings, involving the forced colonisation of Indigenous peoples and their land, continue to reverberate into the present day. This is reflected in the current political climate of Federal Government policies, which have been felt by some to be fuelling racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, refugees and migrants, and Muslims. Young people, especially young people from already marginalised minority groups, continue to be affected by racism.

Recent research has indicated that the majority of people in Australia consider racism to be a significant social problem¹.

This paper outlines the findings and recommendations of the "Young People, Reconciliation and Challenging Racism" project, a short scoping project implemented as part of a student placement at the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ). Consultations with members of the community have revealed that there are a number of ways that Queensland Government can further support efforts to challenge racism and build Reconciliation. This paper is of interest to any individual in the community to share and learn from the experiences of others, to network and share new ideas, and to progress the movement to decrease racism and build for a genuine Reconciliation in Qld.

BACKGROUND TO THIS PROJECT

The idea for the project arose during a conversation held with Claire Cottone, YANQ's Multicultural Development Officer, at the National Conference for the ReconciliAction Youth Network in Canberra, July 2005. Observing the level of energy, positivity and initiative with which young delegates from New South Wales and Victoria described what they were doing in their local areas for Reconciliation and to challenge racism, we wondered what might be happening at the local level in Queensland.

Aims

The scoping project aimed to document local projects and initiatives working for Reconciliation and challenging racism with or by young people in Qld, and through this to:

- Explore how respondents perceive and construct anti-racism and Reconciliation strategies
- Open up discussions on elements of 'good practice' in challenging racism and building for Reconciliation.
- Provide an opportunity for people to share issues, challenges and positive stories with others, and to network around anti-racism and Reconciliation

¹ Dunn, K; Forrest, J, Burnley, I. & McDonald, A. (2004). *Constructing Racism in Australia*. Australian Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 39 No. 4 November 2004.

Discussion of terms

Racism

Racism has been defined as an attitude, behaviour or action that intentionally or unintentionally excludes, denies, discriminates against or assumes superiority over people on the basis of their ethnic background, 'race' or culture². This can then be broken down into two forms of racism: "direct racism" (observable racism by an individual or a group), and "institutional racism" (a more subtle form of racism perpetuated by social and organisational structures).

Racism still pervades Australian society to an alarming degree, affecting the most marginalised³. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from other culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, particularly those who are migrants or refugees, are still faced with the greatest risk of experiencing all forms of racism⁴. In particular, young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have reported a high level of direct and institutional racism experienced within education systems⁵.

Reconciliation

The decision to invite responses from the community about projects that aim for "Reconciliation" in the same sentence as "challenging racism" came from the recognition that no discussion on racism or anti-racism in an Australian context should exclude discussion around the ongoing nature of, and extent of, racism perpetuated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"Reconciliation" is a contested word that holds very different meanings for different people. One interpretation of "Reconciliation" is the process of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together to achieve equity, justice and recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia⁶. The use of the word in this scoping project was intended to explore the perceptions and meaning-in-practice of "Reconciliation" present within the community, that this might re-stimulate healthy debate on its use and interpretations.

Reconciliation Queensland is the peak body for Reconciliation in this State. At present State Government funding to this body is inadequate and does not match allocation in other states.

² Flower, T. (2001). *Long-term Anti-racism Strategies: A Guide to Developing Effective Community Projects*, Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies, BC; also Selvamanickam, S; Jago, J, Ferguson, S & Hunter, J. (2003). *Anti-racism project*. Social Action and Equity Team, Brisbane City Council August 2003 Brisbane.

³ For example, Sudanese refugees in Toowoomba, Queensland. See: *Racist fliers left in street with Sudanese family*, The Toowoomba Chronicle, 19 October 2005. See also recent YANQ publications: "Cultural Chasm", *ERACISM reports 1 & 2*, and "New Kids on the Block – Making space for Sudanese young people in Queensland", all available on the YANQ website www.yanq.org.au

⁴ Selvamanickam et al (2003); Dunn et al (2004)

⁵ Dunn, K.M., Forrest, J., Pe-Pua, R. & Smith, S. (2005) 'Experiences of racism in the Australian body politics: extent, spheres, and cultural unevenness' in Khoo, T. (ed.), *The Body Politic: Racialised Political Cultures in Australia* (Refereed Proceedings from the UQ Australian Studies Centre Conference, Brisbane, 24-26 November 2004), University of Queensland Australian Studies Centre and Monash University National Centre for Australian Studies.

⁶ this is vastly different to the 'practical reconciliation' model espoused by the Federal Government. See: Huggins, J. (2003). "The Figures Seem to Confirm that Practical Reconciliation is Not Enough", www.onlineopinion.com.au, last viewed 10/09/05. See also: www.reconciliAction.org.

Anti-racism

Talking about “anti-racism” can also be controversial. Brisbane City Council’s (BCC’s) 2003 “Anti-racism project” report⁷ discussed the use of the term in relation to other more neutral terms such as “community relations”, “community cohesion”, and, it could be added, “community harmony” and “diversity”. The BCC report highlighted the importance of using “anti-racism” precisely because of its potential as a cathartic tool through which racism can be named and confronted. And like “Reconciliation”, the term “racism” is a familiar term that people can more readily engage with.

That said, this scoping project initially used the term “anti-racism” in the project brief, but this was softened to “challenging racism” after the project worker spoke with some individuals in the community sector who fed back that “anti-racism” might be received as too oppositional for the nature of the project. Whilst this was not necessarily the view of the project worker, it was acknowledged that it was important to invite the widest range of responses, and so “challenging racism” was adopted.

RESEARCH PROCESS

The research duration was a period of four months. The project worker drew from action research principles⁸ in that the research process was:

- Cyclical – incremental learnings informed the next steps in the research
- Geared towards action and making change – the project aimed to contribute to building for Reconciliation and working to challenge racism with young people in Queensland
- Qualitative in nature - the experiences, perceptions and stories of individuals were the focus of the project

For guidance on current trends in concept and practice, recent Australian research on racism, Reconciliation and anti-racism was investigated.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. Project preparation and pre-research

Effort was made to establish whether a project of this nature was a) required and b) was not duplicating other work.

It was found that the most recent project located in Brisbane with similar aims was Brisbane City Council’s “Anti-racism project”, which incorporated a database of projects from around the world that were promoted as successful in confronting and reducing racism. That particular database had not been updated from its creation in 2003, and it listed only two initiatives from Australia that were directly involving young people.

⁷ Selvamanickam et al (2003)

⁸ Stringer, E & Dwyer, R. (2005). *Action Research in Human Services*. Pearson, New Jersey.

Contact was made with senior workers in the field to give feedback on the idea and research process.

The worker also engaged with the project worker of the "Confronting Racisms in Communities" project in order to establish that the two projects would not duplicate⁹.

2. Literature review

The worker scoped recent research publications that had a focus on Reconciliation, racism and young people in the Australian context.

3. Consultation

With no evidence of any other recent and locally focused work that had aimed at scoping Reconciliation and anti-racism projects *with particular relevance to young people*, the project worker formulated a survey and invited the Queensland community sector, through YANQ's contact database, to respond to the project.

'Talking up' the project took place at network meetings, in publication form through YANQ's quarterly newsletter and fortnightly email bulletin, and through personally inviting people to forward the survey on to their networks. The activity/project profile is included as Appendix A.

Data retrieved from the survey

Potential respondents were given six weeks to contact YANQ about the project and/or return a completed activity/project profile. In that time, the project worker spoke over the phone to a large number of people who were interested in the project and wished to clarify points or request further information. 18 respondents were listed as having the intention of filling out and returning a project profile, however only 8 completed profiles were received by the deadline for submission.

Of the eight completed profiles,

- 6 were located in an educational institution (schools) setting
- 2 were located in a community setting
- 4 were educational workshops
- 3 were events/festivals
- 1 was an initiative by a young person

Limitations

Timeframe & timing

The short four month timeframe contributed to the limited number of responses received. This may have been exacerbated by the project calling for responses

⁹ The "Confronting Racisms in Communities" project is a three year pilot project funded by Multicultural Affairs Qld, that aims to address racisms experienced by culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Queensland through supporting the community sector to identify, document and combat racism. Contact Katherine Moriarty, Project Officer, Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care confrontingracism@yahoo.com; (07) 3876 3294

near the end of the year, when the time and energy of people working in the sector is generally taken up with other priorities.

Student placement project

This project was openly acknowledged as being implemented within the framework of a student placement. This may have had a negative effect on the motivation of people to respond to the project. There may be correlations between perceptions of qualification and/or professional employment and level of value and trust in the capacity of the worker to achieve aims and come through with useful outcomes. There may have also been valid concerns about sustainability of the project (see below).

The project worker was also new to the youth sector and had to utilise time and energy to set up communications and working relationships, which if already established may have gained the project much faster momentum.

Scope of the project

The scope of the project may have been overwhelming or unclear in that people were asked to offer project profiles on both Reconciliation and anti-racism activities, although the rationale for that has been outlined above.

Some potential respondents and one actual respondent commented on the length of the project profile, and suggested that an alternative method may have been to simply do the survey over the phone. However, this would take away from the opportunity for the respondent to tell their stories in their own words.

The broad intention of the project was to gather local project information from across Queensland, however only two of the eight received profiles detailed projects from outside of Brisbane. A combination of the above limitations plus perceived disconnection to Brisbane may have given low incentive for people from regional areas to respond. In addition, the lack of interpersonal connection in the written project profile may not have supported regional people to respond.

Sustainability

A fundamental limitation of this research was that there was no scope for YANQ to carry on the project or maintain a database of positive projects, given the absence of project funding for this initiative. Other potential means of sustaining communication and networking of good practice principles and good news stories for Reconciliation and anti-racism are currently being investigated.

LITERATURE REVIEW: STRATEGIES FOR RECONCILIATION & ANTI-RACISM

Some excellent recent publications have outlined recommendations for anti-racism principles and strategies, drawn from consultation with workers in the community and education sectors, and with young people. Resources around anti-racism are more readily accessible than those on Reconciliation. The following is a summary of these suggestions and recommendations.

General principles for anti-racism initiatives

According to Selvamanickam et al¹⁰, good programs that challenge racism:

- Educate about diversity
- Work in the grassroots
- Build partnerships between community, business and government
- Are sustainable
- Combine short term strategies in cohesion with long-term strategies
- Evaluate their impact
- Are appropriate and relevant
- Are accessible
- Include creative means of educating
- Are controlled by the community, are “grassroots”
- Recognise the experience of racism by different groups
- Involve wider community engagement

Racisms in schools

Schools are key settings for young people experiencing racist incidents and institutional racism¹¹. Mansouri & Trembath’s report¹² revealed that Arab-Australian students who disengage from schools may do so, in part, because of perceptions of teacher racism and a lack of acknowledgement and effort to address it on the part of the school. However, schools are also potential sites for anti-racism education and initiatives.

In forums held during 2001 by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues¹³, young people gave suggestions for approaches to addressing racism in schools. They identified the importance of:

¹⁰ Selvamanickam et al (2003). In this publication these are referred to as “critical success factors”; see also Flower (2001)

¹¹ See Cottone, C. (2004). *Cultural Chasm: The changing cultural and linguistic demographic in Queensland schools and the need for reform*. Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, Brisbane. Available on the YANQ website www.yanq.org.au

¹² Mansouri, F. & Trembath, A. (2005). *Multicultural education and racism: The case of Arab-Australian students in contemporary Australia*. International Education Journal, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp.516-529.

¹³ YACVic & CMYI (2001) “*I’m not racist, but...*” Combating racism and discrimination forum report. Melbourne.

- Cultural awareness and diversity days where parents and carers can participate (as key transmitters of discriminatory views / behaviour)
- Education and awareness raising
- Cross-cultural training for teachers and students

In 2003 the Western Independent Young People's Network¹⁴ compiled the following recommendations from young people:

- Curricula that emphasise the contributions that "non-Anglo" cultures have made to Australia
- Leadership and role modelling by school staff in relation to dealing with racism and discrimination
- Opportunities for refugee and migrant young people to contribute to the discourse on racism

On the development of anti-racism strategies within schools, Mansouri & Trembath¹⁵ suggest:

- Schools and educators require resources and experience
- There needs to be an active acknowledgement of "social experiences of racism and exclusion" by the school.
- There needs to be an "integrated approach" where schools, parents and communities work in partnership to address racism

Thomas & Witenberg¹⁶ suggest that education programs around anti-racism should robustly encourage conscious rejection of intolerance and prejudice, through encouraging students to:

- Develop critical thinking and analysis skills around social issues like prejudice
- Put less focus on people's "racial characteristics"
- Develop empathy, especially in relation to the potential harm of intolerance

Statewide networking for anti-racism education – example from New South Wales

A good example of networking for anti-racism in education comes from New South Wales. The Stand Up! Speak Out! anti-racism education conference held in Redfern, NSW in 2002¹⁷ identified important key components of a statewide effort at confronting racism in education. Recommendation 1 was to introduce "compulsory pre-service training for teachers in multicultural and Aboriginal education, with a particular focus on anti-racism education".

¹⁴ Carland, S & Chandra-Shekeran, K. (2003). *No Space for Racism: young people's voices and recommendations*. Western Independent Young People's Network, Melbourne

¹⁵ Mansouri, & Trembath (2005).

¹⁶ Thomas, T. & Witenberg, R. (2004). *Love Thy Neighbours: Racial Tolerance among Young Australians*. RMIT, Melbourne.

¹⁷ *Stand up! Speak out! Anti-racism education conference*, 7th September 2002, Redfern, NSW. Retrieved 15th October 2005 http://www.racismnoway.com.au/news/pages/14_20020930.html

Building for Reconciliation

Principles that found wide support at Reconciliation Australia's May 2005 planning session¹⁸ included, amongst others,

- Education of non-Indigenous students being as important as education of Indigenous students to provide a basis for better relationships.
- The responsibility of non-Indigenous people and institutions to tackle racism head on – with strong emphasis on cultural awareness and competency training in a range of industries/sectors backed up by an intolerance of racism.
- More exposure of achievement, good news and positive role models.

COMMENTARY ON ANTI-RACISM STRATEGIES

The belief that racism can be decreased by educating young people around cultural diversity is related to a psychological model of understanding racism. This model presumes that racist behaviour in the individual can be changed through teaching about diversity and encouraging students to think critically¹⁹. The research and the projects profiled in this paper indicate that many anti-racism programs, especially those in school settings, engage with race, ethnicity and culture issues through this psychological model.

However, some researchers suggest that a more "viable anti-racism" would include multiple strategies – particularly those that are geared towards institutional/systemic change²⁰. Whilst anti-racism strategies based on the psychological model have their place, it may be more useful and more effective for anti-racism practitioners to:

- a) consider the need for multiple strategies in any locality,
and
- b) also engage in advocating for institutional and systemic change.

¹⁸ *Proceedings Report of the National Reconciliation Planning Workshop*, Reconciliation Australia, 30/31 May 2005.

¹⁹ McCollow, J. (2004). *Dealing with racism: concepts and strategies*. QTU Professional Magazine, November 2004.

²⁰ Milosevic (2001) quoted in McCollow (2004)

FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS: PROFILING PROJECTS IN QLD

It is not the place of this paper to analyse the content of the profiled projects (see Appendix C for the proforma). Each approach has been formulated according to the specific local context, community, target audience, personnel, and resources available. One of the aims of this paper was to celebrate the positive projects that are out there, and for people to share ideas, concerns, methods and contacts. The following findings are observations made, correlated by feedback gathered through the scoping process and through challenges and needs identified by project respondents.

1. Positive, local projects that work for Reconciliation and that challenge racism with young people do exist across Queensland.
2. There are a wide range of approaches to Reconciliation and anti-racism work being enacted across many different settings.
3. Respondents wished to see more evidence of positive work on Reconciliation and anti-racism.
4. In responding to the optional question "what are your ideas for the future of building for Reconciliation and challenging racism with young people in Qld", respondents identified that they were deeply concerned about the impact of the media, whether it be about negative portrayals of certain groups or simply unbalanced "media hype".
5. Most of the responses for the project profile came from the education sector. There was a view consistent across respondents from this sector that "education and young people are where change needs to start".
6. Funding for anti-racism and Reconciliation activities within schools was an issue. School-based respondents and other individuals interested in the project identified a need for further funding for programs promoting Reconciliation and addressing racism *outside of the curriculum*, because they were operating on small loans or grants on a shoestring budget.
7. The worker received a number of enquiries from people requesting information on benchmark indicators for good practice and effective outcomes in anti-racism or Reconciliation work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 State Government to provide adequate and recurrent funding to Reconciliation Qld in line with New South Wales and other states
- 2 State Government to provide, and increase, resources for local Reconciliation and anti-racism programs and workers in the education and community sectors
- 3 Education Qld to take a stronger leadership role in progressing anti-racism policy and strategy within the education sector
- 4 More discussion within the education and community sectors on strategies for anti-racism and Reconciliation, and their relevance for young people from all backgrounds, especially those who are most marginalised.
- 5 Educational institutions and programs to take an integrated approach to dealing with racism, partnering with students, their families and the wider community
- 6 Community practitioners to continue to network, share information and support and build for a broader, more sustainable network for Reconciliation and anti-racism, especially in regional areas
- 7 Anti-racism practitioners / academics to gather evidence base and explore benchmarking & performance indicators for "good practice" in anti-racism work

CONCLUSION

This scoping project has barely scratched the surface in exploring local initiatives that build for Reconciliation and challenge racism.

However, we hope that this paper has provided a beginning discussion of anti-racism and Reconciliation strategies with young people in Queensland, using data from recent literature and current work being done in the community and education sectors. It has revealed the potential for furthering dialogue on elements of 'good practice' in such work, and has recommended the ways in which stakeholders (in government, education and community) can assist this process. It cannot be emphasised enough that celebrating and sharing the positive and the workable is important to people who are working for anti-racism and Reconciliation.

In Queensland, dialogue is beginning to warm again towards building a movement against racism. We live in a state that is becoming more richly patterned with culture and diversity each year. Those who see the benefit in this have a responsibility to work proactively with one another in order to continue to progress positive change.

Thanks

Gratitude is offered to the following people:

- The many workers and young people who were enthusiastic about the project, particularly those of you who responded with a project profile
- Ana Maria Holas, and Joan Hendriks, for your kind guidance
- Everyone else in Queensland who works to challenge racism and build for Reconciliation
- Claire Cottone, and the team at YANQ

APPENDIX A: PROJECT PROFILES

Sandgate State High School Multicultural Day

Type: Event/festival
Setting: Educational Institution
Timeframe: Once a year

Description

The Multicultural Day is a one-day celebration of multiculturalism within the school community of Sandgate State High School. The event involved sharing cultural food, traditions and music, and interacting with ideas about inclusion and diversity. It has been running for the last two years, and is set to become a significant event within the school calendar. The aim of coordinators is to reach out and involve the local community to a greater extent in future years.

Background

Some teachers in the school community wished to set up positive experiences around diversity, multiculturalism, and make visible the different cultures within the school community, especially in the wake of the events of September 11. The hope was that this event would emphasise inclusion and acceptance of diversity and harmony already present within the school culture. Key staff personally initiated the idea, facilitated involvement within the staff and parent community in planning, resourcing, and enacting the event.

Resourcing

Basic funding for the running of the day is covered by the school lending the coordinating team, and then profits from food sales is rolled over to the following year. Resources, materials and time were donated to the project, with people contributing as they wanted (for example, parents cooking foods from their cultural background and assisting with cultural entertainment).

Strengths/outcomes of the project

- There was very positive feedback from students, parents and caregivers and staff
- The interest from the local community is high for greater involvement next year
- The event is not meant to be a money making venture, it is all about community participation and diversity
- During the 2005 event, more young men that during the previous year got involved showcasing their cultures

Challenges

- Timing to maximise involvement and be held on an appropriate date
- Overcoming resistance to the idea by some individuals in the school community
- Limited resources
- The prospect that it may get too big for the capacity of the current organisers (a group of staff members)

This event will happen on an ongoing basis.

Contact

Rahman Vasram
Sandgate State High School
(07) 3869 9888

Workshop on Aboriginal history and critical thinking

Type: Educational workshop

Setting: Educational institution

Timeframe: ongoing

Run by James Sandy, based at Sandgate State High School

Description

James facilitates educational workshops on Aboriginal history. The workshops incorporate an overview of the length of time of Aboriginal presence in this country, and significant events that have occurred since colonisation. It includes debunking some cultural and linguistic myths and present in popular understandings of Australian history. Throughout the workshop James encourages young people to ask questions, and to deconstruct words that are commonly used in teaching mainstream history such as "discovery". He begins by using a lateral thinking quiz to get students to "think outside the square" and to open up the space for discussion.

Background

Non-Aboriginal teachers were approaching James to offer workshops on Aboriginal culture and history with students, and he developed a simple structure of explanation around a timeline.

Resourcing

This is James' own initiative and he has been offering the workshops in his own time.

Strengths/Outcomes

- All students learn something
- Young people ask why they haven't been taught this history before
- A simple approach that challenges assumptions
- Long term, this approach can counter racism through knowledge, and introducing patterns of critique and analysis

Challenges

- The ingrained racist attitudes of some young people – but in saying that, this can be worked with.

Contact

James Sandy

Sandgate State High School

(07) 3869 9888

NAIDOC Day celebration, Our Lady's College, Brisbane

Type: Event/festival
Setting: Educational institution
Timeframe: ongoing

Description

An event celebrating NAIDOC Day at Our Lady's College, Annerley, Brisbane, a year 8 – 12 girls' college. The aim of the festival was to recognise and celebrate the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to our cultural heritage, through create a greater awareness of the richness and value of Aboriginal culture. This event involved all 400 students.

Background

NAIDOC Day has not regularly been celebrated in the school. A lot is done to recognise other cultural groups in the school and the decision was made to formally celebrate NAIDOC Day in recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our heritage.

Resourcing

Our presenters donated their time especially Indigenous support staff in Catholic Ed and performers. Artefacts were provided by families and funding for bush foods came from the Commonwealth Government Healthy Food Grants.

Useful resources utilised included NAIDOC posters, Healthy Food Grants money, and Dilly Bag foods based in Eumundi.

Strengths/Outcomes

- Students were extremely enthusiastic and interested in all displays and activities, including a range of different bush foods to try.
- It was a great day. It allowed our three students who have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage to take pride in their culture and since then they have been more interested in identifying as of Aboriginal descent.

Challenges

- Obtaining speakers/presenters as they were booked out, or their time cost money
- Obtaining bush foods, had to travel to locate and get them.
- Locating resources to use
- Overload - too much to do and see on the one day

Future

This will be held again in 2006 but over 2 or 3 days rather than 1 day so students can participate in more activities.

Contact

Carole Hardy
Our Lady's College, Brisbane
(07) 3426 8004
chardy@bne.catholic.edu.au

"Mossman Youth Sports Program"

Type: Event/festival (sport)

Setting: Community

Timeframe: Ongoing

Coordinated by Mossman Sports Committee

Description

Youth sports program located in Mossman community, involving 40-90 youth and children of the Douglas Shire from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage. The aim was to encourage youth to participate in sporting activities as well as play with different nationalities and cultures

Background

A concerned group of community members decided to organise this project to provide a safe and healthy environment for kids to go to on Friday nights.

Resourcing

This project was resourced by donations from community businesses, and local council. A hands-on approach was taken, that utilised local experience and volunteers.

Strengths/Outcomes

- Volunteers who support the project
- High percentage of kids who came along
- Reconciling amongst cultures within the younger generation
- Smiles on the kids' faces!

Challenges

- Funding to pay for use of Indoor Centre and lights

Future

This is an ongoing project but we're not sure about the future – we are running out of donations

Contact

Lalania Tusa Faaefili
Community Education Councillor
Mossman State High School
(07) 4084 1333

Speech on positive input of Aboriginal culture

Type: Initiative by young person
Setting: Educational institution
By Courtney Gerke, year 12 student

Description

Research on Aboriginal culture, literature and spirituality assisted by Terry Willmot; Speech on positive input of Aboriginal culture by non-Indigenous year 12 student Courtney Gerke, who utilised many pieces of Indigenous literature within her project. Speech is attached.

Background

My exam was the second last in a series aimed at gaining my certificate in communication. The exam was a self discovery task that was self-directed focusing on the positive input Aboriginal culture can have on our lives.

Resourcing

Workshop on Aboriginal spirituality by Terry Willmot, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Indigenous Education Liaison Officer for Emmaus College, Rockhampton, Central Queensland. Interviews with Terry Willmot generously offered in his spare time.

Future

Single project: n/a

Contact

Courtney Gerke
gerkcleslie@cqnet.com.au

The Peace Initiative

Type: Workshop/event

Setting: Community

Timeframe: Ongoing

Coordinated by CONTACT Inc and artists, as a youth arts & community cultural development project

Description

The Peace Initiative is a community project for young people in Sunnybank that involves contemporary and traditional dance, music, visual art and video to explore ideas and feelings about *peace, power, freedom, survival* and *faith*. The Peace Initiative is a creative collaboration that engages young people from diverse cultural backgrounds in dialogues exploring peace through the use of traditional and contemporary cultural expressions. It involves cross-cultural and cross-art form collaborations with Indigenous, Torres Strait Island, Polynesian and recently arrived refugee and migrant young people and their communities, living in and around Sunnybank (southwest corner of Brisbane).

The 2005 (fourth) Peace Initiative involved 15 of Brisbane's leading arts workers who worked with more than 50 young people from a diversity of cultural backgrounds to produce a song and video clip called SYMPHONY OF SURVIVAL. The flyer advertising the 2005 Peace Initiative said: Who is it for? All welcome! Especially young people who are Indigenous, Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Afghan, Iraqi, Sudanese, Somali, Eritrean, Iranian, Bosnian, and so on..."

The Peace Initiative is informed by CONTACT Inc's Third Place Policy – the creation of a space where cultures can safely and meaningfully meet.

The aims include the development of a group of young people who are:

- Actively working towards the development of a peaceful community
- Equipped to build contemporary cultures of non-violence and to advocate for peace
- Peer leaders within their community
- Identifying opportunities and issues within their communities and working towards their resolution

Background

CONTACT Inc is one of Australia's leading youth arts and cultural development companies having a sixteen year history of groundbreaking cross-cultural and cross-art form collaborations with Indigenous, Torres Strait Island, Polynesian and recently arrived refugee and migrant young people and their communities.

Initiated in 2001, in response to high levels of inter-cultural violence amongst young members of the community, there was consequently a demonstrated need for work that engaged young people from these communities in active, positive ways. The Peace Initiative works toward finding local, innovative and effective ways to build a sustainable and peaceful community.

Resourcing

CONTACT Inc is funded by the Queensland Government, through Arts Queensland; and is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its funding and advisory body; and the Brisbane City Council; and the Community Gambling Benefit Fund.

Strengths

- Commitment to supporting and developing the young participant's skills beyond the project
- Celebrating young people as valuable community members and key agents of social change
- Providing a safe place for participants to express themselves
- The interests, ideas and creative innovations of young people are driving the project, which means that workshops are flexible in responding to the diverse needs of the participants
- The work is long-term, local, specific, relevant and responsive
- Utilises a range of artistic and cultural forms to explore peace building strategies within communities

Outcomes

There are many outcomes of the project, the most memorable come from participants' experiences: Arts worker and participant Tom Ofanoa says, "before I started out with CONTACT Inc I was going through a really rough stage in my life. At the time I felt isolated and at times not being able to speak my mind. CONTACT Inc is really good in the way of providing a change, not just for different ethnic backgrounds, but Australians in general, to be able to speak out about the issues of racism, discrimination, crime and violence that take place in your environment and the surrounding neighbourhood. I thought being involved in something like this would be silly at first, but after the first day I turned up to CONTACT and spat out my first rhyme, it felt really good. Making music with meaning is what I like doing."

Tracy Hifo, a young Polynesian woman participating in the Peace Initiative says that is "has really widened my way of thinking. I guess it just challenged me to think, feel and see things differently. The whole experience was rewarding as we each learnt to respect each other and see what each of us had to offer."

Challenges

- Maintain the balance between the art form and the peace building focus
- Evaluation on the effectiveness of building peace in the community we operate in

Future

Continue the Peace Initiative. Currently we are looking at how the project can be more responsive and reflective of the peace building process. CONTACT has started a partnership with the Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (the University of Qld) and are currently discussing process around evaluation, research and peace building training. Develop our model into a resource that can be used by other groups or organisations working with young people to build peace through arts and cultural development who wish to run similar initiatives in their own community.

Contact:

Bianca Gilchrist

Program Officer

CONTACT Inc. ph: (07) 3257 2211, email: bianca@contact.org.au

Anti-Discrimination – Making a Meal of it

Type: Workshop

Setting: Educational institution

Timeframe: pilot project, currently resourcing further funding

Collaboration between MultiLink Child and Family Services and the Logan district Police

Description

The project was to provide anti-discrimination pilot workshops in 3 local schools within the Logan district. During these workshops, students were exposed to and discussed situations confronting people who experienced discrimination and identified common feelings and belief systems. They were encouraged to reflect on their own practises and how they would feel if they were placed in a similar situation. Finally, they were encouraged to acknowledge many of the good practices they were already displaying within their schools and possible ways they could be even more effective in working against discrimination. Suggestions from this workshop were then handed back to the school and the school used the students input to write a school anti-discrimination policy. Teachers were also encouraged to follow up this workshop with discussions about discrimination and bullying.

Background

Logan district is identified as having one of the largest culturally diverse communities in South East Queensland. Local schools have identified a growing unquiet among the ethnic student body and a need to address issues of discrimination and bullying among students, as well as a need to work to combat discrimination and negative media surrounding refugees and newly arrived immigrants. Approaching from an early intervention framework, MultiLink identified the need to begin working with young people on these issues in the middle years of schooling as this would provide a proactive, preventative approach to dealing with discrimination issues. The acting police liaison officer at the time, Sue Tasman, approached MultiLink to join in a collaborative project to begin to try and address these issues. Community support for the project was extremely positive.

As a result MultiLink's Child and Family Services Coordinator in collaboration with the Logan City Police developed the "Anti-Discrimination – Making a Meal of it" workshops. They were conducted independently as a trial, and were extremely successful and many teachers commented on the appropriateness and quality of information and learning provided to the students.

Resourcing

Funding for the pilot was acquired from a police funding body.

Woodridge primary school, Kingston primary school, Berrinburrah East primary school, local ESL teachers and community liaison officers were also involved.

The most useful material resource was the use of actual testimonials from refugees living in Australia (ie human resources).

Strengths

- Collaborative
- Early intervention (proactive rather than reactive)
- Drawing on a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience
- Allowing identification of strengths of current practices

Outcomes

Logan district has in excess of one hundred and sixty-five (165) different cultures spread over a population of approximately two hundred and thirty thousand (230,000) people. It is essential for the cultural health of our community that all people, including children, respect each other, acknowledging that we are all individual, diverse and acceptable. By providing a series of workshops across the school year and working in collaboration with local schools, community members and other service providers, it is envisioned that there will be a tangible growth of acceptance amongst primary aged school children which will lead to a reduction of discriminatory incidents at schools where there is already documented evidence of vilification (Principals and Cultural Community Liaison Officers documentation). This will also lead to a higher retention of students from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds at secondary educational institutions.

Further, through enhanced acceptance among the community, there will be less police involvement at both primary and secondary schools around juvenile 'gang' related issues and mentality (School Based Police Officer Documentation). There will be fewer calls to police for assistance at schools and fewer incidents where students are subject to discriminatory incidents on the way to and from school. This will also lead to fewer incidents within the community which require police intervention. Finally, with greater awareness about discrimination and vilification, there may be greater reporting of incidents as they occur in schools which will enhance the ability of the school and police to deal with these issues in the early stages of the incident and thus prevent these incidents becoming major issues

Challenges

- Has the potential to be confronting for students
- Finding suitable volunteers and guest speakers who possess a current blue card
- Finding appropriate personnel to facilitate the workshops
- Managing participants' personal agendas
- Attracting ongoing funding
- Being able to meet community demand for the program

Future

We have currently applied to the crime prevention funding to expand this program but are awaiting the outcome of that submission.

Contact:

Amber Takao
Service Manager
Child & Family Services
MultiLink Community Services Inc.
(07) 3808 4463
amber@multilink.org.au

APPENDIX B: OTHER RESOURCES

Other databases of Reconciliation and anti-racism initiatives

- Local Government Association of Queensland
<http://www.lgaq.asn.au/portal/dt?Community.setSelected=Community/introduction&last=false>
- Racism No Way! School initiatives and strategies
http://www.racismnoway.com.au/news/index_school-initiatives.html
<http://www.racismnoway.com.au/strategies/programs/qld/>
- A list of schools in NSW engaged in Reconciliation activities
<http://www.abst.mq.edu.au/contents.htm>
- Federal Government "Living in Harmony" grants **note, this program is currently under review and it is not certain whether there will be a 2006 grants round
<http://www.harmony.gov.au/index.htm>

Reconciliation

- Reconciliation Australia
<http://www.reconciliationaustralia.org/reconciliation/projects.html#education>
- ReconciliAction network
www.reconciliaction.org
- Discussion on the meaning of Reconciliation, from a survey that was enacted across state, private and catholic schools
<http://www.abst.mq.edu.au/contents.htm>
- Queensland Government Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People statement on reconciliation and stories about Reconciliation
<http://www.reconciliation.qld.gov.au/reconciliation/intro.html>
<http://www.reconciliation.qld.gov.au/stories/index.html>

General Information

- Face the Facts – federal government
http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/face_facts/
- Education Qld
<http://education.qld.gov.au/soc-sci/soc-grp/race-rel/under-skin/index.html>
- Mind Matters
http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/qld/qld_school/qld_school.htm
- Anti-discrimination Commission of Qld
<http://adcq.qld.gov.au/>
- “Play by the rules”, an online resource including discussion on discrimination in sports.

www.playbytherules.net.au
- Queensland Government Department of Education anti-racism policy statement
<http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/doem/currstu/cs-17000/sections/preface.html#policystatement>
- Federal Government “Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity” Strategic directions for 2003-2006
http://www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/inc/pdf_doc/united_diversity/united_diversity.pdf

APPENDIX C: PROJECT PROFILE PROFORMA

Activity/Project Profile

(Please lodge this profile with YANQ by mid-November 2005)

Contact details (so that YANQ can get in touch with you)

Name:

Organisation:

Phone contact:

Email:

What is the name of the activity or project?

What's the timeframe of the project?

Who coordinated the activity/project?

-
- Describe the community where the activity/project was located.

(Where is this community located? How many people did the project involve? Who did the project aim at including?)

“Who is it for? “

- What is the background to this project?

(How did the project come about? What issues in the community did the project seek to respond to?)

- Where was funding for this project sourced?

(eg, federal, state or local government program, private grantsmaking body, fundraising, philanthropy, other. If possible please name the source.)

Type of initiative (please circle)

Workshop

Event/festival

Network

Funding

Educational program

Resource development

Other:

Setting of initiative (please circle)

Government: local / state / commonwealth

Educational institutions: schools / universities / TAFES / other

Community: not-for-profit organisations / volunteer-run initiatives / sporting initiatives

Business/corporate

Media

Arts

Other (please indicate):

-
- **Did you use a particularly useful resource in this activity/project? Where did you source it from?** (eg anti-racism resource packs)

DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Rationale:

Aims/Objectives:

Strengths:

Challenges:

Most significant outcome/s: (short, medium, and/or long term)

What is the future of this project/activity?

Contact person for the project/activity (if ongoing):

OPTIONAL COMMENTS

****Responses to the following section will be confidential and included in the final paper as general discussion only****

- **What led you to become personally involved in this project?**

- **What are your ideas for the future of building for reconciliation and challenging racism with young people in Qld?**

- **Any other comments?**

- **Does YANQ have your permission to compile these details for inclusion in a paper? (please circle).** This discussion paper will be publicly available and will assist YANQ's ongoing work on racism.

For more info, or to lodge your profile, contact:

Emma Davey, Project Officer @ YANQ

Phone: 1800 177 899 or (07) 3844 7713

Mobile: 0421 002 769

Fax: (07) 3844 7731

Mail: 30 Thomas St, West End, Q 4101

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