Sharing Stories ~ Artwork by Karen Maber

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workers in the Workplace

Challenges in the workplace

Being the lone Aboriginal worker in an organisation   Aboriginal workers are all individuals   lack of cultural competency across the organisation   little understanding of impacts of colonisation, generational trauma, impacts of stolen generations, 'sorry' business   need for workers to have flexibility to work with the community   challenge to constantly deal with racism/negative stereotypes in the workplace   dealing with mixed messages on what is the 'right' way of doing things?   role in community advocating for community   misconceptions   broader complex connections   lack of understanding about the need for more in depth advocacy and support for Aboriginal clients accessing mainstream services   mismatch between community needs and perceptions and 'official' funding criteria regarding boundaries   racism   language and terminology used in workplace barrier in itself to access and engagement of community to feel heard seen, understood and that what you say matters   not understanding the importance of communication, plain English and use of slang   unrealistic expectations on workload, tangible outcomes, timeframes, tick boxes   the need for more training and awareness for non-Aboriginal workers and organisations   need to be part of the whole team   Aboriginal workers have skills in engaging and understanding community issues   Aboriginal workers know what approaches work or not with community   "how to explain/advocate for the different ways of working   "the Aboriginal way of working takes more time"   'white privilege'   Being able to work 'our way' with our community   Blurring of roles as worker and as community member   holistic approach   individual workers work differently – need to understand this and allow it to happen

Benefits of cultural supervision and peer support

Bridging worlds and understandings   lowers personal stress   retention of workers   feeling trusted   demonstrates organisation's commitment and valuing of Aboriginal worker   the reality of ongoing inequality and its impact means the need to support Aboriginal workers in particular ways   help to explore 'what is culture   The need for different approaches in the workplace and types of supervision   place to heal and to be held in my spirit   explore boundaries   self-care   build/support identity   access to clarify goals, support structures, career guidance   voice challenges   relationships and identity underpin everything else   helps to understand separation of what is 'culture' and what is 'personal'   "my cultural supervision is about healing/holding my spirit, not about my job duties – I get that internally"   connection of spirit   two way mentoring for the Aboriginal worker in the workplace and for the Aboriginal worker around culture   Aboriginal worker has 'trust' in cultural supervisor   provides deeper understanding of how confronting work with community can be   understands challenges Aboriginal workers face in the community   understands cultural protocols, impacts of stolen generations, sorry business, complexities, impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma   understands family dynamics of the worker and the community   genuinely supportive of the worker

Let's Get Connected Through Learning Conversations March 2013   *Family Worker Training and Development Programme*

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Benefits of providing workplace mentoring

Aboriginal business is everyone's business   needs to be transparent in our reflections and conversations

accountability for goals for positions and outcomes for Aboriginal clients/community   RAP programs need to be real and acted on   accountability=inclusion

opportunity to give/offer Aboriginal workers to grow, develop, extend, expand   opportunity for sharing, deep listening 'Dadirri'   consider the history of the person

career pathway, where are they going   care = great results   find out about the person   support to understand dynamics, complexities and community connections

real jobs, not tokenistic   what are the workers' aspirations   get real about the work Aboriginal workers do   set goals   don't tiptoe around issues

be supportive   value the work that the Aboriginal worker provides and their value to the organisation   match workers with appropriate roles and/or bridging this with traineeships, mentoring and support   build trust/rapport/respect with the worker   workers accountable, responsible and accepted as equal part of team

Key messages for providing a culturally safe and competent workplace

Cultural training for all workers   Aboriginal workers valued for things other than culture   value individual skills and knowledge   open discussions in the workplace   be transparent about issues of concern

safety to come to your manager/team leader and say "something has happened that I need help with"   If you have support structures in place you will retain staff

Racism is a WH&S issue   building bridges to inclusivity   formal processes for Aboriginal workers facing racism in the workplace   flexibility   National Cultural Safety Framework   goodwill and genuine commitment   genuine engagement with Aboriginal workers and community   genuine participation in cultural events and celebrations and community business   find out about what 'Aboriginal' business/ways of doing things looks like   cultural safety = having a place to go to and be heard and held in challenges   be flexible to all for Aboriginal ways of living/doing things/sorry business   show respect for cultural traditions is critical   support worker to respect community connections and obligations   knowing the value that an Aboriginal worker brings to your organisation need to protect and support this resource   need to ask 'why' you are employing an Aboriginal worker   need to assess and address issues of cultural competency in the organisation before you employ an Aboriginal worker, this is not the role of the Aboriginal worker   holistic approach   ensure the worker has a colleague who can advocate with 'hierarchy' if needed   link into networks   reverse cultural support sessions like Yarn Up for non-Aboriginal workers who work with people or staff who are Aboriginal   ability to mix approaches   support worker to attend Aboriginal specific professional development and training opportunities