

Applying First Nations Cultural Intelligence:

'Knowledge Sharing and ways of being & doing'



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Acknowledgement

The First Nations Women's Legal Services Qld acknowledges the Turrbal and Jaggera people as Traditional Owners of the land and sea country whose lands we meet on today.

We acknowledge families and communities affected by past government policies and practices.

We pay our respects to the Elders past and present for their contribution to bring change through truth, justice and healing.

We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



FNWLSQ



First Nations Women's Legal Services Qld is a not-for-profit, community controlled, culturally competent community legal centre, operated by and for First Nations women and their families.

Based in Townsville and Palm Island, we provide outreach to the Burdekin, Hinchinbrook and Charters Towers communities. We also provide legal advice across Qld including the west and Gulf communities and Torres Strait Islands.

Our mission



To empower First Nations women by providing legal services and raising awareness through community legal education, advocacy and law reform activities. Our aim is to develop strategies for improved cultural safety for our clients, staff and community.

Overview



- History
- Impact of colonization
- Systemic oppression, disempowerment and racism
- Contributing factors to cultural crisis
- Knowing your community ie Palm Island and Townsville
- Cultural safety, diversity and cultural reality
- Working with First Nations staff, clients and community
- Cultural supervision/mentoring of First Nations staff
- Increase access to justice for First Nations people

History: past informs the future

- Terra Nullius
- Invasion/settlement
- White Australia Policy
- Aboriginal Protection Policy
- Assimilation
- Integration
- Self Determination



Ongoing impact of colonization for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities

- Intergenerational and collective trauma
- Systemic oppression, disempowerment, racism
- Destruction/disruption of traditional cultures, family and community relationships and community norms about violence



Factors contributing to a cultural crisis

- Dispossession of Indigenous people from their land and subsequent inability to practice their culture
- Forced removal of children
- Loss of family and identity
- Imposition of non-Indigenous law vs Lore



Palm Island Community



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Bwolgoman: Who are we?

- Traditional owners – Manbarra people
- Historical people from up to 60 diverse clan groups from mainland including the Torres Strait Islands
- Lived experience ‘Under the Act’
- Past experiences impact present day



Townsville community: Who are we?

Townsville region is a very diverse community made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- Traditional owner groups, historical people
- Transient community
- Garrison city
- Regional centre for Government agencies
- Education and employment
- Regional Health hub and specialist
- 3 Detention Centres: men, women and youth



Cultural Diversity



- Family and Kinship
- Skin system
- Language groups
- Elders status
- Cultural child rearing practices
- Cultural obligations
- Cultural protocols
- Women's business and Mens business
- Sorry business
- Time
- Communication
- Art, religion or spiritual beliefs

Culturally Safe Practice

The process toward becoming a culturally safe practice includes (3) key elements:

- Cultural awareness
- Cultural sensitivity
- Cultural safety

Williams, R. (1999) Cultural Safety



Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness is a beginning towards understanding that there is difference.

Many people undergo courses designed to sensitise them to formal ritual and practice rather than the emotional, social, economic and political context in which people exist.

Williams, R. (1999) Cultural Safety



Cultural Sensitivity

Alerts practitioners to the legitimacy of difference and begins a process of self exploration as the powerful bearers of their own life experience and realities and the impact this may have on others.

Williams, R. (1999) Cultural Safety



Cultural Safety



Is an outcome that enables 'safe service' to be defined by those who receive the service.

Strategies can enhance ability to undertake culturally safe interactions with others include:

- Reflecting on self, culture, profession, power imbalances, attitudes and beliefs about 'the other'
- Applying basic communication skills
- Developing trust
- Actively negotiating knowledge and outcomes through bi-cultural relationships with others
- Understanding the influences of culture shock

Lets make it happen



Cultural realities:

- Poverty: low socio economic backgrounds
- Loss and fractured family links
- Geographical remoteness
- Lack of relevant and culturally appropriate education
- Un-employment rates highest per capita
- Intergenerational trauma, grief and loss
- Poor health
- Lack of resources
- Homelessness and overcrowded houses
- Food and nutrition



Cultural realities...

- Removal of children from family
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Domestic and family violence
- Feelings of isolation and vulnerability
- Mental health and stress
- Poor maternal health
- Brain trauma and other impairments
- Environmental health factors
- High suicide and early death
- High incarceration rates



Valuing First Nations staff

- Cultural knowledge ie protocols
- Understanding of historical events and relationships
- Kinship connections
- Link to community
- Lived experience
- Family wellbeing support
- Skills and expertise



Things to consider in the workplace

- Educate and inform yourself of your community and clients
- Understand Staff and clients carry intergenerational trauma and vicarious trauma
- Community don't operate between 9 - 5
- Staff are dealing with clients with complex cultural issues and operate in crisis and survival mode
- Staff under pressure and have to balance work commitments, cultural obligation and community commitments
- Staff and clients are dealing with all forms of racism on a regular basis

Working together



Cultural Supervision/Mentoring

What is cultural supervision/mentoring?

‘Cultural mentoring aims to contribute to the development of practice competencies for employee’s, which ultimately promotes improved results and outcomes for employers.

Cultural support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees can directly impact positively on job satisfaction and burn-out by promoting professional and personal growth.

It is recognized that all employees have a level of competency in terms of skills, emotional intelligence and solution oriented and strength based ideas’.

(Spirit Dreaming)

Cultural Mentoring Benefits for your agency

- A higher rate of retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who receive professional and personal support provided through cultural supervision
- Financial cost savings when retention of staff is improved
- Increased improvements in employee's skills and knowledge
- Increase loyalty and commitment from employees who perceive that they are valued by their employer

Cultural mentoring benefits

- Retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees promotes good-will and a professional reputation with community
- Retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees encourages other prospective First Nations people to seek employment with the organization
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander communities are more likely to engage with organisations that have a good reputation for caring for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and clients

Building staff cultural capacity



Cultural Mentoring benefits for staff

Empowering the individual

- Building cultural capacity of individual
- Building resilience, competency and professionalism
- Understanding Cultural protocols and the workplace
- Balancing cultural obligations and workplace responsibilities
- Participation Cultural safety training
- Policy and procedures



Cultural mentoring benefits for staff

- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Identifying risk factors ie racism, bullying, domestic and family violence, grief and loss
- Provide staff with basic conflict management and resolution skills ie difficult conversations
- Communication in the workplace
- Social and emotional well being
- Self care and setting boundaries
- Understanding your rights
- Ongoing professional development



Capacity building



A culturally competent organisation:

- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Acknowledges cultural diversity amongst staff and clients
- Analyses the extent to which it can respond to the cultural needs of Indigenous clients and workers
- Includes cultural knowledge and awareness in planning and service delivery.



Culturally safe practice



Increase access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Support your staff and clients by providing training:

- Cultural Awareness
- Cultural Safety
- Cultural Supervision
- Trauma informed practice
- Domestic and family violence
- Conflict Management and Resolution
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid
- Employ Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff including a Senior Cultural Advisor



A culturally safe workplace:



- Treats everyone with dignity
- Respects other people's cultural differences, language, knowledge and experience
- Allows no assault on a person's identity
- Provides pathways to empowerment and self-determination through capacity building
- Allows people the right to self-promote, develop and maintain their own institutional structures, distinctive customs, traditions, procedures, protocols and practices
- Acknowledges individual differences
- Values what individuals bring to the agency

Thank you....



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