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Presentation title

Inter-Cultural Organisational Development: A Contribution to Aboriginal Social Justice

Oral Presentation with Powerpoint

Abstract

This paper traces the journey that a major, mainstream non-government organisation working with disadvantaged children, young people and families in Australia - has taken with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities. The shared journey has been traveled using an inter-cultural organisational development approach which recognised the desire of all travelers to attain Social Justice for, and strengthen the accessibility, relevance and delivery of services to, ATSI people.

The paper explores the approaches the organisation used to: (i) improve the recruitment and retention processes of ATSI staff and the accessibility of existing services; and (ii) design new services which better match local community needs and cultural issues. The research examined, on a meta level, the:

- Existing structures, process and tasks – providing a description of **what was the case** from the point of view of the organisation and those at the receiving end of the services
- and then discussing **what ought to be the case** from the point of both the organisation and those at the receiving end of the services.

The paper also explores the impact at an organisational level of changes to Australian public policy settings which effect ATSI people, and the challenge of developing genuinely inclusive and consultative relationships in an increasingly 'top down', non-participatory public policy environment.

Qualitative research methods were used including participatory action learning, autoethnography and the critical analysis of secondary data.

Presenter's bio

Rita Perkons is the Director of Social Justice, Partnerships and Communication with UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families Services (CYPFS). Rita is the chair of the organisation's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Initiatives (ATSI) Working Group that is focused on enhancing and strengthening the ATSI recruitment, retention and service delivery processes. This research is also part of Rita's studies towards her Masters in Public Administration through the Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management. Rita has many years experience in addressing and shaping inter-cultural issues in the community services sector.