

A GOOD Engagement Story

The Old Aboriginal Man Under the Tree

In one Aboriginal community, an old Elder would sit under a tree in the middle of town and watch professionals, visitors and workers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, visit his community to deliver their services.

They all noticed the old man and would often wave and nod their head at him to acknowledge him. The old man never responded or talked to any of them. All he would do was watch and observe what they were doing in his community. This went on for a number of years.

Then one day, the old man responded with a nod and waved back to one of the workers who had been working in his community for many years. This worker was very excited and asked a community member, "Why has he responded now after all these years?"

The community member said, "He has observed many people come and go in his community but you have continued to work in the community for along time and he has seen you build up trust and relationships with his people. This commitment has shown him that you are helping his community, so now you have gained his approval".

The moral to the story is that community engagement in Indigenous communities takes time, commitment & understanding. Relationships are paramount!
Story shared by Kerry Major

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"BLACK ENGAGEMENT"

Mt Isa Indigenous community



Practical Tips on how to engage with the Mt Isa Indigenous community



ABOUT US

James Cook University (JCU) School of Medicine & Dentistry (SMD) identified the need to strengthen community engagement processes with the Indigenous community of Mount Isa.

Through the JCU SMD's commitment to Indigenous engagement, several community consultation workshops were held in Mount Isa. As a result, the Mount Isa Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Reference Group (MIATSIRG) formed in April 2011. MIATSIRG consists of Elders, community members and Indigenous staff, all with different experiences and expertise in the fields of Indigenous Engagement and Health & Wellbeing.

The aim of the MAITSIRG is to support JCU in delivering their services to Indigenous communities in a culturally appropriate manner, and to improve how JCU engages with Indigenous communities. To assist in this process, the MIATSIRG initiated the idea of developing a pamphlet simply called 'Black Engagement'.

Who would find this pamphlet useful?

This pamphlet is a practical guide to assist rural placement students, health professionals and other interested persons who want to work and engage in the Mount Isa community. The knowledge used to develop this pamphlet is based on individual expertise and experience spanning more than 40 years.

Please note — this pamphlet is only a guide, and may not be appropriate for all Indigenous communities. A very important **TIP** is, if you have been to one Aboriginal community you have only been to ONE Aboriginal community. Although there are many similarities, there are also many differences — treat all Aboriginal communities as separate communities, with respect. THANKS!

Definition: Indigenous in this content refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"GOOD ENGAGEMENT"

DO:

- Verbally acknowledge and respect Traditional Owners (TO) — the Kalkadoon people and Elders — when meeting on country
- Acknowledge and understand our spiritual beliefs, lore and culture
- Attend cultural awareness training
- Tell 'your story' to share connections and build relationships
- Listen to 'our story', it takes time to get to know us
- Acknowledge and respect the experience and expertise in the Mount Isa Indigenous community. Know the community dynamics, history and people
- Understand body language and gestures
- Understand cultural time frames (murri time) and be prepared to be flexible
- Understand our priorities may differ from yours
- Communicate openly and honestly
- Listen effectively
- Wear appropriate clothing
- Attend social events such as: (1) NAIDOC, (2) All blacks sporting carnivals, and (3) music and cultural festivals
- Use local community health workers to identify relevant referral agencies & contacts

"BAD ENGAGEMENT"

DON'T:

- Use inappropriate language; e.g. too much jargon or 'big words'
- Assume you know everything about Indigenous people
- Get involved in community politics
- Force ideas and agendas in short time frames
- Assume that you can use information technology for communication with Indigenous people
- Make promises you can't keep
- Be ashamed to ask questions
- Speak loudly, that wont make us understand you more, we are not deaf
- Speak down or be condescending
- Display negative body language
- Dress inappropriately; e.g. short skirts
- Go on traditional land and country without permission from Traditional Owners — the Kalkadoon & Elders
- Force Western ways on us — try to be open to alternative solutions