



Koorie Youth Summit 2017

14-15 JUNE
#KYC #OURSUMMIT17



This report captures the voices of delegates at the 2017 Koorie Youth Summit (Summit). By drawing together young people's stories and ideas, this report is an important record to help communities and government understand Aboriginal young people's experiences and take action for change.



Use of QWILR: We've chosen QWILR to easily share our videos and photos with you. This is the PDF version, to view the full report with access to photos and videos, please go to <https://korieyouthcouncil.qwilr.com/NlafAjk6TWeN>



Acknowledgement

The Koorie Youth Summit is held on the lands of the Wurundjeri people. KYC extends our deepest respect to the Wurundjeri Elders and all Elders of the Kulin Nations past, present and emerging. We give thanks to the Wurundjeri people and the Kulin Nations for continuing to support young people to grow on their Country.

KYC would also like to acknowledge all of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who contributed to the Summit in 2017. KYC recognises the knowledge, cultures and continued history of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.



Koorie Youth Council

The Koorie Youth Council (KYC) is the representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Victoria. Led by an Executive of 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and our state-wide members, KYC values the diversity and strength of young people as decision-makers. KYC advocates to government and community to advance the rights and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. By hosting events like the annual Koorie Youth Summit, KYC brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people together to amplify their voices for social change.

A photograph of three Indigenous women standing outdoors. The woman in the center is the main focus, wearing a black long-sleeved top and a black skirt with a red and yellow braided belt. She has white body paint on her face and chest and is holding a wooden object with a carved pattern. The woman on the left is partially visible, holding a green branch. The woman on the right is also partially visible, holding a brown branch. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a wooden fence.

Language

Aboriginal: We use Aboriginal as a term also inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people.

Delegates: Summit delegates are Aboriginal young people living in Victoria or bordering towns aged from 18 to 28.

Koorie: The Koorie Youth Council uses the term Koorie in our organisation's title as inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people living in Victoria.

Lateral Violence: Often described as 'internalised colonisation', lateral violence is the result of discrimination and disadvantage by an oppressive majority. Lateral violence involves members of a marginalised group targeting frustrations and anger towards one another.

Our/We: The Koorie Youth Council and the Summit are run by and for Aboriginal young people. We refer to 'our Summit' and 'our community' to recognise that KYC walks with the delegates and community members that appear in this report.

Young people: The term 'young people' is used to refer to people aged between 12 and 28 years.

A photograph of three young people sitting on a green lawn in front of a dark green hedge. The person on the left is partially visible, wearing a red and black plaid shirt. The person in the center is a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a beige sweater and blue jeans, with yellow body paint on her face. The person on the right is a young man with short dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt with a yellow and red graphic that says 'NATIVE RIGHTS DEFENDER', khaki pants, and a watch, with red body paint on his face. A semi-transparent white banner with the text 'Koorie Youth Summit' in red is overlaid across the middle of the image.

Koorie Youth Summit

The Koorie Youth Summit (Summit) is Victoria's largest gathering created for and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The Summit is a place for us to gather from around the state to connect with each other, discuss what is important to us, be proud, learn, share and celebrate our culture. Young people account for 60 percent of our proud community and it is important that we have a place to gather, meet, empower and inspire.

This report brings together the events, speakers and opportunities for delegates with a focus on young people's goals for change. The Summit invited delegates to take part in yarning circles, cultural activities as well as connect with inspirational peers and Elders.

Essential to the Summit program were creative workshops led by peer facilitators. Workshop groups focused on one of five topic areas that linked with our Summit theme. Delegates shared their insights into the topics and developed an expressive response that was presented to members of the Aboriginal community, stakeholders and Victorian Government. Presentations included: videos, dance, visual art, policy, storytelling and speeches.

To view the 2017 Koorie Youth Summit video, please go to <https://korieyouthcouncil.qwilr.com/NlafAjk6TWeN>

Summit Snapshot



A young man with short brown hair is speaking into a silver microphone. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a colorful graphic that includes the text "KID YOUNG COUNCIL". He also has an orange lanyard with a badge around his neck. The badge has the text "Our Identity. Our Resilience. Our Story." and "Dylan Mearns". To his left, a man with a beard is gesturing with his hands. To his right, a woman with curly hair is also visible. The background is dark and out of focus.

Take Action

In each workshop young people shared their stories, experiences and visions for a better future. The actions expressed in each workshop are collated in this report to inform government and community about what young people need. Many of the actions were shared by multiple workshop groups, particularly the need for a sovereign treaty, culturally safe supports, a united Aboriginal community, the collection and sharing of culture, decolonising education and discourse about Aboriginal history and people.

Go to the 'Make It Happen' section to take action!

A group of people are sitting outdoors in a modern setting with large green plants and blue pillars. A man with a beard and blonde hair is smiling and holding a ball of red string. A woman with dark hair is also smiling. They are all holding the red string, which is stretched across the foreground. A semi-transparent white box with red text is overlaid on the image.

Our Identity, Our
Resilience, Our Story.

In 2017 we selected a theme that demonstrates the power that young people express:

Our Identity - We celebrate our identity as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. We are diverse, deadly and inspired. Our culture is and always will be a part of our identity, our resilience and our story.

Creative Workshops: Cultural connection, Living in Two Worlds

Our Resilience - We recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's strength through their passion, energy and spirit. Our resilience is drawn from our ancestors, Elders and communities. Their ongoing love, guidance and legacies support us to continue the journey of our people.

Creative Workshops: Self determination, Potential and inspiration

Our Story - We tell and listen to stories in order to connect with each other, our Elders, history and communities. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people we are committed to telling the stories of our past, present and future.

Creative Workshop: Intergenerational connection

To view the Matt and Keilara's Summit Journey video, please go to <https://koorieyouthcouncil.qwilr.com/NlafAjk6TWeN>



Strength in Participation and Diversity

True participation values the diversity of our Aboriginal community. KYC's advocacy is committed to intersectionality and representation of voices that society silences. The Summit is an inclusive event that celebrates the range of identities and interests of Aboriginal young people. KYC particularly recognises the strengths of young people who face further discrimination in the form of ableism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

KYC's commitment to a strengths-based model recognises that Aboriginal young people are experts in their own lives. Young people are best-placed to participate in KYC's decision-making, particularly at our events. We practice participation at the Summit by employing young people to lead yarning circles, facilitate workshops, create art and make decisions about the Summit program. Young people were also encouraged to volunteer at the Summit and lead our stage and media engagements. While young people are our focus, we take a whole of community approach by involving Elders and other respected members of our community.

Our facilitation training prepared young people with the skills and confidence to lead workshops at the Summit. Led by Benson Saulo and attended by KYC Executive and their peers, the training focussed on culturally-informed group work and drew on participants' own strengths and experiences in workshops. Watch the video below to get a glimpse of our facilitator training session.

To view the Summit Facilitator Training video, please go to <https://koorieyouthcouncil.qwilr.com/NlafAjk6TWeN>



Our Voice

Our Voice was created to capture the voice of Summit delegates and their goals for social and political change. Our Voice is built on the symbol of Bunjil, the creator spirit. In Kulin Nations culture and stories, Bunjil is the creator of land and waters.

Our Voice is a political artwork that brings together spirituality and young Aboriginal voices. Created by Aboriginal artist, Indianna Hunt, Our Voice asked young people how they will use their voice to achieve their goals for change. Delegates shared deeply personal and political sentiments that demonstrate their energy for structural change, cultural connection and strong communities. Delegates' contributions to Our Voice demonstrate the need for change in the non-Aboriginal community to shift racist perceptions and ignorance. Other key themes included cultural connection, policy change and intergenerational connection.

To view the Our Voice video, please go to <https://koorieyouthcouncil.qwilr.com/NlafAjk6TWeN>

NGARARA WILLIM CENTRE

Lunchtime Expo

FOR ABORIGINAL
AND TOPRES STRAIT

The Lunchtime Expo aimed to link delegates with opportunities, training and organisations. Exhibitors included:

- SEED <http://www.seedmob.org.au/>
- Wayapa <http://wayapa.com/>
- Ngarara Willim Centre <https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/governance-and-management/organisation-structure/education-portfolio/ngarara-willim-centre>
- VAHS Healthy Lifestyles team <http://www.vahs.org.au>
- Orygen Youth Health <http://oyh.org.au/>
- Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria <http://www.disputes.vic.gov.au/>
- Victorian Student Representative Council <http://www.vicsrc.org.au/>
- Youth Disability Advocacy Service <http://www.ydas.org.au/>
- YACVic Rural <https://www.yacvic.org.au/about-us/yacvic-rural>
- Ask Izzy <https://askizzy.org.au/>
- Australian Red Cross <http://www.redcross.org.au/>
- Amnesty International <https://www.amnesty.org.au>
- Ambulance Victoria <https://www.ambulance.vic.gov.au/>

A photograph of two people outdoors in a grassy area. On the left, a man with a grey beanie and a black t-shirt with a white graphic is looking towards the right. A woman with curly hair, seen from the back, is applying red paint to his nose. She is holding a white plate with more red paint. The background is a green lawn and a hedge.

Our Identity: Cultural Connection

Creative workshop facilitated by Megan Solomon and Will Austin

“Culture helps people connect with each other, heal and build relationships.” - Delegate

This group shared the importance of cultural connection in their lives and their vision for a culturally connected future. Culture is central to young people's lives and understanding of the world. Young people shared their experiences of culture as a powerful driver of their identity and choices:

Cultural knowledge helps young people connect with family, friends and broader communities. This group recognised culture as a protective factor in family displacement and other adversities.

“The way I connect to culture is being spiritually aware and that people have gone before us and always around us. They're always guiding us. Here to help us on our journeys.” - Delegate

Delegates noted that cultural connections empower young people to achieve better health, education and standards of living. Delegates identified two significant barriers to cultural connection,

- Access to cultural knowledge in some communities
- Ignorance of culture in the non-Aboriginal community.

“Culture fills the void of belonging and connects me with my spirit.” - Delegate

Delegates produced a video to capture their workshop. To view the video please go to <https://koorieyouthcouncil.qwilr.com/NlafAjk6TWeN>

Actions for a culturally connected future: How can government and community support us to get there?

Action One: Provide spaces for young people to connect with culture.

- Set up cultural centres where young people can learn about their culture including clan-based knowledge.
- Provide more gathering spaces for Aboriginal young people to connect with each other, their Elders, family and culture.
- Facilitate opportunities for cultural camps and clan gatherings.

Action Two: Collect and share cultural knowledge with a focus on educating the upcoming generation of Aboriginal young people.

- Provide language programs for Aboriginal young people.
- Promote a culture of sharing knowledge, values, lore and culture in the Victorian Aboriginal community.
- Provide formal and informal opportunities for Aboriginal young people to yarn with Elders.

Action Three: Decolonise education and discourse in the non-Aboriginal community to enable understanding and respect for Aboriginal culture and people.

- Create cultural awareness among the non-Aboriginal community by teaching the Aboriginal history of Australia including genocide and ongoing injustices.
- Fund Aboriginal organisations and programs sustainably.
- Increase Aboriginal representation in government and other decision-making positions.
- Promote healing and respect for land and culture.

A photograph of four young people standing on a stage. From left to right: a woman with a colorful patterned scarf speaking into a microphone, a man with glasses and a beard in a black jacket, a woman with long red hair in a blue patterned top, and a man with a beard in a blue jacket. To the right, another woman is partially visible. Behind them are two flags: a blue and white flag and a black flag with a red triangle. The foreground shows the dark silhouettes of an audience.

Our Identity: Living in Two Worlds

Creative workshop facilitated by Bonnie Dukakis and Dylan Murphy

“If I had a dream, it is for our young generation to have no shame.” - Delegate

The Living in Two Worlds group connected by sharing their experiences of negotiating the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal worlds. The difficulty of this experience is compounded as young people are in a formative stage, discovering their identities. The group unpacked the pressures experienced in both worlds where Aboriginal young people are stereotyped, questioned and silenced, with a particular focus on the institutional racism of non-Aboriginal Australia. Young people expressed the difficulty of maintaining their connection to culture in a western society. Many feel stuck between contradictory worlds and become exhausted by constantly 'switching codes' to fit in different cultural contexts.

“They ask me, 'So what part of you is Aboriginal?'...'My big toe' I reply.” - Delegate

The Two Worlds group chose to express their findings through storytelling, panel discussion and painting. Stories demonstrated the way young people's identities and Aboriginality are consistently questioned, revealing widespread stereotypes among the population. Members of the group told personal stories that relayed the resilience of delegates as well as the isolating impact of discrimination, ignorance and racism.

“There's no exit. I'm too black to be white and too white to be black. I'm used. I'm token.” - Delegate



“There’s so much ignorance and questioning sometimes it is easier for me not to identify [as Aboriginal].” - Delegate

Delegates formed a panel discussion that celebrated diversity by expressing a range of identities and expressions of Aboriginality. This group emphasised an intersectional approach, acknowledging the added discrimination experienced by diverse community members. The panel addressed the negative impact of stereotypes as non-Aboriginal people make assumptions about their views, experiences and lives. This widespread ignorance makes young people feel as though they must justify their place in communities and society.

“You don’t get to pick and choose the worlds you live in. You just have to find a balance.” - Delegate

Finding a path through two worlds: How can government and community support Aboriginal young people?

Action One: Close the gap between two worlds through awareness and education of non-Aboriginal society.

- Create cultural awareness among the non-Aboriginal community by embedding culture and Aboriginal history (including genocide and ongoing injustices) in school curricula.
- Make non-Aboriginal institutions safe for Aboriginal people by breaking down the stigma and stereotypes associated with the Aboriginal community.
- Challenge assumptions about Aboriginal identity by promoting diverse representations of Aboriginal young people in the media, community and politics.

Action Two: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities support Aboriginal young people to express their identities.

- Train education providers to be culturally safe and support Aboriginal young people to participate.
- Give Aboriginal young people access to culturally safe programs that support their identities including diverse genders, sexualities and people with a disability.
- Educate communities to stop questioning young people's identities and Aboriginality.
- Provide safe spaces for Aboriginal young people to gather and support each other, including physical spaces and events such as the Koorie Youth Summit and national equivalents.

A photograph of a man with dark hair and a slight smile, looking upwards and to the right. He has orange face paint on his cheek and nose. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a yellow graphic that reads 'INDIGENOUS RIGHTS DEFENDER' and a small candle icon. He has a watch on his left wrist and a tattoo on his right arm. The background is blurred, showing other people in a crowd.

Our Resilience: Self Determination

Creative workshop facilitated by Tarneen Onus-Williams and Marayne Muller

“Self determination means true freedom without grief, tension and racism.” - Delegate

This group recognised self-determination as an essential catalyst for the empowerment of Aboriginal young people. Sharing their visions for a self-determined future, delegates expressed the need for self-determination to create the systemic change required to achieve equity for Aboriginal people. For these delegates, self-determination means the decolonisation of institutions and genuine voice and control for Aboriginal people. The accountability of non-Aboriginal Australia and the inclusion of young people in decision-making are integral to the efficacy of a sovereign treaty. On a community and individual level, self-determination is key to improving outcomes in all areas, in particular: social and emotional wellbeing, employment, education, culture and justice.

“What is being taught about my culture makes me feel angry and uncomfortable.” - Delegate



Demands for Self Determination

"We demand full and total control of our own affairs, future, communities and lives without government intervention.

We demand more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander run allied health clinics that are more accessible to our mob, that move away from westernised institutions and are more culturally based and appropriate.

We demand a platform different to the westernised school curriculum.

We demand the right to fit in our own standards of certification.

We demand validation and respect of our knowledge.

We demand legitimacy of our knowledge as a separate body of expertise instead of tokenism in our current education system.

We demand that non-Indigenous Australia respect our traditional laws and customs.

When equity is achieved we can have TRUE reconciliation in Australia. We want sovereignty now.

We demand justice under our own lore. How can we have justice in an unjust system?

Sovereignty has never ceded, we demand the right to govern our own affairs, a sovereign treaty now. Heal our past, build our future.

We demand full and total control of our own affairs, future, communities and lives without government intervention." - Self determination workshop participants

Delegates produced a video to capture their workshop. To view, please go to <https://koorieyouthcouncil.qwilr.com/NlafAjk6TWeN>

A photograph of a group of people at a social gathering. In the center, a man with dark hair and blue-rimmed glasses is smiling broadly. To his left, a woman with dark hair is also smiling. In the background, other people are visible, some looking towards the camera. The scene is indoors with a warm, slightly blurred background.

Our Resilience: Potential and Inspiration

“[Potential and inspiration] gives a sense of direction and purpose.” - Delegate

The potential and inspiration workshop group discussed the importance of empowering Aboriginal young people to make decisions for their futures. Through sharing stories of their own lives, the group recognised the barriers that prevent young people from meeting their goals. Trauma, violence and discrimination continue to disempower Aboriginal young people, affecting their positivity and sense of control over their lives. Delegates' stories revealed the hope that mentors, role models and other inspirations give young people in difficult situations.

“[Potential and inspiration] motivates us to not fall victim to things that stop our people from succeeding.” - Delegate

Delegates recognised the debilitating stigma around Aboriginal people that can affect their self-esteem and ability to live happy, healthy lives. The group wanted to see more representation of 'what's right' rather than 'what's wrong' with Aboriginal people. Delegates identified positive representations of their peers as key to building a more diverse understanding of Aboriginal people in society. As discrimination becomes internalised at a young age, breaking down stigma assists young people's ability to recognise their own strengths, empowering them to be hopeful for their futures.

“I think it's important for us to change the perception that non-Indigenous people have of Indigenous people to move it from something negative to something positive. It's time to celebrate it, share it and show them we're not what they think of us, we're so much more than that.” - Delegate

Spaces for empowerment: How can government and community support young people?

Action One: Young people feel supported and confident to take opportunities and fulfil their potential and live happy, healthy lives.

- Provide young people culturally safe spaces such as youth hubs with a social and emotional wellbeing focus, cultural programs, drug intervention and rehabilitation, homelessness services.
- Provide mentoring and community cohesion initiatives that are sustainably funded to give young people role models who support them to take up opportunities.

Action Two: Government, media and community change the narrative about Aboriginal young people to include diversity and positive celebrations of culture and survival.

- Support Aboriginal young people to have a voice in their communities and society, to represent their diverse identities and shape the discourse about their community.
- Government and media outlets embed a strategy to diversify their representation of Aboriginal people to reduce stigma and stereotypes.
- Make Aboriginal studies (including culture, genocide and ongoing injustices) a compulsory subject for all Australians and is offered as a VCE subject.
- Take action to end lateral violence and family violence that affects the Aboriginal community.

Delegates produced a video to capture their workshop. To view, please go to <https://kooriyouthcouncil.qwilr.com/NlafAjk6TWeN>



Our Story: Intergenerational Connection

“Intergenerational connection to me is knowing where you come from to understand where you belong, where you’re going and what you will pass onto future generations.”
- Delegate

This group shared the importance of intergenerational connection in their communities. Delegates consider Elders a vital link to the culture and history of Aboriginal people. Connecting with language, ceremony and Country through Elders gives young people pride in their identity and roles in community.

“I feel like our people are all on the same page, feel the same frustrations, hurt, trauma from our history, but at the time you’re the only one that feels it. I feel like reaching out to each other like we do at the Koorie Youth Summit brings everyone together and makes everyone realise and remember that we all in it together. We are the same and we can together move on and become better, stronger people.”
- Delegate

Delegates viewed intergenerational connection as key to community cohesion. Connecting young people and Elders increases pride and solidarity within community and helps heal divisions. Intergenerational connection also enables upcoming generations to continue the legacies of their ancestors, ensuring community strength into the future.

Making strong connections: How can government and community support young people?

Action One: All Aboriginal young people have access to their culture and community.

- Support Elders to be an essential part of cultural programs, particularly in schools and out of home care.
- Sustainably fund for cultural programs and community events that provide young people a range of ways to connect with culture and Elders such as dance, yarning spaces, cultural celebrations and initiation.
- Increase accessibility and funding to programs that connect families and trace ancestors, particularly for members of the stolen generations and out of home care clients.
- Facilitate more spaces such as the Koorie Youth Summit where young people connect with Elders.

Action Two: Victoria's Aboriginal community is united, diverse and representative.

- Support young people to be active participants in community decision-making.
- Aboriginal community is unified and respects differences.
- Facilitate Aboriginal young people's access to Elders as mentors.

Action Three: Cultural knowledge is collected and shared.

- Fund comprehensive collection of Elders' stories, ideas, knowledge and languages to be shared with communities.
- Teach all Victorians the Aboriginal culture of the land on which they live.

Delegates produced a video to capture their workshop. To view, please go to <https://kooriyouthcouncil.qwilr.com/NlafAjk6TWeN>

A photograph of a group of people at a conference or workshop. In the foreground, a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a blue shirt and a dark jacket, has his right arm raised with his hand open. Behind him, other people are also raising their hands. The background is a blurred green curtain. A white rectangular box with the text "Make It Happen" is overlaid on the center of the image. In the bottom right corner, there is a table with a blue pen, a white cup, and a yellow card that reads "Our Identity Our Resilience Our Story."

Make It Happen

You can help make the 2017 Koorie Youth Summit actions a reality by sharing them with state and local representatives.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs the Hon. Natalie Hutchins on [Twitter](#) or email natalie.hutchins@parliament.vic.gov.au

Minister for Youth the Hon. Jenny Mikakos on [Twitter](#) or email jenny.mikakos@parliament.vic.gov.au

Premier of Victoria the Hon. Daniel Andrews on [Twitter](#) or email daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au

[List](#) of Victorian state MPs

[List](#) of local councils

Here's an idea for you to copy and paste in your Tweet or email. Don't forget to tag KYC and the MP you are addressing.

"Hi [@Natalie], Aboriginal young ppl spoke up at #OurSummit17. Will you listen and take action on [your topic]? @KYC_Vic"



Thankyou

We would like to thank all young people and community members who contributed to our Summit.

We also thank our sponsors and stakeholders for their valuable support of the Koorie Youth Summit



Victorian State Government, Department Health and Human Services - Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Branch, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Aboriginal Victoria, Commission for Children and Young People, Department of Justice and Regulation - Koori Justice Unit, REX Regional Express, RMIT - Ngarara Willim Centre, Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission, Mantra Bell City, Youth Affairs Council Victoria.

A photograph of a young man and a young woman sitting at a dark wooden table in what appears to be a cafe or meeting area. The man, in the foreground, is wearing a dark blue puffer jacket and looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The woman, in the background, has long blonde hair and is smiling, resting her head on her hand. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid in the center of the image, containing the text 'Contact Us' in a red, sans-serif font.

Contact Us

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