



65%

of the young Aboriginal women interviewed had been in a fight, the majority before the age of 13.

76%

of young women had witnessed a fight where alcohol was reportedly involved.

YAWG Project Findings

The young women in this study provided many reasons for why they fight including jealousy, racism, rumour spreading and slurs against family.

“I grabbed her hand and I pulled it, pushed it towards her and I told her, you don’t ever punch my sister in front of my face and then she tried doing it again so I ended up punching her and then she was like, why did you punch me? I was like, well if you touch my sister I’m going to end up doing something ‘cos I don’t let anyone touch my sisters” (16 years)

“SEEING RED”

Fights sometimes led to serious injury to self and others and consequently, sanctions such as school suspension and contact with police occurred.

“Yeah I’ve seen plenty, heaps. Older people like when we used to go to like family’s house and they used to drink and some of them used to start fighting. I’ve had a lot of experiences” (16 years).

Recommendations

Participants felt that services and health programs were most successful when they have a low perceived risk of shame or stigma, take place in person, and offer informal and opportunistic service delivery models. They also reported that many services didn’t discuss why fights happened with them or try to understand them.

It is important not to dismiss fighting amongst young Aboriginal women as “just an Aboriginal thing”. The behaviours must be understood within the historical context of colonisation, characterised by dispossession, loss of culture and government policy which condoned the removal of children from families and which has led to the breakdown of kinship systems and high levels of intergenerational trauma for many families.

While some young women felt remorse for their actions, some of the fights appeared instrumental in teaching the other person a lesson. While many of the girls suggested talking it out or walking away are two main strategies for solving an issue, some saw these as unrealistic options. This may be because some of these young women have not seen alternative actions being modelled.

The young women emphasised that they needed a safe place to retreat to and to be heard without those around them jumping to conclusions or making judgments.

