



Youth and Elders tackle issues together at Yamatji On-Country: develop calls to action for government

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ABOVE LEFT: Shelby Clarke, left, Christian Wright and Trevor Farrell Jnr speaking at Yamatji On-Country.

ABOVE RIGHT & BOTTOM: Christian Wright, left, makes a presentation to Aboriginal Affairs Minister Toni Buti at Yamatji On-Country.

Youth came to the fore at the second Yamatji On-Country meeting in Geraldton this week, as they highlighted their key areas of concern – racism, drugs and alcohol, lack of Culture, online bullying and a good home and neighbourhood environment.

Students from Nagle Catholic College, Champion Bay Senior High School and Geraldton Senior High School workshopped their main areas of concern before speaking at the event.

Now in its second year, Yamatji On-Country was presented by the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) and re-scheduled for October after extreme weather in August caused the event to be postponed.



First Nations peoples across the Mid West, Murchison and Gascoyne regions came together at Geraldton's Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation to raise issues and work collectively to improve the Yamatji Community.

Geraldton youth joined with Elders as they worked together on six key messages they wanted to present to government as calls to action – including many of the concerns the students had put forward – racism, housing and accommodation, police and justice, education, health and wellbeing and employment, training and economic development.

The Call to Action statement was presented at the event to Aboriginal Affairs Minister Tony Buti, Geraldton Lara Dalton MLA (representing Community Services Minister Simone McGuirk) and directors and senior staff from the Departments of Communities, Education and Planning, Lands and Heritage; WA Police and National Indigenous Australians Agency.

“Our Call to Action seeks real commitment and investment from all community Stakeholders; and offers an open invitation to work with us, to achieve real and sustainable changes in our communities,” the statement, attached, says.

“As First Nations peoples, we also seek to have equal opportunities and privileges that enable us to be self-determining and afford us our rightful place in leading decision-making processes that impact us.

“Further, we seek commitment from government to report annually against our Call to Action statement, so that we can measure our progress and work together to create change.”

First Nations community representatives spoke on each call to action with the youth presentation on the racism call to action – by Champion Bay Senior High School Year 10 student Shelby Clarke, Nagle Catholic College Year 8 student Trevor Farrell Jnr and Geraldton Senior High School Year 11 student Christian Wright – a key highlight.

“Systemic discrimination and racism remain embedded in our society and can range from discreet gestures and undertones to direct and confrontational acts of segregation and exclusion,” Shelby said.

Christian called for an increase in education and cultural immersion programs across all areas of the community, especially in educational institutions and the curriculum, workplaces and government sectors.

“There needs to be an improvement in the ethical, cultural and moral standards and censorship across all forms of media, especially social media,” he said.

Trevor Farrell Jnr added: “Opportunities for ‘truth-telling’ should be provided and promoted to re-educate and deconstruct myths and stereotypes.”

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Tony Buti described the students’ input as “powerful and moving”.

“It was a very reasonable analysis of their lives and what they thought,” he said. “If they’re the calibre of the next generation, there’s a lot look to forward to.

“As Aboriginal Affairs Minister, I’m really a facilitator in a lot of these areas, so I need to speak to the portfolios of ministers who will get advice from their agencies and then work on possible ways of moving forward.”



Yamatji Marlpa
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION



YMAC Deputy Co-Chairperson – Yamatji Region, Deborah Oakley, described Yamatji On-Country as the coming together of a community.

“It was about the community and our future and a chance to work together on issues in the Yamatji region,” she said.

The Call to Action statement will be available at ymac.org.au

ATTACHED: The Call To Action statement.

Ends

Pronunciation guide:

Yamatji – Yam-aht-gee

Marlpa – Marl-pah

Bundiyarra – Bun-dee-ya-rah

About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) for what are described as the Pilbara (Marlpa) and Geraldton (Yamatji) regions of Western Australia. YMAC is run by an Aboriginal Board of Directors, representing several native title groups, each of whom has their own language, culture, traditions, and protocols. YMAC provides a range of services, including native title claim and future act representation, heritage services, executive office, community, economic development assistance, and natural resource management support.

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