



Australian
Human Rights
Commission



Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices)

WAYS OF WORKING

Ways of working—taking a First Nations gendered systems thinking approach

Over the course of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani project we have developed a set of 'ways of working' to help us think and act through a First Nations gendered systems lens. These can be used by individuals and teams across all sectors and positions. The more they are practised, the more likely they are to become embedded and to alter work practices for the better. The presentation of these ways of working have been informed by the everyday systems practices developed by the Prevention Centre.¹

Co-design and collaborate:



First Nations women need to lead in designing solutions and initiatives and be a part of every stage of developing, implementing and evaluating work.

Is co-design a part of your work from conception to actualisation of an idea, and have you ensured that co-design meets the standards of First Nations women? Are you prepared and willing to let co-design change your thinking, projects and intended outcomes?

Engage in deep listening:



It is important to be present, focused, respectful and considered, when meeting and in dialogue to absorb new knowledge and to help define intention and hopes of communities.

Are you thinking about your point of view and what to say next rather than listening? Have you spent time seeking to understand what has been communicated, without assuming and imposing your position? Have you come with a preformed fixed idea that you are unwilling to let go of?

Take a strength-based approach:



First Nations women's lives hold remarkable knowledges, skills and expertise that can inform and create meaningful solutions.

Are you fixated on issues and symptoms and wanting to fix problems without listening or understanding the lives and work of women and their communities? Are you working with the strengths and assets identified?

Commit to self-awareness and reflection:



There are many unknowns at the beginning of a project, reflective learning helps work to be flexible, adaptive and better able to meet needs and local priorities.

Does your work have ongoing evaluation, and can it be altered by new learnings? Are you open to feedback without feeling threatened or defensive? Can you let go of control and accept that you do not know everything?

Rebalance power:



Working in collaboration requires the rebalancing of power relationships and the acceptance that the Western worldview is not superior to all other knowledges. *When you engage are you happy to sit as an equal at the table? Do you invite and encourage others to put forward perspectives and thoughts? When you hear new ideas do you take interest, or do you dismiss them?*

Be intersectional:



Voices from the margins must be embraced and all diversities understood and responded to, including women and girls living remotely, those with disabilities, LGBTQIA+SG (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Sistergirl and Brotherboy), and incarcerated women and children.

Does your work consider diversity or does it presume a homogenous one-size-fits-all approach will work? Have you invited diverse perspectives and lived experiences to gain a better understanding of the whole?

Be informed by women's Law and culture:



Women's knowledge systems hold vast skills and practices that are significant to all sectors and tell of how to live healthy and sustainable existences.

How is your work and thoughts influenced and informed by women's knowledges? Do women have the opportunity to integrate their knowledges and cultural practices into work and projects?

Take a healing-informed approach:



Work underpinned by healing addresses the root causes of harms and inequalities, not just the symptoms.

Do you spend time exploring what has happened and how to prevent it from re-occurring, or do you impose predetermined solutions? Do you judge people's behaviours rather than identifying structural drivers?

¹ The Tasmanian Government and The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre, 'Systems practices you can do everyday' (August, 2018) <https://preventioncentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Systems-Thinking-A4-Poster_Aug18.pdf>.

