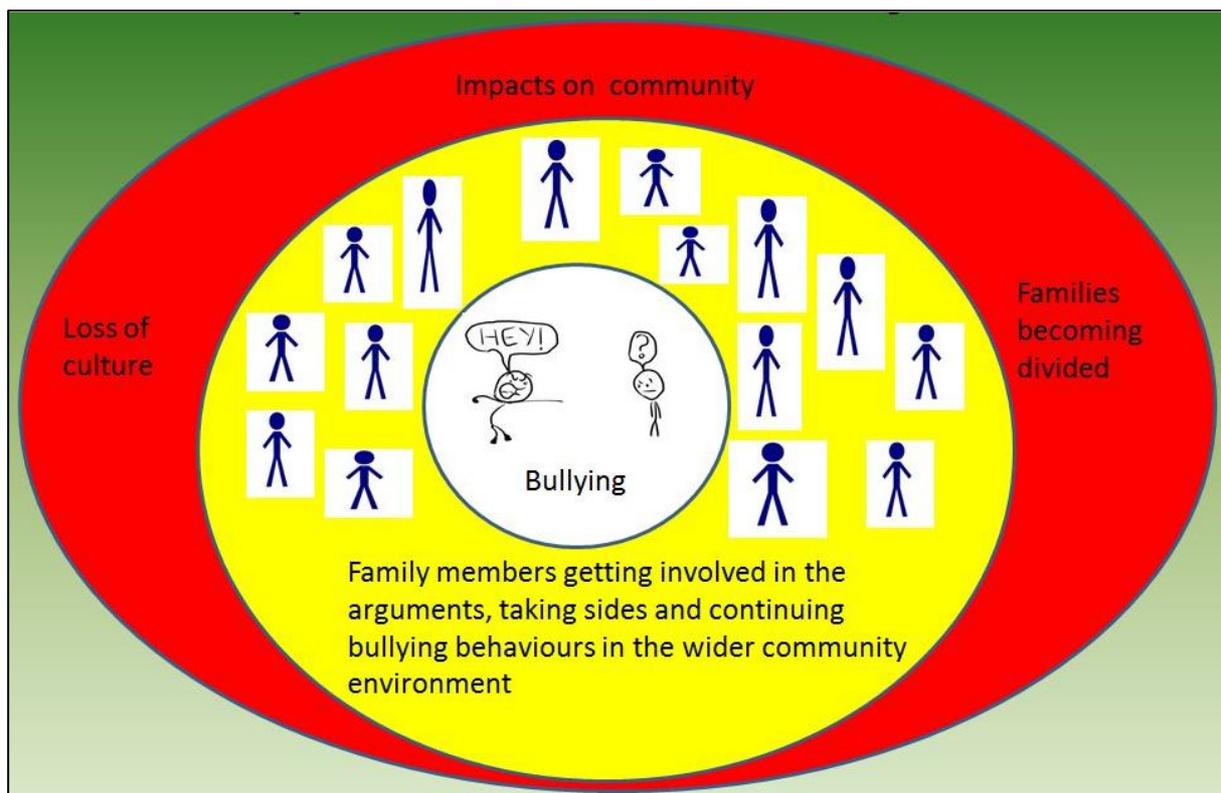




Cyber Bullying on Tiwi Island

Natasha Pilakui

December 2013



Please note: The Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians is an independent advisory body. The views expressed in this report are those of the author and are not necessarily reflective of those of the Office of Youth Affairs or the Northern Territory Government.



YOUTH ISSUE BRIEFING

TO: CHIEF MINISTER
FROM: NATASHA PILAKUI, CHIEF MINISTER'S ROUND TABLE OF YOUNG TERRITORIANS – 2013 MEMBER
TOPIC: CYBER BULLYING ON TIWI ISLAND

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Northern Territory Government:

1. support local initiatives that assist in the promotion of strategies to reduce cyber bullying on Tiwi Island and send the message to Tiwi Youth that the 'the bully is the one with the problem';
2. facilitate educational workshop and programs, at the following schools; Tiwi College, Xavier Catholic College, Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School (MCPS) Primary School. Eventually offer these same programs at schools on Melville Island; and
3. facilitate educational workshop and programs at the Youth Drop in Centre, Council Community Recreation Centre and other venues where Tiwi Youth are happy to do activities.

BACKGROUND

My name is Natasha Pilakui and I'm 25 years old. I've lived most of my life in Wurrumiyanga, which is a Community on Bathurst Island. Bathurst and Melville Islands are the two islands of Tiwi located 80kms north of Darwin. In the past, dating back to the old stories, my ancestors all the way forward to my grandparents lived in general isolation separate from the mainland influences. This has meant the survival of a very strong Tiwi traditional culture, ceremonies, spirituality, laws, dance, art and hunting. Until recent times, like my grandparents and great grandparent's lifetimes, there have been so many fast changes. Now we are part of the modern world, with information technology and many of the same services that have been on the mainland for a longer period of time.

In these times of big changes the people in my community have new issues that come up with living a modern lifestyle. If you did a chart of changes to the Tiwi way of life, it would show so much change in a very short timeframe. Now, modern information technology has brought cyber bullying to my homeland.

The reason I've joined Round Table is because I work with Australian Red Cross (Red Cross) and mostly do activities with young children and teenagers. I have worked for the Red Cross for two years. Part of my job is to supervise youth at the Youth Drop in Centre, which is open every day after school and on Saturdays from 10:00am to

2:00pm. The Red Cross also runs sport and recreation activities and coordinates AFL Auskick each day. The children love to play Aussie Rules Footy, so there is a focus towards setting up a junior league here on the Tiwi Islands.

Because of the work I do with Red Cross, I am in a position where I think I can do something that will help in my community and I looked at this project as a way to making changes. I wanted to help people on Tiwi to understand the effects of bullying and encourage them to learn more about combating the bad outcomes of internet bullies. I also realised that this was a big chance for me to learn more about issues of social concern for youth across the Northern Territory (NT). It is a chance to improve public speaking and to develop more confidence because I will share what I learn with others. As for myself, I feel very lucky to have this opportunity help my people.

DISCUSSION

Cyber bullying is one of the big issues on Wurrumiyanga. Teenagers just go on and on arguing on facebook and start a fight online, then the fight gets bigger. It can turn so bad that family members join in when they hear about lies and bad language against their children and teenagers. This can be the cause of yelling in the street that can finally turn into a physical fight in public. Mostly it is a lot of yelling and angry words against the family that has the kids that post harmful information.

The Oxford dictionary defines cyber bullying as “the use of the internet and related technologies to harm or harass other people, in a desperate, repeated, hostile manner”. This type of bullying has become more common on Tiwi Islands and its causing a lot of trouble. I want to bring awareness that there are laws against this sort of abuse. I want to find out the best ways of protecting children and young people and bring awareness to how we can look after children’s feelings as well as their physical safety.

The main issue on my community is how mobile phones are connected to the internet, which makes cyber bullying easy. Issues come from young people on facebook. It can start if there is a lie or a story about someone or if an argument starts. Sadly with fights and arguments, young teenagers may react by updating their status in a violent way, and then if the other party sees it, they start answering in that way too. The fight is with words but it can become worse because the fight becomes public with yelling and physical hitting and fights. Sometimes the fight goes longer, sometimes shorter. It can go on for a long time and this is due to the fact that people don’t listen to each other because they are listening to negative stories. Everyone is so angry about what has happened online on facebook. Everyone knows that once the bad messages, inappropriate photos or lies are written down, they are there for everyone to see.

Resources and Initiatives

The DVD clip Bikkies was launched at the end of June 2013. Ruby Gaea and Child Abuse Task Force provided Ponga funding to make the DVD the Bikkies. Ponger ladies were acting in the DVD (In animation/cartoon style using the women’s voices) as well as a couple of young girls from Warrumiyanga.

The DVD “Bikkies” look at some of the major issues of the harmful effects and outcomes that texting known as “sexting” can cause. It causes many problems on Warrumiyanga Community. This relates to all youth everywhere. An example of “sexting” can be that someone sends an inappropriate photo to many mobile phones and the internet. This is hurtful and can harm a young teenager and bring feelings of

shame and lead to big family fights. The “Bikkies” is a clever animated cartoon that deals with this problem and it is good for us on Bathurst Island to hear our Elders voices as they speak up to combat Cyber bullying.

The real life characters in the “Bikkies” are a group of strong women who work at Ponga (which was known as Bima Wear in the past). Ponga is a local industry which was set up in the 70’s by the Tiwi women, with the help of the Catholic Nuns that taught at the local school. Ponga women were able to do training to use sewing machines and printing equipment to print traditional Tiwi designs on fabrics, then to sew them into colorful clothing.

Words hurt and they can cause long term trouble to individuals, family and the whole community. This particular issue is shown in the B2M DVD called “Cyber Safety” and it was created for Tiwi by Tiwi and to share with all NT youth.

Elders on our Island want cyber bullying to stop. Unfortunately, the problem can get worse before it gets better because on facebook and Diva Chat, if one friend tells 3 friends and then three friends tell another three friends, already that is 10, then 30, even a 100 or more and so on and so on. Nearly everyone in this small Community of Wurrumiyanga will know in a very short time. The average population is 1600 people in my community, so this way of cyber bullying can get way out of control. To try and stop the problem of fights in the street and big family arguments, someone might need to call the Police. When the Police come quickly, this can help stop the fight. But it can be a really bad situation where someone is arrested for fighting in public and what is even worse if they hit or punched or threw a rock that caused injury. It’s all because of cyber bullying through emails, mobile phone texts and facebook.

Strategies to reduce Cyber Bullying on Tiwi Islands

I chose to get a youth group together after school in the Youth Drop in Centre and show them the DVD of Bikkies and ask them questions about the DVD, then do my survey with them. I was hoping to create opportunities where teenagers, youth and their families become more fully informed of the negative impact of cyber bullying. To help make people more aware of services available to young people living in the NT, and especially young Tiwi people. Part of my work on this project has been to get young people to feel safe to speak up about their cyber bullying story so that other kids can know that they are not alone. This is a big problem for all youth.

A good start would be no phones in the school class room. Stop bringing personal problems, caused by cyber bullying into the school yard. Schools need rules to enforce the kids not to used phones that connect to facebook and Diva Chat, especially in class (some kids use ear phones and are connected to facebook and are not listening to teachers in class and not learning). Educate the kids about the effect of cyber bullying. Put some things in place, like a cyber bullying Policy and invite parents and families to workshops.

Consultations with Young People and Stakeholders

Regarding consulting with stakeholders, Ponga women “the Bikkies” had strong ideas about combating cyber bullying, which helped me to respect and understand that our elders are there to support us. The Red Cross are more aware of problems caused by this issue due to day to day discussions at work where all staff share information about things in the community that worry us. My work mates are very supportive of me doing the Round Table program.

To collect evidence I did a survey to ask the young teenage girls 3 main questions about cyber bullying in Wurrumiyanga Community. As well as this survey I completed 20 surveys which I presented to the second Round Table meeting to show evidence to support my project. After showing the Bikkies DVD I did a survey with the youngest teens, the 12 year olds, to ask them questions about their experiences to do with cyber bullying. How it made them feel? Did they feel comfortable to speak up and share? There was a big problem about the girls speaking up.

It was also hard for me to interview children at the schools. At first I had to get permission from parents, headmasters and teachers. I did not go on with the idea of interviewing kids at school because once I found out through the initial survey that the kids did not want to speak in public. I had to change my plan of action to more private one to one interviews. Even then kids worry about if they speak up they might cause too much trouble. Speaking up in public in Tiwi Community is a very difficult thing for most very young teenagers. Culturally it is the business of the Community, so to point the finger is to make shame for certain families.

So maybe counseling at school and professional safe mediation between families might help? Parents and grandparents (parents include aunties as second mums and uncles as dads), are such important stakeholders in the children's and teenagers lives. All family members have a role to play in a child's upbringing. It all starts at home and through another stakeholder at Wurrumiyanga known as Families as First Teachers (FAFT) I learned that parents need to keep up with the children. FAFT is about parent education. Parents also need to be educated about the harmful effects of bullying online and learn how to be strong and help to combat cyber bullying. My two children are still young, but I know that I need to keep up with issues that are damaging to our youth. Say no to mobile phones at school and safely monitor kids using internet. The youth are our future and parents and grandparents and all family members need to be good mentors for our youth.

On my community, all skin groups can come together and work out ways of helping youth deal with cyber bullying. This way there can be meetings where all families are represented and included. Here on Tiwi Islands our political representative is Mr Francis Xavier and he is in a supportive role where he can deliver issues of social concern to parliament and support the work that has begun with the Chief Minister's Round Table.

FRAMING THE FUTURE

After reviewing the Northern Territory Government priorities in the "Framing the Future" blue print, I think that cyber bullying fits mostly into the vision for Strong Society. It supports the most vulnerable and encourages safety for all at home, at school and relates to safety in the work place, which includes youth. The problems of cyber bullying can be addressed in schools as well as the wider community through educational programs with the support of the Justice System, to enhance community safety here on Tiwi Islands.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

I have studied and identified a serious issue of social concern on the Tiwi Islands known as cyber bullying. I learned that it is a huge problem for youth in general so I focused on how technology has impacted upon my own community of Wurrumiyanga.

I found that very young teenagers would not speak up in public so I had to change my way of interviewing from small groups to one to one. I thought that more teenage girls would turn up to the Youth Drop in Centre, but found that the topic of cyber bullying was a hard one for them to talk about. This all took up a lot of time, so next time I could still show the DVDs about cyber safety like Bikkies at the Youth Drop in Centre, then arrange for individual interviews in private.

Another option is to ask if I can see the kids at a later date and let them know that they can come and see me at any time when they feel comfortable. I also learned that it was important to get the message across that it is 'the bully who has the problem'. Kids need to know that they have support and are not the only one that this is happening to.

I discovered that there is a big need to educate youth and their families about how information can be used badly online through facebook and Diva Chat and other technologies via mobile phones. The strongest recommendation is to identify, investigate and put into action and promote strategies to prevent cyber bullying on the Tiwi Islands.

I learnt that there is a big need to educate youth and their families about how information can be used badly online through facebook and Diva chat and other technologies. I recommend more info at schools to educate kids fully about cyber bullying. The strongest recommendation is to identify, investigate and put into action and promote strategies to prevent cyber bullying on Tiwi Islands.

NATASHA PILAKUI