

NEW CULTURAL EXCHANGE TARGETS INDIGENOUS SUICIDE PREVENTION

Six young Indigenous Australians, including three from WA, will travel to Canada today for a new cultural exchange program focused on suicide prevention and wellbeing.

The inaugural Anika Indigenous Cultural Exchange, funded by the Anika Foundation and the Poche Centre of Indigenous Health at The University of Western Australia, will enable six participants aged 18 to 30 to spend two weeks in Winnipeg with Canadian First Nations youth and Elders.

They will engage in cultural connection, discussion and knowledge-sharing related to Indigenous suicide prevention and wellbeing, and bring back new learnings to share with their communities.

In Australia the average rate of suicide among Indigenous people is twice as high as that recorded for other Australians. For youth aged 15 to 24, it is 3.5 times higher.

UWA School of Indigenous Studies Professor Pat Dudgeon, who developed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project, said the Anika Indigenous Cultural Exchange represented a potentially life-changing opportunity for the young people chosen.

“An important part of the cultural exchange is that they will have conversations about youth perspectives in suicide prevention,” Professor Dudgeon said.

“They will come back stronger and wiser, with a global appreciation of the issue.

“This is an important event for us. Indigenous youth are our future, and we are delighted to provide this opportunity for them.”

The three WA participants are Mark Nannup, a Yamatji Noongar man from Port Hedland and Meekatharra; Kyanne Pryor, a York, Beverley Ballardong yorga (woman) from Perth; and Derek Nannup, a Whadjuk Noongar man who was the 2021 WA Young Person of the Year.

Kyanne, who lost her sister to suicide at age 13, said she hoped the Anika opportunity would equip her with new ways to help people struggling in their communities.

“I want to help make a change because we have seen too many of our people, especially young ones, lose their lives to suicide,” she said.

Mark Nannup, an actor who has starred in a number of short films and documentaries, said he looked forward to sharing experiences.

“It will be good to hear the stories of the old people and how the young people are navigating the two worlds and exchanging culture and our lived experiences of colonisation,” he said.

MEDIA REFERENCE:

Annelies Gartner (UWA PR & Media Manager)

08 6488 3229