



REMEMBER

- Family: Indigenous peoples will do ANYTHING for their family. There is heavy emphasis on respect of elders. You may hear youth call many people "Aunty" or "Uncle", though they may not be blood-related.
- Culture: Indigenous peoples have suffered tremendous cultural disruption and loss. Growing numbers of Indigenous youth today are fighting hard to regain and reconcile their culture that impacts and grows their understanding of their roles, values, and purpose.
- Laughter: Humour is integral to family and community for Indigenous people, they love to laugh. It is key to dealing with everyday and intergenerational struggles.
- Hospitality: Indigenous people are incredibly hospitable. They have generous spirits and a desire to share with and help each other. Their strength is in their community.
- Spirituality: Indigenous people believe that everything is connected to the Creator, that people are deeply spiritual beings, and that care for the earth is a spiritual act.



RECOGNIZE

- Nearly 60% of the Indigenous population of Canada is under 25, three times the national average. Because of this, Indigenous youth have far less adult role models to guide them.
- Indigenous children under 14 make up almost 50% of youth in foster care. They are often disconnected from knowledge of their culture, language, or community.
- Indigenous young people are an "untapped natural resource" that often goes unnoticed. Youth workers have the opportunity to recognize, seek out, and engage them in contributing to their world.
- Life situations often make staying in school a struggle for Indigenous youth. 40% don't graduate.
- Suicide rates for indigenous youth are twice the national average. Rates differ from community to community, some have had "epidemics" of suicide, while others have had few or no suicides for several years.
- Indigenous youth make up 46% of admissions to youth correctional services in Canada but they are only 8% of Canada's youth population.



RESPOND

- Recognize that Indigenous people are a resilient people group, having survived genocide and adverse effects of both residential schools and colonization. Remember this strength and resiliency as you talk to the teen in front of you. Chances are, there have been hurdles in their life that they have surmounted - some thrown there by people that may have looked a lot like you.
 - Practice continually being a learner about the true history of Indigenous peoples and current realities they live in.
 - Learn from the youth themselves, asking about where they are from, what they know about their culture, or how are they involved in their culture today. Culture aside, like any young person, they are yearning to be truly known and loved as they are. Get to know them as individuals apart from their culture as well
 - Indigenous teens are varied in their personalities but many are more comfortable in smaller, casual settings and in side-by-side conversations. They love to laugh - and will laugh at you and with you when you invite them to. This is a great way to bond.
- Tradition is important so create your own traditions and memories together. Your shared experiences build trust and a sense of connectedness.
 - Pray for the Indigenous communities and youth that you see or know. Pray for the youth - that they would have the courage and resources available to them to achieve their dreams. Pray for unity and strength for Indigenous believers in their communities, and also for unity between all of us as believers. Pray for encounters and opportunities to build relationships with Indigenous youth.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDIGENOUS YOUTH

lifeteams
resources



RESOURCES

Healing Traditions: The Mental Health of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, Edited by Laurence J. Kirmayer and Gail Guthrie Valaskas

<http://nwejinan.com/> - Hear and see Indigenous youth voices through these videos.

<https://albertamentors.ca/indigenous-mentoring> - Download the free Handbook for Aboriginal Mentoring to better understand and respectfully reach out.