




Aboriginal  
Health Council  
of Western Australia  
**YOUTH**

Aboriginal Health Council  
of Western Australia  
**Youth Program**





We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Country we live, work and study on, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, for the strength, resilience and capacity they hold for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### Youth booklet artwork

By Kaedisha Westberg

#### Artwork synopsis:

This piece represents the AHCWA Youth Program and Aboriginal Youth across Western Australia. The symbols represent each individual youth. The symbols are of different sizes to represent youth ages 15 – 24 years old. The symbols face different directions to show each youth their paths and journeys. The white lines inside each symbol represent what each Aboriginal Youth has in common, their Culture. The white dots in each symbol represent each youth's strength and resilience. The small lines around each symbol represent the youth's support systems, connection to land, barriers, dreams, goals and connection to ancestors. The large yellow dots and smaller yellow dots represent Aboriginal Youth coming together as one, celebrating Aboriginal Youth and Culture, and sharing their youth voice. The white dots inside the yellow dots represent youth achievements celebrated in the past, present, and future.

*Kaedisha Westberg is an artist who was born and raised on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar (Perth, WA). Kaedisha is a Whadjuk Ballardong Noongar, Kaedisha's family is from Northam and Perth WA.*

#### Disclaimers

A. The term Member Service is inclusive of all Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) that satisfy the membership requirements of the AHCWA Constitution.

B. The word Aboriginal has been used throughout this document. When referring to Aboriginal we are referring to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



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## About AHCWA



The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) is the peak body for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) in Western Australia. We exist to support and act on behalf of our 23 Member Services across the state, actively responding to their individual and collective needs.

Governed by an Aboriginal Board of Directors representing seven regions in Western Australia, AHCWA aims to promote and strengthen the ACCHS' Model of Care, a model that is built around the delivery of comprehensive, holistic, and culturally secure primary health care services.

We come together as one to: respect, welcome and understand social and cultural needs; network and provide mutual support; advocate and influence policy; monitor the performance of the ACCHS sector; build the capacity of the Aboriginal health workforce; and, improve and strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people and their communities.

Representing the interests and needs of our Member Services, we lead and influence the development of Aboriginal health policies at a national and a state level. We advocate for the rights and entitlements of all Aboriginal people and their communities to optimal health and wellbeing.

Incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* in May 2005, AHCWA continues to evolve and build capacity as the leading authority for comprehensive Aboriginal primary health care in Western Australia.



## Vision

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Aboriginal people in Western Australia enjoy the same level of health and wellbeing as all Western Australians.



## Mission

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As the leading authority for Aboriginal health in Western Australia, we strive to strengthen and promote the ACCHS' Model of Care, empowering Aboriginal people to achieve health equality in their communities.

AHCWA is underpinned by a commitment to Aboriginal leadership, self-determination and cultural diversity, pillars which shape the way the organisation conducts its business.



## From the CEO

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*I am pleased to present the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) Youth Program and share its establishment and journey over the years.*

Underpinned by the Western Australia Aboriginal Youth Health Strategy, the AHCWA Youth Program strives to identify and provide leadership, oversight, support, and guidance on matters relevant to young Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing in Western Australia.

The Youth Program originated in 2016. Prior to its establishment, AHCWA held annual workshops tailored for young people working in Western Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. Over time, these workshops have progressed into the annual AHCWA Youth Conference. The Conference provides a pivotal platform enabling Aboriginal youth from across Western Australia to engage in vital discussions and collaborative efforts concerning relevant and important health matters.

In 2016, AHCWA embarked on a transformative journey to enhance and expand its Youth Program. As a pivotal step, we introduced the Youth Program Coordinator position. This role complimented the existing Youth Policy Officer role, laying the foundation for the dynamic AHCWA Youth Program.

In 2020, AHCWA made the significant step of creating a dedicated Youth Director position on its Board of Directors, enhancing the voice of Aboriginal youth in key governance and strategic priorities.

The AHCWA Youth Committee, comprised of representatives from all regions across WA, steers the program to empower, inspire, and lead young Aboriginal people on matters relating to them and their communities.

The AHCWA Youth Program has successfully delivered a range of initiatives over the years. Notably, in recent times, support has been provided for creating and disseminating COVID-19 pandemic resources, health promotion initiatives around sexual health, and working with peak organisations to provide input into priority mental health plans and strategies.

Today's youth represent our future leaders, underlining the significance of empowering them and laying the foundations to cultivate resilience-rich environments. AHCWA's Youth Program is an important platform enabling Aboriginal youth across Western Australia to voice their needs and bring about change and equity.

**Des Martin**

Chief Executive Officer, AHCWA



## From the Youth Committee Chairperson



Over the last eight years, I have been fortunate enough to be a member of the AHCWA Youth Committee and the Chairperson for the last four years. I am filled with pride to reflect on the journey of our committee and the remarkable achievements we have accomplished together.

Since its inception in 2016, the AHCWA Youth Committee has advocated for the health and well-being of Aboriginal youth in Western Australia. Over the past three years, I have had the privilege of serving on the AHCWA Board of Directors, witnessing firsthand the dedication and passion of our Sector.

One of the highlights of our journey has been the opportunity to organise and participate in two unforgettable camps to Shark Bay and Rottnest Island. These experiences not only fostered a sense of camaraderie among our members but also provided invaluable insights into the challenges faced by Aboriginal youth in our communities.

The core mission of our committee is to better inform AHCWA on the issues affecting our youth and to collaborate on initiatives that will lead to better outcomes for generations to come. However, we cannot do this alone. We urgently need more young voices to join us, especially from regional Western Australia. I encourage each of you to consider becoming a part of our committee, where you will have the chance to make a meaningful difference in the lives of Aboriginal youth.

We desire to create positive change and develop future leaders within our community. By joining the AHCWA Youth Committee, you will have the opportunity to contribute to this noble cause and be a part of something truly impactful.

I would like to express my gratitude to AHCWA for their unwavering support of the Youth Committee. The inclusion of a Youth Director in the new constitution is a testament to their commitment to empowering young voices in decision-making processes.

I hope from this conference you are inspired to consider joining the AHCWA Youth Committee or to learn more about our work.

**Wade Garwood**  
Youth Committee Chairperson



## What is the Youth Program?

The AHCWA Youth Program is led by Aboriginal youth for Aboriginal youth, to advocate for Western Australia's young First Nations people.

The AHCWA Youth Committee comprises of Aboriginal youth between the ages of 18 and 29. Members come together to discuss current issues affecting young Aboriginal people across all the regions of Western Australia and put forward options for addressing these issues to the AHCWA Board of Directors.

The AHCWA Youth Committee members are also regularly provided with opportunities to contribute to and provide feedback on relevant policy and program development, both on a community and government level.

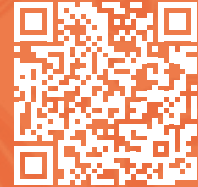
The AHCWA Youth Committee provides oversight, support and guidance for the coordination and facilitation of the AHCWA Youth Conference program. It is used as an avenue to consult on policy, strategies and program development to ensure the work being done in Western Australia around youth health is inclusive and culturally safe for Aboriginal young people.



# Key Achievements

## Sexual Health Clinic Visit

The Youth Program conducted Sexual Health Workshops with the South Terrace Sexual Health Clinic in Fremantle. The workshops saw the AHCWA Youth Team assist the clinic in providing culturally appropriate and safe services to Aboriginal Youth. Collaborative Social Media content was also developed with the clinic as part of this initiative with the focus to increase awareness and accessibility of clinic services for Youth.



Scan the QR code to watch the video.

## Suicide Prevention Program

The AHCWA Youth Team provided significant input into developing the Mental Health Commission's (MHC) three regional Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Plans tailored for the Perth Metropolitan region. During the formation of the working groups comprising Elders and Youth from the Noongar Community, the AHCWA Youth Team emphasised the importance of distinct meetings for Elders and Youth. This approach ensured a safe space for both cohorts to address their concerns effectively. Consequently, a dedicated consultation process for Aboriginal youth emerged, previously non-existent in the consultations. The input from Aboriginal youth harmonised with the Commission's aim of amplifying Youth voices in mental health and suicide prevention discussions, enhancing their involvement in decision-making and co-production of initiatives. The resultant plans, enriched with high-quality youth perspectives, marked a significant achievement.

The AHCWA Youth Team's advocacy efforts are notable, striving for equal recognition alongside established youth representative groups in WA.

## COVID Resource Development

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the AHCWA Youth Team identified the need to create culturally appropriate resources and raise awareness of Aboriginal youth in WA about the impacts of COVID-19. The team created 13 social media resources and other print materials targeting Aboriginal young people, addressing key messages relevant to COVID-19 safety protocols such as: social isolation, COVID-19 testing and proactive preventative measures.



Scan the QR code to watch the video.





## Youth Committee

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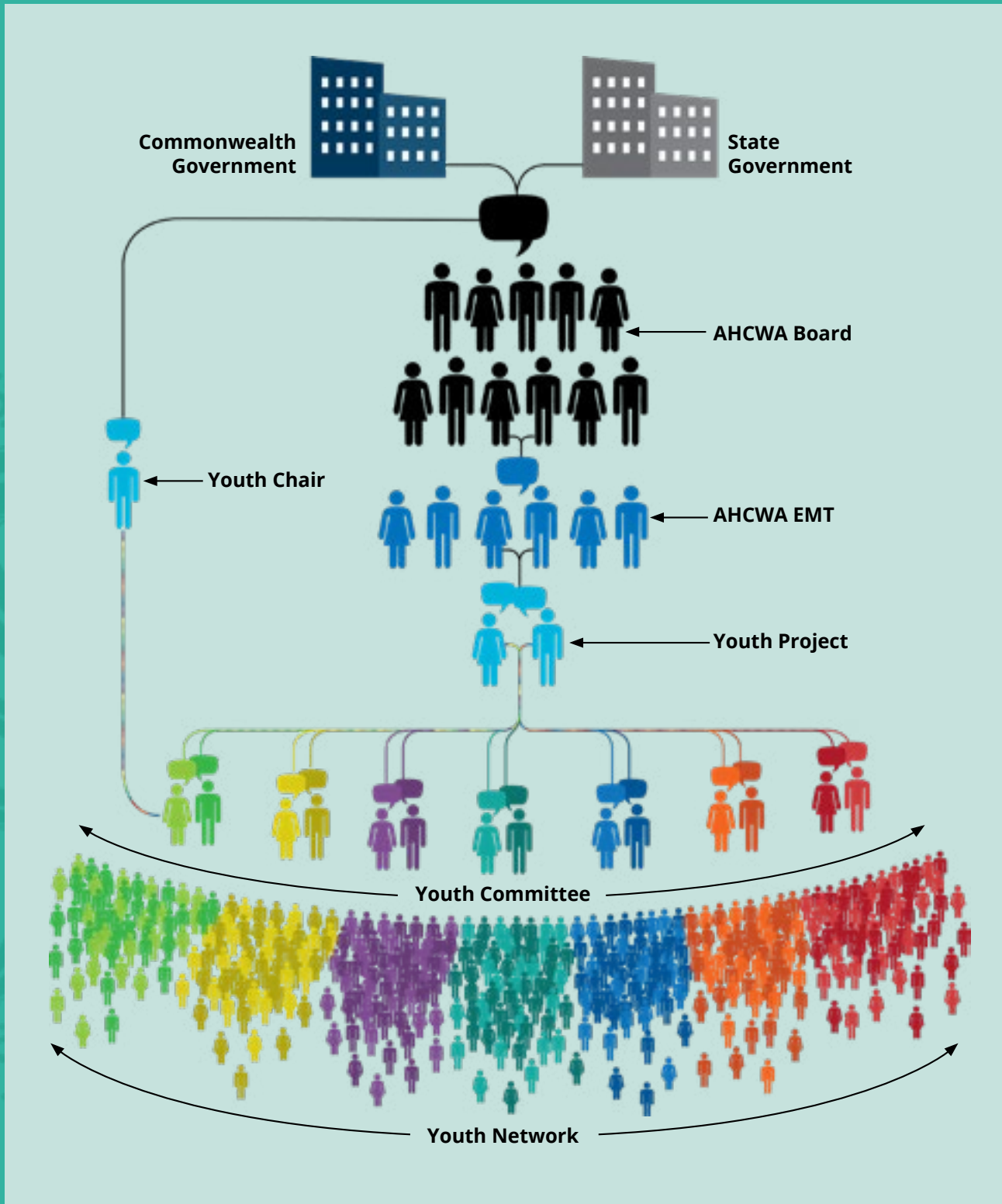
### Purpose

The purpose of the AHCWA Youth Committee is to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth aged 18 to 29 with an opportunity to discuss current issues affecting Aboriginal Youth residing in the regions across Western Australia. It is also a platform to put forward and consider ways to address these issues.



# Youth Committee Structure

AHCWA's values are designed to guide and promote a strong and high-performing organisational culture that is responsive to the state-wide needs of our Member Services.



STATE SECTOR

YOUTH

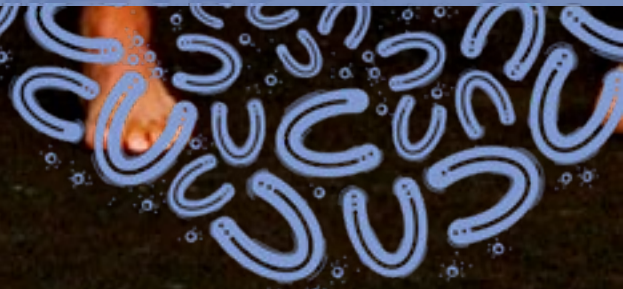
CONFERENCE

HEALTHY COUNTRY  
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

AHCWA Youth  
Youth. Life is inspiring. Life is great.

## AHCWA Youth Conferences

STAND UP,  
SPEAK UP!



2018

2018 marked a historical event for AHCWA as we hosted the biggest annual AHCWA Youth Conference to date, with 30 young Aboriginal people from around the state coming together to participate in the event. The AHCWA Youth presentation was once again a success and included updates on activities they have been working on since the 2017 Conference. The updates included promoting the Youth Conference, work on getting a youth representative onto the AHCWA Board of Directors, the distribution of their own Youth Newsletter, and youth events. The AHCWA Youth team also released the WA Aboriginal Youth Health Strategy 'Today's Young People, Tomorrow's Leaders' which was officially launched by The Hon. Ken Wyatt AM, MP. The Aboriginal Youth Health Strategy is the culmination of almost a decade of AHCWA's commitment and strategic advocacy in Aboriginal youth health.



2019

The 7th annual AHCWA Youth Conference was held at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle in March. With 33 youth delegates in attendance, the day was filled with networking, Aboriginal history and education and cultural connection through Aboriginal art. The youth delegates participated in an intense discussion to dissect the 42 recommendations to which 11 recommendations were chosen to give feedback on. The youth delegates felt that the 11 recommendations they chose were the only recommendations that they could comfortably give appropriate feedback on.



2020

This conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021

In 2021, the Youth Program strived to have 100 youth delegates attend the conference, with approximately 50% from remote and rural communities. Lotterywest funding covered the cost of travel, accommodation and meals for regional and remote youth to attend.

The 2021 conference delegates left the conference with:

- an insight and understanding of critical Aboriginal health issues
- the opportunity to contribute to discussions on policies and issues that impact them and their community on a day-to-day basis
- sharing of COVID-19 information, issues, impacts and strategies to take back to their community and promote re-engagement
- an opportunity to engage with the broader health network and role models
- enhanced leadership ability, equipping youth to work more closely with their community
- enhanced connection to culture and identity
- a connection with other like-minded young people.

Outcomes and recommendations from the Youth Conference are presented at the AHCWA State Sector Conference. Findings and the need for interventions are recorded and allocated to the relevant team for further escalation and follow-up. At the same time, the AHCWA Youth Committee monitors actions and reports to the AHCWA Executive Management Team and Board of Directors.

2022

This conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.





## Youth Program Activities - Cultural Camp

In March 2021, AHCWA held the Youth Health Conference, which saw 70 Aboriginal youth from around WA come together to discuss Health issues impacting Aboriginal youth. At the Conference, the AHCWA Youth Committee presented findings from the Youth Conference to the 2021 annual West Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector Conference.

One recommendation suggested by the gathering at the 2021 Western Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector Conference was for AHCWA to source funds for a camp that encompassed culture and health for Aboriginal youth in WA. This became an overall endorsed recommendation from the 2021 Conference.

The Department of Health provided a grant to AHCWA to create a cultural camp for Aboriginal youth. The AHCWA Youth Team, in consultation with the AHCWA Youth Committee, looked at the best approach to achieve desirable outcomes for the camp.

### Outcomes Recommended by the AHCWA Youth Committee:

- A space for Aboriginal youth to discuss the upcoming AHCWA Youth Conference
- A space for the AHCWA Youth Committee members to build working relationships and make stronger connections between youth in regions
- To learn about culture and the importance of physical and mental health; and
- A safe space to discuss issues within their communities and workshop strategies to overcome them.



## Cultural Learnings and Activities

The Camp was hosted by the Traditional Owners of the land – the Malgana People of the Yamatji Nation. The Youth Committee participated in cultural activities that strengthened their connections to the land. Some of the activities included finding bush tucker, visiting significant cultural sites and learning the language of the local area. There were also robust discussions around the impact of colonisation, the loss of native flora and fauna, and its effects on the spiritual and physical health of Aboriginal people in WA.

## Key Recommendations from the Camp

Aboriginal youth employed at Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services were supported to attend a camp similar to the 2021 AHCWA Youth Committee Camp, which focused on:

- Aboriginal health within WA
- Culture
- The AHCWA Youth Conference
- Issues and solutions for Aboriginal Youth; and
- Learning tools to build connections between regions to empower Aboriginal youth.



Scan the QR code to watch the video.



## Youth Committee Gathering 2023

In June 2023, the Annual Cultural Camp was revised to be identified as a Cultural Gathering to reflect and align with the outcomes associated with the program.

In September 2023, the Youth Committee came together on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja, where the gathering was held over two days, with day one being hosted at Wadjemup (Rottnest Island).

The Youth Gathering focussed on, on-country teaching and educating Indigenous and non-Indigenous people on Aboriginal history, aiming to empower young Indigenous people to become future leaders and a powerful voice. AHCWA Youth Gathering had an agenda that targeted areas of importance such as:

- Team building
- Connect to Country
- Leadership
- Communication
- Culture
- Aboriginal history

Seven Aboriginal youth representing three regions of Western Australia were present at the gathering. This was great for strategic planning as there was a considerable discussion around communities and community based issues. These discussions are continued through monthly Youth Committee meetings, ensuring the momentum, confidence and self-determination led by the Youth Committee members are sustained throughout the year.





## Cultural Learnings and Activities

The Youth Committee participated in Cultural activities that strengthened their connection to the land. The activities included:

- Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony by Uncle Walter McGuire
- Aboriginal Cultural Tour by GoCultural (Walter and Meg McGuire). During this tour Walter and Meg took the Youth Committee to different sacred sites on Wadjemup and taught the committee about the history of each site. These included the burial site of over 400 Indigenous men and the prison where Indigenous men were kept for years.
- A visit to Fremantle Prison to learn about its history and understand prison conditions over the period.

*“I think the gathering was beneficial because everyone got to see each other again and discuss future goals in person on the committee.”*

AHCWA Youth Committee Member



Scan the QR code to watch the video.

The Youth Committee strategic planning session that took place during the gathering explored; issues prevalent in their respective communities, plans for the 2024 Youth Conference and Youth Committee memberships.

The AHCWA Youth Team has observed an uptake in responses, input and collaborations and expect it to positively impact the 2024 AHCWA Youth Conference and Aboriginal youth health. Some discussions around the AHCWA Youth Conference from the gathering included:

- Discussion of what topics to be explored at Youth Conference workshops
- Stalls and exhibitors to have at the Youth Conference
- Engaging Keynote and guest speakers to have at the Youth Conference
- Learnings from the last Youth Conference and way forward.





# Youth Committee Members

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## 2021

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<b>Chairperson</b>	Wade Garwood
<b>Youth Program Coordinator</b>	Jhi Clarke
<b>Committee Members</b>	Onike Williams Soleil White Jayde Chadderton Shaun Garlett Keisha Calyun Reesha Quaresimin Jacob Corpus Latoya Lawford

## 2023

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<b>Chairperson</b>	Wade Garwood
<b>Youth Program Coordinator</b>	Kaedisha Westberg
<b>Committee Members</b>	Onike Williams Soleil White Jayde Chadderton Shaun Garlett Keisha Calyun Lily Carroll

## 2022

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<b>Chairperson</b>	Wade Garwood
<b>Youth Program Coordinator</b>	Jhi Clarke
<b>Committee Members</b>	Onike Williams Soleil White Jayde Chadderton Shaun Garlett Keisha Calyun Jacob Corpus Latoya Lawford

## 2024

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<b>Chairperson</b>	Wade Garwood
<b>Youth Program Coordinator</b>	Kaedisha Westberg
<b>Committee Members</b>	Soleil White Jayde Chadderton Shaun Garlett






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