

Excerpt 1

... When asked what community-building looks, sounds, and feels like, Anagali describes a learning setting that feels older than any of us -- "the Aunties laughing in the background, while the kids are running around without shoes on; everyone is outside; the smell of the air... the warmth." Anagali continues on to mention, "The distinct feelings of community are very familial. Even if they aren't your family by blood, they are your family just because you all come from the same people."

Acknowledging this beautiful instance of intergenerational learning calls into question the ways in which our youth are navigating these systems usually and if they truly reflect our standards of success. Anagali notes, "That's what a lot of these programs are missing - the family relationship you need when having an indigenous-led initiative."

Excerpt 2

... Sydney's advocacy began with attending local youth council meetings, which quickly evolved into participation with Unity and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) during her tenure as Miss Colville Confederated Tribes. Her dedication and passion led to her election as co-vice president of NCAI's youth commission.

Throughout her journey, mentorship played a pivotal role. Sydney credits influential figures like Jeri Brunoe and Tasha Mousseau, whom she met through NCAI, for guiding her development and fostering her growth. "Strong mentors are crucial for youth," Sydney emphasizes. "Youth councils and programs often falter when key mentors leave. Having consistent support and guidance can make all the difference."

Excerpt 3

... "Effective youth engagement is rooted in authenticity and integrity." It's about showing up as your true self and committing to the promises made to young people. "Your word is golden," Millie emphasizes, highlighting the importance of reliability and trustworthiness in building relationships.

Moreover, engagement is not just about the mentors but also about the community. It takes a village to raise a child, and in these programs, everyone from staff to parents to elders plays a critical role. Programs like Millie's emphasize cultural identity and community connections, fostering an environment where youth can explore and embrace their heritage while building connections with others.