

TALKING UP OUR STRENGTHS

*Images of strengths and resilience in Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander cultures*



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Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this publication contains images of people who have since passed away.

Images of strengths and resilience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures



Innovative Resources is the publishing arm of St Luke's Anglicare, an organisation providing social work services throughout North Central Victoria and Southern New South Wales.



SNAICC is the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

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INTRODUCTION

Strengths in Our Culture, Strengths in Our People

The *Talking Up Our Strengths* cards are designed to help us focus on what we, as Aboriginal people, have done to remain proud, resilient and strong. They recognise and honour the underlying teachings of our many cultures that bind us and make us proud. We have our Elders, our land and our ancestors to guide us. We have our families to hold us and keep us strong. We have the love for our children to remind us of our responsibility to keep them strong in our culture.

Our leaders aren't above us – they are with us, from us, part of our families. So many are, and have been, leaders who never gave up and have taught us that embracing and celebrating our culture is vital to our sense of belonging, identity and social wellbeing.

The 22 picture card themes are woven around our children, identity, knowledge, Elders, connection, celebrations, heroes, our land, colours, language, stories, humour, our men, our women, our mob, music, sport, health, tucker, pride, struggles and our past, present and future.

The cards can be used as visual aids to share our stories together – stories that can strengthen our pride in culture and help us nurture our children to flourish and grow.

SNAICC's work for children has always involved partnerships with people and organisations that share our vision for children. We are proud to have worked with St Luke's on this project and look forward to working with them on further innovative resources.

Congratulations to all involved for producing such an exciting and vibrant tool.

Enjoy!



WHY, WHEN AND HOW TO USE THE CARDS

WHY USE THESE CARDS

Talking Up Our Strengths names and celebrates the strengths of the world's most enduring cultures. These family snap-style photos show people being 'strong in culture,' depicting some of the strengths and values that are so deeply rooted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

These cards are conversation triggers for use in different places and different situations. They can be used with individuals or with groups. Change and understanding can be triggered by a picture, a word, by talking up, yarning up and storytelling. These images offer a way to nurture pride and help people put into words a memory, feeling, idea, hope, dream.

Use these cards as reminders about the importance of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, cultural richness and shared meanings
- kinship bonds within and between families and the strengths of these bonds of affection, appreciation, positive communication, commitment to family, honouring cultural lores, enjoying time together, spiritual wellbeing and the ability to manage stress
- celebrations, organisations and activities within and between communities
- keeping optimism alive and rebuilding hopes and dreams
- all Australians taking pride in, and respecting, the cultures that have cared for, and been part of, this land for so long.

WHEN TO USE THE CARDS

There are no strict rules about using these *Talking Up Our Strengths* cards – experiment and see what works.

You may decide to use the cards to:

- help a group open up and build relationships at the beginning of a workshop or class
- start a discussion
- summarise the group's thinking at the end of an activity
- help people make connections between more abstract ideas and their lived experience
- provide a brief break in a long workshop session allowing for interaction, movement and discussion.

Whatever the situation in which you use these cards, experience shows they work best when:

- there is a respectful relationship between all participants
- they are part of the natural flow in a teaching or therapeutic conversation

- they are used to empower and build self-esteem
- the interpretation of the card belongs to the participant who has chosen it
- the facilitator remains in the background.

To help build a positive experience for participants, users need to consider some cautions before using these *Talking Up Our Strengths* cards:

- Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities have experienced enforced removal of children, deaths in custody, loss of land, racism and family violence, and the ideas in *Talking Up Our Strengths* could stir up strong emotions. Have you considered who you could suggest to provide support in such a situation?
- There is great diversity both within and between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural groups – do not make assumptions about cultural practices in your region
- People may or may not want to identify with these images.

- Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures consider it inappropriate to view photographs of deceased persons.

People using this resource may want to ask themselves:

- Why am I showing the cards?
- Is the timing right?
- Have I looked carefully at the cards myself?
- Do I want to use some of the cards or the whole set?
- How will I introduce the activity?
- Can I deal with the wide variety of experiences that may emerge in a group situation?
- Am I ready for strong feelings that may emerge during the discussion?

- Have I allocated enough time?
- Is someone available to provide support afterwards if needed?
- How will I end the activity?
- How will I evaluate the activity?

Talking Up Our Strengths stands for respect and dignity for all. It is also a resource to help those from other backgrounds build an appreciation of the richness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

These *Talking Up Our Strengths* cards are for those who are part of the movement towards reconciliation to use and reflect on.



HOW TO USE THE CARDS

There are three main ways of using the cards—Random Choice, Sequencing or ‘The Three S Method’ (Spread, Scan, Select).

1. Random Choice Method

Hand out cards randomly, ask people to take a card from the pack or spread the cards out face down so that participants can choose a card without seeing the image.

Some focus questions for using the cards in this way include:

- What meaning does this card have for you?
- Does this card relate to big issues in your life now or in the past?
- What stories can you tell about the strengths portrayed in this card?

2. Sequencing Method

Order the cards, or invite participants to order the cards, to show a story or relationship between ideas.

Some focus questions for using the cards in this way include:

- Looking back over your life, when did you become aware of your strengths or when did these strengths become important to you? Can you order the cards to tell this story?
- Can you order the cards to show how important certain aspects of your life are to you?
- How do your strengths (or strengths in your community or family) build on each other? What strengths are needed before others can grow?
- In the future, what strengths would you like to see developed in your life? In your family? In your community? In Australian society? In which order?

3. The Three S Method (spread, scan, select)

Spread the cards randomly, face up on a table, on the floor or on the ground, and invite people to select a card based on one or more of the questions or invitations listed below.

You can then provide people with the opportunity to share why they chose that card (noting that some people may be happy to choose, but not comfortable to share).

Some questions or invitations to help use the cards in this way include:

Personal responses

- Would you like to choose a card that holds a strong message for you at this time?
- Which card(s) contain words that you find especially meaningful?
- Which pictures stand out to you?
- Please choose one or more cards that help you feel hopeful.
- Are any of the cards challenging for you and would you like to choose one that stands out in this way?

- Can you find one or more cards that reflect strengths you see in yourself?
- If one card could be your guide or motto, which one would it be?
- What would you like to see added to this card to better include your own experience?
- Would you like to choose another card as well?
- Do these cards help you identify where you come from?

Family and community responses

- Would you like to choose a card that reminds you of your family?
- Do any of the cards remind you of someone special in your life?
- What strengths does your family talk about or celebrate?
- Which card(s) show strengths you would like to develop yourself?
- Which card(s) show strengths your family or community could further develop?
- Which card(s) show strengths that you could help others learn?
- Which card(s) show strengths that non-indigenous people do not easily recognise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders?

- Which card(s) remind you of people you admire in your community?
- Which card(s) could be made into a poster to put up somewhere important to you?
- For parents: Which card(s) do you think are important for your children?
- Is there anything you would like to see added to these cards to better describe your own community?

Questions for children and young people

- What is the best thing (or things) about being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? Can you find one or more cards that shows this?
- Can you find one or more cards to show your favourite family or community traditions?
- Who taught you to be proud of your culture? Which card(s) show that person or those people best?
- Who do you admire a lot? Can you find one or more cards that show their strengths?
- Which card(s) would you like to see as a poster in your school?

Some extra ideas for teachers

- How can you use the cards to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture?
- How can these cards foster discussion about cultural diversity and similarity?
- How can the cards be used to explore family and community strengths?
- Can you think of ways these cards might be added to other materials to enliven an appreciation of identity and culture in students?
- Would your students like to develop a similar set of cards or posters for their community or school, using collage, painting, drawing, etc?



THE COMPLETE SET OF CARDS



OUR CELEBRATIONS



OUR CHILDREN



OUR COLOURS



OUR HEROES



OUR HUMOUR



OUR IDENTITY



OUR CONNECTION



OUR ELDERS



OUR HEALTH



OUR KNOWLEDGE



OUR LAND



OUR LANGUAGE

THE COMPLETE SET OF CARDS



OUR MEN



OUR MOB



OUR MUSIC



OUR STORIES



OUR STRUGGLES



OUR PAST, PRESENT,
FUTURE



OUR PRIDE



OUR SPORT



OUR WOMEN



OUR TUCKER



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- SNAICC National Executive and Muriel Bamblett (former SNAICC Chairperson) for supporting the development of this resource
- all the many friends of SNAICC and SNAICC staff who provided their photos and contributed their ideas
- many other organisations providing their photos, including: QCOSS Indigenous Professional Support Unit, the *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal*, the University of Newcastle's Family Action Centre, *The Age/Fairfax Photos*, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts - Kakadu National Park rock art (photographer Colin Trotter), Baldwin Spencer Collection, Museum Victoria (photos by Baldwin Spencer of Arande

family, Aranda woman and Waramunga child); The National Library of Australia (photos by Frank Hurley; Murray Island Dancer 1921 and Beach scene; and photo by Samuel Calvert, Portraits of Aboriginal cricketers Victoria 1966), Melbourne Aboriginal Youth, Sport and Recreation, Yothu Yindi Foundation, ICatching Photography, Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses, Tjanabi, The Long Walk, May Kabay, Tim Lane of Woosh Creative and Department of Justice *Koori Justice* magazine



- graphic designer, Tim Lane, whose creativity and skill evolved the design of the cards, booklet and box through many developmental stages to achieve such an outstanding visual result
- St Luke's Innovative Resources staff and consultants who contributed in a variety of ways including ideas, final copyediting and production.

ABOUT SNAICC

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. SNAICC was formally established in 1981 following the *First Aboriginal Child Survival Seminar* (1979).

SNAICC has a membership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based child care agencies, multi-functional Aboriginal children's services (MACS), family support services, foster care agencies, Link-up and family reunification services, family group homes, community groups and voluntary associations, long day care child care services, pre-schools, early childhood education services and services for young people at risk. Others with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children also subscribe to our services.

The SNAICC vision is for an Australian society in which our communities are empowered to determine their own future, where the rights

of our children, young people and families are protected, our cultural identity and achievements are valued and our children and families have access to culturally appropriate services.

The federally funded SNAICC Resource Service was established in 2004 and works in partnership with other agencies to develop resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family services across Australia.

www.snaicc.asn.au

ABOUT ST LUKE'S AND INNOVATIVE RESOURCES

St Luke's Anglicare was established in 1979 by the Anglican Diocese of Bendigo with the active support of the Uniting Church. St Luke's has a staff of around 300 and provides community services throughout North Central Victoria and Southern New South Wales. These include out of home care services, youth homelessness services, intensive family support, mental health support, financial and problem gambling services, early childhood services, and intellectual and disability services. St Luke's motto is: Respect, Hope, Fairness.

www.stlukes.org.au

Innovative Resources published its first resource, *Strengths Cards*, in 1991 and since then has grown into St Luke's self-supporting publishing arm. Innovative Resources creates original, hands-on, conversation-building tools that are used by social workers, counsellors, educators, children, young people and parents throughout Australia and in many other countries. Innovative Resources considers it a privilege to work with SNAICC in the development of this project and hopes this association will produce further resources that can be used to build reconciliation, social justice, mutual understanding and respect.

www.innovativeresources.org



TALKING UP OUR STRENGTHS

22 full-colour photomontage images of strengths and resilience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

A visual theme based resource to help share our stories about our children



www.innovativeresources.org



www.snaicc.asn.au