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Please ring me if you would like me to visit your community to share with you some stories about our lives. My mobile number is 0408960875. Love to hear from you Julieanne.

INDIGENOUS TALK AND WALK

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This Month I would like to talk with you about Sorry Day May 26th, and National Reconciliation Week is from May 27th to June 3rd, in the hope that you might like to do something significant to remember these days.

National Sorry Day & Reconciliation Week in Australia

National Sorry Day is an Australia-wide observance held on May 26 each year. This day gives people the chance to come together and share the steps towards healing for the Stolen Generations, their families and communities. Stolen generations refer to Indigenous Australians who were forcibly removed from their families and communities.



People throughout Australia unite to participate in National Sorry Day. This illustration is based on artwork from ©iStockphoto.com/eva serrabassa

What do people do? What could you do?

Various National Sorry Day activities and events take place throughout Australia on National Sorry Day. They include:

- Concerts and barbecues.
- Reconciliation walks or street marches.
- Sorry Day flag raising events.
- Morning teas or lunches.
- Speeches from community leaders, including Indigenous Australian Elders, as well as educators.
- Media statements from politicians within federal, state and local governments.
- Gatherings for Reflection & Prayer

In the past, National Sorry Day gave people the chance to write messages and sign "Sorry Books" as a way of showing their commitment towards Reconciliation. They pledged their support towards fulfilling the recommendations from the 'Bringing Them Home' Report.

Many school children also take part in National Sorry Day activities, which include essay competitions, lighting candles for Indigenous Australians who were taken away from their families and communities, and inviting local Indigenous Australian Elders into schools to speak with students. Films that focus on the Stolen Generations may also be shown to students for further discussion.

The first National Sorry Day was held on May 26, 1998, which was one year after the tabling of a Report about the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. The Report, known as 'Bringing Them Home', acknowledged that Indigenous children were forcibly separated from their families and communities since the early days of European occupation in Australia. Governments and missionaries were responsible for these forced separations. Systematic removal practices were implemented through various 'Assimilation' and 'Protection' policies by the late 19th century. Many Indigenous children were forcibly taken away from their families in the name of Assimilation during the 1950's and 1960's. These children are known as the 'Stolen Generations'. They were brought up in institutions or fostered to non-Indigenous families. This removal was official Government Policy across Australia until 1969. By the 1980's, welfare and community groups spoke out that Governments' social welfare practices were discriminatory against Indigenous people. This forced a reappraisal of removal and placement practice. In 1980 the family tracing and reunion agency known as 'Link-Up' (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation was established. Similar services now exist throughout Australia for Indigenous Australians to find their way back home..

Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd tabled a motion in parliament on February 13, 2008, apologizing to Australia's Indigenous people, particularly the Stolen Generations and their families and communities, for the laws and policies that inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss. The apology included a proposal for a policy commission to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in matters such as life expectancy, educational achievement, and economic opportunity. This event is seen by many as a step forward in reconciliation.

Symbols

The Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag are often seen on National Sorry Day. The Aboriginal flag is horizontally divided into two equal halves of black (top) and red (bottom) with a yellow circle in the centre. The black symbolizes Australia's Aboriginal people and the yellow circle represents the sun. The red represents the earth and people's relationship with the land. It also represents ochre, which is used in Aboriginal ceremonies in Australia. Harold Joseph Thomas designed the flag, which was first flown at Victoria Square in Adelaide on July 12, 1971.

The Torres Strait Islander flag stands for Torres Strait Islanders' unity and identity. It features three horizontal stripes, with green at the top and bottom of the flag and blue in between, divided by thin black lines. A white *dharri* or *deri* (a type of headdress) sits in the centre, with a five-point star underneath it. The color green represents the land. The *dharri* symbolizes all Torres Strait Islanders. The black represents the people and the blue represents the sea. The five-point star symbolizes the island groups. The star is white, which symbolizes peace in this case. Bernard Namok designed the flag.

Note: Timeanddate.com wishes to thank the Australian Government's Culture Portal for information regarding the Stolen Generation.

National Reconciliation Week 2011 - Let's talk recognition

Recognition. Think about how much you value it. When you are sincerely recognised for who you are and what you contribute, you feel proud, validated and connected. Being recognised is good for your self esteem. It energizes you and encourages you to recognise the best in others.

Recognition comes in all sorts of ways and means different things to different people but everyone likes it when they get it. In what ways do you recognise people around you and in what ways do they recognise you?

For National Reconciliation Week 2011, Reconciliation Australia invites you to join a national conversation about the value of recognition.

What is National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is an annual celebration from 27 May – 3 June and is a time for all Australians to reflect on our shared histories, contributions and achievements. The week is framed by two key events in Australia's history which provide strong symbols of the aspirations for reconciliation.

May 27 marks the anniversary of Australia's most successful referendum and a defining event in our nation's history. The 1967 Referendum saw over 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Commonwealth the power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise them in the national census.

On 3 June, 1992, the High Court of Australia delivered its landmark Mabo decision which legally recognised that Indigenous people had a special relationship to the land—that existed prior to colonisation and still exists today. This recognition paved the way for Indigenous land rights called Native Title.

Join us in a national conversation

The theme for NRW 2011 is Let's talk recognition. How you interpret it is entirely up to you. You might like to hold an event that recognises the important contributions that Indigenous Australians are making to your community. Or perhaps engage students, staff or friends more deeply in a conversation about the value of recognition and why it is of particular importance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Over the next couple of years recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Constitution will be on the agenda as the Federal Government has indicated that there will be a referendum on it, on or before the next election. When people go to vote, we want them to feel confident and capable of making an informed decision. To do this it is important to start the conversation about the value of recognition for us all and why it is important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in particular.

But recognition isn't just about the referendum, it's much broader, and has a lot to do with reconciliation. During NRW 2011 we're asking all Australians to think about the value of recognition, what it means to you personally and its importance to the nation.

What can Edmund Rice People do?

Check out the NRW calendar to see how other people and organisations are talking about recognition. Don't forget to add your event too. For details: www.reconciliation.org.au or call (02)62739200.

Yes, we want to join the conversation, what are the next steps?

Talk to us about what you might do under the theme let's talk recognition

Meet with us in person, send an email to jane.magnus@reconciliation.org.au or call us on 02 6273 9200. Ask for Jane or Jo. We will help you explore different event or project ideas and ways of interpreting the theme that are relevant to your group, organisation or community.

Talk to your group, organisation or community and confirm your contribution

Take this information sheet and your list of possible event or project ideas for NRW 2011 – Let's talk about recognition to your group, organisation or community. Talk with them about your list of ideas, ask them to contribute others and together confirm what idea you will go ahead with.

Discuss possible resource implications such as staffing and funding. Think about who you will invite to your event or project, as well as other groups or organisations you might like to involve in the development and implementation.

Hold your event or project for NRW 2011 – Let's talk recognition between 27 May and 3 June

Celebrate your event or project with as many of your staff and stakeholders as possible. Your event or project may run for an hour, a day or a week—it is up to you. We hope you have a great time and we will encourage as many of our staff and stakeholders to attend your event or project too. Take lots of photos and keep records—we'd love to receive them and share them widely to celebrate your contribution.

Confirm your event or project for NRW 2011 – Let's talk recognition with RA

Call Jane or Jo on 02 6273 9200 or email on jane.magnus@reconciliation.org.au to confirm your event or project. We will register your event or project on our NRW calendar and send you out promotional and other support material as soon as possible. We may also be able to support you with media, speakers and public relations—but please let us know early.

What comes next? Talk to us

We greatly value the contribution you are making by joining the national conversation on the importance of recognition during NRW in 2011. We would love to keep in contact with you about other ways you can continue to be part of the national conversation and contribute to reconciliation more generally—including NRW in 2012 and beyond. Call us on 02 6273 9200 or email jane.magnus@reconciliation.org.au

Did you notice my new title at the top of this newsletter. No longer Education Officer. If I can help your community during this time let me know. Julieanne Indigenous Animator and Advisor for Oceania Province.