

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHILDREN'S DAY

4 AUGUST 2005

Foster and Kinship Carers – Keeping Kids Connected to Community, Family and Culture

This year, SNAICC celebrates the critical role and fabulous work of foster and kinship carers who support kids and keep them in touch with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, families and culture. Making sure kids in care stay connected to their families and culture is the birthright of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Children in foster or kinship care deserve and need stability, family connection, cultural strength and the same love, support and affection all children desire.

SNAICC believes that the best foster and kinship care models work hand in hand with families to ensure children learn about, and develop healthy relationships with, their birth families. Children and young people in care have the right to know their families and culture.

This year, SNAICC continues to advocate for increased support for foster, relative and kinship carers – the best volunteers a community can have.

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) is an annual event celebrated on 4 August. Established by SNAICC in 1988, the day demonstrates how important children are to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. By focusing on a different theme each year, NAICD draws attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the major issues SNAICC pursues on their behalf.

NAICD offers local services and agencies a chance to reflect on their work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Take a break from your routines and organise activities or functions involving children, their families and foster and kinship carers that reinforce how important it is to fill children's lives with happy times.

SNAICC encourages all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, mainstream child and family welfare services, government agencies, schools, preschools, child care services and any organisations with an interest in children to celebrate National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day on 4 August.

CARING FOR CARERS

In all states and territories, there are higher rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care than other children. In Victoria, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is nearly 13 times the rate for other children, while in New South Wales it is nearly nine times the rate.

This situation has arisen because of the damage that has been done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities since colonisation. The practices of the last two hundred years have dispossessed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of their land, livelihood, language and culture. This has damaged families and children economically, psychologically and spiritually. These are the underlying causes of the high rates of child removal and the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care.

When children must be removed from families to protect their safety, their suffering too often continues due to a lack of stability and security in care, and from the grief and loneliness of not belonging and being cut off from family, community and culture.

In 2004, SNAICC produced a detailed policy paper, *Seven Priorities for Children*, that outlines the key issues we believe need to be addressed in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Specifically in relation to foster and kinship carers, the paper advocates:

- ◆ Reforms to foster care and kinship care including that
 - kinship carers (i.e. grandparents and other extended family members) to be provided with financial and other support, including respite care.
 - financial and other types of support for carers should be adequate and equal and based on the findings and recommendations of the independent report on the cost of raising foster children, *The Costs of Caring*.
 - foster carers and kinship carers should be provided with accredited training and ongoing resources and support.
 - recognising the role of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCAs) in foster care systems.

“Children need to know who they are and where they fit in with their families and communities. Even though a child may never live with their community, they should know how they fit in there, what their totem is, where their land is, who their family is.”

Children need to know that they are part of a journey that began 40,000 years ago. They need to know what the journey tracks were and where they fit into that journey. We are part of the rocks and the rivers; no Aboriginal child should have that taken away from them.”

— SNAICC National Executive member

- establish a national recruitment strategy for Indigenous foster carers.
- ◆ Recruitment, assessment, training and ongoing support for Indigenous foster carers to be managed by Indigenous agencies in accordance with agreed standards.

This year, SNAICC has developed a detailed policy paper, *Achieving Stable and Culturally Strong Out of Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*, that proposes further detailed reforms to improve foster care.

Because we value the critical role of foster and kinship carers, SNAICC will continue to argue for proper recognition of their work backed up with fairer and more appropriate financial and other support.

You can get SNAICC's policy documents from our website:

Seven Priorities for Children is available at www.snaicc.asn.au/news/briefing-papers.html
Achieving Stable and Culturally Strong Out of Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children is available at www.snaicc.asn.au/news/briefing-papers.html

GET INVOLVED IN NAICD

The most important thing to do is get involved in NAICD and organise an event – no matter how small – in your service, child care centre, kinder, pre-school, health service or community group.

Make NAICD something you focus on each year to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Community organisations can organise a wide range of practical activities that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Here are some ideas:

Organise an open day or morning tea at work for people to bring their children to their workplaces.

Hold a family fun day for foster and kinship carers and their foster children and young people.

Promote the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in your local community through young achiever awards.

Organise a children's picnic or activities in a local park.

Bring Elders, families and their children together in your service for storytelling.

Run a seminar or workshop with other local services.

Have a flag raising ceremony with children and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.

Put out a press release to your local papers, radio and TV about why your services support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Hold a fete or fund raising activity for children in your community.

Organise sporting events or competitions for children and young people in your service.

Sponsor some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to have a day out with their families at the pictures or in other activities.

Run a seminar on the important roles of foster and kinship carers in your community.

Promote your service and activities to other local children's services.

Screen-print some t-shirts or caps to celebrate NAICD.

Arrange for kids at school or in child care to do their own paintings and artwork about the NAICD theme.

Get children to paint a mural about NAICD to display at your service.

Invite local leaders, politicians and Elders to spend some time at your service on NAICD.

Put children's issues on the agenda of your next staff or board meeting and get people thinking about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

NETWORKING

You can do a number of things to share your NAICD event and ideas with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and find out what others are doing this year:

REGISTER YOUR EVENT WITH SNAICC

SNAICC promotes activities organised in local communities for NAICD. We encourage you to fax back the NAICD Event Registration Form mailed out with the poster and leaflet. SNAICC will feature some stories from NAICD local events in our newsletters and on our website: www.snaicc.asn.au

SEND US PHOTOS OF YOUR EVENT

Organisations can also send us photos of their NAICD event so we can include them in our newsletters. Please only send hard copies that you don't want back and include your contact details on the back, or email us digital files.

KEEP INFORMED THROUGH THE SNAICC WEBSITE

SNAICC publishes updates on NAICD, including any media release we put out about NAICD and children's issues, on our website. You can download media releases and other information about SNAICC and NAICD from our website.

NETWORK WITH OTHERS ONLINE

You can also network with other community based family and children's services and organisations across the country on the Networking section of our website. You can share news, resources and ideas online.

MAKE SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT YEAR'S THEME

You can also use the fax Event Registration Form to tell us your ideas for next year's theme, including any issues you think we should focus on for NAICD.



NAICD THROUGH HISTORY

Each year, SNAICC produces free posters featuring original artwork to represent the year's NAICD theme and distributes them to community organisations throughout the country. Many of these community based children's services organise local celebrations and free activities with a focus on children and families.

Since 1988, NAICD has focussed on themes ranging from child poverty, the forced removal of children from their families, access to education, cultural pride and inheritance, to the importance of elders in children's lives, family reunification and healing, speaking up in response to child abuse and investing in the early years of childhood.



STOP THE CULTURAL GENOCIDE

In 1988, SNAICC produced the first NAICD poster featuring a photograph from the Bicentenary protest march in Sydney. SNAICC highlighted the detrimental impact of placing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children with non-Indigenous families after these children had been removed from their families by welfare authorities.

CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE – LETS PROTECT AND EDUCATE THEM

The 1989 NAICD poster featured artwork from John Cummins using Central Australian Aboriginal symbols. The painting depicts the story of the development of Aboriginal and Islander people and their children, including the damage caused by colonisation. The story ends with the message that we are a strong proud race, let's build ourselves up and protect our children.

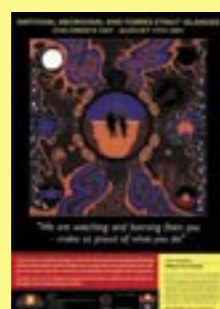
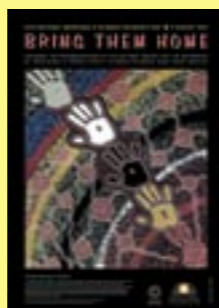


THE STOLEN GENERATIONS – DEMAND AN ENQUIRY INTO THE REMOVAL OF ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHILDREN

In 1991, NAICD focussed on the issue of the Stolen Generations as SNAICC demanded a national inquiry into the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. The poster featured a photograph taken in the 1930s of Aboriginal children removed from their families and placed at the Bomaderry Infants Home in New South Wales. SNAICC was the first national organisation to call for an inquiry into the Stolen Generations and the NAICD poster was instrumental in bringing the Stolen Generations out of the shadows and into public view.

BRING THEM HOME

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission completed the inquiry into the forced removal of children and released the *Bringing Them Home* report in 1997. That year, NAICD called for governments to provide a full and proper response to the *Bringing Them Home* report. This included reparation for those directly affected and a complete overhaul of the current child protection systems, which continue to remove Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at over five times the rate of other children.



WE ARE WATCHING AND LEARNING FROM YOU – MAKE US PROUD OF ALL YOU DO

In 2001, NAICD challenged individuals, organisations and governments to remember that children learn from observing their behaviour. Too often children witness behaviour that carries messages of violence, neglect and indifference instead of love, respect, reconciliation, support and encouragement.

NOT NOW – NOT THEN – NOT EVER: SPEAK UP AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

2003's NAICD theme focussed on the importance of speaking up against child abuse. It reminded people that the abuse of children has never and will never have any place in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.



ONE CHILDHOOD, ONE CHANCE: LET'S NOT TAKE A CHANCE ON OUR FUTURE – INVEST IN OUR FUTURE LEADERS

The 2004 theme reflected the importance of the early years of a child's life and the profound impact childhood experiences have on children's long-term development.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are far less likely than other Australia children to have access to early childhood services and programs. Increased investment in children's development is urgently required to foster the development of the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

Theme painting artist: Ikanbala (Richard McLean)

The painting, 'Keeping Strong', highlights the culture that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live today, and why it is important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be connected to their history and culture to keep their identity strong.

The black background represents both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – the original people of Australia. The dot formations represent our Indigenous history and culture, with the white dots representing the culture we live in today. Our culture is also signified by the cultural images of the kangaroo and emu and our other activities.

The large brown boomerang images represent the shelter and protection provided by the carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The large 'U' shapes represent the carers; their different colours symbolise the many cultures they represent and the awareness of their cultures that they bring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care. The small black 'U' shapes represent those children in care.

The artist, Ikanbala (Richard McLean), is an internationally recognised Indigenous artist from Cape York in far north Queensland. Ikanbala is a proud descendent of the Yadhakana people of Cape York, Queensland, who now lives in Victoria. He has been painting for 15 years and has work in private collections throughout the world.

WHO IS SNAICC

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is the national peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

SNAICC was formally established in 1981 after Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates at the First Aboriginal Child Survival Seminar, held in Melbourne in 1979, proposed the creation of such a body. The organisation elected its first national executive in 1982 and opened its office after first receiving Federal Government funding in 1983. SNAICC marked its 20th anniversary in 2003.

Today, SNAICC has a membership base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community based child care agencies, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services, 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.

Additionally, SNAICC has a network and subscriber list of over 1500 community groups – mostly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, but also significant numbers of non-Indigenous community based services and individuals with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children.

SNAICC is governed by a national executive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people drawn from our membership and operates from an office in Melbourne with nine staff members.

CREDITS AND CONTACTS

SPONSORSHIP

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) has enjoyed the sponsorship and support of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) for most of the past 16 years. Each year, ATSIC (and more recently ATSISS) has provided the funds for the production and distribution of the NAICD posters. SNAICC gratefully acknowledges their long-term support for NAICD, which we will miss.

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CREDITS

Writing & Editing: Julian Pocock & Mark Lawrence
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 Text and artwork © SNAICC 2005
 Photographs © Kenny Bedford 2005

Note: The photographs of children included in this leaflet are for illustration only and are not intended to imply the children depicted are in care.

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FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS

Keeping Kids Connected to Community, Family and Culture



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SECRETARIAT OF NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHILD CARE

Advocating for Indigenous children and their families