



Reflecting on National Reconciliation Week – The value of storytelling

Storytelling is a timeless and powerful tool that transcends generations and cultures. It serves as a bridge between the past and present, enabling families and communities from all walks of life to preserve their histories, values and identities, while collectively working to build a better future.

This week at Mutual Trust, in recognition of National Reconciliation Week, we are taking time to reflect on the 2025 theme: ‘*Bridging Now to Next*’ and how, through stories, we can pass down wisdom, experiences and lessons learned to connect each generation to the next and keep family and cultural legacy and values alive over the long-term.

Storytelling holds a central place in Indigenous Australian culture

Stories have impact – people remember them long after they are told. As the primary way in which history has been recorded by Indigenous Australians, storytelling is a vital practice which sustains communities, validates experiences, nurtures relationships and is integral to cultural continuation.

From a young age and for tens of thousands of years, it has been custom for Indigenous Australian children to be told stories to help them understand the air, the land, the universe, their people, their culture and their history. Elders have shared stories of their journeys and accomplishments and then, as children grow into adults, they have taken on the responsibility of passing these stories to the next generation.

“Our stories are sacred. They connect us to this time and place and link us to our lands, waters and skies – since time immemorial.”

Teela Reid

Wiradjuri & Wailwan woman,
lawyer, essayist, storyteller
and co-founder of
@blackfulla_bookclub

Source: <https://indigenoux.com.au/high-ground-highlights-the-power-of-storytelling-to-heal-our-history/>

Storytelling is a powerful and memorable way to share all types of information. The purpose of a story might be immediately clear – such as to warn whether it is safe to walk near a particular body of water, or there may be a more complex, underlying lesson which is open to interpretation and can be applied to different situations in life.

Effective storytelling engages the senses. Traditional means have included message sticks, rock and sand art, body painting, song, dance and carvings. In our current times, mediums now also include visual and performing arts, multimedia and literary expositions. Regardless of the approach, storytelling provides a platform to express experiences, nurture relationships and teach children and young adults all about life.

“The way we pass down our knowledge is through stories...and our elders are so important in passing knowledge to younger generations. Some stories have been passed from generation to generation for thousands of years...to educate, provide strength and share spiritual beliefs.”

Emma Garlett

Nyungar-Niyaparli-Yamatji woman, Director of Garlett Group and First Nations Leader

Source: Paint It Blak – [Why Indigenous stories matter](#)

The power of stories in Reconciliation

Storytelling, particularly the practice of truth-telling, is vital for Reconciliation. It helps facilitate understanding, empathy and connection amongst all people, while sharing historical truths, acknowledging injustices and promoting a shared understanding of the past – often beyond what has been taught in schools or communicated in mainstream narratives.

By listening to personal stories and experiences, audiences can develop a stronger awareness of Australian history and the injustices that have occurred, while for the storytellers, it can promote healing and help reclaim voice and agency. For all Australians, it's an opportunity to come together with mutual respect and understanding to explore how we can contribute to a reconciled nation.

There are ways we can all engage in effective storytelling for a richer future

When it comes to building enduring family legacies, there is much we can draw from in the practice of storytelling. By recounting significant events, experiences and milestones from the past, families can provide younger family members with context and understanding around their family history and the journeys of their ancestors.

Families can also leverage storytelling as a way to clearly communicate core family values and foster a sense of belonging and unity amongst individual family members.

There is no right or wrong way to engage in storytelling. Whether it be informal conversations around a fire or kitchen table, or through formal initiatives such as a family retreat or externally facilitated workshop, these conversations add tremendous value in helping families build a clear understanding of their shared narrative, creating stronger bonds and connecting on a deeper level.

Please [click here](#) to learn more about Reconciliation Week.

For further reading on Indigenous Australian stories, please visit:

- [Resources on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, ABC Education](#)
- [Our Land, Our Stories | AIATSIS corporate website](#)

Mutual Trust is committed to building a more reconciled Australia. To learn about the initiatives we are working on to provide real impact and opportunities for Indigenous Communities, please visit [Mutual Trust Reconciliation Plan](#).

Julian Butler

Partner, Head of Western Australia

Melbourne

Level 32
360 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
T +61 3 9605 9500

Sydney

Level 18
126 Phillip Street
Sydney NSW 2000
T +61 2 9224 7600

Perth

Ground Floor
22 Stirling Highway
Nedlands WA 6009
T +61 8 9230 7700

Adelaide

Level 1
190 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000
T +61 8 7082 3900

info@mutualtrust.com.au
www.mutualtrust.com.au
ABN: 71 004 285 330
AFSL: 234590

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Mutual Trust acknowledges and pays respect to the past and present Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.