

Respect – Encouragement – Action.

Together we are strong



Daphne Bell

Neil Thorne – Aboriginal teacher

When I was a young mother in my twenties, I was walking through my kids' school one day. I was walking past an open classroom door and I doubled back – I had to stop and listen because I heard a guy's voice and the way he was talking with his class. I felt an instant spiritual connection to him. I looked into the classroom and the teacher, Neil, had built a gigantic humpy and he had artifacts everywhere. I looked around and saw that the kids were very relaxed and in harmony.

He was a proud Aboriginal man. I could feel this straight away. Ever since that moment, that memory has inspired me to be a proud Aboriginal woman so I can pass this pride on. I have been at ease with who I am – this moment captured me and has been with me ever since.

Aboriginal Communities

I would not have got to where I am today without the support of Aboriginal communities.

Gavin Bracks – Past school principal

I went as a parent to an ASSPA meeting and was asked at that meeting by the AEA to do some relief AEA work. I didn't know if I could do the job because I was feeding a small baby. Mr Bracks was willing to work around me feeding my baby – he gave me an opportunity to do the work – I felt very valued.

What makes me strong?

My family and people that want to make a difference for our children and communities – that's what makes me strong.

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Maureen Wenzel

Who helped you along the way?

I had an opportunity in life to go to university. I only went there for *one day* to check it out because I had only attended school until Year 7 – I wasn't confident. On that day, I met the most wonderful Aboriginal woman who became my lecturer, mentor and friend. She was a person who understood my background, my learning style and my passion for my culture. She had fought the same battles and experienced the same prejudices. During my time at uni, I watched her grow. I watched a person who began the same as me grow into an amazing woman achiever. She didn't just set out to achieve for herself. The minute she started to walk up the ladder she reached out a hand to me. So every time she took a step up that ladder, I was on the rung behind her. She instilled in me a thirst for learning which today remains unquenchable. Through that thirst for learning, I can give everything back and fulfill my debt – to make a difference for someone else. I don't look on it as a debt any more. It is my obligation to my people – to share my knowledge. Not just with my own mob – with everyone.