

## Celebrating NAIDOC Week

The theme for this year's NAIDOC week, **Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud**, honours Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their heritage, and their unwavering resilience and perseverance. We are encouraged to celebrate the world's oldest continuous culture, which has thrived for 65,000 years by fostering community and safeguarding the environment.

**Fire** is a powerful symbol of connection to land, to each other, and to the rich tapestry of traditions that define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Many cultures view fire as a symbol of wisdom and knowledge. In the Christian tradition fire symbolises the transforming energy and actions of the Holy Spirit. The prayer of the prophet Elijah, who arose like fire and whose word burned like a torch, brought down fire from heaven on the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. Fire, representing the Holy Spirit, filled the apostles with enthusiasm, replacing their fear with the courage to go forth and share Christ's story. Tongues of fire ... came to rest on each one of them.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples fire unites and inspires, as Auntie Dulcie Flower AM notes:

*... this fire goes right through and you have to think of the force of it, you have to think of the good that it does, the danger that it presents, and the strength that it has within it.*

Auntie Dulcie Flower AM was honoured with the 2024 NAIDOC lifetime achievement award for her unwavering dedication as an activist and advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A proud Miriam woman and beacon of strength and cultural resilience, a champion of Indigenous rights, advocating for self-determination and equitable access to healthcare and training for Indigenous individuals.

**Blak, Loud and Proud** embodies the fearless celebration of Indigenous identity. This theme advocates for reclaiming narratives, amplifying voices, and upholding justice and equality. It encourages all Australians to engage in meaningful

dialogue, listen, and learn, fostering a society that fully appreciates and respects the wisdom and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The NAIDOC week poster by artist, Deb Belyea of Samuawgadhagal, Torres Strait. The title of this work 'Urapun Muy', from the Kalaw Kawaw Ya dialect of the Top Western Islands of the Torres Strait, means 'One Fire'. As Deb explains:

*The inspiration behind this masterpiece stems from the Moingo Kookupurra dance team from Saibai, the very place where my family's roots lie in the Torres Strait. Their name, meaning the spark that ignites a new flame, beautifully encapsulates the essence of our First Nations culture and our unwavering passion. If you gaze at the artwork, you'll notice the hands positioned at the top of the original poster. These hands belong to our ancestors, deliberately passing on the ember into the heart of an already blazing fire.*

May these flames and the theme **Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud** encourage us all to celebrate the unyielding spirit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and in our nation to stand in solidarity with them on the journey of reconciliation.

Reference – <https://www.naidoc.org.au>



### REFLECTION:

How will you celebrate NAIDOC Week in your community?

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.