

Deadly

“Growing up, I knew I was different. But I didn't know what it meant to be Aboriginal. I just knew that I had a really big, extended family. I was taught nothing about who we were or where we came from.” Adam Goodes

Dear Families,

As part of my role as your MHaWC (Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator), I undertake regular professional learning with a program called MHiPS (Mental Health in Primary Schools). This is run through MGSE (Melbourne Graduate School of Education) and sponsored by the MCRI (Murdoch Children's Research Institute). To summarise, your MHaWC does PL with MGSE called MHiPS, sponsored by MCRI. That sentence took me a lot of concentration.

Last term, one of the professional learning sessions was called 'Deadly'. It was about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and how us MHaWCs can help them as they journey through our education system. I was so moved by the presentation delivered by Zoe Upton, who holds the title of Acting Koorie Education Coordinator. I don't think there was a dry eye that I could see during our online session, and there were a few cameras being turned off towards the end. Because this was such a powerful session, I asked Zoe if she would share her presentation with our staff.

After school on Monday, our whole staff signed in at the end of our day for our 'Deadly' session. This was my second time, and I was still excited. Zoe's presentation was designed to help educators understand the challenges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face in our school setting, and how to assist them. However, the session was about a lot more than that. It had us all think about every child in our classrooms and the challenges they all face. It was about the different experiences everyone brings to school each day that shapes them and their families. As our staff ponder, I wonder what positive changes the session will bring.

If you would like to think about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders this week, you may consider trying one of the following activities.

- Watch this video called [The Invisible Discriminator](#) and then watch with your child if you think it is appropriate.
- Research some interesting things about our local Aboriginal Wudawurrung Mob.
- Consider watching [The School That To End Racism \(3 parts on ABC iView\)](#) with your family
- Find out what the colours of the Aboriginal flag represent. What about the colours and symbols of the Torres Strait Island flag?

“Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.” Stephen Covey.

Thanks for being amazing.

Andy McNeilly
Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator

