CASE STUDY

Food from home

Traditional tucker books made for the community in collaboration with public health

REMOTENESS AREA CLASSIFICATION	Very remote

LOCATION

Northern Territory



Background

An Aboriginal Health Practitioner (AHP) in the field of nutrition, who also has a passion for traditional tucker, is in the process of writing two related books that will have a special significance to her and her community on Groote Eylandt, the Warnindilyakwa people. These books will showcase traditional tucker that grows on and around the island through:

- A cookbook for the children and families of Groote Eylandt.
- An educational tool to help health professionals, and the wider community, learn about the traditional tucker of the island.

She was encouraged to take on this project by another NT health professional, a dietitian, who was doing a similar project on the Tiwi Islands.

What does good food education for children look like in community?

She sees that good food education for children in community could occur in several places, for example:

- At schools and in ECEC settings.
- In libraries.
- At health services.
- With the 'Golden Girls' of the community – the Elders who take the children around the island and teach them about traditional tucker.

Other examples she would like to see to enhance food education for children include:

- Visibility of traditional tucker at the local market gardens, with traditional tucker being sold alongside western foods.
  - This would cement the importance of traditional tucker in children's minds as they would be seen as just as important as other foods at the market.
- Children and families being taught how to recognise traditional tucker and knowing how to use it so they will buy and cook with it.
- Traditional tucker being grown at the community gardens for everyone to plant, raise and use.
  - Children would be able to see the way the plant grows and learn how to look after it and then harvest it.
  - Then they might pick up the cookbook with their families and cook something with the food they had grown.
- She sees the proposed traditional tucker books as resources that could be utilised in any of these settings to enhance food education for children and families.

What do you want to do with these books?

- To share her passion for traditional tucker from Groote Eylandt.
- To ensure that the knowledge of the traditional tucker of the island is passed on to the younger generation and preserved for the future.
- To create contemporary educational tools for the whole community to learn about traditional tucker and how to use it.

What did/will you do to create these books?

- First, she asked for permission from the local Elders.
  - She explained what she wanted to do, then received consent.
- She has a plan over three years to collate the information on the traditional tucker of Groote Eylandt for this book:
  - Year 1 – Plants.
  - Year 2 – Land animals.
  - Year 3 – Sea animals.
  - This process will entail her going around the island and drawing, photographing and collecting samples. She will then:
    - Send samples to a laboratory for nutritional analysis as some of these have not been analysed for a long time.
    - Collate the information into two books.
- She plans for the books to include:
  - Cookbook:
    - Simple recipes for families in plain English and with lots of pictures.
    - Recipes that mix traditional and non-traditional foods and cooking methods.
    - Multicultural meals.
    - Information for families about growing healthy kids.
  - Health practitioner book:
    - Pictures of the foods and their traditional and scientific names.
    - Nutritional information about the plant and how it is used in cooking.
    - Information about how the plant is used in bush medicine.
- She also plans to involve the people of Groote Eylandt in the creation of the books, creating a truly community-based resource.

Top tips

She recommends thinking thoroughly about what you would like to do before you start your community-specific book:

- Think about the people you are creating the book for.
- Ask them what kind of book they would prefer:
  - For example, she describes her mob as visual people, so the cookbook will be created to have as little text as possible, will use plain English, and will have lots of photos to illustrate the steps of meal preparation and the final result.

Work with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community:

- Go online and find the list of Land Councils.
- Find the Land Council of your local area.
- Contact the Land Council, explain what you are doing, ask for consent to do the work and have community involvement.
- Be prepared that they might say no:
  - In this case you may need to change your plan.
  - Talk to the Land Council and ask what would help to make your project more acceptable to the community and go from there.

When these two books are created, this AHP will have made something that combines ancient knowledge, local community, education and health promotion.

It will be a lasting legacy that is practical, educational, culturally grounded and meaningful – not just for herself, but for the community, families and children of Groote Eylandt.