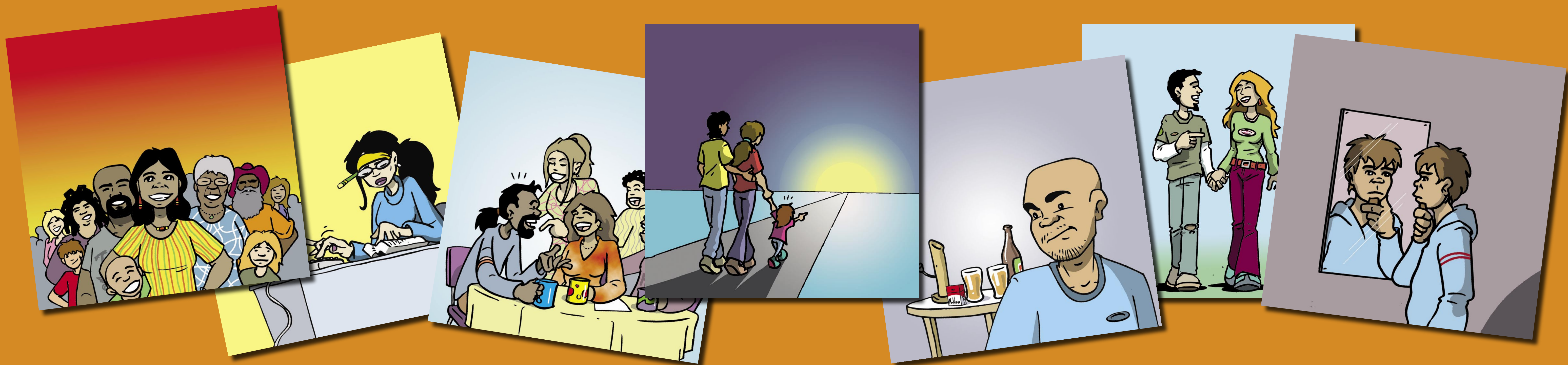


# MY STORY CARDS

*A therapeutic tool for Aboriginal people*



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## MY STORY CARDS

Simplifying communication

- Goal setting
- Prioritising
- Coaching
  - Shared understanding
  - Reduce barriers
  - Self reflection
  - Skills development
  - Education
  - Ice breaking
  - Creating visions
  - Constructive feedback
  - Creativity
  - Simplifying life.

## HOW ARE THEY USED?

There are many ways to use *My Story Cards*. For example, participants are asked to rate their overall quality of life and think about the things that make their life good or challenging (Brief Life Assessment). The interviewer asks the participant to choose 5 cards that most affect their life in a positive or negative way and describe why each life area is important to them. Standard facilitation or counselling techniques can be used to explore responses, identify strengths and set goals against identified areas. Selected areas can be revisited in future sessions or selection of cards repeated as above.

## WHY ARE THEY USEFUL?

- Improve communication
- Client centred - to tell their own story
- Help people develop a shared understanding
- Simplify complex or overwhelming issues
- Enable a broader understanding of client issues
- Safe way to discuss sensitive issues
- Identification of strengths and worries
- Rapid identification of issues
- Help prioritise and set goals
- Culturally appropriate
- Empowering
- Easy to use
- Holistic

## BACKGROUND

Culturally appropriate therapeutic techniques and tools for use with Aboriginal people are scarce in the drug and alcohol sector. To address this gap picture cards depicting 25 identified life areas and adaptive behaviours were developed with Aboriginal people to be an appropriate and sensitive therapeutic tool. *My Story Cards* are the first Aboriginal specific therapeutic tool.

Visual images have been found to be more powerfully linked to emotions than words alone (Dewhurst and Conway 1994) and compliment an observational learning style of many Aboriginal people. *My Story Cards* are a relatively quick, efficient means of identifying domains of treatment and data for people with alcohol, drug, gambling, relationship or emotional issues. The tool has been shown to reduce therapeutic barriers such as language and culture and assist in identifying significant areas to focus therapy, set goals, treatment planning or as a health promotion resource.

The interviewer administered cards use a strengths based, client centred approach to facilitate communication between counsellor and client. *My Story Cards* assist in developing emotional intelligence and skills development around prioritising and goal setting. They are effective in simplifying complex problems and more effectively targeting treatment.



## RESEARCH

### How were *My Story Cards* developed?

Life domains were chosen based on existing quality of life research including a visual research tool called "Injection Drug User Quality of Life" which has been well validated and showed good psychometric properties among people who inject drugs (Brogly et. al 2003). Additional life domains were included for therapeutic use. Life domains were selected based on consultation with Aboriginal people. The author worked with a highly regarded artist to develop the images which were piloted with Aboriginal people and modified as required. Life Domains include: • Social and emotional • Safety and survival • Family and relationships • Identity, self esteem and self expression • Adaptive behaviours.

*MyStoryCards* incorporate several theories and frameworks including: • Social Learning Theory • Cognitive learning • Maslow's hierarchy of needs • Aboriginal concept of health.

**Acceptability** *My Story* cards have been found to be very well accepted among both Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal counsellors and clients in a variety of settings including drug and alcohol & mental health services, youth services, disability services. The cards have been shown to improve communication, assist participants in identifying issues important to them and to simplify and prioritise complex, overwhelming issues and competing needs to develop a path forward.