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An Indigenous Strengths-based Theoretical Framework

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the inadequate recognition and integration of the strengths of Indigenous¹ people in direct practice, policy development, and research. To address this concern, I present an Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework designed to recognise and illuminate the diverse strengths inherent in Indigenous people and communities. The ongoing structure of colonisation often presents challenges for practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and others collaborating with Indigenous people to adopt a strengths-based approach. Unfortunately, well-intentioned collaborators, especially non-Indigenous allies, often succumb to deficit-based thinking and simplistic binary comparative analysis. This article draws inspiration from Dennis Saleebey's (2023) six-step, strengths-based approach, integrating it with a micro, meso, and macro framework and Indigenous Standpoint Theory. The result is an Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework that embraces a strengths-based approach within the context of Indigenous cultures and world views. This framework fosters the identification and development of Indigenous strengths in a respectful and culturally safe manner.

IMPLICATIONS

- A strengths-based approach must supersede the deficit discourse that continues to be a defining feature of how social workers, allied health professionals, researchers, and policymakers interact with Indigenous Australians.
- This article draws inspiration from Saleebey's (2023). The strengths perspective in social work practice: Extensions and cautions. In *Social work* (pp. 230–235). Routledge) six-step approach to a strengths perspective, combined with a systems theory framework and an Indigenous standpoint, and can assist in (re)defining Indigenous strength-based practice.

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Standpoint and Social Positioning

This article is informed by Foley's (2003) Indigenous Standpoint Theory. The utilisation of an Indigenous standpoint in research is necessary, given the enduring marginalisation

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of Indigenous worldviews², encompassing epistemes (knowledges), ontologies (ways of being), and axiologies (values), within research practices and scholarship. This marginalisation often results in the favouring of Western and non-Indigenous world views. As a proud Worimi (Australian Aboriginal) man, originating from and raised in Lutruwita (Tasmania), I aim to actively participate in the local Aboriginal community. Possessing a sound understanding of critical social theory in social work and sociology, my social positioning and incorporation of an Indigenous worldview significantly influence and propel the contents of this article.

In this article, I introduce an Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework to identify and amplify the diverse strengths inherent in Indigenous people. Inspiration is drawn from Saleebey's (2023) six-step, strengths-based approach, integrated with a micro, meso, and macro level framework (see [Appendix 2](#)). The combination of these two approaches with an Indigenous standpoint is used to facilitate the recognition of the multitude of strengths within Indigenous people and communities. By deviating from the prevailing deficit narrative, the strengths of Indigenous people can emerge as a defining characteristic, fostering feelings of empowerment, appreciation, and value.

The prevalence of a deficit-based narrative within the Indigenous landscape is evident across various domains, including published literature (Fogarty, Bulloch et al., 2018; Fogarty, Lovell et al., 2018), media sources (ABC News, 2015, 2016a; Vivian & Roberts, 2019), policy (Closing the Gap, 2022; Dawson et al., 2021), and available data (Walter, 2016; 2018). While substantial disparities exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in various metrics, it is crucial to acknowledge these differences without exclusively focusing on them and overlooking the broader social contexts contributing to these deficits. Adopting a narrow perspective that solely emphasises shortcomings hampers the potential for meaningful and positive change in areas self-determined by Indigenous people (Saleebey 2023).

The numerous strengths possessed by Indigenous people often go unrecognised or unacknowledged. In Australia, collective strengths exhibited by Indigenous people include possessing knowledge derived from being part of the world's oldest living culture (Bell, 1998), statistical overrepresentation at the highest levels of Australian sport (e.g., Rugby League and Australian Football League) (Light & Evans, 2018), and a deep commitment to caring for extended family, community members, and Country³ (ABC News, 2016a; Durey et al., 2016; Prehn et al., 2022). Moreover, individually, Indigenous people may possess a wide range of strengths akin to those of non-Indigenous people, such as musical expertise, nurturing personalities, intellectual abilities, and a sense of humour.

These characteristics have facilitated the survival of Indigenous people amidst ongoing dispossession and oppression, serving as sources of resilience (Dudgeon, Milroy et al., 2014). Despite this resilience, non-Indigenous Australian society tends to focus on the deficits and dysfunction of Indigenous people instead of highlighting their strengths (ABC News, 2016a, 2016b; Fforde et al., 2013), perpetuating the notion of white superiority and justifying the ongoing structures of colonisation (Wolfe, 1999). This emphasis on deficits is compounded by the practice of generalising undesirable behaviour by one Indigenous person to the entire Indigenous population, rarely occurring when white Australians engage in similar behaviours, which are typically viewed as individual

matters by non-Indigenous Australian society (ABC News, 2016a, 2016b; Fogarty, Lovell et al., 2018).

Scholars propose that one of the most effective ways to move away from the dominant deficit narrative about Indigenous people in Australia is through the adoption of a strengths-based approach (Fogarty, Lovell et al., 2018). Within the Indigenous context, a strengths-based approach successfully has countered excessive deficit narratives. Instances of this shift include health and wellbeing (Brough et al., 2004; Bryant et al., 2021; Tedmanson & Guerin, 2011), children and adolescents (Aitken & Wareham, 2017; Armstrong et al., 2012; Priest et al., 2012), families (Walker & Shepherd, 2008; Whiteside et al., 2016), and in research (Bainbridge et al., 2013). While a strengths-based approach has been applied to specific areas involving Indigenous people, I argue that a dedicated Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework is needed.

Deficit Narratives

To understand the deficit narrative surrounding Indigenous people in Australia, it is essential to delve into its historical origins and underlying purpose. In Australia, the persistent structure of colonisation seeks to justify its existence by marginalising Indigenous people and constructing narratives that depict them as “inferior” compared to white Anglo-Celtic Australians (Wolfe, 1999). This distorted justification finds its basis in perilous settler-colonial ideologies, including concepts of racial hierarchy, social Darwinism, and whiteness (Dudgeon, Wright et al., 2014; Frankenberg, 1993; Moreton-Robinson, 2004). The deficit narrative and damaging characterisation of Indigenous people have been central to the relationship with Anglo-Celtic “settlers” and, later, other Western Europeans, and non-Indigenous Australians.

One notable example where the deficit narrative played a purposeful role is evident in the intersection of oppressive colonial legislation with deficit narratives, specifically seen in the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families, commonly known as the “stolen generation” (Dodson & Wilson, 1997). The belief that Indigenous families were incapable of adequately caring for their children has been one of the most profoundly damaging deficit narratives. The process of forcibly separating Indigenous children from their families to assimilate them into white, non-Indigenous Australian society is documented in the *Bringing Them Home* report (1997).

A second example of deficit narratives concerning Aboriginal people, propagated by the predominately white non-Indigenous Australian nation-state, is evident in contemporary policy (Fogarty, Bulloch et al., 2018). For instance, the “Closing the Gap” initiative focuses on health and wellbeing disparities between non-Indigenous society and Indigenous people (Bond, 2005). Interestingly, in Aotearoa (New Zealand), a similar policy framework was abandoned in the 1990s in favour of a strengths-based approach to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and challenging the Western European deficit narrative regarding Māori (Comer, 2008). However, in Australia, as Fogarty, Lovell et al. (2018, p. 2) explain: “There has been far less work in the Australian context on the subtlety of deficit discourse, the elements of its construction and reproduction, or its potential impacts on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people”.

Some scholars have scrutinised the adverse effects of a deficit approach on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Thurber et al. (2020)

emphasised the issues associated with a deficit approach in statistical research, as it contributes to the construction of damaged identities that become self-fulfilling prophecies. Further, Fogarty, Bulloch et al. (2018) and Fogarty, Lovell et al. (2018) have delved into how deficit discourses persist in policy and impact areas such as health and wellbeing. To counter the deficit narrative surrounding Indigenous people in Australia, scholars propose the adoption of a strengths-based approach to reframe and provide solutions to the problems at hand.

The Strengths-based Approach

Insufficient research has been conducted to explore the multitude of individual and collective strengths exhibited by Indigenous people across Australia. The strengths-based approach, or strengths perspective, emerged in response to deficit-based approaches in social work that concentrate on the shortcomings or illnesses of individuals, families, or communities (Rapp, 1998; Saleebey, 2013, 2023). The strengths-based approach emphasises self-determination and highlights the resources and resilience that individuals, families, or communities possess, even in the face of adversity.

While earlier scholars have used the strengths-based approach as early as the 1950s (see Bartlett, 1958), its development into a more practical and adaptable framework was undertaken by Weick et al. (1989) and later Saleebey (2023). The predominance of deficits in Western biomedical understandings of health prompted efforts to shift harmful narratives and develop the strengths perspective. For example, if a person is consistently defined by their illness, that deficit becomes a defining aspect of their identity (Fogarty, Bulloch et al., 2018).

The central premise of the strengths-based approach is to identify what is working well for the individual or community and build upon it. This involves emphasising the person's or community's positive aspects rather than focusing on perceived deficits (Rapp, 1998; Weick et al., 1989). While the shift in thinking gained momentum within Western social work models of health and wellbeing, its spread into other disciplines has been slower (Saleebey, 2013). When applied to health and wellbeing, practitioners may concentrate on achieving future outcomes and leveraging the strengths individuals bring to a particular problem:

The strengths perspective demands a distinct perspective on individuals, families, and communities. They must be viewed in light of their capacities, talents, competencies, possibilities, visions, values, and aspirations, regardless of how circumstances, oppression, and trauma may have distorted or hindered them. (Saleebey, 1996, p. 297)

To date, the strengths-based approach has been applied in various Indigenous contexts with mixed results (Fogarty, Lovell et al., 2018). It must be noted that its application has generally been haphazard and lacks a clear Indigenous theoretical framework. Developing a widely and consistently used theoretical framework for the strengths-based approach with Indigenous people is crucial. However, considering the diversity among Indigenous people in Australia and beyond, such a framework also needs to be adaptable.

I propose an Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework rooted in an Indigenous standpoint (Foley, 2003) and relevant published literature. My extensive experience,

including a PhD focused on the strengths of Aboriginal men and fathers (Prehn 2021) and subsequent research projects and publications involving conversations and consultations with Indigenous Peoples, has prompted meaningful reflections on strengths-based approaches in an Indigenous context. This theoretical framework is grounded in my expertise as a qualified social worker and Aboriginal Health Worker, accumulating over a decade of experience in Indigenous health, direct practice, policy, research, and higher education teaching social work, sociology, and Indigenous Studies. The strengths-based approach is integral to my social work practice.

This Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework also draws inspiration from Saleebey's (2013, pp. 17–21) approach and six key principles. While Saleebey's approach is valuable and widely cited, it is conceptualised from a Western European—American standpoint and does not adequately reflect an Indigenous world view. I propose six significantly modified key principles for an Indigenous strengths-based approach:

- (1) **Celebrate diversity:** Honour the vibrant strengths within Indigenous communities—cultural wisdom, deep connections to Country, resilience, storytelling, kinship, and art;
- (2) **Embrace growth:** Acknowledge the inherent strength, resilience, and growth potential in the face of adversity, turning challenges into opportunities for profound development;
- (3) **Empower aspirations:** Fuel personal and collective growth in the Indigenous context. Support self-determination. Value the aspirations, goals, and visions of Indigenous individuals, families, and communities;
- (4) **Foster self-determination & collaboration:** Boost self-determination with resources and valued Indigenous voices. Collaboration is key—recognise expertise, knowledge, decision-making authority, and empower through meaningful partnerships;
- (5) **Utilise resources:** Tap into the wealth of Indigenous resources—cultural knowledge, traditional practices, land, networks, support systems, and cultural strengths—to address challenges collaboratively; and
- (6) **Cultural grounding:** Root the strengths-based approach in Indigenous culture, care, and context. Respect world views, including knowledge systems, cultural protocols, values, and ways of being. Engage in culturally appropriate ways for interventions aligned with values and cultural safety.

This Indigenous strengths-based approach centres on an Indigenous world view, inclusive of epistemology (knowledge), ontology (way of being), and axiology (values). It demonstrates various contexts where a strengths-based approach can be applied to Indigenous people.

In addition to the Indigenous strengths-based approach and the six key principles, participating in critical reflection is a valuable process to assist individuals collaborating with Indigenous people in examining, acknowledging, and transitioning from deficit thinking to an Indigenous strengths-based approach (Fook & Gardner, 2007). This process of critical reflection is crucial for contemplating how social positioning (e.g., ethnicity, class, gender) and world view influence our perceptions of Indigenous people (Walter & Andersen, 2013).

Micro, Meso, and Macro Contexts

When examining the strengths of Indigenous people and working to challenge the prevailing deficit narrative, it is valuable to consider the different structural layers where change can occur (Parsons et al., 2017). I propose using a micro, meso, and macro framework to identify areas where change can be achieved. This is particularly crucial in an Indigenous context, given the communal (meso) nature of Indigenous societies, which contrasts with the dominant, non-Indigenous Australian, individualised (micro) focus. A micro, meso, and macro level framework has been successfully applied in evaluating and understanding healthcare (Kapuriri et al., 2007), social justice settings (O'Brien, 2010), and the social determinants of Indigenous health (Carson et al., 2007; Walter et al., 2012). A valuable framework emerges by combining the micro, meso, and macro levels with the Indigenous strengths-based approach's six key principles (see [Appendix 2](#)).

The micro, meso, and macro levels are interconnected and can mutually influence one another concerning Indigenous people. At the macro level, we can examine how governments develop policies and allocate funding for Indigenous women's health. At the meso level, these overarching policies shape how organisations deliver services and determine funding. For example, at the micro level, the interactions between an organisational employee and an Indigenous woman accessing a service are influenced by policy and funding dedicated to improving Indigenous women's health (Parsons & Shils, 2017). Employees' attitudes at the micro level can be shaped by factors at the meso and macro levels (O'Sullivan, 2016). The following sections provide specific examples of applying the Indigenous strengths-based approach at the micro, meso, and macro levels concerning Indigenous people in Australia.

The Micro Level

The micro level focuses on individual interactions but may also encompass small groups. At this level, individuals engaging in areas concerning Indigenous people, such as health workers, counsellors, police officers, or researchers, should engage in critical reflection on their own beliefs, attitudes, and approaches (see Fook & Gardner, 2007). If deficit-based perceptions are present, it is crucial to explore the underlying causes of these perceptions, the purpose they serve, and how power operates (Saleebey, 2013). Addressing these questions can help micro level change and growth for those working with Indigenous people.

By initiating this process of critical reflection, individuals can then collaborate with Indigenous people within an Indigenous strengths-based approach. For example, they can explore the first principle of the Indigenous strengths-based approach, which acknowledges and honours the diverse strengths across Indigenous communities (see above). Through this exploration, strengths specific to the Indigenous person can be identified, such as the resilience demonstrated by maintaining meaningful employment in non-Indigenous Australian society despite the ongoing structural impacts of colonisation. By highlighting and amplifying this resilience, a shift in thinking can occur for both the practitioner and the person they are working with.

The Meso Level

The meso level focuses on organisational contexts and small Indigenous communities or sections of Indigenous communities. At this level, there is ample room for both positive

and negative outcomes. For instance, adverse outcomes disproportionately affecting Indigenous people, such as Aboriginal deaths in custody (Vivian & Roberts, 2019), or Indigenous experiences of institutionalised racism (Perkins, 2019), can be addressed at this level. Some Aboriginal deaths in custody have been attributed to organisational culture and the normalisation of mistreatment of Aboriginal people. At the meso level, “social justice involves changing decisions that did not provide users with the services they needed or, in some instances, were entitled to” (O’Brien, 2010). Applying the Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework at the meso level can lead to positive organisational change.

Another area where the strengths-based approach can be applied at the meso level is the framing of Indigenous culture. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are regarded as sources of strength by many Indigenous people in Australia (Dudgeon, Milroy et al., 2014). Collard et al. (2016), in their work with Noongar (Aboriginal people from the southwest corner of Australia) fathers, highlight the importance of culture, Country, and Indigenous language as components of successful fathering, alongside the support provided by organisations to Noongar fathers.

At the meso level, organisations that engage in the process of critical reflection (reflect, recognise, and change) regarding their interactions with Indigenous people can adopt a strengths-based approach. Canuto et al. (2018), in their research on Indigenous male health service use, emphasise the need for critical reflection to enhance organisational culture and attitudes. They found that the stereotype depicting Indigenous men as “not interested” in their health is misleading. Instead, they observed that Indigenous men are interested in improving their health, but services need to adjust their approach and consider the specific needs of Indigenous men.

The Macro Level

The macro level encompasses governments (federal, state, and territory), policy, national organisations, and international factors. It includes whole Indigenous communities, multiple Indigenous communities, Indigenous nations, and Indigenous activism. At this level, integrating an Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework has the potential to bring about powerful, positive, and meaningful change. For example, when federal, state, and territory governments develop policies concerning Indigenous people, employing the fourth principle of the strengths-based approach framework, emphasising self-determination (see above). This approach is empowering for Indigenous people. Engaging Indigenous people through government committees or steering groups allows them to take ownership of the policies that affect them.

National organisations are another domain at the macro level where a strengths-based approach can be implemented. For instance, the *Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Practice Standards* (AASW, 2023) emphasises the importance of adopting a strengths-based narrative when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The AASW (2023, p. 11) states: “Social workers acknowledge the learnings, strengths, capacities, abilities and contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People make to wider society as an integral part of social work knowledge and practice”.

At the macro level, a third area where the strengths-based approach can be applied are reshaping data collection and research practices concerning Indigenous people (Walter

et al., 2021). Currently, an excessive focus exists on gathering national-level data emphasising Indigenous deficits. For example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics consistently collects binary comparative data between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, offering little solutions (Walter, 2016). These data reinforce the deficit narrative, influencing policy and research directions. Those involved in data conceptualisation, collection, and research involving Indigenous communities could benefit from applying the Indigenous strengths-based approach. This includes exploring how data can align with the third principle, embracing the boundless potential for personal and collective development in the Indigenous context (see above).

The micro, meso, and macro level framework, used in conjunction with the six key principles of the Indigenous strengths-based approach, provides a valuable path for implementing a strengths narrative. The interconnected nature of these levels means that applying a strengths-based approach at one level can affect the others. Achieving meaningful change across all three levels is crucial for shifting away from the prevailing deficit narrative. This change is particularly significant in Anglo-colonised countries like Australia, where tensions between the predominantly white population and Indigenous people persist.

Critiques of the Strengths Perspective

One major critique of the strengths-based approach has been that it is “pollyannaish” or merely disguised positive thinking (Saleebey, 1996, pp. 302–303). However, I argue that the strengths-based approach goes beyond positive thinking as it aims to bring about lasting change by collaborating with individuals to leverage their existing resources, knowledge, skills, and motivations (Saleebey, 2013, 2023). For instance, effectively applying the Indigenous version of the fourth principle—Foster self-determination & collaboration—requires substantial time, energy, and effort. When done successfully, the strengths-based approach advances positive thinking, empowers Indigenous people and communities, and promotes self-determination of their affairs (Canuto et al., 2020).

Critics argue that the strengths-based approach overlooks people’s problems. However, it is crucial to note that understanding and acknowledging these issues and broader social factors contributing to them are inherent to the strengths-based approach. Often, individuals initiate discussions about their problems and experiences when sharing their stories, which is vital for effectively using the strengths-based approach. Practitioners in strengths-based work must actively listen and collaboratively identify the best application of strengths-based thinking to enhance existing capacities (Brun & Rapp, 2001). For individuals facing discrimination and marginalisation, assistance is needed to uncover, highlight, and amplify their strengths, especially in the context of non-Indigenous Australian society, where deficit narratives about Indigenous people have persisted since colonisation.

Conclusion

In this article, I have introduced an Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework. Inspiration is drawn from the abundant strengths exhibited by Indigenous people and

communities, Saleebey's (2023) six-step, strengths-based approach, combined with a micro, meso, and macro level framework, and Indigenous Standpoint Theory. I have argued that this theoretical framework is important to appropriately acknowledge Indigenous people and the remarkable collective strengths they possess despite the persisting structures of colonisation. Redirecting the focus away from excessive emphasis on perceived deficits and towards a strengths-based approach can make the strengths of Indigenous people a defining feature of their lives, fostering feelings of empowerment, appreciation, and value. At the very least, this article adds to the limited theoretical literature on how a strengths-based approach appears when viewed through an Indigenous lens, departing from the typically normalised white and Western non-Indigenous perspective.

Notes

1. The term "Indigenous" is used in this paper to refer primarily to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, unless otherwise stated.
2. In philosophical terms, a person's worldview consists of three components: (i) epistemology, focusing on the study of knowledge and information prioritisation; (ii) ontology, representing our way of being in the world; and (iii) axiology, encompassing individual values. For a detailed exploration of differences in these aspects between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, consult Walter and Andersen (2013).
3. For Indigenous people, the notion of Country holds a unique ontological significance compared to the land or outdoors as perceived by many non-Indigenous Australians. Country, in this context, transcends mere physical space; it embodies a profound connection, shaping their distinct way of being and influencing their understanding of the natural environment (Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

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Appendix 1 An Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework

<p>Identify strengths for each of the six steps at the micro, meso, and macro level. Context:</p>	<p>Micro Level: focuses on individual interactions and small groups within Indigenous communities.</p>	<p>Meso Level: centres on organisational contexts, such as government agencies, community organisations, and service providers. Also, a small, or section of an Indigenous community.</p>	<p>Macro Level: encompasses broader societal, political, and policy contexts. Also includes large or multiple Indigenous communities, Indigenous nations, and Indigenous activism.</p>
<p>1. Celebrate Diversity: Honor the vibrant strengths within Indigenous people and communities – cultural wisdom, deep connections to Country, resilience, storytelling, kinship, and art.</p>			
<p>2. Embrace Growth: Acknowledge the inherent strength, resilience, and growth potential in the face of adversity, turning challenges into opportunities for profound development.</p>			
<p>3. Empower Aspirations: Fuel personal and collective growth in the Indigenous context. Support self-determination, valuing the aspirations, goals, and visions of Indigenous individuals, families, and communities.</p>			
<p>4. Foster Self-determination & Collaboration: Boost self-determination with resources and valued Indigenous voices. Collaboration is key – recognise expertise, knowledge, decision-making authority, and empower through meaningful partnerships.</p>			
<p>5. Utilise Resources: Tap into the wealth of Indigenous resources – cultural knowledge, traditional practices, land, networks, support systems, and cultural strengths – to address challenges collaboratively.</p>			
<p>6. Cultural Grounding: Root the strengths-based approach in Indigenous culture, care and context. Respect worldviews, including knowledge systems, cultural protocols, values, and ways of being. Engage in culturally appropriate ways for interventions aligned with values and cultural safety.</p>			

Appendix 2 An Indigenous strengths-based theoretical framework

<p>Identify strengths for each of the six steps at the micro, meso, and macro level Example Context: <i>The illustrations in italics pertain to the initiation of a therapeutic Aboriginal men's program (please modify as needed)</i></p>	<p>Micro level Focuses on individual interactions and small groups within Indigenous communities</p>	<p>Meso level Centres on organisational contexts, such as government agencies, community organisations, and service providers. Also, a small community or section of an Indigenous community</p>	<p>Macro level Encompasses broader societal, political, and policy contexts. Also includes large communities or multiple Indigenous nations, and Indigenous activism</p>
<p>1. Celebrate diversity Honour the vibrant strengths within Indigenous people and communities—cultural wisdom, deep connections to Country, resilience, storytelling, kinship, and art</p>	<p><i>Many individual Aboriginal men in the community, especially the elders, hold profound cultural knowledge</i></p>	<p><i>Operating as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO), the organisation highly values this cultural knowledge</i></p>	<p><i>The cultural knowledge possessed by the men is valued more broadly across the whole Aboriginal community, but it receives less recognition in Australian society due to a lack of understanding</i></p>
<p>2. Embrace growth Acknowledge the inherent strength, resilience, and growth potential in the face of adversity, turning challenges into opportunities for profound development</p>	<p><i>Some passionate individual men, including those with prior experience in running men's groups, are eager to establish the men's program. Despite limited experience, younger men recognise the necessity</i></p>	<p><i>The ACCHO, well-versed in running therapeutic programs for various cohorts, is enthusiastic about the initiative</i></p>	<p><i>Support for the program is widespread within the Aboriginal community, which currently lacks specific alternative supports for Aboriginal men, despite a history of activism for Aboriginal needs</i></p>
<p>3. Empower aspirations Fuel personal and collective growth in the Indigenous context. Support self-determination. Value the aspirations, goals, and visions of Indigenous individuals, families, and communities</p>	<p><i>Several Aboriginal men aspire to establish a men's group for health and wellbeing, combining strong community and cultural knowledge. However, there's limited experience in translating these aspirations into a sustainable reality</i></p>	<p><i>The ACCHO holds a vision for creating programs tailored to Aboriginal men and has experience aligning them with the unique cultural context of the community</i></p>	<p><i>Adjacent Aboriginal communities in the region also share aspirations to establish therapeutic men's programs</i></p>
<p>4. Foster self-determination & collaboration Boost self-determination with resources and valued Indigenous voices. Collaboration is key—recognise expertise, knowledge, decision-making authority, and empower through meaningful partnerships</p>	<p><i>Several influential Aboriginal Elders and leaders play pivotal roles in the community. Collaboration with them is crucial for the success of the men's group initiative</i></p>	<p><i>The ACCHO, seeking to establish an Aboriginal men's program, maintains a robust relationship with non-Indigenous organisations proficient in developing, facilitating, and evaluating men's programs</i></p>	<p><i>Interest from neighbouring Aboriginal communities adds to the potential for collaboration and resource sharing, although communal self-determination is identified as important</i></p>
<p>5. Utilise resources Tap into the wealth of Indigenous resources—cultural knowledge, traditional practices, land, networks, support systems, and cultural strengths—to address challenges collaboratively</p>	<p><i>The key Aboriginal men spearheading the men's group possess extensive cultural knowledge and prioritise the cultural determinants of health</i></p>	<p><i>The ACCHO boasts various resources, including a profound understanding of local Aboriginal culture, extensive networks, and effective strategies for overcoming adversity</i></p>	<p><i>State government policy aligns with the goal of supporting Aboriginal communities in addressing the cultural determinants of health</i></p>
<p>6. Cultural grounding Root the strengths-based approach in Indigenous culture, care, and context. Respect world views, including knowledge systems, cultural protocols, values, and ways of being. Engage in culturally appropriate ways for interventions aligned with values and cultural safety</p>	<p><i>As a health-care professional, acknowledging the need for a deeper understanding of the local Aboriginal culture is crucial for ensuring culturally safe practices</i></p>	<p><i>At the organisational level, adherence to specific cultural protocols is imperative for program success. Given the ACCHO's expertise, colleagues stand ready to provide support</i></p>	<p><i>Despite the enduring impacts of colonisation, the Aboriginal community remains strong in maintaining their Aboriginal world view, encompassing knowledge, values, and ways of being</i></p>