

Using mcewan, a.,
and tsey, k. (2009) as
a starting point,
explain the
importance...

[Religion](#)



Religion and theology Purpose of spirituality to social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people Emotional wellbeing is the ability of an individual to understand and give meaning to emotions and apply them positively in life. Social and emotional wellbeing among individuals enable them to function positively in every activity. Spirituality compounds social and emotional feelings in the society to a given belief. That is why it is a person's experience or a belief in certain power regarding their existence (VanDierendonck & Mohan, 2006).

As stated in the UN Chronicle (2010), " Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians make up 2. 5 per cent of the Australian population". They suffer the consequences of European settlements and have high death rates and lower life expectancy compared to other Australians. In spite of these setbacks, their spirituality is deeply rooted in their culture and the land enabling them to have high social and emotional wellbeing (UN Chronicle, 2010).

Spirituality among the aboriginals is believed to play important roles in their well being. First, is healing which is part of family and personal health (Gorsuch, 2002). For instance, when an individual is sick, he/she can communicate with the ancestors who have passed on to receive strength. They can also receive mental, emotional and physical healing from their religion. Mental health includes issues such as trauma, parental neglect, depression, suicide and self harm which affect individuals and families throughout their Lifecycle. Therefore, recognizing spirituality is critical to Aboriginal wellbeing and an important factor in developing and implementing health promotion and preventive projects (McLennan et al, 2004).

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Protection is also a point of consideration in their spirituality. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people depend on spirituality for protection. They believe that it protects people from problems by giving them skills and solutions. Also, it unites people, protect the children by being responsible and offers guidance (McEwan et al, 2008).

Spirituality also plays a major role in promoting unity. It brings about family and community unity and wellbeing. Children and adults can consult the elders who are living and those who have passed on concerning issues of peace, conflicts, and problems. A perfect example is the high number of youth committing suicide in the community in order to pass a message to the ancestors and spirits. This brings about a cohesive community and enables each person to take responsibility in family and community life (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000).

It also helps in solving problems. When problems are solved, people gain strength and determination and easily cope with life. Aboriginals depend on the spirits through their ancestors for guidance and support in solving problems in the community (Poroch, 2009).

In most cases, spirituality brings about social cohesion among the aborigines. According to Wilkinson & Marmot (2003), social cohesion is the quality of relationships and existence of trust, mutual obligations and respect in community. It protects people and their health in the society. That is why communities are able to work together and defend their social and economic interests (Wilkinson & Marmot, 2003; McEwan& Tsey, K. 2009).

It also acts as a source of empowerment to this group of people. Considering that they are intimidated by the Europeans, they depend on the spirits to

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give them strength. This is evident through communicating and reflecting on where they have come from with the spirits. At the same time, spirits also enable them to think and empathize with other members of their community. This gives them the power and reason to co-exist and support each other for the development of their community.

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