

Charlie Duke

NAIDOC presentation

Good Morning, my name is Charlie Duke and I am a proud Indigenous woman of the Kamilaroi tribe.

I am here today to speak to you about the importance of Naidoc week. A week not only about celebrating the achievements of Indigenous people within our community, but a week for learning and listening to the messages our culture can teach.

Did you know the Aboriginal people of Australia are the oldest continuing culture in the world? We have been here for over 40, 000 years. I don't know about you, but I think anything that can survive that long probably has some core beliefs that are worth taking note of.

For me, the best value of Indigenous culture is the notion of family. It's easy to dismiss this and say well of course I love my family. But for Indigenous people, family is a lot more than blood relations. It's about community, or as we refer to it, it's about our mob. It's about sharing what you have and helping out the others around you, even if it leaves you a bit high and dry sometimes.

And, although we no longer live in tribes, or work together to survive off the land, this notion of 'providing a helping hand' is very much alive today. Take for example, my brothers are good friends with James Roberts, a football player for the Titans here on the Gold Coast. Now, James just signed a big contract. A deal I'm guessing most of our teachers would kill for. But when he does out with my brothers he's still very cautious of how much money he spends. Why? Because he always has countless family, friends and acquaintances at his house. He helps pay for their dinners, he gives them shelter and cares for them without ever asking for anything in return.

He does this because he has so much and without their support he wouldn't be where he is today. They are his family, regardless of whether they raised him or he has only met them once. This is a common occurrence amongst Indigenous households all around the country.

Now, you're probably thinking, how is this relevant to us? Well, we here at PBC are a family. We are the 'Reds Tribe'. Teachers care for us like parents, your best mates are your brothers and sisters, and the rest of your peers are like your different cousins. But I believe amongst the stresses of school and being young adults, we can sometimes forget that. We start to identify with our differences rather than our similarities. And like any "normal" family, it's inevitable we will have our fair share of blues.

But just like my ancestors 40, 000 years ago, we are part of a trive that's working towards a common goal. We want to finish school and make ourselves the best possible people we can be. So, let's remember to help each other out... because you never turn your back on family.

Happy Naidoc week everybody. Thank you.