

Case study: Sharing stories of inclusion

Cultural Storytime

As part of Harmony Week celebrations, Cultural Storytime brought together volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds to share stories, songs, and traditions with children. This initiative fostered inclusion, cultural understanding, and community connections.

A collaborative project between the City of Greater Bendigo, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural services, and Goldfields Libraries, Cultural Storytime was designed to celebrate Harmony Week and acknowledge the region's diverse communities. Volunteers from various cultural groups, including newly arrived migrants and refugees, were invited to present children's storytime sessions with a cultural flavour.

Activity Preparations

In preparation for Cultural Storytime, volunteers from different cultural backgrounds were invited to attend several storytime sessions at Bendigo Library. These sessions demonstrated how to facilitate storytime and encouraged volunteers to brainstorm ways to share their native culture through storytelling, songs, and movement with pre-school aged children.

Nine Cultural Storytime sessions were held, each highlighting a unique culture and language:

- Indonesian (Bahasa)
- Mexican (Spanish)
- Afghan (Dari/Hazargi)
- South Indian (Malayalam)
- Sri Lankan (Sinhalese)
- Filipino (Tagalog)
- Japanese
- South Korean
- Burmese/Myanmar (Karen)

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Volunteer Reflections

Following the events, an informal meeting was held as an opportunity for volunteers to reflect on their experiences and insights. Many volunteers admitted feeling nervous and anxious before their sessions, as it was their first time engaging in the community. However, they all agreed they felt more relaxed and confident after the initial hurdle of getting started.

Volunteers highlighted the value of Cultural Storytime for both the volunteers themselves and the children participating. They noted the importance of teaching their own children about their cultural heritage, while fostering a positive experience for other children to understand and appreciate other cultures. The children particularly enjoyed learning new songs, with music encouraging them to join in the dance and movement. The activities also offered a fun and engaging way to introduce young children to other cultures, helping them learn about their neighbours' backgrounds before beginning primary school together.

Through this activity, volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were able to make meaningful contributions to the local community, build positive social connections across cultures, and gain confidence in sharing their traditions. It also provided a platform to promote their native cultures in a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Looking Ahead

The volunteers expressed that they look forward to participating in future community activities, recognising the benefits of connecting with their local community, fostering relationships, and engaging meaningfully in shared experiences.

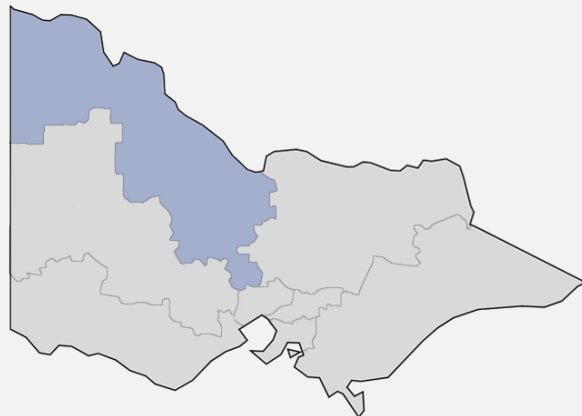
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<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/leading-volunteers/vma-2022-2026/>



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Volunteering Victoria acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.