**Listening all the way - Shared understandings and empowerment**

Deanna McGowan; Roebourne Strong Women’s Group

*Safe Children Make Stronger Children* is a program developed by the inaugural Strong Women’s Group – a collective of local Roebourne women seeking to address critical community concerns such as child sexual abuse and family violence. *Safe Children Make Stronger Children* is a protective behaviours program headed by Deanna McGowan, a local Kuruma woman experienced in family violence, and Anne Mead, a trained psychologist and teacher, that was born out of the desire to create a protective behaviours program overlayed with a strong cultural lens and understanding. The program has been delivered at the local Roebourne primary and secondary schools since 2018 emphasising respect, intuition and problem solving. Two illustrative books have been developed to sit alongside the program, used as a tool by teachers, parents and other family members in understanding and reinforcing protective behaviours. Hear how Deanna and Anne have successfully created a series of innovative culturally appropriate resources to support the children of tomorrow while building community capacity and strengthening families. This initiative brings together creativity and expertise founded on mutual respect and ‘two-way’ communication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together for a strong cross-cultural understanding.

The Roebourne women talk about “Listening all the way”. For us this is listening, sharing interpretations and reading body language with the sole purpose to develop a deep understanding and mutual trust. The needs, wants and concerns of local families are at the forefront for building genuine relationships in the work that we do. We want to develop a future where ‘two-way’ cross-cultural communication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is achieved - Where people are heard, empowered and respected, finding a common ground to work together to ensure no-one is left behind.