

Cascades

Volume 01, 2016 | C&K Building waterfalls magazine



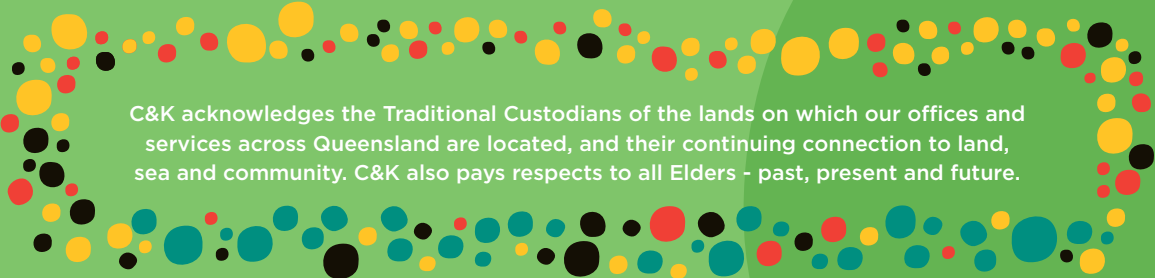
In this issue: Reconciliation

Welcome to the first edition of Cascades for 2016.

The focus for this edition centres around reconciliation and we encourage you to dive in, explore the resources, listen to the stories of fellow educators and think about how you might incorporate some of the ideas into your own work. We have contributions from some very inspiring people right across the board - those who are supporting others, those thinking about their own practice as well as those who are just starting the journey and beginning to think about how they can make a commitment towards reconciliation in their work.

As critical reflection is an integral element of your work as an educator, we have used questions from the recently- launched C&K Reflective Cards to support you in your reflective practices. These questions are scattered throughout this edition. Reflections can be on an individual basis, but may also be used during staff meetings to support reflective dialogue.

There are multiple ways to take the reconciliation journey both personally and professionally. We would like to thank those who have contributed to this very important edition of Cascades exploring some of the issues, and we hope that you enjoy reading and reflecting.



C&K acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our offices and services across Queensland are located, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. C&K also pays respects to all Elders - past, present and future.



Some C&K educators have been exploring ways in which they can do acknowledgements with children. This video shows how one centre in New South Wales has embedded an acknowledgement into their daily routine: www.vimeo.com/144570998

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Learning more about the Stolen Generation and Connection to land



Bob Randall – The Land Owns Us

www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0sWIVR1hXw



How am I genuinely engaging children in conversations about Australia's First Nations Peoples?

What does reconciliation mean to C&K?

A RAP working group, comprising internal and external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and other stakeholders, has been meeting regularly over 2015/16.

The consultation process to develop the actions for this document began with two sessions at the C&K Early Childhood Conference in Brisbane in May 2015. We also asked all C&K staff to consider seven questions about reconciliation and to make submissions during July and August.

Overall, approximately 300 people were directly involved in the consultation process.

The responses to some of the questions in the consultation resulted in the word clouds below. The larger the text, the more people gave that response.

C&K is committed to implementing a realistic and foundational set of actions to build our knowledge and provide a basis for increased commitments in future years and for future plans. You will see in the following articles that the words in the clouds are echoed through the educators' stories.

What does reconciliation mean to you?



What simple actions can C&K take?



Am I being tokenistic?

Doing something is better than nothing

In the workshops that I have been presenting around the state, both in private workshops as well as for organisations, I have listened to early childhood educators and one of the biggest barriers to their confidence in this space, is their concerns around being tokenistic. One of the clear messages I have been giving is that doing something, is better than nothing.

Have an honest conversation and address the elephant in the room rather than walking on eggshells. There can be an oversensitivity in this space from both non Indigenous and Indigenous communities.

I would suggest to educators be brave, take the first step, don't worry what the outcome or end point looks like. Your focus should be on your intent, if your intent is good and you are working towards linking the pedagogical frameworks such as NQS standards and the Early Years Learning Framework, then that is what is important.

Really what is the worst thing that can happen if you get it wrong or it doesn't come out okay? This is a learning process that you are involved in. You might not get it right the first time, but what is the worst that can happen? Your intention needs to be to embed Indigenous inclusion as per your professional roles in Early Years settings.

Another way of thinking about tokenism, is to think about it as a generic approach. That is, a focus on things that are generic to all Indigenous cultures around Australia. An example of that, is that we may explore artefacts like a boomerang and a didgeridoo which are not specific to your local area. They represent general overviews of exploring Indigenous culture. Indigenous cultures in Australia are diverse.

We can work in this space as long as we have a focus on cultures rather than behaviours and a commitment to grow and learn more. Eventually educators are encouraged to move towards a more localised response to embedding Indigenous perspectives in the early childhood setting.

We would then encourage educators to move into a space where they are engaging with the local community. This is reflected in the work required to meet National Quality Standard 6: working in partnerships with families and communities. This is a way of moving towards an approach which is more culturally appropriate through developing partnerships and relationships with local communities.

Educators are encouraged to consider the difference between what a local framework would be compared to a generic, but to take that first step. When we procrastinate and do nothing we go back into the space of staying safe and have no impact on practice or pedagogical frameworks that explore Indigenous inclusion.

Sometimes educators are influenced by discussion that occurs in social media and mainstream media. Take for instance the current debate around 'blackface' on social media. These debates, although important, are not helpful for educators' confidence.



I would encourage you to look beyond all of that, and as practitioners try not to let this fear influence you. Our great work that we do in this space, when we work with intent and are guided by our frameworks, will change these debates and hopefully we will see a reduction in people doing blackface and thinking it is ok.

Look at what has happened with Adam Goodes. Will he still be treated the same way in 20 years? Will 13 year olds still think it is okay to call an Indigenous footballer an ape and not understand how racist it is. If practitioners are paralysed by fear of tokenism this will not change. We can make a difference. We just have to start the journey.

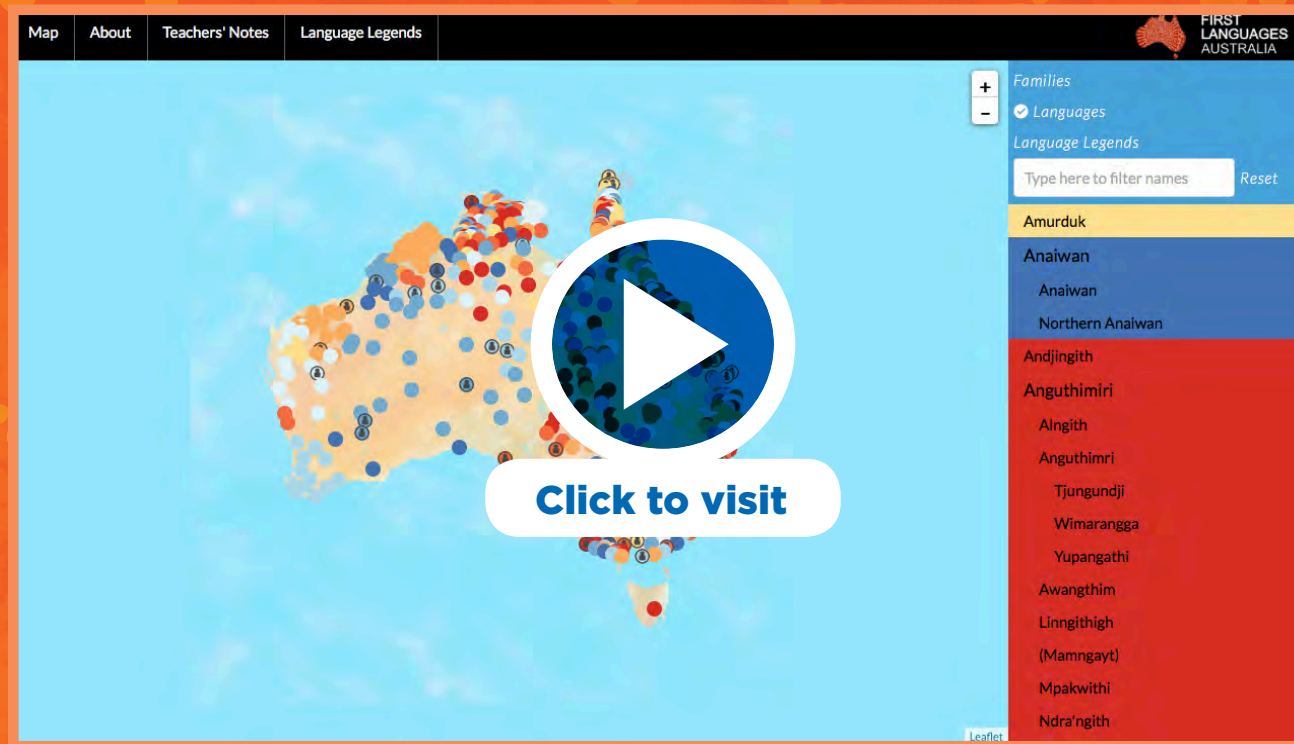


John Briggs
Managing Director
JBC Consultancy



Are we courageous enough
to **challenge the norm?**

First Languages Australia



This interactive language map will help you identify the languages and names and groupings favoured by the community. You may like to locate your service on this map.

www.gambay.com.au/map

Your Cultural Inclusion Journey

- a perspective from the Torres Strait Islands

The question I'm always faced with at our workshops is, "How do I embed Torres Strait Islander perspectives without being tokenistic?" My initial response is always focused on encouraging educators to "do" something which is always better than doing nothing.

Growing up on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait gave me an incredible insight into inclusion and holistic perspectives, from a community point of view. The old saying "It takes a village to raise a child" is indeed the underlying factor to cultural inclusion.

In our community you are not only surrounded by family, extended family members and friends constantly there to support you, but the positive attitude is infectious and sticks with you for life. In the early years this community focus is something that we do quite naturally so inclusion is easy, just take that first step.

4 unique ways to start your Cultural Inclusion Journey

1. First impressions count –

Think about the last time that you walked into a new space; What did you see? How did you feel? What made you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? What made an environment feel sterile or warm? What made you feel like you belonged?

Consider the impression your early childhood service makes when parents enter the front gate.

Creating an aesthetically pleasing space should always start with, recognition of the First Nations. Take a look around your workplace, starting with the foyer and entry. Displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags or artwork is a good place to start, but don't forget to include the children and families in discussions about what they represent and why you are displaying them.

Where possible, resources should be natural and relevant to Australia's history. You could use tropical materials, prints to brighten tables and walls. Decorate with musical instruments and books that children can use, not just look at. And remember it's not just the foyer that needs to show inclusion, the whole service should reflect the diversity of the community.

2. Scaffolding staff awareness –

Start by talking to your educators about what they already know about the Torres Strait. What training have they received in the past, what is their level of understanding or experience with Torres Strait Islander children and their families? Document key learnings and understandings and collate the information for new and existing educators.

Documenting and making this knowledge visible supports in building confidence in this area by documenting what educators already know. This is also a great way to work out their training gaps and identify professional development priorities for the future, as well as to share knowledge within the team.

3. Understanding Torres Strait Islander families and dynamics

One of the comments many educators make when they attend our workshops is how much there is to learn about Torres Strait Islander people and how unique the culture is.

Do you know if any of your families are of Torres Strait Islander descent within your early childhood service? Who are they and what islands are they from? Did they grow up in the Torres Strait or perhaps they have never travelled to the islands. A large number of Islanders do not live in the Torres Strait due to the high cost of living and lack of opportunities in remote areas. Some families may not identify for this reason.

Family always comes first within Torres Strait Islander culture and being connected to your family is a high priority. Respect for Elders is also a highly valued trait in the community, therefore families who have an Elder in their immediate family will not speak out about culture unless permitted by this Elder. Some families will not want to share any stories unless they feel comfortable and accepted by the service as well.

Do the other families in your service know about the Torres Strait Islands? This is a great opportunity to share, learn and walk together on this journey. When families see your service creating inclusive practices in the workplace, they may feel at home and want to open up and share their knowledge.



How do we **acknowledge and celebrate the unique cultures and diversity** of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

4. Children of the Torres Strait

Torres Strait Islanders are very multicultural and originally of Melanesian descent. Therefore, there are a multitude of cultures depending on family values and priorities. I encourage you to explore this with the children in different ways. Firstly, by creating awareness of the cultures and traditions by discovering stories, dance, language, songs and food together. Secondly by promoting inclusion and acceptance by developing relationships with families and community. There are even early childhood services in the Torres Strait that would like to connect with you if you are open to the possibilities.

Explore and walk together on this cultural inclusion journey. But most importantly - Have fun learning and sharing our unique culture.

Join our community at
www.culturalinclusions.com.au

Or Email:
cecelia@culturalinclusions.com.au

Cultural Inclusions provides authentic and educational resources from the Torres Strait to share with the sector. Our primary goal is not only to support people in the Islands but also to sustain the culture and share our experiences with others.



Cecelia Wright
(nee See Kee)
Founder of Cultural Inclusions



Do families feel a **sense of belonging** in our environment?





We can make a difference

‘Here is the land. Here is the sea.
Here is the sky and here is me.
Thank you to country
and I promise to look after it.’

This acknowledgement of country can be heard most mornings at our kindy. When we say the words we are serious. We love to feel the dirt in our hands. We point to the ocean (just over the fence) and stretch on our tippy toes to the sky. Placing our hand on our hearts unites us towards a shared goal of continuing the First Australians work, to care for the land. Our land is something special at C&K Coral Coast at Burnett Heads.

Working towards developing knowledge, skills and dispositions around cultural integrity in regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander understandings, can be a challenge but it is important work.

“We are all unique, all special. No-one is perfect”, suggested Indigenous cultural awareness consultant Grant Sarra at his inspiring workshop recently. He discussed failed Government policies and half-hearted attempts at ‘reconciliation’. He reassured the participants that we are “not the problem”, it is not our fault, but “we are a part of the solution”. As early childhood educators in Australia, we can make a difference.

Theorist, Barbara Rogoff had a sociocultural view of learning. Her theory says that ‘what children learn and how they learn it, depends on what is happening around them’. Activities and experiences in early childhood services form part of children’s culture. I think we will make a difference towards reconciliation.

My co-educator Sarah and myself, recently attended the Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives training (EATSIPEC), which enriched our lives and provided some understanding about Indigenous peoples. We have used our learnings through this program to guide our thinking and planning every day. We are linking our developing understandings about culture, and then considering how to bring children on this journey with us. We would like to share some of our cultural learning and journeys.

We are learning to connect with the land:

Meeting Sharon Lindh (Aboriginal teacher/performer) and spending time with her, impacted greatly on me and my learning. When I told Sharon the story of my favourite tree being cut down, she became very emotional. The tree was home to a family of eagles and I had often marvelled at their beauty as I drove along thinking of a children's story I could write one day. Sharon's connection to the land gave me goose bumps and taught me a powerful lesson.

Grant Sarra consolidated this message when he stated "You hurt the land, you hurt the people". The ancient values of the Aboriginal people of 'caring, sharing, respect' for the land are as important today, as long ago. Our kindy children are learning to; consider their rubbish and put it in the bin, rather than having it blow over the fence into the ocean; respect kindy equipment- it is kindy land too; water the plants; put the insects back in their homes; care for the garden; top up the bird bath; not touch the big lizards; enjoy the flora; listen to the ocean. Children place a rock on their paintings instead of pegging them. At Clean Up Australia day, we gave the school children a drink of water and an award for caring for the land.

Our service has received approval from C&K to run a nature program, in which the children will spend more time outside our fence exploring our beautiful local environment.

We are learning to grow in our connection with the land.

We are learning to connect with our local community:

We are visited by local Aboriginal Elders and our Community Links advisor Dorothy Brown frequently. During these visits we spend time learning through sharing stories, investigating our plants and animals, playing and painting.

We, as educators, are learning to become advocates for cultural inclusion in the community. I hope to be invited to Aboriginal network meetings soon. Educators attend community events alongside our Community Links advisor and hand out material to prospective parents and community members to provoke conversations about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. I write each month for the local community newsletter, sharing our cultural learning.

While learning about the Aboriginal flag recently, Sarah pulled out red, yellow and black Lego for the children to explore on their mats at hello time and conversations about the colours incidentally emerged.



We are learning about culture and developing our sense of identity:

This was illustrated to me when, during dramatic play, the children set up an office. A child asked me if she could take a new C&K brochure home. The brochure has visible symbols of Aboriginality including symbols, pictures of artefacts, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and pictures of children with ceremonial paint. My first thought was, 'No', because it's for the parents to read. I asked the child why she wanted it and she replied, 'because it's beautiful'. I stopped and had my 'light bulb' moment... it is beautiful and it makes sense. This was the child's connection to what she had just learned, the flag, the art, the people, and the land. Later the child told me she keeps it on her own desk in her bedroom.

Another child then wanted one too. Her family is Aboriginal, and when we had our visitors this child was totally engaged, curious about the bush tucker (pig face flower) and showed them the kangaroos over our fence. As we embed cultural awareness, the children connect this understanding themselves.



Linda Stone
Director
C&K Coral Coast
Community Kindergarten

Reference:

(2013) Theories and theorists in Early Childhood Education. Who are they and what did they tell us? Inclusion and Special Support Program (ISSP) and Yorganop (Indigenous professional Support Unit) pg 22
www.ipsuwa.org.au/about/earlychildhood.php



Am I open to and welcoming of new ideas, theories, ways of knowing, being and doing?

Curiosity, awe, wonder and engagement in the learning process – Aboriginal culture

The educators at C&K Banksia Beach Kindergarten, on the coast north of Brisbane, feel very strongly about the importance of reconciliation, and at the very core of our kindergarten philosophy is a respect and honouring of Australia's First Nations peoples in the program.

We feel it important to make our kindergarten a culturally-safe environment where our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families feel acknowledged and understood. We take responsibility for providing a culturally-rich environment where we can share and learn about the traditional custodians of our land, and in particular the rich history and culture of our local Gubbi Gubbi land and people.

In 2015 we invited local Gubbi Gubbi resident Christine Stuart to visit our kindergarten to share her knowledge of the Gubbi Gubbi area, on which we live and play at Banksia Beach. She and her family have strong links to this area dating back many generations. She read her book *Gubbi Gubbi Animal Friends* to the kindy children and shared information about the native animal totems of the area. She showed the children how to make ochre paint from ochre rocks, and allowed them their own hands on experience of this.

She shared some of the Gubbi Gubbi language and taught us the song Warba Warba about the sacred green tree frog. She also shared valuable information with the educators, children and families about Aboriginal culture and local Gubbi Gubbi ways and traditions, so that we now have a much deeper knowledge base of our local area. This information was helpful also in creating our Acknowledgment of Country that we do daily.

The children were eager learners, and were fascinated by this experience. Two children in our group, Maggie and Poppy were particularly keen to keep learning about Aboriginal culture and demonstrated this through their representation of flags.

Our room proudly displays very large Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian flags. We often talk about the flags during the program. On one occasion, Poppy decided to draw an Aboriginal flag of her own accord in the art area. "I've drawn the Aboriginal flag", she explained proudly. She gestured to the flag in the room. I could see she had spent considerable time on this drawing. She explained the meaning of the colours in the flag - yellow for the sun, red for the earth and black for the people, and I could really see she understood its significance.

Poppy drew a hand above the flag. I understood this to be a representation of reconciliation and friendship and a reflection on a previous experience which had occurred during NAIDOC week. Earlier in the year, our class had painted our hands in the Aboriginal flag colours on a canvas in a show of togetherness and acceptance.

Shortly after drawing her first flag, Poppy brought over her second drawing which was of the Torres Strait Islander flag. She had made several attempts at the drawing until she was happy with her representation. You could see she had a real interest in the flags and their meaning. She was so proud of her work and excited to share her knowledge. It was great to see Poppy communicating her understanding in creative art and showing an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

A few days later, while at a celebration we were having for our fathers, Poppy painted the Australian flag. She shared her painting and knowledge of the flag with her dad. Maggie also demonstrated a keen interest and explored drawing flags. Maggie's parents offered to talk to our Kindy class on their time spent teaching in Moa Island, in the Torres Strait. They shared their experience as visitors to the island and the knowledge they had gained about the culture in their time there. This was a valuable experience for our class. They also made up a book and slide show with photos and stories about their time on the island which they shared with the class and this extended the children's learning and interest in the Torres Strait communities and culture.

Learning is a lifelong process and we as educators at C&K Banksia Beach Kindergarten are grateful for the many opportunities we have had to continue learning and look forward to continuing to build partnerships with the community. We are excited about the way our children and families are embracing learning about the Traditional Owners of the land and their culture. WUNYA!



Leanne Telfer
Director
C&K Banksia Beach

Reference:

(2013) Stuart, C., Clark, B. & Clark, S.
Gubbi Gubbi Animal Friends,
Middletons Printing, Caboolture QLD.



Artwork by Poppy, C&K Banksia Beach



What does Reconciliation mean to me and to us as an Early Childhood service?

Early last year an amazing opportunity arose to join an Action Research Project while developing our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The research project was centred around a concept that we have been exploring within our service - 'Standing Up for a Natural Childhood' and our question within this research is "How can we reconceptualise the way children will engage with their local surrounding, so they can truly embody their connection with the land?"

This action research has reignited the desire to connect with, and utilise, the amazing natural bushland behind our kindy. We have planned a visit for some of our educators to go to Cairns and Mornington Island Indigenous Early Learning services to engage in some further consultation and planning.

We want to watch and learn from Indigenous children and educators and observe how they interact and play with the land and the elements! This will help us better understand how we can, with and alongside our children, connect with Mother Earth during nature play as we prepare to introduce our 'Bush Kindy' and 'Family Bush and Beach Walks'.

To further support the action research we will engage in Professional Development with a specific focus on the land and the sea which is relevant to our children and families here on Bribie Island.

The aforementioned projects are helping us to define our approach to reconciliation.

So to answer this very powerful and thought provoking question.... 'Reconciliation what does it mean to me/us as an Early Childhood service' it means all of the above but this has not been the start of our journey.

As a team and community, collectively we have reflected deeply on our core values. Relationships, relationships, relationships are at the heart of our approach, I cannot stress this enough!

Our advice for those who are still dipping their toes, please take heart 'it won't happen overnight but it will happen' as long as you build reciprocal relationships. Listen to the stories of others and share your story too.

Through our listening we heard the voices of our parents, children, colleagues and Indigenous friends say that reconciliation means.....

unity, respect, cohesion, acceptance, healing, moving forward, equal rights, Indigenous history, sharing, actioning, acknowledgement, respect, hope, equality, recognition, understanding, forgiveness





One parent shared, “Cultural awareness plays a big part of reconciliation. If people are more educated about our culture, our history and our struggles, then they can accept and acknowledge the real us. Not the “stereotype” of my people. With all these things combined we all can move forward for a better future especially the generations to come”.

We as early childhood educators should play an important role in reconciliation - we are in a unique position to educate children, families, colleagues, ourselves and the wider community, because the children of today and of the future need to know the history of the land and its First Nations People.

Here on Bribie Island our children know we are on Gubbi Gubbi land and the first people thousands of years ago were the Joondoburri people and that close by, we have middens ‘a place where people would sit and eat their seafood, and the shells were their kitchen scraps’.

Having resources and flags that represent the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, along with artwork is a great start but taking a leap, attending professional development such as Tok Blo Yumi and researching your local area with and alongside your children and families, is showing a true commitment to working towards reconciliation.





We would like to leave you with the words of a respected colleague, a beautiful, inspiring and strong Aboriginal woman April Cunningham who said:

For so long we have learnt the western way and it is time for the western way to learn our way... We also learn a different way to non-Indigenous. We learn through being on the land and Mother Earth. We live and breathe Mother Earth. We are so connected to the land, animals, spirits, earth, people. So understanding this is vital in how we teach. We should not learn about culture; we need to learn through the culture”.



Narelle Dawson
Director/Teacher
Bribie Island
Community Kindergarten



Exploring Reconciliation in early childhood practice



In part one of this two part video, Catharine Hydon talks to three educators about exploring the place of Reconciliation in early childhood education and care practice. It also shows the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in educators work and some practical ways to take action.

www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/e-learning-videos/talking-about-practice/exploring-reconciliation-in-early-childhood-practice/



What do I bring to the role as
an early childhood professional?



Where are there opportunities to
identify and celebrate difference?

SORRY SORRY



Illustrated and written by **Anne Kerr** Cover by **Marda Pitt**

The Journey of the 'Sorry Sorry' book

As I stood nervously waiting at Brisbane Airport, I noticed this young Aboriginal woman coming towards me with a beaming smile and I thought, this must be Marda. It was the first time we had met face to face. We had been communicating via text, email and phone over the last few months. I found myself contemplating the journey that had brought me to this point.

As early childhood educators, we are asked to embed Australian Indigenous culture into our kindy programs. Over the years I had struggled with the HOW of doing this in an authentic and meaningful way. HOW to do it sensitively with respect for a culture that has existed for thousands of years in this land that we call our country?

I had read Dreamtime stories, shown the children didgeridoos, boomerangs and had Indigenous visitors to our service among other things. However, I was searching for a resource that would go a bit deeper, that would generate discussions and nurture young children's understandings of the need for reconciliation.

I consulted with my teaching colleagues, the children from our kindy groups, their parents and Elders from various language groups both local and far away.

'Sorry Sorry' is the result of what collaborating, forming relationships and being open to new perspectives and ways of thinking, looks like.

I felt inspired to write and illustrate a children's book that would fit the criteria that I was searching for. Thus began my journey of reconciliatory understandings. On reflection, the 'Sorry Sorry' book had been waiting to be written. I knew exactly what to call it, and how to do the illustrations and the words became a culmination of all my attempts over previous years.

After talking with a local Elder I had to stop and reconsider my use of the symbolic representations on my cover drawing. I had not even thought to take into consideration the protocols surrounding these. Needing to be sensitive and respectful meant that I would have to find an Indigenous artist willing to do the cover illustration.

That's why I was at the airport meeting Marda Pitt, a Tjungundji woman from Old Mapoon in Western Cape York. Weeks before, I had asked her if she would be willing to illustrate the front cover. She had been so excited. Here I was, at the airport, to collect the painting while she was on a stopover to Sydney. My ongoing friendship with her has humbled me. I look back to the beginning of my 'Sorry Sorry' journey and realise how far I have come and how much I have learnt. As with all good journeys, it is ongoing. I am excited about what is ahead.

I have come to realise that reconciliation is about creating authentic relationships, where the goal is to strive to be together in unity despite differences. As educators, we are modelling this to the children every day.

About 'Sorry Sorry'

'Sorry Sorry' has a simple storyline for a complex issue. It gives hope and in this world, children need hope that complex issues, such as reconciliation, can be resolved if there is a willingness to look at life from another's point of view.

'Sorry Sorry' is a unique resource that opens up conversations that can build understanding and relationships with others. The illustrations are bold and engaging. I am continually surprised at children's ability to connect with the story. I once had a child thrust her finger out at me and demand, 'Why did you do that?' (expressing anger at the treatment of the Indigenous people). I was speechless in the face of her heartfelt outrage. This and other stories I have heard about children's reactions upon reading, have confirmed to me that young children are competent and capable of understanding the need for fairness, caring and sharing – in other words, reconciliation.

The 'Sorry Sorry' book is always on our kindy book shelf. It is read throughout the year. After each reading new discussions are generated and these nurture the children's journeys of understanding that occur. It is a privilege as an educator, to watch these journeys start and continue to grow.

No matter where you are on your journey of reconciliation 'Sorry Sorry' will be a resource that will open up pathways. Every journey begins with a first step. Enjoy.

Date: 4th March 2016
Service: The Gap Kindergarten
Story Title: Sorry Sorry
ISBN: 9781925046687 (paperback)
Subject: Reconciliation – Juvenile fiction.
Australia – History - Juvenile fiction
Dewey Number: A823.4
Cover design: Marda Pitt.
Published by: Boolarong Press
www.boolarongpress.com.au
R.R.P. \$15.95
Author: Kerr, Anne Maxine.
Author Position: Teacher.



Anne Kerr
The Gap Community Kindergarten



Author Anne Kerr meets cover artist Marda Pitt.



Creating possibilities and imagining alternatives!
How do we move beyond the everyday?

Exploring Reconciliation through Children's Literature

18th-20th January 2016

In the lead up to Australia Day, I displayed some materials including maps of Australia, a globe and our three flags, to provoke some interest and discussion about this event. I listened to the children excitedly proclaiming "I live in Australia!" "Me too, but I live in Brisbane and Australia." "I live in Australia and Bracken Ridge!" They were fascinated with the flags, waving them around excitedly and discussing what they liked about the flags.

J explained, "Guess what Miss Liz? I'm not coming to kindy on Australia Day. I'm going to the beach! I'm going to eat fish and chips." Many chimed in, excitedly detailing what they were going to do on that day. Many saw it as a day off to spend with Mummy, Daddy, sisters, brothers and extended families. In essence, a way to relax and indulge in good company, and enjoy the weather we have around this time of year.



21st January 2016

At group time the next day, we looked at the maps, locating Australia and talking about symbols on our flags. After explaining the Aboriginal flag, one child asked, "who are the Aboriginal people?" I pointed to my skin, "see my skin, it's white. White people like me have only lived here for a very short time. The Aboriginal people have been living here for thousands and thousands of years. Australia is their country. They were here first. My ancestors came here on a boat. Ancestors are your family who lived a long time ago, like nanny's nanny and poppy's poppy. They came from countries far, far away. They got on a boat here (pointing to the globe), sailed all the way around here and stopped right here in Sydney. The powerful people in charge, working for the King and Queen, got their flag which looked like this (pointing to the Union Jack) and put it into the dirt and said to the Aboriginal people living there, "This is our land now." I heard some very indignant replies, from the children, "That's not fair!" "That is very, very mean!" "Yes it is, very mean". "So we can see that for Aboriginal people, Australia Day, is not fun. For them it's not about having fish and chips at the beach, it's a very sad day where they lost their homes and their families."

22nd January 2016

At group time on this day, we again discussed the upcoming event of Australia Day. I introduced the book 'Sorry Sorry' by Anne Kerr and Marda Pitt, to revisit this topic in more depth. The children were captivated by this text, demonstrating a very strong emotional connection to the illustrations. "Imagine if someone came to your home and said, "You're not allowed to live here anymore, you have to get out and live far away!" I said. A very passionate child stood up, with her hands on her hips, furrowed brows, shaking her head, "If someone came to my house and pushed me away and took me away from my Mummy, I would say no and give them a big karate kick!"

As the story progressed, the children noticed how people were starting to say "STOP!" to the events that were occurring. We talked about how some people finally said "I'm sorry. I want to get along, let's be friendly. I won't hurt you or let others hurt you anymore." We talked about how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still suffer and hurt from that day long ago and other bad things that have happened since. Some people still won't say sorry for what has happened. At the conclusion of the story, we shared a very touching moment, where one little girl noted the people of different colours sitting in a circle talking together, "They look like us!" and she wrapped her arms around the children next to her. Soon all the children's arms were intertwined in a spontaneous group hug. What a beautiful way to acknowledge and validate the pain and suffering of our past and present, and work towards a more hopeful future of strength and healing.

12th February 2016

On the 12th of February, to commemorate the apology to Australia's Stolen Generations, we read 'Stolen Girl' by Trina Saffioti and Norma MacDonald. Relating back to the previous book we read, the children were very insightful about the suffering endured by the little girl, recalling some of the issues that had occurred in 'Sorry Sorry' They connected with her emotionally, empathising how it would feel if they were taken away from their families and if they had to go through the treatment she had.

L: "Look at her beautiful dress, they took it away. That's so sad, her Mummy made that dress."

J: "She has to work all day. Children are s'posed to play, not work."

E: "This story is making me really sad. She just cry all day and all night."

A: "No-one is taking me, I give them a karate kick!"

L: "She's running away 'cause she misses her Mummy!"



The children amazed me with their insightful comments, demonstrating their capacity for empathy and compassion to this sensitive but very important issue.



Elizabeth Keswell
C&K QUT Carseldine

Reference:

(2011) Saffioti, T, *Stolen Girl* Magabala Books, South Australia



This land is mine



This song and film clip are a collaboration between musicians Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody, exploring two different perspectives around land ownership.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qok6YM3E1z8



How do my own **world views, beliefs and assumptions** influence my teaching practices?

C&K has a history of commitment to reconciliation over more than a century of work in early childhood education and care. Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives throughout our early childhood programs honours this legacy and ensures that we are working to create a fairer, more respectful and just community for all of our children, today and into the future.

As educators we hold a critical role in advocating for a deeper understanding of cultural integrity, advocating positive attitudes, learning about diversity in family context and strengthening relationships with our communities and their families.

C&K has a commitment to ongoing learning and reflective practices. C&K also encourages all educators to be cognisant of the Building waterfalls qualities of character (p.9) including courage, resilience, trust, respect, honesty and compassion in their work. These qualities are of particular importance in working towards reconciliation.

We encourage our educators to reflect on their knowledge of the varied and rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, from a contemporary and historical perspective, and commit to further developing these understandings.

Educators are also asked to work to develop respectful connections within the community, create inviting environments and encourage interactions with children that reflect an inclusive, culturally-safe learning community.

Strategies to embed respectful practice:

- Reflect on your understanding of culture, particularly your own culture and how your world views influence that understanding
- Examine your own understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture
- Understand the 'country' your service is on, the history of your area and its language groups
- Identify who in your local area are the significant Elders or persons you can connect with and invite into your service
- Display an Acknowledgement in your foyer and three Australian flags
- Take time to communicate with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in your area
- Provide respectful resources and non-tokenistic activities throughout the year that reflect the culture of our country
- Engage in professional development to build capacity in cultural integrity
- Listen to families and community (offering a cuppa can help to get the conversation flowing)

When educators' daily practice demonstrates their own commitment to working with cultural integrity and to supporting families, a mutual two-way respectful relationship develops through knowing, seeing and living.



Dianne Homer
C&K Principal Advisor
Inclusion and Wellbeing

Reference: C&K (2011) *Building waterfalls; a guideline for children's teaching and learning in Kindergarten*
Newmarket: Creche and Kindergarten Association Inc.

Helpful links to support your journey on increasing cultural competence:

Closing the Gap Report:

www.dpmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/Closing_the_Gap_2015_Report.pdf

Culture:

www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-indigenous-cultural-heritage

Languages:

www.gambay.com.au

Protocols

www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/protocols-for-consultation

Health:

www.kidsmatter.edu.au/atsi-resources/search

Fostering Culture:

www.snaicc.org.au

Reconciliation:

NarraGunnaWali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning
www.reconciliation.org.au/schools/

Professional Development:

www.workforce.org.au

Resources:

The Budburra books
www.budburrabooks.com.au

Can be purchased directly through the Ration Shed rationshed@bigpond.com

Ration Shed Education resources
www.rationshed.com.au/education/edu-store/



National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples

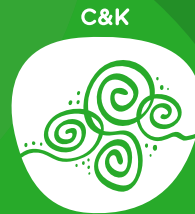


On 13 February 2008, the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a landmark speech apologising to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia for past injustices committed by Government. This speech has become part of our joint history and an important milestone in the movement for reconciliation

www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3TZOGpG6cM



Feeling culturally safe
begins as we walk through the gate.



Building waterfalls

Contributions

Articles appearing in *Cascades* are contributed to by C&K educators.
Guest contributors will also appear from time to time.

Cascades is compiled by the C&K Education, Inclusion and Wellbeing team.

If you are interested in writing an article for *Cascades*, please don't hesitate to contact education@candk.asn.au



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