



Cultural Connections Booklet



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This cultural connections booklet has been created to complement and introduce some of the materials in your *Cultural Connections Kit* and to help you and your team engage in some of the key topics surrounding 'respect of diversity' and 'cultural competency' in the early childhood education and care sector.

All of us want to ensure that the children and their families, who attend our services, feel welcome, enriched and settled. Because of the rich diversity of our communities, it is important we support children to be able to grow and flourish in a multicultural society.

Cultural Connection Kits:

In your kit you will find a variety of resources, including a mixture of:

- Puzzles
- Story books
- Puppets
- Dolls
- Games
- Musical Instruments
- Dress ups
- Cultural Treasure Chest DVD.
- Resource and Information sheets

However, cultural competency goes far beyond what resources we have in our service. It's about the relationships we make, the way we connect with others and our attitudes.

"Often when we talk about 'cultural competency' people often think where to get resources from, how to get Aboriginal people to come and tell stories, do dances, where to go to get puzzles and so on. What is important to stress is that this is secondary" (Yorganop)

Inside the booklet you will find a series of practical examples, stories, reflective questions and staff exercises. You will also see ideas on how to use the resources in your kit in a meaningful way.

Some things that may be useful to bear in mind when using this resource:

- Culture changes over time and members of different cultural or ethnic groups will not always think and act in the same way
- Cultural considerations are relevant to all children, whether or not their cultural identity is the same as the dominant culture
- As cultural competence is a reflection of combinations of what we know, what we want to know and what we can pass on, cultural competency becomes an integral part of a continuous learning process
- Cultural competency is a life long journey, not a destination and it varies from moment to moment and from situation to situation.

This resource focuses on cultural diversity in general. Clearly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people occupy a unique place in our nation as the original custodians. While examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences have been given, we strongly urge you to access materials and resources written by Indigenous organisations. A list of these can be found in the resource sections of this booklet.



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Introduction

Research¹ shows that:

- Children as young as 3 years old and sometimes earlier can show prejudice behaviour and attitudes.
- Evidence proves that children are affected by the attitudes and behaviours of adults around them.
- Educating children reduces discrimination and violence in society over the long term.

It is at these early stages in their lives, where we as Educators can play a significant role in planting seeds of tolerance, compassion and understanding that will contribute towards the creation of a more harmonious society for the future to come.

'Respect for diversity' and 'cultural competency' are key aspects of the National Quality Standards (NQS), the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Framework for School Aged Care (FSAC). There is also increasing evidence to show that supporting children to follow their cultural traditions and to participate in cultural activities enhances their wellbeing and can contribute to their resilience, social confidence and protection from prolonged isolation, emotional trauma or exclusion.²

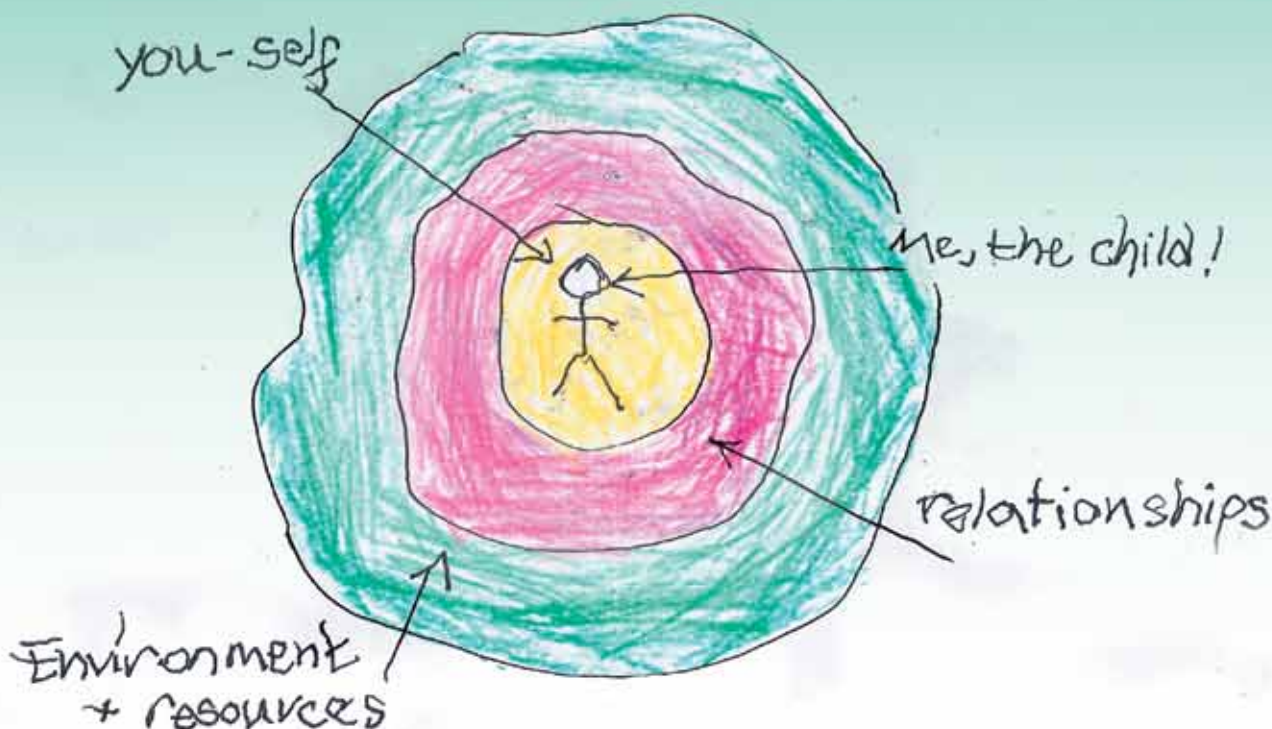
Given that these topics are complex and cover such a vast array of areas, we have chosen to consolidate the research in the field and structure this resource into three key areas:

- Self
- Relationships
- Environment & Resources

Culture is 'the fundamental building block of identity' and is essential for children's sense of being and belonging. (Educators Guide EYLF 2010, 21)



This symbol highlights how some of the resources in your Cultural Connection Kit are relevant to the text.



What is Culture:

According to Aboriginal leader Dr. Alf Bamblett *'culture is to people as water is to fish – we take our own culture for granted as it is part of our identity and part of our very being'*.



(Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework. Copyright State of Victoria 2008, Victoria Aboriginal Child Care Agency 2008).

Australia is home to people from over 200 countries, providing children with many opportunities to learn about cultures³. However, **'culture' is not limited to a person's ethnicity.** It is related to **'who we are on the inside.'**⁴

'Culture is transmitted through families, language, communities, within generations and from one generation to the next'.⁵

*'Cultural identity is not just an add-on to the best interests of the child.....Your culture helps define **how** you attach, **how** you express emotion, **how** you learn and **how** you stay healthy'.⁶*

'Educators who are culturally competent respect multiple ways of knowing, seeing and living, celebrate the benefits of diversity and have an ability to understand and honour differences (EYLF p.13)

Cultural Competence

For many educators, cultural competence is a new and perhaps unfamiliar area of focus. The EYLF describes cultural competence as:

'Much more than awareness of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures'.⁷

Cultural competence encompasses:

- Being aware of one's own world view
- Developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- Gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views
- Developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures.

The EYLF Educators Guide (2010, 25-26) describes cultural competency as a journey that encompasses skills, knowledge and attitudes. It highlights the need for cultural competency to filtrate through three levels- the individual, the service level and the systems level.

'The ability to identify and challenge one's own cultural assumptions, one's values and beliefs. It is about developing empathy and connected knowledge, the ability to see the world through another's eyes, or at the very least, to recognise that others may view the world through different cultural lenses.'⁸



Reflections of Diversity through the Curriculum

The program should recognise and incorporate the diverse cultures, languages, beliefs and values of families, the community and children. Educators who are knowledgeable about the culture and languages that children bring to school are then able to provide resources, experiences and interactions that reflect children's everyday lives. However, **a multicultural approach is relevant regardless of whether the children are from diverse cultural backgrounds or not.** Educators need to work consciously to assist children to recognise their own worldview and to build their competence to interact within cultures of larger society⁹.

*'Being familiar with the rich and long history of Australia, including our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures is essential and enriches us all.'*¹⁰.

*'Belonging, being and becoming are integral parts of identity. Children learn about themselves and construct their own identity within the contexts of their family and communities. This includes relationships with people, places and things and the actions and responses of others. Identity...is shaped by experiences.'*¹¹



Where do I start?

'Educators need to be aware that they pass on their personal values to the children in many ways, including through the curriculum choices such as topics, language, activities, materials, celebrations, displays and in their interactions with others.'¹² **'Omissions can be just as destructive as stereotypes and inaccurate information.'**¹³ Therefore, educators need to firstly consider their own values, beliefs and attitudes related to diversity and acknowledge and address any bias they may hold (EYLF Educators Guide 2010)

How do my biases affect the children I work with?

Self-reflection

What way do we as Educators respond to discrimination?

Think about how you and your service handle discrimination by checking out this list. Which of these approaches do you use most often?

1. **Head in the sand** - We try to ignore discrimination and prejudice, our own and what's around us.
2. **Giving out** - We tell children what to think. We don't really spend time discussing things with them.
3. **Making space** - We help children explore what they think and feel as well as telling them our views.
4. **Getting support** - We find out more about things we are unsure of, or unfamiliar with, by talking, discussing, and finding out, so we get a clearer idea of where we stand.
5. **Seeing the big picture** - We make links between our experiences and between different types of prejudice and discrimination. We discuss these issues with the children.

What might the results be of each approach?

As Educators we may move between these different approaches in our everyday lives. Each approach has a different effect on your relationships and on the children's development.

1. **Head in the sand** - Children don't learn to think about or deal with the issues (and are less likely to question what they hear from other people). Opportunities for building relationships and learning are lost.
2. **Giving out** - Children may feel that their views are not important and opportunities for building relationships and skills are lost.
3. **Making space** - Children develop skills, confidence and conscience.
4. **Getting support** - Educators develop skills, confidence and a clear understanding.
5. **Seeing the big picture** - Children and educators are able to make links between their lives and the lives of other people.



Guiding children to respect diversity:

*'Children need to be taught to respect, appreciate and positively interact with people who are different from them. There are no simple solutions or easy answers to complex challenges such as discrimination, culture, prejudice or multiculturalism. Educators need to be committed to designing and implementing culturally relevant and enriching curriculum whilst teaching children to reject bias and stand up for themselves and others who may be experiencing discrimination.'*¹⁴

*"We may think that events happening in the world do not reach young children. But to the contrary, children if given the opportunity can raise issues that can appear very complex for discussion, such as racism."*¹⁵

Example

An example of practice:

'A child from South Africa was talking to his friends about the apartheid and about Nelson Mandela. He was very aware of the unfairness of apartheid and its meaning. His friends, though interested, could not grasp the idea. They had no information or experience of it.'

I decided to do a short story where Sipho, the black South African doll, explained why his parents came to live and study in Australia. After the story we 'did apartheid'. We used the colour of eyes and long and short hair to re-create a situation where the children could talk about similarities and differences and what it can feel like to be treated differently. We talked about how it affected us, the things we could do, the friends we could not have and the places we could not go, how we felt, and how fair or unfair it was. (Creaser, B and Dau, E. The Anti-bias Approach in Early Childhood 1998, 168)

The example above illustrates how an educator proactively came up with an activity to assist the children to further explore the harmful effects of the apartheid. The activity created an experience for the children to feel what it is like to be treated differently or unfairly. Such an activity can be effective, yet needs to be facilitated carefully. For more information visit www.janeelliott.com

It is not uncommon for us to feel discomfort when dealing with children's ethnic and racial identity and bias.

'There is a tendency to ignore these issues, either in the hope they will go away, or because of the mistaken notion that bias and prejudice is made worse by paying attention to it. Children's concerns and attitudes about ethnic and racial differences are real and intense. You have a small window of opportunity to prevent these normal concerns and attitudes from becoming deeply ingrained prejudices that are invulnerable to change. If you cannot truly engage children and deal directly with this content, this opportunity is lost.' (Klein & Chen 2001, 127)



Example

Beauty- A white Fantasy:

A study conducted by Mundine and Guigni illustrated how children exclude and include each other from conversations and play depending on perceptions of beauty and by creating a hierarchy of skin colours and cultures'. (K. A. Mundine & Guigni, M. *Diversity & Difference: lighting the spirit of identity* 10, 2006)

- Language such as 'black skin' was used to exclude children from friendship groups
- Clothing was a basis for including and excluding children from friendship groups
- Knowledge of popular culture was used to include and exclude children from friendship groups

'This raised questions for us about the complexities of interest-based learning approaches, especially when children use dominant images from popular videos, songs and stories.'
(K. A. Mundine & Guigni, M. 11, 2006)



Helpful tips in challenging discriminatory or bias comments from children:

- **Respond immediately:** the child will have a better understanding of the response if it is given immediately. Never ignore a comment or a question that appears bias or discriminatory.
- **Respond simply** – try not to use complicated language and be honest in your answers. Show an awareness of the child's age and stage of development
- **Respond authentically**- always use honest answers and correct information. Children should not be ridiculed or chastised for what they say if it does reflect bias attitudes, but children need to be given the correct information. ¹⁶
- **Talk about your own experiences.** Share a story of a time you felt excluded, how you resolved the issue and what you learnt from it. Invite the children to make comments. You can guide them to imagine how they would have felt in such a situation, how they would have responded, what they would have expected the outcome to be.
- **Encourage children to think though the consequences of discrimination.** Find examples children can relate to in books and through personal experiences in their own lives.



In your Cultural Connections Kit you will find a range of resources and books that offer a great opportunity to explore with children ways of facing challenging situations and how we can find ways to help us to stand strong.



- **Model inclusive behaviour.** Children observe behaviours of adults and from this learn appropriate or non-appropriate ways of being and doing. Be conscious of your interactions with others and the words you use.
- **Don't pretend.** It's OK to say 'I don't know the answers to your question' when you genuinely don't know. This gives Educators and children an opportunity to learn together.
- **Support children** hurt by discrimination or prejudice by listening carefully to what they have to say, be positive about their identity and give them comfort.
- **Encourage children** to act and challenge discrimination.
- **Point out** how interesting and positive differences are.
- **Ask questions** and listen rather than give 'lectures.'¹⁷

Reflections

'We have no children from those backgrounds here'

- Even if your centre appears to not have children of different ethnic backgrounds attend, how do you bring discussions into the program that explore similarities and differences and issues relating to social justice?
- How can you engage children in discussions that could help change the rules about who can play and why?
- How can we share stories and understandings about Australia's First Peoples, about injustices that took place and about others who have journeyed here?

'Appreciating differences should not be limited to dealing with children's individual differences, but should be incorporated into the curriculum. For example, take children on walks and pick up leaves and stones and talk about how they are different. Read books and show pictures of different animals and help children talk about how they are different...the possibilities are endless.' (Klein & Chen 2001, 127)



Suggestions:

- **Concept of skin colour:** Have children mix white, yellow, brown and red paint to try to match their own skin colours. Talk about the concepts of lighter and darker, as well as different colour shades and hues such as golden brown, tan, peach, rosy pink, ivory and so on.
- **Black beauty:** Think of how colours brown and black can be referred to in positive ways such as 'the horse in this story has a beautiful black mane'. Counteract as best you can the most universal notion that 'white is good' and 'black is bad.'¹⁸
- **Teachable moments:** utilize spontaneous opportunities to talk with children about cultural, racial and any other similarities and difference in a positive way.



Many of the resources in your *Cultural Connections Kit* will allow you to explore deeper issues with the children. Use of the resources and sensitive conversations will encourage them to connect with feelings of empathy and fairness. For example, reading a book about the experience of a family changing countries whether by choice or by force (e.g. to flee war) could be used to explore the common theme of 'changing environments' e.g. what does it feel like: changing bedrooms, moving house, moving rooms etc.



Encourage children to engage deeply with the story by asking questions such as 'what do you think it would feel like if.....? What would you do if you were the person in the story.....'



Use the puppets in your kit to help children understand and develop compassion and empathy by being able to view things from another's point of view. Develop an animal habitat to help children learn about taking care of animals and the environment (for more information see the 'Using Puppets' sections).

- **Exploring the lands:** Together with the children in your service look at maps of Aboriginal Australia and colonial Australia. Use this as an opportunity to talk about how Australia has changed over time. View the maps (<http://www.dia.wa.gov.au/en/Information/Maps/> and <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/asp/map.html>)



In your *Cultural Connections Kit* you will find a book that will give you an insight into elements of Aboriginal dreamtime, cultures and family stories. To complement the story you could highlight the diversity of Aboriginal cultures across Australia and create a big display board that shows the different cultural and language groups. You could then represent the backgrounds of the children in your centre (e.g. where they were born, languages they speak, where parents are from etc).



Suggestions:

- **Story time:** Encourage stories and discussion that acknowledge the diverse society we live in Australia.



Use the resources in your *Cultural Connection Kits* to open discussion around other cultures. For example, you could explore the different ways people live their lives in other countries and within Australia, the different jobs people may have, different lifestyles they may lead and different environments they may spend their time in etc.

- **Honouring:** Acknowledge the traditional landowners of Australia and be open and honest in exploring harmful policies that existed in the past.
- **Celebrating:** Acknowledge the contribution of migrant communities to Australia's culture and economy.



Role-play is an important part of children's development. It allows exploration of emotion, language, creativity and imagination. Children may use dress ups to explore a particular topic or theme, and to express their understanding of various social environments.

- **Discovering:** Develop curiosity about unfamiliar customs, for example once a week, have an activity call 'try it, you'll like it!' Bring in an unfamiliar food, game, or type of clothing. Encourage the children to try and experience and describe their reactions. Talk about how it takes time to enjoy unfamiliar things, and how if you don't try, you can miss out on something good. Encourage children and parents to contribute things from their own family and communities. (Adapted from Klein & Chen 2001, 128).



You may find the resources in your *Cultural Connections Kit* help you to explore other aspects of life, such as the natural world, cultural celebrations and food. By introducing the children to a simple activity such as grinding herbs and spices from around the world- this could stimulate curiosity and conversation. You may find you discuss fragrances, textures, origins of products and recipes.

View the ***Cultural Connection Kit*** 'Resource Information Sheets' for further activity ideas.



Johari's Window –revealing those blind spots

Seeing how our own perceptions and attitudes can affect the way we respond to discrimination is key if we want to equip our children with the skills to grow up successfully in a multicultural society. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we all hold some kind of prejudices or ethnocentric attitudes (see appendix for definitions).

Those beliefs we hold that we may not be aware of are often referred to as 'blind spots.' Johari's window is a tool commonly used to show where our blind spots are. We can decrease our blind spots by being more self-aware and inviting open feedback from others.

Below are two case scenarios that help illustrate how 'blind' our own perceptions can affect the way we respond consciously or unconsciously to discrimination.



Case Scenario 1:

An Educator was asked to reflect on the children in her group- were any children from a culturally diverse background? To the visitor it was obvious that one young girl was from an Asian culture. The Educator responded by calling out to a young boy “*Brayden were you born in New Zealand or Australia?” Brayden was unable or chose not to respond. The Educator informed her visitor that Brayden always supports New Zealand in the rugby. This was the Educator’s only response.

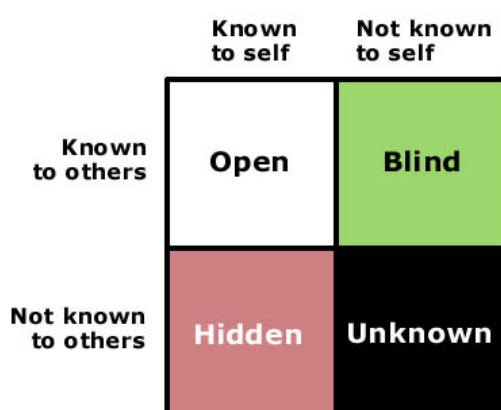
As the visitor left the service, she referred to the young girl, who had remained at the one activity throughout the 1½ hour visit. The Educator’s responded “Oh *Kim, she’s just learnt English, but she’s no trouble she keeps everything clean and tidy for me”.



Reflection:

- Looking at the diagram of Johari's window, consider the educator's response to the question she was asked. According to her understanding and views, which quarter would she be positioned in?
- What may the Educator's response have been if she was positioned in the 'open' quadrant of Johari's window?

The Johari Window

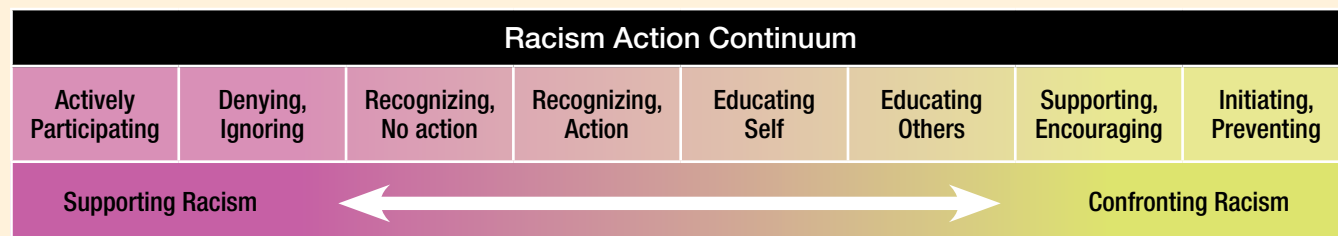


Understanding your own racism and personal prejudice

It is not uncommon nowadays to hear the phrase 'I'm not racist but....' followed by a racist comment or statement that generalizes people in a negative manner. A common example is families and children of refugee background being referred to as 'boat people' or 'queue jumpers.' (Refer to 'myth busting resource' p.g.30) There are many different forms of racism and racist attitudes can manifest in different ways including stereotypical assumptions and xenophobia (refer to Appendix for definitions).

Contemporary Racism

In recent years, notions of nationhood have emerged as modern expressions of racism. These racist beliefs are based on the view of who the 'real' Australians are and in which minority cultures are regarded as alien and a threat to social cohesion. It consists of assumptions where the customs and beliefs of the dominant group in society are presented as the norm.



Actively participating: Telling jokes, putting down people, intentionally avoiding people, discriminating against, verbally or physically harassing

Denying: Enabling oppression by denying oppression. Does not actively oppress, but by denying that oppression exists, colludes with oppression

Recognising, No action: Is aware of oppressive actions by self or others and their harmful effects, but takes no action to stop this behaviour. Inaction is the result of fear, lack of information, confusion.

Recognising, Action: Is aware of oppression, recognizes oppressive actions of self and others and takes action to stop it.

Educating Self: Taking actions to learn more about oppression and the experiences and heritage of others. Joins organisations that oppose oppression, attend social action and social change events.

Educating Others: Moving beyond only educating self to question and dialogue with others too. Rather than only stopping oppressive comments or behaviours, also engaging people in discussion to share why you object to a comment or action.

Supporting, Encouraging: Supporting others who speak out against oppression or who are working to be more inclusive by backing up others who speak out, forming an allies group, joining a coalition group.

Initiating, Preventing: Working to change individual and institutional actions and policies that discriminate, planning educational programs or other events, working for legislative change, being explicit about making sure that organizations are inclusive.



Reflective questions:

‘Unpacking the things that make us squirm’

Where do you sit on the above continuum?

- Can you think of specific times when you have been at different stages?
- How does your stance change depending on your setting and who you are with? e.g. at a party or social gathering, talking to parents, in a professional setting etc.
- What human differences make you most uncomfortable as and Educator

Suggestions:

Self Education:

Develop your awareness of history and past injustices to help further your understanding on certain subjects and to help explain why things appear to be the way they are.

- How can you open up discussions about identity and create opportunities to challenge myths that stereotype?
- Consider how you perceive and discuss issues in regards to others from different cultures.
- How can you increase your knowledge of past injustices e.g. stolen generation, issues relating to refugees and detention centres and migration policies?





Suggestions:

Engage in critical thinking:

The TV, radio, and newspaper are all powerful mediums that can impact and mold our judgments and opinions on certain subjects. Very often they do not portray a story in a neutral manner, but rather from a particular political stance or agenda. Rather than adopting the view of what you read or see without any hesitation it can be useful to ask some questions about what you are presented with:

- Who is telling this story?
- Why is the story being told, who's interests are being served?
- What might be left out?
- Who holds the power here?
- Why is this picture used?
- Why are these words chosen?
- What is *not* being shown?

Thinking about equity:

There is an increasing emphasis for us to address issues of equity and access in our policies and procedures. In order to do this effectively and in a meaningful way, you and your service need to have a common understanding of what will and won't be tolerated in your service in terms of discriminatory practices.

For ideas on where to go to explore any of the above issues refer to resources on page 33.

As Sims (2009) states,

....Educators often struggle with the concept of fairness. Fairness is about equity, and for some, equity means all being treated the same. However, we know that treating every child in the same way is not equitable. All children have different needs, and treating them all the same actually ignored the needs of many.'

'Inclusion is not just what you do but also the spirit behind what you do- how and why you do it. To do it well, inclusion must be embraced enthusiastically rather than approached as something you have to do.' (Sims 2009)

Staff Activity

Getting creative to explore the stickier stuff!

Here is a creative activity to help you and your service explore what 'Discrimination' looks like in your centre. This can also be a useful exercise that can inform your policies and procedures:

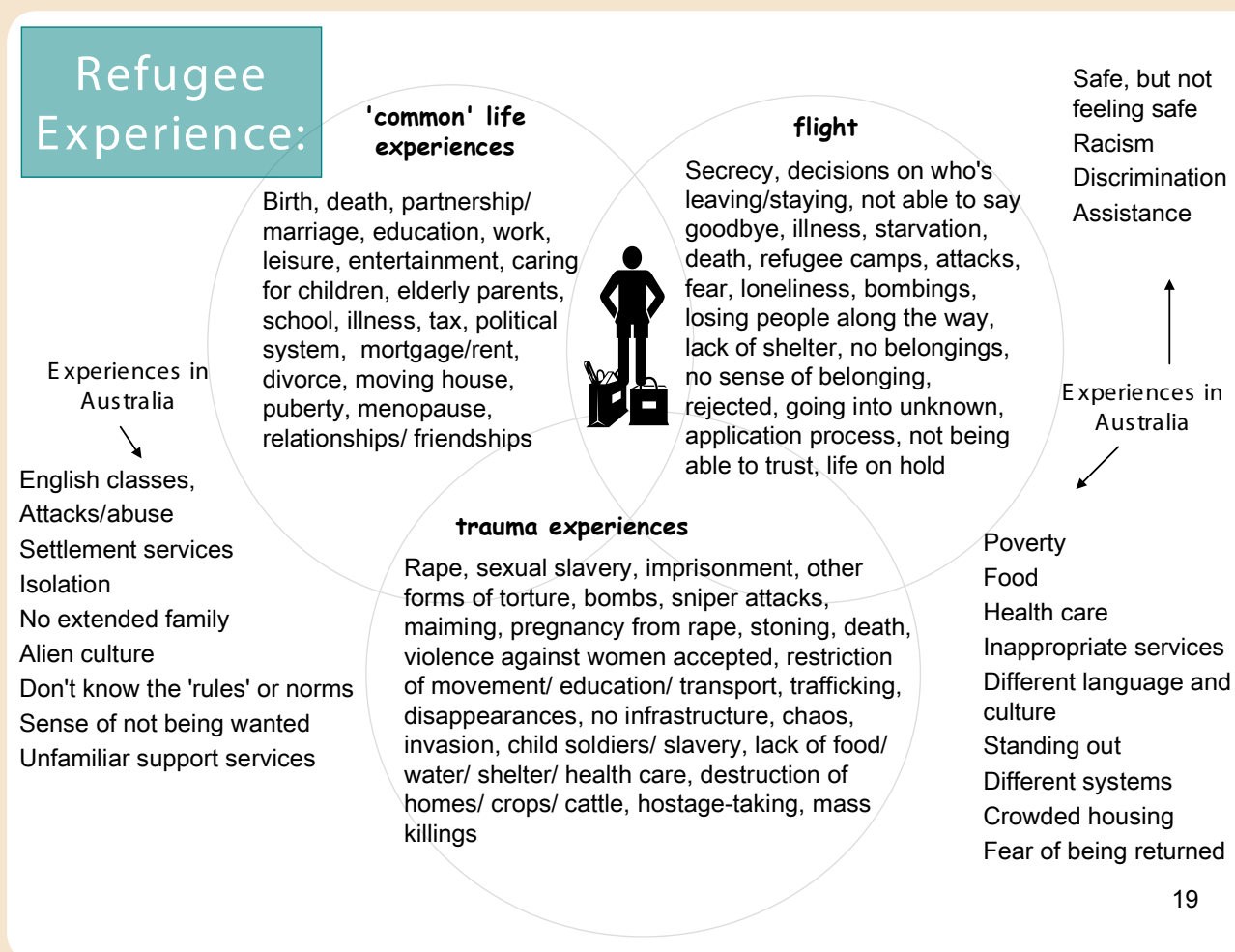
- **Describe 'it':** On some butchers paper using your own words, jot down some words of what you think 'Discrimination' looks like.
- **Name 'it':** How do you know when 'it' is in your centre?
- **Draw 'it':** What does 'it' look like? 'Does he/she/it go by other names?'
- **Familiarize yourself with 'it':** How do you know when it is around you, the children, their families, other staff and in the wider community? What are the signs that let you know 'discrimination is around?'
- **Reveal 'it':** Does 'discrimination' have different types of behavior? E.g. verbal or visual e.g. does s/he make others ignore one another, act mean, name call?
- **Stand up against 'it':** Together in your team decide as a collective group what you will and won't allow.
- **Prevent 'it' from returning:** Explore how anti-discriminatory practices can be included in the policies in your parent's handbook.
- **Take a stance and protect others from 'it':** Ensure these strategies are clearly communicated to parents/ families at enrolment.

Having an understanding of the broader issues faced by many families can help us develop a more empathic stance in our interactions with them. In the long run this will help us in building more secure and respectful relationship. This can also encourage us to remain flexible in our approach and service delivery to better accommodate families' needs.



Staff Activity: A Refugee experience

Below is a diagram to illustrate some of the circumstances families and children of refugee background face pre and post arrival to Australia. It helps illustrate how some families may be legitimately focused on day to day survival.



Reflection:

- Having an awareness of these issues, how may they potentially impact the way you communicate with the family, the expectations you may have of the parents and the way you try to build a relationship with them?
- Think back to a time when you visited a new unfamiliar place, a country where you could not speak the language or when you were surrounded by a group of people you did not know.
 - What did it feel like?
 - What things would have helped you feel more at ease?
 - How can you apply some of these ideas to your service setting?
- What are some of the challenges that can be caused from poverty, addiction, dislocation and trauma?
- If parents are suffering from such circumstances, what impact may it have on their children?
- What challenges may this pose for you, your staff and the everyday functioning of your service? What are some of the strategies you could use to help alleviate the stressors?

So now I'm a refugee:

*So I have a new name - refugee
 Strange that a name should take away from me
 My past, my personality and hope
 Strange refuge this.
 So many seem to share this name - refugee
 Yet we share so many differences.
 I find no comfort in my new name
 I long to share my past, restore my pride,
 To show, I too, in time will offer more
 Than I have borrowed.
 For now the comfort that I seek
 Resides in the old yet new name
 I would choose - Friend*

By Ruvimbo Bungwe from Zimbabwe, 9 years old, 2002

Reflection:

- What do you learn or take away from this poem?
- The above reflections show the importance of having an understanding of the broader issues but at the same time, illustrate that care should be taken not to generalise or label individuals or groups.

Questioning Our Assumptions And Attitudes

'What you read and hear about specific cultural groups are general trends and do not apply to every family from that culture'¹⁹.

Staff Activity: Cultural Iceberg

Looking at the diagram below, what assumptions do you hold about following things:

- Discipline
- Cleanliness
- The 'right way' to behave
- How respect 'should be' shown
- Ways of communicating with others (e.g. eye contact, body language, proximity)
- What a family 'looks like'
- Key child rearing practices

THE ICEBERG CONCEPT OF CULTURE

SURFACE CULTURE: easily observed

Fine arts
music drama
dancing storytelling
cooking games dress

Ideas of modesty

Knowledge of plants, animals, stars, country, seasons etc

Body language

Survival: obtaining food

Ideas about child rearing

Ideas of beauty

Approaches to problem solving

Concept of 'self'

Concepts of time

Concepts of family and geneology

Attitudes to disability

Concept of relationships

Concepts of health and illness

Patterns of group decision making

Ideas about what is true and how you prove it

Courtship practices

Ideas of cleanliness

Definitions of good and evil

And much, much more!

DEEP CULTURE: not easily observed



Some Key Differences Across Cultures

In order to develop sound, respectful relationships and partnership with families and parents we need interpersonal skills that include the acceptance of different cultural viewpoints.

Below are some key examples of assumptions that can vary across cultures:

Family composition and parenting:

An Anglo-Saxon family commonly is thought of as a nuclear family including mother father and children whilst in other cultures families include extended families like cousins, nieces, nephew, aunts and uncles and can consist of hundreds of people. The Nigerian Igbo culture and proverb “Ora na azu nwa” meaning ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ which has since become a common saying, illustrates this point nicely.

Aboriginal Elder Aunty Gail: ‘A lot of Aboriginal children grow up in mixed peer aged groups, where older kids are expected to look after the littlies. For this reason when they get to child care where children are separated into age groups- they can’t understand why- it feels strange to them’.²⁰

Suggestions:

- Being flexible and open to the idea of offering regular opportunities for natural mixed age connections to take place. As many Aboriginal families and families from other cultural groups value kinship ties and children can feel disconnected and alone if they are separated from their siblings.
- Having an awareness of the child’s links to family and extended family is useful as you can make reference to them during activities you plan at your service (example inviting a parent, granny, auntie, older cousin to share some of their culture or stories with the children). This helps children stay connected to the people and places that give them a sense of belonging through people and places.

“Many cultures are relationship-oriented and it is important to gain someone’s’ trust before ‘doing business’ or discussing problems.”²¹



Child rearing practices:

Example

'Junior, who is new to the centre, is excited when he sees a bowl of food. The baby makes happy sounds, kicks his legs, and waves his arms. But when Helen places the bowl in front of him, he just sits there and makes no attempt to feed himself. He looks confused and then distressed. Finally he slumps over, a glazed look in his eyes.'

His mother explains later that she taught Junior not to touch his food. In fact, her son has never been in a high chair; he has always been fed on his mother's lap, wrapped up tightly in a blanket to discourage him from interfering with her. Junior obviously doesn't know how to respond to this new arrangement.' (Mena-Gonzalez and Bhavnagri-Diversity and Infant/Toddler Caregiving cited in Copple 2006, 35)

The above story identifies the need to have open dialogue with families so we may better understand the 'thinking' and 'doing' of ourselves and others. Openly invite their feedback and thoughts. It is only through dialogue and perseverance that happy mediums can be found.

'Child rearing practices in Anglo-Australian mainstream culture are often oriented towards individualism.²² Newborns are often expected to sleep alone, toddlers are encouraged to feed themselves, and pre-schoolers are encouraged to be competitive and to do the best they can.

'Families from a collectivist cultures may emphasize interdependence and the cooperation of the group as a whole. The family may sleep together, self feeding may occur at a later stage, and being competitive- to stand apart from the group- is considered inappropriate and shameful behaviour.'²³

Some eastern cultures may place greater emphasis on maintaining more *interdependent* relationships. In cultures influenced by Confucian and Taoist philosophies, self-restraint and controlling emotions is considered a sign of social maturity. (Chen et al 1998 in Coppler 2008, 168) Whilst asserting oneself may be seen as a sign of immaturity. Children who are shy, reticent, and quiet are to likely be considered competent and well behaved by parents and Educators in the People's Republic of China (Chen et al 1998 in Coppler 2008, 168) Some cultures such as traditional Navajo cultures expect children to observe before attempting anything. (Bacon & Carter 1991 in Coppler 2008, 137)



Collective Cultures	Individualistic Cultures
Children tend to think in terms of 'we'	Children learn to think in terms of 'I'
Harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontations avoided	Speaking one's mind is a characteristic of an honest person
Resources should be shared with relatives	Individual ownership of resources, even for children
Showing sadness is encouraged, and happiness is discouraged	Showing happiness is encouraged and sadness is discouraged
People with disabilities are a shame on the family and should be kept out of sight	People with disability should participate as much as possible in normal life.
Rely more on social networks for information	Prefer researched information from statistics, reference books or the internet.

Preferences at the poles of the collectivistic- individualistic continuum²⁴

Be aware that people can display characteristics of both collectivist and individualist cultures. For example, someone born in a country that predominantly has a collectivist culture such as Sudan or Vietnam and who then has moved to Australia, can show aspects of both.

Suggestions:

- Although getting to know your families and children is an ongoing process, enrolment is a time that is certainly worth investing in. It is a time that many of these differences can be articulated, where our assumptions can be ironed out and expectations can be clarified. Doing a thorough job at the start will help you and your service get off on the right footing.
- Enrolment is also a great opportunity to sit down with their family and/or caregiver, to share some stories and find out some key information about their background. This information will help you create a more welcoming environment for them and their child.

'Educators should avoid the polarization of either/ or choices and explore more thoroughly how two seemingly opposing views can both be right'.

(Gonzalez-Mena & Bhavnagri in Coppler 2008, 37)

'You don't realise what it is like for me as a Samoan, when I'm asked a question like "what do you think?"... It is so hard for me to answer that question. I have to think: what does my mother think, what does my grandmother think, what does my father think, what does my uncle think, what does my sister think, what is the consensus of those thoughts – ah, that must be what I think.'

(Waldegrave, Charles 'The challenges of culture to psychology and postmodern thinking' 1998, 151 in Re-visioning Family Therapy: Race, Culture and Gender in Clinical Practice. New York: Guilford Press.)

Such a quote is not to make us 'paranoid' and 'to close us off' from asking questions, but rather to draw attention to *the way* we may ask things.



Spirituality, religion and other considerations

For many people spirituality and religion is a very personal ordeal, whereas for others it is integral to the way they live their lives and the values they want their children to grow up following.

'The term 'spirituality' is open to a range of interpretations, and is often used to describe a person's inner life or to define those aspects of a person that are unseen, or intangible, but that give meaning or purpose to life. Spirituality is also used to describe a set of personal beliefs; it can be connected to a personal cultural or religious heritage, and may be linked to institutional religions or participation in church based events and activities...'

There is strong evidence that spirituality is important in shaping a young person's perception of their quality of life and, in this sense, it is understood to be important for health and wellbeing....

'For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, the development of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander spirituality is closely linked to family and country or land, and spiritual development depends on connections to particular people and places being maintained.' ²⁵

Educators of young children have a 'special responsibility to contribute to Australia's reconciliation and equity agendas in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.'

(Connor 2011b in EYLF in Action AISWA 2011, 75)

Voices from parents:

'I was very concerned as the staff at the child care centre were telling me that my children kept wetting themselves. I knew they were toilet trained, so I could not understand what the problem was. One day when I visited the centre I realised that they would not go because there were no doors on the toilet cabins. In my country it is considered very shameful to go to the toilet where others can see you.'
Mother from Iran.

'In our family we eat only halal food, this can be difficult sometimes as we notice Jelly, which contains gelatin (and is an animal derivative) is a very popular food at the child care centres here in Australia.' It's good though because when we enrolled Ashraf, the Director asked us if we had any dietary requirements and now they ensure all food Ashraf eats is halal.' Muslim father

Reflection:

Reflecting on the quote above: What would you do if a family came into your service and said they do not want their child to celebrate Easter or Christmas?



Suggestions:

- Ensure you ask questions relating to any dietary requirements, dress codes, hygiene considerations, and toileting styles.
- With so many different cultural and religious protocols it can sometimes feel confusing and overwhelming knowing whether we are doing the right thing. The best thing is to ask!
- Ensure all children's toileting needs are catered for. Example: provide a jug of water next to the base of the toilet, as some cultures prefer to use water rather than toilet paper.
- Some cultures and religions have certain conditions around hygiene and petting animals. This may be worth checking with the family.
- Take steps to build a deep understanding about Indigenous custodianship for your local environment. Speak to family members and contact local councils for more information.
- Remember that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are diverse. Seek out local Elders, family and community members to guide learning about Aboriginal cultures.

Food Security

Families who may have changed location (e.g. from remote or rural locations to the city) or who may have recently arrived in Australia from a country where the culture is significantly different (e.g. some migrant families and newly arrived refugees) can be confronted with a range of food security issues. These may include familiarisation with unknown foods, accessing familiar foods, adapting to differences in eating patterns, food costs and choices, food safety and storage, use of unfamiliar food preparation equipment.



Voices from parents:

'In our country, sweets, biscuits, soft drink and fried foods are all things we have at celebrations or is something you can only afford if you are rich. Here in Australia it is often the cheapest food, so many from the community buy it for their children, without realising that it is not good for their health.' Mother from Sudan

"Food is the basis of many of the activities at our centre. At festival times, food provides a focus for learning about cultures ...and to acknowledge CALD families as experts in their own cultures. Particular family rituals and traditions are asked about and shared. Everyone is invited to prepare and share food"²⁶.

'In our country, rice is our staple food and in this sense is sacred. Therefore to see it used for making paintings feels disrespectful to our culture.' Mother from Vietnam

Suggestions:

- Food is not only connected to our physical health but also our mental, social and emotional wellbeing. In many cultures, food has a strong bonding effect and is an integral part of people's culture and sense of identity. You can help families with some of the above challenges by enquiring about where they do their food shopping; sharing information such as where the closest fruit and veggie market or international supermarket is that sells many spices and produce from different countries.
- Another way of enhancing community connection and a sense of belonging is to create a visual community profile as a big display board in your service using art and craft materials. You can encourage families, staff and children to add significant places on the map including markets, parks, leisure complexes, places of worship, doctors etc.
- In many countries packed lunches are a strange concept as many children will return home for lunch. Talking to families about this can be important in clarifying expectations and helping families to familiarize themselves with health and hygiene issues.



Celebrations, entertainment and religious observances

"For a child who is disconnected from their culture, cultural events can be a subtle and rewarding 'way in'. Attending events, be they creative, sporting or community, can be a very positive way for Aboriginal people [and those from other cultural groups] to re-engage or even make a connection for the first time".²⁷

Suggestions:

- As Educators you may have received an invitation to join a gathering or an event put on by a particular community. Attending these can be a very powerful way to get to know community members, to give you a more holistic understanding of the child, their family and the background they come from.
- In an early childhood setting, celebrations usually start on the surface level of culture, meaning a variety of art and craft activities, special foods and different music is introduced. However, in every day family life, cultural festivals usually have more profound meaning and link to life, such as celebrating religion, transition in the life cycle, building relationships or special family bonding. The challenge for programming is to include cultural information at a deeper level than just the fun activities, as at this level real cultural understanding and tolerance takes place.
- Other ideas when celebrating celebrations and festivals:
 - Share dream time stories (refer to Cultural Connection Kit Resource Information Sheets)
 - Explore the idea of 'home', 'family' or 'community' using stories, poetry, drama, puppets, songs, drawing and photographs. For example, you could paste photos of different living environments and homes from magazines such as the national geographic on the side of cardboard boxes and let children explore them.





Decision making

In many cultures men are seen as the decision makers and the 'head of the family', however decisions relating to the children may lie with the mother. In other cases, before any family member makes any decision, they may have to consult with elders or respected members of the community.

Suggestions:

- As an Educator during enrolment and orientation time it can be useful to gently and respectfully enquire about whether it is more suitable to communicate certain things to a certain parent or individual.
- What do I do when there appears to be a difference between the practices and policies at our centre and the family?

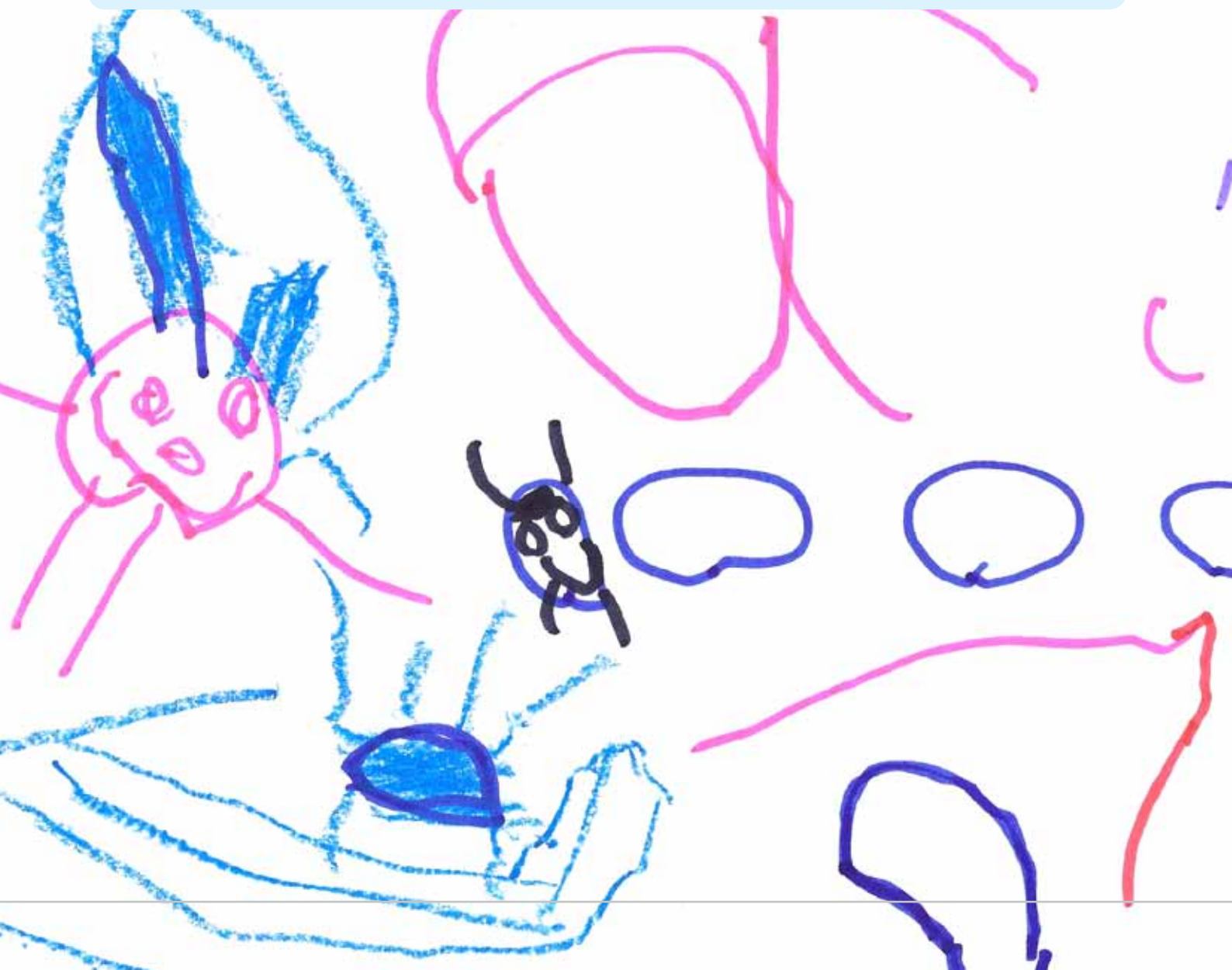
What do we, as educators need to consider when there appears to be a difference between practices and policies at our centre and the family?

1. What is the cultural perspective of the family?
2. What are the family's goals for the child, and how has the family's culture influenced their goals?
3. In view of the goals, is the family's practice in the child's best interests?
4. Is there any sound research data indicating that the family practice is actually doing any harm?
5. Is the program's practice or policy universally applicable, or is it better suited to a particular culture?
6. Have we attempted to fully understand the family's rationale for its practices, the complexity of the issues, and other factors that contribute to the practices?
7. Have we attempted to fully explain to the family our rationale for our practices and looked at the complexity of the issues and how our own culture influences my rationale and perspective?

(adapted from Gonzalez-Mena & Bhavnagri in Coppler 2008, 37)

Reflections:

- Has there been a situation where your early childhood practice or suggestion created a conflict with a family?
- What was the specific situation?
- How did you discover there was a conflict between your program practice and the families' values and priorities?
- How did the family respond?
- What did you do?
- What was the outcome? Was the conflict resolved and if so, how?
- What did you learn from this experience?
- What would/could you do differently next time?
- In your experience, is there a time when educators know more than parents and when parents know more than educators?
- How do the families you support approach child rearing differently from your own upbringing? What ways have you found useful to work with these differences?
- Given that making mistakes is an important way of learning, what ways would help create a culture in your service where it's 'ok to not always get things right'?



Resources:

Statistics on demographics of Australia: www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_diversity_statistics.cfm

- Australian Bureau of Statistics – www.abs.gov.au
- Settlement Data from Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs – www.immi.gov.au/settlement/
- Community Information Summaries from Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs – www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ/

Aboriginal Issues:

- Inclusion of Aboriginal Children in child care fact sheets are available at: <http://www.ipsu.com.au> and resources at: www.snaicc.asn.au
- Powerful documentary on the Australian Aboriginal struggle for their land, culture and freedom. Great resource to use as a discussion tool in a staff meeting. 'Our generation' DVD <http://www.ourgeneration.org.au>
- Bringing them Home Report: <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>
- www.koorimail.com (Fortnightly Indigenous Newspaper)
- For further aboriginal resources refer to 'Environment and Resources' section.

Some stories about contributions to Australian culture from migrant communities:

- The Cambodian founder of Hans Café: <http://www.hanscafe.com.au/>
- The Japanese Pearl Divers in Broome
- The Ghan train which honours Afghan camel drivers who arrived in Australia in the late 19th century.

Racism and reconciliation

- <http://www.racismnoway.com.au> (factsheets, definitions and teaching ideas)
- <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/> (factsheets)
- <http://www.asrc.org.au/> (mythbuster)
- Refugee Myth Busting Animation- Get up! (You tube)

Exploring cultural differences and similarities

- Child Rearing Backgrounds of Immigrant Families in Australia (manual and/or CD) Published by FKA Children's Services.
- Contact the Community Liaison Officer at the Office of Multicultural Interests in your state who can put you in touch with an appropriate agency or community group.
- 'Community Profiles' have been developed by Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to assist service providers and others to better understand the backgrounds and needs of Humanitarian Programme arrivals: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/government-programs/settlement-planning/community-profiles.htm>
- *Good Food for New Arrivals* provides a range of food and nutrition resources that can assist newly arrived refugees to deal with a range of food security issues. www.asetts.org.au/nutrition
- www.nutritionaustralia.org

Celebrations and Festivals

- <http://www.reonline.org.uk/festivals/>
- *Faiths & Festivals: A guide to the religions and celebrations in our multicultural society.* Howard, Christine et al. (Practical Pre-school books, London 2006)
- Genuine celebrations: including cultural experiences in the program (Kennedy A. extract from Putting Children First, National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) Issue 33 March 2010 17-19)
- Contact your local Bicultural Support Agency to find out if they have developed any resources e.g. multicultural calendar)
- Inclusive Directions Cultural Info. Sheet <http://www.directions.org.au>



Relationships



Building secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships (Principle 1 in EYLF/FSAC) is a process that takes time. It's about building trust and getting to know one another's 'ways of being.'

When developing relationships across cultures, we can start with one little story or conversation or question.

Although there are some common characteristics across certain cultural groups, each individual is as unique as their own finger print, each with their own likes, dislikes, value systems and beliefs. Therefore rather than reading a manual about each individual language, ethnic group and culture it is much more useful to treat and interact with the child and the family you see in front of you as an individual. A useful point worth highlighting is that **we all have culture, no matter what country or ethnic group we come from.**

Communicating With Others:

Cross-cultural communication is a skill that can be developed and always worked on. Rather than following certain generalized communication strategies, it is more about connecting with others 'on a human level.' For example, sometimes expecting people to open up and offer information up front about themselves and other personal aspects of their lives e.g. around child rearing can be seen as intimidating or intrusive. Showing a willingness to offer something of yourself, e.g. about your background can sometimes help bridge this gap. Not expecting others to engage straight away and allowing others some space and time 'to work you and/or the service out from a distance first' can be seen as signs of respect in some instances.



Some things to think about:

Acknowledging diversity within cultural groups:

Australian indigenous culture has always been diverse and pluralistic. There is no one kind of Aboriginal person or community. Indigenous communities throughout Australia have their own distinct history, politics, culture and linguistic experience. Although indigenous people may share many experiences and similar circumstances, they are not a homogeneous group and no single person can speak for all indigenous people. Many indigenous communities refer to themselves by their own language group name.

Some Aboriginal boundary (state) names:

State	Name
New South Wales	Koori, Goorie, Koorie, Coorie, Murri
Victoria	Koorie
South Australia	Nunga, Nyungar, Nyoongah
Western Australia	Nyungar, Nyoongar
Northern Territory	Yolngu (top end); Anangu (central)
Queensland	Murri
Tasmania	Palawa, Koori

There were assumed to have been 700 distinct language groups in Australia prior to European Invasion. Of these at least 250 languages have been recorded.

Many Aboriginal people identify themselves as belonging to several nations. This is because

- their **parents or grandparents** come from these nations. Traditionally they would've come from the same nation, but contemporary relationships often involve partners from different Aboriginal nations;
- they have **lived in two places** and identify themselves with each.

Suggestions:

- Enquiring about someone's family origins or about their ancestral links in some circumstances can feel validating and a sign of respect.
- Although, different nouns are used in various parts of Australia to refer to 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', unfortunately, inappropriate terminology from past eras sometimes continues to be used. This can cause offense. To avoid this from happening, consult with your local Indigenous community for their preferred way of being collectively identified and described.

Literacy and Education Levels:

Some parents and families may be unable to read or write. Being sensitive to this is important as it may help avoid embarrassment and can help you to find alternative means of communicating important messages to them.

Suggestions:

- Where possible speak to the parents (in person or on the phone) and reduce the number of letters and notices you give out.
- Have a notice board where you can keep parents informed through appealing visuals of projects and policies in your service.

Verbal and non-verbal communication:

As we know actions can often speak louder than words. In many cultures non-verbal body language speaks volumes, therefore being receptive to other forms of communication is important

Greetings

Greetings and titles are important in many cultures and can be a sign of respect. Handshakes can sometimes be gender dependent and some cultures bow their head as a greeting. Simply asking as well as learning through observing how families interact with other members from their community can be a useful way for you to gauge what is appropriate.

Aunty Gail: *'In our cultures we say so much without using words, a 'lift of an eyebrow or lip, or the tilting of the chin, can say heaps.'*



Empowering parents:

Even for parents who are unable to read or write, oral language development is still a major precursor to early literacy. Parents should be encouraged to engage their children in rhymes, songs, riddles, oral history, poetry, proverbs, and folklore. In addition parents can also share wordless picture books with their children to teach early literacy skills such as predicting, story sequencing, and identifying key characters.

http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/empowering_refugees/
Empowering Refugees – A Good Practice Guide to Humanitarian Settlement

Reflective Questions:

- What are some of the ways you have adapted your communication style in different settings?
- What influences the way you communicate with others? (e.g. where you are? The age or appearance of others? If they are male or female? etc.)
- What are some of the nonverbal cues you may have picked up on or observed from the children and families who access your service?

Voices from Broome:

Following a workshop on 'Cultural Competency' with Yorganop, here's what some services had to say about what was helpful for them:

'Allowing time for my staff to make those relationships'

'Embracing an attitude of curiosity- how they're sleeping? Eating? I have noticed as I have become more involved and build closer relationships with the parents and families they start to open up more and become more willing to share'.

'When I'm met with a stereotypical question or comment, I really have to think about how I am going to respond, rather than react'.

'It's better to ask, then not ask. People will tell you if you're wrong. You're not going to know unless you ask'.

'One day I was asking a mum lots of questions about her child. She said it was really good to share and to be asked. I think it shows that you actually care'.



Extended community involvement

*'The child, the family and the service do not exist in isolation. They are all part of a much wider community. When educators and coordinators develop links, share information, and work in collaboration they are better to achieve the best outcomes for children and families.'*²⁸

As stated in the philosophy of Ubuntu: "I am what I am because of who we all are."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (2008) 'One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu – the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality – Ubuntu – you are known for your generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole World. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity.'²⁹

Reflections:

- How do you collaborate with families?
- How can you enhance the connection between the children and families at your service and the wider community?
- What local events could you attend?





First Impressions & Enrolment

'First impressions count' and they take place even before the family step through the door. What does your service look like from the outside? Does it have signs up or things in the window that make it look inviting? Do you have acknowledgement plaques or stickers in the window acknowledging the traditional Aboriginal landowners? How do your staff conduct themselves when out and about whilst wearing their uniforms?

Then once the family are through the door are they met with a smile and made to feel welcome?

These are all considerations we have to be mindful of when wanting to create environments that are culturally sensitive and inclusive of all.

With all the time pressures we face as Educators it is easy at times to just hand out an enrolment pack to families without making the time to go over key areas with them. Enrolment however can make a real difference in helping the family feel comfortable at your service. It is often where the relationship begins and contributes towards the foundation of building a trusting relationship.

*'On our enrolment form, parents are asked to share their goals and hopes for their children; they are asked to describe their heroes and important family days.... We devise ways for families to tell their cultural stories, knowing that their values are often embedded in them. For example, once a certain level of trust has been developed amongst families and Educators, an entire parent meeting can be built around sharing cultural stories. Educators ask questions like, 'what are some of the important beliefs and traditions that your family is built around?' 'What are some of the ways you pass those traditions from generation to the next?' We ask families to describe their sense of humour, or primary celebrations, or the origins of a name. We ask family members to bring in photos or a mementos to share; 'We ask questions like 'who lives in your home- including family pets!' this can spark meaningful conversations.'*¹³⁰

Reflective Questions:

- 1) Do you share as much of yourself as you expect and wish families to share with you?
It's important to recognise the position of power we have as Educators in asking very personal questions of our families.
- 2) Do you ask the same questions of all families, not just singling out those who 'appear' to be more ethnically diverse?
Whatever our background, be it Anglo-Australian, Aboriginal Australian, Congolese, Chilean, Greek and so on, we all have a culture.
- 3) How do you and other staff members present yourselves when out and about in the wider community?

The EYLF and FSAC states 'Children and families [are] encouraged to collaborate with educators about curriculum decisions'. (p.g. 12)

However, not all families find this an easy process. Many may not be *used to being involved and consulted about their child's care and education. For this reason it is important to clearly convey to families who may be unfamiliar with how the childcare system works in Australia the values and practices of your specific child care service. For example in many countries and within many parts of Australia children may not attend childcare but be looked after extended family or neighbours.*

Critical Reflection Activity: Enrolment:

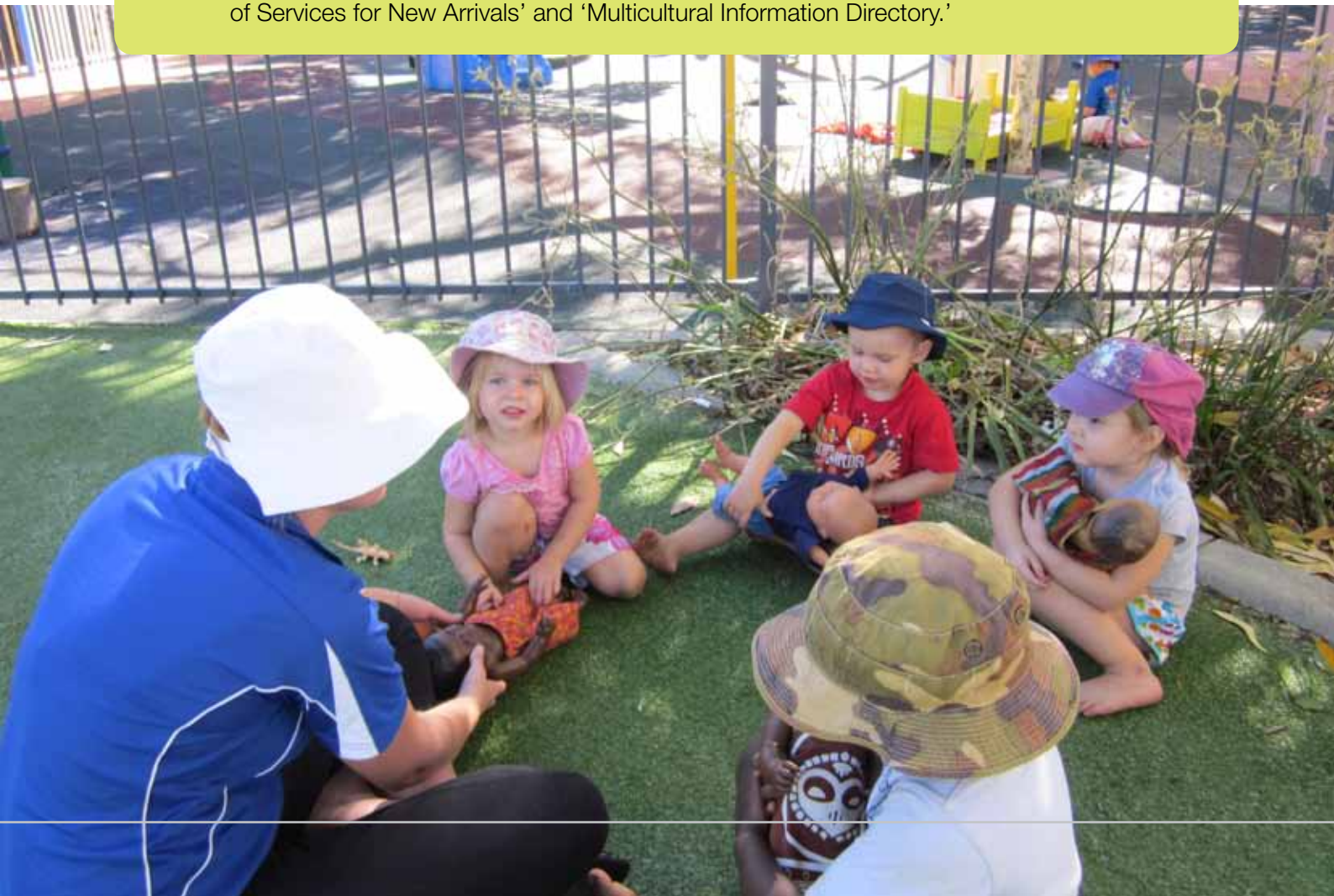


The photo above shows a Director and a mum talking during enrolment.

- Are there any things that stand out to you in this photo?
- What do you think the Educator may be asking the mum?
- Who could you contact for support if the parent spoke little or no English?
- What tools or techniques could you use to help communicate across the language barrier?
- What would help encourage mum to share information about her values, beliefs, preferred child rearing practices and culture?
- What would help you enquire about the child's background?

Suggestions:

- **Contextualise the questions you ask:** Sometimes asking questions may appear intrusive especially if there is a language barrier. It can be useful therefore to explain why such information is useful for you to know and how this will help you to accommodate their child's needs.
- **Use translated materials:** e.g. 'Welcome to Child Care booklet' available in 17 different languages (www.directions.org.au) or information on the Value of Bilingualism (<http://www.eccfcsc.org/index.php/bspresources>)
- **Use visual aids, diagrams and photos:** e.g. 'Hello' and 'Welcome' books visit: <http://www.rainbowdaybooks.com/index.html>
- **Use maps and language cards:** e.g. have a map in the reception area or laminated in your office with country names and languages spoken to help families explain their background (<http://www.dia.wa.gov.au/en/Information/Maps/> and <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/asp/map.html>)
- **Having a broader understanding:** We are all influenced by the places we have lived and the environments i.e. living conditions. Asking a variety of questions that can help determine the overall picture of a child and their family background is important. Example: Child's country of birth, where they grew up, how long they've lived in Australia for, what languages they speak?
 - **Offer additional support:** Some families may find the enrolment process intimidating, so being flexible and offering parents the opportunity to bring a trusted friend or relative may be a sensitive gesture.
 - **Using bicultural workers** at your centre: to help communicate with families.
 - **Community resources and contacts:** Knowing what services are available to support families of CALD and Aboriginal backgrounds can help you in building stronger relationships. Contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs in your state and ask for 'Directory of Services for New Arrivals' and 'Multicultural Information Directory.'



Working With Families And Children Who Have English As Their Second Language

Importance of Bilingualism

'The maintenance of first or home languages has a significant and continuing role in the construction of identity'. (VEYLDF, p.18)

'There is a risk when working with children who have English as their second language that the child gets treated as though they are nearly invisible or like a baby by other children, which can lead to frustration and withdrawal.' (Tabor in Copple. C. *A World of Difference, Readings on Teaching Young Children in a Diverse Society, NAEYC 2008, 17*)

Bilingual language acquisition chart:

It is vital that educators are aware of how language proficiency develops so that they can address an English as an Additional Language Dialect (EAL/D) child's specific learning requirements. According to York (2003) and Clarke (2009), the stages of bilingual language acquisition are usually as follows, but will vary according to the individual:

1. Continued Use of Home Language

At this early stage, some children may not realise that people are speaking a different language from their own and they may continue to speak using their home language.

Educators roles: Provide bilingual support if possible, be positive about children's use of home language, make efforts to include the learner in a range of group experiences, supplement verbal communication with gestures and nonverbal language.

2. Nonverbal Period

Children at this stage often stop communicating with words. They realise that the adults and children in the classroom don't understand them. They continue to use their home language with family and other familiar speakers.

Educator's roles: Provide a wide variety of activities that encourage interaction, use simple language supported by visual materials, accept and praise efforts to communicate including use of nonverbal responses.

3. Becoming Familiar with English

Learners start to understand familiar English. They use basic communication and may depend on adults to extend their efforts. Telegraphic speech (the use of simple one and two word utterances) and formulaic or rehearsed language may be used to communicate. Their progress with English is demonstrated by a growing vocabulary related to objects and events.

Educator's roles: Provide lots of opportunities to hear and use language in a variety of contexts including play, help the child expand his vocabulary, label the classroom in the child's home language and English, where possible introduce basic vocabulary in English as well as in the child's home language so children can hear the different sounds and meanings.

4. Productive Language

The child begins to combine the one-word utterances with simple phrases to form sentences. Expect the child to make grammatical mistakes because he/she is now creating original sentences rather than repeating words and short phrases from memory.

Educator's roles: Give children frequent opportunities to use language; ask children to respond verbally as a way to check for comprehension; increase the complexity of your language with children.

Code Switching

It is very common for bilingual children to blend their two languages. For example, young children may speak a sentence of English that includes a word or two of their home language. Indeed, older children and adults may blend phrases, sentences and entire conversations. This is known as 'code switching'. It is a very sophisticated language skill that plays an important role in communicating and maintaining one's cultural identity. It also enables a person to clarify their thoughts or express their ideas more precisely. Those who assume it is a sign of poor language skills or lack of vocabulary are mistaken. Educators are encouraged to use children's books that exhibit code switching to encourage and model this language skill.





Tips for when working with ESL Families

It is not unusual for us all to sometimes feel uncomfortable when we are trying to communicate across languages and cultures. However, unless we strive to overcome these initial feelings of discomfort, there is a risk whether consciously or unconsciously that we may avoid engaging with certain families, leaving them feeling excluded or disregarded. With 'high expectations and equity' being a key principle in EYLF/FSAC this provides us with an additional incentive to strive and overcome what initially appear as potential obstacles.

Here are some useful tips to help overcome some of the challenges you may feel you are facing:

1. Ensure all **names are pronounced correctly**. In some cultures it is considered impolite for a child to correct an adult, so it is important that Educators ask about names and titles.
2. It is essential that **judgments are not made** about children's language and cognitive proficiencies based only on their use of the English language.
3. **Invite parents to ask questions** and have their concerns respectfully addressed.
4. Explore ways to support families to understand the **value of maintaining their first language**. Make available up to date information such as bilingual resources in formats that are accessible for families.
5. **Reassure families** that children will learn English as an additional language from English speakers at the early years setting.
6. **Work with bilingual early childhood professionals** whenever possible to support children to feel secure in the early years setting and to assist communication with families.
7. Demonstrate a respect for diverse cultures and languages by **learning greetings and asking families to teach you key words** and the names of familiar objects in the child's first language.
8. Show respect for the cultural backgrounds of families by taking time to discuss their cultural practices and routines such as:
 - The child's sleeping patterns
 - Feeding, eating and toileting expectations
 - Behaviour guidance and beliefs about discipline.



Some tips when using some of the resources from the Cultural Connection Kits with children who speak English as an additional language:

- Ensure you use a variety of non-verbal communication such as gesturing and mimes. Point to pictures and name key objects.
- Illustrate stories using a felt board to provide visual support and encourage children to retell stories using visual aids.
- Make your own illustrations: draw or photocopy pictures, laminate and put Velcro on the back to make them stick onto a felt board.
- Use puppets to encourage children to communicate and enter a world of imagination and fun.
- Read books more than once. If children hear a story often they get more information and begin to learn new vocabulary. If children are familiar with the story they will be able to talk about what is happening.

Information sourced from: *Learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years (birth to six years) Resource Booklet* (Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2011))

‘Create a safe haven in the rooms where second language learning children can spend some time, away from the communicatively demanding activities and can give them a vantage point from which to watch and listen until they are ready to join in’.

(Tabor . P. *What Early Childhood Educators Need to know. Developing Effective Programs for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Children and Families*)



Using interpreters

Using Interpreters can feel strange or unnatural at first, but it is a skill that can be easily learnt. It is better to use an interpreter than risk not knowing or finding out important information that could help a family's child settle into your centre.

Interpreters can help communicate key messages such as:

- Helping you explain to families how your child care service operates (routines and policies etc)
- To enquire about the child's likes or dislikes
- Customs/Traditions and Religion
- Eating habits and dietary requirements

"Recognise that some parents who need an interpreter will not ask for one. For some, it may be embarrassing to ask due to a fear that they could be viewed as 'ignorant'. Others might not want to go through the all too typical hassle of waiting for one to be located. Still others might simply want to use the opportunity to practice their English". (BRYCS October 2007, 2 Spotlight. Involving Refugee Parents in their Children's Education).

There are some key considerations to using an interpreter.



Resources:

- Tips on **cross cultural communication**: <http://www.melaleuca.org.au> (cultural do's and don't under info links)

English as a second language:

- Learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years (birth to six years) Resource Booklet (Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2011)
- Dr Estelle Farrar, *Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families*, Centre for Community Child Health, Childcare and children's health Vol 10 No. 1 March 2007

Bilingualism

- Refer to 'Bilingualism and language learning sheets' (available in 18 different languages) at: <http://www.eccfcsc.org>
- Publications of key phrases for early years setting such as FKA Children's Service publications, BISS factsheets (available from PSCWA and NT).

Translation & Interpreting:

- Generate individual sets of key words using the web translators at:
 - <http://translate.google.com>
 - <http://babelfish.yahoo.com>
- Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS): Government service that provides in person and over the phone interpreting (fee based service):
 - <http://www.immi.gov.au/>
 - Call: 131 450 for telephone interpreting (WA & NT) and
 - 1300 655 082 for on-site Interpreter Bookings
- Aboriginal Interpreter Service: 24 Hour on-call service: (08) 8999 8353
- Language card to help families identify their language and script: (<http://www.immi.gov.au/> OR <http://www3.hants.gov.uk>)
- For hints and tips on using interpreters (DVD) go to: <http://www.immi.gov.au>
- To access TIS promotional material e.g. language cards visit: <http://www.immi.gov.au/>
- Multilingual: Local rate charge service that can interpret Centrelink services for clients in different languages over the phone 13 1202 <http://www.centrelink.gov.au>





Environment & Resources

After having seen the complexity of issues that are involved when we think about cultural competency it becomes clear how it is not something that can be picked up in a manual. It is rather something that needs to be worked on, experienced and lived. Having said this creating a welcoming environment and using resources in meaningful ways contribute to this process and can be useful aids in helping children explore and connect with some of the deeper issues that have so far been discussed.

'All people who access early childhood settings should feel welcome and included.'

(Richardson 2011 in EYLF in Action AISWA 2011, 36).

Some additional strategies to create a welcoming and supportive environment for all families and children

1. Provide translated notices, brochures and pamphlets that help explain the routines of the early years setting.
2. Create a space to display community information and provide bilingual information whenever possible.
3. Acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land at meetings and public forums.
4. Display a plaque that recognises the Traditional Owners of the land, as well as posters and symbols (such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flag) that symbolize cultural respect.
5. Display a calendar of significant cultural events to share with all families.
6. Discuss with families appropriate ways of acknowledging and celebrating these events with children and families.
7. Display photos of children engaged in learning. Accompany photos with explanations of the children's experiences using the languages spoken by the children and written in the spoken language and English.

Broome based Service:

'Our centre invited some community members to do a smoking ceremony at the centre. We also looked at how we could incorporate native plants, so we created a camp scene in one of the back yards and made a stew out of boob nuts!'

Some thoughts from Aunty Gail on creating inclusive spaces for Aboriginal children:

Don't underestimate the 'value of visuals'- having appropriate images that depict real life Aboriginal families and connections'

Value of 'oral traditions- our people often tell stories while drawing in the sand, so there is an oral, aural and visual depiction of events.

'Written materials – don't go very far- find different ways of communicating with our people, aside from newsletters etc'.

Important for families and children to feel there's 'Something they can connect with at the centre'

Create localised brochures that show what happens in the service and its connection to the surrounding area and it's people. 'It's likely that our mob will pick it up if they know the person in the picture.'



Instead of relying on the typical education catalogue items such as 'multicultural' dolls and food, culturally competent educators open their minds to the possibilities of exploring culture:

'Now instead of using plastic foods, we cook. Instead of using 'Black Family Finger Puppets' we read books, look at maps and discuss history, culture, geography, tradition and customs. And what we have learnt from this experience was so much more important and meaningful compared with the old times of playing with the 'Wooden Aboriginal family', which was certainly not representative of my [indigenous] family...we took the time to discuss issues such as being a multicultural country, differences and togetherness- something I learnt I could not do with plastic Italian food set, or simply by putting an Asian family in the block space. We created long periods of time to consider these questions rather than provide answers (Giugni & Mundine 2010 cited in EYLF in Action, AISWA 81)

*Experiences and resources can be separated out and labelled as 'multicultural' and their differences highlighted, or more appropriately they can be incorporated seamlessly into the environment.'*³¹

Reflection:

'You are working in a childcare centre where almost all the children have an Anglo-Australian heritage. You decide to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander week to teach the children about Aboriginal culture. You do dot painting on bark, invite Aboriginal peoples from the local college to come and teach the children some dances, put pictures on the walls of Aboriginal people looking for bush tucker, and you paint the children's faces with paint they have made from crushed ochre'.

- What will these experiences alone teach the children in your service?
- Do they give any information about how some Aboriginal Australians live in contemporary life?

What is Tokenism

Educators might display posters, artefacts, artwork, flags and welcome signs with multicultural perspectives, but we need to ask the questions: *Why are they there? Are they reflective of educator's genuine attitudes towards inclusion and equity?*

'Inclusion is not just what you do, but also the spirit behind what you do- how and why you do it' (Sims, 2009).

If the educators lack culturally competent attitudes, one can only deduce that these environment provisions and displays are tokenistic. Without demonstrating each of the three elements (skills, knowledge and attitudes), an educator cannot be culturally competent (EYLF in Action BBB-AISWA 70)

Suggestions:

Art area:

- Crayons, paper and writing implements in different skin tones.
- Opportunities to mix paints (or dyed shaving cream) to represent a variety of skin colours
- Use fingers, materials from nature and other resources in painting, not only paintbrushes.
- Examples of artworks, including contemporary artworks such as paintings. A rich source of imagery can be found in websites such as www.archive.com
- Materials that showcase and encourage children to create arts and crafts found in diverse communities including their own (e.g. ceramic bowls and statues, clay to make pottery, woven wall hangings, place mats, wool)
- Clay which comes in various earth coloured shades, allows the children to create 3 dimensional characters and shapes as well as 2 dimensional cut outs. This is an activity that they can share with others, providing an opportunity for conversations and further discussions around colour and skin tones.



Music:

- Musical instruments used in different cultures
- Songs reflective of different cultures.
- Make musical instruments from natural materials
- Have diverse types of music playing throughout the centre



Construction & Blocks:

- Images of a diverse range of houses and architecture, including those representative of the local community. National geographic magazines or websites may be a good source of images from diverse places.
- A range of building materials including twigs, rocks, plants, canvas and bricks.
- Animal figures- both locally familiar and native to other countries.
- Toy vehicles that represent different occupations (e.g. taxis, farm tractors...)

Dramatic Play:

- Multicultural kitchen utensils, storage containers and food packages
- Dolls and puppets of various ethnicities and genders
- Child sized disability aids (e.g. crutches, walkers, eyeglasses with lens removed)
- Consider designing dramatic play setting that represent a range of environments where people may live and work.

Displays:

- Fabrics and rugs, wall hanging and artwork that are representative of a wide variety of cultures.
- Maps of local community or world maps to identify different cultures within the centre.
- Environmental print in different languages, particularly those that are relevant to the children and their families including local Aboriginal languages.
- Images of diverse peoples and lands can be sourced through various websites and magazines, including National Geographic. Representations of cultures in books, images and artifacts need to reflect contemporary perspectives, rather than stereotypes.

Outdoors play:

- Plant a variety of herbs and plants that reflect a rich cultural diversity, for example Vietnamese mint, bamboo in pots, lemongrass, and oregano, Australian native plants.
- Get baskets from the local op shop and fill them with pebbles, bark, honey nuts, shells and other locally sourced natural resources.





For more ideas on how to use the resources in the Cultural Connection Kits refer to the Resource Information Sheets.

'While using materials such as paper bark and grass tree branches gathered from the local area to construct the shelters, the children listened to Noongar traditions about making shelters, keeping camps, building fires, warding off evil spirits and welcoming kind ones, that came from 40,000 years of ancient tradition.' (EYLF in Action, AISWA 77)

Food for thought:

'We have to be careful about respecting traditional values and cultural protocols. For example one day a parent bought in a didgeridoo to play to the children. Later on we found out that traditionally girls are not allowed to play it as it is considered men's business.'

- There is a vast diversity of Aboriginal cultures in Australia and within each state. What is appropriate for an Aboriginal child in one location may not be appropriate for an Aboriginal child in another location. Aboriginal children require cultural knowledge and information that relates to their own community and tribal group.

Staff Activity



Watch the YouTube video 'The danger of a single story' by Chimamanda Adichie.'

- Discuss with your team, what stood out for you from the video?
- What was it about that part that impacted you?
- After seeing this how could you modify your setting accordingly?



Storytelling with children:

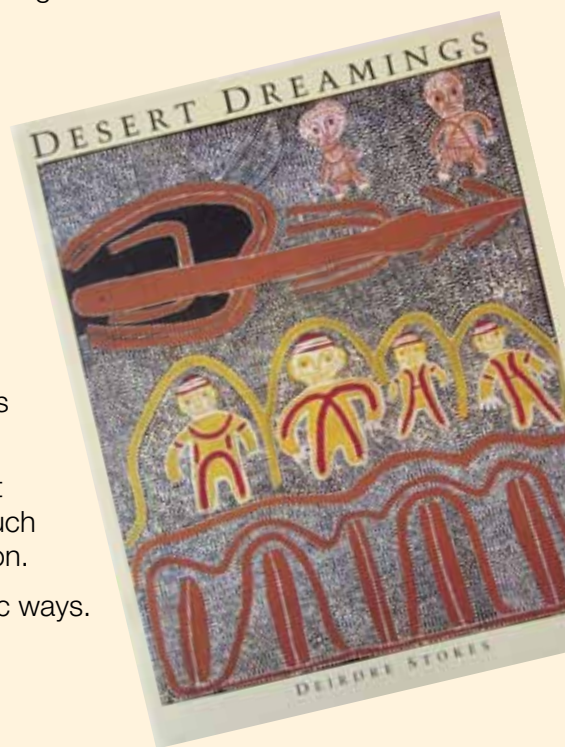
Storytelling has been a universal way for all cultures to communicate for generations. Stories did not only provide entertainment but they were used to convey messages and meanings to children about the world they live in. Some cultures hold specific stories that have special meaning for that culture and have been told to children to teach a life lesson.

Telling stories that are similar and reflect the lives of children will keep them engaged and more inclined to learn. The EYLF/FSAC explains that children are more likely to become involved and confident learners when their family and community experiences and understandings are recognised and included in the early childhood settings (EYLF 2009, 33).

Some tips on selecting appropriate books for your service:

Books:

- Texts should be representative of languages spoken at home and in the community
- Books need to depict a variety of family structures, ethnicities, cultures and ages (including the elderly). Texts should also depict people with various disabilities. In addition to offering representations of the wider community, children should recognise their own lives reflected in literature. Contemporary as well as traditional perspectives are important.
- Books should show men and women engaged in different activities at home, work and leisure. Texts that challenge stereotypes and bias, such as *The Paper Bag Princess* (Robert Munsch) are a worthwhile inclusion.
- Look for literature that embeds cross-cultural friendships in naturalistic ways.
- Texts that focus on standing up for oneself and for others.



Some tips for story telling:



In your Cultural Connections Kit you will have a variety of books, below are some tips that will help you get the most of them at story telling time.

- Sometimes children can find it hard to make a distinction between fantasy and reality; it's important that you explain the difference to children before you start. If you are telling a story that has been passed on it is important to share knowledge about where the story came from. And you may need to ask permission to pass the story on (e.g. some dreamtime stories)
- Stories don't only need to come from books. You could make up your own stories that come from your community and beyond. Sharing stories that originate from different cultures gives children a platform for understanding cultures unfamiliar to their own. This is part of helping children to become involved and confident learners.
- Involve the children in storytelling. Encourage them to make up the story, have a prop like a toy kangaroo to start them off. Ask children to act out characters themselves, or in the form of puppets.
- Add to the experience of storytelling by using props or costumes, decorate the room or turn off the lights and use a candle.
- Make sure you put lots of expression and excitement into your storytelling. If you are telling a story that has different characters change the tone of your voice to match³².

Using puppets:



In your Cultural Connection Kit you may come across a number of puppets. Puppetry is a wonderful way to elicit children's talk about social dilemmas in ways that encourage problem solving. Puppets foster social interaction, communication, imagination, listening and much more.

Development of Language and Cognitive skills:

Encourage children to make up their own stories with the puppets. When children have to decide the story and think about what will happen and how it will end, language, thinking and problem solving skills develop. Remember some children may be scared of puppets. Be sensitive and don't force children to touch or be engaged with them

Tell stories:

Develop stories using puppets instead of books and make the experience more visual. Encourage children to get involved in the telling of the story, to make them different characters and make up the story.

Set up a quiet corner:

Develop a quiet corner for one, placing soft puppets inside. This is good for children who like to have time by themselves or children who may not be fully confident in speaking English yet.



Resources

The Humble Honky Nut, Awakening relationships with nature through indoor environments. By Gillian McAuliffe

Inviting play: Photographs of imaginatively constructed early childhood setting (Clarke, P)

Deb Curtis and Margie Carter, 2003 Designs for living and learning: Transforming early childhood environments,

Rusty Keeler *Natural Playscapes*

Clare Warden *The potential of a puddle*

ESL resources

FKA Children Services Inc: www.teachchildrenesl.com

Gowrie Victoria: www.gowrievictoria.org.au

Puppets by Post: www.puppetsbypost.com

Putumayo World Music: www.putumayo.com

The Boite: www.boite.com.au

Resources for Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives

This list of resources is not exhaustive and should simply be considered a starting point for finding more information.

People & Places

Elders, families and local community members.

Local council.

WA

Yorganup Indigenous Professional Support Unit.
www.yorganop.org.au

Piney Lakes Environmental Education Centre.
www.melvillecity.com.au/pineylakes

Kings Park Education.

Kings Park offers a range of education programs, including 'Wadjuk Wandering' (a Nyoongar Cultural Education program).

Email: education@bgpa.wa.gov.au

Nyungar Know How Workshops. For educators as well as children.
www.nyungar.com.au/knowhow.html

South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. Offers online resources about Noongar history, people, country, arts and cultures aimed to promote understanding and collaboration. Contact to find out more about custodianship of your local environment.

www.noongarculture.org.au

NT

The Regional and Remote Children and Services Support Unit (RRACSSU)

<http://rracssucentral.batchelor.edu.au>

Books, Resources & Websites

Consider asking at bookshops for literature that incorporates reflections of diverse Aboriginal lives (e.g. Tom Tom by Rosemary Sullivan or Me and My Dad by Sally Morgan & Ezekiel Kwaymullina).

www.abc.net.au/indigenous/

Aboriginal Languages of Australia.

Dictionaries of some Australian Indigenous languages are available.

www.dnathan.com/VL/index.htm

Maps showing Aboriginal communities and languages (WA)

<http://www.dia.wa.gov.au/en/Information/Maps/> and <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/asp/map.html>

Aboriginal Perspectives Across the Curriculum (Department of Education, W.A.)

www.det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/apac/detcms/portal/

Connor, J. (2007). Dreaming Stories: A springboard for learning. Available from Early Childhood Australia.

Education Network Australia (edna) – Early childhood theme page for Aboriginal culture.

www.edna.edu.au/edna/go/ece/pid/3152

Little Red Yellow Black Site: <http://lryb.aiatsis.gov.au>

Magabala Books

Our place, our dreaming: Resource Book

http://www.ipsu.com.au/latest_news.php

PALS Projects: <http://pals.dia.wa.gov.au>

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care: www.snaicc.asn.au

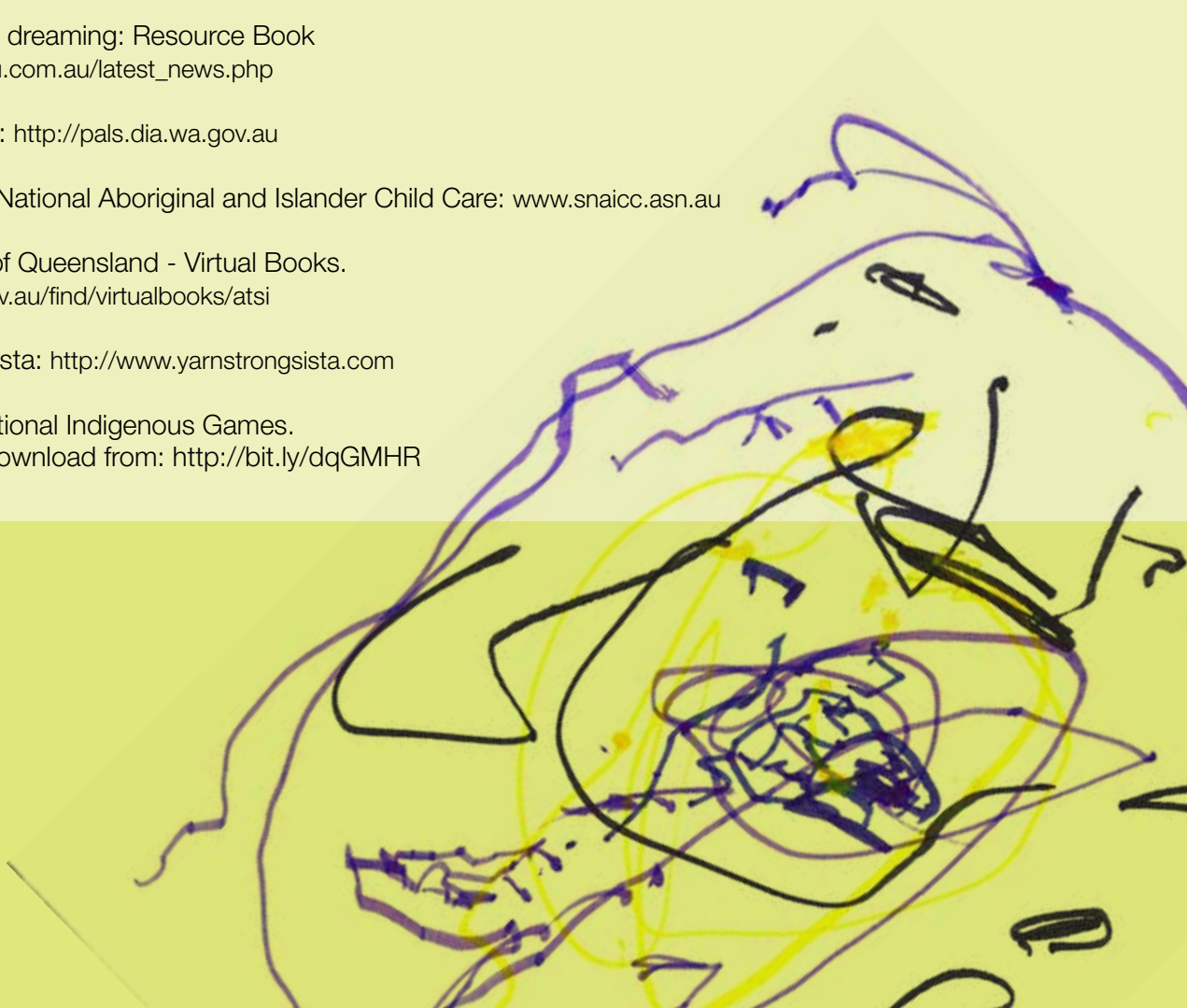
State Library of Queensland - Virtual Books.

www.slq.qld.gov.au/find/virtualbooks/atsi

Yarn Strong Sista: <http://www.yarnstrongsista.com>

Yulunga: Traditional Indigenous Games.

Available for download from: <http://bit.ly/dqGMHR>



Community resources

The following listing provides links to specific Australian Government and community organisations relating to multiculturalism and associated topics in Australia.

If you are looking for support services in areas such as health, housing, crisis and emergency and other services, please search the Directory of Services for New Arrivals in Western Australia

Federal Government

- Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission – www.hreoc.gov.au
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship – www.immi.gov.au

State Government

- Department of Culture and the Arts – www.dca.wa.gov.au
- Equal Opportunity Commission – www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au
- Office of Multicultural Affairs NT – www.multicultural.nt.gov.au/

Other resources

Communities and services

Go to www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_msd.cfm

- Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors – www.asetts.org.au
- Celebrate WA – www.celebratewa.com.au
- Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia – www.fecca.org.au
- Institute for Cultural Diversity – www.culturaldiversity.net.au
- Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) – www.refugeecouncil.org.au
- The Scanlon Foundation – <http://www.scanlonfoundation.org.au/>
- Vita Italiane – www.italianlives.arts.uwa.edu.au/ Italian lives in Western Australia

Educational resources

Go to www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_schools.cfm

- The *Voices of Australia Education Module* is an educational tool to help combat racism and promote a culture of respect and equality among high school students around Australia has been launched by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).
Voices of Australia can be downloaded from – www.humanrights.gov.au/education/voices_of_australia/index.html
- *The Impact of Racism upon the Health and Wellbeing of Young Australians 2009* and *Building Bridges: Creating a Culture of Diversity* from the Foundation for Young Australians – www.fya.org.au
- Racism No Way – www.racismnoway.com.au
- Making Multicultural Australia – www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au
- Reporting Diversity – www.reportingdiversity.org.au
- StepOne provides guidance and practical resources to councils and community groups interested in implementing community harmony initiatives in their local areas – <http://www.stepone.org.au/>
- The UN cyberschoolbus – The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/iderd/

Definitions

Some useful terms to be aware of:

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person:

- of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander **descent**
- who **identifies** as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and
- is accepted as such by the **community** in which he (she) lives.”

Bias: Having a preferred point of view, attitude or feeling about a person or group. Can be positive or negative.

Prejudice is an opinion or attitude about a group of people that is based upon lack of understanding or incorrect information.

Discrimination is when a person is treated unfairly because they are a member of a particular group.

Stereotype: An over-simplified generalisation about a particular group, ‘race’ or sex, based on widely held assumptions, presenting a rigid view that can be difficult to change.

A migrant is a person who chooses to leave his/her home country for a variety of reasons including employment, marriage, family relationships.

A refugee according to the 1951 UN Convention relating to status of refugees is someone who:

Owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear is unwilling, to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country: or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence is unable, or owing to such a fear, is unwilling to return to it.

An asylum seeker is a person who wishes to remain in Australia on the grounds that he or she is truly a refugee. In the first instance, asylum seekers have to apply to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) for a determination of their refugee status.

While a decision is being made asylum seekers who enter Australia without authorization are detained. Asylum seekers who have visas (such as tourist or student visas) on arrival, are allowed to remain in the community while a decision is being made.

Ethnocentrism: is making value judgments about another culture from perspectives of one’s own cultural system. The ethnocentric individual will judge other groups relative to his or her own particular ethnic group or culture, especially with concern to language, behavior, customs, and religion.

Xenophobia: is defined as an unreasonable fear of foreigners or strangers or of that which is foreign or strange.

References:

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- Early Years Learning Framework, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). <http://www.deewr.gov.au>
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- Ireland, National Child Care Strategy 2006 – 2010, Diversity and Equality Guidelines for Childcare Providers
http://www.cscentral.org.au/Resources/Exploring_Multiculturalism.pdf
- http://www.pii-mifc.org/content_research_young_children.htm (Too Young to Notice study by Prof. Paul Connolly)
- Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health: www.ceh.org.au/culturalcompetence.aspx
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- Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework. Victoria Aboriginal Child Care Agency 2008.
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- Encouraging Inclusive Behaviour, Extract from Putting Children First, the Newsletter of the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) Issue 14 June 2005
- Gibbs 1997 Fair play- anti bias in Action. Lady Gowrie Child Care, Sydney Australia
- (BRYCS Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services, *Involving Refugee Parents in their Children's Education* October 2007, 2 Spotlight.
- Building Bridges, breaking barriers, a training manual for volunteers working with Refugees: ASeTTS (Association of Services for Torture and Trauma Survivors) Induction pack.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2009, *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, (VEYLDF) Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Melbourne, Australia.
- Inviting Play: Photographs of imaginatively constructed early childhood settings (Clarke, P)
- Learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years (birth to six years) Resource Booklet (Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2011)
- Tabor, P. *What Early Childhood Educators Need to know. Developing Effective Programs for Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Children and Families* in Copple, C. *A World of Difference, Readings on Teaching Young Children in a Diverse Society*, NAEYC 2008, 17.
- Wolpert, Ellen, *Start Seeing Diversity – the Basic Guide to an Anti Bias Classroom*, 2005, Redleaf press, USA
- Naming the Elephants in the Room: Reflections on and insights into working in a multicultural dementia care environment*, Alzheimer's Australia WA Nov 2011, 42

Appendix:

PROMOTING CULTURAL & LINGUISTIC COMPETENCY

Self-Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Services and Supports In Early Intervention and Early Childhood Settings

Directions: Please select A, B, or C for each item listed below.
 A = Things I do frequently, or statement applies to me to a great degree
 B = Things I do occasionally, or statement applies to me to a moderate degree
 C = Things I do rarely or never, or statement applies to me to minimal degree or not at all

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- _____ 1. I display pictures, posters and other materials that reflect the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of children and families served in my early childhood program or setting.
- _____ 2. I select props for the dramatic play/housekeeping area that are culturally diverse (e.g. dolls, clothing, cooking utensils, household articles, furniture).
- _____ 3. I ensure that the book/literacy area has pictures and storybooks that reflect the different cultures of children and families served in my early childhood program or setting.
- _____ 4. I ensure that table-top toys and other play accessories (that depict people) are representative of the various cultural and ethnic groups both within my community and the society in general.
- _____ 5. I read a variety of books exposing children in my early childhood program or setting to various life experiences of cultures and ethnic groups other than their own.
- _____ 6. When such books are not available, I provide opportunities for children and their families to create their own books and include them among the resources and materials in my early childhood program or setting.
- _____ 7. I adapt the above referenced approaches when providing services, supports and other interventions in the home setting.
- _____ 8. I encourage and provide opportunities for children and their families to share experiences through storytelling, puppets, marionettes, or other props to support the "oral tradition" common among many cultures.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, MATERIALS & RESOURCES (CONT'D)

- _____ 9. I plan trips and community outings to places where children and their families can learn about their own cultural or ethnic history as well as the history of others.
- _____ 10. I select videos, films or other media resources reflective of diverse cultures to share with children and families served in my early childhood program or setting.
- _____ 11. I play a variety of music and introduce musical instruments from many cultures.
- _____ 12. I ensure that meals provided include foods that are unique to the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of children and families served in my early childhood program or setting.
- _____ 13. I provide opportunities for children to cook or sample a variety of foods typically served by different cultural and ethnic groups other than their own.
- _____ 14. If my early childhood program or setting consists entirely of children and families from the same cultural or ethnic group, I feel it is important to plan an environment and implement activities that reflect the cultural diversity within the society at large.
- _____ 15. I am cognizant of and ensure that curricula I use include traditional holidays celebrated by the majority culture, as well as those holidays that are unique to the culturally diverse children and families served in my early childhood program or setting.

COMMUNICATION STYLES

- _____ 16. For children who speak languages or dialects other than English, I attempt to learn and use key words in their language so that I am better able to communicate with them.
- _____ 17. I attempt to determine any familial colloquialisms used by children and families that will assist and/or enhance the delivery of services and supports.
- _____ 18. I use visual aids, gestures, and physical prompts in my interactions with children who have limited English proficiency.
- _____ 19. When interacting with parents and other family members who have limited English proficiency I always keep in mind that:
- _____ (a) limitation in English proficiency is in no way a reflection of their level of intellectual functioning.
- _____ (b) their limited ability to speak the language of the dominant culture has no bearing on their ability to communicate effectively in their language of origin.
- _____ (c) they may neither be literate in their language of origin nor English.
- _____ 20. I ensure that all notices and communiqués to parents are written in their language of origin.
- _____ 21. I understand that it may be necessary to use alternatives to written communications for some families, as word of mouth may be a preferred method of receiving information.
- _____ 22. I understand the principles and practices of linguistic competency and:
- _____ (a) apply them within my early childhood program or setting.
- _____ (b) advocate for them within my program or agency.

COMMUNICATION STYLES (CONT'D)

- _____ 23. I use bilingual or multilingual staff and/or trained/certified foreign language interpreters for meetings, conferences, or other events for parents and family members who may require this level of assistance.
- _____ 24. I encourage and invite parents and family members to volunteer and assist with activities regardless of their ability to speak English.
- _____ 25. I use alternative formats and varied approaches to communicate with children and/or their family members who experience disability.
- _____ 26. I arrange accommodations for parents and family members who may require communication assistance to ensure their full participation in all aspects of the early childhood program (e.g. hearing impaired, physical disability, visually impaired, not literate or low literacy etc.).
- _____ 27. I accept and recognize that there are often differences between language used in early childhood/early intervention settings, or at "school", and in the home setting.

VALUES & ATTITUDES

- _____ 28. I avoid imposing values that may conflict or be inconsistent with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than my own.

- _____ 29. I discourage children from using racial and ethnic slurs by helping them understand that certain words can hurt others.

- _____ 30. I screen books, movies, and other media resources for negative cultural, ethnic, racial, or religious stereotypes before sharing them with children and their families served in my early childhood program or setting.

- _____ 31. I provide activities to help children learn about and accept the differences and similarities in all people as an ongoing component of program curricula.

- _____ 32. I intervene in an appropriate manner when I observe other staff or parents within my program or agency engaging in behaviors that show cultural insensitivity, bias or prejudice.

- _____ 33. I recognize and accept that individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant culture.

- _____ 34. I understand and accept that family is defined differently by different cultures (e.g. extended family members, fictive kin, godparents).

- _____ 35. I accept and respect that male-female roles in families may vary significantly among different cultures (e.g. who makes major decisions for the family, play and social interactions expected of male and female children).

- _____ 36. I understand that age and life cycle factors must be considered in interactions with families (e.g. high value placed on the decisions or childrearing practices of elders or the role of the eldest female in the family).

- _____ 37. Even though my professional or moral viewpoints may differ, I accept the family/parents as the ultimate decision makers for services and supports for their children.

VALUES & ATTITUDES (CONT'D)

- _____ 38. I accept that religion, spirituality, and other beliefs may influence how families respond to illness, disease, and death.
- _____ 39. I recognize and understand that beliefs and concepts of mental health or emotional well-being, particularly for infants and young children, vary significantly from culture to culture.
- _____ 40. I recognize and accept that familial folklore, religious, or spiritual beliefs may influence a family's reaction and approach to a child born with a disability or later diagnosed with a disability or special health care needs.
- _____ 41. I understand that beliefs about mental illness and emotional disability are culturally-based. I accept that responses to these conditions and related treatment/interventions are heavily influenced by culture.
- _____ 42. I understand that the health care practices of families served in my early childhood program or setting may be rooted in cultural traditions.
- _____ 43. I recognize that the meaning or value of early childhood education or early intervention may vary greatly among cultures.
- _____ 44. I understand that traditional approaches to disciplining children are influenced by culture.
- _____ 45. I understand that families from different cultures will have different expectations of their children for acquiring toileting, dressing, feeding, and other self-help skills.
- _____ 46. I accept and respect that customs and beliefs about food, its value, preparation, and use are different from culture to culture.
- _____ 47. Before visiting or providing services in the home setting, I seek information on acceptable behaviors, courtesies, customs, and expectations that are unique to families of specific cultural groups served in my early childhood program or setting.

VALUES & ATTITUDES (CONT'D)

- _____ 48. I advocate for the review of my program's or agency's mission statement, goals, policies, and procedures to ensure that they incorporate principles and practices that promote cultural diversity, cultural competence and linguistic competence.
- _____ 49. I seek information from family members or other key community informants that will assist me to respond effectively to the needs and preferences of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families served in my early childhood program or setting. .

How to use this checklist

This checklist is intended to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of personnel to the importance of cultural diversity, cultural competence and linguistic competence in early childhood settings. It provides concrete examples of the kinds of practices that foster such an environment. There is no answer key with correct responses. However, if you frequently responded "C", you may not necessarily demonstrate practices that promote a culturally diverse and culturally competent learning environment for children and families within your classroom, program or agency,

Footnotes

- ¹ http://www.pii-mifc.org/content_research_young_children.htm
- ² *Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework. Victoria Aboriginal Child Care Agency 2008, 39*
- ³ Minister of Immigration and Citizenship 2011 cited in EYLF in Action AISWA 2011, 69
- ⁴ York 2003 in EYLF in Action, AISWA 2011, 69
- ⁵ EYLF in Action, AISWA 2011, 69
- ⁶ *Bamblett and Lewis, "A Vision for Koorie Children and Families: Embedding Rights, Embedding Culture", p. 44. Cited in Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework. Victoria Aboriginal Child Care Agency 2008, 17.*
- ⁷ EYLF 2009, 16
- ⁸ Fitzgerald 2000 cited in Stewart 2006
- ⁹ EYLF in Action AISWA 2011, 70
- ¹⁰ EYLF Educators guide 2010, page 25
- ¹¹ EYLF 2009, 20, FSAC 2011
- ¹² EYLF in Action AISWA 2011, 71
- ¹³ York 2003 cited in *EYLF in Action* AISWA 2011, 71
- ¹⁴ EYLF in Action AISWA 2011, 71
- ¹⁵ *Creaser, B and Dau, E. The Anti-bias Approach in Early Childhood 1998, 168*
- ¹⁶ *Gibbs 1997 Fair play- anti bias in Action. Lady Gowrie Child Care, Sydney Australia.*
- ¹⁷ *Connolly, P. (2002) Fairplay: Talking With Children About Prejudice and Discrimination. Belfast: Barnardos and Save the Children.*
- ¹⁸ *K. A. Mundine & Guigni, M. 11, 2006*
- ¹⁹ *Klein & Chen 2001, 45*
- ²⁰ We would like to thank Aunty Gail for her contribution to this document. Aunty Gail asked us not to include her second name in this publication.
- ²¹ BRYCS October 2007, 2 Spotlight. Involving Refugee Parents in their Children's Education
- ²² Lynch & Hanson 1992 cited in Klein & Chen 2001, 45
- ²³ Klein & Chen 2001, 45
- ²⁴ cited from *Naming the Elephants in the Room: Reflections on and insights into working in a multicultural dementia care environment*, Alzheimer's Australia WA Nov 2011, 42
- ²⁵ FaHCSIA 2009 cited in EYLF in Action AISWA 2011, 104
- ²⁶ *Cited from Childcare and Children's Health Vol. 10 No.1 March 2007 'Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families.*
- ²⁷ Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework. Victoria Aboriginal Child Care Agency 2008, 23.
- ²⁸ NQS Draft Guide 2010, 103
- ²⁹ "Ubuntu Women Institute USA (UWIU) with SSIWEL as its first South Sudan Project". <http://www.ssiwel.org/>
- ³⁰ Pelo & Davidson,. *Partnership-building Strategies* cited in Coppler 2008, 76
- ³¹ *Arthur et al 2008, 251-251 in EYLF in Action AISWA 79*
- ³² Would like to thank Yorganop for their contribution of this this material

Notes

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