Cultural Awareness Training

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Roxanne Brown
Workshop Overview

1. Welcome and Acknowledgement
2. Traditional Ownership of the ACT and Region
3. Build and understanding and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the diversity and differences between them
4. Identify issues or barriers that exist in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and communities
5. Learn to engage effectively and respectfully whilst developing basic cross-cultural communication skills
6. An Awareness of the issues /barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Peoples face
7. Encourage a culturally sensitive way of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
Traditional Ownership of the ACT and Region
Aboriginal Protocols in the ACT

ACT Government Policy

The ACT Government recognises the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the ACT and surrounding region.

The ACT Government’s adoption of the use of the term ‘Ngunnawal’ to identify the traditional custodians of the ACT was based on advice from a special meeting of Ngunnawal community members in May 2002.
Welcome to Country
Protocols

Acknowledgement

The Government’s policy is that all public speeches by representatives of the ACT Government include an acknowledgement of the traditional custodians. Further, depending on the availability of an Aboriginal community elder, and the significance of the event, a formal Welcome to Country may be offered.
If you cannot arrange for a Ngunnawal Elder to attend your event, or if your event is considered too small to warrant a formal Welcome to Country you can make an acknowledgement to Country
“I/We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. I/We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contributions they make to the life of this city and region.

I/We would also like to greet other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people and all of you attending today’s event.”
We cannot train you to understand or completely know the oldest living culture in the world - NOT in One Day. Today is the start of your learning........
“Being culturally aware does not mean one session of training. It’s the beginning of a lifetime journey of experiences that will enhance your life in a positive and meaningful way.”

Caroline Hughes
CIT Yurauna Centre
2014
2. Build and understanding and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the diversity and differences between them
Culture is:

• Learned
• Culture is us
• Norms and Values learned in Childhood
Levels of Culture

- Personal
- Interpersonal
- National
- Universal
Sometimes Culture is visible:

- Language
- Traditions
- Clothing
- Music
- Food
Stereotype

Urban Dictionary defines:

a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

A stereotype is used to categorize a group of people. People don't understand that type of person, so they put them into classifications, thinking that everyone who is that needs to be like that, or anyone who acts like their classifications is one.

To Categorise and Understand the World Around Us

It's like using a Map to get around the World – BUT make sure you don't use the wrong Map
Culture consists of accepted and traditionally patterned ways of being and behaving.

It is a common understanding shared by members of a group or community, and it includes land, sea, beliefs, spirituality, language, stories, identity and ways of living and working.
BUT

Whilst Culture is a Collective

Like any group of people – whether Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Non-Indigenous Australian

People are also Individuals FIRST
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Diversity

There are two distinct groups of Indigenous peoples in Australia.

Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people

These two groups are ethnically distinct with different histories.

It is very important to acknowledge that an individual person has the right to identify with one or more cultures to which they belong.
Cultural Diversity

“The concept of cultural diversity has multiple and sometimes divergent meaning. Diversity is not a single concept – there is diversity within societies and across societies and there is diversity over time.”

Cowen, Tyler - “How Globalisation is Changing the World’s Culture” - 2004
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualist thinking Westernised (Monochromic)</th>
<th>Collective thinking Indigenous (Polychromic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policies and procedures</td>
<td>Cultural protocols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear family</td>
<td>Community responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult with one person</td>
<td>Consult with family/community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership of land</td>
<td>Work with environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do one thing at a time</td>
<td>Do many things at once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously</td>
<td>Change plans often and easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize promptness</td>
<td>Consider time commitments an objective to be achieved, if possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are concerned about not disturbing others; follow rules of privacy and consideration</td>
<td>Are more concerned with those who are closely related (family, friends, close business associates) than with privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show great respect for private property; seldom borrow or lend</td>
<td>Borrow and lend things often and easily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who can Identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?
A person who:

1. Is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent

2. Identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

3. Is recognised by the appropriate Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community
Issues of Identity
- Tied to culture you are raised in

Myth: Colour of Skin = No Culture

One of the biggest misconceptions and is offensive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that because of the colour of skin and lighter complexions that you do not have your culture.
The Aboriginal Flag
The Torres Strait Islander Flag
Kinship Terms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinship Terms</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aunty and Uncle</td>
<td>Address given to someone older, May not be related, term of Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother or Sister</td>
<td>Sibling, refer to cousins, general term when address one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousin Brother Cousin Sister</td>
<td>Cousin Address from both mother and father’s side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father and Mother</td>
<td>Includes any relative of parents generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin or Skin Group</td>
<td>Determined by skin of parents and determines who you can marry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Refers to any woman of one’s great-grandparents’ generation. This is due to the cyclical nature of traditional kinship systems and mirrors usage in many Australian Languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>Refers to any male of the next generation, such as nephews just as “daughter” can refer to any female of the next generation including nieces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your own research vital to establishing your relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Issues of Identity

Definitions of Aboriginal Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT and New South Wales</td>
<td>Ngunnawal TO’s or Koori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Koorie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coorie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Murri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Koorie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Nunga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nyungar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>Nyoongah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nyoongar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Yolngu – Top End</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anangu – Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>Murri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>Palawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Koori</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: these terms are not confined to State/Territory boundaries and there is like to be diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a particular location. Some groups prefer to be referred to by their tribal or tradition skin name. It is important that you make the effort to identify the preferred names of the groups in your locality.
## Aboriginal English (Creole)

### Some common words used in ACT and NSW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gugan</td>
<td>Gulwan</td>
<td>Gubba</td>
<td>Dubbay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burries</td>
<td>Tidda</td>
<td>Sista</td>
<td>Jarjum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brotha</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Fella, fulla</td>
<td>Jilawah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingo</td>
<td>Deadly</td>
<td>Mish</td>
<td>Gammon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarn</td>
<td>Gunjies</td>
<td>Gunyans</td>
<td>Yunggi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarndi</td>
<td>Mob</td>
<td>Boondah</td>
<td>Doori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durri</td>
<td>Gunja</td>
<td>Yarndi</td>
<td>Sorry business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shame</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contemporary Snapshot
At June 2011:

- 34.8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians lived in major cities
- 22% lived in inner regional areas
- 21% lived in outer regional areas
- 7.7% lived in remote areas
- 13.7% lived in very remote areas

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2011
At 30 June 2011:

Estimated Australian Indigenous population was 669,736.

- In 2011, NSW had the highest number of Indigenous people (208,364 people, 31% of the total Indigenous population).
- In 2011, the NT had the highest proportion of Indigenous people in its population (30% of the NT population were Indigenous).
- In 2011, around 33% of Indigenous people lived in a capital city.
- There was a 21% increase in the number of Indigenous people counted in the 2011 Census compared with the 2006 Census.
- The Indigenous population is much younger than the non-Indigenous population.

Source: ABS, 2012

Notes:
1. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision; population projections are expected to be finalised by 2014
2. Australian population includes Jervis Bay Territory, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and Christmas Island
3. Proportions of jurisdiction population have used total population figures estimated from demographic information for June 2011
Population pyramid of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations
30 June 2011
Life Expectancy:

The gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians is approximately 12 years for males in both major cities and regional/remote areas and 10 years for females in the same areas.

Chronic disease is a major contributor to this gap.
3. Identify issues or barriers that exist in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and communities
What is discrimination?

1. ‘unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice’

2. fair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice?
Cultural Safety

A commonly used definition of cultural safety is that of Williams (p213:1999) who defined cultural safety as:

• An environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people

• Enhances Personal Empowerment of Indigenous client and staff

• Where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need

• It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together

Strategies that enhance the ability to be culturally safe include:

• reflecting on one’s own culture, attitudes and beliefs about ‘others’
• clear, value free, open and respectful communication
• developing trust
• recognising and avoiding stereotypical barriers
• being prepared to engage with others in a two-way dialogue where knowledge is shared
• understanding the influence of culture shock
Deliver services in a creative and flexible manner in response to the changing needs of the community.

- This includes flexibility not only in the ways that services are provided, but also where they take place.
- Involve Indigenous community members in the planning/delivery of the program/service structure.
- Conduct programs in informal, non-threatening settings
- Ensure that costs to service users are kept to a minimum
- Conduct services "in language" (the first language of local people) or, failing this, have translators or people who can present information in plain, accessible English
• It is also important to ensure that any metaphors or examples used take account of our world views and experiences.

• Involve cultural artefacts in services and everyday activities (eg. traditional tools, foods, artwork and images).

• Consult and involve family, extended kinship networks, and community members in service delivery.

• Invite Indigenous Elders to participate in the program delivery.
Culturally safe practices include:

- actions that recognize and respect the cultural identities of others, and safely meets our needs, expectations and rights
- Culturally unsafe practices are those that "diminish, demean or disempower the cultural identity and well-being of an individual"
- An important principle of cultural safety is that it doesn’t require clients to focus on the cultural dimensions of any culture other than their own
- Instead, cultural safety is primarily about examining our own cultural identities and attitudes, and being open-minded and flexible in our attitudes towards people from cultures other than our own.
- Identifying what makes someone else different is simple
- Understanding our own culture, and its influence on how we think, feel and behave is much harder. However, in the increasingly multicultural environments in which we all live and work, the importance of being culturally safe in what we do cannot be underestimated
Factors that inhibit the successful delivery of services to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities:

- A lack of appropriate infrastructure hinders the logistics of service delivery
- Demanding workloads and low remuneration make staff burnout a common issue
- Difficult social environments - with low levels of trust, participation, social control, and efficacy, and high levels of anxiety, disempowerment, disorganisation, and mobility - provide the context for much service delivery
• One Size fits All
• Not working ‘with’ – assumptions that YOU know the answer
• Doing it FOR me, rather than supporting me to become self-reliant – EMPOWERMENT is the key
• Service isn’t culturally competent
• Applying for Funding then wanting a relationship with us
• Lack of appropriate infrastructure for successful delivery of service
Involve community members. This includes involvement in both planning and implementation of service/delivery.

Identify pressing needs. It is important to communicate with community members in order to identify their most pressing needs. Experience suggests that it is often best to start with small and achievable objectives, rather than trying to take on too much too early. Early successes often have a "ripple" effect, inspiring community confidence and motivating service staff.

Utilise existing networks, services, and resources.

Balance the talking with the doing. Temper the consultation - too much community consultation and a subsequent failure to follow through with action leads to cynicism. Balance consultation with implementation.

Give honest and constructive Feedback.

Ensure that your service is culturally competent.
5. An Awareness of the issues /barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Peoples face
The Cycle of Poverty

Disadvantaged

Employment
- Unskilled labour
- Unemployment
- Low income
- High mobility

Lifestyle
- Poor housing
- Poverty
- Imprisonment
- Poor health

Birth
- High birth rate
- Poor housing
- Overcrowding
- Poor maternal health

Early childhood
- Poor health
- Poor parental models
- Inadequate
- Poor language
- Development

Schooling
- Low achievement
- Poor health
- Absenteeism
- Behavioural problems

Early Schooling dropout
- Poor qualifications
- Few skills
- Poor attitudes
- No access to further education
Many Indigenous families and communities in contemporary Australia face immense challenges
Our strength and resilience is compromised by multiple complex problems, including:

- Historical and ongoing dispossession
- Marginalisation
- Racism
- as well as the legacy of past policies of forced removal and cultural assimilation (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997)

These issues contribute to the high levels of poverty, unemployment, violence, and substance abuse seen in many Indigenous communities.

They also impact negatively on Indigenous children, who demonstrate poor health, educational, and social outcomes when compared to non-Indigenous children.
4. Learn to engage effectively and respectfully whilst developing basic cross-cultural communication skills

6. Encourage a culturally sensitive way of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
• Traditional Owners
• Eye contact
• The concept of time
• Shame
• Men’s and Women’s Business
• Importance of extended family, Elder System
• Sorry Business
• Silence
• Questioning
• Land/sacred sites
• Secrecy and Confidentiality
Communication skills

Note that you must never assume these customs apply to every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person you meet. You need to tailor your communication approach on a case-by-case basis. Remember that the basis of all effective communication relies on 4 main skills:

• questioning
• active listening
• feedback
• empathy
Be aware of those elements of communication that are influenced by culture, including:

- **body language** – how we use our faces and bodies to communicate
- **topic choice** – what we talk about
- **quantity and style of talk** – how much we talk and how we do it
- **politeness and face** – what we have to do to be considered polite
- **presenting information** – what is the best way of getting facts and viewpoints across
- **physical distance** – how much space is acceptable between you and another person
Men’s and Women’s Business:

There are three types of ceremonies:

1. Sacred and Secret – specific place and for a specific reason – men and women’s business

2. Semi Sacred – pertaining to men and women rites of passage

3. Non Sacred – All of community

Intangible laws around this make it taboo for men and women to know or participate in each other’s business. Cultural practices have been adapted to the environment and ceremony takes on different meanings to different communities. Important to understand if you are meant to know about this you will be informed about these and included in these ceremonies if so chosen to do so, consider it an honour that some Aboriginal cultures are willing to share with you.

Remember: ‘ASK FIRST’
Relationship building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

- Appropriate engagement skills underpin building positive and healthy relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

- Ensuring that staff members have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural understanding and cultural respect

- Ensuring that trust, respect and honesty are the guiding principles of relationship building.

- Clear and concise communication

- Be available to talk, meet and consult

- Allow time to build a trusting and respectful relationship, this cannot be rushed

- Be prepared to build a relationship with several family members including extended family members
Tips for building positive relationships with Aboriginal people

- Ensuring that an Acknowledgement of Country/Traditional owners is performed at meetings, gatherings and ceremonies
- Becoming familiar with Aboriginal culture and further knowledge
- Be familiar with Aboriginal Men’s and Women’s business
- Research Aboriginal organisations in your area and key Aboriginal workers
- Get out in the community and attend Aboriginal events and programs
- Engage all staff in ongoing Cultural Awareness Training
- Listening as everyone has their own stories

This is a generalist list and does not apply to all Aboriginal people
ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL
Protocols are defined as a set of ethical principles that guide behaviour in a situation. These protocols can assist you in improving working relationships with communities.

- Be aware of local expectations
- Welcome and Acknowledgement to Country Protocols
- Professionalism
- Further considerations: 3 T’s
  1. Time
  2. Trust
  3. Tea