



# Cultural Understandings



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# Support Document Aboriginal Perspectives on the early years of learning



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# Overview of Cultural Understandings



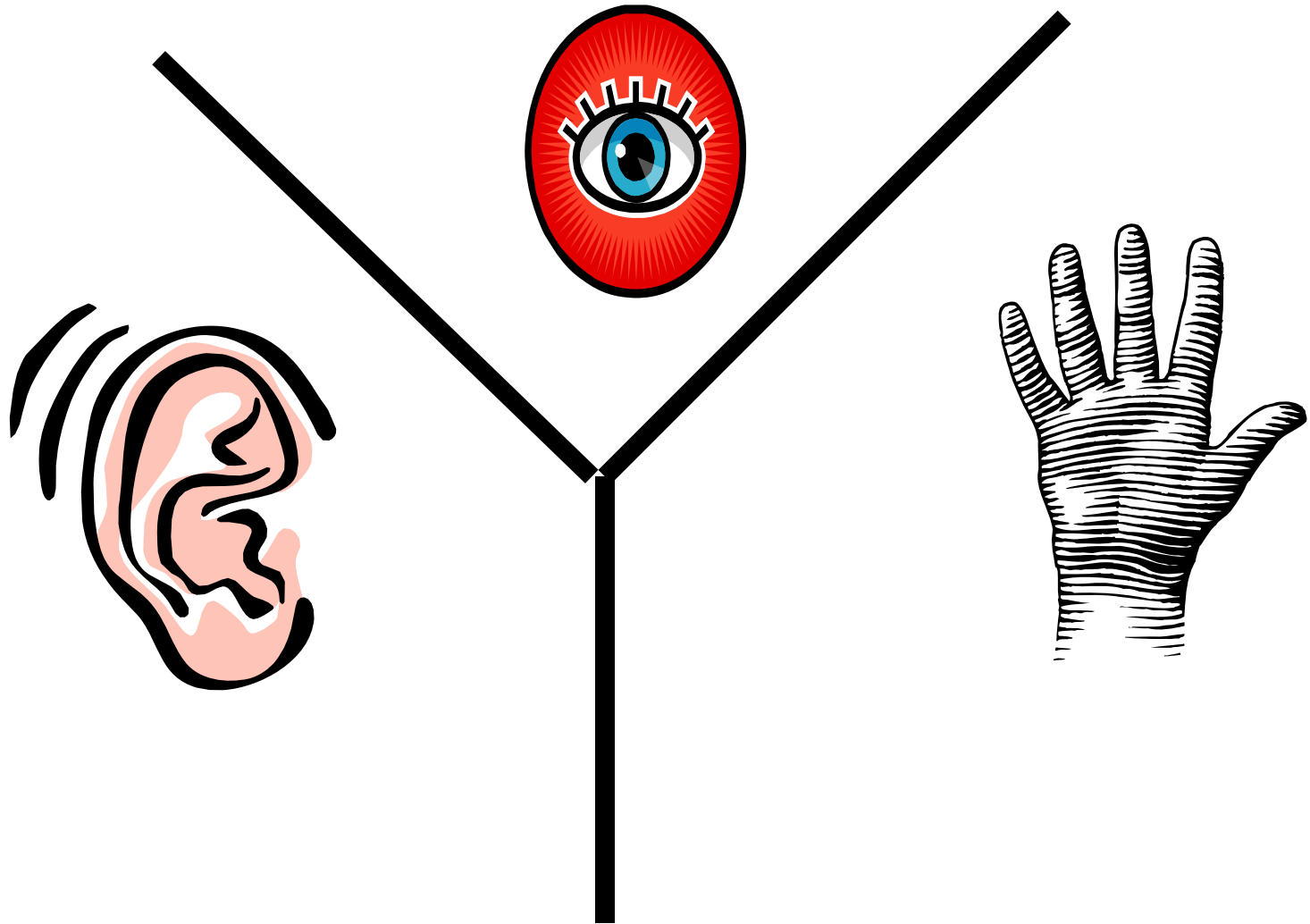
- Objectives: To provide opportunities for participants to;
  - Develop an understanding of the diverse aspects of culture for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
  - Develop a better understanding of the cultural factors which influence an individual's life and contribute to their identity
  - Plan for a culturally inclusive curriculum for their site based on the cultural identity of the children who attend there.
- Outcomes:
  - Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their understandings about culture
  - Participants will have the opportunity to unpack aspects of culture and its diversity for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
  - Participants will extend their understanding of the inclusive nature of cultural awareness



## What is culture?

- Responses from educators/parents
  - Social constructs, our family, songs, ways of thinking, a sense of belonging,
  - music, dance, food, dress, celebration, codes of behaviour, traditions, identity, religion,
  - how generations pass down information, connections, education,
  - people we are comfortable with, groups, rules for living, artwork, friends,

# 'Y' Chart of culture





# Cultural Awareness Statements

## Responses from educators

- The way we view the world and the way the world views us is determined by our culture!
- Identity, knowledge and culture connecting to community!





- Culture is - who a person is - who and what they identify with - their beliefs and practices they value to understand respect, value the cultures of others and its ongoing practice
- Culture awareness is to be open to and respectful of diversity of people's life, customs, language, religion, values to give a few example



## Develop an Aboriginal cultural awareness statement

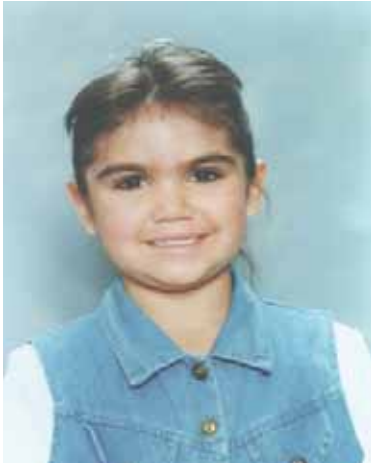
- IT IS THE SAME!!
- IF WE ARE TRULY VALUING ALL CHILDREN'S CULTURE IN OUR CENTRE/SERVICE.
- THEN THE CULTURAL AWARENESS STATEMENT SHOULD BE INCLUSIVE OF ALL CHILDREN'S CULTURE TO BE ....





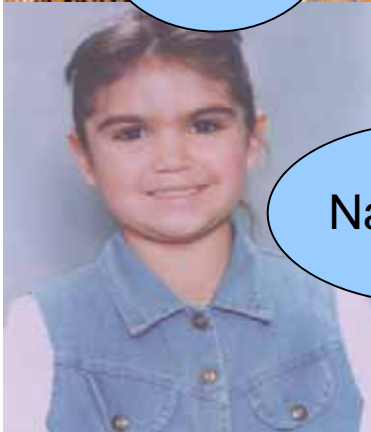
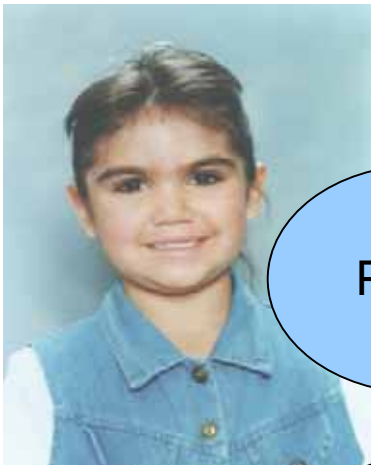
## Definitions of Culture

- Culture is the way we do things, our attitudes, thoughts, expectations, goals, hopes and values. It is the set of guides we have for living. These guides or rules are often unspoken. We learn them in a variety of ways from our families, friends, schooling, social activities, the media and the social institutions we interact with as we go through life. (Office of Multicultural & Ethnic Affairs 1992:63)



## Definitions of Culture

- The sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings, which is transmitted from one generation to another  
(Macquarie Library Pty Ltd 1990:448)



**Aboriginal people**

The following information is from a book by Adelaide, South Australia.

Other children would have strong links to places like Raukkan, Nepabunna, Port Augusta and the Riverland.

Many Aboriginal children have English names.

Proud identity.

Identifying with butterfly indicates to those who know about South Australian Aboriginal people that Alex's people are from Point Pearce on Yorke Peninsula—Narungga people who have traditionally linked spiritually to the butterfly.

Confident

Strong Spirituality

Proud

Identifies as butterfly

Self Assured

Australian

Good communicator

Happy

My name is Alex and I'm Butterfly.

English name

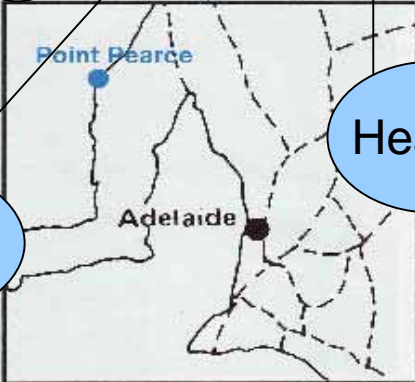
Language

Pretty

Girl

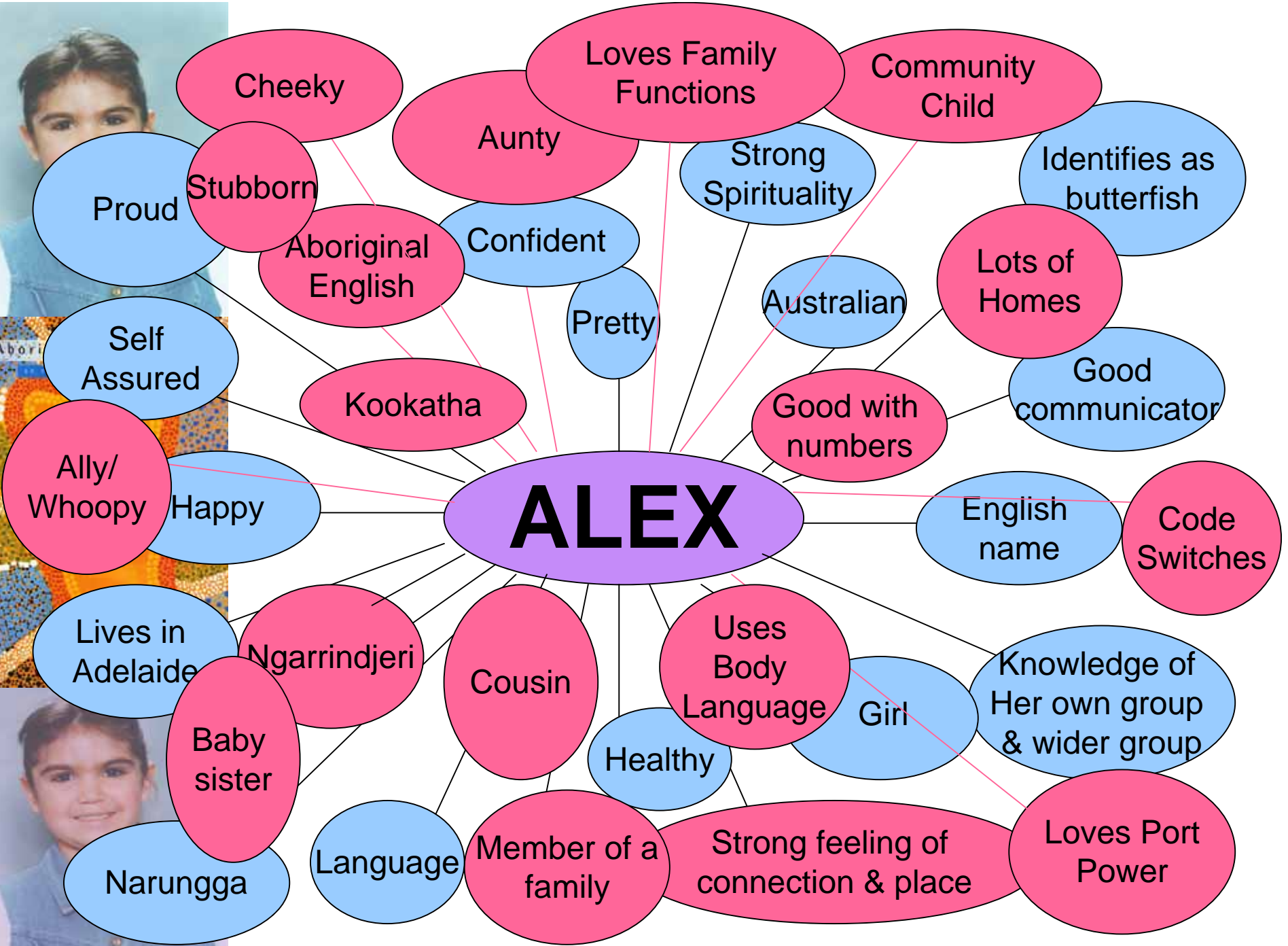
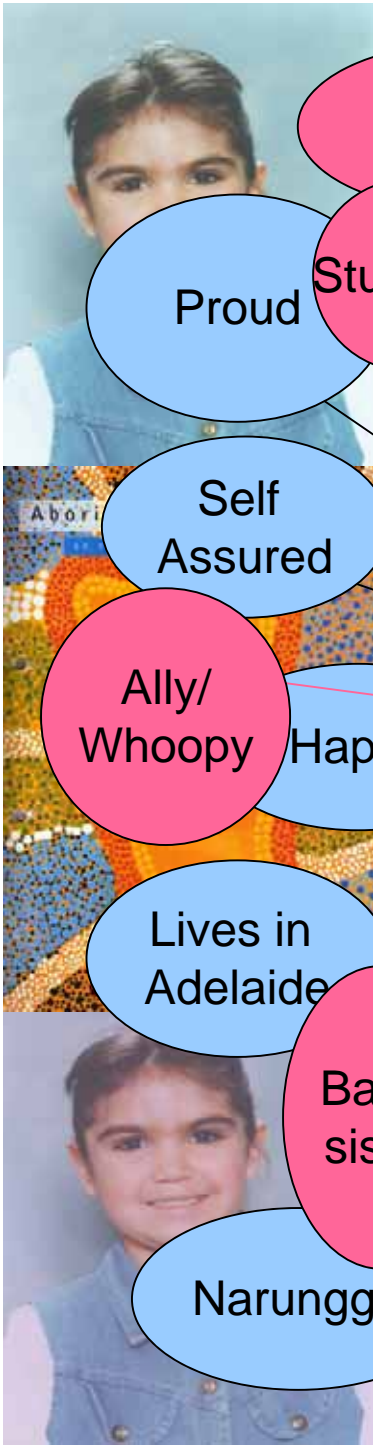
Knowledge of Her own group & wider group

Narungga



Healthy

Lives in Adelaide





# Identity: 'Who I am'

- This means children:
  - Expressing the need for attention and comfort
  - Developing attachments and trust with significant others
  - Beginning to develop autonomy in behaviour, self-regulation and the ability to influence others
  - Beginning to recognise, name and manage own emotions and express personal needs
  - Exploring different aspects of their identity (physical, social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive)





- Developing personal health and hygiene routines and using a range of fine and gross motor skills to engage in physical activities
- Developing awareness of their social and cultural heritage
- Beginning to develop self-awareness and understandings with a strong sense of self-worth, context and direction
- Developing personal resilience to maintain and support aspects of identities that are valued in various contexts
- Beginning to understand social constructs to identify justices and injustices. (SACSA Early Years. General Introduction p11)



## Identity Web

- How do we respect and value Alex's culture in our site?
- Which things would be more likely to be visible for us in our centre
- How can we support Alex to explore her own identity in a supportive environment?

**Tasks:** Participants will construct an identity web for a child in their site



# Planning for Change

- Consider one of the following areas from the document in relation to the focus child: Child rearing, Home environment, Child and Family Health, Aboriginal English, The Dreaming and use this as support to formulate a plan of action which may include the following:
  - Community Involvement
  - Curriculum
  - Explicit Teaching
  - Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity
  - Further Training and Development





# Reflection

- Question to participants:
  - Does our site and everything in it reflect the children and families who use it?
- As a result of what you have learned today, what might you do in your site?
  - What challenges you in what you want to do?
  - What will be easy to implement?



Remember "...If we see differences as a resource on which further teaching and learning can be built, our teaching response will be to seek to extend the skills that children already have."





## From consultation to genuine dialogue

- Working with Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people and through Aboriginal people requires more than consultation – it requires a dialogue
- Creating Protocols for Dialogue
- So what does dialogue look like in practice?



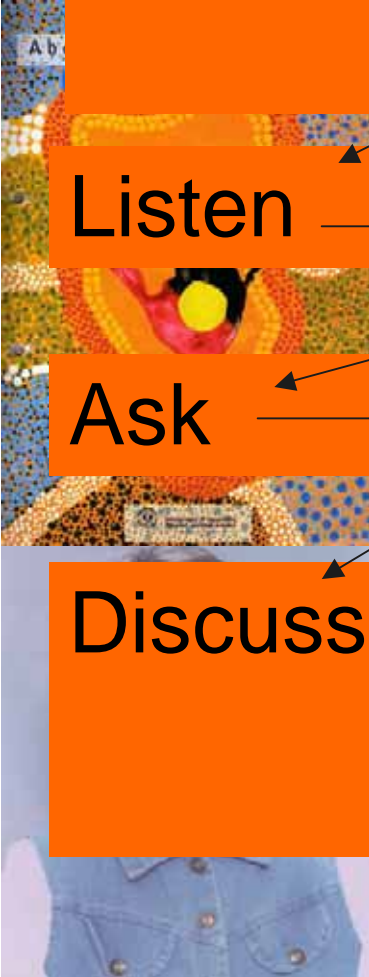
# Creating Protocols for Dialogue

Observe → Check-Self → Collaborative Learning =  
Reflection + Inquiry

Listen → Check-Self → CL = R + I

Ask → Check-Self → CL = R + I

Discuss → Mutual Plan of Action → Collective Decision  
Making





# Dialogue Skills

- **Respectful silence**
- **Suspension of assumptions**
- **Acting as a colleague and partner rather than an expert**
- **Spirit of Inquiry**





## Impact on educators

- I found this to be interesting – I didn't look at Aboriginal culture to be different from any other culture – it just depends on how much you believe in your own! (Aboriginal staff member)
- Great the way you got us thinking about 'culture' not focusing on any specific culture



- Identity Web gave me lots of good ideas on how to really get to know the kids better.
- Identity Web a great idea. Will definitely use it in the room/centre. Realised I need to learn more about many of my children
- Would be good to use identity web for all children.
- Staff Identity web should shared with families.



- I learnt that we need to look more into the community as a whole looking at culture
- Has given me food for thought on a number of levels including forward planning for my centre and how I set up the environment and curriculum for all children
- We must make a few changes to our centre and this PD has just reassured that!