

PATHWAYS OF LANGUAGE REVIVAL

LANGUAGE REVIVAL IS A JOURNEY

The journey starts with inspiration...

WHAT'S THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR JOURNEY?

There are all sorts of reasons why people begin the journey of language revival...

- I want my grandkids to know their country and their language
- Our local school wants to run Language and Culture classes
- My Mum was asked to do a Welcome to Country
- Our art group wants to be able to use Language in our work

LANGUAGE REVIVAL JOURNEYING HAS NO END

As you develop your language and learn more about what language revival means in your community, you will want to change many of the early choices that were made. It's so important to remember that at the time they were good choices. Just as you change through the process of language revival, so will your priorities and your understanding of what seems right.

When you look back over years on this journey there will be ups and downs, places where you went slowly and times when you seemed to fly. Each of the choices you make about making new words or spelling will have its time. Some of them will stick for the long term but sometimes it will be obvious pretty quickly that there are other choices that will work better. If you don't try things, you can't find out if they work!

THINGS TO PACK WHEN THERE IS NO MAP

You may not know exactly where you're heading but there are a few things you can do to support yourself on the journey of language revival. It's useful to be clear about the different resources you have – and the different people in the community who could be part of the journey.

- What language is remembered in the community?
- Are there words? Cultural knowledge? Stories? Place names?
- Are there historical records for your language?
- How do people feel about the records and the people who collected them?
- Is there any research work by linguists – perhaps a dictionary or grammar description?
- How do people feel about using that?

JOURNEYING TOGETHER

As Language work becomes more visible in the community, more people may want to get involved. Sometimes there can be conflict about different parts of the language revival journey.

Language revival work ripples out into issues to do with Culture and Country. Sharing language happens in families and communities, and different points of view are part of how relationships can be strengthened. There can be difficult times and conflict but if you are persistent there will also be connection and healing.



Hollie Johnson teaching language to preschoolers

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"If my Ancestors told these stories to the first settlers, there was a reason for that. It set the pattern. It wasn't a closed shop. It was a door left open, for me to be able to see that and look for the bigger picture. To say, well if they told them, they must have known somehow that that was going to be recorded for the next generation. And it's taken me that journey, because it is the journey of your status, too, within your community – to know knowledge, to share knowledge, to bring it to the next stage. So I had to reclaim it, look at it, understand it, and start to feel confident to write it." - Carolyn Briggs

"When we first started all we had to do was to remember to keep one word in front of the kids. And that was the way we sort of tried to keep it. You know, like, you went in the next day, you had a new subject. You knew that they didn't know what father was and mother was, and all this, so you were ahead of 'em." - Geoff Anderson

"But all the argy bargy that's going on, behind it all is a very positive cultural thing. Because ten years ago we wouldn't have been arguing the toss about Language. We wouldn't have been arguing the toss about Language boundaries – because we didn't have that knowledge. So it's inevitable that there's going to be some push and shove about whose Country's whose and what language is what. But you've just got to accept that that's gonna be part and parcel of the rise of the culture and the language." - Bruce Pascoe

"I think only about a dozen or more people started. For a couple of weeks, and then it slowly dwindled away to about 2 people after the 8 weeks. I was very disappointed. I thought, 'Why don't they come and learn? Because it's up to them as parents and older people to teach the kids.' Then I started thinking, perhaps it's the other way round. Learn the kids, and they'll ask their parents, who'll want to know what they're talking about. And sometimes that works." - Uncle Ivan Couzens

"We've got the language, [Threlkeld's] publications, you know. It's like reading old Shakespeare stuff. And that's where all the evidence of our language is. Inside amongst that. So, to unlock the secrets of the language, we've had to unlock him. And that's just what we've concentrated on. We could've dove in and grabbed his lexicons and his word list and so forth, which appear in these old books, just used those and started pronouncing the words and started talking again. But we couldn't. We needed to understand how he used every single one of those characters, to pronounce that unique sound." - Daryn McKenny

"The other thing that makes it slightly easier now, cos I'm starting to get the hang of it, is the endings. Cos when I was first doing the language, I wasn't using endings. I was just putting words together. And so basically it was Language done in an English way. Now that I'm starting to learn the endings, and putting endings in the right place, it's becoming more Wathaurong than English. And it's quite interesting, because once you start using the endings, it makes a lot of sense', you know. Makes it sound right, and puts it in its right flow." - David Tournier