

PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE REVIVAL

HEALING

Health, wellbeing and healing in Aboriginal communities is comprehensive and holistic. It is viewed and practiced considering all aspects of a person/s, family/s, community/s environment, culture and circumstance. Health and healing is not separate from the 'all' of life. In thinking about healing, from the 'Language is Culture' principle, communities identify culture as the key to healing: to healing the spirit of individuals, families, communities and Country.

IDENTITY AND HEALING

Learning your language is vital in strengthening identity ...
...and reclaiming identity and cultural knowledge.

"Getting your Holden cars and your pencillin injections won't revive your language. But language can ensure the health of the community." - Bruce Pascoe

ABORIGINAL IDENTITY IS WHO YOU ARE AND YOUR PLACE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

"It was what my son learned that brought me back to reclaiming. 'You have to reclaim who you are Mum!' That was his bit of wisdom ... he told me the power of our knowledge." - Carolyn Briggs

"My daughters, they felt that once they'd done the language, that really gave them their birthright more than anything else." - Richard Kennedy

"We sent them home with a whole branch, a whole family tree with each of their kinship order names and their grandfathers and mothers on their mother's side and their grandfathers and mothers on their father's side. And we would name them all in the kinship order system." - Prof. Lester-Irabinna Rigney



"The sooner Aboriginal people across Australia understand the powerfulness of their own language, they'll understand that their life will become better. It will be because they'll have their own language and say – this is my language, this is me, this is who I am ... I can now speak my language ..." - David Tournier

Tyrendarra - Reviving Language is caring for Country (Gunditjmara)

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WAYS OF KNOWING AND BEING

Our primary learning way is 'listening, looking and imitation'. Within this learning we also receive spiritual learning – our ways of learning and knowing are not all tangible and explainable.

Our connection to Country, family and community is our spirituality: these ways of knowing, being and sensing are fundamental elements of our learnings. Feeling our spirituality, connecting and understanding our spirituality is healing. Our stories and language can deepen our connection to Country and culture.

“As soon as you start teaching them a few words ... they feel the language. Because it belongs to them ... it comes up through the ground into them.”

- Geoff Anderson

“Our spirituality is so strong, but it's not talked about in many ways. We do have spiritual healers. We have spiritual connection here that, if we walk onto a ground that we are not supposed to be on, we know, automatically that that is the wrong place to be. We will walk away. A lot of people don't understand that. And I'm raising this because it does come with Language, our Creation stories tell us of where our Ancestors have been. But the most important thing, it tells us about our Country.” - Jenni Beer

Language, Healing and Country

People, Country and Language are interconnected. Language, our language from our own Country, strengthens our connections, healing people and land.

Language can not only promote healing within Aboriginal communities, but also in the wider community. For example, people have noticed how the number of racist incidents in schools drops when Language is taught, with respect and understanding.



Vicki Couzens making a possum skin cloak.

“Our languages have an unique harmonic structure that resonates with this Land, this Land from which they (languages) are born. This is why we must continue our work in language revival. Our Old People left us a legacy, a responsibility to care for Country, and to care for Country we have to know the right stories, words and songs. When we say ‘sing up Country’, that is what we are doing and our Country hears us. When we say ‘make the Country strong’, that is what we are doing, when we speak our language, when we sing those songs.” - Vicki Couzens