

Protecting Culture and Protecting the Future for Our Children

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S.N.A.I.C.C.



I will tell you something about stories
They aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled.
They are all we have, you see,
All we have to fight off illness and death.

You don't have anything
If you don't have stories.

Their evil is mighty
But it can't stand up to our stories.
So they try to destroy the stories
Let the stories be confused or forgotten
They would like that
They would be happy
Because we would be defenceless then.

Indigenous American Elder - Leslie Marmon Silko



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Telling Our Story

- Our Aboriginal cultures are the longest continuing culture in the world. They are sophisticated and holistic - linking spirituality with politics, education, economics, land care, and the law.
- Our stories since colonisation have been dangerous and subversive remembrances.
- New stories, modern stories of surviving the policies of assimilation and establishing our own organisations in law, health, education, child care and child and family services.



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A year of Significance

- The tenth anniversary of the release of the *Bringing Them Home Report*
- The fiftieth anniversary of NAIDOC
- The fortieth anniversary of the 1967 Referendum

The real story is that of Aboriginal and Islander people on the ground.

- It is their perseverance which we must honour in all that we do and it is their perseverance which continuously guides us towards creating a better environment for our children.



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National Indigenous Children's Services Plan

- The result of 4 years of consultations
- Key plank in the plan is the acknowledgement that it is the role of government to support Aboriginal families in meeting children's cultural and development needs.
- Culture
 - is critical to children's development needs
 - is about identity and
 - children who are strong in their sense of identity have greater resilience.
- A service system that values Aboriginal and Islander culture and is culturally competent is one which can lead to a better future for our children.



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National Aboriginal and Islander Child Protection Plan

- SNAICC has been advocating for a plan since 1995 based on
 - understanding the role of culture and giving communities a sense of control over their future.
 - based on evidence, Aboriginal and Islander expertise and the expertise of a growing number of child and family services experts and academics who want to work with us.



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Traditional social investment

- Our economies were holistic - politics, law, culture, land and economic activity merged with a spiritual dimension to maintain life in community.
- Each person had their role, rights and responsibilities.
- Work was a spiritual act, subject to the ancient laws and traditions established by the creator spirits, and not just an economic act of survival.
- The social investment made by the creator spirits and the spirit of the land.
- The rhythms of our economies based on the rhythms of the land.



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Social investment strategy for Aboriginal and Islander children and families

- - recognises that colonisation has impacted negatively on Aboriginal social and economic capacity,
- - builds on the strengths of Aboriginal culture,
- - respects the self-determining rights of Aboriginal communities in order to re-build our community capacity
- - recognizes that the support system for Aboriginal and Islander children must be culturally competent.



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Culture as protection

- **Culture defines** who we are, how we think, how we communicate, what we value and what is important. Aboriginal children require cultural knowledge and cultural information that relates to their own community.
- The **protective and resilient qualities of a strong cultural identity** and involvement in cultural life.
- Adherence to **cultural traditions and participation** in cultural activities enhance child wellbeing and contributes to the child's resilience
- The **dynamics of power** between cultures. Racism and dealing with the underlying issues which lead to disempowerment and dysfunction



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Culture-based, strengths-based response

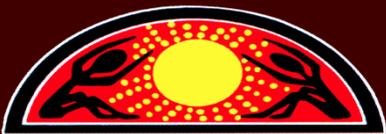
- Western approach focuses on a negative, 'deficit approach' that ignores social, historical and cultural aspects, including resilience
 - Fails to recognise
 - how *profound* and how *pervasive* is on-going loss
 - contemporary consequences of trans-generational trauma
- We need to
 - Strengthen resilience
 - Use Koori ways - 'Deep Listening'
 - Cultural competence / cultural safety
 - Build environments for change



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Culture the key ingredient

- Culture is the missing ingredient in mainstream services and it isn't something they can manufacture.
- Culture is for our children the 'leaven in the bread' that can help them grow and develop - as long as they see their culture valued. Which means they see their sense of identity valued.
- Being strong and proud in culture and knowing where you belong helps give Koorie youth today the strength to face challenges.



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Cultural Competence Continuum

Cultural Destructiveness

Cultural Incapacity

Cultural Blindness

Cultural Pre competence

Cultural Competence

Cultural Proficiency

Characterised by
Intentional attitudes policies & practices that are destructive to cultures and consequently to individuals within the Culture

Characterised by:
Lack of capacity to help minority clients or Communities due to extremely biased beliefs and a paternal attitude toward those not of a mainstream Culture

Characterised by:
The belief that service or helping approaches traditionally used by the dominant culture are universally applicable regardless of race or culture. These services ignore cultural strengths and encourage assimilation

Characterised by:
The desire to deliver quality services and a commitment to diversity indicated by hiring minority staff, initiating training and recruiting minority members for agency leadership, but lacking information on how to maximise these capacities. This level of competence can lead to tokenism

Characterised by:
Acceptance and respect for difference continuing self assessment, careful attention to the dynamics of difference, continuous expansion of knowledge and resources, and adaptation of services to better meet the needs of diverse populations

Characterised by:
Holding culture in high esteem: seeking to add to the knowledge base of culturally competent practice by conducting research, influencing approaches to care, and improving relations between cultures Promotes self determination

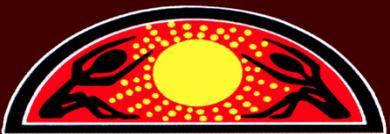
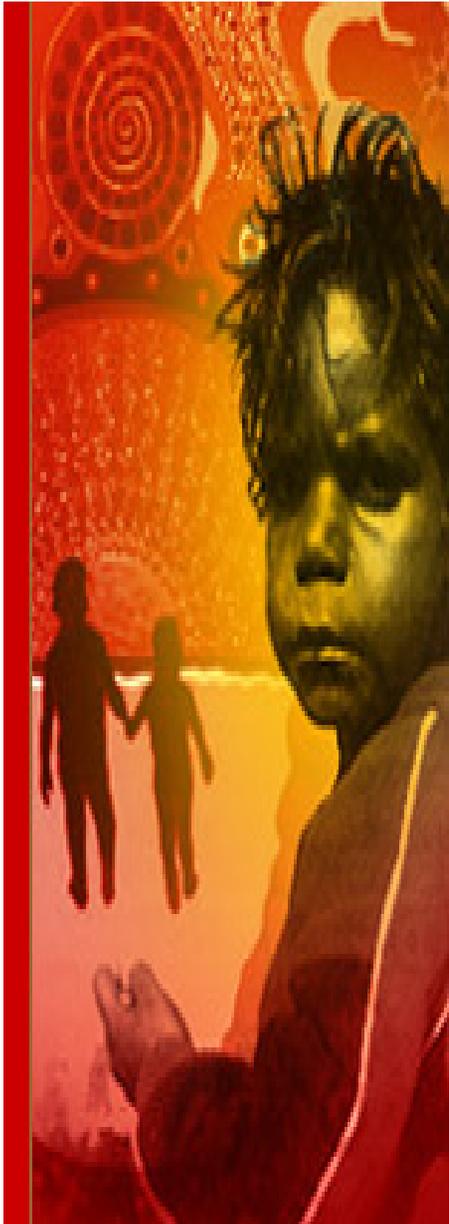
Real self-determination

- self-determination needs
 - to be resourced,
 - capacity building;
 - respectful dialogue and community development.

Aboriginal and Islander people want rights not welfare and with rights comes responsibility.



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