

# DEADLY STORY

## Tips for Engaging with Children

**A**cknowledge the child's cultural journey and be aware that the child may not have a lot of understanding of their identity. Always approach identity questions with sensitivity. There may be some shame and the child/young person may be uncomfortable talking about their family and culture – take it slow and be led by the child or young person

**I**n consultation with the child/young person's care team always approach identity with a age, stage and developmentally appropriate lens – have realistic expectations

**U**se VACCA's Child's Voice Toolkit as a Guide

**R**emember a child/young person's cultural plan isn't something that should happen in one sitting, and it is not something that is formed from a structured question and answer session. Be creative and allow a naturally flowing, organic process to occur – allow your observations and conversations to help create a meaningful cultural story to evolve for the child/young person

**B**uild relationships and trust with the child/young person – spend time, build rapport, listen attentively and observe

**A**lways acknowledge the child's family, heritage and culture in a positive, strengths based way that empowers the child to feel proud of their identity and culture.

**G**ain as much understanding and knowledge as possible about the child's family, culture and identity – join the child or young person on their journey, and help them with their research and knowledge exploration, for example you could research their mob together on the internet.

**E**ngage with the child/young person in a safe, child-friendly space wherever possible – for some young people this may be outside or at a local Aboriginal organisation.

**A**lways explain your role and the importance/significance of the cultural support plan. Give them lots of information about the process and how it will affect them and allow them to feel empowered and drive the process as much as possible.

**U**nderstand and be aware of the impact of trauma as some children and young people have been in unsafe environments and it will take time to trust you. Also, be aware that discussing family and identity can highlight a child's loss and bring feelings of grief, so it's important to allow children to have their emotions and consultation with services such as the Aboriginal Children's Healing team are essential as well as a care team approach always.

**A**lways consult with Aboriginal Senior Advisors Cultural Planning and other Aboriginal community organisations and Elders for further advice and guidance



## Tips for Engaging with Community Organisations

**B**uild relationships and trust – invite local organisations to a morning tea and ask them respectfully to share information about their local areas, services and staff. Strengthen positive relationships and partnerships and always respect Aboriginal community rights to self-determination and empowerment.

**W**herever appropriate attend local community events, activities, meetings, open days, functions, NAIDOC days etc. Develop an awareness and interest – be observant and willing to learn.

**I**ncorporate “Acknowledgement of Country” at ceremonies, meetings and official events and invite local Elders to conduct a Welcome to Country wherever possible

**E**nsure non-Aboriginal staff receives ongoing Aboriginal cultural awareness and Cultural Support Plan training.

**E**stablish community advisory groups where relevant to gain general knowledge and understanding around cultural plan development and implementation

**G**ain knowledge of the community, for example clan groups, language groups, local history, local area knowledge etc

**E**mploy Aboriginal staff wherever possible to assist with engaging community or engage VACCA senior Advisors or Lakidjeka/ACCSASS staff to assist with engaging.



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## Tips for engaging with Elders

**E**ngaging with Elders should always be based on respect as our Elders are the custodians of information and knowledge

**B**e aware of cultural protocol values and ways of doing business relevant to the Elders, community and country. For example, protocols may include - Should you acknowledge country? Is the meeting environment a culturally safe one? Should an Aboriginal person accompany you? Should you ask permission to use certain language certain languages and symbols? Are there certain protocols around deceased people/sorry business, men and women's business etc.

**A**lways ask how elders would like to be addressed/acknowledged. Do not assume that an elder wants you to call them Aunty or Uncle unless a strong relationship has been established.

**P**ractice active listening, always wait your turn to speak and do not talk over anyone

**B**e clear about your purpose of engagement and be guided and directed by the Elders. Ensure Elders are aware of workers commitment to child's culture, cultural support plan and how this is in the best interest of the child.

**W**here extensive engagement is required, Elders should be paid for their time and if travel is required then transport to and from the meeting venue will need to be arranged and refreshments provided.

**H**ave a respectful curiosity and ask questions that allow Elders to feel inclusive and culturally safe always.

**B**uild relationships and trust, where appropriate meet with Elders on a regular basis to share and exchange mutual updates and information about the child/young person

**B**e mindful of historical factors and potential past traumas as a result of past policies such as the forcible removal of Aboriginal children.

**C**onsult with Aboriginal Senior Advisors Cultural Planning and other Aboriginal community organisations for further advice and guidance

