

# Paakantji Language and Culture Nest – August 25 meeting notes

---

## Welcome to Country

**Meeting opened at 9:38am.** Alyssa Bourke Welcomed people to Country in Paakantji Language. A minutes silence was taken to reflect on the recent passing of a community member.

## Paakantji Language and Culture Nest Open Group Discussion

Shayne Williams and Raymond Ingrey provided a brief introduction to the meeting which included a background to the Language and Culture Nests and an overview of the recent joint NSW Department of Education - NSW AECG objectives to support and progress the Language and Culture Nests. After the introduction an open group discussion began. The following points were made.

### Discussion Points: Barriers to Paakantji Language and Culture Nest Progression

- A major barrier has been the lack of appointment of a coordinator as well as a Language and Culture Teacher
- Without the above appointments there has been a lack of direction and leadership – Principals and schools are unaware and/or unsure about what the Nest is meant to do
- Communications about the Nest have not reached everyone and information has not been openly shared
- There is little clarity around payment for tutors, and roles and responsibilities - there is a need for clarity as this is causing a lot of frustration
- The travel some tutors have had to cover and the wear and tear on their vehicles is discouraging tutors
- Having the Nest located in the school with an unsupportive unwelcoming Principal has been a major barrier
- Some kids are engaging with language learning but a lot don't seem keen
- There is uncertainty/lack of clarity about the teacher's and tutor's role when teaching language within the classroom
- In some schools Language and Culture learning feels or is isolated to one room in the school rather than something that is present throughout the school
- In some schools teachers are teaching Paakantji without guidance from Paakantji community members – this is causing issues re pronunciation and appropriate resource development - If there's no one identified to go in and support then there should be use of VC to provide the support that is required

### **Discussion points: Successes and positives in regards to the Paakantji Language and Culture Nest**

- It is a positive that the NSW AECG is now involved – non-Aboriginal organisations wouldn't understand
- The Paakantji language circle is a real positive - has been meeting for a long time and having constant conversations and sharing/supporting opportunities - we have a solid structure in place
- Kayleen Kerwin has been very valuable and active in teaching language – even through tough times
- There are lots of people with a real passion – working through the holidays with kids in care and foster homes and also teaching non-Aboriginal people language
- Seeing children four years old doing Welcome to Country in Paakantji, speaking Paakantji at home – this is making parents very proud

### **Discussion points: Where should Paakantji Language and Culture resources be housed?**

- Would be good if there was both an online space and real sharing spaces for resources
- Resources would be best housed in an independent location, outside of a school
- Resources could be housed in Wilcannia, a building is being developed there which could be leased for the language nest
- If resources were housed in Broken Hill this would be a central location where everyone would have a decent road to travel on and people often need to go to Broken Hill anyway for shopping and other services
- At a local level language meeting places and resources can be anywhere, for example the Language Circle is rotating meetings across several locations – it's up to community though to decide where the Language resources can be housed – the Language 'Keeping Place' can be virtual but there is a need for somewhere central to develop resources – It's up to the community to decide on a place and provide advice back to the Department of Education
- Locally some communities have developed their own spaces, within schools and cultural centres for example, to housing and develop resources
- If the Nest becomes a virtual space and each community has their own mini Nest then we can take away the worry that some have about people taking all the resources – this setup can be flexible to allow for dialects to be recognised in each space to suit the local environments - The bigger resource house can then be centralised

### **Discussion Points: Resources, staffing and professional development to support the nest**

- In terms of building resources for the Nest, Auntie Di McNaboe has spent a few days working with people in Dubbo to share the type of teaching resources the Wiradjuri Nest has developed
- In order not to 'reinvent the wheel' with developing resources it would be useful if the five Language and Culture Nests were somehow networked so people can share
- There is a need for Paakantji audio resources to be developed

- The Nest needs adult programs as well as programs for young ones so that young and old can practice and speak language together
- The base school in the Language Nest receives funding which originally came out of the Ochre strategy/DAA to support administration costs, and wages for the Language and Culture Nest teacher and tutors (tutors funding for three hours per school within the Language Nest area)
- The NSW AECG has recently been contracted to work with community to support progressing the Nest based on current needs - this could include supporting professional development needs or cultural awareness for non-Indigenous staff i.e. Dr Shayne Williams' *Healthy Culture Healthy Country* program
- It would be better if a Paakantji Language and Culture Project Officer was not employed within a school or any other institution which might not respect the importance of the community based work that is needed
- Once community governance for the Nest is in place then the Department of Education can respond to community identifying things like who could and should be language nest tutors and teachers
- Currently the Paakantji language Nest has some committed tutors who would be suitable for moving towards teacher roles later
- TAFE Western can provide relevant Paakantji language training (Cert I, II for example) to train up more tutors – these courses can be offered for free – if this need is clearly identified then NSW AECG can have discussions to support this to happen
- An issue was identified around recognition of prior learning and knowledge - For example some people have good language knowledge but do not want to go to TAFE or might find Cert I and II too basic – however some Principals want to see Certificates...It was suggested that community may need to develop a process/a body for endorsing people who have this knowledge and then informing Principals of their recognised language knowledge so they can be recognised and payed appropriately
- Schools are funded for tutors to deliver three hours per week - if there's a need for more than 3 hours schools need to pay this out of their own budget.
- In regards to filling the Language and Culture Teacher position the Department of Education is keen to hear whether there is anyone who may be interested and have the qualifications to fill the position
- Shayne Williams can provide professional development around teaching methodologies and may be able to tailor his program for a 2 hour session with the Language Circle
- In the Department the Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement team also have a staff member who can come out to provide professional development for tutors and teachers.
- Once the Paakantji Language and Culture teacher is employed there's an expectation for them to support bringing tutors together for resource development and professional development opportunities

- Charles Darwin University are apparently interested in doing block diploma program for Aboriginal teachers on country – this could be a good follow up program for those who have done their TAFE Certificates

#### **Discussion Points: Governance of Paakantji Language and Culture Nest**

- The Department of Education is keen for Paakantji Language and Culture Nest governance arrangements to be formalised so that community can communicate the direction of the Nest with the Department and NSW AECG
- The Paakantji language circle can also work as the Language Nest Reference Group – it is an established group and has good community representation
- The reference group could be a body which initiates formal recognition of Tutors and other community members' knowledge and training in Language, Culture and teaching
- A rotating Chair for the Language Circle/Reference Group would be good

#### **Additional points to consider**

- There is a need for developing a virtual keeping place
  - There is only 2016-17 left on the original Nest strategy – the Paakantji Nest needs to work and organise together now to prove to government the success and positive educational outcomes Paakantji language learning brings
  - In terms of Paakantji pronunciation - the oral language wasn't spelt, the spelling is causing confusion - the spelling of language is an issue and so is white fellas linguistic interpretations of what they hear/heard
  - Across some Paakantji communities accents and pronunciations vary – this is ok as long as it is the accepted community pronunciation
  - Meanings of words even change – language evolves – old and new language – even Aboriginal English is changing... but it is up to community to decide on which direction their language goes
- 

**Meeting Close: 12:15pm**