Learning from Experience

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The ‘Meeting Point’ factsheets

What are they?

• A set of 16 ‘factsheets’ to assist communities in their language revival journey. Each sheet includes a range of ideas on a single topic and either a workshop or a set of quotes for discussion.
• Everyone’s language revival journey is different. These sheets do not tell you what to do – they just show you what some other people have found useful.

Where did this come from?

• All the ideas, language examples and quotes come from people reviving their languages across the eastern states of Australia.
• We especially thank our six case study language programs: Wathaurong in Geelong, Wiradjuri in Parkes, Gumbaynggirr in Nambucca Heads, Butchulla in Hervey Bay, Keerraywoorroong in Warrnambool and Gunnai in Gippsland.
The ‘Meeting Point’ factsheets

**Why did we make them?**

- Our ‘Meeting Point’ project team assembled these ideas and examples into this form so that you can easily ‘Learn from their Experience’.
- Language revival is still very new. As we share different journeys from different places, we can benefit from others’ experiences and ideas.

**What are they for?**

- The idea is that you can take any of these topics, look through the examples from the case studies, then try them out using the workshop, or discuss the topic using the quotes to get you started.
The types of factsheets

(1) Methods: How people do the work

- Words in English
- Making a Translation
- Dictionaries and Wordlists
- Exploring Deeper Meanings in Words

**LANGUAGE REVIVAL METHODS**

**DICTIONARIES AND WORDLISTS**

**WHAT A DICTIONARY IS FOR – AND WHAT IT IS NOT FOR**

The point of a dictionary in language revival is to have all the words you have found in one place, so that learners and teachers can find them and use them.

A dictionary cannot possibly contain your language. It is only the words and an English translation. It does not hold all the wealth of meaning and knowledge of your language, nor does it show you how the words go together into fluent living language. You will need more resources than just a dictionary. But making all your words accessible is a key foundation for your language program, even if you don’t pass it out to everyone.

A dictionary makes it much easier to produce other resources – a body parts chart, a fieldbook of birds, an introduction to kin terms – as well as translations, songs, stories and so on. You might also want what is called an ‘encyclopaedic dictionary’, that includes a large amount of cultural notes along with the words.

**YOUR DICTIONARY, EDITION ONE – AND TWO**

Many communities produce a first dictionary as an important milestone in the language research – and then do a second one later. This is not a waste of effort. The first dictionary allows you to get your language out there to the community, and –
The types of factsheets

(2) Practice: Ideas for using language

- Signs
- Everyday Language
- Welcome to Country
- Songs

LANGUAGE REVIVAL IN PRACTICE

Songs are a great way to learn and teach language. They are fun and easy to remember. Here are some different ways of developing songs in language...

TRANSLATE A WELL-KNOWN SONG

One advantage of translating a widely known English language song is that people already know the tune, as well as the meaning of the song. In the early days of a new language program, Heads, shoulders, knees and toes is a popular choice because it teaches body parts. Many school programs, such Wirladjuri in Parkes, use a Good Morning song ("Yamandhu marang, yamandhu marang... ")

The main challenge of translating English songs is that the rhythm of the music may not fit readily with the Language words. Some of the the words may also be difficult to translate.
The types of factsheets

(3) Principles: What’s it all for?

- Language is Culture
- Healing
- ‘Getting it Right’
- Grammar Pathways
- Using Linguistics
- Old into New

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.

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 language.”

“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.”

“Getting your Holden cars and your pencil/min injections won’t revive your language. But language can ensure the health of the community.” - Bruce Pascoe
The types of factsheets

(4) Pathways: Language journeys

- Stages and Processes
- Language Revival is a Journey

Pathways of Language Revival
Stages and Processes

There is no one right pathway for reviving language.

Different communities may prioritise cultural knowledge, traditional grammar, the knowledge or preferences of Elders. Language in schools, foundation resources such as a dictionary, songs and stories for children, language for public use, or other goals.

Some groups have Elders who speak or remember language; some have access to a linguist they know and trust; some have rich language records. You may be responding to interest from a school, or awareness that your Elders’ knowledge is precious and time limited, or you may be looking for a better understanding of who you are.

All of these starting points and priorities help to motivate and shape your language revival pathways. For example:

If you have...
Elders who speak Language or cultural knowledge...

your pathway might emphasise...
...listening to Elders, encouraging talking out on Country with them, recording their knowledge.

Work in progress: Wathaurong translation for film on William Buckley (David Tournier)
Where can I get them?

- The Meeting Point factsheets are free to download at http://www.vaclang.org.au/projects/meeting-point-factsheets.html

- You can also contact VACL to obtain a glossy printed set.

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