

“Koorlungkas Yarning – children talking, a collaborate project around language”

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Abstract

Introduction:

Language acquisition occurs within a socio-cultural context. The ways families engage with babies are culturally driven and influence the particular communication and social behaviours that are reinforced even before children begin to talk. However, these values and practices may not be reflected in the way services engage with Aboriginal families in Perth’s urban area, nor are they reflected in current early childhood assessments and interventions, so even with the best intentions cultural protocols may be broken, values negated, tests failed and key people ignored.

Method

Building on findings of Whadjak Noongar woman Rosemary Walley’s ethnographic study, *Kadadjiny Dwank (listening, thinking and learning with your ears)*, the *Koorlungkas Yarning* (children talking) project uses a video ethnographic approach to give voice to six Aboriginal families who share their stories and attitudes around the importance of language in raising children to be good communicators in a cultural context, and to talk and communicate ‘proper way’. Using a strengths-based, collaborative approach the project identifies strategies used to encourage communication in babies as they learn ways of connecting with family, with community, and with place.

Community has been at the core of this project, in guiding the projects’ development; as participants who share and interpret their stories; suggesting solutions; and decision making, thus embracing the research process to better meet the needs and aspirations of community. Allowing community to have a voice.

Results

We will present a series of videos made by community for community to help build strong language skills in babies, as well as explain how we are integrating outcomes to inform a new approach that works with early childhood and Aboriginal Health Professionals. Time permitting we will also explore lessons learnt about the collaborative research process and the fundamental role community has in research.

Conclusion

We hope outcomes of this study will inform overall understanding, knowledge, attitudes and practices of health professionals to improve the role services have and how a workforce may best address this.