

Children's Ground

*“...It's time we researched
ourselves back to life”*

Amunda Gorey & Jen Lorains



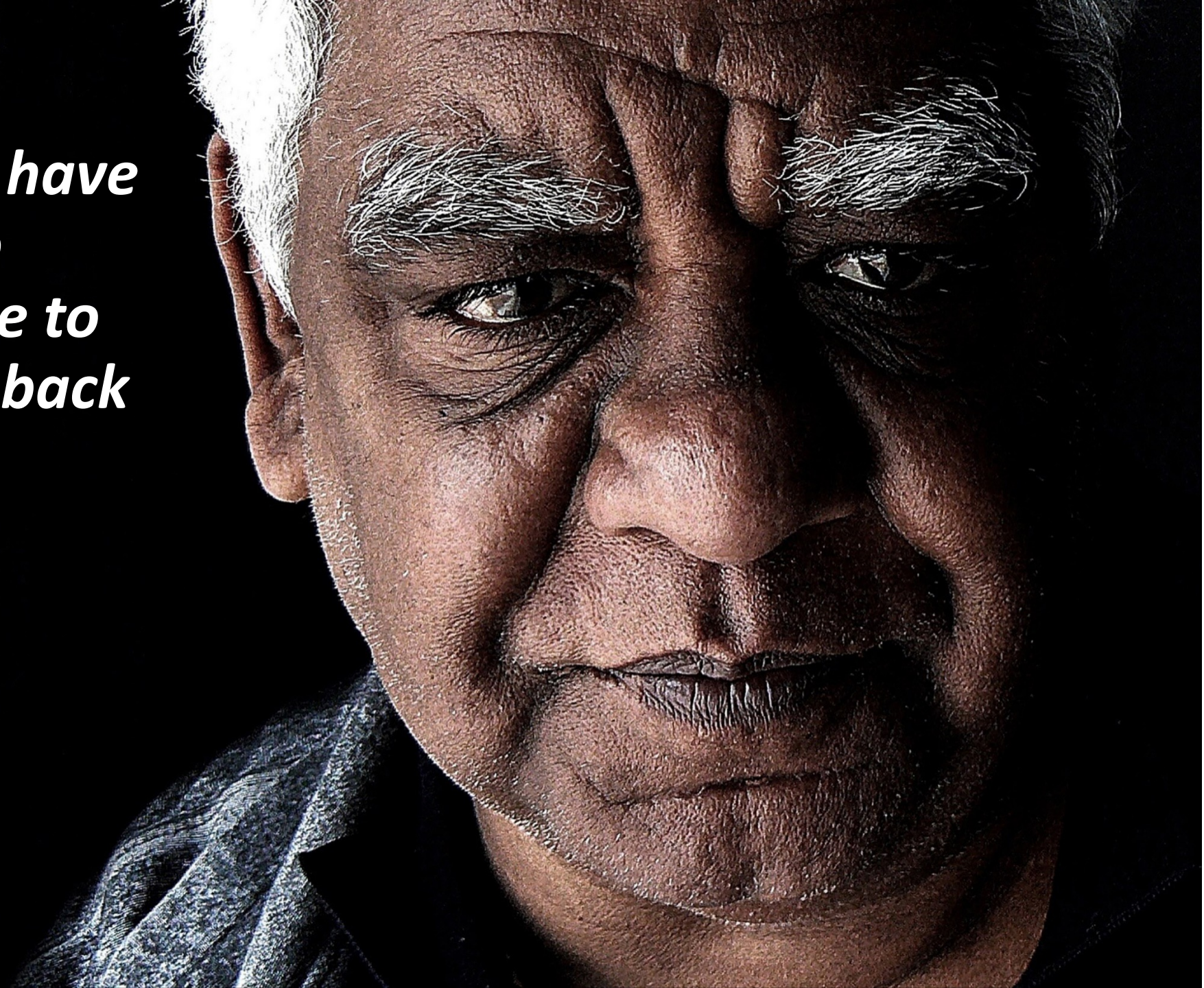





children's
ground

“Aboriginal people have been researched to death. It’s now time to research ourselves back to life.”

William Tilmouth
Chair of the Board
Children’s Ground





A close-up portrait of an elderly Indigenous Australian man with white curly hair, looking slightly to the left with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark blue polo shirt with white stripes on the sleeves. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a building and trees.

**“You won’t ‘close the gap’
in quality of life by trying
to *fix* Aboriginal people.
You need instead to fix the
system of solutions which are
repeatedly imposed on all
our people.”**

**WILLIAM TILMOUTH, CHAIRPERSON
AMPE-KENHE AHELHE
(CHILDREN’S GROUND)**





“Only by respecting the language, culture and knowledge of the learner can we together build literate, schooled and educated societies, where lifelong learning is the norm.”

**THE UNITED NATIONS
EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC + CULTURAL
ORGANISATION (UNESCO)**

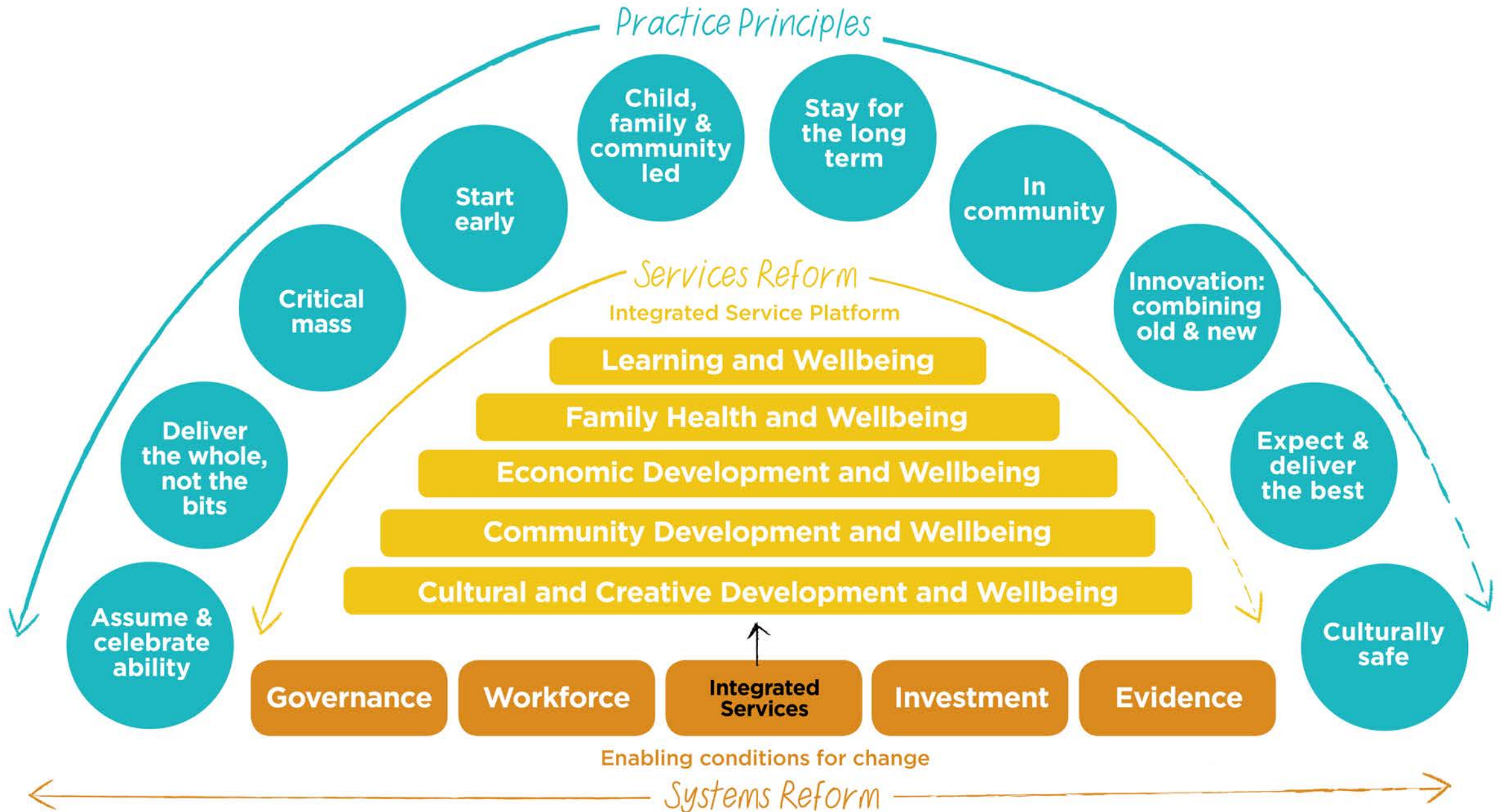


ARKENTELI LAND





The Children's Ground Approach













20/10/22






“We’ve been following government nearly all our lives – this is a new beginning. We are following a new path, our own path as First Nations people for the future of our children. At Children’s Ground, the community are taking the lead. We are very proud of that. We are the government of ourselves.”

***M.K. Turner, OAM, Arrernte Professor, Elder, Law Woman.
Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe Director
Children’s Ground***

25-year
Longitudinal
Outcomes
Evaluation
Framework

Measuring
short, medium
and long-term
impact

Progress
indicators over
time

Aspiration	Children are thriving – engaged in life, brimming with laughter, pride, confidence, and opportunities			
Outcomes 	Children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning	Children are healthy	Children know their history and feel confident in their cultures	Children are happy
Aspiration	Families feel strong, supported and confident about their children’s future; feel valued and are involved in their children’s learning, wellbeing and development			
Outcomes 	Families are involved in their children’s learning, wellbeing and development		Families are socially and economically strong	
Aspiration	Communities care for each other and provide a safe environment for every child. They enjoy economic, cultural and social strength and opportunity.			
Outcomes 	The community values its place and heritage and continues to grow	The community enjoys employment and economic opportunity		The community is safe, inclusive and respects diversity







Children and young people

Children are thriving-engaged in life, brimming with laughter, pride, confidence and opportunities

Family

Families feel confident about their children's wellbeing and future. They feel involved and empowered in their children's learning, wellbeing and development and their own ability to create environments of safety

Community

Communities enjoy economic, cultural and social strength and opportunity. Local Governance is strong and inclusive. People care for each other and provide a safe environment for every child

Families are walking alongside their children

Aspirations

Headline indicator

High level outcomes

Progress measures

Access & Engagement
YEAR 1-3

Children know their history and feel confident in their cultures

Children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning & are creative problem solvers

Children are healthy

Children are happy

Children have increased access to and engagement in First Cultural early years learning

Children have increased access to and engagement in high quality early years learning

Children have increased access to health promotion

Children have increased access to social and emotional wellbeing and literacy

A critical mass (75%) of children engaged in early years learning
No. of children (3-5 years) engaging in early years learning (progressing towards Universal Access)

No. of children engaged in health promotion

No. of children engaged in SEWB

Families are involved in their child's learning, wellbeing and development

Families are socially and economically strong

The community feels empowered and celebrates its cultural wellbeing

The community enjoys employment and economic opportunity

Communities are safe and inclusive

No. of children have families participating alongside them in learning, health and development

Families have increased access to health promotion and support
Families have increased economic opportunities and support

First Nations governance is established, inclusive and active (No. people & meetings)
Community engages in cultural teaching and learning

Community has increased access to economic and employment opportunities

Community has access to cultural and physically safe intergenerational environments
Community enjoys social and cultural events, activities and celebrations

No. of families involved in their community alongside their children

No. of families engaged in health promotion and economic opportunities

Community reports improvement in empowerment

Community engaged in economic opportunities

Community reports improved cultural and physical safety
Prevalence of social stress

Implementation phases

Community Engagement

25 Year implementation of full Children's Ground Approach

Walk, Talk & Act (WTA)

*Community engagement
& planning*

(12-24 months)

**Access &
Engagement**
Establishing the CGA

(1-3 years)

Opportunity

*A new norm
emerging*

(4-10 years)

**Change &
Consolidation**

(11-20 years)

Sustainability

(20-25 years & ongoing)



Evaluation questions (high-level)

- Was the CG Approach implemented as intended? In respect to:
 - The 'how' (practice principles).
 - The 'what' (integrated '*Learning, Wellbeing & Development*' platform).
 - Systems reform.
- Is the CG Approach cost effective and efficient?
- What change and impact occurred?
- How did the CG Approach contribute to any changes?
- Which system enablers contributed to process and implementation effectiveness?
 - Governance, Workforce, Service Delivery, Investment, Evidence
- What contribution has been made towards broader Systems reform?





Participatory
Approach -
Everyone is
involved





Arrernte (First Nations) evaluation analysis

24 First Nations staff and leaders engaged in 5 analysis sessions – using cultural evaluation framework

Focusing on:

- Quantitative data: Numbers for delivery and participation: Year-on-year data for each CG platform
- The money story: CG year-on-year cost of delivery
- Qualitative data: What staff and families have said about CG
- Mapping key influences and current conditions
- Final analysis and confirmation:







"I know a lot of little children that come here... I think little children have changed. They seem more healthier than when they first started. I've noticed changes in all the little ones."

"Kids are putting words together – used to be all in English. Now they learn with English and Arrernte."

"Language won't be learned on a blackboard – we teach them how they need to learn."

"They are learning about health – nose blowing, washing hands... I can see them learning. They have songs with these things – they are singing them all the time, at home too."

"Families are really proud to be supporting and teaching kids. Family are learning at the same time."

"I see family teaching the little ones in our way and they don't get that at school."

"Kids are safe because all family are getting together now – parents are there too."

"It's great to be listened to and valued."

"It's giving them kids a good example about you can't be sitting over there and drinking and smoking dope and stuff like that. You've got to have somewhere you can have space and where you can do your job, work."

"Makes me feel free [being at CG], and my daughter too."

"I feel strong. All good now. Everybody together and involved and we can connect with other family and make decisions together. This is how we all get in touch now – at Children's Ground."

"It was the first thing I had in my life where I felt really good. I kept coming and it has kept growing and growing."

"Kids and families are more confident when Children's Ground is involved. By themselves it's hard to make appointments anywhere."

"I didn't even know how to read and write in Arrernte... We're getting more support from Elders just being here. I'm learning to write in Arrernte and greet in Arrernte and read... because I didn't have that growing up."

Evaluation 2017-2019 | 6



HALF CIRCLES: These are people. The larger shapes are adults, the smaller shapes are children. The curved pictures with the hats represent male Elders. The curved pictures with the scarfs are female Elders. The old people are standing behind the young people – we are all being led and taught by the old people.

Akngerre-parte mape involve-ireme and itne iwerre imernemele. Anwerneke artweye mape akalye-antheke akngerre-parte mapele, anwerne ampe ingkernerwe mape mwantyele akalye-antheke, arntarnte aretyeke ante itele-aretyeke nthekehe itne anwerne akalye antheke.

Elders are involved and leading: knowledge from the old people being passed on, learned and respected by children and our young people and families.

- The Elders haven't stopped trying. They were all trying for years and now we are doing it and slowly growing.
- We are proud because our Elders are leading. Some are passing away and they will never see a change in the system, and that's sad.
- We always ask the Elders – we don't just go ahead and do things.

- Elders are important for the future – for both the young people and the little ones.
- There's only a few Elders and people who have the right knowledge to teach us and the children. We need more people who know the right knowledge and can sing the songs. We need to find all the songs. We worry some are lost.
- We learn from the old people, but there are some that need to learn more. Some old and young people don't know. We need to do more like learn from each other because some haven't been taught yet. They need our support for culture, and we can do more.
- Children need to respect their Elders and teachers. They are learning what they are responsible for with other people, with Elders and with each other. Respect is the most important thing for children to learn.



STAR-LIKE SHAPE: This is a fire, with the people sitting around it. Kids and families are learning and sharing around the fire – like we have done for so long. Elders are teaching our kids and young people, with the families all together – always working together.

Akngerre-aparte mapele ileme tyerrtye ingkernerwe ante ampe akweke mape itne iterrke anetyeke, itneke ilemele nenghe angkamele anetyeke ante decision mpwaremetyeke.

Next generation leadership: Elders are giving power to the young ones – getting them involved in the decisions.

- We are getting more young leaders, but always need more. We'd like to see more of our people being a part of a dream, you know, that the old people had for Children's Ground.
- We need to get more young people working with the little ones, showing leadership.
- We need to show our young people how to speak up and have more young people. Stop feeling shame and talk up. They are trying hard and learning.
- We need more governance with the young people and Elders together, and then the men and women separate but together too.
- Young people are always getting advice from the old and young people that know culture. We support them so they don't feel shame for not knowing. Elders are here working because they can teach us as well as the children.
- We are learning from the Elders. This knowledge makes you feel powerful.



Progress measures:

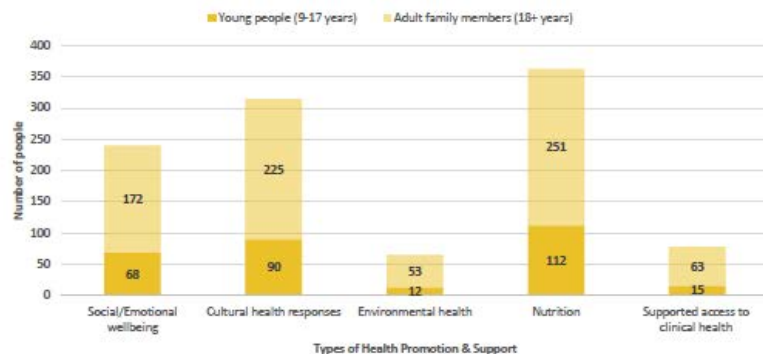
- Families have increased access to health promotion and support
- Number of families engaged in health promotion and support

Article 24 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that: *"Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices... have the right to access, without any discrimination, all social and health services... [and] have an equal right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health"*.

From July 2018 and in 2019, 487 family members engaged in health promotion and support. This included 150 young people (9-17 years) and 337 adult family members (18+ years).

Graph 12 shows the number of family members (young people and adults aged 9+ years) engaged in various types of family health and wellbeing promotion and support.

Graph 12: Number of family members engaged health promotion and support, by age group and type



The multiple health risks experienced by families are addressed through a range of health activities. The team integrates access to services and supports. Children's Ground staff work to understand the multiple needs of families and to coordinate service response.

First Nations families/staff were asked to 'think about places you get help when you have worries about children's/adult's physical health (body and nutrition) and emotional health (mind and behaviour), and how they are now compared to before Children's Ground started'.

100% (n=23) of families/staff reported increased access to services for physical and emotional health and wellbeing, reporting access was better or much better. For both physical and emotional health and wellbeing, 65% of families/staff reported better and 35% reported much better.

These quotes are individual perspectives and not representative of strong evaluation themes.

"Kids and families are more confident when Children's Ground is involved. By themselves it's hard to make appointments anywhere."

"People come in here because they got health workers and stuff like that support to take them to the hospital or for their appointments, go to housing or to all those things that come in - the problems that happen."

"Children's Ground listens to us. Helps us sort whatever problems we have - housing, Centrelink, health, food vouchers, training and conferences, training for young ones too [youth]."

"More parents are getting into the health too. Checking themselves out as well."

"We don't need to be pressured, we can ask for support and we just get it - no problems. That is good, knowing that you have that there if you need."

Family/Staff members, 2019

109 UN General Assembly, 2007. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 2 October 2007, A/RES/62/295



When asked 'How have you been involved in governance?', 85% (n=27) people reported involvement in planning as key to this. Of this, 26% of people reported it can be challenging to stick to delivery plans at times.

"Sometimes we plan for learning but learning doesn't go according to plan - there are lots of things that change that mean our plan doesn't work."

Family/Staff member, 2019

Families, leaders and staff were asked 'How First Nations people making the decisions about their lives and about Children's Ground is now compared to before Children's Ground started.' Of those who answered the question, all (n=17) reported it was better (59%) or much better (41%).

"We engage everybody, families and children, and all. I'm being a leader, leading the way and showing what we can do for our children's future, and we are being strong leaders and all that... We can show them our way of leading, being a great leader and being a good role model for our children."

"When I first started [at Children's Ground], I didn't have a job and I was always struggling you know, with my kids going to school and stuff like that. But now that we've found Children's Ground, people's voices are being heard. And all those years that our Arrente mob were struggling with education and finally we've got a say."

"We have the voice, we can talk. We can tell them what we need, what we want."

"It feels really good to be a leader."

Family/Staff members, 2019



Twenty-one First Nations family members and staff stated that Elders are critical to Children's Ground, particularly in relation to governance, developing young people as the next generation leaders, for cultural teaching and transmission and as the cultural authority for all to learn from.

"Very important to have the Elders here working because they can teach us as well as the kids. Then we teach the kids where we are and why."

"We've got Elders that come in, like them old ladies when they come in. They come in and they make people feel like there's all these bosses coming in - and they just come in and they just want to be at Children's Ground. If it wasn't for our Elders, we wouldn't be here. We've only got a few of our Elders left."

"To make people think - you got to think like your old people and make decisions. Like talk about it the right way. Because she [an Elder] always tell us you got to be the right person to talk with this country. The right person to go and talk to that person. So she gives us a lot of advice. Because sometimes I get a lot of people asking me questions, so I come back and I ask her. That cultural way, you know."

"It makes me feel proud because all of my Elders are here - some are passing away and they will never see a change in the system, and it's sad."

"They're planning with us - role model and teaching us a lot of things too about how we live and Aboriginal cultural way."

"We just have to talk to the Elders and ask them what they really want."

Family/Staff members, 2019

‘Nthakenhe ampe akweke
akaltye-irreme’
(‘How little children learn’)



children's
33ground







“This is something we’ve never had before: data collection being done by our families.

We know the background of where these children come from. You’ve got to know them – what they’re really like – so you can see how they’re going to learn.”

MK Turner, OAM

Central Australian Community Elder

MK doing traditional data collection. Drawing a layout of people attending.

Research & Evaluation Principles

1. The right to control and own
2. Trust and respect
3. Community leadership and participation from end to end
4. Local context and knowledge must be privileged
5. Creating knowledge together through joint research that combines First Nations and Western evidence and research practice
6. Knowledge into action and impact, ensuring what we learn is used to improve lives
7. Only undertake research and evaluation that is of benefit to the participants and their communities/groups




The right to
control and
own

Trust and
respect





Community
leadership and
participation
from end to end



Local
context &
knowledge
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privileged



Creating
knowledge
together

Knowledge
into action
and impact



Only for
the benefit

Emerging evidence



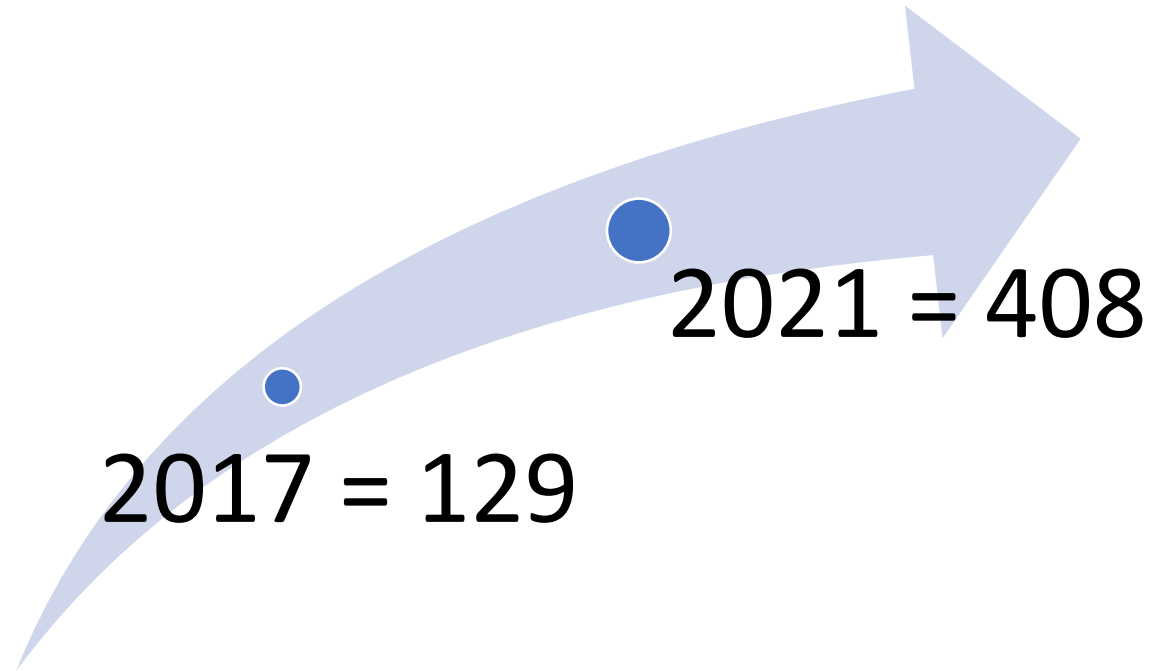
A snapshot of engagement

**From 2014 to 2021
across all Children's
Ground regions**

- Central Australia
- West Arnhem
- Darwin



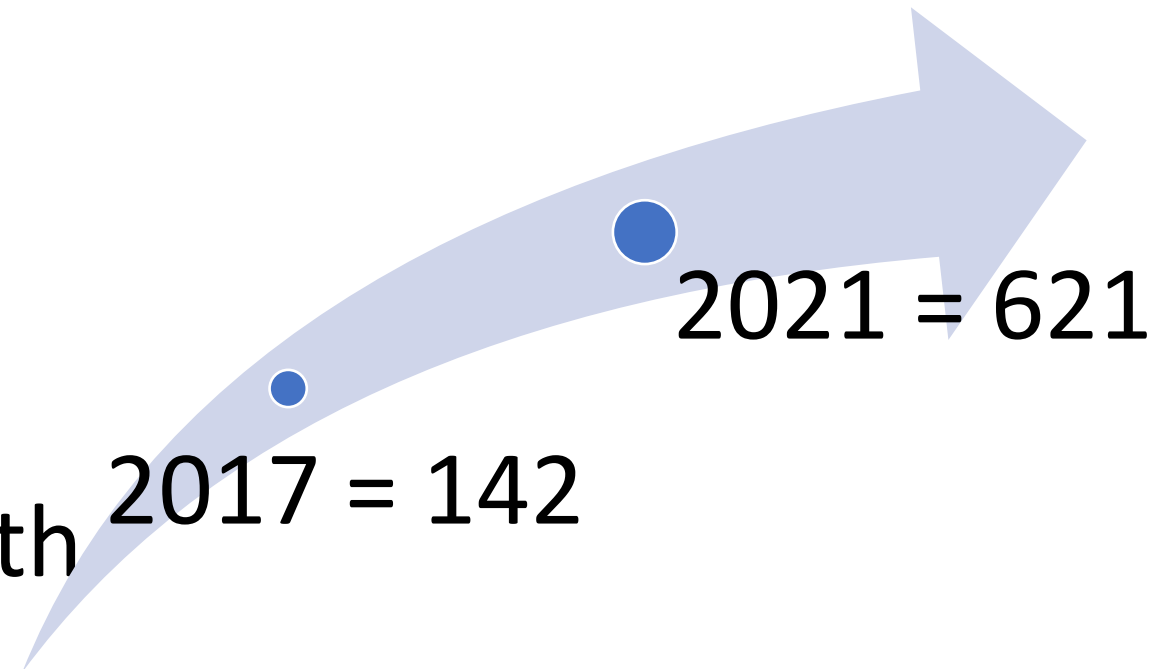
Children 0-8 years: Engaged in learning and health



2017 = 129

2021 = 408

Family members 18+ years: Engaged in learning and health




2017 = 142

2021 = 621



Growth has resulted from:

- Increased learning delivery as resources grew
 - Ongoing Walk & Talk (community engagement) with families
 - Family Health & Wellbeing began in July 2018
 - Families leading, working and engaging - Family engagement leads to more families engaging
 - New communities requesting Children's Ground
- 

“There’s been a lot of changes. Just little kids coming to school [CG] every day nearly is big

“Kids are learning counting, cutting, shapes, sizes, gluing – it’s a lot better now.”

“...she used to talk in English and whisper in Arrernte – now she talks proud in both.”

Family members, 2019



“When the kids go to school they have to leave their language and culture at the door. But with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children’s Ground) we take them out on their Country, show them where they are from and where their ancestors are from – so they know who they are.”


GOREY,
SENIOR ARRERNTE
EDUCATOR





“I started at Children’s Ground because my children weren’t getting enough cultural education and people wasn’t listening. Like when you go to mainstream classes they don’t invite them [families] for children’s learning... But now, we got families involved with children’s learning.”

Family member, 2019



“Working at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children’s Ground) has really made a difference in my life. I didn’t know how to read and write my language, but now I’ve learnt that from working here with my Elders. I never had that opportunity before. Working with family and other strong people has helped me build up my confidence. You know that you’re going to be supported by the team members that work here.”

**ANNA MARIA PALMER, ARRERNTE EARLY YEARS
SUPPORT WORKER AND EDUCATOR**



"We work hard every day - the nutrition is very good, kids are learning about food that they would never have had before - like the hummus and the carrots. They love that now."

"She mostly eats healthy now. Wants to brush her teeth and wash hands."

Family member, 2019



“They are healthy now that Children’s Ground is running. They look so healthy today. They get good food everyday not like before. All junk or sometimes starving ... Families and kids getting stronger and happier and more learning.”

Family member, 2017





“It’s [CG] always giving somebody a chance because that person who never had a job before...it makes them feel more comfortable and want to come into work all the time. They know that they’re being supported.”

“Makes the kids feel proud and makes them also want to get up and work.”

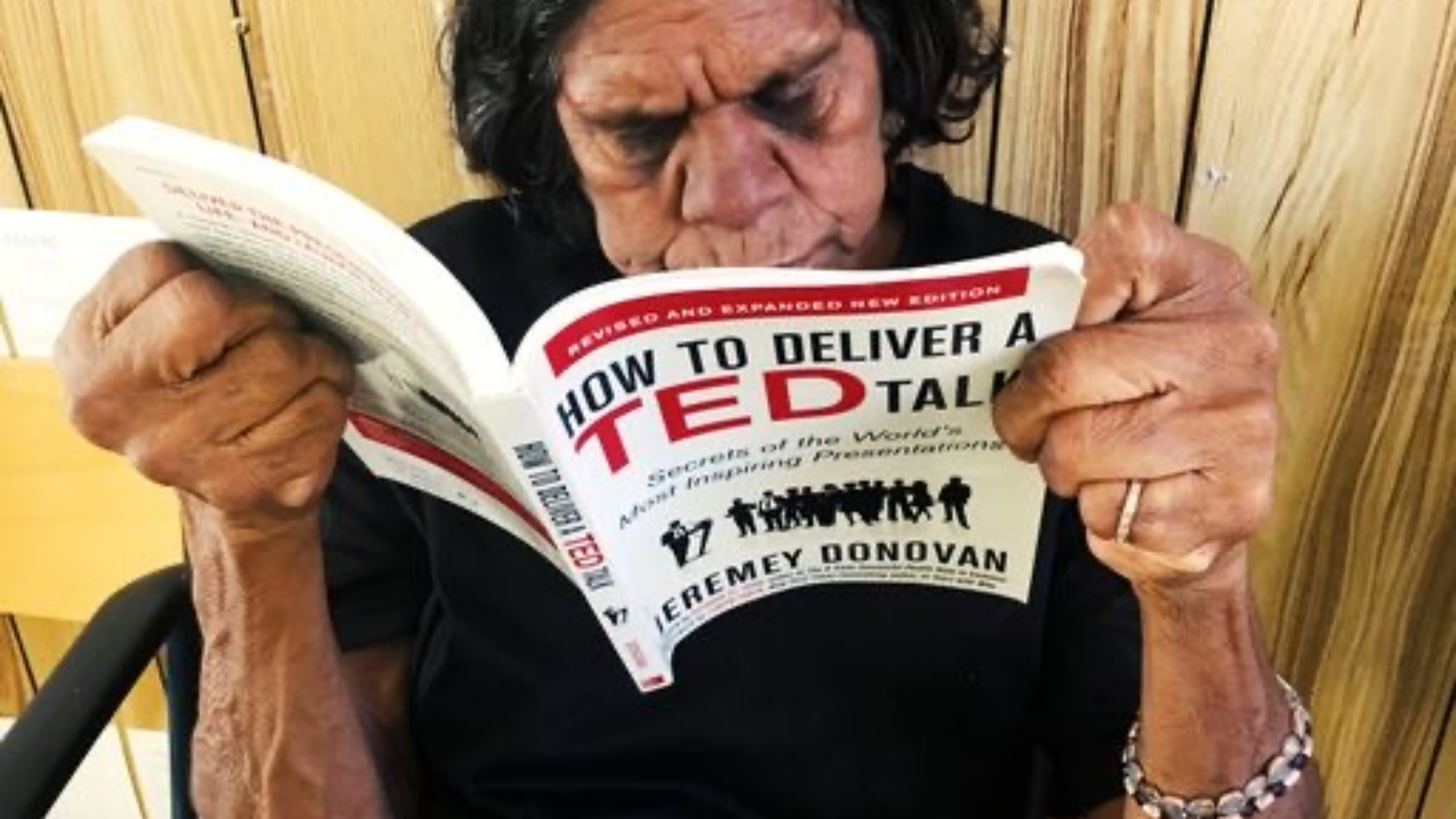
Family member, 2019

“It’s important for Bininj [First Nations] to work. It gives them something to look forward to. You feel good about yourself and more confident. Some people see you as a role model. It’s important for Bininj to work. And they have been put down for many years. They feel strong and proud now.”

“You can see young people - they want to do things... And they watching too how people work, and listening.”

Family members 2017 & 2019

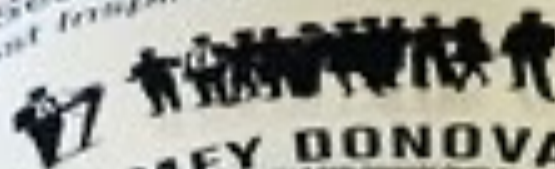




REVISED AND EXPANDED NEW EDITION

HOW TO DELIVER A **TED** TALK

*Secrets of the World's
Most Inspiring Presentations*



JEREMY DONOVAN



86% of families reported
Children's Ground as a safe
place for the community

"Children's Ground is a safe
place, you know, we don't
want to bring whatever
issues that are outside of
Children's Ground into
Children's Ground. We
want what's best for our
kids to learn."

Family member, 2019



“Good to see things happen for our young babies, our young kids. Giving them that space, that they can feel happy and loved, you know, safe. They don’t have to worry...some of that stuff they never had in their life before...they need it for their growing. It helps them to grow.”

Family member, 2017



“Kids want to see something different. They need an education that is more than sitting down with pen and paper in a classroom. The land is their classroom. We have to help those kids find a better place to learn. And Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe is the best.”

[REDACTED] PALMER,
AMPE-KENHE AHELHE DIRECTOR &
SENIOR CULTURAL ADVISOR











TYERRTYE

UTNENGE

Arntarnte
AreLheme

TYERRTYE-KENHE
ITERRENTYE

"Land is
Real Tea

ITERRENTYE

LAW

Language

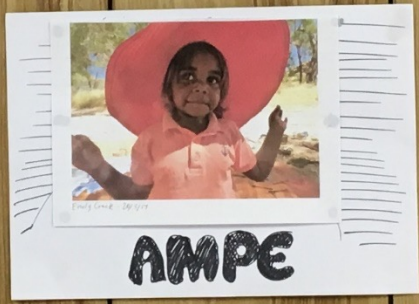
Land

ANGKENTYE

ltyele
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Sacred
MK TU

INGKERRENYEKE
ANYENTEKE-IRREME

TOTEM



Relationship
+ KINSHIP

"Ane akaltye
Ikwerenheke
lthe ab
arenye ape
And that pers
and he know
is born out of
land"

AKALTYE
IRRETYEKE

CULTURE

family

Identity

BEING - Angwenhe unke
aneme
BELONGING - Angwenhe Kenhe
Unke
Becoming - Angwenhe anken
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children's
ground
WHA

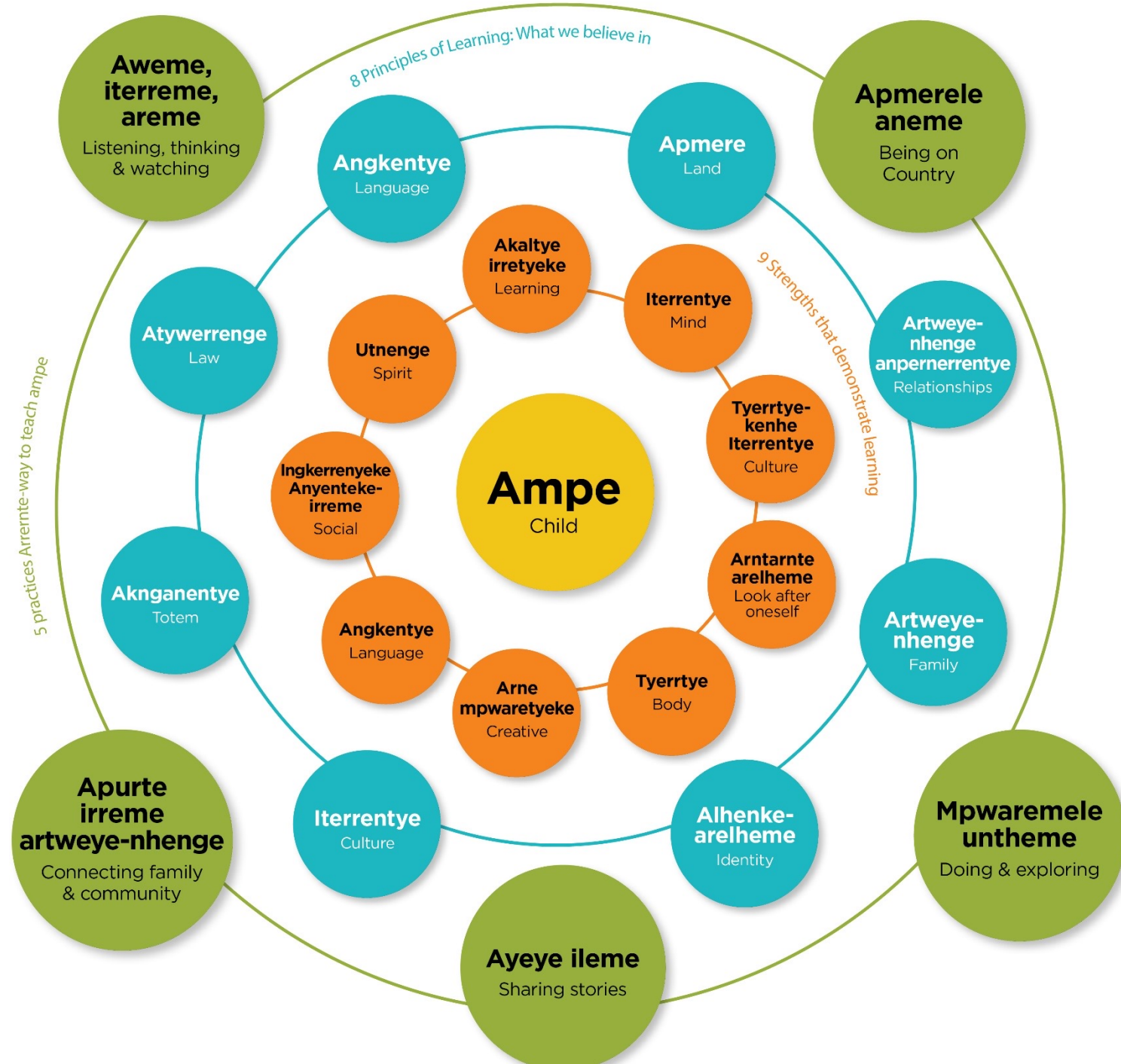
ARNE
MPWARETYEKE

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Land

Y
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N HAVE
NOWLEDGE +
LIFE +



Angkentye anwerne-kenhe akerte ayeye intelhe-iletayeke ante pipe-ke arrenetyeke

Putting our stories in language and writing them in books



Key systems finding:

Reform in only
one area of
systems,
service delivery
and practice
will not create
short or long-
term change





A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a black t-shirt with '75' and 'LEGACY' on it, is walking on a wide, reddish-brown dirt road. She is holding the hand of a small child in a black and white polka-dot outfit. Another child in an orange tank top is walking alongside them. The background is a dry, hilly landscape with sparse green and yellow vegetation under a clear blue sky.

Kele!

(Ok, finished!)

Visit us at:
childrensground.org.au

