

# The Aboriginal Languages of Southeast Queensland A Guide for Learners

Shaun Davies, Southeast Queensland Indigenous Language Centre

2023



# Table of Content

Table of Content.....	2
Congratulations!.....	3
<b>Letter of Support.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Why Revive Language? .....	5
<b>The Importance of Aboriginal Languages.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Cultural Preservation: .....	5
2. Sense of Belonging and Identity:.....	5
3. Healing and Well-being:.....	6
4. Knowledge Preservation:.....	6
5. Linguistic Diversity:.....	6
6. Reclaiming Indigenous Rights: .....	6
<b>Benefits of Bilingualism .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Enhanced Executive Function: .....	7
2. Improved Cognitive Flexibility:.....	7
3. Heightened Attention and Focus:.....	7
4. Enhanced Problem-Solving Skills:.....	8
5. Improved Memory Function:.....	8
6. Delayed Cognitive Decline: .....	8
7. Enhanced Metalinguistic Awareness: .....	8
<b>Aboriginal Languages vs English.....</b>	<b>8</b>
1. Sounds and Words:.....	8
2. Grammar and Structure: .....	8
3. Cultural Importance:.....	9
4. History and Endangerment:.....	9
Things you can do!.....	9
1. Consistent Language Exposure: .....	9
2. Create Language-rich Environment: .....	9
3. Use Multilingual Activities: .....	10
4. Cultural Experiences: .....	10
5. Bilingual Materials: .....	10
6. Language Exchange:.....	10

7. Emphasize Language Value:..... 10  
8. Patience and Encouragement:..... 10

**Congratulations!**

## *Letter of Support*

---

*ON BEHALF OF THE SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE CENTRE, I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND MY WARMEST CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ON YOUR DECISION TO LEARN AN ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE. YOUR DEDICATION AND ENTHUSIASM TOWARDS EMBRACING THE RICH LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IS TRULY COMMENDABLE.*

*BY EMBARKING ON THIS JOURNEY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING, YOU HAVE TAKEN A SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARDS FOSTERING UNDERSTANDING, RESPECT, AND APPRECIATION FOR THE UNIQUE LANGUAGES AND CULTURES THAT HAVE SHAPED AUSTRALIA FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. YOUR COMMITMENT TO LEARNING AN ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE DEMONSTRATES A GENUINE DESIRE TO CONNECT WITH INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS, KNOWLEDGE, AND WAYS OF LIFE.*

*LEARNING AN ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE NOT ONLY OPENS DOORS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES BUT ALSO SERVES AS A BRIDGE TO DEEPER CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING. THROUGH YOUR LANGUAGE LEARNING JOURNEY, YOU WILL GAIN*



*INSIGHTS INTO THE RICH HISTORY, DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES, AND PROFOUND WISDOM EMBEDDED WITHIN THESE LANGUAGES. YOUR DEDICATION WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRESERVATION AND REVITALIZATION OF THESE INVALUABLE CULTURAL TREASURES.*

*WE RECOGNIZE THAT LEARNING A LANGUAGE REQUIRES PERSEVERANCE, PATIENCE, AND A GENUINE PASSION FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY. AS YOU EMBARK ON THIS REWARDING ENDEAVOUR, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO EMBRACE THE JOURNEY*

*WITH AN OPEN MIND AND HEART. IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE LINGUISTIC NUANCES, CULTURAL CONTEXTS, AND STORYTELLING TRADITIONS THAT WILL BRING THE LANGUAGE TO LIFE.*

*REMEMBER, LANGUAGE LEARNING IS A DYNAMIC PROCESS THAT EXTENDS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM. SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, ATTEND CULTURAL EVENTS, AND CONNECT WITH LANGUAGE SPEAKERS AND EDUCATORS WHO CAN GUIDE AND INSPIRE YOU ALONG THE WAY. YOUR DEDICATION AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION WILL ENRICH YOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS AND FOSTER MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITH THE BROADER INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY.*

*AS YOU PROGRESS IN YOUR LANGUAGE LEARNING JOURNEY, SET REALISTIC GOALS AND CELEBRATE EACH MILESTONE YOU ACHIEVE. LEARNING A LANGUAGE IS AN ONGOING PROCESS, AND WITH EACH STEP FORWARD, YOU ARE NURTURING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN CULTURES, HISTORIES, AND WAYS OF KNOWING.*

*WE ARE THRILLED TO SUPPORT YOU ON THIS INCREDIBLE LANGUAGE LEARNING ADVENTURE. SHOULD YOU NEED ANY ASSISTANCE, RESOURCES, OR GUIDANCE, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO*

REACH OUT. OUR TEAM IS HERE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT THROUGHOUT YOUR LANGUAGE LEARNING JOURNEY.

ONCE AGAIN, CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR DECISION TO LEARN AN ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE. YOUR COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND UNDERSTANDING IS INSPIRING, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO WITNESSING YOUR PROGRESS AND THE POSITIVE IMPACT YOU WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY.

WISHING YOU GREAT SUCCESS AND FULFILLMENT ON THIS REMARKABLE LANGUAGE LEARNING JOURNEY!

WARM REGARDS,

RORY O'CONNOR

SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE CENTRE

---

## Why Revive Language?

### *The Importance of Aboriginal Languages*

Reviving Aboriginal languages among your descendants is of utmost importance for several compelling reasons:



#### 1. Cultural Preservation:

Aboriginal languages are integral to the cultural identity and heritage of Indigenous communities. Language serves as a vessel for transmitting traditions, customs, knowledge, and stories across generations. Reviving and maintaining Aboriginal languages ensures that cultural practices, values, and worldviews are preserved and passed on to future generations.

#### 2. Sense of Belonging and Identity:

Language plays a crucial role in shaping one's sense of identity and belonging. For Aboriginal communities, their languages are deeply intertwined with their personal and collective identities. By

revitalizing Aboriginal languages, descendants can strengthen their connection to their ancestors, their community, and their land. Language allows individuals to express their unique perspectives, maintain social bonds, and foster a sense of pride in their cultural heritage.

### 3. Healing and Well-being:

The loss of Aboriginal languages has had profound impacts on Indigenous communities. Language loss often stems from colonization, forced assimilation, and historical trauma. Reviving Aboriginal languages contributes to healing and reconciliation processes by empowering individuals and communities to reclaim their cultural autonomy and assert their right to language and self-expression. Language revitalization can enhance emotional well-being, strengthen community resilience, and promote a sense of empowerment and self-determination.

### 4. Knowledge Preservation:

Aboriginal languages carry within them a vast wealth of traditional knowledge, including ecological knowledge, medicinal practices, storytelling, and spiritual beliefs. Reviving these languages allows for the preservation and revitalization of this invaluable knowledge, which is essential for understanding and managing the environment, fostering sustainable practices, and preserving unique cultural practices and wisdom.

### 5. Linguistic Diversity:

Aboriginal languages are an essential part of the world's linguistic diversity. Each language represents a unique system of communication and thought, offering distinct ways of understanding and interacting with the world. Language diversity enriches human experience, contributes to the global heritage of knowledge, and fosters appreciation for the immense linguistic and cultural diversity of humanity.

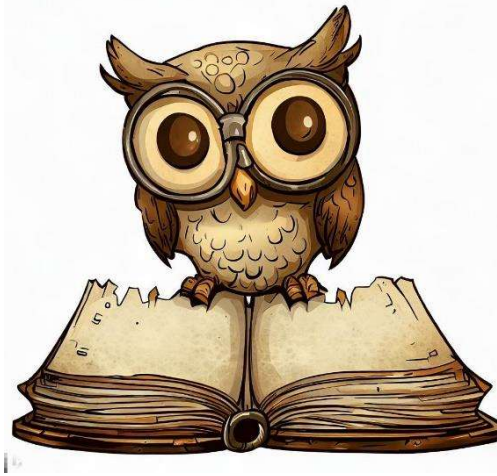
### 6. Reclaiming Indigenous Rights:

Language revitalization is closely tied to Indigenous rights. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain, revitalize, and develop their languages. Reviving Aboriginal languages helps to assert and reclaim these rights, fostering self-determination, cultural autonomy, and recognition of Indigenous sovereignty.

*Reviving Aboriginal languages among their descendants is an act of cultural resilience, empowerment, and pride. It promotes intergenerational healing, strengthens cultural identity, and contributes to the richness and diversity of the global human experience. It is a profound and essential step toward recognizing and honouring the invaluable contributions of Aboriginal communities to our shared humanity.*

## *Benefits of Bilingualism*

Being bilingual has numerous cognitive benefits that can positively impact individuals throughout their lives. Here are some of the cognitive advantages associated with bilingualism:



**1. Enhanced Executive Function:**

Bilingual individuals often demonstrate improved executive function, which refers to a set of cognitive processes responsible for goal-directed behaviour, problem-solving, and self-control. Bilinguals tend to exhibit better attention control, task-switching abilities, and conflict resolution skills, as they constantly navigate between two languages and manage language choice.

**2. Improved Cognitive Flexibility:**

Bilingualism promotes cognitive flexibility, the ability to adapt and switch between different tasks or mental frameworks. Switching between languages and mentally juggling two linguistic systems requires flexibility in thinking, enabling bilingual individuals to adapt to changing circumstances more easily.

**3. Heightened Attention and Focus:**

Bilinguals often display enhanced attention and selective focus, which are essential cognitive skills for filtering out irrelevant information and maintaining attention on relevant stimuli. Bilingual language processing involves inhibiting one language while using the other, which can strengthen attentional control mechanisms.

#### 4. Enhanced Problem-Solving

##### Skills:

Bilingualism can foster creative and efficient problem-solving abilities. The experience of navigating between languages and different linguistic structures promotes divergent thinking and the ability to find alternative solutions to problems.

#### 5. Improved Memory Function:

Bilingual individuals exhibit improved memory skills compared to monolinguals. Bilingualism requires constant monitoring, accessing, and recalling information from two languages, thereby exercising memory systems more frequently and leading to potential memory benefits.



#### 6. Delayed Cognitive Decline:

Bilingualism has been linked to a delayed onset of age-related cognitive decline and neurodegenerative disorders such as dementia. Bilingual individuals may experience symptoms of cognitive decline later in life, on average, compared to monolingual individuals.

#### 7. Enhanced Metalinguistic Awareness:

Bilingualism nurtures metalinguistic awareness—the ability to think about language and understand its components, rules, and structures. Bilingual individuals often possess a heightened awareness of language, grammar, syntax, and semantics, facilitating language learning and literacy skills.

## *Aboriginal Languages vs English*

Let's take a moment to learn about the general differences between English and Aboriginal Australian languages in a simplified manner. Understanding these differences can help us appreciate the uniqueness of Aboriginal languages and the importance of preserving them.

English and Aboriginal Australian languages are different in several ways:

#### 1. Sounds and Words:

Aboriginal languages have sounds that may not exist in English, such as clicks. The vocabulary of Aboriginal languages often reflects the natural environment and includes words specific to local plants, animals, and natural phenomena. English, being a global language, has a wide range of words covering many subjects.

#### 2. Grammar and Structure:



Aboriginal languages have their own grammar rules and structures, including different ways of forming words and sentences. They may have complex systems for organizing nouns, verbs, and other parts of speech. English, in comparison, has simpler grammar rules.

### 3. Cultural Importance:

Aboriginal Australian languages are deeply connected to the cultural identity of Indigenous communities. They carry stories, knowledge, and traditions that have been passed down through generations. These languages help strengthen cultural bonds and a sense of belonging within the community. English, on the other hand, is used more widely for communication beyond specific cultural groups.

### 4. History and Endangerment:

English arrived in Australia through colonization and had a significant impact on Aboriginal languages. Many Aboriginal languages have faced a decline in speakers and are now endangered. Efforts are being made to revitalize and preserve these languages as an important part of cultural heritage.

*It is essential to recognise and support the preservation of Aboriginal languages. By doing so, we help honour Indigenous culture, maintain linguistic diversity, and promote a deeper understanding of the unique heritage of Aboriginal communities.*

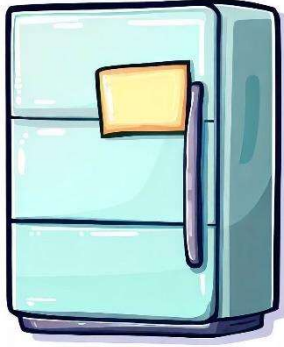
## **Things you can do!**

### 1. Consistent Language Exposure:

Ensure that you have consistent exposure to the language. Spend dedicated time where you exclusively communicate in the language.

### 2. Create Language-rich Environment:

Surround yourself with resources that promote the use of the language. Examples include books, music, movies, and games in the language. Label objects around the house in both English and the language, encouraging yourself to learn and associate words in both languages.



### 3. Use Multilingual Activities:

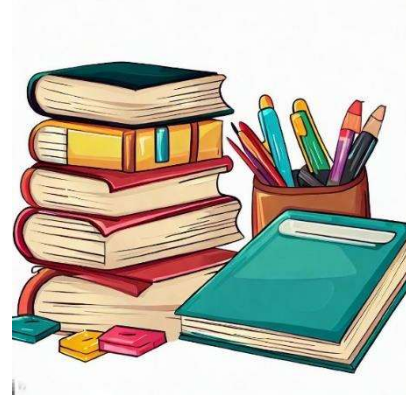
Incorporate fun activities that naturally integrate language learning into your day-to-day life. Engage in reading, singing songs, or playing games, all while using the language. This helps create positive associations and reinforces language skills.

### 4. Cultural Experiences:

Introduce yourself nephew to aspects of the culture and traditions associated with the language. Celebrate cultural festivals, share stories, teach yourself about history, and get involved in cultural activities. This not only deepens your connection to the language but also enhances your cultural understanding.

### 5. Bilingual Materials:

Utilise bilingual materials or resources that support language learning in both English and the language. This could include dual-language books, apps, websites, or language learning programs.



### 6. Language Exchange:

If possible, connect with native speakers of the language. Arrange language exchange opportunities with other families who speak your language. This can provide additional language exposure and opportunities for them to practice with peers.

### 7. Emphasize Language Value:

Understand the importance and value of being bilingual and remember the benefits of knowing multiple languages, such as enhanced communication skills, cultural understanding, and expanded opportunities in the future. These are an added bonus that can keep you motivated!

### 8. Patience and Encouragement:

Support your language learning journey with patience, encouragement, and positive reinforcement. Make the language-learning experience enjoyable and rewarding, remembering to praise your efforts and progress.

*Remember that language acquisition takes time, so consistency, regular practice, and a supportive environment are key to helping yourself become fluent in language!*