



children's
ground



Ampe-kenhe Ahele

COMMUNITY REPORT 2017

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Werte! Anwerne Governance Committee aneme nhenhe Central Australia arenhe. Anwerne Arrernte mape aneme. Anwerne apurte-irreke Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe-nge Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe aneme ampe akweke mapeke akaltye irreyeke apurte irremele itneke artweye mapenge arlke. Akaltye irreyeke angkentye itnekenhe arlke.

Anwerne ahentye aneme ampe mape akaltyele anthetyeke anwerneke artweye areyele arle mpwaretye-arte arteke arrulenge ntyele.

Ampe anwerne-kenhe mape akaltyele anthemele angkentye anwernekenhe ritterreke atnyernetyeke. Anwerne apeke ampe anwerne-kenhe akaltyele antherlenge anwernekenhe akenhe governmentele ayakelengeiknge itne ahentye aneme mpwaretyehenge akwele iterrentye itnekenhe-ele.

Kele nhenhe Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe-ele ante arle anwernekenhe alhengke areme iwenhe arle. Anwerne mpwareme itnekenge anwerne apurte irremele urrakapetyeke. Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe-nge kwenhe ampe akweke mape anwerneke akangkwerremele aweme anwerne arle angkeme.

Anwerne itelareme Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe utherne anwerne arlke mwerre apurte-irreme akaltyele anthetyeke.

Hello! We are the Governance Committee for Children's Ground Central Australia (Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe). We are all Arrernte people and we come together with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe because we want to keep doing what we have been doing for thousands of years - teaching our children their culture and their language. At Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe we are working with our children on our Land - on the ground with their families. Together we are teaching them.

We have been doing this for a really long time, but every time we try something we get stopped because other people say they know better. Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe is the way we can be recognised for what we have been doing and what we can do. Children's Ground believes in us. We believe we can go through this together with Children's Ground.

MK TURNER, THERESE RYDER, LEONIE PALMER, FELICITY HAYES, LORRAYNE GOREY, VERONICA TURNER, CATHY TURNER, ANNAMARIA PALMER.





From Children's Ground Chairperson:

William Tilmouth

Children's Ground in Central Australia has a long story - over many decades. It builds on the work of many people including community leaders who have passed away, who dedicated their life to their people and to the cultural wealth of Australia. It is their talent and vision that we try to honour in the work of Children's Ground.

We designed Children's Ground because the system has failed First Nations peoples. First Nations people in Australia continue to endure the impact of generations of violence and trauma that has taken form and shape in different ways over 230 years, but is ever present in the lives of people today.

Children's Ground is a system for change. It is time that Aboriginal people enjoy our cultural rights and life, as well as be part of the mainstream economic system.

We created the Children's Ground system out of our experience over many decades, knowing the barriers and the strengths. We listened to the people. We were inspired by the work in our own country and with First Nations education around the

world. We were inspired by other global international leading practice. We learnt from all of this and we created Children's Ground.

Our heart began in Alice Springs and in 2011 a community engagement phase with Town Camps began and people wanted Children's Ground to begin. The story of Children's Ground was told through this painting (seen on page 4) designed by Jane Davis (Arrernte and Western educator) and painted by local Arrernte artist Amunda Gorey.

Despite efforts, Children's Ground was unable to get funding at that time for Central Australia. Concurrently Kakadu West Arnhem (referred to as Top End in this report) undertook a community engagement phase and went on to become the first Children's Ground site to commence operations in 2013. The success of Kakadu West Arnhem excited the families in Alice Springs. In late 2015 we returned to Alice Springs to the people who inspired Children's Ground.

Philanthropic families who first connected with our work in Alice Springs became key supporters

in the Top End. The Top End team grew their philanthropic family as they developed their Collective Investment - just one of the areas of systemic reform Children's Ground is committed to. One of our long term supporters who had visited Alice Springs provided some seed funding and the grassroots Community engagement (Walk, Talk and Act) came to life again in the Centre.

The senior elders wanted Children's Ground (known in Arrernte as Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe) to come and support them in their lifelong ambition to strengthen first language, culture and education for their children and grandchildren. They set the strategic platform quickly. We talked about the grassroots movements in New Zealand, Hawaii and other places that began 30 years ago, and where today there are whole systems of education from early childhood through to University for First Nations peoples.

Without any Government funding we have focused on Learning and Wellbeing. But the Children's Ground story is bigger. The full

system covers five platforms of: Learning and Wellbeing; Health and Wellbeing; Community Development and Wellbeing; Economic Development and Wellbeing; Creative and Cultural Wellbeing.

Despite doing it on our own, we are still touching each of these platforms. You'll see that in the following report. Our goal is to further build our financial base, so we can commit to the full model and achieve the outcomes we know are possible when the system is integrated.

Felicity Hayes became the first employee at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe in April 2016. She is the Traditional Owner for Alice Springs. Together with Leonie Sheedy, they followed the plan set out by the elders. Over the next few months their work, and that of the ever-increasing staff (Arrernte and non-Arrernte) and families joining the team, reignited the vision and passion of local Arrernte people to continue a long history of fighting for education reform and social and cultural equity.

Momentum continued to build for Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe and along with the Walk and Talk, an Act phase

grew quickly into weekly Early Years Language and Culture sessions.

By the end of 2016, 15 Arrernte people had been employed or provided services to Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. We had spoken with 240 adults and children across three family groups connected to Mpwerkingke Anapipe, Irrkerlantye and Yarrenyty Arltere; 48 0-5 year olds, 31 6-12 yr olds and 95 adults had attended our Early Years sessions. across three family groups connected to Mpwerkingke Anapipe, Irrkerlantye and Yarrenyty Arltere. The groundswell had indeed begun. People wanted this to continue. Our philanthropic family stepped in to make it possible.

In 2017 we created a Central Hub for Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe at the old Batchelor Institute campus on Bloomfield St. We've grown our Early Years sessions from one activity per family group per week to two activities per family group - one on country and one centre-based, and we use our Thursdays for meetings, curriculum development, partnership discussions, planning etc. Some families from Ewyenper Atwatye have joined in with the

Mpwerkingke Anapipe families and can now get back on to country with their children again through these weekly sessions.

Children's Ground in Central Australia continues to advance a system that responds to the social, cultural and economic determinants for long term wellbeing. We have the people, we have the commitment and dedication, we have the right approach. In this report you will hear this from the Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe community.

It is their journey and story that is to be celebrated and shared.

There have been many attempts to have Arrernte language and culture privileged within the education system by people working at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe today and others. We are building on those foundations and we hope this time it will be different. Children's Ground has demonstrated what is possible when First Nations people and communities have hope, agency, opportunity, choice and voice in decision making about their own lives, backed with the resources to deliver excellence.



This is how I see Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children's Ground).

The semi-circular shape in this painting represents ilthe/apmere which means a home, where we live. This picture represents a home and community. The little curved shapes in the semi-circle represent people, the larger shapes are adults, the smaller shapes are children. The curved pictures with the hats represent male elders, while the curved pictures with scarfs are female elders. They are all within that home, within that community, and in Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe itself.

The star-like shape is a fire, with the people sitting around it. The footprints leading from the outer circle to the centre are the families and communities interacting with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. The footprints show the interaction between children, families, homes and communities, and Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe - sharing, caring and togetherness. That is one of the most important things about Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe - the interactions. The footprints are going two ways. People are coming and going all the time. They are interacting. It represents the building of a relationship too, between all these children, families, homes, communities and Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe.

Within Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe we have two-way learning. Children are learning Indigenous language and culture, and Western language and culture.

The two curved shapes in the bottom right-hand corner are graduated students from Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. The graduated students will have a good future. They will have a choice. They have had all those experiences and the knowledge they have gathered through Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. This will enable them to have real choices. They will have the opportunity to seek out jobs in different places, whether it be in their own community, the wider Australian community, or overseas; it could be anywhere. It will be their choice.

Whereever they live maybe they will have their own children and begin the cycle again. This will prevent them from going back into the way of life we have now.

The little house with stick figures are the investors and partners of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. The footprints show the coming together, the interaction, of all the parts of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe: the families, the homes and the communities. The funding and support is coming in to the community from the investors and partners. And we give back information about what is happening in our community, showing the improvement and enrichment in the health and life of the children, families and communities.

Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe is a school, but not as we know it today. Now children say, 'we are going to school' and they mean somewhere over there. But this school is going to be at the community, and it is not going to be in one small place, it is going to be in the home, in the community centres, out bush - anywhere where education can occur, where the child's learning can be strengthened.

Children may learn Chinese or Indian or another foreign language. We would have to take them to an environment which would strengthen that learning. You have to be in an environment where you can absorb all those things. If children are taken to an environment where they can learn those things then they can focus.

If we want the child to learn and strengthen their own language, then they have to be in an environment where they can learn and focus on their own language, like out bush, and the teacher is going to be an elder or family member who speaks that language.

The same method of teaching would be throughout.

The picture also shows the ownership. The families and communities will have ownership of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe through all that impatye, all those footprints. They will have input, they will have a say in everything that is happening in Children's Ground.

JANE DAVIS
October 2011



Margaret Kemarre Turner, OAM

AMPE-KENHE AHELHE DIRECTOR

We have had a big struggle trying to get the importance of learning first languages and culture recognised within the Western education system. When we started [with schooling] our language wasn't really important to the mainstream. When our adult children were teachers in the school, they had literacy and numeracy in their mind, but they couldn't get that out because they weren't allowed to teach in their first language. They had to teach in English. Every written word was not in their first language. First language stayed very strong in their minds and in their hearts, but they could only teach it for maybe 40 minutes in a day. Even though the First Nations students knew their language, they needed to learn more about writing it.

Their Aboriginal identity was left outside when they walked into the classroom. They had to take on the Education Department's expected identity of who they should be in the classroom; to relate to non-Aboriginal kids in the environment of education. All of those children, when they walk out the door - that's when they pick up their identity. You've got to have your identity to learn. That's why Children's Ground is really important: we need the kids to grow up different to the kids of today - with their identity strong.

At Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe my book *Iwenhe Tyerrtye* (published by IAD Press, 2010) has been used as the framework for discussing our curriculum development. I want to see many people looking at and reading my book *Iwenhe Tyerrtye*

“Arrente language always came last in the education system. It was their words first. But now, here, we've got an opportunity to do this.”

and learning from it. Especially my nieces and nephews and any other Aboriginal people. They are most welcome to take quotes from that book and use those quotes in a good way. They have to take that book and be serious about it; not to misuse it. Non-Aboriginal people too. They can learn what it is to be us, to be Aboriginal people - what goodness is within the First Nations people. It is an important book for everyone and I am so happy to be continuing this work with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe.

Ayeye MK-kenhe.

Leonie Kngwarraye Palmer

AMPE-KENHE AHELHE DIRECTOR

A while ago MK and I were sitting under an athenge (Ironwood tree), just talking about our children's future. We talked about how many people we have asked for help to get a school going for our kids but it's never happened.

Vaddy was listening to us. She started telling us about Jabiru Children's Ground. We told her we were interested in getting something started for our children on their homelands. We told her about our children not speaking Arrernte language properly and not knowing their culture properly. We told her we'd like to start something like Children's Ground for those children, to help them get back on their feet. We were even talking about older kids from primary school, as they don't speak their language properly either. They are lost and struggling in the mainstream.

When I talk to my older grandchildren they say it's very exciting what we do at Children's Ground. Even older people want to learn more because they missed out on their cultural experience and language. When I go back to my homeland I talk to the older adult grandchildren and they ask me so many questions about the old ways. I tell them how I've learnt from my grandparents - grandmothers especially. They told me it's very important to keep going with language and culture, so the older ones can teach their own kids.

When we started working with Children's Ground we took the little kids out bush, giving them time to play with sand and other things lying around on the land. It's very important they create their own little stories with these

“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.”

things. They learn about songs, Arrernte dancing - both boys and girls. They really enjoy it, because they're doing things themselves and the teachers and elders watch them. Those young children learn Arrernte in a very simple way; they make clapsticks and design them with their own colours. I love working with children - it makes me so proud of what we've achieved. It's growing and there's more to come - more of the community will get involved.

Kele mwerre.



Ingkerrekele Arntarnte-areme

EVERYONE BEING RESPONSIBLE: AMPE-KENHE AHELHE GOVERNANCE

“The Land, the people, the story – that’s our Governance.”

MK TURNER, DIRECTOR

Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe is different to other organisations because it is run by us – our elders, our families and all the community that come to Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. We speak with our own strong voices. Our structure is determined by our Arrernte kinship and we follow the leadership and guidance of our elders. They support each generation to have their say; we want our younger generation to learn from the experience of others and take opportunities to get stronger at leading and telling our story. They are our future leaders. This is why our committee is open to all family members or people who come to Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe.

We are governing, designing, delivering and evaluating our on the ground work. At Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe there is a ‘two-

tiered governance’ set up and we work closely with the Children’s Ground Board which oversees the financial viability, corporate governance and integrity. We make recommendations to them from the local level, because they don’t have the knowledge we have or know what our needs are. They listen to us and can help us make decisions too.

Our way of governance is based on a collective. We talk about the opportunities as well as the risks. We have community agency through our governance committee. It was the same in the Top End – they made the decisions for up there. Every site is responsible for themselves.

Each family group has another level of governance for their site. Each site has their own elders for cultural direction and advice. Each geographic location is represented on the governance committee. Everyone has the

opportunity to be part of decision making through the Early Years activities and there are also a lot of discussions going on outside of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe where we talk with family and visitors about what we are doing.

Our work has included strategic planning, staff recruitment, curriculum development, problem solving, setting rules and communicating decisions to family. We have also created 12 WHS policies for our EY activities; they are called ‘Angkentye anwerne – kenhe anthurre apentyetyeke’ (These are the words we must follow. These are our policies).

“We are speaking up at meetings, we are telling our story at conferences, we are pushing ourselves to lead. We’re in the driver’s seat now – everyone else (non-Indigenous people) can get in the back seat.”

LORRAYNE GOREY, SENIOR ARRERENTE EDUCATOR

Anwerne kenhe Angkentye, Iterrentye

OUR PRINCIPLES

1.

Iwenheke apeke unte lyernpenye unte anthetyeke

Expect and deliver the best

2.

Akweke anthurre mapenge urrke arne mpwaremele urrkapetyeke

Start early with the little ones

3.

Akweke itnekenge akwete anetyeke itnenhenhe amangkelhe-ilenhemele

Stay with the children and grow with them until they are big

4.

Tyerrtye ingerrenyekenge urrkapetyeke

Work with everyone

5.

Mwarrentye arle arne mpwareme renhe tnaketyeke

Use and celebrate people’s ability

6.

Arne ingkerrenyekenge anyentelhe iletyeke: tyerretye ngwenhe mwerre anetyeke, akaltye irremele, tyerrtye ngwenge artweye mapenge

Connect everything: health, learning, life, culture, family, jobs

7.

Arne mpwaretyeke arrurle arle mpwarewarretyarte ante nthakenhe arle lyete arne mpwarewarreme arteke

Always think about old ways and new ways of doing things

8.

Anwenehe Ampe-kenhe Ahelhele iwerre arratyehetyeke akwete community-ele arlke apentetyeke

We are led by the children, the family and the community



*"Anwerne akwetethe anthurre ampe
anwerne kenhe mape akaltyle
anthentye akngerre. Itne apmere
itekenhe-nge akaltye irreme, nhenge
apmere akethe arrpenhenge apeke.
Tyernty e arrpenhe mapele kwenhe ampe
nhenhe areyele mpwareme aretyekenhe.
Itne aretyenhenge warrke nhenhe
renhe, Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe-nge."*

LORRAYNE GOREY, SENIOR ARRERENTE EDUCATOR

"We've always been teaching our kids. They've always been learning on country or wherever we are. No one has been able to see that. Now we have a chance to show them through Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe."



Ampe mape kwertele-ileme itnenhe riterreke iletyeke
All the kids are being smoked so they can be strong

Nthakenhe Anwerne Mpwareme

WHY ARE WE DOING CHILDREN'S GROUND?

We are all worried for our grandkids. Everyone. Day in, day out. We worry about our kids being locked up. We worry about our kids going to welfare. We worry for them when they are sick. We worry all the time. We worry that the school system is not working for our next generation of kids. We want a place where they are safe; where they can grow up to be healthy, educated and have a better future. Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe is the best place for them.

We as First Nations people want to teach our children in a culturally appropriate way, from the grassroots. This is the way we were taught by our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and other extended families. These people were our first teachers growing up in our community and they gave us the best education. This is what we want for our children. When we teach

our kids they are learning about knowledge, health, community and society. We connect everything.

Today, so many of our young men and women leave school. Some of them have forgotten their culture and traditional stories. They feel lost - walking in two worlds but not feeling confident in either. That's why it's so important we teach the next generation to be strong in culture and to learn how to speak Arrernte properly - so they know who they are. When kids know who they are then they can learn anything.

The Arrernte children who are going to mainstream schools and early learning centres are being forced to leave their identity, culture and language at the door. They are dropping out of education.

If our kids are encouraged to truly keep their culture and identity with them all day, all the time, they will be more confident to

learn. They need to be talking to their teachers in their own first language; they need to know that there is something there for them, like a family member or Aboriginal teachers who understand them and know their family. Growing up and having your family around you all the time is so important for children in these early years. How are they going to learn with strangers when they don't feel confident to communicate in English?

When they are learning from elders and families about their culture, language, relationships and kinship, they are learning who they are and where they come from. This is how our children grow strong and healthy in their body, mind and spirit. If our children don't know this from an early age they will go to school not knowing who they are.

At Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe our ampe akweke mape (children) - are made

Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe?

to feel proud about their totems, skin names and language. All of these things are vital to the growth and survival of our children.

When kids don't get to be Arrernte at school it can really affect them later in life. We want our kids to grow up and have jobs and a good family life. This starts with education. By supporting kids to be strong in their language and culture, we are trying to make a difference for later on.

Parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins are all welcomed and encouraged to attend Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe with their children - that's our way of learning. Kinship and family relationships are vital to our children.

Each family member plays an important and different role in a child's life. This includes extended family too. We are all growing up that one child together.

When we are out bush we are not just taking the children on a picnic, we are teaching them the most important part of our system of education and society - respect for the land. They are learning about the amereke artweye mape - people of the land - and about cultural safety.

Why can't we teach our language to our kids in school? Other children in Australia can learn in their first languages, so why can't we have our kids taught in our own languages when they go to school?

We have high expectations. Our Arrernte teachers are trained in both Arrernte and Western education. Our kids will also learn English and Western skills but their culture must come first.

We want our children to be proud of who they are and we want to make sure young people grow up feeling

good about themselves as First Nations people, and proud to be part of a community. We are all strong.

It's going to be different for the next generation of kids because of what we are doing here. Arrernte language has always come last in the education system. It was always their words first. But now, here, we've got an opportunity to do this: to have our education system for our kids so they can have a better future.

“Young people need to learn what the land is called in Arrernte, how they are related to the land, what the land is to them, the Dreaming for that place, which skin group they are and who is the keeper of the land. You've got to tell the right story. It is important to get this right. It has to start with the elders. If we don't do it now, it will all be lost.”

MK TURNER, DIRECTOR

Felicity is telling Shontara a story during a learning on country session



Anna Maria and Fiona running an Early Years session at the Centre

Akaltye-irreme Unte Mwerre Anetyeke

LEARNING AND WELLBEING

Our relationship with the land is the reason why we base the children's education on country. Nurturing the relationship with the country nurtures families and communities. When you are on country you can feel the spirits of the land and the ancestors with you. We are communicating with them and they are our guardians.

We don't own the land, the land owns us. We don't hold it, it holds us.

The land is a family member and we all have our different relationships and responsibilities to it; this includes the ampe mape (the children). The land is our greatest teacher, it's like a book.

Learning on country makes our children strong in their culture and language. We want to make sure our children grow up to be proud of who they are.

Nature is important to children's development in every major way - intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually and physically. The natural resources on country form the basis of pre-reading, numeracy and writing experiences for us. Traditional stories and songs from the land form strong images in our little ones' minds. The repetition of our told stories builds predictability and a sense of security for our ampe akweke mape.

With Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe, we take our children outside so they can learn from what's happening on their country. We don't want them to just look at a picture of a kangaroo on a classroom wall - we want them to really see that kangaroo. We want to show them what's in the open space - the awengkere (duck); the arrpwere (magpie). We want them to go deeper - to look inside the kwatye (water) and find the mpwaltye

(frog), pwepelye (tadpole) and round rocks. No more sitting down in a classroom - the best learning is outside, on country.

In town, kids just see water coming from a tap. When we go out bush with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe they learn that the water comes from the ground and we show them how to dig for it. This is not just part of our culture and tradition - finding the soakage in the creek bed - it is important for survival skills.

Families and elders at each location are teaching. As First Nations people, we believe that our children learn better in an intergenerational setting. Children need to learn culture, language, history, song and dance from their parents and elders. The older generations are the knowledge holders, so it is important that all ages are learning together.

It is important that our children learn the history of Aboriginal people living in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). This year with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe we've been taking them to places like Amoonguna and Telegraph Station to show them where people lived and worked before the Town Camps were set up. Learning our history helps them understand where they have come from and the life of Arrernte people today.

We are also making books to document the learning that is happening. Whenever we go out on country there is something to learn. We take photos of what we see and what the children are doing and use them to make resources in Arrernte. It's important for children to grow up reading stories in their first language. We want to be the ones to write these stories. We've been doing this since we started with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe and have published

two books so far. We will continue into the future, creating resources for our children's learning. We know language and literacy are at the heart of learning. Eventually this may even become an enterprise for us.

The Centre

In July this year we moved into our new site at the old Batchelor Institute campus. This means each family group can now have two Early Years sessions per week - one on country and one at the Centre. Sometimes we bring things back from our on country trips - like seeds, sticks and ochre - and use these as part of our activity in the Centre. We might continue a story that started on country with the things we bring back. We might tell it a different way or work out how we can draw it or paint it with the little ones.

We run all our sessions outside under the bough shelter and when the kids get off the bus they can't wait to run in. They always go straight to the cubby house area where they can have lots of imaginative play. Some kids will stay in that area for hours setting up different spaces. They like to wash the dolls and then wrap them up and put them to bed, or even lie down and go to bed themselves. We have lots of wood that they use for building things and there's always cardboard boxes to add to the cubby house play. We have a rich play-based Early Years learning environment. We also have story time and singing as well, and usually craft activities that adults like doing with the little ones. It's a calming space for all of us.



Having this central location has also helped us to grow in other ways. We have a meeting room now where we can do our curriculum development work, document our Early Years outcomes or work on reports like this one. The walls display our thinking and allow us to develop ideas slowly and keep talking about what each of us think. Putting our work on the walls also helps us to explain our processes to others.

We regularly update our data so everyone knows the statistics for our Early Years work. As we build our evaluation tools, these will also be reported on in that room so everyone can talk about them and develop them further. All of us who come to Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe own that information. So far in 2017, 140 adults, 85 0-5 year olds and 26 6-8 year olds have attended our Early Years activities, both on country and centre-based. We're evaluating this work from the beginning. This information will be so important to prove that we know what we are doing with our children and families.

The most important thing about the Centre is that it is a safe space for everyone. It is a place of no argument. It's important for the children and for all of us.

Arrernte-kenhe Angkentye

What you can see here (on the opposite page) has been the journey for us this year; working out how to write our curriculum framework down. This is the framework we have been living with for thousands of years. We know this works. This learning framework is the same for all First Nations people. This is us ALL the time.

We have always been told that the Western way is the better way – a better way than what we already had. We have never been validated for our knowledge. We are writing it down so other people can see that we can teach our children our way, the way we have been doing for generations. This is a very deep and rich way of learning which is so important for us.

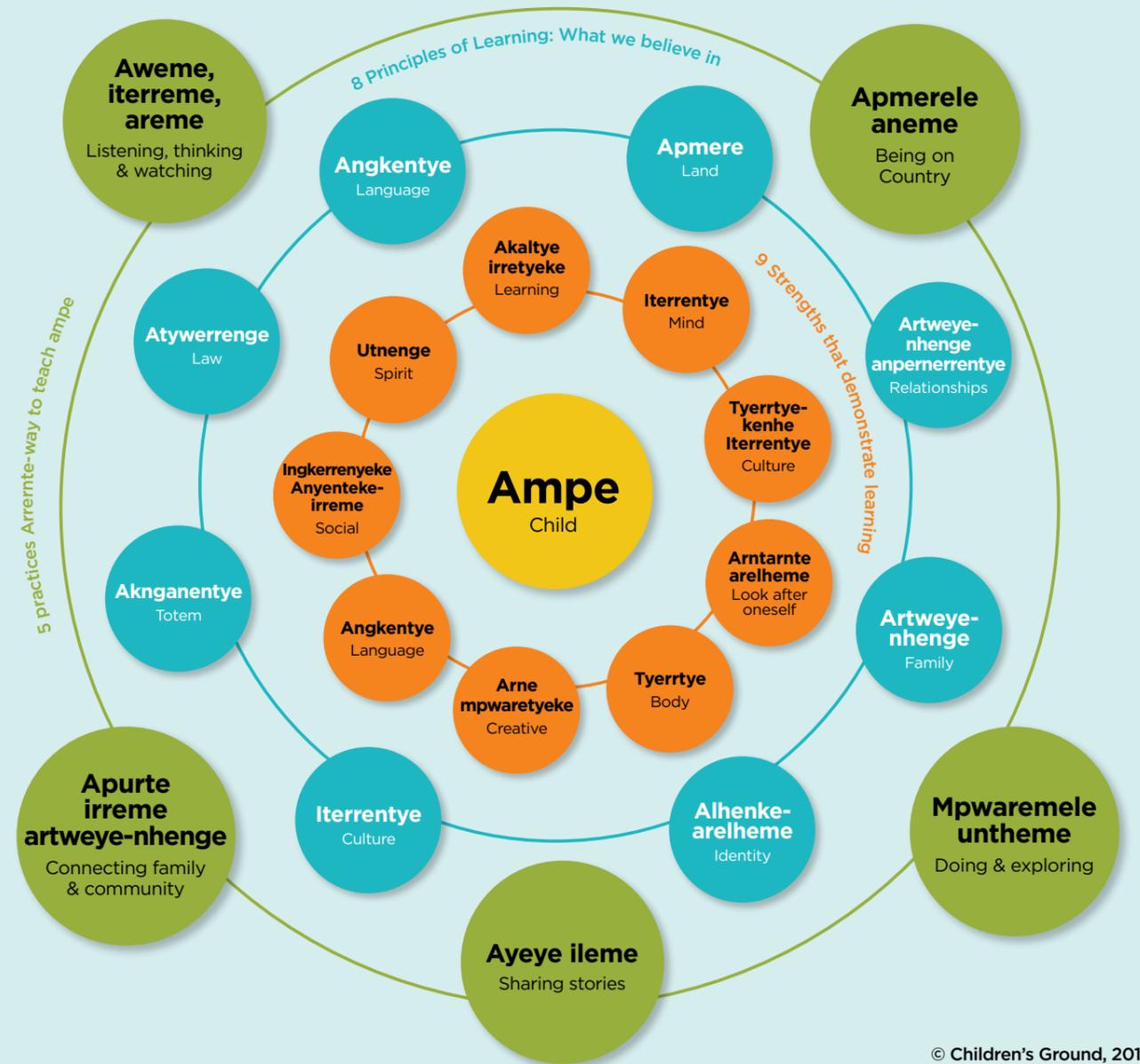
When looking at a Western Early Years framework, you can see all of it there, laid out on the page. With our Arrernte frameworks we can see everything that goes behind it – that this learning system goes on forever, deeper and deeper.

We have not tried to fit into a Western Early Years framework because we are always expected to fit into the Western ways of thinking. That's hard for us because we can't always translate your words into Arrernte. The work we have done documenting this curriculum helps us to now explain it to other people to other people because it's ours, because we have written it, we understand it, we own it.

“I came into this role with a strong view of what constitutes best Early Childhood practice – holding the child at the centre of our work, supported by family and community and using the elements of the natural environment as the teacher. Fortunately I discovered my beliefs closely aligned with those of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe’s guiding principles and the aspirations of the community. I bring a strong belief to the role, that Aboriginal ways of teaching kids on country has always been ‘best practice’ – showing, telling and allowing kids to learn through the land.”

HELEN FITZGERALD, WESTERN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

Arrernte-kenhe Angkentye



© Children's Ground, 2017

These are some of the important skills developed through Arrernte learning. They form a rich and complex system of knowledge and learning. The examples we share offer a small window into a very deep learning system.

Iterrentye (good mind): To have a good mind for learning and thinking. To know where you are from, to know cultural knowledge and to be able to pass it down to the next generation.

Tyerrtye (healthy body): To have a strong, healthy body we smoke our babies after birth. Traditional ceremonies keep our children healthy and strong.

Arne Mpwaretyeke (being active): Dance ceremonies and learning how to dance, hunting for bush foods – this is our exercise.

Akaltye Irretyeke (learn more): by looking and doing. We listen to our Altyerrenge (Dreaming) and history to learn more from our elders.

Arntarnte Arelheme (learn to look after yourself): We teach them to be independent and to look after themselves from dangers like fire and snakes. We teach cultural safety; to respect other peoples' land and not to climb on the hill on someone else's country.

Ingkerrenyeke Anyenteke-irreme (family and community together): Connecting with other people from the land. We are connected through our Altyerrenge (Dreaming).

Tyerrtye-kenhe Iterrentye (cultural; learn about safety of the land): We know where people come from and how they are related to us through our land, language, lore and culture.

Utnenge (strong spirit): We feel the spirit of the land; it gives us strength. We know the spirit of the land. The spirit of the land recognises us.



Ella tyape ineme meye ikwerenhenge. Ella's mum is feeding her witchetty grub.



Tyerrtye Mwerre Anetyeke

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The way we think about health at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe is through our wholistic First Nations perspective. We are all growing up that one child together, so we are all responsible for their health and wellbeing.

We know that if children don't have a great start in life they will have an increased risk of developing health problems later. This is part of why we work with the little ones - to try and get this right for the next generation.

We are trying to integrate health and wellbeing into everything we do. It just happens. When we take the kids on country with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe they can run around and climb hills and trees - this is their exercise and keeps their bodies strong.

The little ones are learning from their elders about how to find food on country. The bush is our

supermarket. The food we find here is the most nutritious for our children and keeps the whole family healthy. We show them how to hunt for alewatyerre (goanna) atywenpe (perentie) and how to prepare it properly for eating. The kids get really excited when we dig for yalke (bush onions) or tyape (witchetty grub) from the witchetty bush. Even if we don't find any tyape or kere, we know the process of looking, chasing or digging is good for the children's physical health and cultural maintenance. It's important to keep these traditional practices strong.

We are always teaching the little ones about our bush medicines - how to find them on country, how to crush and mix them, and what to use them for. They need to learn this from us because there will be a new generation coming up soon and they are the future elders who will have to pass this knowledge on.

We involve our children in traditional smoking ceremonies to keep their spirit strong. This year we have performed several smoking ceremonies with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe - to cleanse our new campus at Bloomfield St, to welcome visitors and philanthropists and to 'finish off' at Burt Creek (one of the northern outstations - 60km north of Mparntwe / Alice Springs) after an old man passed away. 'Finishing off' is an important cultural practice that is initiated after someone passes away to clear the space. It was important for us to do this before we held our weekly Early Years program at Burt Creek, and we were able to do it the proper way because all the elders and families were together with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe.

It's important for the children to be learning on country because their utnenge (spirit) is connected to

the land. Learning here keeps their identity, mind and body strong. They feel good about themselves; they feel proud and confident. We feel the spirit of the land and it recognises us and gives us strength. We need our kids to be learning on the land.

Akeyulerre (The Healing Centre) is our key partner. They are so important in keeping Arrernte health practices alive including our traditional doctors and bush medicines.

We encourage children to develop healthy routines, teaching them about nose-blowing and hand-washing. The little ones are doing it for themselves now when they come to Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe.

We always make healthy food to take with us on activities or to eat at the centre. We encourage the children to try different foods and eat them in different ways. Our nutrition program aims to make healthy food accessible and to

promote healthy eating habits to children and families. Everyone feels good when they have food in their stomachs, or when they have really enjoyed a meal - it's good for wellbeing.

For our kids to walk in both worlds, we know that it's important to look at the Western health system too. Health promotion is a central part of our work. We are taking health back to the people and making sure our families know and control their health story. We invite other organisations to help us. Hearing is a big issue for our kids. This year we invited Jo, an audiologist working at Central Australian Aboriginal Congress to walk with us. She came to the Centre to meet with some families and she also came with us on a learning on country session at Burt Creek. In just one session she was able to test the ears of 18 children and adults, and share the results with the whole family group

so we could all be knowledgeable about the health of each child.

The way this happened was the proper way for Arrernte families - looking at the health of the whole family and encouraging everyone to be part of the conversation. Not sitting in a clinic in town, one parent with one kid. Now we all have the knowledge, we can all be responsible for supporting those children with hearing problems. Australian Hearing also support us. They were happy to listen to how Arrernte families want to do health, not the other way around. This is how people should be working with First Nations families, but no one is actually doing it.

Nhenhe alheme menhenge-nhenge uthetyeke, aretyeke ante akalyetye apmerekke.
Four generations of family are teaching together on country.



Warrke-irreme Mwerrentye

EMPLOYMENT AND WELLBEING

In our culture there are many different levels of teachers. Some skills you learn as you get older; sometimes you might learn something about country because you are next in line to look after it or some knowledge is passed to you for other reasons. At Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe our cultural standing and knowledge is recognised. We are not just employed as assistants – we are employed as educators in our own right. We work alongside non-Arrernte people who are sharing what they know – they are coming on this journey with us. We are all learning and walking together.

In the last quarter we had 22 Arrernte people on our books – as employees or suppliers of services. Some people might only work for a few hours each week, some people work up to 30 hours a week and others might just work every now and again. People can work

in a variety of areas: in Early Years activities at both our centre and on country, working on the Arrernte-kenhe Angkentye, developing resources, documenting learning sessions, as part of our governance committee, on research and evaluation, assisting with media and communication needs, nutrition and kitchen work, driving, maintenance and admin. We now have four full-time and four part-time non-Arrernte staff, and since we started we've had many volunteers both locally and from interstate.

Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe also recognises the wealth of knowledge held by our senior people. Children's Ground values them because as we know, our elders are the most important people. It's like a big jig-saw puzzle – we've got to have that piece there too. It's important that the younger staff are learning from their elders because they're going to be the

“We focus on strengths at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. We don't see the deficits. People come to Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe because they are family, because they are connected, not because they have been referred. We want all Arrernte people who come to Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe to feel good about who they are, proud to be part of a community because we are First Nations people working together for our children.”

VERONICA TURNER, SENIOR ARRERNTE EDUCATOR

next generation that will need to pass on that knowledge again. It's like a big circle.

It's important for the kids to see that their parents and grandparents are their teachers. When they see their elders working they can see First Nations people as leaders. They are really proud of us and the work we are doing.

It's hard for many Aboriginal people here in Alice Springs to get a job. Potential employers really judge you on your background and qualifications. They look at you as if you have no experience – even if you have cultural experience and authority – because that kind of thing isn't written down on a CV. The difference with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe is our skills and cultural knowledge are being recognised and valued. We want the world to see what we have been doing for generations with our children.

We feel confident and safe at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe to say what we want and to assert what is important to us as First Nations people, because we know we are in control.

We celebrate everyone's ability and see the potential within all our community for people to contribute. You might be an artist, a teacher, a do-er, a listener – everyone is welcome to come and be a part of Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe.

We have come a long way in the last year. We are still Walking and Talking and meeting with some families for the first time. More people are talking about Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe and we can see it growing. It makes us proud to know we have started this and to see what we have achieved in such a short time. We really think it is going to work this time.

Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe has a flexible approach to employment that prioritises the wellbeing of our staff and their families. We can see that work is just one part of everyone's life and there are many other issues people are dealing with: health, housing, looking after kids etc. By having a broad employee base people can step in to different roles if someone can't come into work one day. We are all there to support each other and make sure everyone is strong and healthy to do the best work we can for our kids.



“Working at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe has really made a difference in my life - and not just because I didn’t have a job before. I’ve learnt a lot here. I knew how to speak my language but I didn’t know how to read and write it, and now I’ve learnt that from working here with my elders. It means a lot to me. We need to keep our culture and language strong so the next generation can teach their little ones, because it’s very important for us as Aboriginal people to be connected and to have that knowledge. All of that I learnt here at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe with my elders. I never had that opportunity before. Working with family has helped me build up my confidence and to work alongside groups of strong people who inspire me. You know that you’re going to be supported by the team members that work here. It will be good to see other young people like me come in and work. We need to make sure the next generation gets involved so they can come up behind us.”

ANNA MARIA PALMER, ARRERNTE EARLY YEARS SUPPORT WORKER AND EDUCATOR



Lorrayne reading one of our two published books: *Mpwaltye (frog)* written by MK Turner (& family)

Lorrayne Perrurle Gorey

SENIOR ARRERENTE EDUCATOR

I feel really proud working at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe because this is the kind of thing I used to hope for. I have always wanted to do this: teach our own kids in our own language. I want people to take notice – even our people – and show them that we can do this.

When I first started at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe I didn't know there would be so much to learn. Over the last year I've got to know Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe more: we are getting more people, families and children involved too. The first thing I did was a big family tree of all the families from my homeland: Mpwerkingke Anapipe area, north of Mparntwe (Alice Springs). We have eight homelands in the Mpwerkingke Anapipe area: Burt Creek, Gillen Bore and 16 Mile (Mpwerkingke); Sandy Bore, Snake Well, Corkwood Bore, Black Tank and Harry Creek (Anapipe). In 2016

we did Walk and Talk with lots of family groups around this area – talking about Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. I was even talking to families at the main shopping centres like Yeperenye or at the plaza. Some families are really interested and we are still talking to more families from the outstations and in and around town.

For our first Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe learning session with the little ones we went out to Corkwood Bore, one of our homelands. You feel like you're your own teacher – you can teach your kids the way you want to teach them. No one's telling you what to do, because you know what you're doing – you know what to teach the kids. Some of those little ones already know [about their culture], but we're getting them to know that they have to keep it strong; keep it with them all the time.

“When the kids go to school they have to leave their language and culture at the door. But with Children's Ground, we take them out on their country and show them their place; where they are from and where their ancestors are from. So they know who they are.”

I'm from Burt Creek and I know all about the little ones – what they do and what they like – and I've seen a lot of changes in them since we started with Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. The kids know it is their school. Montannah is now learning more Arrernte, as well as Anmatyerre [her first language]. She knows how to say things in Arrernte. All those little ones know what their skin names are and are learning how they relate to people and what to call them in Arrernte. I talk to all the little ones in Arrernte, correcting them if they speak

Arrernte wrong way. At night we're always talking stories about the past; telling stories of our ancestors.

These little ones know more than my teenage kids when they were small. They know more because they've been coming to Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe with Aunty MK and other women – we all chuck our knowledge together, for that one child or for all of them. The older kids didn't have that chance. They say to me: “What you are doing Nanna, you should have been doing that long time ago!”. But they were in boarding school, with other kids and family, travelling around from place to place. They didn't get the chance to have that knowledge taught to them properly from families and elders. If you're in one place you're learning everyday – you know more than people who are travelling around.

[At Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe] I also like working on developing curriculum; sharing with the other ladies what we've learnt, what we teach. We're trying to get the Arrernte framework together, while still looking into the Western side too. When I look at [a Western Early Years framework] you can just see what's there. But when you look at an Arrernte framework there's more behind it – you can keep going forever. That's what I've learnt. That's what I like doing: translating, writing in Arrernte.

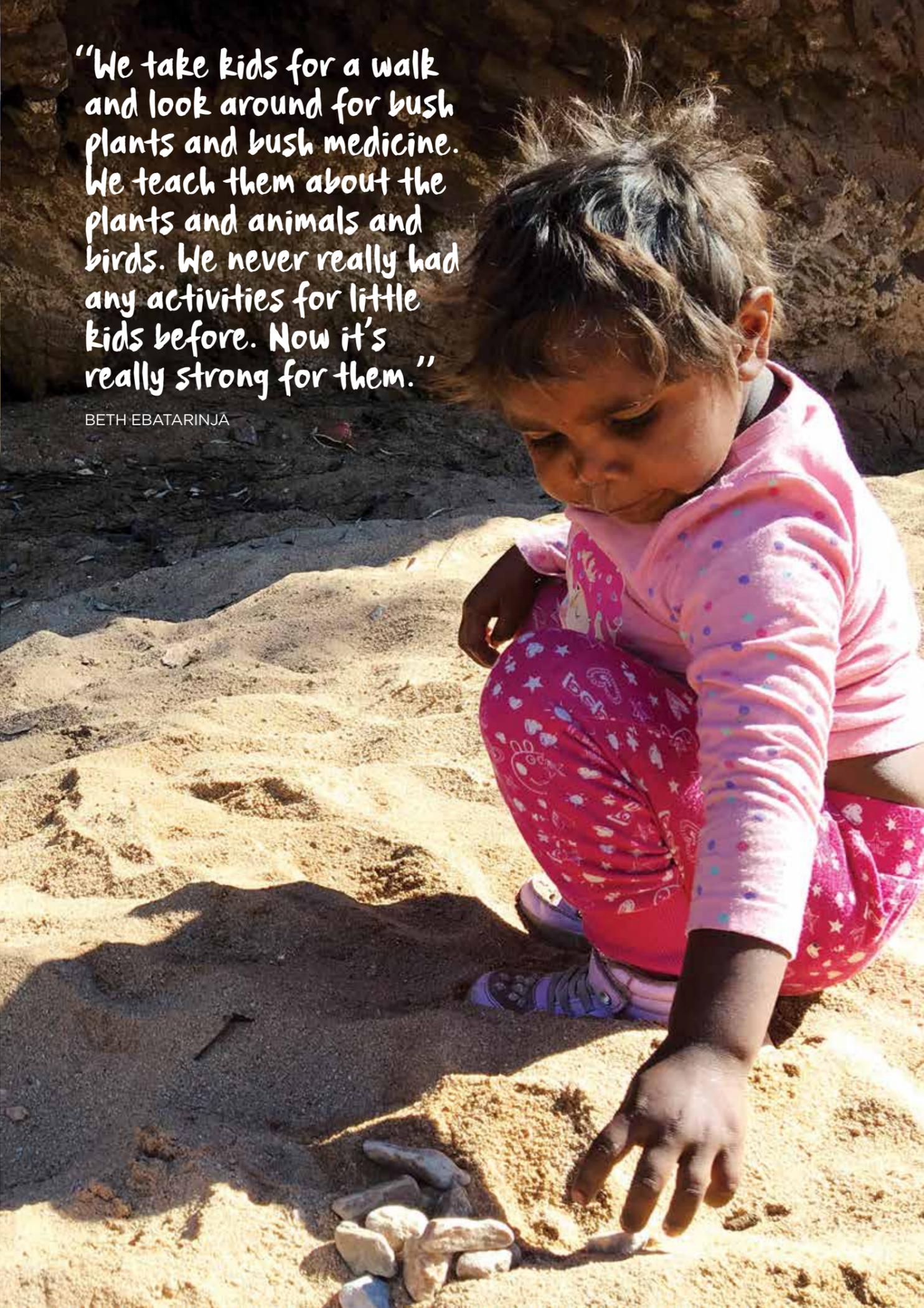
I've learnt more about Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe this year – especially when we went to Melbourne. I didn't know there was a bigger story too, the money story side. We have to keep talking to people in the city: tell them our story, get them to listen to us. I also like the bush trips with the visitors [philanthropists]. They can

“We've never had a chance like this: to teach our kids our culture, the way we want. To teach on our Homelands and to make our own resources. We had to follow someone else's rules first and now we have a chance to do what we want.”

come and see what we do; what we have been teaching; how we do it – so they can take it back and share it for all our people.

Next year I can see more changes, more families and children. I hope that the government gives us a chance to do what we want to do. Just one chance. Maybe somebody with a mind like us can get in that government – so we can all do the same thing.

Kele.



“We take kids for a walk and look around for bush plants and bush medicine. We teach them about the plants and animals and birds. We never really had any activities for little kids before. Now it’s really strong for them.”

BETH EBATARINJA

Ayeye Ileme Mapeke

SHARING OUR STORY

This year we presented papers at three conferences:

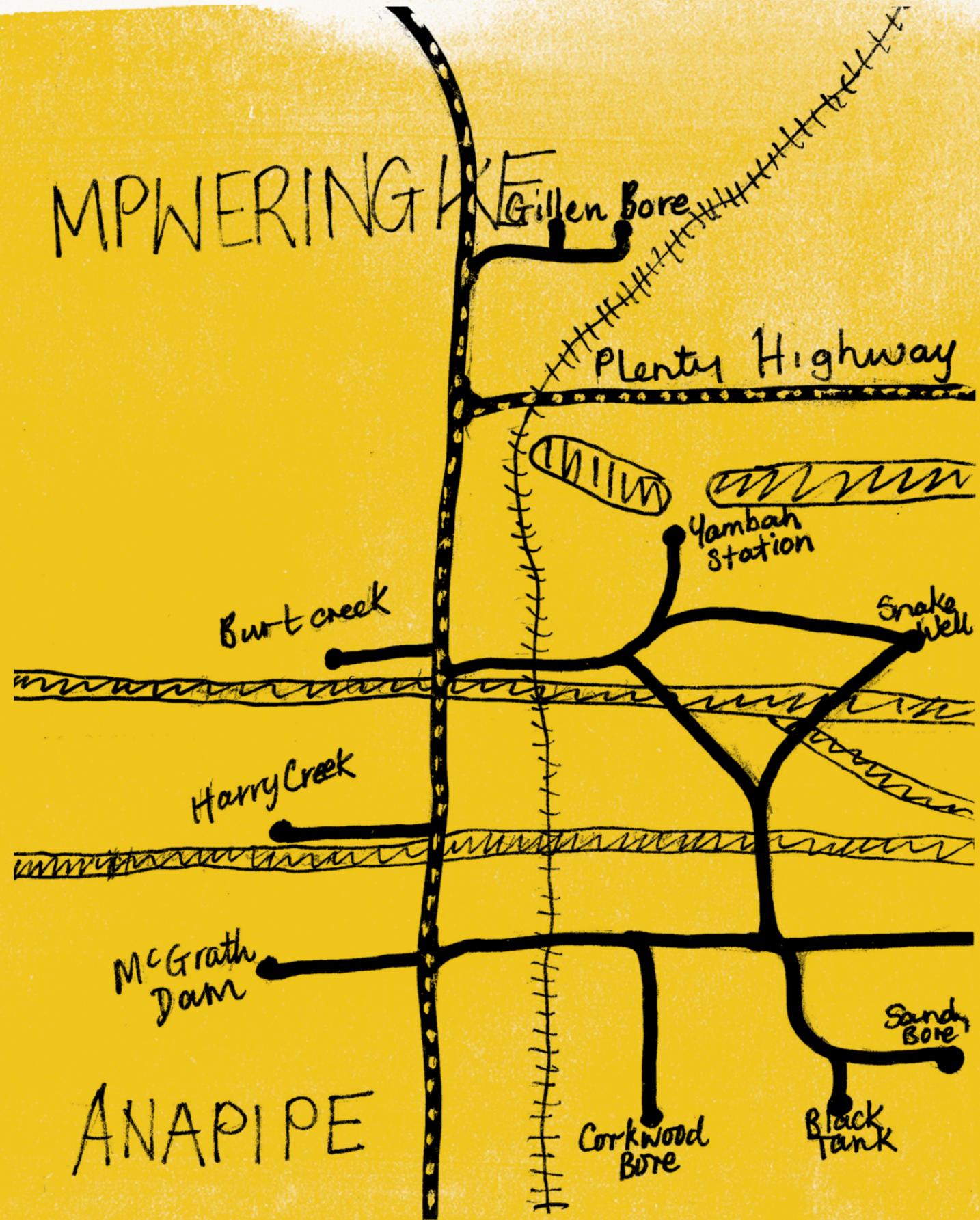
- *Akalyirreme nthenhele apeke - Learning is Everywhere*, presented by Felicity Hayes and Mel Kean at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) in Canada
- *You’ve got to listen to us; our voice: Privileging Arrernte language and culture in Early Childhood*, presented by Felicity Hayes, Lorryne Gorey, Veronica Turner and Bethan Rees at the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) Conference in Canberra.
- *Anwernenhe anteme iwerre anthaye ampe akweke anwerne-kenhe areyeke - Backing Aboriginal People to lead the way in the Early Years*, presented by Felicity Hayes, Lorryne Gorey, Veronica Turner, Bethan Rees and Mel Kean at the Little People Big Dreams, Northern Territory Children’s Learning & Development Conference in Darwin. We presented for one and a half hours. This was a really great achievement for all of us.

“I went to Canada as a First Nations person of Australia because I have been working in education for a long time and I have always been passionate about the education, health and wellbeing of our children. This trip was my first time overseas, but I felt that I was ready and confident to share the work that we have been doing in Alice Springs with Ampe-kehne Ahelhe with other First Nations peoples of the world.

I was inspired by other First Nations people who had similar ways of teaching to us. I learnt that other First Nations people have the same problems with health, with children being taken away, children in the criminal justice system, suicide risks and with children not going to school because the school system is not working for them. We saw people talking about how their communities were trying to find solutions for their families, like we are here. We came back knowing that we are part of a bigger movement - an international movement. We can all share our knowledge and fight for the right to teach our children our way; with all the knowledge that has been handed down to us and taught for generations and generations by our great leaders - all our elders and ancestors.”

FELICITY HAYES, SENIOR ARRERENTE EDUCATOR

Mpweringke Anapipe Arenye Ampe Mape



Akaltye-irreme Apmerekere: Mpwerkingke Anapipe

LEARNING ON COUNTRY: MPWERINGKE ANAPIPE



Nhenhe anwerne tnerne-irreme arne arelhel Peltharre atherrenge. Ampe mapeke arnwerne ayeye ileke itne akaltye irretyenhenge ayeye altyerrenge arelhel Peltharre atherre akerte. Here we are standing with the two Peltharre women trees. We told the kids this story about their ancestors so they can become knowledgeable.



Ampe urreye akweke mape akaltye irreme lthartekere untetyeke. All the boys are learning to dance.



Alexis-ele ingwerrpeke areme. Alexis is looking for snotty-gobbles (bush berries).



Kelsey akaltye-irreme arne mpwaretyeke ahelhenge ntyele. Kelsey is making things from the ground - painting with sand & making things with clay.



Kieren-ele Ellarisha-ke ampe ikwerenhe imerneme nthakenhe re tea mpwaretyeke. Kieren is showing his daughter Ellarisha how to make tea.



Marle akweke mape anthepe-irretyeker akaltye-irreme. The young girls are learning Arrernte dance.



Seraiya uthene kake ikwerenhe Antonio uthene terrurenge arrkene-irreme. Seraiya and her big brother Antonio are playing with music sticks their Nannas made.



Dominic-ele utnerrenge mpwareme aperleye ikwerenhe Lowlee arle areke irrpere. Dominic is mixing utnerrenge (bush medicine) after watching his Nanna Lowlee.



Akweke mape akaltye-irreme ulpe mpwaretyeke. The little ones are learning how to mix ochre.



Ali-ele ampe mapeke ayeye ileme. Ali telling a story for the kids.



Anwerne alewatyerreke areme arne kweneke. We are trying to get the goanna out of the branches.

Irrkerlantye Arenye Ampe Mape



Akaltye-irreme Apmerekere: Irrkerlantye

LEARNING ON COUNTRY: IRRKERLANTYE



"Ampe nhenhe areyele thipe irrkerrlantye alkereke-areme."
"Look up there at the bird in the sky."



"Nhenhe areye merne atwakeye mape."
"Look at all the bush oranges."



"Our kids are learning on country,
growing up proud and strong."
ANGELINA HAYES, ARRERNTI EARLY YEARS
SUPPORT WORKER AND EDUCATOR



Nhenhe atnyeneme arrutnenge mape Lilly ante Shontara.
Lilly and Shontara holding bush passionfruit.



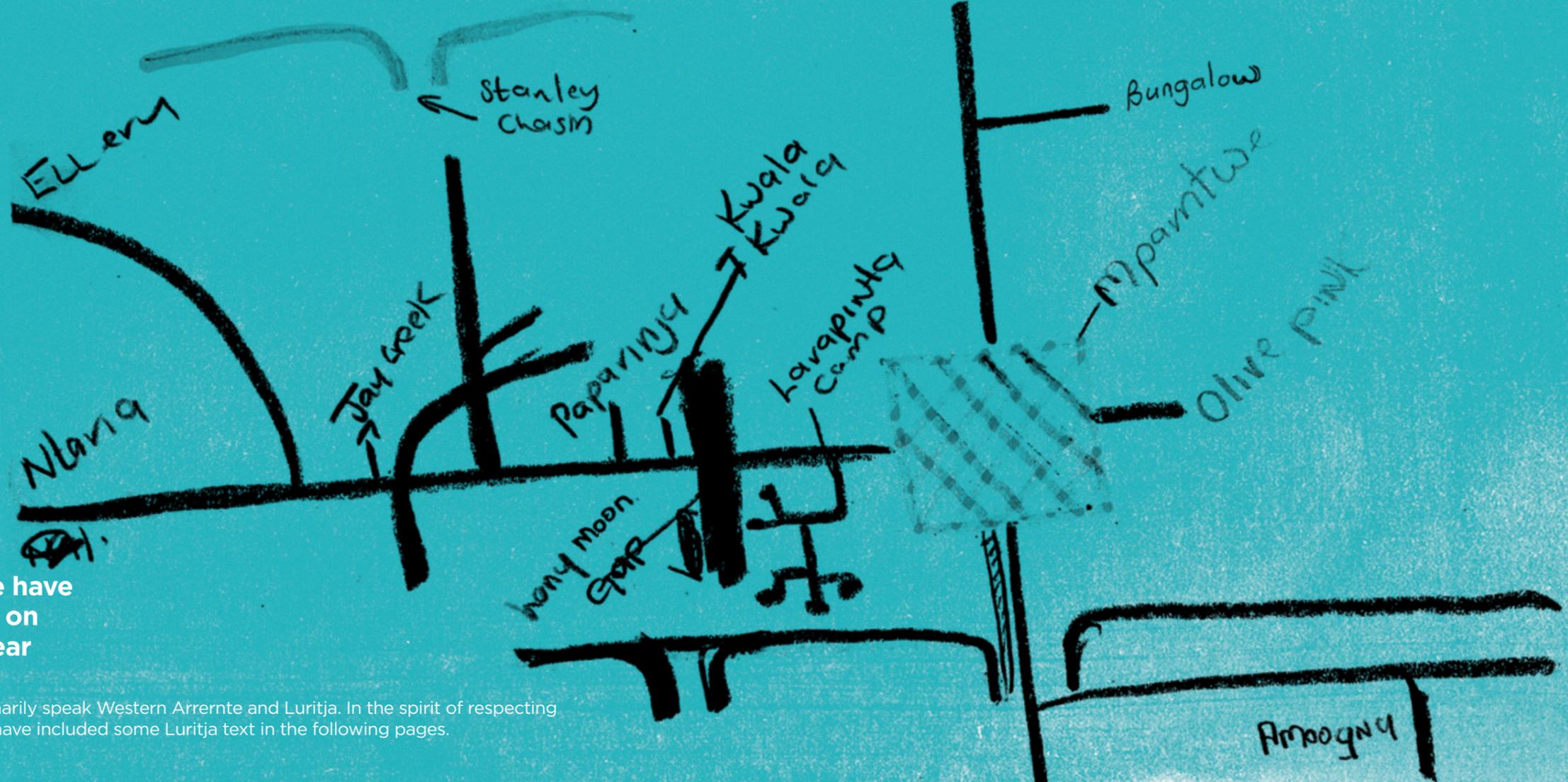
Anwerne alhme unthetyeke merne putye arenyeke ante tyapeke.
Looking for witchetty grubs on country at Mt Undoolya.



Nhenhe ayeye ileme ampe akweke mapeke.
Reading to the children.



Yarrenyty Arltere Ketyeye



These are the places we have visited for our Learning on Country sessions this year

Families from Yarrenyty Arltere primarily speak Western Arrernte and Luritja. In the spirit of respecting the language of all our families, we have included some Luritja text in the following pages.

Nintirringanyi Ngurratja: Yarrenyty Arltere

LEARNING ON COUNTRY: YARRENYTY ARLTERE



Ngayulu nintini ngyuku untalpaant tjitjtutaku nyangatja ngayku walktja tjuta irriti wiyarringu. Dulcie is telling her daughter about family and country, so she can tell her children.



Roxannanya iti palumpa kapingka tjurpinyi ilurrla. Roxanne and her little one are swimming in the water.



Tjitji tjuta nintirringayi mayi kika palyanyaku. Kids are pretending to make cakes



Nyangatja kwala kalala ngaranyi tjitji tjuta. Kids are at Kwala Kwala.

“Ngayulu pulkarringu ngayuku
kamiku nintinu yaltji yaltji
mayi putjitja tjuta warungka
kutjarra ngalkuni mayi untunga
maku yalka munu mirritjina
tjuta palyantaku.”

ROXANNE SHARP

“When I was growing up I learnt how to find bush tucker like witchetty grubs and bush onions. We learnt how to cook with fire and which bush medicine to find to heal mob. This is what I want my kids to learn. It makes kids strong.”



Kele Mwerre

Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe came to life because of the generosity and leadership of philanthropy.

Our very first investors – our Angels – were Claire Brunner and her mother, Jasmine Brunner. They gave us some money for Alice Springs. We were able to look after that money until we were ready. Now look at where we have come. We want to recognise Claire here and we pay our respects to her and her family as she has now passed away. We wish she could have seen what we have built at Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe with her generous support.

For the last year and a half we have existed because of the innovation of philanthropy, a donation from Centrecorp, community support, our volunteers and our partners. Our philanthropic supporters who have made Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe possible are: the Brunner family, PMF, Third Link, English Family Foundation, Johnson &

Johnson Family of Companies, Igniting Change, Limb Family Foundation, Ryan Cooper Family Foundation, Ramses Foundation, Beverley Jackson Foundation, the Bonnici Family, the Rogers Family, Sydney Myer Fund, Jessie Street Trust, Australian Communities Foundation, The Duggan Foundation, The Angel Fund and the JB Davros Family Foundation and other wonderful individuals and families

These people and organisations have backed us, they have believed in us and now, together we are leading the way.

We have waited for Government support for so long; for them to believe that First Nations people can actually do this. We've shown the power of the people through Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe. We are just at the beginning. More families want to be involved and we need to keep building our funding so we can do this important work.

We invite new people to come and take this journey with us, walk with us and join our family.

Partners
Akeyulerre
Arrernte Language Centre
Batchelor Institute

Supporters
Project 1 Million
Youthworx
Kogo
Deborah Wilson
Louise Dorrat
Helen Miller
Paul and Jane Hallam

Friends Apmere Angkentye-kenhe, KIDS the film, Rachel Edwardson, Jan Owen, Dave Nixon, Damien Williams (for his shout outs), Pat Cash, Black Rock Band, Yarrenyty Arltere Artists, Mike Bowden, David Woods, Rod Moss



Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe Staff



Thank you to our Volunteers



...and everyone who has given their time and skills to walk with us on this journey so far.



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“Lyete kwenhe, arrangkwe anteme tyerrtye mape nhenge apmerele anertte anetyeke. Anwernenhe awerraye, angkentye anwerne kenhe anwerne angkeme arle. Anwerne akattyele antherrt aneme apmere-nge, aw, akethe arrpenhenge arlke. Ampe mape akattyele anhetyeke ayeye arrekwerlyne, ante ilnekenhe culture-ke. Itne iterrke akwete amangketyenhenge. Education system nhenhe uthene, culture uthene apurteke akwete akattye irretyeke. Lyete anteme, anwerne arne ngkerneme fruit mape arlke akerte. Anwerne ingkerrekele apurtele mpwaretyeke.”

INGKERREKELE ARNTARANTE-AREME AMPE-KENHE AHELHE

“No more sitting back. We want people to listen to us, our voices. In our society, learning takes place anywhere and anytime we are on country. We want to teach kids their history as well as their culture; we want them to grow up with a strong identity. We want an education system for kids that is culturally appropriate. Now we are growing the fruit. We are the ones that need to make it happen. Kele.”

CHILDREN'S GROUND CENTRAL AUSTRALIA GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE