

Elder Street Pedagogical Post

August 2022



So much learning and curiosity in the Possum Room

CONNECTING TO COUNTRY - In the beginning stages of this project, the children drew from varied dispositions for learning and curiosity to drive their language and creative expression in connecting to country and reconciliation. Through these forms of learning, the children developed the following understanding:

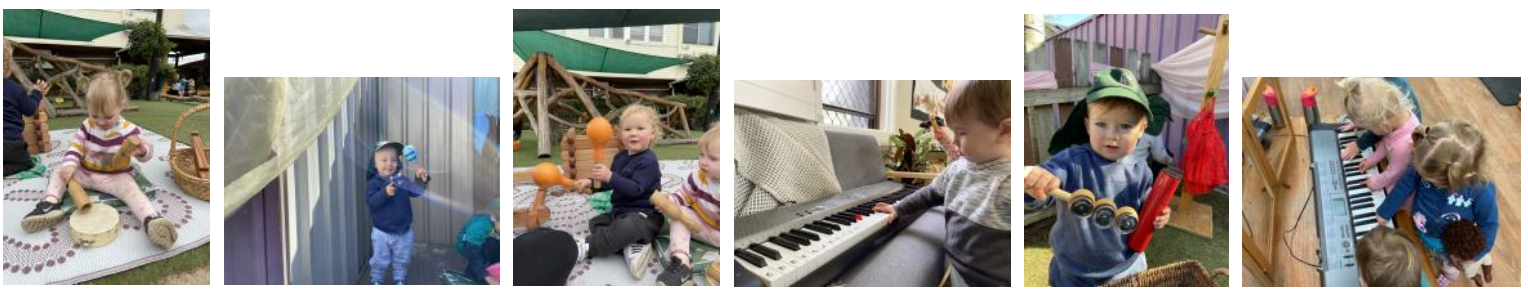
- The presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture in our community.
- How Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold strong connection with the land
- How we can continue to care for Awabakal Country through our everyday learning and practices.

Over a few weeks, the children continued to create theories based on interactions with the river space and waterways. Educators were intentional in their strategies to support the children having unhurried time to interact, experiment and collaborate. We engaged more with the Parama and the importance it holds for the Awabakal people. We gathered out on the front steps in a yarning circle to listen to the dreaming story of the Rainbow Serpent and how it formed the Hunter River on Awabakal Country. The children began sharing their connections. "Ssssss" Max expressed creating the sound and movement of a snake with his hands. This prompted Remi to lay down on the mat as the Rainbow Serpent. "Awa" she shouted. We paused to reflect on the connections the children were making. Their language of connection was in the form of using their hands to touch and create. We next provided clay, sandstone rocks, water and paintbrushes. Each of the earthy elements represents Awabakal Country and the Earth where the Rainbow Serpent emerged from.

We saw an opportunity for the children to extend on this learning through an interactive story involving natural materials. Educators encouraged the children to use their hands to pat the sand flat as the earth was flat in the beginning of the story. They used their fingers and hands to form the river and mountains in the land. Their hands then tickled the frogs that were full of water. Remi turned to Grace and began tickling Grace's belly. "Tickle tickle tickle" she expressed. "What came out of their bellies?" Bree asked. "Ah warga" Remi shouted out loud with excitement. The girls used a water pipette to squirt water and fill the ridges to create Pamara.

As the project came to an end, it was clear our journey of Reconciliation continues. This important work comes from our hearts and active social justice voices.





OUR LOVE OF MUSIC - Throughout our Reconciliation Journey and project learning, the children were exposed to a wide variety of music. It soon became evident that they were drawn to the songs "Innanay" and "Taba Naba", both Torres Strait Islander songs. Through time spent together and repetitive learning, the children became familiar with both the words and actions to these songs. This learning transferred into the home environment with lots of families sharing that their children were singing Taba Naba at home. We also made a connection with this song on National Torres Strait Islander Day as we saw Taba Naba being sung through the digital projector.

Other ways we have engaged in and explored music is through a range of musical instruments, experimenting with different sounds in the learning environment, and having the opportunity to explore sound sequencing and patterns on Keely's keyboard she brought in from home.



LEARNING TOGETHER - As the year has progressed we have noticed the dynamics in the room change and the children build strong connections through common interests. Educators see and encourage the importance of learning together as this provides opportunities for children to form strong relationships, scaffold each other's learning and create theories in their play. Lev Vygotsky, a psychologist and developmental theorist, stated that we can't just look at what students are capable of doing on their own; we have to look at what they are capable of doing in a social setting. In many cases students are able to complete a task within a group before they are able to complete it on their own. This has been observed through many experiences over the last few months, as children have shared their knowledge and expertise in certain areas of their learning; Grace exploring bush critters, Liam's exploration of music, Remi sharing her singing and knowledge of songs, Loula with dancing and movement, Joseph with his experimentation of building and crashing (cause and effect). Educators have been mindful to slow down the learning process and engage the children to research and experiment with their ideas rather than educators provide answer straight away.

WHERE TO NEXT - The process of beginning a new project involves educators engaging deeply with the children's learning and interactions in the learning environment. It also requires educators to consider the children as individuals with socio-cultural influences from the home and other learning environments. We then come together to collaborate and reflect on what we believe this learning is. What form of learning are the children engaging in? Why are they interested in this learning? When is this learning happening? How can we further engage with this learning? This form of works attends to how research, theories, knowledge and new understandings are created and constructed in the learning environment. We are excited to see where our next learning journey takes us!

Love Bree,
Keely,
Carley,
Hannah
and Chloe

xxx

A learning enriched few months with the Joey's



EMERGENCY VEHICLES: WRAPPING UP OUR LEARNING –

As our project began to progress educators reflected on how we could fulfil the children's goal "to drive one". After receiving some big boxes the children collaborated, discussed, designed and constructed their own fire truck.

Throughout our project journey, educators have intentionally planned experiences based on conversations and observations documented. This phase of our project has supported the children's connections and desire to engage in real life scenarios through role play and communication. The children have identified and shared their knowledge of emergency personnel and we believe this learning has been influenced from learning within our community and our project explorations.

After working collaboratively to discover new information and understandings about emergency vehicles and the importance of them in the community, as well as constructing their very own fire truck from recycled materials, we concluded our project with a very special visitor to Elder Street; a fire truck!! Thanks to Joseph's dad Trent kindly organising for his crew from Lambton Fire Station to visit Elder Street. Trent Rostron, Sam from the Wallaby rooms dad, put on his full uniform complete with oxygen tank, mask and helmet to show the children what a fire fighter might look like if they ever have to enter their home to help them. The children were a little shy but totally in awe of the truck and all of the equipment that is used to save lives every single day.



DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIPS - As the year has progressed, so has the confidence and meaning in the children's friendships and connections. We have noticed a shift in the types of play the children are engaging in when they are together. At the beginning of the year, the children were mostly engaging in parallel play; interested in the same things but playing alongside each other. Over the last few months we have noticed a lot more collaborative play, hypothesising, conversations and small group work. This has been supported by our ongoing project work and spending time researching as a group.



Close relationships are the context for children's play, development and learning. What young children learn, how they interact to events and people around them, and what they expect for themselves and others (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) depend greatly on their close relationships.



BUSH CREATURES - In response to the children's connection to our bush friends book and creation experiences, educators have intentionally planned to slow this learning down to provide opportunities for the children to gather and share their thoughts and ideas over a period of time. After many discussions about what types of natural materials we might find when out with our families, the children were encouraged to transfer their ideas onto paper, to represent their bush creature plans. This interest has continued to grow and has been explored in both the indoor and outdoor environments. As part of our July outdoor program, the atelier space was set up to support the children in imagining and creating bush creature friends. Their ideas and understandings of bush friend creations has evolved and will continue to be an important element in our intentional teaching experiences.



Love, Lauren, Sarah,
Casey, Chloe and
Hannah xx



Learning and exploration in the Wallaby room from May - August

CONCLUDING OUR INQUIRY BASED LEARNING PROJECT

BEYOND THE STARS: OUR SPACE ODYSSEY - Throughout the project the children continually demonstrated inquisitive questioning supporting the initial concept observed by the educators. Our book, 'Questions and Answers about Space' provided us with many opportunities to delve deeper into the questions and inquiry focusing specifically on the where, what, why, how, and who...

Where have people visited in space? - Henry

Where does space begin? - Elliott

Why is it so cold on Uranus? - Jonny

Why did Jupiter have a big storm? - Marli

Why is the moon so heavy? - Maddox

Why does the moon spin around? - Ayla

Why a rocket comes down and up? - Eliana

How do planets stay up in space? - Winifred



MAKING OUR MODEL - The project group unpacked their understandings about space and how they aspired to represent their knowledge through their model. The children demonstrated critical and creative thinking when deciding the size of the structural and colour components that best represented their learning. They were mindful to encompass the ideas of the collective project group which is a significant skill to achieve at this age. We spent time hypothesising, unpacking our thoughts, and finalising what materials would work best to create our model.

Collaborative learning provides opportunities for reflection and overcoming hurdles. The group initially decided to use a balloon to make the meteor, however meshing the paper mâché on top of the balloon caused the balloon to pop. Educators encouraged the children to think critically about what other materials could be used. After engaging in deep critical thinking and reflection, the group decided to implement Elliott's idea. We worked to attach the rocket and the meteor to a piece of wire, wiggling it around into position before deciding on its set space on the canvas.



REFLECTING ON OUR LEARNING - Throughout the time spent documenting, researching, unpacking, and theorising, the children became aware of the critical role of asking intentional questions. The children demonstrated confidence in their ability to learn as individuals and within a group to further develop their depth of knowledge and promote participation. The children were exposed to a slow pedagogy, unpacking how to learn conceptually to further support their research. We moved beyond some languages of researching and unpacking knowledge to physical and practical explorations through a deep dive into the hundred languages of children including art, conversation, construction, and science.



A LOVE OF LITERACY - What is literacy? It is a part of everyday life and we use it for so many reasons; to share ideas and feelings, to find out information, to help us remember things and for enjoyment. While traditionally literacy can be understood as reading and writing, contemporary views of literacy have broadened to also include processes of speaking and listening, viewing, drawing and creating a range of texts. We have noticed that the children's love of literacy in all forms has continued to grow. This has been evident through the many story times with follow up question sessions, providing opportunities for the children to develop an understanding of what it is they are learning about. Another great way that children have been exploring literacy is through their love of mark making. Often, we see children expressing themselves through their drawings or paintings and relaying the story that accompanies them with their peers and educators. We love when children bring in special books from their home life to share. These may be a favourite to read as a family or represent an important or exciting change in their lives.



MUSIC AND MOVEMENT - The preschool children have shown an increased interest in music, movement and expressing themselves through these avenues over the past few months. Popular songs such as freeze, the floor is lava, the Wombat Wobble and Tooty Ta as well as free dancing and parachute games. These experiences have provided opportunities for the children to extend their gross motor skills, balance, co-ordination, crossing the midline, spatial awareness and flexibility. Research suggests that movement in early childhood can help increase memory, perception, language, attention, emotion and decision making. It also helps to develop skills such as cognitive growth, problem solving, self-expression and social development.

HAVING A YARN: EMBEDDING INDIGENOUS PRACTICES - The Wallaby children and educators have been working together to form strong, respectful relationships and understandings of Indigenous practices and perspectives. One of our main focuses has been to embed our Acknowledgement to Country into our daily practice, supporting each and every member of our Preschool community to feel confident in being involved in such a special part of our day. This time spent together has led to the children being involved in and then running our own yarnning circles. Each child understands the processes involved and respect each other in this space; taking turns, listening and enjoying each other's company. Our yarnin stick holds great significance as Marli conducted some data collection to decide on the patterns and colours that our Elder Street community connected with. These practices were then supported by Lauren and Bree attending the Reconciliation Symposium in Darwin and returning with some special coral that was painted using Aboriginal flag colours. They had so many wonderful stories to share with us.



REMAINING CONNECTED AND RESILIENT - One thing that has stood out to us over the past few months is the children's resilience and connectedness. With so much uncertainty still in the world and the children spending time apart from their friends and educators, we are so proud of how they have continued to build strong relationships, support each other and be happy and content in themselves as individuals. We are so proud that the children have been able to maintain our collaborative philosophy of group learning and the importance of relationships. We are very grateful for the relationships we share with all of our families.



PROJECT WORK: COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP - As the children progress through the year, they have actively engaged in many learning concepts that challenge them and provoke deep reflective thinking. They have been exposed to many national and international events that have altered and shaped their learning, providing them opportunities to delve deeper into collaborative discussions and sustained shared thinking. Educators have ensured that they have guided and supported the children through their many dispositions for learning, enabling them to shape who they are as individuals, who they can be as part of a group, and how they can facilitate their learning through these concepts. An in-depth exploration of our Reconciliation Action plan, connecting and coming together during extended sickness and isolation periods, and the beginning of some transitioning to school have guided the children to think about their role, the role of a group, and the impacts that individuals can have on our communities.

The children engaged with a variety of books including 'Who am I' and 'When I grow up', to spark their thinking on communities as a concept and their dispositions for supporting their future. During collaborative discussions, the children were able to identify their ideas of career paths, bouncing ideas off one another and inspiring others. We decided to extend this learning and develop our knowledge of what each career entailed and the roles they played within the community.

As the children began to understand how functioning communities operate, we directed our attention to our role within the community and how we can actively engage and participate now and in the future. We decided to undertake some data collection and research within our Elder Street communities to see what knowledge and expertise we have access to. During many shared discussions and group experiences, the children were provided with the opportunity to share knowledge of their parent's careers and how they think they impact our communities. Educators introduced the concept of community engagement and occupational aspirations into our thinking early in our lives.



Love Kate, Donna, Ellie, Olivia, Casey and Hannah xxx