



**EARLY YEARS
(AGES 3-5)**

Kinship

EDUCATOR RESOURCE

Created in collaboration with First Nations cultural advisers

Aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework v2.0

Written by teachers for teachers

AUSTRALIANS
TOGETHER

Warning: This resource may contain images, voices and names of deceased persons, and references to language or events that may be considered culturally sensitive, offensive or outdated.

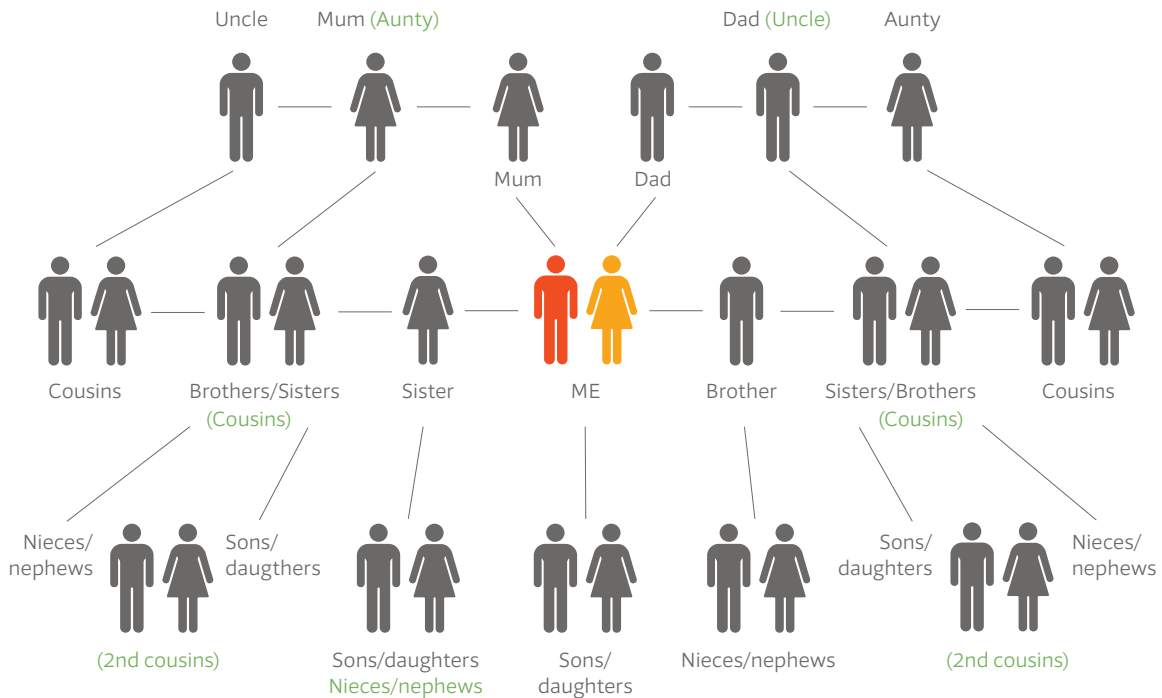
Language note: It's important to consider the historical context and evolving nature of language when viewing the information in this resource. While it may not be our preferred language, Australians Together at times uses or includes terms necessary for context, due to the educational nature of our content.



Essential question

How do we connect with our families and community?

First Nations Kinship - the extended family



(Adapted from a Northern Territory Government Department of Health diagram, n.d.)

Before teaching

Pre-reading: what's kinship?

To prepare for discussing and learning about kinship with your children, read the short article, '[First Nations kinship](#)' (1,298 words, 4-minute read) from *Australians Together*. In the article, author and [Wiradjuri](#) woman Courtney Rubie explains the difference between First Nations kinship and the nuclear family structure, the use of the terms Aunty and Uncle, and how kinship helps define a person's responsibility to others.

In their book *Nganga: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Words and Phrases* Aunty Fay Muir and Sue Lawson give a definition of the word kinship:

Kinship is a word used by Indigenous Australians to describe their complex family and social structures. Kinship encompasses nations' connections to each other and how they belong to the land. It also sets out a clan's obligations and social behaviours, including marriage, who cares for the old or ill and who is responsible for children. Kinship groups have unique totems, often an animal, plant or place, which connects them.

(2018, p. 60)

For your own learning you may wish to also take a look at the following:

- [Deadly Story](#) provides a detailed overview and video explaining First Nations kinship systems (01:09).
- [Central Land Council](#) provides greater detail on kinship, moiety, totems and skin names for First Nations Peoples the Council represents in the Northern Territory (858 words, 4-minute read).

The University of Sydney also has an online professional learning '[Kinship Module](#)' about Aboriginal kinship systems, which is free to access. It's made up of eight short videos, each two to five minutes long.

Which words?

You can access our [Language and Terminology Toolkit](#) for any terms you feel unsure about.

Trauma-informed teaching and learning

Before teaching these activities, start by reflecting on what you know about the personal experiences and family histories of the children, so you're better placed to support them in their learning. You may wish to adapt some of the activities or language used when discussing families, in order to be responsive and inclusive of all of the children, at all times. For example, children could focus on one important person in their life, even an educator or friend from preschool, rather than representing all their relatives.

Parents and caregivers letter – 'This is my family'

Attached to this resource is a 'Parent/Caregiver letter' template that can be sent home to support students in this learning. Parents and carers are asked to help by sending in some family photos that can be included in a classroom display, as well as answers to a number of provided questions. Your knowledge of the children's home situation will inform how you approach families and carers for this activity and learning.

Activity materials

You'll need:

- wall space in the classroom to create a visual display – added to throughout the learning
- copies of the 'Parent/Caregiver letter' template for each student
- a shared screen to view online maps and other sources
- a copy of the picture book, *Family*, by Aunty Fay Muir and Sue Lawson
- materials to set up 'family provocations', such as rocks/loose parts, wooden and/or multicultural dolls, paper, drawing materials and wooden craft sticks.

Activities



Who's your family?

Talk and share

To begin the learning in this resource, give the children an opportunity to talk and share about their families. Ideally, conduct this in a group setting so they're able to hear about each other's families and begin to build their understanding that not all families are the same as their own, or those they've seen on TV or read about in books. You may like to use the following prompts to guide a group discussion about the children's families:

- Who's in your family?
- Do all the people in your family live in the same house?
- Who are your aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents?
- Where do they live?
- Does your family speak any languages other than English?
- Are there any stories or songs that your family share?
- What do you love about your family?
- What can people in a family or community do to take care of each other?



Family play provocations

Play and explore

Set up some family provocations in the classroom for the children to access and interact with throughout the learning. Some examples are listed below:

- Making members of your family using rocks or loose parts
- Using sticks to draw your family in sand or dirt – First Nations children attending your site may choose to draw signs and symbols to depict their family if they have this knowledge
- Making family puppets by drawing members of your family and attaching wooden craft sticks or creating using wooden pegs
- Having multicultural or wooden dolls for children to role play with



Activity notes

If you're collecting items for these family play provocations outside with the children, it provides an opportunity to discuss the ways we can all care for Country by only taking what we need, not everything we want. We also leave enough for others (animals, plants and humans), so that Country can stay healthy. We only collect leaves from the ground rather than pull them off the trees and we return things to where we found them.

Home learning



This is my family

Using the 'Parent/Caregiver letter' template or your own wording, ask families and caregivers to send in a family photo, or of important people in the child's life, with a short statement about where they're from, what languages they speak and what celebrations are important to them. You could also ask them to share something special about the family, such as a picture of their garden, a favourite recipe, a story or song they enjoy together, or a special place they like to visit.

As these are brought into the classroom, begin to create a visual wall display celebrating each and every family.

Kinship and belonging

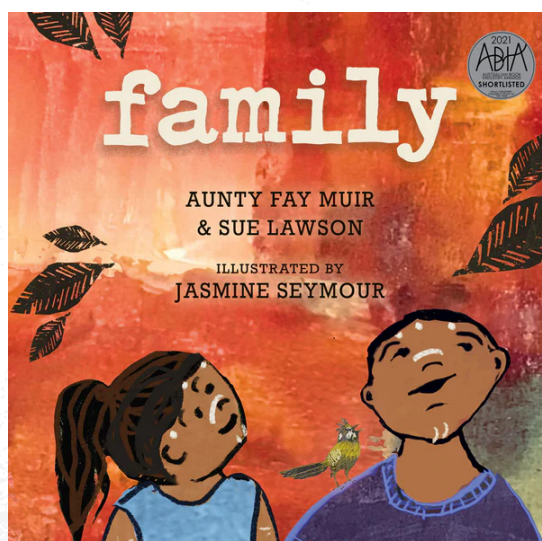


Read the picture book *Family*

As a class read the picture book *Family* by Aunty Faye Muir and Sue Lawson, illustrated by Jasmine Seymour.

After reading ask the children:

- Did you hear the word 'kinship' in the book?
- What do you think kinship means?





Learn about kinship

Discuss First Nations kinship systems with the children using your knowledge from the sources in the 'Before teaching' section and elsewhere.

Show the children where "Aunties, Uncles, Elders and Ancestors" are mentioned in the text and discuss the roles these different people play in First Nations children's lives, as wider-family members.

Ask the children:

- Are there any people in your life who you call Aunty or Uncle, like your mum or dad's close friends rather than their brothers or sisters?
- What do these people mean to you? Do they help take care of you? Or teach you things?
- What do you do to help or take care of them? What's your responsibility when you visit them?



Watch *Little J and Big Cuz*

Share with children the '[Hopalong](#)' episode of *Little J and Big Cuz* (12:00). After watching, ask the following questions:

- When did you notice the people/characters in the episode taking care of each other? What sorts of things were they doing?
- Who is part of Little J and Big Cuz's family? How can you tell?
- Does their family make you think of anything that we've been learning about 'kinship'?
- How do you think Little J and Big Cuz's family make them feel safe and like they belong?

Activity notes

The *Little J and Big Cuz* episode, 'Hopalong' from series 1, is only available on the ABC iView website, so you'll need to login to watch it. If you don't already have an account, it's free to join.



Care and connect

Following on from watching the *Little J and Big Cuz* episode ask the children:

- Who do you belong to?
- Who cares for you?
- Who do you care for? Maybe a younger sibling, animal or plant?
- What animals/pets or plants do you take care of just like Old Dog and Hopalong?

The children then draw some of the people they talked about. These could be members of their immediate families or wider family networks.

Add these drawings to the visual wall display. You may like to display the prompting questions for some extra context.

The language of family and kin



Listen to *Little Yarns* podcast

Listen to ABC's *Little Yarns* podcast episode '[Family in Adnyamathanha](#)' (08:00), from 28 March 2022. You may like to do this during a relaxation time or ask children to lie down and close their eyes to listen. While listening, encourage children to notice the images and pictures they 'see' in their mind's eye.

Ask the children afterwards what was shared about families in the episode.

Together, say the word *Nganggini*, meaning 'family', which Clayton shared in [Adnyamathanha](#), and ask children again about which languages are spoken in their families.



Find and speak local language

Remind children that at the start of the *Little Yarns* episode Rudi shares that she's from [Gadigal](#) Country and asks, 'Whose Country are you on right now?'

Use the AIATSIS '[Map of Indigenous Australia](#)' to find the Country the preschool is on. If you have time, you may also like to find Adnyamathanha and Gadigal Country as they're both mentioned in the podcast.

Then use the '[Gambay First Languages Map](#)' and [50 Words Project](#) website to find the words and pronunciation for different family members in language/s local to your area.

As the teaching and sharing of languages is a cultural practice, make sure you seek guidance and permission to use local words for family. It's important to remember First Nations Peoples need to be the lead voice of teaching about culture. Language has meaning, and First Nations Custodians can support your learning about not only pronunciation but also language meaning and protocols. This is a great opportunity to build relationship with Elders, Custodians and knowledge holders. Please go on the journey of building relationship before you ask knowledge holders to do something for your centre, even if it's a paid opportunity. Strong relationships are best started reciprocally, not transactionally. See the 'Before teaching' information on connecting with community.

With permission, add any words you find to the visual wall display being created in the classroom.

Family: heart and home

Discuss meaning

Revisit the picture book *Family* by Aunty Fay Muir, Sue Lawson and Jasmine Seymour.

You may like to read again to see if children have any new connections or reflections after learning more about kinship, family and language.

Bring children's attention to the first and last pages which both read "Family. Heart and Home."

Ask children:

- Why do you think this has been repeated at the start and end of the book?
- What do you think the author means by 'heart and home'?



Draw what you love

Talk to the children about what makes them feel loved and cared for as well as how they show care for the people they love.

Children use the heart template to draw pictures showing all the different things they come up with. You may like to ask children to paint the background with watercolour paints first then draw over the top with black markers, when dry.

When finished, add these to the classroom display, which is hopefully now a collaborative representation of the diversity of all of the families in the classroom, celebrated and highlighted for all to see.

PARENT/CAREGIVER LETTER

Home learning

This is my family

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

As part of our learning about families, we're hoping to create a display in our classroom of photos and information about each child's family.

Could you please help by bringing in some photos of your family that we can add to the display along with a short statement from your child about their family.

Questions you may like to ask your child include:

- Who's in our family?
- Which languages do we speak at home?
- What do we celebrate and who's part of the celebrations?
- What are some ways we look after each other in our family?
- Are there any stories or songs we enjoy together?
- Where are some special places we like to visit?
- What food do we make and enjoy together?

We're very keen to hear about and include as many families as possible in our display. Please reach out if you have any questions, and we hope this activity is enjoyable for all participants.

Kind regards,



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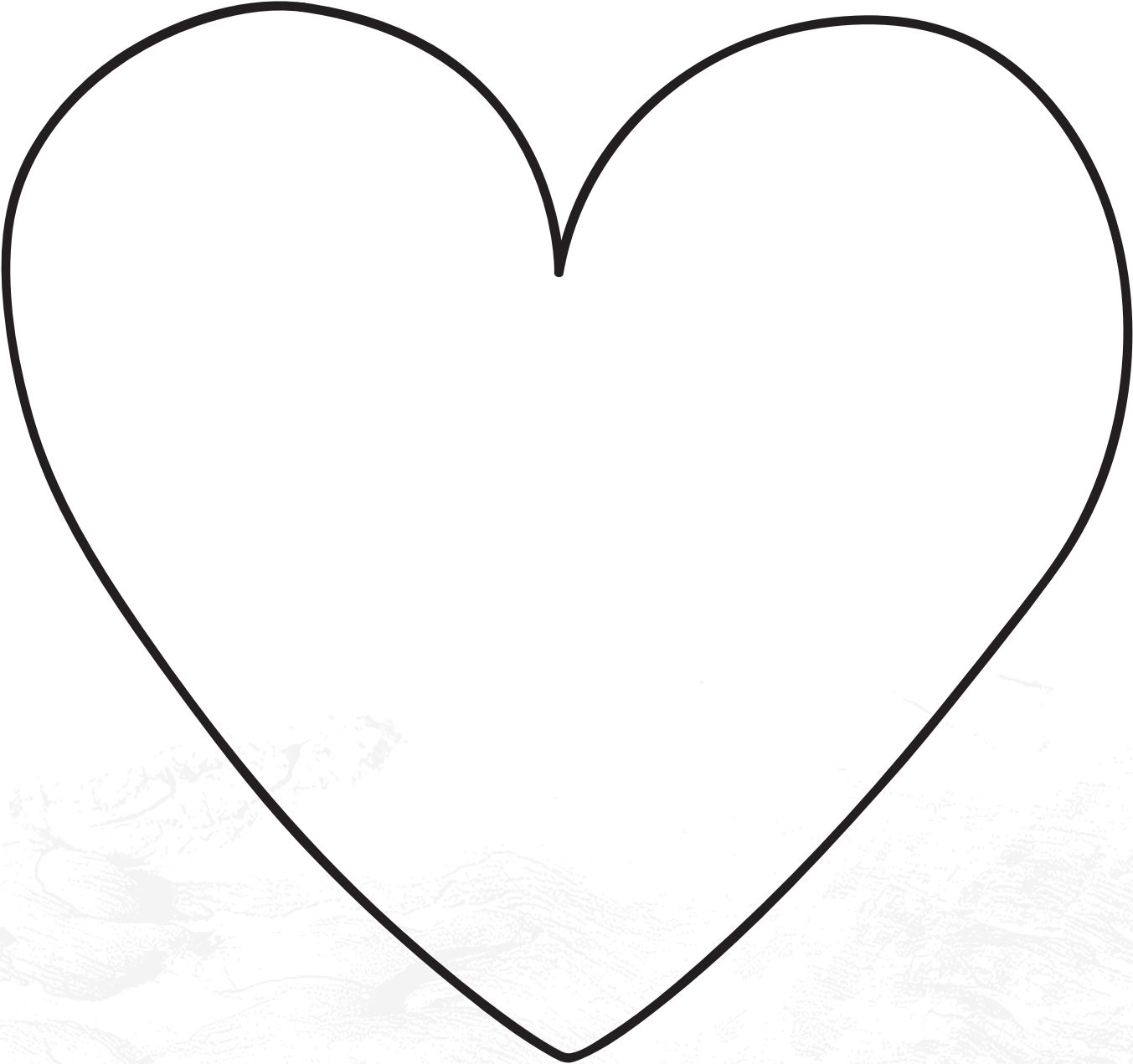
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Heart and home

Draw what you love



Australians Together Learning Framework™

Our resources follow a framework of 5 Key Ideas that are designed to shape a new narrative for all Australians. Each Key Idea underpins the content and activities in its section to take students on a transformational learning journey. You can download the framework from our [Curriculum Resources page](#).



The Wound

Injustice from the impact of colonisation



Our History

A past that shapes our story as a nation



Why Me?

What's it got to do with me?



Our Cultures

Everyone has culture. Know about your culture and value the cultures of others



My Response

Steps we can take to build a brighter future

Alignment to the Early Years Framework v2.0

Learning Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

- 1.1 Children feel safe, secure and supported
- 1.2 Children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and agency
- 1.3 Children develop knowledgeable confident self-identities, and a positive sense of self-worth
- 1.4 Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

Learning Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

- 2.1 Children develop a sense of connectedness to groups and communities and an understanding of their reciprocal rights and responsibilities as active and informed citizens
- 2.2 Children respond to diversity with respect
- 2.3 Children become aware of fairness

Learning Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

- 3.1 Children become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing

Learning Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

- 4.1 Children develop a growth mindset and learning dispositions such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity
- 4.3 Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another

Learning Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

- 5.1 Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes
 - 5.2 Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts
 - 5.3 Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media
 - 5.5 Children use digital technologies and media to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking
-

References

Muir F and Lawson S (2018), *Nganga: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Words and Phrases*, Black Dog Books . Reproduced with permission.

Image acknowledgments

Cover image: Peter Bergmeier (2017) Two people walking on sandy ground – legs only visible [photograph], © Concilia Ltd. Reproduced with permission.

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Aunty Fay Muir, Sue Lawson and Jasmine Seymour (2020) *Family [book cover]*, Magabala Books website. Reproduced with permission.

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