



7 Steps to Culturally Responsive Advocacy



ATSIDNQ
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
Disability Network of Queensland
Supporting our mob with disability

Artist Bio

Chern'ee Sutton is a proud Kalkadoon woman & Aboriginal artist from Mount Isa, QLD, Australia who is passionate about her culture & history & wants to share that with the rest of the world through her art.

Her unique style combines 2 worlds of traditional Aboriginal heritage with a modern contemporary twist which has caught the eyes of collectors around the world including Royalty & on the 2018 Commonwealth Games mascot Borobi. Chern'ee has her artwork hanging in The Royal Collection in Buckingham Palace, Queensland Parliament House, Queensland State Library and has exhibited her artworks in London, Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong, Melbourne and Sydney.

Chern'ee's artworks have been commissioned by The Queensland Government, Tennis Australia, The National Rugby League, The Royal Australian Mint, Dreamworld Theme Park, The 2018 Commonwealth Games, Rainforestation, The Australian Defence Force, Northrop Grumman, FIFA, V8 Supercars, AusCycling, The Australian Department of Veteran Affairs and The Australian Public Service Commission to name a few.

Due to Chern'ee's passion for reconciliation and equality she has received numerous accolades including National NAIDOC Youth of The Year, Australia Day Awards for 2013 and 2014, Queensland Pride of Australia Award, Local

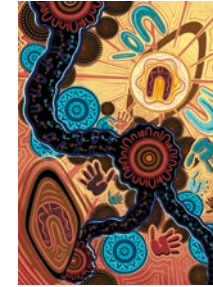
NAIDOC Awards including Artist of the Year and has been an Australia Day Ambassador for the past 6 years.

Chern'ee has designed the NRL's Indigenous All Stars Jerseys for 4 years the most recent being 2021, has just launched a new circulating and uncirculated Indigenous Military Service \$2.00 coin which she designed and features her artwork in partnership with The Australian Defence Force and The Royal Australian Mint and has collaborated with Australia Post to create an Indigenous Military Service Stamp and Coin Set featuring her artwork for Remembrance Day 2021.



www.cherneesutton.com.au

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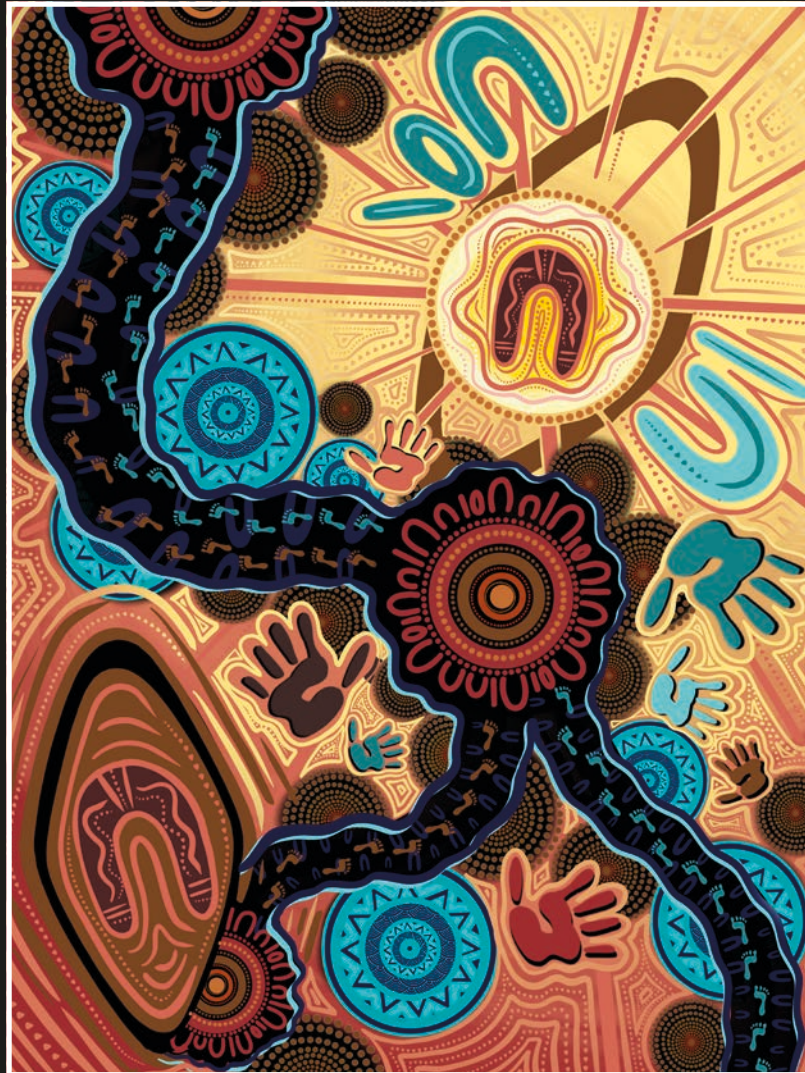
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Awareness

The shield around the client represents the underlying social issues and trauma that they may be experiencing. The client's journey is represented by the brown footprints and the advocates footprints are represented in aqua. At first, they walk separately until they meet in community. Being in community will assist the advocate to identify barriers or factors that may need to be considered when supporting the client. The brown dotted circles and aqua circles in the background represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history with the handprints representing the client's connection to their Country and their community. The advocate then walks alongside the client, with the appropriate supporting people or services to start their journey in resolving the issue. The client is then shown breaking through the shield with the support of their advocate as the sun represents a lighter future for the client.

1. Awareness

Before engaging, take time to identify barriers or factors that may need to be considered when supporting your client.

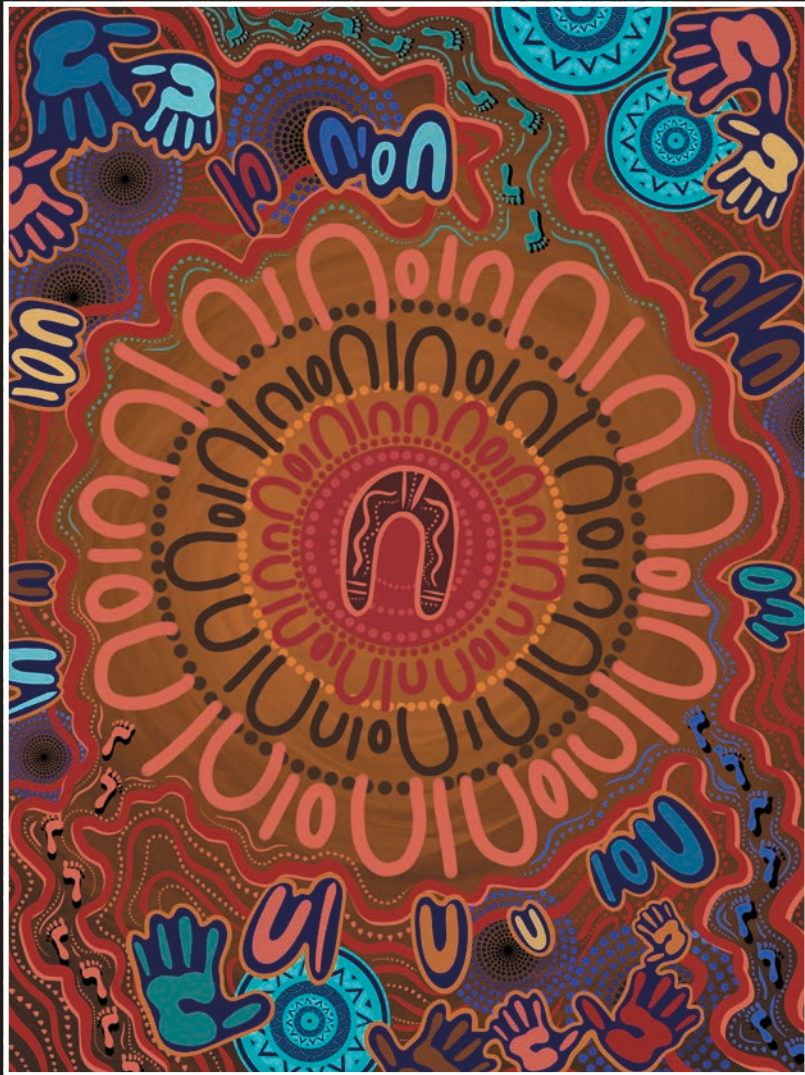
- **Does** my client live in a rural, regional or discreet community?
- **Do** I know the history of my client's community?
- **Do** I need to research more on their community?
- **Do** I need to be aware of cultural communication protocols? (Example male to male, female to female communication; young non-Indigenous female to older Indigenous male (vice-versa); non-eye contact).
- **Do** I need to check if the community has had a recent death and going through "Sorry business"?

Practicing cultural humility will open opportunities to build genuine and meaningful relationships with your client. Take time to reflect on your own understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, underlying social issues, culture and respectful engagement.

- **Am** I aware of my own stereotypes and viewpoints, am I acceptable of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewpoints?
- **Do** I need to seek cultural guidance and support?
- **Do** I need to build stronger relationships with the communities I work in?
- **Is** it important for me in my role to undertake regular cultural competency training?



[www.youtube.com/
watch?v=E11qLKSdDBo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E11qLKSdDBo)



Recognition

The client is surrounded by the many people in their community who care and support them. This includes, family, Elders, friends, community groups and organisations. The client may not be known as a person with disability, but the community recognises that the person needs special help and strong wrap around supports. The footprints represent the advocate's journey into the client's community whilst recognising the client's existing kinship connections. The blue dotted circles and aqua circles in the background represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history with the handprints representing the client's connection to their country and their community as well as the support they receive from their communities. The men, women and children symbols around the outside acknowledges the history of those people with disability who were removed from their communities or were seen in cultural LORE as consequences for past wrongs.

2. Recognise

There is no word for disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People generally do not refer to people in community as a person with disability. Disability is a concept that has been adopted from Western culture and society.

Here is an example of how your client might talk about their son with a hearing impairment.

"Our young fulla is hard of hearing and is not listening properly when we talk to him, we are not sure why but something isn't right there. Everyone knows to tap him on the shoulder first and then he can hear what you are saying".

"A long history of poverty, marginalisation and racism (for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population following European colonisation) can mean that many Indigenous Australians do not see impairment as a disability but as an aspect of more general challenges and disadvantages".

Hollingsworth; as cited in Dudgeon et al., 2014

- Did you know many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disability were removed deliberately by the Australian Government as part of its assimilation policy?



Have a listen to Carers Qld podcast yarning with Uncle Willie Prince.

Some key points to think about

- Do** I understand why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People may have a mistrust with Government services, faith based services and institutional care models?
- Is** my client experiencing multilayered trauma?
- Do** I know how to support my client with their experience of trauma?
- Do** I recognise and accept that my client may require longer timeframes to build a trusting relationship? (This may impact on my work targets / KPI's)



Respectful Relationships

The client is in their home community and sharing with the advocate their connection to Country, land, seas, community, kinship / family, cultural LORE and responsibilities. The footprints in the middle of the community symbol represents the advocate and their responsibility in researching and gaining an understanding of the cultural protocols of the client and their community, symbolised through the yellow spirit trails. The client's connection to their land is the mountains in the bottom right, their connection to the waterways and sea is the waterholes in the bottom left. Their kinships/ family is the man (U with the spear) and Woman (U with the coolamon and digging sticks) in the top left, their connection to their community is the dark brown community symbol which is next, Cultural Lore is the boomerang and handprints, and personal responsibilities is the person symbol (U). The blue dotted circles and aqua circles in the background represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history.

3. Respectful Relationships

Relationships First ...

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are generally more interested in who you are rather than what you do.

To build rapport allow your client to get to know and understand you as a person.

"Before you share who you are and where you come from, is there anything you would like to know about me?"

Doing some research demonstrates your interest in learning more about your client's community, cultural connections and protocols.

- **Whose** Country am I on?
- **Whose** Country is my client on?
- **Who** are the local tribes and what are their connections to the land and water?
- **What** are the historical events for this country/region? (good and not-so-good).

www.aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia

Business Second...

Some key points to think about

- **Acknowledge** your client's existing community and kinship ties.
- **I** am here to support my client first and will engage with family and community if my client is happy for me to do so.
- **Reassure** your client that their story is safe with you.
- **Be** honest and open if there is something you do not understand.
- **Find** out how your client would like to be addressed.

"Is it ok with you if I ask you some questions about your story so that I can understand better?"

"I noticed you introduced yourself as Aunty Pat, would you like me to call you Aunty Pat too?"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNtPcW4t1PY



Listening

Building a respectful and safe relationship is important for the client. Listening to the client helps to build respect and trust through storytelling and sharing, which is the main way an issue or concern will be communicated. The ear and hands represent the advocate listening to their client and identifying the issue. Effective listening can also support the advocate to gain a better understanding of family, community or personal issues the client may be experiencing, which is represented through the symbols. The blue dotted circles and aqua circles in the background represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history.

4. Listening


Listening demonstrates respect and opens the opportunity for trust to build in the relationship.

Storytelling and sharing are generally the preferred way in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will communicate an issue or concern.

Some key things to think about

- **Being** engaged in conversation and listening attentively will support you in identifying your client's concerns.
- **It** is important that you do not interrupt or hurry your client to get to the specific issues.
- **When** your client has finished sharing, acknowledge their story.

"Thank you, Aunty Pat, for sharing with me. I know it must have been hard for you to talk about those things. I appreciate you trusting me with your story".

 www.youtube.com/watch?v=qj8HVOrMN8Y

Some clients might hold back at first or only provide brief information. This could be because they don't feel safe or because they are unsure of where their story will end up.

You might hear this from your client.

- **Staff** don't understand me and don't know my culture and I don't feel safe / comfortable there.
- **Who** are you sharing my information with? I don't want other Government departments to have my information.
- **Workers** fly in and out of my community and they lack culturally safe service provision. They don't know anything about my community.

There is a reason why your client has reached out for support and it won't be until you sit and listen that you will begin to understand the full picture of what your client is experiencing.

Some key points to think about.

- **Have** I informed the client of our privacy and confidentiality policies?
- **Is** the meeting space culturally safe for my client?



Let's Yarn

The client and the advocate are yarnning to better understand how the client wishes the advocate to engage with them. This is represented by the Aqua U symbol (advocate) within the community in the bottom left and the Brown U symbol (client) in their community in the bottom right. The client is sharing their stories and their journey which is represented by the footprints. The footprints then lead into the future with the support of the advocate in their community. The advocate is being clear about their advocacy role and its purpose, which is represented by the handprints in the centre. This symbolises the advocates support to the client, strengthening relationships with the client and community and supporting safe places for the client to share their story. The aqua dotted circles and aqua circles in the background represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history with the handprints representing the client's connection to their country and their community as well as the support they receive.

5. Let's Yarn

Now is the time to reach out and engage with your client.

The language you use when you are speaking is important.

Some key points to think about

- **Ask** your client about the best way to connect.
- **Be** clear about the purpose of your advocacy role and it's limitations.
- **Be** up front if you are unable to meet in person.
- **Reach** out to a local health service or community organisation for support to connect with your client.
- **Don't** speak in acronyms or NDIS language.

"Sorry I am unable to come out and yarn with you face to face. Is there a local service you feel comfortable with that I can contact to support us with an online meeting?"

- ? There may be times when the client shows frustrations or distrust.
- ? There may be times when it is hard to reach your client or you feel that the client is disengaging.
- ? There may be times when you feel challenged.

Some key points to think about

- **Allow** and acknowledge your client's negative experience with systems and ineffective practice.
- **Be** patient with your client.
- **If** your client is distressed then suggest closing the meeting or phone call.
- **Make** more attempts to contact your client at different times of the day.
- **There** will be times when you may feel uncomfortable and it is important to remember that is both normal and okay.

"I just want to check if you are ok and if you would like to yarn about why you are feeling that way?"



Your Story Matters

The client is represented in the middle of the sun. It is important for the client to feel that their story is important and their voice matters. The client is feeling empowered yarning with the advocate and receiving information and education on their rights as a person living with disability. The client might share lots of stories with you from their personal journey (footprints) to their community, to the support they receive (handprints), to their family (man and women symbols with spear, coolamon and digging stick) and about their culture and history. This means the client feels safe to share their story with the advocate. The brown dotted circles and blue circles around the sun represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history. Sharing stories and information can support the client to move forward and pass that knowledge onto people in their community, which is represented through the blue travelling lines.

6. Your Story Matters

Thank your client for trusting you with their story.

Empower your client through education, information and awareness.

Ensure that your client understands their rights.

Encourage your client to share information within their own community.

Ask your client if there is an Elders group or local community group that you can connect with to share information.



The Journey

The journey is represented through the two sets of footprints, the brown footprints (client) and the aqua footprints (advocate). The two separate footprints walk separately until they meet in the middle at the client's community. The advocate walks with commitment and transparency throughout the advocacy journey and provides flexible support and consistency to the client as they continue their journey together. The layers which surround the centre community symbol represent how advocates will support warm referrals to other agencies if underlying social issues or trauma are identified, this is represented through the travelling lines, which will support the client to move forwards. The light aqua dotted circles and dark aqua circles in the background represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history with the handprints representing the client's connection to Country and community along with other supports they receive.

7. The Journey

Be flexible, clear and transparent throughout the advocacy journey.

Yarn through your commitment and responsibilities and provide timeframes.

With permission, support warm referrals to other agencies if multilayered issues are identified.

Other key points to think about

- **Yarn** through the advocacy plan so your client knows what to expect.
- **Yarn** through what is going to happen next.
- **Stay** in touch with your client to ensure consistency.

Contact Us



ATSIDNQ

The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability through a disability support network and advocacy service across Queensland.

The Network gives members the opportunity to connect, celebrate their strengths, have a yarn and share their stories and contribute to the conversation about disability in a culturally safe space, while the advocacy service, Side by Side First Peoples

Advocacy, provides individual advocacy support information and referrals to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

ATSIDNQ would like to thank the Network members and Champions for being a part of the Network and contributing your knowledge, stories and representing your community, which has helped shape the information provided in this resource.

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Supported by



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The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands in which we work and live on and honours the Elders past, present and future.





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