

# Your identity map

There is a strong link between culture and the way people think and learn, so an understanding of the culture of a learner is essential in maximizing learning potential. Understanding the way your own culture influences your ways of learning will help you to understand the importance of this for your students as well, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

These questions offer an opportunity to reflect on your own unique cultural standpoint, no matter where you are from in this world. These questions were developed by Rhonda Ashby in New South Wales, Australia, inspired by the work of Dr. Karen Martin, Noonuccal woman and Aboriginal researcher.

The questions will help you reflect on your ways of being, ways of knowing, ways of doing and ways of valuing. In western knowledge systems these become ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. You can add or remove any questions and use the worksheet as you wish, including with your students.

Note: Questioning, challenging and resisting this document is a valid way of engaging with it. Just make sure you're not doing this as a way to avoid self-reflection or self-scrutiny...

## 1. Ways of being.

Where do you belong? Who do you belong to?

How do you know that something is real?

List some categories of the things you know are real in this world.

From the following sets, select the land orientations you feel most comfortable with:

Saltwater / freshwater  
High ground / low ground  
Hills / plains / ridges / mountains / coast  
Open country / forest  
Wet / dry  
Red soil / black soil  
Sand / dirt / rock  
Warm / cool  
Fur / feathers / scales / fins  
Wood / rock / earth / wind / fire

Where are your ancestors from and how do you connect with them?

How are you accountable for maintaining relationships with ancestors, people and the environment? (What are your personal consequences for damaging these relationships?)

How will the knowledge you have learned in this life be passed on, and to whom?

## **2. Ways of knowing.**

How did you know the answers to the questions so far – how did you learn these things?

Sketch a diagram of the way you solve problems. What shape does this take for you?  
When you access knowledge from memory, what form does that take in your head? (e.g. images, sounds, print, language, shapes)

What are the stories that have had the biggest impact on how you relate to the world around you? (Might be books, films, oral histories, fables etc.)

What symbols are most meaningful for you? (e.g. crucifix, tag, icon, flag)

How do these symbols inform your life and work?

What sorts of things do you know implicitly, without having to be taught?

Do the answers to any of these questions make you want to change any of your answers back in section 1? (Because our ways of knowing shape our ways of being.)

### **3. Ways of doing.**

Do you learn new knowledge best with others, for others, alone, or for yourself?

Do you internalise new knowledge through dialogue, reflection or both?

Do you achieve learning outcomes at the end of a process, or during the process?

What are the signs you look for to know if what you are doing is right?

What does it usually take for you to change your mind about something?

What tools do you use for teaching and learning?

What are your main cultural practices, your ways of expressing your culture (e.g. singing, sport, events, rituals)? How do these cultural practices impact on the way you do your work?

#### **4. Ways of valuing.**

What is truth?

What would be your top three rules for living? Top three for learning?

What is the most important thing in the world to you?

How did you learn your values? Where did they come from?

## Reflection:

Now, track back through your responses and find the points that relate to:

- Stories and histories
- Knowledge pathways/processes
- Unspoken/instinctive/ancestral knowledge
- Metaphors and symbols
- Land and place
- Non-linear/contradictory/irrational/creative ideas
- Wholes vs parts / Macro vs micro / Communal vs independent
- Family, community, culture