

Contact Children's Mobile

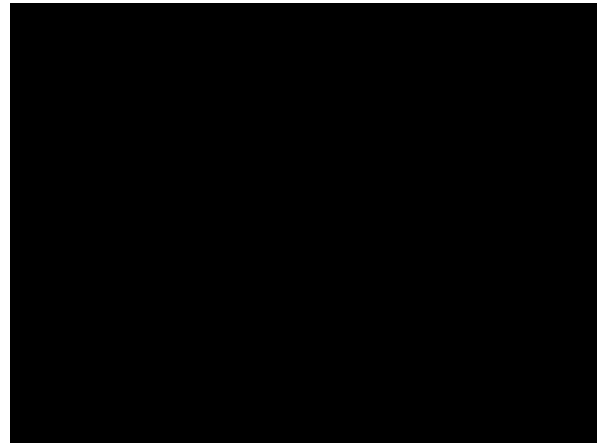
Case Study with Atheley Community

Atheley Homelands Community Profile

Atheley is positioned 20km north east of Arlparra.

The approximate population of Atheley fluctuates between 60 to 90 people with these numbers changing throughout the year for various reasons.

The community is not serviced by any public transport with community members having limited access to safe registered vehicles with appropriate child restraints.



There are approximately eight structural houses and a number of humpy camps.

Working with Atheley

Up until August 2014, Atheley had not experienced any early learning programs as family and community members are at home with their children when on community.

In August 2014, CCM commenced making connections and consultations with the Atheley community to explore whether there was interest in accessing early childhood learning programs.

Being a mobile service means there is the availability to be flexible and fit in with the community needs and desires. The service comes to the community, the community do not have to worry about any travel to access the service, thus eliminating the issues associated with public transport and/or private vehicle access.

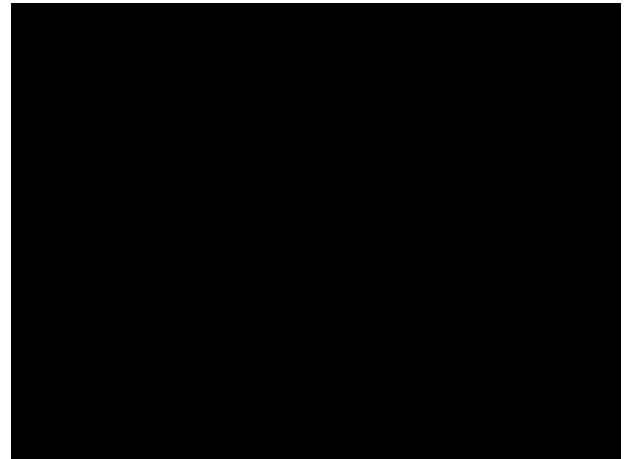
The Traditional Elder for this community is Freddy Jones. CCM approached Freddy in 2014 and sat with Freddy to discuss the children, the families and his aspirations for his community. CCM explored the potential opportunity for the children of Atheley to have a regular early learning service inclusive of family and community members and the benefits of early learning programs for children to gain skills to make school successful. It was stressed to Freddy that Contact believes it is important the adults come with the children to the proposed early learning sessions so that together everyone helps each other to make the sessions inclusive and enjoyable for all.

After these discussions, CCM then offered to start coming to Atheley as Freddy was very keen about the potential of such a program occurring in his community as were the women who had gathered to check out the CCM and hear about what we were about and discussing with Freddy.

As a result of these initial discussions, Freddy approved of the CCM team visiting his community each week and thus CCM service delivery commenced.

The first CCM session was offered on 2 September 2014. CCM arrived at Atheley and again sought out Freddy. CCM wanted Atheley to have an ownership of the programs that would be delivered and to define the area in which they should be delivered.

Together Freddy and the CCM team chose a spot in the middle of the community so that everyone could see the CCM team and come along to the sessions. To this day, the community maintains this spot as a place where community can celebrate being together and community takes pride in supporting the learning of the children.



On the first day, four children attended to take part in the new event, with Freddy and three other community members sitting on the periphery of the mat and closely watching the session unfold.

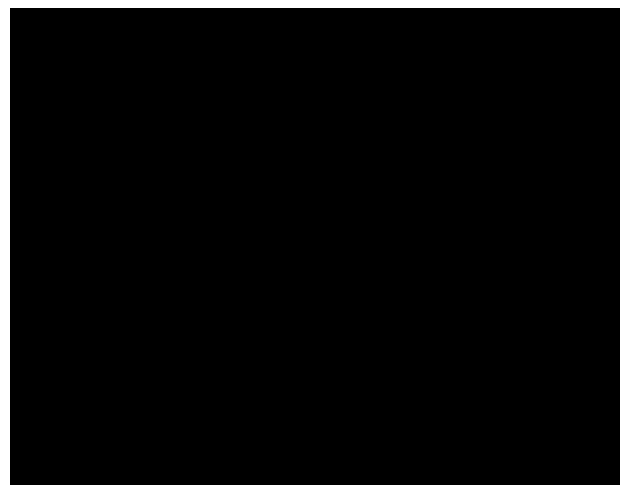
The community soon took on board making a sign clearly claiming the area for Atheley, painting on a car bonnet the words “Atheley Playgroup” which continues to stand in pride of place under a tree in the middle of the Atheley community.

It was not long after the first visit before more children and more community members were making themselves known to the team and attending the sessions with their children and/or grandchildren - some for a short time and some for a while.

Since September 2014, CCM has continued to visit weekly and offer early learning sessions when the children and families are on community. As a respectful practice, CCM continues to also check in with Freddy when he is on community to update and discuss matters of relevance.

The Atheley CCM early learning environment is made to ensure all participants feel welcome and there is something for everyone to be doing. It was not long into the CCM service delivery when it became evident that relationships were being built and were growing. Informal conversations were taking place and as a result, the CCM team learned a lot about family dynamics and structures which enabled the team to be mindful of cultural lore that is in place.

With building trust the CCM team shared information with the community of Atheley that their children are confident and capable of learning as much as all young Australian children and soon some structure in activities was introduced into the program, where the older children were guided to begin activities that develop early literacy and early numeracy concepts.



CCM intentionally wanted to build the skills of the attending adults and show them how they can continue these activities back at camp. With this in mind, the resources used within the programs deliberately utilised wherever possible, items from the natural environment or the community.

CCM team also introduced that at the beginning of the early learning session, the adults would make play dough. Then together as a group, the adults, children and CCM team members gathered natural objects to use with the play dough to manipulate, squeeze, poke and create. All the time sharing with the adults, information relating to the skills the children are using to manipulate the dough, the benefit to the child which will assist in their preparation for school.

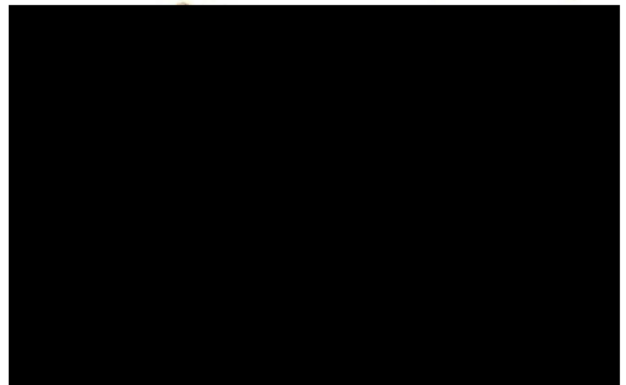
Gently guided by the CCM, adults' confidence and knowledge relating to early education and ways they could further support their child's learning, were progressively evidenced. By 2016, the CCM reported that the Atheley adults could be heard saying to the children - count them, or write your name, it starts with a "letter" and sound it out with the child; or the adults were asking CCM to write for them, then the adult would encourage the child to copy and write too; or encourage their child to match colours and shapes or letters.

Some families who do have access to a vehicle now take their children to another community on other days so that their child receives more than one early learning session from the CCM per week.

Whilst literacy and numeracy skills are a part of being school ready, the CCM program also strives to develop the child's self-esteem. Having a holistic approach to learning, the CCM team believe it is important to support the children to develop necessary social skills such as co-operation, sharing and developing coping strategies to encourage children to be emotionally strong.

Activities to build such skills became intrinsic to the ongoing CCM program.

The Atheley sessions continued to grow in duration to approximately three hours per session and during each session, the children had moved through many activities. These activities had been planned and implemented by the CCM Early Childhood Teacher to cater to the children's emerging interests and agency, allowing time to learn new concepts and explore further into their understanding of things.



The age range of the children that attend when on community varies from babies from birth to one year olds, to children transitioning into school aged six years. During school holidays, children in the middle years also attend.

In terms of numbers of children, utilising the base line figure of the first six-months of service delivery in Atheley, 16 children began utilising the CCM sessions. Over the period of 2.5 years of service delivery, five children have transitioned into school and 21 children remained attending the CCM family and community session as at December 2017.

Offers of employment with CCM continue to be made within the Atheley community. During 2014, for a regular period, four people worked casually on and off when on community. Although efforts to assist others obtain Ochre Cards and related work documentation, these individuals are not regularly on community. On average, three to four adults regularly volunteer and contribute to enhance the programs outcomes.

Overall Statistical summary / comparisons for Atheley Jul 2014 – Dec 2017							
	Jul - Dec 2014	Jan - Jun 2015	Jul - Dec 2015	Jan - Jun 2016	Jul - Dec 2016	Jan - Jun 2017	Jul - Dec 2017
Participation of Children	16	21	23	19	16	27	21
Participation of Adults	21	34	33	36	21	18	16
Indigenous Participants Employed	0	4					
Indigenous Participants Volunteering per session	Avg 4	Avg 4	Avg 4	Avg 5	Avg 4	Avg 5	Avg 3
Transition To School Children	0	1	1	2	2	2	2

The differences CCM have made to Atheley

For the Children

- Exposing children to activities not previously accessed before.
- Being able to bring the children together and begin to work together.
- Working at activities and building concentration for the children.
- Refining pencil grips ready for writing.
- Teaching children to work and finish activities before moving on.
- Learning to work in routines.
- Learning to work alongside your peers.
- Providing opportunities for the children to think, create and solve problems.
- Seeing adults excited about what you can do.
- Beginning children to enjoy story books and sitting and listening to a teacher.
- Providing activities that begin exploration of pre-math skills.
- Providing activities that begin exploration of pre-literacy skills.

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- Exposing children to their written name and working towards recognising it (ready for school).
 - Having relationships with non-Indigenous Australians in a positive sense.
 - Providing activities that promote the listening and following instructions.
 - Providing information for their caregivers about early childhood development.
 - Letting children know that you (as a teacher) think they are confident and capable learners

For the Adult Family and Community Members

- Seeing non-Indigenous people weekly that enjoy being with you.
- Providing opportunities for gaining employability skills.
- Having input into the design and delivery of the programs offered and learning that your opinions and ideas are all considered and implemented into the program.
- Seeing the CCM staff excited about the skills the children are gaining.
- Learning to use digital technology to capture their children's growth and development.
- Being able to ask the CCM team members questions about any issue relating to their children and as families.
- Learning from Early Childhood professionals about behaviours of children and how to best to deal with these.
- Learning how to make play dough and provide this so that the adults can source in their community to continue learning.
- Being able to experiment with play items themselves, to then be able to guide the children.
- Learning ideas from the CCM team to continue to present to the children to grow their skills further.
- Learning how to positively engage with the children.
- Practicing English with the CCM team.
- Learning about health issues.
- Being able to be flexible with the CCM on timeframe of sessions.
- Being able to complete occasional cook-ups to reinforce nutritional message from Primary Health Network visits.
- Being able to come together with other community members and work with the children and enjoy that the children of Atheley are learning and that the adults play a crucial role in the children's development.

In Conclusion

The Atheley case study illustrates one of CCM service delivery to Utopia Homelands contracted sites. Similar individual case studies can be provided for other Homelands venues, noting that Contact's approaches and the outcomes for children, families and communities in the main represent very similar achievements in each site.