



CATSINaM 2014 Conference: Outcomes of the 'Articulating the uniqueness of our workforce' Yarning Circles

October 2014

CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NURSES AND MIDWIVES

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Unity and Strength through Caring

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CATSINaM would like to thank everyone who participated in the 2014 Conference ‘Articulating the uniqueness of our workforce’ Yarning Circles for sharing their collective reflections and considerations, and providing guidance on how CATSINaM can prepare a policy position statement that underpins its advocacy agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives.

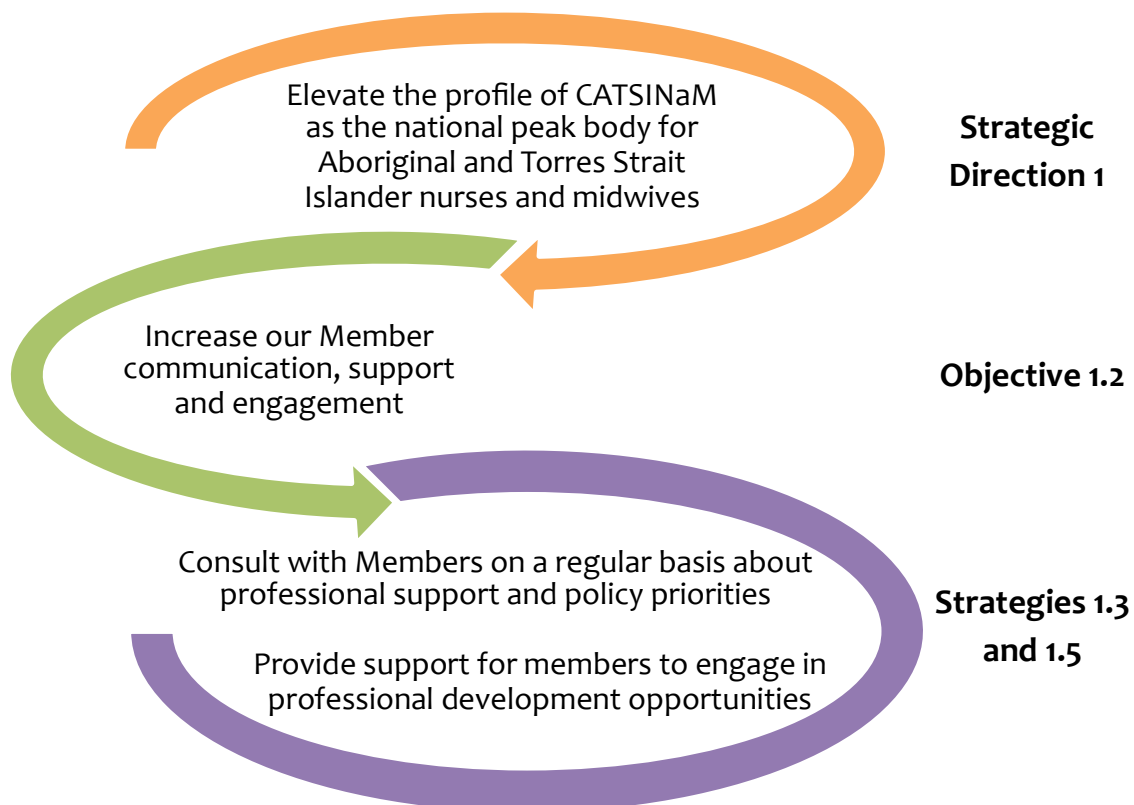
Introduction

CATSINaM has held an Annual Conference since being formally established in 1998. The conference has multiple purposes, including: networking, peer support, professional development, dissemination of research findings, and sharing nursing and midwifery good practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts. The 2013-2018 Strategic Plan identified another critical purpose for the conference, depicted in Figure 1, which is 'Strategy 1.3: Consult with Members on a regular basis about professional support and policy priorities'.

The consultation outcomes from the 2013 Conference have translated into direct action in two ways. First, they have guided the priorities CATSINaM has taken to providing member support, member benefits and professional development options. Second, they have resulted in three policy position statements that are now available on the CATSINaM website: 1) recruitment and retention, 2) clinical placements, and 3) cultural safety. They inform stakeholders of CATSINaM's position, and are regularly used in CATSINaM's partnership and advocacy work on building and supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce.

A priority focus for consultations at the 2014 Annual Conference was on how CATSINaM could effectively articulate the **uniqueness** of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce. This report outlines the process undertaken and outcomes achieved, which will form the basis of a new policy position statement.

Figure 1: 2013-2018 CATSINaM Strategic Plan and Annual Conference links



Yarning Circles process

The Yarning Circles were a self-led activity where participants broke into groups and worked at a table with six-ten people for about 45 minutes. They chose their table facilitator and documenter, and used the provided recording tools to go through the steps outlined below.

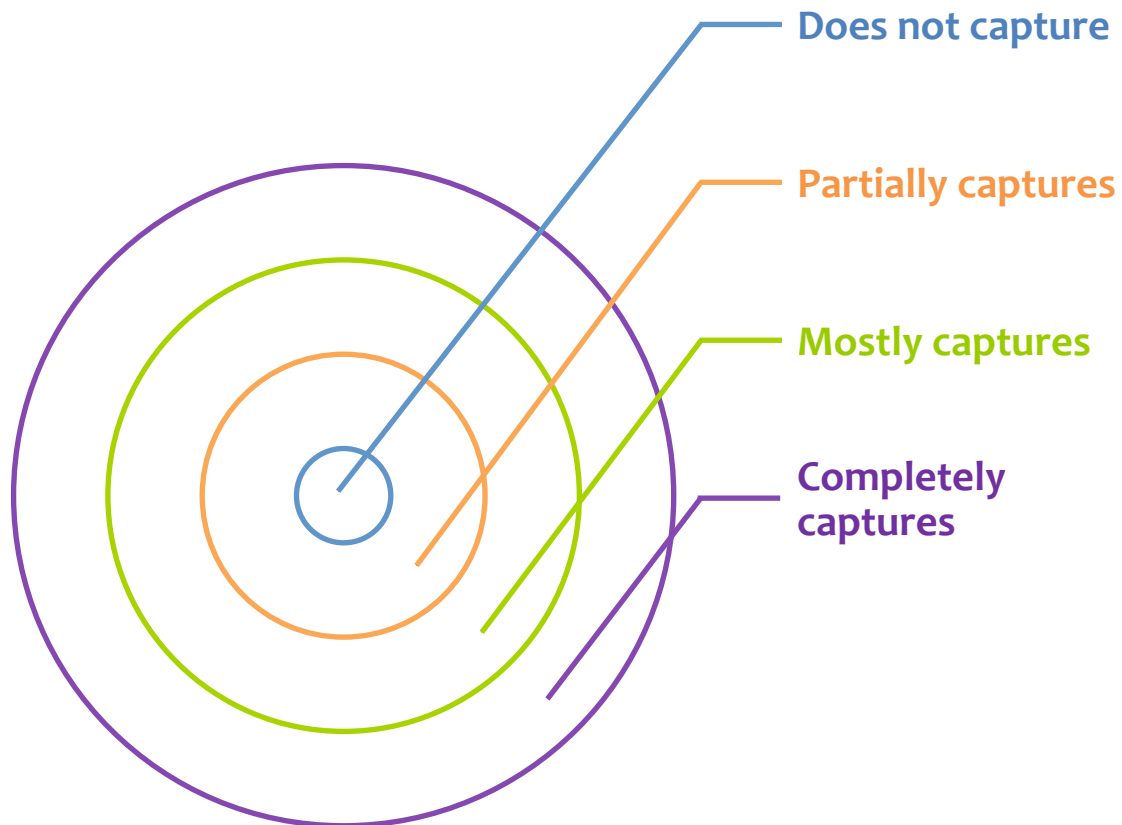
STEP 1 - Assess the principles: Each person must decide how well CATSINaM's current principles embody or capture the uniqueness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing and Midwifery Workforce. The principles are:

1. We are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples before we are nurses and midwives.
2. We are First Nation's Peoples and intend to maintain our cultural heritage.
3. We recognise that we are on a lifelong journey with cultural obligations and commitments to our communities.
4. We challenge the western health model in which nurses and midwives live and work because it promotes separation, hierarchy and power struggles, and denies the emotional, social, spiritual and political aspects of health in our holistic way.
5. The philosophy that promotes all people as equal, or treated the same, denies difference and cultural identity.
6. Justice and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history is a requirement of reconciliation.
7. We are the experts in our own health and believe our experience and worldview challenges the established models of health. Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People can learn and benefit from our experiences.
8. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives are forced to live a 'double life' between two worlds and cultures causing internal conflict. CATSINaM sees this as a continuation of the assimilation process and we support all measures to reverse or challenge this process

Using post-it notes, choose the colour that matches your rating and put it on the provided butcher's paper that is drawn up with four concentric circles in these colours – see Figure 2:

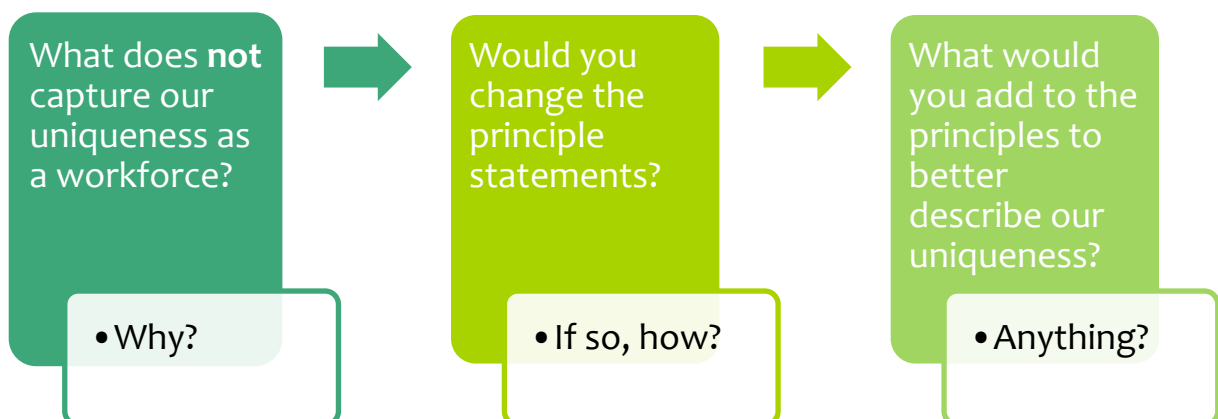
- **PURPLE** – completely captures our uniqueness
- **GREEN** – mostly captures our uniqueness
- **ORANGE** – partially captures our uniqueness
- **BLUE** – does not capture our uniqueness

Figure 2: Assessment of the CATSINaM principles – colours and meanings



STEP 2 - Discuss your assessment: Review the outcomes of your discussion based on the three questions in Figure 3 and document your responses and suggestions:

Figure 3: Discussion questions



Choose which one of your proposals is the most important to emphasise to CATSINaM. Write it on the butcher's paper. However, know that **all** your proposals will be analysed and considered.

STEP 3 - Feedback: Put your butcher's paper in the display area so others can see your group's ratings and top priority proposal.

Outcomes

Assessment of the CATSINaM principles

In total, 85 conference delegates participated in the yarning circles and assessed each principle. They ranged from highly experienced through to student nurses and midwives. Their collective assessment of each principle is shown in the graph on Figure 4. Each principle is represented in a different colour line and marker style. Following each line from left to right, the percentage of votes given to each of the four ratings is shown. This provides a clear indication of which principles are written in a manner that completely or mostly capture the uniqueness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives.

Overall, there was a high level of support for the eight principles. Principles 1 and 2 gained the strongest support for how they are currently written, followed by Principles 3 and 5. There was solid support for Principle 6 and 8 with adaptations suggested. While the spirit of Principles 4 and 7 was appreciated, they were highlighted as the principles requiring the most redrafting.

Table 1 summarises the range of comments, and suggestions for changes or additions to the principles as they are currently worded. A number of the recommended changes relate to using more accommodating language rather than direct or blunt statements of the issues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives have and continue to face. Whether to make this shift will be an important discussion for the Board in order to honour the work and context of CATSINaM founding members, while considering the contemporary situation and the nature of language by which CATSINaM wants to characterise itself.

Some suggestions relate more to strategic directions and priority strategies for CATSINaM, rather than requiring a change or addition to the principles (see the 'Overall' row in Table 1). For example, the suggested new principle on striving to improve education and retention rates is the primary focus of Strategic Direction 3 of the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan. Another suggested additional principle regarding students is consistent with the existing Principles 4 and 7, so it would not constitute an addition, and it links to CATSINaM's work to:

- engage with ANMAC to improve existing standards on Aboriginal health, history and culture so it includes cultural safety and be more explicit with universities through a detailed explanatory note associated with these standards
- engage with universities and health services regarding the importance of cultural safety, and to develop and implement strategies that can enhance cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students during their education and clinical placements, as well as for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and staff
- provide advice, support and mentoring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that builds their resilience and helps them complete their qualifications.

Other comments, i.e. key words for revising Principle 7, are not specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives as they could relate to nurses and midwives in general.

Figure: Assessment outcomes for the CATSINaM principles

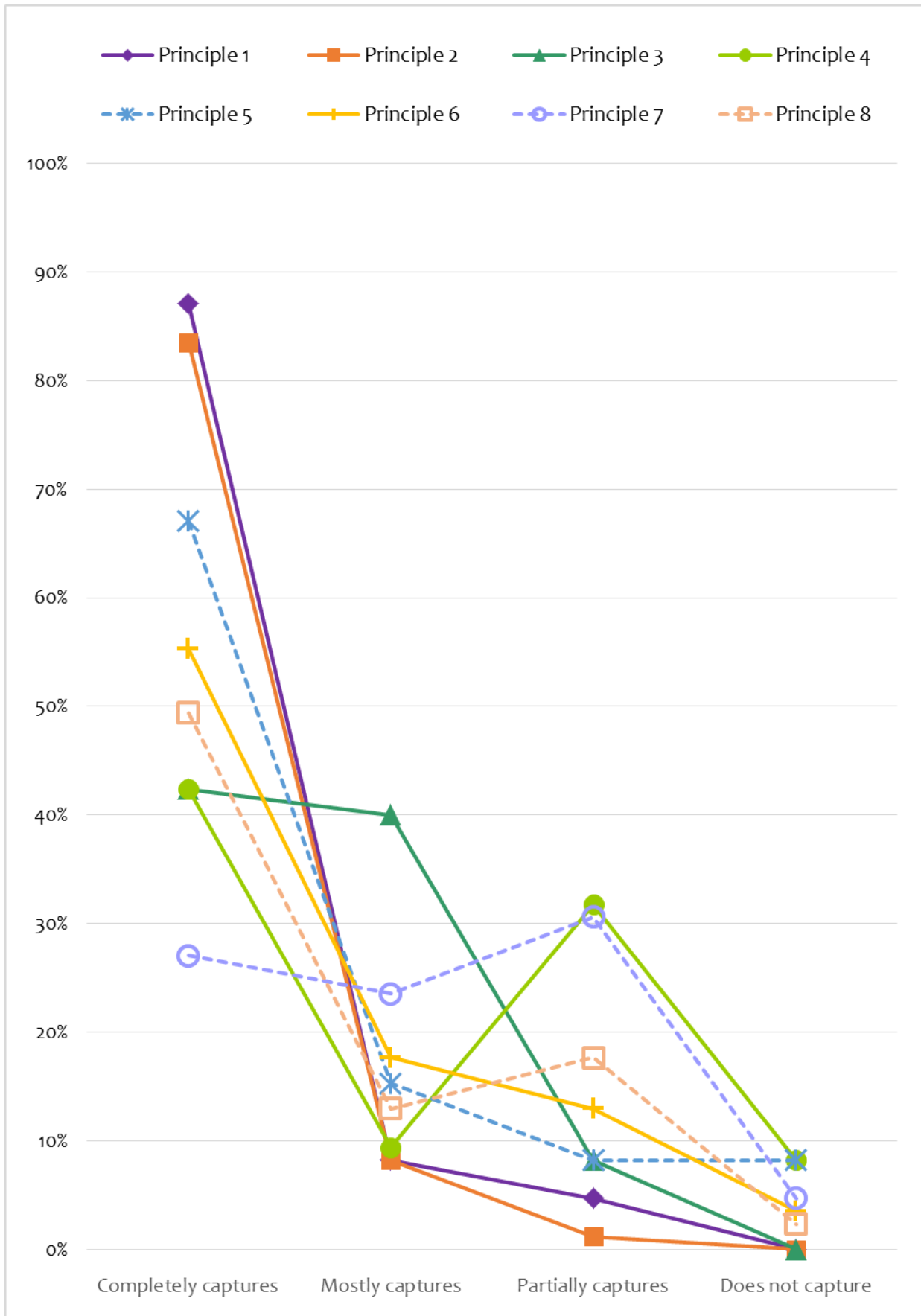


Table 1: The range of comments and recommended changes to the principles

| Principle | Recommended changes or additions, including comments |
|-----------|---|
| 1 | Use “as well as” rather than “before we are”. |
| 2 | Use “must” rather than “intend” because we are doing this. Consider listing this Principle before the current Principle 1. |
| 3 | Use the term “broader communities”. Change the word “obligation”. |
| 4 | Use “may promote” rather than “because it promotes”. Use “may deny” rather than “denies”. Use “We assist in challenging” rather than “We challenge”. Change the word “challenge” – we agree there is separation and power struggles but it is necessary for our culture to work with Western Health and adapt. We don't believe western health denies emotional and spiritual aspects in a holistic way. Put “political” at the beginning of the aspects of health list. Rewrite as: “Indigenous nurses and midwives empower social and emotional aspects of everyone, not just our mob. We find ways to give appropriate care in all aspects to all people. As Indigenous nurses and midwives we do not just specialise in the care of our mob, we offer equality to all.” This is too general – the intention is not clearly stated. This reads in a negative way. |
| 5 | Use “may deny” rather than “denies”. Use “to be treated” rather than “treated” – consider the flow of the sentence. Concern that this applies to everyone and is not specifically worded to be related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Emphasis is on fairness and equity. Consider rewording this sentence. |
| 6 | Use “right” rather than “requirement”. Delete “Justice and” and being with “Recognition”. Use “justice for and recognition of” rather than “justice and recognition of”. Needs to include understanding and education, not just recognition. Consider rewording this sentence to include ‘social justice’, we have moved on from the concept of reconciliation. |

| Principle | Recommended changes or additions, including comments |
|-----------|--|
| 7 | <p>Focus on valuing our expertise rather than being experts.</p> <p>Use “we have a great body of knowledge that can contribute significantly to Indigenous health care” rather than “we are experts in our own health”.</p> <p>Consider that no-one is ever the expert, as we continue to seek information and learn from others.</p> <p>Use “knowledge holders” rather than “experts”.</p> <p>Key words to use in revising this statement: strive for excellence, both ways, commitment to lifelong learning, can never have enough knowledge, evidence is always changing, new information always presenting itself, reflective practice to turn experiences into knowledge, attending to feelings, evaluation knowledge, and promoting resilience.</p> <p>Change the word “challenges”.</p> <p>Consider making the second sentence a separate principle.</p> <p>Rewrite the second sentence as: “As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples we have the ability to enrich the knowledge of the non-Indigenous workforce to better understand and interact with patients of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.”</p> <p>Consider rewording this sentence.</p> |
| 8 | <p>Use “reverse and challenge” rather than “reverse or challenge”.</p> <p>Use “improve and challenge” rather than “reverse or challenge”.</p> <p>“Assimilation” may be too strong a word.</p> <p>The word “forced” is very negative.</p> <p>It needs to include individual experiences.</p> <p>The experience is different for each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.</p> <p>Rewrite as: “Living between two worlds and two cultures may cause internal conflict for some people. Furthermore, they see this as a continuation of the assimilation process and support all measures to reverse or challenge this process”.</p> <p>Add “Indigenous knowledge” and consider integrating this with Principle 4.</p> <p>Consider rewording this sentence.</p> |

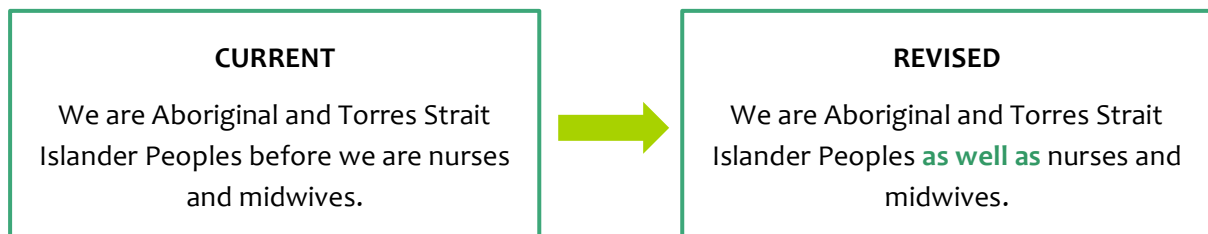
| | |
|----------------|---|
| Overall | <p>Use the term “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander”.</p> <p>Add a new principle: “We will strive to improve training, education and retention rates of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are often taught in confronting and inappropriate learning environments.”</p> <p>Add a new principle: “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student nurses and midwives need to be empowered and supported to challenge non-Indigenous nurses and midwives so that when we enter the workforce we will be equipped with the skills to speak out and ensure the health and education of our people.”</p> <p>CATSiNaM could formally acknowledge and embrace the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.</p> <p>Our uniqueness includes: communication, empowering, giving a voice, adaptability, empathy and advocacy.</p> <p>Include that we collaborate with non-Aboriginal and non-Torres Strait Islander organisations.</p> |
|----------------|---|

Proposed revisions of the eight CATSINaM principles

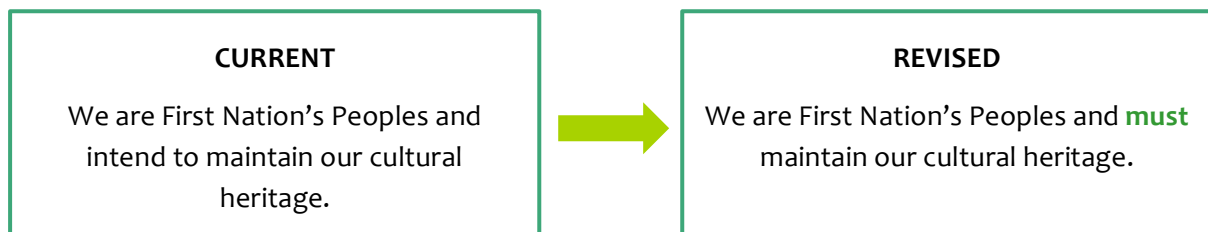
Each principle has been reviewed drawing on the suggestions provided. The current version and a proposed revised version of each principal are shown in the boxes below, with main changes or additions highlighted in **bold green** text. In some instances there is more than one revised version, or suggestions made against one principle were seen to have relevance to a different principle.

While these revisions have considered all suggestions provided, they do not represent them all. They should be considered an initial set of revisions that are indicative of what the final endorsed versions could be. For example, when there are different versions of a revised principle, the changes made could be combined differently to achieve a preferred statement.

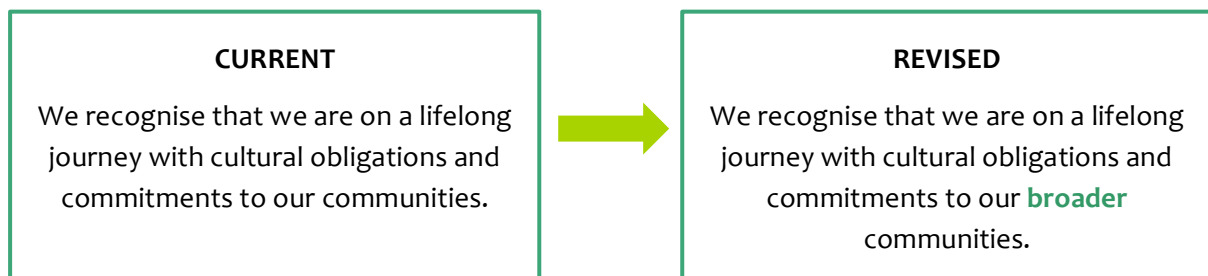
Principle 1



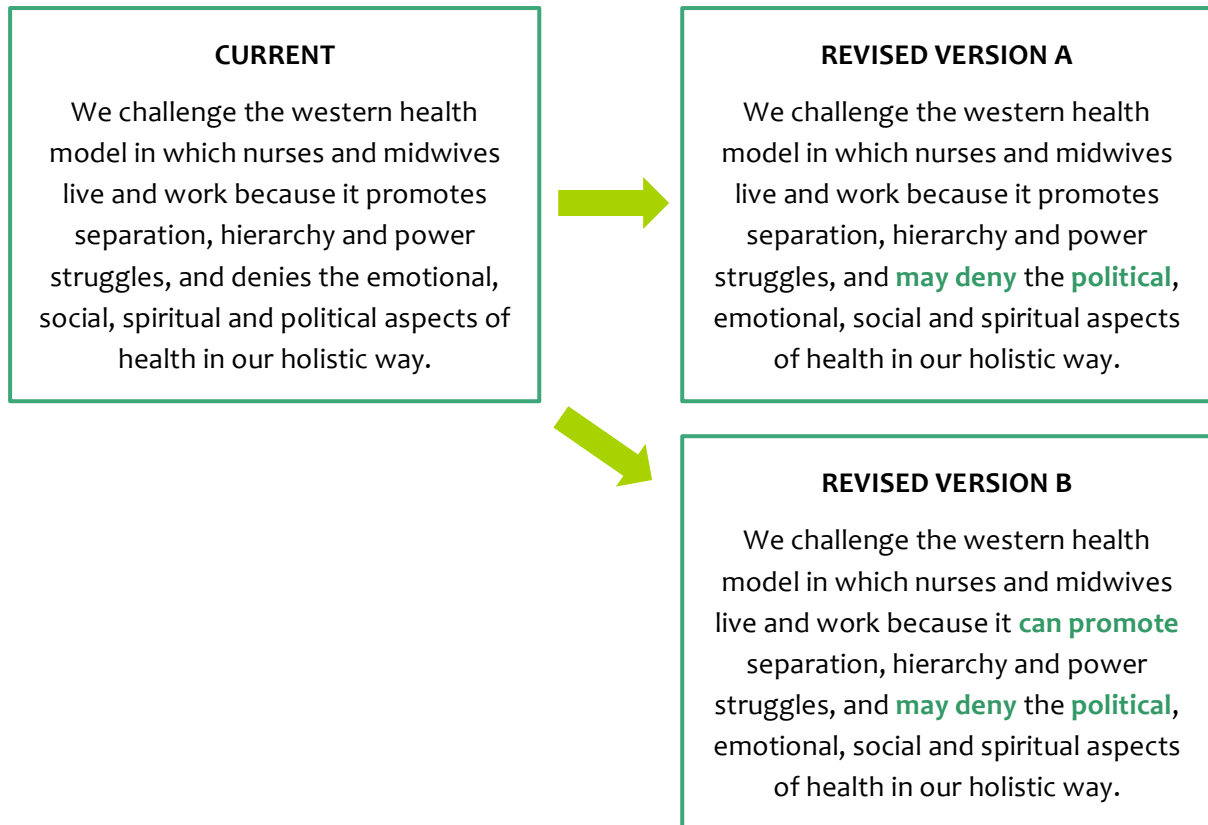
Principle 2



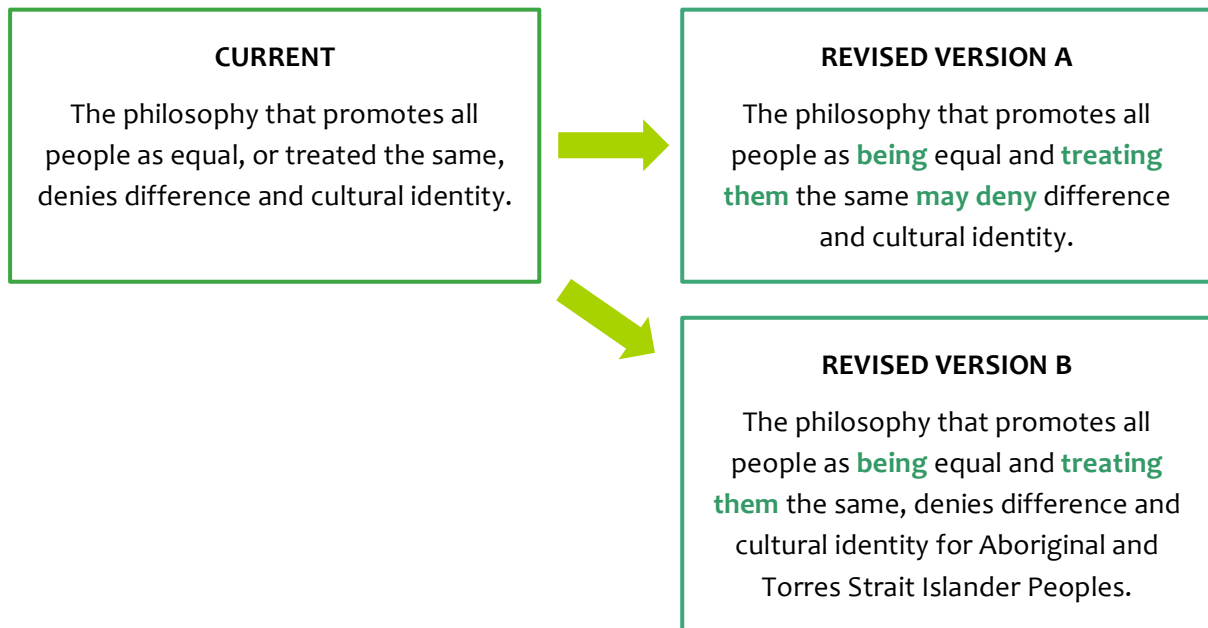
Principle 3



Principle 4



Principle 5



REVISED VERSION C

The philosophy that promotes all people as **being** equal and **treating them** the same, denies difference, cultural identity and **equitable outcomes** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Principle 6

CURRENT

Justice and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history is a requirement of reconciliation.



REVISED VERSION A

Justice **for** and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history is a **right as part** of reconciliation.



REVISED VERSION B

Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history is a requirement of reconciliation.

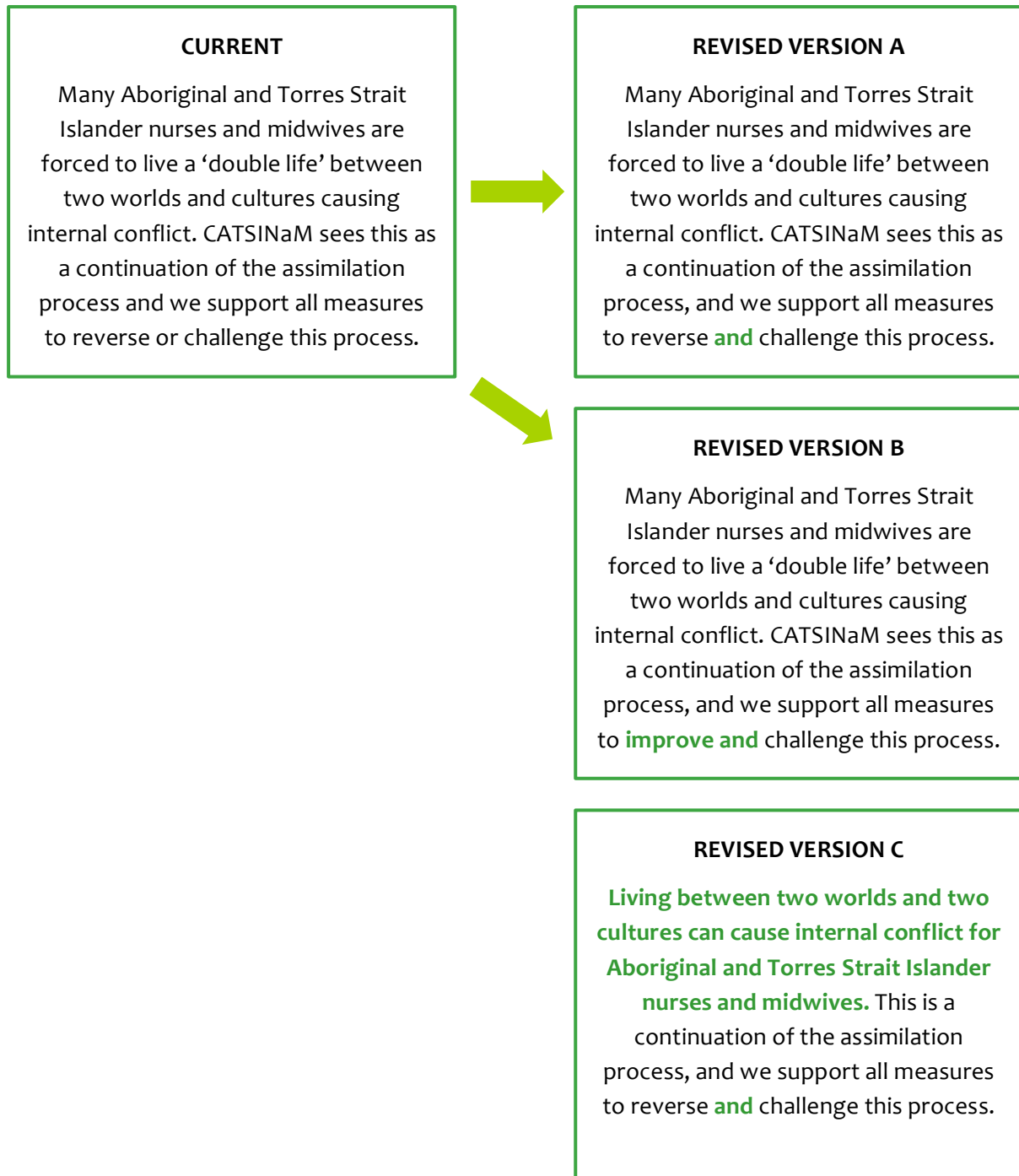
REVISED VERSION C

Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history is a **right as part** of reconciliation, and will require education to achieve understanding.

Principle 7



Principle 8



Additional considerations

Some suggested changes were more marked than those included in the revised versions, so the Board may want to draw upon them. In relation to the overall comments, the Board could also consider the order of the principles (i.e. swapping Principle 1 and 2), formally acknowledging and embracing the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to complement the principles, and whether additional suggested language is relevant to other CATSINaM documentation.

Summary

The outcomes of the 'Articulating the uniqueness of our workforce' Yarning Circles demonstrated a high level of support for the eight principles that CATSINaM adopted at the time of its establishment. This suggests that many of the concerns and positions that the founding members of CATSINaM held in 1997 remain relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives today, 17 years later.

Suggestions were made to revise the principles to reflect the contemporary environment in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives operate. They ranged from replacing a word through to rewriting sentences in order to modify the nature or strength of meanings. These proposed new versions will be considered by the CATSINaM Board early in 2015 and decisions made on whether all or some of the revisions will be adopted. The CATSINaM membership will be notified of the final decisions, and the revised set of principles will be reflected in all relevant CATSINaM documents and communication mechanisms, including the website and Strategic Plan.