

Family Law Pathways Network

presents

Ben Grimes

Predictable Miscommunication: Understanding differences between Aboriginal and standard English narrative styles



Wednesday, 3 June 2020
11:00am-12:30pm AWST

As part of our **free webinar series** the Family Law Pathways Networks across Australia invite you to join a free webinar by leading expert **Ben Grimes**

Understand the differences between Aboriginal and Standard English Narrative Styles with Ben Grimes, a lawyer and linguist who specialises in communication issues in the legal system and cross-cultural legal education.

Interaction with clients and witnesses often involves asking a person to give a narrative about events. The narrative forms the basis for analysis and decisions that have significant impact on the client. People from different language backgrounds intuitively tell stories in very different ways. This includes features such as what details to include and exclude, to what extent the narrative should be chronological, different conceptualisations of key words, how problems and opinions are expressed within the narrative, how to recall speech and underlying assumptions about what is logical. Clients from non-English speaking backgrounds can be at significant disadvantage when their narratives are unintentionally assessed and interpreted according to what is 'normal' for Standard English narratives.

This webinar will identify known sources of miscommunication with speakers of Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal Englishes and discuss recent linguistic research that identifies significant differences between Standard English and Aboriginal narrative patterns in the context of legal issues. The webinar will discuss some of the implications for practice, and provide strategies for identifying and minimising miscommunication based on differences in narrative patterns.

Ben Grimes is a lawyer and linguist who specialises in communication issues in the legal system and cross-cultural legal education. Ben worked as criminal lawyer and community legal educator with the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) in the NT where he developed a particular focus on incorporating Aboriginal law into therapeutic sentencing options, community courts (circle sentencing), and working with Law and Justice groups in remote communities. At the NT Government Aboriginal Interpreter Service, Ben managed 50 full-time staff and 350 interpreters across the NT, developed legal training for Aboriginal interpreters, established the Bush Court interpreting system used in the NT, and led the NT Government project to interpret and record suspects' rights into 18 Aboriginal languages for use by NT Police. Ben is currently a lecturer in law at Charles Darwin University, where he runs the Indigenous Pre-law and Mentoring Program and teaches units including Criminal Law, Customary Law and Indigenous Peoples and the Law. Ben regularly assists courts and legal agencies on issues around improving communication and access to justice for people from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Register Here

Registered participants will be emailed a link for the webinar prior to start time and will also have access to a recording of the webinar for a period of time following the live stream.



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