

Kinship

Aboriginal Kinship & Families

Learning the intricate pattern of kinship is part of every Aboriginal child's education.

The system of classes or skins puts everybody in a specific kinship relationship. All of these relationships have roles and responsibilities attached to them. This kinship influences who one could marry and it governs many other aspects of everyday behaviour.



Once adulthood is reached the person knows exactly how to behave towards everyone he or she meets, and what type of behaviour. Many of these forms of behaviour are considered necessary to show politeness and respect to certain relatives. Kinship is thus brought with it a set of obligations that one had to perform when relating to others. These obligations form a part of Aboriginal Law.

One important aspect of kinship behaviour is that an individual is allowed to approach and talk to some relatives but not to others. These avoidance rules applied to both blood and class relatives. It does not mean that these people dislike each other. The rule exists to maintain respect between certain classes of relatives. If two people who are not permitted to speak wanted to exchange information, they have to find a third person to pass on this information.

Sharing food and giving gifts to certain types of relatives happen everyday. Other kinship behaviour includes playing tricks on or teasing certain relatives. The main relationship in which this occurred was between a granny and her grandchildren, by both blood and class. There are still further kinship rules that governed dancing, ceremonies, camp layout and choosing hunting parties.

Source: Aunty Rose Flick, Thallon Community