CHCECE054
Encourage understanding of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures

Learner Guide

Updated to include National Quality Framework changes

Aspire
Learning Resources

CHCECE054

Encourage understanding of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 2.1

Aspire Learning Resources

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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCECE054 Encourage understanding of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures*, Release 1.

Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. Information regarding how this Learner Guide relates to this unit of competency is detailed in our mapping guide.

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	➤ Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples	➤ These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice Tasks	➤ Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.
Summaries	➤ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning Checkpoints	➤ There are Learning Checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which activities to complete. These activities give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

This table maps each topic in this Learner Guide to the National Quality Standard and national learning framework: Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

T = Topic

Topics	National Quality Standard (NQS)
T1, T3	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements
T1, T3	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children
T1, T3	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership
	Early Years Learning Framework
	Principles
T3	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
	Partnerships
T1, T3	Respect for diversity
T1-T3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
T1-T3	Equity, inclusion and high expectations
	Sustainability
T1-T3	Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning
	Collaborative leadership and teamwork
	Practice
	Holistic, integrated and interconnected approaches
	Responsiveness to children
	Play-based learning and intentionality
T1-T3	Learning environments
T1, T3	Cultural responsiveness
	Continuity of learning and transitions
	Assessment and evaluation for learning, development and wellbeing
	Learning Outcomes
T1, T3	1. Children have a strong sense of identity
	2. Children are connected to and contribute to their world
T1, T3	3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
	4. Children are confident and involved learners
	5. Children are effective communicators

Please note: This Learner Guide refers to several terms used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

- Indigenous: Can refer to all people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Non-Indigenous: Refers to Australians who are not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- First Nations peoples or First Australians: Refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Traditional custodians: Can be used to refer to the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community in your local area

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this Learner Guide may contain images of people who have died.

Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

- **1A** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures
- **1B** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories
- **1C** Cultural responsiveness and the NQF

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories

Learning about how events of the past have affected and continue to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will enable you to better reflect on your practice.

Having some knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures also shows respect to Indigenous peoples.

Some people feel uncomfortable addressing issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' disadvantage. You should find positive ways to address these issues and incorporate respectful practices and learning experiences with children.

Early learning impacts on the future education and care outcomes of children. Teaching children how to respect Indigenous cultures can help to overcome divisions and inequality in Australian society. This can be guided by traditional custodians and others in the local community.

1A Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures

Culture can be defined as a way of life, and a collection of ideas, customs and social practices for a particular group.

For people who make up the dominant culture in a country, the cultures of minority groups are often more noticeable than their own. People from the dominant culture often find it difficult to describe their culture because it is so familiar to them and is well entrenched in how their society operates.

There are many different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures – be aware of the one that applies to your local area.

Culture often combines a set of easily observed as well as invisible practices. Sometimes this is described as a cultural iceberg: the easily observed aspects of culture appear on the top above sea level, but the larger part of the iceberg reflects ingrained attitudes, and ways of thinking and doing things that are below the sea level and not so visible.

Learning only about the dominant culture reinforces a message that other cultures are less important. By including a child's own culture in learning opportunities educators show children that you value them and their culture.

Easily observed culture	Invisible culture
Clothing Food choices Language Accent	Values Taboos (beliefs about unacceptable behaviour) Family attitudes Parenting practices

The role of the educator

You need to recognise that the cultural experiences and understandings of others may be different to your own.

Different individual experiences shape people's perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures. Some staff may be more experienced and knowledgeable of historical events and their impact on Indigenous people. In contrast, others may have very little knowledge, and may never have met an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

You can model respect for others by reinforcing positive aspects of cultures into daily practice routines. This is particularly important to provide another voice to negative messages that may exist about people from that culture in wider society.

Reinforcing positive ideas about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures can:

- build children's self-esteem, wellbeing and sense of belonging
- support the reconciliation process, which acknowledges the problems, inequalities and injustices of the past, and addresses the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
- help overcome historic negative experiences family members may have had with education and childcare services
- help to value each child's culture
- build engagement with the cultural group in the local area
- develop positive relationships and respect by inviting traditional custodians to share an activity with the children
- help children learn about the different cultures across Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities have unique, rich and diverse cultures. Focusing on local culture as told by traditional custodians helps children understand:

- the close relationship that traditional custodians have with the land they live on
- how they value the climate, flora, fauna, landforms and other natural resources
- that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are the First Australians, which means they are the original owners and custodians of the land.

Improving your awareness

Many non-Indigenous Australians are unaware of the ways in which Indigenous people have been discriminated against.

When Europeans first colonised Australia in 1788, they considered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be less than human. They claimed Australia was *'terra nullius'*, which means 'land without people'. In the late 1800s, the Torres Strait Islands were also colonised. As a result of colonisation, many Indigenous people lost their land, lives, families, languages, knowledge systems and cultures. Europeans attempted to assimilate the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, forcing them to adopt the dominant, European culture and forget their own languages and cultural practices.

Since colonisation, Indigenous people have continued to be discriminated against. Different laws have applied to Indigenous people compared to non-Indigenous Australians. As a result, Indigenous people are more likely to have:

- a shorter life
- poorer health
- lower educational achievement and employment
- higher rates of imprisonment.

Many Indigenous Australians experience discrimination and negative treatment.

Indigenous Australians continue to experience racism and negative attitudes. It is important that you understand this is a significant issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People so that you can help others to have more respectful attitudes.

To find out more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, go to: aspirelr.link/human-rights-face-the-facts.

Change of perspectives

For most of the last 200 years, Indigenous people have not been given a choice in how their cultures have been described.

Many non-Indigenous Australians have been provided incorrect information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, and in some cases have not been made aware at all. In many cases, non-Indigenous people have only learnt about the desert cultures in northern Australia. The ideas portrayed about culture were simplistic, making it seem that Indigenous Australians and their cultures were less developed than other societies. For example, Aboriginal culture was often taught by pointing out its strangeness when compared with Western cultural practices.

Here are some common misconceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures that may be encountered today.

Misconception	Reality
Aboriginal peoples were hunter-gatherers who did not engage in agriculture.	Recent research by scholars such as Bruce Pascoe has shown that early settlers suppressed information about Aboriginal agriculture and permanent dwellings.
The Aboriginal way of life was similar all over Australia.	Aboriginal practices depended on local environmental factors, as well as social and cultural ideas that developed over time. Early European collections of artefacts often did not record their specific place of origin, making it difficult for objects to be returned to their communities, and for understanding different local cultures. Many local names of flora and fauna have been lost.
Aboriginal societies were unchanged for thousands of years.	Aboriginal Australia was a 'continuous culture', which means it had little to no influence outside of Australia. It does not mean that societies did not evolve or change. In reality, Aboriginal culture was constantly adapting and changing with new ideas and discoveries.
Aboriginal peoples did not own land; they merely inhabited it.	The European concept of 'terra nullius', meaning 'land belonging to no one' was used as an excuse by Europeans to take over Australia. However, land was owned; it belonged collectively to a group, and distinct boundaries existed between communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures

Aboriginal nations, with their own languages and cultures, have existed in Australia for over 60,000 years.

There is great diversity amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their various cultures. A language map developed by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Studies (AIATSIS) illustrates the many language, tribal or nation groups of Indigenous peoples. You can access the map here: aspirelr.link/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples cultures share similar characteristics, including a deep connection with the land and sea.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures share some of the following characteristics:

- Deep connection to the land and/or sea
- The resources of the land and/or sea are cared for; communities make sure that their food sources do not become exhausted
- Strong sense of spirituality and connection with ancestors
- Strongly defined gender roles in the community
- Elders are the decision-makers of the community
- Complex family or kinship systems
- The Dreaming contains the history, law and knowledge of the community

The Dreaming is difficult to explain in the English language. It has often been misunderstood by non-Indigenous Australians as a set of creation myths and legends.

Aboriginal writer Mudrooroo described it as: 'Not a long way away. The Dreamtime is the environment that the Aboriginal lived in, and it still exists today, all around us'.

Source: Korff, J, (2019), 'What is the 'Dreamtime' or the 'Dreaming'?'

Although 'Dreamtime' was commonly used in the past, that term is now considered outdated because the idea of 'time' does not accurately describe its meaning.

Yolngu Elder Laklak Burarrwanga describes her land and culture: 'We learn the knowledge from our grandparents, walking in the land, telling the stories. Or we sing the songlines...We are connected to the landscape, the land is family, we are related to the land, and everything tells us a story.'

Source: Burarrwanga, L, Dr Wright, S, Dr Suchet-Pearson, S, Dr Lloyd, K (2013), Welcome to My Country, A&U Children's

Torres Strait Islander cultures

Torres Strait Islanders are culturally distinct and are usually referred to separately from Aboriginal peoples.

Approximately 274 islands make up the Torres Strait Islands, which is an island group off the tip of Cape York Peninsula, between Queensland and Papua New Guinea. Only a few are inhabited.

Torres Strait Islanders have diverse local cultures that are distinct from mainland Australian First Nations peoples. There are five island groups and each has shared traditions shaped by environmental factors, such as climate and soil type. Together, Torres Strait Islanders have a shared identity as a sea-faring people, using detailed knowledge of star constellations for navigation.

The Torres Strait Islands were not populated by the British at the same time as the rest of Australia. As a result, it has experienced a different history. However, as part of the Queensland state since 1879, Torres Strait Islanders experienced harsh rules under the protection system. Missionaries on the islands tried to prohibit cultural practices that they believed interfered with conversion to Christianity.

Traditional and contemporary culture

Like all cultures, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures are constantly changing and evolving.

Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures are often referred to in the past tense as if they have been entirely replaced by Western culture. Cultural practices have existed for a long time and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities have continuously practised aspects of traditional culture, while other communities had many of their cultural beliefs and practices abolished by colonisation. Recovering knowledge of their traditional cultural practices and languages is important to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Australian government policies have attempted to support people of different cultures to live harmoniously, while still practising elements of their culture and language. This is referred to as multiculturalism.

In contemporary society, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity may include borrowed, combined or shared ideas from other cultures.

Cultures and identity

Words such as 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' are general terms used around the world to describe 'people who originate from a particular place'.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People describe themselves using the language group or nation from which their family originates. Some refer to themselves as Aboriginal, Islander or Indigenous, while others choose to use local or regional terms.

These include:

- Noongar (WA)
- Nunga (SA)
- Palawa (Tasmania)
- Murri (Queensland/NSW)
- Koorie (NSW/Victoria)
- Anangu (Central Australia)
- Yolngu (Arnhem Land)

Identity can be a complex issue. Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were officially categorised based on their skin colour and racial ancestry. Because of this, many Indigenous people feel challenged, doubted or judged by others. This may happen in personal interactions, but there are also examples in the media, where an Aboriginal person's legitimacy is questioned based on their appearance. As a result, some people may try to hide the fact that they are Aboriginal.

Racism and poor self-esteem have been shown to have a significant impact on a person's mental health. As an educator, you should be aware of how wider racism in society can impact on young children. You can support cultural identity by offering a culturally safe environment for children and their families. A culturally safe environment does not deny a person's identity, but shows respect, allows the person to have dignity and shows them they are listened to.

Example

Growing up Aboriginal in Australia

Other people's ideas and perspectives can negatively affect children. Think about the effects of each of these experiences.

Aboriginal person	Experience
Jason Goninen	I still vividly remember the day when in year 3, after I had recently changed schools, I told a 'friend' that I was Aboriginal. I didn't think anything of it, until that 'friend' told his older brother and his mates. That's when the taunts and slurs began, the random pushing and shoulder barges in the hallway, and it was reinforced to me over time that it was not okay to be Aboriginal.
Jodi Haines	'You're not a real Aborigine.' 'You don't look Aboriginal.' 'How much Aboriginal is in you?' These are the consistent comments I have listened to throughout my childhood.
John Hartley	I remember in third grade being told I was not Aboriginal because I was not black. I remember being educated to feel shame just because of who I was and where I came from; I remember becoming nothing.
Keira Jenkins	We were learning about Aboriginal people and I piped up very proudly. 'I'm Aboriginal.' I waved my hand in the air. 'No, you're not,' my friend Alison said. 'You're too white to be Aboriginal.'

Source: *Growing up Aboriginal in Australia* (2018), Edited by Anita Heiss, Black Inc

Achieving equality

Reconciliation is one way that non-Indigenous Australians are attempting to redress inequality and improve social justice.

In the 1990s, the Australian Government began a process of reconciliation, which attempted to:

- right the wrongs of the past
- give justice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- work together to overcome inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
- close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

In the last thirty years, there has been a greater emphasis on acknowledging and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples place as the First Australians. It is important to acknowledge that First Australians must be given self-determination, meaning the right to determine their own future as a people.

Example

Correcting misconceptions

Sally is a recently employed educator in a large city-based early learning centre. She is listening to one of the more experienced educators, Allison, talk to a four-year-old child who is newly enrolled in the service.

Allison says, 'So, you're from Mildura?'

The child replies, 'Yes.'

Allison says, 'Tell me more about you and your family.'

The child says, 'We're Aboriginal.'

Allison says in a disbelieving tone, 'Really? You mean you're part-Aboriginal?'

The child does not reply.

Sally knows that the term 'part-Aboriginal' is rarely used by Aboriginal people. She can see that the child does not understand Allison's words, and looks uncomfortable and confused. Other children nearby are also listening to the conversation. Finally, Sally says to everyone, 'We usually just say "Aboriginal".'

Practice Task 1

1. Draw a line to match each term about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories to its definition.

* Assimilate	* When one country takes over another country, usually for land, power or to make money.
* Reconciliation	* The process of restoring justice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in an attempt to make up for the wrongs committed in the past.
* Multiculturalism	* The idea that there are visible and invisible ways of practising one's culture.
* *Terra nullius*	* The idea that people from minority cultures should forget their language and cultural practices and adopt the dominant culture.
* Colonisation	* A government policy that supports people of different cultures to live harmoniously, while still practising elements of their culture and language.
* Cultural iceberg	* A Latin term meaning 'land without people'.

2. Which of the following statements about your role in promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories and cultures are correct? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Learning only about a dominant culture sends a message that other cultures are less important.
- ☐ Including a child's own culture in a program shows them that they are valued and included.
- ☐ Positive aspects of cultures counter all negative messages that exist in wider society.
- ☐ Children should be encouraged to enjoy looking at the strangeness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.

1B Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories

The first years of British colonisation were devastating to Aboriginal nations, particularly in south-east Australia.

When Europeans landed, they claimed land belonging to Aboriginal people for themselves.

On 26 January 1788 the British arrived on a section of land known as the Eora Nation by Aboriginal peoples. Europeans claimed Australia and used criminals from overcrowded jails to help settle a population in what is now Sydney. Later, free settlers who were escaping poverty in Europe came to Australia seeking new opportunities. At the time, when Europeans took over new land, they often negotiated with local leaders and bribed them to share power. However, because they used the concept of *'terra nullius'* to claim there were no people living in Australia, they did not consider that Indigenous people had any rights to the land.

The First Fleet brought diseases such as smallpox with them, which was devastating to Indigenous people because they had no immunity to it. It spread throughout south-east Australia. It is believed that up to 70 per cent of Aboriginal people were killed by the disease.

As Europeans moved further inland, they cut down forests to clear the land and build farms. Aboriginal survivors fought for their land, organised raids and engaged in battles and retaliations for the killings and massacres caused by Europeans.

Eventually the killings were so widespread that the British government insisted on a system of 'protection' in which European officials were appointed to be responsible for the welfare of Aboriginal people. Their task was to 'civilise the Aboriginal residents, teach agriculture, house-building and other white endeavours, to educate them to a settled European lifestyle and to convert them to Christianity'.

Source: Eidelson, M, (2014), *Melbourne dreaming: A guide to important places of the past and present*, Aboriginal Studies Press

Protectionism and the Stolen Generations

Under protectionism, Aboriginal survivors were forced into reserves and missions, and were given food and clothing as rations.

They were required to learn about Christianity and produced crops or livestock under European management. There is evidence that some 'protectors' were personally responsible for cruelty, and in some cases even presided over massacres.

In an attempt to erase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, rules were brought in that separated children from their parents. Authorities were keen to take mixed race children away so they would only know European culture. In Western Australia, children could be sent away to work by a protector when they were just eight years old. In Queensland, the definition of a neglectful mother included 'being Aboriginal'. This meant that the law in this state supported taking all Aboriginal children from their mothers.

The Stolen Generations comprise all children who were taken from their parents by the authorities. Many were put into institutions and endured harsh and abusive treatment. Others were put into foster care. Non-Indigenous Australians were given the impression that Aboriginal people did not care for their children, reinforcing prejudice against them.

Many survivors of the Stolen Generations never saw their parents again, and have been deeply scarred by their experiences of grief and loss. Some are still searching for their families. The consequences of these policies towards Aboriginal people have damaged and disrupted family and kinship connections, caused intergenerational trauma and led to deep mistrust of authorities.

Example
Stolen Generations

The following is an account by Aboriginal woman Deborah Cheetham:

'My ancestors come from the rich green land of the Yorta Yorta nation, which embraces both sides of the Murray River. We call this river Dhungala, and the Dhungala has been home to the Yorta Yorta people for more than 60,000 years. My grandfather James came to Yorta Yorta country from Wallaga Lake in the early 1930s and married a local girl. Her name was Frances McGee, although she was fondly known as Sissy. Together they had seven children, the youngest of whom was my mother Monica, while Colin, Betty, Freddie, Ernest, Madeline and the eldest, Jimmy, were my uncles and aunties. I am one of nine children myself.

'It would be fabulous to tell you some hilarious story about growing up with so many brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties and countless cousins, but I can't. You see, I didn't grow up with them. For the first 30 years of my life I didn't know anything about them. At just three weeks of age, I was taken from Monica.'

Source: Cheetham, D (2018) 'So much still pending', *Growing up Aboriginal in Australia*, Edited by Anita Heiss, Black Inc.

Rules of protection

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had to follow strict rules.

In 1901, the separate colonies in Australia became states in a federation. This meant Australia could govern itself without Britain. The Australian Constitution was written, which set out the rules that the government must follow. Only states could make laws regarding Indigenous people, and the government did not

include them in the population numbers. This was because of the expectation that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' population would continue to shrink as younger people were absorbed into the dominant culture.

The authorities could give approval to a person with mixed heritage to get an exemption certificate. This meant having the same freedom as a non-Indigenous person. However, the person had to give up all connections to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture and the exemption could be revoked at any time. For example, in NSW, a person could be jailed if they were caught visiting their Aboriginal family.

Indigenous people lived under the rules of protection, which differed from state to state. Some of the general rules that applied to most states are outlined in the table below.

Rules of protection
➤ Indigenous people had to ask for permission to marry.
➤ Indigenous people were not allowed to drink alcohol.
➤ Indigenous people were not allowed to vote in elections.
➤ Indigenous people were not allowed to leave the district without written permission from the protector.
➤ Indigenous people were not allowed to fraternise with (be friends with) white people.
➤ Employment or work could be paid in food, and the monetary part of the wage was kept by the protector.
➤ All Indigenous people were considered 'wards of the state', meaning they were treated as children in the eyes of the law.
➤ Mothers were not allowed to breastfeed children and were punished if they did.
➤ Police could search the home of an Indigenous person without a warrant.
➤ The authorities were able to move an Indigenous person to another reserve or mission at will.

Campaigns for rights and equality

Since the early days of colonisation, Aboriginal Elders have asked for land in order to live with dignity and have responsibility for their own lives.

There are many cases where Indigenous people became successful farmers. However, the rules of protection restricted their ability to prosper and make a living to provide for their families. Indigenous people were treated unfairly by governments when their leaders petitioned and complained.

During the 1920s, the first nation-wide Aboriginal organisations were formed in Sydney and Melbourne. In the 1930s, protests and campaigns were held. By the 1960s, Aboriginal organisations were well organised, although non-Indigenous people still held many leadership roles within these organisations.

Many people in the major cities were unaware of the discrimination that was taking place against Aboriginal people in rural areas. Young people campaigning in 1965 drew attention to unfair rules that denied access to shops, pubs and public swimming pools. This contributed to pressure on the government to take action.

In 1967, a referendum was held. As a result, Indigenous people were granted equal status as non-Indigenous Australians and the protection system was ended. It meant that for the first time, all Indigenous people could receive equal pay, vote and be counted in the Census. However, outback stations in northern Australia had been relying on the virtual slave labour of Aboriginal workers, and many refused to pay legal wages. Communities were forced to move to towns, where unemployment was high and connections to land and culture became disrupted.

Protests were held by Aboriginal organisations throughout the 20th century.

Young Indigenous people in the 1960s learned about ideas of self-determination from the experiences of racism in countries such as the US. They argued that Aboriginal organisations should be led and controlled by Aboriginal people. In the early 1970s, Aboriginal legal aid and medical clinics were established that provided a safe place to seek assistance. These organisations provided a model for Aboriginal control of services in communities. The government later began to hand over control of some Aboriginal affairs.

Land rights

Land is at the heart of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.

The terms 'traditional custodians' or 'traditional owners' are used when referring to Aboriginal peoples' relationship to the land. Most non-Indigenous Australians are accustomed to the European style of individual land ownership. Much of the political activism throughout Australia's history in relation to land rights is based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' desire to:

- have land returned
- live on ancestral land without interference
- care for the land, its landforms, and sacred and significant sites.

Here are some examples of two famous campaigns on land rights.

Wave Hill walk-off	The Gurindji strike or Wave Hill walk-off occurred in the NT in 1965. A group of men were dissatisfied with their low pay and poor conditions on the Vestey cattle station. They went on strike, and eventually campaigned for the freedom to live on their traditional land and follow traditional customs. In 1975, the Australian Government granted the Gurindji people limited land rights, sparking a wave of laws around Australia that allowed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities the right to apply for ownership and control of Crown (government) lands.

Mabo decision	Eddie Mabo, a traditional owner of the island of Mer in the Torres Strait, argued that the European idea of *terra nullius* was wrong and eventually took his case to the High Court. The Mabo decision concluded that the land did indeed have people on it, and proved that Mer was owned and productively used by the local community. In 1992, the High Court overturned the concept of *terra nullius*, paving the way for a form of limited land rights for Crown lands called 'native title'.

Largely thanks to these successful campaigns, limited land rights have been granted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities that were able to prove a continuous connection to the land from the time before colonisation. However, this is impossible for many Aboriginal communities in southern parts of Australia as these communities have suffered diseases and killings, been forcibly moved away from their ancestral lands, and in many cases have lost knowledge of their cultures, practices and languages.

Perspectives on colonisation and invasion

People have different perspectives and levels of awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories.

Until recently, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' views and perspectives have been either overlooked or falsely documented in accounts about Australian history. Older books and references aimed at Australian children and used in classrooms tended to discuss Aboriginal culture before the arrival of Europeans, and then focus solely on Europeans after 1788.

'We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion.' – Former Prime Minister Paul Keating

Around the time the process of reconciliation began, then Prime Minister Paul Keating gave a speech which many Indigenous people regarded as a watershed moment. In it, he stated: 'We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice'.

However, during the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was a backlash. The succeeding Prime Minister John Howard argued that non-Indigenous Australians should not feel responsible for what happened in the past. In particular, he insisted the Australian government would not pay compensation to the Stolen Generations. A group of prominent non-Indigenous people claimed that Australians should think of the past positively. This debate became known as the 'culture wars' between the 'black armband view of history' and the 'white blindfold view of history'.

In January 2008 the Tasmanian Government was the first government to pay compensation to members of the Stolen Generations, following an apology that was delivered in 1997. In 2008, newly elected Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made a national apology to the Stolen Generations.

Practice Task 2

1. Put the historical events in order from 1 to 7 from the earliest to the most recent.

- [ ] Children began to be removed from their families.
- [ ] Aboriginal organisations started up and began to argue for equal rights.
- [ ] The British arrived with convicts to take and settle the land as their own.
- [ ] A referendum was held that granted Indigenous people equal legal status as non-Indigenous people.
- [ ] The era of reconciliation began and the government formally apologised for the Stolen Generations.
- [ ] Aboriginal people resisted European settlers turning their land into farms by engaging in warfare.
- [ ] The British government ordered that a system of 'protection' be set up.

2. Historical events have caused inter-generational trauma and disadvantage for Indigenous people. Briefly describe what the term 'Stolen Generations' means.

3. Briefly describe one campaign on the struggle for land rights.

4. List three of the rules under protection.

1C Cultural responsiveness and the NQF

The NQF helps you develop and implement best practice for child development and wellbeing.

The National Quality Framework (NQF) reflects the Education and Care Services National Law.

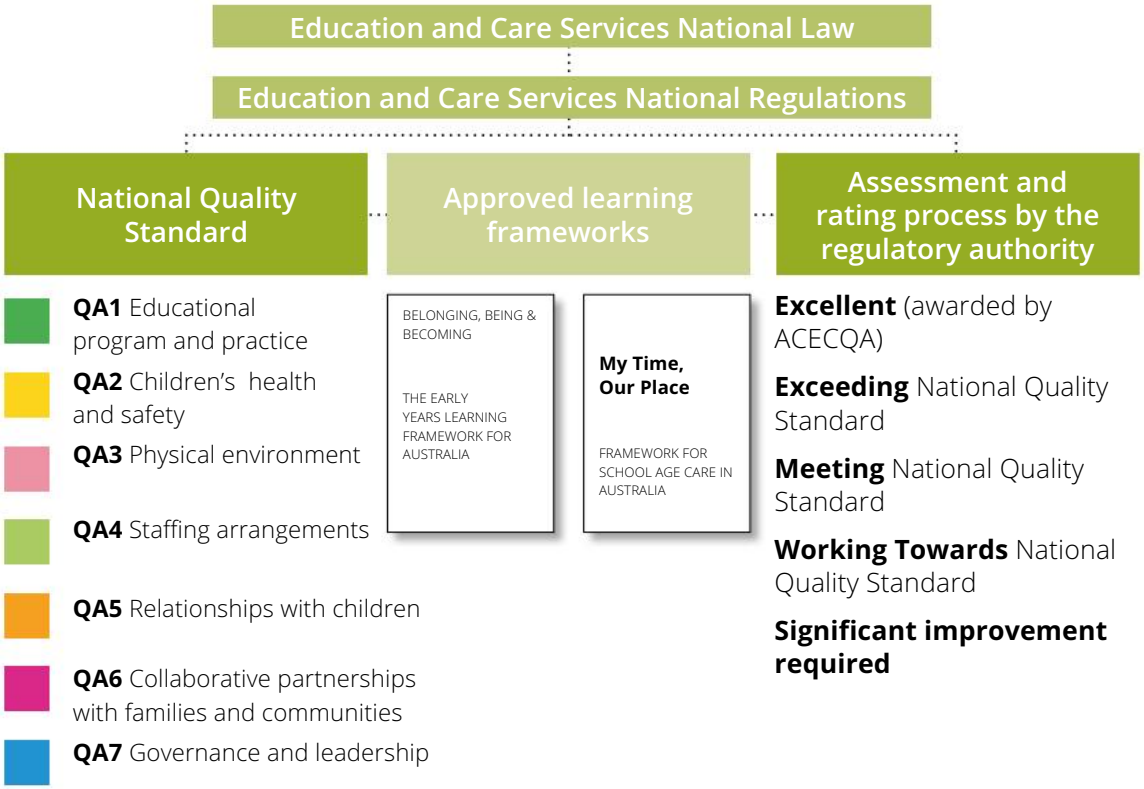
The NQF includes the following components:

- Laws – Education and Care Services National Law
- Regulations – Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Standards – National Quality Standard (NQS)
- Approved learning frameworks – *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (EYLF) and *My time, our place: Framework for school age care in Australia* (MTOP)

The aim of the NQF is to help you develop practices that achieve high-quality child development and wellbeing outcomes.

The following diagram provides an outline of the system.

The National Quality Framework



Source: ACECQA, *The Guide to the National Quality Framework*

You can find out more about the NQF and its components in the *Guide to the National Quality Framework*, an online document found at: aspirelr.link/guide-to-the-nqf.

It details the quality areas, standards and associated elements, including references, links and an assessment guide.

National Quality Standard

The National Quality Standard (NQS) is used to measure and assess early childhood education and care services.

The NQS forms part of the NQF and provides services with a clear set of guidelines on what is required to meet an expected level of quality in the service.

The NQS includes the following components:

- Quality areas: These are very broad areas that identify key concepts that services must consider.
- Standards: These are headings that break the quality areas down into particular areas to focus on.
- Elements: These are statements that tell you exactly what needs to be done in each standard to meet the quality level required.

The NQS identifies the importance of culture and identity, with a focus on embedding these concepts into daily practices.

The following quality areas and elements are particularly relevant to developing and nurturing cultural identity.

Quality area	Element	Descriptor
Quality area 1 – Educational program and practice	Element 1.1.2 – Child-centred	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
	Element 1.3.2 – Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
Quality area 5 – Relationships with children	Element 5.1.1 – Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships, which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
	Element 5.1.2 – Dignity and rights of every child are maintained	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
Quality area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	Element 6.1.2 – Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
	Element 6.2.3 – Community engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.

Laws and regulations

The Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations outline ways you must support culture and identity in the service.

The following sections and regulations are particularly relevant.

Section/Regulation	Description
Section 168 – Offence relating to required programs	A program must be delivered to all children being educated and cared for by the service that is designed to take into account the individual differences of each child.
Regulation 73 – Educational program	An educational program is to contribute to the following outcomes for each child: › The child will have a strong sense of identity. › The child will be connected with and contribute to his or her world. › The child will have a strong sense of wellbeing. › The child will be a confident and involved learner. › The child will be an effective communicator.
Regulation 155 – Interactions with children	The service must take reasonable steps to ensure that the following occurs: › Children are encouraged to express themselves and their opinions. › Children undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem. › The dignity and rights of each child are maintained at all times. › Each child is provided positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour. › Family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for are considered and catered for.
Regulation 156 – Relationships in groups	Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that children are provided with opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other, and with staff members and volunteers at the service.

Approved learning frameworks

Principles are the beliefs educators have about children and their learning and guide their ability to provide quality education and care.

Both nationally approved learning frameworks, the EYLF and MTOP, outline Both nationally approved learning frameworks, the EYLF and MTOP, outline principles, practices and outcomes for early childhood educators, and educators providing school-aged care.

The framework helps you to decide on:

- the curriculum principles (what your beliefs and values are)
- your daily practice (why you do the things you do with the children)
- the outcomes (your specific focus during curriculum development and delivery).

For example, the EYLF states how Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity can be achieved:

'Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities when they:

- develop strong foundations in both the culture and language/s of their family and of the broader community without compromising their cultural identities
- develop their social and cultural heritage through engagement with Elders and community members.'

The following table is an explanation of the principles that relate to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories in the service.

Principle/ Practice	Related terms	How to implement
Respect for diversity	Diversity	• There are many ways that people live, and different beliefs, values and traditions should be considered and included. • Value children's different capacities and abilities, and respect differences in families' home lives. • Recognise that diversity contributes to the richness of our society. • Promote greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of knowing and being.
	Respect	• Honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child-rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. • Respect diversity within the curriculum by acknowledging and accepting the practices, values and beliefs of families. • Recognise and accept each family and the things they feel are important. Ensure you find out about and follow each family's expectations.
	Sharing culture	• Part of living and teaching in Australia involves understanding, welcoming and sharing with people from all parts of the world. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experiences, knowledge and skills, both past and present. • Make curriculum decisions that uphold all children's rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued. • Respond to the complexity of children's and families' lives.
	Fairness	• Think about and deal with similarities and differences between families who use the service. • Always aim for fairness and take action to redress unfairness.

Principle/ Practice	Related terms	How to implement
Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning	Ongoing/ lifelong learning	➤ Aim to continually learn and improve your skills. ➤ Become co-learners with children, families and the community. ➤ Value the continuity and richness of local knowledge shared by community members, including Aboriginal Elders.
	Reflective practice	➤ Engage with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. ➤ Examine what happens in your practice and reflect on what you could change and improve. ➤ Consider the way you educate and care for children on a regular basis. ➤ Gather information that makes you better at providing care and education for children.
	Critical reflection	➤ Ask questions and look at things from different perspectives and points of view. ➤ Always aim to improve.
	Cycle of review	➤ Create a lively culture of professional inquiry. ➤ Conduct an ongoing cycle of review where current practices are examined, outcomes are reviewed and new ideas are generated. ➤ Raise and debate issues relating to curriculum quality, and children's wellbeing and equity.
	Pedagogy	➤ Consider your belief about education and learning, and how you demonstrate this. ➤ Ask questions such as: – Are there other theories or knowledge that could help me to better understand what I have observed or experienced? – What are they and how might they affect my practice?
Aboriginal and Torres Strait perspectives	Cultural competence	➤ Respect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are the longest surviving Indigenous cultures in the world and the custodians of this land. ➤ Show you are interested in the knowledge systems, traditions, ceremonies, lore and culture that survived for over 60,000 years. ➤ Be aware that relationships and continual connections to Country and community are at the heart of contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – past and present – and should be acknowledged and valued in children's learning.

Principle/ Practice	Related terms	How to implement
Aboriginal and Torres Strait perspectives	Sharing culture	➤ Help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to see themselves, their identities and culture reflected in their environment to help them develop a strong sense of who they are.
	Pedagogy	➤ Think about how to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the philosophy of the service. ➤ Learn how to make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives part of the planning and curriculum.

Cultural responsiveness

Being aware of your own world view allows you to develop positive attitudes towards others, gain knowledge of different cultural practices and develop cross-cultural communication techniques.

When you have this ability, you are being inclusive and showing cultural responsiveness. People interacting with inclusive environments will feel a sense of belonging, as well as feeling valued and respected.

Cultural responsiveness is the ability to effectively communicate and interact with people of different cultures. It is also a practice identified in the approved learning framework, *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (EYLF).

Building cultural responsiveness involves understanding your own culture and the cultures of others. It means acknowledging the similarities and differences between cultures and breaking down stereotypes and biases.

Cultural responsiveness allows us to take a stand when we encounter racism or bias. Research has shown that even toddlers can show prejudiced behaviour and attitudes. Children learn through modelling and imitation, so your behaviours and attitudes have an impact on how children behave. Children need to be taught respect and how to interact positively with adults and peers, including those who are different from themselves.

Educators who are culturally responsiveness are able to develop a culturally relevant and enriching curriculum. This also teaches children to reject bias and stand up for themselves and others who may be experiencing discrimination. When you demonstrate cultural responsiveness in your work role, children can learn and experience acceptance for who they are. They will be encouraged to question behaviours that do not show respect or acceptance of others.

Cultural competence

Cultural competence is a way of understanding different cultures and how they impact people.

A culturally competent person is someone who:

- understands their own culture and how it shapes their thinking

- respects diversity
- can build connections with people from different cultures to their own.

As an educator, you are expected to be culturally competent in your relationships with all families and children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' families and their children.

Cultural competence is demonstrated in the following examples.

Type of cultural competence	Example
Understanding and recognising cultural differences between children	Two four-year-olds are arguing about what a normal breakfast looks like. The educator explains that families might eat different foods because of different traditions and that there is no 'normal'.
Being aware of how one's own culture has shaped one's views of parenting and managing children	Newly employed educator Indira is accustomed to cuddling her younger siblings to sleep. She is surprised when a mother at the centre tells her she must not cuddle her baby to help her get to sleep. She follows the mother's wishes.
Having respect for diversity in children and their families	A family requests that their child does not eat pork or other pig products for religious reasons. Centre manager Adrienne makes sure that all the staff are aware of this requirement.
Helping children feel that they belong by building understanding between children	Room leader Aurora makes sure that the books in her area have characters of different cultural and diverse backgrounds. She uses the books to discuss similarities and differences between cultures with the children.
Being aware that a child's culture is a key part of their identity	The educator uses phrases from children's home languages to create a learning experience that helps to celebrate their different backgrounds.
Communicating and interacting effectively with families from different cultures	A toddler arrives at the centre who does not speak English. The room leader arranges for an educator who does speak the child's language, to interpret a discussion so she understands the child's likes, dislikes and normal routines.

Critical reflection

Experiences inform your perspectives, which reflect your beliefs or how you see things.

Examining your own culture and how it has developed will help you to understand how the culture of others has evolved, and how important beliefs and values change to form new ways of viewing the world.

Critical reflection helps you to examine your Reflection helps you to examine your attitudes, knowledge and skills, and the experiences that have formed these beliefs. You must continually reflect on your practices in order to challenge your own perspectives and biases. Reflection helps you to consider the effectiveness of your programs, and how you can improve yourself and the outcomes for the children in your care.

Reflect on your practices and perspectives towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.

Reflection can be used to examine your own perspectives and those of others in your service. In terms of perspectives towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories, you may want to find out:

- your knowledge, or lack of knowledge, about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories and cultures
- the knowledge of educators at your service
- the way your service delivers or acknowledges the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture
- whether programs represent minority cultures as well as dominant cultures
- the expectations for children, staff and families
- your role in making connections and developing cultural responsiveness
- the way your service supports self-determination and equality for Indigenous people
- the understanding of staff of the reasons for the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
- the extent to which the service redresses the problems and injustices of the past
- whether enough time is available to research unfamiliar cultures or backgrounds of families who use the service
- the extent to which traditional custodians or local Aboriginal Elders contribute to the program
- learning experiences for children and the way they can be improved
- daily practice routines that help children be respectful and understanding of others.

Meaningful critical reflection

For reflection to be meaningful, the outcomes you identify must be used to inform and change practice.

Reflection can either be done individually or together with other educators. It might include reflecting on the attitudes or perspectives of others, or may examine an individual activity.

To determine the perspectives of the service, you will need to read policy documents, familiarise with curriculum and observe daily practices to find examples of ways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures are embedded in the learning opportunities for children. You may need to ask questions of the other staff and have discussions with your supervisor.

To gather information about various perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures in your service, you may need to:

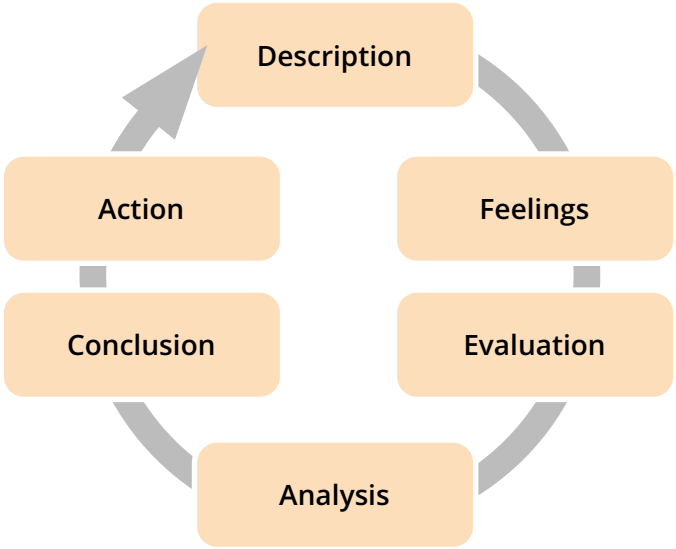
- have regular team or staff meetings, and reflect on how the curriculum is influencing you and catering to all needs, interests and backgrounds
- collect information about the knowledge of others through surveys or meetings
- participate in regular in-service and professional development training to ensure you keep up to date with best practice
- work with a supervisor or senior person to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses – use a diary to record these conversations.

Reflective cycle

The reflective cycle can be used to help you think about your interactions with children, other staff, and any Indigenous families attending the service.

The reflective cycle has six stages. By looking at each stage in turn, you can ask yourself a series of questions. The questions in a reflective process can be used to examine your cultural responsiveness and the ways your background influence your interactions and relationships with others.

Here is an example of a reflective cycle.



The following table outlines how the reflective cycle can be used to examine your own cultural bias.

Description – What happened?

- Reflect on and describe your background and upbringing. Include how you felt, and the values and expectations you learnt.
- Reflect on any biases and stereotypes you have, positive experiences you have had with other cultures, or when you were exposed to cultures or people that you felt uncomfortable around.

Feelings – What were you thinking and feeling?

- What feelings have you had about your upbringing as a child, teenager and adult?
- How do you feel about those different from you?
- What positive and negative feelings do you experience that are related to diversity?
- Do your feelings affect the way you interact with, relate to or accept others?

Evaluation and analysis – What was good and bad about the experience?

- How well do you accept others?
- What would you like to change about yourself or your actions?
- What skills and weaknesses have you noticed?
- How do your feelings and reactions affect your interactions and relationships with others?

Analysis – What sense can you make of the situation?

- What can you do differently?
- What skills do you need to develop?
- What skills or abilities could you improve?
- What do you need to understand better?

Conclusion – What can you conclude from this situation and your reaction to it?

- What conclusion can you draw from your analysis?
- At this stage, you can:
  - set some goals
  - break your goals into steps
  - plan learning, education or discussion
  - plan further or more specific reflection
  - ask for support or help.

Action – Put your plans into action

- Act to improve by carrying out your plans.

Reflecting on your perspectives

Values and beliefs that form a person's culture are created from past experiences.

When someone feels their values and beliefs are not in line with a person of a different culture – especially when the life choices of another are not acceptable or clear to them – cultural bias occurs. Cultural bias usually comes from fear or misunderstanding.

A person's upbringing and family expectations play a major role in developing their perspectives. These perspectives are further influenced by different life events and the different people they have met and interacted with.

Consider how your perspectives about child-rearing may differ from the following list of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives on child rearing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives on child rearing
➤ In traditional culture, the wellbeing of children is a central concern of the community, and women gain prestige from bearing and rearing healthy children.
➤ Pregnant and breastfeeding women have a series of restrictions on what they eat in order to preserve the health of their baby.
➤ Children are generally spaced a few years apart because of the nurturing responsibilities.
➤ Mothers nurse their baby throughout the day, but at night fathers and other kin soothe the baby.
➤ Children are weaned around three or four years of age, and the stages of childhood are defined by the level of dependence on the mother before full independence and adulthood are reached.

The following are examples of traditional Aboriginal perspectives on aspects of child learning and development. Consider how your perspectives and understanding of child development may differ to the perspectives of many Indigenous Australians.

Physical development	➤ Children learn physical skills by necessity, so they can adapt to a mobile lifestyle. For example, babies learn to find their mother's teat while being carried.
Social development	➤ Children learn that they are part of a system of interconnectedness with people, land, nature and the weather. They learn their obligations, expected behaviours and responsibilities. ➤ Children are constantly reminded of their relationship with others around them, particularly their kin. ➤ Adults expect little of children.
Emotional development	➤ Children and babies are loved and indulged by parents, older kin and older children. ➤ Children receive non-authoritarian and affectionate nurture from both men and women. ➤ Nurture during children's upbringing creates long-term obligations to return care. ➤ Outsiders are strangers but can be made knowledgeable through introduction to the kinship system. ➤ The child's sense of self is linked with the land where they were conceived and born.

Cognitive development	➤ Babies and toddlers learn from observing and listening while being carried at adult height. ➤ From a young age, children are given tools and items that help them learn to imitate adults. ➤ Children must learn and memorise a large amount of information and rules about finding, using and eating food, managing resources sustainably, understanding the habits of insects and animals, and other activities for the livelihood of the community.
Communication development	➤ Children's needs are met on demand. ➤ Children are taught using oral instructions and by listening to stories.

Example

Reflecting on skills

Lorna, an educator, is feeling anxious. She finds it challenging to introduce a new family to her service. Today she has no information about the family she is meeting and is not sure how to manage a situation where the family is from the Torres Strait Islands.

Lorna wants to improve her skills and realises that reflection can be a powerful tool. She reflects on her skills of meeting new people from a cultural group she knows little about so she can build her confidence. During her reflection she realises that her anxiety comes from a lack of knowledge and fear she will embarrass herself by using offensive language or not being understood. She sets some goals to help her get past this anxiety.

Lorna is showing that she is willing to improve her approach towards new families and being responsive to the needs of others.

Practice Task 3

1. Which of the following are national requirements for implementing culture and identity into programs for children? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Regulation 156 – Relationships in groups
- ☐ NQS Quality area 1 – Educational program and practice
- ☐ NQS Quality area 2 – Children's health and safety
- ☐ NQS Quality area 5 – Relationships with children
- ☐ NQS Quality area 6 – Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- ☐ EYLF and MTOP Principle: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

2. The staff in an early childhood learning centre are meeting to discuss activities to include in this year's program during NAIDOC Week. They begin by asking some reflection questions about activities held last year.

   Which of the following questions would be most useful to help them improve activities? Select all that apply.

   - ☐ How do we know the children understood what NAIDOC Week was about?
   - ☐ Were families provided information on changes to the program?
   - ☐ Were all the children in attendance during the week?
   - ☐ How could we improve the way the topic was delivered?
   - ☐ Were NAIDOC Week activities extended into other programs and practices?

3. Sharon is an educator who wants to examine if the various cultural backgrounds of each child are recognised in the program. Which of the following areas would benefit from reflection? Select all that apply.

   - ☐ The arrangement of books in the library corner shelves
   - ☐ The involvement of families in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural activities of the program
   - ☐ Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures into daily routines
   - ☐ Getting everyone involved in the clean-up required after cultural art activities
   - ☐ The extent to which staff work together to learn more about the local traditional custodians

Summary

- Culture is a set of shared practices, ideas and values held by a group of people.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures are diverse across Australia, but hold some shared concepts, such as a deep connection to and respect for the land.
- Throughout Australian history, authorities have tried to force Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to abandon their culture.
- Many non-Indigenous Australians do not have an accurate understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including their history and culture.
- Educators should be culturally competent and aware of how the NQS supports embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.

Learning Checkpoint 1
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories

Part A

1. Draw a line to match the following perspectives on learning and development to either dominant culture or Indigenous cultures.

* Children are taught about the values of their community through talking and telling of stories	* Dominant culture
* Verbal instructions are given to children to perform simple tasks	* Dominant culture
* Children learn without verbal training from the adult, but by observing others and mimicking the behaviour	* Indigenous cultures
* Children are expected to react to pain and parents hurry to pick up fallen babies	* Indigenous cultures

2. Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. An awareness of how forced separation has impacted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today will help you to reflect on your own perspectives.	* Yes	* No
b. Educators will reflect differently on the effects of inter-generational trauma and disadvantage on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	* Yes	* No
c. NQS Element 1.1.2 – Child-centred practice, states that each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.	* Yes	* No
d. Educators must follow requirements in the NQS for relationships with children that offer a culturally safe environment for children and their families.	* Yes	* No
e. The service must build relationships and engage with its community.	* Yes	* No
f. The EYLF/MTOP principles state that educators must not offer too many cultural experiences to children to avoid them becoming confused about their own culture.	* Yes	* No

3. Which of the following are examples of meaningful critical reflection? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Use the reflection process to identify ideas on how cultural activities can be used in daily practices with children.
- ☐ Ask a supervisor or more experienced staff member to confirm your cultural beliefs.
- ☐ Keep a record of your discussions with a more experienced educator.
- ☐ Work with others to identify the different levels of knowledge and understanding amongst staff on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories.

4. The staff at a rural childcare centre are identifying ways they promote awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures in the program. Which of the following are reflection questions the staff could ask? Select all that apply.

- ☐ What toys does the service have that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures?
- ☐ What events throughout the year are acknowledged in the service?
- ☐ Is there a balance of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures in the service?
- ☐ How many Aboriginal children are currently enrolled in the service?
- ☐ Are members of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities involved in the service?

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the question that follows.

Case study

Staff at a suburban early learning centre sit down to prepare for their reconciliation action plan (RAP). Together, they discuss and write down everything that they currently do in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures. This will help them engage in a process of critical reflection. The list includes:

- Displaying artefacts during NAIDOC Week, including a didgeridoo, examples of some local native plants, and children's books about the Dreaming.
- Discussing the colours of the Aboriginal flag with children and the significance of the colours and symbols during NAIDOC Week. Children are given red, yellow and black paint to engage in a free painting session.
- Reading a book to children called *Tea and sugar train*, which has an Aboriginal girl as the main character.
- Teaching children to sing *My island home* for the end of year concert.

1. Which of the following statements in relation to the case study are correct? Select all that apply.

- ☐ This centre currently approaches Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures only at special occasions
- ☐ The centre currently approaches Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures during particular times of the year, but there are also some learning experiences at other times of the year.
- ☐ The centre has thought deeply about embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures into its daily practice in as many aspects of their program and environment as they can.
- ☐ Acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures is clearly visible at all times of the year in the foyer, inside and outside spaces.

Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

2A Evaluate research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories

2B Protocols for art, culture and language

Investigate the local context for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures

Each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural group has its own traditions, histories and culture.

As an educator, you should know how to access reliable information about Indigenous Australians in your local area, and learn appropriate and respectful ways to incorporate culture into learning experiences for children.

2A Evaluate research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories

Seek information on the culture of traditional custodians of the land where the service is based.

In some cases, there may no longer be any traditional owners living in the local area as a result of forced relocations. You should investigate and connect with any local Indigenous groups that operate in the area and prioritise your research in this order:

1. Culture of the community where the service is based
2. Cultures of neighbouring communities
3. Cultures from elsewhere in the state or territory
4. Cultures from across Australia

Research and evaluate information on the local Aboriginal culture.

Once you have determined who the traditional custodians are, you can identify what their language is. The AIATSIS language map (aspirelr.link/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia) can provide this information, or you can try searching online for local organisations.

Using museums to research information

Information on traditional cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live in your state or territory can be found on websites of major state organisations, such as museums.

Museums generally hold collections that began in the 1800s and work to return items that were taken from communities, and to assist them to rebuild their culture and artefacts. Some museums assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with genealogical research, help them understand their family histories and to trace areas from which their ancestors were forcibly moved.

You may find the following websites useful.

State/ territory	Organisation
ACT	**National Museum of Australia, Canberra** aspirelr.link/national-museum-australia-indigenous-collection **ACT Department of Education** aspirelr.link/act-department-of-education-indigenous-education
NSW	**Australian Museum** aspirelr.link/australian-museum-atsi-collection **NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc (AECG)** aspirelr.link/aecg-regions **The Aboriginal Studies Association (ASA), NSW** aspirelr.link/asa
NT	**Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory (MAGNT)** aspirelr.link/magnt **NT Department of Education** aspirelr.link/nt-department-of-education-indigenous-cultures
Queensland	**Queensland Museum** aspirelr.link/queensland-museum-indigenous-cultures **Queensland Government** aspirelr.link/queensland-govt-indigenous-cultural-awareness **Queensland Government Indigenous Portal** aspirelr.link/queensland-govt-indigenous-portal
SA	**South Australian Museum** aspirelr.link/sa-museum-aboriginal-cultures **State Library of South Australia** aspirelr.link/slsa-indigenous-collections **State Records of South Australia** aspirelr.link/sa-state-records-aboriginal-services
Tasmania	**Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG)** aspirelr.link/tmag-indigenous-cultures **The Orb, Tasmanian Department of Education** aspirelr.link/the-orb
Victoria	**Melbourne Museum** aspirelr.link/melbourne-museum-bunjilaka **Culture Victoria** aspirelr.link/culture-victoria-aboriginal-culture **Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council** aspirelr.link/victorian-aboriginal-heritage-council **Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI)** aspirelr.link/vaeai

State/ territory	Organisation
WA	**Western Australian Museum (WAM)** aspirelr.link/wam-aboriginal-cultures-collection

Relevant organisations and peak bodies

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples-led organisations and peak agencies offer advice and support on legal issues and health services and aim to improve the social, economic and cultural advancement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The aim of many of these organisations is the promotion of legal, cultural, economic, political and social rights as well as safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families.

Federal organisations and websites:

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) aspirelr.link/naccho	A national leadership body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in Australia. They represent 143 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) that operate in over 300 clinics across Australia and are initiated and operated by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
Coalition of Peaks aspirelr.link/coalition-of-peaks	A representative body comprised of around fifty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled peak organisations that have partnered with Australian governments on closing the gap, a policy aimed at improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) aspirelr.link/snaicc	SNAICC has a membership base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based child care agencies, Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS), crèches, long day care child care services, pre-schools, early childhood education services, early childhood support organisations, family support services, foster care agencies, family reunification services, family group homes, services for young people at risk, community groups and voluntary associations, government agencies and individual supporters,
First Peoples Disability Network aspirelr.link/fpdn	National organisation of and for Australia's first peoples with disability, their families and communities. our organisation is governed by first peoples with lived experience of disability
Aboriginal Children's Day aspirelr.link/aboriginal-childrens-day	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day (Children's Day) is a national day dedicated to celebrated on 4 August.

Other useful organisations and websites include:

- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) – aspirelr.link/naccho
- Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) – aspirelr.link/snaicc
- Aboriginal Children's Day – aspirelr.link/aboriginal-childrens-day

Contacting local community organisations

There are people who can advise non-Indigenous people on matters relating to culture and language.

Aboriginal corporations are a good first point of contact.

Each state and territory has a network of Aboriginal corporations and land and sea councils, such as the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. They are a good first point of contact for non-Indigenous people seeking assistance and information about local culture.

The roles of these organisations include:

- providing a strong voice for the Aboriginal people they represent
- helping Aboriginal people get back their country by land claim or purchase
- helping Aboriginal people manage their land
- protecting Aboriginal people's cultures and sacred sites
- fighting for legal recognition of Aboriginal people's rights
- helping to resolve land disputes, native title claims and compensation cases
- pursuing cultural, social and economic independence for Aboriginal people
- maintaining and enhancing Aboriginal culture, identity and heritage.

Some local government councils also provide information on the traditional custodians of your area.

Here are some examples of State and Territory organisations:

State/ territory	Organisation
WA	Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia aspirelr.link/ahcwa Peak body for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) in Western Australia
TAS	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre aspirelr.link/tacinc Represents the political and community development aspirations of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

State/ territory	Organisation
NT	Central Land Council Represents and provides services to Aboriginal traditional owners and residents of Central Australia aspirelr.link/clc Northern Land Council Assisting Aboriginal peoples in the Top End of the Northern Territory to acquire and manage their traditional lands and seas aspirelr.link/nlc-about-us
ACT	ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body aspirelr.link/atsieb Advocating for accountability, transparency and effectiveness in achieving social and economic outcomes for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
QLD	Queensland Coalition of Peaks being established including: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Ltd Community-based organisation established to provide professional and culturally competent legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Queensland aspirelr.link/atsils Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited aspirelr.link/qatsicpp Promotion & advocacy of the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families
SA	Promotion of legal, cultural, economic, political and social rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as dispossessed peoples within South Australia. Acts as a lobby group, and where able, implements support programs that assist in addressing some of the issues known to contribute to Aboriginal people coming into contact with the criminal justice system. aspirelr.link/alrm

State/ territory	Organisation
VIC	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency aspirelr.link/vacca State-wide Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) servicing children, young people, families, and community members Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations aspirelr.link/fvtoc Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations was created in 2013, focusing on our shared interests – broadening political engagement, increasing economic opportunities and caring for Country. Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd aspirelr.link/vacsal State-wide agency that providing advice to Government on a range of community development issues as well as being a major provider of services to the Aboriginal community in both the metropolitan and some regional communities
NSW	NSW Aboriginal Land Council aspirelr.link/alc Peak representative body in Aboriginal Affairs NSW Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat aspirelr.link/absec NSW Aboriginal child and family peak organisation, working to empower Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities impacted by the child protection system, as well as support a quality Aboriginal community controlled child and family sector to deliver needed supports in Aboriginal communities across the state.

People who can help

Ensure you only approach people with the authority to speak about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Here is a list of people you can approach for information.

Aboriginal Liaison Officers

Aboriginal Liaison Officers are often employed in public sector services, including health, education, housing, local government and justice. They provide emotional and practical support to Aboriginal families who access services, and help relevant organisations communicate with each other on the needs, priorities and concerns of the Aboriginal community. Their role is not to educate non-Indigenous Australians. However, they may be able to assist you in identifying who to contact to help you embed local Aboriginal culture in the service.

Elders and/or other community leaders

In Aboriginal cultures, Elders are accorded special respect as the teachers and holders of the knowledge of their communities. They provide unique insight into the traditional ways and activities of their community.

The traditional roles of Elders differ across Australia, but in general they are committed to sharing what they know and providing guidance to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to help maintain connections to land and culture. They are often addressed as Auntie or Uncle, terms that indicate respect.

Elders may be happy to visit your service. They are often very busy, as they have many demands on their time. Offering money to compensate for cost and time involved (including travel time) acknowledges the important work that Elders do in the community.

Aboriginal interpreters

In parts of Australia where Indigenous languages are first languages, interpreters assist in communication. They may be able to advise you on how to contact relevant local people who can assist you.

Aboriginal educators

If you have an Aboriginal educator in your service, they may be able to take on a special role in advising you on how to embed Aboriginal culture. However, it is important to be aware that due to past government acts, such as dispossession and separation of children from their families, Aboriginal educators may not be comfortable being seen as a source of information for their culture.

Be aware that not everyone has the authority to speak about specific Indigenous cultural material. It is not appropriate to expect any Indigenous Australian to answer questions or resolve issues, and be an expert on all aspects of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander culture.

For example, in her book, *Am I black enough for you?,* writer Anita Heiss has said, 'I have been expected by non-Aboriginal people – at university, during school visits, at writers' festivals, at dinner parties, on plane rides and in night clubs – to be all knowing of Aboriginal culture as well as to articulate my predefined, exotic and somehow tangible relationship with the land.'

Example

Supporting the work of Elders

Penny, an educator in Perth, has been researching local Aboriginal culture to embed in her early years childcare service. She has been trying to get in touch with a Noongar Elder for advice and to provide a learning experience for the children. The Elder is not returning her calls or emails. Penny knows how busy Elders are and discusses with the director of the service if she can offer financial support to the Elder for his time and travel. This way the service can show that the time, skills and experience of community Elders is highly valued by the service.

Credible sources of information

Make sure the information you research comes from a reliable and trustworthy source.

A culture and its values and practices may be represented inaccurately online or even in a published book. It is always preferable to find sources that are written or produced by Indigenous Australians.

Some examples of reliable sources are:

- official government resources, such as education and health websites
- resources produced by non-government organisations (NGOs)
- recently published textbooks that make an effort to show Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives (generally less than 30 years old)
- study materials
- research from experts.

Here are some things to consider when researching information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.

Example	What to do
Some aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures have been used or reproduced wrongly or without permission. For example, objects have been created for sale, such as mass-produced machine-made boomerangs or didgeridoos targeted towards the tourism market.	It is always preferable to support Aboriginal businesses when sourcing materials used for teaching about Aboriginal cultures.
Some aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures or ways of life have been exaggerated or have only a limited view of traditional culture. For example, Indigenous Australians have often been thought of as 'primitive', or living a 'timeless, unchanging lifestyle'.	Avoid the stereotypical ways in which Aboriginal culture has been portrayed. Source children's books that represent Indigenous Australians living and engaging with modern culture or technology.
Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures have been portrayed as childlike since the protection system that imposed many rules and restrictions on adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Avoid resources that present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures in a simplistic way. Some children's books use dialogue in a fluent Aboriginal language, but it is translated by the author as a simplified or pidgin version of English. Avoid using words such as 'nomads' and 'hunter-gatherers'. Emphasise the positive aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures; for example, they were the first ocean-going navigators, first astronomers and the first agriculturalists in Australia.

Evaluating information

The NQS encourages educators to participate in ongoing reflection.

Use your reflection skills to help you clarify the origins of information you are reading.

Coming up with a set of questions is always a good approach to reflection. When examining sources, consider the following:

- Who wrote it?
- When was it written?
- What language is used, and is it appropriate and respectful?
- Why was this written and who is it aimed at?

Example

Reading a Dreaming story

Maya is reading a Dreaming story to the four-year-old group. It has pictures of Aboriginal men that are nearly naked. Many of the children are laughing and pointing at the pictures. Maya has been told by her room leader that one child in this group is Aboriginal, but the parents have asked that this information be kept confidential.

Maya says to the children, 'People do things differently in many different parts of the world. Why might it be best for people to wear little or no clothing?'

She discusses positive ideas with the children, such as:

- It may help to keep them cooler in hot weather.
- The clothes don't need to be washed.
- They don't need to store the clothes anywhere.
- They don't have to worry about wearing wet clothes, leading to illness.
- Sometimes, people wear clothing during ceremonies or special occasional that they don't wear at home or at childcare.

Practice Task 4

1. Which of the following statements are examples of evaluating information? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Prioritise researching cultures from across Australia.
- ☐ Research the network of land and sea councils or Aboriginal corporations.
- ☐ Seek advice from Elders for insight into the traditional activities of the local community.
- ☐ Research online to gather a wide range of opinion on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories.
- ☐ Consider the author and date of publication.

2. You want to seek advice on ways to embed culture into the daily routines for children. Which of the following are appropriate sources of information? Select all that apply.

- ☐ An Aboriginal worker at the local hospital
- ☐ Your state or territory land and sea council, or Aboriginal corporation
- ☐ The local government art and culture department
- ☐ An Aboriginal cultural centre run by the local university
- ☐ An Elder from the local community

2B Protocols for art, culture and language

Protocols ensure that there is respect and acknowledgment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's right to exercise control over their culture.

A protocol is a rule you need to follow in order to show respect. Protocols help you to sensitively handle information about culture.

Aims of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' protocols
Show awareness of the issues around the importance of language and how it needs to be used and relearned.
Show respect by seeking permission to share culture with others.
Acknowledge the right of Indigenous Australians to have control and ownership of their cultures.
Show awareness of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures have been misrepresented or appropriated in the past.

In some parts of Australia, colonisation occurred more recently and, as a result, the community may have been able to hold onto traditional cultural practices more strongly. Areas that were colonised earlier are likely to have had many of their cultural practices suppressed or completely wiped out.

Terms of respect

The correct terminology can vary over time and from place to place.

Respectful terminology must be used when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures. Guides on the correct use of appropriate language and terminology are produced by departments of health, education authorities, including universities. Some terms are offensive and have been used in the past as an expression of power by the dominant culture. Usually it is not appropriate for non-Indigenous people to use these words.

One example of a guide on appropriate Aboriginal terminology produced by the Centre for Aboriginal Health, NSW Ministry of Health, can be found here:

aspirelr.link/cah-terminology

Some terminology guides suitable for schools and early learning services in Australia can be found at:

- aspirelr.link/indigenous-terminology-guide
- aspirelr.link/appropriate-terminology-aboriginal-topics
- aspirelr.link/indigenous-terminology

Note: Recommendations on appropriate terminology vary across organisations from different states and territories. Ensure you refer to a reputable site that applies to the state/territory where your service is based.

Issues relating to language

Some protocols relate to learning and knowing Indigenous languages.

Aboriginal writer Bruce Pascoe says, 'The maintenance and revival of our languages is crucial to our cultural health. For many of us, our languages represent the keystone to our identities, Law and land claims.'

Source: Simpson, J. (2019) 'The state of Australia's Indigenous languages – and how we can help people speak them more often', *The Conversation*, 21 January

Prior to Europeans arriving in Australia in 1788, it is believed there were between 300 and 700 Indigenous languages spoken in Australia. However, since colonisation, there have been many cases in which speaking Indigenous languages was forbidden and punished. Today, 160 Indigenous languages are still spoken at home, but only 13 are known and spoken by children. Only 10 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People speak an Indigenous language at home.

There are a number of research strategies investigating Indigenous languages with the aim of revitalising them. Researchers have been able to find old artefacts, recordings and manuscripts created by early European settlers who wanted to communicate with Aboriginal people. Many people are actively relearning their ancestral languages.

In some parts of Australia, there is a major effort to support bilingual education. This helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' children get a grounding in their first language, and learn English alongside it. The aim is to preserve community languages by ensuring young people continue to know and speak their first language.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People speak a dialect of English, sometimes termed 'Aboriginal English'. Educators should recognise it as a different way of speaking English.

Incorporating Indigenous languages in the service

Indigenous words and languages are increasingly being acknowledged across Australia today.

Since the British first arrived in Australia, they tried to recreate England with roads, English plants and trees, and towns named after English villages. Although many Aboriginal terms for features of the landscape have been lost, European colonisers often used Aboriginal words for place names. Sometimes these were inaccurate, or any Aboriginal word was used for a new place name.

Incorporate Aboriginal words and languages in the service.

Over the last few decades, places of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural significance have been renamed out of respect for the traditional custodians, and their original has been name returned. The most famous of these is Uluru in the Central Desert, formerly known by Europeans as 'Ayer's Rock'. There have been efforts to incorporate local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' languages into the naming of parks and open spaces, media, signage or community information. For example, the 'Word Up!' program broadcast by the ABC teaches radio listeners about local languages spoken around Australia.

Before naming a place, event or artform using an Indigenous term, permission should be sought from local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representatives, even if that term is already in use.

Incorporating Maori culture

New Zealand/Aotearoa is known globally for its shared cultural approach in early childhood.

The Treaty of Waitangi made in 1840 founded an idea of official shared culture, sometimes called biculturalism.

Today, early childhood services are expected to embed Maori language and culture into their programs. Because the Maori people only have one language, government strategies to incorporate language into education services are more straightforward than in Australia.

You can read more about NZ's practice of embedding Maori culture in different early childhood settings here: aspirelr.link/te-whariki-identity-language-culture.

Thanks to the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand has an official shared culture.

Cultural expressions of art, music and dance

Educational activities that incorporate cultural expressions need the guidance of the traditional custodians of the land on which the service operates.

Cultural expressions can include many different forms, such as:

- stories
- poetry
- songs
- music
- dances
- plays
- ceremonies
- carvings
- sculptures
- handicrafts
- rituals
- performances
- symbols
- drawings
- designs
- paintings
- needlework
- textiles
- artefacts
- instruments.

Here are some examples of cultural expressions.

The Dreaming 	The Dreaming is the knowledge system of art, law, education and histories that governs Aboriginal culture. Stories, music, art and dance help maintain a connection to land and culture. The Dreaming weaves together items, ideas and places that are sacred or have particular significance to communities. You should talk about sacred and significant aspects of culture in terms of respect. This includes discussing the Dreaming in meetings and modelling language to describe the Dreaming in ways that children in the service can understand.
Dance 	Dance is traditionally used in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures to maintain knowledge through storytelling. There are usually protocols guiding who in the community performs particular dances. Contemporary dancing is inspired by traditional dancing. However, be aware that dancing should not be reproduced except with permission.
Music 	Music is a key expression of cultural belonging. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, the function of music is to: › renew and teach law and culture › perform ceremonies › tell stories › preserve language › entertain › record personal stories › celebrate › comment on life, society and politics › showcase and share Indigenous experiences.
Songs 	A contemporary song that is well known in popular culture generally does not require permission to learn and perform, as long as it is incorporated in the program respectfully. However, you should still seek permission to teach or reproduce songs in local Indigenous languages or by lesser known performers.

Musical instruments 	There are differences of opinion within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities on protocols around using traditional musical instruments. Some prefer that customary laws and practices are followed, and permission be sought from traditional custodians. For example, some feel strongly that women should not play a yidaki or didgeridoo. It is best to seek guidance from local traditional custodians on the use of Indigenous instruments in the service. Paying for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander musician to visit, perform and teach children is a good way to support local Indigenous music performers to maintain and share their cultural traditions.
Visual art 	Indigenous visual arts have traditionally been made using natural materials such as fibres, bark, shells, clay and rock. Often traditional art is connected to the Dreaming and many symbols are sacred or used for specific purposes. There are many forms of contemporary Indigenous art that cover different media and technologies. Subject matter can vary from images of social life and the landscape to commentary on political ideas. However, you should be aware that dot paintings were invented in the 1970s to obscure sacred symbols.

In most cases, seek guidance and/or permission from local traditional custodians of the land on which the service operates about activities that incorporate cultural expressions. In addition, a service may have a policy or procedural document that outlines how to gain, and who to contact for, permission. A policy or code of ethics document will include statements on the appropriate and expected behaviour of educators and the protocols to follow to show respect and sensitively handle information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture. For example, Early childhood Australia's (ECA) code of ethics states that in relation to families and educator will: learn about, respect and respond to the uniqueness of each family, their circumstances, culture, family structure, customs, language, beliefs and kinship systems.

Appropriation of Aboriginal artworks

In recent years, laws have been developed that protect Aboriginal people's rights over art and culture.

In the past when Aboriginal artists and performers produced artworks, most of the financial benefits often went to non-Indigenous dealers, galleries or other agents.

However, the law referred to as Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protects the rights of the original artist or creator. This law extends to knowledge of the community, such as its laws and histories.

ICIP rights
To protect and limit access to traditional knowledge and sacred cultural material.
To ensure that traditional laws and customary obligations are respected, particularly when profits are made.
To be compensated if Indigenous culture is used without the community's permission.
To be acknowledged as the community connected with the culture.
To be able to prevent insulting, offensive and misleading uses of Indigenous culture in all forms of media.
To control the recording of cultural customs and expressions, and language which may be essential to cultural identity, knowledge, skill and teaching about Indigenous cultures.

Cultural sensitivity

Educators should be aware of aspects of traditional culture that may be practised by traditional custodians of the land.

There are several protocols related to knowing and sharing information. Here are some examples.

Men's and women's business	In traditional culture, men and women have separate responsibilities in the community. Ceremonies and rituals are performed by specific roles and are often private or secret. Some knowledge is only for men or only for women.
Deceased people	Some Aboriginal people do not use the name of a deceased person. An initial or replacement may be used to refer to the person. When referring to a person who is deceased, it is most appropriate to follow the guidance of the group or nation that person came from. It is also the custom for some people to refrain from viewing images of a deceased person. If you are showing an image of someone who is deceased, it is respectful to give a warning first to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.
Photography	You may wish to take photos of special occasions or when special visitors come to the service. Photos may be used to document learning programs or shared in newsletters or online. Ensure you seek permission before filming or photographing a demonstration or performance by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

Example

Using respectful language

The children are reading a book together that mentions climbing Uluru. The educator Vivian knows that this is not respectful as the traditional custodians have asked people not to climb it.

Vivian decides not to mention that part of the story. Instead, she pauses the book to have a brief discussion about Uluru. She says, 'Uluru is a giant piece of red rock that comes out of the ground in the middle of Australia. It is an important and special place for the Anangu people. Many people from Australia and other countries visit and learn about why it is special, like these people in the story.'

Practice Task 5

1. Which of the following are examples of when protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need to be followed? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Protocols need to be followed before teaching a song in a local Indigenous language. * Yes * No

b. Protocols need to be followed when reading a published Dreaming story to children such as the Tiddalick the Frog. * Yes * No

c. Protocols need to be followed before taking a photo of an Elder talking to children in your service. * Yes * No

d. Protocols need to be followed when talking about reconciliation to children. * Yes * No

e. Protocols need to be followed before teaching children how to sing a contemporary popular song, such as 'My Island Home'. * Yes * No

f. Protocols need to be followed as outlined in the service's code of ethics to ensure cultural information is handled sensitively. * Yes * No

2. Select true or false in relation to the following statement.

Over the last few decades, places of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural significance have been renamed out of respect for the traditional custodians, and their original Indigenous name has been returned. * True * False

3. Select true or false in relation to the following statement.

In the past most Aboriginal artists benefitted greatly by having their artwork sold to non-Indigenous dealers, galleries or other agents. * True * False

Summary

- Aim to increase your knowledge about the traditional custodians in the area where your service is based.
- Reflection can be useful to work out whether a source is credible and reliable.
- Traditional custodians in your local area may be able to assist you to learn about their culture.
- Community cultural protocols are a set of formal and informal guidelines that help non-Indigenous Australians navigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures respectfully.
- You need to be aware of protocols when you are incorporating Indigenous languages, art, music and other aspects of culture into learning experiences.

Learning Checkpoint 2

Investigate the local context for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.

1. Sarah is an educator at an early learning service. She recently undertook research to help her understand the culture of traditional custodians of the area where the service is based.

   Which of the following are critical reflection questions she can use to decide the best sources of information for her research? Select all that apply.

   - ☐ Is the resource written by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person, or written from their perspective?
   - ☐ Does the information focus on a local culture rather than general national culture?
   - ☐ Does the information use respectful language and terminology, showing that it is up to date?
   - ☐ Is the information able to be printed out and shared?

2. Which of the following are protocols that show respect and cultural sensitively for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures? Select all that apply.

   - ☐ Dance is traditionally used to maintain knowledge through storytelling and can be reproduced without permission.
   - ☐ Laws protect access to traditional knowledge and compensation if cultural expression is used without the community's permission.
   - ☐ Cultural sensitivity includes warning any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person if you will be showing an image of someone who is deceased.
   - ☐ You don't need to ask permission to take photos of visitors to the service if these will be used to document learning programs.

Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

3A Contributing ideas for embedding cultures into daily practice

3B Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures in the learning program

Integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures in the service

The best way to develop ideas is to collaborate with others.

By using your research skills and working with your supervisor and colleagues, you will be able to think of interesting opportunities that encourage children to reflect on and engage with different aspects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.

3A Contributing ideas for embedding cultures into daily practice

Collaboration improves the delivery of learning to children.

Collaboration happens when two or more individuals work together to share knowledge and skills. In an education and care service, collaboration will occur frequently as educators discuss ideas during planning meetings. Staff in more senior roles will have program planning experience and will be able to support you to plan and implement your ideas into the daily routines of children.

Collaborating with others helps you to consider new ideas and perspectives.

A collaborative approach requires staff to speak clearly and respectfully to each other. You must be honest about what you do and don't know about Indigenous cultures, and be open to learning new ideas from others. Collaboration helps people to review their perspectives by considering the opinions of others. In some cases it could lead you to change your mind when presented with new ways of doing things.

Collaborating works best when there is purpose, structure and clear processes in place. This includes being aware of protocols related to knowing and sharing information. This may involve the whole team working together or some team members researching and reporting back to the team. In some services, it is possible to invite families to be involved in developing and brainstorming new ideas. Families don't necessarily have to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples to be able to provide insight. They may have knowledge of Indigenous culture due to lived experience, location of residence, work experience, study or relationships.

Benefits of collaboration
Better staff relationships, teamwork and information-sharing
Improved staff morale with the ability to embrace change
Increased staff professionalism and productivity
Developing innovations and interesting learning experiences for children
Ideas for improving the learning outcomes and opportunities for children

Seeking help for ideas

Research indicates that many educators are cautious about teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures out of a fear of being inaccurate or unintentionally offensive.

Aboriginal educator Adam Duncan suggests the following about non-indigenous educators acknowledging and incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures into programs:

- Inform yourself and engage with the culture.
- Try to have a personal connection or understanding.
- Use contemporary events as a basis for learning.
- Begin incorporating ideas in the curriculum and then keep going even if they feel tokenistic; they provide a good foundation and starting point.
- Build a sense of good faith and partnership with the local community by making contact with the Elders and traditional custodians of the land in which the service is located.

Developing ideas from professional development

As an educator, you must stay informed and improve on your professional capabilities throughout your career.

There are professional development resources available to support awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories and cultures. The activities of other services can provide insight into the different ways to include opportunities for children.

Examples of organisations that offer early childhood learning professional development are provided below.

Organisation	Description
Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority ACECQA	This is an initiative of the federal government. Resources are available on cultural competence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures. These include free professional learning modules aimed at educators working in early years settings. Learning modules include: - personal cultural competency - embedding culture in learning practices - building a culturally competent and responsive service.
Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs)	These are funded by the Australian government to provide professional development and support to children's services. They focus on services that have Indigenous Australian students.
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)	SNAICC is the national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' children. The organisation has several useful resources that help educators learn about the needs of Indigenous Australian children and how to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures into learning environments, experiences and routines.

Documenting your ideas

When your ideas have been developed as much as possible, you will need to confirm any changes with your supervisor or the team leader responsible for program development.

Your ideas should be based around the approved learning frameworks, the EYLF or MTOP, so they reflect the principles and practices of these documents. Your supervisor will want to know the following information in regard to your ideas for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures into the curriculum:

- What children will be doing during each activity
- The educator's role during the activity
- What aspect of culture the activity relates to, such as art, craft, music and language
- Resources that will be required for each activity and an indication of new resources that may need to be purchased or obtained
- How the activity relates to local traditional custodians
- How the experience will promote understanding and respect

Developing a reconciliation action plan

The purpose of a reconciliation action plan (RAP) is to support an organisations to develop respectful relationships and create meaningful opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

RAPs are an initiative of Reconciliation Australia, an organisation that supports reconciliation and Closing the Gap which is an initiative to reduce disadvantage. A reconciliation plan is a formal document that may be developed by the service to demonstrate its respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and its willingness to welcome them in the service.

A RAP outlines the strategies that the service wishes to implement for children. Once your ideas have been implemented, a RAP will demonstrate the commitment of the service to increasing respect and awareness between the service and Indigenous Australians in the community.

You can read more about RAPs here: aspirelr.link/rap-hub. You can see an example of a RAP produced by Early Childhood Australia (ECA) here: aspirelr.link/eca-rap.

Example

Beginning to embed culture

After reading an article on a government website, room leader Thanh realises that the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures are currently taught in the service is outdated. The service owns a few old items and books that are annually put on display during NAIDOC Week.

She talks to each of the educators and finds that one of the new educators, Kelly, is investigating aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures as part of a professional development program. Thanh asks Kelly to meet with her and together they do online research and discuss their findings so they have new ideas to present at the next staff meeting.

Practice Task 6

Which of the following statements relate to collaboration? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Planning meetings are a good place for educators to share and listen to others' ideas.
- ☐ One staff member can take credit for the ideas of the team.
- ☐ A reconciliation action plan supports educators and the organisation to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- ☐ Ideas that are tokenistic will not be appreciated by the traditional custodians.

3B Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures in the learning program

Embedding cultures in the learning program means making them a key part of the program, rather than a project or theme that only happens at particular times.

Incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures into programs is an important aspect of multiculturalism that celebrates diversity in Australia. Some early childhood services aim to emphasise Indigenous cultures in learning experiences and programs. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories can become part of the daily routines for children, regardless of whether Indigenous Australian children and families are part of the service community.

Making Indigenous cultures part of the everyday program will help Indigenous Australian children feel welcome and included.

Making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures visible in learning programs and physical spaces is important for all children, but is particularly relevant for cultural safety and improving educational outcomes of Indigenous Australian children.

Ways of learning

You can facilitate children's experiences and encourage them to reflect and engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of learning.

Ways of learning is a concept that came from research conducted at James Cook University in 2009. The eight ways of learning describe Indigenous processes for the transmission of knowledge and offers a cultural interface between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of learning. It is used as a starting point for discussions about local Aboriginal ways of learning.

Eight interconnected pedagogies	Description
Story Sharing	Narrative-driven learning
Learning Maps	Visualised learning processes
Non-verbal	Applying intra-personal, hands on/ kinaesthetic skills to thinking and learning
Symbols and Images	Using images and metaphors to understand concepts and content
Land Links	Place-based learning, linking content to local land and place

Eight interconnected pedagogies	Description
Non-linear	Producing innovations and understanding by thinking laterally or combining systems or using an interdisciplinary approach
Deconstruct/Reconstruct	Modelling and scaffolding, working from wholes to parts (watch then do)
Community Links	Centring local viewpoints, making a connection to community, applying learning for community benefit

Aspects of ways of learning can be applied to several areas of the learning program, such as:

- Maths - discussion with children about history, eras and timelines of events. Working with symbols such as understanding traditional symbols and developing new symbols.
- Science - investigating Indigenous foods, creating an Indigenous garden, developing and participating in a Bush Kinder program, initiating an ongoing relationship with an Elder who might share environmental connections, stories and sustainable concepts.
- Art - examining the meanings behind the symbols used in artworks and the use of different surfaces and the ways paints and pastes are used.
- Music - learning to hold music sticks and using them to make different noises symbolising different animals or meanings.

You can read more about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of learning here: aspirelr.link/qcaa-atsi-frameworks

Embedding positive learning experiences

Children benefit from positive and respectful learning experiences.

As an educator, you can support children to reflect on and engage with many different aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures. Encouraging children to listen and ask questions during a learning experience will help them to develop respect and encourage understanding.

Learning experience	Ways to encourage reflection
Acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia	Children can be taught that the land has been colonised and altered by saying things such as: 'This land was always Aboriginal land until other people arrived. They changed the land to look like their own homelands, and Aboriginal people were no longer able to live the same way.'
Familiarity with important cultural symbols	Children can become familiar with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' flags, art styles and other symbolism incorporated into the learning spaces and daily routines. This helps them see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures as central to what it means to be Australian.

Learning experience	Ways to encourage reflection
Understanding the impact of colonisation	Children can be made aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been and continue to be treated unfairly. Educators can discuss how having different types of rules for people in the same community is wrong. Children can be taught that Aboriginal people fought for their land and that many people died. They can be taught that languages are now being relearned because many Indigenous Australians were told to stop speaking their language, and were sometimes punished if they did.
Understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures were different across Australia	Emphasise that what children are learning is from the traditional custodians. For example, you could say: 'This is the language of the [local Indigenous group]. There were many different languages all across Australia.' Or you could say: 'These shell necklaces were made because the [local Indigenous group] lived by the sea. Do you think communities far away from the sea would have been able to make shell necklaces?'
Experiencing ways of knowing and communication	Children can be taught how oral communication (speaking and listening) and art were used to share information and ideas.
Understanding and respecting the Dreaming	Educators can talk about the Dreaming as a system of keeping the knowledge of the community. Everyone in the community learns this by listening to stories, laws and facts told by Elders.
Learning the local language	Language is an important tool that can help people become closer to a culture. Children can learn a set of terms or phrases that help them become familiar with the language of traditional custodians.
Understanding traditional practices that cared for the land	Indigenous Australians developed careful practices over thousands of years that ensured sustainability and sufficient resources for the community to survive on their land. You can embed these traditional approaches into discussions about sustainability and caring for the environment today.
Knowing about local flora and fauna	Children can understand how the land has changed as a result of colonisation: new people who were unfamiliar with local plants and animals caused a lot of damage to the existing ecosystems. You could say: 'Bandicoots used to live on this land until it was turned into farmland and then became part of the city. Why might bandicoots have found it hard to live with buildings and people around?' Children can be encouraged to understand how introduced species of plants and animals have interfered with native species.
Discussing contemporary issues	Children can be introduced to some of the problems that exist today for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. One way this can be achieved is by examining campaigns that aim to redress racism, such as 'Racism, it stops with me'.

Developing your Acknowledgment of Country

An Acknowledgment of Country is a short and clear written or oral statement.

'Acknowledgment' means showing awareness and understanding of something. In this case, it shows awareness that we are living on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander land.

Say an Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of meetings and information sessions.

Any person can make an acknowledgement. The statement helps children learn the name of the traditional custodians in the area where the service is based, and begin the process of identifying unique differences that exist in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures. This is different to a Welcome to Country, which should only be performed by an Aboriginal person.

Often, an Acknowledgment of Country is offered at the beginning of a meeting or significant event. It should be known and understood by the community, and should make specific reference to the traditional custodians of the area.

There are many resources online to support your service in developing an Acknowledgement of Country. A basic form is: 'We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.'

Children in the service can make more meaning from the acknowledgment by:

- seeing the statement printed in large text, decorated, and put it in a prominent area, such as the wall of the entry area
- learning the words and taking turns saying it during the daily routine, such as the first morning group session
- hearing educators say the acknowledgment at the beginning of meetings and information sessions.

Physical environments

Different parts of the service can be used to acknowledge and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.

The following table outlines how you can best utilise different parts of the service environment.

Entry or foyer 	➤ The entry area can be used to demonstrate the service's philosophy and approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures. ➤ It can be used to reinforce aspects of local and traditional culture that are being covered in the programs. ➤ The following can be displayed in the foyer or front area of the service building: – words from local languages – local terms for seasons – 'welcome' sign in your local Indigenous language – statement explaining the importance of the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture to your service – books that celebrate and inform about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples – a written Acknowledgment of Country – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' flags – pictures of native plants and wildlife. Remember to gain permission to use languages.
Inside learning spaces 	➤ The inclusion of objects that represent cultural practices, such as items used in ceremonies, should be guided by the traditional custodians in your area. ➤ Plastic or felt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' dolls and outfits can be used in the home corner. ➤ Native animal costumes such as kangaroos or possums can encourage children to dress up and engage in dramatic play. ➤ Natural objects such as rocks, stones, shells, bark, leaves, reeds and fur can be collected for a sensory display. They can be used to broaden children's language on textures and other observable features. Images or samples of made objects and artefacts can be used to show how they were used to manufacture everyday items or artworks. ➤ Toys or native animals, birds and insects in the local area can be provided for children to play with. ➤ Artefacts and traditional objects such as woven bags, flint stones and eel traps can be provided. ➤ Wall displays of words, images, artworks, maps and flags to help celebrate, acknowledge and learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures can be included. ➤ Indigenous artwork printed on fabric can be used to represent symbols and ideas. Information about the artists, such as their name, picture and a simple map showing where they are from can be provided.

Outside learning spaces 	➤ Natural features of the local landscape or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures can be incorporated into landscaping, such as a dry creek bed, rock formation, or a paved space for a yarning (storytelling and sharing) circle. ➤ Outside learning spaces help incorporate nature and provide opportunities to learn about traditional flora and fauna of the land on which the service resides. Pictures of the pre-colonised local landscape can be shown to share and discuss. ➤ Environmental sustainability can be introduced by showing the ways in which traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' practices maintained good environmental health and avoided depletion of resources. ➤ Local plant species can be grown in a garden bed amongst images of extinct plants and animals that can no longer survive in the area. ➤ Symbols and pictures can be used on signs to help children understand the status of a plant, such as the extent to which it grows across Australia, whether it is endangered and whether there is a known name in a local Indigenous language. ➤ Many of the more common bush foods have European names, such as 'bush banana', 'native lime' and 'native orange', even though they may be from completely different plant families. Discussing why they have been given English names instead of using an Indigenous name can encourage children to reflect on how languages can be lost, and how we may use familiar words or ideas to name unfamiliar things. Bush foods might also be incorporated into cooking activities.

Books and stories

There is a range of contemporary and traditional stories available, including fiction and non-fiction stories.

Dreaming stories represented as picture books are a strong tradition in early childhood education in Australia. Dreaming stories can be a picture book, told orally in person by a visiting Aboriginal Elder or educator, or a video or online resource narrated by an Aboriginal storyteller.

Dreaming stories reveal Aboriginal knowledge of Australia's long-term history. For example, there are many stories that contain giant animals. These are references to the extinct megafauna that existed in Australia a long time ago.

Dreaming stories can be used to teach children about:

- the spiritual belief system of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- myths and legends of how an animal, landform or other aspect of nature came into existence
- features of the local land and how to care for it
- how to behave morally and kindly towards others

- hunting and gathering practices
- survival skills
- how animals behave
- customs that need to be obeyed.

In addition to Dreaming stories, there are also other books that show contemporary Aboriginal life, or assist children to gain a better understanding of Indigenous society. Seek advice from local Aboriginal community members or librarians about suitable stories to use in the service.

Example

Embedding cultural knowledge in the learning program

Luke is an educator who understands that children need to be exposed to a range of contemporary ideas and see different Indigenous Australians talking about culture, whether this is on a video or through pictures in books. He wants to show children pictures of Aboriginal people through Dreaming stories and how traditional customs are blended with Western practices to give a well-rounded view of modern life for Aboriginal people in Australia.

He finds a picture book that show Indigenous Australian children learning in a remote community school. It shows children today and how they learn about traditional practices, such as foraging for food, building shelters or fishing.

Art and craft

Crafts are handmade objects that are mostly used for practical or functional purposes.

They tend to be designed or decorated in specific ways according to local traditions. Many handcrafted Indigenous artefacts are mass-produced and sold in souvenir shops, including didgeridoos, boomerangs, music sticks and dilly bags. Indigenous representatives can be invited to demonstrate how to make an object to children and guide them to attempt to make a simple item using traditional materials.

Art can be explored together to help children understand symbols and meanings, and to comprehend the rich stories that emerge from a single artwork. Children can be shown traditional methods of mixing paint pastes, and try painting on different surfaces. A local Indigenous artist may be commissioned to create an artwork in consultation with the staff and children at the service.

Incorporate Indigenous art and craft into the program.

Special events

Events can be used to recognise the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

Here are some examples of learning opportunities relating to particular events.

Sorry Day (26 May)	The anniversary of the *Bringing them Home* report into the Stolen Generations.
Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June)	A celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories. 27 May is the anniversary of the 1967 Referendum. 3 June is the anniversary of the High Court Judgment of the Mabo Case, overturning the concept of *Terra Nullius*. It is also known as Mabo Day.
NAIDOC week (7–14 July)	Celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' achievements, including important Indigenous Australians.
National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (4 August)	Highlights the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' children.
International Day of the World's Indigenous People (9 August)	This is a day recognised and observed by the United Nations.

Excursions

Excursions to museums, cultural centres or important sites offer insights into cultural information and meanings.

If excursions are not possible, a display in the foyer or a handout can be created for families describing local places they can visit with their children. They may include special places that show traditional culture, such as a scar tree or the site of fish trapping. Significant landmarks for modern Indigenous history, such as an important mural, memorial or meeting place, may also be of interest.

Inviting community visitors

Arranging a visitor from the local community can provide rich learning experiences for children.

Hearing stories directly from a respected member of the community, such as a traditional custodian or other Indigenous educator or community member, will provide an opportunity for educators to model interactions that show respect.

Speakers may share personal experiences, family history and traditional stories. They may even bring artefacts that help children gain deeper understanding of the local culture. Before the visit takes place, staff at the centre should be made aware of the need for sensitivity when asking questions about matters relating to traditional culture and negative historical events.

Community visitors should also be offered financial compensation for their time and travel costs.

Incorporating languages and words

Research a reputable source to obtain a list of approved words for use in a program with children.

This may come from the traditional custodians, or from a book, website or learning resource. Research should be undertaken into the protocols for using local Aboriginal words and language. The traditional custodians can assist in what language is used and the appropriate and respectful use of local or regional words or language.

Names for seasons	Seasonal calendars are available for different parts of Australia. For example, the Queensland Government provides detailed diagrams of Torres Strait Islander seasons and stars at: aspirelr.link/qcaa-torres-strait-islander-seasons-stars.
Animal names	Children can learn to confidently use Indigenous names for native animals. You can develop activities where animals communicate with each other or are part of storytelling. Children could be encouraged to take turns to look after a particular animal, learning about what they need to survive.
Simple phrases	Learning simple phrases such as 'hello' and 'welcome' in the local Indigenous language will give children greater familiarity and engagement with the local community.

Incorporating song and dance

Singing and dancing together is an opportunity to build a sense of community among the children.

Children can either learn traditional songs (where protocols are taken into consideration) or contemporary songs that help them learn about the ideas and experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Songs also increase familiarity with the sound of the local language.

Dance is used to mark important or special occasions in many cultures. Indigenous Australian dance is often used for storytelling rituals, as well as for celebrations and for spiritual reasons. Encourage children to participate and learn what various dances mean to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Yarning circles

'Yarning' is an Aboriginal English word and refers to the idea of informal talking or storytelling.

Yarning circles are an important custom in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, and provide an opportunity to respectfully share knowledge and build relationships. Instruct children on how to respectfully participate in a yarning circle. The person who starts and manages the yarning circle is usually referred to as the host, and can be an educator or visitor.

Follow these steps to create a yarning circle:

1. Sit in a circle: This shows that everyone is equal and must listen to each other.
2. Ask each child to share something about themselves.
3. Introduce the topic or purpose of the yarning circle.
4. Share ideas and thoughts: Children take turns to talk, share and learn. Time can be allocated for participants to write or draw their thoughts after each person speaks. You could provide paper in the middle of the circle for participants to record their thoughts. The yarning circle can take place outside so thoughts can be drawn in the dirt.
5. Reflect: Resolve any actions or issues identified by the yarning circle or agree to follow up in future yarning circles.

You can read more about Yarning circles here: aspirelr.link/qcaa-yarning-circles

Finding resources

It is always preferable to buy or access resources from Indigenous-owned businesses or organisations.

Some of these are national organisations, but there are many that have a local focus. Here are some useful places to help you begin to look at the kinds of resources available to purchase.

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTAR)	ANTAR has an extensive online shop with children's book titles. It also sells signs and plates that acknowledge Aboriginal land.
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)	SNAICC sells items such as literacy and numeracy posters, as well as professional development resources.
Yarn Strong Sista	This is a locally focused organisation in Melbourne. It sells custom-made kits for early childhood settings, including items used for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.
Magabala Books	Magabala Books is an independent publisher that sells many children's book titles.
Early Childhood Australia (ECA)	There are several publications from the ECA shop that contain activities to help educators teach Indigenous songs, craft and other aspects of culture.

Example

Culture as a tick-box exercise

When Adut began working at an education and care centre, she noticed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures were only mentioned at particular times of the year. She asked a colleague, Cathy, about this, and was told that it would be wrong to focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures when most of the enrolled children came from a non-English-speaking background. Cathy felt it was confusing for the children to learn about the local Aboriginal culture when they first needed to adjust to being in Australia.

Adut realises that Cathy believes that migrant children should be taught about the dominant culture. During the next staff meeting, Adut suggests arranging some staff training about cultural competence because of the diversity in the centre.

Practice Task 7

1. Which of the following are examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures being supported in practices? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Magda puts an Aboriginal flag on the wall of the main room in her service. She places a sign underneath it saying, 'This is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' flag'.	* Yes	* No
b. Fatima creates a yarning circle area surrounded by local grasses. Children sit on small cushions in bush colours. She teaches them how to listen and learn from each other using the practice of yarning.	* Yes	* No
c. Christine is given a list of words for animals in the local language by the traditional custodians in her area. She makes a display in the foyer with pictures of the animals and their local Indigenous names.	* Yes	* No
d. On her state museum website, Jana found a short video of an Aboriginal Elder narrating a story about how the magpie got his colours. She showed it to her group and they discussed the lessons in the story.	* Yes	* No

Summary

- Collaboration is an important way to develop and communicate ideas about embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures.
- Engage in professional development and investigate resources on cultural competency and Aboriginal ways of learning.
- Embedding culture is different to a theme- or project-based approach, as it means incorporating culture into daily practice.
- Encourage children to listen and to ask questions to help them develop respect and encourage understanding.

Learning Checkpoint 3

Integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures in the service

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Monica is a room leader and is having a meeting to discuss ways to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures in the program. Some of the staff have expressed that they don't feel confident or qualified to teach children about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories.

1. Which of the following actions should Monica do? Select yes or no for each one.

a. She should research the address of a local Elder and book a bus for all the staff to meet this person at his home.	* Yes	* No
b. She should work with the staff to identify a suitable set of activities to develop a personal connection and understanding of the culture and history of the traditional custodians.	* Yes	* No
c. She should make a list of Aboriginal words she has found on the internet to describe animals and flora. She will distribute it to staff to use in their rooms with children.	* Yes	* No
d. She should begin incorporating small ideas in the curriculum, then keep building on those ideas.	* Yes	* No
e. She could start with a Reconciliation Plan that outlines the strategies that the service will use to implement strategies for children.	* Yes	* No

2. Which of the following encourages children to engage with the original landscape of the land on which a service sits? Select yes or no for each one.

   a. Visiting a local indigenous plant nursery. * Yes * No

   b. Talking to someone from a local Aboriginal organisation that represents the traditional custodians of the area. * Yes * No

   c. Checking the approved learning framework principles and practices for guidance. * Yes * No

3. Which of the following activities relating to art and culture require consultation with local traditional custodians? Select all that apply.

   - ☐ Children use collected leaves, sticks and glue to create a mural shaped like an animal.
   - ☐ Children use paint colours that reflect the natural landscape, such as green and brown, to do some free painting.
   - ☐ Children copy the techniques in a painting by a famous Aboriginal artist.

4. Draw a line to match each learning method to its example.

* Deconstruct/ Reconstruct	* Using symbols to indicate history, eras and timelines of events
* Using kinaesthetic skills to learn	* Asking an Elder to share environmental connections such as local bush foods and sustainability concepts
* Using images to understand concepts	* Examining different surfaces and the ways paints and pastes are used in art and developing their own artwork
* Linking content to local land and place	* Practising holding music sticks and using them to make different noises