



New South Wales
Aboriginal Education
Consultative Group Inc.



UNSW
SYDNEY



CULTURAL
RESIDENTS
PROJECT

ENGAGING A LOCAL CULTURAL EDUCATOR

A toolkit for schools



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The authors of this toolkit, members of the UNSW School of Education and Eastern Suburbs Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, acknowledge the Bidjigal, Dharawal, and Gadigal custodians of the lands on which we have lived, worked and learned whilst undertaking the Cultural Residents Project, 2020-2022.

We believe that all Australian children deserve to grow up learning from First Nations people about First Nations knowledge in order to better care for Country, acknowledge their own place on sovereign land, and contribute to Reconciliation.



ISBN 978-0-7334-4082-3

This *Engaging a Local Cultural Educator: A toolkit for schools* has been developed by the UNSW's School of Education Cultural Residents Project Team including Dr Rose Amazan, Katherine Thompson, Aimelyn Aquilino, Trent Kelly and Aunty Maxine Ryan, with advisory support from members of the Eastern Suburbs Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (ESLAECG) including Pauline Beller, Calita Murray and Shallan Foster.

The Cultural Residents Project & toolkit are licensed through the philanthropic support from the Crown Resorts and Packer Family Foundations.

The Know Your Country design elements by Rachael Sarra, Goreng Goreng Country, is licensed under a CC BY-NC-N4 4.0.

CONTENTS

Letter from the AECG	1
Introduction	2
A note on terminology	3
About this Toolkit	4
Who is this toolkit for?	5
Why have First Nations Cultural Educators in every school?	6
Background of the Cultural Residents Project	6
The Know Your Country Campaign	7
Overarching Principles	9
Templates	14
SWOT Analysis	15
KWL Chart	16
Is My School Ready for a Cultural Educator? Self-Assessment	16
Part A: School Environment Self-Assessment	21
Part B: Reflexivity and Following Relational Process	23
Your Survey Responses	24
Relationship Building – Dos and Don'ts	
Potential Outcomes	25
Template: Goals and Outcomes Blank Template	26
Preconditions for a Cultural Educator	27
School and System Level	28
Teacher and Classroom Level	31
Engaging Parents and Families	35
Engaging First Nations Communities	36
Summary of Key Enablers/Barriers	40
Templates	42
Sample Parent Newsletter Item	42
Letter to AECG (or similar consultative body in your State/Territory)	43
Sample presentation to Parent Community	44
Know Your Country Fact Sheet	45
Relationships Map	46
Planning for a Cultural Educator – Your School is Committed; now what?	47
Funding	48
Professional Learning for Staff	49
Creating a Staff Committee	51
Community Advisement and Support	53



Recruitment and Selection	53
Templates	56
Expression of Interest	56
One-pager	58
Sample Role Descriptions	59
Implementation – Having a Cultural Educator at your school	62
Nuts and Bolts	63
Orientation and Settling In	63
Scheduling Models	65
Planning Time	67
Curriculum Planning	68
First Nations knowledges in the Australian Curriculum	68
Ways forward with a Cultural Educator	69
Professional Learning	71
Involving parents and families	73
Involving the wider First Nations community	75
Promoting the initiative	76
Reflecting on how it’s going and documenting the outcomes	77
Troubleshooting	79
Templates and Examples	85
Goal Setting Template	85
Big Idea Diagram – Blank	86
Big Idea Diagram – Worked Example	87
Cultural Residents Project Professional Learning Outline	88
Student End-of-Term Reflection Templates	90
Teacher Reflection Prompts	93
Conclusion	94
Recommended Reading and Resources	95
Academic reading	96
Teaching Resources and Media Snapshots	97
Reference List	98





LETTER FROM THE AECG



To the teachers, schools and communities interested in bringing Aboriginal cultural education to your local schools:

The Eastern Suburbs Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (ESLAECG) supports Aboriginal families from the local community with their children's education by consulting and liaising with principals and schools within our boundaries. We also assist schools to communicate effectively with families of Aboriginal students, and provide valuable information to schools about engaging the local Aboriginal community. Many schools want to add Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum but unfortunately lack the confidence and knowledge to include it into their programs. We provide advice to guide them as to how to include appropriate resources into their programs, and we value the opportunity to continue our long-standing work with UNSW on this endeavour.

One of our priorities has always been to empower Aboriginal community members to share their culture, history and knowledge, and to help improve our children's engagement and retention by boosting the presence and visibility of Aboriginal role models in their schools. Since 2016, we have worked with the UNSW School of Education to document the value of something we already know is so important: for all Australian children to learn from the knowledges, histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This work has shown us the potential of what is possible if schools and Aboriginal people can come together, listen to each other, and learn from each other for the sake of improving all children's education in Australia. We believe our work with UNSW has demonstrated that all Australian schools can benefit from employing an Aboriginal Cultural Educator year-round.

The Aboriginal community has developed a strong sense of belonging and empowerment in our local area, and ownership of our journey past and future. We want to support teachers to gain the confidence to more fully embrace Aboriginal knowledge in their pedagogy, and to be sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal students and their families.

We believe this toolkit will be able to help other schools and communities to connect, in order to better educate all people about the importance of embracing First Nations cultures. We are excited for a future in which all Australian children are able to learn from and celebrate our knowledge, and to join us in looking after Country for future generations.

Sincerely,

Pauline Beller

President of the Eastern Suburbs Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (ESLAECG)
2020- 2022

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit documents the experiences and findings of the Cultural Residents Project (CRP), conducted between 2020-2022 by UNSW School of Education and the Eastern Suburbs Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (ESLAECG) in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney, home to the La Perouse Aboriginal Community.

The CRP sought to strengthen the relationships between schools and local Aboriginal community members and organisations to improve the teaching of local First Nations perspectives in schools, for the benefit of all students. The project aimed to demonstrate the benefits of employing local First Nations Cultural Educators in schools, and became a proof of concept for the Know Your Country campaign, which prioritises the employment of a First Nations Cultural Educator in every primary school, in order to ‘close the knowledge gap’ in non-Indigenous people’s understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures.

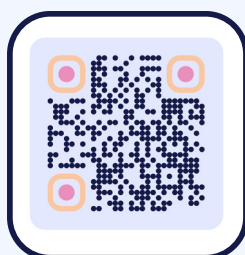


CHIFLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL

First Nations communities have long fought for greater authority and agency in connection with formal schooling. Although the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers mandate that all teachers should have an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) Cross-Curriculum Priorities require the teaching of First Nations perspectives across all disciplines, the largely non-Indigenous teaching workforce feels ill-equipped to teach First Nations perspectives in a meaningful way.

Our research aimed to document the practices and strategies that effectively assist learning communities with improving relationships and better valuing the contribution of First Nations community members, in order to provide culturally responsive and sustaining educational experiences.

This toolkit will assist schools and communities that are keen to embark on such a journey of walking together. Through working from a set of research-based first principles (p. 10), we show you step-by-step considerations and practices that will help you get started, plan, build relationships, make decisions, and troubleshoot any challenges that may arise. We also include examples, case studies, quotations, and narratives that arose during the CRP to illustrate some of these ideas and suggestions. It is important to note that every context is unique, and schools must be responsive to the needs of their *local* First Nations communities and their own school communities. Each section includes templates that may help you with different phases of planning, implementation, documentation and reflection. These are available to download in editable form from our website <http://unsw.to/crtoolkit>.



Scan the QR code above to download the editable templates featured in this toolkit.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

We acknowledge that all English terms that describe the First Peoples of the land now called Australia are inherently colonial. Throughout this document, we generally use the term 'Aboriginal' as this is the preference of the La Perouse community members who supported the CRP. We also use the term 'First Nations' when discussing the Know Your Country campaign, as this was the preferred term following extensive consultation with stakeholders Australia-wide. We have limited our use of "Indigenous" in the local contexts to respect the community we work with. In using these terms we acknowledge that First Nations Peoples are not one homogeneous group, but share common ontology, epistemology and sovereignty that has not been lost nor ceded.



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

**OVERARCHING
PRINCIPLES**

**PRECONDITIONS FOR
A CULTURAL EDUCATOR**

**PLANNING FOR
A CULTURAL EDUCATOR**

IMPLEMENTATION



WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

This toolkit is for school communities that wish to actively and sustainably engage in similar work to the Cultural Residents Project. This toolkit acts as a framework for educators, especially principals and teachers, to engage and collaborate with local Aboriginal community members to teach Aboriginal knowledges, histories, cultures and perspectives in an authentic, mutually respectful and culturally responsive way. The toolkit will outline guiding principles and processes to ensure the employment and teaching experience of a Cultural Educator is inclusive and collaborative within your school community.

We hope for this toolkit to have broad reach and to be applicable to all Australian schools – early childhood, primary, and secondary, across all sectors and states/territories. We note, however, that the research that primarily informs the toolkit was conducted in metro-area primary schools in New South Wales which occupy Bidjigal, Dharawal and Gadigal lands. We may refer to NSW-specific entities such as the AECG, or teams within the NSW Department of Education, noting that similar entities exist in most sectoral systems, states and territories. We believe that Aboriginal cultural education should be a part of all levels of schooling, including high school, but the CRP focussed on primary schools for several reasons:



- This approach was recommended and supported by the local AECG
- Early childhood and primary education shape students' values, expectations, beliefs, and knowledge about society during extremely formative years (Australian Government Department of Education and Workplace Relations, 2009)
- Primary teachers generally teach across all KLAs, better enabling a holistic curriculum narrative around First Nations education to be developed by the schools/teachers involved (see Curriculum Planning section later in this document, p. 68).

All that said, we continue to hope for a future in which all levels of schooling embrace the teaching of First Nations knowledges, for the benefit of all students, and we hope that high schools will also find this toolkit useful.

WHY HAVE FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL EDUCATORS IN EVERY SCHOOL?

Research shows that partnerships between schools and First Nations communities, and the embedding of First Nations cultural knowledge and perspectives in schools, can improve schooling for ALL students (see Bishop et al., 2021). We believe that a First Nations Cultural Educator should be a mainstay of every Australian school. Just as no school would be complete without a principal, a library, or a physical education program, no school should be complete without an Aboriginal Cultural Educator to guide teachers and students in their planning, design and delivery of First Nations knowledges, histories, cultures and perspectives.



Photo Credit: Wolter Peeters, Sydney Morning Herald

CHIFLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL

BACKGROUND OF THE CULTURAL RESIDENTS PROJECT

The Cultural Residents Project (CRP) was a three-year collaborative research practice project between The University of New South Wales (UNSW) and the Eastern Suburbs Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (ESLAECG) from 2020-2022. In the project, Dharawal woman Aunty Maxine Ryan and Yuin and Wailwan man, Trent Kelly, were employed as local Cultural Residents across eight schools in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney. Aunty Maxine and Trent worked with classroom teachers to collaboratively plan, implement, document and evaluate the integration of Aboriginal histories, knowledges and cultures across the curriculum.

The higher level findings from the CRP include:

- increased connection between their school and their local First Nations community
- increased confidence among teaching staff in the authenticity and appropriateness of the First Nations content they are teaching
- deeper intercultural understanding for both teachers and students
- high levels of student engagement.

One of the most significant impacts of the CRP is that it has provided proof of concept for a national program of primary school-based Cultural Educators, an initiative being promoted in the Know Your Country campaign, led by World Vision.

"I think it's good for the schools that we're at, with very, very low Aboriginal populations, so that they can come into contact with blackfellas...."

So it's exposing them to who we are, teaching them about our culture because they're gonna be in our lives, in our societies and it's good to, you know, show the kids sort of what we're about, so that their stereotypes and a lot of the things that they think about us get broken very early when they're in primary school."

Trent Kelly
(Cultural Resident)



THE KNOW YOUR COUNTRY CAMPAIGN

The success of Auntie Maxine's and Trent's work as Cultural Residents has provided the proof of concept for an initiative that promises to be national in scope: Know Your Country. The initiative, convened by World Vision, supported by UNSW, and informed by a First Nations Advisory Panel which includes Auntie Maxine, calls for local First Nations 'Cultural Educators' to be embedded in every primary school in Australia.

A survey conducted by World Vision in 2021 found that almost two in three Australians (63%) believe First Nations people have a right to share their history and culture in schools, with similar numbers (61%) agreeing that the best way forward is to have people from First Nations communities directly involved in shaping and delivering that education.

A positive step in this direction came in late 2022 with the Federal Government's commitment of \$14.1 million over four years to support the teaching of First Nations languages in schools. These roles will be held by local First Nations educators who will also share knowledge of local cultures across the curriculum, which is a key ask of the Know Your Country campaign.



**KNOW
YOUR
COUNTRY**



Scan this QR code to view the Know Your Country 'Every school needs an Auntie Maxine' video

CULTURAL RESIDENT VS CULTURAL EDUCATOR

The Cultural Residents Project, led by the local AECG, decided to use the term “Cultural Resident” to emphasise the vision that Aboriginal community members will one day become permanent “fixtures” within all Australian schools; the term “resident” implying a longer-term relationship with place. We feel this term also encompasses the multifaceted nature of the role – it is centred around education but also around relationship-building, mentorship, and what it means to live in a place.

The term “Cultural Educator” is used by the Know Your Country campaign to describe the role they advocate for including in all primary schools, with an emphasis on all students learning from First Nations community members about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and knowledges. This term was chosen to emphasise the status of the roles as that of “educator”, to distinguish them from existing roles that focus more on student wellbeing and support, and to elevate the role’s status to be commensurate with that of teachers.

In this document, we use both terms, but generally use “Cultural Resident” when referring to the CRP specifically, and “Cultural Educator” when referring to the Know Your Country Campaign or the prospect of implementing these roles more widely across Australia.



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

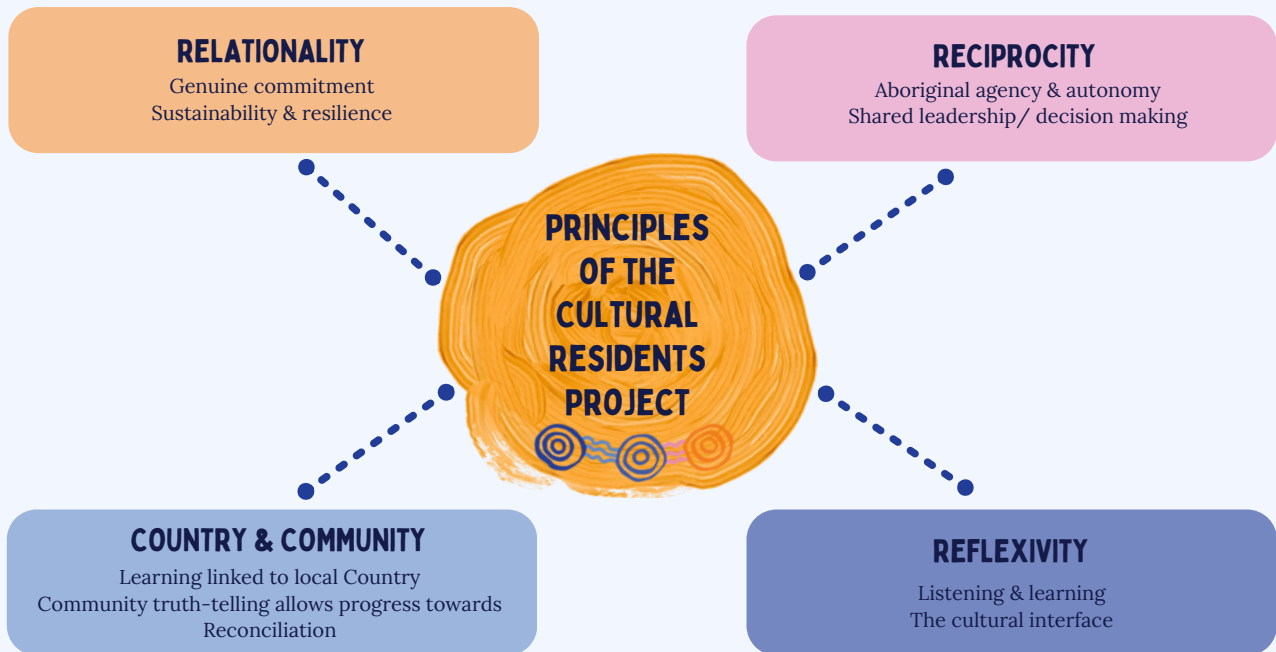
PRECONDITIONS FOR A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

PLANNING FOR A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

IMPLEMENTATION



Our overarching principles are grounded in work by Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020) which provide us with some crucial ideas that are important in connection with our efforts to genuinely and meaningfully do justice to the requirements guiding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum priorities in the national curriculum.



The principles in the diagram above have guided the work of the CRP, and we believe they are integral to any genuine effort at connecting schools and First Nations communities. Importantly, these principles provide a straightforward starting point to guide your work, as you engage in building relationships with your local First Nations community and implementing First Nations perspectives into classroom teaching. When engaging a Cultural Educator within your school, it is important to continually reflect on the following questions:

- Are we taking this action in a relationship built on mutual respect and long-term commitment?
- How can we as a school exercise shared power and autonomy in decision making with our local First Nations community?
- Does this action centre care and respect for local Country, the historical and cultural knowledge that is held there, and the knowledge of local First Nations community members who have been custodians of that Country for generations?
- Have we taken into account personal biases, those of others involved, and what else I/we may need to learn in order to make the best decision?



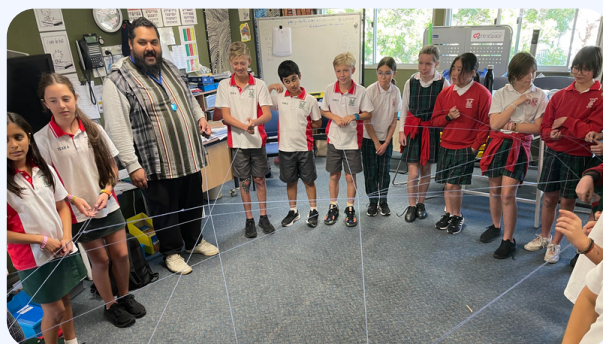
CHIFLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL

Here, we elaborate a little bit on each of these principles and their justification according to First Nations-led scholarship and experience:

RELATIONALITY

*Genuine commitment
Sustainability & resilience*

According to Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020), “in Aboriginal worldviews an entity cannot exist unless it is in relation to something else” (p. 2). Connectedness and relationships are centred in all things, and following relational process means that you are taking the time to build relationships, understand each other, operate out of genuine respect and commitment, and act in ways that will sustain the relationship and make it resilient to challenges. All “outcomes” and “deliverables” you might hope for out of an initiative like introducing a Cultural Educator in your school are predicated on this way of interacting. This also helps address the trepidation and fear of offending that many non-Indigenous people feel when engaging with First Nations communities: “If you follow this way, responding to authentic relationships, you will be able to read the warning signs that will prevent you from overstepping, offending and transgressing. Even better, you will be able to co-create the shared meanings and language needed for genuine (and productive) inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge in the academy (Rigney, 1999)” (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020, pp. 3–4).



MAROUBRA JUNCTION PUBLIC SCHOOL

RECIPROCITY

*Aboriginal agency and autonomy
Shared leadership/decision making*

True efforts to reform the ways that First Nations peoples and perspectives are included in schooling must acknowledge and respect First Nations autonomy and agency. Schools, principals and teachers must be willing to share power and decision making with First Nations peoples, which is still unfortunately a rare occurrence (McLaughlin et al., 2012). Honouring Aboriginal voices and autonomy shows communities that a school wants to take steps to redress the wrongs of the past, when educational institutions in Australia were overt tools of assimilation, cultural erasure, and racism. Acting with reciprocity means that the local First Nations community themselves will see benefit from the initiative, feel ownership of it, and work to make it a success (Bishop et al., 2019). If the benefits are seen to be only for the school, you risk damaging the relationship with community and perpetuating negative patterns of community interaction with schools.



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

COUNTRY AND COMMUNITY

*Learning linked to local Country
Community truth-telling allows
progress toward Reconciliation*

“Country’s been speaking for many years (forever!). And Elders have been talking about this sort of stuff for a very long time. But we’ve not been listening...” – Hughes & Barlo, 2021, p. 357

Aboriginal knowledge is held on and within Country, and human beings are a part of Country and exist in relationship to Country (Hughes & Barlo, 2021). According to Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020), “Your living spirit is only as healthy as the land you are standing on and the community you are living in, so it is vital to maintain and care for country and understand your relationship with place and people” (p. 6). The CRP has emphasised learning from local Country and community for these sorts of reasons – Aboriginal knowledges cannot be authentic if divorced from the Country from which they come. Indeed, Country has been proposed as the foundation for what Culturally Responsive Pedagogy might look like in an Australian context, as a way of facilitating a feeling of belonging in students by connecting them to their environment, the history that is held there, and their own place in that narrative (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2020).

Lowe and colleagues (2020) have similarly proposed Learning from Country as the foundational element to creating Culturally Nourishing Australian schools. Although the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers require that teachers “promote reconciliation”, many First Nations people argue that reconciliation is a “political consolation prize”, promoted at the expense of true progress in the form of treaty and land rights (Lowe et al., 2021, p. 73) and that the promise of reconciliation enables non-Indigenous people “to imagine an untroubled future, one in which settler-native conflict has been resolved” (Tuck and Yang, 2012, as cited in Lowe et al., 2021, p. 74).

Truth-telling is a necessary precursor to any hope of reconciliation, as seen in evidence from Canada and other parts of the world: “despite the time it will take to achieve full reconciliation, the open sharing of truth, met by open and listening audiences willing to really hear that truth, can have a powerful and transformative effect on a society” (Moran, 2016, p. 188). Schools that engage a Cultural Educator must commit to allowing First Nations people to share their truth, and for that truth to be really heard.



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

REFLEXIVITY

Listening & Learning The Cultural Interface

Constantly reflecting on and adapting our processes and actions is an integral part of the complex work of integrating First Nations knowledges with Western schooling systems. Through acknowledging and interrogating our own perspectives and where our knowledge has come from, we can see more clearly whether we are acting with bias, or how our actions might be perceived by those who come from different backgrounds and bring different perspectives. According to Nakata and colleagues (2012), such work “requires a lot of thinking and reflection over time, it requires dealing with a lot of difficult questions, and it requires an acceptance that not everything can be resolved immediately” (p. 135). Nakata (2011) also explores the importance and potential of “the Cultural Interface”, the contested space where Western and Indigenous knowledges come together, as fruitful for the production of new and meaningful knowledge, and ways of working together. Schools and teachers that want to engage with their local community through working with a Cultural Educator must commit to embedding reflexivity in their processes and seeking to navigate the Cultural Interface with openness, respect, and a desire to increase the complexity of students’ understanding of their world (Nakata, 2011; Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020).



CLOVELLY PUBLIC SCHOOL

PRINCIPAL/ LEADERSHIP TEAM: _____ SCHOOL: _____ DATE: _____



SWOT ANALYSIS



S

STRENGTHS

W

WEAKNESSES

O

OPPORTUNITIES

T

THREATS

NAME: _____

SCHOOL: _____

DATE: _____

KWL CHART

K

WHAT I KNOW

W

WHAT I WANT TO KNOW

L

WHAT I LARNED



IS MY SCHOOL READY FOR A CULTURAL EDUCATOR?

Self-Assessment



PART A: SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

This survey is designed as an initial self-assessment survey for the person or team who is instigating the work of engaging a First Nations Cultural Educator for a particular school environment. You may be a Principal, teacher, parent committee member, Aboriginal Education team chair, etc.

SCHOOL:

1. System affiliation (public, Catholic, Independent, etc.):
2. Aboriginal Country/(ies) my school is located on:
3. Local Aboriginal organisations relevant to education in this area (e.g. AECG, Lands Councils):
4. Number and percentage of First Nations students enrolled at my school:
5. Number and percentage of First Nations staff employed at my school:
6. Are there any particular patterns or disparities between First Nations and non-First Nations student outcomes at this school that you hope further work with Cultural Educators could address? E.g. attendance, engagement, test scores, incidences of ignorance or racism.
7. From which community, clan or language groups do your First Nations students/staff at this school come from or have connections to?
8. Does your school regularly acknowledge Country in classes or at special events?
9. Does your school have a personalised Acknowledgment of Country? If so, was this developed in consultation with the local Aboriginal community?

10. Does your school have a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)? How deeply is Aboriginal education embedded in your strategic plan or school culture?

11. What existing relationships and points of engagement does your school have with its local Aboriginal community? E.g. Elders who regularly participate in events at the school, NAIDOC activities, curricular activities, cultural or academic support activities?

12. Where is engagement currently lacking, or what relationships still need to be built or strengthened?

13. What indications of investment in Aboriginal education does the school make on its publicly available materials (e.g. website, newsletters, flyers, signage)?

14. In linking with your school's values or mission statement, how relevant is this to the employment of a First Nations Cultural Educator?

15. Where/how does the employment of a First Nations Cultural Educator fit within the school's Strategic Plan?

16. What procedures are in place at your school for staff or students experiencing racism?

17. How would you foster a buy-in for this approach from parents/staff school community in general?

STAFF :

1. How would you describe the principal's attitude toward Aboriginal education and current relationship to Aboriginal students/parents/community? Does the executive team share this attitude?

[Empty response box for question 1]

2. Is the Principal supportive of the school employing a Cultural Educator? How do you know?

[Empty response box for question 2]

3. Note any known staff demographics that may impact on the school culture toward Aboriginal education, such as:

- Number/percentage of First Nations staff [Empty response box]
- Cultural backgrounds of non-First Nations staff (e.g. number/percentage born in Australia vs overseas)

[Empty response box for cultural backgrounds]

- Percentage of staff in various age brackets (20-35, 35-50, 50-65+)

[Empty response box for age brackets]

- Percentage of staff who have been teaching for....less than 5 years, 5-10 years, 10-20 years, 20+ years

[Empty response box for teaching experience]

4. Does your school provide opportunities in Professional Learning related to Aboriginal Education?

What Professional Learning have you completed/ engaged in?

[Empty response box for professional learning]

5. Do you have anecdotal evidence of staff attitudes toward inclusion of First Nations perspectives in curriculum – based on conversations, comments in the staffroom, etc. Are staff likely to be receptive? Resistant? Something else?

[Empty response box for anecdotal evidence]

6. Have front office/administrative staff received professional learning in working with Aboriginal communities?



7. How would you describe your school's general welcomingness to Aboriginal students, families and visitors?



8. What actions do you think might need to happen in order for staff to be ready and receptive toward working with a Cultural Educator?



9. In considering the cultural/emotional load that will be shouldered by the Cultural Educator, how will you create a space that is culturally safe?



10. Does your school have processes or budget lines in place for remunerating members of the Aboriginal community who may give their time or expertise to school operations or events?



PARENTS :

1. Note any known parent/family demographics that may impact on the school culture toward Aboriginal education, such as:

- Number/percentage of First Nations families
- Cultural backgrounds of non-First Nations families (e.g. number/percentage born in Australia vs overseas)
- If there is a substantial cohort of families from any particular cultural background, what backgrounds/languages are most prevalent?
- Percentage of students who have been in Australia for....less than 1 year, 1-3 years, 3-10 years, born in Australia
- Socio-economic background or education levels of families

2. Does your school have a P&C committee (or similar)? What proportion of parents are involved in this committee? What are this committee's priorities?

3. Do you have a sense of what First Nations parents'/families' priorities are for their children's experience at school?

4. Do you have anecdotal evidence of parent/family attitudes toward inclusion of First Nations perspectives in curriculum – based on conversations, comments overheard, etc. Are parents likely to be receptive? Resistant? Something else?



PART B: REFLEXIVITY AND FOLLOWING RELATIONAL PROCESS

This part of the survey is designed to get you thinking about some of the deeper attitudinal and values-oriented questions that are at the heart of working with Aboriginal communities and creating intercultural understanding in your school environment. Individuals may fill out copies of this section on their own, and then come together and discuss, and/or you may think about the school/staff as an “entity” in relation to the questions.

1. How would you characterise your own cultural background? Do you feel like your own culture was represented in your experience going to school? What was the effect of this on you?

2. What do you know about your family history and how you personally came to be in Australia, living on the unceded lands of the First Nations people local to where you live?

3. What do you know about the history of Aboriginal people and Country in your local area? Are there key historical events, figures, or locations of significance?

4. Why do you (personally) want to work with a First Nations Cultural Educator to your school?

5. What do you hope will be gained by doing this (for students, for staff, for the school community, for the local First Nations community, etc.)?

6. What do you see as the value of learning about First Nations cultural knowledge for all students (not just for First Nations students)?

7. What do you see as the biggest challenges that will need to be worked through as part of this process?
8. Describe your prior knowledge or experience of working with local Aboriginal people, communities, and knowledges.
9. What are the strengths of your own knowledge/experience in this area? Where are the gaps?
10. Are you aware of any local historical events that may still impact on the relationship between First Nations and non-Indigenous people in this community today, or the relationship between the school and the local First Nations community?
11. Do you believe you are genuinely “open-minded” to learning from other people’s perspectives on the world? What evidence do you have of this?
12. Do you believe you are able to accept criticism/critique, and respond in the spirit of learning from mistakes? What evidence do you have of this?
13. How do you react if you know you have caused offense to someone? What actions might you take to try to repair this relationship?
14. Are you prepared to spend time building relationships with local First Nations community members, and to listen to their knowledge, concerns and ideas?
15. Are you planning to be a member of this school community for a significant amount of time (2+ years)?
16. Who are the allies you will need to engage to ensure this work is a success and will continue beyond your tenure at the school? E.g. principal, local government or business leaders, First Nations community members, etc.
17. Are you prepared to advocate for local First Nations community members to be remunerated for the time and expertise they give to the school?





YOUR SURVEY RESPONSES



There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to the questions on the [self-assessment survey \(p.16\)](#), [SWOT analysis \(p.14\)](#), or [KWL \(p.15\)](#) reflective activities. Rather, they are designed to help you and your school understand the complexity of engaging with First Nations peoples, cultures and knowledges within the framework of the colonial, Western schooling system. Understanding this will help you think through how to navigate this complex space and work through any challenges that may arise along the way. Each school environment and each First Nations community is diverse and therefore the needs and priorities of this work may look different in each community and school.

For example, when working with a school staff who have had very little prior experience engaging with Aboriginal people or knowledges, the professional learning aspect to build up their prior knowledge will be a key component to making a school more culturally safe, before contemplating engagement of a Cultural Educator.

Similarly, a demographic of students and families from non-Australian language backgrounds other than English may be at a different place in their knowledge and understanding of the relevance of First Nations cultural knowledge than families who have been in Australia for a long time. But this should not be a deterrent to engaging your school on this journey – all students in Australia are living and learning on First Nations land, and have a role to play in both Reconciliation and in caring for Country.

In all actions you or your school undertakes in engaging a Cultural Educator, the building and maintaining of relationships must always be front and centre. These relationships exist between the school and community, but those macro-level relationships are made up of relationships between individuals involved. **At times, your individual relationships and institutional or community responsibilities may be at odds. This is the nature of the complexity of this space, and is something to acknowledge and work through, rather than a reason to disengage from the work.**



MASCOT PUBLIC SCHOOL



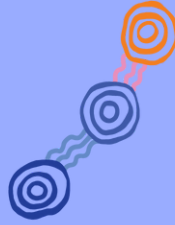
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING – DOS AND DON'TS

You will be embarking on this work in the midst of an existing story – the story of local First Nations history and culture which stretches back for millennia, the story of your own cultural background and values, as well as the story of colonisation and resistance in your local area, and how your school has interacted in the recent and more distant past with local First Nations people. Many First Nations people and communities have strained relationships with government institutions, including schools, for valid reasons that continue into the present day. Having an awareness of this may help you contextualise interactions you have or attitudes you encounter from both First Nations and non-First Nations people in the course of this work.

DO	DON'T
Position yourself and let people know who you are and where you're coming from.	Centre yourself and your own needs in every conversation
Be able to articulate why you are engaging in this work and why it is important	Assume that local community will automatically be grateful for what you are doing
Listen more than you speak, and listen before you speak	Tell First Nations people what is best for them or their community
Acknowledge your understanding of the assimilatory and deficit-oriented history of schooling for First Nations people	Assume that Western knowledge or culture is superior to First Nations knowledges and cultures
Value and respect First Nations knowledges	Misuse or misappropriate cultural knowledge or attempt to engage in cultural activities that are not appropriate for you
Seek to support First Nations self-determination and agency	Approach First Nations communities with a deficit perspective (as a "problem to be fixed")
Take your time	Expect things to happen quickly
Use existing connections to build further relationships	Use existing relationships to take advantage of people (e.g. ask a community member to share their knowledge without payment)
Communicate proactively and with modes of communication best suited to the person or audience you are trying to engage. E.g. consider whether face-to-face, phone or email communication is best, levels of technology or Internet access, and other responsibilities people may have such as work, carer's duties, and cultural obligations	Try one method of communication and then give up. But also don't bother people incessantly if they are not interested!
Bounce back from mistakes and blunders; approach critique without defensiveness; apologise and seek to do better	Give up after one, or two or three setbacks – this is a long-haul engagement
Explain and outline your key focus areas relating to your KLA (be specific)	Assume community will prioritise your needs and wants
Provide examples/ samples of work already completed	'Dumb it down' when talking with First Nations community members
Recognise the level of knowledges and skills First Nations people bring to your learning	Assume First Nations people know or are experts at everything


POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

	FOR SCHOOLS AND SYSTEMS	FOR TEACHERS AND CLASSROOMS	FOR STUDENTS	FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES	FOR FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES
SHORT TERM 6-12 MONTHS	<p>Increased First Nations employment</p> <p>Improved relationships and lines of communication between school and local First Nations community</p>	<p>Improved empathy and understanding around First Nations issues</p> <p>Development of relationships with local First Nations people and communities.</p>	<p>More exposure to First Nations peoples, places and understandings from their local context</p> <p>Better education about and empathy for First Nations peoples and issues</p>	<p>Students begin to educate parents/families about what they are learning from local Country and community</p>	<p>Increased voice and agency in local schooling practices</p> <p>Increased employment opportunities in the education sector</p> <p>More positive relationships with local schools and the people within them</p> <p>Opportunity to shape the narratives that non-Indigenous people are receiving about First Nations people</p>
MEDIUM TERM 1-3 YEARS	<p>Improved engagement with First Nations families</p> <p>Improved attendance and engagement from First Nations students</p> <p>Fewer instances of racism against First Nations students/staff reported</p>	<p>Less resistance and fear from teachers to engage with First Nations perspectives within the curriculum</p> <p>More engagement with truth-telling and higher-order thinking in the teaching of First Nations perspectives and knowledges</p> <p>Improved attendance and engagement from First Nations students</p>	<p>Ability to think critically about representations of First Nations peoples they encounter in mainstream media and in the opinions of others</p> <p>Reduced experience of or perpetuation of racism and stereotypes</p> <p>Improved attendance and engagement for First Nations students</p> <p>High engagement for all students</p> <p>All students feel a better sense of belonging to their local school and community</p>	<p>Parents and families grow their own intercultural understanding</p> <p>Parents and families support school efforts toward elevating the place of First Nations perspectives and knowledges in the school</p> <p>Parents and families understand better how to best interact with and support/ 'give back' to local First Nations Country and community</p>	<p>Reduced experience of racism and stereotypes</p> <p>Improved attendance and engagement for First Nations students</p> <p>Confidence in schools' ability to meet the needs of First Nations students grows</p> <p>Non-Indigenous people show support for efforts to improve First Nations representation and voice in the education system</p> <p>Shared decision-making exists between schools and First Nations peoples</p>
LONG TERM 3 YEARS AND BEYOND	<p>Relationships between schools and their local First Nations communities grow, deepen, and are sustained – communities have more trust in schools and are willing to support further school initiatives</p> <p>Improved retention and academic outcomes for First Nations students</p> <p>Improved capacity of teachers to meet AITSL standards 1.4, 2.4 and 7.4</p> <p>Schools develop a coherent "curriculum narrative" for First Nations content, resulting in students graduating with a meaningful body of knowledge about First Nations issues and perspectives.</p>	<p>Teachers develop competence and confidence to engage respectfully with First Nations people in their community</p> <p>Improved capacity of teachers to meet AITSL standards 1.4, 2.4 and 7.4</p> <p>Teachers contribute to iterative development of their school's curriculum content, based on their own learning and relationships.</p>	<p>Improved understanding of First Nations knowledges and perspectives by all students</p> <p>Ability to think and speak intelligently and respectfully about First Nations issues that arise in the public sphere</p> <p>Improved retention and academic outcomes for First Nations students</p> <p>Improved intercultural understanding and willingness/ability to build and sustain relationships with First Nations people in many contexts (inside and outside of school)</p>	<p>Reduction of racism in the wider community</p> <p>Parents and families are better able to think and speak intelligently and respectfully about First Nations issues that arise in the public sphere</p> <p>Parents and families feel more connected to their local Country and community</p> <p>It is no longer possible for a child to finish primary school without ever having met an First Nations person</p>	<p>Relationships between schools and their local First Nations communities grow, deepen, and are sustained – communities have more trust in schools and are willing to support further school initiatives</p> <p>Improved retention and academic outcomes for First Nations students</p> <p>Reduction of racism in the wider community</p> <p>Interactions with non-Indigenous people are more often based on respect and reciprocity</p> <p>Local Country is better taken care of by First Nations and non-Indigenous people alike</p>



GOALS & OUTCOMES

To begin planning for your specific school or system's needs, you may wish to think through the particular outcomes you hope to achieve. As you begin to engage with your local First Nations community, make sure you are willing to edit and update these outcomes to align with the needs and vision they may share with you.

 SHORT TERM 6-12 MONTHS	FOR SCHOOLS AND SYSTEMS	FOR TEACHERS AND CLASSROOMS	FOR STUDENTS	FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES	FOR FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

PRECONDITIONS FOR A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

PRECONDITIONS FOR A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

PLANNING FOR A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

IMPLEMENTATION



This section outlines things a school may need to consider before committing to the engagement of a First Nations Cultural Educator. While all students can benefit from learning from local First Nations Cultural Educators, that does not mean that all school environments are yet appropriate and safe for First Nations Cultural Educators to enter. Bringing a First Nations person into a hostile environment or attempting to force resistant or apathetic staff to share power in their classrooms with a First Nations person may do more harm than good. The [Is My School Ready for a Cultural Educator? Self-Assessment \(p. 16\)](#) and [Goals and Outcomes Template \(p. 26\)](#) have already helped you think through the particular conditions for your school and community.

This section is organised by preconditions that should be considered for different stakeholders:

- School and system level
- Teacher and classroom level
- Engaging parents and families
- Engaging First Nations communities

The section concludes with a Summary of key barriers/enablers and relevant templates.

SCHOOL AND SYSTEM LEVEL

Successful engagement of a First Nations Cultural Educator at any school is a complex task, whether the school has a high proportion of First Nations students or not, and whether it has an existing relationship with its local First Nations community or not. The task of teachers and Cultural Educators in this work is to bridge rifts and lack of understanding that have existed since the beginning of colonisation, and to bring knowledges together from two disparate knowledge systems in a productive way (Nakata, 2007), all while working under the umbrella of a colonial and Western institution which sits on unceded First Nations Country (Lowe et al., 2021).

The challenge of this cannot be overstated – and it is not something that necessarily becomes “easy” once put in motion. That said, the responsibility to do this clearly exists within existing policy requirements, including the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Australian Curriculum, and Federal and State Aboriginal Education Policies. Therefore, the work required is not an “add-on”, and not something “extra” being asked of teachers and principals – it is a necessary challenge to address in order to make schools more culturally safe places for First Nations students and to better educate non-First Nations students about First Nations histories and cultures.



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

Research has shown that short-term programs and interventions that address only one aspect of education fail to redress Aboriginal disadvantage in any substantive way; therefore, effective approaches (both to engaging Aboriginal students in schooling, and to educating all students about Aboriginal perspectives) must be holistic, sustained/sustaining, and prioritise Aboriginal community voices and aspirations (Lowe et al., 2020; Parkinson & Jones, 2019). Therefore, it is useful to think of ways to anchor this work in larger strategies and structures in place that exist for school

improvement and community engagement. These may include, for example, embedding Aboriginal education and community engagement (including the employment of a Cultural Educator) into School Strategic Plans, establishing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for your school, and establishing working groups or advisory groups that help advance these efforts. When this work is embedded within a strategic framework and is integral to the goals of the institution, it is more likely to be valued by all stakeholders within the institution, and approached with purpose rather than with random or ad-hoc actions.

Engaging a Cultural Educator in any school requires not just support from the Principal in the form of their signature on a letter, but enthusiastic support from the Principal in the form of their own words, actions, allocation of resources, and commitment to community engagement.

In turn, the Principal needs to...

- have the support of their immediate supervisor within the department or system their school is a part of
- value Aboriginal education and community engagement by having clear goals in this area articulated as part of their School Strategic Plan
- meet with and build relationships with First Nations community members themselves, not just via a delegate
- be able to discuss with parents and families how engagement of a First Nations Cultural Educator contributes to their shared vision for the school
- commit to funding (or seeking funding for) professional learning for staff in areas of identified need with regard to Aboriginal education
- commit to funding (or seeking funding) to remunerate the Cultural Educator and any other community members engaged for special events or additional work with the school
- create a plan delineating how participating executive and teachers will be selected and supported to ensure their commitment to participation in the program
- create a plan delineating how the learning of those staff who work with the Cultural Educator will be shared with other staff

IT'S NOT JUST THE TEACHING STAFF...

Cultural Residents and the AECG Working Group who advised on the CRP all emphasised repeatedly the importance of school support personnel, particularly front office staff, also being trained in cultural awareness. Schools are intimidating places for many Aboriginal people to enter, based on their own lived experience or intergenerational trauma, and the person who greets visitors at the front office can have a significant impact on whether someone feels welcome or safe at the school. All staff have a role to play in helping members of the Aboriginal community feel welcome, and principals must be committed to ensuring these staff are supported to gain the skills and expertise to work with diverse communities and stakeholders.



CHIFLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL



PRINCIPAL PORTRAITS

Below is a case study of two schools that hosted the Cultural Resident for an entire year during the CRP (two days per week at each school). Both principals had very different backgrounds and experience but managed to project sensitively and successfully.

SUSAN

Susan is an Aboriginal woman and experienced principal, having worked at this school for many years and serving as principal at other schools before this. She is not from the Aboriginal community close to the school though, and did not have the contacts she felt she needed to get authentically engaged with the community herself. She has also felt a tension in her leadership that if she prioritises issues of Aboriginal education, particularly emphasising Aboriginal education for all students, this may be seen by some staff and parents as her “pushing her own agenda”. This has caused her to perhaps be more cautious than she would have liked to be about pursuing whole-school Aboriginal community engagement initiatives prior to this project.

The Cultural Residents Project provided Susan with support to have this courage, and the contacts within the local community to finally bring Aboriginal education to the forefront at her multicultural school. Her relational management style was apparent, and she prioritised staff professional learning and release time to plan with the Cultural Residents. Additionally, the Cultural Residents felt safe and supported knowing there was an Aboriginal woman at the helm of this school.

“This project has authentically linked us with our local Aboriginal community so that our work in our school is genuine, deep and impactful. We have heaps more to do which is why we will continue to advocate for cultural residents [educators] in schools.”



LISA

Lisa is a non-Indigenous woman who grew up in the local community, but without much contact with Aboriginal people. In her own education, not much was taught about Aboriginal histories and cultures, and certainly not from Aboriginal people themselves. However, she is very committed to issues of social justice and making educational opportunities available to everyone. She is a new principal, just appointed to her school this year, and feels the Cultural Residents project is a great initiative for her school that will help her put these values into action.

Lisa operates with humility and an admission that there is a lot she is still learning. She listens before she speaks. She is also skilled at sharing leadership with other staff, allowing young members of staff who share her commitment to Aboriginal education to have organisational and leadership roles on the project. The Cultural Residents feel supported by these staff members and feel that the communication and expectations they receive from the school are clear.

“This program has provided opportunities for deep reflection of our teaching in relation to supporting Aboriginal perspectives authentically in our day to day teaching curriculum. It has allowed teachers to feel vulnerable and deepen their knowledge and confidence in their ability to teach Aboriginal education perspectives.”



TEACHER AND CLASSROOM LEVEL

There is no single quality that makes a teacher a good fit for working with a Cultural Educator in their classroom. Some younger teachers may have experienced greater acceptance or appreciation of Aboriginal histories and cultures in their own schooling or in the values espoused by their own families, but they may conversely feel a great deal of pressure surrounding the challenges of teaching (from planning and delivery, assessment and reporting requirements, classroom management, accreditation requirements, and general administrative burden). On the other hand, more experienced teachers may not feel so overwhelmed by these elements of teaching, but feel they have very little background or exposure to Aboriginal people or knowledges, and can feel intimidated by the proposition of sharing power so intimately with an Aboriginal person in the classroom.

In the Cultural Residents Project, teachers of all ages and career stages and from many different cultural backgrounds and levels of experience were successful at working with the Cultural Residents in their classrooms. However, the classroom is where the Cultural Educator will likely spend the majority of their time, and it is the place where the “rubber hits the road” in terms of engagement with difficult topics including, potentially, colonisation, the Stolen Generations, racism, and other issues. Therefore, it is important that teachers are...

- “on board” with the initiative,
- have some level of cultural awareness/reflexivity and are willing to learn more,
- are open to sharing power in the classroom and in curricular/pedagogic planning with the Cultural Educator,
- confident enough with the general processes of teaching that they do not feel “overwhelmed” by the prospect of working with a Cultural Educator, and
- are committed to anti-racism, such that they will address any issues of racism or misunderstandings if they arise from students, parents or colleagues.

YARN WITH THE CULTURAL RESIDENTS PROJECT AECG WORKING GROUP

What qualities make a teacher good at working with a Cultural Resident?

Pauline Beller:

They have to want to do it, not have to do it.



Calita Murray:

They have to be open to other ways of teaching, and open to learning. You know, not someone who thinks they know it all.

Trent Kelly:

Even those teachers that weren't interested at the start when I got there, they've slowly come around, just by exposure. And by the end, I really didn't have any teachers who were sort of not interested at least, you know what I mean?

So even if they come in with a bad attitude, you break it down just by being there every day.



We encourage teachers to review the sections presented earlier in this toolkit, particularly Part B of the “Is My School Ready for a Cultural Educator? Self-Assessment” (p. 21), the “Relationship Building Do’s and Don’ts” (p. 24), and the “Goals and Outcomes Blank Template” (p. 26) to ascertain their readiness for working with a Cultural Educator. If you don’t feel ready, but this is something you might like to work toward, you can identify what you might need to do over the next few months or years to become ready, including pursuing further professional learning opportunities, gaining more confidence in your general teaching practice, or being mentored by colleagues with more experience in this area. It may be helpful to remember that you are not alone; many teachers are going through similar experiences and starting this work from a baseline of very little knowledge. No matter where you are starting, you can take small steps to educate yourself and get to know your school community. As noted by Weuffen and colleagues (2023), all efforts must start somewhere, and small efforts are only “tokenistic” if that is where they stay, and no further action is taken: “The beginning point isn’t as important as actually beginning” (p. 142).

"I had a teacher come to me and she said, Look, before you came into the school, it was a tick-a-box sort of thing. She didn't really see why it was important, 'we got no Aboriginal kids at the school anyway'. But we had a really good time in her class and her class was one of the better classes that I was with. And she came to me and she said, I'm happy that you came, because it changed her mindset around why these things are important, we've gotta hear 'em and we've gotta teach 'em to our kids. I've noticed in history in particular, we are doing a lot of stuff in early Sydney, so we're talking about Bennelong, Barangaroo and all that kind of stuff. And nobody knows about it. Not even adults know about this kind of stuff really. You know, it's the history of the city that we live in, but nobody knows anything about it."

Trent Kelly
(Cultural Resident)



Teachers who do feel ready to work with a Cultural Educator on a personal/professional level should also consider their classroom and the students that they teach, to think through any changes or preparation that should be undertaken before the arrival of the Cultural Educator. For example:

- Do you have any information about students’ current level of knowledge about Aboriginal peoples?
- Is the Cultural Educator likely to experience racist or ignorant comments from students?
- What teaching and learning will you need to engage in with students to minimise the possibility of this?
- Will you need to communicate with students’ families about the presence of an Aboriginal Cultural Educator working in your classroom? What will be the most effective way to do this?
- Does your classroom have physical elements that make it a potentially welcoming or unwelcoming environment for a Cultural Educator? Such as:


POTENTIALLY WELCOMING	POTENTIALLY UNWELCOMING
Comfortable place for an adult visitor to sit	No place to sit; visitors must sit on the floor or in child-sized chairs
Display of Aboriginal languages maps	Display of Western political maps only
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags displayed	Australian flag displayed (without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags)
Acknowledgement of Country displayed/enacted	No Acknowledgement of Country; National anthem lyrics displayed
Books by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors displayed	No books by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors displayed; or only out-of-date "anthropological" books about Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal authors
Diverse role models (including prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) displayed in the form of posters etc.	Veneration of early colonisers in the form of posters, monuments or house names
What else can you think of to add in this column?	What else can you think of to add in this column?

"It's good for a lot of the teachers because they come across this stuff in the curriculum anyway and they don't know what to do. They don't know how to teach it. They don't know what to say. They get scared. But I've noticed being there, it's, it's got a lot more comfortable. People aren't freaking out and you know, worried about talking about this stuff. They're more confident. They're more comfortable."

Trent Kelly
(Cultural Resident)



HOW WORKING WITH A CULTURAL RESIDENT IMPROVED MY TEACHING PRACTICE



“I found that talking to Trent and listening to him have some difficult conversations with students about key events in Aboriginal history, made me feel more confident and empowered to engage in these conversations in the future. I had previously felt unsure on how to engage in these discussions, being afraid to say the wrong thing and worried about offending anyone.”

– Teacher

(Maroubra Junction Public School)



MAROUBRA JUNCTION PUBLIC SCHOOL



**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING,
CLOVELLY PUBLIC SCHOOL**

“We’ve learnt so much from the [Cultural Residents’] stories, but you know it’s not just the stories and the knowledge that we’ve acquired; it’s about opening up and sharing with us. It’s the connection that I know all our school, the kids and the teachers, that we’ve really treasured.”

– Teacher

(Professional Learning reflection)

“Becoming a student, who learns alongside my students, rather than feeling the need to be the expert, has been a major shift in the way that I approach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.”

– Teacher

(Gardeners Road Public School)



ENGAGING PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Parents and families are children’s first educators (Queensland Government Department of Education, 2023), and as such they will have influenced children’s attitudes toward culture, cultural difference, First Nations peoples, and many other elements integral to learning from a Cultural Educator before students even arrive at primary school. This means that communication with parents and families, and, hopefully, your school’s parent community being generally supportive of the engagement of a Cultural Educator, is an important early step in the process.

In some communities, it may be the case that parents are generally quite supportive – one school leader involved in the Cultural Residents Project described their parent community as “hungry for this” to happen in their school. Others may require some convincing, or you may not have a majority who find learning from Aboriginal knowledge a priority. Other communities may, for various reasons (e.g language barriers, or socioeconomic pressures meaning parents’ time is quite stretched) be challenging to communicate with, and you may struggle to get a sense of whether they have an opinion about this at all.

In any of these scenarios, though, it is important to identify your allies or “influencers,” the people most important to get on your side and who may have the ability to bring others on board with them. This may include P&C Committee executives or other highly involved parents/carers, or those who have leadership roles in the community, such as members of the clergy, sport coaches, social workers, or leaders of affinity group organisations.

It is also important to communicate specifically with any First Nations families at your school, regardless of what percentage of your student population they comprise, and explain your school’s goals or plans for engaging a Cultural Educator, and seek their feedback, suggestions and support. It may be that your school’s Cultural Educator could be drawn from your parent community! This will need to be decided in collaboration with your local AECG or similar consultative body.



RECONCILIATION ASSEMBLY, CLOVELLY PUBLIC SCHOOL

DON'T ASSUME! PART 1

It is important not to make assumptions in your communications with First Nations families, such as:

- They will all feel the same way about how schools should engage with First Nations education
- They will all have had similar experiences with educational institutions
- They will immediately be “grateful” for all the effort you are making
- They will have positive feelings about all other First Nations people in the community
- They will have the same opinions about who would be an appropriate Cultural Educator at your school
- They all belong to the same people/ “mob” (e.g. a Wiradjuri person may be living on Bidjigal Country)
- They do or do not have “authentic” cultural knowledge based on their profession, education level, age, skin tone, or where they live.

CHIFLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL



ENGAGING FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

The Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community local to your school must be involved in order to engage a First Nations Cultural Educator to work at your school. If your school already has contacts in the local First Nations community, you can start there, asking what local people and organisations you will need to involve in this process. If your State/Territory has an educational consultative body such as the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) or Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI), you should arrange to meet with local representatives of this group to discuss your ideas and listen to their advice. If your school regularly sends a delegate to local committee meetings, you might raise this at a meeting – if your school doesn't do this, you should start doing so at the next available opportunity. You can also contact any resources/work units within the system your school is a part of, e.g. the NSW Department of Education Aboriginal Education and Wellbeing Team, who can advise schools on professional learning available, support teachers with the inclusion of First Nations perspectives, and help schools with building local community connections.

Reaching out to your local First Nations community and your First Nations parent/carer community at your school will be important early steps in this process. It is important not to fall into the trap of waiting to do this once you already have all your plans in place, hired someone, and created a streamlined plan for the initiative. Rather, local First Nations people should be involved in every step of the process of planning for and hiring a Cultural Educator, and you should be guided by listening to their feedback and advice rather than forge ahead with how you initially envision your plans.

A CASE IN POINT

UNSW's "Cultural Residents Project" was initially proposed by UNSW staff and academics under the name "Elders in Residence", imagining that Elders would be the most valuable knowledge-holders in Aboriginal communities who might share their wisdom in schools. However, early consultation with local community groups emphasised that all community members held valuable knowledge and experience, and that 'Elders' were not always going to be the most appropriate people to target as Cultural Educators – due to health reasons, desire for employment vs existing community commitments, their own experiences in school and other factors. The community emphasised that we should not overlook young people in our engagement of Cultural Educators. They helped us arrive at a new conception of the proposal, "Cultural Residents," which could be open to community members of all ages and experience. This opened the employment possibilities from the project to more members of the community and resulted in incredible contributions from younger community members during the project implementation.



CULTURAL EDUCATORS (AUNTY MAXINE, TRENT AND AUNTY ALI)

As seen from the UNSW example, Cultural Educators need not necessarily be 'Elders', and communities may have different conceptions of what qualifies someone as an 'Elder' in the first place. It is important that individuals engaged as Cultural Educators be supported/endorsed by the local AECG or similar consultative body, or if that does not exist then by a critical mass of other members of the local Aboriginal community so that they will feel supported by them in doing the role. Similarly, some non-Indigenous people have a misconception that "true" or "authentic" cultural knowledge or connection still exists only in remote areas. Aboriginal people can be deeply connected to their culture and versed in cultural knowledge whether they live in rural or urban areas. Conversely, it can be painful or cause "shame" if you assume that an Aboriginal person has certain knowledge that they do not, as this may place focus on wounds or family disconnection caused through the Stolen Generations or other intergenerational trauma. It is important to build genuine relationships with people in the local Aboriginal community, and with individual families in your parent community, to help you navigate these sorts of sensitivities. It is important not to give up if at first you face challenges in reaching out to your local community, as there are legitimate historical reasons that First Nations communities may feel wary of the "good intentions" of educational institutions and their representatives (see Beresford, 2012; Lowe & Weuffen, 2023), which need to be understood and honoured. However, using this as an excuse for your school not making progress in improving its relationships with your local Aboriginal community serves only to preserve the status quo, not to enable change (Weuffen et al., 2023).

COMMUNICATING WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Avoiding Deficit Mindset

'Deficit discourse' refers to disempowering patterns of thought, language and practice that represent people in terms of deficiencies and failures. It particularly refers to discourse that places responsibility for problems with the affected individuals or communities, overlooking the larger socio-economic structures in which they are embedded.

- Lowitja Institute & National Centre for Indigenous Studies, 2018

SCENARIO #1:

You send a note home with all First Nations students about a parent meeting at the school to discuss the employment of a Cultural Educator. No one shows up to the meeting.

INTERPRETING THIS THROUGH A DEFICIT PARADIGM :

We tried but Aboriginal parents just aren't engaged in their children's schooling.

Aboriginal parents don't really care about this; maybe it's not so important after all.

ANOTHER VIEW - AVOIDING DEFICIT THINKING:

Perhaps some parents didn't get the note; maybe we should have tried some additional avenues of communication.

Perhaps the meeting was not conveniently scheduled for parents if they had work or other care duties; maybe we should have asked them what times they could attend.

Perhaps parents are wary of coming into a school based on their own or their family's prior experiences with institutions; maybe we could reach out to them via a community member they know and trust or present this in another setting (e.g. community meeting held by another organisation).



SCENARIO #2:

You create an application link on your school's job site for your Cultural Educator position. You email the local Lands Council the link and ask anyone who's interested to apply. At the closing date, you have received no applications.

INTERPRETING THIS THROUGH A DEFICIT PARADIGM :

We tried but the local community just isn't interested in these positions.

The Aboriginal community doesn't really care about this; maybe it's not so important after all.

ANOTHER VIEW - AVOIDING DEFICIT THINKING:

Perhaps not all suitable candidates in the community have access to the technology to know that this opportunity has been posted, or how to apply if it does.

Perhaps the local Lands Council is wary of distributing links to “opportunities” that come from people or institutions they aren’t familiar with.

Perhaps there were other important priorities at the time they received the email and this did not get distributed, or perhaps internal dynamics in the community meant that the opportunity wasn’t circulated to everyone who might be interested.

Perhaps the school employment site is difficult to navigate or requires users to provide extensive documentation/create an account before they can apply. Maybe we could try other methods of recruitment, like asking people we know to promote it to their networks, posting in a local newspaper or jobs board, or distributing flyers to key Aboriginal community organisations.



SCENARIO #3:

Someone recommends a friend in the local Aboriginal community who might be interested in one of the Cultural Educator positions. You call them from your office phone and leave a voicemail but they do not call back. You get busy and do not try to call again.

INTERPRETING THIS THROUGH A DEFICIT PARADIGM :

We reached out to someone but they never answer their phone, so they must not be interested.

Communicating with the Aboriginal community is so difficult; it’s hardly worth it.

ANOTHER VIEW - AVOIDING DEFICIT THINKING:

Perhaps the office phone shows up as an unknown or private number; many people do not answer calls like this. Maybe I should try from my mobile and send a text first.

Perhaps I should ask my contact to share my number with their friend, tell them who I am, and let them know I am planning to call them on a certain day.

Maybe the person was busy and I should try again another time.

Maybe the person does not have phone credit to call me back, or accidentally deleted the voicemail with my callback number. I’ll call again in a few days.

For an in-depth example of speaking back against deficit discourse, see the Passing the Message Stick initiative: <https://passingthemessagestick.org/>.

SUMMARY OF KEY ENABLERS/ BARRIERS

Through the Cultural Residents Project, we found certain key elements that could be enablers to successfully engaging a Cultural Educator, and others that could be barriers for this work. Some of these are summarised below.

ENABLERS	BARRIERS
Strengths-based mindset toward Aboriginal and other marginalised communities	Deficit mindset toward Aboriginal people/communities
Cultural awareness and humility from teachers and school leaders – understanding that we have much to learn; we are willing to do the work to get there	Racism or “epistemic inertia” on the part of schools – defined as “the cognitive inability to move beyond the fear of getting it wrong, offending, or being labelled racist” (Weuffen et al., 2023, p. 131).
Willingness to use existing general funding toward this cause or to apply for additional funding (e.g. grants) to make it possible	Lack of funding or lack of willingness to use existing funding toward employment of a Cultural Educator. Positions should not be funded out of “Aboriginal education funding” but out of general budgets
Belief that all students will benefit from and have an obligation to learn about Aboriginal perspectives	Notion that Aboriginal cultural education is only valuable for Aboriginal students – not seeing the value for all students
Creative, consistent and persistent efforts at communication and relationship-building	Giving up efforts to communicate, reach out or build relationships after the first failed attempt
Schools have in place systems to support staff welfare and teachers know where to turn if overwhelmed	Teachers or principals feeling overwhelmed with other factors (e.g. accreditation or accountability requirements; pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic)
Existing relationships with local Aboriginal community or willingness to build these over time	Lack of existing relationships with members of local Aboriginal community, or lack of willingness to build these over time.
Engaging Aboriginal community members regularly, throughout the year, with appropriate notice and compensation.	Only calling on Aboriginal community when you need them to do a Welcome or for a NAIDOC event.
Understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ unique status as the First Peoples of Australia.	View that Aboriginal people are just one of many minorities in Australia and all cultures must be given equal treatment – “colourblindness” or egalitarianism gone awry



KENSINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL

YARN WITH THE CULTURAL RESIDENTS PROJECT AECG WORKING GROUP

What kinds of things help a Cultural Resident feel safe in a school environment?



Pawline Beller:

Support from the staff and parents too. Even though you know not everyone's gonna like you.

Trent Kelly:

Just support. That's it. The only thing I was really scared about is we're talking about, you know, complicated things, like Stolen Generation or you know, even massacres and stuff. That's really full on. I was scared they would go home, tell their parents and their parents would get, you know, upset, but the teachers and the principal sort of said, so what? We'll deal with it, we'll support you. It comes to that, this is what we want in the schools. If it comes to an argument, we've got you, we've got your back and that was it. That's all I really needed.



This section has illustrated how preparing a school to be ready for a Cultural Educator is not a simple or speedy process, but one that must be undertaken in a deliberate and relationally-responsive manner. Schools that are willing to put sustained and genuine effort toward building or repairing relationships with their local Aboriginal communities will reap the benefits, and in the end they will become better able to serve all students in their community.



SAMPLE PARENT NEWSLETTER ITEM



At **[Insert school name]**, we are honoured to teach and learn on **[Insert local Country name]**. We believe that Aboriginal education is everyone's business, and that all children living on Aboriginal land deserve to learn about Aboriginal perspectives, histories and cultures. Therefore, we will be embarking on a process to employ a local Aboriginal Cultural Educator at our school, who will help us to strengthen our teaching of First Nations content across the curriculum. Over the coming months, we will be working with the local Aboriginal community to recruit a suitable candidate for this role and engage with further professional learning for our staff so that all staff have greater awareness about working with Aboriginal communities.

At the next P&C meeting on **[Insert date]**, there will be an opportunity to ask questions or learn more about this initiative. Please attend or send your questions via email to **[Insert school email address]**.



LETTER TO AECG

(or similar consultative body in your
State/Territory)



Re: Proposal to employ an Aboriginal Cultural Educator at **[Insert school name]**

Dear **[Insert President's name here]**,

I am a *(position yourself here as to your cultural background, gender, the Aboriginal country you were born/grew up on, and where you now live/work – as appropriate to your situation)*. As the Principal of **[Insert school name]**, I am committed to improving our relationship with the local Aboriginal community, the experiences of Aboriginal students, and the ways in which we teach all students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. In service of this, I would like to employ a local Aboriginal Cultural Educator at our school to strengthen our teaching of Aboriginal perspectives. This position would entail working with staff and students at the school to embed authentic learning about Aboriginal histories and cultures into units of work across the curriculum, and sharing Aboriginal knowledge (as deemed appropriate by the community) with all students.

I would like the opportunity to discuss the Cultural Educator initiative with you and to gather your feedback and suggestions on moving forward. I am happy to attend your next public meeting or to find a time for you to visit our school and chat about this.

Please feel free to contact me at any time via email **[Insert school email address]** or phone **[Insert school phone number]**.

I look forward to hearing from you.

SAMPLE PRESENTATION TO PARENT COMMUNITY

An editable version of this 'Presentation to Parent Community' can be downloaded from our [website](#).

ENGAGING AN ABORIGINAL CULTURAL EDUCATOR AT OUR SCHOOL

Insert your school crest here

Presenter Name here
School Name
Parent Information Session Date

1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Insert local photo of your school grounds or well-known place in local Country

2

CONTEXT

- Schools are becoming increasingly aware of our obligations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and to educating all Australian children about Aboriginal histories and cultures
- This is part of education policy, e.g. the Professional Standards for Teachers, Cross Curriculum Priorities, and Aboriginal Education Policy
- This is important for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students
- [This Know Your Country resource](#)

3

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Why is it important for your child at [] School to learn about First Nations perspectives, histories and cultures?

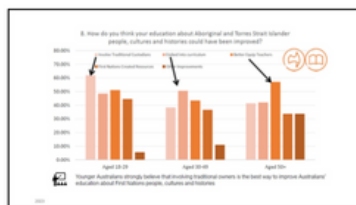
4

What History? What Truth?
Australian Attitudes Poll 2020

April 2020 [https://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/pubs/attitudespoll2020.html](#)

The research was commissioned by the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and was funded by the Honorary Members Trust and Australia's National Indigenous Children's Centre.

5



6

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- A local Aboriginal Cultural Educator (insert name if known) is employed by the school for [] days per week
- She will work with classroom teachers to (collaboratively) plan, implement, document and evaluate the integration of Aboriginal histories, knowledges and cultures across the curriculum through specific units of work for all students.
- Topics may include local and personal history, language, creative arts, local events and activities (insert to suit)

7

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

- Each classroom will work with the Cultural Educator (insert name) for [] days per week (insert to suit)
- Stage leaders will work with their staff to plan for how the Cultural Educator can contribute to particular units of work experienced by all students in a stage
- Teachers will engage in professional learning across the year to improve their understanding of Aboriginal histories and cultures
- The Cultural Educator is part of our school community, contributing to school-wide events such as Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.
- The Cultural Educator will help us build relationships with others in the local Aboriginal community.

8

WHAT WILL HAVING A CULTURAL EDUCATOR LOOK LIKE AT OUR SCHOOL?

Insert specific ideas for implementation at your school

Insert picture from your school context

9

QUESTIONS?

This is my thank you dance!

Contact:

- Your Name
- Your Title
- Your email/phone

10

KNOW YOUR COUNTRY CAMPAIGN FACT SHEET

KIDS DESERVE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES AND CULTURES FROM FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL EDUCATORS

This campaign is about closing a critical yet still overlooked gap in our education. A good primary school education, featuring regular, positive relationships with people from the local First Nations community will set our children up for life-long learning around and appreciation of our shared history, respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

PROBLEMS THIS CAMPAIGN IS ADDRESSING

- Most children are missing out on a quality education about local First Nations people, cultures, histories and perspectives in school.
- Teachers often aren't confident or properly supported to authentically deliver the First Nations cross-curriculum priority.
- Schools aren't funded to employ local First Nations community members to assist teachers, students and the school itself.
- There is no universal, national system for schools to formally engage and fairly pay local First Nations communities for sharing their knowledge with all students.

For millennia the cultures, lores, ceremonies and connection to the lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been strong and enduring. It is core to our understanding of ourselves as a nation, and shouldn't be treated as optional.



Cultural Educator from the La Perouse Community - Aunty Maxine Ryan with students from Chifley Public School in Sydney, NSW

SOLUTION

Every child across this vast continent deserves to learn from the wisdom of the first custodians of the Country they live on. This way, the next generation will be equipped to make better decisions that impact the lives of First Nations peoples. Our society can be grounded in the First Nations ways of being, doing and knowing.

This campaign calls for Federal, State and Territory Ministers to commit ongoing funding for every primary school to employ locally app First Nations Cultural Educators.

This will equip teachers and schools with the resource required to embed existing First Nations knowledge priorities in the curriculum. First Nations Cultural Educators will be able to build authentic and meaningful relationships between schools and local First Nations communities.



Cultural Educator Phyllis Marsh at West Moreton Anglican College, Qld

WHAT DO CULTURAL EDUCATORS DO?

The role of First Nations Cultural Residents would be co-designed at the local level by the school and the First Nations community. Cultural Educators could help:

EMBED First Nations knowledge and perspectives across the curriculum.

BUILD in schools and students authentic and meaningful relationships with their local First Nations communities.

GUIDE student and staff learning and development, including coordinating community-based and on-Country learning experiences, cultural awareness and capability training for students and school staff.

IMPLEMENT existing school strategies, such as Reconciliation Action Plans.

WAYS TO JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

Visit knowyourcountry.com.au to sign the petition as an everyday Australian and grab assets to help Acknowledge the First Nations Country you're on | Parents and teachers can download educational resources | Principals can sign up their school | Organisations can join a growing list of allies.

KNOW
YOUR
COUNTRY



RELATIONSHIPS MAP



You can use this template to map your/your school's existing or potential relationships or engagement with the local First Nations community. This is important because knowing connections/kin is important for building relationships and community engagement. Mapping these relationships out can also give you information about your school's standing in the community.

<p><u>FIRST NATIONS COUNTRY YOU ARE ON:</u></p>	<p><u>NAME OF LOCAL LANDS COUNCIL AND KEY CONTACTS:</u></p>	<p><u>LOCAL SITES OF SIGNIFICANCE TO FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES:</u></p>
<p><u>OTHER IMPORTANT LOCAL FIRST NATIONS ORGANISATIONS:</u></p>	<p><u>OTHER IMPORTANT LOCAL FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE/ELDERS:</u></p>	<p><u>NAME OF LOCAL AECG (OR SIMILAR ORGANISATION) AND KEY CONTACTS:</u></p>
<p><u>YOUR SCHOOL</u></p> <p>Your Principal: Key First Nations staff members:</p>	<p><u>KEY MEMBERS OF PARENT COMMUNITY</u></p> <p>P&C: First Nations Parents:</p>	<p><u>KEY MEMBERS OF STUDENT COMMUNITY</u></p> <p>SRC: First Nations students: Alumni:</p>
<p><u>YOUR DIRECTOR/SYSTEM LEADER:</u></p> <p><u>YOUR SYSTEMIC ABORIGINAL EDUCATION SUPPORT TEAM:</u></p>	<p><u>NAME OF LOCAL AECG (OR SIMILAR ORGANISATION) AND KEY CONTACTS:</u></p>	
<p><u>POTENTIAL MATERIAL SUPPORT</u></p> <p>Local businesses: Local council:</p> <p>Philanthropic organisations: Parent or alumni connections:</p>		

PLANNING FOR A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

– Your school is committed;
now what?

OVERARCHING
PRINCIPLES

PRECONDITIONS FOR
A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

PLANNING FOR
A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

IMPLEMENTATION



This section contains information about how a school can move ahead toward employing a First Nations Cultural Educator. Much of this information is logistical and presumes that schools have worked through many of the more “philosophical” questions posed in earlier sections, or are in the process of doing so. It also presumes that schools have built a rapport with members of their local First Nations community and that this community is supportive of the school’s goal to employ a Cultural Educator.



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

FUNDING

It is the position of UNSW School of Education, as well as the Know Your Country campaign, that a First Nations Cultural Educator position should exist in every Australian school, funded by the government or system to which the school belongs just as any other teaching position would be. These positions should be remunerated, at minimum, at levels commensurate with teachers, out of respect for the expertise of First Nations knowledge-holders and in an attempt to counteract the historical and ongoing effects of colonisers demeaning, appropriating and devaluing First Nations knowledges (Terri Janke and Company, 2018). Importantly, the right of Indigenous Peoples to control the use of their knowledges and to be compensated for their value is protected by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) (Terri Janke and Company, 2018). However, as Shay and colleagues (2022) point out, First Nations staff in schools are often paid at levels that do not “adequately reflect [their] knowledge and experience...and this may mean looking at industrial models that may not exist in schools” (p. 12).

The Cultural Residents Project received philanthropic funding from the Crown Resorts Foundation, which enabled a Cultural Resident to be employed by UNSW for the three-year duration of the project. This helped us circumvent the difficulty that arises within government schools of the requirement of a formal teaching qualification in order for staff to be paid a teacher’s salary rate. Many jurisdictions are experimenting with expanding roles for Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs), to include roles within schools with lower concentrations of Aboriginal students and roles focused more on Aboriginal cultural education for all students – however, these roles remain remunerated at AEO rates, which are lower than teachers’ salaries. While a positive first step, this salary level is not competitive when compared to the rates charged by private organisations that engage in sharing First Nations cultural knowledge, and schools or systems that attempt to employ Cultural Educators by this route may find this a barrier.

Fundamentally, as a result of our learnings from the Cultural Residents Project, we recommend the following considerations for funding:

- Hiring a First Nations Cultural Educator is a step toward curriculum enrichment that benefits all students and staff at a school; it is not an “Aboriginal program”. Therefore, funding for these roles should come from a school’s general budget and not only from funding earmarked for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

- Roles should be remunerated (at a minimum) at teaching salary rates; bearing in mind that many or most of the best candidates may not be “qualified” teachers (in the Western sense).
- If your school can only afford to hire someone for 1-2 days per week, this is certainly better than nothing. If you encounter difficulty in recruiting for this position, it may be worth partnering with another school or schools in your local area to see whether you can jointly sponsor a full-time position.
- It is possible that some candidates who would be suitable for engagement as a Cultural Resident may not wish to be paid as a regular employee (e.g. if this would disrupt pension or housing costs). In these cases, it is best if schools can work closely with the candidate to arrive at an arrangement everyone is happy with – e.g. in-kind or material contributions, honoraria in the form of gift cards, etc.

Ideas for funding sources outside a school’s general budget:

- Sponsorship from local businesses
- P&C fundraising
- Philanthropic organisations
- Department of Education grants
- Local community grants (e.g. from councils)
- See if your school has anything else you can offer in exchange; e.g. if you have expertise in working with students with disabilities, and a local First Nations organisation seeks training in this area, could you “trade” professional development for the services of one of their affiliates? It is important that a situation like this be conducted with relationality and respect for all the recommended Overarching Principles (pp. 10-13), at its core.



Photo Credit: Wolter Peeters, Sydney Morning Herald **CHIFLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL**

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR STAFF

It is important that Cultural Residents enter an environment that is as safe and free from racism as is possible within an educational setting. Therefore, school staff having a baseline level of cultural awareness/sensitivity is important. Prior to engagement of a Cultural Resident, schools should assess their recent history with professional learning in Aboriginal education, and get a sense of how receptive or “on board” their staff are (see “Is My School Ready for a Cultural Educator? Self Assessment” on p. 16). From there, in the months or year preceding engagement of a Cultural Resident, schools should schedule in professional learning sessions appropriate to the needs of their staff, so that staff are relatively “on the same page” with regard to a respectful knowledge of Aboriginal history and how this impacts on present-day issues that play out in schools and in society at large. Staff need to also understand their school’s approach to Aboriginal education and community relationships, and to be able to explain their school’s values and vision with regard to this, in addition to reflecting on their own personal commitment to Aboriginal education as a teacher.

This professional learning may take a variety of forms, depending on what is available in your area or through your school system. This will continue during the employment of the Cultural Resident as your school deepens its embedding of Aboriginal knowledge within curriculum and pedagogy (see “Implementation” section on p. 68). There is no one-size-fits-all approach to this, but the following principles should be considered:

- A single session is not enough – this must be an ongoing endeavour for your school staff to broaden and deepen their understanding.
- Whenever possible, professional learning should be led by First Nations people local to your school context. In NSW, for example, many people from local communities are employed in the Department of Education Aboriginal Education and Wellbeing teams, which, among many other, deliver professional learning modules to Department schools. If this is not possible, or if you wish to employ an outside organisation with broader reach to deliver a workshop (e.g. the Stronger Smarter Institute), you should do your best to ensure that your local community supports this (for example, via consulting your local AECG or similar consultative body).
- Staff reflecting on their own positioning and sociocultural location is key to them engaging in this relational work with purpose, humility and a willingness to learn. Therefore, professional learning should not only focus on “learning about” First Nations cultures but also learning about oneself.
- Findings from the Cultural Residents Project showed that the better a school was able to plan for and with a Cultural Resident, the more effectively they were able to engage meaningfully with First Nations knowledges as connected to curriculum, not just as a celebratory add-on. Professional learning around curricular implementation is further discussed on p. 71, but it is useful for schools to consider from the outset, and to begin to conduct an audit of their existing programs to see where First Nations content is currently being taught, and where you see potential for it to be further included.
- Despite your best efforts, it may not be possible to shift the thinking of every single staff member to be receptive to working with a Cultural Resident. It is important that Cultural Residents not be placed in classrooms where their presence is not supported by the teacher, as this may expose them to discomfort, hostility, and racism, and damage their relationship with your school. In the meantime, continue to find ways to support the development of more “resistant” or “reluctant” staff, including opportunities for them to observe the effects of other teachers working with Cultural Residents, and mentoring with regard to their professional obligations toward the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.



CREATING A STAFF COMMITTEE

Through the Cultural Residents Project, we experimented with different ways of schools organising and communicating with the Cultural Resident. It became clear that having a staff point-person as well as a support committee is the best practice model for implementation.

RECONCILIATION WEEK AND NAIDOC WEEK

Santoro and colleagues (2011) have observed that “far too often, Indigenous teachers carry the burden of being responsible for all aspects of Indigenous education” in a school (p. 72). It is common practice in schools to lay most, if not all, of the responsibility for key First Nations events such as Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week onto the First Nations staff within a school, regardless of their pay grade and pre-existing responsibilities. This also happened in the early days of the Cultural Residents Project, with Cultural Residents being asked to single-handedly coordinate activities, assemblies, and high-profile events for these celebrations, often with very little guidance, budget or support.

While often this happens as a result of schools’ “good intentions” – they want to prioritise First Nations leadership and voice in how these events are observed – the result can lead to First Nations staff members feeling overworked and underpaid, exhausted, and resentful. It can appear that non-Indigenous people do not support these events or just want to show up to enjoy them without doing any work.

We posit that this is especially insidious with regard to Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week, which are meant to be about non-Indigenous people acknowledging the wrongs of the past and committing to addressing them through their present-day actions and commitments. It is not First Nations Peoples who need to be “sorry”.

CLOVELLY PUBLIC SCHOOL



To avoid overburdening the Cultural Educator and any other First Nations staff at your school, and to ensure distributed leadership and workload, an Aboriginal Education committee should be formed, involving (in most school settings) both First Nations and non-Indigenous staff. This will also help your initiatives remain sustainable in the event of turnover of key staff (see “[Troubleshooting](#)” section, p. 79). This committee should prioritise listening to First Nations staff members (and possibly students and parents/carers as well) to understand their vision and goals for Aboriginal Education at your school, including major events such as NAIDOC Week. As recently as 2021, research by Moodie and colleagues has shown that “Indigenous people are often not heard, and often not counted, by teachers, school leaders or policymakers” (p. 7). This staff committee should see its role as supporting the operationalising of the school’s First Nations stakeholders’ vision, with all members equally sharing the load.

Within this committee, a point-person should be nominated to support the Cultural Educator, so that the Cultural Educator has a clear point of contact at the school. This point person's duties may include:

- Being easy to contact, e.g. exchange of mobile numbers
- Ensuring the Cultural Educator knows their way around the school, has a secure place to keep their belongings, knows where the toilets are, and that any accessibility needs are met (such as avoiding stairs for someone with limited mobility)
- Creating the Cultural Educator's timetable in consultation with other key staff members, and communicating this timetable to all involved parties with advance notice
- Scheduling in opportunities for planning time between the Cultural Educator and the teachers involved
- Managing unforeseen events such as Cultural Educator illness or Sorry Business, or communicating with the Cultural Educator about school events that may impact their work, such as Athletics Carnivals or school camps
- Ensuring the Cultural Educator is invited to special school events, such as performances, award ceremonies, morning teas and professional development days
- Connecting the Cultural Educator with other relevant staff as needed, e.g. Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO), Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO), or Community Liaison Officer (CLO)
- Troubleshooting any other issues or challenges that may arise and involving the Principal where appropriate

*"It was great knowing I could call on
[the school's point-person] for
anything I needed during my time at
the school."*

Trent Kelly
(Cultural Resident)



COMMUNITY ADVISEMENT AND SUPPORT

The importance of support from your local Aboriginal community has been emphasised throughout this document. Now that you are at the stage of hiring a Cultural Educator, it is also important to consider the support this person will need while in the role. In many cases, the Cultural Educator may be the only Aboriginal employee at their school, and at times this can be an isolating and an uncomfortable experience. During the Cultural Residents Project, we held monthly meetings with an AECG Working Group, to ensure that the project was being delivered in line with the community's vision, and to provide the opportunity for the Cultural Residents to be supported by other Aboriginal colleagues working in education. Sometimes this meant talking through an experience of ignorance or racism that the Cultural Resident had encountered while at a school. Sometimes it involved advice on who else in the community a school should reach out to for specialist knowledge.

We believe that this kind of structured support system is a key component to employment of a Cultural Educator and its importance cannot be underestimated – without adequate support, research shows that school staff who are positioned as “cultural experts” may experience heightened stress and burnout (Basit & Santoro, 2011). If several schools in your area are employing a Cultural Educator, perhaps monthly or once-per-term “network meetings” could occur, or support could be sought from your local AECG or Aboriginal Education and Wellbeing Team (or state/system equivalent). You should work with your school's Aboriginal Education committee, local community and the Cultural Educator you have employed to set up a support system that meets their needs in your specific context.



KENSINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

In recruiting First Nations people to work in schools, it is important to be mindful of the historical relationship that many First Nations families have with education and educational institutions. Most First Nations people are not accustomed to schools valuing their cultural knowledge, or caring about what they have to say, and schools initiating “partnerships” with First Nations communities may be viewed with suspicion, given that such “partnerships” usually serve the school's needs more than the community's (Lowe, 2011). So it is possible that you may advertise a position, not receive any responses, and be faced with what to do next.

In the Cultural Residents Project, relationships and word-of-mouth were keys to the successful recruitment of Aboriginal community members for the Cultural Resident positions. In our experience,

posting a position on formal job listing sites or circulating it via professional networks did not yield results; whereas building on existing relationships, and asking community members to recommend particular individuals to approach, was much more effective. This process can take time, and if a school gives up after its first attempt(s), they may lose out on finding a quality candidate. If your consultation with your local community has indicated that employing a Cultural Educator is something they would support, then you should persist in your efforts. Don't assume that a lack of response equates to a lack of interest or investment from your local community; instead, look for ways to build on the relationships you already have, to deepen or widen your connections, and to have people in the community vouch for the position, and for your school as an employer.

It may be necessary to reflect on and review any aspects of the position or process that you might change in order to make it more attractive to community members, including the pay scale and application processes. If you have invested the time in the beginning to lay the groundwork and think through some of the issues discussed so far in this toolkit, you will be better positioned to persist in these efforts.



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

For the Cultural Residents Project, we drafted a brief Expression of Interest form that could be circulated among the community – via email but more importantly in-person at community events, such as AECG meetings and local cultural celebration days. It was important to us to, as much as possible, remove barriers to applying. Therefore, we considered the following:

- Making the process easy – no frustrating application websites that require logins or proof of identity
- Limiting the amount of reading and writing required to express interest (a short, simple form, able to be submitted electronically, on paper, or verbally over the phone)
- Available to everyone – the process needs to be accessible to an Elder who does not use the Internet, as well as to a younger person who may never be without their phone
- Flexible or rolling application deadlines
- Being willing to talk to candidates about the roles, about any questions or concerns they may have, and to support them to apply if they need help
- Removing economic hardship as a barrier – e.g. covering the cost of transportation to an interview, or the cost of a Working With Children Check

Relying on existing recruitment structures within your school, system, or department may inhibit the process, and you may have to advocate for finding creative solutions or operating with less formality than is customary when hiring for a full-time teaching role, for example.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU DON'T HAVE A BIRTH CERTIFICATE?

Many non-Indigenous people might take having a birth certificate for granted. But obtaining one is a process riddled with barriers for many First Nations people, including cost, bureaucratic hurdles, lack of access to technology or to physical service centres, and more. There can be intergenerational trauma associated with the Stolen Generations, and suspicion of registering a birth with the government for this reason. However, without a birth certificate, First Nations people face hurdles everywhere – including in obtaining other forms of identification, or in applying for jobs, Working With Children Checks, or bank accounts (learn more at www.pathfinders.ngo). You may not have imagined this as one of the factors that could keep an Aboriginal community member from applying for your Cultural Educator position, but if it were;

- *How could you support a potential candidate to navigate this issue?*
- *What might your school gain from being willing to work with this person, rather than being closed off to them until they “get it sorted on their own”?*



Once you have one or more viable candidates interested in your Cultural Educator position, ensure that you have First Nations people within your school, and/or members of the local AECG or similar organisation, involved in the selection process. This may involve a formal interview process or a less formal endorsement, but you will want to ascertain that your candidate will be supported by other members of the school community and local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community whilst in the role. Each community may have a variety of opinions about issues such as:

- Who is considered a suitable candidate (based on age, experience, cultural knowledge, heritage or connection to the local area)
- Whether existing community politics or divisions present any sort of conflict of interest
- Who is allowed to speak on behalf of the community
- What sort of hiring or selection process is “fair”

You cannot expect that everyone in a given First Nations community will agree with each other about any issue, or in this case about any candidate for your role. But you should ensure you have consulted a cross-section of people (not just one First Nations person you happen to know), that local First Nations people were central to your selection process, and that the person you hire will not face hostility or resistance from key community leaders in undertaking the role.





EXPRESSION OF INTEREST



ABORIGINAL CULTURAL EDUCATOR WANTED FOR

[Insert school name] located on **[Insert local Country name]** (**Insert English name for suburb**), is seeking to employ an Aboriginal Cultural Educator for the 20__ school year.

Cultural Educators work with school students and teachers, helping the teachers build their capacity to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in their teaching.

Applications will be accepted until **[Insert date]** for work commencing on **[Insert date]**.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with connections to the local community **[Insert local community or Country name]**
- Knowledge or expertise about Aboriginal perspectives, histories and cultures related to primary school curriculum
- Written and interpersonal communication skills, including a willingness to work with teachers and students
- Availability for at least 2 days per week of work during school terms
- Successful applicants must undergo a Working with Children Check (cost covered by the employer)

EOIs will be reviewed by a committee that includes representatives from the AECG and Department of Education.

Please send your EOI to **[Insert school email address]** by **[Insert date]** COB. If you have questions about the role, please call **[Insert date]** on **[Insert phone number]**.

Full Name:			
Phone number:		Email address:	
Number of days per week looking for work (and which days if applicable):			
Why are you a good candidate to work with school students and teachers on learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives?			
Please describe your connection to the local community.			

Thank you for your time and your interest. We will be in touch as soon as possible.





ONE-PAGER

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL EDUCATION AT ----- SCHOOL

Insert photo from your school context here

At **[Insert school name]**, we value **[fill in the blank]**, and we are committed to strengthening our relationships with our local Aboriginal **[or fill in specific name]** community and improving Aboriginal education at our school. This year, we are hoping to employ a local Aboriginal Cultural Educator so that all students become better educated about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, histories and cultures.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

First Nations communities have long fought for greater authority and agency in connection with formal schooling. Although the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers mandate that all teachers should have an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and the ACARA Cross-Curriculum Priorities require the teaching of First Nations perspectives across all disciplines, many teachers feel ill-equipped to teach this in a meaningful way.

Research shows that partnerships between schools and First Nations communities, and the embedding of First Nations cultural knowledge and perspectives in schools, can improve schooling for ALL students. Visit www.knowyourcountry.com.au to learn more.

HISTORY

Australian schools were not originally designed to sustain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' connection to their communities and culture; in fact, they were overt tools of assimilation. Australia has a long way to go to right these wrongs and to show Aboriginal people that schools are safe places for them and their children.

There is also a pattern of mainstream Australia believing negative stereotypes and historical inaccuracies about Aboriginal people and culture. This has resulted in many non-Indigenous Australians not believing that learning about First Nations culture will be relevant or meaningful to them. However, this is beginning to change, with a 2020 survey of over 1,000 Australians showing that most are unsatisfied with how they were taught First Nations histories and cultures in school, and they wish they knew more.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

A Cultural Educator will work at our school _ days a week, collaborating with teachers to plan, implement, and evaluate the integration of First Nations perspectives across the curriculum.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

We hope, through working with a Cultural Educator, to build and sustain positive relationships with our local Aboriginal community. We hope to build our teachers' capacity to work with Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum in meaningful, non-tokenistic ways. And we hope that our students will become well-educated about Aboriginal histories and perspectives, and that we prepare them to be culturally aware and to advocate for reconciliation in their communities.

For more information, please contact **[Insert name]**, **[Insert role]** via **[Insert email address]** and/or **[Insert phone number]**.



SAMPLE ROLE DESCRIPTIONS



ROLE:

Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander/local group term such as Koori, Murri/
First Nations (choose appropriate terminology for your school context) Cultural Educator

REPORTS TO:

e.g. Principal, Head Teacher – Teaching & Learning, or similar

ROLE DESCRIPTION & KEY DUTIES:

Cultural Educators are local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community members approved by the local AECG or similar consultative body who work with teachers and school leaders to improve schools' capacity to include First Nations perspectives in their curriculum and pedagogy, for the purpose of improving education for both First Nations and non-Indigenous school students. The Cultural Educator's role is to:

- Build positive relationships with students, staff, school leaders and families/wider community.
- Work with Principals to identify key areas for change in school culture to make schools more culturally safe and nourishing for First Nations students/families/guests.
- Work alongside teachers to identify and describe key elements of Aboriginal cultures, histories and knowledges associated with curriculum outcomes, and to provide advice on their selection and sequence.
- Co-deliver lessons within selected curriculum units with participating teachers.
- Advise teachers on appropriate pedagogies and assessment methods from a First Nations perspective (for use with both First Nations and non-Indigenous students).
- Work alongside teachers to reflect on and evaluate successes and challenges after delivering lessons/units including First Nations content.
- Work alongside systemic and external providers to contribute to professional learning of teaching staff and leaders.

Note: the Cultural Educator's role revolves around curricular and pedagogic support for teachers and thus **does not** include some duties usually performed by Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) or School Learning and Support Officers (SLSOs), including:

- individual Aboriginal student support/participation in family meetings
- classroom behaviour management/discipline
- supervision of students, e.g. playground duty



ROLE:

Principals

REPORTS TO:

Department of Education/Directors

ROLE DESCRIPTION & KEY DUTIES:

Principals understand the importance of improving educational environments for all students by better integrating First Nations perspectives in curriculum and pedagogy. They are committed to bringing their teaching staff along on this journey by prioritising professional learning and opportunities in this field. The Principal's role is to:

- Build positive relationships with students, staff, Cultural Educators and families/wider community.
- Work with the Cultural Educator to improve their overarching school culture so that First Nations families and guests find the school culturally safe and nourishing.
- Support the work of the Cultural Educator at their school, e.g. by organising professional learning, time release for staff, and facilitating working groups of specific staff leaders who will primarily engage with the Cultural Educator.
- Ensure staff understand the role of the Cultural Educator and that the Cultural Educator is not being asked to engage in other duties not central to their position
- Work alongside teachers to reflect on and evaluate successes and challenges after delivering lessons/units including First Nations content.
- Document and maintain a record of their engagement/PL activities and outcomes.



ROLE:

Teachers

REPORTS TO:

Department of Education/Principals

ROLE DESCRIPTION & KEY DUTIES:

Teachers understand the importance of improving educational environments for all students by better integrating First Nations perspectives in curriculum and pedagogy. They are committed to prioritising professional learning and opportunities in this field. The teachers' role is to:

- Build positive relationships with the Cultural Educator, students, staff, school leaders and families/wider community.
- Participate in professional learning activities and planning meetings with the Cultural Educator.
- Work with the Cultural Educator to identify and select key elements of Aboriginal cultures, histories and knowledges associated with curriculum outcomes, and to design and sequence

appropriate learning activities based on these.

- Co-deliver lessons within selected curriculum units with Cultural Educators
- Integrate pedagogies and assessment methods from a First Nations perspective based on the Cultural Educator's and research-based recommendations.
- Work alongside the Cultural Educator to reflect on and evaluate successes and challenges after delivering lessons/units including First Nations content.
- Document and maintain a record of their teaching activities and outcomes.



IMPLEMENTATION

– Having a Cultural Educator
at your school

OVERARCHING
PRINCIPLES

PRECONDITIONS FOR
A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

PLANNING FOR
A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

IMPLEMENTATION



You've come so far! You have done all the self-assessment, planning, community outreach and consultation outlined in the previous sections of this document, but you're still only at the beginning of your journey with bringing a Cultural Educator into your school. This section will help prepare you for many of the considerations involved in the day-to-day work of collaborating with the Cultural Educator as well as ways to make this initiative impactful and sustainable for your school and community.



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

NUTS AND BOLTS

ORIENTATION AND SETTLING IN

In the process of planning for and hiring your school's Cultural Educator, your school will have established a staff committee (see p. 51) to support this work, including a point-person for the Cultural Educator. This person/group should think through the initial orientation of the Cultural Educator to the school, including elements such as:

- Assembling any onboarding documentation the school already has (e.g. for new or casual staff) and reviewing it to ensure its clarity and applicability to the Cultural Educator role i.e. teacher's diary, your school's year and term calendars, and community protocols.
- Understanding the Cultural Educator's level of facility with technology, including finding out if the Cultural Educator has any access to technology already, helping them connect to school wifi, and furnishing them with a school device (e.g. laptop) if required.
- Ensuring the Cultural Educator is set up in the payroll system in advance of starting work, and is supported in getting this set up as needed. This may involve sitting with them to set up online access to portals or apps, assembling and uploading identity documents, writing down passwords, and making sure they know any essential processes for payment, such as if they need to put in regular pay claims or request leave.
- Geographical orientation to the school, e.g. copy of school map with room numbers, and making time for a guided tour of the school.
- Ensuring the Cultural Educator knows where they can leave their things, access toilets, have a rest, make a cup of tea, etc. Ideally there will be a room or area that the Cultural Educator can

access if they need quiet or privacy, e.g. to take a break or make a phone call.

- Introducing the Cultural Educator to other school staff – initially with key staff, e.g. Principal, Office Manager, and Staff Committee – and then deciding on the best way to introduce them to all staff. This might be through a morning tea, a staff meeting, or individual/small group visits over multiple days.
- Helping the Cultural Educator know whom they can go to if they have a problem, including the best process to let someone know if they will be late or absent. They should be given the mobile number/email address of their point-person and possibly additional key staff members.
- Introducing the Cultural Educator to students – work with the person to decide whether a large group setting such as an assembly would be appropriate, or whether they would prefer meeting students in smaller group settings.
- If parents or the wider community will be notified about the employment of the Cultural Educator, such as in the school newsletter or on social media, ensure the Cultural Educator has input into how they are presented and gives permission for any images to be shared.



MAROUBRA JUNCTION PUBLIC SCHOOL

DON'T ASSUME! PART 2

As discussed elsewhere in this document, the long history of educational institutions disrespecting First Nations people and culture means that it is important to carefully consider basic elements of schooling processes that may cause discomfort to some Cultural Educators. Looking at the list on the previous page, can you identify any elements of the initial settling-in phase that might need to be thought through more deeply than with general staff onboarding?

While each individual is different, can you imagine various reasons why some First Nations people may ...

- Be uncomfortable with public speaking in large groups?
- Be uncomfortable with their image being posted to social media, or used by a school in a promotional capacity without their consent?
- Be cautious about uploading identification documents to the Internet?
- Feel nervous speaking to a largely non-Indigenous group of staff or parents?
- Feel hesitant about being in crowded spaces (particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic) or about vaccination requirements for employment?
- Prefer a paper copy of important school documents, e.g. map or staff handbook?

Take the time to get to know your school's Cultural Educator well in order to gauge their comfort level with these sorts of elements and processes, in order to make their integration into your school community as seamless as possible.



SCHEDULING MODELS

During the Cultural Residents Project, we were not prescriptive about the ways schools could choose to schedule the Cultural Resident’s work with teachers and classes. The schools had the Cultural Resident for two days per week and within that, could determine how they allocated the time. Thus, we had the opportunity to observe different logistical models and document their pros and cons. What makes the most sense for your school will be determined by a variety of factors, including the size of your school, number of days per week you employ a Cultural Educator, which teaching staff are most suitable to work with the Cultural Educator, and your school’s existing timetable. We present a few different options below:

MODEL 1: DEEP DIVE WITH A FEW TEACHERS	
<p>In an earlier iteration of this project, the Culture, Community and Curriculum Project (CCCP), schools initially expressed concern about the impact on teachers or increased workload of having a Cultural Educator with them for long periods of time. So, Cultural Educators worked with 1-2 teachers at a time, usually only for 1 day per week. Professional learning was conducted with these teachers and Cultural Educators to build relationships and plan for culturally responsive teaching.</p>	
THE PROS	THE CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers who were involved were passionate and enthusiastic about working with the Cultural Educators, minimising the possibility of hostility or racism. • Cultural Educators and teachers were well supported and became comfortable with each other. • The relationships between the Cultural Educators and teachers, and the ongoing presence with a particular class, meant that deeper learning was able to occur. Entire units were able to be structured around Aboriginal perspectives and students were able to take excursions, delve more deeply into local history and knowledge, and to engage critically with issues such as racism and the Stolen Generations. • Teachers began to feel confident to continue engaging with Aboriginal perspectives even when a Cultural Educator is not always present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the Cultural Educator leaves the role, only a few teachers have worked with them and whole-school structural change does not necessarily occur • Less possibility for whole-school curriculum narratives to be constructed around First Nations knowledges and perspectives • Fewer students and teachers overall get exposure to the Aboriginal community member • Cultural Educator may end up spending some time out of each day involved in lessons unrelated to their contribution to the classroom e.g. NAPLAN preparation lessons, other literacy/numeracy requirements, or sport.



MODEL 2: AS MANY CLASSES AS POSSIBLE

Many schools want to make the most of having a Cultural Educator at their school and ensure that most or all students and teachers get a chance to work with them. They may create a schedule where each teacher or class gets to work with the Cultural Educator, although depending on the size of the school, this might end up meaning that each class works with them for a very short time (e.g. 1-2 lessons).

THE PROS	THE CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All or most of the staff and students get a chance to work with the Cultural Educator, making this more of a school-wide experience • No one feels “left out” • The Cultural Educator gets to know most people in the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough time for deeper influence of curriculum – work may stay on the surface and mean that the majority of the school’s programming remains as-is, untouched by Aboriginal perspectives • Cultural Educator may repeat certain activities over and over, risk of “tokenism” • Not enough time for deeper or sustained relationships between staff and Cultural Educator • Potential for lack of cultural safety for the Cultural Educator, or experiences of racism, if working with staff who are not fully “on board” • Teachers’ overall practice may not be substantially influenced; Cultural Educator input is a “special occasion” or bonus.



MODEL 3: BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

We found in the Cultural Residents Project that no matter what scheduling model we tried, schools always reported wishing they had more time to work with their Cultural Resident. In the project’s final year, we achieved the most in-depth success, having the Cultural Resident at a school two days per week for the entire year. This is more indicative of the type of structure hoped for in a future where every school employs a Cultural Educator. This model allowed schools to form genuine and ongoing relationships with the Cultural Resident, to make the most of the Cultural Residents’ individual skill sets, to enable them to become an embedded part of school life (e.g. attending P&C meetings, assemblies, and special events) and most importantly to influence teacher practice and school processes, and engage in sequences of deeper learning with students.

Schools generally focussed on a particular stage group working with the Cultural Resident each term, aligned with interdisciplinary curriculum units; for example; the Cultural Resident might work with the youngest students (Early Stage 1/Stage 1) at the start of the year when the curriculum emphasises themes of identity and belonging. However, potential models in other settings could include in-depth work with specialist teachers such as STEM, creative arts, or library classes that interact with all students across the year.

THE PROS	THE CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A nice mix of “breadth” and “depth” – most of the school community gets to be involved, and level of learning gets to be deeper and more sustained • Most staff who want to be involved can be; there is still leeway for working with resistant staff • Cultural Educator’s ongoing presence gives teachers a chance to practice co-teaching but also continuing the teaching of Aboriginal content on their own, with the opportunity to check in or receive advice from the Cultural Educator – this influences teachers’ confidence and collective efficacy to engage with Aboriginal perspectives and communities in an ongoing way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not always as “easy” or straightforward as other models; schools have to think through the logistics of what they are going to do • Students receive in-depth exposure to the Cultural Educator for one term out of the year, but not in the others • Cultural Resident may still not work with every student or influence all subjects/classes in ongoing ways, unless purposeful planning and curriculum programming is undertaken by the school.

The pros and cons of the models are not exhaustive in any way, so your school may have some better ideas on how to work with/between the different models or even perhaps come up with something completely different. Your school can choose an approach that feels most natural for you, and that is a good fit for the Cultural Educator(s) you are working with.

Please be willing to be flexible with whatever scheduling model you arrive at, and to change your planned approach if it seems not to be working as well as you hoped. It is also crucial that the Cultural Educator be aware of deviations from the normal timetable, and special school events, such as assemblies, Presentation/Speech Days, school camps, etc. It is worth checking in with them personally for the first few weeks or months as they get accustomed to the usual school methods for disseminating this information, e.g. through a portal or all-staff emails.



KENSINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL

PLANNING TIME

In the Cultural Residents Project, follow-up interviews with both the teachers and the Cultural Residents emphasised that planning time was crucial to success. This is always a challenge in schools, particularly in primary schools where teachers are rarely “off class”, and covering teachers with casual relief can be expensive. Schools involved in the CRP were generous with their time allotted to planning – usually a half to full day was allotted prior to a term start (either at the beginning of the term, or end of the previous term) for stage groups to work with the Cultural Residents. Then within the term, individual teachers found time to further plan for daily activities, either during free periods, lunch, or before/after school. Stage leaders had some opportunity for planning within scheduled professional learning sessions (further discussed on p. 71) and when staff committees were timetabled to meet. Still, most teachers expressed that still more time to plan with the Cultural Resident would have been beneficial to improve the depth and quality of the teaching and learning. Schools might experiment with creative ways of approaching this issue. Some ideas could be:

- Seeking funding (e.g. corporate sponsorship, P&C or philanthropic funds) to support more time-release for teachers involved
- Enlisting additional parent volunteers for events such as excursions, camps, athletics carnivals, etc. to enable key staff to plan with the Cultural Educator on those days
- Using casual staff to cover more events such as the above, or to supervise in-school events such as standardised testing or “Scripture”, to enable teachers to plan with the Cultural Educator
- Timetabling breaks for the Cultural Educator out of alignment with school bell times, so that they can be available to build relationships or plan with teachers during recess and lunch

As with any teacher, it takes advance planning for the Cultural Educator to think through the best approach for a certain topic, to gather supplies or artefacts they may want to utilise, or to get in touch with other community members who might be able to offer specialist knowledge. Careful planning will help ensure that the Cultural Educator’s interactions with students are not ad-hoc; rather, that they contribute meaningfully to a larger sequence of teaching and learning. We elaborate on why this is so important in the next section.

CURRICULUM PLANNING

FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGES IN THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Most schools have become accustomed to a very occasional and selective pattern of including First Nations peoples, cultures and communities into school activities, including teaching and learning. In many cases, discrete events related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are observed (e.g. NAIDOC week), and occasional integration into curricular topics, such as when discussing the history of the colonisation of Australia within History, linking topics in science about plants or ecology to First Nations uses and “bush tucker”, or studying texts by First Nations authors in English. However, these topics are integrated only insofar as they seem to “fit” or “match” the discipline (or Key Learning Area, ‘KLA’) to which they have been assigned, and their purpose is usually to serve the curriculum outcomes of that KLA.

In most schools, there is generally not consideration of the big picture; the overall narrative or learning outcomes that students might form about First Nations knowledges across Kindergarten to Year 6. Thus, teachers struggle to meaningfully teach about First Nations content, and students struggle to understand this knowledge coherently, as part of a larger narrative – because they are exposed to it in tiny, atomised “bits” that are disconnected from each other (Lowe & Galstaun, 2020). This is a fundamental challenge posed by the positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures as one of the “Cross-curriculum Priorities” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2023), as opposed to being one of the “Learning areas”. The figure below illustrates this disconnect, showing how teachers’ ability to teach First Nations content is affected by the struggle to fit this content into Western disciplines, divorcing it from the context, community, Country and knowledge system that produced it:

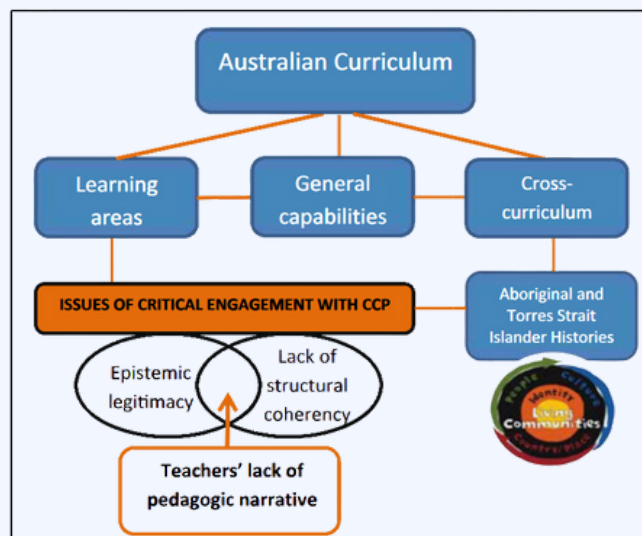
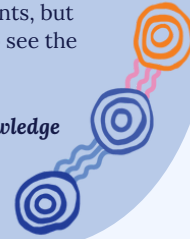


Fig. 1 Issues of critical engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP in the Australian Curriculum
 Figure citation: Lowe & Galstaun, 2020, p. 96

A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT...

Imagine if in the next version of the curriculum, mathematics were designated a “cross-curriculum priority” instead of a “key learning area”. Instead of teaching maths in a coherent sequence, building on foundational skills in order to deepen a student’s capacity and knowledge over time, maths would be integrated into other KLAs wherever they could manage to fit it in. So geography teachers might ask students to work with charts and tables, art teachers might ask students to measure walls and canvases for hanging, and so on. But this would be done without students necessarily knowing how to add, subtract, multiply and divide, or having ever been taught about percentages and ratios. We would expect students to acquire these skills “on the fly”, or imbibe them from the general ether. Every now and then, we would invite in specialist mathematicians to share some aspect of their knowledge with students, but students might often be disengaged during these sessions and fail to see the relevance to their own lives.

If we then did not see students becoming skilled in mathematical knowledge or passionate about studying maths in the future, why might this be?



Lowe and Galstaun (2020) as well as Weuffen and colleagues (in press) have highlighted the need for pedagogical narratives to help teachers incorporate First Nations perspectives meaningfully. These can be constructed on an individual or school-wide level to backward-map a coherent sequence of learning across a student’s experience of schooling (Ladwig, 2009; Loughland & Parkes, 2004). This involves articulating an overarching “big idea” (Mitchell et al., 2017) that will draw all the disparate content together, and that will form the ultimate outcome for understanding. According to Whiteley (2012), big ideas constitute “the meaningful patterns that enable one to connect the dots of otherwise fragmented knowledge” (cited in Mitchell et al., 2017, p. 4). When considering the fragmented nature of First Nations knowledge across the Australian Curriculum, the need for couching this content within the frame of an overarching big idea becomes clear.

WAYS FORWARD WITH A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

Most First Nations Cultural Educators are not “trained” teachers (in the conventional sense) and therefore cannot be expected to be familiar with the structural intricacies of the curriculum as outlined in the previous section. Thus, there is a need for genuine collaboration between teachers and Cultural Educators in the teaching and learning of First Nations knowledges – the Cultural Educators bring their knowledge, lived experiences, and perspective to the table, and the teachers bring their understanding of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Only with both of these parties’ expertise can we see where the Cultural Educator’s knowledge fits in with the broader sequence of teaching and learning across all disciplines.

It is important to remember that a Cultural Educator delivering one-off lessons that are disconnected, or only tenuously connected, to the sequence of learning students are otherwise engaged in, will not make a sustained impact on student understanding of First Nations perspectives. Learning must be connected to a larger narrative in order to be meaningful, and hopefully this is part of your goal or purpose in why your school decided to invest in employing a Cultural Educator in the first place.

It is also important to remember that the Cultural Educator at your school is unlikely to be a subject

matter expert on all disciplines. It is unfair to ask someone whose strengths lie primarily in cooking, visual arts and reflecting on personal history to speak with authority within a science lesson on native plants and ecology. However, in these situations, a Cultural Educator may be able to recommend someone else in the community for you to talk to, or may be able to offer useful insights based on their own perspective and experience that relate to these topics and add a meaningful dimension to them (e.g. “we used to eat bush lollies growing up on the mission”).

We hope you are coming to see the importance of approaching work with a Cultural Educator purposefully, with ample time to plan, listen, learn, think creatively and reflectively, and adapt. Another excellent resource for deepening your curricular practices in engaging with First Nations perspectives is a guide from the Queensland Department of Education and Training (2011) called Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools (EATSIPS). Pages 36–41 of this document contain useful frameworks and guiding questions for your planning process.

At the end of this section (p. 86), you will find a blank template to chart your backward-mapping of your “big idea” as well as a worked example from Kami Hazlewood, an experienced teacher with Lead Accreditation developed in partnership with her school’s Cultural Educator, Aunty Phyllis Marsh when she was the Lead Teacher a West Moreton Anglican College (p. 87).

"They've learned a lot. Like the kids, compared to when I was in primary school or even in high school, they're getting exposed to so much more. When we sort of started it was didgeridoos and boomerangs and dancing and that's sort of all they really had seen and known, and then the stereotypes. But now I can go to a class that I've been to and they can tell me interesting facts about Country. Like what Country is this school on? They all know that. How, how do Aboriginal people live now? How did we live at the time? You know, a lot of people have no idea about the traditional ways and I'm still learning myself because we never got this proper education. You know, it's kind of a reconnecting thing. So it's been very good for me. But they know more, they've got a better picture of what blackfellas look like and are about than any other kind of kid coming out of the school system who really isn't getting a lot.

You might hear about colonisation, you might hear about, you know, Captain Cook and then that's about it. But the stuff we're doing is pretty interesting and they enjoy it. And we didn't hold back. We were talking about um, sort of what do you think happened, what did it look like? What were the ideas at the time that led to the kids being taken away? You know, things like that. And they really grasped it well, even though they're primary school kids. And I always said to the teachers, you pull me up if I go too far, then we'll have a conversation about it. But we, we did push it and it's good that they know this stuff."

Trent Kelly
(Cultural Resident)



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The complexity of curriculum planning, as outlined above, means that most teachers and schools will require specialist professional learning in order to make their work with a Cultural Educator meaningful and sustainable, in order to achieve better outcomes for students. Many school systems will have an Aboriginal Education unit or directorate which may provide professional learning. These courses may or may not specifically address the curricular complexities discussed here, but may be able to cover specific areas of practice, or areas where your school staff has particular knowledge gaps. There are also private organisations and businesses that offer professional learning courses nationwide. Be sure to apply your own critical lens to these offerings and to consult with your local Aboriginal community as to whether they support the use of these offerings for your school/community context.

Here are some examples of existing entities offering professional learning in Aboriginal education to teachers and schools. This is not an exhaustive list, and being listed here does not constitute an endorsement from UNSW or the Cultural Residents Project team – but these may provide a jumping-off point for your research:

STATE-BASED DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION	PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS
<u>Victorian Institute of Teaching</u>	<u>Stronger Smarter Institute</u>
<u>Queensland Department of Education</u>	<u>Australians Together</u>
<u>New South Wales Department of Education</u>	<u>Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)</u>



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

In the Cultural Residents Project, UNSW and the Cultural Residents developed a tailored Professional Learning Program for the schools involved. This was most successful with the final cohort of schools, who worked with a Cultural Resident across an entire year. Changes to curriculum, programming, and teacher practice take time, and even a year was only enough to establish the rationale and initiate changes – those schools who worked with a Cultural Resident only for one or two terms struggled to integrate the Professional Learning in a meaningful way before their time with the Cultural Resident was finished. These sessions included:

- Opportunities to build relationships and listen to First Nations Peoples, in alignment with relationally responsive practice (Bishop et al., 2019; Bishop & Vass, 2020);
- Opportunities for teachers involved to set goals for themselves and engage in reflective practice (Thompson & Thompson, 2023);
- Clear objectives in service of an overarching narrative or Big Idea (Lowe & Galstaun, 2020; Mitchell et al., 2017);
- Engagement with recent academic literature via Professional Conversations, as advocated by the Culturally Nourishing Schooling model (Burgess et al., 2023; Lowe et al., 2020); and
- Opportunities to learn from experienced practitioners, via guest presenters who were academics, teachers, principals, and Aboriginal Cultural Educators.

An outline of the Cultural Residents Project professional learning sequence is available in the Templates and Examples at the end of this section (p. 83). This may be built upon or used as a starting point to craft professional learning in your local context.



The CRP professional learning program met the following recommendations as per Bishop & Vass (2020):

- Prioritises relationality and deep listening to First Nations voices
- Avoids deficit discourse in its positioning of First Nations Peoples and Knowledges
- Encourages complexity, higher-order thinking, and a rejection of tokenism/stereotyping by teachers
- Is applicable to your local school/community context and is supported by your local First Nations community
- Advocates evidence-based practices (based on recent research, prioritising research generated by and with First Nations Peoples)
- Demonstrates mapping against the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#)

INVOLVING PARENTS AND FAMILIES

In the “Preconditions for a Cultural Educator” section (p. 27), strategies for initial engagement of parents and families in the idea of your school working with a Cultural Educator were discussed. It is important to maintain communication with parents and carers on an ongoing basis, and, where possible, extending the learning that students are undertaking with the Cultural Educator to involve families as well. Schools in the Cultural Residents Project described their parents as “hungry” for this sort of opportunity, and research from the Know Your Country campaign shows that, in 2020, 70% of people over the age of 30 feel that First Nations histories and cultures were taught “very badly or not at all” in their own schooling, and wish they had received a better education about these issues. This is not to say that all parents will take this view, but it is encouraging that so many parents will be likely to see a school’s work with a Cultural Educator as a valuable opportunity for their child, one that they missed out on themselves.

Ideas for involving parents and families in your school’s work with a Cultural Educator:

- Include an update on the Cultural Educator’s activities as a regular section of each school newsletter
- Highlight the Cultural Educator’s activities on school social media channels (with their permission)
- Create opportunities for parents and carers to meet your school’s Cultural Educator, for example at P&C meetings, parent-teacher night, morning teas, school assembly or a dedicated event
- Invite parents and families to participate in NAIDOC celebration events
- Invite parents and carers to volunteer in the classroom during Cultural Educator sessions
- Create opportunities within classroom learning and assessment activities for students to talk to their families about what they are learning, and deepen their own understanding of their family’s relationship to First Nations Australia (e.g. family history and migration experiences, parents’ own learning about First Nations issues when they were children, family relationship to the local area or other First Nations Country)
- Hold special parent education sessions led by the Cultural Educator (if this is something they are comfortable to do) or by another person or organisation from the local First Nations community on topics such as local histories and cultures, on-Country experiences, cultural awareness, or other topics of interest
- Seek parent and carer support in fundraising for items or experiences that would enhance the ability of the Cultural Educator to make an impact at your school (e.g. yarning circles/bush tucker gardens, funds for professional learning, paying subject-matter experts, increasing budget for art supplies or excursions)



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

ONE PARENT'S GRATITUDE

A parent at one of the Cultural Residents schools sent this email to the school administration. *Small details have been changed to preserve anonymity.*

Good afternoon,

This email is to say a special thank you to Aunty Maxine. Each week my son comes back from school with stories to tell that he learnt from Aunty Maxine, stories about how school was, about the food, about the Stolen Generation. We moved to Australia only a few years ago, and I think that it is so important for our kids to learn about the culture of the first people who lived in Australia. It is important for them to be more tolerant, open minded and kind with others. It is important for them to hear all Aunty Maxine's stories and I think he really likes her enthusiasm and just her presence. It is the only thing he recalls/or wants to talk about his school days!!

He loved the damper bread yesterday and was so happy to share the bread with his classmates and told me it smells so good. It all starts with our children and also with children like mine, who are not born in Australia but who can now call Australia their homeland.

Please share our thanks to her and thanks to the school for making this possible.



CLOVELLY PUBLIC SCHOOL

INVOLVING THE WIDER FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY

Your school's Cultural Educator is hopefully a respected member of their community, but still, they are one person and they cannot speak on behalf of everyone in the community. It is important for schools to be aware of this, so they do not put Cultural Educators in a difficult position of being asked to endorse things or put forward their own perspective as that of all First Nations people. Your school's Cultural Educator will also have their own particular areas of expertise, knowledge and experience. They may not know how to set up a bush tucker garden, they may not know how to cook, they may not know local art forms, music or dances. Schools need to learn where their Cultural Educators are most capable of contributing, and work with them to find other members of the community who can bring First Nations perspectives into other areas.

Depending on how your school or system chooses to define your Cultural Educator's role, it may include helping the school form relationships with other people and organisations within the local First Nations community. They may form a "conduit" between the school and community, enabling easier communication and relationship-building via making introductions and leveraging existing relationships and trust. However, it is of paramount importance that the school does not abuse this trust, for example through making contact with another community member and then expecting them to share their expertise for free. An incident like this will have reverberations for the Cultural Educator's personal relationships in the community and could impact their view of your school. One thing to keep in mind is that a Cultural Educator is first and foremost accountable to their community. If an incident happens, they will have to answer to community members. A Cultural Educator has a responsibility to uphold and respect cultural protocols, cultural knowledge, values, and customs of their community. So, be mindful of what you are asking of them.



A few examples of community involvement from the CRP:

- Aunty Maxine was always upfront about not being a gardener, but many schools she worked with hoped for her assistance with creating bush tucker gardens. She and one school worked together on areas of these projects that Aunty Maxine could contribute to, such as connections with local Indigenous plant nurseries, and experts within organisations such as the Royal Botanic Gardens. Aunty Maxine helped design the educational components of the gardens, such as placement of yarning circles and shade. She organised other local Elders and community members to attend an opening celebration and Smoking Ceremony for the groundbreaking of the garden.
- Several schools involved in the Cultural Residents Project have continued embedding local community knowledge and relationships in their schools even after they no longer have the Cultural Resident at their school. Some schools have employed the [Gujaga Foundation](#) to deliver Dharawal language programs or engaged the departmental Aboriginal Education and Wellbeing Unit to provide ongoing professional learning and help their students create bespoke Acknowledgements of Country.

- Some schools reported an increase in engagement from their Aboriginal parents and families after having the Cultural Resident involved in Aboriginal cultural support activities for students or in Personalised Learning Pathway (PLP meetings) for Aboriginal students.

Of course, involving the wider local First Nations community is not only about teaching and learning activities for your school. As discussed in the earlier section on [Community Advisement and Support \(p. 53\)](#), it is important that the Cultural Educator have some form of regular support network with fellow First Nations people as they undertake the role, and this network will also form a way of involving the wider community in the activities being undertaken.

PROMOTING THE INITIATIVE

Early on, it is more important to focus on the actual work of the Cultural Educator and embedding this meaningfully into your school than it is to worry about promotion and publicity. However, these elements are worth thinking about as they can make a significant contribution to the way your school community (as well as the wider public) view the initiative, and help your employment of a Cultural Educator remain sustainable through having visible and widespread support. The more positive publicity and reinforcement this sort of program generates, the harder it will be for detractors (e.g. recalcitrant parents or staff members) to maintain their stance. It will also make it easier for higher-level systemic leadership to support your school. If your school is trying to grow its enrolment, employment of a Cultural Educator may be a factor that distinguishes you from other nearby choices. Positive publicity within First Nations communities may elevate the standing of your school from the community's perspective.

Consider the following elements as ways of promoting your school's work with the Cultural Educator (remembering the advice previously noted with regard to permission and consent from the Cultural Educator in terms of use of their image, or how they are represented):

- Utilising school portal software/parent apps, website, social media, newsletters
- Alerting local politicians/journalists/media/influencers
- Submitting to internal systemic channels and awards nominations
- Applying for external awards, grants or corporate sponsorship
- Finding ways to signify your school's commitment to Aboriginal recognition through physical elements – murals, gardens, yarning circles, flying the flag, display of maps and artworks
- Inviting the public to special events, and having school representatives attend community events



AUNTY MAXINE RYAN
DHARAWAL

FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL EDUCATOR
UNSW SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

KNOW
YOUR
COUNTRY

REFLECTING ON HOW IT'S GOING AND DOCUMENTING THE OUTCOMES

It is important that your review and evaluation of your school's work with a Cultural Educator is formative and iterative – you should build in multiple opportunities to check in, reflect on how things are going, and look for areas that can be improved. These should involve various stakeholders, including students, teachers, the Cultural Educator themselves, and the wider community (e.g. parents; First Nations support network) as appropriate.

It is also crucial to maintain a reflexive process through this journey, particularly around your expectations for what constitutes a positive outcome. For instance, it is unrealistic to expect change in students' NAPLAN results or for any sort of fast turnaround in quantitative but tangential metrics. Change is incremental and slow, which is why it is important for this work to be part of a long-term, strategic investment for your school, one that involves a clear purpose and aim for engaging a Cultural Educator, and is invested in community relationships and meaningful curriculum work.

It will be useful for you to think about the types of data you would like to collect along the way in order to be able to show evidence of the program's success. This may include things like:

- Baseline data on student attendance/achievement/engagement
- Baseline data on teacher experience/confidence in working with First Nations peoples and perspectives
- Baseline data on teacher/student knowledge about First Nations topics and issues
- Baseline program audit of how First Nations perspectives were engaged with in the classroom prior to engagement of a Cultural Educator
- Baseline data on the school's engagement points with local First Nations community or parents/carers of enrolled First Nations students
- Student work samples to show their learning about First Nations histories and cultures
- Teacher reflections or along-the-way surveys to gauge growing confidence or facility with working with First Nations peoples and perspectives
- First Nations staff satisfaction surveys or focus groups
- Individual feedback from parents, community members, staff, or students
- Publicity and media about the initiative
- Ongoing student attendance/achievement/engagement data



CLOVELLY PUBLIC SCHOOL

Elsewhere in this document we have referred to the [Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools \(EATSIPS\)](#) guide from the Queensland Department of Education and Training (2011). This page and the page prior ([pages 77 & 78](#)) contain useful advice toward documenting and reflecting on your school's engagement with First Nations communities and perspectives, including an "Implementation Checklist with Targets" that can form a template for your thinking.

ASK YOURSELF...

- What is currently working well about the program?
- What could be improved about the program?
- Does the Cultural Educator feel safe and supported at our school? Is there any way we can improve upon this?
- Have we built in sufficient time to consult with and listen to the Cultural Educator and other First Nations community members on a regular basis? Are we basing our activities on that listening?
- Can we do more to uplift First Nations voices and perspectives within our school community?
- Are we linking the Cultural Educator's work with meaningful areas of the curriculum? Is this learning connected in a narrative that makes sense?
- Are we fostering students' critical and higher-order thinking in the lessons with the Cultural Educator?
- Does school-level data show any interesting trends since employing the Cultural Educator (e.g. enrolment, attendance, engagement, wellbeing, or academic matters)? Remember, it may take time for these sorts of results to appear.
- Where are the gaps that still exist in teacher/staff practice? Where do we need to learn more?
- Is working with the Cultural Educator contributing to our school's strategic goals?
- Do local First Nations people have a positive view of our school? Again, it may take time for these sorts of opinions to shift.
- If there have been challenges or difficult situations, have we handled them well? How could we do better next time?



If you have received a philanthropic grant or corporate sponsorship to support your hiring of a Cultural Educator, be sure to note the types of deliverables and outcomes that are expected from this funding body and, as you go, gather the evidence you will need to inform any required project reports or presentations. Even if you don't have external funders holding you to account, this will be useful for informing your school Annual Report, making the case to your superiors for the initiative's value, or applying for future funding.

TROUBLESHOOTING

As important and valuable as we know this work to be, it is not without its challenges. Many of these have been noted throughout this document, including the legacy the education system's role in damaging and erasing First Nations languages and cultural practices, the epistemic disconnect between First Nations knowledges and the Western disciplinary structure of the curriculum and community fracturing as a result of generations of colonial practices. We know this work will be rewarding for those who engage in it and transformative for students – but we do not wish to represent it as “easy” or “feel-good” all the time.

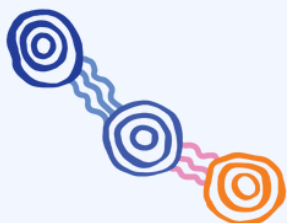
We lay out some potential problems you might encounter during the implementation phase, and initial steps to address these below. This is by no means an exhaustive list and the solutions presented are not the only possible ways of approaching the issues.

POTENTIAL ISSUE #1:

The Cultural Educator experiences racism or trauma at your school, from a student or staff member.

POSSIBLE APPROACH:

Ensure first and foremost that the Cultural Educator has the opportunity to share what happened with the Principal or a person they trust. They should be given the chance to share what they hope will happen as a result, and anything they need to recover from the situation (e.g. time off, being taken off the class with the offender temporarily or permanently). You should undertake approaches required under usual school policies such as involving the school's Anti-racism Contact Officer (ARCO) or similar, and listing the incident on any registers of racism. Setting up a meeting with another member or members of any existing support networks may be helpful, so that the Cultural Educator can debrief about the incident with other First Nations colleagues. Talk with the Cultural Educator to find out whether they would like to talk with or confront the perpetrator, and if they would, then find an appropriate mediator for this conversation. Consequences for the perpetrator may vary considerably depending on each situation, but when warranted by the severity of the case, an educative approach can work better than a punitive one in terms of reforming this person's behaviour in the future. The take away is take this seriously, act appropriately and make sure the Cultural Educator feels heard and supported.



POTENTIAL ISSUE #2:

The Cultural Educator is frequently absent, or has an unforeseen medical or personal issue that impacts on their attendance or their ability to continue in the role.

POSSIBLE APPROACH:

Statistically, First Nations peoples have poorer health outcomes across a range of measures, lower life expectancy, and higher incidence of some diseases than the non-Indigenous population (Commonwealth of Australia, 2020). They are also more likely to have involvement with the justice system, or have family members who are. This is not due to some fault, negligence or inherent defect in First Nations people but due to systemic factors resulting from colonisation that have created intergenerational trauma and disadvantage. These statistics may translate into your First Nations staff members seemingly taking more sick leave, carers' leave, or bereavement leave than you would consider "normal". Also, the obligations around death of First Nations community members ("Sorry Business") are important cultural protocols that must be honoured. It is important to recognise this with tact, empathy and concern, rather than dismissiveness or criticism. If you have built a trusting relationship with the Cultural Educator, hopefully they will be willing to share what is going on with them if something like this happens, though some people may prefer to be private about these personal details. Work with them on a plan to communicate about any personal issues that arise, or what should happen if an absence needs to occur at short notice. Try to work with the candidate to help them understand their leave options including leave without pay if they need to take a temporary hiatus from work. If an alternate employment schedule might help, you could look at reducing the Cultural Educator's hours and dividing the role between them and another community member, or if the situation is extreme, it may be necessary to look for a replacement. It is important to approach these issues with compassion and without deficit-oriented judgement, so that your relationships with your Cultural Educator and the wider First Nations community remain strong.



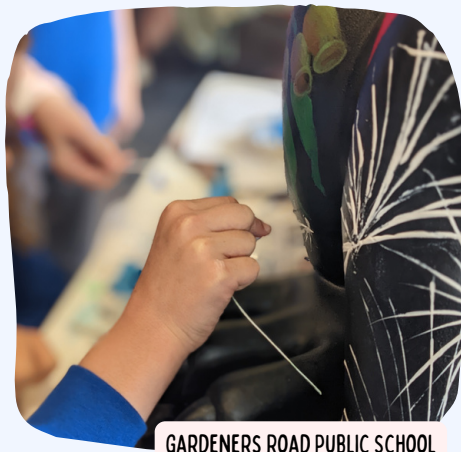
CHIFLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL

POTENTIAL ISSUE #3:

The Cultural Educator quits unexpectedly, or stops showing up.

POSSIBLE APPROACH:

This situation could occur for many reasons, and it is important to try to understand the particulars of the situation. If they no longer wish to perform the role, you will need to try to recruit a replacement, perhaps looking at your initial applicants and contacting other appointable ones. However, it is also important to reflect on what contributed to your first Cultural Educator leaving. If it had to do with the Cultural Educator's personal or health circumstances, this may have been unavoidable, but was there anything else you could have done to support them? Or was there something within the school or interpersonal environment that contributed to the Cultural Educator wanting to leave the role? If there is something like this (experiencing racism or bullying, feeling disrespected or not listened-to, for example) it will be important to address this before putting another person in the role. It is also worth noting that judgements such as “well, this person was just a poor fit for our school” can sometimes be proxies for racial or cultural judgements (Marvasti & McKinney, 2007). Please think deeply about what made the person a “poor fit” in such a case, and whether anything needs to change about the school, rather than the candidate.



POTENTIAL ISSUE #4:

A staff member decides they no longer want to work with the Cultural Educator after teaching and learning activities have already begun.

POSSIBLE APPROACH:

It is important that the Cultural Educator is not placed in situations where they are likely to face hostility or racism, so forcing this teacher to keep working with them may not be the best approach. However, you will need to investigate what the staff member's rationale is and what led to this situation. They have a professional obligation to address the AITSL Standards and Cross-Curriculum Priorities, and so they cannot be left to remain uncomfortable working with First Nations peoples indefinitely. Perhaps they need more targeted professional learning, or time to reflect and plan before entering back into the work. It may help to have them observe a colleague who is working productively with the Cultural Educator.

POTENTIAL ISSUE #5:

A parent complains about the school focusing too much on First Nations perspectives.

POSSIBLE APPROACH:

Offer to have a meeting with this parent to explain your position. If they have not attended the parent events you have held, or read information sent home, they may not be aware of the arguments as to why this is important for all students. They may also not be aware of the school's professional obligations to the Aboriginal Education Policy or implementing the AITSL standards or Cross-Curriculum Priorities. You can refer to the “Sample Presentation to Parents” and “Know Your Country Fact Sheet” contained in this toolkit. If the Cultural Educator is comfortable with it, you could invite the parent to observe one of their lessons or activities or to come along on an excursion.



GARDENERS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL

POTENTIAL ISSUE #6:

A First Nations community member complains about something the Cultural Educator has done, or something the school did under their advisement.

POSSIBLE APPROACH:

Arrange a meeting with this community member to better understand their position. You may invite them to the school, or offer to come to a place that is convenient for them. Try not to take a defensive stance in this meeting, but rather aim to increase your understanding of diverse community perspectives, remembering that not all members of a community will have the same beliefs, knowledges and opinions. It may help, during this meeting, to explain to the community member the relational processes you have gone through in preparing your school for a Cultural Educator, consulting with the community, hiring the Cultural Educator, and building relationships between members of your school community and the local First Nations community. Sometimes, this may result in the person respecting your process even if they disagree with part of the outcome. As Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth (2020, pp. 3–4) advise, “If you follow this way, responding to authentic relationships, you will be able to read the warning signs that will prevent you from overstepping, offending and transgressing. Even better, you will be able to co-create the shared meanings and language needed for genuine (and productive) inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge in the academy (Rigney, 1999).”



POTENTIAL ISSUE #7:

The school receives conflicting advice about something from different members of the local First Nations community.

POSSIBLE APPROACH:

As in the example above, it is important to remember that there is not usually one “community perspective” about anything, but that members of any community may have diverse and differing opinions on every issue. So, you should approach this situation without defensiveness, and seek to understand the diversity of opinions within your community. How you ultimately decide will be determined by the situation itself and who the authority on that should be, as well as the nature of the relationships your school has established with the community. In New South Wales, for example, Department of Education schools are bound by the [AECG Partnership Agreement](#), and so your local AECG executive will be the likely best arbiters in a situation like this. However, it’s possible that if the issue relates to issues of land or waterways (e.g. an important site on your school grounds or planned works that impact Country) your local Lands Council may need to be involved in the decision.

In some cases it may be best to respect the opinion of a local Elder who has significant involvement with your school community. There is not an easy answer to this question but any situation should be approached with relational responsiveness and a willingness to listen and change.



POTENTIAL ISSUE #8:

A champion within the school (Principal or point-person) leaves and their replacement is not as supportive of the initiative.

POSSIBLE APPROACH:

Hopefully, having taken a whole-school approach involving professional learning, publicity, and documenting of outcomes along the way, there won’t only be one “champion” within your school, but a framework of support that keeps the momentum going. However, it is important for new members of the school community to be brought on board and oriented toward this work – present them with important documents and data collected, introduce them to key players, and if possible give them access to professional learning previously completed by the majority of staff. There is always turnover in schools from year to year, so be mindful of scheduling in opportunities to help new staff get familiar with your school’s approach and priorities with regard to working with a Cultural Educator, and think about professional learning needs to refresh or deepen the work being undertaken in your school community.

In an extreme situation if a new principal is overtly hostile to this work (e.g. wants to discontinue keeping the Cultural Educator on staff), you may try to mobilise support networks such as parents and local Aboriginal community organisations to express their support, which will make it more difficult for the principal to resist. However, it is still important as always to avoid putting a Cultural Educator in a toxic work environment, so how this person’s leadership has affected your school environment will need to be considered.

POTENTIAL ISSUE #9:

An expected funding source falls through or doesn't come through.

POSSIBLE APPROACH:

Depending what you were planning to use this funding for, and within what time frame, you can try to find alternative sources of funding at short notice, or see if there are ways to rearrange funds allocated for other things within your school budget. You could try crowdfunding, or mobilising your parent community to help you fundraise.

If the funding is for some sort of optional activity, such as planting a bush tucker garden, you may need to consider changing tack and finding a different activity to undertake that can meet some of the same outcomes without the expenditure. However, if the funding is meant to employ the Cultural Educator, it will be important to give them as much notice about a potential risk to their position and to be transparent about this, so that they can make the best decision for themselves with regard to their career and financial situation.

YARN WITH THE CULTURAL RESIDENTS PROJECT AECG WORKING GROUP

What are some of the barriers that can get in the way of a Cultural Resident being successful at a school?

- Funding – schools' unwillingness to use money from their whole-school budget because they see this only as an "Aboriginal program"
- Divisions within the community
- Schools blaming their own failings on problems within the community
- Pay scale not commensurate with the type of work required within the role
- Lack of formal qualifications and documentation (e.g. birth certificates, passports)
- The pressure of being expected to be an expert on "all things Aboriginal"

After reading this toolkit, do you feel prepared to address most of these barriers if they should arise in your school environment?



NAME: _____ SCHOOL: _____



WORKING WITH A CULTURAL EDUCATOR

Goal Setting Template



Please use this form as a guide to help you reflect on your reasons for putting your hand up for this experience, and articulating your goals and vision for your involvement.

I WANT TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE CULTURAL EDUCATOR AT MY SCHOOL BECAUSE...

Consider: your personal and professional reasons; your background and prior knowledge or experiences; your views or philosophy about teaching and why this supports those; specific issues in your school or your practice that you would like to address, etc.

THINGS I FEEL I CAN CONTRIBUTE:

THINGS I HOPE TO GAIN FROM INVOLVEMENT IN THIS PROJECT:

MY MAIN GOAL(S) FOR MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROJECT THIS YEAR ARE...

Note: in setting goals, consider using the SMART Goals framework. Don't set a million goals; just focus on one or two.

SMART GOALS	SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	RELEVANT	TIME-ORIENTED
	Who? What? When? Where? Why? Which?	Milestones? Outcomes? How will you know you've achieved them?	What will I realistically be able to accomplish?	Does it fit with the overall project objectives?	Does it fit within the proposed time frame? Are there definable steps?

...FOR MY SCHOOL:

...FOR MYSELF/MY PRACTICE:



BIG IDEA DIAGRAM

Blank



Teacher planning starts here

BIG IDEA

1. The most important thing to remember is **'What is the BIG IDEA?'**
i.e. What concepts do you want the students to remember 1 or 5 years on?

WHY DOES THIS LEARNING MATTER?

2. **Why is this work important?**

If it is not intrinsically important, why would students need to do it?

TARGET CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS

YEAR 6

YEAR 4

YEAR 5

4. **The scope and sequence of learning over Years F-6.**

It is meant to be discrete, in each iteration, but also seen as a whole learning experience.

3. Given the BIG IDEA, **what would students need to know over time & across each year?**
i.e. to demonstrate an increasing level of understanding through this comprehensive F-6 programs?

YEAR 2 & 3

FOUNDATION & YEAR 1

Student learning starts here

BIG IDEA DIAGRAM

Worked Example

Teacher planning starts here

BIG IDEA

Connection to the Environment and Sustainability

By the end of Year 6, students will understand that...

For tens of thousands of years sustainability has been demonstrated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander use of the land and resources which contributes to contemporary understanding of sustainability; their traditional understanding of the environment helps them to make decisions and informs our decisions today.

There are different ways of understanding and communicating ideas.

All living things are connected and affect each other.

WHY DOES THIS LEARNING MATTER?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were the first people to live on this land and their scientific understanding has contributed to contemporary scientific understanding and practice.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a unique way of communicating their understanding so that knowledge is passed on and preserved for sustainable use of resources in Australia.

TARGET CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS

ACSSU002	ACSHE013	AC SIS029
ACSSU017	ACSHE021	AC SIS053
ACSSU043	ACSHE022	AC SIS060
ACSSU044	ACSHE050	AC SIS093
ACSSU072	ACSHE061	
ACSSU073	ACSHE081	
ACSSU094	ACSHE083	

YEAR 6

Students investigate and identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge about the growth and survival of living things in the Australian environments and the impacts of invasive species. Students use the knowledge to describe and predict the effect of environmental change on living things.

YEAR 4

Students investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander use of life cycles for sustainability. Students can explain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on peoples' connection to the environment. Students use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practices of estimation to describe patterns and relationships.

YEAR 5

Students investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge of adaptations by species to their environment. Students investigate how traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge informs sustainable harvesting of certain species, such as dugongs and turtles.

YEAR 2 & 3

Students can describe how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples know and communicate about plants and animals for hunting and gathering. Students can compare contemporary ways of classifying living things to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander systems of classification. Students communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about invasive species. Students explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' of living things.

FOUNDATION & YEAR 1

Students can explain how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people care for the environment and how they gain knowledge about the land. Students explore how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people communicate features of living things. Students can describe how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use changes in the land and sky to choose resources and act sustainability. Students can communicate how an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person would share observations or make representations of their environment.

Student learning starts here



CULTURAL RESIDENTS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OUTLINE



PROGRAM STRUCTURE:

- WHO: Teachers and school leaders from both participating schools
- WHAT: Connecting our work with Cultural Residents with meaningful curricular and pedagogic practice
- WHERE: Hosted alternately by the participating schools and UNSW
- WHEN: Eight 2-hour sessions (two per term)

OUR BIG IDEA:

Systemic change in Aboriginal education and the engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in the curriculum is possible through changes in teacher practice. Teachers change their practice through building relationships with local Aboriginal people, listening to and learning from Aboriginal people, and letting their practice be informed by this learning. The Cultural Residents project provides access and assistance for teachers and schools to begin this journey.

OVERALL OUTCOME/PURPOSE:

The Cultural Residents Professional Learning Program is an 8-session, year-long developmental opportunity designed to help you make the most out of being part of the Cultural Residents project. The outcome of this program is to equip you as you move beyond a surface level of engagement with Aboriginal perspectives in your teaching and to tap into the deeper and more profound possibilities of this work.

SESSION	TOPIC	READING
1 EARLY TERM 1	<p>BIG IDEA: The purpose for this work: Systemic change</p> <p>FOCUS QUESTION: What is truly involved in changing processes and practices in schools?</p>	<p>Bishop, M., Vass, G., & Thompson, K. (2019). Decolonising schooling practices through relationality and reciprocity: Embedding local Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom. <i>Pedagogy, Culture & Society</i>, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2019.1704844</p>
2 LATE TERM 1	<p>BIG IDEA: Cultural mentoring and relationally responsive practice</p> <p>FOCUS QUESTION: Why is it important to build sustained and reciprocal relationships?</p>	<p>Burgess, C., & Cavanagh, P. (2016). Cultural immersion: Developing a community of practice of teachers and Aboriginal community members. <i>The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education</i>, 45(1), 48–55.</p>

Implementation – Having a Cultural Educator at your school
Example

SESSION	TOPIC	READING
3 EARLY TERM 2	<p>BIG IDEA: Building a curriculum narrative and reconceptualisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum content (Part 1)</p> <p>FOCUS QUESTION: Making learning meaningful by engaging with “big ideas.”</p>	<p>Lowe, K., & Galstaun, V. (2020). Ethical challenges: The possibility of authentic teaching encounters with indigenous cross-curriculum content? <i>Curriculum Perspectives</i>, 40(1), 93–98. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-019-00093-1</p>
4 LATE TERM 2	<p>BIG IDEA: Building a curriculum narrative and reconceptualisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum content (Part 2)</p> <p>FOCUS QUESTION: How are you engaging with higher-order thinking?</p>	<p>Lowe, K., & Yunkaporta, T. (2013). <i>The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in the Australian National Curriculum: A cultural, cognitive and socio-political evaluation</i>. 33(1), 14.</p>
5 EARLY TERM 3	<p>BIG IDEA: Connecting Country to curriculum</p> <p>FOCUS QUESTION: How can we connect listening to Aboriginal community members to the curriculum that we teach students?</p>	<p>McKnight, A. (2016). Preservice teachers' learning with Yuiin Country: becoming respectful teachers in Aboriginal education. <i>Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education</i>, 44(2), 110–124.</p>
6 LATE TERM 3	<p>BIG IDEA: Establishing quality pedagogy and curriculum that makes a difference</p> <p>FOCUS QUESTION: How can we reflect on past teaching practice?</p>	<p>Harrison, N., Tennent, C., Vass, G., Guenther, J., Lowe, K., & Moodie, N. (2019). Curriculum and learning in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education: A systematic review. <i>The Australian Educational Researcher</i>, 46(2), 233–251.</p>
7 EARLY TERM 4	<p>BIG IDEA: Knowledge Exchange</p> <p>FOCUS QUESTION: What pedagogic or structural changes you have made to your practice so far this year?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
8 LATE TERM 4	<p>BIG IDEA: Leadership for change</p> <p>FOCUS QUESTION: How to lead for meaningful, lasting change?</p>	<p>Auerbach, S. (2010). Beyond coffee with the principal: Toward leadership for authentic school–family partnerships. <i>Journal of School Leadership</i>, 20(6), 728–757.</p>

NAME: _____ CLASS: _____ SCHOOL: _____



STUDENT END-OF-TERM REFLECTION




Term _____ Year _____

1. Draw and write about 3 of your favourite experiences with _____
this term:




2. Fill in the blanks to this **Acknowledgement of Country** statement:



Our school is on
_____ **Country.**

This is the traditional land of the
_____ **people.**



3. Write about 3 new things you learnt about the local Aboriginal Country, community and culture from _____ this term:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____





TEACHER REFLECTION PROMPTS



Teachers can select from one or more of these to reflect on at different points across the year, or you may choose one or more to focus a staff meeting or professional learning session.

REFLECT IN WRITING...

- **How would you describe your level of comfort and confidence in collaborating with First Nations Peoples and engaging with First Nations perspectives in the classroom?**
 - Has this changed since you started working with a Cultural Educator?
- **Think about a lesson or unit that you have taught involving the Cultural Educator or First Nations perspectives/knowledges:**
 - What went well? What could be improved?
 - How did learnings from the Cultural Educator, previous PL, or other First Nations sources impact your practice?
 - How, if at all, did that lesson relate to the big idea your school has been workshopping?
- **What are some of the ways in which you are or can be a leader in your school to support your colleagues and support a whole-school approach to Aboriginal education (including curriculum work and community engagement)?**
- **How does your teaching demonstrate the valuing of local cultural perspectives, knowledges or histories?**
- **How have you revised or reworked your class content based on the feedback, knowledges or perspectives of the Cultural Educator?**
- **What evidence do you have that the students were engaged in teaching and learning about First Nations knowledges and perspectives?**
- **In what ways has your own learning and cultural consciousness about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, perspectives and peoples developed since beginning to work with the Cultural Educator?**
- **What are some of the complexities or challenges you have experienced in attempting to integrate First Nations knowledges, perspectives and cultures into the classroom?**
- **How do you understand and describe your own cultural identity? In what ways do you think cultural identity has an impact on your, and your students', experiences with schooling?**



CONCLUSION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have occupied the Australian continent for millennia, and it would be the worst form of hubris to for others to assume there is nothing they can learn from the world's oldest continuing culture. Although the colonial Australian state has attempted to eradicate, assimilate, subjugate and silence First Nations peoples, they have continually resisted these efforts and maintained their connection to culture, Country, and language. It is a profound act of generosity that many First Nations peoples are willing to share their knowledge and experiences with the non-Indigenous population, and hold out hope that non-Indigenous people will be ready to listen. Those of us writing and reading this toolkit are privileged to live in a time that is much more open to listening to and learning from First Nations people than any time previously in the last 240 years, and although there is a long way to go toward righting the wrongs of the past, we can all contribute to doing so in our work and in the conduct of our lives.

The Cultural Residents Project provided the project team and members of the La Perouse Aboriginal community with a glimpse of what is possible when schools can build meaningful relationships and work productively with Aboriginal people. This learning benefits both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, children and adults, and the Country on which our homes and school buildings are built. We hope that by sharing our learnings from these three years, we can help other schools and communities embrace the possibilities for transformative change when all people can learn from the First Peoples of Australia.

“My advice to any school and community is to give it time. You know, give it time to make it work. Because it’s about building those relationships and getting to know each other, getting to know the students and what’s going to work in that school.”

-Calita Murray
(AECG Working Group Member)



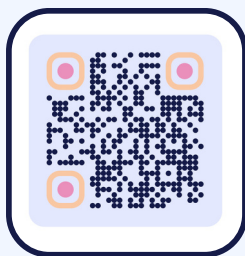
RECOMMENDED READING AND RESOURCES



ACADEMIC READING

- Bishop, M., Vass, G., & Thompson, K. (2021). Decolonising schooling practices through relationality and reciprocity: Embedding local Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 29(2), 193-211.
- Burgess, C., Tennent, C., Vass, G., Guenther, J., Lowe, K., & Moodie, N. (2019). A systematic review of pedagogies that support, engage and improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 1-21.
- Burgess, C., & Harwood, V. (2021). Aboriginal cultural educators teaching the teachers: mobilising a collaborative cultural mentoring program to affect change. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 1-18.
- Burgess, C., Thorpe, K., Egan, S., & Harwood, V. (2022). Learning from Country to conceptualise what an Aboriginal curriculum narrative might look like in education. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 42(2), 157-169.
- Lampert, J. (2012). Becoming a socially just teacher: Walking the talk. In Phillips, J. & Lampert, J. *Introductory Indigenous studies in education* (2nd Ed.). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson.
- Lowe, K., & Galstaun, V. (2020). Ethical challenges: the possibility of authentic teaching encounters with indigenous cross-curriculum content?. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 40(1), 93-98.
- Lowe, K., Harrison, N., Tennent, C., Guenther, J., Vass, G., & Moodie, N. (2019). Factors affecting the development of school and Indigenous community engagement: A systematic review. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 46(2), 253-271.
- Lowe, K., & Howard, P. (2010). So you want to work with the community? Principles and strategies for school leaders affecting the establishment of Aboriginal language programs. *RE-AWAKENING LANGUAGES*, 194.
- Harrison, N., Page, S., & Tobin, L. (2016). Art has a place: Country as teacher in the city. *Educational philosophy and theory*, 48(13), 1321-1335.
- Harrison, N., & Skrebneva, I. (2019). Country as pedagogical: enacting an Australian foundation for culturally responsive pedagogy. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1-12
- McDowall, A (2021). Layered spaces: A pedagogy of uncomfortable reflexivity in Indigenous education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(2), 341-355, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2020.1756751
- McLeod, K., Thakchoe, S., Hunter, M. A., Vincent, K., Baltra-Ulloa, A. J., & MacDonald, A. (2020). Principles for a pedagogy of unlearning. *Reflective Practice*, 21(2), 183-197.
- Morrison, A., Rigney, L. I., Hattam, R., & Diplock, A. (2019). *Toward an Australian culturally responsive pedagogy: A narrative review of the literature*. University of South Australia.
- Moodie, N., Maxwell, J., & Rudolph, S. (2019). The impact of racism on the schooling experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students: A systematic review. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 46(2), 273-295.
- Proud, A. D., & Morgan, A. (2021). Critical self-reflection: A foundational skill. In *Indigenous Education in Australia* (pp. 38-50). Routledge.
- Timperley, H (2015). Professional Conversations and Improvement-Focused Feedback: A Review of the Research Literature and the Impact on Practice and Student Outcomes, prepared for the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, AITSL, Melbourne. https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/professional-conversations-literature-review-oct-2015.pdf?sfvrsn=fc2ec3c_0
- Tujague, N., Ryan, K. (2023). Billabong of Culture and Healing. In: Cultural Safety in Trauma-Informed Practice from a First Nations Perspective. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13138-7_9
- Williams, S. (2010). Being culturally aware becoming culturally inclusive: A pathway to cultural competence. NSW AECG Stanmore Sydney NSW.
- Yunkaporta, T., & Shillingsworth, D. (2020). Relationally Responsive Standpoint. *Journal of Indigenous Research*, 8(Article 4.)

TEACHING RESOURCES AND MEDIA SNAPSHOTS



Scan the QR code above for links to other teaching resources and media that may help you in your work with an Aboriginal Cultural Educator.

REFERENCE LIST

- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2023). *Cross-curriculum priorities*. ACARA. <https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/f-10-curriculum-overview/cross-curriculum-priorities>
- Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Commonwealth of Australia. https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-02/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf
- Basit, T. N., & Santoro, N. (2011). Playing the role of 'cultural expert': Teachers of ethnic difference in Britain and Australia. *Oxford Review of Education*, 37(1), 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2010.521621>
- Beresford, Q. (2012). Separate and Unequal: An Outline of Aboriginal Education, 1900–1996. In G. Partington, G. Gower, & Q. Beresford (Eds.), *Reform and Resistance in Aboriginal Education: The Australian Experience (Revised Edition)* (pp. 85–119). UWA Publishing. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unsw/detail.action?docID=1962985>
- Beresford, Q., Partington, G., & Gower, G. (2012). *Reform and Resistance in Aboriginal Education: The Australian Experience (Revised Edition)*. UWA Publishing. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unsw/detail.action?docID=1962985>
- Bishop, M., & Vass, G. (2020). Talking about culturally responsive approaches to education: Teacher professional learning, Indigenous learners and the politics of schooling. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 50(2), 340–347. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2020.30>
- Bishop, M., Vass, G., & Thompson, K. (2019). Decolonising schooling practices through relationality and reciprocity: Embedding local Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2019.1704844>
- Burgess, C., Grice, C., & Wood, J. (2023). Leading by Listening: Why Aboriginal Voices Matter in Creating a World Worth Living in. In K. E. Reimer, M. Kaukko, S. Windsor, K. Mahon, & S. Kemmis (Eds.), *Living Well in a World Worth Living in for All* (pp. 115–136). Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-7985-9_7
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2020). *Closing the Gap Report 2020* (p. 108).
- Harrison, N., & Skrebneva, I. (2020). Country as pedagogical: Enacting an Australian foundation for culturally responsive pedagogy. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(1), 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1641843>
- Hughes, M., & Barlo, S. (2021). Yarning With Country: An Indigenist Research Methodology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 27(3–4), 353–363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800420918889>
- Ladwig, J. G. (2009). Working backwards towards curriculum: On the curricular implications of Quality Teaching. *The Curriculum Journal*, 20(3), 271–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585170903195886>
- Loughland, T., & Parkes, R. J. (2004). Backward mapping and the big idea: Employing social constructionist theory in curriculum planning. *Making Spaces: Regenerating the Profession. Proceedings of the 2004 Australian Teacher Education Association Conference*, 407–414.
- Lowe, K. (2011). A critique of school and Aboriginal community partnerships. In N. Purdie, G. Milgare, & H. Bell (Eds.), *Two Way Teaching and Learning—Toward culturally reflective and relevant education* (p. 20). ACER.
- Lowe, K., & Galstaun, V. (2020). Ethical challenges: The possibility of authentic teaching encounters with Indigenous cross-curriculum content? *Curriculum Perspectives*, 40(1), 93–98. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-019-00093-1>
- Lowe, K., Moodie, N., & Weuffen, S. (2021). Refusing Reconciliation in Indigenous Curriculum. In B. Green, P. Roberts, & M. Brennan (Eds.), *Curriculum Challenges and Opportunities in a Changing World* (pp. 71–86). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-61667-0_5
- Lowe, K., Skrebneva, I., Burgess, C., Harrison, N., & Vass, G. (2020). Towards an Australian model of culturally nourishing schooling. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1764111>
- Lowe, K., & Weuffen, S. (2023). “You get to ‘feel’ your culture”: Aboriginal students speaking back to deficit discourses in Australian schooling. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 50, 33–53.

- Lowitja Institute & National Centre for Indigenous Studies. (2018). *Deficit discourse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Policy: Summary Report*. <https://www.lowitja.org.au/content/Document/PDF/deficit-discourse-summary-report.pdf>
- Marvasti, A., & McKinney, K. (2007). The Work of Making Racism Invisible. In H. Vera & J. R. Feagin (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of racial and ethnic relations* (pp. 67–78). Springer.
- McLaughlin, J., Whatman, S., Ross, R., & Katona, M. (2012). Indigenous knowledge and effective parent-school partnerships: Issues and insights. In J. Phillips & J. Lampert (Eds.), *Introductory Indigenous Studies in Education: Reflection and the importance of knowing* (2nd ed., pp. 178–195). Pearson Education Australia.
- Mitchell, I., Keast, S., Panizzon, D., & Mitchell, J. (2017). Using 'big ideas' to enhance teaching and student learning. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(5), 596–610. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1218328>
- Moodie, N., Vass, G., & Lowe, K. (2021). The Aboriginal Voices Project: Findings and reflections. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1080/1359866X.2020.1863335>
- Moran, R. (2016). Truth, Sharing and Hearing: The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Challenge of Civic Engagement. In S. Maddison, T. Clark, & R. de Costa (Eds.), *The Limits of Settler Colonial Reconciliation: Non-Indigenous People and the Responsibility to Engage* (pp. 177–191). Springer.
- Nakata, M. (2007). The Cultural Interface. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 36(S1), 7–14. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S132601100004646>
- Nakata, M. (2011). Pathways for Indigenous Education in the Australian Curriculum Framework. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 40, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1375/ajie.40.1>
- Nakata, M., Nakata, V., Keech, S., & Bolt, R. (2012). Decolonial goals and pedagogies for Indigenous studies. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 120–140.
- Parkinson, C., & Jones, T. (2019). Aboriginal people's aspirations and the Australian Curriculum: A critical analysis. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 18(1), 75–97. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-018-9228-4>
- Queensland Government Department of Education. (2023). *Families as first teachers*. Early Childhood Education and Care. <https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/activities-and-resources/resources-parents/read-and-count/families-as-first-teachers>
- Santoro, N., Reid, J.-A., Crawford, L., & Simpson, L. (2011). Teaching Indigenous Children: Listening To And Learning From Indigenous Teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(10). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2011v36n10.2>
- Shay, M., Sarra, G., & Lampert, J. (2022). Counter stories: The voices of Indigenous peoples undertaking educative roles in flexi schools. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 51(1). <https://doi.org/10.55146/ajie.2022.20>
- Terri Janke and Company. (2018). *Indigenous Knowledge: Issues for protection and management* [Discussion Paper]. IP Australia & the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science.
- Thompson, S., & Thompson, N. (2023). *The Critically Reflective Practitioner* (3rd ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Weuffen, S., Lowe, K., Amazan, R., & Thompson, K. (in press). The need for First Nations narratives: Epistemic inertia and complicity in (re)creating the settler-colonial education state. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*.
- Weuffen, S., Lowe, K., Burgess, C., & Thompson, K. (2023). Sovereign and pseudo-hosts: The politics of hospitality for negotiating culturally nourishing schools. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 50, 131–146. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-022-00599-0>
- Yunkaporta, T., & Shillingsworth, D. (2020). Relationally Responsive Standpoint. *Journal of Indigenous Research*, 8(2020), 16.

