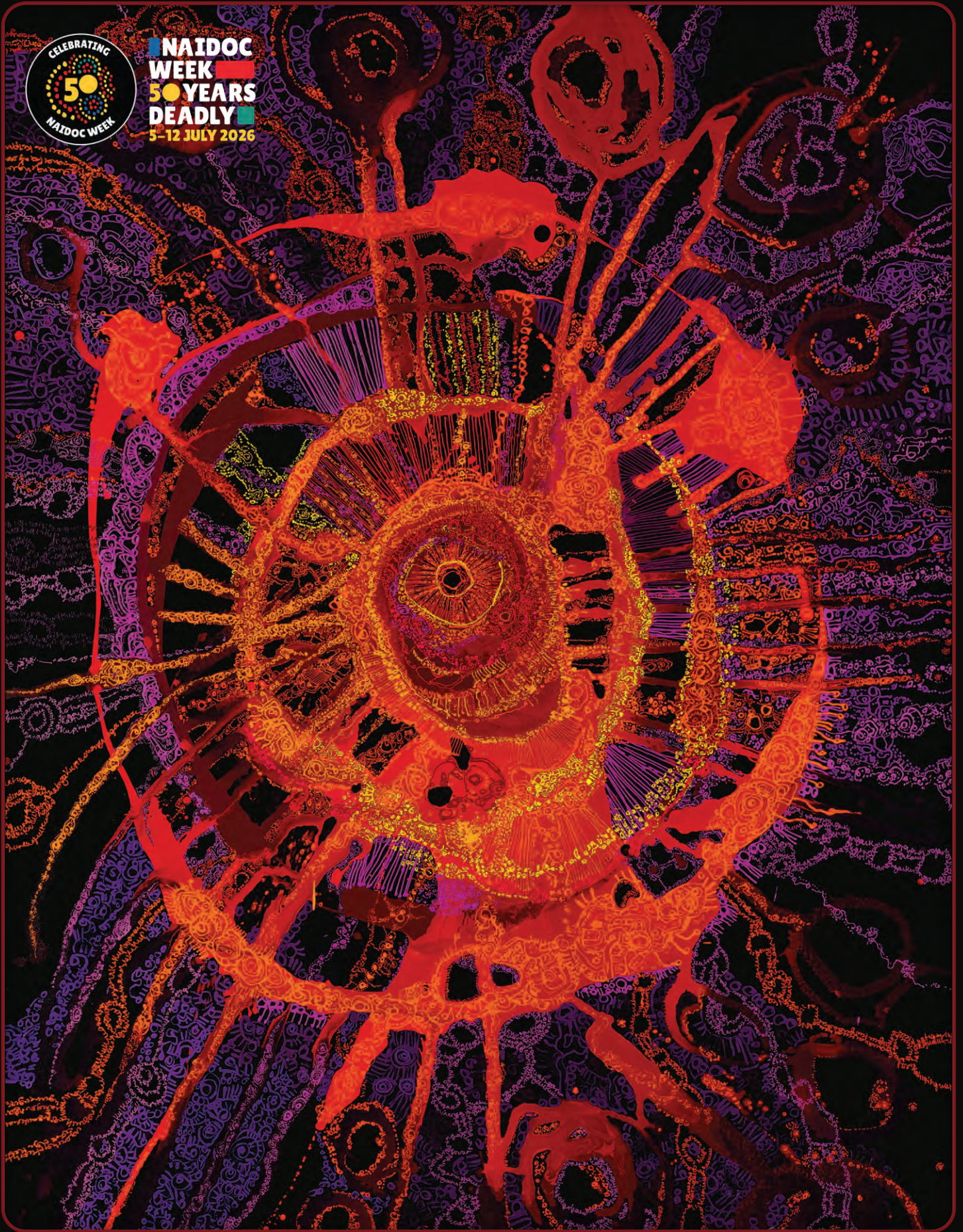




NAIDOC WEEK
50 YEARS
DEADLY
5-12 JULY 2026



NAIDOC WEEK 2026
EDUCATION RESOURCES



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge all First Peoples of the beautiful lands on which we live and celebrate their enduring knowledge and connections to Country.

We honour the wisdom of and pay respect to Elders past and present.

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WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this resource contains names, images and stories of people who have now passed.

INTRODUCTION

NAIDOC WEEK

National NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia in the first week of July each year (Sunday to Sunday).

NAIDOC Week celebrates and recognises the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is an opportunity for all Australians to learn about First Nations histories and

cultures and to participate in celebrations of the oldest, continuous living cultures on Earth.

It is an invitation to all Australians to connect with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by attending activities and events hosted throughout the week.

NAIDOC WEEK HISTORY

Before the 1920s, Aboriginal rights groups boycotted Australia Day in protest against the status and treatment of Indigenous Australians. By the 1920s, they were increasingly aware that the broader Australian public was largely ignorant of the boycotts. If the movement was to make progress, it would need to be active.

On Australia Day in 1938, protesters marched through the streets of Sydney, followed by a major civil rights gathering attended by more than a thousand people. It was known as the Day of Mourning, and it was a pivotal “first” for Indigenous rights activism, leading to increased calls for change that ultimately influenced the 1967 Referendum.

After the Day of Mourning, there was a growing feeling that it should be a regular event. In 1939, Aboriginal activist, community leader and founder

of the Australian Aborigines League, William Cooper, wrote to the National Missionary Council of Australia to seek their assistance in supporting and promoting an annual event.

From 1940 until 1955, the Day of Mourning was held annually on the Sunday before Australia Day and was known as Aborigines Day. In 1955, Aborigines Day was shifted to the first Sunday in July, after it was decided the day should become not simply a protest day but also a celebration of Aboriginal culture. In 1975, it was decided that the event should cover a week, from the first to the second Sunday in July.

NAIDOC Week takes its name from the National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC), an independent, voluntary committee that coordinates the event nationally.

naidoc.org.au/about/history

NAIDOC 2026 THEME – 50 YEARS OF DEADLY

For five decades, NAIDOC Week has celebrated the voices of our communities — steady, unapologetic and proud. Each year, its themes have called for truth, celebrated culture, honoured resistance and reminded the nation of who we are.

“Fifty Years of Deadly” marks a milestone. It’s a tribute to the people who built this movement: the Elders who stood firm, the organisers who made space, the artists who turned resistance into expression and the communities who keep showing up, year after year.

NAIDOC has always been more than a week — it’s a platform, a protest, a celebration and a statement of survival. This moment is about looking back at the stories, the marches, the languages, the art,

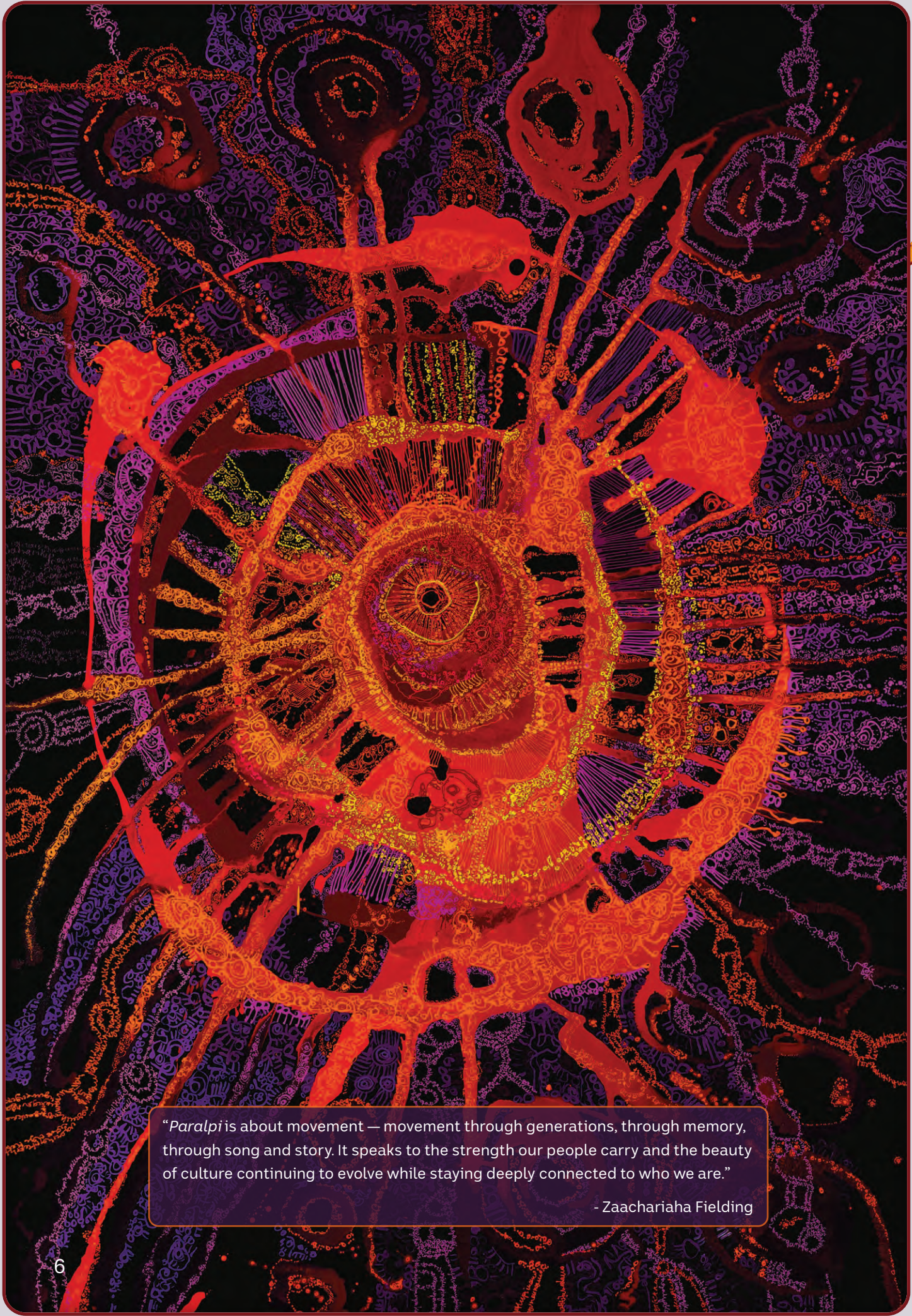
the leadership. At the strength it took to get here. It’s about recognising how far we’ve come, not by chance, but because generations of people refused to be silenced.

It’s also about the here and now, who we are today. Grounded in culture. Strong in our identity. Leading change across every field, from health and education to media, business and the arts. We’re telling our own stories, in our own way, on our own terms. And it’s about the future. The next 50 years. The young ones growing up proud. The return of language. The return to Country. The fight for justice continuing with new tools, new voices and the same fire.

— National NAIDOC Committee



National NAIDOC Committee 2025 (Credit: Cole Baxter)



“*Paralpi* is about movement — movement through generations, through memory, through song and story. It speaks to the strength our people carry and the beauty of culture continuing to evolve while staying deeply connected to who we are.”

- Zaachariaha Fielding

THE ARTWORK

Paralpi by Zaachariaha Fielding

The 2026 National NAIDOC Week poster, *Paralpi* by acclaimed Yankunytjatjara artist and musician Zaachariaha Fielding, captures the spirit of this year's theme, "50 Years of Deadly".

The artwork reflects movement through generations, memory, song and story — honouring the strength of those who carried culture, community and resistance forward, while celebrating the next generation continuing that legacy today.

Rich in colour, symbolism and energy, *Paralpi* speaks to the enduring strength and cultural power of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over the past fifty years of NAIDOC and beyond. The flowing forms throughout the work symbolise continuity and connection between Ancestors, community and future generations, representing culture as something living, evolving

and deeply connected to identity, language and Country.

The piece also reflects the cultural renaissance taking place across communities throughout the country — where language, music, art and storytelling continue to thrive in contemporary spaces while remaining grounded in ancient knowledge systems and cultural responsibility.

As NAIDOC marks fifty years as a national celebration, *Paralpi* honours both legacy and future. It is a celebration of Blak excellence, resilience and creativity, while inviting all Australians to reflect on the richness and diversity of First Nations cultures.

Through this powerful work, Zaachariaha Fielding captures what NAIDOC has represented for generations: pride, survival, visibility and the ongoing strength of culture.



Zaachariaha Fielding (Credit: NAIDOC)

Zaachariaha Fielding is a proud Yankunytjatjara person from the APY Lands in South Australia and is recognised as one of Australia's leading contemporary First Nations artists and musicians.

Known internationally as one half of the acclaimed music duo Electric Fields, Zaachariaha's work brings together language, music, visual storytelling and culture in deeply powerful and contemporary ways. Through both his music and visual art practice, he celebrates the strength of First Nations identity, the continuation of culture and the importance of language and storytelling.

His work is recognised for blending traditional cultural influences with bold contemporary expression, creating art that resonates across communities, generations and audiences around the world.

WELCOME

Aunty (Professor) Lynette Riley AO

(Wiradjuri and Gamilaroi)

Co-Chair, National NAIDOC Committee

On behalf of the National NAIDOC Committee, we proudly celebrate this year's National NAIDOC theme, 50 Years Deadly, through the development of this Education Resource. This significant milestone honours the strength, spirit and enduring wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, while recognising the powerful legacy of culture, community and knowledge that continues to shape future generations.

This resource is a celebration of culture, community and the rich knowledge that has been shared across generations and continues to guide and inspire learning today. It recognises the importance of

listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, valuing truth-telling, and embracing the histories, stories and perspectives that strengthen education for everyone. We hope this resource encourages pride, connection and a deeper appreciation of the world's oldest continuing cultures, while supporting respectful and meaningful learning for future generations.

We would like to thank the ABC Education team and Culture is Life, who have worked with the National NAIDOC Committee to develop this inspiring resource for National NAIDOC Week.

Happy NAIDOC Week!

Kelly Williams

(Bundjalung)

Director First Nations Strategy, ABC

The ABC is proud to partner with the National NAIDOC Committee in celebrating the five decades of deadly work their members have done in reminding the nation what can be achieved when culture leads and community comes first.

That leadership is especially critical at this moment in history when First Nations knowledge in social justice, community and environmental stewardship has never been more vital.

The resources developed by Culture is Life in partnership with ABC Education and the National NAIDOC Committee will play a crucial role in building a shared national identity that recognises and embraces this knowledge. It is my hope that in doing so, these resources will also support the Committee to continue leading future generations grounded in culture and strong in identity.

Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy
(Yanyuwa and Garawa)

Minister for Indigenous Australians

This year's NAIDOC theme, 50 Years of Deadly, marks five decades of NAIDOC Week and celebrates the strength of the NAIDOC movement.

It invites us all to reflect on the work of those who have come before us, and how their efforts have shaped NAIDOC into what it is today.

Beginning as a small grassroots movement for recognition and rights, NAIDOC has grown into an annual, week-long celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.

50 Years of Deadly is an opportunity to learn more about the stories, the marches, the languages, the art and the leadership of previous NAIDOC weeks.

It's also an opportunity to think about how we can build on the successes and support future

generations to continue this work.

The ABC Education team and Culture is Life have worked with the National NAIDOC Committee to develop a thoughtful collection of National NAIDOC Week education resources.

I encourage all students, educators, parents and carers to take the time to explore these resources and deepen their understanding of First Nations people, histories and cultures.

NAIDOC Week is dedicated to amplifying and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the world's oldest continuing culture.

I invite everyone to celebrate with us.

Enjoy NAIDOC Week!

Belinda Duarte
(Wotjobaluk and Dja Dja Wirrung)

CEO, Culture is Life

The "50 Years of Deadly" theme celebrates the strength, resilience and cultural pride of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It also recognises the ongoing fight for justice.

This theme aligns with Culture is Life's purpose on the importance of culture and how this supports wellbeing long-term for future generations. By backing young people, we strengthen their social and emotional wellbeing, build leadership and

create pathways for the next generation to thrive. First Nations young people continue to have disproportionate experiences of incarceration, suicide, racism and other lived experiences, highlighting the urgency of this work.

We are proud to partner with ABC Education and the National NAIDOC Committee, to build education that empowers future leaders and creates healthier connected communities across the country.

ABOUT THESE RESOURCES

In the spirit of the 2026 theme “50 Years of Deadly!”, we journey through six decades of NAIDOC Week themes that reflect what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were advocating for at the time.

We encourage teachers to visit the NAIDOC Poster Gallery (naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery) and dive into the key themes across the decades, to build an understanding of what has shaped the calls for action and advocacy, and significant movements over time.

These resources provide an overview of the social and political themes of each decade. They explore three key NAIDOC themes per decade, including reflective discussion questions and activities. This year’s resources are not aligned to specific year levels, with trust in teachers’ ability to adapt the resources to their students’ learning levels and needs, and with the hope that teachers explore all the NAIDOC Week themes over the years.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives have historically been left out of key moments in history that have shaped Australia as a nation, as well as significant moments today. These resources aim to honour these perspectives and assist in the truth-telling of this nation’s history.

We encourage teachers to explore the abundance of resources and evidence to support historic events beyond these resources, honouring the incredible First Nations stories and truth-tellers through film, arts and literature. Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members near you is also integral to relationship building and knowledge sharing.

Teaching Tip

When teaching the history and policies that have impacted First Nations peoples, consider breaking it down in the following three stages.

1. Acts and policies

Identify the legal and administrative frameworks used to control, displace and assimilate First Nations peoples. For example, protection and segregation acts, assimilation policies, constitutional recognition and native title.

2. Impacts on families and communities

Examine how these policies fundamentally fractured social structures and created lasting, intergenerational harm. For example, intergenerational trauma, dispossession, loss of culture, poverty and poor nutrition.

3. Social implications

Focus on the present-day repercussions of past policies and how they shape public perception. For example, stereotypes, systemic racism, deficit narratives, resilience and agency.

Supporting NAIDOC Toolkit

Use the Supporting NAIDOC Toolkit for more NAIDOC Week history, to learn ways to support and promote NAIDOC Week, and for information about cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation. naidoc.org.au/resources/supporting-naidoc-toolkit

CURRICULUM RESOURCES – Journey through the decades



TIMELINE

1970s

- 1970** The first Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) was established in Redfern, NSW.
- 1971** The Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) in Redfern became the first Aboriginal community-controlled health service.
- 1971** Neville Bonner became Australia's first Aboriginal parliamentarian.
- 1972** The Aboriginal Tent Embassy was established in Canberra, ACT.
- 1972** The NSW Department of Education was no longer allowed to refuse Aboriginal students entry to public schools.
- 1975** Australia's first federal anti-discrimination law was passed: the Racial Discrimination Act.
- 1975** The World Council of Indigenous Peoples was founded.
- 1975** The Gurindji people, led by Vincent Lingiari, regained ownership of part of their traditional lands in the Northern Territory.
- 1976** Australia's first Aboriginal Land Rights Act was passed, the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976.
- 1977** The first United Nations meeting of Indigenous peoples was held in Geneva, Switzerland.
- 1978** The Anti-Discrimination Board strongly recommended that Aboriginal Studies be taught in schools as both a subject and a perspective to reduce prejudice and racial hostility.

1980s

- 1982** The NSW Aboriginal Education Policy became Australia's first Aboriginal-focused education policy.
- 1983** The Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 was passed in NSW.
- 1983** NT welfare legislation prioritised the placement of Aboriginal children with Aboriginal families and communities when adoption or fostering was necessary. NSW introduced their Children (Care and Protection) Act in 1987.
- 1985** Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was returned to the Anangu people.
- 1985** The Torres Strait Treaty came into effect.
- 1987** The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody began.
- 1988** The Bicentenary protest took place on 26 January at Sydney Harbour, NSW.
- 1989** The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy was launched.

1990s

- 1991** The final report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) was handed down.
- 1992** The High Court of Australia handed down the Mabo v Queensland (No 2) decision.
- 1993** The Native Title Act 1993 was passed.
- 1995** Tasmania passed its first legislation to legally recognise Aboriginal rights: the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995.
- 1995** The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission launched an inquiry into the Stolen Generations.
- 1996** National Reconciliation Week began.
- 1997** The Bringing Them Home report was released.

2000s

2000 More than 250,000 people participated in the Walk for Reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

2001 A national conference on reparations for the Stolen Generations was held.

2007 The Northern Territory Intervention was launched by Prime Minister John Howard.

2008 The Apology to the Stolen Generations was delivered by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

2010s

2010 The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples was established.

2012 Reconciliation Australia's "Recognise" campaign began.

2014 The Poruma (Coconut Island) community protested for action on the Poruma Seawall Project.

2017 The Uluru Statement from the Heart was released.

2018 Victoria became the first Australian state to pass treaty legislation: the Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018.

2020s

2020 Black Lives Matter protests sparked global action, including rallies across Australia highlighting Indigenous deaths.

2020 Mining company Rio Tinto destroyed two 46,000-year-old Aboriginal heritage sites at Juukan Gorge in the Pilbara, WA.

2021 The Yoorrook Justice Commission was established in Victoria.

2023 The Voice to Parliament Referendum was defeated.

2023 South Australia's First Nations Voice Act was passed.

2023 Queensland passed the Path to Treaty Act 2023.

2024 Queensland established its Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry.

2024 Queensland repealed the Path to Treaty Act and ended the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry.

2025 NAIDOC Week marked 50 years since it became a week-long national event in 1975.

This timeline is not intended to be an exhaustive list. It highlights some key moments found throughout this resource and is linked to NAIDOC themes at a national level, over the last 50 years.

Teachers and educators are encouraged to use key moments from their local community as often as possible.

1970s

The 1970s saw significant political movements, with Indigenous peoples seeking justice and self-determination in Australia. This followed influential movements and demonstrations in the 1960s, such as the Freedom Rides, the Wave Hill walk-off, the Yirrkala Bark Petitions and the 1967 Referendum, to name a few.

Globally, the first international meeting of Indigenous leaders at the United Nations was held in Geneva in 1977. In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had long fought for justice against colonial control and policies that explicitly targeted them.



Establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on 26 January 1972, by (from left) Michael Anderson, Billie Craigie, Bert Williams and Tony Coore (Credit: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales/Courtesy SEARCH Foundation)

The 1970s was the first decade in which all states had repealed the legislation allowing for the removal of Aboriginal children (the Stolen Generations) under policies of “protection”. Aboriginal community-controlled organisations were established, with the first being the Aboriginal Legal Service in Redfern in 1970 — Australia’s first free, shopfront community legal service aimed at addressing police harassment, brutality and the legal injustices faced by Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal Medical Service was established in Redfern in 1971.

The longest ongoing protest for First Nations land rights, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, began in Canberra in 1972. This was followed by the first legislation in Australia that enabled Aboriginal peoples to claim land rights for Country where traditional ownership could be proven: the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976.

This chapter expands on the following three NAIDOC themes from the 1970s:

1. Self-Determination (1974)
2. Chains or Change (1977)
3. Cultural Revival is Survival (1978)

Music and arts

Art is a powerful tool for social change and has influenced social and political movements throughout history. Bands that formed in the 1970s, such as No Fixed Address and Us Mob, marked the beginning of broader public recognition of music as a way to communicate Aboriginal stories and experiences.

- Research an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist, musician or collective from the 1970s. Discuss the key themes in their art and music. What can you find out about their stories? What themes or issues were they responding to?

Examples:

- **Bob Randall:** Bob Randall was a Yankunytjatjara Elder. In the early 1970s, his song Brown Skin Baby (They Took Me Away) became an anthem for Aboriginal people.
YouTube: youtu.be/v3ytJioXKzI
- **Wilga Williams:** Wilga Munro Williams was born in Tamworth, New South Wales. Harry and Wilga Williams were known as the “godfather and godmother of Koori country music”.
YouTube: youtu.be/HKP1sFu-HEU
- **Jimmy Little:** Jimmy Little, a Yorta Yorta man, became one of Australia’s most acclaimed Aboriginal musicians. He won many awards, was inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia.
YouTube: youtu.be/im_Sk2zk8CU

Self-Determination (1974)

According to the Australian Human Rights Commission, self-determination is “an ongoing process of ensuring that peoples are able to make decisions about matters that affect their lives. Essential to the exercise of self-determination is choice, participation and control.”

The election of the Gough Whitlam government in 1972 marked a key moment in the recognition of the right to self-determination.



NAIDOC 1974 poster *Self-Determination* (Credit: NAIDOC)

- Research Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on the key themes from the 1974 NAIDOC poster. What was happening during the 1970s in relation to these themes? What were First Nations peoples advocating for?
naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-1974-poster
- Explore these themes further by inviting an Indigenous guest speaker from your local community with lived experience of these themes or activism in the 1970s. Alternatively, research recorded interviews, books, films or songs that speak to the topics.

Redfern: Aboriginal activism in the 1970s

Redfern, NSW, is known as the birthplace of the urban Aboriginal civil rights movement in Australia. In the 1970s, the establishment of the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Housing Company in Redfern inspired Self-determination for many Aboriginal communities.

- Explore the National Indigenous Australians Agency’s (NIAA) timeline and discuss the significance of the events in relation to Self-determination.
niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/indigenous/empowered-communities/alt/description-redfern.html



Early members of the Aboriginal Legal Service in 1974 (Credit: National Archives of Australia)

Neville Bonner

Neville Bonner became Australia’s first Aboriginal parliamentarian when he was appointed to represent Queensland in the Senate in 1971.

- Watch this interview with Neville Bonner and answer the discussion questions.
abc.net.au/education/australias-first-aboriginal-member-of-parliament/13760840



The Aboriginal Tent Embassy outside Parliament House, Canberra, on 27 January 1972. (Credit: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales/Courtesy SEARCH Foundation)

Aboriginal Tent Embassy

The Aboriginal Tent Embassy is the longest ongoing protest for First Nations land rights. It began in 1972 with four Aboriginal men travelling from Sydney to protest in Canberra.

- Read the history of the protest and recognition of land rights. Watch this video of the protest with footage from 1972. Discuss the purpose of the demonstration and its impacts and legacy today. abc.net.au/news/2022-01-26/aboriginal-tent-embassy-50-year-anniversary-michael-anderson/100777220
- Discuss why there is still a need for the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

Chains or Change (1977)

In 1977, the pursuit of dignity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia was centred on the 10th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, with activists highlighting the lack of promised land rights, compensation and legal equality.



NAIDOC 1977 poster *Chains or Change* (Credit: NAIDOC)

- Discuss what you can see on the 1977 NAIDOC poster. What might the title “Chains or Change” be referring to? naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-1977-poster

1967 Referendum

On 27 May 1967, Australians voted to change the Constitution so that, like all other Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would be counted as part of the population and the Commonwealth would be able to make laws for them.

A resounding 90.77 per cent voted “Yes”, with every state recording a majority result. It was one of the most successful national campaigns in Australia’s history.



Charles Perkins led the Freedom Ride in 1965 (Credit: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales/Courtesy SEARCH Foundation)

- Charles Perkins was a prolific Aboriginal activist and played a key role in the successful campaign for change in 1967. Watch him speak in this video and discuss the accompanying questions.

abc.net.au/education/five-australians-charles-perkins-campaigns-for-aboriginal-right/13767030

- Learn more about the history of the 1967 Referendum and changes to the Constitution through archival documents and film in this digibook collection. Discuss the impacts that the 1967 Referendum process and outcome have had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

abc.net.au/education/digibooks/righting-wrongs-in-the-1967-referendum/101873156

Aboriginal Protection Acts

Prior to the 1967 Referendum, Australian states had the power to create their own laws and policies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These included Aboriginal Protection Acts, which gave state governments legal authority to control many aspects of Aboriginal peoples’ lives, including the removal of children from their families. These laws led to the forced removal and dispossession of many Aboriginal children (known as the Stolen Generations) and their families.

Discrimination refers to being treated unfairly or differently because of personal characteristics such as race, sex, age and abilities. In the 1970s, Australian states were introducing anti-discrimination laws, such as the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW), while other states, such as Queensland, did not have a comparable overarching act.

- Watch Restricted Rights and Freedoms: Discriminatory laws. Then, discuss the history and accompanying questions.

abc.net.au/education/restricted-rights-and-freedoms-discriminatory-laws/13922192

Land rights

A number of significant events across Australia helped shape the course of the Aboriginal land rights movement. The 1970s saw the introduction of the first Aboriginal land rights legislation to legally recognise systems of Aboriginal land ownership.

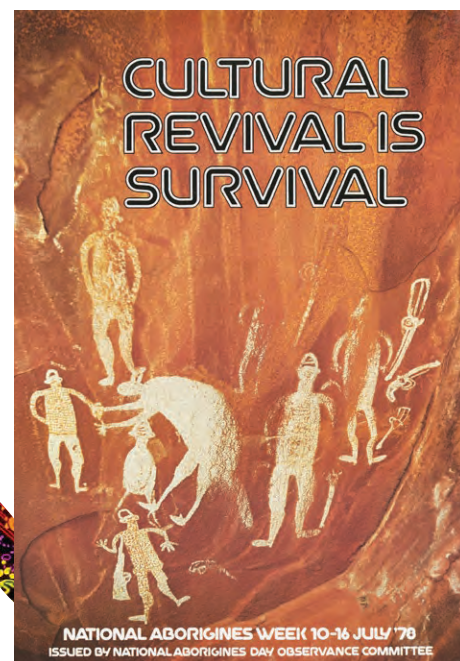
nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/aboriginal-land-rights-act

- Research the 1963 Yirrkala Bark Petition. How was this petition a turning point in the Aboriginal land rights movement? Discuss the significance of cultural recognition and consultation regarding land use for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- The 1966 Wave Hill strike led to the Gurindji people, led by Vincent Lingiari, regaining ownership of part of their traditional lands in 1975. Watch this video and explore the discussion questions.
abc.net.au/education/this-day-tonight-two-years-after-the-1966-wave-hill-walk-off/13942244
- View Mervyn Bishop's 1975 photograph of Gough Whitlam pouring soil into Vincent Lingiari's hand. Discuss why this event is important.
portrait.gov.au/portraits/2001.8/prime-minister-gough-whitlam-pours-soil-into-the-hand-of-traditional-land-owner-vincent
- Research the timeline of events that led to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 and into the 2000s. How has the land rights movement impacted Aboriginal peoples' rights to Self-determination in land care and management.

Cultural Revival is Survival (1978)

In 1975, National Aborigines Day became a week-long celebration of the history, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The rock art on the 1978 NAIDOC poster promotes the protection and survival of the world's oldest continuing culture.

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-1978-poster



NAIDOC 1978 poster *Cultural Revival is Survival*
(Credit: NAIDOC)

What is culture?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures date back more than 65,000 years. Culture reflects First Nations peoples' deep connection to Country (land, waters, animals and plants), Kinship (family, community and Country), spirituality (the Dreaming) and language, with more than 250 known language groups today.

- What are some ways you might practise your culture? Think about language, dance, song, food, community gatherings and stories.
- How can you engage with local Indigenous communities to join in and celebrate First Nations cultures?

Indigenous repatriation

Indigenous repatriation is the process of returning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and sacred items to their traditional custodians and communities of origin. It is a process of cultural revival and survival against colonisation that contributes to healing. Aboriginal ancestral remains are commonly repatriated from major museums, universities and private collections in Australia and overseas, particularly the United Kingdom.

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery became the first Australian museum to repatriate Aboriginal remains. After decades of advocacy by the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, the remains of Trucanini, who died in 1876, were given back to Palawa people to honour her cremation wishes.

The 1976 NAIDOC poster honoured the repatriation of Trucanini's remains, 100 years after her death. The claim that she was the "last of her people" was a myth, perpetuated by British colonists and their descendants, who described her as the last "full-blooded" Aboriginal Tasmanian.

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-1976-poster



NAIDOC 1976 poster *Trucanini. Last of her People. Born 18?? Died 1876. Buried 1976. Received Her Land Rights at Last* (Credit: NAIDOC)

- Watch this video about Trucanini and answer the discussion questions. abc.net.au/education/trukanini/101887572
- Explore how Trucanini's story has been used in political arguments. How has the idea that she was the "last of her people" been used against Aboriginal resistance? How has this idea been used in discussions about the decimation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population and genocide? Why does this still cause harm for Palawa people today?
- Learn about Fanny Cochrane Smith and her descendants abc.net.au/news/2022-07-27/fanny-smith-aboriginal-tasmanian/101250498
- How does Fanny Smith's life and recorded voice challenge the myth that Tasmanian Aboriginal people became "extinct"? nfsa.gov.au/collection/item/fanny-cochrane-smiths-tasmanian-aboriginal-songs

Language songs

Tyerrtye Atyinhe (My Body)

Follow along to the movements while singing the language as a class.

Children's Ground: youtu.be/bdnkJytQ-Ak

Marrin Gamu: Many languages, one song

The words "marrin" and "gamu" mean "body" in the Kalaw Kawaw Ya (Torres Strait) and Wiradjuri (NSW) languages. Watch First Languages Australia's videos and learn the language and dances.

firstlanguages.org.au/marrin-gamu

Yarrabil: First Nations songs

Yarrabil is the word for "sing" in the Yugambeh language of south-east Queensland. Access the slides, worksheets and language cards to learn words in various First Nations languages.

abc.net.au/education/search?query=yarrabil

- Learn words in the Gooreng Gooreng, Noongar, Dharug, Meriam Mir, Gunditjmara and Kaurua languages. abc.net.au/education/digibooks/yarrabil-first-nations-songs/104025800
- Learn words in the Yugambeh, Yawuru, Wiradjuri, Pitjantjatjara, palawa kani and Arrernte languages. abc.net.au/education/digibooks/yarrabil-bula-first-nations-songs/104810588

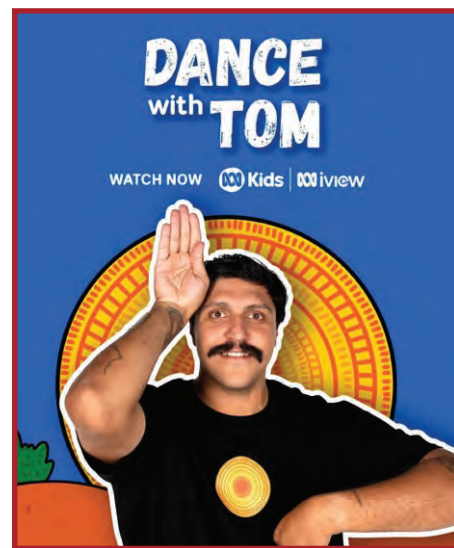
Dance with Tom

Nyunga is the Yugambeh word for Sun. In the first episode of *Dance with Tom*, we dance across the Yugambeh language region in south-east Queensland.

iview.abc.net.au/show/dance-with-tom

Learn the dance by following Tom, starting with the Sun, reaching over the water, spreading the warmth and placing it on your heart.

- Name some things you can see in the introduction of *Dance with Tom*.
- What does the Sun give to people and Country?
- What animals do you see in the video?
- Watch more episodes of *Dance with Tom* to learn more stories and dances.



Dance with Tom (Credit: Allstory Pictures)

Dust Echoes

Watch this series of 12 animated Dreamtime stories from Central Arnhem Land and refer to the study guides for classroom activities and questions.

abc.net.au/education/digibooks/dust-echoes/101734324

NAISDA Dance College

The National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) is a performing arts training organisation specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

It was established in 1976 to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and wisdom through excellence and innovation in dance and performing arts education.

- Read about NAISDA celebrating 50 years of cultural pride and discuss the significance of this legacy. [abc.net.au/news/2026-03-11/naisda-indigenous-dance-college-50-years/106418320](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-03-11/naisda-indigenous-dance-college-50-years/106418320)
- NAISDA graduates went on to create Bangarra Dance Company. Discover some of Bangarra's dance works and education resources. [abc.net.au/education/search?query=Bangarra](https://www.abc.net.au/education/search?query=Bangarra)

Resources

- **Indigenous advocacy timeline**
[humanrights.gov.au/know-your-rights/rights-of-individuals/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-rights/articles-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/history-aboriginal-and-torres-strait](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/know-your-rights/rights-of-individuals/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-rights/articles-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/history-aboriginal-and-torres-strait)
- **Land rights timelines**
National Museum of Australia: indigenousrights.net.au/timeline/1970-79
- **Elections for the first National Aboriginal Consultative Committee**
aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/digitised_collections/dawn_index/v22/s09/9.pdf
- **Fact sheet: The Woodward Royal Commission**
antar.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Woodward-Royal-Commission-Factsheet-1.pdf
- **Fact sheet: Self-Determination**
antar.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Self-Determination-Factsheet.pdf
- **Aboriginal Land Rights Act**
National Museum of Australia: nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/aboriginal-land-rights-act
- **White Police and Black Power**
Aboriginal Legal Service: alsnswact.org.au/white_police_black_power_1

1980s

The 1980s saw Indigenous people continue to seek justice and Self-determination. Policies and programs emerged from decades of activism, leading to state and national employment opportunities and an increase in Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) positions in health, education and judicial systems.

It required strength to resist, disrupt and push back against years of erasure and dismissal of Aboriginal culture and connection to Country, as well as a lack of investment in language. Strategies focused on Aboriginal people pursuing further education, gaining employment across many fields and positioning their rights and culture as central to ways forward.

Many were seeking to walk in “two worlds” — keeping their Aboriginal identity but wanting the rights and privileges of other Australians. Land rights remained a key focus, with the establishment of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW) and the handback of Uluru to the Anangu in 1985. In 1988, as Australia marked two centuries since Captain Arthur Phillip’s arrival in Sydney Harbour, more than 40,000 people marched through Sydney in protest, calling for change, recognition and truth-telling.

Music and arts

The 1980s saw increased activism through music, art, film and stories. Music carried messages of change, including Solid Rock by Goanna and global hits by Midnight Oil such as The Dead Heart (1986) and Beds Are Burning (1987). These songs were instrumental in raising mainstream awareness of the treatment of Aboriginal people, land rights and dispossession. It was also the first time that wider audiences heard popular music featuring Aboriginal languages.

The 1981 film, *Wrong Side of the Road*, told the story of two bands, *Us Mob* and *No Fixed Address*.

- Research an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist, musician or collective from the 1980s. Discuss the key themes in their art and music. What can you find out about their stories? What themes or issues were they speaking to?

This chapter expands on the following three NAIDOC themes from the 1980s:

1. Race For Life For A Race (1982)
2. White Australia Has a Black History (1987)
3. Recognise and Share the Survival of the Oldest Culture in the World (1988)

Examples:

1981: *Tiwi Songs*

- **YouTube:** youtu.be/fQfdatPKJik

1981: *We Have Survived*, by No Fixed Address

1983: The Warumpi Band released *Jailanguru Pakarnu* (“Out From Jail”), the first rock song recorded and released in an Aboriginal language (Luritja).

1986: Midnight Oil spent several months on the Blackfella/Whitefella tour of outback Australia with Aboriginal music groups Warumpi Band and Gondwanaland, playing to remote Aboriginal communities and seeing firsthand the seriousness of the issues experienced in these communities since colonisation.

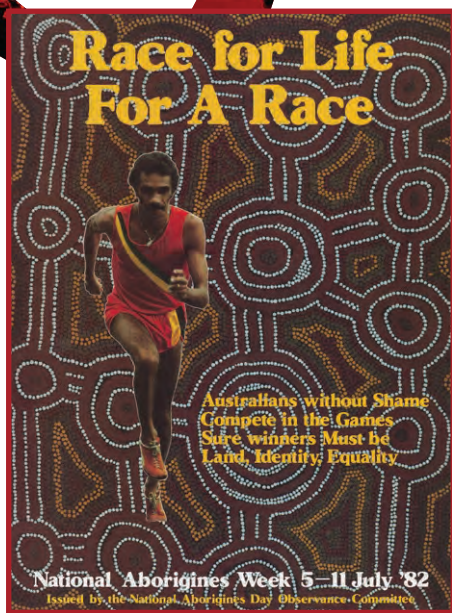
1987: *Coloured Stone* became the first Aboriginal band to win an ARIA Award.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music

- narragunnawali.org.au/storage/media/professional-learning/music-resource-guide-4dedbf9014.pdf

Songs about survival, protest, Reconciliation and truth-telling

- sbs.com.au/nitv/article/enjoy-this-playlist-of-26-songs-about-survival-protest-reconciliation-and-truth-telling/haq4opyh3



NAIDOC 1982 poster *Race For Life For a Race*
(Credit: NAIDOC)

Race For Life For a Race (1982)

The 1982 theme was an act of resistance: a fight not only for land rights but also for identity. It reflected a race against time to ensure Aboriginal people and their cultures were not erased. The 1982 Commonwealth Games in Brisbane provided an opportunity for Aboriginal people to be seen and heard through protest on an international scale.

That same year, Mark Ella was appointed captain of the Wallabies rugby team, Evonne Goolagong Cawley was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia following her 1980 Wimbledon win, and Maurice Rioli was awarded the AFL's Norm Smith Medal. But as Aboriginal athletes excelled across multiple sports, the struggle for cultural survival and land rights continued.

- Research Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on the key themes from the 1982 NAIDOC poster. What was happening in the 1980s in relation to these themes? What were First Nations peoples advocating for?

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-1982-poster

Noonkanbah dispute

In 1980, after a two-year stand-off, the Yungngora people and their supporters sat in a dusty Kimberley creek bed, blocking the path of drilling rigs to protect their sacred land.

- Read the history of the blockade. Discuss the dispute, protest, and the impacts and legacy of the demonstrations. Investigate some of the current disputes and protests for land and the right to protect Country in the Kimberley or in other states and territories.

abc.net.au/news/2018-06-05/noonkanbah-dispute-remembered-40-years-on/9833232

The handback of Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park

In 1985, Uluru, a widely known sacred site for the Anangu people, was handed back to its traditional owners by Governor-General Sir Ninian Stephen. It was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1987.

indigenous.gov.au/stories/acknowledging-handback-uluru-kata-tjuta



The Uluru climb has been closed since 2019 (ABC News: Michael Franchi)

Torres Strait Treaty

Signed in December 1978, the Torres Strait Treaty came into force in February 1985, defining the border between Australia and Papua New Guinea. It also honours traditional Kinship, cultural ties and shared histories between 13 Torres Strait Islands and 13 coastal villages of Papua New Guinea, allowing movement within the Torres Strait Protected Zone.

- Read the history of the Torres Strait Treaty and discuss its impacts and legacy. Why is it important? How does it maintain Kinship, culture and daily life across national borders?

sbs.com.au/nitv/article/40th-anniversary-of-a-torres-strait-treaty-sparks-memories-of-hist/toy06w7zm

- Read about the handback of Uluru to the Anangu people.
Deadly Story: deadlystory.com/page/culture/history/Uluru_Handed_Back_to_Anangu_People
- Discuss the significance of the decision to ban the Uluru climb.
BTN, 2017: youtu.be/cqDnOEDUJcw
- What were the events leading up to the handback? What did the handback officially recognise? Why do you think tourists should or shouldn't be allowed to climb Uluru?
- Research the history and recognition of land rights in Australia. Discuss the impacts and legacy today, and identify examples of land rights or sacred sites within your area.



NAIDOC 1987 poster *White Australia Has a Black History* by Laurie Nilsen (Credit: NAIDOC)

White Australia Has a Black History (1987)

The artist of the 1987 NAIDOC poster is Mandandanji descendant Laurie Nilsen. “White Australia Has a Black History” is a slogan that alludes to Australia’s longstanding reluctance to meaningfully acknowledge Aboriginal people and perspectives in the telling of the nation’s history, and it was the theme when Perth hosted NAIDOC Week in 1987.

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-1987-poster

- Look at the poster and discuss what images you see. What might each image represent? How do they relate to the theme “White Australia Has a Black History”?
- Choose an image from the poster to research further and discuss with your class. For example, Australia as a large island continent, Aboriginal soldiers fighting for Australia, or the Serpent Dreaming and storytelling culture.

Aboriginal Education History

Australia’s colonial British education system was used to sever Aboriginal connections to culture and family through mission schools, which aimed to assimilate Aboriginal young people into white society.

There are many examples of Aboriginal people calling for an education system in which culture, language and identity are recognised and celebrated as core values.

- The School Exclusion Project Research Report by the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC) is the first comprehensive historical overview of the exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from schools. The report was written through an analysis of archival records, historiography, legislation and policies, and includes timelines of this history for each state and territory.
Free download from NIYEC: niyec.com/knowledge-base/the-school-exclusion-project-span-classsqrte-text-color-blackresearch-reportspar
- Watch this video celebrating 40 years of the NSW Aboriginal Education Policy. Discuss the significance of this first Aboriginal Education Policy in Australia. Why was its introduction so important for Aboriginal students and communities?
YouTube: youtu.be/8f8WtDlikAU
- Investigate a Community-led Aboriginal School and discuss the need for change in the education of Aboriginal students. Reflect on why these schools are important today.

Examples:

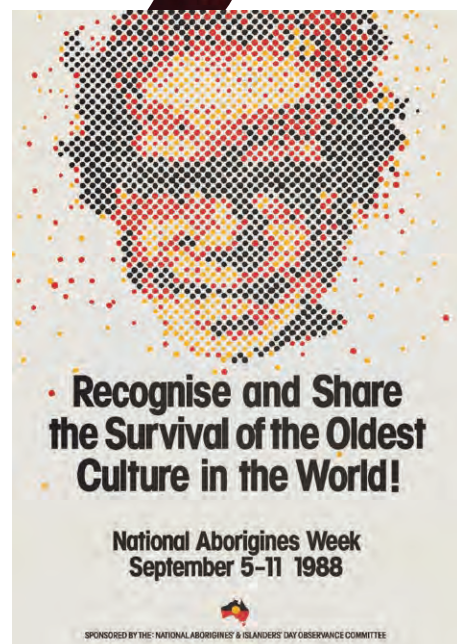
- **Yipirinya School**
uts.edu.au/case-studies/self-determination-indigenous-education-story-yipirinya-school
- **Strelley Community School**
strelleycommunityschool.wa.edu.au
- **Worawa Aboriginal College**
worawa.vic.edu.au/our-story
- **Tranby**
tranby.edu.au/about-tranby
- **Maam Giingana Gumbaynggirr**
www.maamgiingana.nsw.edu.au

Recognise and Share the Survival of the Oldest Culture in the World (1988)

The 1988 NAIDOC theme followed on from continued protests by Aboriginal people for their rights to land, language and the celebration of culture.

While Bicentenary celebrations were held across Australia, more than 40,000 people marched in Sydney to protest the commemoration of invasion and the continued colonisation of a country that did not recognise its First Peoples. Several prominent Aboriginal leaders and activists spoke out, drawing national and international attention to the ongoing impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-1988-poster



NAIDOC 1988 poster *Recognise and Share the Survival of the Oldest Culture in the World* (Credit: NAIDOC)

- Watch the following two videos depicting the Bicentenary protests and celebrations on Sydney Harbour in 1988. Discuss the messages in the speeches and narration, and the impacts this event has had on the nation today.

National Film and Sound Archive: nfsa.gov.au/collection/item/bicentenary-1988

AIATSIS: vimeo.com/111496815

Resistance and survival

The march in Sydney on Australia Day 1988 drew widespread support — including trade unions, churches and the wider public — who protested with Aboriginal people.

A joint statement signed by 14 heads of Australian churches called for Reconciliation and Aboriginal rights, including a secure land base for dispossessed communities, an assured place in political processes and a guaranteed future for Aboriginal culture.

- Investigate the timeline of resistance and how Aboriginal people continue to celebrate their survival.
Free download from Original Power: originalpower.org.au/resistance_timeline
- Read about the 1988 Bicentenary protest. Consider its legacy and describe how you and your school community celebrate Aboriginal survival over the school year.
Deadly Story: deadlystory.com/page/culture/history/The_1988_Bicentenary_Protest
- Research the significance of 26 January and colonial history for Aboriginal people. Discuss the conflict surrounding the date on which Australia Day is celebrated.
abc.net.au/news/2021-06-18/australia-day-january-26-views-changing-australia-talks-reveals/100223940

The Barunga Statement

In the lead-up to the 1988 Bicentenary year, the Central, Northern and Tiwi Land Councils, along with the Pitjantjatjara Council, met and decided to boycott the events.

In 1985, the first Barunga Festival was held at Barunga in the Northern Territory. The festival was initiated by Bangardi Robert Lee (1952–2005), a leader of the Bagala clan of the Jawoyn people. In 1988, the Central and Northern Land Councils presented Prime Minister Bob Hawke with the Barunga Statement, calling for land rights and a treaty.

aph.gov.au/Visit_Parliament/Art/Stories/Barunga_Statement

- The Barunga Statement was a work of art with clear and insightful words. Watch these videos and explore the messages. Then, share your findings with your class in a creative work of art or words.
aiatsis.gov.au/explore/barunga-statement



Emily Kame Kngwarreye (Credit: Utopia Art Sydney)

Celebrating Aboriginal art

The 1980s saw an Aboriginal art boom, marking a decade of transformation that amplified Aboriginal voices through art.

During this period, Emily Kame Kngwarreye was a pivotal member of the Utopia Women's Batik Group.

Museums Victoria: collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/14272

- Research Emily Kame Kngwarreye's art from the 1980s, considering her designs and use of colour. Investigate other Aboriginal artists of this time, such as Bronwyn Bancroft, Rover Thomas or Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri.
- Why is there a need to protect Aboriginal works of art?
Arts Law Centre of Australia: youtu.be/ouvXTVOPIWg
- What is Indigenous cultural and intellectual property, and why is it important?
Arts Law Centre of Australia: youtu.be/4Is8g8PQ7YY

1990s

The 1990s were significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) took effect in 1990, followed by the release of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991. The Royal Commission revealed the disproportionate over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody and made recommendations addressing systemic justice, policing and social issues.

In 1992, the landmark *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* decision by the High Court of Australia rejected the notion of *Terra Nullius* (“land belonging to no one”), which had been used since 1788 to justify British claims to Aboriginal lands. The Native Title Act 1993 followed, providing a legal framework to recognise and protect Indigenous land rights based on traditional laws and customs, which had not previously been recognised under Australian common law.

Reconciliation was a major theme in the 1990s, with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation launching Australia’s first National Reconciliation Week in 1996. The 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report revealed the scale and impact of policies that led to the Stolen Generations, and on 26 May 1998 the first National Sorry Day was held.

This chapter expands on the following three NAIDOC themes from the 1990s:

1. New Decade — Don’t Destroy, Learn and Enjoy Our Cultural Heritage (1990)
2. Justice Not Tolerance (1995)
3. Bringing Them Home (1998)

Music and arts

First Nations musicians and bands made waves in the 1990s, including the Warumpi Band, Yothu Yindi, Archie Roach, Ruby Hunter and Yabu Band. The storytelling in their songs shed light on the issues facing First Nations peoples, as well as their strength and survival.

Deadly Sounds, a weekly radio program hosted by Rhoda Roberts, began in 1993 and played a pivotal role in showcasing First Nations talent in the 1990s. First Nations theatre saw the launch of Indigenous plays and musicals, including Jimmy Chi’s *Bran Nue Dae* (1990), John Harding’s *Up the Road* (1991), Deborah Mailman and Wesley Enoch’s *The 7 Stages of Grieving* (1995) and Jane Harrison’s *Stolen* (1998).

Yothu Yindi

Treaty by Yothu Yindi was the first song in an Aboriginal language (Gumatj) to gain extensive radio airplay in Australia. “Well, I heard it on the radio, and I saw it on the television,” sang Yothu Yindi’s lead singer, Dr Mandawuy Yunupingu. The lyrics speak to Prime Minister Bob Hawke’s promise after he was presented with the Barunga Statement. He said, “... there shall be a Treaty negotiated between the Aboriginal people and the Government on behalf of all the people of Australia.”

- Discuss the song’s emotions, messaging and relevance to calls for national and state-based treaties today.

abc.net.au/listen/doublej/music-reads/features/the-story-of-yothu-yindis-treaty/11295338

Yabu Band

Yabu Band is an Indigenous Australian rock, roots band formed by brothers Delson and Boyd Stokes in 1998 in Kalgoorlie. The word yabu means “rock” or “gold” in Wongutha, a Western Desert language.

Noongar Music by Yabu Band/YouTube: youtu.be/Xx8tf4ne3As

- Yabu Band sings in their Wongutha and Noongar languages. Why is this important for Wongutha and Noongar peoples and younger generations?

abc.net.au/news/2020-12-29/yabu-band-sing-in-language-to-reach-struggling-communities/12914814

Nganampa Anwernekenhe

Nganampa Anwernekenhe means “ours” in the Pitjantjatjara and Arrernte languages. This Aboriginal-produced series of programs helps maintain Aboriginal language and culture through the art, music, stories and dances of the original inhabitants of this land.

National Film and Sound Archive: aso.gov.au/titles/series/nganampa-anwernekenhe

Rhoda Roberts

Rhoda Roberts AO (1959–2026) was a proud Widjabul Wiyebal woman from the Bundjalung Nation in northern NSW. She was a pioneering journalist, producer, broadcaster, actor and artistic director who transformed the media, performing and creative arts sectors. She shaped black contemporary theatre with productions such as Radiance (1993), and she produced the national radio program Deadly Sounds, which ran for 21 years.

- Listen to the Deadly Sounds intro and search the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) for more Deadly Sounds clips.

nfsa.gov.au/collection/item/deadly-sounds-vibe-australia

- Research other influential Aboriginal people who have effected change in Australia for Indigenous peoples. Present your findings back to the class.



NAIDOC 1990 poster *New Decade – Don't Destroy, Learn and Enjoy Our Cultural Heritage* by Gloria Beckett (Credit: NAIDOC)

New Decade – Don't Destroy, Learn and Enjoy Our Cultural Heritage (1990)

With the beginning of a new decade, the 1990 NAIDOC theme called on all Australians to stop the destruction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and to allow knowledge holders and communities to practise their traditions without interference.

It also encouraged Australians to listen, learn and take pride in the oldest continuing cultures in the world.

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-1990-poster

Aboriginal deaths in custody

Established in 1987, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody presented its final report and recommendations in 1991. It investigated 99 deaths between 1980 and 1989. The report contained 339 recommendations addressing underlying issues including the dispossession of Aboriginal land and culture, as well as economic exclusion.

The Commission also supported granting Aboriginal land rights across Australia and affirmed Aboriginal peoples' right to control access to and development of their land.

- What is a royal commission, and what is its purpose?
- What are some of the systemic justice, policing and social issues that contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody and the number of deaths in custody?
- What policies have been implemented to reduce the number of deaths in custody?
- What factors might contribute to the lack of criminal convictions following deaths in custody?
- Research the work of the Dhadjowa Foundation in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families whose loved ones have died in custody.
dhadjowa.com.au

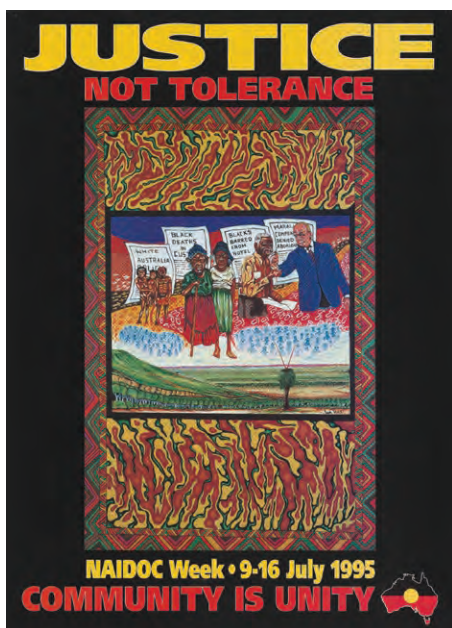


Rachel Perkins (Credit: Dylan River, The Australian Wars)

First Nations films

Film is a powerful tool for social change, and in the 1990s Aboriginal filmmakers such as Tracey Moffatt and Rachel Perkins explored themes of identity, colonial history and social justice. Hit films included *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1990), *Bedevil* (1993) and *Radiance* (1998).

- Research the incredible work and biography of Arrernte and Kalkadoon woman Rachel Perkins, including how she founded Blackfella Films in 1992. What impact did Rachel have on First Nations filmmaking? What TV series and films has she written or directed? Explore one of her films and its impact on audiences.
- Explore this list of First Nations films. Select a film to watch as a class and discuss its key themes and story.
commonground.org.au/article/first-nations-films-you-should-watch



NAIDOC 1995 poster *Justice Not Tolerance* by Ian Wallan Hill (Credit: NAIDOC)

Justice Not Tolerance (1995)

In 1995, “Justice Not Tolerance” called for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the ongoing fight for land rights following the *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* decision and the Native Title Act 1993.

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-1995-poster

- Discuss the word “tolerance”. Why is this *not* an appropriate term to use in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ cultures and rights?

Native Title

The landmark 1992 *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* decision rejected the legal doctrine of *Terra Nullius* and led to the Native Title Act 1993, which provided a legal framework to recognise and protect Indigenous land rights.



Eddie Koiki Mabo (Credit: © James Cook University)

- View a timeline outlining key events leading to and following the High Court decision.
abc.net.au/news/2012-06-03/mabo-a-timeline/4047186
- Research Eddie Koiki Mabo from the island of Mer in the Torres Strait. Learn about his life of campaigning, the Black Community School he co-founded and his decade-long court case, during which he passed away four months before the ruling.
aiatsis.gov.au/explore/eddie-koiki-mabo
- Watch the film *Mabo* (2012).
iview.abc.net.au/show/mabo
- Why was Eddie Mabo’s legal fight important in gaining recognition of Indigenous land and inheritance rights?

Jabiluka Blockade

Jabiluka is a uranium deposit on Mirarr Aboriginal land, surrounded by the World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory. The Mirarr people have a long history of fighting against uranium mining in the Kakadu region.

- Research the Jabiluka Blockade in 1998. Why was it significant, and what did it achieve?
- Find out about movements for land care and justice in your local region.

The flags

In 1995, the Australian Government officially recognised the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags as “Flags of Australia” under the Flags Act 1953.

The Australian Aboriginal flag was designed by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia, and was first raised on 9 July 1971. The Torres Strait Islander flag was designed by Bernard Namok from Thursday Island — his design was the winning entry in a 1992 competition to create a symbol of unity and identity, and it was presented to Torres Strait Islander communities on 29 May 1992.



The Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal flags

- Draw both the Aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islander flags. List what each part of the flags represents, including the colours and symbols.
- Discuss how colours, symbols and design can represent identity and shared values. Then, design a flag for your class or school and explain the meaning behind your design choices.

Reconciliation

National Reconciliation Week is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures and achievements, and to think about how everyone can contribute to achieving Reconciliation in Australia.

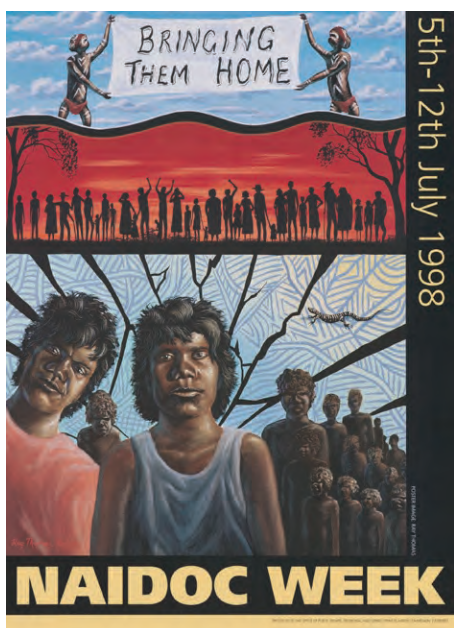
- Discuss how your school can participate in Reconciliation Week. Beyond the week, brainstorm ways you can learn and share First Nations histories, cultures and achievements. reconciliation.org.au/our-work/national-reconciliation-week

Bringing Them Home (1998)

The 1997 Bringing Them Home report exposed the systematic, forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families by Australian governments, confirming this as a policy of assimilation and a breach of human rights.

The report made 54 recommendations and found that almost every Indigenous family was affected by government policies of child removal based on Indigeneity. It documented widespread abuse, loss of culture and profound, lasting trauma experienced by children removed under these policies, known as the Stolen Generations.

humanrights.gov.au/bringing-them-home/us-taken-away-kids/track-the-history.html



NAIDOC 1998 poster *Bringing Them Home* by Ray Thomas (Credit: NAIDOC)

- Learn about the Bringing Them Home report and its recommendations and findings.
humanrights.gov.au/bringing-them-home/the-report/bringing-them-home-report.html
- Reflect on the magnitude of the rates of removal and their impact. Why are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children over-represented in out-of-home care today, and how does this relate to past child-removal policies?
aiatsis.gov.au/explore/stolen-generations
- What is Kinship care? How do you think government policies have affected families and community connections?
Deadly Story: deadlystory.com/page/culture/Life_Lore/Family/Kinship

Stolen Generations

In Australia, between 1910 and the 1970s, between one in ten and one in three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were taken from their families through state and federal government race-based policies. These children have become known as the Stolen Generations. They were forcibly removed and put into institutions, or fostered out to non-Indigenous families. They suffered a huge amount of abuse, grief and trauma through the loss of their family, identity, land, language and culture — trauma that is still deeply felt today.

abc.net.au/education/teach-aboriginal-history-and-truths-in-the-classroom/13597118

- Research the work of the Healing Foundation and its ongoing leadership and advocacy for Stolen Generations survivors and their families.
healingfoundation.org.au/resources/education-toolkits-lesson-plans
- Explore the Institutions Map of the Institutions, Reserves and Missions that Stolen Generations children were known or believed to have been taken to after being forcibly removed from their families. Find your area on the map and learn about local places that children were removed to. Discuss the specific policies of your state or territory.
map.healingfoundation.org.au
- Learn about institutions such as Kinchela Boys Home (kinchelaboyshome.org.au) and Cootamundra Girls Home (cootagirls.org.au). Why were these institutions set up, and how did they contribute to Indigenous peoples' trauma?



Archie Roach (Credit: Joanne O'Keefe)

Archie Roach

Archie Roach (1956–2022) was a Gunditjmara and Bundjalung Elder, a celebrated musician and a human rights advocate. He touched the hearts of many by sharing his lived experience as a Stolen Generations survivor through his famous song *Took the Children Away*.

YouTube: youtu.be/IL_DBNkkcSE

- Explore the Archie Roach Stolen Generations Resources, including the videos of the late Archie Roach reading his book and speaking to key themes of cultural identity, truth-telling, justice and healing through art. Listen to powerful interviews with five incredible Elders and Stolen Generations survivors, including Jack Charles, Eva Jo Edwards, Lorraine Peeters, Syd Jackson and Iris Bysouth.

ABC Education: abc.net.au/education/digibooks/archie-roach-stolen-generations-resources/101745510

Culture is Life: cultureislife.org/education/resources/archie-roach-stolen-generations

Lived experience

It's important to give voice to, honour and remember the many lives that were taken and impacted by this dark time in Australian history.

- Gamilaroi woman Donna Meehan was taken from her family in 1960 and adopted by a white family. Listen to Donna's lived experience in this interview and reflect on the questions provided.

abc.net.au/education/the-making-of-modern-australia-a-voice-from-the-stolen-generati/13890824

- Listen to prominent Tasmanian Aboriginal Elder Aunty Ida West as she shares some of her life experiences. Learn about her legacy as a community leader and activist.

abc.net.au/education/stateline-tas-aunty-ida-west-tasmanian-aboriginal-elder-1995/13819266

2000s

Many movements of the 1990s led into the 2000s with a sense of optimism for change and a national focus on Reconciliation.

In Sydney, Corroboree 2000 was a landmark event promoting Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge was attended by more than 250,000 people seeking change, hope and Reconciliation for the future.

But not all Indigenous peoples supported calls for Reconciliation. Influential voices such as the late Uncle Chicka Dixon renamed the movement “ReCONSillynation” — the “con” was the call to “walk together” as an alternative to Treaty and land rights.

Mistrust was reinforced by government policies such as the Northern Territory Intervention, launched in 2007 by Prime Minister John Howard. In 2008, a much-needed offer of healing occurred with the National Apology to the Stolen Generations made by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

This chapter expands on the following three NAIDOC themes from the 2000s:

1. Treaty... Let's Get It Right (2001)
2. The Path We Lead (2007)
3. Advance Australia Fair? (2008)

Music and arts

Globally, music was evolving as a powerful expression of struggle, with messages centring youth, poverty and Black American culture. These influences can be seen in Australian Aboriginal hip-hop groups including Local Knowledge, Brothablack, The Last Kinection, Mau Power, Indigenous Intrudaz and Briggs.

Music has long been used as a way to express anger and frustration at unjust systems. For Indigenous artists, it became a means of speaking their truths and continuing to shine a light on their culture, identity and survival.

The Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 saw Aboriginal music placed centre stage. It was a time of growth for Aboriginal rock and country music. This reflected a sense of optimism for change and acceptance, while hard times saw the ongoing fight for land rights, human rights and social justice.

- Research an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist, musician or collective from the 2000s. Discuss the key themes in their art and music. What can you find out about their stories? What themes were they speaking to?

Examples:

Christine Anu, Kev Carmody, Deborah Cheetham, NoKTuRNL, Shellie Morris, Troy Cassar-Daley.

Black Arm Band was a music production company founded in 2006. Learn about their first concert Murundak, which means “alive” in the Woiwurrung language.

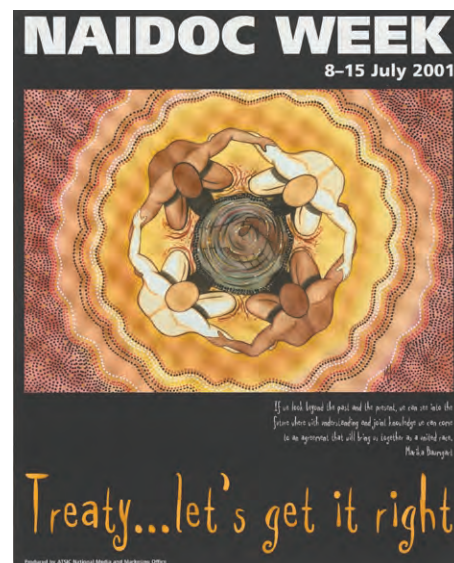
- [sbs.com.au/ondemand/tv-program/murundak-songs-of-freedom/658127939517](https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/tv-program/murundak-songs-of-freedom/658127939517)

Treaty... Let's Get It Right (2001)

The artist of the 2001 NAIDOC poster, Marika Baumgart, said, "If we look beyond the past and the present, we can see into the future where with understanding and joint knowledge we can come to an agreement that will bring us together as a united race."

- Discuss what you see on the poster. What is the meaning of "Treaty... Let's Get It Right"? Critically reflect on why this may or may not work.

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-2001-poster



NAIDOC 2001 poster *Treaty... Let's Get It Right* by Marika Baumgart (Credit: NAIDOC)

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is ongoing and relies on generations of Australians working together to build trusting relationships. In 2000, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation presented non-Indigenous leaders with two documents: the Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation (reconciliation.org.au/australian-declaration-towards-reconciliation) and the Roadmap for Reconciliation (austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/2000/10/pg2.htm).

The Walk for Reconciliation in 2000 saw more than 250,000 people cross the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In 2001, Reconciliation Australia was established as the lead body for Reconciliation in the nation.

- Explore the two documents above and create a story of the Reconciliation movement, including the key ideas and goals.
- Review and reflect on local activities around Reconciliation.
- Explain how Reconciliation has changed over time, and discuss what your community or school could do to support it.

Treaty

By the early 2000s, although Reconciliation talks and legislative proposals had not resulted in a national treaty, they did establish a framework for future discussions about truth-telling, agreements and the continued struggle for Indigenous rights in Australia.

BTN, 2018: abc.net.au/btn/classroom/what-is-a-treaty/10489008

- Discover the ideas around a treaty. What are the key focus areas?
antar.org.au/issues/treaty
- Invite local Indigenous people with lived experience in any of these focus areas to share with the class.
- Learn about the Treaty in Victoria. What does it mean for First Nations peoples? Why is it important in relation to sovereignty?
BTN, 2025: abc.net.au/btn/classroom/victoria-treaty/105776312



NAIDOC 2007 poster *The Path We Lead* by Tyeli Hannah (Credit: NAIDOC)

The Path We Lead (2007)

The artist of the 2007 NAIDOC poster, Tyeli Hannah, said, “As Indigenous Australians, we are travelling along a path. This path is a long and ancient one that has served us well. Along this path we have hit hard times, often leaving us heart-broken. Though we are torn and weathered, we still have a bright future. We look forward to equality in education, health, employment and standard of living. The path won’t be easy, but we will get there.”

- Research Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on the key themes from the poster. What was happening in the 2000s in relation to these themes? What were First Nations peoples advocating for?

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-2007-poster



Then-Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough visited the Northern Territory in 2007 to explain the controversial NT Intervention plan. (Credit: ABC News)

NT Intervention

In 2007, the federal government staged a massive intervention in the Northern Territory. The aim was to protect Aboriginal children there from harm, but the program included controversial measures that inspired big protests.

- What was the policy that became better known as “The Intervention”? Investigate why it came about and describe its impacts. Why was this a human rights issue?
- Intervention Anniversary
BTN, 2017: abc.net.au/btn/classroom/intervention-anniversary/10522798
- 10 impacts of the NT Intervention
sbs.com.au/nitv/article/10-impacts-of-the-nt-intervention/vzia753tx
- The NT Intervention and human rights
amnesty.org/en/documents/sec01/003/2010/en

Closing the Gap

The “gap” refers to the differences in health, life expectancy and social outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap includes 19 socio-economic targets designed to address inequity and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve life outcomes equal to those of non-Indigenous Australians.

closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets

- What are human rights, and why are they important? Identify how human rights connect to the Closing the Gap targets.
- Investigate programs of culture and strength that achieve a target from the Closing the Gap report. If possible, search out local examples.
- Choose one Closing the Gap target and investigate how cultural knowledge, community strength or Indigenous-led programs support progress towards this target. Where possible, include local examples.
- What is a campaign? How would you design a campaign to raise awareness of the “gap”?

Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu

Gurrumul was an extraordinary Yolŋu singer-songwriter whose music brought Indigenous-language songs to international attention.

During a decade marked by both challenges and achievements, his work showed Australia and the world the power and beauty of singing in an Indigenous language.

His performances in 2007 led to the release of his self-titled debut album, Gurrumul, which included his widely acclaimed song Wiyathul.

YouTube: youtu.be/MNBTT20aDIQ

- Investigate Gurrumul’s enormous talent by choosing one of his songs and uncovering the stories it tells. Listen to his voice and consider where the music takes you. How does it make you feel? Express these ideas and feelings through a range of artistic forms, for example, music, poetry, oral storytelling or visual art.

Gurrumul performing with Saltwater Band in 2007:

- Baywara Power - YouTube: youtu.be/HzCTnJ40eHE
- Gela Boy - YouTube: youtu.be/WCLd9Wcw80w



NAIDOC 2008 poster *Advance Australia Fair?* by Duwun Lee and Laniyuk Lee (Credit: NAIDOC)

Advance Australia Fair (2008)

Following the Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples in 2008 (indigenous.gov.au/reconciliation), the 2008 NAIDOC poster by artists Duwun Lee and Laniyuk Lee called for a fairer Australia for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. "There must be a change in attitudes of black and white and all the colours in between," they said.

- Research the key themes from the poster. What was happening in the 2000s in relation to these themes? What were First Nations peoples advocating for?
naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-2008-poster
- The title of the poster "Advance Australia Fair?" is a reference to the national anthem of Australia. Read the four verses of the national anthem and discuss what it is really saying.
nfsa.gov.au/collection/item/advance-australia-fair
- Discuss the changes to the second line of the Australian national anthem.
pmc.gov.au/government/australian-national-anthem
- Read the protocols of the Australian national anthem.
pmc.gov.au/government/australian-national-anthem/australian-national-anthem-protocols.
- Watch the anthem sung in the Eora language.
ABC News: youtu.be/nf_hedxlaoQ
- Watch the anthem sung in the Dharawal language.
ABC Indigenous: youtu.be/o8RsMcKnbsk
- How does the national anthem have the power to transcend language and culture?
sbs.com.au/nity/article/2016/01/21/national-anthems-power-transcend-language-and-culture
- Discuss this version of the national anthem co-written by several Aboriginal people.
Indigenous Community TV: ictv.com.au/video/item/4665

Apology to the Stolen Generations

On 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered an official apology to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Government. He acknowledged the laws and policies of past governments and formally apologised for the profound pain, suffering and loss they inflicted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

abc.net.au/education/pm-kevin-rudd-apology-to-the-stolen-generations/13889176

- How did the National Apology to the Stolen Generations come about, and why was it considered necessary? Why was the apology so significant? How does watching this moment make you feel?
abc.net.au/btn/classroom/apology-anniversary/106324236
- Who was the prime minister addressing in the apology? When did the Stolen Generations occur?
- Why were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families? What impacts did these removals have on generations of families and communities?
- Watch the documentary *We Were Just Little Boys*, created by Kinchela Boys Home. What does this film reveal about Australia's past treatment of Indigenous peoples? **WARNING:** This film contains sensitive content and survivor testimony, and it is not appropriate for a primary school audience; use with care and appropriate support.
YouTube: youtu.be/u4Hw9d91k2E
- The Healing Foundation centres the voices and lived experience of Stolen Generations survivors and their families. Why might an organisation like this be needed at a national level? Investigate how communities are working together to heal in response to the history and impacts of the Stolen Generations.
abc.net.au/education/healing-foundation-resources-to-learn-about-stolen-generations/13930192

Sorry Day

Following the *Bringing Them Home* report in 1997, there was a need for healing and to apologise for the past. National Sorry Day was established to provide an opportunity for all Australians to reflect on this history and recognise the resilience of Indigenous communities. It marked a commitment to ongoing Reconciliation, truth-telling and increased understanding of the forced removal of Indigenous children over many decades.

reconciliation.org.au/national-sorry-day-2020

- Watch the reading of *Sorry Day* by Coral Vass.
YouTube: youtu.be/owPeoqfsSk
- Discuss the purpose of hosting a Sorry Day event.
abc.net.au/btn/classroom/sorry-day/102363614
- How could you support or participate in a local Sorry Day event or become involved in related activities within your local community?

2010s

The 2010s were a decade of firsts in Australian politics, with Noongar, Yamatji and Wongi man Ken Wyatt AM becoming the first Aboriginal Australian elected to the House of Representatives and, by the end of the decade, becoming the first Aboriginal Australian to serve in Cabinet as Minister for Indigenous Australians. In 2016, Wiradjuri woman Linda Burney became the first Aboriginal woman elected to the House of Representatives.

In 2015, the Referendum Council was established to advise on progress towards a referendum on constitutional recognition. The Uluru Statement from the Heart was delivered in 2017 at the First Nations National Constitutional Convention, calling for a “Voice, Treaty, Truth” framework.

National reports indicated continued high rates of Indigenous child removal, with out-of-home care numbers rising between 2012 and 2017. A formal inquiry into youth detention centres was launched following the release of footage exposing mistreatment at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre in the Northern Territory.

National attention and protest movements against police brutality continued, with the 2019 death of Kumanjayi Walker in Yuendumu, NT, sparking national outrage.

This chapter expands on the following three NAIDOC themes from the 2010s:

1. Unsung Heroes — Leading Through Example (2010)
2. Our Languages Matter (2017)
3. Voice. Treaty. Truth. (2019)

Music and arts

Between 2010 and 2019, Aboriginal music and arts experienced a major surge in mainstream Australian and international recognition. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts expanded into major galleries, with the National Gallery of Australia opening its first dedicated wing for its Indigenous collection in 2010. This decade also saw a rise in “blackfella” filmmaking, powerful social commentary in music and acclaimed literature challenging colonial history.

Literature

- That Deadman Dance (2010) by Kim Scott
- Dark Emu (2014) by Bruce Pascoe
- Inside My Mother (2015) by Ali Cobby Eckermann
- Talking to My Country (2016) by Stan Grant
- Terra Nullius (2017) by Claire G. Coleman
- Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia (2018), edited by Anita Heiss
- Too Much Lip (2018) by Melissa Lucashenko
- The Yield (2019) by Tara June Winch
- The White Girl (2019) by Tony Birch

Film and television

- The Sapphires (2012)
- Mabo (2012)
- Cleverman (2016–2017)
- Sweet Country (2017)
- Top End Wedding (2019)
- In My Blood It Runs (2019)

Music

- Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu
- Thelma Plum
- A.B. Original

Awards

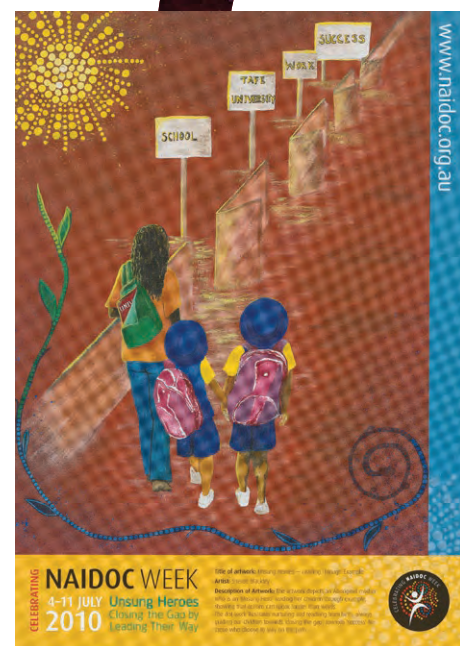
- Aunty Lola Greeno — Red Ochre Award, 2019 (Visual arts)
- Uncle Jack Charles — Red Ochre Award, 2019 (Theatre)

Unsung Heroes – Leading Through Example (2010)

The artist of the 2010 NAIDOC poster, Sheree Blackley, said, “The artwork depicts an Aboriginal mother who is an ‘Unsung Hero’ leading her children through example, showing that actions can speak louder than words. The dot work illustrates nurturing and teaching from birth, always guiding our children towards ‘closing the gap’, towards ‘success’ for those who choose to stay on the path.”

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-2010-poster

- What is a hero, and how can everyday actions show heroism? Think about someone in your life who has cared for you or taught you valuable lessons and explain why you might see them as a hero.
- Write a list of people you value or admire and explain why. Draw a campfire and write the names of these people around it, and maybe even draw them. What conversations would you have with these people around the campfire? What songs would be shared? What would you hope to learn or experience through these campfire yarns?
- Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have created positive change and inspired others across Australia and globally. Research a First Nations person who has influenced change in a field that interests you, such as science, the arts, sport, health or land care. Reflect on the qualities or values they have demonstrated, and the tools and approaches they used to bring about change.
- Aboriginal Heroes
dlgsc.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/aboriginal-history/right-wrongs-toolkit-part-4-aboriginal-heros.pdf
- 100 great Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders you really ought to know
Central News UTS: centralnews.com.au/2023/10/14/100-great-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islanders-you-really-ought-to-know



2010 NAIDOC poster *Unsung Heroes – Leading Through Example* by Sheree Blackley (Credit: NAIDOC)



2017 National poster *Your Tribe, My Tribe, Our Nation* by Joanne Cassady (Credit: NAIDOC)

Our Languages Matter (2017)

The artist of the 2017 NAIDOC poster, Joanne Cassady, said, “All our languages matter and are important to us as Indigenous Australians. My artwork reflects this year’s theme by incorporating some of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations and languages around Australia.”

naidoc.org.au/node/31

Language revival

In 2019, the International Year of Indigenous Languages highlighted the urgent need to preserve and revitalise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, with roughly 90 per cent considered endangered. The UNESCO initiative emphasised the importance of language as central to identity, connection to Country and cultural wellbeing. The disappearance of any single language threatens the culture and knowledge system to which it belongs.

More than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and 800 dialects were spoken in Australia before British colonisation. Government policies strategically suppressed the use of these languages, resulting in most becoming endangered or lost.

Today, many community-led projects are working to strengthen and revive Indigenous languages. These projects include language apps, dual-naming signage, songs in language and school projects that build awareness of local Indigenous cultures.

- What is the local language of the First Peoples of the land your school is on? Research books, stories, songs or films that include your local language and knowledge.
- Explore the Goldfields Aboriginal Language Centre’s digitised books in languages including Ngaanyatjarra, Mirning and Ngadjju. wangka.com.au/resources/books
- Research your local seasons in the language of the land your school is on. Create colourful posters to represent the seasons in language and display them in your classroom.

Boonwurrung seasons example from Biik Bundjil:
biikbundjil.com/heritage

Map of Indigenous languages

Beginning in the 1920s, Norman Tindale spent more than 50 years researching First Australian languages and cultures. He attempted to identify all the languages spoken prior to colonisation. This was challenging as First Australians were an oral culture, which meant that languages were not written down. Furthermore, colonisation displaced communities and disrupted the speaking and transmission of language.

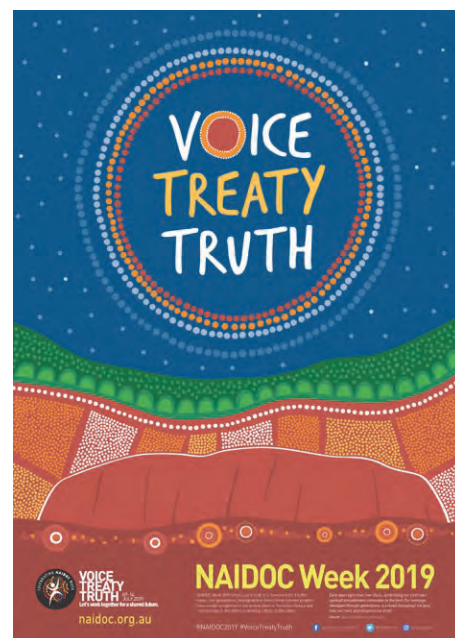
naa.gov.au/students-and-teachers/student-research-portal/learning-resource-themes/first-australians/history/map-indigenous-languages

- Display the map of Indigenous languages in your classroom. Identify the language group of the land your school is on and discuss the diversity of language groups, cultural practices and landscapes.
aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia
- Use the interactive Gambay map to listen to the pronunciation of language names, watch video profiles of language workers and access teacher notes for all year levels.
firstlanguages.org.au/gambay

Voice. Treaty. Truth. (2019)

The artist of the 2019 NAIDOC poster, Charmaine Mumbulla, said, “Dawn light stretches across Uluru promising hope and new beginnings. The circles at the base of Uluru represent the gathering of many people from different nations to consult and discuss new ways of moving forward, resulting in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. A new day and a new beginning calls for a new way of moving forward as a nation.”

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-2019-poster



2019 NAIDOC poster *Awaken* by Charmaine Mumbulla (Credit: NAIDOC)

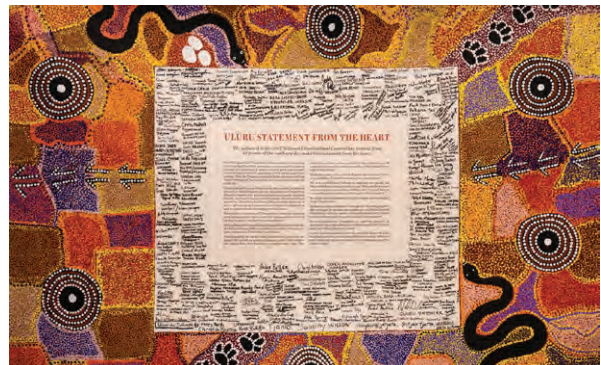
Uluru Statement from the Heart

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have called for a political voice and representation in Australian decision-making for more than 100 years, with aims focused on self-determination, autonomy and having a seat at the table in matters affecting their communities.

reconciliation.org.au/support-a-voice-to-parliament/100-years-of-calls-for-voice

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a historic one-page document and artwork calling for constitutional recognition of First Nations Australians through a “Voice, Treaty, Truth.” It was produced by consensus of delegates at the First Nations National Constitutional Convention in May 2017. Delegates in support of the statement expressed a need for substantive constitutional reform and proposed a First Nations Voice to Parliament and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to oversee a process of agreement-making (treaty) and truth-telling.

abc.net.au/news/2023-08-30/inside-the-uluru-statement-from-the-heart/102792526



The Uluru Statement from the Heart (Credit: Supplied)

- Australia is the only Commonwealth country that does not have a federal treaty or comprehensive nationwide agreement with its First Nations peoples. How did Terra Nullius lead to the British justification for not signing a treaty?
- Research British law in the 18th century and the three ways that Europeans could “legally” gain sovereignty over a country. Discuss British assumptions of Aboriginal lore and the stark differences between European law and Indigenous lore.
ruleoflaw.org.au/explainer-terra-nullius-and-european-settlement

State and territory treaties

Most Australian states and territories have initiated treaty-making processes with Indigenous Australians, though progress varies significantly across jurisdictions. Some state governments, such as Queensland, have passed and later repealed treaty-related legislation.

- Research Australia’s first treaty between First Peoples and the Victorian Government. Learn about the process and the representative body, Gellung Warl.
firstpeoplesvic.org

Truth-telling

The 2019 NAIDOC Week theme emphasised the need to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonisation. This included Australia’s history of genocides, massacres and frontier conflict, as well as ongoing injustices and discrimination, while also recognising the contributions of First Nations peoples in protecting and building this country.

- Truth-telling processes across Australian states and territories vary, ranging from formal, legislated commissions to community-led initiatives. Research truth-telling initiatives in your state or territory and present your findings to the class.
antar.org.au/issues/truth-telling/truth-telling-states-territories

2020s

The 2020s have been a decade of highs and lows. The Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 galvanised widespread protests across Australia, highlighting systemic racism, police brutality and disproportionately high rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap came into effect on 27 July 2020 and remains a cornerstone framework for Australian governments to partner with First Nations peoples to address entrenched inequality.

The global COVID-19 pandemic caused enormous disruption and shifts in national and global priorities. Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations demonstrated exceptional leadership, working tirelessly with Indigenous communities across Australia to develop effective public health responses to the pandemic.

Aboriginal traditional owners in Australia continued their fight for Country against large-scale mining expansion. The period was marked by the destruction of two 46,000-year-old sacred rock shelters at Juukan Gorge, increased investor scrutiny of mining companies and failed heritage legislation.

On 14 October 2023, Australians voted in a Referendum “to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.” The Referendum process caused tension, division and widespread racism against First Nations communities, but there were also examples of hope and unity among supporters and mobilised community efforts.

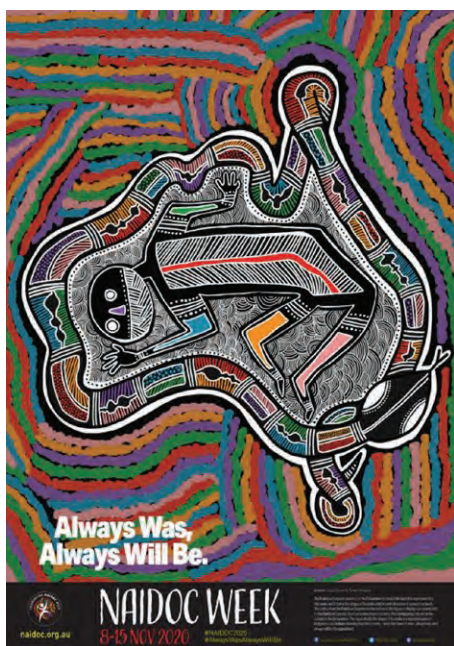
First Nations leaders looked towards the future with a growing population of more than 33.1 per cent of Indigenous peoples in Australia under 15 years of age. And after decades-long collective efforts, hope for positive change came through the signing of Australia’s first treaty in Victoria in 2025.

This chapter expands on the following three NAIDOC themes from the 2020s:

1. Always Was, Always Will Be. (2020)
2. Heal Country! (2021)
3. For Our Elders (2023)

Music

- **BARKAA:** A powerful force in Australian hip-hop, the Malyangapa and Barkindji artist gained national prominence in the early 2020s for her sharp lyricism and storytelling, earning ARIA nominations and National Indigenous Music Awards.
- **Electric Fields:** The acclaimed electronic duo pushes boundaries, blending electronic soul with Indigenous language. They represented Australia at Eurovision in 2024 and appeared at the 2026 Parrtjima Festival.
- **Baker Boy:** A dominant figure in Australian hip-hop, charting with hits such as Move and Cool as Hell.
- **Miss Kaninna:** A rapper-singer-songwriter who has gained traction for her distinctive style, including her 2023 release Blak Britney.
- **Mitch Tambo:** A proud Gamilaraay man known for revitalising traditional music with modern sounds.
- **Budjerah and Miiesha:** A new wave of contemporary Indigenous soul and R&B artists who have achieved success at the National Indigenous Music Awards.
- **DOBBY:** A Murrawarri and Filipino rapper, drummer and composer whose album, Warrangu: River Story, speaks to the environmental impacts on the three rivers surrounding Brewarrina, including over-irrigation and water misappropriation in the Murray-Darling Basin.



NAIDOC 2020 poster *Shape of Land*
by Tyrown Waigana (Credit: NAIDOC)

Always Was, Always Will Be. (2020)

On one of many trips out on Country during a land rights campaign, Uncle William Bates's father, Uncle Jim Bates, became excited and started telling stories of his Country and land. Uncle William said, "Dad, it's not your land anymore, whitefellas own it," and Uncle Jim replied, "No, they only borrowed it; it always was and always will be Aboriginal land."

The artist of the 2020 NAIDOC poster, Tyrown Waigana, said, "The Rainbow Serpent came out of the Dreamtime to create this land. It is represented by the snake and it forms the shape of Australia, which symbolises how it created our lands ... The figure inside the shape of Australia is a representation of Indigenous Australians showing that this country — since the dawn of time — Always Was, Always Will Be Aboriginal Land."

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-2020-poster

- Discuss the slogan "Always Was, Always Will Be". Why is it used as a symbol of pride and protest? Investigate where and how the slogan is used today, and explain what it communicates about Indigenous sovereignty, history and ongoing connection to Country.
- Read the article "Always Was, Always Will Be, Aboriginal Land" by Laura McBride, which explains how the phrase originated. What were Barkandji people advocating for, and what did they achieve? What does the slogan and chant continue to respond to today?

australian.museum/learn/first-nations/always-will-be-aboriginal-land

Heal Country! (2021)

In her 2021 NAIDOC poster, artist Maggie-Jean Douglas included communities/people, animals and bush medicines spread across different landscapes of red dirt, green grass, bushland and coastal areas. This tells the story of the many ways Country can and has healed First Nations people throughout their lives and journeys.

naidoc.org.au/posters/poster-gallery/naidoc-2021-poster

- Caring for Country is a widely used term by Indigenous peoples, and also by their allies. Research ways you can care for Country in your local area.
- Find a song, or a story from a book or short film, that speaks to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experiences and connection to Country.



NAIDOC 2021 poster *Care for Country* by Maggie-Jean Douglas (Credit: NAIDOC)

Examples:

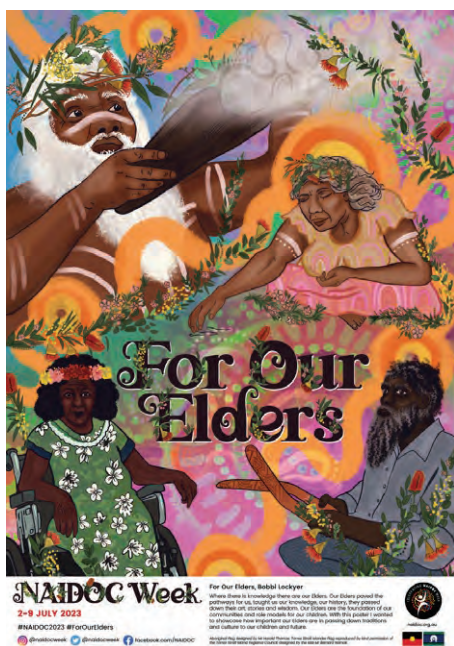
- Walking on Country (Ngurambangga Yanhanha) by Sharron mirii Bell, a Wiradjuri language song about walking on Country, ancestors and Mother Earth.
YouTube: youtu.be/OQ-HBDqySaU
- Wanjoo (Welcome Song) by Gina Williams in the Noongar language.
YouTube: youtu.be/kxBRgLiHRqI
- Back on Country by Troy Cassar-Daley, a contemporary country song about returning to ancestral lands.
YouTube: youtu.be/FRGPQX8iB2Q
- Taba Naba, a song from the Torres Strait Islands about loving the sea and reef.
Torres Strait Islanders' Regional Education Council: tsirec.com.au/news/tabu-naba

Lutruwita/Tasmania place names

After many years of work to retrieve original place names, the *palawa kani* Language Program has created a place names map that can be used by everyone.

Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre:
tacinc.com.au/pulingina-to-lutruwita-place-names-map

- Listen to place names in the *palawa kani* language and compare how they sound with their English spellings. What differences do you notice? Find Aboriginal place names in your area and learn their correct pronunciation.
- Why is naming a place or Country significant? Research how places are named and what these names reveal about power, history and cultural values.
- Counter-mapping involves creating maps that challenge, resist or offer alternatives to dominant or official maps. How can counter-mapping be used by Aboriginal communities to reclaim and assert connections to Country? How does it reveal histories, knowledge or perspectives that are excluded or erased from official maps?



NAIDOC 2023 poster *For Our Elders*
by Bobbi Lockyer (Credit: NAIDOC)

For Our Elders (2023)

The 2023 NAIDOC theme “For Our Elders” honoured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present.

The artist of the 2023 NAIDOC poster, Bobbi Lockyer, said, “Where there is knowledge there are our Elders. Our Elders paved the pathways for us, taught us our knowledge, our history, they passed down their art, stories and wisdom. Our Elders are the foundation of our communities and role models for our children. With this poster I wanted to showcase how important our Elders are in passing down traditions and culture to our children and future.”

naidoc.org.au/2023-poster

- Use the 2023 NAIDOC Week Education Resources to ensure young people are learning from Elders’ knowledge and perspectives, and to help maintain the passing down of this knowledge through generations.
abc.net.au/education/digibooks/naidoc-week-2023-for-our-elders-education-resources/102460420
- Watch the interviews of young adults from Culture is Life’s Fullship Program reflecting on stories and the significance of their Elders. What feelings and emotions arise from the young adults and their stories?
abc.net.au/education/digibooks/naidoc-week-2023-for-our-elders-education-resources/102460420#2

Which key lessons or memories resonate with you? Explain why these lessons and memories are so valuable to young people.

What are some examples shared of how young people can build relationships and connect with Elders?

Watch “My Pop, Simon Narrier”. Simon is a proud Noongar man who grew up on a Mission in Western Australia. While watching, write down key memories and lessons shared to discuss as a class.

Reflect on significant senior people in your life. How have they made you feel, and how have they impacted your life?

THANK YOU

Thank you for ensuring that First Nations knowledge and perspectives are a valued part of your school's curriculum and community. We acknowledge the huge role and responsibility that teachers and educators have, and we hope that these resources are shared far and wide!

FEEDBACK

Culture is Life aims to maintain high quality, free-to-access First Nations curriculum for all teachers and educators.



Your feedback will help us do that and we'd love to hear your thoughts through this 5-minute survey:
tinyurl.com/CisLsurvey

You can also contact us via email or through our website:

info@cultureislife.org

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Ghost Gum Media, a digital media production company based in Mpartwe (Alice Springs).

Indigi-Print, a print management company based in Narrm (Melbourne).

PARTNERS

National NAIDOC Committee

On 26 January 1938, while many Australians celebrated the 150th anniversary of the landing of the First Fleet, a group of more than 1,000 Aboriginal people gathered at Australia Hall in Sydney to call for full citizenship status and laws to improve the lives of First Nations people. As one of the first major civil rights gatherings in the world, this day became known as the Day of Mourning. Since then, National NAIDOC Week has grown to become both a

commemoration of the first Day of Mourning as well as a celebration of the history, culture and excellence of First Nations people.

The National NAIDOC Committee is an independent, voluntary committee, whose members are the custodians of the National NAIDOC Week Awards Ceremony on behalf of all First Nations people.

naidoc.org.au

ABC Education

ABC Education offers a treasure trove of educational resources and engaging content for students from Foundation to Year 10. From insightful articles to thought-provoking videos that are mapped to the Australian Curriculum, the website fosters

intellectual curiosity. ABC Education is proud to work with Culture is Life to ensure resources such as these are led by and respectfully created with First Nations peoples.

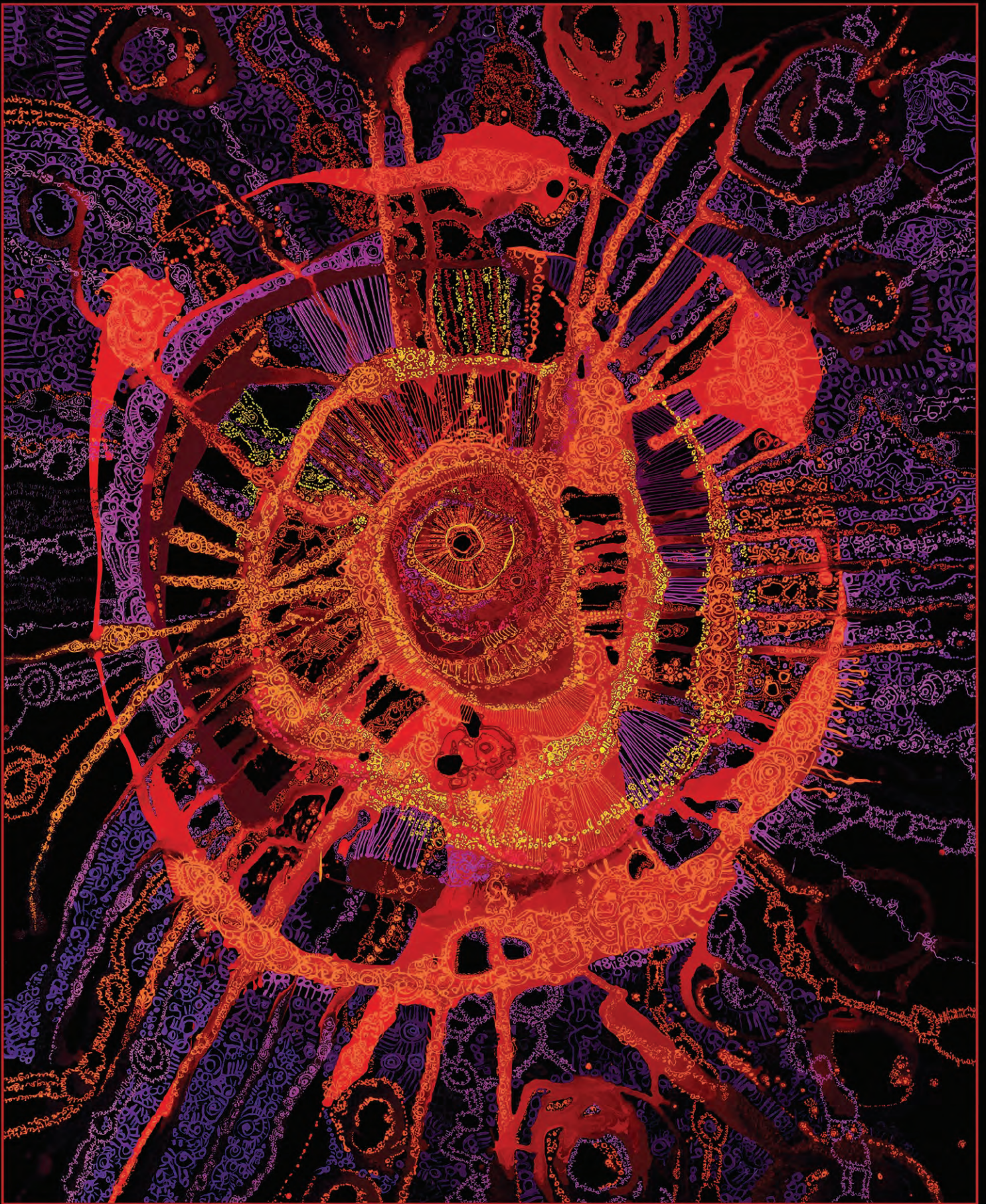
abc.net.au/education

Culture is Life

Culture is Life is an Aboriginal-led not-for-profit organisation. We believe that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have the right to thrive and flourish, strong in knowing who they are, where they come from and who they are connected to.

All our efforts deepen young people's experiences of culture as protection through thoughtfully designed programs and simple-to-access and easy-to-use policies, projects, resources and campaigns.

cultureislife.org



NAIDOC
WEEK
50 YEARS
DEADLY
5-12 JULY 2026

Paralpi by Zaachariaha Fielding

Paralpi extends Zaachariaha's acclaimed *Inma* series and reflects a deeply cultural and immersive narrative grounded in Country. The artwork depicts the sounds of *Paralpi*, a significant place just outside Mimili on the eastern APY Lands in South Australia. As Zaachariaha describes, *Paralpi* is a place where people come to embrace and celebrate children, where they are taught by Elders to move and mimic their Clan emblem – for Mimili, this being the maku (witchetty grub).

#NAIDOC2026

#FIFTYEARSDEADLY

#NAIDOCWEEK

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Aboriginal Flag
designed by Mr
Harold Thomas.



Torres Strait Islander Flag reproduced by kind
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Council, designed by the late Mr Bernard Namok.