

Teaching and learning ideas

Each year National Reconciliation Week (NRW) celebrates and builds on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. It is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures and achievements and to explore how each of us can join the national reconciliation journey.

NRW is held from 27 May to 3 June each year. Preceded by [National Sorry Day](#) on 26 May, NRW is bookended by two key events in Australia's history, which provide strong symbols for reconciliation:

[27 May 1967](#) – the referendum that saw more than 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Australian Government power to make laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and recognise them in the census.

[3 June 1992](#) – the Australian High Court delivered the Mabo decision, which recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a special relationship with the land. This paved the way for land rights or Native Title.

This year is particularly momentous, with Reconciliation Australia celebrating a number of anniversaries, including:

- **25 years** of formal reconciliation in Australia with the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1991
- **15 years** since Reconciliation Australia was formed
- **10 years** of success in its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program.

To mark this significant year, Reconciliation Australia released a landmark report, the [State of Reconciliation in Australia](#), which highlights what has been achieved under five dimensions of reconciliation—race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity, and historical acceptance—and makes recommendations on how we can progress reconciliation into the next generation. Importantly, the five dimensions give us a shared language and vision for reconciliation.

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) started as the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation in 1993 (the International Year of the World's Indigenous People) and was supported by Australia's major faith communities. In 1996, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation launched Australia's first 'National Reconciliation Week'. In 2000, Reconciliation Australia was established to continue to provide national leadership on reconciliation. In the same year, approximately 300,000 people [walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge](#) as part of NRW, showing support for the reconciliation process.

This year's theme

NRW has a different theme each year – this year it is '*Our History, Our Story, Our Future*'.

'**Our History**' reminds us all that historical acceptance is essential to our reconciliation journey. Historical acceptance will exist when all Australians understand and accept the fact that past laws, practices and policies deeply affected the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, often having devastating immediate impacts and causing much of the disadvantage that exists today. It is also a commitment to ensuring these wrongs are never repeated in the future.

'**Our Story**' reflects the fact that the journey towards reconciliation forms a significant part of Australia's story, as do the stories of both trauma and triumph told by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It also encourages each and every one of us to make reconciliation part of our own story.

'**Our Future**' reinforces that reconciliation must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all Australians as we move forward, in the knowledge that we believe in fairness for everyone, that our diversity makes us richer, and that together, we are stronger.

Talking about reconciliation

When discussing reconciliation with students and children, a good place to start is to talk about key terms such as friendship, harmony, difference, respect, acceptance and understanding.

Ask students and children to reflect on their own relationships with friends and family by asking:

- What are the ingredients of a good relationship?
- What makes you feel pride (both in oneself and those around you) and what happens when you feel disrespected?
- What do you do to build trust in your personal relationships?

Reconciliation means lots of different things to different people. In Australia, and in our schools and early learning services, reconciliation usually means working to ensure everyone understands and values that we can learn, eat, speak and be in many different ways. A large part of learning about, and working towards reconciliation is learning about and respecting Australia's First Peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Considerations for schools and early learning services hosting NRW events:

- Remember to register events organised by your school or early learning service, whether big or small, public or private, on the NRW website. This assists Reconciliation Australia to understand Australia's engagement with the week.
- Leave plenty of time to organise speakers and to let people know about your event—remember building respectful collaborative relationships is at the heart of reconciliation.
- Put NRW on the agenda of an all staff meeting to encourage your whole school or early learning service community to get involved and put forward ideas. This is also a good opportunity to discuss the 2016 theme—Our History, Our Story, Our Future.
- Include a story in the newsletter, on your website or send home a flyer of events to encourage parents, families and your local community to attend.

Ideas for action

NRW is a great opportunity for schools and early learning services to organise and attend public events as a way of strengthening community understanding and engagement with reconciliation.

Visit the [NRW website](http://www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw)

(www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw/get-involved/) for tips on how to make the following suggested activities happen in your school or early learning service.

Coordinate a Welcome to Country: A Welcome to Country is delivered by Traditional Owners, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been given permission from Traditional Owners, to welcome visitors to their Country. A Welcome to Country usually occurs at the beginning of a formal event and can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language or English.

Acknowledgement of Country: An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for to Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. An Acknowledgment of Country can be given by both non-Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are connected to another place. The act of being Welcomed to and Acknowledging Country are a continuation of protocols that have been practiced for thousands of years.

Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP): Your school or early learning service can continue promoting reconciliation throughout the year by developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). A RAP is a formal statement of commitment to building relationships and respect with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning* makes the first steps to develop a RAP easy. Here you will find a list of actions, practical steps and measurable targets for your school or early learning service to develop and implement in the classroom, around the school and with the community. For more information visit

www.reconciliation.org.au/schools

Host a morning tea: Bringing your school or early learning service community together for a morning tea demonstrates that reconciliation is an important priority and will encourage participants to stop, reflect and take notice of its place in their own lives.

Participate in local community events: During NRW, public events are being held across the country – in other schools, early learning services, community centres and local parks. Many of these events are free, and in the spirit of reconciliation, open to schools, services and community members interested in building new relationships based on respect.

Promote NRW on social media: Social media is a great way to share your NRW experiences and to join in the national conversation about reconciliation between 27 May and 3 June using the hashtag #NRW2016.

Join the *Narragunnawali* community: [Narragunnawali](#) assists schools and early learning services to bring reconciliation to life in classrooms, around schools and services and with the community all year round, not just during NRW.

Fly or display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags: Flying or displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags is a highly visible symbol of respect. This act demonstrates Australia's recognition of its First Peoples and promotes a sense of community partnership and a commitment to reconciliation.

Screen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander films and TV programs: The stories and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are exceptionally diverse. Films, television and documentaries that tell these rich stories, especially those made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers, producers, directors and actors, are an accessible way to continue your learning journey around the histories and cultures of Australia's First Peoples. Use our [viewing guide](#) to select films and programs of interest, or tune in to NITV during NRW to watch a diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused programs.

Visit sites of cultural significance: Visiting sites of cultural significance within your town, city or surrounding national parks can provide a different perspective on the land where you live, work or play and allow you to learn about the Traditional Owners of the area. Working with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to learn about and visit sites of historical and cultural significance will also enrich relationships, understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture, Country and place.

Learn about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander art: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have used a variety of media to tell stories for thousands of years. Paintings, carvings, weavings, dance, song and other art forms continue to be a way to pass on stories, histories and knowledge across generations. You can deepen your understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions by inviting artists to your school or early learning service to share their art making practice.

Curriculum activities

These teaching and learning ideas are designed for early learning, primary and secondary school settings, but it's up to you as a teacher to tailor them for your class. Remember these are just a few suggestions and the possibilities are endless.

Talk about the theme: The theme for NRW 2016 is *Our History, Our Story, Our Future*. 'Our History, Our Story, Our Future' is derived from the [State of Reconciliation in Australia](#) report, which asks all Australians to reflect on our national identity, and the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights in our nation's story. Show students this year's NRW [poster](#) and [video](#) and discuss the ways in which the theme is communicated. Refer to the explanation of our theme in short above, or visit the NRW [homepage](#) to explore each element in depth.

Use the 'head, heart, hand' model to unpack the term 'reconciliation' with students and children:

- **Head (think, know):** What do you already know about reconciliation? Why is history an important part of the reconciliation journey?
- **Heart (feel):** How do you feel about the part or role you can play in improving reconciliation? How is reconciliation part of our own story?
- **Hand (act):** Make a list and discuss practical actions that individuals or the class could take to improving reconciliation. How can we make sure that, in the future, reconciliation continues to live in our hearts, minds and actions?

Collate responses from the 'head, heart, hand' exercise on three different posters (labelled Our History, Our Story, Our Future) and display them in your classroom.

Create your own NRW poster: Students can create their own NRW poster based on the theme 'Our History, Our Story, Our Future'. Discuss the importance of type of images, layout, size and quantity of text, colour and composition for effective communication and to grab attention. When creating a poster, ask students to consider what the purpose of the poster is, who the audience might be, and why certain images and text have been included in the poster.

Take a picture of your posters and send them to schools@reconciliation.org.au

Postcard from the future: Ask students to imagine they are living in a future Australia that has achieved reconciliation. As a class, think about what a reconciled Australia looks like, sounds like and feels like and brainstorm a list of the things that might have contributed to this achievement. You might like to use the five dimensions of reconciliation on page 7 of the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report [summary](#) to guide your discussion. Ask students to design their own postcard to send from future Australia to a friend or significant person, telling the recipient what life is like. Choose an eye-catching picture to draw, paint or print. Send your postcards to schools@reconciliation.org.au

Our shared history – reconciliation jigsaw: Explore our shared history and piece together a reconciliation jigsaw of events using Reconciliation Australia's [Share our Pride timeline](#) or the timeline on page 4 and 5 of the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report [summary](#). Individually or in small groups, select one milestone for reconciliation on the timeline and explore its significance by answering the questions below:

- What happened at the event?
- Who did it affect and why?
- What is the significance of the event to reconciliation?
- How is the event remembered today?

Students may need to do some further research on the event to answer the above questions. Students could create a research poster that summarises answers to the questions. Piece together the reconciliation jigsaw by asking students to present their research back to the class in order of events (earliest to most recent) and display the posters on the walls of your classroom.

Professional learning

The reconciliation process is an important part of Australia's story and our national identity. NRW is a great opportunity for staff to learn about reconciliation history and contemporary issues through the following professional learning suggestions:

Have a yarn: Positive change starts with conversations which encourage the open exchange of ideas and build shared understandings. Set aside some time with your colleagues during NRW to form a yarning circle and discuss the importance of reconciliation in our nation's story, in your workplace/community, and in your own life.

How to make this happen:

- Read the [summary](#) of Reconciliation Australia's the *State of Reconciliation in Australia* report and watch the accompanying video [Our History, Our Story, Our Future](#).
- Use the video and the five dimensions of reconciliation outlined in the Report to guide your yarning circle conversation. They are:
 1. **Race relations**
 2. **Equality and equity**
 3. **Institutional integrity**
 4. **Unity**
 5. **Historical acceptance**
- You may discuss why each dimension is crucial for reconciliation and what practical steps we can take in our own lives to progress them.
- Ensure you respect the protocols of the yarning circle process by providing all participants with an opportunity to have their say. Each participant should speak, one at a time, and be heard without interruption. This process develops deep listening skills and the ability to show respect in the face of differing views.

Hold TED screenings: The journey towards reconciliation forms a significant part of Australia's story, as do the stories of both trauma and triumph told by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. TED talks give us access to these stories, told first hand in moving and motivating ways by diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals.

How to make this happen:

- Most TEDx talks are less than 20 minutes in length, so can quite easily be screened via YouTube at a staff meeting during NRW.
- There are many incredible talks, but here are a few that speak strongly to reconciliation:
 - [Science, art, and reconciliation](#) by Steven Tingay at TEDxPerth
 - [ONExSAMENESS](#) by Dr Anita Heiss at TEDxBrisbane
 - [Two worlds](#) by Ingrid Cumming at TEDxPerth
 - [IndigenousX](#) by Luke Pearson at TEDxCanberra
 - [ONExEAR](#) by Michael Williams
 - [All you need is.... TO DREAM](#) by Chris Sarra TEDxBrisbane

Host a book club: Reconciliation is an important part of our nation's story and reading books can impart many different perspectives on this story and fill in historical blind spots. While we can learn much from reading alone, hosting a book club can provide even more insight by encouraging meaningful discussions about reconciliation and sharing ideas and viewpoints.

How to make this happen:

- Use our [reading guide](#) to pick books of interest focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.
- You may like to hold a one-off book club during NRW, or continue reading throughout the year by holding a discussion group monthly or every two months.

- The book club discussion could take place in person, or if pressed for time to gather, through a private online forum.
- Consider posing a few questions to guide your discussion. Try to move beyond likes and dislikes to questions such as:
What did you learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories or peoples?
How do you think the book could start a dialogue about reconciliation?
- If your book club successfully runs for a year, you may like to vote on your favourite book and host a reading of select passages during the next NRW.
- Let us know what you're reading during NRW using the hashtag #NRW 2016.