# Aboriginal Studies 7-10: case study guide

Development of case studies in partnership with local Aboriginal community involves engagement with local knowledge holders and organisation from content planning through to implementation and evaluation – demonstrating an authentic partnership to students.

It is recommended that teachers develop an understanding of respectful and culturally safe, community engagement protocols in the NSW education context by accessing the following guides:

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principles and Protocols](https://ab-ed.nesa.nsw.edu.au/principles-and-protocols) (NESA, 2018)

[Working with Aboriginal Communities: A Guide to Community Consultation and Protocols](https://ab-ed.nesa.nsw.edu.au/go/partnerships) (NESA, 2008)

[The journey’s just begun: Enhancing schools’ capacity to partner Aboriginal communities to improve student learning – Facilitator handbook and DVD](https://ab-ed.nesa.nsw.edu.au/go/partnerships/journey) (NESA, 2008)

## ****Ethical research and protocols for consultation****

When working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, communities and organisations, application of ethical and culturally safe practices must always be demonstrated. This includes:

* respect for ownership of cultural knowledges through working within Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) guidelines for the area of focus
* reciprocal learning and sharing of knowledges
* authentic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice through using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander written or endorsed texts
* respecting and recognition of Men’s and Women’s Business
* management of shared knowledges after completion of teaching unit.

For a complete description of ethical research principles, guides for implementation and in-depth background into Australian Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights, access the following resources:

* [Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies](https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/guidelines-ethical-research-australian-indigenous-studies) (AIATSIS, 2012)
* [Our Culture: Our Future](https://www.terrijanke.com.au/our-culture-our-future) (Janke, 1998)

## ****Aboriginal community organisations****

**Begin** local Aboriginal community engagement through connecting with your school’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. **Also, consider contacting the following organisations to identify branches in your local area:**

* [Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc.](https://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/aecg-regions/)
* [NSW Aboriginal Lands Council](https://alc.org.au/)
* [NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service – Conservation and Heritage](https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/conservation-and-heritage)
* [Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW](https://www.ahmrc.org.au/)
* [Reconciliation NSW](https://reconciliationnsw.org.au/)
* local government councils.

# Working with Aboriginal communities

Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent/carers and communities is central to the design and delivery of curriculum.

[Working with Aboriginal Communities](https://ab-ed.nesa.nsw.edu.au/go/partnerships) (NESA, 2008) provides advice and outlines steps to assist schools in appropriate ways to approach Aboriginal community members and in building partnerships between schools, teachers and local Aboriginal communities.

As custodians of their cultural knowledge and languages, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples alone possess the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences to give authenticity to Aboriginal perspectives in the school’s educational program.

Communities should be approached to provide this expertise during the planning and implementation of units of learning.

## ****Identifying your local Aboriginal community****

Identifying and forming a partnership with the local Aboriginal community, starts with understanding the lands on which your school is built and the culture, language and history of your local area ([Reconciliation NSW: Aboriginal languages in NSW and ACT](https://www.schoolsreconciliationchallenge.org.au/reconciliation-in-education/)).

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| --- | --- |
| Organisation | Community Links |
| Local government and non-government organisations | * local Aboriginal Medical Services * Aboriginal Out of Home Care Services * local or regional Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers * local Aboriginal Disability Services * local Government Councils and Libraries |
| Local Aboriginal cultural organisations | * local Aboriginal Lands Councils * local and regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) * local Aboriginal cultural, historical and education organisations, e.g. botanic gardens, art galleries, museums, cultural groups. |
| Elders, grandparents, aunty and uncles, parents and carers | * extended families are important to acknowledge and invite to participate in curriculum planning, cultural days, school events and engaging with students to hear about their learnings. |

**Important Cultural Note**

Not all local Aboriginal community members will be living On-Country. Due to the impact of past government policies and personal reasons, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples may have relocated from their traditional lands and now reside Off-Country.

When contacting local Aboriginal community members and organisations, it is important to be mindful of where knowledges, cultures and personal stories may originate. For this reason, contacting local Aboriginal Lands Councils, Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups and other local Aboriginal organisations will assist in identifying community members who may be able to share knowledge that is from your local area.

Supporting students’ understanding of the concept of On-Country and Off-Country will also assist in developing an understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages and histories across our nation.

## ****Community engagement strategies****

When engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of cultures, languages and histories that continue to exist across the nation. For this reason, the strategies suggested below should be seen as a starting point and may need to be modified to the community’s context:

* **Start slow** – build relationships first through culturally safe and respectful conversations.
* **Spend time yarning** – the traditional way of teaching, learning and sharing in the Aboriginal culture.
* **Keep it informal** – discuss with community members the background and audience when inviting to speak and work with staff and/or students. Allow community members to guide the way in which cultural knowledge is shared (i.e. formal or informal settings) and if this can or cannot be recorded.
* **Staff professional learning** – ensure staff participate in regular cultural competence training and On-Country learning.
* **Maintain links beyond the ‘project’** – authentic partnerships and sharing of cultural knowledges, languages and histories is not based on a single project, event or visit from a community member. Engagement with community should be ongoing with both students and staff.

Support materials and tools for NSW schools looking to begin forming a partnership with their local Aboriginal community can be accessed through NESA’s [The Journey’s Just Begun](https://ab-ed.nesa.nsw.edu.au/go/partnerships/journey) professional learning package.

To support the development of safe and respectful partnerships with local Aboriginal Community members, it is recommended that teachers review [Communicating Positively: A Guide to Appropriate Aboriginal Terminology](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal/Pages/policies-and-documents.aspx).

## ****Acknowledging ownership of cultural knowledges****

When engaging with Aboriginal community members to share cultural knowledges, languages, histories and personal experiences, it is important to acknowledge that the community will govern how the knowledge is shared, recorded and duplicated for future use.

Considerations include:

* **Recording cultural knowledge** – it is important to have a conversation prior to working with students, especially if the session is recorded or students will be expected to take notes and/or reproduce knowledge.
* **Duplication of knowledge or artworks** – cultural protocols in some communities will mean that knowledge (including artworks) cannot be duplicated. Ask the Aboriginal Community member working with your school for advice.
* **Cultural knowledge and protocols are always localised** – cultural knowledge (histories, language and stories) and protocols are not the same from one community to the next. Each language group and kinship group will have different perceptions on sharing and recording of knowledge and where this knowledge can be shared.
* **Cultural knowledge is not free** – when Elders or community members work in partnership with a school, they will need to be offered recompense for their time (for example, travel costs, cost of materials, fee for service).
* **Men’s and Women’s Business** – some cultural knowledge and places are only for men or women and cannot be shared with the opposite sex. This is particularly important when engaging students in On-Country learning or completing field work.

Each of these considerations can be addressed through developing a deeper understanding of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights, by reviewing Terry Janke’s [Our Culture: Our Future](https://www.terrijanke.com.au/our-culture-our-future).