Australians Together

Interactive Toolkit
Introduction

This Interactive Toolkit explores 5 key ideas that provide a framework for teachers to plan and teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. You’ll find first-hand stories about how events of the past continue to have impact today and where we can go from here.

Watch the videos for an introduction to the 5 key ideas. Read through this Toolkit and explore the content in more depth. To help you further we’ve included references and links to the source information.

The 5 key ideas that form the Australians Together Learning Framework are:

1. **The Wound** explores the ongoing negative effects of colonisation;
2. **Our History** tells stories that many Australians have never heard;
3. **Why Me?** examines why this is relevant to every Australian;
4. **Our Cultures** focuses on the importance of identity for all people; and
5. **My Response** gives some guidelines for how to respond respectfully.

This Toolkit can be used...

...to encourage classroom or group discussions
...to support independent research as part of a unit of inquiry
...as a follow-up to the Australians Together Professional Learning workshops
...to share key facts and information with colleagues
...for researching specific topics.

Note: Our Professional Learning tools specifically address the Australian Curriculum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum priority and AITSL Teacher Standard 2.4.

- [Watch the 5 key ideas intro video](#)
- [Watch The Wound video](#)
- [Watch Our History video](#)
- [Watch Why Me? video](#)
- [Watch Our Cultures video](#)
- [Watch My Response video](#)
- [Watch Summary video](#)
5 key ideas for all Australians
## 5 Key Ideas to Inform Teachers and Students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives

### Goal: Teachers and Students Will:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Wound</th>
<th>Our History</th>
<th>Why Me?</th>
<th>Our Cultures</th>
<th>My Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>empathise with the reason why many Indigenous people experience injustice and disadvantage;</td>
<td>acknowledge how our shared past continues to have an impact on our present context;</td>
<td>appreciate the interconnectedness of Australians and take personal responsibility for attitudes and behaviours towards Indigenous people and culture;</td>
<td>value and respect Indigenous people through an understanding of the importance of culture;</td>
<td>actively respond in respectful and meaningful ways in both personal and professional lives;</td>
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<td>understand that a lack of awareness and acts of injustice lead to pain and disadvantage; and</td>
<td>understand that history continues to have an impact in the present; and</td>
<td>understand that actions derive from worldview and attitudes; and</td>
<td>understand that knowledge of personal identity and culture will build empathy with others; and</td>
<td>understand that respectful relationships and connections reduce Indigenous injustice and disadvantage; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why are many Indigenous Australians experiencing disadvantage and injustice?</td>
<td>Why are many Indigenous Australians experiencing disadvantage and injustice?</td>
<td>What does this have to do with me?</td>
<td>Why are culture and identity important?</td>
<td>How can I respond respectfully and meaningfully?</td>
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**AUSTRALIANS TOGETHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

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### Australians Together Knowledge Overview

#### Knowledge to Help Teachers and Students Answer Essential Questions

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K1.1 There is a wound in our nation which started at colonisation, and continues today.</td>
<td>K2.1 Colonisation deeply affects us today.</td>
<td>K3.1 As Australians, we're all interconnected.</td>
<td>K4.1 We need to understand the importance of culture if we're to make better relationships and connections.</td>
<td>K5.1 There is no one way to respond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1.2 There is a disparity that is not right. Many Indigenous people today face injustice and disadvantage.</td>
<td>K2.2 We should not repeat the mistakes of the past by remaining ignorant.</td>
<td>K3.2 There is a dominant culture in Australia. The dominant Australian culture presents a shared identity but minorities may not experience this.</td>
<td>K4.2 There are common elements in all cultures.</td>
<td>K5.2 If we take action we can make a difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1.3 The past continues to affect us. Events, policies and behaviours of our shared history all continue to contribute to the current injustice and disadvantage suffered by many Indigenous people.</td>
<td>K2.3 Colonisation interrupted and disconnected Indigenous ways of life and therefore culture. Learning about our past history and the attitudes and behaviours brings empathy.</td>
<td>K3.3 There is a connection between what we believe about other people and our actions.</td>
<td>K4.3 Understanding Indigenous culture breaks down stereotypes and myths that are at the root of misunderstanding.</td>
<td>K5.3 The Australians Together approach will help you to respond respectfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1.4 Cultural awareness helps us understand the wound better.</td>
<td>K2.4 Acknowledgment of our shared history and the pain and disadvantage caused, gives hope for the future.</td>
<td>K3.4 Our identity is expressed through culture.</td>
<td>K5.4 Starting locally is often an effective response.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K1.5 Stereotypes and identity issues need to be addressed. Indigenous Australians are not defined by the stereotypes many people hold.</td>
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<tr>
<td>K1.6 The injustice experienced by Indigenous people is at odds with our National values. Many opportunities to celebrate Indigenous culture have been missed.</td>
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5 key ideas knowledge articles

Knowledge to support learning and curriculum planning
5 articles that provide deeper content knowledge and reference material.

The Wound • Our History • Why Me? • Our Cultures • My Response
1

The Wound

**Goal:**
Australians will understand and empathise with the reason why many Indigenous people experience injustice and disadvantage.

**Understanding:**
That lack of awareness and acts of injustice lead to pain and disadvantage.

**Essential question:**
Why are many Indigenous Australians experiencing disadvantage and injustice?
The Wound

K1.1 There’s a wound in our nation. It’s an injustice towards Indigenous Australians that began with colonisation and is ongoing today. Despite this injustice, many Indigenous people around Australia are thriving and proudly reviving, protecting and celebrating their Indigenous culture and identity. The wound however, is evident in the devastating statistics relating to Indigenous Australians across a range of life indicators. Discrimination and prejudice towards Indigenous Australians seems hard wired into our society’s very DNA. So how did it start and what can we do about it?

Something’s not right

K1.2 Are you aware that Australia enjoys the second highest quality of life ranking in the world?1 Yet when we compare Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians on a range of life indicators, there’s a devastating disparity. These statistics reveal something deeply wrong in our nation.

But why?

Why is there a statistical gap between the wellbeing and outcomes enjoyed by non-Indigenous people compared to Indigenous people? The answer goes back to the beginning of colonisation and its effects on Indigenous people ever since.

Lack of understanding, value and respect

The disparity we see today is a result of the lingering injustices of colonisation - dispossession, exploitation and violence that started at first contact. This unjust behaviour towards Indigenous people was rationalised by a colonial system that didn’t understand, respect or value Indigenous Australians. In the worst cases, people of influence refused to acknowledge Indigenous Australians as human in order to justify extraordinary acts of oppression and cruelty towards Aboriginal people.2 This history is an uncomfortable truth for many Australians. Others remain ignorant of these facts. It has resulted in a fractured relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, a relationship that remains unresolved today.3

NOTE 1 This history is an uncomfortable truth for many Australians. Others remain ignorant of these facts. It has resulted in a fractured relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, a relationship that remains unresolved today.

NOTE 2

SUICIDE RATE
2X HIGHER

YOUTH INCARCERATION
26X HIGHER

HOMELESSNESS APPROX.
14X HIGHER

UNEMPLOYMENT APPROX.
5X HIGHER

LIFE EXPECTANCY APPROX.
10YRS LESS

AUSTRALIANS TOGETHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
The Wound

Historical injustice

Colonial attitudes and actions set in motion a series of events that continue to impact Indigenous Australians today, despite Indigenous people’s efforts to resist and overcome the effects of colonisation. The social and economic impact of invasion, dispossession, marginalisation and control of Indigenous people has accumulated across generations, and has been amplified by policies and practices that have systematically disadvantaged Indigenous people. In many instances, this has resulted in the transmission of poverty, poor health and other forms of disadvantage from generation to generation.

Australia is the only Commonwealth nation where a treaty doesn’t exist between the colonisers and Indigenous people. The absence of a treaty is at the very heart of the historical injustice in Australia. The continued lack of treaty with Indigenous Australians shows an ongoing denial of the prior occupation and dispossession of Indigenous people in Australia and a general disregard for a dispossessed people. It’s a reminder that disrespectful colonial attitudes still haven’t been addressed.

What’s institutional injustice?

Institutional injustice is when government policies marginalise some people. This clearly occurred at the beginning of colonisation when Indigenous people were “legally” dispossessed and exploited. However, the formal structures and institutions of the time set up a legacy of discrimination against Indigenous people. This is now played out in the current social statistics such as incarceration rates, NAPLAN* results and employment rates.

Some improvements have been made with the granting of certain rights in the 1960’s and recognition of Native Title in 1993. However, these changes haven’t been enough to reverse the negative impact past policies continue to have on Indigenous Australians.

Culture, identity and belonging

To understand the full extent of the challenges Indigenous people face today, it’s vital to understand how the impact of colonisation on Indigenous culture has affected people. This is because Indigenous identity is inextricably linked to land and family. When Indigenous people were dispossessed of their land, they were dispossessed of a major part of their identity. The enormous impact of this was heightened when people were also separated from their families. This is a major underlying cause of many challenges Indigenous people face.

*National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy
The Wound

Social injustice

Indigenous Australians experience some of the worst discrimination in the country. This includes unfair and negative stereotypes such as being lazy, violent and alcoholic. Many Australians also presume that ‘real’ Indigenous people only live in the desert, when in fact a third of all Indigenous Australians live in major cities. Instead of simply accepting what the media and society say, it’s important to listen to Indigenous people share about their identity as Indigenous Australians and what this means for them personally. Whilst being Indigenous means different things to different people, for many Indigenous people, it’s about being connected to Country, community and culture. It has nothing to do with many of the myths and stereotypes about Indigenous Australians which perpetuate discrimination.

A shared wound, a shared solution

The colonial system brutalised many of the early British convicts who were removed from their land and families and subject to control, severe punishment, forced labour, abuse and harsh living conditions. However, since that time, many non-Indigenous Australians have accumulated significant socio-economic advantages as a result of colonisation, and these benefits have come at enormous cost to Indigenous people.

The injustice experienced by Indigenous people is at odds with our national values, the things that make us proud to be Australian. It affects everyone living on this land. Because of intolerance, mainstream Australian culture has missed many opportunities to inherit aspects of rich Indigenous cultures and deep knowledge of the land we all live on.

Despite our disturbing history, there’s significant good will in Australia. While considerable effort has been made to set things right, many attempts to address injustice and disadvantage are simply not working. That’s why Australians Together focuses on respectful relationships and connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We’re passionate about addressing the wound in our nation by changing the way we understand one another. We know that coming together respectfully has the power to change everything, to address the wound in our nation and create a better shared future for all Australians.
References


Notes

NOTE 1. In his book, One Blood, John Harris cites historical examples of colonists' attitudes toward Aboriginal people, including one of the jurors in the trial of seven settlers for the massacre of Aboriginal men, women and children at Myall Creek in 1838: “I look on the blacks as a set of monkeys, and the earlier they are exterminated from the face of the earth the better. I would never consent to hang a white man for a black one. I knew well (the settlers) were guilty of the murder, but I for one would never see a white man suffer for shooting a black.” Harris, J. 2013, pg. 27, One Blood (electronic resource): Two hundred years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity, Concilia LTD, Brentford Square.


Goal: Australians will understand and acknowledge how our shared past continues to have an impact on our present context.

Understanding: That history continues to have an impact in the present.

Essential question: How does our history continue to affect us today?
Can’t they just get over it?

Have you heard someone ask, “Why can’t Indigenous people just get over it? After all, it happened ages ago.”

On the surface this might seem like a fair question, prompted by a genuine desire to see all Australians prosper together. The reason why many Indigenous people can’t simply get over the past is because the negative effects of colonisation are still having an impact on Indigenous people every day, often in drastic ways. You don’t have to look far to find evidence of this.

These statistics are a result of the lingering injustices of colonisation - dispossession, displacement, exploitation and violence that started at first contact. This behaviour towards Indigenous people was justified by the British colonial system that didn’t understand, respect or value Indigenous Australians. In the worst cases, people of influence refused to acknowledge Indigenous Australians as human in order to justify extraordinary acts of cruelty towards Aboriginal people. These 18th Century colonial attitudes set in motion events and policies and established systems and institutions that continue to have an impact on Indigenous people today, despite Indigenous people’s determined efforts to resist and overcome this adversity.

What’s the connection between the past and the present?

The social and economic impact of invasion and control of Indigenous people has accumulated across generations. It was amplified by policies and practices that have systematically disadvantaged Indigenous people. In many instances, this has resulted in the transmission of trauma, poverty and other forms of disadvantage from generation to generation. The disadvantage we see today is often the long term effect of lack of opportunities in previous generations, including poor nutrition and inadequate education and health care.

Watch Uncle Graham Paulson talk about the effects of colonisation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Terra nullius (1770 - 1992)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Invasion without treaty (1788 - present)</strong></th>
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| The premise of British colonisation was *terra nullius*, a legal term which claimed the land (Australia) belonged to no one. This blatantly denied the existence of Indigenous Australians as human beings.  

*Terra nullius* essentially asserted that Indigenous people were non-human. This premise formed the basis of the relationship between Indigenous people and the nation state from its very inception. This problematic relationship has never been fully resolved, even in light of the Mabo decision and resulting Native Title. |
| Colonial powers did not enter into negotiations with Indigenous people about the taking of their lands.  

The lack of treaty in Australia goes to the very heart of the wound in our nation. Many Indigenous people continue to feel the pain of occupation, dispossession and lack of recognition. The absence of a treaty suggests an ongoing denial of the existence, prior occupation and dispossession of Indigenous people in Australia. It also highlights a lack of engagement and relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The lack of treaty or acknowledgement of invasion is one of the key topics in discussions about Constitutional Recognition in 2017.  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Resistance wars (1788 - 1930s)</strong></th>
<th><strong>TODAY</strong></th>
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</table>
| Thousands of Indigenous people fought colonisers for their homelands, families and way of life. However, these battles have been omitted from Australia's war commemoration history.  

The omission of resistance wars from history has left most Australians without knowledge of their own history. It represents Indigenous people as passive - implying Indigenous people didn't fight for their country and reinforcing derogatory stereotyping of Indigenous people as lazy and incompetent.  

Through the denial of resistance wars, Aboriginal Australians haven't even been "conceded the dignity due to worthy opponents".  

In contrast, New Zealand's Maori people are a source of national pride, famed as warriors and formally recognised in their nation's history through the "Maori Wars". |
|  | Terra nullius essentially asserted that Indigenous people were non-human. This premise formed the basis of the relationship between Indigenous people and the nation state from its very inception. This problematic relationship has never been fully resolved, even in light of the Mabo decision and resulting Native Title. |

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</table>
| **Resistance wars (1788 - 1930s) cont.** | The denial of the resistance wars in Australia continues to affect both Indigenous Australians’ perception of themselves and the distorted perception many Australians have of our history as a peaceful settlement to be celebrated.

- Watch historian John Harris talk about the legacy of the missions and reserves.

| **Massacres (1780s - 1920s)** | The devastation of culture, families and people groups as a result of massacres is still felt today. In many cases, these events resulted in loss of cultural knowledge as entire generations or family groups were murdered. This in turn led to a crisis of identity and belonging for many Indigenous people which continues to impact people in the present. The truth about massacres has been left out of our national history and many Australians are shocked when they come to realise what really happened in towns and places where they now live. The lack of acknowledgement of these events invalidates the experiences and suffering of many Indigenous people and is an ongoing source of pain.

K2.3 Populations were devastated and Indigenous people were dehumanised by the colonisers in order to justify the horrific acts against them.\(^5\)\(^6\)\(^7\)

| **Missions and reserves (early 1800s - present)** | Today, many Indigenous people still experience the effects of the missions and reserves. Some are living with the trauma of growing up in these often abusive environments.\(^1\) Others have been displaced from land and family as a result of the reserve system. Other impacts include intergenerational transmission of poverty as a long term result of poor nutrition, inadequate education and health care, few assets or a lack of opportunities for previous generations living on missions and reserves.

K2.3 Legislation and state policies served to exclude Indigenous people from participation as citizens through their removal from their homes to reserves, missions and cattle stations where their everyday lives were lived under regimes of surveillance control and lack of liberty as equal citizens.\(^1\)\(^1\)
Exemption Certificates (1940s - 1960s)

From the 1940s, in most parts of Australia, the state governments issued thousands of exemption certificates. They gave their Indigenous recipients citizenship rights that they otherwise didn't possess, yet which were enjoyed by the non-Indigenous majority of Australian society. They included 'privileges' such as being allowed to vote, attend school, enter hotels and be exempted from the restrictions of state Aboriginal protection laws.

Continued on next page.

The policies of child removal left a legacy of trauma and loss that continues to affect Indigenous communities, families and individuals. Research shows that people who experience trauma are more likely to engage in self-destructive behaviours, develop life-style diseases and enter and remain in the criminal justice system. In fact, the high rates of poor physical health, mental health problems, addiction, incarceration, domestic violence, self harm and suicide in Indigenous communities are directly linked to experiences of trauma.

The removal of several generations of children also severely disrupted Indigenous culture, and consequently much cultural knowledge was unable to passed on.

Many members of the Stolen Generations never experienced living in a healthy family situation, and never learned parenting skills. In some instances, this has resulted in generations of children raised in state care.

Exemption certificates contributed to the sense of being a second-rate member of society, as well as the degradation of cultural knowledge and a weakening of Indigenous identity.

Watch Aunty Iris talk about losing home

Watch Aunty Ruth talk about being seperated from family

Watch Aunty Iris talk about losing home

Watch Aunty Ruth talk about being seperated from family

K2.3

Stolen Generations (1910-1970)

The forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families was part of the policy of Assimilation. The generations of children removed became known as the Stolen Generations.

Assimilation was based on the assumption of black inferiority and white superiority, which proposed that Indigenous people should be allowed to 'die out' through a process of natural elimination, or, where possible, should be assimilated into the white community.

Children taken from their parents were taught to reject their Indigenous heritage, and forced to adopt white culture. Their names were often changed, and they were forbidden to speak their traditional languages. Some children were adopted by white families, and many were placed in institutions where abuse and neglect were common.

The policies of child removal left a legacy of trauma and loss that continues to affect Indigenous communities, families and individuals. Research shows that people who experience trauma are more likely to engage in self-destructive behaviours, develop life-style diseases and enter and remain in the criminal justice system. In fact, the high rates of poor physical health, mental health problems, addiction, incarceration, domestic violence, self harm and suicide in Indigenous communities are directly linked to experiences of trauma.

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Exemption Certificates (1940s - 1960s) cont.

However, applicants had to agree to abandon association with the Indigenous community, give up their Indigenous culture including connections with Country and end contact with their Indigenous kinship, except for their closest family.

Exemption certificates forced many Indigenous people to sacrifice their Indigenous identity in order to obtain a very basic level of freedom enjoyed by other Australian citizens. People with exemption certificates weren’t allowed to enter or stay on Aboriginal reserves and stations, even if they were visiting relatives.

This interfered with Indigenous family life. The need to show certificates to police officers in order to be permitted to exist in public spaces was also a source of humiliation and shame.22, 23

Exploited labour (1840s - 1970s)

Many Indigenous people were exploited for their labour on missions, reserves, cattle stations and as domestic helpers in non-Indigenous homes. Many Indigenous Australians have never been paid wages earned over decades of hard labour.24

Exemption certificates were related to various policies that regulated and controlled Indigenous people and denied Indigenous Australians full rights and freedoms. These policies have contributed to a legacy of mistrust of authorities in many Indigenous families and communities today.

The non-payment of wages earned has contributed to the transmission of disadvantage across generations and mistrust of authority amongst many Indigenous people.

Watch Aunty Iris talk about stolen wages


Social exclusion (1880s - 1960s)

Since the arrival of the British in the eighteenth century, Indigenous people have been marginalised in all aspects of life. Being denied participation in the mainstream social system meant being denied the rights and privileges of that system. Up until the 1960’s, Indigenous people were denied access to certain public spaces and were excluded from the national census. Over generations, people were also denied access to healthcare, education and employment on the basis of their race.

Institutionalised discrimination (1880s - present)

Institutional discrimination happens when a society’s institutions discriminate against a group of people, often through unequal bias or exclusion. This clearly occurred at the beginning of colonisation when Indigenous people were “legally” dispossessed and exploited. However, the formal structures and institutions of the time set up a legacy of discrimination against Indigenous people. For example, our education, legal and political systems are based on non-Indigenous ways of knowing and operating (individualism, capitalism, private property, the nuclear family etc.) which often fail to acknowledge Indigenous value systems.

The ongoing impact of policies and practices that have systematically disadvantaged Indigenous people is reflected today in statistics relating to incarceration rates, health, education and politics. While some improvements have been made (such as the 1967 Referendum and recognition of Native Title) these structures haven’t changed enough to balance or reverse the socio-economic impact of colonisation and past government policies and practices on Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous Australians remain amongst the most socially excluded people in Australia.

Evidence of Indigenous social exclusion includes current high rates of poverty, incarceration, unemployment, homelessness, poor health and lack of education outcomes.

Past experience of systemic discrimination and prejudice has also resulted in widespread mistrust, anger and resentment towards authorities amongst Indigenous people.

Watch this video about segregation

Watch this clip on self-determination
Institutionalised discrimination (1880s - present) cont.

There are many examples of how systems established under colonialism continue to marginalise Indigenous people. For instance, until recently, land law in Australia was founded on the legal fiction of terra nullius (that Australia was land belonging to no-one at the time of British arrival). In 2018, the Constitution, our nation’s founding document, contains race powers (power to discriminate based on race) and fails to acknowledge the prior occupation and dispossession of Indigenous people.27

Watch this video about the Mabo decision

Undermining law, society, culture and belief systems

From the earliest days, European contact undermined Indigenous laws, society, culture and beliefs.28

Despite Indigenous people’s efforts to maintain and revive culture in the face of colonisation, there’s no denying that colonisation has deeply impacted Indigenous cultures, societies and languages across Australia. This has had a strong impact on people’s sense of identity and belonging - which bring meaning to a person’s existence. Cultural disconnection and the weakening of identity is the underlying cause of many of the struggles Indigenous people are dealing with today.
Intergenerational Trauma

Indigenous people who haven’t directly experienced the events or policies of our history are often still impacted by the legacy left behind. Trauma caused by colonisation, including violence and loss of culture and land, as well as policies such as the forced removal of children, is often passed from generation to generation in families and communities, with devastating effects. It’s important to view the challenges faced by many Indigenous communities in the context of this history.

How far back are we talking?

Many people may not realise just how recent much of this history is. In fact, there are people alive today who:

› were forcibly removed from their parents under government policy
› had their children taken away
› were not allowed in towns after 6:00pm
› were not allowed to be in public areas without permission
› were barred from schools and hospitals
› were forced to work in the homes of non-Indigenous people and had their earnings permanently withheld by the government

What are we really asking when we say, “Can’t they just get over it?”

When Indigenous people are asked to ‘get over it’ - it’s not just the physical violence of the frontier wars or even the stolen land or children we’re asking people to move on from. It’s the current bias in our society that prevents Indigenous people from achieving the quality of life that would otherwise be possible. It’s evident in the skyrocketing incarceration rates, devastatingly high suicide rates, unacceptable mortality gap and everyday discrimination. We’re still a society where 1 in 5 people openly admit to having racist attitudes towards Indigenous people.29
Our History

Moving on together

Many of us are aware that this disadvantage and discrimination exists in Australia. But not all of us understand that it’s a direct result of our nation’s history of colonisation:

“Dispossession of land, population displacement, prejudice in everyday life and outright discrimination have, over the subsequent generations, resulted in Indigenous Australians being disadvantaged to the extreme and denied the chance to share in the benefits of one of the wealthiest nations in the world.”  

If we truly want to move forward together and be part of a better country, it’s essential that we openly acknowledge our history and validate the pain it’s caused. This means recognising that:

› the land we live on, and prosper from was previously inhabited by Indigenous people, and their displacement wasn’t founded on mutual agreement

› the social and economic impacts of invasion, dispossession, marginalisation and control of Indigenous people have accumulated across generations

› this impact has been amplified by policies and practices that have systematically disadvantaged Indigenous people

› in many instances, this has resulted in the transmission of poverty, poor health and other forms of disadvantage from generation to generation

› Indigenous people have courageously resisted and sought to overcome adversity generation after generation after generation

Watch the Paul Keating 1992 Redfern speech

Watch the Kevin Rudd 2008 Apology speech

This mutual recognition and understanding of our shared history is a foundation from which we can hope to move forward together.
Our History: References


2. Harris, J. 2013, pg. 27, One Blood (electronic resource): Two hundred years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity, Concilia LTD, Brentford Square


6. Harris, J. 2013, One Blood (electronic resource): Two hundred years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity, Concilia LTD, Brentford Square, pg. 24 - 28


Accessed on 17/01/18

See also Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, http://www.kinchelaboyshome.org.au/story/ Accessed on 17/01/18

Accessed on 17/01/18

Accessed on 17/01/18

Accessed on 17/01/18


22. Wickes, J. 2010, A Study of the ‘lived experience’ of Citizenship amongst Exempted Aboriginal People in regional Queensland, with a focus on the South Burnett region, (online), Available at: http://research.usc.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/usc-6544/SOURCE2 Accessed on 17/01/18

23. National Museum of Australia, Programmed to be White (online), Available at: http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/from_little_things_big_things_grow/behind_the_scenes/programmed_to_be_white Accessed on 17/01/18


25. Moreton-Robinson, A. 2017, Citizenship, Exclusion and the Denial of Indigenous Sovereign Rights, ABC (online), Available at: http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2017/05/30/4677483.htm Accessed on 02/01/18


Goal: Australians will understand our interconnectedness and take personal responsibility for their attitudes and behaviours towards Indigenous people and culture.

Understanding: That there's a connection between our worldview, attitudes and behaviour.

Essential question: What does this have to do with me?
You’ve probably heard some statistics about Indigenous disadvantage in Australia. Maybe you’ve even heard personal stories of pain and injustice. You probably wish someone would do something about it. But at the end of the day, it’s just not your problem… or is it?

Right and wrong

There’s an injustice in our nation that originated with the beginning of British colonisation and is ongoing today. For over 200 years, this injustice has inflicted pain and suffering. It’s not just an issue for Indigenous people. It concerns every person living in Australia. It matters because it’s an issue of justice, of right and wrong. As human beings, this should concern us. The fact is, something’s wrong and you can be part of making it right.

We are all connected

We’re all connected by our shared government, economy and the land we live on. We’re connected by the TV programs that air on our networks, the songs that play on our radio stations, the sports we follow, the national public holidays we celebrate and our education system.

We’re also connected by the fact that as Australians we have a reputation for the second highest quality of life anywhere in the world.¹ We enjoy much of this prosperity today because of historic events that got us to this point. It’s a history of courage and perseverance… but also of violent dispossession, exploitation and abuse. In this way, our current lives are inextricably connected to the pain of the past and its present fallout - the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across every social indicator. It’s a situation at odds with our national values, the things that make us proud to be Australian. This is a challenge for all Australians whether we feel like we’re part of it or not.

What’s this got to do with me?

Australian society is increasingly multicultural and yet many people living in Australia are still connected by a common culture. People born into this mainstream culture are fortunate to have it reinforced on a daily basis - in the media, education system, legal system, English language and the faces of our parliament. This means a member of Australia’s mainstream culture can expect to feel comfortable, accepted and affirmed in most social situations. It might not seem like a big deal, but this is actually a huge advantage! It translates into other benefits - such as better chances of accessing education and employment and avoiding encounters with the criminal justice system.
Why Me?

No one’s fault

People born into mainstream culture didn’t ask for these advantages. In fact, most are not even aware of them! After all, being part of the mainstream doesn’t automatically mean we don’t experience other forms of hardship or disadvantage. But due to factors that we have no control over, we live in a society that structurally marginalises some people and holds them back, while allowing others a head start. The fact that our society operates in this way is no one’s fault today. We all inherited this system, which has been passed down from the beginning of colonisation.

Good people in a flawed system

Over 200 years, our society and systems (legal, education, political, health etc.) have evolved to be less blatantly discriminatory. In fact, modern Australia openly celebrates and promotes the multicultural nature of our society. These advancements are worth celebrating! But it’s also important to understand that discrimination isn’t just the result of overtly racist policies or actions. It’s possible to have a proudly multicultural society and yet retain systems and attitudes that subtly discriminate against minorities. Unfortunately, these systems are reinforced daily by the unconscious behaviour of decent, moral, well-intentioned people.

For example, when we believe the stereotypes promoted by the media or accept the mainstream version of history without considering another perspective, we reinforce a society that favours the mainstream Anglo culture and either ignores or actively excludes minority cultures.

This means the way we think and act in our everyday lives, from listening to the news and chatting with family to supermarket shopping, has a profound effect on others. It follows that our attitudes matter. Something as simple (and as challenging) as examining our own thoughts and attitudes can help make a difference to injustice in our nation.

Want to be part of the solution?

No one today is responsible for the pain resulting from our shared past. But the fact is that a grave injustice remains unresolved. The good news is that we all have the opportunity to become part of making things right. It starts with understanding that we’re all connected and recognising that we each have a part to play in creating a better future. Are you ready to consider your part in the story?

Watch Kyle and Shaun talk about working together
Why Me?: References


Our Cultures

Goal:
Australians will value and respect Indigenous people through an understanding of the importance of culture.

Understanding:
Indigenous culture helps build empathy with Indigenous people.

Essential question:
Why are culture and identity important?
We all have it

No matter who you are, we all have culture. Each person’s culture is important; it’s part of what makes us who we are.

So what’s culture?

Essentially, culture refers to a people’s way of life - their ideas, values, customs and social behaviour. Culture includes things like the way we celebrate weddings and conduct funerals, the food we like to eat, the way we dress and the music we like. Culture is passed down from generation to generation, and while cultural practices and beliefs change and evolve, many of the basic aspects remain the same. Even though we may dress differently from our grandparents and hold different religious or political beliefs, it’s likely there are elements of the way you live that can be traced back to them. These cultural elements have a strong influence on who we are, how we think about the world and how we operate in society.

Even me?

For some people, the idea that everyone has culture could be new. This is particularly true for people who are part of mainstream society. In this case, trying to identify your culture may be challenging at first because it’s so natural and normal it’s virtually invisible to us.

Sometimes it becomes clearer when you think about your culture in light of someone else’s. For example, consider how the holidays you celebrate, the types of food you eat, the clothing you wear and the way you approach events such as births, deaths and marriages are similar to, or different from, another culture.

What does this have to do with Indigenous culture?

Many Indigenous people in Australia have a unique view of the world that’s distinct from the mainstream. Land, family, law, ceremony and language are five key interconnected elements of Indigenous culture. For example, families are connected to the land through the kinship system, and this connection to land comes with specific roles and responsibilities which are enshrined in the law and observed through ceremony. In this way, the five elements combine to create a way of seeing and being in the world that’s distinctly Indigenous. Understanding how intricately interconnected these elements are, helps us understand the damage done when colonisation occurred. Being disconnected from culture can have a profound impact on a person’s sense of identity and belonging. Identity and belonging gives meaning and purpose to people’s lives. Understanding this will help us find appropriate ways to respond to the pain caused by colonisation.

Watch Bob’s story about cultural heritage
5 Stones Cultural Framework

5 INTERCONNECTING ELEMENTS TO HAVING ONE’S CULTURE

KINSHIP/FAMILY
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups have strong family values that extend well beyond the loyalties within a nuclear family. For example, people often use kinship terms that give every member of a society a ‘skin’ name so that everyone can relate to others as their ‘mother’, ‘grandfather’, ‘sister’, ‘nephew’, and so on, regardless of whether people belong to their immediate family or not.

LAND
Traditional groups are strongly connected to particular lands and waters, which provide the foundations of identity. Within the boundaries of this traditional country there will also be particular sites that have been rendered sacred by events in the ancestral past. ‘Country’ in this particular Aboriginal sense includes the animals and plants, along with lands and waters, all of which must be cared for by their traditional owners.

LAW
Traditional law applies across every area of life, governing relationships, ceremony, seasons of the year, flora and fauna, as well as punishments when the law is breached. Caring for country and caring for family are all covered by the law, and everything flourishes when the law is properly kept.

LANGUAGE
In traditional societies, languages were linked directly to their country, and there was no common language across the hundreds of the First Nations. People might have had some understanding of their neighbours’ languages, but generally it was a person’s own mother tongue that expressed identity within their own country. In particular, caring for country through ceremony required the maintenance of the local language.

CEREMONY
There are many different kinds of ceremonies in traditional culture, relating for example to gender-specific initiations, caring for country through the performance of sacred songs and practices, communal celebration, protection of sacred things in secret rites, and reconciliation ceremonies. These activities bind people together in a range of different ways, reinforcing the networks of responsibility within the community. When ceremonies aren’t carefully maintained, the country suffers and its people become disorientated.

Based on Paulson, G & Brett, M. 2013. Five Smooth Stones: Reading the Bible through Aboriginal Eyes (Abridged version of a paper to be published in Colloquium: The Australians and New Zealand Theological review, November 2013).
Difference and similarity

Although there’s diversity amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures, land, family, law, ceremony and language actually play a crucial role in shaping all our lives, regardless of our culture or heritage. Identifying what this looks like in our own life can help us develop empathy with others. For example, consider how your life is shaped by the language you speak, your own family traditions, the area where you live and how you approach significant life events such as weddings and funerals. As we grow in empathy and understanding, we begin to relate better to one another.

How will empathy and understanding make a difference?

To truly relate to another person, it’s useful to understand some things about their culture. This means that for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to come together for a better future, it’s important for all Australians to learn about Indigenous culture, as well as becoming more aware of our own. Learning about Indigenous culture, valuing and celebrating it in our mainstream society, is one way we can begin to address the challenges we see today. As we learn about Indigenous culture, we can begin to relate to each other better, recognise the cultural history of this land and value the ongoing, rich cultural legacy of this place we call home.

› As a nation, our identity and character can be strengthened by a respectful appreciation of the various expressions of Indigenous culture. As we celebrate, value and take pride in Indigenous culture, we’ll be supporting and strengthening Indigenous peoples’ sense of value in the process.

› Genuinely seeking to understand Indigenous culture can help dispel stereotypes and myths about Indigenous people that result from misunderstanding, which serves to perpetuate disadvantage and discrimination.

› As individuals, there’s much we can learn from each other’s culture. For example, if we open ourselves to humbly learning about a different worldview, we can grow in our understanding of ourselves and be enriched by another way of thinking about the world.

Watch Mark’s Story

Download identity and culture teaching resources and activity sheets:

Activity 1 Identity worksheet (pdf)
Activity 1 Identity & Culture lesson plan (pdf)
Activity 1 Cultural Framework (pdf)
Our Cultures

Learn more about culture

› Listen to Indigenous people from across the continent share about the importance of land  Watch

› Find out about kinship systems and their continued importance for many Indigenous people  Read article

› Understand Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country and why these practices are so important  Read article

› Discover more about Indigenous spirituality  Read article
Goal: Australians will actively respond in respectful and meaningful ways in their personal and professional lives.

Understanding: That respectful relationships and connections reduce Indigenous injustice and disadvantage.

Essential question: How can I respond respectfully and meaningfully?
A better future for all Australians is possible, but to get there we each need to play our part to respond to the wound in our nation (see pg6). When we hear statistics about Indigenous disadvantage and listen to people’s stories of pain and injustice, most of us have a natural desire to do something, to make things right. But many of us don’t know how! There’s actually quite a lot you can do to make a difference. Responding will look different for different people. Consider your response to the lingering injustice in our nation and start playing your part in a better future today.

What can I do?

Most of us think that ‘doing something’ to address Indigenous injustice and disadvantage should look a certain way, like building schools, giving money or even travelling to remote communities. While these things have their place, we invite you to think outside the box...

Visiting a remote Indigenous community might be the right thing for one person, but it’s not realistic for everyone. In fact, it wouldn’t be helpful for everyone to respond that way! Indigenous people make up less than 3% of the Australian population, so close personal relationships with Indigenous Australians just aren’t possible for every non-Indigenous person.

Togetherness

For everyone, responding is about finding ways to live out togetherness. This might look like a face-to-face relationship, but it could also be about developing a sense of togetherness. At its most basic, togetherness means recognising our connectedness, understanding other’s reality, validating others’ concerns and experiences and recognising that our freedoms (or lack thereof) are interlinked. We believe a sense of connection and togetherness is the first step to addressing the wound in our nation and overcoming the lingering injustices of colonisation.
My Response

How do I respond?

The way you respond will depend on things like your interests, location and influence; personally and professionally. Your response will be whatever feels right for you. It may be searching for more knowledge, sharing conversations with family and friends, attending a cultural event or becoming involved in advocacy.

Why should I listen and learn?

A response as simple as listening and learning can make a real difference. In fact, one of the most powerful ways you can make a difference is increasing your awareness and understanding - about our shared history, Indigenous culture, the importance of treaty, constitutional recognition, land rights and other justice matters.

When you take it upon yourself to listen and learn, you ease pressure on Indigenous people who currently bear the burden of increasing awareness amongst non-Indigenous Australians. Taking time to listen and learn about history and culture can also provide a crucial foundation to begin to build respectful relationships when the opportunity arises.

Although it might not seem like much in light of the challenges, awareness in and of itself can be incredibly powerful, particularly if you share your learning with others. A change in attitudes and behaviours is what’s important.

Watch this video about starting where you live
Getting active

Finding ways to actively apply your awareness through acknowledging and valuing Indigenous people, culture and history is an important part of responding. Some suggestions include:

- Incorporating Acknowledgement of Country into emails, websites and printed materials. Find out why and how
- Recognising Indigenous events in your personal and professional calendars (resource coming soon)
- Recognising significant cultural sites locally and nationally
- Learning about the cultural history of where you live

Still unsure where or how to start?

We recommend you start locally. Most local Councils have information about Indigenous people who lived in, and continue to have connections with, the area, as well as local events and significant sites. Visiting a local gallery, museum or Indigenous-led event will help you see your direct connection to a shared story, both historically and today. Starting locally also tends to be easier and less costly, with greater potential for building long-term relationships. Engaging locally demonstrates respect for Indigenous people in your community.

If you seek to engage with an Indigenous leader or community, be aware that there’s a lot of pressure put on Indigenous people to engage with non-Indigenous communities on their terms. For example, Indigenous people are often requested to do a Welcome to Country at non-Indigenous events. The one-sided nature of this engagement can become draining for Indigenous people.

Before you invite Indigenous people to participate in your events, we recommend that you take the opportunity to support public Indigenous events. If you seek to build genuine and authentic relationships with Indigenous people in your community, your journey to creating respectful responses will have begun.
What is the Australians Together approach?

The Australians Together Approach is designed to help develop and maintain respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The Australians Together Approach advocates:

1. **Valuing relationships:** Meaningful solutions are possible when people put relationships first.

2. **Working in partnerships:** Working in genuine partnerships can create lasting change.

3. **Reflecting on self:** People understand others better when they are self-aware.

4. **Committing long term:** Respectful relationships and healthy partnerships are possible when people are focussed on long term connections rather than short-term outcomes.

5. **Reimagining solutions:** Coming together makes it possible for people to build better solutions for the future.

Start today

However you choose to respond, we recommend you approach it as an ongoing process, not a once-off experience. With every step you take in your journey you’ll be making a difference in our nation.

The following are examples of how the Australians Together approach has worked in schools:

- [Watch this primary school story](#)
- [Watch this middle school story](#)
- [Watch this senior school story](#)
For Professional Learning purposes, Australians Together has developed a Curriculum Plan and Educational Project Plan based on the Understanding by Design Professional Development module. If you wish to use these documents to assist with your planning, they are available to you via our website or you can go to the following link for an editable word version.

Download Curriculum Plan Word file

Download Project Plan Word file