

## Incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander water perspectives

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have a rich cultural connection to their waterways and seas. This sense of identity can be explored in this unit. Local community elders can be invited to share their stories—particularly those relating to water.

For ideas about how to develop partnerships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities download the [Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools](#) document produced by the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET). It includes information and additional links to assist with developing protocols for engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. Other resources can be found on the [DET Indigenous portal](#) including more general [protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people](#).

The [Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority](#) also provides useful information about [working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guest speakers](#).

### Preparatory to year 8

In the **Shared perspectives guest speaker** activity, students learn from local elders about how Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people value, use and manage their water.

### Preparatory to year 5

#### Dreaming stories

Dreaming stories were used to pass on important knowledge about what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples believe and how they should live. They provide an insight into their cultural views about the value of water and how it should be managed.

#### Tiddalick: The frog who caused a flood

Read 'Tiddalick: The frog who caused a flood' by Robert Rosenfeldt, an adaptation of an Aboriginal Dreaming legend about a thirsty frog that drank up all the rivers and billabongs in the land (Puffin Books). The other animals had to find a way to get the water back.

Explain how Dreaming stories are used to pass on knowledge. Ask students to think about all the animals in the story. What did the animals need water for? How did the animals feel when there was no water? How would you feel if you didn't have any water?

Optional: Show the [Tiddalick the frog](#) animation.

[The Rainbow Serpent](#) web page briefly describes the link between the Rainbow Serpent Dreaming stories and water for many Aboriginal people.

#### Our special water connections

Storybooks can also convey the close connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and water.

[You and me, Murrawee](#) by Kerri Hashmi: This book and video [6:26] describes a day in the life of an Aboriginal girl living traditionally near the Murray River in South Australia compared with a European girl's experiences in the same place. (Penquin Books)



'Our Island', by the children of Gununa with Alison Lester and Elizabeth Honey, was written and illustrated by the students of Mornington Island and shows the special connection to their sea and land. The [Our Island video](#) [6:23] explains how the book was created. (Penguin Books)

Students can explore how Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people lived in their area—both past and present. They can think about the water places that are special to them and create text and illustrations that tell their own story.

## Years 6 and 7

### Special places

Your local waterway or beach can be a special place for many people. Students consider how local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people view these special places using [Uncle Ernie's Framework](#). This holistic approach develops students' thinking skills, particularly their systems thinking skills. Uncle Ernie's Framework is described in the My Land, My Tracks book and some online videos. Uncle Ernie Grant briefly describes [The indigenous ways of knowing and being](#) [3:29]. Louise Alexander explains how students can use this Aboriginal perspective to write text in the [Uncle Ernie's Framework](#) video presentation [8:08]. Note that this video was made in 2008 and can be difficult to hear.

### How do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples use water?

Discuss how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples used water before European settlement. Ask students to suggest how Indigenous people would have found water in areas where it is scarce. How would they have carried it from place to place?

Ask students to research Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' water management and record their findings in their student journal:

- a) How did Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people find water in places where it was scarce?
- b) What different types of technologies did Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use to carry water in different parts of Australia? What is it made of? How is it made? Where was it used?
- c) How does pre-European Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's use of water compare with the way that water is now supplied to towns and cities?
- d) What water management issues are significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities today?

Here are some resources to get students started:

- How did Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples manage their water resources?
- How did Aboriginal peoples manage their water resources?
- Water stories from Torres Strait – Dauan and Saibai Islands
- [Through our Eyes - Finding water in an arid environment with Badger Bates](#) [5:00]: This video explains how Aboriginal people found and carried water in far western New South Wales.
- [Through our Eyes - Welcome to Mutawintji with Mark Sutton](#) [8:30]: This video explains the importance of permanent water sites to Aboriginal people in far western New South Wales and how this area is now managed to preserve traditional values.
- [Aboriginal water values and management in northern Australia](#) [14:16]: This video explains the value of traditional practices such as collecting bush tucker in rivers, creeks and billabongs as the seasons change. It also discusses the importance of incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in water management planning for the communities in the Daly River area in the Northern Territory.