



Caring for Country

In 2020 we invite schools to be inspired by and engage with this year's Schools Reconciliation theme *Caring for Country*.

In Australia, First Nations Peoples have cared for Country for over 120,000 years, maintaining Country by using a wide range of strategies, knowledges and technologies to manage land, water and resources to ensure that Country is cared for now and for generations to come.

When we use the term "Country" we are referring to the specific areas of land, sea and sky with which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities have a custodial, cultural and spiritual relationship. Take a look at our NSW & ACT Aboriginal Languages and Nations Map included in this kit, this resource is also downloadable from our [Schools Reconciliation Challenge website](#).

'Country' is capitalised as a proper noun to acknowledge the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' relationships to Country and aspects of the way in which First Nations People think about, speak about and relate to Country.

"The land is the mother and we are of the land; we do not own the land rather the land owns us. The land is our food, our culture, our spirit our identity"

Professor Dennis Foley, Gai-mariagal and Wiradjuri man

Acknowledging Country and/or being welcomed to Country by Traditional Owners is an important way that we honour the long and continuing custodial relationships that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have with Country. Acknowledging this relationship is a way that First Nations Peoples and all Australians pay their respects to the First Nations groups of the area and acknowledge that they have been caring for Country in that area for generations. Through this practice we also acknowledge the Peoples, stories, languages and cultures of that First Nations group and the ways that Country cares for us and shapes our lives and communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples also care for Country spiritually through ceremony, music, dance, language, story-telling, art and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge about caring for Country.

In 2020 we invite you to learn, share and participate in *Caring for Country!*

By exploring the theme *Caring for Country* students will:

- Learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' relationships with Country
- Learn about the diversity of expert First Nations knowledges, sustainability practices, land, water and resource management strategies that are used by First Nations Peoples in caring for Country
- Be inspired to care for Country and take action in their communities to ensure that Country is cared for now and for generations to come
- Participate in learning activities that explore seasonal calendars, bush foods, medicines, local ecosystems, fire management strategies, and agricultural techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for thousands of years.

These resources and activities will focus on schools learning from First Nations peoples about caring for Country and offer schools opportunities to participate in caring for Country in their local community.

In 2020, we encourage all schools participating in the Schools Reconciliation Challenge to engage with the Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education program.

To learn more about how your school or service can learn more about Caring for Country, please view the Narragunnawali Care for [Country RAP Action](#) and related [Professional Learning](#) and [Curriculum Resources](#).

Caring for Country Brainstorming Questions

Activity 1: Getting started with the theme – *Caring for Country*





- What does the 2020 SRC theme and artwork mean to you and why?
- What stands out for you?
- What do you notice about the colours and design of the images, and why do you think the artists made those choices?
- What do the words *Caring for Country* mean to you, and why?
- Consider what *Caring for Country* feels like, sounds like, looks like for you?
- What are your experiences of being on Country and or in places that are special to you?
- What are the benefits of *Caring for Country*?

Reconciliation and the theme

- What does reconciliation mean to you?
- Why do you think it is important to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples languages, cultures, knowledges and perspectives?
- How does listening to, learning from and honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of caring for Country support reconciliation processes?
- Why is reconciliation important?

Activity 2: Caring for Country and reconciliation Mind Map

- Create a mind map (a picture with words, drawings and images) that explores what you think of, or feel, when engaging with the theme *Caring for Country*
 - You can draw pictures, write words, collage images and combine these all together to create your mind map.
 - You are welcome to share and discuss your mind map with your friends, teachers and families and with us by emailing your mind map to schools@reconciliationnsw.org.au
 - For more activities visit schoolsreconciliationchallenge.org.au