



In 2022 we invite schools to be inspired by and engage with this year's theme [\*\*From River to Sea: Our Island Home.\*\*](#)

Water has been the lifeblood for First Nations people who, for over 60,000 years, have lived on this vast and arid continent. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their relationship with water goes far beyond that of just physical survival; it is deeply embedded in identity, connections spirituality and ways of life as First Nations people.

In 2022, water extremes experienced by communities across NSW highlight the need for everyone to better understand and learn from First People's land and water management practices, which have allowed their survival on the driest inhabited continent on Earth for millennia.

First Nations peoples' view of Country encompasses the land as well as the waters that flow in and around it. One's identity is deeply embedded in the Country they are from. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often identify as being Saltwater or Freshwater people. Saltwater people are from sea Country along the coastlines and off the mainland, and Freshwater people from areas near inland water sources.

Through the sharing of Dreaming stories, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have developed a deep spiritual connection to Country. Teaching lessons by sharing stories has established lore on how water and Country is to be used, managed and cared for. Knowledge about how to locate water, and which water sources were suitable for bathing, fishing, leisure and ceremony safeguarded access to quality drinking water. This has allowed First Nations peoples to survive on the driest inhabited continent on Earth for millennia.

Reading the environment and observing seasonal changes, rainfall, tides and river levels and how this impacts flora, fauna and other natural resources has allowed First Nations peoples to live in harmony with the environment. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples fish, hunt and collect resources, taking only what is needed

and leaving enough behind to sustain supplies and maintain the delicate balance of the ecosystems in and around the water.

Historically, trade has also been an important aspect of life for First Nations people, and the water has provided many opportunities for that. Not only was water a way to travel from place to place but it also allowed for the development of fishing technologies and aquaculture systems, providing food for the local mob as well as an opportunity to trade these food supplies with other nations.

We want to celebrate the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their relationships with water by inviting you to explore your local waterways. Discover the ancient knowledge that surrounds these vital life sources and share your interpretations and ideas using art and writing.

### **By exploring the theme *From River to Sea: Our Island Home*, students will:**

- Learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relationships with water.
- Learn about the diversity of expert First Nations knowledge of water, understand its importance to culture and how this knowledge aids survival.
- Be inspired to learn about waterways in their local community, their significance to Aboriginal people, and how these waterways are used and cared for today.
- Participate in learning activities that explore... ancient methods of fishing and water management, Dreaming stories about the creation of waterways, impacts of European settlement on vital water sources and more!

In 2022, we encourage all schools participating in the Schools Reconciliation Challenge to engage with the [lesson plans and activities](#), and [additional resources](#) we have gathered for this year's challenge to inspire your students to draw, paint and write about their new knowledge and understanding of living together [\*\*\*From River to Sea: Our Island Home\*\*\*](#).

### **From River to Sea: Our Island Home Brainstorming Questions**

Activity: Getting started with the theme: ***From River to Sea: Our Island Home***

- What does the 2022 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 *From River to Sea: Our Island Home* mean to you, and why?
- Consider what *From River to Sea: Our Island Home* feels like, sounds like, looks like for you?
- What are your experiences of viewing, listening to, being on or in both freshwater and saltwater areas in Australia?
- What are the benefits of understanding the water?

## 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, knowledge and perspectives?
- How does listening to, learning from and honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of understanding water support reconciliation processes?
- Why is reconciliation important?

## Activity for *From River to Sea: Our Island Home* 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 *From River to Sea: Our Island Home*.
- You can draw pictures, write words, create a collage, or 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](mailto:schools@reconciliationnsw.org.au)