



## 2024 – Learning From Legacy: Healing Our Country

In 2024 we invite schools to be inspired by, and engage with, this year's learning theme: **Learning From Legacy: Healing Our Country.**

Knowledge is the key to our survival. The survival of culture. The survival of Country. It is through the perpetuation of ancient knowledges that Australia's First Peoples have thrived as the oldest living cultures on earth. First Nations methods have enabled a vast practical understanding of the natural environment, one that has ensured prosperity and unity with the land and all it encompasses for over 65,000 years. Their ancestors have passed down knowledge of the soil, sky, and water, including sophisticated science techniques, such as those used to engineer the boomerang or navigate by the stars, which date back tens of thousands of years, long before Western science theories now taught in schools. First Nations kinship and language systems are some of the most complex on earth.

To ensure the survival of people and of Country, we need to reconnect to the ancient wisdom of this land. We must listen with intent, learning from the legacy of those who have walked before us. It is through their generosity in sharing this knowledge that we can hope to heal our Country and communities, building a better future for generations to come.

**We need to heal our country.**

Learning from legacy is understanding how, with heat, the colour of ochre can be manipulated, that different coloured ochres have special cultural significance and uses. It is listening to the stories of the emu in the sky, looking up, and knowing when to hunt for emu eggs; it is also knowing how many eggs to take to ensure the emu population is not harmed. Learning from legacy is spending time on Country and understanding when it needs to be healed and reinvigorated through cultural burning. It is listening to storytelling and studying rock art that confirms the timeline of the coexistence of humans and megafauna suggested by Western science. Learning from legacy is respecting your Elders and understanding the need for reciprocal relationships with community and Country.

With colonisation came a devaluing of First Nations knowledges. Europeans asserted their power by banning the use of Aboriginal languages, replacing cultural and land management practices on Country. They disregarded traditional kinship systems and overrode Aboriginal law and traditions.

In response, generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have resisted colonisation for the survival of their knowledges and cultural traditions, for the benefit of their families, communities and all Australians. This started a growing movement in Australia to better understand the legacy of these ancient knowledge systems; a desire to unlearn the dominant narrative and relearn the truth of this ancient continent.

Now, more than ever, we are turning towards and celebrating Aboriginal land management methods like cultural burning, farming native grains, production of native foods, medicines and sustainable fishing. NSW communities are working to revive languages that were once “sleeping.” NSW schools are integrating Aboriginal languages into their curriculum; the first bilingual school in NSW opened in 2023 (*Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School*). Dual naming of places – where the traditional name stands alongside the Western name – is becoming more and more common, with examples such as Tumbalong (Darling Harbour), Barunguba (Montague Island) and Dubbagullee (Bennelong Point) in NSW. There is a desire to better understand the responsibilities to culture, family and community that First Nations peoples hold, and a growing acknowledgement that those responsibilities are distinct from Western understandings of family and community – and are critical to the wellbeing of First Nations people and communities.

It is crucial that we continue to listen to the voices of First Nations peoples. But we must do more than listen. We must do our part to learn from and pass on First Nations knowledges that are uniquely of this land now known as Australia. We must take action to prioritise and protect ancient stories, sacred sites and live sustainably in unity with the natural world, to ensure the continued survival of people and Country for another 65,000 years.

**We need to look to the legacy of First Nations peoples to heal our country.**

This year we ask students to look at the deep and enduring legacy of First Nations knowledges and how colonisation – and its privileging of Western knowledge – has affected that legacy. We ask students to consider what we have to gain from learning, embracing and protecting First Nations knowledges.

## **What will you learn from their legacy, and how will you use it to heal our country?**

BY EXPLORING THE THEME Learning From Legacy: Healing Our Country  
STUDENTS WILL:

- Explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dreaming stories and how they pass on important knowledge.
- Research the continuity of Aboriginal knowledges that have ensured survival and adapted to changing environments.
- Learn about Aboriginal land management practices and how they can heal Country.
- Consider how they can contribute to creating the future legacies of this land through;
  - increased understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, languages and histories;
  - understanding the different ways knowledge has been passed through time;
  - Understanding the significance of First Nations storytelling;
  - finding ways to connect with local Aboriginal culture, language and communities.

In 2024, we encourage all participating schools 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, write or sing about their increased knowledge and understanding of the theme *Learning From Legacy: Healing Our Country*.

## **Learning From Legacy: Healing Our Country BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS**

Activity: Getting started with the theme.

- What does the 2024 SRC theme and artwork mean to you and why?
- What stands out for you?
- What do you notice about the images, and why do you think the artists made those choices?
- What do the words Learning From Legacy: Healing Our Country mean to you, and why?
- Consider what legacy and healing feels like, sounds like, looks like for you?
- What are the benefits of understanding stories? Languages? Cultures? different knowledges?

## 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 the world around us support reconciliation processes?
- Why is reconciliation important?

Activity for ***Learning From Legacy: Healing Our Country*** And Reconciliation Mind Map.

### **Activity: Getting started with the theme *Learning From Legacy: Healing Our Country*.**

- Create a mind map (a picture with words, drawings, and images) that explores what you think of, or feel, when engaging with the theme *Learning From Legacy: Healing Our Country*.
- 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)