Acknowledgement
We acknowledge all the Countries you are on and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the importance of the local stories of the traditional custodians of the land on which you are learning.

Welcome!
Welcome to you all! This guide compliments the website www.yourstoryourjourney.net and has been designed to help you navigate the engaging and partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and caregivers professional development resource or what has now become known as Your Story Our Journey.

This Guide has five parts to help you find the information you need:

Part one provides helpful background information providing the thinking that contributed to the overall development and design of the resource package.

Part two defines the learning principles that guide your inquiry and action.

Part three explains the professional learning context and how to record your learning journey.

Part four provides an example of how you can begin your learning journey and engage with all the design features of the website.

Part five acknowledges and thanks all those who contributed to the creation of this resource.
Why the resource is called, Your Story Our Journey.

The words, *Your Story Our Journey*, reflects the essence of the project. The project is essentially a professional learning journey, starting with your story. This short statement below, crafted with us by our reference group, best captures our intent and has guided our journey.

*In education, we celebrate that schools are places that bring together teachers, students, families and community members through myriad extended links.*

‘Your story’ becomes ‘our story’, ‘my school’ becomes ‘our school’, ‘what do I know?’ becomes ‘what do we know?’, ‘your journey’ becomes ‘our journey’.
Part One: Background

What informed the development of the resource?

The project team was guided by our aim, which is to support a connected education community to find ways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be heard, and to collaborate to achieve an educational experience for all Australian children and young people that acknowledges our past, enriches our present, and supports us to move towards a better future.

As part of the initial framing of the project, the team sought advice from experts in our reference group. We acknowledge that schooling in the Australian context has been a prime example of ways of thinking and learning imposed on to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with little to no input by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This lack of recognition has to date served to continue the silencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ voices that lies at the centre of our nation’s history and impedes real progress towards reconciliation (Uluru Statement from the Heart, 2017).

The need for privileging and honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ experiences and knowledges, and ensuring they are at the centre of the embodied enactment of schooling in every community, is at the very heart of this project and has guided the resource at all stages of its development.
What professional development approach has been adopted?

We have created a ‘reflect-inquire-reflect’ approach to help you build up your learning and experience in an iterative way. It was developed to facilitate every learner coming into the resource from their own level of understanding and seeking answers to their personalised questions. Asking questions and learning is celebrated in this resource and rewarded as a legitimate way of engaging in your own professional learning. It is a powerful way to cut across social injustices. We have chosen a professional development approach that focuses on the learner – you.

Have you ever been to a professional learning session where you spend a day learning about a particular topic? Often it is great to have such a day where you are immersed in new knowledge and thinking and have the chance to talk with colleagues. However we know it is common to return to the everyday and you find it hard to put into practice what appeared so easy to learn on the day.

To try and address this, we have designed a professional learning approach that you can come back to, time and time again. As your knowledge and expertise expands, you can try new approaches and further reflect on your learning, creating a powerful learning cycle. We have sought to develop a resource that is deeply personal as well as tailored… a bit tricky to do when we don’t know you! However, we feel that you know yourself and so we begin always with a series of inquiry questions where you can reflect on what you know (and perhaps more importantly, don’t know) to help then map out and guide your learning.

We acknowledge upfront that many people do not know as much about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the best ways to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as they would like to, and that is OK. That is why this professional development resource has been developed! What is not OK, is remaining in a state of ignorance because of fear or shame or denial. This resource is designed to be supportive and helpful. Once you have found out more about what you know and don’t know, you are provided with examples of resources and strategies to trial and learn about. Of course, there will always be some trial and error as you learn, practice, reflect and learn again. This can be challenging work. You are encouraged at every step, to do deep learning and really engage with the
broad range of quality materials that have been created by and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, scholars and researchers.

Part Two: The learning principles

What are the learning principles?

There are five learning principles that guide your professional learning journey. They are Relationality, Togetherness, Critical discernment, Pro-activity and Community. While we hope the words themselves carry their meaning, here is a brief definition of each term, provided in the context of this resource:

- **Relationality** in education means working through relationships.
- **Togetherness** means working together as a team.
- **Pro-activity** means actively seeking connections with an open and engaged mindset.
- **Community** means knowing the story of the community and how the school connect together.
- **Critical discernment** means making deliberate and informed choices about using your resources and teaching strategies.
Where did the learning principles come from?

The team, with support from the reference group, used an extensive literature search to identify and synthesise five guiding learning principles that inform and have underpinned the entire design and development of the resource. These five principles reflect a standpoint of reconciliation. We acknowledge that these principles may not always reflect all views; they are to be used as a way to establish a mindset, a way of thinking, learning and being.

Each principle is explained now further and accompanied by way of a story, a narrative, as written by one of our team members, to help us relate to its meaning and also an explanation, thus providing two ways to approach the concepts. A reference to a key resource or literature is then provided to help you read and understand more about the principle. In many ways you can start your learning journey at this point and the readings are a way to get you thinking and reflecting on the learning principles. They are not intended to be the ‘last word’ or a definitive work but a resource to help you engage with the principles and your story.
Relationality

You can skim across the surface like a water strider bug, but you won’t be able to effect change. To improve education and life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, you need to be woven into their web. This doesn’t mean you lose your identity or need to be different, but you need to know learners, families, schools, teachers, people, country and history, and to identify or create your connection to all of these.

Explanation

Relationality in an educational context means working through relationships. We connect through relationships, we form partnerships based on relationships. These relationships need to be carefully and deliberately developed and maintained. Our relationships need to be based on genuine personal/professional connections. They need to be built on reciprocity and to be beneficial to everyone involved. Relationships are the foundations of partnerships, and involve developing trust and respect, and valuing differences.

A resource to start you learning more....

Think of a waterway that absorbs all the creeks that feed into it, making space for the new waters to cross-mingle to create one new entity – a river. When working together, all partners make different contributions, but all voices are heard. This might require making new spaces and processes for school-community partnerships to thrive.

**Explanation**

Togetherness means working together as a team to promote the active involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in school governance and teaching activities. The process for engagement needs to be flexible and reflect practices of inclusivity, provide capacity building for community members, reflect the sharing of power, provide opportunities to participate in decision making and include appropriate accountability measures that help shape school and community partnerships.

**A resource to start you learning more....**

Critical discernment

Throw a stone into the river and it causes ever-widening ripples. The choices we make in learning and classroom practice also create ripples, expanding our ability to contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ rights and reconciliation.

Explanation

To teach in the spirit of reconciliation and through a rights-based perspective, there needs to be a level of critical discernment in the way in which culturally appropriate resources are chosen and pedagogical strategies employed. Racism, either overt or covert, exists in many publications and practices so there is a need for teachers to be skilled to critically read, reflect and select appropriate materials and strategies in their classrooms.

A resource to start you learning more....

Website: https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/a-unit-outline-and-content-for-professional-learning-units-to-support-teachers-in-meeting-focus-areas-1.4-and-2.4
Pro-activity

It can be easy to see where two waterways meet – they might have different colours, or one might carry lots of leaves. Eventually, the two sources merge to make the one river. Similarly, your community-school partnership will be built through the contributions of diverse people. You will need to be pro-active to identify different perspectives and have an open and engaged mindset to bring them together into the one endeavour.

Explanation

Pro-activity means working from an open and engaged mindset, actively participating in partnerships with others and communicating with all members of the broader school community. Being pro-active requires accepting responsibility to actively participate in partnership with others. It means adopting an inquiry stance and being mindful of your role as a listener and a learner, and how you position yourself in relation to others.

A resource to start you learning more….

Website: https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/
A river might look like one defined waterway, but it is formed by many smaller creeks feeding into it. Communities are like this, many individuals joined as one entity. We are connected in diverse ways: through family and kinship, relationships with place, shared history, attendance at a particular school. It’s the connections between the individuals that make the community.

**Explanation**

To create good school-community partnerships, we need to know the story of the community, who is in it, how the school fits in and how everyone connects. As individuals, we need to know about ourselves and our connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community. Understanding yourself and your community is an important step to be able to engage successfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families. Relationships and understanding that are built with students and the community provide a positive platform for school-based learning. Knowing the community can provide educators with valuable opportunities to engage in pedagogical practices that build on students’ cultural capital.

**A resource to start you learning more….**

Part Three: Your professional learning journey

Learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultures and the best ways to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

This professional learning resource has been developed to support all those working to improve the educational success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in early learning centres, schools and higher education institutions. It is intended to be used in teacher education programs (pre-service and in-service), by educators, teachers and school leaders, and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The resource has been created to help educators to form relationships and partnerships with communities and parents to achieve better educational outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It has been particularly designed to enable and position educators as powerful agents of change.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) requires that all teachers and school leaders must meet Standards, according to the four stages of career progression (Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished, Lead). There is a professional responsibility for all teachers and leaders to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the best ways to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Here are the relevant focus areas:

- **Focus 1.4** Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- **Focus 2.4** Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- **Focus 7.3** Engage with the parents/carers
How can I record and show the evidence of what I learn?

To enable you to record your professional learning against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, we have provided two approaches for you to document and share your learning.

1: Self-reflection on your learning journey

Throughout the website, you have the opportunity to reflect on the provided questions and activities, and record your thinking and learning directly on the webpage. You can then print your responses, or send your notes to yourself. You can choose to share this with others or keep the information as your own personal record of your learning. This part of the website is not shared with anyone else and is only for you.

2: Uploading evidence of learning

The website also has a Log-In feature that enables you to upload evidence of your understandings and capabilities for APSTs 1.4, 2.4 and 7.3 and according to your career stage and development. Examples of evidence could be worksheets, student work samples, lesson plans, video, parent discussions etc. Each piece of evidence you upload can be assigned to a particular APST and has an accompanying space where you can annotate and explain how this evidence demonstrates your capabilities against that APST. No one else can see this information unless you choose to share it with them. To be able to upload and store the evidence, you will need to register to access this area.

All details about reflecting and recording your learning are provided on the website.
A process of unlearning to learn?

While we have focused on your professional learning throughout the entire design of this project, we would like to note that sometimes you will be ‘unlearning’ to learn. Reflection questions are used throughout the resource and have been developed as part of an ‘unlearning-relearning’ process. Sometimes, we have to unpack and unpick our existing knowledge to make space for new knowledge and new ways of doing things.

This means you will be often encouraged to question what you currently think and and why. For example, we might ask you, where have you learnt the information? Perhaps, as an example, what you think you might know has never been questioned and there is more to know from different sources to those you might have heard from in the past?

We have aimed to help you consider the sources of information to date you might have used and perhaps to broaden and widen your reference list. Throughout all the resources and strategies we provide in this resource the materials and readings have been written and created either by or with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This resource is full of reflection questions! Reflection helps learning and unlearning in a variety of ways:

- It provides an opportunity to capture our ideas and make them obvious.
- It can generate insights and even ‘aha’ moments.
- It can give us time to pause and process new ideas, which sometimes can be challenging – that’s learning!

These questions appear throughout the website and we have provided them here as a comprehensive list for you to consider the types of questions you might like to continue to pose to yourself and others as part of the unlearning to learn process.

What do I know now?

- It might seem odd to identify precisely what you know, but we often rely on assumptions and these can mislead us.
What do I not know?
- This is about identifying the current gaps in your knowledge and capabilities.

What do I do?
- This is about identifying what you do in your teaching practice that contributes to forming strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school relationships, and that stems from those strong relationships. It is possible that your current practice is not, or is only a little bit, mediated through a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples– school relationship.

What credible sources is my knowledge based on?
- Sometimes we ‘just know things’ and it can be an interesting exercise to work out where our information came from. It might be from friends and family, social media, school or university, books you’ve read, TV shows and movies you’ve watched, and so on.
- Credible sources will differ for every context and you will need to have sharp discernment skills to work out appropriate sources. Identify the stakeholders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - school relationships and find sources of information that are, or include, their direct voices.

What’s causing these gaps in my knowledge?
- This is a deceptively simple question and finding the answers might be challenging, both in the sense of ‘hard to find’ as well as ‘confronting’.
- Always probe further than your initial answer. For example, your first answer might be: “It’s because I don’t know any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You can take this further by asking “Why do I not know any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?” “I was never taught this at school” becomes “Why was I never taught this at school?”
Why do I do it this way?

- Similar to questions already encountered in this journey, answering this question can present challenges. We often just do things a certain way without really interrogating why it's that way and not another way.
- Our first responses to this question can be simple, but it's worth going deeper. For example, you might answer, “it’s how everyone else in the school is doing it”, but take it further: why does this influence my practice?

How can I find out what I need to know?

- Always look for resources that have been created or designed by, or in collaboration with, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Part Four: Using the website for your professional learning

How can I use the website?

Your learning journey is personal. This website is thus designed to allow you to take a personal journey and reflect on your learning along the way. This resource supports you using three powerful tools for learning: storytelling, inquiry and reflection. If you are not sure where to start with the website (although we have tried to make it as intuitive and interactive as possible), we have also provided a framework for you here to help you follow your professional learning pathway, starting with a story to stimulate your thinking and inquiry.
Start - Our Learning Your Journey animated story
We encourage you to begin on the website homepage and watch the animated narration of *Our Learning Journey*. We have started with a story because stories are powerful teaching tools that convey messages and knowledge. Through this story, you can engage with the visual elements of the website designed by artist Ms Rachael Sarra, and encounter the language and principles that will guide the rest of your learning journey.

After listening to the story you can reflect or discuss these questions:

- What do you think is meant by the story?
- What interests or intrigues you?
- What aspects did you like?
- What aspects did you not like or understand?

Your responses to these questions is another way to begin your learning journey and are an example of how the learning process works in this resource.

Engaging with the Learning Principles
We recognise that everyone’s learning journey is unique. You will have a focus that is unique to you, your role, the place you are working in and the people you are teaching and working with. **Choose the principle/s that are important for you.**
Choose a principle by hovering over the design on the website and then clicking on one of the 5 principles.

Here is a brief reminder of their definition:

- **Relationality** in education means working through relationships.
- **Togetherness** means working together as a team.
- **Pro-activity** means actively seeking connections with an open and engaged mindset.
- **Community** means knowing the story of the community and how the school connect together.
- **Critical discernment** means making deliberate and informed choices about using your resources and teaching strategies.

**Statements of Intent**

For each principle, we have created a set of *Statements of Intent*. These provide ideas for you to think about, and highlight the important knowledges, skills and attitudes that embody and enact the principle.

**For example, here are the Statements of Intent for the principle of Community.**

- I can acknowledge the Country we are on, and respect ‘on Country’ stories.

- Our school is informed by and draws on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to compose and deliver *Acknowledgement of Country* and *Welcome to Country.*
• I learn about local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the people themselves, and respect their ways of identifying themselves and relating to others.

• I contribute to our school being a culturally safe place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

• I consult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to appropriate curriculum and ensure community members contribute to curriculum in the way they want to.

• I advocate for and facilitate the incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into governance mechanisms at our school.

**Reflective questions**

Each Statement of Intent has a set reflective question for you to consider. They can be used to question yourself on your level of awareness, understanding and knowledge under each principle.

We have provided a 'slider' that you can adjust so that you can measure your own level of confidence in response to the question.

The sliders provide a visual 'snapshot' of where you are now in your knowledge and skills at the point of time and can change each time you do it. These are not intended to be used like quiz questions that test what you know. Instead, these are meant to be a visual way to reveal the knowledge or skills that you can develop.

You can use the sliders to continually assess your own capability or knowledge and skill. The aim is not to have all sliders to the right! The more we learn, the more we realise there is more to learn! Your knowledge will also change according to your role, career progression and the context in which you are learning and working.
For example, here are the reflective questions under each Statement of Intent for Community.

• I can acknowledge the Country we are on, and respect ‘on Country’ stories.
  o How can our school acknowledge the Country we are on, and respect ‘on Country’ stories?

• Our school is informed by and draws on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to compose and deliver Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.
  o What are our school’s protocols around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country?

• I learn about local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the people themselves, and respect their ways of identifying themselves and relating to others.
  o How do local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identify themselves and relate to others, and how does the school respect this?

• I contribute to our school being a culturally safe place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
  o How do we make our school a culturally safe place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

• I consult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to appropriate curriculum and ensure community members contribute to curriculum in the way they want to.
  o How can we work together to develop local First Nations curriculum?

• I advocate for and facilitate the incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into governance mechanisms at our school.
  o How can our school incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into school governance?
You can use the slider to honestly reflect on your level of knowledge, skills and awareness. Once you have a picture of your stage of learning, you can then begin to identify what you need to inquire more about. To help you do this, we have provided scaffolding and links to resources and strategies for you so that if you do not know, or you are not sure where to begin or the right question to ask - you can take the proactive step to identify how you can find out and record your learning journey.

**Embarking on your learning journey through inquiry**

Below are some questions, you might like to ask, followed by lots of examples of advice, resources and strategies (and some more questions!) to support you to answer the questions for yourself and appropriate to your context.

- **How can our school (or learning environment) acknowledge the Country we are on, and respect ‘on Country’ stories?**
  - The best way to find out about Country and how to respect ‘on Country’ stories is to talk to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and community members.
  - *Engaging with Aboriginal communities: Where do we start?* has useful tips and links to help you identify who to contact in your local area.
  - *Inside and outside knowledge* introduces the idea that there are protocols around who owns what knowledge, and who determines how it should be used.
    - What strategies could your school implement?
- **What are our school’s protocols around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country?**
  - Ways for schools to Acknowledge Country and Welcome people to Country need to be determined by consulting local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. *Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country: A guide for Victorian schools* has information and protocols.
In some places, the impact of colonisation has caused disagreement about Country and the people who live in the community. Navigating this requires awareness and sensitivity.

- What does your school (or place) currently do?
- What consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is this based on?
- In what variety of ways can Country be acknowledged in your school?

You may also be interested in this Welcome to Country app.

- How do local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identify themselves and relate to others, and how does the school respect this?

  - Across Australia, there are many ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people relate to each other. This may be through kinship, or relationships. For all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, relationships are important. The best way to find out how local First Nations people relate to others is to talk to local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.
    - Who could you talk to find out more about local ways of relating?
    - How could your school respect these ways of relating and knowing each other, in governance, curriculum and teaching?

  - This online Kinship Module has information about ways that some Aboriginal peoples relate to each other.

- How do we make our school a culturally safe place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Cultural Needs provides information about the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and provides a reflective framework for educators to think about how they can work in this space.
    - What strategies could our school use?
• How can we work together to develop local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander curriculum?
  o *Aboriginal community engagement in primary schooling* provides an example of a school-Aboriginal community unit of learning co-developed by teachers and Aboriginal community members, demonstrating how to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and knowledge.
    ▪ What would our school need to do to make an activity like this happen?
  o *Embedding Indigenous knowledges in curriculum* provides guidance, information and resource links.

• How can our school incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into school governance?
  o The *Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD): School-based audit tool* helps schools audit their current practice and provides strategies for improving practice.
    ▪ How does our school shape up in the audit?
    ▪ Who do we need to include in our conversations about this?
    ▪ What strategies could our school put in place?

A cycle of learning

This series of questions and processes outlined in this guide is just an example of what has been created for you in the entire resource package. The website houses all the steps to enable you to re-enter the site again and again to continue your learning journey. It’s important to remember that learning never ends. You’ve thought about what you know, asked questions, sought answers, and now you can think about what you know now, ask more questions and seek answers, and so on. We encourage you to continue to investigate and deepen your learning. Enjoy!

Find all information at the yOURstory website.
Who made this website possible?

The Engaging and Partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and caregivers project was funded by the Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching. We would also like to acknowledge the support from the various institutions in which the project team and reference group members worked: Queensland University of Technology, Edith Cowan University, Charles Sturt University, University of Southern Queensland, James Cook University and Monash University.

Who made the website?

This project brought together a team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and academics who recognised the need for a ‘how to’ professional development resource that would support initial teacher education providers and school communities to best meet the needs of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ learning needs. The project was led by Professor Simone White (QUT) with team members, Professor Peter Anderson (QUT), Dr Graeme Gower (ECU), Associate Professor Matt Byrne (ECU), Maria Bennet (CSU), Alison Quin (QUT) and Anna Darling (Monash). The team were advised by Geraldine Atkinson (VAEAI), Professor Jeanne Herbert (CSU), Professor Martin Nakata (JCU) and Professor Jo-Anne Reid (CSU). Professor Karen Trimmer (USQ) was our evaluator and critical friend.
Together with our creative design partner, Gilimbaa, our creative artist Rachel Sarra, and our technical design support team, Thirteen Digital, we have created a supportive professional learning journey resource for you.

We hope you enjoy this resource as much as we enjoyed creating it for you.