Getting started –   
1. Community, Country and Languages

Foundation to Level 2,   
Victorian Aboriginal Languages,   
sample unit of work



Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority  
Level 7, 2 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

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Introduction

Overview of the unit of work

This sample unit of work is the first of three in the ‘Getting started’ series. The units of work are designed to support teachers implementing the Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum and to demonstrate how the Foundation to Level 2 content descriptions and achievement standard may be addressed.

Teachers of Victorian Aboriginal Languages may wish to use this sample unit of work as a model from which they can develop their own unit of work.

Further advice on implementing the Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum in schools is available in the [Help me plan](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/foundation-10/resources/languages/victorian-aboriginal-languages/help-me-plan/Pages/default.aspx) section of the Victorian Aboriginal Languages pages on the VCAA website.

Links to the Victorian Curriculum F–10

This unit of work is linked to the Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum Foundation to Level 2. A list of all relevant content descriptions plus relevant extracts from the achievement standard is included at the start of each learning activity in this document.

Cross-curriculum links

**Curriculum area and level:** English, Foundation

**Content description:** Understand that English is one of many languages spoken in Australia and that different languages may be spoken by family, classmates and community [(VCELA164)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCELA164)

**Curriculum area and level:** English, Level 1

**Content description:** Understand that people use different systems of communication to cater to different needs and purposes and that many people may use sign systems to communicate with others [(VCELA198)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCELA198)

**Curriculum area and levels:** Geography, Foundation to Level 2

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Country/Place on which the school is located and why Country/Place is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the ways in which they maintain special connections to particular Country/Place [(VCGGK066)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCGGK066)

**Curriculum area and level:** Health and Physical Education, Foundation

**Content description (extract):** Participate in play that promotes engagement with outdoor settings including … the natural environment [(VCHPEP063)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCHPEP063)

**Curriculum area and levels:** Intercultural Capability, Foundation to Level 2

**Content description:** Identify and discuss cultural diversity in the school and/or community [(VCICCD003)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCICCD003)

Other cross-curriculum opportunities

This unit of work can also be linked to the cross-curriculum priority of [learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/overview/cross-curriculum-priorities). Students begin to understand the uniqueness of these cultures and the wisdom and knowledge embedded in them.

Teaching Victorian Aboriginal Languages F–10

Protocols

**Victorian Aboriginal Languages can only be taught after permission has been granted by the language’s Traditional Owners.**

Read [Victorian Curriculum F–10 – Victorian Aboriginal Languages](http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/languages/victorian-aboriginal-languages/introduction/rationale-and-aims) carefully, and ensure that you follow the protocols on the Department of Education and Training’s [Koorie Cross-Curricular Protocols](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/multicultural/Pages/koorieculture.aspx) for Victorian government schools. These are complemented by the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.’s (VAEAI) [Protocols for Koorie Education in Victorian Primary and Secondary Schools [PDF – 0.99MB]](http://www.vaeai.org.au/wp-content/uploads/delightful-downloads/2020/01/Protocols-for-Koorie-Education-in-Victorian-Primary-and-Secondary-Schools-2019.pdf). The protocols encourage respect and trust between Aboriginal communities and schools. A school should not commence Aboriginal language classes without agreement and support from appropriate local Aboriginal people, the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) and/or the appropriate Traditional Owners. It is important that everyone involved shows respect for the intellectual property rights of First Nations Peoples pertaining to Aboriginal languages and cultural knowledge, and follows Community protocols and school guidelines.

Key information

Learning in Victorian Aboriginal Languages

Before the arrival of Europeans, Koorie people often learnt multiple languages, including the language of the Country where their family was located and the languages of neighbouring Countries. Each language contained sacred, cultural and scientific information, which was passed orally from generation to generation.

There are at least 44 Victorian Aboriginal Languages. All Victorian Aboriginal Languages are revival languages.

The F–10 [Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/languages/victorian-aboriginal-languages/introduction/learning-in-victorian-aboriginal-languages) provides opportunities for students to study Victorian Aboriginal Languages that are being revived by their owners, and to become more richly connected to the Countries of the First Peoples. The amount of vocabulary and variety of language structures available for teaching and learning will be influenced by the current progress of language revival for a particular language.

Consultation with the appropriate Traditional Owners is always essential. This is relevant when providing language learning programs in schools based on the Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum. Respectful engagement also extends to visits, excursions to the Country or Place, and use of cultural material as part of the teaching and learning program. In order to establish a program, approval must be sought and received from the school council or similar, the local Aboriginal Community (ideally through the [Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group](http://www.vaeai.org.au/local-aboriginal-education-consultative-groups/); for more information, contact [VAEAI](https://www.vaeai.org.au/templates/contact/)) and the [Traditional Owners](https://achris.vic.gov.au/weave/wca.html) of the land on which the school stands.

Language Team

It is very important that students understand the relationship between Language, Country and Community. Victorian Aboriginal Language programs have different needs to other language programs. Currently, Victorian Aboriginal Languages are not often used on a daily basis, and each is at a different stage of revival. There are very few books or teaching materials available for most Victorian Aboriginal Languages.

To ensure appropriate resources are sourced, developed and taught, schools are advised to establish a Language Team. Where possible this team should include an Aboriginal Language authority or custodian from the Community, an Aboriginal Language teacher or assistant, a linguist and possibly a qualified language teacher. The Language Team can be further supported by a [Koorie Education Coordinator (KEC) and/or a Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/marrungregional.aspx), and a [Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG)](https://www.vaeai.org.au/local-aboriginal-education-consultative-groups/) representative.

The Aboriginal members of the school’s Language Team will assist staff and students in learning about Aboriginal ways of ‘knowing, being, doing, valuing and learning’ (Yunkaporta, 2010). This Aboriginal language pedagogy will strengthen and complement common language teaching methodology such as repetition and systematic building of vocabulary and language structures.

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

Conducting a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country demonstrates respect for the Traditional Owners of the land on which the event or class is taking place and acknowledges their spiritual, physical and cultural connection to Country as the First Peoples.

An official Welcome to Country can only be provided by a member of the Traditional Owner group from the Country where the event or class is taking place.

An Acknowledgement of Country can be given by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which they stand. An Aboriginal specialist in the local language may help write an Acknowledgement of Country in the local language that students can learn. Teachers may also encourage more advanced students of Victorian Aboriginal Languages to write their own individual or group Acknowledgement of Country, following appropriate local Community protocols and with the guidance of the Language Team.

For further advice, see [Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Welcome to Country in Schools](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/acknowledgement-traditional-owners-and-welcome-country-schools/policy) on the Department of Education and Training website.

Dictionaries, databases and applications

Traditional language custodians, often in conjunction with a linguist, can provide an understanding of the range and variety of language already documented. An agreement with Traditional Owners about the most appropriate source dictionary and/or word lists to use is essential. For some languages, simple databases and word-learning applications exist. Permission must be sought prior to using such tools and materials. Any words or constructions required for the purpose of teaching a Victorian Aboriginal Language must come from the local Aboriginal Community. Further resources for Victorian Aboriginal Languages are available from the [Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages](https://www.vaclang.org.au/).

Word creation and spelling

All Victorian Aboriginal Languages are revival languages and certain words and grammatical structures may have been lost or did not exist at the time language information was being documented. Teachers and students need to be guided by the Language Team when creating new words and phrases. Strategies can include using known word-formation processes for the local and neighbouring Aboriginal languages, and borrowing words from other related Aboriginal languages with permission. Aboriginal languages were not traditionally written, and colonists who recorded Aboriginal languages were often unable to hear or distinguish unfamiliar sounds and used inconsistent and varying spelling systems influenced by their own languages. The Victorian Aboriginal Language specialist should be consulted for Community’s preferred spelling conventions.

Pronunciation

All teachers are encouraged to become familiar with the local language sounds that do not occur in English prior to commencing teaching a Victorian Aboriginal Language. Stress patterns are also different from those in English. Teachers should do this in consultation with their Language Team and/or the designated language custodian. If teachers have not previously spoken or taught this language, they will need to practise these sounds until they are comfortable both pronouncing them as individual sounds, and in words and phrases, with the correct stress patterns. Teachers are strongly encouraged to program regular visits from knowledgeable Community members who can model pronunciation. Where possible, programs should also include audio and/or video recordings of Community speakers pronouncing the local language sounds and speaking in the local language.

Sign language and gestures

Sign language is a common characteristic of many Australian Aboriginal languages. These ‘alternate sign languages’ (Kendon, 1988) are not related to deafness and are not a primary means of communication. They appear to have been developed to be used when spoken communication was not practical (for example, to communicate over distances, such as when hunting), not permitted (for example, during rituals related to mourning, initiation, kinship relationships) or during ceremonies, dancing and children’s play. In some parts of Australia, hand signs are still commonly used. In many parts of Australia, including Victoria, body, face and eye movements also have specific meanings, and are used to communicate instead of speaking.

Before using any sign language or gestures, it is essential to talk to your local Language Team about whether there is existing sign language from the local language in use. If not, they may approve using borrowed sign language from another Aboriginal language or adapted from Australian Sign Language (Auslan), following appropriate protocols.

Key resources

Background resources for teachers

* Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2018) ‘Yarning circles’, [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/k-12-policies/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-perspectives/resources/yarning-circles](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/k-12-policies/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-perspectives/resources/yarning-circles)
* Research Unit for Indigenous Language (n.d.) ‘The sounds of Australian Aboriginal Languages’ video series, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, <https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/research-unit-for-indigenous-language/training/australian-indigenous-languages/sounds-of-aboriginal-languages>
* Yunkaporta T (2010) ‘Our ways of learning in Aboriginal languages’, in J Hobson, K Lowe, S Poetsch & M Walsh (eds) *Re-awakening Languages: theory and practice in the revitalisation of Australia’s Indigenous languages*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 37–49, [https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au//bitstream/2123/6914/1/RAL-chapter-3.pdf [PDF – 277KB]](https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/6914/1/RAL-chapter-3.pdf); see also [www.8ways.online](https://www.8ways.online/)

Additional resources for teachers

The following resources may be helpful for those wanting to know more about the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages.

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

* Reconciliation Australia (n.d.) ‘Let’s Talk: Welcome to Country, Acknowledgement of Country’, [www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/welcome\_acknowledgement\_v4.pdf [PDF – 629KB]](https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/welcome_acknowledgement_v4.pdf)

Sounds and spelling

* Jones C, Chandler P and Lowe K (2010) ‘Sounds, spelling and learning to read an Aboriginal language’, in J Hobson, K Lowe, S Poetsch & M Walsh (eds) *Re-awakening Languages: theory and practice in the revitalisation of Australia’s Indigenous languages*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 281­–292, [https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/handle/2123/6956/RAL-chapter-24.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [PDF – 160KB]](https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/handle/2123/6956/RAL-chapter-24.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
* Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) (n., ‘Language fact sheets’ (including 2. Language Sounds; 3. Spelling; 4.Spelling decisions – consonants; 5. Spelling decisions – vowels), [www.vaclang.org.au/Resources/language-fact-sheets.html](http://www.vaclang.org.au/Resources/language-fact-sheets.html)
* Webb, T (2020) ‘Changing the ABC’s pronunciation guidance on Indigenous words’, ABC News, [www.abc.net.au/news/about/backstory/2020-06-04/tiger-webb-abc-pronunciation-guide-indigenous-languages/12317822](http://www.abc.net.au/news/about/backstory/2020-06-04/tiger-webb-abc-pronunciation-guide-indigenous-languages/12317822)

Sign language

* Colin Jones, Queensland Rural Medical Education Limited (2013) ‘What is the importance of body language and sign language in communication?’ video, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=03bPHQktqiI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03bPHQktqiI) (Note: The statement in this video that ‘we had one sign language which we used over the whole continent before Europeans arrived here’ is contested in Victoria.)
* Kendon, A (1988) *Sign Languages of Aboriginal Australia: cultural, semiotic and communicative perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne
* Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages (2010) ‘Clifton Bieundurry – traditional hand signs (Australia)’ video, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLwf2b4kWKo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLwf2b4kWKo) (Wangkajunga, north-western Australia)
* Miller, M (2017) *Auslan and Yorta Yorta language*, in consultation with Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation and Yalca Loitjiba (for more information, contact [VAEAI](https://www.vaeai.org.au/administration))

Learning activities

Both of the following sample learning activities were designed to cover elements of the content from the Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum Foundation to Level 2. All parts of the sample learning activities would need to be delivered to ensure the content descriptions that are listed here are explicitly covered.

**Before beginning a unit of work, review all resources and activities and discuss with the Language Team to ensure that everyone is comfortable to proceed. If not, make adjustments where necessary.**

Learning activity 1: Introduction to local Community and Country

**Timing (approximate):** 2 × 1-hour sessions

**Learning intentions – Session 1:**  Learn the name of the language group for the area where the school is located

Know that it is important to connect with Country when learning language

**Learning intentions – Session 2:**  Know what a Welcome to Country is and understand why it is important to behave respectfully

Understand that there are many places and organisations in the community with local language names

Be able to use natural products to create and connect to Country

**Content descriptions (extracts):** Interact with each other, the teaching team and visiting respected community members, using language and gestures to … talk about self … [(VCLVC130)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCLVC130)

Discover key information about Country/Place by exploring Country/Place and listening to stories from respected community members [(VCLVC133)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCLVC133)

Give factual information using simple statements [and] gestures … [(VCLVC134)](http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCLVC134)

Understand that language belongs to communities, and that language learning requires the application of respectful and appropriate behaviour [(VCLVU148)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCLVU148)

**Achievement standard (extracts):** By the end of Level 2, students interact with the teaching team and respected community members to talk about themselves ... using familiar modelled language and gestures. They use appropriate protocols when interacting with respected community members and community speakers, such as appropriate forms of address, terms of respect and behaviour … They identify key information about Country/Place, under the guidance of respected community members … They identify places in the local area which have names in the language.

Preparation

Session 1

* Organise a visit from an Elder/respected Community member, or film an Elder/respected Community member welcoming the students to Country and the language class.
* Find a quiet, safe outdoor space, away from traffic and noise.
* Review the lists of resources (see [the background resources for teachers](#BackResources) and [the list of resources for this learning activity](#Resources1)).
* Read the ‘Yarning circles’ resource. Talk to the Language Team or respected Community members abouthow a yarning circle works.
* Determine any sign language or gestures for introductions, for example self (teacher), self (student), Elders, groups and others. Speak to the Language Team about:
* whether there is existing sign language or gestures from the local language
* whether the Language Team wishes to create sign language or gestures or use borrowed sign language from another Aboriginal language or Australian Sign Language.
* Watch [‘The sounds of Australian Aboriginal languages](https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/research-unit-for-indigenous-language/training/australian-indigenous-languages/sounds-of-aboriginal-languages)’ videos, compare the sounds to the local language and ensure everyone who is involved in the program is confident in pronouncing them.
* Prepare the Learning activity 1 Session 1 words and phrases list with the Language Team (see [Appendix 1](#Appendix1) for some suggested words and phrases).
* Prepare materials to start a word wall of language.
* Conduct any pre-assessment of student knowledge (see an example in [Assessment ideas](#Assessment1)).

Session 2

* Obtain and review the book *Welcome to Country: a traditional Aboriginal ceremony* (2016) by Aunty Joy Murphy and Lisa Kennedy.
* Find a quiet, safe outdoor space, away from traffic and noise.
* Review the Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country videos in [the list of resources for this learning activity](#Resources1).
* Review the video about [making a leaf ball](https://vimeo.com/414971707).
* Plan a safe place outside to collect ball materials, or organise to provide materials for making a leaf ball.
* Prepare the Learning activity 1 Session 2 words and phrases list (see [Appendix 1](#Appendix1)) with the Language Team. This may involve creating words, for example a word for ‘ball’.
* Discuss with the local Community how they welcome people and, if possible, organise for an Elder/respected Community member to welcome students to Country and to learning the local language.

Session 1

Activity 1: Introduction to Country – in a yarning circle

* Sit in a yarning circle with students and the Elder/respected Community member.
* Introduce yourself in the local language and reinforce using gesture or, if appropriate, sign language. Say you are speaking that language; for example, *ngadha dhangkai-na dhudhuroa* (I am speaking Dhudhuroa).
* Introduce the Elder/respected Community member briefly in English. The Elder introduces themselves in the local language and says what language they are speaking.
* Model language for students to introduce themselves in the local language. Repeat as a class and then go around the circle individually. Prompt students as required.
* Model language for students to say they are speaking the local language (‘I am speaking …’). Repeat as a class and then go around the circle individually or in pairs. Prompt students as required.
* The Elder/respected Community member may wish to talk about yarning circles, their language and what it means to be learning an Aboriginal language at school.
* Watch the [‘Connection to Country](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHBQhqvFaN4&t=77s)’ video together and discuss.

**Tips:**

* Prompt students who are less confident when introducing themselves.
* Model language as much as possible and in a variety of ways.
* When practising new vocabulary, less confident students may prefer to respond in a group of two or three.

**Discussion prompts:**

* What is the right language for the Country your school is on/you live on? Why is learning the local language important?
* How do you feel when you are outside and walk across ground with bare feet?
* Why do you think connecting to Country might help people stay healthy?

Activity 2: Introduction to Country – outside

* Take the students outside to a safe place and stand in a circle.
* Get students to take off their shoes and feel the land underneath them.
* Ask students to close their eyes and listen, smell and feel the Country.
* When they open their eyes, prompt students to offer one word about what they experienced.
* Remain outside or return to the classroom. Students begin to create a word wall of Aboriginal language that can be displayed and added to regularly. Words can be illustrated or given an English translation.

**Tips:**

* Encourage students to really connect with Country by using all their senses.
* If the Elder/respected Community member is with you outside, they can lead this activity.

**Extension:**

Students with more advanced knowledge or skills can write the words for the word wall.

Activity 3: Reflection and farewell

* Students reflect on what they have noticed and learnt.
* Farewell students in local language. Prompt them to repeat the farewell greeting before leaving.

Session 2

Activity 4: Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country

* Sit in a yarning circle.
* Model language for students to introduce themselves in the local language and say what language they are speaking, using gestures or sign language where appropriate.
* In turn, around the circle, students introduce themselves in the local language and say what language they are speaking. Many students will need prompting.
* Watch an appropriate Welcome to Country video (such as the [Boonwurrung](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNN2P7sEgEw) or [Woiwurrung](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeBWuItrpW8) Welcome to Country) and/or an [Acknowledgement of Country](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksBoJT_gkVc) video.
* If possible, an Elder/respected Community member welcomes the students to their Country and talks about what a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country are in the local context.
* Discuss how we can connect to Country no matter where we live.

**Discussion prompts:**

* Why is it important for the right person to welcome you to Country?
* What are the main things we can include in an Acknowledgement of Country?
* How do we connect to Country (for example, even when there are buildings around)?

Activity 5: Making a leaf ball

* Watch the video [‘Making the leaf game ball](https://vimeo.com/414971707)’.
* Go outside together to find resources to make the ball.
* Sitting in a yarning circle, each student makes their own ball.
* Discuss the word for ‘ball’ or, if the word for ‘ball’ was created, discuss simply the process of word creation. Further discussion could include the word for ‘leaf’ or the names of the plants students collected to make their ball too, if known.
* While making balls, discuss placenames and Community organisations with Aboriginal names.
* Return to the classroom and read the book *Welcome to Country* to students.
* Review the concept of connecting to Country, particularly in urban areas. Discuss the materials collected for the balls and where they were collected from.
* Store the leaf balls for future use in games, for example the Kangaroo hunting or feeding game in Learning activity 2.
* Add to the word wall of language. Additions may include new vocabulary or any local language names, such as local language placenames.

**Tips:**

* Encourage all students to be part of the discussions in some way.
* If there is not a word for ‘ball’, start some basic discussion about why there may not be a word for ‘ball’ in the local language and the protocols required in language creation.

Activity 6: Reflection and farewell

* Students reflect on what they have noticed and learnt.
* Farewell students in local language.

Assessment ideas

Pre-assessment

Ask students if they know any of the local language, for example greetings or local Aboriginal placenames. Check if they have experience listening to respected Aboriginal Community members, for example at gatherings.

Ongoing assessment

Students begin by mainly observing, listening, and showing understanding by following simple instructions and behaving respectfully. Then they progress to answering simple questions, repeating individual words that are modelled several times, contributing occasionally to discussions and showing understanding of respectful behaviours. Finally students will provide more detail in answers, say words without prompting, contribute regularly and thoughtfully to discussions, encourage others to behave respectfully, and show knowledge of key Aboriginal concepts and places discussed.

The teacher can use the table in [Appendix 2](#Appendix2) as a guide when observing students’ interactions in the language; participation in discussions and activities; answers to questions; behaviour with respected Community members; respect for language, culture and Country; and reflection on learning.

Resources

* Visit from an Elder/respected Community member, or a video of an Elder/respected Community member welcoming students to Country and local language learning
* ‘Connection to Country’ video, Galambila, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHBQhqvFaN4&t=77s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHBQhqvFaN4&t=77s)
* Learning activity 1 Session 1 words and phrases list (see [Appendix 1](#Appendix1))
* Murphy J and Kennedy L (2016) *Welcome to Country: a traditional Aboriginal ceremony*, Walker Books Australia, Newtown
* ‘Welcome to Country’ video, if possible from your Country (examples include Boonwurrung [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNN2P7sEgEw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNN2P7sEgEw) and Woiwurrung [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeBWuItrpW8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeBWuItrpW8))
* ‘Acknowledgement of Country’ video, Reconciliation Australia, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksBoJT\_gkVc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksBoJT_gkVc)
* ‘Making the leaf game ball’ video, Thamarrurr Youth, Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/414971707> (Wadeye region, Northern Territory)

Learning activity 2: Awareness of language diversity

**Timing (approximate):** 2 × 1-hour sessions

**Learning intentions – Session 1:** Learn that there are many different languages throughout Australia and the rest of the world

Understand that language belongs to communities

Be able to identify where the local language comes from on a map

**Learning intentions – Session 2:** Understand why Aboriginal people needed to be multilingual

Know that there are different neighbouring Aboriginal languages

Be able to show the directions of the Countries from which neighbouring Aboriginal languages come

Know that each Country has its own language and it is important to speak the right language for that Country

**Content descriptions (extracts):** Interact with each other [and] the teaching team ..., using language and gestures to … talk about self … [(VCLVC130)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCLVC130)

Participate in guided group activities, such as games ... and simple tasks, using movement and gestures to support understanding and to convey meaning [(VCLVC131)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCLVC131)

Describe aspects of self, such as ... language/s spoken, considering how these contribute to their sense of identity [(VCLVC139)](http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCLVC139)

Recognise that the language is part of the broader regional and national language diversity [(VCLVU147)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCLVU147)

Understand that language belongs to communities, and that language learning requires the application of respectful and appropriate behaviour [(VCLVU148)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCLVU148)

**Achievement standard (extracts):** By the end of Level 2, students interact with the teaching team ... to talk about themselves ... using familiar modelled language and gestures. They use appropriate protocols when interacting with ... community speakers, such as appropriate forms of address, terms of respect and behaviour. They use movement [and] gestures … to participate in guided group activities … They identify markers of their own identity, such as … language/s spoken, and compare these to the importance of Place … and relationships in Aboriginal [and Torres Strait Islander] communities …

They recognise that many different languages are spoken at their school, in their local community, and in other parts of Australia.

Preparation

* Review the lists of resources (see [the background resources for teachers](#BackResources) and [the list of resources for this learning activity](#Resources2)).
* Find a quiet, safe outdoor space, away from traffic and noise.
* Prepare Learning activity 2 words and phrases lists (see [Appendix 3](#Appendix3)) with the Language Team.
* Set up the Kangaroo hunting or feeding game (see [Appendix 5](#Appendix5)), including preparing cards with the words for ‘kangaroo’ in your local and neighbouring Aboriginal languages, where available. Use your Language Team to help with the words needed.
* Conduct any pre-assessment of student knowledge (see an example in [Assessment ideas](#Assessment2)).

Session 1

Activity 1: Introduction to Aboriginal languages

* Sit in a yarning circle.
* Introduce yourself in the local language, using sign language and/or gestures where appropriate.
* With prompting, students introduce themselves in the local language and say what language they are speaking as they go around the circle.
* Ask students which languages they speak at home or in their community, or which languages they hear around them.
* Look at [Gambay – First Languages Map](https://gambay.com.au/map/) and identify the local language or the area where the local language is. Explain that there is still a lot of work to be done on Australian languages.
* Teach and practise the word for ‘hand’ in the local language and, if available, the word for ‘show’ or ‘point’.
* Ask Aboriginal students in the class to show where their language is located on the map by using their hand.
* Show students a world globe or map of the world and ask all students to try to identify where their language(s) come(s) from by showing or pointing with their hands.

Activity 2: Different languages and cultures

* Watch the [Yorta Yorta](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab_BEXB-zzI) and [Yawuru](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrcUKgP_sks) videos.
* Ask students to find where these languages are on the Gambay map.
* Students share briefly their experiences of the different languages and cultures they know in Australia.
* Discuss how different Aboriginal languages have different cultures that are also connected to the land that they are on.
* Continue to add to the word wall of language.

Activity 3: Reflection and farewell

* Students reflect on what they have noticed and learnt.
* Farewell students in local language.

**Tips:**

* Ensure all students are included in finding where the languages they know come from on a map or globe. Some students may need time to check with their families.
* Make students aware that singing is an integral part of Aboriginal culture but that the songs in Activity 2 use Aboriginal language in English songs, which may change language stress.

**Extension:**

Students may know languages from places or countries outside Australia, other than their home language. Get them to point to those places or countries on the globe.

Session 2

Activity 4: Local Aboriginal languages

* Sit in a yarning circle.
* Introduce yourself in the local language, using sign language or gestures where appropriate.
* With prompting, students introduce themselves in the local language and say what language they are speaking as they go around the circle.
* Look at the [Aboriginal Languages of Victoria map](https://www.vaclang.org.au/Resources/maps.html) and ask students to point to the local language with their hand (using language learnt in Session 1).
* Identify and name three or four neighbouring Aboriginal languages, pointing to their location on the map. The class repeats these names several times.
* Show and say the words for ‘kangaroo’ in three or four neighbouring Aboriginal languages if possible. Students practise saying these words and language names aloud.
* Discuss with students that Aboriginal people were multilingual in order to interact and trade with their neighbours.

**Tip:** If the local language is from the Victorian border region, refer back to the Gambay map for information on neighbouring languages in other states.

Activity 5: Kangaroo hunting or feeding game

* Watch the relevant section of the [‘Yorta Yorta connection to Country Dookie](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQV_2rcEWzU)’ video and discuss directions, neighbouring Countries and languages.
* Watch [‘The Kangaroo Hunting Game](https://vimeo.com/414637383)’ video, and explain the concept of the Kangaroo hunting and feeding game (see [Appendix 5](#Appendix5)).
* Go outside and play the game.
* Remain outside or return to the classroom. Continue to add to the word wall of language.

**Tips:**

* If you have students in your class who are sensitive to the concept of hunting, encourage them to ‘feed’ the kangaroos instead.
* Adapt the game to suit taller, smaller, weaker and/or stronger students by grouping students according to throwing ability by positioning buckets to suit the skills of each group.
* As students play the kangaroo game, discuss which geographical/physical direction each language is located in, and any land and language features that are different in each Country.

Activity 6: Reflection and farewell

* Students reflect on what they have noticed and learnt.
* Farewell students in local language.

**Extension:** Students with more advanced knowledge or skills can write the words for the word wall.

Assessment ideas

Pre-assessment

Ask students if they know how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages there are and the names of any of those languages. Check if they have ever heard the local or any First Nations language being spoken. Check if they speak or hear other languages at home or in their community.

Ongoing assessment

Students begin by mainly observing, listening, and showing understanding by following simple instructions and behaving respectfully. Then they progress to answering simple questions, repeating individual words that are modelled several times, contributing occasionally to discussions and showing understanding of respectful behaviours. Finally students will provide more detail in answers, say words without prompting, contribute regularly and thoughtfully to discussions, encourage others to behave respectfully, and show knowledge of key Aboriginal concepts and places discussed.

The teacher can use the table in [Appendix 4](#Appendix4) as a guide when observing students’ interactions in the language; participation in discussions and the game; answers to questions; respect for language, culture and Country; and reflection on learning.

Resources

Resources used in Session 1

* Learning activity 2, Session 1 words and phrases list (see [Appendix 3](#Appendix3))
* Gambay – First Languages Map, <https://gambay.com.au/map/>
* ‘Aboriginal language classes at Gowrie St Primary School’ (Yorta Yorta language), McPherson Media Group, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab\_BEXB-zzI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab_BEXB-zzI)
* ‘“I am Australian” in Yawuru language’, ABC Australia, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrcUKgP\_sks](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrcUKgP_sks)
* world globe or world map

Resources used in Session 2

* Learning activity 2 words and phrases list (see [Appendix 3](#Appendix3)) (and Learning Activity 1 lists as needed)
* VACL Map, Victorian Aboriginal Corporation of Languages, [www.vaclang.org.au/Resources/maps.html](http://www.vaclang.org.au/Resources/maps.html) – Aboriginal Languages of Victoria map
* ‘Yorta Yorta connection to Country Dookie’ video (showing neighbouring Country directions), Goulburn Broken CMA, YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQV\_2rcEWzU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQV_2rcEWzU) – focus on 0:40–1:30
* ‘The Kangaroo Hunting Game’ video, Thamarrurr Youth, Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/414637383> (Wadeye region, Northern Territory)
* Kangaroo hunting or feeding game (see [Appendix 5](#Appendix5))

Appendices

Appendix 1: Learning activity 1 words and phrases

**Note:** Prepare the words and phrases lists with the Language Team. Some suggestions have been included, based on the activities, but you can also add additional language that you think is relevant. This additional language may include words and phrases you can use to expose students to more language (without explicit explanation) and gradually build students’ passive understanding.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning activity 1, Session 1 words and phrases list** | | |
| **English** | **Local language** | **Sign language or gestures (where relevant)** |
| me/I |  |  |
| you |  |  |
| him/he |  |  |
| her/she |  |  |
| farewell/ goodbye |  |  |
| I am speaking |  |  |
| local language name |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning activity 1, Session 2 words and phrases list** | | |
| **English** | **Local language** | **Sign language or gestures (where relevant)** |
| ball |  |  |
| hand |  |  |
| leaf |  |  |
| show/point |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Appendix 2: Learning activity 1 assessment grid

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Starting out** | **Progressing towards Level 2** | **By the end of Level 2  (achievement standard extracts)** |
| Students begin to interact with the teaching team and respected community members to talk about themselves, using familiar modelled language and gestures. | With support, students interact with the teaching team and respected community members to talk about themselves, using familiar modelled language and gestures. | …students interact with the teaching team and respected community members to talk about themselves ... using familiar modelled language and gestures. |
| Students understand that they need to be respectful and change their behaviour when talking to respected community members and community speakers. | With support, students are able to use appropriate behaviour and some language to interact with respected community members and community speakers. | [Students] use appropriate protocols when interacting with respected community members and community speakers, such as appropriate forms of address, terms of respect and behaviour. |
| Students listen to a respected community member talking about or demonstrating key information about Country/Place and answer very simple questions. | Students listen to a respected community member talking about or demonstrating key information about Country/Place and provide some details in their answers to simple questions. | [Students] identify key information about Country/Place, under the guidance of respected community members … |
| Students can distinguish local Aboriginal placenames from English language placenames. | With support, students are able to list local places that have names in the language, or point to them on a map. | [Students] identify places in the local area which have names in the language. |

Appendix 3: Learning activity 2 words and phrases

**Note:** Prepare the words and phrases lists with the Language Team. Some suggestions have been included, based on the activities, but you can also add additional language that you think is relevant. This additional language may include words and phrases you can use to expose students to more language (without explicit explanation) and gradually build students’ passive understanding.

| **Learning activity 2, Session 1 words and phrases list** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **English** | **Local language** | **Sign language or gestures (where relevant)** |
| hand |  |  |
| show/point |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

| **Learning activity 2, Session 2 words and phrases list** | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **English** | **Local language** | **Sign language or gestures (where relevant)** |
| ball |  |  |
| throw |  |  |
| neighbouring language 1 |  |  |
| neighbouring language 2 |  |  |
| neighbouring language 3 |  |  |
| neighbouring language 4 |  |  |
| kangaroo – local language |  |  |
| kangaroo – neighbouring language 1 |  |  |
| kangaroo – neighbouring language 2 |  |  |
| kangaroo – neighbouring language 3 |  |  |
| kangaroo – neighbouring language 4 |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Appendix 4: Learning activity 2 assessment grid

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Getting started** | **Progressing towards Level 2** | **By the end of Level 2 (achievement standard extracts)** |
| Students begin to interact with the teaching team to talk about themselves, using familiar modelled language and gestures. | With support, students interact with the teaching team to talk about themselves, using familiar modelled language and gestures. | …students interact with the teaching team ... to talk about themselves ... using familiar modelled language and gestures. |
| Students understand that they need to be respectful and change their behaviour when talking to respected community members and community speakers. | With support, students are able to use appropriate behaviour and some language to interact with respected community members and community speakers. | [Students] use appropriate protocols when interacting with … community speakers, such as appropriate forms of address, terms of respect and behaviour. |
| With some assistance, students use movement and gestures as they take turns, cooperate and follow instructions to play a group game. | With occasional assistance, students use movement and gestures as they take turns, cooperate and follow instructions to play a group game. | [Students] use movement [and] gestures … to participate in guided group activities … |
| Students can state that different Aboriginal languages are spoken locally and know there is a link between the local Community, their language and their Country. | With support, students are able to talk about languages they and others speak, and the link between the local Community, their language and their Country. | [Students] identify markers of their own identity, such as ... language/s spoken, and compare these to the importance of Place ... and relationships in Aboriginal [and Torres Strait Islander] communities. |
| Students are able to name the language they speak and the Aboriginal language they are learning. They know that some students at their school speak other languages. | Students are able to name the language they speak, the Aboriginal language they are learning, one or two other Aboriginal languages, and one or two other languages spoken in their local community or other parts of Australia. | [Students] recognise that many different languages are spoken at their school, in their local community, and in other parts of Australia. |

Appendix 5: Kangaroo hunting or feeding game

**Learning intention:** To appreciate language diversity, understand language protocols and learn the names of neighbouring languages

**Playing area:** A safe area for throwing

**Equipment:** One ball for each student (reuse those made in Learning Activity 1 if possible)

3–5 buckets, with signs in the local Aboriginal language and 2–4 neighbouring languages stuck to them. Each sign has a word for ‘kangaroo’ in language, as well as the name of the language

**Gameplay and basic rules:**

* The game takes place in a safe area for throwing.
* The teacher marks a position where each student will stand to ‘hunt’ or ‘feed’.
* The teacher places the local language bucket and each of the neighbouring language buckets at a safe throwing distance from the hunting or feeding position. They make sure to place the neighbouring language buckets in the same geographical direction as those Countries.
* Students line up and the front student begins from the hunting or feeding position.
* The student starts by saying both the word for ‘kangaroo’ and the name of their local language, in the local language. They acknowledge the Traditional Owners of their own language group (by addressing the bucket) and ask permission to hunt on their Country.
* Then the student throws their ball into the bucket for that language. If they get the ball in, they have ‘hunted’ or ‘fed’ kangaroo in their own Country. If they miss, or say either of the words incorrectly, they go to the back of the line. They continue to try each subsequent turn until they get the ball in the bucket and pronounce the words correctly.
* Once students have ‘hunted’ or ‘fed’ their local language, they continue to ‘hunt’ or ‘feed’ kangaroos in the other languages by saying both the word for ‘kangaroo’ and the name of the other language in that language. They first acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the language group (by addressing the bucket) and ask permission to hunt on their Country. Students should understand that when on other people’s Country they need to speak the right language.

**Tips:**

* If you have students in your class who are sensitive to the concept of hunting, encourage them to ‘feed’ the kangaroos instead.
* Adapt the game to suit taller, smaller, weaker and/or stronger students by grouping students according to throwing ability and positioning buckets to suit the skills of each group.
* As students play the kangaroo game, discuss which geographical/physical direction each language is located in, and what land and language features are different in each Country.