

Important Tenets

You might currently be feeling overwhelmed by the size of the task ahead of you, that there's so much to learn, and so much conflicting advice, that you're not sure where to start or how to get a handle on it all.

You might also be feeling like you're treading lightly, not wanting to do anything for risk of doing something offensive. That's totally fair. We're here to help!



It's important to remember a few key tenets for approaching including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in your curriculum:

- Include a balance of contemporary, traditional, urban, regional and local cultural perspectives. Sometimes it's not what we do but what we don't do that create stereotypes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is not static or uniform. Like all cultures, it is continually interpreted and adapted according to the influences on the person or the community ([Source](#)). So, don't immediately go to historical or cliché representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives can be modern and come from someone living in a major metropolitan area. Keep it diverse, just like you would any other culture or peoples from around the world.
- Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives holistically throughout your programming, and make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander influences are spread across multiple play spaces instead of creating cultural corners. This is a 'tourist approach'; only experiencing often stereotypical examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture as a one-off activity. This also extends to only engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on significant dates or during cultural celebration periods. We understand you might need to begin somewhere, but the end goal should be for your centre to not feel as if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are tacked on and separate. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives should be experienced every day and seamlessly integrated, not isolated in a 'cultural corner'.



- To do this, connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives with children's pre-existing interests, the same way you would with any learning. If children are interested in cooking, for example, think about how you can make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives just one of many unique cultural perspectives present in that play space. Make sure culture is play-based and not themed based teaching – this means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not the topic or theme of a particular activity. Additionally, make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources, tools and artefacts are utilised in play and not just used as a display. In practice, this might look like having some native cooking ingredients alongside your plastic peas and carrots, or including digging sticks alongside your plastic shovels in the sandpit. [Our activities](#) have more specific recommendations for once you've completed this introductory material, but start to think about incorporation rather than visitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.
- Also, you need to connect with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or Traditional Owners. Language and culture is going to be entirely dependent on your geographical location, and in order to respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, you need to go about this process the right way and engage with it on a personal, local level. As an added benefit, your local Elders and community groups will be able to lead you towards better understanding and practice than any general advice we can give here.
- Most of all, remember that doing nothing is worse than trying something. Don't be so overwhelmed or anxious about potentially being offensive, tokenistic, or leaning into stereotypes that put this in the too-hard basket.

