



Brave New Clan – Country/Place 2: Connection to Country – Years 4 to 6

Teacher preparation

Overarching learning goal: Students will understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a strong connection to Country, and that this experience and expression of connection to Country is different for everyone. Students will recognise that there are often Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander names for places all around Australia, including their local area. Students will find out who the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander custodians of the land, seas, skies and waterways in their local area are. Finally, students will recognise their own connection to places and how these places affect them and their identity.



Teacher content information:



"COUNTRY IN ABORIGINAL ENGLISH IS NOT ONLY A COMMON NOUN BUT ALSO A PROPER NOUN. PEOPLE TALK ABOUT COUNTRY IN THE SAME WAY THAT THEY WOULD TALK ABOUT A PERSON: THEY SPEAK TO COUNTRY, SING TO COUNTRY, VISIT COUNTRY, WORRY ABOUT COUNTRY, FEEL SORRY FOR COUNTRY, AND LONG FOR COUNTRY. PEOPLE SAY THAT COUNTRY KNOWS, HEARS, SMELLS, TAKES NOTICE, TAKES CARE, IS SORRY OR HAPPY. COUNTRY IS NOT A GENERALISED OR UNDIFFERENTIATED TYPE OF PLACE, SUCH AS ONE MIGHT INDICATE WITH TERMS LIKE 'SPENDING A DAY IN THE COUNTRY' OR 'GOING UP THE COUNTRY'. RATHER, COUNTRY IS A LIVING ENTITY WITH A YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW, WITH A CONSCIOUSNESS, AND A WILL TOWARD LIFE." – DEBORAH BIRD ROSE, NOURISHING TERRAINS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to Country. Connection to Country is important whether a person lives in a city or in a rural area. This connection has been the core of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander existence in Australia since time immemorial, and continues to be integral in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; influencing spiritual, physical, cultural, social and emotional wellbeing.



Connection to Country is complex, multilayered and can be difficult for non-Indigenous people to understand. Connection to Country is unable to be separated from identity, and holds physical, spiritual and familial connections, knowledge, and responsibilities. One's Country or language group provides a person with their identity by defining who they are, where they come from, and the places they are responsible for (these include the land, the waterways and the seas). Other core elements of identity such as skin names and totems come from Country, and Country links a person directly to family, ancestors and their Dreaming stories. All of this is inter-connected and brought to life with songlines being sung, and giving Country a voice through art, dance, rituals and music.

THE IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COUNTRY AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES MEANS THAT COUNTRY IS A PROPER NOUN AND IS THEREFORE CAPITALISED IN ALL WRITTEN MATERIAL. PLEASE ENSURE YOU FOLLOW THIS PROTOCOL WITH STUDENTS.

"Apmereyanhe, our Language-Land, is like a root or a tie to us. It holds all of us. The only way that we can translate into English how we see our relationship with the Land is with the words 'hold' and 'connect'. The roots of the country and its people are twined together. We are a part of the Land. The Land is us, and we are the Land. That's how we hold our Land." - Margaret Kemarre Turner, *Iwenhe Tyerrtye - What it means to be an Aboriginal person*.

About the films: *Who We Are: Brave New Clan* follows the lives of six exceptional young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who share stories about their communities, history and cultures in contemporary Australia. The films engage teachers and students in discussions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and allow students to examine the influences of family, kinship, community, Country/place, culture, spirituality, history and modern mainstream Australian society on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Further information about using these resources:

- [About Who We Are - Brave New Clan](#)
- [Who We Are - Brave New Clan - Supplementary Resources](#)

TALK WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS, STAFF, FAMILIES OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHEN PLANNING TO USE THE WHO WE ARE: BRAVE NEW CLAN LEARNING RESOURCES IN THE CLASSROOM. YOU COULD INVITE MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY TO SHARE STORIES ABOUT THEIR CULTURE AND EXPERIENCES. THIS WILL ENRICH THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS AND IS ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL WHEN LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ARE SHARED FROM THE PLACE STUDENTS ARE LIVING AND LEARNING.

Ground rules: You may have already created a set of ground rules during the Tuning In lesson. Remind students of these ground rules before commencing this lesson.

If you haven't created a set of ground rules, explain to students that due to the sensitive nature of some of the content in *Who We Are: Brave New Clan*, setting classroom ground rules before commencing this lesson is an important step in creating a safe space and helping develop mutual respect and understanding between the members of your classroom community.

Ground rules might include:

- Own your contributions: Use "I think" rather than "you should"
- Be respectful: each person has their own beliefs and values
- Value diversity: each person has their own world views, experiences and opinions
- Listen politely: each person has a right to contribute without pressure or intimidation
- Act with honour and courage: be brave in sharing experiences,



ideas and opinions

- Appreciate privacy: each person has the right to uphold their privacy
- Act responsibly: share feedback with thoughtful consideration and a positive attitude towards others

"WE MAY GO AWAY
FROM OUR COUNTRY,
BUT THE FLAME IS
ALWAYS BURNING TO GO
BACK AND RECONNECT."
— KIM

Teaching sequence

10 minutes - Watching and Responding to Film

10 minutes - Identifying Country of Hosts in Film

20 minutes - Locating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Place Names

20 minutes - Short Story Writing

10 minutes - Reflection (can be extended or completed as homework)

Work through this resource material in the following sequence:

Step 1. As a class, watch the *Who We Are: Country/Place* film (also available on the Student Worksheet). Focus student viewing by asking them to look for references to 'Country':

Who We Are: Country/Place (<http://bit.ly/1WBeOCM>)

Once complete, engage students in a class discussion around the



following questions:

- How did the hosts in this film talk about their connection to Country?
- What was interesting or surprising about the way they spoke of their connection to Country?
- How is this different or similar to your own connection to country?

Step 2. Explain to students that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to Country. Connection to Country is important, whether a person lives in the city or in a rural area. This connection has been the core of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander existence in Australia since time immemorial, and influences spiritual, physical, cultural, social and emotional well being. 'Healthy Country, healthy people' is an intrinsic belief held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In the film, James explains: "It is important for Aboriginal people to connect to Country. It's where we find our strength, revitalise ourselves, so we can head back to the cities and the towns and do what we need to do with energy and vitality."

Invite students to think again of the hosts in the film, and engage students in a discussion around the following questions:

- What is the significance of the opening sequence of the film when we first see the six hosts?
- What are some words the hosts use to describe how they feel when they are at home or on Country?

Record student ideas on the board.

Step 3. The below paragraph, written by anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose, describes the significance of Aboriginal connections to country. Project the paragraph on a screen so students can follow as you read out the paragraph.



"COUNTRY IN ABORIGINAL ENGLISH IS NOT ONLY A COMMON NOUN BUT ALSO A PROPER NOUN. PEOPLE TALK ABOUT COUNTRY IN THE SAME WAY THAT THEY WOULD TALK ABOUT A PERSON: THEY SPEAK TO COUNTRY, SING TO COUNTRY, VISIT COUNTRY, WORRY ABOUT COUNTRY, FEEL SORRY FOR COUNTRY, AND LONG FOR COUNTRY. PEOPLE SAY THAT COUNTRY KNOWS, HEARS, SMELLS, TAKES NOTICE, TAKES CARE, IS SORRY OR HAPPY. COUNTRY IS NOT A GENERALISED OR UNDIFFERENTIATED TYPE OF PLACE, SUCH AS ONE MIGHT INDICATE WITH TERMS LIKE 'SPENDING A DAY IN THE COUNTRY' OR 'GOING UP THE COUNTRY'. RATHER, COUNTRY IS A LIVING ENTITY WITH A YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW, WITH A CONSCIOUSNESS, AND A WILL TOWARD LIFE."
– DEBORAH BIRD ROSE, (NOURISHING TERRAINS, 1996)

Have an open discussion with students about this paragraph and how it makes them feel, or what parts of the paragraph they can relate to.

Ask students to choose a phrase or sentence from the paragraph that they feel connects in some way with what one of the hosts says in the film. Ask students to copy the phrase into their workbooks and write a paragraph underneath explaining how the host is connected to Country, using words from the phrase they have chosen.

Invite some students to share what they have written with the class.

Step 4. Break the class into six groups, and assign each group one of the hosts featured in the video: Kim, Harry, Josh, James, Miranda and Kaylah.

Invite each group to undertake research on the Internet on the places that the hosts call home. Each group should create an A4 sized poster of this place with images sourced online (remembering to include references) and some written information about:

- The common name of the place
- If you can find it, the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander name



for the place, if different from the common name (for example, Canberra was known by the Ngunnawal people as Kamberra or Kambery before being officially named Canberra in 1913)

- The geographic features

Invite groups to share their posters with the class and engage students in a discussion about the posters.

Step 5. Attach an A3 map of Australia to the wall or board. Explain to students that many of the places we are familiar with in Australia have names in both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and in English. In some places the original place name has remained, or an adaptation of this name is used, while in other places an English name is used.

Working in the same groups, invite students to conduct research online to see if they can find out the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language and English names for significant places in your local area and for other well-known places in Australia. These could be cities, parks, oceans, streets, tracks, etc.

Differentiation:

- Older students can choose 10 places to research. They should also:
 - Locate the names of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander groups that have custodianship of the land, sea, sky and waterways in at least two of the places they investigated AND for your local area.
 - Create a document that lists the names of the places they have found, and the meaning if possible. These documents can be compiled to create a class booklet to accompany your map.
- Assign younger students with 5 places to research. In addition, help your students to:
 - Locate the names of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander groups that have custodianship of the land, sea,

sky and waterways in one of the places they investigated AND for your local area.

- Create a poster that lists the names of the places they have found. These posters can be displayed close to the map.

Step 6. With all places researched, invite students to add the names and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language groups to the map of Australia you have attached to the wall/board.

Step 7. Remind students to think about what James says when he talks about his connection to Country (at 4:12):

"IF YOU EVER GO TO A PLACE WHERE YOU JUST FEEL LIKE YOU KNOW YOURSELF AND THIS PLACE KNOWS YOU, AND IT'S OK, AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY OR FEEL THREATENED." – JAMES

Through class discussion, invite students to share what this quote makes them feel and think about.

Next, continue your discussion by asking students to think about the following questions:

- Are there any places that are really special to you?
- Why are they special?
- Do you share any of these places with other people; for example your family or a group of friends?

Each student should then write a short story about this place, explaining why it is important. Encourage students to think about real and meaningful experiences that they have had in this place and how they and/or their family relate to or identify with the place. All students need to create a name for this place that is based upon their personal experience of the place, for example: *Lee Family Magic Cave* or *Nguyen Party Tree*.



Differentiation:

- Year 4 - Create a short story using student artworks to support the story.
- Year 5 - Create a short story in the style of a graphic novel or cartoon to communicate the narrative.
- Year 6 - Create a narrative in a written, spoken or multimodal/digital format based on the use of sensory language to convey a vivid picture of places, feelings and events.

Share these stories around the classroom or upload them to the class blog if you have one.

Reflection

Invite students to think about the place they call home and their relationship to this place, and answer the questions below (also available on the Student Worksheet):

- Where do you live?
- Where were you born?
- What place do you call home?
- In what ways is your home special?
- What are the special features of the place you call home?
- What natural landmarks are important in your area?
- Who else in your family has lived here?
- How does being at home make you feel?

EXTEND: STUDENTS CAN CONDUCT SMALL INTERVIEWS WITH IMMEDIATE AND EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS TO FIND OUT THE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS ABOVE, INCLUDING HOW LONG YOUR FAMILY HAS BEEN CONNECTED TO THE AREA WHERE YOU LIVE. STUDENTS SHOULD REFLECT ON WHETHER THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES OF HOME ARE DIFFERENT TO THEIRS.



Extension

Explore the concept of *Terra nullius* (meaning land belonging to no one) and how this relates to Native Title. Native Title recognises the traditional rights and interests to land and waters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Spend some time exploring what Native Title is and the history of Native Title in Australia. For example:

- When the British Empire colonised Australia, they did not recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their unique connection with Country. Instead, they claimed the land for the British Crown and declared that Australia is *Terra nullius* - land belonging to nobody.
- On 3 June 1992, six of the seven High Court judges upheld the claim and ruled that the lands of this continent were not *Terra nullius* or 'land belonging to no one' when European settlement occurred, and that the Meriam people were 'entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of (most of) the lands of the Murray Islands'.

Students can use the internet to investigate a Native Title case and make a [Prezi](#) that informs the class about the facts of the selected Native Title case. Ask students to use the Explanation Game to help organise their ideas. This routine focuses first on identifying something interesting about a topic, for example: "I notice that..." Students are then asked to follow up this observation with the question: "Why is it that way?" or "Why did it happen that way?"

Resources to get started:

- [Share Our Pride](#)
- [Australian Museum - The Land](#)

Take it further

Organise a class excursion to a significant site in your local area. Seek



guidance from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander rangers or community members about significant areas and invite them to join you to speak about the significance and the history of that place.