

The image features a vibrant, abstract background. A large, dark green shape dominates the center, with a lighter green, concentric-circle pattern on the right side. Red, orange, and grey organic shapes are scattered around the green area. The text 'Cultural Actions' is centered in white, sans-serif font.

Cultural Actions



Scroll through the suggested actions below and consider whether they can be adapted or contextualised for your learning community and included in your Be You Action Plan.

How can these actions be most effective?

We encourage you to consider the following steps to help increase the effectiveness of whole-setting actions:

- Consult with members of the learning community, particularly Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers or Aboriginal Teaching Assistants, to develop and agree on the best approach. You could also seek input from the wider community, including Elders, families or caregivers, health and community services.
- Tailor actions to meet the needs of your learning community. For example, modify or contextualise actions to suit the age and demographics of the children or young people in your care.
- Regularly review and revisit actions to check their effectiveness and to drive continuous improvement.

Walk softly

- Introduce yourself to families and caregivers in a way that's meaningful – allow yourself to be guided by the AIEOs/ ATAs to identify the most appropriate way to do this.
- While maintaining a work-life balance, be open to proactively take part in wider community events and programs that operate outside of school hours, such as youth programs and sporting events. Interschool sporting carnivals, such as basketball competitions/football camps, and youth leadership camps provide an opportunity for connection outside the classroom.
- Be willing to meet with families in informal settings outside the school or where they feel most comfortable.
- Engage with AIEOs/ATAs on a regular basis to keep informed of any significant events occurring and the potential impact of these on the classroom environment.
- Protocols concerning engaging with community members during sorry business/sorry time may vary from location to location, never assume that you know the culturally responsive way to interact, always ask.
- When making enquiries about a child or young person's welfare, ask "what's happening for you?" Don't make assumptions or ask leading questions.
- Undertake ongoing cultural awareness training specific to the community and prior to engagement with families, caregivers and students, if possible.
- Be aware of your own unconscious biases and how they may affect your interactions and decisions.
- Support boys to identify the person/people they feel comfortable speaking with about their social and emotional wellbeing.
- Engage with local initiatives and organisations working collaboratively with youth promoting healthy social and emotional wellbeing practices.
- Endeavour to better understand the local history of the community if cultural awareness training is unavailable.



Identify and build connections

- Work with the students to identify who they are, where they come from and how they see themselves in the world. This will support students to feel seen as a whole individual.
- Use photographs and multimedia to share family relationships, interests, places visited, or favourite sporting teams to invite connection.
- Facilitate lessons outside the school walls in spaces where community members are present and where experiential learning can take place. This could include working on a project with local councils, where students map out a piece of land, plan for a park that they would like to see created on this space and have these proposals considered by the council. Students could then work as a group on the winning proposal.
- Encourage Elders to come into the learning community and participate in cultural activities within the school. This could include leading days of significance, storytelling, and smoking ceremonies.
- Develop ongoing communication strategies with caregivers and families, that focus on the positive activities in the classroom. This could include monthly catch-up conversations, emails or text messages to the caregivers and families.
- Send a monthly newsletter by email and hard copy, to caregivers and families, including videos and photos showing class activities and highlighting class achievements.
- Create a buddy bench or friendship chair that encourages students to connect with others in the playground.
- Schedule regular home visits, where appropriate. These visits should focus on the achievements and efforts of the child or young person, rather than behaviour and results alone. Home visits can support building strong relationships with families and caregivers.
- As shame can be a significant barrier to a student's personal growth, create a process which allows children or young people to ask for help within the classroom in an inconspicuous way. This might include placing an object on their desk to alert the educator they need help.

Identify and build connections

- Enquire if there are local community members willing and able to perform a smoking ceremony at the start of the school year or term, and ask families to join. For many Aboriginal people smoking ceremonies can help to cleanse an environment or in certain locations, to welcome people to a space.
- Recognise days of local and national significance including the Pilbara Strike, NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week. This could include having an event or an art competition.
- Create a term calendar of cultural events, activities and seasons and display it in the classroom. There are six seasons in the Kimberley. You could also promote an existing Aboriginal seasons calendar that depicts the local weather patterns, flora and fauna availability as well as traditional ecological knowledge.
- Establish positive relationships and praise when you see children or young people, their families and caregivers in an informal setting outside the school environment.
- Approach community Elders to provide cultural supervision for AIEOs and ATAs.
- Actively involve caregivers or family members in the decision-making process for any matter relating to the child or young person. Fostering the student's social and emotional wellbeing should be a team effort.
- Include community members in storytelling activities with staff and students offering both traditional and more modern stories promoting local Aboriginal cultures. This may include reading stories in local languages to promote a bilingual environment.
- Determine a shared contextualised, culturally responsive understanding of what social and emotional wellbeing means within the school and community.
- Invite the community to special events or celebrations within the learning environment. An example of a special event is the Pilbara Fashion Show.
- Support young people to seek out and engage in opportunities outside school, for example, job interviews, life skills, art exhibitions, scholarships.
- Create an induction/familiarisation package for new families when they enrol their first child.

Identify and build connections

- Be approachable. Families or caregivers may not want to book an appointment to talk, preferring less formal engagement. Non-confrontational questions like “Are you doing anything?” “Is it ok if ..?” “Are you busy later?” help set this space in a culturally responsive manner.
- Take the time to build a relationship with AIEOs/ATAs, recognise the value they bring into the school and the knowledge of the community they hold. Don’t talk down to them - make them the cup of tea!
- If a child or young person engages you in a confidential conversation, you need to ensure they understand you can’t maintain confidentiality if they are at risk. You must document the conversation if there is a perceived risk.
- Encourage mum and bubs playgroups to come into the learning community to build relationships.
- Promote special events at the school through flyers, on noticeboards and word-of-mouth.
- Consider incorporating community-led programs and incentives designed to encourage positive school attendance.
- Organise/attend events where students and families can meet with health care service providers and collectively discuss issues that can affect a young person’s wellbeing.
- Attend the annual Reconciliation Ball or family fun day, hosted by the Shire of East Pilbara during Reconciliation Week.
- Attend Elders’ birthday celebrations in Roebourne.
- Attend Martu community events.
- Volunteer with the YMCA Remote Schools Attendance Strategy buses in Newman.
- Create an Aboriginal Educators Cultural Group within schools and communities who can work with Elders to promote Aboriginality and cultural recognition within their learning space.
- Host a disco for all students in a region/learning cluster to come together.
- Assess the preferred and most effective ways to engage with different families and caregivers. This may be through texting, a newsletter or a face-to-face conversation.
- Organise community fundraising events, such as family fun days, to raise money for school excursions and/or equipment.

Provide flexible, culturally responsive education

- Form networks with educators, AIEOs and ATAs from other schools to gain an understanding of their communities, share similarities and differences. This allows everyone to share knowledge and activity ideas - not only ideas that have been tried and were successful, but also those that haven't worked.
- Incorporate local Aboriginal history in lessons. This can be achieved by working with AIEOs and ATAs to identify the local holders of this knowledge and who in the community would be best placed to lead these lessons or assist with discussions. Suggested sources include local Native Title Bodies, Prescribed Body Corporates or other Traditional Owner groups.
- Develop projects with students to celebrate and better understand their cultures and history with the class. This doesn't have to be limited to paper-based projects. It could be a photography or oral history project where students learn about their history from their Elders and create a PowerPoint presentation, which they present to the class.
- Cultural excursions including trips on Country, camping, fishing and hunting all encourage intergenerational knowledge translation when actively engaging with Elders, AIEOs/ATAs and rangers. This can help you identify significant sites in the region. It could also be an opportunity to build connections with families or caregivers, who could be approached to volunteer for these excursions.
- Establish a healthy cooking and gardening program incorporating traditional Indigenous foods and plants. Get the local rangers to support this work and share their knowledge, which could include foraging excursions. In some places, like One Arm Point Remote Community School, EON Foundation has worked with classes to share knowledge about Bardi seasons, such as the best times to plant and harvest crops and when to eat certain animals to ensure they don't become extinct. This has enabled educators and students to plant and maintain a healthy fruit and vegetable garden in accordance with the traditional Bardi seasonal calendar.
- Engage knowledgeable community members to lead bush medicine workshops, including collecting materials and making medicines. This activity enables knowledge to be passed between generations and strengthens connections between children or young people and the older people in their community. You could also include learning about traditional Aboriginal medicine and ecological knowledge in science classes.



Provide flexible, culturally responsive education

- Use 50words.online (website) to incorporate local language into the classroom which could include signs and learning areas. This activity enables students to become the educators, highlighting how, in different contexts, people's roles can change. At One Arm Point and Jigalong Remote Community schools, Bardi, Martu and English are included on signs in classrooms and around the school. This allows students to feel as though their identity is recognised and celebrated.
- Name each classroom after an animal or season in the appropriate language, in consultation with the local language centre or Traditional Owner group.
- Teach the local and English names of sites/towns/items/activities in the community. This activity could also include an excursion around the community where students map out the areas, then name them in the local language and in English. This incorporates various curricula in one activity and allows students to be the holders of knowledge and the educators to learn from them.
- Incorporate a structured local language lesson in the classroom. At Roebourne School, some of the AIEOs run a cultural class and teach language to the students. This activity builds capacity and confidence for the AIEO staff while also reminding students that their local language is valued.
- Engage community members to teach language for different classes, such as music, art and language classes, based on their strengths, interests and skill sets.
- Run a classroom art exhibition where the children can display art they have made that represents their culture or the Land, and invite community members to attend.
- Determine a common language or visual representations for emotions, including non-verbal communication, that allows children to self-select how they are feeling. For example, thumbs up, halfway or thumbs down.
- Use the Be You Feeling Cards to encourage conversation with children and young people.
- Actively promote the use and active engagement with Aboriginal authors and books in the classroom and at home. For more information visit: <https://www.indigenouliteracyfoundation.org.au/>
- Be aware of the influence that the physical environment can have on students who have been exposed to trauma. Create spaces that promote different energy levels, balancing spaces for calm and high energy levels.

Provide flexible, culturally responsive education

- Establish classroom principles and learning foundations with AIEOs/ATAs. These could include learning principles that include the incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.
- Encourage children and young people to identify and talk about their role models. You could create role model wall or run a show and tell.
- Learning communities in urban areas can establish connections with the Land by exploring the local national parks through a cultural lens with Aboriginal Park Rangers.
- Develop an Acknowledgement of Country protocol and policy, which is school and classroom specific. Have an acknowledgement in class each morning and ask students to take turns in sharing why this is important and what it means to them personally.
- Work with the AIEO/ATA, families or caregivers to learn about family structures, avoidance relationships and kinship obligations in the community. Consider these relationships before planning an event or seating arrangements in classroom.
- Create a leadership program, within the classroom or school, that supports inclusive and responsive learning where students competent in their language are encouraged to help others learn.
- Create personalised learning strategies and emotional de-escalation activities that actively include the caregivers and work with the families' identified strengths.
- Develop lesson plans with the AIEOs/ATAs that can be used for children across a range of developmental ages and capabilities.
- Share lesson plans with the caregivers and families in a way that is easy for them to understand and encourages feedback.
- Establish a sensory box within the classroom.
- With help from AIEOs/ATAs and community members create a list of local language swear words that's available to new education staff, to best restrict use of these words in the classroom.
- Actively include children or young people in decision-making processes to determine the type and location of culturally responsive activities.



Provide flexible, culturally responsive education

- Have a clear, fair, consistent and transparent response to racism and subsequent bullying incidents (physical, verbal, online) specific to your community for educators, AIEOs/ ATAs and school support officers to use. You'll find anti-racism resources listed in the 'Provide flexible, culturally responsive education' section of this resource.
- Display the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Map of Indigenous Australia in the classroom and encourage students to identify Language Groups known to them. It can be found here: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/>
- Greet children, young people, families and caregivers at the school drop-off or pick-up in local language. You can also promote local language through 'word of the week' activities.
- Engage children and young people in intergenerational learning and modelling respectful relationships by visiting Elders in nursing homes and making connections.
- Engage children and young people in learning and singing songs with Elders. Make sure you consider cultural sensitivities and protocols.
- Invite Aboriginal artists to encourage students to create their own culturally meaningful art that can be displayed in the classroom. Incorporate Bronwyn Bancroft's *The Art in Country* book in your art class and discuss the significance of shapes, colours and patterns of Country. You could also work with a local art centre to engage children and young people in making natural pigments, such as ochre.
- ANZAC Day activity – read *Alfred's War* by Rachel Bin Salleh, which explores roles and perspectives of Aboriginal soldiers during World War I.
- Reinforce the importance of language in the classroom and create an open space where children can express themselves in a language of their choice.
- Create lessons that explore the history of colonisation from an Aboriginal perspective to better understand its ongoing impacts.
- Display culturally appropriate artifacts/artwork around the school. Discuss how to do this appropriately with AIEOs/ ATAs and community members.
- Provide opportunities for intergenerational learning where Elders are invited into schools and tell their stories to younger generations. This could include conducting activities on Country that they engaged in when they were children, such as looking for goannas in Jigalong.

Provide flexible, culturally responsive education

- Work with Aboriginal health care services, offering them the chance to come into the learning community to talk about relevant topics such as bullying, anxiety and social and emotional wellbeing.
- Encourage learning in different spaces, both indoors and outdoors.
- Invite Aboriginal LGBTQIA+ speakers to the school to talk to young people about celebrating diversity, promoting inclusion, encouraging belonging and creating a safe space.
- Establish an 'Australian animal of the month' calendar and discuss the stories and cultural significance of the animal for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Engage a community member to teach traditional weaving, enabling the class to make wearable art.
- Include traditional Aboriginal instruments in music class and engage a community member to discuss the significance of instruments, including how they're made and when they're used.
- Ask the AIEO or ATA to teach students Aboriginal symbols to incorporate in writing, drawing and storytelling.
- Engage with the artist of your learning community's Reconciliation Action Plan artwork to discuss the significance and connection of the artwork to your setting.
- Encourage the students to take part in yarning circles to share their ideas and thoughts throughout the day. Ask the AIEO/ATA to lead the yarning circle.
- Explore Songlines and Dreamtime stories by inviting Elders to share their knowledge and reflections of these.
- Teach about significant social activism of leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentors. This could include Truganini, Mabo or Vincent Lingiari.
- Discuss David Unaipon's achievements and why he is on the Australian \$50 (fifty dollar) note.
- Discuss the music of Archie Roach, including the song *Took the Children Away*.
- Discuss the journey towards the 1967 referendum and what impact that had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- Use the ABC's 'Right Wrongs' resource to discuss social change and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander civil rights movement. You can find it here: <https://www.abc.net.au/rightwrongs/>

Provide flexible, culturally responsive education

- Discuss Reconciliation Week, including what it aims to do and how the learning community can get involved in developing their Reconciliation Action Plan. Read *Say Yes* by Jennifer Castles to unpack the meaning of Reconciliation Week and ask questions such as “What does reconciliation mean to me?”
- Discuss Native Title, Traditional Land Ownership and the impact of the Mabo case in your geography class.
- Read *Sorry Day* by Coral Vass and Dub Leffler to acknowledge National Sorry Day on 26 May.
- Engage in natural play by exploring different natural materials sourced from the local area. Work with a local ranger to explain what natural resources are available in your local area, including native seeds and where they can be planted in a learning setting.
- Work with the AIEO/ATA to embed the 8 Aboriginal ways of learning in your classroom.
- Read Bruce Pascoe’s *Young Dark Emu* to engage local ways of knowing and being with Country from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective.
- Work with community groups to do an on Country clean-up day.
- Display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in your classroom and discuss the meaning of the colours and symbols.
- Discuss the significance of the 1946 Pilbara Strike, which lasted until 1949, when hundreds of Aboriginal pastoral workers walked off the job for better pay and conditions.
- Run a competition for each classroom where students collaborate on an artwork that relates to the NAIDOC theme for the year. Encourage students to research the theme, Aboriginal art styles and to work together to map and develop a piece that will be presented to the rest of the school and community members. Elders could be invited to the reveal ceremony and be on the judging panel to choose the winning artwork.
- Organise a NAIDOC ball for all students to attend. Here you can raise the profile of your local Aboriginal students by encouraging them to share stories, cultural dances and food with other students. To ensure all students are comfortable to attend, educators should seek to have shoes and formal wear donated for students who may not be able to obtain these. Engage service providers and Aboriginal Medical Services to support the event. You could also ensure students’ families, Elders and community members are invited.