Teacher background information

## Acknowledgement of Country

**Australian Curriculum (v9.0)**

Digital Technologies, Year 5 and 6 | Knowledge and understanding: Data representation

Content description

explore how data can be represented by off and on states (zeros and ones in binary) (AC9TDI6K04)

Content elaboration

Making collaboratively a long thread with beads representing binary for the letters that spell the Country/Place name in the local First Nations language and English, and could be displayed as a ‘binary banner’ as an Acknowledgement of Country that we are on the Traditional Lands of the <insert name> Peoples

### Connecting the content elaboration and content description

This content elaboration give students the opportunity to understand and deepen their knowledge of what an Acknowledgement of Country is, and its significance for all Australians, by recognising First Nations Australians’ special connection, physically and spiritually, to Country/Place. Through investigating the local name for the First Nations Australian language or language group(s), students explore data representation, learning about the way data, in the form of text, can be represented in binary (on and off states). In using the context of Acknowledgement of Country, students can explore First Nations Australian language or group names written digitally, as symbols and using a long thread of beads.

### Detail

For millennia, First Nations Australians have lived on, and cared for, the country known as Australia. However:

When the British officers and convicts of the First Fleet arrived in Australia in 1788, their aim was to claim the land as their own. They considered it their duty to expand the British Empire. They were confident in their assumption that they had the ‘right’ to occupy the ‘empty land’. (Pascoe, 2019, p 8)

An Acknowledgement of Country is a demonstration and validation of respect for the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which an event or meeting is being held. It recognises the continuing connection and relationship between First Nations Australians and their Country.

An Acknowledgement of Country is usually given at the beginning of an event, meeting or formal occasion by anyone and can be given by a significant non-Indigenous person or by any person, including by a First Nations Australian who is from another Nation or place. Many schools have a visible Acknowledgement of Country on the walls of school buildings and in classrooms that acknowledges local First Nations Peoples.

In schools, an Acknowledgement of Country can be used for many purposes and events including:

* staff workshops, meetings, professional learning activities
* assemblies and presentations and awards events
* sports days
* governing body meetings
* meetings with external participants, organisations, government bodies
* at the start of each day.

While there is no specific wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, they should convey sincerity and respect. You are strongly encouraged to do some investigation or research about the Country that is being acknowledged.

At the beginning of a school event or meeting, the principal or another school leader or person running the occasion (or nominee) gives an acknowledgement by saying something like:

*I begin by acknowledging the local Traditional Owners and Custodians, the \_\_\_\_\_\_People of the land on which we gather today, and their deep feelings of attachment and relationship to this Country. I respect and value the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_People’s connection to land, sea, sky and waters and pay my respects to Elders past and present.*

Often, some personalised content can be included such as recognising a particular site on that Country that has significance to the person giving the Acknowledgement.

Increasingly, broad Acknowledgements of Country/Place are being included on organisations’ websites, email signature blocks and on social media, such as:

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (name of organisation/business) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country and Place throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters, sky and Community. We pay our respects to all First Nations Australian Peoples, histories and cultures, and Elders past and present.*

### Country/Place

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority in the Australian Curriculum highlights Country/Place as one of its three key concepts, along with Culture and People. The key concept Country/Place:

* recognises the special connection to Country/Place and celebrates the unique belief systems that connect First Nations Australians physically and spiritually to Country/Place.
* positions First Nations Australians as the Traditional Owners of Country/Place and highlights how native title law recognises the rights and interests of the First Peoples of Australia and the First Nations Peoples of the Torres Strait in Country/Place.
* acknowledges the impacts of colonisation and the doctrine of *terra nullius* on First Nations Australians’ ownership of, and access to, Country/Place. (ACARA, 2023)

These are recognised through the following three organising ideas for Country/Place:

###### A\_TSICP1: First Nations communities of Australia maintain a deep connection to, and responsibility for, Country/Place and have holistic values and belief systems that are connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.

###### A\_TSICP2: The occupation and colonisation of Australia by the British, under the now overturned doctrine of *terra nullius*, were experienced by First Nations Australians as an invasion that denied their occupation of, and connection to, Country/Place.

###### A\_TSICP3: The First Peoples of Australia are the Traditional Owners of Country/Place, protected in Australian Law by the *Native Title Act 1993* which recognises pre-existing sovereignty, continuing systems of law and customs, and connection to Country/Place. This recognised legal right provides for economic sustainability and a voice into the development and management of Country/Place. (ACARA, 2023)

### Uluru

Uluru is a sacred site to the Traditional Owners and Custodians, the Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjara Peoples of that Country and who have been living there for thousands of years. In the local Anangu language, Uluru means ‘great pebble’ and was called this a long time before colonisation. Uluru is a huge chunk of rock, a massive sandstone monolith, that is estimated to be about half a billion years old and is a UNESCO World Heritage site (along with the surrounding Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park) for its cultural and natural values.

Uluru is very significant to Anangu through Tjukurpa (traditional law, stories and spirituality), which is kept alive and strong by Traditional Owners and Custodians. Tjukurpa lives in Country and People.

In 1985, the Mutitjulu oval was the site for the historic handback of Uluru whereby Anangu Traditional Owners were given freehold title deeds for the park. Mutitjulu Community rangers look after and jointly manage Uluru.

### Connecting with Community

Learning opportunities can be further contextualised and deepened through a process of connecting with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, knowledges, cultures and language(s). Acknowledging and consulting and collaborating with Community provides opportunities for two-way learning that is essential for creating, implementing and evaluating resources, teaching and learning strategies, and curriculum content. All students benefit.



Source: Maths in Schools and the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance

### References

[Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/welcome-country), accessed 24 November 2023.

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, [Understand this cross-curriculum priority](https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/teacher-resources/understand-this-cross-curriculum-priority/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures#accordion-38e6895a00-item-80b33fc2b2), accessed 23 November 2023.

Department of Education Queensland, [Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country](https://indigenousportal.education.qld.gov.au/resource/Documents/acknowledgment-of-country-overview.pdf), accessed 23 November 2023.

Pascoe, B. (2019). *Young Dark Emu: A truer history*. Magabala Books, p 8.

Reconciliation Australia, [Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country](https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/acknowledgement-of-country-and-welcome-to-country/), accessed 23 November 2023.