



IT'S TIME FOR TREATY

A GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS AND EARLY LEARNING CENTRES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reconciliation Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and community. We pay our respects to those communities and their cultures as well as Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our office sits. We acknowledge that First Peoples have called for Treaty for many years and hope that this aspiration is fulfilled and embraced by all Victorians.

“Reconciliation Victoria’s Treaty Toolkits are grounded in our core goals and our commitment to support truth telling, justice and self-determination for and with First Peoples. The resources and actions within will support individuals, organisations, and institutions to engage meaningfully with Treaty in their local communities.”

Shane Charles and Andrew Gunstone,
Co-Chairs of Reconciliation Victoria

“Treaty is for all Victorians and will allow us to come together, share and listen so we can build a deeper understanding and a foundation of mutual respect on the journey towards reconciliation.”

Diana David,
former CEO of Reconciliation Victoria

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Jodie Brennan, Mazart Communications
Supply Nation and Kinaway Certified



Reconciliation Victoria would like to thank Bank Australia for their ongoing support.

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A note on language: Throughout this toolkit “First Peoples” is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The use of a capitalised “Treaty” refers to the many possible outcomes of current negotiations and may refer to multiple treaties.

ABOUT RECONCILIATION VICTORIA

Reconciliation Victoria is the statewide body for reconciliation, acting as a focal point for advancing a deeper understanding, respect, truth, and justice for and with First Peoples.

Reconciliation Victoria focuses efforts on local governments, community groups and the education sector as they provide opportunities to make significant and widespread progress in reconciliation.

Our vision is a Victorian identity that reflects our true history, and promotes and celebrates First Peoples' cultures, equity and self-determination.

Find out more about us at
www.reconciliationvic.org.au



FIRST PEOPLES AND VICTORIA

First Peoples have lived in Victoria for many tens of thousands of years, with evidence around Moyjil in Warrnambool showing probability that First Peoples have been here for at least 120 000 years.

There is much diversity among the First Peoples of Victoria. Different Traditional Owners have different creation stories, totems, art styles and cultures. There are upwards of 44 different Language Groups, and within certain groups there are also different clans.

There are currently 11 Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) across Victoria. At this stage, not all Traditional Owners have RAP status, however one of the aims of Treaty is to achieve this formal recognition for all Traditional Owner groups across Victoria.

It is crucial that when working for and with First Peoples you recognise they are not a homogeneous group.

To learn more about the Country on which you live, work and learn on, visit the Maggolee website at www.maggolee.org.au

Knowing the Traditional Owners of the land you are on is an important aspect of cultural competency.

It is also important to acknowledge that, despite the severe impacts of colonisation on First Peoples in Victoria, links to Country have never been broken. Traditional cultural, spiritual and economic links to Country are enduring.


WHAT IS A TREATY?

First Peoples have long called for Treaty but for many in the wider community the idea of Treaty may still be a cause for confusion.

After the colonisation of Australia, a treaty between First Peoples and the colonisers was never signed. You may have heard of the invalid Batman “treaty” of 1835 which was an attempt to take advantage of the local Traditional Owners.

Treaties between First Peoples and colonisers have been signed in many different countries including New Zealand and Canada.

The Treaty process has never advanced as far as it has in Victoria. Treaty is something that will benefit everyone as it is an important step towards reconciliation.



Simply, a treaty
is an agreement
between parties.



THE STORY OF TREATY SO FAR

After a series of Self-determination Forums with Victorian Traditional Owners throughout 2016, the Victorian Government committed to exploring Treaty. An Aboriginal Treaty Working Group was established in 2016, and Aunty Jill Gallagher AO was appointed as the independent Victoria Treaty Advancement Commissioner in 2017.

The Victorian Parliament passed the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act* in June 2018. This contained the legal power to establish an elected First Peoples representative body – The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. The current First Peoples' Assembly was elected September – October 2019.

It is important to note that the current Treaty process is not supported by all First Peoples in Victoria.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF TREATY?

Treaty will lead to significant benefits for all Victorians.

As the first state in Australia to reach this stage of the Treaty process, all Victorians can be proud of the efforts to build a more just and fair society.

The efforts of Elders in fighting for Treaty for many years is something to be respected and celebrated.

A Treaty will likely result in improvements in cultural rights and recognition, health, education, economic development and employment outcomes, something that will strengthen the whole state of Victoria.

Importantly, a Treaty will lay solid foundations on which First Peoples and the wider community can build stronger relationships based on respect and a shared understanding of our history.

Treaty is for all Victorians and will allow us to come together, share and listen so we can build a deeper understanding and a foundation of mutual respect on the journey towards reconciliation..



RECONCILIATION VICTORIA'S VIEW ON TREATY

Reconciliation Victoria has long supported the aspirations of First Peoples in calling for self-determination.

We believe truth-telling is an essential part of the Treaty process and that it supports First Peoples to achieve self-determination.

We acknowledge that there is a diversity of views among Traditional Owners in Victoria about the effectiveness of the current Treaty process. We are pleased that the First Peoples' Assembly is investigating alternate pathways for membership so the voices of all Victorian Traditional Owners can be heard in this process.

We believe Treaty will be the most significant step towards self-determination ever taken in Victoria and that Treaty possibilities will strengthen reconciliation pathways and progress.

To ensure the benefits of Treaty are delivered, the voices of all Victorian Traditional Owners need to be heard and respected. This is an exciting time for all Victorians and the Treaty process is cause for great optimism.

FIRST PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY STRUCTURE

CO-CHAIRS

Marcus Stewart Taungurung Representative	Geraldine Atkinson North East Representative
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EXECUTIVE REPRESENTATIVES

Rueben Berg Metropolitan	Tracey Evans Metropolitan	Jamie Lowe Eastern Maar	Melissa Jones First People of the Millewa-Mallee	Troy McDonald Gunai Kurnai Land and Waters	Ngarra Murray Metropolitan	Trent Nelson Dja Dja Wurrung
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MEMBER REPRESENTATIVES

Jason Kelly North West	Sean Fagan Wadawurrung	Muriel Bamblett Metropolitan	Peter Hood South East	Jordan Edwards South West	Leanne Miller North East
Andrew Gardiner Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung	Carolyn Briggs AM Metropolitan	Dylan Clarke Barengi Gadjin Land Council	Raylene Harradine North West	Esmerelda Bamblett Metropolitan	Donna Wright Gunditj Mirring
Trevor Gallagher Metropolitan	Alice Pepper South East	Travis Morgan North East	Matthew Burns Metropolitan	Michael Bell South West	
	Shane Clarke Bunurong Land Council	Alister Thorpe Metropolitan	Charmaine Clarke South West	Jacinta Chaplin North West	Kaylene Williamson South East



For more information on The Assembly,
visit www.firstpeoplesvic.org

THE FIRST PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY OF VICTORIA

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (The Assembly) is an elected representative body for First Peoples in Victoria. As the graphic on the left shows, it is made up of elected members and reserved seat holders. Every member is a Victorian Traditional Owner.

It is important to note that The Assembly will not negotiate Treaty. Its main role is to establish:



THE TREATY AUTHORITY:

an independent umpire throughout the Treaty process.

THE TREATY NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK:

which will set up how Treaties can be agreed to in Victoria.

A SELF-DETERMINATION FUND:

so First Peoples can be on a level playing field with government.

ELDERS' VOICE

The Assembly is establishing an Elders' Voice to ensure Elders are at the heart of a culturally strong Treaty process.

The Elders' Voice will provide Elders of Victoria with opportunities to exercise their cultural authority and experience to strengthen Victoria's progress towards Treaty by providing guidance, wisdom and cultural oversight to the work of the Assembly.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS AND EARLY LEARNING CENTRES

As the educators of our youngest Victorians, schools and early learning centres have a crucial role to play in improving the lives of First Peoples across the state.

It is important that our future leaders and the wider community are knowledgeable and are prepared to grasp the world of opportunities that Treaty will present for all Victorians.

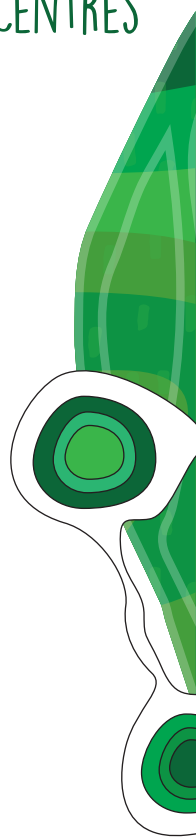
Educators can stay up to date on the progress of Treaty by connecting with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, local Traditional Owners and Reconciliation Victoria.

Reconciliation Victoria has developed a set of resources, each aimed at supporting a different audience to engage with Treaty; educators and educational institutions, community organisations and local government.

These resources are grounded in Reconciliation Victoria's core goals: to support cultural safety, equitable outcomes, a new statewide identity, and to ensure accountability, and address historical injustice.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures is an F-10 cross curriculum priority. The actions within this toolkit and the wider work of Reconciliation Victoria spans outcomes from that priority and extend beyond it.

Each of the following sections contain actions you can implement to strengthen your school or centre's relationships with Treaty.





STRENGTHEN YOUR
RELATIONSHIPS WITH
TREATY THROUGH:

CULTURAL SAFETY

EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

A NEW STATEWIDE IDENTITY

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

ADDRESSING HISTORICAL
INJUSTICE

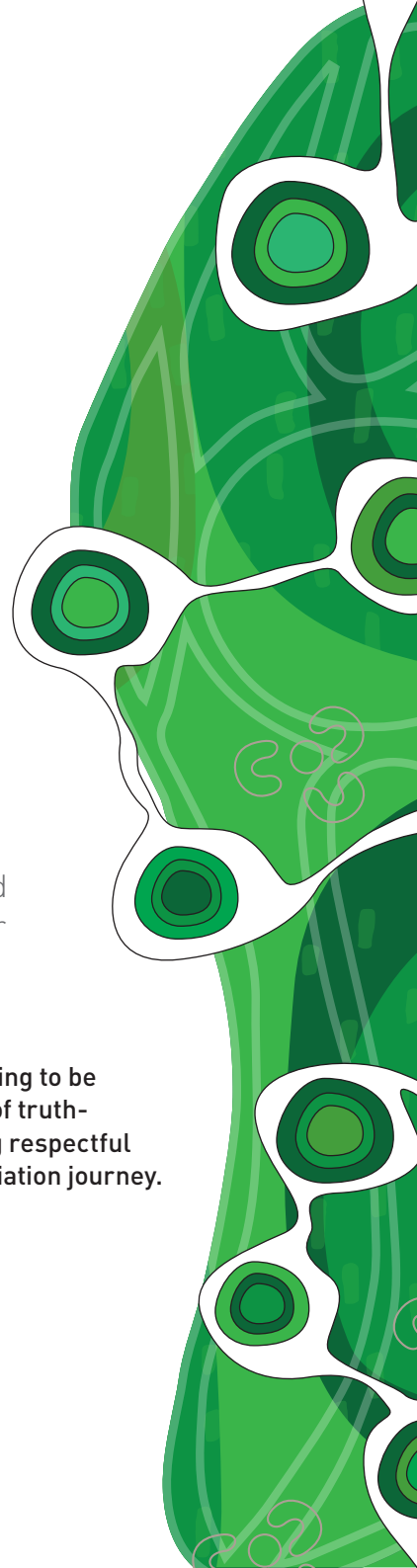
CULTURAL SAFETY

Making sure your school or early learning centre is culturally safe is an essential part of the education of First Peoples children.

Schools and early learning centres will have a role to play in building cultural competency and zero tolerance for racism across the broader community including children, families and staff. It is important that schools and early learning centres feel welcoming and that First Peoples children feel supported and safe while learning.

There are also benefits for children from the wider community. Treaty must be supported by the 97% of Victorians who are from the wider community. Understanding the contexts, cultures and histories of First Peoples is important for the wider community to understand and support Treaty.

There is nothing to fear from Treaty and everything to be gained. Treaty will provide a crucial foundation of truth-telling, justice, and self-determination, ensuring respectful relationships remain at the heart of the reconciliation journey.





COMPULSORY cultural competency training from a First Peoples' organisation for all staff.

ENSURE that staff have access to regular professional development opportunities regarding cultural safety.

ADOPT strategies that promote cultural diversity and anti-racism in your school or centre.

CONDUCT a full curriculum audit to ensure all material being taught is culturally safe.

EMPLOY First Nations educators and wider staff.

PROMOTE positive images and messages about First Peoples; their achievements, aspirations, histories, and valuable contributions to the social fabric of your community in your newsletters and display boards.

DEVELOP engagement policies and protocols in partnership with First Peoples' community organisations in your local area.

ENGAGE with your local Koorie Engagement Support Officer.

PROMOTE respect and recognition of Traditional Owners through Acknowledgement on signs and buildings across the campus.

INVITE Traditional Owners to attend official functions and participate in school or centre activities and events.

LEADERSHIP team should attend First Peoples' community meetings and functions when invited.

ENSURE a Welcome to Country is organised for every formal event the school or centre holds.

DEVELOP your own personalised Acknowledgment of Country, guided by local Traditional Owners and children for your school or centre.

ENSURE that an Acknowledgement of Country is held at the start of every day and every meeting.

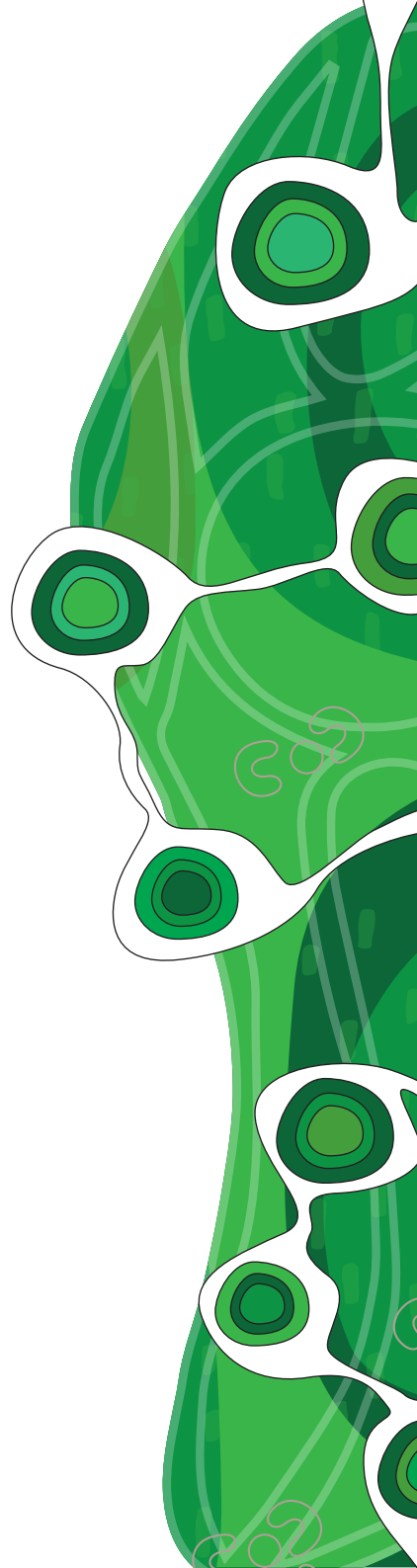
UPDATE your website and email signatures to include an Acknowledgment of Country.

EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

When it comes to Treaty, equitable outcomes are important for two reasons. Firstly, colonisation has led to disastrous outcomes for First Peoples in justice, health, education and employment. Treaty will go a long way toward reaching equity with the broader community.

Secondly, it is crucial that there is a balance of power when negotiations are taking place. It is important that this is a focus if more equitable outcomes are to be achieved both during and after Treaty negotiations.

As the educators of our future leaders, negotiators and voters, it is important that schools and early learning centres act now to try and close the gap. Prioritising more equitable outcomes now will strengthen the Treaty process and lead to better outcomes for all in the future.





WHAT CAN YOU DO?

UNDERTAKE audits of your school or centre to identify whether there are barriers for First Peoples and take steps to make services more inclusive.

DEVELOP a recruitment strategy and, if necessary, introduce identified roles in your school or centre staffing structure and create position descriptions in consultation with First Peoples' community partners.

ENSURE that First Peoples parents are represented on school or centre committees and boards in your organisation, and are financially compensated for this work.

EDIT terms of references for your committees to specifically mention the importance of First Peoples' representation.

ESTABLISH a Reconciliation Advisory Committee of staff, parents and students to help guide your work.

CONSIDER reconciliation in curriculum planning and incorporate First Peoples' cultures and histories wherever possible.

REVIEW your procurement policy and set targets to support First Peoples-owned businesses in your local area.

INVITE First Peoples-owned businesses to hold a stall at your public events such as fetes or open days.

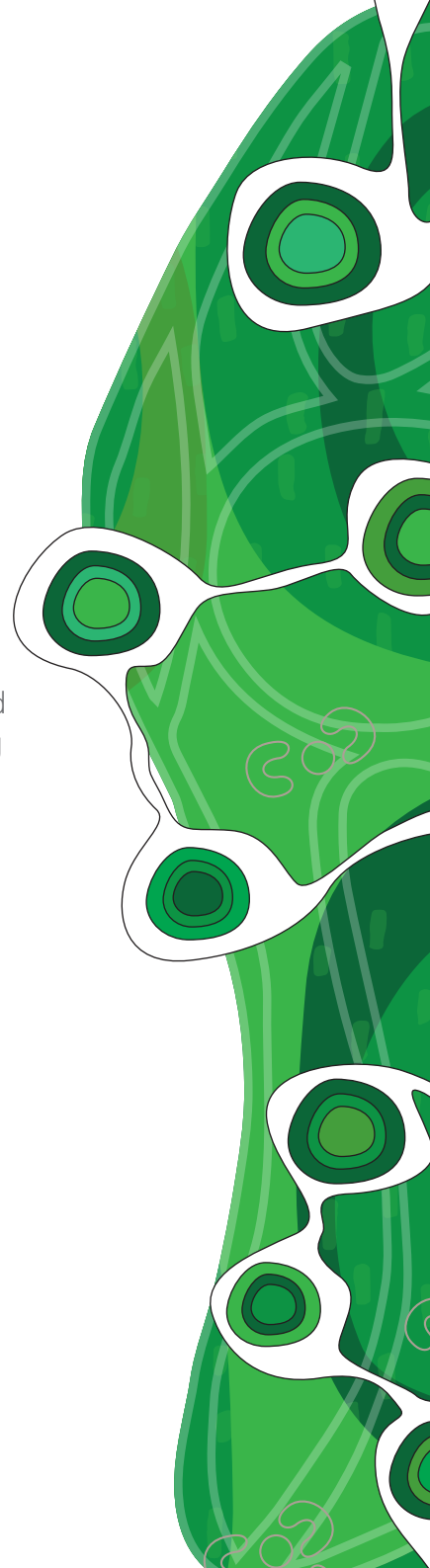
HOLD fundraising events that contribute to local First Peoples' foundations.


A NEW STATEWIDE IDENTITY

Treaty will recognise the sovereignty of First Peoples in Victoria and will value the significance of self-determination.

Understanding our history is essential if we want to understand our future. Treaty is a way for First Peoples and the broader community to acknowledge the past while also creating a new and shared statewide identity.

Schools and early learning centres have a role to play because they shape young people's ideas of our society and our state. Taking steps toward building an inclusive identity that celebrates First Peoples will strengthen your school or centre and the development of all children who learn there.





FLYING the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school or centre grounds is one of the most widespread and fundamental ways you can recognise and respect First Peoples.

DEVELOP local protocols around the flags with Traditional Owners, including lowering them to half-mast on the passing of an Elder and on Sorry Day.

WORK with local Traditional Owners to develop protocols for Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.

CELEBRATE and **COMMEMORATE** National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC, and other significant dates.

ESTABLISH a National Reconciliation Week Committee to drive events and actions at your school or centre.

HOST story-telling sessions by First Peoples.

HOST a First Peoples artist-in-residence during National Reconciliation Week and/or collaborate with a First Peoples artist on a mural that can be painted with the children.

REGOGNISE the seasons of Traditional Owners by adding them into your calendars.

INVITE Traditional Owners to hold a Smoking Ceremony to mark the start of the school year and incorporate a reconciliation garden on the school or centre grounds.

CREATE a physical Acknowledgement of Country mural or statue and have displays on noticeboards around the school or centre that celebrate First Peoples in Victoria.

HOLD a sports day where you invite Traditional Owners to teach traditional games.

ORGANISE excursions to significant and appropriate local sites or community events or host a film night that highlights the stories and histories of First Peoples.

INVITE First Peoples guest speakers to the school or centre to speak on a wide variety of topics relating to your curriculum.

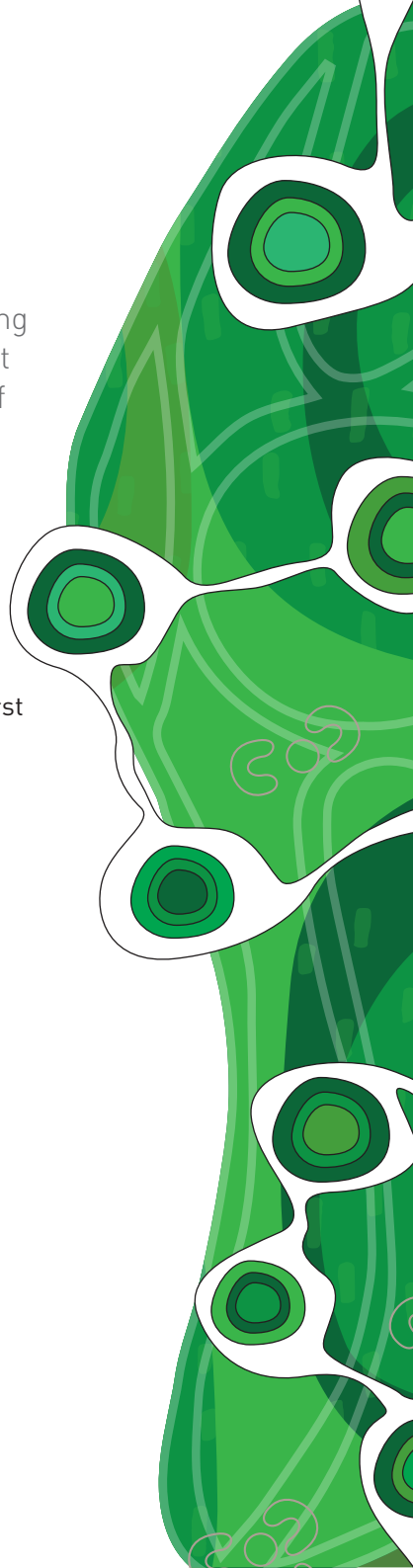
ALWAYS remunerate First Peoples for their time and knowledge.

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

In preparing your school or early learning centre for Treaty, the key element is that all work must be guided by the voices of First Peoples.

Schools and early learning centres need to be accountable to local First Peoples for the commitments they make.

There are a number of ways your school or early learning centre can do this, while keeping in mind your resources and the needs of your local community. An important part of this is first ensuring your school or centre is a culturally safe place where local First Peoples feel comfortable sharing their truths.





WHAT CAN YOU DO?

IN CONSULTATION with First Peoples staff, families and students, consider developing a strategy such as a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) through the Narragunnawali platform.

WORK with First Peoples-owned businesses to audit and evaluate your curriculum and programs.

DEVELOP a culturally safe feedback system for First Peoples staff, families and students.

CREATE a student survey so you can understand more about the needs, experiences and aspirations of children.

Regularly **CHECK-IN** with First Peoples staff, while also being aware of cultural loading.

INCLUDE a reconciliation standing agenda item for all planning days and curriculum meetings.

EMBED reconciliation in your curriculum and outcomes frameworks, and cross reference with national standards such as the Early Years Learning Framework.

BECOME familiar with publications from peak bodies such as the Commission for Children and Young People.

CREATE a key stakeholder list and regularly check in and gain feedback.

CONTACT your local government and inform them of your reconciliation work while encouraging them to do their own part.

INVESTIGATE local awards for which you can nominate your school in recognition of your achievements in reconciliation.

ADDRESSING HISTORICAL INJUSTICE

Schools and early learning centres play an important role in teaching and celebrating Victoria's diverse histories. First Peoples' histories add an important dimension to these activities and acknowledging this is an important step towards reconciliation. We cannot continue to ignore past and ongoing injustices to First Peoples. If we are to move forward we must actively address historical injustice.

Truth-telling is a central part of the Victorian Treaty process and the upcoming work of the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission. It is a core element of the Uluru Statement from the Heart's call for Voice, Treaty, Truth.

This is not to say that addressing historical injustice is solely about the tragedies that colonialism has caused for First Peoples in Victoria. It is also important to recognise the significant role that many First Peoples have played in the development of local areas and their contributions to the broader culture.





WHAT CAN YOU DO?

RENAME buildings or campuses containing racist names, replacing them with traditional language names.

CONDUCT an audit of any memorials at your school or centre.

DEVELOP cultural heritage trails and reconciliation gardens.

INTRODUCE First Peoples' cultures and histories across all areas of the curriculum.

ACKNOWLEDGE and promote the work of local First Peoples who have contributed to your local community.

CONSIDER establishing traditional language programs at your school or centre.

RAISE awareness of the diversity of First Peoples' languages by promoting the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages' Victorian language map.

CONSIDER First Peoples' perspectives in your sustainability plans.

CREATE a library subject guide so students can easily access a broad range of information.

UPDATE library catalogues to ensure representation from a broad range of First Peoples writers and news sources.

COMMIT to a reconciliation fund in your yearly budget to ensure the delivery of projects and programs.

RECOGNISE great achievement in reconciliation at your school or centre. This can be done by awarding house points, class points and other awards.

RESOURCES

Reconciliation Victoria

reconciliationvic.org.au

Maggolee

maggolee.org.au

First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria

firstpeoplesvic.org

Yoo-rrook Justice Commission

yoorrook.com.au

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council

aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

vaccho.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages

vacl.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.

vaeai.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

vals.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

vahs.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd

vacsal.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

vacca.org

Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation

whitelion.asn.au/maysar

Koorie Youth Council

koorieyouthcouncil.org.au

Aboriginal Housing Victoria

ahvic.org.au

Aboriginal Community Elders Services Inc.

acesinc.org.au

Aborigines Advancement League

aal.org.au

Reconciliation Australia

reconciliation.org.au

Reconciliation Victoria works with an independent network of Local Reconciliation Groups, who promote cultural awareness, understanding and education in their local communities.

If you are interested in contacting or joining a Local Reconciliation Group visit: <http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au/act/local-reconciliation-groups>

