

NSW Aboriginal Languages Week 2025

Let Our Voices Fly!

Educator's Presentation Notes

This document is designed to be used in conjunction with the NSW Aboriginal Languages Week 2025 – Educator's resources PowerPoint presentation.

Welcome to NSW Aboriginal Languages Week 2025. This week is all about celebrating and promoting Aboriginal Languages of NSW.

NSW Aboriginal Languages, like all languages, are important parts of Culture and Identity. It is important that we recognise the impacts of Australia's history on Aboriginal Languages and the work currently underway to bring those Languages back into regular use.

We encourage educators and school communities to support the Languages and Cultures of their Aboriginal students within the school context. Through these Language week resources, we look to support schools to build on Embedding Aboriginal Perspectives in Schools which supports the Closing the Gap Education strategy.

The Aboriginal Languages Trust continues to work with Communities to revive, grow and nurture Languages. We invite you to join us on this journey to engage with Aboriginal Languages in your local area, celebrate and share stories of connection and appreciate the history that has impacted NSW Aboriginal Communities.

Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Some of the resources and links provided in this document refer to the damage done to Aboriginal Languages of NSW, and the impact this has had on Aboriginal Peoples. This information may bring up a variety of feelings for Aboriginal students, including hurt, sadness or distress. Please be mindful of the wellbeing and Cultural safety of Aboriginal students as this information is discussed in the classroom environment.

Suggested Classroom Activity Stages 2 to 6

Slide 1: Introducing NSW Aboriginal Languages Week



Background

- During the week 19-26 October 2025, people, communities, and schools all over NSW will be celebrating NSW Aboriginal Languages Week.
- This week is significant because it marks the anniversary of the passing of the *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017* into law on 24 October 2017.
- NSW is the first jurisdiction in Australia to pass legislation that recognises the importance of Aboriginal Languages.

More information

- [The Aboriginal Languages Act 2017](#)

Slide 2: About Aboriginal Languages in NSW

Did you know?

There are over 100 Aboriginal Languages and dialects* that come from the land we now call NSW.

- ◆ Aboriginal Languages have been used all over NSW for time immemorial. There are Languages for every part of this state.
- ◆ What is the local Language (or Languages – there might be more than one) in your local area?

* Source: AIATSIS Austlang database
<https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/search>

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Background

The land we now call New South Wales is home to more than 100 Aboriginal Languages and dialects (AIATSIS Austlang database <https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/search>). Many of these Languages are still in use, but all of these are at various stages of revitalisation.

The geographical areas that Aboriginal Languages belong to often overlap. It is more helpful to consider areas of Country that different Aboriginal Languages belonged to and were spoken on, rather than focusing on boundary lines between Language Groups.

Some of these Languages also cross over state borders into Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory.

More information

- Discuss your local Aboriginal Language with your Aboriginal Education Officer or local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group.
- Video of [Uncle Warren Foster](#) talking about Djirringanj Language.
- [Gambay First Languages Map](#)
- [AIATSIS Austlang Database](#)

Suggested activity

Watch [Uncle Warren Foster](#) talk about Djirringanj Language.

Look at the [AIATSIS Austlang Database](#). Draw a map of your area and identify the local Language Group where you live and any neighbouring Language Groups.

Explore the [Gambay First Languages Map](#) – Look at stories from local Language holders in your area or neighbouring areas.

Slide 3: The history of what happened to Aboriginal Languages

Did you know?

From 1909 to 1969 government policies on Aboriginal education stopped Aboriginal children from speaking their Languages.

- Some past Government policies and legislations like the Aborigines Protection Act 1909, didn't allow Aboriginal children to learn or speak their Languages.
- Aboriginal children were taken away from their families, Languages and Culture. These children are now known as the Stolen Generations.
- How is the Aboriginal Languages Act 2017 different to the old Aborigines Protection Act 1909?

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Background

Past government activities, policies and legislations have had a devastating impact on Aboriginal Languages in NSW.

Some of the events, policies and legislations that have impacted Aboriginal people's ability to speak their Languages include:

- The Frontier Wars – violent conflicts between Aboriginal people and settlers which resulted in the deaths of many thousands of Aboriginal people
- The establishment of Aboriginal reserves, missions and stations, where Aboriginal people were forced to live, away from their traditional lands and disconnecting families
- The Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (and the subsequent amendment in 1915 which allowed the NSW Aborigines Protection Board the power to remove any Aboriginal child at any time and for any reason, including for speaking their Languages)
- Establishment of Aboriginal children's homes, including the Bomaderry Aboriginal Children's Home, the Cootamundra Girls Home and the Kinchela Boys Home, where speaking of Aboriginal Languages was forbidden, and children were disconnected from their families so could not learn about their Languages and Cultures

More information

- ALT Animation on [Aboriginal Languages in NSW](#).
- [Deadly Stories Frontier Wars Article](#)
- [Legislations affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples](#)
- [About the Aboriginal Languages Act 2017](#)

Suggested activity

Watch the animation about [Aboriginal Languages in NSW](#). Discuss how the *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017* is different to past NSW Government policies and legislation that stopped Language use.

What is the history of what happened to Aboriginal Languages in NSW? How did this impact Aboriginal People?

Slide 4: Aboriginal Language Revitalisation in NSW

Did you know?

Right now, Aboriginal Languages are being revitalised, and more people are learning to speak them?

- ◆ Aboriginal Languages all over NSW are being revitalised and more Aboriginal people are learning to speak their Languages.
- ◆ **Listen to the song Yandool** by Stiff Gins in Wiradjuri Language. What area in NSW does Wiradjuri Language come from?
- ◆ **Watch the film Freedom to Speak.** How does the Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School help to revitalise Gumbaynggirr Language?

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Background

Today, the original languages of New South Wales are in various stages of revival.

Aboriginal people and communities throughout NSW have worked tirelessly to bring Languages back into use. Language revitalisation is multi-generational work – it can take many years.

Some Language revitalisation work is being done by Language Centres. In other parts of NSW, there are Aboriginal organisations or even individuals doing the work. The Aboriginal Languages Trust funds some of these Language projects.

Some Language Groups use modern songs and art to revitalise their languages.

More information

- [NSW Aboriginal Languages Information](#)
- [Yandool by the Stiff Gins](#)
- [AIATSIS Wiradjuri information card](#)
- [Freedom to Speak](#) film of the Gumbaynggirr Gingana Freedom School
- Article [Reclaiming Language Is Key to Aboriginal Cultural Identity and Wellbeing](#)
- NSW Library online [Language Archives](#).

Suggested activity

Listen to the song Yandool by Stiff Gins sung in Wiradjuri Language on Spotify or Apple Music or watch it on YouTube. What area in NSW does Wiradjuri Language come from?

What the short film [Freedom to Speak](#) that tells the story of the Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School, the first bilingual school in an Aboriginal Language in NSW. What are some of the activities the Freedom School students do that help to revitalise the Gumbaynggirr Language?

Have a look at some of the [archived Language records](#) held online by NSW State Library. Can students make out any of the handwriting?

Slide 5: Aboriginal Languages are part of Aboriginal identity



Did you know?

Aboriginal Languages are embedded in kinship, songs, stories and ceremony. These are considered a sacred expression of Country and Dreaming.

- ◆ Aboriginal Language Groups express their stories in their Languages through song and dance.
- ◆ **Watch Dance Rites 2020.** Can you identify the name of a dance group? Where are they from and what story is their dance telling?
- ◆ Watch the Language Journeys films. What do Brooke and Cody say about why learning their Language is important?

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Background

Certain words and sounds come from Country and are expressed through the Language of that Country. When Aboriginal People sing, they are singing words from their Country and representing stories from their country through the melody, beat, words and dances.

Dance Rites is a national First Nations dance competition hosted by the Sydney Opera House each year. Dance groups come from different First Nations around Australia to share their song, dance and story. Many songs are sung in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

ALT Language Journeys Films follow Languages Week Ambassadors comedian Andy Saunders and rapper Barkaa on a Language journey on their home countries, where they share their feelings and insights into the importance of Language for them and their families.

More information

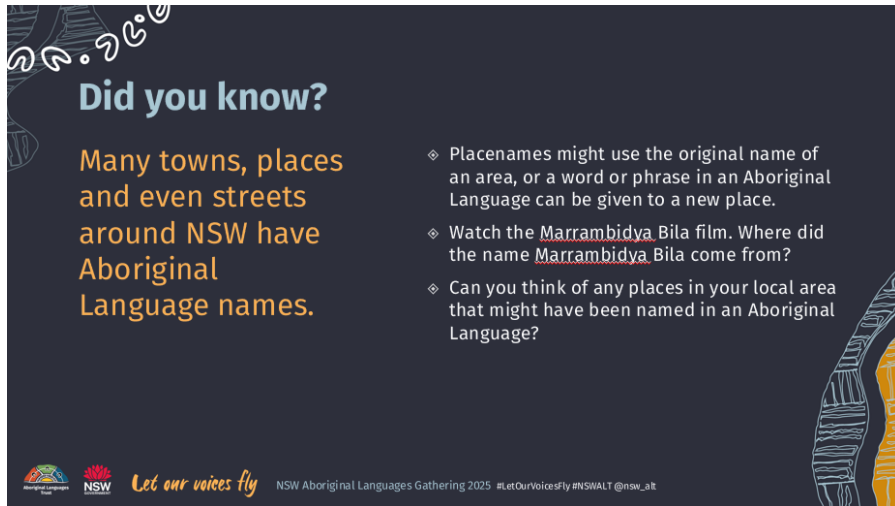
- Video of [Dance Rites 2020 Heat One](#). NSW Groups to look out for in the video are Dinawan's Connection (05:31), Wajaarr Ngaarlu (14:39), Wagana (19:50) and Bawrrung (27:26).
- Ambassador Language Journeys Films with [Cody Walker \(Bundjalung, Yuin\)](#) and [Brooke Boney \(Gamilaroi\)](#).
- *The Benefits of Aboriginal Language Use and Revival in New South Wales*, Jumbunna Institute, pages 18-25, available to download [here](#).

Suggested activity

Watch some of the [Dance Rites](#) 2020 performances. Can you identify the name of a dance group and what story their dance is telling?

Watch the Language Journeys films featuring NRL star with [Cody Walker \(Bundjalung, Yuin\)](#) and journalist and television presenter [Brooke Boney \(Gamilaroi\)](#). Ask students to identify what Cody and Brooke say about how learning Language affects them. What do others in the videos say?

Slide 6: Place-names in Aboriginal Languages



Did you know?

Many towns, places and even streets around NSW have Aboriginal Language names.

- ◆ Placenames might use the original name of an area, or a word or phrase in an Aboriginal Language can be given to a new place.
- ◆ Watch the [Marrambidya Bila](#) film. Where did the name Marrambidya Bila come from?
- ◆ Can you think of any places in your local area that might have been named in an Aboriginal Language?

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Background

Place-naming in Aboriginal Languages is one type of Language revitalisation work happening in NSW.

Through place naming, communities have the opportunity to unlock past stories, preserve traditions, and provide a sense of belonging and identity.

The NSW Department of Planning has a Dual Naming project, which supports the use of traditional placenames in Aboriginal Languages alongside the English name.

The Geographical Names Board NSW (GNB) is the authority responsible for assigning names to places in NSW. The GNB is committed to Aboriginal place-naming and prefers the use of Aboriginal names for geographical features.

More information

- NSW Department of Planning list of [Dual Names in NSW](#)
- [Aboriginal place naming – Geographical Names Board](#)

Suggested activity

Watch the [Marrambidya Bila](#) episode of This Place (ABC Indigenous). Ask students to discuss where the name Marrambidya Bila comes from and what its significance is to Wiradjuri People.

Look at the list of [Dual Names in NSW](#). Ask students if they know any of these places?

Ask students to identify places in their region that might have an Aboriginal name or a name that might have originated from an Aboriginal Language.

Slide 7: Common Sounds in Aboriginal Languages



Did you know?

Aboriginal Languages use different sounds and pronunciations to Australian English.

- ◆ For example, many Aboriginal Languages roll the letter 'rr' to make a trill sound. This is done by vibrating the tongue behind the top of the teeth. Other Languages use the 'ng' sound found in words like 'singer' at the start of their words.
- ◆ Listen to some of the Language sounds on the 50 Words Project and the Common Sounds video.
- ◆ Watch the Common Sounds in Our Languages film. Have a go at making rr and ng sounds. Trying to say 'rra' and 'nga'.

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Background

Sounds in Aboriginal Languages are different to sounds in Australian English.

For example, many Aboriginal Languages roll the letter 'rr' to make a trill sound. This is done by vibrating the tongue behind the top of the teeth. Other Languages use the 'ng' sound found in words like 'singer' at the start of their words.

Students can experience some of the different sounds and practice producing sounds in class.

More information

- [50 words](#) project
- [Common Sounds in Our Languages](#) article and video

Suggested activity

Go to the [50 words](#) project. Explore some of the sound recordings in the available NSW Languages Wiradjuri, Mathi Mathi, Paakantji, Awabakal, Gumbaynggirr, Gamilaraay and Muruwari. How do the words sounds different to English. Can you hear a 'rr' or 'ng' sound being used?

Watch the relevant parts of the [Common Sounds in Our Languages](#) film. Practice your rr (04:35 – 05:19) and ng (02:17 – 03:16) sounds. Try saying 'rra' and 'nga'.