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| **Strands** | World Religions |
| **Stage of Development** | Lower Secondary (Year 7-9) | **Created** May 2021 | **Review** 2025 |
| **Aim** | In traditional Aboriginal society, human culture and the natural environment are intimately linked to one another. The natural world and human life have a common spiritual ancestry. The unit seeks to help students explore and understand the implications of a traditional Aboriginal understanding of connectedness to country. Where possible, the unit should be developed to include input from local Aboriginal elders or representatives. Some information has been provided on Noongar spirituality. This may need to be adapted depending on the location of your school. |
| **Content Descriptions** | **Knowledge and Understanding*** The role of the Dreaming in establishing the rules that link Aboriginal people and country.
* The sacred significance of Country for Aboriginal people
* The relationship between country, kinship, and language for Aboriginal people
* The impact of European settlement on Aboriginal people’s connection to Country
 | **Religious Studies Skills & Virtues*** Concept cracking
* Intercultural understanding
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| **Resources** | Dialogue Australasia Network Aboriginal Spirituality resource page.[www.dialogueaustralasia.org/201/](http://www.dialogueaustralasia.org/201/) | This page contains several study guides on Aboriginal Spirituality.  |
|  | A Voice in the Wilderness: Listening to the Statement from the Heart. An ABM Study Guide for Individuals and Groups. Artist: The Rev. Glenn Loughrey.[www.abmission.org/data/Education/2018/A\_Voice\_in\_the\_Wilderness.pdf](http://www.abmission.org/data/Education/2018/A_Voice_in_the_Wilderness.pdf) | This study guide created by the Anglican Board of Mission seeks to help the Church ‘hear the voice of the other’ in response to the ‘The Statement from the Heart’.  |
|  | Rev. Garry Deverell on Grounded Spirituality[www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/soul-search/the-bigger-picture:-indigenous-theologian-garry-deverell/12669954](http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/soul-search/the-bigger-picture%3A-indigenous-theologian-garry-deverell/12669954) | This podcast considers what a grounded theology might look like in the aftermath of colonisation.  |
|  | Australians Together[australianstogether.org.au](https://australianstogether.org.au/). | Provide several curriculum resources. A not-for-profit that seeks to bring indigenous and other Australians together by telling stories to build understanding.  |
|  | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander School Curricula (Melbourne University)<https://indigenousknowledge.unimelb.edu.au/curriculum> | This website contains curriculum resources created for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curricula Project.  |
|  | South West Aboriginal Land and See Council[www.noongarculture.org.au/spirituality/](http://www.noongarculture.org.au/spirituality/) | Contains significant information on Noongar Spirituality. |
|  | Narragunnawali<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resources> | Seeks to support schools and early learning services to develop environments that foster a high level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and contributions.  |
|  | On Being Blackfella’s Young Fella by Glen Loughrey | The review below of Glenn’s book might be helpful<https://anglicanfocus.org.au/2020/09/07/on-being-blackfellas-young-fella-is-being-aboriginal-enough/> |

| **Lesson** | **Key Questions** | **Lesson Activity Ideas** | **Resources** |
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| **1** | Students’ Connections | How is the student connected to land?How is the student connected to people?How is the student connected to language? | 15min10min10min10min | Activity: Take the students outside and ask them to touch certain aspects of the land/nature e.g. pick up a pile of dirt or leaves. Ask the students to identify if they feel connected the location and why or why not. Share other physical locations students feel connect to and discuss why this connection exists. Brainstorm: How to say hello in as many different languages as possible. Watch this YouTube clip to add to your list <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DdkqOHDiLE> (2min: 23 sec). Discuss who students can and cannot talk to because of the languages they know/don’t know. Discuss how language creates connection/disconnection in the students’ lives. Think, Pair, Share: Ask the students to list five people they feel connected with. Ask the students to share why they feel connected to these people. Discuss the different things that might connect us to others.Activity: Ask students to sit in a circle and describe themselves to the rest of the group. Discuss why they choose to describe themselves in this way. What connections are significant to their description.  | Outside natural spaceYouTube Video |
| **2** | Aboriginal Connection to Country | What does “country” mean to Aboriginal people?What is the relationship between Aboriginal Nations and the Dreaming Ancestors? | 5min5min10min10min10min | Watch: Reconciliation Australia Video on Aboriginal Nations. <https://rrr.edu.au/unit/module-3/topic-2/connection-to-country/> (1min). Show students a map of Australia divided into Aboriginal Nations and discuss. Explain: For Aboriginal people “country” “encompasses an interdependent relationship between an individual and their ancestral lands and sea. The reciprocal relationship between the land and people is sustained by the environment and cultural knowledge.” <https://www.commonground.org.au/learn/connection-to-country>Artwork: Study the artwork ‘Ngapa Jukurrpa’ (water dreaming) by Shorty Jangala Robertson, 2011. Explain Aboriginal people see the entire landmass as crisscrossed by “Dreamings” or “songlines”. The roots taken by Dreaming Ancestors (Creator beings, who travelled the country making all things in the natural world, instituting kinship systems and the Law) create a series of interconnecting pathways. As these Creator Ancestors travelled, they planted languages into the ground, instituted social, cultural and legal practices, and stopped along the way to create flora, fauna, waterholes, landmarks, and other environmental features, they interacted with other species and with “country”.Research: What Country (Aboriginal Nation) do your students currently live in/study in/holiday in? Discuss: “The land is the mother and we are of the land; we do not own the land rather the land owns us. The land is our food, our culture, our spirit and our identity” **Dennis Foley, a Gai-mariagal and Wiradjuri man, and Fulbright scholar.** Discuss how this quote might help non-Aboriginal Australians understand Aboriginal connection to country. Watch: YouTube Clip “The Land Owns Us” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0sWIVR1hXw&feature=emb_logo> (6 min). Discuss how Bob Randall (Yankunytjatjara elder) understands his connection to “Country”. | Map of Aboriginal Nations.You Tube Clip on Aboriginal NationsArtwork: artwork ‘Ngapa Jukurrpa’ (water dreaming) by Shorty Jangala Robertson (available online).internet |
| **3** | Local connection to country | How do local Aboriginal people understand connection to country?What are some of the sites of significance for the Aboriginal Nation on which your school stands? | 5min5min30min | Activity: Show students a picture of a famous local landmark (e.g. Dingo Flour Mill, Freemantle or Cottesloe Beach). Ask the students to reflect on their connection to the place in the picture. Ask the students to describe how they would feel if the government announced they well selling/destroying the location. Discuss how and why they might feel connected to ‘land’/’locations’/’country’. Ask students how they think their sense of place might compare to an Aboriginal person’s experience of country.Watch:<https://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/152132/noongar-people-speak-about-a-sense-of-place> (ABC video on sense of place 2min 51sec). Ask students how they think their sense of place might compare to an Aboriginal person’s experience of country. Ask the students how they think an Aboriginal person might be impacted/feel if their connection with country was broken. Research Activity: Ask students to research the following inquiry questions and discuss answers as a class. 1. Who are the Local Traditional Custodians of the Land on which your schools stands?
2. What kind of environment is your school based in? Are there any particular local sites of significance for Aboriginal people? Are there totems for the area?
3. What are some of the traditional and continuing caring for country practices used by Aboriginal people in your local area and/or across Australia?
4. What are the language groups in your area?
5. How far does the Aboriginal Nation you live in extend?

Information on Noongar Nation and their connection to country[https://www.noongarculture.org.au](https://www.noongarculture.org.au/spirituality/). See the Country tab.  | Picture of famous local landmarkABC Clip <https://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/152132/noongar-people-speak-about-a-sense-of-place>“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 to 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, Anthropologist  |
| **4** | Local connection to country | How is connection to country expressed in the dreaming?How is connection to Country experienced, celebrated and passed on by local Aboriginal people? | 10min15min20min | Read: A local Dreamtime story to your students e.g. The Noongar Waugal or Great Serpent-like Dreamtime Spirit. Discuss connections to country evident in the story. Activity: Analyse The Roundhouse a 2007 painting by Christopher Pease. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/RiversofEmotionsBook.pdf>. Discuss how this painting might help us understand Noongar connection to country. Research: How do local Aboriginal people experience, celebrate and pass on their connection to country?  | <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/spirituality/> |
| **5** | Broken relationship with country | What is Terra Nullius?How has the application of Terra Nullius to Australia impacted Aboriginal people’s connection to Country?How has a broken relationship with country impacted Aboriginal people? | 5min10min20min5min | Activity: bring a broken object to class and ask students to describe the consequences of the object being broken e.g. the broken pen can no longer be used to write or the broken plate can no longer be used to eat food or the chipped plate does not look as good as it used to. Activity: Ask students to research the question What is Terra Nullius and why was it applied to Australia? Discuss.Watch: ABC video “History and Truths” <https://education.abc.net.au/newsandarticles/blog/-/b/3419994/teach-aboriginal-history-and-truths-in-the-classroom> (6min 24sec). On the white board write a list of the way the application of Terra Nullius to Australia broke Aboriginal people’s connection to Country? Discuss some of the impacts on Aboriginal people of this broken connection (<https://australianstogether.org.au/discover/the-wound/indigenous-disadvantage-in-australia/>).Research: How do local Aboriginal people approach Australia Day? (‘invasion day’, ‘survival day’ or something else)?  | A broken object.Resource on Terra Nullius <https://australianstogether.org.au/discover/australian-history/mabo-native-title/>To not know your country causes a painful disconnection, the impact of which is well documented in studies relating to health, wellbeing and life outcomes... It is this knowledge that enables me to identify who I am, who my family is, who my ancestors were and what my stories are. We are indistinguishable from our country which is why we fight so hard to hang on.” **Catherine Liddle, Arrente and Luritja woman, and Aboriginal activist** |
| **6** | Acknowledging & Respecting Aboriginal Connection to “Country” | How can Aboriginal connection to country be respected and acknowledged?What is the difference between a Welcome to Country and an Acknowledgment of Country? | 5min5min10min10min10min | Activity: List the differences between welcoming someone and acknowledging someone. Explain when we might welcome someone and when we might only acknowledge them. (Scenario: Ask the students to imagine they were at a friend’s house and another person came to their friend’s house. Who could acknowledge the new person and who could welcome the new person in this scenario?)Watch: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/vision-and-values/our-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-community/kinship-module/learning-module/welcome-and-acknowledgement.html> (2min). Discuss. Activity: Explore the Acknowledgement of Country used in your school. Discuss why and when it is used. Watch: some videos of different Aboriginal elders performing a Welcome to Country. It would be great if you could find some local examples. Brainstorm: Why is it important to make space for both Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country in our society? | <https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/80/my-acknowledgement-of-country-secondary?search=my+acknowledgement+of+country&searchType=CR> |
| 7 | Aboriginal connection to language | What traditional language is used by the traditional custodians of the land on which your school is built?Why is the preservation and respect of traditional Aboriginal languages important? | 5min5min5min25min | Brainstorm: List as many local landmarks as students can think off.Activity: Break the students into small groups and see what group can come up with the most names in local language from the list on the board. Discuss: The quote belowOur language is like a pearl inside a shell.The shell is like the people that carry the language.If our language is taken away, then that would be like a pearl that is gone.We would be like an empty oyster shell.– Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin’ku, North East Arnhem LandWatch & Discuss: <https://www.biblesociety.org.au/nyoongar/?fbclid=IwAR0_sYtttuBGJRiPzqngcvIlessXJwYQEXgo9gRS3pGgKuH9tjf8kSDOhXw> (16min) On the significance of language to some of the Noongar people and their reflections on how it felt to have their language taken away.  |  |
| 8 | Student Reflection | How have students grown in their understanding of Aboriginality?What impact has this new understanding of Aboriginality had on students?How does the Christian ethic help students understand how they should respond to what they have learnt?  |  | Worksheet: Student reflection. |  |