

Evaluating Resources Guide

As part of curriculum planning, it is important to carefully evaluate resources that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives. Using inappropriate resources can risk perpetuating negative stereotypes and misinformation about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures. The below criteria are a guide only and, as a result, you may not always get your selection right every time. Speak with, and actively listen to, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or organisations if you are unsure if a resource is appropriate, and to seek their guidance around which resources would be most relevant and meaningful to your local context. Make sure that you contextualise any selected resource, and that you state where you got information from by referencing sources.

Production

<p>When was the resource produced? (How) have you actively honoured its contemporary or ongoing relevance?</p> <p>What is the value and relevance of the resource beyond the context of its original production?</p> <p>How do you intend to incorporate the resource into genuine and meaningful educational experiences so as not to relegate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives to the past alone?</p> <p>Is the content up-to-date?</p>	<p><i>As a general rule, many non-Indigenous authored publications produced before the late 20th Century present an out-dated colonial misunderstanding or miscommunication of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures. While there are always exceptions, it is important to engage with earlier publications with a critical eye, and often better to use more recent resources, all the while remembering that even recent resources can problematically perpetuate longstanding stereotypes.</i></p> <p><i>When selecting less recently produced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authored resources, it is important not to relegate these resources—and the people and perspectives behind them—to the past, and to instead think carefully about their continued, contemporary relevance.</i></p>
<p>Who produced the resource?</p> <p>Was the resource produced by, or developed in consultation with, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people?</p>	<p><i>Use resources that are either produced by, or appropriately developed in collaboration with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Should you select resources that were not produced by your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, invite community members to evaluate the resources' appropriateness and relevance to your specific education context, and to provide guidance around the most meaningful way to incorporate these resources into local learning activities.</i></p>

<p>Does the resource use appropriate language and terminology?</p>	<p><i>The use of inappropriate language and terminology in a resource can act as a warning that the attitudes being expressed are likely to be problematic, or that students and children may take a negative meaning from the material, regardless of what the author or you intended. Staff and students should be encouraged to critically analyse terminology used, and should engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols and preferences around terminology use (visit the Narragunnawali FAQs page for an example of a guide to appropriate terminology, remembering that, given the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and identities, terminology conventions may vary between individuals and distinct communities).</i></p>
<h2 style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 5px;">Representation</h2>	
<p>Do the resources give a range of perspectives of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people?</p>	<p><i>Given the great diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and identities across Australia, it is important to appreciate that there is often no single “Aboriginal” viewpoint/voice, and to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives in education.</i></p>
<p>Does the resource help to highlight the distinctiveness, diversity and complexity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures?</p>	<p><i>Avoid using resources that that contain stereotypical depictions or present generalised information that presents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as homogenous or lacking diversity.</i></p>
<p>Are illustrations and photographs positive, accurate and culturally appropriate portrayals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?</p>	<p><i>Illustrations and photographs should include diverse, dynamic and contemporary representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, unless such portrayals are to be used as examples of racist, stereotypical or particular socio-historically framed representations (which should be introduced and critically explored with caution and sensitivity). In selecting photographic images as resources, staff and students will also need to ensure that they are aware of cultural protocols around image sharing and publication (for example, in accordance with cultural respect protocols, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will not publicise images of deceased community members for a period of time following that community member’s passing).</i></p>
<p>Are photographs accompanied by captions which name the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or group, and indicate where they come from?</p>	<p><i>Many photographs, particularly those taken in the 19th and early 20th centuries, did not dignify the person or group with a name and acknowledgement of the place(s) or Country with which those individuals or groups were connected. Make students aware of the courtesy of identifying people and groups portrayed and, unless cultural protocols indicate otherwise, avoid using photographs where people are unnamed.</i></p>

	<p><i>If photographs are of local people or groups, local community members may be able to assist with identification. As mentioned above, pay careful attention to local cultural protocols around image sharing and publication. Many communities also have distinct communicative protocols around the use of personal names (for example, in some communities, it may not be considered respectful for a female to call the name of her brothers or male in-laws, and vice versa). Consult with the local community concerned for guidance around the most appropriate ways to refer to, or represent, the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person identified.</i></p>
<p>Do the materials give a sense of the longstanding and continuing presence and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures?</p>	<p><i>Statements that relegate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to “an Ancient past”, as part of “a vast and empty landscape” were common in twentieth century education texts. Problematically, they present static representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and contributions that do not honour their continuing and contemporary presence and significance. These representations also tend to ignore the tens of thousands of years of active Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions and connections to Country prior to colonisation, misleadingly perpetuating the legal fiction of ‘terra nullius’ (‘land belonging to nobody’).</i></p>

References: [QCAA – Selecting and Evaluating Resources](#) and [Queensland Museum – Evaluating Resources](#)

