



Connecting with Country and our First Nations people

Binnowee educators have been exploring a reconciliation action plan process since early 2018. Educators and management feel very strongly that this needs to be a genuine and meaningful process, not something to tick the right boxes for assessment and rating purposes. Several educators have been involved in looking for connections with local Aboriginal people who may like to join us on our journey. Several years ago one of the educators came into contact with Jody Hoskins from Indigenous Education and Deadly Pathways. Jody has helped us make further connections and her willingness to share knowledge with us has enabled us to complete this first version of our own version of a reconciliation action plan. We continue on our reconciliation journey and learn a little more with each conversation and encounter and we hope to keep learning as individuals and with our children and families on beautiful Dharug country.

1. Relationships in the classroom - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the classroom			
<i>Enhance teaching and learning activities by engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people from within the school or early learning service community</i>			
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up ideas and suggestions	
Establish genuine, personal and ongoing relationships before engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to come into your learning environment. Allow for the time it takes to build these relationships. Follow up with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members involved with Binnowee by showing them you appreciated their contributions. E.g. you could give them a thank you letter from your class or a small gift.	Over several years, we have made a conscious effort to make connections with Indigenous people/elders – there has been several attempts e.g. through Hornsby Council etc, though it was difficult to make a connection and we didn't get a response back – we understood this is due to time constraints and work load of the indigenous people/elders in our area and we respected this. Grace also connected with Tarni who does sessions teaching Aboriginal weaving (Nula weaving) but it was hard to lock in a time, again due to availability for Tarni. This was respected and understood. In March of 2023, Grace attended the Eel festival on Dharug country and there met Jody Hoskins, a proud Wiradjun woman and invited her to Binnowee. Jody has continued to come to Binnowee each term and over time we have shared our journey with Jody of how we have embedded Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander perspectives in our pedagogy at Binnowee. Jody has also invited her father, Aboriginal Elder; Uncle John to visit Binnowee.	The children have gained a lot from their exposure to the visits from Jody and Uncle John. "Small changes in personal dialogue from my own child understanding her connection to country and how her actions affect the land." (parent comment) Indigenous resources are openly available for the children to access and see. This helps to normalise the connection to Indigenous culture and makes it a part of the	

Discuss potential scenarios with staff that could happen with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the learning environment. For example, there can be risks of burdening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff or community members. Ask the person for feedback about their experience, and suggestions for future learning collaborations. Find ways to make relationships stronger and increase the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the classroom.	Jody and Uncle John visited 3rd/5th July 2025 to do a group experience with us for NAIDOC week celebrations. We have continued this connection through Sara, Grace and Debbie visiting the Blacktown arts centre on a few occasions and meeting with Elders in Residence who have shared their knowledge and customs. We share our journey and personal history with them also. Through these connections we have been fortunate enough to have Jody and the Dharug elders consult with us through our journey of naming our classrooms in Dharug dhalang language. The names of the rooms will be Nangamay (meaning Dream) and Dyanmila (meaning Play). This became official on 15th and 16th May 2024 we are truly grateful to Jody and the Dharug elders who consulted with Binnowee on this meaningful journey to name our classrooms in Dharug dhalang language. We are honoured to have participated in this new and important part of Binnowee's 90 year history. Staff at Binnowee have developed an understanding of the value of consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, while also recognising that there could be a risk of burdening them. We ensure we maintain respectful and open communication with all Aboriginal elders and community members we encounter. We work out times that are suitable to them and ensure that Jody and the elders know their value within our community through welcoming them into Binnowee, keeping open communication, providing welcoming spaces for them, ensuring they are paid for their time and sharing of knowledge. We also have made them a thankyou card from Binnowee as well as baking biscuits using indigenous ingredients to gift them. At Binnowee the children and teachers acknowledge the Dharug country we learn and play on. We regularly have open and authentic conversations with the children about what we mean when we say our acknowledgement of country. We talk about caring for country and only taking what we need with the children; you can see and hear these messages being understood through the children's care for our preschool and the land we learn and play on. Binnowee has a wide range of indigenous resources such as puzzles, books, dolls, games that we incorporate as a regular part of our program. We display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork, cultural symbols and language in the classroom – we have taught the children simple words in the	"everyday" for the children and it is not tokenistic.
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	Dharug language and have taught them to count in Dharug dhalang. This is a long term continuing practice and an integral part of our pedagogy. Aboriginal word symbols – We provided the children with some sand and some word symbols and they copied the symbols by drawing them with their fingers into the sand – we endeavour to embed learning about Aboriginal culture as part of our daily program. Include books and stories by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors in the daily reading routine. Counting in Dharug – we incorporate learning the numbers from 1 – 10 in the indigenous language. We use a range of resources available to us for example – we listened to Uncle Jack Charlie reading an online story - Go to sleep Cheeky Animals, we use Aboriginal music and meditations at rest and relaxation; thereby bringing Aboriginal people into the classroom. Teach children simple words and phrases in local Aboriginal languages. We have downloaded the Bayala Dharug app on our work devices which models how to say Dharug words. Aboriginal symbols – we teach the children about using Aboriginal symbols as a way of communicating and storytelling. Painting with Ochre – we have crushed Ochre into white powder to use for paint. White Ochre can be used by all Aboriginal people to connect them to mother earth and to protect them. We have learnt that other colours of ochre are reserved for specific mobs or only for men or for women. We have developed and continue to add to the Indigenous Learning Padlet which all staff can access for inspiration and ideas for pedagogy. https://padlet.com/Binnowee/indigenous-learning-in4p2v49vuwj8bz7 2025 – We now have a family with Indigenous background who have joined us in the Th/Fri group.	
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2. Relationships around the school – Cultural Responsiveness for staff Give staff opportunities to engage in leaning, unlearning, and relearning about their own bias and prejudices and understand more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, contributions and cultures.			
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up ideas and suggestions	
Support staff to take cultural responsiveness training as professional learning in their formal accreditation processes. Building a culturally responsive workplace Professional learning opportunities	Staff are made aware of professional learning opportunities and resources are shared with the team on a regular basis. Time is set aside in staff meetings to reflect on our own cultural identities and cultural responsiveness. Sydney Zoo – story telling, dance and weaving with chats about totems, place and belonging, etc. Bush tucker session through Hills Community workshop. We have a bush tucker garden in the back area of Binnowee – we tend to our bush tucker gardens, we purchase indigenous spices and ingredients to cook with and use with the children. Mural being painted in the lower yard; this project has been delayed due to the original artist being unable to commit and we are looking for a new artist to team up with us for this project.	Sara has obtained an artist contact through the Hornsby AECG network and will follow up on this for early 2026.	

3. Relationships with the community – Welcome to Country Welcoming visitors to country has been an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocol for thousands of years. Coordinate a welcome to country for significant events.			
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up ideas and suggestions	
Invite an Indigenous community member/Elder to do a Welcome to Country at formal and important events. Look at protocol guidelines and resources from your state/territory about coordinating a Welcome to Country. Understand how this is different to acknowledging Country.	Sara has reached out to Stacy-Jane Etal (Dharug Aboriginal Woman) to attend our 90th anniversary celebrations. Matthew was booked for the 85th birthday celebrations which were cancelled due to COVID – 19. Uncle Laurie did a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country for the 90th birthday celebrations. Uncle Laurie will be asked back to do some carving and yarning with the children later in 2025. Staff have knowledge and understand the differences between 'Welcome to Country' & 'Acknowledgement of Country'	Uncle Laurie did a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country for the 90th birthday celebrations. Uncle Laurie will be asked back to do some carving and yarning with the children later in 2025.	

Use learning activities to strengthen staff and children's awareness of the important ties between being welcomed on Country, connecting to Country, caring for Country, and reconciliation.	Acknowledgement of Country is done at the start of each preschool meeting – staff, Board, networking meetings, etc. Children say an acknowledgment each day as a group and we discuss why and what it means and the importance of it. Staff engage in learning activities and group discussions in staff meetings to strengthen their awareness and knowledge. Jody has talked to all the children and staff about the Indigenous and Torres Strait Island flags and has taught the children more about Welcome to country and Acknowledgment of Country In her sessions with us.	Extending acknowledgement of country lesson to include recognising and understanding the meaning behind Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags. Staff to be familiar with our Indigenous Learning Padlet to extend their knowledge in general.
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4. Relationships with community: National Reconciliation Week , National Sorry Day, Anniversary of the Referendum and Mabo Day. National Reconciliation Week (NRW) from 27th May -June 3rd each year.			
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee		Ideas for follow up actions
National Reconciliation Week is held from 27 May to 3 June each year, when all Australians can: - reflect on our shared histories, cultures and achievements. - explore how we can join the national reconciliation journey.	At Binnowee we talk to the children about reconciliation and use National Reconciliation week, National Sorry Day, Anniversary of the Referendum and Mabo Day to explore the history and the future. This is a time to come together to learn about what reconciliation really is so we can begin to bridge the gap and learn from past wrongs. We use the book “Say Yes – A story of friendship and a vote for hope” by Jennifer Castles. This story has been a great conversation starter with the children where we have discussed how they would feel if that was to happen to them and their friends. We use this resource during Reconciliation week. 15/5/24 Jody came and talked to the children about Reconciliation. Jody explained that Sorry Day is about remembering and acknowledging the stolen generations.		We could host a morning tea For staff, children and community such as Jody/ Uncle John and/or families. This is a way to bring our learning community together and it demonstrates we prioritise reconciliation. This is a good way to bring people together to reflect and discuss the importance of reconciliation and what it means to you and the Binnowee community. During these weeks we could do something in the vegetable garden focused on indigenous plants. Help build the connection between caring for country and being in the garden at Binnowee.

	In 2024 as part of our Reconciliation journey, Jody made us a reconciliation tree that we all then added our own personal touch to. The children received a leaf that they added their name too and we use those leaves to decorate the tree. The reconciliation tree was displayed on the window in the good room- looking out into the playground so it was visible to all children, families and visitors. Families were welcomed to contribute to reconciliation week also.		
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5. Build relationships with community – Build respectful, trusting and inclusive connections with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander community			
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Ideas for Follow Up Actions	
Reflect on levels of engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples/community. Connect with local Indigenous communities such as • local Indigenous Education consultative bodies. • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art centres • Local Aboriginal Land Councils • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community liaison officers • Aboriginal Land councils Attend community events	Already established and will continue to be built upon, e.g. Jody Hoskin /Blacktown Arts/Uncle John Jessie Waratah – Mural. Jessie unfortunately cancelled her commission with Binnowee. Courtney Garstang will start the mural work in late 2025. As a whole team (e.g. in staff meeting) we reflect on our connections with Jody/Blacktown arts, etc. We are aware of not burdening Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander community connections with these responsibilities. We recognise the importance of drawing on existing relationships and advice while showing support, thanks and collaboration. We take interest in community events and different staff attend when they can e.g. Grace went to the Parramatta Eel Festival and made connections, Kelly and Kathy have attended the Blak markets at the Rocks and learnt about different resources. We have continued to take an interest in these events e.g. several visits to Blacktown Arts centre as it shows commitment to these events and helps show we are serious about building relationships with the local community.	During information nights or orientation evenings or at other events, we could tell parents and community members: • about our commitment to Connecting with Country and First Nations people • what progress we have made with implementing this commitment as well as our plans for the future. For new parents to Binnowee it would be great to demonstrate how we weave Indigenous learning into the curriculum. Showing we are really proud of our actions in the preschool. Kelly attended the Hornsby AECG meeting in October 2024 and was advised they do not support the	

		Nurragunnawalli website and funding, etc. As a result we have decided we will not pursue registering a RAP on the Nurragunnawalli website. We will however, publish our own plan on the Binnowee website.	
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6. Respect in the classroom – Teach about reconciliation - Teach about the concept, history and progress of reconciliation in Australia			
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up Actions	
Support staff to register for and engage in learning through webinars or training	Daily curriculum – links to EYLF v2.0 Participation in Reconciliation week – registered for the simultaneous story which didn't go ahead due to one of the elders not being available last minute. At Binnowee we talk to the children about reconciliation and use National Reconciliation week, National Sorry Day, Anniversary of the Referendum and Mabo Day to explore the history and the future – this is a time to come together to learn about what Reconciliation really is so we can begin to bridge the gap and learn from past wrongs. We have connected with Uncle John (through Jody) to hear his own personal story (1st July / 3rd July 2025). NAIDOC Week acknowledgment and learning – takes place in the holidays so we focus on this the first few weeks of term three. We have discussed the concept of reconciliation in staff meetings - staff have opportunities to learn and talk about reconciliation: the history, process, concept and how they feel about this.	Staff could do the Narragunnawalli RAP Action Series Webinar 2: 'Teach About Reconciliation' & 'Curriculum Planning' Make use of Indigenous Pathways and Deadly Education online resources Connect with First Nations Stolen Generations to hear their stories.	

7. Respect in the classroom – Teach about reconciliation - Explore current affairs and issues – Discuss news and current issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and reconciliation			
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up Actions	

Encourage and support staff to find out about significant current affairs and issues in our local area.	As per above. Exploring current affairs and issues with the children in a developmentally and culturally appropriate way. We have conversations with the children about relevant concepts and read stories which reflect current affairs and beliefs. All staff at Binnowee Kindergarten ensure implementation is respectful and done in a meaningful way.	Encourage the wider staff team to engage with Indigenous Pathways and Deadly education, Narragunnawali. Can be challenging as many parents were educated at a time when Aboriginal history was not taught or promoted in schools. This further reinforces the importance of this being taught in early learning.
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8. Respect around school – Acknowledgment of country – Develop understanding of what it means to acknowledge country and provide everyone the opportunity to do so at staff meetings and events throughout the year.
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Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up Actions
Encourage staff and students to learn about Acknowledgement of Country. Promote the professional learning and curriculum resources. Invite local Traditional Owners to speak with staff and children. They could share their own views about acknowledging Country – how important it is and the local protocols.	We have engaged in much work as a wider staff team to develop an understanding of Acknowledgement of country. We do this at the beginning of each staff meeting and we also do this with the children. Any time we get together we share a meaningful Acknowledgement of Country. Jody has discussed this with the children. Children had input in our acknowledgment of country.	Continue to discuss the difference between a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of country as well as “What is country”.

9. Respect with the community – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags Fly or display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags all year round to show respect and recognition for the First Peoples of Australia.

Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up Actions
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Displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags is a public statement of respect.	We have the Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander flags displayed out the front on our main preschool sign and in the office foyer. Incursions with Jody from Indigenous Pathways and Deadly Education learning about the history of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags and meaning of the colours and symbols on the flags.	Ensure the children know what the flags are; needs to go beyond just a symbolic gesture so the children know why the flags are there.
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10. Respect with the community – Take Action Against Racism Raise awareness on, teach about, and act against racism.		
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up Actions
Create a safe space for you, other staff and students to reflect on your own: • cultural identities • cultural responsiveness • the role they can play in promoting anti-racist assumptions, attitudes and actions. Read children's books, watch shows and films and listen to podcasts by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and artists.	• Reading books, exposure to music and art from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island writers and artists. • Normalising the differences of everyone in a wider context and teaching respect. • Yarning circles – Yarning circles are cultural opportunities and ensure everyone is seen, known, valued, heard and cared for.	Look at children and staff and discuss differences as well as similarities. How wonderful and beautiful it is to have differences and similarities. Talk with the children about what they like and enjoy about culture.

As a staff team - Build your awareness of the diverse (direct, indirect or institutional) experiences of racism. Look at different media viewpoints and representations of racism.		
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11. Opportunities in the classroom - Curriculum Planning Incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures when planning, developing and evaluating your curriculum		
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up Actions
Include a regular agenda item during staff meetings or planning days to discuss as a whole team how to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives in our program. Build a good collection of resources.	Binnowee has built up a good collection of resources – children’s books, puzzles, games, pictures and posters, plants and bush tucker materials, staff resources and music over time. Kelly and Kathy have attended Concord West Rhodes preschool who have a wealth of knowledge and resources to learn from as well as the Blak Markets where we learnt about resources available and purchased some of what we learnt about. We have signed up to different indigenous stall holders and businesses and keep up to date this way and purchase what we feel will work well at Binnowee. We respectfully seek feedback from our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community connections asking them for their views on resources and how to use them.	Staff appraisals have a focus on how we meaningfully include and embed Aboriginal perspectives in our daily work with children.

12. Opportunities around the school – Inclusive Policies

Make policies that include and increase knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, histories and cultures.

Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up Actions
Examine our policies to find where they reference equality, equity, unity, inclusivity and the rights of First Peoples. Support staff and children's understanding of the respective roles of equality and equity in shaping inclusive policies • provide learning opportunities for staff and students to become aware of: • the differences between equity and equality • the distinct roles that both equality and equity play in generating inclusivity.	Having as many resources as possible to allow the children exposure to Aboriginal culture as many will not have had this exposure at home or in mainstream media.	

13. Opportunities around the school – Staff engagement with reconciliation

Encourage staff to be involved in the ongoing development and implementation of reconciliation through staff development opportunities		
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up Actions
Involve all staff in the process and progress of developing the RAP Update all staff on key milestones in your RAP development journey, such as when your RAP is published, and when it's due to be refreshed. Continue to let all staff know about your reconciliation initiatives and how they can be involved.	We discuss the reconciliation progress in staff meetings and in Board meetings.	Go through the 14 required RAP actions so all staff know what these are. Introduce the Narragunnawali Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) process to all staff in the early stages of developing your RAP – do this by • informing all staff about what a RAP is • let everyone know how your RAP is progressing • gather and discuss how staff can contribute. Support staff to register for and engage with the RAP Action Series training through Narragunnawali. As we move along in the process – involve staff by giving input in what actions we add as we go along. Keeping in mind we have decided not to publish our RAP on the Narragunnawali website.

14. Opportunities with the community – Celebrate RAP Progress Celebrate RAP progress in the school or early learning service and throughout the community		
Ideas for Action	Examples of how we have achieved this at Binnowee	Follow Up Actions
Track positive staff contributions to the RAP, including its development, implementation or professional learning activities.		Check off tasks achieved under each of your RAP Actions using Deliverables. Deliverables help you plan and keep track of achievements against your RAP commitments. Complete the reflection survey each year and compare our progress to past years. Use the data from the survey to share your progress over time.