Authentically embedding Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and histories in learning programs.
Learning Intention

What is the purpose of this learning session?

• Teaching and learning for engagement using Aboriginal ways of learning and developing connection to self, others, place.
• Importance of authenticity in creating purposeful & meaningful learning opportunities.
• Celebrating, sharing and growing Silkwood’s integrated indigenous learning initiatives – together we are better!
• Exploring possibilities for developing and integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and ways of learning for sustainable and ethical futures.
Traditional Custodians.

Silkwood School is part of Kombumerri country and the wider Yugambeh language region, which includes the Gold Coast, Scenic Rim and Logan regions. We respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land and their capacity and resilience as indigenous custodians.

At Silkwood School we have explored the notion that in order to protect and sustain the environment, people have to connect with it in physical and emotional ways, through direct experience. The respect and intuition our traditional owners have for the land and the interconnectedness of all elements is an inspiration for us. There’s much to learn from spending time in native environments and using powers of observation & connection to become aware, note changes and take positive action. By getting in touch with our local indigenous communities we hope to inspire young people build deeper connections to themselves, others and their local environments in meaningful and authentic ways.
Tell a Story (Story Sharing)

Silkwood is a small, independent, co-educational primary and high school situated in South East Queensland, leading the way with innovative and integrated indigenous learning programs. The site has been carefully planned to blend our natural bush surroundings & two creeks, with specially designed sustainable & cultural learning centres.

What’s Silkwood’s story? (Oral sharing of Silkwood’s Story)

What’s your story? (Partner discussion about how you’ve journeyed to become part of Silkwood’s Story)

This four minute short film can also give a sense of our connection to place.

SPIRIT OF SILKWOOD

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSozS_AqOAO&feature=plcp

What is the spirit of Silkwood? Be inspiring, get connected, make a difference!
The Australian Curriculum deems it relevant to the education of students that three cross curriculum priorities (CCPs) are given special attention: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (A&TSI) histories and cultures, Sustainability and Australia’s engagement with Asia. [http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/crosscurriculumpriorities](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/crosscurriculumpriorities)

Silkwood School takes these priorities seriously and has actively worked to embed these priorities explicitly in learning programs and implicitly through school culture and organisational structures. In particular, we believe the A&TSI and Sustainability CCPs are complementary and can be closely linked.

Essentially, indigenous engagement is much more than a curriculum priority. It’s all about building meaningful connections and deeper understandings to self, others and place through authentic, purposeful and integrated learning modes & experiences.
It's all about Connection!

Teaching & Learning for Sustainability

PLACE

OTHERS

SELF

Personal
Wellbeing &
Identity

Strong Social and Cultural
Relationships

Nature & the wider
Community
of Life
8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning

- Story Sharing
- Community Links
- Learning Maps
- Deconstruct Reconstruct
- Non-verbal
- Non-Linear
- Symbols & Images
- Land Links
Tell a Story
Make a Plan
Think and Do
Create It
Take it Outside
Try a New Way
Watch, then Do
Share it with Others
Think and Do - (Non-verbal Communication)

Using the prompt questions below, respond in non-verbal form to communicate responses – e.g. write it, draw it, think it.

Place – What relevance does connection to place have in educational contexts? How do you reflect your relationship to nature and the wider community of life in your own teaching and learning work?

Others – How are social and cultural relationships and ethics communicated through your teaching and learning work?

Self – How do you connect to self? How is your identity reflected through your teaching and learning principles/practices?

Short reflective activity- template provided
Implicit Learning Opportunities.

Silkwood School has a range of initiatives that develop a positive school & community culture & ongoing sense of meaningful connection and purpose, with high visibility.

• Three flags flying in school grounds with Silkwood Story mural.
• Connecting to Country through Totems – school totem entrance and gardens, including signage of Silkwood Story, Gathering Song and Acknowledgement to Country.
• Native habitats and bush trails with interpretive signage, outdoor learnscapes and yarning circles, integrating local indigenous knowledge shared with us by mentors.
• Pedagogy of Place – learning how to connect to and care for country over time. ‘Connecting to Country through Totems’
• Mentorship and Partnership – building connections and relationships with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander individuals, networks, communities and organisations that are mutually beneficial and sustainable.
• Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
Explicit Learning Opportunities.

At Silkwood School, we have a range of initiatives that are explicitly woven into learning experiences.

- Interdisciplinary Inquiry Units are embedded in all of Silkwood’s learning programs across all year levels – primary and high school. The Flight of the Boomerang [https://vimeo.com/87139018](https://vimeo.com/87139018)
- Silkwood Dreaming Festival – whole school annual Spring event
- Integrated Indigenous Studies in Term 3 leading up to the Silkwood Dreaming Festival
- Grade 8 Indigenous Immersion Camp – Central Australia.
- Community events and initiatives: For e.g. Yugambeh Museum - annual Drumley Walk, Write into Art, Mobo event; National Reconciliation Week, Recognise campaign.
- Kids Teaching Kids – research, mentorship, workshop development and delivery.
- Presenting at community, national and international workshops and conferences to share our learning journey with others.
Take it Outside - (lessons from nature)

Traditional Indigenous Games

Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander games were almost lost after colonisation. Today extensive consultation with indigenous elders is necessary to re-establish the traditional indigenous games and their rules. Accreditation to teach TIGs is available through Get Active Queensland. A number of Silkwood teachers are accredited.

Benefits of traditional Indigenous games

Benefits of bringing traditional Indigenous games back to life include:
- bringing-together of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people
- help reconnect urban Indigenous youth to their culture
- promote reconciliation
- provide essential training in social interaction
- enhance physical health

Let’s take it outside and play a game using protocols and Aboriginal ways of learning!
Connecting to Country through Totems

Aboriginal people learn the values of their clan and how to connect to their country through totems. They are born into the responsibility to care for their land, today and with future generations.

Silkwood’s young people are learning how to connect to the land through totem animals too!

Each class is working with a totem animal and habitat specific to Silkwood’s natural environment. Every year, students meet their new totem animal and continue on a learning journey that connects them to their natural environment, over time. See how in this short film. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmNZh0pSOqY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmNZh0pSOqY)

Three simple focus areas: (Will need planning templates and Totem folders)
What do we already have developed and how can we utilise resources?
What could still be explored, imagined and created?
How can we maximise authenticity of learning opportunities?
Silkwood Dreaming Festival
Silkwood School has as part of its school culture, seasonal festivals for the whole school community. The Spring Festival is dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. Our Silkwood Dreaming Festival is run in Term 3 every year and is a whole school celebration of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Histories & Cultures.

Every class integrates local indigenous studies into their learning program throughout the term leading up to the festival celebration, including Traditional Indigenous Games, Music, Arts – visual and performing, Craft, English, Science, Maths, History and Sustainable Environmental Education.

Indigenous community members are involved, including local, national & international presenters and performers, for example, Jeremy Donovan from Generation One – a national organisation dedicated to ending indigenous disparity.

**Syndicate Discussions:** Have a look at the Festival lead-in template and discuss how your learning programs are linking into the Silkwood Dreaming Festival.
Create It (Art and Creative Application)

Same Place, Different Story
At Silkwood we like to use Aboriginal Ways of learning as inspiration for telling our own stories. For example, we could use indigenous symbols to communicate our connection to a significant place here at Silkwood that is special to us (self), or as a group (others).

Over tens of thousands of years, message sticks were commonly used by ancestors as one means of communicating between different Aboriginal tribes/nations. Messages were painted and inscribed on a stick, which was then transported by hand.

Same Stick, Different Message
Your task is to create a message stick using Aboriginal symbols to communicate your connection to this shared place. Your message stick can be used as a ‘talking stick’ in the classroom or hung in Silkwood’s habitats for passing children to wonder what the message for them could be...
Fusion: You can incorporate your own symbols as well.
Interdisciplinary Inquiry
Exploration of content through various lenses of inquiry adds depth to quality and diversity of learning. When working with the Australian Curriculum, we like to work across disciplines and strands in integrated and authentic ways.

For example, as part of an interdisciplinary inquiry unit titled ‘Indigenous Science’, one sub-topic - ‘The Flight of the Boomerang’ - was explored through cultural, physical, reflective and intellectual lenses of inquiry.

The Flight of the Boomerang
https://vimeo.com/87139018
Integrated Indigenous Studies.

• Make it visible! Look for opportunities to increase A&TSI visibility in your school and community.
• Meaningful, authentic, purposeful engagement vs. tokenistic, occasional consideration. It is part of the everyday. Aboriginal culture is a living culture.
• Start local. Build relationships with local communities, language region groups and individuals. Connect to your place, your land.
• Work with principles of mentorship and collaboration – network, create and share – especially stories.
• Look for opportunities to integrate indigenous perspectives/ studies in creative and integrated ways - hands-on/interactive, direct experience.
• Aboriginal Ways of Learning – consider indigenous pedagogy & learning engagement- for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.
• Attitude – focus on what you CAN DO, not on what you can’t.
• Find opportunities to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culture & history within your school – not just NAIDOC Week.
In Summary

• Solid pedagogy – engaged learners
• Mentorship & community
• Meaningful, authentic & purposeful learning
• Seek out opportunities – start local
• Direct experience vs. indirect experience
• Explicit and implicit learning
• Connecting – self, others, place
• Students as teachers and leaders

Discussion Points:
• Are there any challenges or barriers you’d like to explore?
• What would you like to learn more about?
• Is there any further support you need?
Exploring and Sharing – New Ideas!

With all that has been shared, discussed, engaged with and created, what else can be explored? What could be improved or reimagined? What will be your focus? What point of difference could you create? What gaps still exist? Where to next?

**ACTIVITY:** Explore resources on display, share ideas, take an idea – expand/improve – MAS (Modify, Add, Substitute), create new resources, build connections and hubs.
Mobo Jarjums – Tomorrow’s Children