

## Country and Belonging by Arena Theatre Company

### Program description

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#### Visual Arts | First Nations culture | Connection to place

Country and Belonging immerses primary school students in First Nations culture and perspectives.

Country and Belonging is a First Nations-led artistic program that immerses primary school students in First Nations culture and perspectives. It focuses on exploring the meaning and importance of the Acknowledgement of Country.

Children frequently hear Acknowledgements of Country at sports events, and public gatherings. This program explores their understanding of these acknowledgements, asking whether they feel a personal connection to the words they hear and say, and if they have any investment in them.

Aimed at students in Grades 3 and 4, the program involves discussions and artistic workshops. It begins with a First Nations artist leading a discussion about the students' local environment, posing questions such as:

- Who do they share these places with?
- What types of things do they see there?
- What activities do they engage in at these places?

Students then break into smaller groups to work with First Nations art form of leaf painting (led by a First Nations artist) and sculpture. These activities help students to become familiar with the ideas, history, and stories that underpin the Acknowledgement of Country. Students reflect on their own relationship to Country as they write a personal Acknowledgement of Country. This activity is framed by the First Nations Artist and involves each person's personal reflection of their relationship to Country. It may be led by a non-First Nations person.

By the end of the program, students will have written their own personal Acknowledgement of Country, created a range of artworks inspired by the theme, and developed a deeper awareness and respect for the Traditional Custodians of the land.

The program concludes with an exhibition showcasing the students' work, allowing the entire school community to participate and celebrate their achievements.

[Watch the Country and Belonging Promotional Video](#)

## Educational benefits

At the conclusion of the Country and Belonging program, participants will:

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- Have an increased understanding of their sense of belonging in the framework of their own/their schoolmates' cultures (relates to Cultural Practices VCICCB005 & 006).
  - Have an increased understanding of the significance of First Nations connection to Country as it is expressed through the Acknowledgement of Country (relates to Cultural Practices VCICCB005 & 006).
  - Be able to demonstrate how they have worked individually and collectively to create an Acknowledgement of Country and artworks. They will be able to demonstrate an improved understanding of the role of cultural traditions in the development of personal, group and national identities, and they will have written their own personal Acknowledgement of Country. (VCICCB006)
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## Biographies/Company Profile

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Arena is a professional theatre company proudly operating from Bendigo. Since 1966, Arena has dedicated itself to making innovative theatre, live experiences, and creative learning programs designed for and with children and young people.

Moving to Bendigo in 2018 was a major milestone for Arena. This not only allowed us to embed ourselves deeply within our local community but also to create extraordinary theatrical experiences for young audiences in Bendigo and surrounding areas. Our passion and commitment to touching hearts and nurturing young minds through creativity have only grown stronger with our new home, enabling us to innovate and reach out to more children and young people than ever before.

In 2025, we hope to embark on a new chapter as part of the Creative Learning Touring Program. This is such a fantastic opportunity to reach beyond Bendigo and connect with children across Regional Victoria, sharing the thrill of live performance and creative learning in their schools.

### **Annie Brigdale - First Nations/lead artist**

I've always been drawn to colour and creating pattern. It brings me joy, calms me, gives me balance and helps me quiet my busy mind. I have trained and worked in creative roles such as visual merchandising and floristry, and always felt the urge to put some of this creativity on canvas.

Since becoming a mother I've felt the pull to learn more of my Aboriginal heritage and share it with my children so that we as a family can pass this learning and history on to future generations. This family journey has been alongside my creative path into visual art and painting. During this process I have learnt to listen quietly, learn and grow.

I am a Yorta Yorta woman living on Dja Dja Wurrung country and follow strong Yorta Yorta women before me. A creative soul with a strong connection to country through art and an intuitive artist, I love spending time on the Murray and the Ovens rivers, which inspire and renew me."

## **The GANAG instructional model.**

GANAG stands for:

**Goals**

**Access**

**New Info**

**Apply**

**Goal review.**

The GANAG instructional model for lesson design was created by Jane Pollock and presented in the text *Classroom Instruction that Works* (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). It grew from the work of Madeline Hunter who created a schema in the 1970s for lessons that is still useful today (Hunter, 2004).

Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge:Oxon.  
Marzano, R., Pickering, D. & Pollock, E. (2001). *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. ASCD: Alexandria, Virginia.

Teachers can use the table below to assist in integrating the program into their curriculum delivery.

GANAG	9 High Yield Strategies	Unit : Country and Belonging		
<b>Goal</b> set the learning goal/benchmark or objective	- Setting Objectives & Providing Feedback	<u>Standards</u> applying to that lesson	Pre Visit Activities	
	- Reinforcing Effort And Providing Recognition	<u>Learning Intention</u>	<b>Focus 1</b> I can understand an acknowledgement of country and why we use it.	<b>Focus 2</b> I can understand culture and how this is expressed through many different forms
<b>Access</b> Access students' prior knowledge building engagement through establishing immediate relevancy; a "hook" that is a short introduction to the lesson	- Question, Cues And Advanced Organisers - Nonlinguistic Representations - Identifying Similarities And Differences - Cooperative Learning	Possible <u>Instructional Strategies</u> to Try: - Review of previous lesson - Pair and Share - Turn and Talk - Brainstorming - Quick Write - Verbal check-in of prior knowledge - Visual to access prior knowledge	An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. There is no specific wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, it should be sincere and respectful. <b>Have students pair and share what they know about Acknowledgements</b>	Conversations about culture can help shape student's understanding of the cultural makeup of their community. <b>Students can turn and talk with classmates about different things that make up Culture.</b>
<b>New Information</b> Acquire new information – declarative and/or procedural	- Summarising and Note Taking - Homework and Practise	Possible <u>Instructional Strategies</u> to Try: - Modeling and direct instruction - Student discussions - Academic feedback to students - Non-fiction writing, vocabulary and reading strategies to develop understanding of new information - Inquiry based questions and activities	Discuss with students the importance of an Acknowledgement of Country and showing respect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cettjSx1uV8&amp;t=106s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cettjSx1uV8&amp;t=106s</a></li> </ul> Read your schools acknowledgement of country, Or use this one as an example <b>Here is the Land            Here is the Sky            Here are my friends            and here am I            We play today            On traditional Land            Our First Nation people            we walk hand in hand            We'd like to say thank you            for letting us share            the Land that you love            we promise to take care.</b> Or a more formal version for upper years	Hold a class discussion on - What do you think "culture" means? How many different cultures do you think we might have in this class? What do we know about (country) cultural traditions? When we talk about a culture, what are we talking about? (Looking for answers such as geographic ideas, traditions, food, religion, dress, song, art, dance, storytelling, customs, the way we live.)

			<p>I acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Owners and Elders - past and present - of the lands on which Project Platypus operates. I acknowledge Aboriginal connection to these lands for more than 65,000 years and extend my respect to First Nations people throughout our communities. I acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. Always was, Always will be.</p>	
<p><b>Apply</b> Apply a thinking skill or use knowledge in a new situation. Opportunity for feedback provided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify Similarities And Differences</li> <li>- Cues, Questions And Advanced Organisers</li> <li>_ Generate And Test Hypotheses</li> </ul>	<p>Possible <b>Instructional Strategies</b> to Try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guided Practice</li> <li>- Independent and group work</li> <li>- Student demonstration of learning objective</li> <li>- Student-to-student discussions using accountable talk</li> <li>- Ongoing checks for understanding</li> <li>- Continuous academic feedback to the students</li> </ul>	<p>Do some research on the Country you are acknowledging.</p> <p><a href="#">Whose Country am I on?   AIATSIS</a></p>	<p>Allow students time to make a list of the different types of culture they may have in their own families, or have experienced or know of in others</p>
<p><b>Goal Review</b> Review what has been taught. How will the teacher know if students met the measurable objective?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting Objectives And Providing Feedback</li> <li>- Reinforcing Effort And Providing Recognition</li> <li>- Homework And Practise</li> </ul>	<p>Possible <b>Means of Assessments</b> to Try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oral or written summary of lesson</li> <li>- Exit slip or quick write</li> <li>- Pair and share</li> <li>- Peer and individual review of work</li> <li>- Class discussion of topic</li> <li>- Cornell notes check</li> </ul>	<p>Pair and share with a classmate what works in an acknowledgement, and what words are consistently used.</p>	<p>Compile a written summary with the class of the different forms of culture they have suggested</p>

## Suggested Post-Visit Activities

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Activities that dissect and expand upon the content of *Country and Belonging* that the teacher and students can engage in post-program.

GANAG	9 High Yield Strategies		Unit : Country and Belonging	
<b>Goal</b> set the learning goal/benchmark or objective	- Setting Objectives & Providing Feedback	<b>Standards</b> applying to that lesson	Post Visit Activities	
	- Reinforcing Effort And Providing Recognition	<b>Learning Intention</b>	<b>Focus 1</b> I can read the Daily/Weekly Acknowledgement	<b>Focus 2</b> I can understand my own connection to the area that surrounds me
<b>Access</b> Access students' prior knowledge building engagement through establishing immediate relevancy: a "hook" that is a short introduction to the lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Question, Cues And Advanced Organisers</li> <li>- Nonlinguistic Representations</li> <li>- Identifying Similarities And Differences</li> <li>- Cooperative Learning</li> </ul>	Possible <b>Instructional Strategies</b> to Try: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of previous lesson</li> <li>- Pair and Share</li> <li>- Turn and Talk</li> <li>- Brainstorming</li> <li>- Quick Write</li> <li>- Verbal check-in of prior knowledge</li> <li>- Visual to access prior knowledge</li> </ul>	<b>Ensure your school acknowledges country at your assemblies, in newsletters and at the start of the week.</b> Remind students of the prior learning about Acknowledgement of Country with Arena Theatre company	<b>Nature Art Walk</b> <b>Show students examples of nature artists works.</b> <b>Nils Udo - <a href="#">Spectacular Works of Land Art Celebrate the Beauty of Nature</a></b> <b>Agnes Denes - <a href="#">Agnes Denes</a></b> <b>Andy Goldsworthy - <a href="#">Site-Specific Land Art by Andy Goldsworthy are Ephemeral Earthworks</a></b>
<b>New Information</b> Acquire new information – declarative and/or procedural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Summarising and Note Taking</li> <li>- Homework and Practise</li> </ul>	Possible <b>Instructional Strategies</b> to Try: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Modeling and direct instruction</li> <li>- Student discussions</li> <li>- Academic feedback to students</li> <li>- Non-fiction writing, vocabulary and reading strategies to develop understanding of new information</li> <li>- Inquiry based questions and activities</li> </ul>	As a class discuss what your school acknowledge can/will/should say. Provide students with examples of acknowledgements of country (as per Pre visit GANAG chart)	Lead student discussions around public art, understanding country and being respectful of the environment.
<b>Apply</b> Apply a thinking skill or use knowledge in a new situation. Opportunity for feedback provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify Similarities And Differences</li> <li>- Cues, Questions And Advanced Organisers</li> <li>- Generate And Test Hypotheses</li> </ul>	Possible <b>Instructional Strategies</b> to Try: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guided Practice</li> <li>- Independent and group work</li> <li>- Student demonstration of learning objective</li> <li>- Student-to-student discussions using accountable talk</li> <li>- Ongoing checks for understanding</li> <li>- Continuous academic feedback to the students</li> </ul>	Have students collectively write an acknowledgement, and then ensure it is timetabled. Nominate a reader for the acknowledgment each week.	Take students outside to collect natural materials (leaves, bark, stones) and create additional artworks that represent their personal connection to Country.



# Goal Review

Review what has been taught. How will the teacher know if students met the measurable objective?

- Setting Objectives And Providing Feedback
- Reinforcing Effort And Providing Recognition
- Homework And Practise

Possible **Means of Assessments** to Try:

- Oral or written summary of lesson
- Exit slip or quick write
- Pair and share
- Peer and individual review of work
- Class discussion of topic
- Cornell notes check

Pair and share the acknowledgment with classmates, practice makes perfect!

Photograph the results and pair and share with class.

## Further Reading

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- “Teaching First Nations Content in the Drama Classroom” downloadable from the Drama Victoria Website: <https://www.dramavictoria.vic.edu.au/resources/first-nations/>
- Welcome to Country, Read aloud, Aunty Joy Murphy and Lisa Kennedy <https://youtu.be/LP15V-imLa4>
- Welcome to Country, Marcia Langton

## Access

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Examples of similar work that students could relate to or may have seen before. This can assist teachers to draw on connections for students and help them relate to the work (or that can complement it).

- General observance/discussion of First Nations artwork.

- 5:45 video of Uncle Rick Nelson talking about his Dja Dja Wurrung ancestors:

<https://vimeo.com/423429830>

- 1:17 Dumawul Tours video highlights of Djaara country

<https://dumawul.com.au/>

## Curriculum Links – Victorian F-10 Curriculum

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Use the Victorian Curriculum F-10 website <https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

Note that the Victorian Curriculum is different to the Australian Curriculum.

Learning Areas
The Arts: Visual Arts
<b>Strand:</b> Respond and Interpret
Level F-8
Country & Belonging encourages student awareness and understanding to explore their own cultures and beliefs, and to express their sense of belonging using traditional and modern visual arts materials, digital technologies and storytelling.
<b>Example of link:</b> Country & Belonging participants identify and discuss how ideas are expressed in artworks from a range of places, times and cultures, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The residency culminates in a presentation/exhibition that allows participating students to share their work with a community audience and feel pride in their achievements. They will have the opportunity (ongoing) to discuss and respond to their works (and their friend' works) by reflecting on and demonstrating the new cultural and artistic knowledge they have gained through the program, extending their understanding of our shared culture. Associated achievements will see participants develop critical perspectives on and respect for their own and other' cultures.

**Strand:** Visual Arts Practices - (VCAVAV022, 26, 30)

Level - F-6

Students will develop an understanding of First Nations artworks and skills by exploring, selecting, and applying techniques and processes. They will be shown by a First Nations artist how their ideas are expressed in artworks.

**Example of link**

*Country & Belonging* aligns with all four strands of the Visual Arts Curriculum: **Explore and Express Ideas, Visual Arts Practices, Present and Perform, and Respond and Interpret.**

The depth of engagement in each strand depends on factors such as the number of students and their age. For example, at a smaller school, we may work with all students from Prep to Grade 6, adapting activities to suit different age groups and abilities. In contrast, at a larger school where we work exclusively with Grade 3-4 students, we can explore specific strands and ideas in greater depth.

The Arts: Dance

**Strand: Explore & Express Ideas**

Level 1-2 Use safe dance practice, fundamental locomotor and non-locomotor movements, body parts, bases and zones to explore, improvise and structure movement ideas for dance

**Strand: Present & Perform**

**Level 1-2** Use simple technical and expressive skills when presenting dance that communicates ideas about themselves and their world to an audience

**Example of link**

In the post-visit activities, students are encouraged to create a routine that explores storytelling through movement and using their up-cycled instruments.

**Capabilities**

Intercultural capability, (VCICCB006 and 010)

**Levels F-6**

*Country & Belonging* starts a discussion about what they have learnt about themselves and others through participatory art making. Students learn to identify and value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others.

**Example of link**

Having participated in *Country & Belonging*, participants will have an increased understanding of the personal significance of the practice of Acknowledging Country. This will be achieved through having each student write their own personal Acknowledgement, based on values that are important to them.

**Cross Curriculum Links**

Learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. Intersects with Visual Arts.

Students practice making art with traditional First Nations materials as well as modern technologies.

- Identify and discuss how ideas are expressed in artworks from a range of places, times and cultures, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (VCAVAR028)
- Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.
- Designing action for sustainability requires an evaluation of past practices, the assessment of scientific and technological developments, and balanced judgments based on projected future economic, social and environmental impacts.
- Promoting reflective thinking processes in young people and empower them to design action that will lead to more a more equitable and sustainable future
- Sustainable futures result from actions designed to preserve and/or restore the quality and uniqueness of environments.

Contact the Creative Learning team at [education@rav.net.au](mailto:education@rav.net.au) with further questions or, even better, examples of your work!

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