

MEDIA RELEASE

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TEACHING TWO-WAY SCIENCE IN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

ACARA and the CSIRO have together developed illustrations of practice showing students learning Aboriginal traditional ecological knowledge through the Australian Curriculum: Science, through on Country and classroom projects (also known as two-way science).

The [four illustrations of practice videos](#) featuring primary and middle school students in remote Aboriginal communities have been published on the Australian Curriculum website.

ACARA worked with the Indigenous STEM Education Project, a partnership between CSIRO and BHP Foundation, to collate these videos.

“Illustrations of practice show the different approaches teachers take in teaching the Australian Curriculum content, based on their local context,” ACARA CEO David de Carvalho said.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures is a cross-curriculum priority, and one of our goals is to increase engagement and achievement of our First Nations’ students by ensuring the curriculum is flexible and adaptable for individual learning.”

One of the videos features [Leonora District High School](#), located in a remote mining community in WA on the traditional lands of the Wankatja people. David Broun, CSIRO Science Pathways for Indigenous Communities Senior Coordinator, worked with the school and community to develop a two-way science learning program. This included an investigation of the *mamutjitji*, or *antlion*, a type of insect. Elders taught students the Dreaming story that describes the structural features of the *mamutjitji*, and its special sand traps. This was connected to a scientific investigation of *mamutjitji* habitat.

“Two-way science is a pedagogy,” Mr Broun said. “It’s an approach that connects the traditional ecological knowledge of Aboriginal people – that is the cultural understanding of people, animals and the environment – with western science inquiry, and links that to the Australian Curriculum in a learning program.”

In the Leonora District High School illustration of practice, Kado Muir, Cultural Protocol Officer with the Ngalia Heritage Research Council, said the value of engaging with two-way science on Country was to ‘reconnect our kids’.

“I’m hoping that with what we’re doing now... valuing Aboriginal knowledge and incorporating that into the curriculum, and seeing the world through our eyes, we’re able to add an element of our knowledge to the curriculum,” he said.

The four schools involved in the two-way science illustrations of practice were:

- **Areyonga School:** a Northern Territory government school located in a remote community 225 km west of Alice Springs on the traditional lands of the Pitjantjatjara people. It has an enrolment of 50 students, all of whom are Aboriginal.
- **Leonora District High School:** an F-12 government school located in the remote mining community of Leonora, WA, on the traditional lands of the on Wankatja people. It has an enrolment of 97 students, of whom 73% are Aboriginal.
- **Mt Liebig School:** a Northern Territory government school located in a remote community 325 km west of Alice Springs on the traditional lands of the Pintupi-Luritja people. It has an enrolment of 60 students, all of whom are Aboriginal.
- **Wiluna Remote Community School:** located in the mid-west region of Western Australia on the edge of the Western Desert, on the traditional lands of the Martu people. It has an enrolment of between 70 and 105 students, most of whom are Aboriginal.

“These illustrations of practice are aimed at supporting teacher engagement with, and promoting better understanding of, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority for all students,” Mr de Carvalho said.

“I think teachers have a real appetite for ensuring all Australian students have every opportunity to learn about our First Nations Peoples and the knowledge and culture embedded within 65,000+ years of history. It’s important that the Australian Curriculum continue to provide opportunities to improve engagement and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in schools.”

The videos can be viewed on the [Australian Curriculum website](#).

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