

First Nations – Traditional Knowledges and referencing

Citations and research involving First Nations people should recognise and respect their rights, culture and knowledge systems. Research conducted with First Nations people should follow ethical practices, including obtaining free, prior and informed consent. Researchers should discuss with First Nations people how they would like to be recognised and cited in any content or publication.

Citing Traditional Knowledges

‘Traditional knowledge is knowledge, know-how, skills and practices that are developed, sustained and passed on from generation to generation within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity’ ([World Intellectual Property Organization](#)).

It is recommended that Traditional Knowledges from First Nations people quoted or summarised in any content are cited as follows.

Australian Traditional Knowledge citation

Last name, title (if appropriate) and first name; Position (if appropriate; for example, Knowledge Holder, Elder), Language nation. *Topic of communication*, date of communication (day, month and year). Other details as appropriate.

For example:

Poole, Aunty Dawn; Knowledge Holder and Elder, Wiradjuri. *Belonging to the river*, 2 May 2020. Conversation with James Hayes.

Cumpston, Zena; Barkandji. *Indigenous plant use*, 1 September 2021. Notes provided to the national State of the Environment project.

Always ask the person how they would like to be referred to in the citation.

North American Traditional Knowledge citation

Lorisia MacLeod has developed an approach to [citing North American Indigenous knowledge](#):

Last name, First name. Nation/Community. Treaty Territory if applicable. City/Community they live in if applicable. Topic/subject of communication if applicable. Date Month Year.

For example:

Cardinal, Delores. Goodfish Lake Cree Nation. Treaty 6. Lives in Edmonton. Oral teaching. 4 April 2004.

Guidance on using Traditional Knowledge citations

The Traditional Knowledge citation should be used when the information focuses on Traditional Knowledge – that is, knowledge that has been handed down across generations, or that is kept by a Knowledge Holder or Elder of a language nation.

Other approaches to citations may be used for general information gained through communication with a First Nations person. See [Other approaches to citing Traditional Knowledges](#).

Researchers should discuss with the Knowledge Holders how they would like to be recognised and cited in any publication (see [Research involving First Nations people](#)).

Why a Traditional Knowledge citation should be used

Traditional Knowledges are usually not written down or published; however, it is important to afford Traditional Knowledges the same respect as academic publications.

Citation of sources is a critical element of an academic tradition in which knowledge is built on what has gone before. Citations recognise and show the work and discoveries of previous researchers.

Traditional Knowledges are similarly built up over time and through the experiences of many people.

Citing Traditional Knowledges recognises that Traditional Knowledges represent a tested and respected body of knowledge with an oral, rather than written, tradition. In Australia, Traditional Knowledges reflect at least 65,000 years of continuous culture and history of the many nations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Formally citing Traditional Knowledges in the recommended format provides an important way for these knowledges to be recognised and included.

Other approaches to citing Traditional Knowledges

Other approaches to citing Traditional Knowledges may be used, depending on the requirements of the publication and the preferences of the Knowledge Holder. The main alternative method is to cite oral information as a 'personal communication'.

Further advice on citing Traditional Knowledges is available from:

- Indigenous Archives Collective [*Indigenous referencing guidance for Indigenous knowledges*](#)
- University of Melbourne [*Indigenous knowledge research: advice on citation*](#).

Including First Nations people, publications and works in text

First Nations people, works and subjects should be included using respectful and appropriate language.

If a First Nations person is mentioned in text, include details of their language nation and place it in parentheses after their name. Further guidance is available from the [*James Cook University APA 7th referencing guide*](#).

If the details are available, include the language nation of First Nations authors in citations. Further guidance is available from the Bond University guidance on [*Indigenous authors*](#).

Citations of other works by First Nations people, such as artworks, should include details of their language nation and place. Detailed guidance has been developed by Danièle Hromek (Budawang/ Yuin) and Sophie Herbert in the University of Technology Sydney Library guide to referencing Indigenous material, page 122 of the [*UTS Library APA 7th referencing guide*](#).

First Nations researchers can consider including their cultural identity as part of their authorship credentials in publications, depending on the options available for the publication. Some academic journals have endorsed and follow the [*Indigenous Cultural Identity of Research Authors Standard*](#).

Research involving First Nations people

Research involving First Nations people or subjects has specific ethical requirements. These always apply when working with First Nations people, and can also apply when conducting desktop or other research involving First Nations sources or subjects. Identify and follow what is required for your institution or publication.

In Australia, researchers conducting research on First Nations topics should follow:

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) [*Code of ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research*](#), which outlines 4 principles that underpin ethical Australian First Nations research
- AIATSIS [*Guidelines for the ethical publishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and research from those communities*](#).

Other guidance on conducting First Nations research is available, including from:

- research funding organisations, such as
 - Australian Research Council [*codes and guidelines*](#)
 - National Health and Medical Research Council [*Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: guidelines for researchers and stakeholders*](#)

- research institutions, such as
 - Indigenous Archives Collective [*Indigenous referencing guidance for Indigenous knowledges*](#) (which has guidance about assessing and using sources relating to First Nations)
 - Indigenous Knowledge Institute [*Charter for research with Indigenous knowledge holders*](#)
 - CSIRO [*Our knowledge, our way guidelines*](#)
- universities, such as
 - Australian National University [*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research*](#)
 - University of Melbourne [*Indigenous knowledges research guide*](#)
 - University of Tasmania [*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research ethics*](#).

Indigenous cultural and intellectual property

First Nations people have rights associated with their Traditional Knowledges, including intellectual property (IP) rights. Traditional Knowledge IP is known as Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP). ICIP should be considered and respected in any research involving First Nations people or subjects.

Various guidance resources about ICIP are available, including:

- IP Australia [*Indigenous Knowledge IP hub*](#) and a discussion paper on [*Issues for protection and management of Indigenous Knowledge*](#)
- NSW Government [*Indigenous cultural and intellectual property protocol*](#)
- [*True tracks*](#) by Dr Terri Janke, which provides guidelines for respectful engagement with Indigenous IP, knowledge and culture
- Australia Council for the Arts [*Protocols for using first nations cultural and intellectual property in the arts*](#)
- World Intellectual Property Organization [*Treaty on intellectual property, genetic resources and associated Traditional Knowledge*](#), which addresses the connection between IP, Traditional Knowledge and genetic resources.

Free, prior and informed consent

Before any Traditional Knowledges are published, free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) must be obtained from the First Nations people involved.

The principle of FPIC is recognised under the [*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*](#) and implemented under various national and international laws and practices. FPIC allows First Nations people to provide, withhold or withdraw consent to the use of their ICIP at any time.

New uses of ICIP require new consent. [*Protocols for using First Nations cultural and intellectual property in the arts*](#) states that: 'FPIC is dynamic and ongoing. As projects develop ... there may be new aspects of ICIP use that require the further permission of the source communities. Make sure that the relevant Indigenous people and/or communities are consulted adequately on these additional uses. This, too, should be documented and agreed to in writing.'

A guide to FPIC is available from the United Nations: [*Free, prior and informed consent manual*](#).

This guide has been created with help from:

- Dr Terri Janke – an Indigenous Australian lawyer of Wuthathi/Meriam heritage; Solicitor Director of Terri Janke and Company and a leading international authority on ICIP
- Dr Mark Lock – an Australian academic of Ngiyampaa heritage, specialising in cultural safety in research, writing and editing
- Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews – a D'harawal man raised on Bidjigal and Nattaimattagal Country; Director of Indigenous Research at Western Sydney University
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
- Universities Australia Deputy Vice Chancellor / Pro Vice Chancellor Indigenous Committee.