

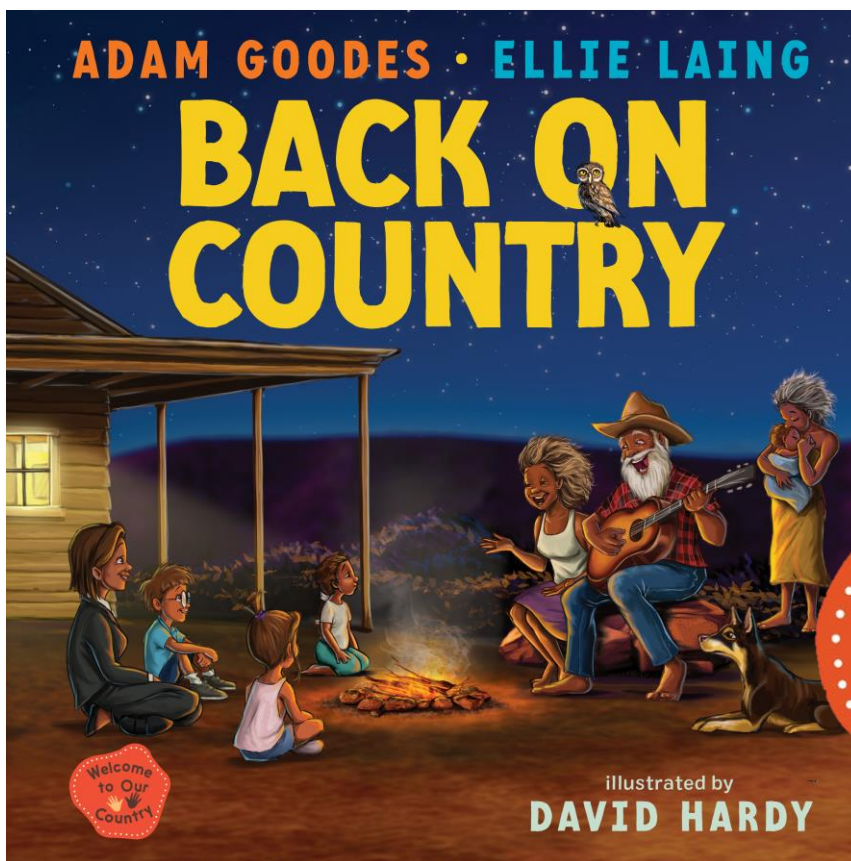
READING RESOURCES BY **CULTURE IS LIFE**

Culture
is Life

BACK ON COUNTRY

By Adam Goodes and Ellie Laing, illustrated by David Hardy

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands and waterways. We pay respects to Elders both past and present and extend respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



Recommended for ages 4–8

Preschool to Year 3

Themes: First Nations, Indigenous Australians, Australian History, Adnyamathanha culture, Connection to Country and Culture, Kinship

Welcome
to Our
Country

ABOUT THE RESOURCE DEVELOPERS: **CULTURE IS LIFE**

Culture is Life is an Aboriginal-led not-for-profit organisation that works to inspire change by supporting projects and programs that are anchored in cultural activities and expression. To address the prevalent issues of health inequity and to draw on growing evidence that cultural strengthening influences the health and well-being of First Nations peoples globally, Culture is Life backs Aboriginal-led solutions that deepen connection to culture and Country for Aboriginal young people. The organisation's work aims to build awareness and educate the broader community to reframe the relationships non-Aboriginal people have with Australia's First Peoples, leading educational and advocacy change across key environments to strengthen the wellbeing of Aboriginal young people.

ABOUT **BACK ON COUNTRY**

Back on Country is a beautiful story sharing the first time sister and brother, Lucy and David, go back on Country with their mother to meet their cousins and Elders. They visit special places of their Adnymathanha people, whilst learning language and hearing the stories of their Country and ancestors along the way. A true illustration of the connection to community, Country and culture that is not just in the past, but is celebrated today.

The story told by Adam Goodes and Ellie Laing, together with David Hardy's illustrations, create a sense of wonder to further explore the protocols of First Nations people. As you turn each page, you are immersed in the joy of ancient songlines, beliefs, beauty and ceremony of First Nations peoples. Embedded in the book is Yura Ngarwala language of Adam Goodes' people, the Adnyamathanha people, for you to learn and share. The Kinship system of the Adnyamathanha people is shared throughout *Back on Country* where you will explore the moiety system and kinship structure with your students and the levels of respect shown towards Elders within their family structure.

The creators and publishers hope the book will be a prompt for people to take a deeper interest in First Nations rights and issues and explore the many other books, documentaries and films that are available. Adam Goodes worked in consultation with senior cultural advisors, when writing *Back on Country*.



ABOUT THE **WELCOME TO OUR COUNTRY** SERIES

Welcome to Our Country is a five-book series designed to connect young children, teachers, parents and carers with First Nations history and cultures. **Somebody's Land** acknowledges the hurt of the past and joins together the community as one, with a precious shared history, and is available for purchase now. The educational resources for *Somebody's Land* can be downloaded here. **Ceremony** is a delightful story shared through the eyes of children, about the end of season ceremony and celebrations of First Nations Peoples. **Back on Country** highlights connection to Country and kinship as Lucy and David go back on Country for the first time with their mother. The next book in the series will be available in November 2023.

FROM THE RESOURCE DEVELOPERS, **CULTURE IS LIFE**

Aboriginal people are the oldest known civilisation on the earth. The land we now know as Australia has stories going back thousands of generations told through ancient songlines. As Aboriginal people we have a shared oral history, passed through thousands of generations, that has only been documented through writing since European colonisation began in 1788.

As Aboriginal people and educators it is important that we highlight and influence education settings, homes and communities to connect with and truly understand our history of strong cultures and peoples who lived harmoniously on this land for tens of thousands of years. It is also important that all people living in Australia understand our shared history of colonisation that caused devastating impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that continue to have impact today. Despite this, our cultures and connection to Country, meaning all spirits, land, waterways, sky, animals and people, still remain strong.

We hope to inspire an everlasting connection to and appreciation of our beautiful culture, peoples and countries for yourself, young people in your care, family and wider community. In doing this, we believe in the positive impact and change that we can collectively create in shared story and truth telling.

Culture is Life acknowledges the ongoing work of so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as First Nations peoples globally – they have paved the way for us to be seen, heard and truly appreciated for the value and knowledge that has lived in us for time immemorial. We also acknowledge all the people who walk beside us and choose to be a part of these important conversations, particularly those who inspire our next generation of leaders.

Culture is Life is grateful to play a role in supporting our young generations' education through your teachings and assisting in strengthening knowledge, awareness and understanding of the First Peoples of the Country they live on. **We would love to hear from you with any feedback or insights into this resource and your journey at info@cultureislife.org**

A WORD FROM THE CREATORS OF *BACK ON COUNTRY*



This book was written for all those Indigenous families who weren't born on their Country and haven't been able to reconnect to Country.

It is also made for everyone to understand the importance of Country and the connection Aboriginal people have to it.

– Adam Goodes

Back on Country is a story that showcases the importance of Country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and their deep connection to it. It showcases how Country is much more than a place, but central to one's identity and existence: Everyone and everything is connected by Country, which encompasses the physical, the spiritual and the cultural.

Our book *Back on Country*, the third in our Welcome to Our Country series, aims to highlight all of those elements through the exciting adventures and experiences of the central characters.

The book aims to highlight how powerful, strengthening and unburdening the experience of going Back on Country can be, leaving people feeling more relaxed, energised and at one with nature.

– Ellie Laing



Back on Country as a story reminds me of my childhood. My mother had been reunited with her family later in life, after being separated when she was a child. I was about 6 years old when we reconnected with our relatives and started to learn about our country and culture.

Annually, my mum, dad, sister and I travelled back on country to Brewarrina from Sydney. I still remember the countless hours of the long drive, being surrounded by nothing but red dirt and the occasional roo.

Catching up with all the relatives was always something to look forward to, especially hanging out with all my cousins. Learning about how our ancestors used to live was so amazing to me, especially learning about the Brewarrina fish traps. I also loved the bush tucker, pigging out on as many quondongs as we could stomach.

The illustrations in this book were heavily inspired by my personal experiences, during these times back in Brewarrina. Even though this book is set in Adnyamathanha country, I still added some elements of my country in this book, especially the tents in the backyard where all the kids used to sleep at Aunty Viv and Uncle Bill's place.

This book holds so much importance to me and my family, and I know that so many other families would have had similar experiences in their life.

– David Hardy

IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE READING:

Please consider **protocols** and **cultural safety** in providing a safe space for young people to learn, ask questions and express their thoughts and feelings.

It is also important that educators value the benefits of young people's understanding and connection to place, belonging, community and kinship in strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To know our world's longest surviving culture is a gift to be appreciated!

USEFUL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AFTER READING

1. What is this book about? Who is the book intended for?
2. What messages and learnings are obvious in this book? What messages and learnings may be more deeply embedded?
3. Why is it important for children in my care to read this book?
4. What changes do I want to see? What role can I play in facilitating these changes?

PERSONAL CHECK-IN

We invite parents and carers to truly pause and reflect on your connection and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, traditions, customs, perspectives and knowledge before reading this book to children. We ask you to be vulnerable in reflecting on your experiences and prior knowledge of the traditional custodians of the land that you live on. Identify any areas where you can strengthen your understanding to ensure you are providing the most respectful and honest conversation in your home or place of care. A very useful Further Reading list is provided later in these notes.

CULTURAL SAFETY FOR CHILDREN

This book was written from both an Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspective, with a shared vision for all people to better connect and understand the true histories, cultures and peoples of the land we now call Australia.

It is important to first consider any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children reading this book and how the perspectives and themes could impact them.

The significant impacts of past and current policies influence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's journey, and knowledge and experiences differ between every child. It is also important to consider the experiences of any person reading this book, who could be impacted by the removal from their homelands, family, kinship and country.

Start conversations with the children in your care and consider their wellbeing and backgrounds.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in your care may well relate and feel connected to these stories in a way that they want to celebrate. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are also directly impacted by practices and policies that impact their connection to culture, kinship and place. Stories of removal and dispossession can be triggering. As a carer or parent, you know your children best to make these considerations when reading and having related conversations with them.

Connect with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Build relationships in your community to hear local First People's perspectives and local knowledges. Take your children to cultural events, services or places, where appropriate, to deepen this connection.

In understanding and honouring the survival and strong presence and cultures of Aboriginal people today, when discussing Aboriginal ways in past tense, it is important for adults to confirm that Aboriginal cultural practices in this book are still strong and practised today. Even if this looks different, the topics are not just historic.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED READING FOR ADULTS

On Adnyamathanha People and Anangu Society

[Adnyamathanha – Aboriginal people of South](#)

[Australia \(State Library of South Australia\)](#)

[Men’s and women’s business – Anangu society](#)

On Indigenous Kinship and Moiety

[Kinship – The heart of First Nations Society](#)

[Skin, Kin and Clan: Moiety Names in South-Eastern Australia \(ANU\)](#)

[Moiety \(University of Sydney\)](#)

On Songlines

[Songlines: the Indigenous memory code \(All In The](#)

[Mind, ABC Radio National\)](#)

On Language

[What happened to Australia’s Indigenous languages?](#)

On Country

[AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia](#)

[Welcome to Country \(AIATSIS\)](#)

[Welcome to or Acknowledgement of Country?](#)

On Dreaming

[Understanding Aboriginal Dreaming and the Dreamtime](#)

[Aboriginal Dreaming stories, birds and the local environment \(A Strategy for years R–5\)](#)

On Aboriginal Culture and Histories

[Why is it important for students to learn about Aboriginal culture?](#)

[Histories written in the land \(SBS\)](#)

On Aboriginal Art Creation

[Grinding Ochre – a classroom activity](#)

BEFORE READING *BACK ON COUNTRY*

The preface

The preface on the dedication page is important to note. It explains to adults that this book is about Country and kinship. It also depicts the structure of Adnyamathanha society and the importance of moieties and the role they play.

Yura ngarwala language used within the book

Throughout *Back on Country*, Yura ngarwala is used – this is the common term used for the Adnyamathanha people’s language – when literally translated, it means ‘people speak’. Yura ngarwala has been embedded for children to be exposed to and to learn language. Adnyamathanha people are members of the Thura-Yura language family.

The QR code in the Foreword links to a recording of the story and glossary. This will help with learning the pronunciation of the Adnyamathanha words. Alternatively, head to the audio link on the A&U website.

Find out what the young people in your care already know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures by asking questions such as:

- Who were the First Peoples to live on the land we now call Australia?
- What do you know about how Aboriginal people lived? (Encourage a broad discussion, including music, art, food, history, language, ceremonies and culture.)
- What are different names for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? What does Indigenous, First Nations and First People mean?

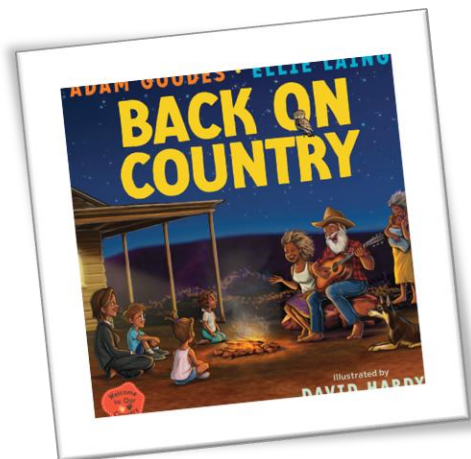
*In understanding and honouring the survival and strong presence and cultures of Aboriginal people today, when discussing Aboriginal ways in past tense, it is important for adults to confirm that **Aboriginal people’s connection to Country, Community, Kinship and Culture is alive today**. Even if this looks different, the topics are not just historic.*

*It is important for children to understand these names can be used for the same group of people. It can be appropriate to use either term or their specific clan or language group if known. **The best way to know how a specific person prefers to be referred to is to respectfully ask**. This book refers to Aboriginal people as a term for the collective of many groups of First Peoples from mainland Australia.*

CONSIDERING THE COVER

Show children the front cover of *Back on Country* and give them plenty of time to absorb the illustrations and title. Encourage them to think deeply about the cover by asking questions such as:

- What does the title *Back on Country* tell you about this book?
- Who are Aboriginal people?
- What do you know about their cultures?
- What do you know about connection to Country?
- How does this front cover make you feel?



NOW IT'S TIME TO READ AND DISCOVER TOGETHER

Enjoy reading this delightful book with your children, appreciating the beauty of Aboriginal culture shown through the excitement of children preparing and enjoying their connection to Country, family and their Adnyamathanha culture. Cuddle up and enjoy the magic!

HERE ARE SOME FUN AFTER-READING ACTIVITIES TO DO

Create an Indigenous Map

Look at an [Indigenous Map of Australia](#) from AIATSIS on the internet or order one for yourself. Together, find where the Adnyamathanha people's Country is on the map.

You may like to print a small one and glue it into a project book and add information, language and pictures about the Adnyamathanha people and your local Aboriginal peoples, as you learn together. Children can share it with other members of the family or their class at school.

Kinship

Explain the concept of kinship and Aboriginal peoples' relationships with people, animals and Country. You can learn more about traditional kinship structure [here](#).

- What roles do Elders, Aunties, Uncles, men, women and children play in Aboriginal communities?
- What do you see them doing in their roles in the book?
- How is this similar or different in your life?

Cooking Quandong (Urti) Pie

Cooking together with your class can be special. If you are able to get some Urti (Quandongs) to make a Urti pie with your class, here is a recipe from Damien Coulthard, who grew up picking Urtis in the Flinders Rangers with his Adnyini.

- Damien has shared his family recipe with you for you to share with your class. Or find out the local Native ingredients from your area and find a recipe that you can make and share with your class. Damper is a great one! [Damien's Urti Pie](#)

Songlines

[Damian Coulthard's paintings](#) tell the Creation stories of the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. The Flinders Ranges are culturally significant to the Adnyamathanha people. His paintings evoke songlines where his people performed ceremonies and rituals.

Songs and dances are and have been performed during the travels on the songlines on this land for thousands and thousands of years.

- Explore [Damian's artworks](#) on the internet or in person if you are lucky. Look at how he shares the beauty of his culture and songlines of the Adnyamathanha people through art.
- Visit a local Aboriginal art gallery and explore the artwork of a local Aboriginal artist together.

You may be surprised to learn that many of the highways and major roads you may have travelled on are ancient songlines of Aboriginal peoples.

All **Aboriginal Art is covered by copyright** and cannot be reproduced. Please use the art for inspiration and education purposes only.

Dreaming Story

The Kingfisher Story is an Adnyamathanha Dreaming story: a journey of Yurlu, the old kingfisher man, to Ikara (Wilpena Pound). It tells of the role that smoke and fire plays in his journey to a ceremony that leads to the formation of Wilpena Pound, the planet Mars, the Turkey and Kingfishers. Read the full story here: [The Kingfisher Story – Wilpena Pound Resort](#)

The Sharing Stories Foundation is an organisation that works with 17 different language groups around Australia including Adnyamathanha people.

They have created a touch book of a collection of Aboriginal stories you can share with your children: [Yulu – The Kingfisher Man](#) will be available in 2022.

Seven Sisters Songlines

Watch these amazing clips of the Digital Domes experience Songlines tracking the Seven Sisters - one features animations of the Seven Sisters flying into the night sky and the other transports you to this previously never filmed Seven Sisters rock art site. A special way to further explore the meaning and connection Aboriginal people have with the Seven Sisters Dreaming: [Songlines](#).

Create a song – storytelling

As a class sit outside and walk on Country together quietly just absorbing the sounds, smells and sights of the Country your school is on. Head back into class or sit in a quiet space outside and create a song together sharing the stories of Country. Sing it at a school assembly or at a special school event.

Sacred Places

The story of Akurra the Snake is a very important creation story of Lake Frome, to the Adnyamathanha people. Check out this incredible image and the story of Akurra here [Legends of the North - Akurra, the Snake - Peter MacDonald Photo](#)

Charcoal

Explore the stunning stories and images of the Adnyamathanha cave paintings with your child online, talk about how the caves are protected and you are not allowed to copy them as they belong to Aboriginal people of that area. You will notice that a lot of the drawings are done in

charcoal. Provide your children with some brown paper and charcoal and get them to draw a story about a moment in their life they think would be cave worthy. You may even like to make a small cave in a doorway and to hang them and showcase them together as a family.

Understanding Ochre

- Learn about ochre painting and ceremonies with Aunty Lyn Chapman: [Grinding Ochre](#). This practical activity explains ochre painting and ceremonies and includes an activity to grind rocks, or chalk, on paper to understand how traditional paint works.
- Explore these images of the Adnyamathanha peoples' use of ochre in the Flinders Rangers [Aboriginal Cave Paintings at Yourambulla, South Australia](#)
- Research whether your local First Nations peoples used ochre as well.

Local Connections

As a family unit, try to attend local festivals and celebrations run by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or your council and immerse yourselves in the culture and beauty.

Listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander podcasts to hear true lived experiences, watch movies to share in their truth and read books written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There are so many ways available for you to start making a connection and gain a deeper understanding of the history, culture and beauty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.

World Heritage listing

The Flinders Rangers is dubbed 'The great outdoor museum' and is over 600 million years old and rich in fossils that tell the story of evolution. The South Australian Government with the help of many stakeholders is hoping the Flinders Rangers will be added to the World Heritage list in 2025. [South Australia's Flinders Ranges nominated for Unesco world heritage status](#).

Watch this [video of their bid](#) and continue to follow the story in the coming years. Discuss with your family why it is important to protect our country and the stories in the land and what role you play as a family.

DEBRIEFING AND ONGOING CONVERSATIONS

It is important to allow space for ongoing conversations.

Some questions you could ask the children in your care are:

- What did you learn or remember from what we read and discussed?
- How do you feel?
- Why might this feel (insert positive response)?
- Why might this feel (insert negative response)?
- What would you like to do and/or learn more about?

Reinforce the title of the book, *Back on Country* and discuss how we can honour and be respectful to the ceremonies performed by Aboriginal people in the past and today.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Adam Goodes is an Adnyamathanha and Narungga man and community leader. He is a former Australian Rules footballer, having achieved the greatest heights in the game, and was named Australian of the Year in 2014 for his public work in the fight against racism and his advocacy in First Nations affairs. Together with his cousin Michael O'Loughlin, Adam founded the GO Foundation, which supports and inspires the next generation of First Nations leaders. With a diploma in Aboriginal Studies and his own daughter approaching preschool age, Adam was motivated to publish a series of books for young children and families about Australia's First Nations history.

Ellie Laing (nee Southwood) is a political adviser and former journalist and presenter who lives on the lands of the Gammeraygal people on the northern beaches of Sydney with her husband and two sons. When Ellie's eldest son Harvey came home from preschool reciting Acknowledgements of Country and singing Aboriginal lullabies, she was inspired to collaborate with Adam Goodes on a series of books aimed at helping families with young children to talk about Australia's First Nations history. She has recently completed studies in Traditional Aboriginal Cultures.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

David Hardy is a Barkindji man, author and artist with more than eight years of animation experience with Walt Disney Animation Studios. Married with two children, he is currently a Senior Gaming Illustrator/Animation Manager for Lightning Box Games. David has worked on twelve animated feature films, including *The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Beginning*, *The Lion King 3: Hakuna Matata* and *Return to Neverland*. His books for children include *Somebody's Land* and *Ceremony* (written by Adam Goodes and Ellie Laing), *Alfie's Search for Destiny* and *Alfie's Big Wish*, *On the Way to Nana's* (written by Frances and Lindsay Haji-Ali), *The Proud Foots 1: Shaka Shaka Hawaii* (written by Lucas Proudfoot) and *Aussie Kids: Meet Zoe and Zac at the Zoo* (written by Belinda Murrell).

ABOUT THE ART STYLE

Creative licence has been taken with regard to historical accuracy. Clothing and other details reflect the sensibilities of a contemporary audience. The art and ceremony depicted in the illustrations are of the Adnyamathanha people and is set on their country in South Australia around the Flinders Ranges.