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Australian First Nations Online Learning

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Significant Dates and Information.

2020.

26th January.	Australia Day--Survival Day.
13th February.	Anniversary of Apology to Australia's Indigenous People.
19th March.	National Close the Gap Day.
21st March.	Harmony Day. Coincides with United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
26th May.	National Sorry Day.
27th May.	Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum.
27th May – 3rd June.	National Reconciliation Week.
3rd June.	Mabo Day.
1st July.	Coming of the Light.
5th July – 12th July.	NAIDOC Week.
4th August.	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day.
9th August.	International Day of the Worlds Indigenous People.

26th January.

Survival Day.

Background: January 26, 1788 was the date on which Captain Arthur Phillip took formal possession of the colony of New South Wales and raised the British flag for the first time in Sydney Cove.

In the early 1880s the day was known as 'First Landing', 'Anniversary Day' or 'Foundation Day'.

In 1946 the Commonwealth and state governments agreed to unify the celebrations on January 26 and call it 'Australia Day'.

The day became a public holiday in 1818 (its 30th anniversary) and since 1994 has been celebrated by all states and territories.

However, to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people there is little to celebrate and the day is a commemoration of a deep loss - loss of their sovereign rights to their land, loss of family, loss of the right to practice their culture.

The day is therefore also known as 'Invasion Day', 'Day of Mourning', 'Survival Day' or, since 2006, 'Aboriginal Sovereignty Day'.

The name *Survival Day* emphasises that Aboriginal culture is still strong, and that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's identities are positive and alive despite all that has happened since colonisation.

Survival Day has become one of the biggest Indigenous cultural events that is staged throughout Australia.

In all major cities alternative concerts are held where mainly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gather. There are various Survival Day events around the State and around Australia.

13th February.

Anniversary of Apology to Australia's Indigenous People.

This event marks the anniversary of the Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples in the House of Representatives on 13 February 2008 by former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, apologising for past laws, policies and practices that have impacted on Australia's First Nations Peoples, particularly members of the Stolen Generations.

The motion was supported by the Opposition and passed through both houses of Parliament; Brendan Nelson (former Leader of the Opposition) gave a formal response.

Many members of the Stolen Generations were present in the Chamber to hear the Apology and thousands more filled the Great Hall of Parliament House and flowed out onto the lawns to watch it on big screens.

The Apology was broadcast across Australia.

View information: <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people/apology-to-australias-indigenous-peoples>

19th March. National Close the Gap Day.

In 2006, more than 40 national organisations came together to form Close the Gap - Australia's largest ever campaign to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Every year people are encouraged to hold their own event on National Close the Gap Day to raise awareness about the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Since 2006, the Close the Gap campaign has achieved an enormous amount with community support.

In 2013, there were over 900 National Close the Gap Day events around Australia.

View information: <https://www.oxfam.org.au/close-the-gap-student-kit/>

21st March. Harmony Day. Coincides with United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Harmony Day is a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home – from the traditional owners of this land to those who have come from many countries around the world. By participating in Harmony Day activities, people can learn and understand how all Australians from diverse backgrounds equally belong to this nation and enrich it.

View information: <https://www.harmony.gov.au/about/>

26th May. National Sorry Day.

National Sorry Day is a significant day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and particularly for Stolen Generations survivors.

The idea of holding a 'Sorry Day' was first mentioned as one of the 54 recommendations of the Bringing them home report, which was tabled in Parliament on 26 May 1997.

This report was the result of a two year National Inquiry into the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families, communities and cultural identity.

On 26 May 1998 the first 'Sorry Day' was held in Sydney, it is now commemorated across Australia, with many thousands of people participating in memorials and commemorative events, in honour of the Stolen Generations.

View information: <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/australia/national-sorry-day>

27th May. Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum.

View Information: <http://www.abc.net.au/rightwrongs/>

27th May – 3rd June. National Reconciliation Week.

National Reconciliation Week is an ideal time for everyone to join the reconciliation conversation and reflect on shared histories, contributions and achievements. It is held annually from 27 May to 3 June and is a time to celebrate and build on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. Preceded by National Sorry Day on 26 May, National Reconciliation Week is framed by two key events in Australia's history, which provide strong symbols for reconciliation:

- o 27 May 1967 – the referendum that saw more than 90 per cent of Australians vote to give the Australian Government power to make laws for Indigenous people and recognise them in the census.
- o 3 June 1992 – the Australian High Court delivered the Mabo decision, which recognised that Indigenous people have a special relationship with the land. This paved the way for land rights known as native title.

Mabo Day is held 3 June to celebrate the life of Eddie Koiki Mabo.

View information: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/>

3rd June. Mabo Day.

Mabo Day marks the anniversary of the High Court of Australia's judgement in 1992 in the Mabo case. This is a day of particular significance for Torres Strait Islander Australians. Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo's name is synonymous with native title rights. His story began in May 1982 when he and fellow Murray (Mer) Islanders David Passi, Sam Passi, James Rice and Celuia Salee instituted a claim in the High Court for native title to the Murray (Mer) Islands in the Torres Strait. The claim was made against the State of Queensland, which responded by seeking to legislate to extinguish retrospectively any native title on the Islands. This was challenged in the High Court on the grounds that it was inconsistent with the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act. The High Court, in an historical judgement delivered on 3 June 1992, accepted the claim by Eddie Mabo and the other claimants that their people (the Meriam people) had occupied the Islands of Mer for hundreds of years before the arrival of the British. The High Court found that the Meriam people were 'entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of lands in the Murray Islands.' The decision overturned a legal fiction that Australia was terra nullius (a land belonging to no one) at the time of British colonisation.

View information: <http://www.aboriginalheritage.org/news/2013/mabo-day/>
<http://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au/our-communities/celebrations-holidays>

1st July. Coming of the Light.

For Torres Strait Islanders, the arrival of the missionaries marked the beginning of a new era, and Islanders use the Torres Strait Creole (Kriol) word *bipotaim* (meaning *before time*) to refer to the era before the coming of the missionaries.

View Information: <https://www.adcq.qld.gov.au/resources/a-and-tsi/torres-strait-islander-people-in-qld/coming-of-the-light>

5th – 12th July.

NAIDOC Week.

Always Was, Always Will Be.

Always Was, Always Will Be. recognises that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years.

We are spiritually and culturally connected to this country.

This country was criss-crossed by generations of brilliant Nations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were Australia's first explorers, first navigators, first engineers, first farmers, first botanists, first scientists, first diplomats, first astronomers and first artists.

Australia has the world's oldest oral stories. The First Peoples engraved the world's first maps, made the earliest paintings of ceremony and invented unique technologies. We built and engineered structures - structures on Earth - predating well-known sites such as the Egyptian Pyramids and Stonehenge.

Our adaptation and intimate knowledge of Country enabled us to endure climate change, catastrophic droughts and rising sea levels.

Always Was, Always Will Be. acknowledges that hundreds of Nations and our cultures covered this continent. All were managing the land - the biggest estate on earth - to sustainably provide for their future.

Through ingenious land management systems like fire stick farming we transformed the harshest habitable continent into a land of bounty.

NAIDOC Week 2020 acknowledges and celebrates that our nation's story didn't begin with documented European contact whether in 1770 or 1606 - with the arrival of the Dutch on the western coast of the Cape York Peninsula.

The very first footprints on this continent were those belonging to First Nations peoples.

Our coastal Nations watched and interacted with at least 36 contacts made by Europeans prior to 1770. Many of them resulting in the charting of the northern, western and southern coastlines – of our lands and our waters.

For us, this nation's story began at the dawn of time.

NAIDOC 2020 invites all Australians to embrace the true history of this country – a history which dates back thousands of generations.

It's about seeing, hearing and learning the First Nations' 65,000+ year history of this country - which is Australian history. We want all Australians to celebrate that we have the oldest continuing cultures on the planet and to recognise that our sovereignty was never ceded.

Always Was, Always Will Be.

<https://www.naidoc.org.au/get-involved/2020-theme>

4th August. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day.

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) is a celebration of Indigenous children and is held on 4 August each year. NAICD was first observed by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) in 1988. Each year SNAICC produces and sends out resources to help celebrations for NAICD.

View information: <http://aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/>

9th August. International Day of the World's Indigenous People.

The United Nations' (UN) International Day of the World's Indigenous People is observed on August 9 each year to promote and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population. This event also recognizes the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection.

View information: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/stories/celebrating-international-day-world-s-indigenous-peoples>

Note:

It is highly recommended that Organisations contact the Local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community to confirm local arrangements for these occasions.

There could also be other dates of Note that the local Community do acknowledge.