

# ABORIGINAL CULTURE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are complex and diverse. The Indigenous cultures of Australia are the oldest living cultural history in the world – they go back at least 50,000 years and some argue closer to 65,000 years. One of the reasons Aboriginal cultures have survived for so long is their ability to adapt and change over time. It was this affinity with their surroundings that goes a long way to explaining how Aboriginal people survived for so many millennia.

Cultural heritage is seen as ‘the total ways of living built up by a group of human beings, which is passed from one generation to the next’, given to them by reason of their birth. In Australia, Indigenous communities

keep their cultural heritage alive by passing their knowledge, arts, rituals and performances from one generation to another, speaking and teaching languages, protecting cultural materials, sacred and significant sites, and objects. Land is fundamental to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people. The land is not just soil or rocks or minerals, but a whole environment that sustains and is sustained by people and culture. For Indigenous Australians, the land is the core of all spirituality and this relationship and the spirit of ‘country’ is

central to the issues that are important to Indigenous people today. All of Australia’s Aboriginals were semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers, with each clan having its own territory from which they ‘made their living’. These territories or ‘traditional lands’ were defined by geographic boundaries such as rivers, lakes and mountains. They understood and cared for their different environments, and adapted to them.

Indigenous knowledge of the land is linked to their exceptional tracking skills based on their hunter and gather life. This includes the ability to track down animals, to identify and locate edible plants, to find sources of water and fish.



*“[In Aboriginal culture], nothing is written down; instead, it’s passed on through singing and dancing ceremonies, which are becoming increasingly rare.”*