LECC
Law Enforcement
Conduct Commission

Law Enforcement Conduct Commission

First Nations Strategy 2026–2029

September 2025





Acknowledgements

Artwork used throughout this report: *Expressions of a Sunburnt Country* by Ethan Peterson, Darug.
This artwork appears on the front cover, above the artist's statement and as visual elements.

'This artwork, *Expressions of a Sunburnt Country*, is a deeply personal reflection on my lived experience of growing up within a broken system, known today as statutory care. Each section of the canvas speaks to the journey of moving across different Countries, adapting to constant change and walking many paths that were not of my own choosing.

The empty family tree represents the deep loss and disconnection caused by fractured kinship ties, a reminder of the impact of systemic failures on Aboriginal families and culture. Yet, woven throughout the piece is resilience: the colours, symbols and pathways marking my determination to create and define my own journey.

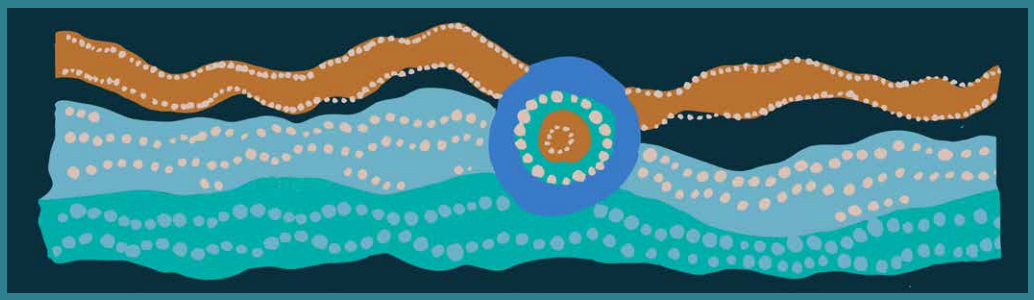
As a proud Darug man, this work is both an acknowledgement of pain, worry, trauma and a celebration of strength. It carries the story of survival, identity and self-determination, finding belonging in my culture and Country while forging new connections and honouring the old.

This is not just my story, but also a broader truth of many who have walked a similar path: one of hardship, healing and hope.'

About the artist: Ethan Peterson is a proud Darug man who brought his energy and creativity to his role as the Commission's inaugural First Nations Engagement Officer. In that role, he kickstarted important conversations within the Commission and with First Nations communities across NSW. We are proud that he has offered to let us use this very personal artwork as part of our *First Nations Strategy 2026–2029.*



Ethan Peterson



Acknowledgement of Country

The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (the Commission) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we work and pays respect to First Nations Elders, past and present.

The Commission's jurisdiction covers all of New South Wales, from the lands of the Bundjalung people in the North, the Wiradjuri and Barkindji in the West and the Yuin and the Yorta Yorta peoples in the South. Our office sits on the lands of the Gadigal people.

We recognise the living, unceded connection of First Nations people to the lands and waters of NSW and honour the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who have sustained this connection through the extreme hardships and legacy of colonisation.

Acknowledgement of Country artwork: *Sand Dunes* by Balarinji.

'Clans people journey to a camping place on sun-bleached sands along weathered shores.
Food is prepared and stories are shared around the fire near their shell middens.'



Dixie Crawford

Guidance

This Strategy was developed with guidance from Dixie Crawford – a Barkindji woman from Brewarrina – and her team at Nganya, including Dr Sarah Ciftci.

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Contents

Senior Executive foreword 4

Introduction 5

Purpose of this Strategy 5

Vision 5

Our values 5

Our work 6

Approach to developing this Strategy 7

Approach to reviewing progress 7

Strategic Priority 1 – Striving for systemic change through aligning our work to Closing the Gap 9

Supporting police practice improvement 9

Why is this important? 9

What we will do 9

What success looks like 10

How we will achieve and measure success 10

Supporting data sovereignty 10

Why is this important? 11

What we will do 11

What success looks like 11

How we will achieve and measure success 11

Target outcome: The Commission regularly releases data of significance to First Nations communities. 11

Strategic Priority 2 – Demonstrating our value to First Nations communities 13

Why is this important? 13

What we will do 13

What success looks like 14

How we will achieve and measure success 14



Strategic Priority 3 – Connecting through a culture of respect and opportunities **15**

Why is this important? 15

What we will do 15

What success looks like 15

First Nations protocols and good practices **17**

Kinship 17

Men's and Women's Business 17

Sorry Business 17

Rapport 17

Language, 'yes' and eye contact 17

Silence 17

Shame 17

Senior Executive foreword

We are proud to introduce the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission's (the Commission) inaugural *First Nations Strategy 2026–2029* (the Strategy). Formed on the pillars of respect and accountability, the Strategy demonstrates our commitment to fostering trust and strengthening our relationship with First Nations communities across NSW. The Strategy builds on our *Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan* (RAP) released in October 2023.

The Commission provides independent oversight of the NSW Police Force (NSWPF) and the NSW Crime Commission. Our oversight promotes the integrity and reputability of NSW law enforcement agencies and helps maintain public trust in those organisations. Our ability to influence the institutions, systems and behaviour that directly impact First Nations peoples and communities makes us directly responsible for participating in, and strengthening, the reconciliation movement. As a NSW Government organisation, we also have a responsibility to do our part to improve the lives of First Nations people, informed by the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

We are proud of the Commission's previous and ongoing work to address systemic issues in law enforcement. Many of the Commission's reports and investigations have brought attention to the ongoing impact of law enforcement on First Nations people and have been successful in promoting accountability within NSW law enforcement agencies. For example, our report on *Bail Compliance Checks in NSW* in April 2025, which considered submissions from the Aboriginal Legal Service, Dharriwaa Elders Group and other First Nations stakeholders. Or, more recently, our report on *Operation Eacham* in June 2025, which found serious misconduct against a NSWPF officer who put an Aboriginal man in custody in critical danger due to 'unconscious racism'.

We also acknowledge law enforcement agencies' efforts to change their relationship with First Nations communities. The NSWPF has remained clear on how important it is to improve this relationship and has worked since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody to develop stronger ties with communities. These aims and strategies have been laid out in the *NSWPF Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2024*. However, we know that there is more work to be done to bridge the gap.

Our aim for this Strategy is to make the Commission an organisation that is trusted by First Nations peoples – as an oversight agency and employer. In time, we hope that this Strategy proves successful in enhancing the Commission's operational capability when responding to concerns raised by First Nations people and sharpens our vision for delivering impactful outcomes and clear, measurable goals.

By committing ourselves to this work, the Commission acknowledges the long and dark history of law enforcement agencies with First Nations communities. While this relationship is often adversarial, we aim to seize this opportunity to strengthen the resolve of law enforcement agencies to address this history, to create more pathways towards positive and respectful relationships, and to recognise the strength, resilience, and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community voices today.



Introduction

Purpose of this Strategy

The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission's (the Commission) *First Nations Strategy 2026–2029* (the Strategy) aims to improve relationships and trust between First Nations communities and law enforcement agencies in NSW by:

1. striving for systemic change through aligning our work to ***Closing the Gap***
2. demonstrating our value to First Nations communities
3. connecting through a culture of respect and opportunity.

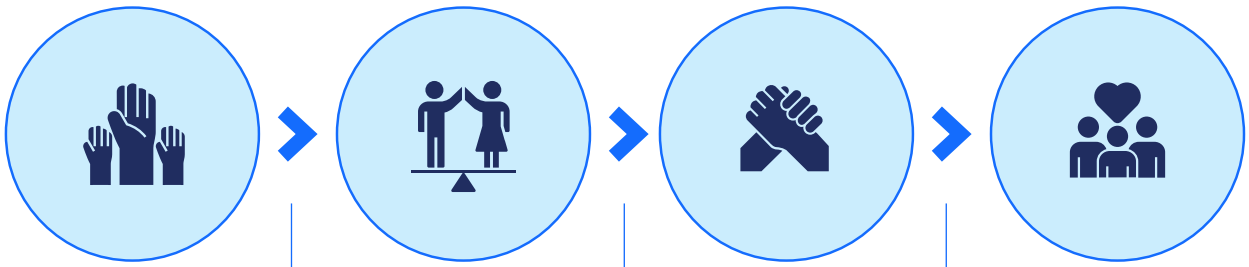
Vision

Our vision is to be a trusted oversight body that works effectively with First Nations people and communities to identify and respond to concerns about law enforcement conduct and police practices.

Our values

The Commission is guided by the values of accountability, fairness, integrity and respect. These values sit at the core of the way we work with First Nations people and communities and are critical to maintaining cultural safety and respect.

Figure 1: The Commission's values



Accountability

- We take responsibility for our decisions and actions.
- We are transparent about our decision-making.
- We provide a timely and quality service to the public and the agencies we work with.

Fairness

- Our decisions are impartial.
- We use our powers and resources proportionately. We build community trust by making fair and equitable decisions.

Integrity

- We are independent and act in the public interest.
- We act honestly and ethically.
- We approach challenges with courage.

Respect

- We value diversity of skills, experience and ideas.
- We work collaboratively across the Commission and consult with stakeholders.
- We listen to others' points of view.



Our work

The Commission is an independent civilian agency. Our role is to oversight the NSW Police Force (NSWPF) and the NSW Crime Commission (NSWCC) and to maintain public trust and confidence in the integrity of these organisations. We do this through:

- independent oversight (through real-time monitoring and review) of the NSWPF and NSWCC's complaints handling of serious misconduct and maladministration, as well as real-time monitoring of the NSWPF's critical incident investigations
- independent detection, investigation and exposure of serious misconduct and serious maladministration within the NSWPF and the NSWCC that may have occurred, be occurring, be about to occur or that is likely to occur
- research activities that identify systemic issues that could contribute to misconduct, unlawful actions and unreasonable practices so they can be prevented.

The legacy of racially discriminatory past policies, including the forced removal of children, the dispossession of land and resources and the instrumental use of police in enforcing these policies, has entrenched institutional racism within the Australian justice system. For many First Nations peoples, law enforcement is not only associated with the past injustices but with ongoing harm, over-policing, racial profiling and disproportionate incarceration. This has created a profound and enduring mistrust of police and justice institutions—one that cannot be repaired without structural reform, cultural accountability and proactive engagement with community.

We recognise the systemic over-representation of First Nations people in all stages of the criminal justice system in NSW – from arrests to incarceration – and the importance of driving change to improve justice system experiences and outcomes. We acknowledge the critical role we play in oversighting the NSWPF and the NSWCC throughout NSW.

Through our work, we aim to listen to the needs and priorities of First Nations peoples and use our influence to create lasting change to the institutions, systems and behaviour that directly impact their communities. Although we are independent, we have good working relationships with the NSWPF and the NSWCC and use our position and expertise to communicate directly with these agencies about issues we identify and our recommendations for how to address them.

Where it is in the public interest, we report publicly about our work or report directly to the Parliament of NSW. We also work with other integrity agencies such as the Director of Public Prosecutions and the NSW State Coroner, and regularly engage with academic, legal and advocacy organisations who are interested in the way in which police operate. As such, we hold a unique position to influence change through our work.

This Strategy represents the next step in the Commission's reconciliatory journey. It builds on the solid foundation established through our *Reflect RAP* released in October 2023, where we first committed to positively influencing the relationship between NSW law enforcement and First Nations communities through strategic action and outlined the Commission's commitments under 4 core pillars: relationships, respect, opportunities and governance.

The *Reflect RAP* was developed under the guidance of Badu Island man Jason Timor from Stonecrab and provided an opportunity to look internally. We reflected on our policies and cultural awareness training and gained a better understanding of our sphere of influence. This work was vital in preparing the Commission for deeper engagement in reconciliation.



Approach to developing this Strategy

This Strategy has been guided by the principles of reconciliation and the priority reforms outlined in the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. An independent desktop review was conducted by Nganya – a First Nations-owned and led consultancy – to inform the development of this Strategy. The desktop review focused on key internal documents highlighting the Commission's work with implications for First Nations people. Content in each document that had relevance and significance for First Nations people was identified and key themes were developed to inform the Commission's inaugural *First Nations Strategy 2026–2029.*

The Commission formed a First Nations Ambassadors Group to guide the development and implementation of this Strategy. Membership of the group was achieved through an expression of interest process aimed at representing all parts of the Commission, and all First Nations identifying staff were included in the Ambassadors Group. The Ambassadors Group helped to shape the Strategy before it was provided to the Executive for final approval.

We have mapped this Strategy to our *LECC Strategic Plan 2023-26*. By doing so, we ensure that our First Nations Strategic Priorities are embedded in our everyday business.

Approach to reviewing progress

This Strategy will be implemented over 3 years. A mid-term and end-of-strategy review will be conducted by the Commission's First Nations Ambassadors Group to assess its effectiveness and strengthen its next iteration. Additionally, we will report progress against key deliverables in our Annual Report.





Strategic Priority 1 – Striving for systemic change through aligning our work to Closing the Gap

Supporting police practice improvement

We have a critical opportunity to influence police practices through oversight and targeted operational activities in a way that is informed by First Nations voices and lived experiences.

The NSWPF is the primary agency tasked with protecting public safety and reducing violence, crime and fear. It is the Commission's responsibility to improve community trust in law enforcement, including through investigating the conduct of police officers and enhancing accountability. As a law enforcement oversight agency, the Commission is committed to highlighting systemic factors that contribute to the continued over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as victims and offenders of crime.

In addition to investigations of individual complaints and incidents, the Commission conducts broader reviews. The Commission's review of the NSWPF Suspect Target Management Program (STMP) in *Operation Tepito* is one example of how we have drawn attention to the ways police practices cause more First Nations young people to come into the criminal justice system. Additionally, our *Review of NSW Police Force responses to domestic and family violence incidents* made important observations about police misidentification of First Nations women as the primary aggressor, leading to an increase in their imprisonment rate. We will actively build on this work by listening to the law enforcement concerns of First Nations communities.

Why is this important?

First Nations people are over-represented both as victims and offenders of crime and we have an opportunity to influence actions towards achieving *Closing the Gap* targets 10, 11 and 13. Ending the over-representation of First Nations young people and adults in the criminal justice system and ending all forms of family violence and abuse against First Nations women and children requires a collective effort across all areas of government. Listening to First Nations people and communities will help us to:

- understand misconduct and integrity issues within law enforcement from the perspectives of First Nations peoples
- be informed by the expertise, knowledge and lived experience of First Nations peoples
- decide how we should prioritise our limited resources to respond to the issues that are most important to the community.

What we will do

Through active engagement with First Nations communities and organisations, we aim to identify key law enforcement concerns and engage in ongoing and open discussion. This will strengthen the alignment of our work to *Closing the Gap* outcomes 10 and 11, that First Nations adults and young people are not over-represented in the criminal justice system, and outcome 13 – that First Nations families and households are safe.

What success looks like

The Commission becomes a trusted organisation that draws attention to systemic law enforcement practices that undermine progress made towards ending the over-representation of First Nations people in the criminal justice system and the safety of First Nations families and households.

How we will achieve and measure success

Target outcome: The Commission consistently makes recommendations to the NSWPF that can contribute to reducing the over-representation of First Nations people in the criminal justice system and improve safety for First Nations people and communities.

Action	Timeframe	Indicators
Engage with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW CAPO representative) and other First Nations stakeholder organisations to understand systemic law enforcement concerns impacting First Nations people and communities.	Ongoing	• Number and consistency of consultations • Quality of information obtained in consultations
Conduct investigations and reviews that consider and examine systemic policing approaches that impact over-representation of First Nations people in the criminal justice system.	Ongoing	• Number and quality of reviews that discuss systemic policing approaches that impact First Nations people • Evidence that First Nations law enforcement concerns have influenced the Commission's investigations • Reviews and reporting (e.g. consultation process reported, submissions received and scholarship cited)
Examine the extent to which NSWPF accept and implement First Nations related recommendations arising from Commission reports or other oversight activities.	Annually	• Number and percentage of recommendations accepted and implemented by NSWPF

Supporting data sovereignty

We have the opportunity to share data and information of critical importance to First Nations communities so that they can make informed decisions, identify key priorities and use the information to achieve core strategic and historical goals.

The Commission is committed to working with First Nations communities in NSW to strengthen the alignment of our work to the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

In line with Priority Reform 4, we recognise that we hold data and information that is of critical importance to First Nations communities and aim to improve accessibility and usability of this data. The Commission's publicly available *Observations Paper* of complaints made by or on behalf of First Nations people is an example of our previous efforts to increase First Nations peoples' knowledge, access and capability to use available data.

Why is this important?

To support First Nations communities and organisations in setting priorities and driving solutions that will work, access to appropriate, high-quality data and other relevant information held by government agencies is paramount. The data and information need to be meaningful and relevant to First Nations communities and their priorities for it to be useful.

What we will do

We will work collaboratively with First Nations organisations and community stakeholders to develop and agree on a plan for proactively releasing data and information that is identified as being useful.[1] This will include what formats the released data and information should take.

What success looks like

First Nations people and organisations can easily access Aboriginal complaints data in usable formats that facilitate their understanding of the Commission's investigations into police misconduct, our findings and recommendations.

How we will achieve and measure success

Target outcome: The Commission regularly releases data of significance to First Nations communities.

Action	Timeframe	Indicators
Engage with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW CAPO representative) and other stakeholder organisations to identify the types of data held by the Commission that First Nations communities wish to access.	6 months	• Number of consultations • Quality of information obtained in consultations
Develop a plan to release data and information that is of importance to First Nations communities in line with *Closing the Gap* Priority Reform 4.	12 months	• Plan developed • Evidence that consultations influenced the plan
Release the data (in the form of a report or dashboard) which First Nations communities have identified as being relevant and useful.	3 years	• Data is released • Evidence that the data is being used to advance First Nations priorities • Feedback on data

1 The Commission is bound by secrecy obligations in the *Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016* (NSW), so that data disclosed must be in accordance with the exceptions in s 180(5) of the LECC Act.





Strategic Priority 2 – Demonstrating our value to First Nations communities

We have the opportunity to extend the impact of our work by establishing strong and enduring relationships with First Nations communities.

Aboriginal adults comprise approximately 3% of the NSW adult population but represent 22% of adults brought to court by police – a rate 8 times higher than other adults. Aboriginal young people comprise approximately 8% of the NSW young people population but represent 57% of young people brought to court by police – a rate 16 times higher than other young people.

This over-representation is not currently reflected in the number of complaints received by the Commission. On average, only 4.1% of complaints received by the Commission are from Aboriginal people.[2]

The Commission prioritises and values proactive and meaningful engagement with First Nations people, communities and organisations, as outlined in our *Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2026*. Meaningful engagement with First Nations people, communities and organisations will support us to build trusting and respectful relationships that are grounded in mutual understanding and accountability. Strong relationships with First Nations people and communities will improve our capacity as an agency to oversight the NSWPF and the NSWCC.

We have formed initial connections with legal sector stakeholders including representatives from the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), Legal Aid NSW, Redfern Legal Centre and the Justice and Equity Centre (formerly known as the Public Interest Advocacy Centre). We have also formed initial connections with several First Nations communities across NSW through previous outreach activities. We will continue to extend this work.

Why is this important?

Effective engagement with First Nations people and communities will help us to:

- demonstrate our impact to First Nations communities and organisations
- build awareness and trust in our work among First Nations people and in the integrity of law enforcement in NSW
- build long-term relationships with First Nations people, communities and organisations to enhance our work going forward.

What we will do

- We will engage with First Nations communities about our work.
- We will strengthen our existing relationships and form new relationships with First Nations communities and organisations. This will be achieved through ongoing engagement about how we can improve our complaints process and ensure our investigations and review processes are culturally responsive and safe.
- We will strive to establish and maintain long-term relationships with First Nations organisations and communities by having regular and open lines of communication about how we can improve trust in law enforcement.

2 This figure has been calculated as a percentage of all complaints received from 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2022 where the complainant identified as an Aboriginal person. See the Commission's observations paper – *Analysis of complaints made by or on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*.



What success looks like

First Nations people and organisations are aware of the work we do, feel listened to when we engage with them and trust our commitment to maintaining long-term relationships to address law enforcement misconduct and integrity issues.

How we will achieve and measure success

Target outcome: The proportion of complaints made by First Nations people to the Commission better reflects the levels of First Nations peoples' interactions with police.

Action	Timeframe	Indicators
Engage with First Nations communities impacted by investigations while the investigation is underway. This will help inform its direction and give feedback to the community about the outcome of the investigation to build trust and ongoing engagement.	Ongoing	• Number, quality and consistency of consultations and feedback provided to First Nations communities • Number of repeat invitations from communities
Engage with First Nations stakeholders (e.g. Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and advocacy groups) about how to improve access to the Commission's complaints process for First Nations people.	12 months	• Number of consultations • Quality of information obtained • Number of invitations to continue engagement • Number of repeat engagements
Deliver awareness-raising initiatives aimed at increasing the visibility of the Commission's work and building trust with First Nations communities. This may include community outreach activities (e.g. stall at NAIDOC, advertisements) and/or initiatives that communicate Commission projects of relevance to First Nations communities (e.g. occasional podcast or VLOG)	Ongoing	• Number of awareness-raising initiatives, reach and engagement with the initiatives • Feedback from First Nations stakeholders about the quality of the initiatives



Strategic Priority 3 – Connecting through a culture of respect and opportunities

We have an opportunity to create safer workplaces to attract First Nations candidates and contribute to improving economic and social outcomes for First Nations people.

Demonstrating respect in our interactions with First Nations people requires us to increase our understanding, value and recognition of First Nations cultures, protocols, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning in line with *Closing the Gap* Priority Reform 3 – Transforming Government Organisations.
The Commission has a staff of approximately 130 people and our office is in the Sydney CBD. However, our staff often travel to other parts of NSW to attend critical incident sites, meet with witnesses or meet with stakeholders. It is crucial that our staff can communicate and engage effectively with First Nations people and communities. Currently, only 3 of our staff members identify as Aboriginal people. This is a statistic we are committed to improving.

Why is this important?

To improve mainstream institutions, government organisations must be culturally safe, responsive to the needs of First Nations people, accountable and transparent, and prioritise equity.

What we will do

- We will build our workforce cultural capability and demonstrate respect through cultural learning activities and observing cultural protocols.
- We will take active steps to grow and support our First Nations workforce and identify opportunities to increase First Nations supplier diversity.

What success looks like

First Nations people feel valued by all Commission employees and experience a culturally safe work environment that is free from racism. First Nations businesses are engaged when opportunities arise, contributing to economic and social outcomes.



How we will achieve and measure success

Target outcome: Grow the Commission's First Nations workforce to 6%.

Action	Timeframe	Indicators
Engage Commission staff in the Cultural Learning Program.	12 months	• Percentage of Commission staff that complete the program • Feedback from staff about changes in knowledge, confidence and skills as a result of the program
Disseminate First Nations protocols and good practices alongside this Strategy and as part of onboarding processes.	6 months	• Quality of First Nations community consultations
Develop a plan for recruiting and retaining First Nations staff to key roles, particularly in complaints review. The plan will acknowledge the possibility of 'secondary' or 'vicarious trauma' experiences and offer mitigation strategies.	18 months	• Plan delivered • Number of First Nations staff hired and retained
Review opportunities to increase First Nations supplier diversity.	Ongoing	• Number of First Nations businesses contracted



First Nations protocols and good practices

Kinship

Kinship is central to the cultures and lives of First Nations people and is significantly different to family and social structures of non-Indigenous people. Kinship shapes worldviews, values, relationships, obligations and interactions. Kinship extends family beyond a nuclear structure. For example, the concepts of mother and father may extend beyond biological parents to include a person's aunties and uncles, while brothers and sisters may include biological cousins.

Men's and Women's Business

While equally respected, the roles of men and women in First Nations cultures are distinct and clearly defined, with certain knowledge kept and shared between men only or women only.

Sorry Business

Sorry Business refers to the process of mourning and taking part in funerals and is an important ritual within First Nations cultures. Non-attendance at a funeral or failing to properly observe the process of mourning or to spend time with family can have significant impacts for individuals within their family and community.

Rapport

Establishing rapport and building relationships is an important first step in engaging with First Nations people. Adopting a 'people before business' approach will help us to establish rapport and build relationships.

Language, 'yes' and eye contact

Aboriginal English differs from English and it is important that we are aware that some First Nations people may not speak English as a first language. It is also important to recognise that the word 'yes' might not indicate agreement or understanding. In many First Nations cultures, avoiding eye contact is a gesture of respect and some First Nations people feel no obligation to make direct eye contact with the person who is speaking to them.

Silence

It is important not to assume that silence from First Nations peoples equates to having nothing to contribute. Long periods of silence may be used to listen, process information, show respect or indicate consensus. Brief responses, such as 'yes' or 'no', are also valued in some First Nations cultures.

Shame

The word 'shame' for First Nations people is broader than the non-Indigenous use of the word. The meaning of shame extends to include deeply felt feelings of being ashamed or embarrassed and is often due to attention or circumstances rather than the result of one's own actions.

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