



Seven threads prompt book

Practical prompts to help non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations engage First Nations Peoples, and foreground First Nations' wisdom, so that together, we can further reconciliation, self-determination and change.

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THE
AUSTRALIAN
CENTRE FOR
SOCIAL
INNOVATION

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional custodians and owners of the lands on which we work and live on across Australia. We pay our respects to Elders of the past, present and emerging young leaders. We are committed to collaboration that furthers self-determination and creates a better future for all.

We acknowledge that the world is changing and that all of the challenges facing our society will be more deeply felt by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Embedding a cultural lens across all of our work must be a priority in any strategy that's created and implemented.

Thank you

This work has been inspired by lots of people over many projects. We'd particularly like to thank Uncle Tony Lovett, Aunty Vickey Charles, Dana Shen, Tyson Yunkaporta and Melanie Goodchild for sharing their perspectives.



Contents

How we got here

Seven threads of allyship

Next steps

How we got here

In 2018, TACSI's Aboriginal Lead and Aunty in Residence Aunty Vickey Charles led the creation of the 'cultural canvas': a one page toolkit and set of questions designed to help non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples build in considerations for working on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands, and to help them include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples into every one of our social innovation projects.

It was based on our experiences of bringing considerations for working with Aboriginal Peoples across a number of projects, and a desire to make that part of every project.

The Seven Threads are intended to be woven throughout a project or organisation. The framework shares the intent of the Cultural Canvas, while broadening the range of considerations.

All this is based on our understanding of what it means to be a good Ally in 2022. It's just a start; we expect to revise and update, and we always welcome feedback.

Our hope is that it can be a practical tool for a range of organisations and individuals – especially those engaged in innovation, reform and public policy – for reflecting on how to become better allies.



The Cultural Canvas gave us a way to start the conversation, the Seven Threads can be woven through everything you do.

It's about making it easy.

If you sit in fear, wondering 'what if I do the wrong thing?', you're going to spin your wheels and not go anywhere.

Aunty Vickey Charles
Aboriginal Lead and Aunty
in Residence at TACSI

Innovating together

Realise the potential of many culture innovation

Bridging
Bringing worlds closer together

Seeing & valuing
Foreground First Nations ways of thinking

Self-determination

Support First Nations leadership,
and First Nations determined futures.

Seven threads of allyship

Country & Peoples

Think about where you are working
and who you are working with.

Histories & realities

Educate yourself on past and present
in respect of the issue in focus.

The first thread

Country & Peoples

Think about where you're working and who you're working with.


On which First Nations' lands will the project take place?

What considerations should be made around Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country?

What cultural considerations should be made around people on the team and people informing the work?

What language considerations should be made around people on the team and people informing the work?

Who should you connect with, why, and when? Consider community leaders or elders, community members, organisations, expert informants, and others.



It's your personal responsibility as an ally to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

To be respectfully curious and learn about the Community you work with.

Dana Shen

Co-design Practitioner

Listen to Dana in conversation with Aunty Vickey Charles in this [podcast](#)

The second thread

Histories & realities

*Educate yourself on past and present
in respect of the issue in focus*

How is the topic you're working on conceptualised by the First Nations Peoples you're working with?


How is the topic you're working on experienced by First Nations Peoples? What does the data and research say?

What have First Nations Peoples said about the topic?

What historical context needs to be kept in mind?

What recent events should be kept in mind?

What might be happening in communities during the time of your project? e.g. cultural business?



I only see through Black eyes
and hear through Black ears. It's
important to see things through
that lens. It's about not having
assumptions, and recognising
that Aboriginal voice is different,
depending on who you ask.

Aunty Vickey Charles
Aboriginal Lead and Aunty
in Residence at TACSI

The third thread

Self-determination

*Support First Nations leadership,
and First Nations determined futures.*

Are you the right person/organisation to lead this work, or would it be better done by an First Nations person, organisation, or in partnership?

How can you create greater self-determination in this project?
What might you need to share, or give up?

What are the First Nations visions for the future on this topic?

What First Nations Peoples, communities and organisations are leading innovation on this in Australia, and on other continents?

How could you connect to and amplify these people, work, and the conditions for it?

How will ownership of the knowledge generated and shared in this work be recognised - internally, publicly and legally?

Being a good ally means working to support the self-determination of Aboriginal people.

This requires working in true partnership, making sure you're deeply listening to what Aboriginal people have to say.

This involves practicing cultural humility and respect, knowing we don't know everything as non-Aboriginal people, and being open to learning, and working with Aboriginal people to translate their vision.

Last but not least, you need to create a safe space to join up together and do it in true partnership.

Dana Shen

Co-design practitioner

Listen to Dana in conversation with Aunty Vickey in [this podcast](#)



The fourth thread

Seeing & valuing

Foreground First Nations ways of thinking

How could First Nations ways of valuing, being and knowing contribute to addressing this issue to the benefit of all people?

What could First Nations Knowledge from around the world teach on this topic?

Who could help you with this?



I always think what would my aunties and uncles say? What would they encourage me to do? ...If you're not open to it then you'll miss part of what could help you in expanding, or filling up your knowledge bundle.

Melanie Goodchild

Anishinaabe systems thinker

Listen to Melanie in conversation with Tyson Yunkaporta in the episode [Indigenous System Thinking](#) of Tyson's podcast [The Other Others](#).

The fifth thread

Bridging

Bring worlds together

How could you support non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to build the capability, confidence and conditions to better support First Nations Peoples to achieve their aims; to be better allies?

What are you learning about supporting First Nations Peoples, organisations and systems?

How could you support First Nations organisations' work in dominant culture systems (if they choose to) to achieve their aims?



Our people need allies; we didn't get here alone.

Dana Shen

Co-design practitioner

Listen to Dana in conversation with
Aunty Vickey in [this podcast](#)

The sixth & seventh threads

Innovating together

Realise the potential of many culture innovations

How, in this work, can you demonstrate the potential of different cultures (First Nations and non-First Nations, in all their diversity) working in partnership?

How can you further *the conditions* for innovation that brings cultures together in partnership?



There are a lot of opportunities for sustainable innovation through the dialogue of Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of living... the problem with this communication so far has been asymmetry - when power relations are so skewed that most communication is one way, there is not much opportunity for the brackish waters of hybridity to stew up something exciting.

Tyson Yunkaporta

Author

Quote from the book

[Sand Talk - How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World](#)

If you have suggestions on how to improve this prompt book, or you want to know more about TACSI's work in this area reach out to:

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We can't wait to hear from you.