8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning
Factsheet

This academic factsheet explains 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning as one view of Indigenous cultural competence and why it is important for those working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

How can teachers (lecturers and tutors) use Aboriginal knowledge authentically and productively with students?

- The 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning is a pedagogy framework that allows teachers to include Aboriginal perspectives by using Aboriginal learning techniques.

Teaching through Aboriginal processes and protocols, not just Aboriginal content validates and teaches through Aboriginal culture and may enhance the learning for all students.

Common ground between mainstream and Aboriginal pedagogies:

- Learning through narrative.
- Planning and visualising explicit processes.
- Working non-verbally with self-reflective, hands-on methods.
- Learning through images, symbols and metaphors.
- Learning through place-responsive, environmental practice.
- Using indirect, innovative and interdisciplinary approaches.
- Modelling and scaffolding by working from wholes to parts.
- Connecting learning to local values, needs and knowledge

What is “8 ways” to develop Indigenous Cultural Competence?
You can see here the common ground between western and Aboriginal pedagogy:

- **Story Sharing**: Approaching learning through narrative. Personal narratives (stories) are central.

- **Learning Maps**: Explicitly mapping/visualising processes. Images or visuals are used to map out processes for learners to follow.

- **Non-verbal**: Applying intra-personal and kinaesthetic skills to thinking and learning. Kinaesthetic, hands-on, non-verbal learning is characteristic.

- **Symbols and Images**: Using images and metaphors to understand concepts and content. Symbol, image and metaphor are central to pedagogy.

- **Land Links**: Place-based learning, linking content to local land and place. Ecological and place-based, drawn from the living landscape within a framework of profound ancestral and personal relationships with place.

- **Non-linear**: Producing innovations and understanding by thinking laterally. Non-linear ways of learning are complementary, not oppositional.

- **Deconstruct/Reconstruct**: Modelling and scaffolding, working from wholes to parts. Begin with the whole structure, rather than a series of sequenced steps. Holistic, global, scaffolded and independent learning orientations of students.

- **Community Links**: Centring local viewpoints, applying learning for community benefit. Connections to real-life purposes, contexts & communities, teams.
Tell a story. Make a plan. Think and do. Draw it. Take it outside. Try a new way. Watch first, then do. Share it with others.