La Trobe University | Billabongs Not Silos | Beyond Symbolism

CCSR TEACHER REFLECTION GUIDE

Critical Cultural Self-Reflection as Professional Learning

Djaa Djuwima Gallery | Dja Dja Wurrung Country | June – September 2026

How to use this guide

This guide has three movements, one for each stage of your experience: Before you enter the exhibition, During your walk, and After you leave. Each stage draws on the Critical Cultural Self-Reflection (CCSR) framework and connects to the AIATSIS Resource Evaluation Framework. Write/think freely.

Only rules are OPEN HEART & OPEN MIND.

1 BEFORE THE EXHIBITION — Grounding Yourself

Critical Cultural Self-Reflection

Unless each person has a sense of knowing and valuing their own cultural identity it is more difficult to have a deep understanding and appreciation of the significance and meaning of the cultural identity of others and why this knowledge is so important within many cultures. Therefore, knowing our own cultural identity and what has shaped who we are is the first step in critical self-reflection.

- Proud & Morgan, 2021

Before you enter, take a few minutes alone. This is not about getting ready — it is about arriving as yourself.

Reflecting on Self

1. What is my cultural heritage? How has it shaped the world I grew up in, and the assumptions I carry into my teaching?

2. What do I already know, or think I know, about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, histories and cultures? Where did that knowledge come from?

3. What feels comfortable or uncomfortable about entering this exhibition? What might that tell me?

Critical Cultural Self-Reflection

As teachers engage in critical reflection on their own cultural identity, they may experience being both challenged and enriched. Self-awareness highlights the social and cultural influences that have conditioned our ways of thinking and our ways of relating to others, all of which influence who we are as educators.

- Proud & Morgan, 2021

Connecting to Your Teaching Context

1. Think of a unit or lesson you currently teach that involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures or perspectives. What resources do you use? Who created them?

2. In what ways does your own cultural background influence what you emphasise, or leave out, in your teaching?

2 DURING THE EXHIBITION — Walking and Witnessing

Move through the exhibition slowly. At points during your walk, pause at an artwork or object and respond to the prompts below. Choose the works that draw you in or challenge you.

PAUSE — Stop at a work that draws you in

1. What do you notice first? What do you know about the artist, the Country, the story?

2. What specifically challenges or unsettles you? Is it unfamiliarity, discomfort with historical context, uncertainty about how to teach it, or something else?

3. Whose voice or perspective is present in this work? Why is this important?

4. Using the AIATSIS Positioning lens: how are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples represented, past or present? As subjects or agents? As specific peoples or homogenised?

PAUSE — An organisation's written reflection on its cultural object

1. Read the organisation's written reflection. Do you find it convincing? What makes a reflection on cultural custodianship feel genuine rather than performative?

2. What would the equivalent reflection look like for your school or faculty, naming a resource or practice and examining your relationship to it honestly?

3. What is one question this reflection raises that you want to carry into your own practice?

A word to carry with you

'Beyond Symbolism exists because symbolic presence alone is not enough.' As you walk, what would it mean for your own teaching practice to move beyond symbolic acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures?

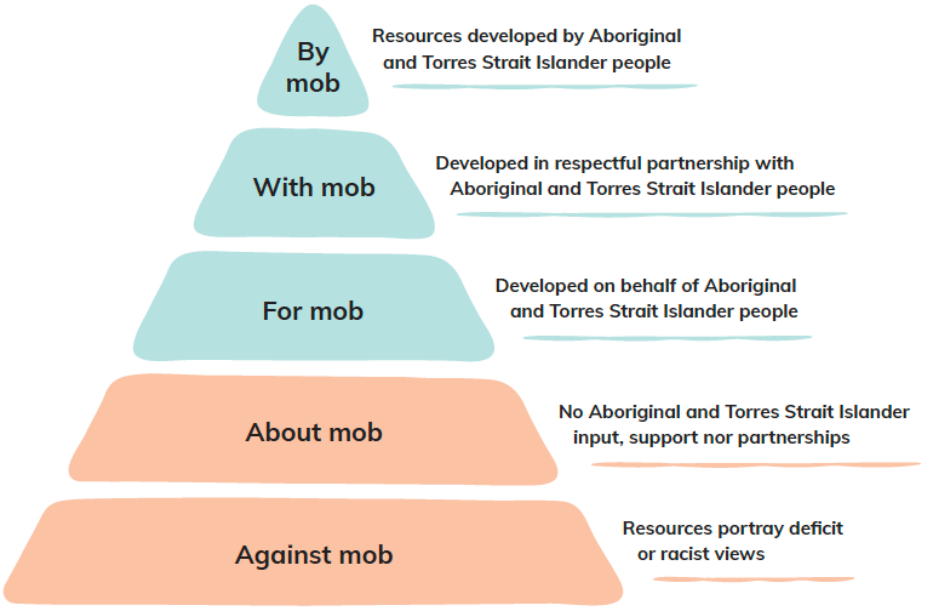
3 AFTER THE EXHIBITION — Integrating and Acting

Action in the classroom and school

1. What stayed with you from the exhibition? Name a specific work, artist, story or question that you keep returning to.

2. At what moment, if any, did you feel most aware of your own positionality, your cultural identity, assumptions, or gaps in knowledge? What brought that awareness?

3. The exhibition asks: 'How are commitments to First Nations peoples activated in practice, beyond display?' How would you answer that question in relation to your classroom or your school?



AIATSIS Guide to Evaluating and Selecting Education Resources (AIATSIS, 2022)

AIATSIS Resource Audit — Applied Practice

Name one resource you currently use in your teaching that engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures or perspectives:

Now apply the three AIATSIS lenses:

PARTICIPATION — Is the author or creator Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? If not, what is their relationship to this material? Has it been endorsed by an Indigenous-governed group? Is it acceptable to the people it is about?
POSITIONING — How are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples positioned throughout the resource? Is it mainly past tense? Does it homogenise or stereotype? Is the information accurate and free from harm?
PRODUCTION — If you were creating a resource on this topic for your students, what guidance would you seek? From whom? What community relationships and obligations would you carry?

Where does this resource sit on the AIATSIS spectrum?
By mob □ With mob □ For mob □ About mob □ Against mob □

Commitment to Action

The AIATSIS framework is not a checklist. It is a tool for integrity-driven decision-making.

As a result of this experience, I will:

Review, replace or add context to the following resource:

One question I will bring to my team, faculty or leadership:

One way I will continue my own critical self-reflection practice:

A note on this process

Critical self-reflection is not a one-time event. The AIATSIS Guide reminds us that regularly revisiting these questions supports ongoing professional growth. This guide can be brought into a staff meeting, used as part of a community of practice, or revisited when selecting new curriculum resources.

This professional learning was developed as part of the Billabongs Not Silos initiative. La Trobe University School of Education | Rural Health School | Office of Indigenous Strategy and Engagement | Djaa Djuwima Gallery, City of Greater Bendigo. Draws on the AIATSIS Guide to Evaluating and Selecting Education Resources (AIATSIS, 2022) and the CCSR framework. aiatsis.gov.au/education