



Aboriginal Protocols and Guidelines



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Introduction

Overview

The Bega Valley Shire Council is committed to working in partnership with local Aboriginal communities within the Bega Valley. The purpose of this document is to provide Council staff with an understanding of the important protocols when working with, consulting with and acknowledging local Aboriginal communities.

What are Cultural Protocols?

Cultural protocols are customs, values, and codes of behaviour that are important to a particular cultural group. Protocols are an important part of all cultures and provide guidance on how to treat and work with people in a respectful and useful way.

Observing Aboriginal cultural protocols demonstrates respect for the cultural traditions, history and diversity of that community and acknowledges that the protocols of this community is as equally valid and worthy of respect as the cultural protocols of other communities.

Understanding Aboriginal Identity

An Aboriginal person is someone who satisfies each of the following criteria:

- * Is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia;
- * Identifies as an Aboriginal person; and
- * Is accepted by the Aboriginal community in which they live in as an Aboriginal person.

(Amended from NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983)

It is offensive to question the 'amount' of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander blood a person may possess. Rather, it is advisable to ask people how they would like to be described. This may include where they come from or which community or clan they identify with.

The terms 'Aboriginal', 'Torres Strait Islander' and 'Indigenous'

In Australia, there are two identified cultural groups (people) who are the Australia's First peoples to the land – Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people.

This document uses the term 'Aboriginal', rather than 'Indigenous' or 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original Inhabitants of NSW. Aboriginal cultures vary from place to place.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, while both First Nations of Australia, are very different cultures with their own histories, beliefs and values.

The term Aboriginal people in this document denotes Aboriginal people of this Region (Yuin). Many Aboriginal people are opposed to the use of the term 'Indigenous' as it generalises both cultures. Council and Council Officers should be advised against using this term where possible.



Bega Valley Shire Aboriginal History



Brief History of the Yuin Nation / Howitt's Evidence on Cultural Grouping

Howitt's major ethnography of South Eastern Australia titled, *The Native Tribes of South – East Australia* was published in 1904 but was based on research conducted 30 years previously. As a result of his position as Mining Warden and Police Magistrate he travelled widely and knew many Aboriginal people in eastern Victoria and southern New South Wales.

In his book, Howitt describes the cultural geography of the south coast in the following terms:

Reverting to the coast tribes (Clans) ...the Murring, or more especially the Yuin tribes (Clans). These claimed the country from Cape Howe to the Shoalhaven River, in New South Wales. They formed two large sub tribes or sub-divisions, engcalled respectively Guyangal and Kurial, from the words गया, 'south' and कुरु,'north', gal being the possessive postfix. The inland extent of their country included the fall from the coast range to the sea, and their local organisation is as follows:

Sub-Tribes	Clans
South Yuin	
Guyabgai-Yuin	1. Thauaira, east of Mallacoota Inlet
	2. Tadjera-Munji, in the Bega District
	3. Bugelli-munji, in the Moruya District
North Yuin	
Kurial-Yuin	4. name not ascertained- Braidwood Dist.
	5. name not ascertained-Ulladulla Dist.
	6. Gurrungatta-munji – Lower Shoalhaven River Dist.

Not only are the coast Murring divided into the “southerners” and “northerners” but are also divided into those who live inland. The former are the Katungal, from Katung, “the sea”, called by the whites “fisherman”. Those who live inland from the sea are called Paiendra, from the Paien, “a tomahawk”, and are called by the whites “whaddymen” from the word “Waddy”, an Aboriginal word for tree, and referring to their climbing trees in search of food.

Those who live on the high mountains still further back are called the Bemeringal or mountaineers, from Bemering, “a mountain”. Perhaps strictly the Bemeringal include the people living on the Monaro tablelands, and even those of the high country as far as Kiandra, but not those of the fall thence to the north.

The Katungal commence at Moruya, and extend far up the coast including distant tribes (clans). Yuin is also a general name for all the tribes (clans) from Merimbula to Port Jackson, and “man” for those from Merimbula to Cape Howe. Beyond the more distant Bemeringal known to the Yuin, namely at Kiandra, there were tribes (clans) they called the Woradjera and also Kunamildan, or “come by night”, who at times crossed the mountain and killed the Murring. The former are clearly the Wiradjuri, some of whom lived on the lower Tumut River.

Although Howitt is not entirely consistent here, it is clear that people of the south coast are seen as distinct from those inland at the top of the escarpment.

In 1883, Howitt was involved in sponsoring an initiation ceremony on Mumbulla Mountain (see Egloff 1979/1981). This ceremony is described in his book “The Native Tribes of South- East Australia”, although the exact location of the ceremony is not made clear there. Analysis of the geographical area from which the participants were drawn for this ceremony provides another way to consider cultural relationships in this region.

Howitt clearly sets out the distribution of the ceremonial networks in south-eastern NSW and gives the geographical spread of the peoples attending the 1883 Mumbulla Mountain Bunan initiation ceremony.

Aboriginal History

Assuming that the Bunan was to be attended by the clans from the Moruya, Bega, and Twofold Bay, that is, by both the Kurial and Guyangal, and that meeting was to be near Bega. The people from Braidwood, Ulladulla, and Shoalhaven would accompany those from Moruya. With them, people from Broulee would occasionally come. Next would arrive those from Queanbeyan, then the Gurrungatta from beyond the Shoalhaven, with whom there might be even some from Jervis Bay; and all these people are true Kurial (Howitt 1904, pp.519-20).

The people from Twofold Bay would arrive about the same time, and bring with them some of the Bemeringal from the country along the coast range, being some of those living to the east of the Ngarigo (Howitt 1904, p.520).

The limits within which people would come may be roughly stated as Jamberoo, Kangaroo Valley, and Nowra; but at this latter place were Bemeringal, that is, those who lived upon the high tableland, who went to the ceremonies at Goulburn. Nor did the Bemeringal come to these ceremonies from as great a distance as the country of Ngarigo (Howitt 1904, p.520).

The Yuin ceremonies of initiation were attended by people from a district included by Shoalhaven River, Braidwood, the southern part of the Monaro, and Twofold Bay.

At the termination of these ceremonies, when the novices had gone away into the bush for their time of probation, and when the people were about to separate, there was held a kind of market, to which those articles which they had bought with them for exchange were bartered. It was held at some clear space near the camp, (Howitt 1904, p718 and refer to Appendixes of this work).

On this basis of this evidence the coast/uplands distinction emerges again as highly significant. It is not surprising that some people from each region attended ceremonies in the other but it seems clear that the great body of the people at the ceremonies came from within the region where it was held. Such regions were never hermetically sealed off from each other, as the commonalities in culture, similarities in language and evidence for exchange of material culture and personnel in marriage make clear.

* Please note that these were the observations of Howitt an explorer of the times but you still need to talk with Aboriginal people of the area for further information.

Significant Ceremonies

Welcome to Country

A 'Welcome to Country' is where a Traditional Owner or descendant of the original Aboriginal clan welcomes people to their land at the beginning of a major event, ceremony or meeting. It was used to welcome people to visit and meet on the traditional area, set agreements of behaviour etc. It is an important mark of respect for Aboriginal people and history, and recognises respect for the land and culture.

A Welcome to Country should, where possible, be undertaken by a Traditional Aboriginal Elder of the land the Welcome is taking place on. If a Traditional Aboriginal Elder of the land is not available, they can make recommendations or refer the role to another person.

The Local Aboriginal Land Council is able to recommend the best placed Traditional Aboriginal Elder or a descendant of the land to perform a Welcome to Country.

There is no exact wording for a Welcome to Country and how it is performed is dependent upon the individual undertaking the role. A 'Welcome to Country' should always occur in the opening ceremony of the event, preferably as the first item and may consist of a single speech or it can also include a performance, a traditional welcome song, a traditional dance, didgeridoo performance or a combination of any of the above.

As such, the content of the ceremony should be negotiated between the Council and the Elder or representative with reference to the nature of the event and community practices.

The Elder or representative of the Aboriginal community performing the "Welcome to Country" should always be seated alongside other dignitaries and speakers at the event.

Traditional Aboriginal Elders should be asked how they would like to be referred to (e.g. Aunty or Uncle, etc.).

Recommended Practice

A 'Welcome to Country' should be performed at all significant or major Council events throughout the calendar year, including but not limited to Australia Day, as well as openings, launches or where it is appropriate to welcome people into the local community.

In general, a non-Aboriginal person, or an Aboriginal person from a different community, CANNOT do a 'Welcome to Country'. They should do an

Acknowledgement of Country /Traditional Owners.

Acknowledgement of Country/Traditional Owners (Acknowledgement by a non-Aboriginal person or Non Traditional Owner)

An 'Acknowledgement of Country/Traditional Owners' is a way that non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people not from that land can show respect for the Traditional Aboriginal people

and heritage and the ongoing relationship of traditional owners with the land. A chair or speaker begins the meeting by acknowledging that the event or meeting is taking place in the country of the traditional owners.

NOTE: In the case of opening an important event, a “Welcome to Country’ should be performed, not an ‘Acknowledgement’.

Bega is quite a unique council area as it is intersected by three Aboriginal Land Councils, the Bega Local Aboriginal Lands Council, the Eden Local Aboriginal Lands Council and the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Lands Council (Wallaga Lake). It is appropriate to acknowledge the Djiringanj people of the Yuin Nation.

Appropriate wording for an Acknowledgement to Country in the Bega Valley Council Area:

“I would like to commence by acknowledging on behalf of Bega Valley Shire Council the original inhabitants of the lands and waters of the Shire – the people of the Yuin nation and show our respect to elders past, present and future.” (Please note that in some places of the BVSC area Monaro should also be acknowledged).

An Acknowledgement to Country can be performed by the Mayor, Councillors, Council Management or main dignitary at an event. It is recommended that Council staff perform an Acknowledgement to Country when running programs or events on Council’s behalf and where there is no Councillor representation.

Where the person doing an Acknowledgement of Country is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, they are required to use the following format for their acknowledgement:

- Name
- Mention their Clan
- Where they come from
- Permission from local Elders
- Acknowledge local Aboriginal Peoples

Recommended Practice

The Acknowledgement to Country is a minimum requirement for all Council events and significant meetings.

Smoking Ceremony

Smoking ceremonies are a religious event conducted by Aboriginal people with specialised cultural knowledge, such as an Elder, Aboriginal people with the spiritual knowledge or cultural teacher. Most Aboriginal dance groups also provide Smoking Ceremonies as part of their services but it is a separate religious ceremony.

The smoking ceremony aims to spiritually cleanse the space in which the ceremony takes place, so as to allow peace and recognise the importance of a meeting. Given the significant nature of the ceremony, smoking ceremonies are usually only performed on special occasions or at major events and places of spiritual significance. It should also be noted that smoking ceremonies are also more appropriate for outdoor occasions due to ventilation requirements.

A smoking ceremony is a religious ceremony and should only be performed with permission from the Traditional Owners.

Other Traditional peoples perform other rituals such as water cleansing ceremonies with song and dance.

The Local Aboriginal Lands Councils can provide contact details for Traditional Owners and suitable Aboriginal people who can be engaged for performing smoking ceremonies.

Recommended Practice

A Smoking Ceremony should be performed on special occasions or at major outdoor events, such as Australia Day, and other culturally significant activities including Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week when permission has been approved by the Traditional Owners.



Fee for Service

In providing cultural services such as welcomes, artistic performances and other social ceremonies, it is important to acknowledge that Aboriginal people are using their intellectual property. For this reason it is appropriate that people receive payment for their services. The remuneration should take into account travel to the event, time and complexity of the service as well as the profile of the event.

Bega Valley Shire Council has a memorandum of understanding with the Bega, Eden and Merrimans Local Aboriginal Lands Councils including a Welcome to Country Protocol; this protocol outlines appropriate occasions for a Welcome to Country and the fees that will be paid.

The Department of Communities: Aboriginal Affairs (NSW) has developed guidelines for government agencies to consider when engaging Aboriginal people in cultural performances, or other Aboriginal cultural protocols.

It is important to note that the schedule below is only a guide for a range of Aboriginal cultural services and the fees are indicative only.

Cultural Practice	Suggested Fee
Welcome to Country	As per MOU
Smoking Ceremony (Depending on accepted Religious person)	\$530
Didgeridoo Performance (Men Only)	\$360
Dancer category 1 (basic)	\$430
Dancer(s) category 2 (professional)	\$450 - \$1800 (1 or 2, or a group)
Guest Lecturer/Speaker (Depending on knowledge)	\$110 - \$500
Sitting Fee*	\$35 per hour

*Note: Sitting fees may be paid, where appropriate and by prior written agreement, to Aboriginal members of a committee/advisory board to acknowledge the value of the unique and specialist expertise on cultural heritage issues provided by Aboriginal committee members. This is determined by the funding of the specific project being undertaken.

Significant Dates and Events

Overview of significant dates

26 January	Australia Day
21 March	Harmony Day (Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day)
25 April	Coloured Diggers Day
26 May to 3 June	National Reconciliation Week Incorporates the following significant dates:
26 May	– National Sorry Day
27 May	– Amendments to the Constitution regarding Aboriginal people (Referendum?)
3 June	– Mabo Day (Torres Strait Islander celebration)
First week of July (Sunday to Sunday)	National Aboriginal & Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC) Week
4 August	National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day
9 August	International Day of the World's Indigenous People

Australia Day (26 January)

Australia Day is a day of celebration for most Australians; however for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people it is a day that represents invasion, dispossession and loss of culture and sovereign rights. For this reason many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people choose to refer to Australia Day as Survival Day.

The Survival Day concept was born out of the 1988 Bicentenary Australia Day celebrations in Sydney. Many Indigenous Australians who took part in the Bicentennial marches felt they would like to have an alternative celebration which told the story of how their history and culture had survived since colonisation.

The first Survival concert was held in 1992 and local Australia/Survival Day ceremonies and celebrations are held annually across New South Wales.

Harmony Day (21 March)

Harmony Day is held on 21 March each year, which is also the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Harmony Day is an Australian Government initiative designed to promote community harmony, build relationships between people and address racism where it occurs. Harmony Day was first held in 1999 and has since developed into Australia's largest annual multicultural event.

Coloured Diggers Day (25 April)

A Coloured Diggers March is held during Anzac Day each year as a way of raising awareness as well as honouring and recognising the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders war veterans that were accorded to other servicemen and servicewomen, but denied for so many years to Aboriginal people.

More than 5,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans served in World War I and WWII although many Aboriginal Diggers did not identify themselves as Aboriginal when they joined the armed forces because as Aboriginal people they would not have been allowed to join, or they wanted to avoid exposure to racism. Instead they pretended to be Maori or Indian.

Upon their return to Australia, instead of recognition, Aboriginal Diggers received ignorance and racism, were not eligible for returned servicemen land grants or even membership of Returned Services League (RSL) clubs, and sometimes even found that the government had taken their children away while they defended their country.

The first official Coloured Diggers March was held on Anzac Day 2007 in Redfern, Sydney, with hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans and their descendants marching in Sydney's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anzac Day parade.

National Reconciliation Week (26 May - 3 June)

Each year National Reconciliation Week celebrates the rich culture and history of the First Australians. It provides the opportunity to focus on reconciliation and to explore new and better ways of meeting challenges in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The start of the week (26 May) is **National Sorry Day** (a recommendation of the Stolen Generation Report) followed by the **Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum** which removed from the Constitution clauses that discriminated against the First Australians (27 May) and the end of the week (3 June), **Mabo Day**, is the anniversary of the High Court decision in the Eddie Mabo land rights case of 1992. For more information go to: www.reconciliation.org.au

NAIDOC Week (First week in July)

National Aboriginal & Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC) celebrations are held around Australia in the first full week in July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For more information go to: www.naidoc.org.au

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (4 August)

This is an annual event which aims to raise awareness of the significance of providing a safe, nurturing, and healthy environment for Indigenous children. The focus of the day is to enhance

family relationships and emphasise the importance of culture for young children. Each year, the Children's Day has a theme to highlight a significant issue, concern or hope for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

International Day of the World's Indigenous People (9 August)

The day recognises the value and diversity of the cultures of Indigenous communities and the contributions that they can make to humanity.

Aboriginal Flag



About the Flag

The Aboriginal flag is divided horizontally into equal halves of black (top) and red (bottom), and has a yellow circle in the centre. The colour black symbolises the Aboriginal people, the colour red represents the earth and the colour ochre which is used in Aboriginal ceremonies, and the yellow circle represents the sun.

The Aboriginal flag should be flown at all times and at half-mast on Sorry Day. If the flag cannot be raised all the time, it should be raised on important Aboriginal calendar events such as Survival Day, Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

Flag Flying Protocol

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet provides protocols for the appropriate use and the flying of official Australian flags in the publication *'Australian flags - Part 2: The protocols for the appropriate use and the flying of the flag'*. The flag order should follow the rules of precedence as follows, dependent upon the number of flag poles erected in any one location:

1. Australian National Flag (should always take precedence and be flown on the far left of the person/s facing the flags)
2. New South Wales State flag
3. Australian Aboriginal flag (prescribed by the Flags Act 1953)

(Source: Flying and Use of the Australian National Flag)

Recommended Practice

The hierarchy for flying flags on Council property should follow the rules of precedence outlined above.



Aboriginal Cultural Practices & Considerations

Gender Protocols - Men's and Women's Business

Aboriginal society still regards some information as specific and sacred to either men or women. This knowledge is sacred and recorded in a way that only men or only women can access.

It is unlikely that officers will be able to distinguish between men's and women's business. Councils need to be aware that such issues exist and seek advice from the Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people about when they are likely to arise and how to manage such issues.

Sacred Sites

Sacred sites are places of cultural significance to Aboriginal people. They may be parts of the natural landscape such as hills, rocks, trees and springs that are not always spectacular or interesting to the non-Aboriginal eye. They may be places that are significant because they mark a particular act of a creation being. They also include burial grounds and places where particular ceremonies have been held.

In some cases the act of identifying or talking about a site may in itself be a violation. Custodians have particular responsibilities to protect and maintain sacred sites. This may be done in various ways including holding ceremonies, visiting the places and singing the songs associated with them.

At present, under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, the National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for the care, control and management of all historic sites, reserves and Aboriginal areas (this is under review via the Culture and Heritage Reform). More information is available from the NSW Department of Environment and Heritage NSW Department of Premier Cabinet website under the National Parks & Wildlife Act.

There are a number of significant Aboriginal sites in the Bega Valley Shire, i.e. (Biamanga Mountain and Gulaga Mountain). These sites were a meeting place where exchanges took place between the Yuin people.

Further information about the cultural heritage and significance of some of the areas please see the Koori Heritage Stories, Bega Valley Shire Far South Coast, New South Wales (2012).

Confidentiality

Aboriginal people have traditional customs, stories, and sacred information that may or may not be passed onto non-aboriginal people. If you are given this information/knowledge, remember, it is given in trust. That trust requires that you respect that confidentiality. This includes translating, reproducing or passing on any information, practices or cultural product

without permission. You should assume that all information is confidential unless you have specifically negotiated permission to use it.

Naming the Deceased

Aboriginal communities in NSW may have different protocols regarding naming deceased Aboriginal persons than that which is often raised with northern Australian Aboriginal communities. In many Aboriginal communities in northern Australia it is offensive to refer to a deceased person by name or show photographic images of the person during the mourning period, unless agreed to by the relevant family. Cultural warnings are often used to avoid causing offence to the families of deceased persons.

The best way for Council to use the appropriate protocol for their area regarding naming the deceased or showing photographic images is to consult the Local Aboriginal Land Council regarding the background of the particular community member(s).

Dignity and Respect

The past experience of many Aboriginal people is that they were considered to be lesser people needing protection and assimilation into Australian society.

It is critical to ensure that Aboriginal people are treated with dignity and respect. This is much more than attitude. It must include tangible recognition of Aboriginal history, heritage, culture and protocols.

Community Engagement

Getting Permission

Getting permission is essential before starting work on any project that has an impact directly on Aboriginal communities.

Getting permission involves forming strong partnerships with the Aboriginal community and Traditional Elders. They can advise of the correct protocol for gaining consent. Permission will rarely be refused if the purpose of the work is clearly understood and way of undertaking the work is properly negotiated. Where it is refused, the reason may relate to issues that are sacred or taboo, related to a death custom, or is specifically women's or men's business.

Consultation

It is important that Council uses a range of strategies to involve and consult with the local Aboriginal communities and provide opportunities for the communities to participate in Council decision-making.

For ideas on appropriate consultation and engagement strategies with the Aboriginal community, contact Council's Aboriginal Liaison Officer.

Ownership, Copyright, Cultural and Intellectual Property

In the past, non-Aboriginal people have appropriated Aboriginal stories, language, songs, dance and knowledge. Aboriginal people have not been recognised as the owners of this knowledge. In some cases non-Aboriginal authors, who have benefited from the knowledge given to them, have claimed the copyright and have profited from the information.

As a result, copyright and the protection of intellectual property are vital issues for Aboriginal people. They are the custodians of their culture and have the right to own and control their cultural heritage.

Any access to and use of Aboriginal cultural information must have permission from relevant individuals. Rights to use Aboriginal material may be held by an individual, but mostly cultural material belongs to the traditional owners of that knowledge as a community.

Council should reach formal agreement with the owner/s of knowledge before commencing a project that uses it. In some cases this should be in the form of a written contract.

Copyright and moral rights are complex issues and not always clear in relation to Aboriginal culture. The Arts Law Centre of Australia can provide further advice on relevant legal issues (website: www.artslaw.com.au).

Communicating with the Aboriginal Community

When seeking to engage with Aboriginal people, the issues must be clearly communicated, including priorities, limitations and benefits to the community. Care needs to be taken to cross check that all participants have understood these issues.

On any issue the limitations to negotiation need to be clearly articulated. There may be legal, financial or policy restraints on Council that will limit what can be achieved.

Aboriginal Community Contacts & Organisations

Most Local Aboriginal Lands Councils will have contacts of Traditional Aboriginal Elders, Knowledge Holders, Aboriginal community contacts that are suitable for engaging for Welcome Ceremonies, Smoking ceremonies, other cultural performances as well as Aboriginal media. (A local Koori directory is being developed)

Definitions & Terms

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

It is important to remember that while both are First Nations of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are very different. As with Aboriginal People each Nation has its own cultural language and traditions with their own histories, beliefs and values. It is respectful to give each cultural group their own identity.

In written works it is considered offensive to include a footnote to the word Aboriginal stating that 'It includes both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', so it is advised not to do this. When specifically referring to both cultures, use the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In all other circumstances, use Aboriginal peoples. Always capitalise the 'A' in Aboriginal. Lower case refers to an aboriginal person or indigenous people in any part of the world.

Elders

Elders are custodians of knowledge. They are chosen and accepted by their own communities and are highly respected. An Elder is a member of a particular Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community, male or female, who is respected and has the authority within the community to give permission, advise others, and pass on knowledge. Elders are usually the holder of traditional knowledge and customs and are the only ones who have the authority to talk about it or not, and to pass it on or not.

An Elder is usually, but not always, an older person. Young people may also be given permission to talk on behalf of an acknowledged Elder not a 'self-proclaimed Elder'.

You must also be aware of addressing an Elder in the appropriate way. Some Elders are referred to as Uncle or Aunty, but you should only use these titles if given permission by them to do so. Simply asking politely is the best way to find out if you can do so or not.

Indigenous

The term 'Indigenous' is generally used when referring to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. 'Indigenous' is generally used by the Commonwealth Government as they have a charter of providing services and programs to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at a national level. The term Aboriginal refers specifically to the Aboriginal people of the mainland and Tasmania and does not necessarily include Torres Strait Islander people.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are opposed to the term 'Indigenous' being used as it generalises both cultures. Council should be advised against using this term where possible.

Land Council

An Aboriginal Land Council is a community organisation organised by regions that are state legislated and are caretakers of the land on behalf of Aboriginal people. They are organised by Aboriginal people but (in some instances) they are not the Traditional Owners of the land they care for. They have historically advocated for recognition of traditional land rights, and also for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in other areas such as equal wages and adequate housing and basic human rights.

Land Councils aim to provide employment, training and to explore business and community development opportunities for members. Land Council regions can be reflective of Aboriginal clan boundaries.

Under the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act, the function of a land council is to “to improve, protect and foster the best interests of all Aboriginal persons within the council’ area and other persons who are members of that land council”. This includes promoting the protection of Aboriginal culture and the heritage of Aboriginal persons in its area, conservation and land management of Aboriginal sites and relics, and promoting the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage with other Government authorities by advising and educating the broader community about the significance of Aboriginal culture, heritage and sites.

The Bega Valley Shire is intersected by three Aboriginal land councils –Eden LALC, Bega LALC and Merrimans LALC, (Wallaga Lake).

Nation, Tribe, Clan, Mob

These are all terms referring to a culturally distinct group of Aboriginal people associated with a particular, culturally defined area of land or country. A number of ‘tribes’ or ‘clans’ comprise a larger grouping of Aboriginal people that identify as a ‘nation’.

Mob is a term that is being increasingly used by Aboriginal communities as a generic term.

Aboriginal people will often refer to themselves as being Koori, Goori or Murri. These are terms drawn from Aboriginal languages. ‘Koori’ is usually used by Aboriginal people in parts of NSW and Victoria. ‘Goori’ is usually used by Aboriginal people in northern NSW coastal regions. ‘Murri’ is usually used by Aboriginal people in north-west NSW and Queensland. Koori is the term used by the local Aboriginal community in the Bega region.

Traditional Owners/Custodians

‘Traditional Owners/Custodians’ is the term to describe the original Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who inhabited an area. Traditional custodians today are descendants of the original inhabitants and have ongoing spiritual and cultural ties to the land and waterways where their ancestors lived.

References

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www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au
- Aboriginal Cultural Protocols and Practices Policy - Department of Aboriginal Affairs, NSW (2005)
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http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/symbols/docs/australian_flags_excerpt.pdf
- Engaging with Aboriginal Communities: A Resource Kit for Local Government in NSW - Department of Local Government & the Local Government & Shires Associations of NSW (2007)
<https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/content/engaging-local-aboriginal-communities-resource-kit-nsw-councils>
- Aboriginal Heritage Office - Sydney (2009)
www.aboriginalheritage.org/sites/identification.

Bega Local Aboriginal Lands Council

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Acknowledgement

David Watts

Aboriginal Heritage Office

Constance Chatfield

Auburn City Council for providing the basis of the Protocols Paper

Biamanga and Gulaga - Aboriginal Cultural Association with Biamanga and Gulaga Nation Parks.

B.Egloff, N.Peterson and S.Wesson

Cultural Heritage Research Centre

University of Canberra, Australia 2005

The various paintings are from Aunt Maude Moore's private art collection

Artists; C. G. Muurruugia , Chris Brodie, DUK, R.Loche, Brown, Brodie and R.Ping