




# Immersive Learning Experiences **On-Country**





# Acknowledgement of Sovereignty

We acknowledge Indigenous Australian's unceded sovereignty of the lands in which we work and the long-standing traditions of sustaining their communities and environments for many tens of thousands of years as traditional custodians of the land.

They are the first educators and first innovators. They are the holders of knowledge that makes a critical contribution to the sustainability of our local, national and global communities.

We offer our respects to Elders - past, present, and emerging and extend this to all First Nations people.



# Message from Professor Ruth Wallace

Our university has a bold vision for the future, and we invite you to be a part of it.

Embark on a life-changing journey On-Country, where you'll explore the profound, enduring and unique connections between Indigenous peoples, their cultures, and the natural environment.

Our immersive courses offer the opportunity to engage with Indigenous Australians and their contemporary expressions of their relationship to each other and to Country.

Through hands-on experiences led by expert educators, guides and hosts, you'll gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous cultures, explore

ways in which these experiences can guide your thinking and actions and reflect critically on how this can shape your professional practice.

Join us for a journey of discovery that will broaden your perspectives and enrich your life.

By exploring different understandings of relationships to land and sea country, you'll gain a unique perspective that will transform the way you see the world.



**Professor Ruth Wallace**

Pro Vice Chancellor,  
Faculty of Arts & Society

# Our Mission

## Embrace & Unite

Our mission is to **“facilitate transformative experiences that immerse participants in the richness of Indigenous Australian cultures. We aim to provide a platform for deep understanding, self-discovery, and effective engagement with Indigenous Australians. Through our immersive courses, we foster cultural sensitivity, respect, and reconciliation.”**

We believe in the power of cultural immersion to unlock profound insights and personal growth. Our courses provide participants with immersive experiences that expose them to the diverse knowledge systems and traditions of Indigenous communities. By participating in cultural practices, listening to stories, and witnessing the resilience of Indigenous heritage, participants develop a heightened sense of self-awareness and cultural sensitivity, and develop skills for the practice of knowledge-work in intercultural contexts.

We strive to equip participants with the skills to build connections and foster collaborative relationships with Indigenous Australians. By embracing the wisdom and insights gained from their immersive encounters, participants develop a new, respect and empathy for Indigenous cultures. The purpose is to begin the journey towards decolonising practice and reconciliation.

By actively engaging with Indigenous cultures and gaining a deeper understanding of their histories and contemporary challenges and successes, we are committed to empowering participants to become agents of positive change in the ongoing process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Central to our mission is the commitment to support economic development and capacity building within the communities with which we partner. By providing employment and training opportunities for community members, and by actively supporting local businesses and organisations, we strive to create sustainable pathways for community growth and self-determination.

### What does an On-Country experience mean?

If you are living in or visiting Australia, then you are always on Aboriginal land. We are always On-Country! CDU On-Country experiences are a program of activities and intercultural interactions intentionally held on the ancestral lands of Aboriginal Australians in the context of people exercising their sovereign cultural rights on their own land. This is not a tourist experience, it is a program of intentional, intercultural, educational experiences that help visitors to develop a better understanding both themselves and sovereign Aboriginal people.









# Our Purpose

Charles Darwin University's programs of social and cultural immersion are designed to build capacity for you to work and learn more respectfully and productively with Indigenous Australians

Our work seeks to help our students and participants to recognise the colonising effects of their current thinking and work practices, and then build an understanding of and strategies for enacting decolonising practices.

Each program helps you to make sense of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

You will benefit from:

- » Intercultural Competence: Develop a deeper understanding of working with difference in intercultural contexts.
- » Respectful Relations: Build meaningful connections with Indigenous Australians, fostering collaboration and mutual understanding.
- » Decolonising Practices: Recognise and begin the personal and collaborative work to address the impacts of institutional colonisation.
- » Professional Advantage: Gain intercultural competencies sought by employers in various fields.
- » Personal Growth: Broaden perspectives on knowledges and culture, challenge long held assumptions, and cultivate empathy.
- » Experiential Learning: Engage directly with Indigenous communities and learn from elders and leaders.

CDU's social and cultural immersion programs empower participants to engage respectfully and productively with Indigenous Australians, fostering deep understanding and promoting harmonious collaboration.











## Deepening understanding through cultural immersion

By immersion and hands-on activities and engaging directly with Indigenous knowledge holders, participants gain a deep appreciation for their wisdom and contemporary expressions of their relationship with land and sea country. This unique opportunity allows critical reflection on how this understanding can shape professional practice and enhance personal growth.

## Bridging Cultures, Fostering Understanding

Our immersive courses offer participants a profound opportunity to delve into the richness of Indigenous Australian cultures, gaining a deeper understanding of their unique ways of knowing, being, and doing. By reflecting upon and embracing new perspectives, participants embark on a journey of professional and personal self-discovery and expand their capacity to effectively and respectfully engage with Indigenous Australians. Through culturally immersive experiences and listening to stories shared by Indigenous elders and community members, participants are exposed to the diverse knowledge systems and traditions of Indigenous communities.







## The Core Value of Reciprocity

Central to our mission is the commitment to support economic development and capacity building within the communities we partner with. By providing employment and training opportunities for community members, and by actively supporting local businesses and organisations, we strive to create sustainable pathways for community growth and self-determination.

## Advocacy For Change

By actively engaging with Indigenous cultures and gaining a deeper understanding of their histories and contemporary challenges, participants become agents of positive change in the ongoing process of decolonisation and explore opportunities for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Our immersive courses, provide an opportunity for participants to join a community of individuals committed to fostering understanding, respect, and reconciliation.















# Executive On-Country

An executive On-Country immersive experience offers a unique and tailored opportunity for professionals to engage with Indigenous cultures, fostering a deeper understanding of the connections between Indigenous knowledge, leadership, and sustainable practices.

This program is designed to meet the specific needs and interests of executive teams, providing a transformative experience that combines cultural immersion, dialogue, and personal growth.

Participants will have the privilege of engaging with respected Indigenous knowledge holders who will share their stories and insights to help develop a better understanding of the relationship between Indigenous culture, leadership, and sustainability. Through these experiences, executives will not only deepen their understanding of Indigenous cultures but also reflect on their own leadership journeys.

Guided reflection sessions and facilitated discussions will encourage executives to explore the connections between Indigenous leadership principles and their own professional roles.

“Where leadership meets cultural wisdom, a sustainable path is forged towards a brighter future.”





# Students On-Country

Offers a transformative opportunity for University students and faculty to engage with Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. This immersive program combines academic rigor with cultural immersion, fostering a holistic understanding of Indigenous perspectives and promoting meaningful collaborations between academia and Indigenous communities.

Academic components within the On-Country experience can vary depending on the disciplines and focus areas of the participating universities. Faculty and students may engage in research projects, collaborative workshops, or interdisciplinary courses that explore themes such as Indigenous knowledge systems, environmental sustainability, social justice, and reconciliation.

These academic pursuits are designed to integrate Indigenous perspectives, promote critical thinking, and encourage cross-cultural dialogue.

Collaboration with Indigenous communities is at the heart of the On-Country experience for universities.

Local Indigenous knowledge holders, community leaders, and educators serve as guides, mentors, and co-creators of knowledge in these immersive contexts.

By forging reciprocal relationships, universities contribute to community development initiatives, support Indigenous-led projects, and ensure that the benefits of the program flow back to the communities.

"Where academia meets cultural immersion, transformative understanding takes flight."









# On-Country For Government



An On-Country experience for government departments provides a unique platform for policymakers and public servants to deepen their understanding of Indigenous cultures, knowledge systems, and the relationship between government and Indigenous communities. This immersive program combines policy-focused discussions with cultural immersion, fostering meaningful connections and informing more inclusive and effective governance practices.

Government officials engage directly with Indigenous communities, listening to their perspectives, learning about their governance structures, and witnessing the resilience of their cultures.

Through facilitated discussions, workshops, and cultural activities, participants gain insights into the historical context, contemporary challenges, and aspirations of Indigenous communities. This firsthand experience informs policy development, decision-making processes, and community engagement strategies.

"Inspiring inclusive governance through cultural understanding and collaboration."

These sessions are designed to foster dialogue, knowledge sharing, collaboration between government representatives and Indigenous community leaders, and ways of exploring processes of co-design in generative policy contexts

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During NAIDOC week I had the privilege and honor of spending the week on Bininj and Mungguy Country in Kadadu, Northern Territory. The intensive study program was created in partnership with CDU, The Australian National University and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Everything I thought I knew about the world was profoundly challenged.

**Grace Sinstead- Reid**  
New Colombo Plan Scholar  
Australian Department of  
Foreign Affairs & Trade











## When are On-Country courses offered?

Typically May to September as activities including camping “On-Country”.

## What accommodation is provided?

Accommodation On-Country is camping with accommodation provided as necessary at the start and end in International House on the CDU campus in Casuarina or other similar accommodation.

## What is the duration of the courses?

On-Country courses can be anywhere between 3 and 5 days, depending on requirements.

## What do they cost?

POA - Costs vary and are dependent on the type of On-Country experience, location and number of days including accommodation, transport from Darwin, food, and activities.

## Can I receive credit for university level study?

Yes some courses do offer this.

For more information contact  
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