

# 10 Positive Ways to Engage with Indigenous Issues



*Shannan Dodson is a Yawuru (Broome area) woman born in Katherine in the Northern Territory who currently lives in Sydney. She has worked in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs for over 15 years and is a communications and digital specialist. This is an extract from her article "Indigenous issues can be daunting – here are 10 positive ways to engage," originally published by ABC Triple J on 4 Jun 2020.*

## 1. Educate yourself

If you've been following the Black Lives Matter movement in the US, you should be aware that systemic racism is insidious in our own country too. Find out about your own history and how discrimination affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples daily.

Here are some places to start:

- Find out about over [400 Indigenous people](#) who have died in custody and not one person has been charged
- The [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](#) has great resources
- [Share Our Pride](#) debunks myths and the "you can't ask that" type of questions but also just gives a good overview of Indigenous Australia
- [Common Ground](#) shares First Nations cultures, histories and lived experiences
- This guide of better reporting and understanding Indigenous people is useful for everyone not only those in the media

## 2. Donate

There are families that have not seen justice for their loved ones killed in custody. Donate to support them to seek this justice. There are campaigns for justice for [Kumanjayi Walker](#), [Tanya Day](#), [David Dungay Jnr](#) and many others. And integral legal services like [NAAJA](#) and [Djirra](#) are also accepting donations. Google Aboriginal Legal Services in your state or territory to find one close to you that may need your help.

## 3. Engage with Indigenous media

[Indigenous X](#) is an Aboriginal owned and operated media company that's all about challenging stereotypes of the Indigenous community.

Its Twitter account has a new guest tweeter every week - so you hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from around the country talking about issues that affect them and their communities.

They're also on Instagram and Facebook.

[NITV](#) is a free-to-air network with programs that celebrate Indigenous culture, challenge perceptions, and facilitate debate.

#### **4. Find out about the mob in your local area**

It's pretty simple to just google your area and get clued up on who's the local mob. This map is also a great resource

You can also contact your local [Aboriginal Land Council](#) to get a sense of the local community, and any events or ways that you can volunteer.

"You don't necessarily have to travel to engage with Indigenous people," Shannan told Hack.

"If you get the privilege to meet our from all across the nation, it's important to understand that we all have completely different languages, histories, cultures and perspectives."

#### **5. Go to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events**

Be sensible in these COVID times but there are events happening around the country in support of Indigenous Lives Matter. Do your research to ensure they're Indigenous-led or inclusive.

There are also days throughout the year to mark significant events for Indigenous people, like Sorry Day (May 26), Mabo Day (June 3) and National Close The Gap Day (19 March).

[National Reconciliation Week](#) runs from May 27-June 3 every year and [NAIDOC Week](#) runs from July 7-July 14 this year. For each, there are heaps of events to attend, and you can also encourage your workplace and/or university to get involved.



*Shannon Dodson*

There are also events on January 26, like Yabun festival in Sydney, to celebrate Indigenous peoples and cultures.

#### **6. Encourage your workplace and university to do cultural competency**

If you google 'cultural competency' or 'Indigenous cultural awareness' in the place you live, there is usually a provider. Just check they are Indigenous-owned and led.

#### **7. Volunteer or donate to Indigenous organisations or causes**

There are plenty of volunteering opportunities out there, including:

- [Garma](#)
- [NASCA](#)
- [AIATSIS](#)
- [Cairns Indigenous Art Fair](#)
- [Seed Mob](#)
- [Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair](#)

And many more! You can also look up local community groups, art galleries, and theatres that you can volunteer or donate to.

Google what your local Aboriginal Legal and Health services are and see if they require volunteers (and definitely donations).

"There are indigenous organisations that are either in their infancies or long-standing that you can support," Shannan says.

"It's about you identifying those organisations and figuring out where you can be of assistance - whether it's providing your skills, donations or an extra pair of hands."

"It shouldn't be about using Indigenous people as way of making yourself woke, or for your own self-gain, or for getting some kind of cultural awakening and letting Indigenous people do the heavy lifting.

## **8. Support Indigenous suppliers and businesses**

To find them, use [Supply Nation](#) - a national directory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.

## **9. Read Welcome to Country by Marcia Langton**

It's basically a Lonely Planet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia and [lists awesome things you can do around the country](#). (This will be great for when we can all travel again!)

## **10. Support organisations and peak bodies to fight for the rights of Indigenous people**

There are many, but some include:

- [National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations](#) - the national peak body representing 143 Indigenous health services

- [The Healing Foundation](#) - a national organisation that partners with communities to address the ongoing trauma caused by actions like the forced removal of children from their families
- [SNAICC](#) - the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- [Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory \(AMSANT\)](#) - the peak body for Aboriginal community controlled primary health services in the NT.
- [First People's Disability Network](#) - a national organisation representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and their families.
- [Black Rainbow](#) - a national advocacy platform and touchpoint for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTQI) peoples
- [APONT](#) - An Aboriginal governance and management program that builds strength and resilience in NT Aboriginal Organisations
- [Lowitja Institute](#) - a national institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research
- [TSYRSA](#) - provides sports funding, financial support and community grants to Indigenous people within the Torres Strait region
- [AbSec](#) - provides child protection and out-of-home care policy advice on issues affecting Aboriginal children, young people, families and carers