



**Sustainable  
Communities  
and Waste**

National Environmental Science Program

# Indigenous Audience Communications Guide

Supporting effective  
communication of research with  
Indigenous audiences

Mandy Downing, Sarah Bassett



## 1. Why this guide?

Researchers funded through the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) must consider how their research may impact or be of interest to Indigenous Australian people. Researchers must comply with the Three Category Approach of Indigenous engagement and inclusion (read the [factsheet here](#)). Many Sustainable Community and Waste Hub projects fall under the **Category 3: Communicate** approach which requires research outputs that are relevant to Indigenous people, lands and waters must be communicated with Indigenous people and stakeholders (Prescribed Body Corporates and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations etc).

However, traditional outputs such as journal articles, traditional media, policy briefs or websites may not always reach or resonate with Indigenous audiences. This guide aims to help researchers understand how to **communicate meaningfully, ethically and effectively** with Indigenous audiences by drawing on targeted media channels, community protocols and culturally appropriate approaches. This guide aims to enhance understandings of reciprocity, ongoing relationships through accountability and impact and value (as per AIATSIS Code of Ethics).

## 2. Positioning yourself and your research

Before designing communications, reflect on your **positionality**, which is who you are, where you come from, and how this shapes your perspective. As SCaW Indigenous Facilitator Associate Professor Mandy Downing [emphasises](#):

- **Acknowledge your position:** Be transparent and upfront about your cultural background, lived experience, wider social paradigms, institutional position – and the limitations this can present to an Indigenous audience.
- **Respect sovereignty of knowledge:** Indigenous knowledge systems are living, cultural and sovereign. Managing and respecting this knowledge requires different considerations from Western systems.
- **Follow protocols:** Adhere to relevant codes of ethics, Indigenous data sovereignty principles and local community protocols.

## 3. Indigenous media and communication pathways

Instead of relying on mainstream or institutional channels, researchers should consider **trusted Indigenous communication platforms**:

- **National media**
  - NITV (National Indigenous Television)
  - National Indigenous Times
  - Koori Mail
- **Community radio and regional media**

- First Nations Media Australia (umbrella body for over 230 Indigenous community broadcasters)
- Local Indigenous radio stations such as 3KND, Koori Radio 93.7FM, Ngaarda Media, Noongar Radio etc.
- **Community networks and organisations**
  - Local Land Councils, Indigenous ranger groups, Indigenous peak bodies relevant to research topic
  - Social media accounts run by Indigenous organisations and influencers
- **Events and gatherings**
  - NAIDOC Week, Garma Festival and other community gatherings can be suitable venues to share findings.
  - Indigenous focused conferences such as the AIATSIS Summit, Lowitja Conference etc.

## 4. Practical communication principles

When preparing research outputs for Indigenous audiences, consider:

- **Positionality:** Lead with your position in relation to an Indigenous audience and any limitations this may present in regard to your understandings of Indigenous Australia and any potential gaps in your research. For example, who did you engage with was it an entire nation or a small number of people situated in a region?
- **Plain language:** Avoid jargon. Focus on relevance to people and Country. Communicate in a concise manner and remember that not everyone will understand your technical terms.
- **Visual storytelling:** With permission (consent and talent release form where necessary) Use graphics, video and audio formats where possible. Always, cite your source and permissions in respect of knowledge holders, Indigenous knowledge and as per your Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) agreements.
- **Community benefit:** Frame research around “what it means” for communities such as health, environment, jobs and cultural continuity and how this knowledge can be applied.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure outputs are easy to access without paywalls or barriers as community members aren’t always affiliated with an academic institution.
- **Respectful tone:** Avoid cultural deficit framing. Emphasise strengths, resilience opportunity and sovereignty.

## 5. Checklist for researchers

Before releasing communication intended for Indigenous audiences, ensure you have:

- Reflected on your positionality and how it shapes your message
- Reviewed relevant cultural protocols, ethics codes and language sensitivities
- Identified which Indigenous communities may be most interested or affected
- Selected trusted Indigenous media channels to share your message
- Prepared communication in accessible plain language with visual or oral formats where possible

## 6. Further reading and resources

- NESP Three Category Approach [Factsheet](#)
- AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research:
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles
- True Tracks Training in ICIP
- Institutional communications and media staff

## 7. Final note

Communicating with Indigenous audiences is not just a requirement under NESP. It is an opportunity to **build respectful relationships, mutual benefit sharing of research and ensure findings contribute to sustainable futures for all communities**. This is an opportunity to design and development communications that are engaging and of benefit to Indigenous audiences to meet the requirements of the 3) Communicate category.