

LANGUAGE FACT SHEET

The Great Book Swap

Yari

In Yawuru language, “Yari” translates to “whale”!

Yawuru = “ya-roo”

Yari = “ya-ree”



Curriculum links

Australian Curriculum version 9:

- **Foundation Year Science:** [AC9SFH01](#) — explore the ways people make and use observations and questions to learn about the natural world
- **Year 1 Science:** [AC9S1H01](#) — describe how people use science in their daily lives, including using patterns to make scientific predictions

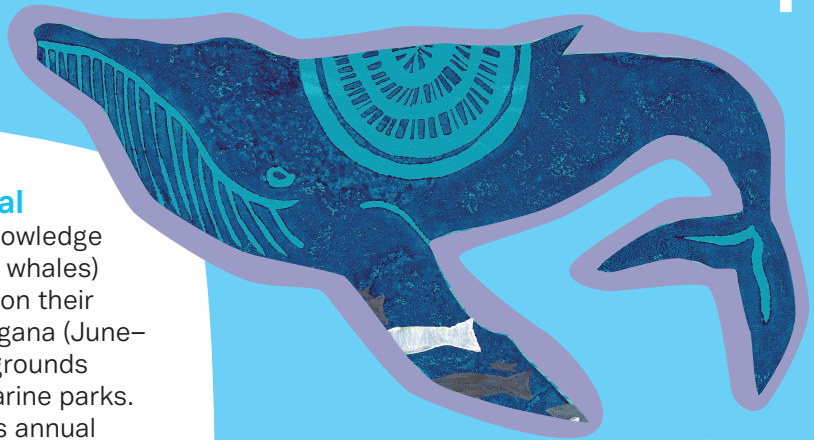
Australian Curriculum Version 8.4:

- **Foundation Year Humanities and Social Sciences (Geography):** [ACHASSK014](#) — The representation of the location of places and their features on simple maps and models.
- **Foundation Year Humanities and Social Sciences (Geography):** [ACHASSK016](#) — The Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Country/Place on which the school is located and why Country/Place is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- **Year 2 Humanities and Social Sciences:** [ACHASSI035](#) — Collect data and information from observations and identify information and data from sources provided.
- **Year 2 Humanities and Social Sciences (Geography):** [ACHASSK049](#) — The ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples maintain special connections to particular Country/Place.
- **Year 3 Humanities and Social Sciences (History):** [ACHASSK062](#) — The importance of Country/Place to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples who belong to a local area.
- **Year 3 Humanities and Social Sciences (Geography):** [ACHASSK066](#) — The representation of Australia as states and territories and as Countries/Places of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; and major places in Australia, both natural and human.
- **Year 4 Humanities and Social Sciences (History):** [ACHASSK083](#) — The diversity of Australia’s First Peoples and the long and continuous connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to Country/Place (land, sea, waterways and skies).
- **Year 4 Humanities and Social Sciences (Geography):** [ACHASSK089](#) — The custodial responsibility Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have for Country/Place, and how this influences views about sustainability.
- **Year 4 Humanities and Social Sciences (Civics and Citizenship):** [ACHASSK093](#) — The different cultural, religious and/or social groups to which they and others in the community belong.

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Significance of the animal

According to the traditional knowledge of the Yawuru, yari (humpback whales) begin to arrive from the south on their northward journey during Barrgana (June–August), heading to breeding grounds around the Lalang-gaddam marine parks. The yari have been making this annual migration for tens of thousands of years and their appearance tells the Yawuru people when the seasons are changing.

Humpback whales can live for 80 to 90 years. Humpback whales can grow up to 18m long and can weigh over 36 tonnes. Male humpback whales create and sing songs that can be heard up to 20 miles away. Humpback whales are named for the distinctive hump on their backs. Humpback whales are active and can be seen breaching out of the water, slapping the surfacing with their fins and tails and twirling underwater.

About Yawuru Language

Yawuru is an endangered language spoken on the coast south of Rubibi (Broome) in Western Australia. The Nyamba Buru Yawuru at the Mabu Yawuru Ngan-ga Language Centre have been developing resources to revitalise the language and train Yawuru people to teach and share the language.

Broome primary schools have Yawuru language programs and it is becoming more familiar to the broader community, increasing respect and understanding for the language and culture of the Yawuru People.

First Nations language reclamation is a vital part in ensuring the continuation of cultural knowledge and is a form of empowerment that helps build strong connections in Communities.

About Yawuru Community

The Yawuru people are the Traditional Custodians of the Lands and Waters in and around Rubibi (Broome) from Bangaragara to the Yalimban (south) to Wirrjinmirr (Willie Creek) to the Guniyan (north), and Banu (east) covering Roebuck Plains and Thangoo pastoral leases, in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia.

Country Tells Us When...

“Some cultures around the world have four seasons that they look out for on a calendar - Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring. Us Yawuru mob, we don't have four seasons that are told to us by a calendar. We have six seasons and Country tells us when they have arrived by what we feel, see, taste, smell and hear.”

This book idea was conceived by educators and Traditional Custodians Tsheena Cooper, Dalisa Pigram-Ross and Sheree Ford, who were inspired to share important cultural knowledge and language in a story that was both engaging and informative for children. They have used the medium of block printing to depict the imagery, layering the distinctive colours of the Kimberley as they move through the seasonal changes.



Classroom Activities

1. How many years can a humpback whale live?
2. What other marine or sea animals can you think of?
3. Do the students know any other facts about humpback whales?
4. Using the ILF Map, can you find where Yawuru Country is?
5. There are over 800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and dialects spoken across the country. Languages that are taken directly from Country. How many languages are spoken by your students at home?
6. Ask the children in your class to think of a book that they relate to or that is important to them. If they can't think of a book, they could choose a story told to them, a TV show, or a movie. Key Question: What makes this story so special for you?
7. What is special about the Lands, Seas and Skies on which you live and learn? E.g. Mountains, rivers, coast etc.
8. Who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which your school stands?
9. Watch the 2023 Indigenous Literacy Day FILM, celebrating Country Tells Us When... and two other ILF titles launched last year, We Look, We Find, and Shordi Krik. These books are about being on Country with Elders and learning language. Have the students relate to the video by discussing a place that is important to them and that they feel connected to.

Activities Based on *Country Tells Us When...*

1. Read *Country Tells Us When...* to your class. You can hear the story in both English and Yawuru by scanning the QR code on the book.
2. After reading *Country Tells Us When...* ask the students to summarise the story in one sentence.
3. Using the QR code on the back of the book and the glossary, learn how to pronounce the Yawuru words as a class from the book.
4. What did you learn about the whale from the story?
5. Write the six seasons from the Yawuru calendar as a class.
6. How do the Yawuru people know when a season stops and starts?
7. What do you notice is similar in each season?
8. What are the Yawuru people watching on Country to learn when the seasons change?
9. What was your favourite Yawuru season and why?
10. Activity: create a class collage of the Yawuru seasons and of the Western seasons. You may use things you find outside and cut up old magazines to match colours and animals you see in each one.
11. Why is Country/place so important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
12. Why is it important to connect with, and care for, Country/Place?
13. What is the connection between language and Country? How might this connection also be tied to important questions of culture and identity?
14. Organise an incursion or excursion - Have a local organisation or Traditional Custodian come to your classroom or take you on an excursion around the local area to learn more about native plants and animals and local seasons.