Main Topic: Country
Sub Topic: Country

Country was chosen to be the central theme of the GECKOS Aboriginal Studies Across the Curriculum website, as Country is central to Aboriginal people’s sense of themselves and their place within the landscapes they inhabit. It is from Country that all things begin and end, where all knowledge is held, shared, known and integrated. Deborah Bird Rose (1996) describes Country in her essay Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginals Views on Landscape and Wilderness as being “….a place that gives and receives life. Not just imagined or represented, it is lived in and lived with.

Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about Country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to Country, sing to Country, visit Country, worry about Country, feel sorry for Country, and long for Country. People say that Country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like ‘spending a day in the Country’ or ‘going up the Country’. Rather, Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life. Because of this richness, Country is home, and peace; nourishment for body, mind, and spirit; heart’s ease….

A ‘healthy’ or ‘good’ Country, is one in which all the elements do their work. They all nourish each other because there is no site, no position, from which the interest of one can be disengaged from the interests of others in the long term. Self-interest and the interest of all of the other living components of Country (the self-interest of kangaroos, barramundi, eels and so on), cannot exist independently of each other in the long term.

The interdependence of all life within Country constitutes a hard but essential lesson: “those who destroy their Country ultimately destroy themselves.”

For the purpose of outlining ideas for the integration of Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum, Arts, Ceremony, Spirituality, Dreaming, Ecology, each have their own sections. However it must be remembered that in Aboriginal societies these things are part of the whole. The sacred and the secular are intertwined.