

## Get connected, for the sake of your students

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The teaching of Aboriginal culture can lead to deep learning, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance chair Professor Chris Matthews told the Centre for Professional Learning's recent Aboriginal Education Conference.

"If you teach from this perspective you will be ticking the boxes in the curriculum," Professor Matthews, a Noonuccal man said. But teachers need to connect with their local Aboriginal community as a first step — teachers who are too frightened to do the wrong thing when speaking with Aboriginal people are denying an opportunity to get to know Aboriginal people and so ignorance of Aboriginal culture continues, he said. Fear and mistrust have evolved between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people due to the education system being built on the perception that non-Indigenous people are the knowledge holders.



Professor Matthews talked about Aboriginal base five number systems (different versions widely used across Indigenous societies but for a long time not recognised by academics "because they didn't want to see them"). He gave an account of a teacher introducing an Aboriginal number system from a different [Indigenous] Country: "Those kids' pride and understanding for number systems went through the roof."

"We can teach a base five system, if we want to, coming from an Aboriginal perspective."

If you're going to do this sort of work, you have to work with your local Aboriginal community.

"Even if you decide to teach from another [Indigenous Country] number system, make sure Aboriginal people know why you're doing it, because it is sensitive.

"We've gone through a history that has denied our culture and then you're going to teach some part of culture then you've got to make sure they're going to feel comfortable with it. Work with your Aboriginal workers in the school, too, when you're doing it, and start those relationships."

Primary and secondary workshops, led by educational leaders and experienced teachers, explored practical examples of ways to: improve outcomes for Aboriginal students, develop knowledge and understandings of Aboriginal Australia for all students and build relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal communities. The presenters referred to the Department of Education's Aboriginal Education Policy, *NSWTF 25 Year Approach: The Way Forward* and the NESA Standards.

Completing an Aboriginal Education K-12 Conference with the [Centre for Professional Learning](#) will contribute five hours of NESA Registered PD addressing: 1.4.2, 6.2.2 from the Australian Professional Standards for

Teachers towards maintaining Proficient Teacher Accreditation in NSW.