



**EARLY YEARS
(AGES 3-5)**

Seasons

EDUCATOR RESOURCE

Created in collaboration with First Nations cultural advisers

Aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework v2.0

Written by teachers for teachers

AUSTRALIANS
TOGETHER

Warning: This resource may contain images, voices and names of deceased persons, and references to language or events that may be considered culturally sensitive, offensive or outdated.

Language note: It's important to consider the historical context and evolving nature of language when viewing the information in this resource. While it may not be our preferred language, Australians Together at times uses or includes terms necessary for context, due to the educational nature of our content.



Essential question

How does learning about First Nations seasons help us understand the world around us?



Before teaching

First Nations seasons

Scientific knowledge doesn't come from formulas written in books, but from observation and experimentation. In a Western model of time and seasons, the year is divided into equal lengths of time, but for many First Nations Peoples, knowledge about the seasons comes from environmental events; for example, a change in the colour of spear grass, or turtle breeding, not according to a date on the European calendar (Woodward 2010).

This resource focuses on Indigenous seasonal calendars, which are different from the European-style four-season calendars that students are probably more familiar with. Comparing the two can help students understand that even though both are different, they connect to the same natural phenomenon – an annual repeat of seasons. It's recommended that you focus on the Indigenous systems to complete students' understanding of seasons, not just as an addition to the Western system. There isn't a perfect overlap because these systems have been developed independently of each other.

It's also important to remember that children may incidentally learn about the four European seasons from picture books, television shows, their families, etc. They may not need much time spent repeating what's already visible to them. What you can do instead is make connections between learning about Indigenous weather knowledge and how their family talks about seasons and times of year. You may wish to affirm their knowledge of spring, summer, autumn and winter, if these come up in group discussions, and encourage them to think about the connections.

Knowing where you live

If you don't already know the name of the Country or Countries your preschool is located on, prepare for the learning by finding out using the AIATSIS [Map of Indigenous Australia](#). You'll use this Map with the children in one of the activities.

Using local First Nations language/s

In this resource you're encouraged to use local Indigenous language for the seasons, flora and fauna in your area. Be mindful that language is and should be protected as Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), so be sure to connect with and consult local language custodians and work according to local cultural principles and protocols.

There are also some online resources that can be used. The '[Gambay Languages Map](#)' is a good place to start, especially if you're unsure what language is spoken on your Country, and the [50 Words Project](#), which is working to record 50 words in First Nations languages across the continent, to highlight the diversity of language and as a language-learning resource for schools and the public.

For localised information about languages and protocol try the following websites:

Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales	'AECG regions' , NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (AECG) 'Ngunnawal language revival project' , AIATSIS
Northern Territory	Guidelines for the Implementation of Indigenous Languages and Cultures Programs in Schools , Northern Territory Government
Queensland and Torres Strait Islands	Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol for the teaching of Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages in Queensland State Schools , Queensland Department of Education
South Australia	Kurna Warra , University of Adelaide
Tasmania	Policy and Protocol for Use of palawa kani Aboriginal Language, 2019 , Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
Victoria	'Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture' , Victorian Department of Education
Western Australia	'Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages Framework: guiding principles' , School Curriculum and Standards Authority, Government of Western Australia 'Protocols' , Kaartdijin Noongar – Noongar Knowledge, Sharing Noongar Culture website, South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council

Connecting with communities/Elders

If you or your school already has a relationship with a local First Nations community member, cultural expert or Elder, reach out to invite the person to share and learn about their life experiences, cultural values and knowledge, and the ways they express their cultural identity.

If you don't have existing relationships with First Nations people, consider starting one by contacting your local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander land council; or searching for First Nations groups through local or state botanical gardens, national parks and ranger groups, peak educational bodies or museums.

Relationships take time to build and it's important to maintain realistic expectations. It can take significant time to establish trust and respect within a First Nations community. What's important to you may not be as important to the people you're working alongside. Short-term approaches to engagement often result in pain. First Nations people should dictate the pace of any engagement. Keep in mind the huge pressure on First Nations people and communities to share experiences and expertise with non-Indigenous Australians.

Be sure to remunerate cultural specialists for their time and expertise.

Parents and caregivers' letter – 'Seasons at home'

Attached to this resource is a 'Parent/caregiver's letter template' that can be sent home to support students in this learning. Parents and carers are asked to help by sending in some family photos that can be included in a classroom display, as well as answers to a number of provided questions. Your knowledge of the children's home situations can inform how you approach families and carers for this activity and learning.

Recommended picture books

Books about First Nations seasons that you may also like to use with your children include:

[Ask Aunty: Seasons](#) by Aunty Munya Andrews and Charmaine Ledden-Lewis

[Big Rain Coming](#) by Katrina Germein and Bronwyn Bancroft

[Our World Bardi Jaawi, Life at Ardiyooloon](#) by One Arm Point Remote Community School

[My Home in Kakadu](#) by Jane Christophersen and Christine Christophersen

[Sea Country](#) by Aunty Patsy Cameron and Lisa Kennedy

[Cooee Mittigar](#) by Jasmine Seymour and Leanne Mulgo Watson

Activity materials

You'll need:

- access to an outdoor area
- a device or notebook to record student responses
- device/s for taking photos
- baskets or paper bags for collecting items from nature
- a classroom area to set up nature provocation stations
- paper and coloured pencils
- a copy of the picture book *Ernie Dances to the Digeridoo* by Alison Lester
- a shared screen with internet access to present online maps to the children, or a downloaded image
- access to an outdoor area for collecting natural objects and creating a mandala.

Activities



How can nature change?

Exploring the world around us

Select an outdoor area that has features that noticeably change across the seasons. This could be a playground or garden, or the local streets or community.

As children explore the space ask them questions like:

- What do you notice?
- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- What do you smell?

Encourage students to touch safe things, like plants or the ground. Ask them what it feels like: hot, cold, wet, dry, soft, hard, spiky, itchy, squishy, etc.

Then ask the children:

- Does this place always look this way?
- Has anyone seen it look different?

Record their thoughts. Encourage them to think about whether they've seen it in hotter or colder weather or at a different time of day.

Ask questions like:

- Have you seen the trees with more or fewer leaves? Different coloured leaves? Flowers? Fruit?
- Is there sometimes water in a creek, pond or catchment?
- What birds or insect can you see or hear and what are they doing?

Think about how different shadows, plants, soil or other features may be at different times they've seen.

Take a picture of the place as it is now. If you have enough devices (tablets or cameras), allow students to take a picture of some of the features they think will change.



Collecting nature

Using baskets or paper bags ask children to select two or three things to collect for a nature table in the classroom.

This is a great opportunity to talk with children about ways to care for Country. You could ask them:

- What would happen if we took everything we wanted?
- Why's it important to put things back where we collected them from?

Encourage children to collect natural items from the ground, rather than pulling leaves and flowers from any plants, to reinforce the importance of taking care of the world around us.

Back in the classroom, gather the items and discuss what children chose and why – because it was smooth? Or soft? Or colourful?

Seasons play provocations



Play and explore

Set up some nature provocations in the classroom for the children to access and interact with throughout the learning. Some examples are listed here:

- Observing the items on the nature table using magnifying glasses
- Using a wooden mortar and pestles to grind up items from the nature table
- Making nature landscapes using playdough and the items from the nature table
- Creating nature paint brushes by attaching items from the nature table to sticks
- Using a hole punch to make holes in leaves and threading these onto string or twine



Home learning



Seasons at home

Using the 'Parent/caregiver's letter template' or your own wording, ask families and caregivers to send in any photos from home that show activities families do each season, including celebrations, holidays and cultural events.

Children can share about the photos as these are brought into the classroom, and they can also be used in a visual display of the four Western seasons.

Summer, autumn, winter, spring



What season is it now?

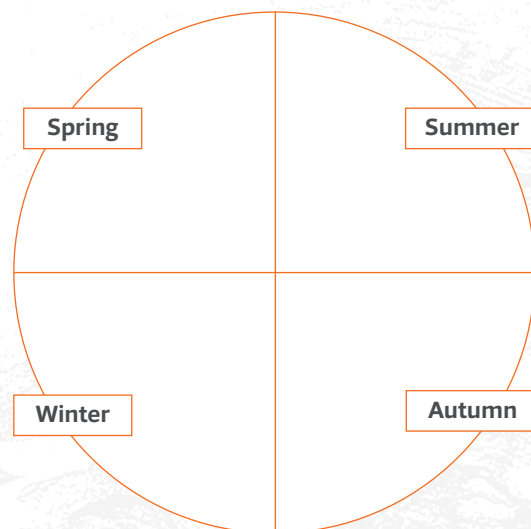
Discuss with children the four Western seasons, including the months that are in each, and the way they repeat at the same time every year.

Draw (or have prepared) a large circle split into four sections, labelled with a name of each of the seasons e.g.:

Ask students to draw pictures about the following topics (and any others you think of) that can be cut out and added to each season:

- Activities we do
- Foods we eat
- Clothes we wear
- Things that happen at preschool

You can also add any photos that have been sent in from home to the relevant season section on the circular chart.



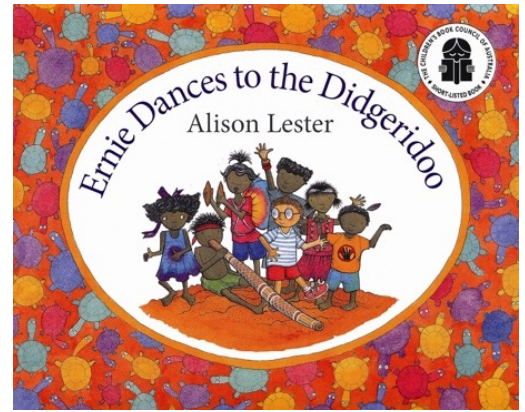
First Nations seasons

Read and discuss the book

As a class, read the picture book [Ernie Dances to the Didgeridoo](#) by Alison Lester.

Let the children know that Alison Lester created this book in consultation with Upper Primary students at Gunbalanya School in the Northern Territory.

The story takes its structure from the six seasons in Arnhem Land, where Ernie has moved with his parents. The illustrations capture the activities local children take part in for each season. The story is a series of letters from Ernie to his classmates back at his original school.



Take time to pause on each page for the children to notice the ways each season is depicted.

You may like to spend some time with students on the [Kunwinjku](#) terms given in the glossary. For additional help with pronunciation, try the 50 Words Project entries for [Kuninjku](#) (spelling variant).

Use the online AIATSIS '[Map of Indigenous Australia](#)', or a printed version, to show children where Gunbalanya is located (near the Alligator River).

Which Country are we on?

After reading ask the children:

In the book, Ernie went to live in Arnhem Land, do you know what Country our preschool is located on?

Next, use the [AIATSIS Map](#) with the children to find out the name of the Country and then decide on somewhere to display it in the classroom.

Then use the [Indigenous Weather Knowledge](#) page from the Bureau of Meteorology or the [Indigenous seasonal calendars](#) from the CSIRO website to find out the local seasons for your area.

You may like to discuss with children that in the book Ernie experienced the six seasons of the Arnhem Land seasonal calendar, and make some connections between how many First Nations seasons there are where you are.

First Nations seasons chart

Draw (or have prepared) another large circle split into enough sections to show each of the First Nations seasons from your local area, labelling each section with the name of the season, using the local language, if possible.

Use the [Indigenous Weather Knowledge](#) page from the Bureau of Meteorology as well as the [Indigenous seasonal calendars](#) page from the CSIRO to find out more information about each season.

Add information to each section of the chart showing the unique aspects of each First Nations season. Alternatively, this could be a longer project where each section is added to as each First Nations season is experienced and observed. You may like to add photos of the things that have been observed, quotes from the children or have a daily provocation such as 'What do you notice on Country today?'

This is also an excellent opportunity to invite a local First Nations community member into the preschool to talk more about each season. There's more information about connecting with First Nations community and Elders in the 'Before teaching' section.

The language of First Nations seasons

Words to identify

As a group, find words related to each of the seasons using language that local First Nations community members have shared with you and given permission for you to use. These may be the plants that are growing in your play space, animals or birds that have been observed or words for types of weather.

Find ways to use and display these words in a meaningful way. You may like to make signage for outdoor areas that identify the plants growing in First Nations language and English. To develop a sense of belonging with children, the languages they speak at home could also be included in the signage.

Seasonal movement

Listen and move

Access the '[Classic Kids: Music for the Dreaming](#)' audio clips from ABC Education.

While playing the 'Galaa', 'Dharwara' and 'Gambambara' video clips, which are each related to First Nations seasons, ask children to move carefully and safely around the room in ways that are inspired by what they can hear. You may like to join in too and demonstrate some ways the children can move their bodies.

After the listening and movement activity gather the children together and talk about what they heard in each of the audio clips and why they moved in the ways they did.

Activity notes

For this activity you'll need plenty of floor space for children to move around safely.

Creative group response

Making a seasonal mandala

Spend some time with children gathering natural objects found from the current season you're in, and/or use the objects from the 'Collecting nature' activity. You may also like to encourage children to bring objects from their own gardens or local park.

This is also an opportunity to refer back to the concept of sustainability with the children, as it relates to First Nations Peoples and their reciprocal relationship with Country. As before, encourage children to collect natural items from the ground, rather than pulling leaves and flowers from any plants, to reinforce the importance of

taking care of the world around us. Discuss with children that First Nations people take only what they need from Country and are mindful of leaving enough for next time, to ensure the environment stays balanced and healthy.

Children may be able to recall their thoughts in response to the questions:

- What would happen if we took everything we wanted?
- Why's it important to put things back where we collected them from?

Sort natural objects into colour/size/shape and then work together as a group to create a large nature mandala. When complete take a photo of the mandala and ask students how it shows something they've learnt about First Nations seasons.



PARENT/CAREGIVER LETTER

Home learning

Seasons at home

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

As part of our learning about seasons, we're hoping to create a display about the ways each family observes and participates in each of the seasons.

Please can you help by bringing in some photos and/or information that we can add to the display?

The photos/information may be about the following:

- What activities do you do in summer/autumn/winter/spring?
- Are there any holidays you go on because of the season, e.g. a beach holiday in summer?
- How do the seasons change what you eat at home?
- How do the seasons change the clothes you wear?
- Do you know any words to do with the seasons in a language that's spoken at home?

We're very keen to hear about and include as much information as possible in our display.

Please reach out if you have any questions, and we hope this activity is enjoyable for all participants.

Kind regards,



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Seasons

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Australians Together Learning Framework™

Our resources follow a framework of 5 Key Ideas that are designed to shape a new narrative for all Australians. Each Key Idea underpins the content and activities in its section to take students on a transformational learning journey. You can download the framework from our [Curriculum Resources page](#).



The Wound

Injustice from the impact of colonisation



Our History

A past that shapes our story as a nation



Why Me?

What's it got to do with me?



Our Cultures

Everyone has culture. Know about your culture and value the cultures of others



My Response

Steps we can take to build a brighter future

Alignment to the Early Years Framework v2.0

Learning Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

- 1.1 Children feel safe, secure and supported
- 1.2 Children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and agency
- 1.3 Children develop knowledgeable confident self-identities, and a positive sense of self-worth
- 1.4 Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

Learning Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

- 2.1 Children develop a sense of connectedness to groups and communities and an understanding of their reciprocal rights and responsibilities as active and informed citizens
- 2.2 Children respond to diversity with respect
- 2.4 Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment

Learning Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

- 3.1 Children become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing
- 3.2 Children become strong in their physical learning and mental wellbeing

Learning Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

- 4.1 Children develop a growth mindset and learning dispositions such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity
- 4.2 Children develop a range of learning and thinking skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating

4.3 Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another

4.4 Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies, and natural and processed materials

Learning Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

5.1 Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes

5.2 Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts

5.3 Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media

5.4 Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work

References

Woodward EL (2010) 'Creating the Ngan'gi Seasons Calendar: reflections on engaging Indigenous knowledge authorities in research', *Learning Communities*, 2:125–37.

Image acknowledgments

Peter Bergmeier (2014) *Yellow Water Billabong/Ngurrungurrudjba* [photograph], © Concilia Ltd. Reproduced with permission.

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[Spring wildflowers – Western Australia](#), Adwo/Shutterstock.com

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The Arts Centre (2025) [Nature paint brushes](#) [photograph], The Arts Centre website, Reproduced with permission.

Alison Lester (2006) [Ernie dances to the didgeridoo](#) [book cover], Lothian Children's Books, Hachette Australia. Reproduced with permission.

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