



# Society and culture 1: responsibilities and obligations



Number one in a series of eight lessons:

- **Society and culture 1: responsibilities and obligations**
- Society and culture 2: guest speaker – roles, responsibilities and obligations
- Society and culture 3: family roles of men and women in Aboriginal society
- Society and culture 4: what is an extended family?
- Society and culture 5: men’s roles, responsibilities and obligations in traditional and contemporary societies
- Society and culture 6: women’s roles, responsibilities and obligations in traditional and contemporary societies
- Society and culture 7: identifying personal responsibilities
- Society and culture 8: year 1 class visit

## CURRICULUM INFORMATION

### PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT

Early Childhood	Middle Childhood	Early Adolescence	Late Adolescence
✓	✓		

### MAJOR LEARNING AREAS

The Arts	English	H & PE	LOTE	Mathematics	Science	S & E	T & E
✓	✓					✓ ✓	

### VALUES

Pursuit of knowledge & commitment to achievement of potential	Self acceptance & respect of self	Respect & concern for others & their rights	Social & civic responsibility	Environmental responsibility
✓	✓	✓	✓	

## TOPIC INFORMATION

### PURPOSE

To provide opportunities for students to identify and explore roles, relationships and obligations in traditional Aboriginal communities, and to compare them with relationships in contemporary society.

### STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students:

- identify responsibilities and obligations in traditional Aboriginal communities and in our contemporary society;
- identify roles of men and women then and now;
- discuss families: their own, those in traditional Aboriginal communities, and those in our contemporary society;
- identify family roles, responsibilities and obligations; and
- demonstrate understanding of extended families and roles, responsibilities and obligations of extended family members.





## KEY BACKGROUND POINTS

This series of lessons examines roles, responsibilities, and obligations of men and women in traditional Aboriginal communities and in our contemporary society.

The Education Department of Western Australia's curriculum document, *Aboriginal studies, 1996*, Level 3 states:

*Responsibilities and obligations are important aspects of Aboriginal culture. Both exist in the social structure through the 'kinship system'.*

*Responsibility differs from obligation in that responsibility can be delegated to others who are in the same relationship category. For example:*

- *older siblings are responsible for looking after young siblings; and*
- *grandparents have responsibility for grandchildren – rearing and teaching and appropriate behaviour.*

*Any of these responsibilities can be delegated to relatives classified as siblings (cousins) and grandparents (cousins/sisters/brothers of grandparents).*

*Obligations, on the other hand, are expectations of the moral order. In accordance with rules of etiquette within the value system, obligations cannot be delegated.*

*In traditional Aboriginal society, leadership of each group varied according to the situation. Various people knew different parts of the law and could perform the rites or songs. Other people would know of renewal practices and rituals concerned with the maintenance of the environment and food resources. Elders exerted some control, but the group could also contribute to decisions.*

*Most aspects of daily life were governed by the kinship system. This gave order to the maintenance of social control and power to families to ensure that laws were observed and customs obeyed.*

*Kinship responsibilities and obligations encouraged people to conform to the norm, which in turn suppressed individual deviations. Importantly, the kinship system was the basis of social structure and gave Aboriginal people group cohesion and identity.*

*In contemporary Aboriginal society, the understanding of the importance of the kinship system continues to be recognised.*

*It is not easy for all Aboriginal people to still live by the kinship rules. In some areas, the rules have been forgotten and the social group's basic structure of the kinship no longer exists.*

*For teachers who are in areas where the kinship system does not operate, it would be advisable to concentrate on extended family groupings, which in itself is a part of the kinship system.*

And, the same document discusses roles as follows:

*In traditional Aboriginal societies the roles of men and women were clearly defined. Men made tools, weapons, implements and hunted for larger game. Women reared children, looked after the aged and collected plant foods and smaller game such as goannas, lizards and marsupials.*

*Women supplied most of the food that the group consumed. About 80% of the day's food supply was provided by women. As well as collecting food supplies, women cared for younger children and taught the children necessary ceremonial skills.*

*Children were taught to assume male/female work roles through everyday activities. Once boys were old enough, they were taught by the men who were responsible for teaching them how to manufacture weapons, tools, etc and to hunt game.*

*In today's society, Aboriginal men and women live and work in environments that are usually vastly different to traditional cultural environments. The expectations these environments place on them do not allow for definitive men's and women's roles in a traditional Aboriginal way.*

## CULTURAL & PROTOCOL CONSIDERATIONS

Plan your lessons, and where possible team-teach, with your school's AIEO, a member of the local Aboriginal community, or a member of the District Office's Aboriginal Education team, to ensure you have not only accurate information but also you respect/observe any relevant cultural practices.





## RESOURCES

Medium	Author, producer, developer etc	Title	Source
curriculum materials	Education Department of WA	<i>Aboriginal studies</i>	schools have these documents, also the Aboriginal Studies branch of DET WA
book	UWA Press – writers: Angus Wallam & Susan Kelly, 2004	<i>Corroboree</i>	booksellers and libraries
blackline masters	Elton publications	<i>About Aboriginal people – books 1 – 3</i>	educational booksellers
blackline masters	RIC publications	<i>Australian Aboriginal culture</i>	educational booksellers
book	Omnibus, 1993 – writer: Jeanie Adams	<i>Going for oysters</i>	libraries, bookshops

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

### TEACHING RESOURCES

- copy of *Going for oysters* (or another story that involves the traditional Aboriginal lifestyle and focuses on responsibilities and/or obligations of the people)
- teacher made chart: Responsibilities and obligations
- RIC and Elton blackline masters (optional)
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### LESSON STEPS

#### Preparation

- **Read** KEY BACKGROUND POINTS and CULTURAL AND PROTOCOL CONSIDERATIONS sections above.
- **Work** with your AIEO, other Aboriginal staff members, or the Aboriginal Education team at your District Education office to ensure your lesson planning is appropriate.
- **Read** *Going for oysters* and use chart-sized paper or card to list, in two columns, responsibilities and obligations of family members towards each other.
- **Check out** the RIC and Elton blackline masters and select relevant worksheets to complete at the end of the lesson (optional).

#### Implementation

##### Whole class

- **Introduce** the concepts of 'responsibilities' and 'obligations' through the story *Going for oysters*.
- **Write** the terms 'responsibilities' and 'obligations' on the board (as headings for two lists to be made later in the lesson) and discuss/explain their meanings (see KEY BACKGROUND POINTS section above).
- **Explain** that you will read *Going for oysters* which is a story that involves responsibilities and obligations of Aboriginal family members towards each other.
- **Ask** children to note any responsibilities and obligations they can identify as you read the story.
- **Read** *Going for oysters* to class, showing illustrations as you go.
- **Discuss** students' impressions of/feelings about the story, and ask them to explain what it was in the story that made them feel the way they describe.
- **Discuss** roles and responsibilities in students' own families and compare/contrast with those in the book.





### Working in pairs

- **Explain** that you want students to retell the story to a partner, and to discuss the responsibilities and obligations they wrote down.
- **Ask** students to **retell** orally, the story to each other, and to **compare and discuss** the responsibilities and obligations they noted.

### Whole class

- **Guide** a class retelling of the story by asking different students to contribute.
- **Write** main events, as they are told, on the board.
- **Revise** the meanings of 'responsibilities' and 'obligations'.
- **Brainstorm** first 'responsibilities' then 'obligations' in the story, listing responses under relative headings.
- **Compare** this list with teacher-made chart, *Responsibilities and obligations*, discuss any differences and add extra points to chart.
- **Discuss** differences in size and composition of families in the story and compare with their own families.
- **Discuss** responsibilities of family members towards each other.

If appropriate, ask class to complete a relevant worksheet from RIC or Elton publications listed in RESOURCES.

### ASSESSMENT

**Observe** student's participation in class discussions and working in pairs.

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