



## Significant Episode: Using Narrative to Help Solve Problems

**Kate Naughtin**  
Healesville Primary school  
Healesville Cluster

### *Finding 3.9: Narrative*

*Use narrative and discussion to allow students to feel personally connected to the mathematics.*

*My aim: to build on the relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students using their knowledge to provide an Indigenous perspective on maths programs.*

I have been involved in the *Make It Count* program for the past 3 years and this story illustrates my cultural awareness training and learning to use narrative and contexts to teach maths.

Last year I taught a Koorie boy in Grade 3 called John (not his real name). At the beginning of the year we studied a unit on identity where we discussed the heritage of all students. I asked John one-on-one about his knowledge of his Aboriginality and he explained that his mother's family was Aboriginal. I told him that being Aboriginal was something to be very proud about and if he wanted to share anything he knew with the class he was most welcome to.

When he first did so, many of the students in the class weren't sure what he meant by this, and so we looked at a timeline of Australian history and I explained to the class that John was from a long line of ancestors who had been in Australia for tens of thousands of years. The kids were in awe when they looked at the timeline. John shared some of the things that he knew about the ways that Aboriginal people had lived prior to colonisation and some of the things that he knew about his present day culture. He was so proud. This really set our class up for the year to hear about John's stories.

John would often contribute what he knew about Aboriginal people, and as a class we built on some of his stories. This was helpful to create contexts in maths, such as 'what would people have to consider if they were building a humpy or a boat?' His stories created a great narrative for problem solving and engaged all students.

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### Some questions to prompt discussion:

1. *This story has many elements to it including pride in culture. How can cultural identity be developed in the mathematics classroom and how can mathematical identity be developed through culture?*
2. *How important or significant might the experiences be for non-Indigenous students who were a part of this learning? What impact might they have on the students?*
3. *What other interesting or important aspects are in this Significant Episode?*