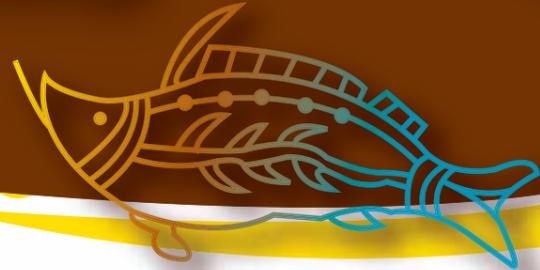


# Sea Country connections



## What is Sea Country

### What do we mean by country?

The word *country* for Indigenous peoples means place of origin – culturally or spiritually, and includes all living things, beliefs, values, creation spirits and cultural obligations connected to that area. To Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples country is not only a place of belonging, but also a way of believing.

Sea country doesn't just refer to a geographical area. It includes all living things, beliefs, values, creation stories, spirits and cultural obligations associated with it. The boundaries of different sea country areas are often clearly defined by features like river mouths or rock formations.



*Cultural connection to the sea is taught to each new generation.*

“ In the Dreamtime, the rainbow serpent Gubal, moved through the Palm Island group and surrounding areas, leaving a track as he went. When the sea levels rose, a giant stingray came and found a place to stay. This makes the boundaries between Manbarra, Nywaigi and Wulgurukaba. ”

Walter Palm Island, Manbarra Traditional Owner, from *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009*

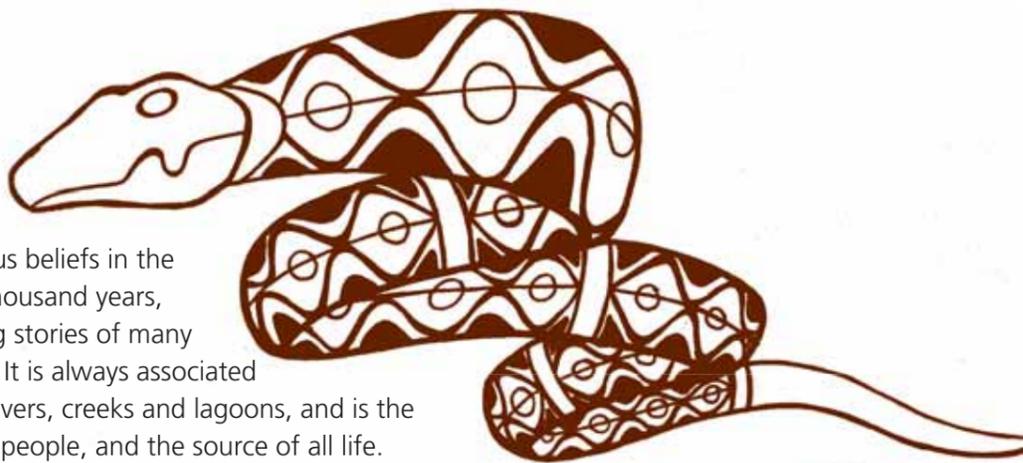
### Traditional Owners connection to sea country

Some of the Traditional Owners along the Great Barrier Reef coast have Dreaming stories from when their ancestors lived on the coastal plains near the edge of the continental shelf. Their myths and legends are expressed through dance and song and there are many creation stories for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park's islands and reefs. The deep cultural connection they have to the sea is taught to each new generation.

Hunting, fishing, collecting, and looking after culturally significant sites have always been an important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. These activities are deeply rooted in their traditions and customs. Continuing these traditions is of high cultural importance, and key to preserving the connection between the past, present and future. It establishes a strong sense of self identity, and most importantly, a connection to place. Sea country is also important to the subsistence lifestyles of Indigenous peoples.

### Rainbow serpent belief

The Aboriginal rainbow serpent belief is one of the oldest continuing religious beliefs in the world, dating back several thousand years, and features in the Dreaming stories of many mainland Aboriginal groups. It is always associated with watercourses, such as rivers, creeks and lagoons, and is the protector of the land and its people, and the source of all life.



*Illustration by Evan Ivy*

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# REEF Beat

Illustrations by Patricia Galvin and Shenoa Sultana



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