

The First Storytellers: Indigenous Literacy Day 2 September 2026

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As the legal profession marks Indigenous Literacy Day 2026 under the theme "Country Is Our Teacher," it is an opportune moment to reflect on how systemic issues intersect with daily legal practice.

Between 40% to 70% of First Nations adults have low literacy and in some First Nations communities (particularly remote communities), the rate of low literacy is as high as 90%.¹

Addressing First Nations literacy is not just a matter of cultural appreciation, rather it is also a critical element of ensuring access to justice and fulfilling broader professional and corporate responsibilities.

We know that the power of literacy is life changing. It leads to better outcomes in health, children's education and development, employer, justice and leads to an overall better quality of life and the opportunities that come with it.

Navigating the Australian legal system as a defendant or a party to proceedings or even as a supporter for a friend or loved ones, requires informed consent and comprehension. Due to low literacy, for many First Nations peoples living in remote or disadvantaged communities across Queensland, standard legal English and comprehension of such, is often a significant barrier.

True equality before the law requires more than just physical access to a courtroom; it requires linguistic and cognitive accessibility. When legal professionals fail to bridge this communication gap, systemic disadvantage is reinforced. In criminal law, family law, and child protection proceedings, this literacy gap can inadvertently compromise a client's ability to understand their rights, give proper instructions, or navigate court pathways.

This Indigenous Literacy Day, we challenge law practices and practitioners to consider how they can support increased literacy rates for our nation's first storytellers. Each year the Queensland Law Society is proud to support the [Indigenous Literacy Foundation](#), through internal staff led fundraisers and initiatives. In the 2024/2025 year, QLS raised approximately \$800 to help provide remote indigenous communities with culturally relevant books and learning resources.

Law practices can integrate literacy initiatives into their firm's Corporate Social Responsibility strategy by channelling resources and financial backing into literacy initiatives, such as those championed by the Indigenous Literacy Foundation. Firms also can host initiatives like the Great Book Swap or fundraisers to raising money to

¹ [Indigenous Literacy Day 2026 - Literacy for Life Foundation](#) accessed 21 August 2026.

support remote educational resources while fostering internal firm awareness of Indigenous cultures and language rights.

By acknowledging that low English literacy compounds systemic legal disadvantages, Queensland lawyers can better advocate for their clients to support long-term educational empowerment.