



50 words: From hello to kangaroo, new map of Indigenous languages of Australia

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Jack Buckskin had "no idea" what he was getting into when he signed up 14 years ago to learn his people's "sleeping" language.

Spoken for thousands of years by the Aboriginal people of Adelaide and the Adelaide Plains, nobody had used it in everyday life for nearly 150 years.

Now 50 words of Kurna have been included and voiced by Mr Buckskin on a new Indigenous language mapping project called 50words.online.



Jack Buckskin is driving a new project aiming to put 50 words of every Indigenous language on the map. *Credit: Roy Vandervegt*

Mr Buckskin, who once dabbled in stand up comedy, is one of five fluent speakers who is dedicating his life to revitalising the language.

The 33-year-old estimates he has taught Kurna (pronounced Garna) to thousands of people, including children at Northfield Primary School in Adelaide last Monday. These days he finds it galling when people dazzle him with their linguistic twists in Kurna. "I find it difficult that someone can throw me under a bus with a random conversation [in Kurna] because I have usually taught them," Mr Buckskin said.



Jack Buckskin teaching the local Indigenous language at Northfield Primary School in Adelaide. *Credit:Roy Vandervegt*

Launched a week ago, the 50words map aims to showcase the diversity of Indigenous languages, starting with 50 words (or fewer, if more words aren't available). There are 15 languages, including Kurna, and the hope is to include every Indigenous language.

The list starts with 'welcome', 'hello' and 'goodbye', and includes 'yes', 'no', 'kangaroo', 'cold weather', 'moon', 'star' and others. Audio is provided, and people can search the map by language and word.