

Exploring urban identities and histories was developed from papers presented at the 2009 AIATSIS National Indigenous Studies Conference, where presenters considered a range of questions facing Indigenous people living in urban and semi-urban / regional areas of Australia.

While many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have witnessed cities and towns grow up around them through the course of generations, many have migrated to urban areas. This book considers urban identity, the history of urbanisation, demographic mobility and diverse community experiences.

The urban Indigenous population in Australia is often projected as experiencing less authentic forms of Aboriginality, disassociated from country, having 'lost' culture. The identity chapters in this volume speak directly to the challenge of presenting the life-world of 'ordinary' Aboriginal people. In doing so, they challenge readers to think about Aboriginal identity in new ways, undermining the discourses that presume to determine what constitutes 'real' Aboriginality.

Critical to understanding urban Aboriginal identities is a consideration of Indigenous history, in particular its under-representation, exclusion and misrepresentation in historical texts. Although there is now an increasing focus on Indigenous history, this volume contributes a unique set of chapters that concentrate on the history of urban areas. By doing so, these contributions — from Australia, New Zealand and Canada — illustrate the richness, complexity and variety of urban historical experience.

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