

伝統文様、風呂敷 *Traditional Patterns and Furoshiki*

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This Senseis' Voices article is brought to you by Natalie Cornish sensei of Tasmania.

Natalie sensei incorporated recognition and study of Australia's First Nations people into her classes through learning about Japanese traditional patterns and *furoshiki*. In this article she kindly shares how she did it.

Recently St Brendan Shaw College students of Japanese had the opportunity to participate in the Nihongo Roadshow offered by The Japan Foundation, Sydney, which included not only fun Japanese *undokai* games, but also the opportunity to participate in an online *furoshiki* workshop.

The Japan Foundation, Sydney offered the online workshop which explored the history and usage of *furoshiki* up to present time, lucky symbols that can be found in Japanese designs and hands-on practice at using the *furoshiki* to wrap a lunch box, drink bottle and laptop. The students were amazed at how many different things could be wrapped with *furoshiki* and impressed with the possibility of an alternative to plastic bags and wrapping paper, both of which are often thrown away.

[Furoshiki introduction](#)

[How to make a furoshiki mask](#)

Students were also impressed at how *furoshiki*, once popular in Japan, had grown out of fashion with the introduction of plastic bags, but was now making a comeback. A reminder to us all to explore how our ancestors lived more sustainably with what nature offered them.

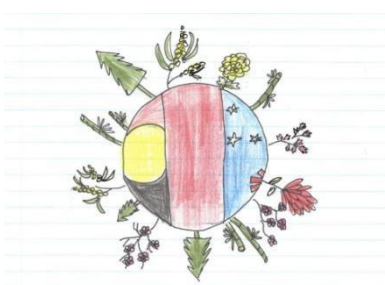


Building on the content of the *furoshiki* workshop, we used the Traditional Patterns / *Dentou monyou* slides created by The Japan Foundation, Sydney, to learn more about Japanese patterns, the meaning behind them and to start to look more deeply at what symbols around us represent.

[Traditional Japanese Patterns Slides JPF](#)

The slides offer a fantastic range of vocabulary learning opportunities including colours, shapes and symbols. Having already learnt Japanese numbers, the students easily picked up the vocabulary for shapes and had fun guessing the meaning behind symbols. When they read that an arrow symbolises a happy marriage, they thought that it represented cupid's arrow and were surprised to learn that an arrow is considered lucky as, 'Once the arrow is fired, it never returns and continues its journey'.

The second traditional patterns slide showed the usage of patterns in everyday life in Japan, enhancing the aesthetics of train stations, streets, gardens and accessories. What was fascinating for the students was to see the similarities in Indigenous Australia patterns. Triangle patterns in Japan represent a snake, which is a lucky charm and the snake drawn in the indigenous artwork presented had triangle patterns on its body.



Wave patterns symbolise peace in Japanese designs, and water holes as well often present in Indigenous art. Traditional designs from both cultures are inspired by nature and animals and present to us the inherent wisdom in observing and learning from nature.



After learning about Kikkoman using the symbol of a tortoise shell to symbolise longevity for the company, we talked about the kangaroo and the emu, two Australian animals, which can only move forward not backwards, being present on the Australian coat of arms. To encourage the students to reflect even more on symbols of Japan and Australia, the students were given a task to:



Task 1

Consider and make a list of what kinds of symbols would represent the seasons in Australia.
Consider and make a list of what kinds of symbols would represent good luck in Australia.

Task 2

Create a design for a *furoshiki* that represents both Australia and Japan. Consider patterns and colours that represent the seasons, nature and good luck for both countries. If you have a multicultural background you may like to include symbols that represent your multicultural heritage.

Task 3

Practice wrapping 3 different items with 3 different wrapping patterns. Take photos of them and include them in this assignment.

Furoshiki wrapping patterns



Many students asked if it was ok to use the Indigenous flag in their design even if they did not have an indigenous background, quickly recognising the significance of the sun as a central motif in both the Japanese and Aboriginal flag. A number of students used this as a starting point for their design, while others blended Indigenous colours into Japanese designs for some deeply thought out designs.

The students' designs have been enlarged, laminated and now featured on a display board in the Japanese room. What has been even more rewarding is that in the next presentation assignment, students took a lot of care to use backgrounds that included Japanese patterns in their slideshows. These have also been laminated and displayed in the room giving the students a sense of ownership and connection to Japanese and our language room.



As a language teacher, I have often wondered how to incorporate recognition and study of our First Nations people into our classes and through these workshops and slides, I was presented with a wonderful way to do that. Next year I will time this activity with NAIDOC week and make more space to explore the connections between art, design, nature and cultures.

A huge thank you to The Japan Foundation, Sydney for the wonderful resources made available to us, which help us find similarities and points of connection between cultures.

