The Welcome ceremony in the present has both old and new meanings. The invitation to visitors to enter and enjoy the Country is still there, but now it is offered to people who are already on the Country. So a Welcome now emphasises the importance of Country and Traditional Owners in this event or place, and in this way practises respect for land, people and custodianship. In the 21st century, this is also an act of healing and reconciliation. A Welcome is not always in person – for example, some DVDs start with a Welcome.

Giving a Welcome in the Language of the Land is often an important early goal in Language revival. To do this increases the power of the ceremony, as the language is intrinsically bound to the land. Some say that the actual sounds of the language emerge from the land itself, and in many traditions it is necessary to greet the land and its Ancestors in their Language in order to be permitted entry.

Many people write a Welcome for general use and then vary it for each specific occasion. Other kinds of formal speeches, such as the launch of a book or event, can use a basic Welcome to start with, and expand it with a sentence or two about the event of the day.

The word ‘welcome’ is not often found in historical collections. People commonly use the best-known greeting in their language – ‘Galangoor djali’ (Butchulla), ‘Ngatanwarr’ (Gunditjmara) etc.

The Welcome speeches we have collected share some common elements:

1. Self-introduction. The speaker is often known to most of the audience, so the self-introduction is actually a way of establishing how they are connected to the Land and the Ancestors.

2. What Country it is, and acknowledgement of Elders and Ancestors. If the speech is translated into English, the Country or important features of the Country are usually still named in Language.

3. Responsibilities of the visitors to the Land and its people. Sometimes this includes a specific statement of laws about caring for the Land and ‘the children of Bunjil’, and sometimes also an invitation to guests to signal their acceptance of these responsibilities, such as by taking a gum leaf brought by the officiating Elder.

4. Introduction to the event of the day.

5. Statement of Welcome and thanks to the visitors.
To get started on your own Welcome to Country in Language, you only need a few simple ideas in your language. Resources for this workshop might include:

- a Language worker, teacher or Elder
- books about your language
- a visitor from a nearby Language Centre or university department of Linguistics or Indigenous Studies.

In the group, decide what you want to say in your basic Welcome. Consider the outline over the page. Find or develop key phrases in the workshop such as:

- Hello, welcome or good morning/evening
- My name is …
- I am a … [name of your country or clan] woman/man
- This is [name of your country]
- OR We are on [name of your country] (you could add the PLACE (Locative) ending onto the Country name)

You may like to say more than that in English, or develop more Language in your Welcome as an advanced project. Once you have a basic Welcome, you can add more complexity to it over time, or adapt it to different situations.

A Gunditjmara acknowledgement of Kulin Country

Ngatanwarr wooka ngootooan ngathoongan. greet give you (all) we (all)

Ngathook mayapa-wangan ngootyoong wanyoo I make-understand good (to)

kulín alam meen, koorrookee, ngapoon ba ngarrakeetoong. person Ancestor mother’s mother mother’s father and family

Mayapa-wangan ngootyoong wanyoo make-understand good (to)

kulín meerreeng makatepa. person Country today

“We greet you all. I pay respect to the Kulin Ancestors: the grandmothers, grandfathers and families. Pay respect to the Kulin people and Country today.” - Welcome by Vicki Couzens