



# Introduction

Australia is alive with the long history of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, our cultures and our stories. Nowhere else in the world can you see and experience the oldest living cultures of humankind. There are two Indigenous cultural groupings in Australia: Aboriginal peoples on the mainland and most islands; and the Torres Strait Islanders, whose homelands are in the Torres Strait, between the northern tip of Queensland and Papua New Guinea. People are believed to have settled on the Torres Strait islands about 20,000 years ago.

Scientific research carried out in the past few decades has shown that Aboriginal people have been living on the mainland for more than 60,000 years. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of people living in Arnhem Land, in the Northern Territory, 65,000 years ago. As new evidence and more advanced dating technologies become available, archaeologists in the future may discover that this number goes back much further.

## Learning about Aboriginal life and culture

The impact of Aboriginal life can be found across the Australian continent and its islands, but it is often invisible until it is pointed out to you. In *Welcome to Country*, I hope to show how Indigenous people cared for this land and developed their knowledge, cultures and stories over thousands of years. Then you will begin to see the country around you differently.

Indigenous people are finding ways to reach out to all Australians to tell them about their knowledge, cultures and histories. They want school students to know that the Indigenous communities are strong, resilient, rich and diverse. They want young Australians to go out into the world with a respect for the First peoples and everything they have achieved.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have a burning desire for their young people to learn about their own rich cultures and achievements, so they can feel proud of them. Indigenous students should be able to learn about their cultures in every year at school. That way, they can take part fully in all their subjects and build their self-esteem.

## Understanding the present

Many Australians think that the only ‘real’ Aboriginal people are those who live in the deserts. This idea is based on two centuries of racist views that were wrong and should have no place in modern Australia. The official population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will reach one million in the next decade. Over the last century, Indigenous people, like many other Australians, have moved from the rural and remote areas and now the majority live in cities and towns. The rest mainly live in small towns and Aboriginal settlements and communities scattered across the country.

Even in the largest cities, such as Sydney and Melbourne, many Aboriginal people have kept many of their traditional customs and, in some cases, have gained the right to own and manage their land and waters. Also, they have found ways to keep their languages and cultures alive and to remember their history.

## Hope for the future

My generation of Aboriginal people want young Australians to be taught more about our history and culture than we were. I have met very few Australians in my generation, or even among younger people, who learnt anything in school about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Many have told me that if they were taught anything at all about our peoples, it was inaccurate and often racist.

In 2006, I wrote the Prologue for *First Australians*,<sup>1</sup> the book that accompanied the award-winning television series on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history produced, written and directed by Rachel Perkins. I explained in the Prologue how learning Australian history in school in Queensland, more than fifty years ago, was painful and boring:

The occasional Aboriginal characters represented bore no resemblance to the people I knew and had grown up with. Gradually, there was a dawning realisation that I was seen by my teacher and classmates as one of ‘those’ Aborigines. History was for me a terrible burden, because it was in this class that I learnt that people like me were hated; and that the only stories that were told about us provided a steady stock of evidence about our supposedly shockingly violent tendencies, savagery, and most importantly – our innate tendency to steal and pilfer.

When Rachel Perkins and I looked at how Australian history was taught in the past, we found that most textbooks made it seem that our people disappeared or died out completely in the early nineteenth century. If the writers of those books did say that there were a few survivors, they wrote about those Indigenous people in ways that were disrespectful and dehumanising. They did not acknowledge our ancient and important history. Gradually, the attitude started to change as new historians began to write our history. They understood that it was important to record the lives of ordinary, as well as extraordinary, people.

Rachel Perkins is one of Australia’s most well-informed and creative television and film producers; she is also an award-winning director and writer. She was surprised that, while the school and university textbooks generally didn’t include anything about the Indigenous peoples’ cultures and knowledge, there are mountains of historical sources about our stories. That is, history books, journals and research documents, for example.

When SBS first came to ask me if I were interested in doing a major documentary series on Indigenous history I enthusiastically agreed although I had no idea what it would be. In making *First Australians* it has been common for many to ask why hasn’t this story been told? The truth is these stories have been told, at least in print, by the historians we feature in our series. There is more being written all the time and there is a substantial body of work to be found in good libraries if you have the interest.<sup>2</sup>

## Learning resources

There are thousands of resources that can help you understand the great and positive impact the First peoples have had on this country. For information about some of these, go to the Resources section at the back of the book.

1 SBS, Blackfella Films, Screen Australia, *First Australians*; retrieved 18 February 2019; [sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/](https://sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/)

2 SBS, *First Australians*, Producer’s Statement; retrieved 18 February 2019; [sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/about](https://sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/about)

## Sharing our knowledge and stories

While it is impossible to cover the wealth of Indigenous knowledge in one book, I want to show you that we have thousands of years of history, customs and stories that we are proud of and we are pleased to share with other Australians.

I encourage you and your students to use the book as a way to begin to explore the world of Indigenous Australians, to learn about our important and fascinating past, and our many contributions to modern Australian life. Your own sense of pride for the Indigenous cultures that have made this country will grow, and you will be well-informed ambassadors for the long history of Australia, most of which was Aboriginal.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcia Langton". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marcia" and the last name "Langton" written in a single continuous line.

# 1

# Prehistory

## **This resource:**

- is designed to introduce a variety of topics as an introductory summary
- aims to develop students' knowledge and understanding of the migration to Australia of Indigenous peoples and the scientific and documentary evidence of their pre-colonial civilisations.

## Content overview

This chapter introduces several main ideas to be explored further in later chapters. It introduces habitation of the Australian continent by Indigenous people in the millennia before colonial arrivals and establishes key ideas such as European visitation, Aboriginal art, archaeological evidence of ancient Aboriginal life, particularly its documentation in rock art and carvings, and Aboriginal Australians' manipulation, care and conservation of the country and its environment. The examples aim to introduce readers to both past and present contexts for Indigenous people.

As the Prehistory chapter is a broad survey of important features of Indigenous life in Australia, the material can be used to meet a number of the organising ideas in the cross-curriculum priority in an introductory manner, with further depth possible in later chapters.

## Teacher introduction

In recent times, there has been a dramatic increase in the information available about life in Australia before the arrival of Europeans. With each new archaeological discovery, the date for the earliest human habitation of the Australian continent is pushed further back. In the absence of knowledge, and given the lack of interest formerly shown towards pre-European civilisation in this country, it was long assumed and taught in schools that Indigenous people were nomadic and lived completely at the mercy of nature.

We now know, through a growing body of evidence, that this assumption could not be more wrong. Research, archaeology, anthropology, carbon-dating, and the meticulous combing of the diaries of the first Europeans to arrive in Australia have shown that Indigenous people across the country had sophisticated cosmologies, a thorough understanding of their environment at the most minute level, and processes by which they farmed animals, grew crops and shaped the environment. The way they did these things may not have been immediately apparent to most

Europeans, but some saw these practices at work and commented on them in their journals. The best way to uncover a new understanding of how Indigenous people actually lived in this country is to read *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe.

A second way to increase understanding about pre-European life in Australia is through Indigenous people's own narratives. This primary source material recounts knowledge of events from a time far earlier than 1788, including songs and narratives that refer to land and islands that have been below sea level since the last Ice Age ended. These songs and their associated designs and dances are encyclopedias of knowledge that can inform all of us about thousands of years of living on this continent.

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

Ol.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
Ol.3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.
Ol.5	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of life are uniquely expressed through ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: History, Geography, Visual Arts

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

#### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people inhabited Australia from at least 65,000 years ago
- that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to practise their traditions today
- that Australia has hundreds of thousands of rock art and carving sites throughout the country
- that the most up-to-date information from scientists shows that the oldest skeletal remains discovered in Australia are Aboriginal, and that there was not an earlier group of people here.

The students will **understand**:

- how scientific evidence is being used to discover more about ancient Aboriginal people
- that this evidence includes human remains, artefacts, middens, rock art and carvings
- that we are continually learning from newly-discovered sources about pre-colonial Aboriginal civilisation and their use and management of their environment
- that examining artworks from pre-colonial times reveals ever more detailed knowledge about how Aboriginal people lived.

The students will **be able to**:

- discuss how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people managed the land through changes in climate and geography, including an ice age and significant sea-level changes
- use evidence to explain some of the characteristics of pre-colonial Aboriginal civilisation
- generate a range of questions that are informed by their study of this topic.

## Activity summary

### Activity 1: The spread of people to Australia

In pairs or small groups, students read allocated parts of the web page '[The spread of people to Australia](#)'. They prepare one PowerPoint slide with the main information from the section/s they were allocated, and include a relevant picture. They put together the individual slides in a logical order and present to the class, each group speaking to their own slide to educate the class about what they learned. Alternatively, these pieces of information can also be written on small cards that can then be arranged on a display board, in a manner designed to reinforce the learning and present the learning to others.

### Activity 2: See, Think, Wonder

Read the [online version](#) of the extract from Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu*, and make a list of questions that arise while reading. Processes like the 'See, Think, Wonder' sequence (where students ask themselves, 'What did you see?' 'What did you think?' and finally, 'What are you now wondering about?') can be applied to the reading. Students can debate the topics that arise.

### Activity 3: Dating Australia's past

*Friday essay: when did Australia's human history begin?* This is an article in *The Conversation* which discusses the gradual increase in our knowledge about how and when Australia became populated. Discuss the role or participation of Indigenous Australians as described in this article and form hypotheses about the effects of opposite scenarios.

## Links to learning areas

### History

#### Year 7

Students build on and consolidate their understanding of historical inquiry from previous years in depth, using a range of sources for the study of the ancient past (ACDSEH001)

- identifying different approaches to historical investigation such as the use of excavation and stratigraphy, oral history and use of data derived from radiocarbon dating

The nature of sources for ancient Australia and what they reveal about Australia's past in the ancient period, such as the use of resources (ACDSEH031)

- investigating the discovery of Mungo Woman in 1969 and the use of radiocarbon dating to draw conclusions about the longevity of human occupation at Lake Mungo
- generating a range of questions to investigate a source (for example, a shell midden in ancient Australia – where it was found, how long it was used for, what it reveals about technology and the use of environmental resources)

The importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH148)

- investigating world heritage criteria for the listing of significant ancient sites, using an example of an ancient site

## Year 9

The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH020)

- explaining the effects of contact (for example, the massacres of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; their killing of sheep; the spread of European diseases) and categorising these effects as either intended or unintended
- investigating the forcible removal of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century (leading to the Stolen Generations), such as the motivations for the removal of children, the practices and laws that were in place, and experiences of separation.

## Geography

### Year 7

Economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and peoples of the Asia region (ACHGK041)

- exploring the multilayered meanings (material, cultural and spiritual wellbeing) associated with rivers, waterways, waterholes, seas, lakes, soaks and springs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Factors that influence the decisions people make about where to live and their perceptions of the liveability of places (ACHGK043)

- discussing that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples choose to live on their Country/Place or might prefer to if they had the choice

### Year 8

Different types of landscapes and their distinctive landform features (ACHGK048)

- exploring the names, meanings and significance of landform features from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspective

Spiritual, aesthetic and cultural value of landscapes and landforms for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHGK049)

- discussing the representation of landscapes in literature, song/music, film and art
- exploring the multilayered meanings (material, cultural and spiritual wellbeing) associated with landscapes and landforms by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- investigating Aboriginal Dreaming stories and Legends of the Torres Strait concerning the formation, meaning and interconnection of landforms
- discussing the significance of landforms for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

### Year 10

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' approaches to custodial responsibility and environmental management in different regions of Australia (ACHGK072)

- researching the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in environmental management
- explaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander models of sustainability that contribute to broader conservation practices

## Visual Arts

### Year 7 and 8

- Considering viewpoints – cultures: For example – How do artists from different cultures represent the concepts of Place/Country?
- Considering viewpoints – materials and technologies: What is the artwork made of? How does the choice of material enhance the audience's understanding of the artist's intention? What made you want to touch this sculpture?
- applying ethical understandings to innovation and invention of theme, concept or subject matter when making their collection of visual artworks for display, and consider exhibitions that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks

### Year 9 and 10

Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAVAM125)

- exploring and reflecting on the connections between their own artworks and artworks from different contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks, for example, maintaining a reflective journal of their developing artwork

## RESOURCES

### National

#### **Dark Emu online**

Online version of an excerpt from Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu*

[www.foreground.com.au/environment/decolonising-agriculture-bruce-pascoes-dark-emu/](http://www.foreground.com.au/environment/decolonising-agriculture-bruce-pascoes-dark-emu/)

#### **When did Australia's human history begin?**

*Friday essay: When did Australia's human history begin?* This is an article in *The Conversation* which discusses the gradual increase in our knowledge about how and when Australia became populated.

<https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-when-did-australias-human-history-begin-87251>

#### **Sharing Stories Foundation**

*Sharing Stories Foundation – 'Culture' and 'Country'*

This is a comprehensive resource which includes teachers' guides and information, films and videos covering a wide range of content descriptions.

<https://sharingstoriesfoundation.org/our-stories/culture/>

#### **The spread of people to Australia**

*The spread of people to Australia.* Detailed description of the various migration theories of people to Australia and examples of evidence of early Australians and their lives

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/science/human-evolution/the-spread-of-people-to-australia/>

#### **Geography Teachers' Association website**

The Geography Teachers' Association's website of support materials (Year 7 and Year 8) is a detailed resource that covers the full F–10 curriculum and provides resources and illustrations of practice regarding landforms and their cultural value.

[www.geogspace.edu.au](http://www.geogspace.edu.au)



## ABC education films

### ***Bardi Jawi Rangers: Caring for country* [3'01"]**

A three-minute ABC film that gives an example of Indigenous people caring for country in the present

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/526699/>

### ***Out and About with the Nyul Nyul Rangers* [3'05"]**

These rangers speak about their ongoing cultural and spiritual connection with the land and water that they help to protect

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/526721/>

### ***Indigenous Perspective on Sustainability* [3'29"]**

An explanation of how traditional knowledge of the land and cultural significance guide Aboriginal environmental sustainability

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/525907/>

### ***Fire's Role in the Australian Environment* [4'11"]**

Explanation of the pattern of burning established by Aboriginal peoples prior to colonisation

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/525643/>

## UNESCO – Indigenous knowledge and sustainability

*Indigenous knowledge and sustainability.* A comprehensive website about 'traditional ecological knowledge or indigenous or local knowledge which encompasses the sophisticated arrays of information, understandings and interpretations that guide human societies around the globe in their innumerable interactions with the natural milieu'. This includes material about Australia's Indigenous people and other indigenous societies around the world.

[http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme\\_c/mod11.html](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_c/mod11.html)

## Arts: LIVE

*Visual storytelling.* A comprehensive website that includes lesson plans, teacher notes and a curriculum map to the Australian Curriculum

<https://create.artslive.com/explore/story-starters/visual-storytelling?>

## Inside art: Indigenous

*Inside art: Indigenous.* A collection of six short videos by artist Michael Lawrence featuring interviews with artists and others involved in the art world

<https://vimeo.com/album/2653677>

## National Gallery of Australia

Both these resources, and many others on the site, explain the context of the works and the artists.

Lorna Brown Napanangka

*Grandfather's country at Warren Creek*

<https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=151602&PICTAUS=TRUE&TLF=TRUE>

Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri

*Sunrise chasing away the night*

<https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=5953&PICTAUS=TRUE&TLF=TRUE>

## Migration Heritage

This is a large document about migration to Australia.

[www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/cms/wp-content/uploads/teachers-resources/factsheets/MHC-ObjectsTimeline.pdf](http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/cms/wp-content/uploads/teachers-resources/factsheets/MHC-ObjectsTimeline.pdf)

## **AIATSIS Pathways**

*AIATSIS Pathways* is a searchable database that contains the terms used to describe the items in the AIATSIS Collections. This includes a thesaurus for subjects relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, language groups and people, and place names.

[www1.aiatsis.gov.au/index.asp](http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/index.asp)

## **New South Wales**

### **Through our eyes: Series 1**

Land management practices and social, spiritual and cultural knowledge of the Ngemba, Kamilaroi and Euahlayi Aboriginal language groups in north-western New South Wales

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PK0tL4W55M&list=PL5Oe\\_wGmcw4v-oggEKWfOTlCpIsHoJsRV&index=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PK0tL4W55M&list=PL5Oe_wGmcw4v-oggEKWfOTlCpIsHoJsRV&index=1)

## **Western Australia**

### **ArtsEdge**

Western Australian Government website *ArtsEdge*. A hub that includes many links to relevant Visual Arts websites about Aboriginal art

[www.artsedge.dca.wa.gov.au/resources/Pages/Visual-Arts.aspx](http://www.artsedge.dca.wa.gov.au/resources/Pages/Visual-Arts.aspx)

## **Queensland**

### **Queensland Art Gallery**

Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art. Collection of artworks by Indigenous Australians with information for each

<https://learning.qagoma.qld.gov.au/?s=indigenous+art>

# 2

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and post-colonial history

### This resource:

- summarises the history of contact between colonial Australia and Indigenous peoples across the continent
- outlines the ways in which frontier violence resulted in significant loss of Indigenous people and their cultures
- explains how assimilationist policies were introduced
- describes the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples maintain strong connections with both their country and their ancestors
- introduces the LGBTQI Indigenous people and their place within society
- presents an example of how the integrated aspects of culture – in this case, song, family, sunset, and a moral lesson – are fundamental to Indigenous people.

### Content overview

This chapter details the rich diversity of Indigenous peoples who inhabit the Australian continent, their unique cultures and how these are manifest in Australia today. 'Culture' is the word that represents all the ways of living that are built up by groups of people and transmitted from one generation to another. One of the most fundamental features of culture is the powerful link that Aboriginal people have with their ancestors and ancestral beings who both created the world and continue to give evidence of their presence within it today. However, it is important to recognise also that Indigenous cultures, like all cultures, are forever changing as they adapt to the changing world around them.

Also summarised in this chapter is the history of contact between colonial and Indigenous Australia, and many of the practices that shaped this process. Frontier violence is discussed, as this was the hallmark of contact in most of Australia and underpinned the events that followed in every state and territory. This is followed by accounts of missions, rationing, introduced diseases, forced slavery and wage theft. It then details the movement from these past practices into the present, where Indigenous people live in cities, rural and regional towns, and Aboriginal communities and outstation environments, and how Indigenous people in all these areas are working to revitalise, re-establish or reconstruct, from historical sources, their cultural practices and languages. Finally, it examines Indigenous people and modernity, the maintenance of traditions and spiritual beliefs, the growing inclusion of Indigenous LGBTQI people and, lastly, how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have much to teach us.

# Teacher introduction

Australia's Indigenous cultures are the oldest continuing cultures anywhere in the world. Until you sit somewhere like a shell midden and contemplate the layers and layers of human culture that are literally beneath you, it is hard to grasp just how old these cultures and cultural practices are. Even then, it remains conceptually difficult for non-Indigenous people, whose knowledge of their own family is generally limited to just a few generations. There are many ways in which Aboriginal people commune with and respect the ancestral beings that continue to hold agency and power in the present – in particular, the ability to protect and provide. This significance of this becomes clearer when one considers that many of them are living on the very land and communing with the very same environment as their direct forebears of many millennia ago.

Something for teachers and students alike to grapple with is the sheer number of ancestors that each Indigenous person has – all of whom remain in the land (both physically and metaphorically), binding together the clan throughout the centuries. Four generations back, each person will have sixteen ancestors. Ten generations back, there are 1024 ancestors, and one hundred generations back, the number of ancestors is so large that it is beyond our ability to conceptualise. The number has 30 zeros and is called a nonillion. Of course, this last is a theoretical concepts as nowhere have there ever been this many people on Earth, so in family trees everywhere there is a significant amount of recursiveness. Nonetheless, it is true to say that we each have millions of ancestors.

For the vast majority of Australians, their millions of ancestors are located elsewhere – they don't lie in the earth beneath their feet here in Australia. For Indigenous Australians, the situation is very different. They live on the same land, repeating and reshaping the same songs and dances, passing on the same cultural knowledge as the millions of ancestors who *do* lie in the earth beneath their feet. So, when non-Indigenous people hear how Indigenous Australians are connected to their land and their ancestors, it is worth trying to imagine just what that might mean – a visceral connection to the very same earth as *every ancestor they ever had* – and how they are charged with maintaining an unbroken line of people and culture, almost since the dawn of humanity itself.

However, like all cultures, Indigenous cultures are neither static nor 'stuck in the past,' mindlessly repeating unchanging practices. Adaptation and innovation are part of every society, and Indigenous cultures in Australia have shown great resilience in being able to absorb modern technologies into the process of sharing knowledge and culture. For example, a distinctive use of emojis to represent skin names and kinship relationships has arisen; scattered throughout texts and Facebook posts, often written in Indigenous languages, will be emojis and cultural references that are completely unintelligible to those outside that particular culture. Indigenous musicians are sharing their music on Spotify; sending their videos of dances, didjeridu lessons and ceremonies all around the world via YouTube; and, in particular, using Facebook to communicate – often in their own languages.

Artistic collaborations with other cultures are commonplace, such as the *Crossing Roper Bar* performances in which the Australian Art Orchestra combined with musicians from Roper River to produce new works combining both traditional musical elements and contemporary sounds. The Ochre Contemporary Dance Company in Perth has similarly collaborated with a dance company from India to produce a work that includes traditional elements from both cultures with a contemporary theme of climate change. One example of a Facebook page that uses both English and the local language, Yolŋu Matha, is the [Yolŋu Radio](#) page.

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

Ol.1	Australia has two distinct Indigenous groups: Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and within those groups there is significant diversity.
Ol.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
Ol.4	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies have many Language Groups.
Ol.7	The broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies encompass a diversity of nations across Australia.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: Geography, Music, Visual Arts

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

#### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that there is a diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia who have their own unique culture, customs and languages
- that culture is embedded in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly through song and dance
- that songs, whether in a traditional style or a modern rock style, specifically share important elements of culture at a deep level.

The students will **understand**:

- that the ancestral beings who gave birth to and shaped the land remain present in the natural landscape today
- that people invoke their ancestors through cultural activities such as song, dance and art, as well as through their practice of law and ceremony
- that concepts that are embedded in Indigenous song, such as in 'Djäpana' (see below), are more easily expressed in the language of the culture.

The students will **be able to**:

- explain that songs such as 'Djäpana' always have stories and meanings embedded in them that are only apparent to members of the particular Indigenous group, or those who have learnt about such songs
- that there are many layers of meaning in Indigenous songs and narratives; while the lyrics on the surface may recount a simple (reduced) version of a story, initiated and experienced Indigenous people will read the deep levels of meaning underneath
- discuss the similarities and differences between the ways in which Indigenous cultures express emotions and those in which the students' own culture expresses emotion.

These activities, as well as those referred to in the resource section below, can be embedded in a variety of learning areas including: the study of design as a communication tool in Visual Arts; the sharing of knowledge and language through both traditional and popular song in Music; the characteristics of societies in History; the use of communication methods in English; the interrelatedness of aspects of the environment in Science; and the exploration of multilayered meanings of natural features in Geography. What follows is an example of the song ‘Djāpana’ from the band Yothu Yindi, which could be used to explore Aboriginal languages and cultures in any or all of these curriculum areas.

*Before undertaking the activities below, use this background information, together with the resources below, to develop a framework of who the Yolŋu are and where they are from.*

## Activity summary

### Activity 1a: Learn about the Yolŋu (background information)

The information presented here is for the teacher, who can then share this with the class through activities and the online resources below.

#### Who are the Yolŋu?

[The Yolŋu](#) are one of the largest groups of Indigenous Australians, who mostly live in north-east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. This area is home to approximately 7000 Yolŋu people, who are born into some 60 *mala* (or groups), which are also often called clans. The languages spoken by the Yolŋu people are collectively called [Yolŋu Matha](#), which means ‘people’s tongue’ in English, with each clan speaking its own specific dialect. The Yolŋu dialect most commonly heard in contemporary popular songs belongs to the Gumatj clan, which was the clan of one of the most prolific Yolŋu musicians, the late Dr Mandawuy Yunupinju AC.

The Yolŋu homelands cover more than 40,000 square kilometres in north-east Arnhem Land. The Gove Peninsula is situated 650 kilometres east of Darwin in the very north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land, where the Gulf of Carpentaria meets the Arafura Sea. The landscape there is typical of the Top End: red earth, palm trees, stringybark forests and spear-grass.

#### What are their beliefs?

[The Yolŋu clans believe](#) that they were established by their original ancestors, who named, shaped and populated their homelands long ago. These ancestral beings, who are known as the Wanjarr, travelled across the landscape creating features such as rivers, rocks, sand-hills, trees and islands, and imbuing the lands and waters with their eternal presence. Sometimes, they appeared as humans, while at other times, they assumed the forms of other species such as shark and saltwater crocodile. Along with each clan’s homelands, the Wanjarr left their Yolŋu descendants an extensive repertoire of ceremonial *yäku* (names), *manikay* (songs), *bungul* (dances) and *miny’tji* (designs). To this day, these provide a framework for Yolŋu law and knowledge of how best to live in north-east Arnhem Land. All Yolŋu clans possess their own individual repertoires of *manikay* (songs) that have been handed down from the original ancestors and provide knowledge of how best to live in their homelands. Song and language are, therefore, two of the most important aspects of Yolŋu culture.

#### The band Yothu Yindi

The band [Yothu Yindi](#) was founded at Yirrkala, on the Gove Peninsula in Arnhem Land, by Mandawuy Yunupinju, Witiyana Marika and Milakaynu Mununggurr in 1986. They produced six albums, comprising more than 90 songs that draw on the hereditary *manikay* (song) and *bungul* (dance) traditions of the members’ clans. Their original songs often incorporate the Yolŋu instruments *bilma* (paired sticks) and *yidaki* (didjeridu), as well as subjects, lyrics, rhythms and melodies drawn from the *manikay* tradition.

Lead singer and Gumatj Elder Mandawuy resolutely used his own language, Gumatj, and other Yolŋu languages in his songs for several reasons:

- 1 Only the vocabulary, structure and meaning of these languages can truly communicate the cultural meaning of the texts – translations, by their very nature, can only approximate meaning.
- 2 Mandawuy was the originator of the ‘Two-Way Education’ philosophy in which children are educated most effectively in their mother-tongue first and then in English. His songs are an example of the importance of maintaining Australian languages as a primary method of communication among their speakers.
- 3 After many generations of deliberate attempts to eradicate Australian languages by the state and its agencies, as well as engendering fear and shame in people who spoke them, the use of these languages in hugely popular and successful songs is a strong message to Aboriginal children to both feel proud of their languages and continue to use them. (This perspective is similar to that of Chapter 3 of the Australian Human Rights Commission’s *Social Justice Report 2009*<sup>1</sup>, which reports that the use of Australian Indigenous languages can promote resilience, improve health and cognitive functioning, increase employment options, and provide intrinsic value.)

### Activity 1b: Learn about the Yolŋu (online resources)

The Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation, located in the mining town of Nhulunbuy in north-east Arnhem Land (NT), has a [website](#) that explains many aspects of Yolŋu culture, in particular, the connection between the Yolŋu, their ancestors (the Waŋarr) and their land/country.

- 1 a Students are allocated a section of the ‘Yolŋu culture’ in pairs. Together, they read and discuss their topic and research it further if necessary to help their understanding. The page could be divided up as follows:
  - Dhuwa and Yirritja moieties
  - The sixteen Yolŋu clans, and which ones are Dhuwa and which are Yirritja
  - What it means to say that the ancestors ‘bestowed’ the land
  - The Waŋarr (Wangarr) beings
  - What the Waŋarr gave to their clans
  - What *djalkiri* is, and how it gives meaning and identity
- b As an extension task, after reading all the information on the page, students try to describe the connection between the Yolŋu, the Waŋarr and the land.
- 2 After collecting the information, students teach each other about the aspect they learnt, through discussion, images, mind maps or whatever helps them convey their message.

### Activity 2: What is Djäpana (Sunset Dreaming)?

The song ‘Djäpana (Sunset Dreaming)’

The first song by Yothu Yindi, ‘[Djäpana \(Sunset Dreaming\)](#)’, was written by the band’s leader, Mandawuy Yunupingu, in 1983, during the time in which he worked as Assistant Principal at Shepherdson College at Galiwin’ku on Elcho Island (NT). Even in this first song, Mandawuy was already using the features that would become the hallmarks of his later work – bilingualism and biculturalism.

- 1 The students will listen to the song and [watch the music video](#) before learning about it, to give them a context for what follows.

*Djäpana* is the red-gold colour of the sunset. It is a subject of the Gumatj *manikay* (song) series that describes one of the clan’s most important foundational narratives. Here is a version of the story that can be read to students, drawing on what they learned about the Yolŋu above:

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1 [www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/chapter-3-introduction-social-justice-report-2009](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/chapter-3-introduction-social-justice-report-2009)



The Yolŋu have many coastlines in north-east Arnhem Land and, over the centuries, they have played host to seafaring visitors from islands in South-East Asia. Sometimes these visitors were marauders, whom the Yolŋu called 'Bayini', and came with bad intentions ...

One day, some marauders came to the Gumatj homeland of Bawaka and captured and kidnapped a woman named Djotarra. They imprisoned her in the hull of their boat and sailed off into a sunset that had strong and vibrant red, gold and coral colours in the sky.

The grieving Yolŋu watched the kidnappers' boat disappearing into the sunset, but then they saw disaster strike the boat. Before their eyes, the boat upended and sank, and all on board drowned, including Djotarra.

The upturned boat became the island of Binhanhaŋay and is there today. The island, and any sunset with vibrant red, gold and coral colours, remain as a reminder to Yolŋu, even today, of grief and loss.

The composer himself, Mandawuy, says about the song 'Djäpana':

I was living there at Galiwin'ku on my own and I was really missing my family at Yirrkala. When *djäpana* is sung in our *manikay* [traditional song], it's an expression of sadness for the departed or whoever you're thinking about. That time of day, when the sun begins to set, filling the clouds and the horizon with a yellow glow, makes you think about the past, the future and the present all in one. I picked *djäpana* as a subject for this song because we see the spectacle of *rräma* (coral-hued sunset clouds) almost every day of our lives. In a true Yolŋu sense, it gave me a way of expressing just how much I missed my family at that time.<sup>2</sup>

- 2 The students analyse the music and lyrics of the song 'Djäpana' to further develop their understanding of its meaning and importance. The translation of the four Gumatj language words is as follows:

*djäpana* – red, gold, coral sunset colours  
*rramani* – coral-coloured clouds at sunset

*warwu* – sorrow, mourning  
*galanŋarri* – coral-coloured sunset

In later verses, the subject matter of the song moves from the traditional story of sorrowing at sunset to questioning the Australian people about their engagements with Aboriginal people, to a warning to Mandawuy's own people not to be fooled by the damaging ways of the *Balanda* (the Yolŋu word for people.) The song concludes with a coda that exhorts people to 'live it up' and remember their 'sunset dreaming' beliefs.

- 3 Students discuss the importance of the use of the Gumatj language in the song. Some questions could be: 'Is it more effective for Mandawuy to sing about these particular concepts in English or Gumatj? Which language is best for conveying the meaning and the emotions? What could be some positive effects on Yolŋu people, especially young people, by hearing their language used in a hit song?'

### Activity 3: Perform 'Djäpana (Sunset Dreaming)'

Students identify the chord progression throughout most of the song as Bm-A-G and then work out how to perform this in a variety of ways using instruments, iPads or other technology as relevant to the class.

Students can play and/or sing along with the recording using the chord pattern. The Gumatj text of the chorus (just four words) can be learnt by listening to the song. Students can then also improvise or compose new melodic material based on the synthesiser part in the instrumental sections of the song.

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<sup>2</sup> Corn, 2009. *Reflections and Voices*, p. 38



## Activity 4: Create an artwork inspired by 'Djäpana (Sunset Dreaming)'

Students locate artworks that represent the red-gold colours of sunset from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. These can be downloaded to computers and then edited in paint and graphics programs, and students add their own artistic ideas to the artworks to include a representation of *warwu* (or sorrow). They can also create an artwork from scratch, using the red-gold-coral colours of the sunset, that is inspired by the ideas in the song. They then present these to the class, drawing on what they have learnt from the story about Djotarra, and how this represents feelings of sorrow or yearning.

## Activity 5: 'Don't be fooled by the Balanda way'

Lead a class discussion about the line in the song, 'Don't be fooled by the *Balanda* way'. First, explain to the students that the Yolŋu adopted the term *Balanda* in the centuries before British colonisation from visiting fishermen from the Indonesian port of Macassar (today known as Ujung Pandang). *Balanda* is the Yolŋu version of the Macassans' word for the Dutch, *Hollander*, and generically means a fair-haired or white person. Ask the students to identify what aspects of *Balanda* society could be said to be 'fooling' the Yolŋu; in other words, attracting them away from their own cultural practices by promising something better, but ultimately causing 'sorrow and woe'. Students can write their answers up or present them using PowerPoint.

## Links to learning areas

### Geography

#### Year 7

Economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and peoples of the Asia region (ACHGK041)

- exploring the multilayered meanings (material, cultural and spiritual wellbeing) associated with rivers, waterways, waterholes, seas, lakes, soaks and springs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Factors that influence the decisions people make about where to live and their perceptions of the liveability of places (ACHGK043)

- discussing that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples choose to live on their Country/Place or might prefer to if they had the choice

#### Year 8

Different types of landscapes and their distinctive landform features (ACHGK048)

- exploring the names, meanings and significance of landform features from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspective

Spiritual, aesthetic and cultural value of landscapes and landforms for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHGK049)

- investigating Aboriginal Dreaming stories and Legends of the Torres Strait concerning the formation, meaning and interconnection of landforms
- discussing the significance of landforms for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

## Visual Arts

### Years 7 and 8

Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork (ACAVAM118)

- observing how artists select and apply different visual arts techniques to represent themes, concepts and ideas and considering how they could use these in their own art making

Identify and connect specific features and purposes of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their art-making, starting with Australian artworks including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAVAR124)

- comparing and contrasting different representations and interpretations of Country/Place from a range of viewpoints and contexts, for example, researching and comparing the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and colonists in artworks from and about 1788

### Years 9 and 10

Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAVAM125)

- exploring and reflecting on the connections between their own artworks and artworks from different contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks, for example, maintaining a reflective journal of their developing artwork

Analyse a range of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their visual art-making, starting with Australian artworks, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider international artworks (ACAVAR131)

- analysing the role of visual arts as a means of challenging prevailing issues of traditional and contemporary relevance, for example, the availability of resources for future generations

## Music

### Years 7 and 8

Explain how the elements of music communicate meaning by comparing music from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music (ACAMUR091)

- Considering viewpoints – societies and cultures: For example – How do different cultures use music? Why is this piece of music important in this culture?

Analyse composers' use of the elements of music and stylistic features when listening to and interpreting music (ACAMUR097)

- Considering viewpoints – evaluations: For example – How effectively did the musicians use expressive techniques in their performance? What are the strengths of this performance or composition?
- identifying and describing the features and performance practices that help determine a specific musical style or culture

Identify and connect specific features and purposes of music from different eras to explore viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAMUR098)

- identifying roles and responsibilities in music-making activities and contexts as both performer and audience member

## Years 9 and 10

Plan and organise compositions with an understanding of style and convention, including drawing upon Australian music by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAMUM102)

- planning, recording and communicating ideas in different musical styles, including Australian music by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, using specialised notation and terminology
- composing and arranging music using the elements of music to communicate style and genre, and considering contemporary Australian styles and emerging genres such as Aboriginal hip hop and mash up and classical fusion of instrumentation such as symphonic orchestra and didgeridoo

Analyse a range of music from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider music in international contexts (ACAMUR105)

- discussing the influence of music on the development of personal and cultural identity

## English

### Year 7

Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1619)

- building knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the history, culture, and literary heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

### Year 9

Investigate how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices, for example allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor (ACELA1552)

- comparing texts that use evaluative language in different ways – print advertisements, editorials, talkback radio and poetry – and identifying wordings that appraise things indirectly, through evocative language, similes and metaphors that direct the views of the readers in particular ways

## History

### Year 9

The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples(ACDSEH020)

- the effects of contact (for example, the massacres of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; their killing of sheep; the spread of European diseases) and categorising these effects as either intended or unintended
- investigating the forcible removal of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century (leading to the Stolen Generations), such as the motivations for the removal of children, the practices and laws that were in place, and experiences of separation.

# RESOURCES

## **Yothu Yindi, Djapana (Radio Mix) [3'59']**

This version of the song and music video is the best one to use for this activity. However, the original version is also available on YouTube, as is the [version with the \*manikay\*](#) at the beginning.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMX2PrHPXzY>

## **Culture – Yolŋu resources**

### **Yolŋu Culture**

The Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation, located in the mining town of Nhulunbuy in north-east Arnhem Land (NT), has a website that explains many aspects of Yolŋu culture, and also how the corporation manages the local IPA area, visitors to the area, conservation and many other activities.

<http://www.dhimurru.com.au/yolngu-culture.html>

### **Living Knowledge – Yolŋu Sea Country**

This is an excellent resource with in-depth information about the Yolŋu – everything from how to say ‘Yolŋu’ to Yolŋu science and creation beliefs.

<http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/learningsites/seacountry/index.htm>

### **Introduction to the Yolŋu world view**

This is the Yothu Yindi Foundation’s website, which contains cultural information as well as concise historical information about the history of Arnhem Land.

<https://www.yyf.com.au/pages/?ParentPageID=2&PageID=104>

### **Teachers’ notes for an art exhibition of Yolŋu culture**

These teachers’ notes are clear and concise and contain many useful references to the Australian Curriculum, student activities, images, background information and pictures to do with Yolŋu culture.

<https://artbacknt.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/Balnhdhurr-teachers-notes.pdf>

### **Yolŋu Culture and Environment**

The Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Art Centre in Yirrkala has an excellent website with many good resources and images – this page in particular has information about Yolŋu culture.

<https://yirrkala.com/culture-and-environment/>

### **Cultural Snapshot – Yolŋu stories, clan and kinship**

This is the website of Miwatj Health, an independent Aboriginal-controlled health service that oversees three large areas, one of which includes the Yolŋu. This page has information about the Yolŋu, and is mostly to do with kinship.

<http://miwatj.com.au/dev/our-region/a-cultural-snapshot/>

### **About the Yolŋu**

The Nhulunbuy Corporation’s website, which includes much good, detailed information about many aspects of Yolŋu culture and life

<http://ncl.net.au/play/about-yolngu/>

### **Yolŋu and their land**

This is the entry page to Yolŋu Studies at Charles Darwin University. This page has a very short summary of the Yolŋu as well as a map that shows all the towns and remote outstations of Arnhem Land.

<https://learnline.cdu.edu.au/yolngustudies/land.html>

## Culture – other resources

### Common Ground

This is an excellent resource which aspires ‘to help Australians see the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through providing access to engaging and authentic content that will help bridge gaps in knowledge’.

[www.commonground.org.au/learn](http://www.commonground.org.au/learn)

### Our Culture

Reconciliation Australia’s website has several really useful and informative sections, including one specifically about culture that has videos and student-friendly information.

<http://shareourpride.reconciliation.org.au/sections/our-culture/>

### Culture Victoria

The Victorian Government website for Aboriginal Culture – this includes a wide variety of different topics and is very suitable for the classroom.

<https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/>

### Then and now: Reimagining the land on which we live and learn

The Narragunnawali resource *Then and now: Reimagining the land on which we live and learn* has students engage with the idea that the land on which their school stands was once owned and occupied by Indigenous people, and then craft a creative response.

[www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/88/then-and-now-reimagining-the-land-on-which-we-live-and-learn-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR&page=3](http://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/88/then-and-now-reimagining-the-land-on-which-we-live-and-learn-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR&page=3)

### A sense of place

The Narragunnawali resource *A sense of place* is structured around an ABC Splash resource, *Noongar people speak about a sense of place*. It encourages students to appreciate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges of, perspectives about, and relationships with, the physical landscape.

[www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/129/a-sense-of-place-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR](http://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/129/a-sense-of-place-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR)

### Connection to country

*Why a connection to country is so important to Aboriginal communities* is a web page about how important, and yet how difficult to explain, is Indigenous people’s strength of connection to place. It also contains the video for a half-hour episode of *AWAKEN: Talking country*.

[www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2015/10/22/why-connection-country-so-important-aboriginal-communities](http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2015/10/22/why-connection-country-so-important-aboriginal-communities)

### Australians Together

This website has a wide variety of topics about Indigenous cultures, such as ‘living culture’, ‘colonisation’, ‘how culture shapes our identity’, and ‘what can I do?’

<https://australianstogether.org.au>

### The Role of Culture

Although this website is designed mainly for people who work with or deliver services to Indigenous people, it has excellent material on history and culture which supports the cross-curriculum priority.

[http://www.workingwithindigenoustralian.info/content/Culture\\_1\\_Culture.html](http://www.workingwithindigenoustralian.info/content/Culture_1_Culture.html)

# 3

## Languages

### This resource:

- explains the current state of Indigenous languages in Australia, including those that are being maintained, increased and revived
- explains how language is critical for the expression and passing on of culture
- has links to many online resources for specific Indigenous languages across Australia that are useful for classroom activities
- includes a variety of activities for students that engage them with Indigenous languages.

### Content overview

This chapter outlines in some detail the story of the hundreds of languages this continent contained and how they have either survived or been eradicated, or somewhere in between these two, over the past 231 years. The projects currently under way to save the endangered languages, and to revive the ones that are almost entirely extinct, are outlined, as are recent developments in government policy that are supporting these efforts.

The chapter also outlines Aboriginal English and describes what it is – a unique type of English in its own right – as well as giving a detailed explanation of what Kriol is and how it works. It gives examples of how Wiradjuri is being supported so that it remains a living language, and also the example of the languages of the Torres Strait.

Also included is information about how important language is to culture, and how the maintenance and revival of languages is being used to help with mental health outcomes. Finally, it shows how languages have been strengthened by being used by popular musicians such as the band Yothu Yindi and the rap artist Baker Boy. The song '*Djāpana* (Sunset Dreaming)' is given as an example; this is explored further in the activities in Chapter 2.

# Teacher introduction

Australian languages are treasures of international significance. They bridge the dark space between tangible and intangible cultural heritage.<sup>1</sup>

‘Education and language are the glue needed to maintain, revive and reclaim culture.’<sup>2</sup>

Language is especially important in the transmission and practice of culture. As explained on the First Languages Australia [website](#), ‘Language and culture are interdependent. It has long been understood that language is the verbal expression of culture. It is the medium through which culture is carried and transferred. Stories, songs and the nuanced meaning of words contain the key to understanding one’s world and one’s part within it. Strong culture gives the individual a sense of belonging to people and places. For this reason, language and culture are deeply interconnected and core parts of one’s identity.’<sup>3</sup>

Australia is situated in one of the world’s linguistic hotspots. Our languages are treasures of international significance. They are a bridge to rich and important information. When a language is lost, a deep body of knowledge is lost with it.<sup>4</sup>

‘You can never understand one language until you can understand two.’

This old saying perfectly describes why the largely monolingual Australian populace, right from colonisation days, never understood why preserving Indigenous languages was crucial to their cultural survival. As monolingual English-speakers, the colonists, and later the Australian state and federal governments, could not understand how cultural knowledge can be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to convey in a foreign language. And even if they *did* know that to maintain culture properly and easily it was necessary to do so in one’s own language, the policies of the Australian Government at all levels up until living memory were actually to eradicate Aboriginal culture entirely.

As a result, it is estimated that, throughout Australia, of the approximately 600 language varieties that existed in 1788, roughly 250 survive in a variety of conditions. Approximately twenty languages, like Yolŋu Matha of the Yolŋu people of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, are rich and robust, and remain the mother-tongue of several thousand speakers. Others, like the Ngarrindjeri language, are being revived by groups such as the Ngarrindjeri ‘Deadly Nannas’ of the Murray Bridge region in South Australia, in the hope that one day they may again be understood and spoken by younger generations. Musicians such as the members of Yothu Yindi and, very recently, Baker Boy have recorded many songs using a variety of Yolŋu languages and English.

Many Australian Indigenous languages have declined to a critical state. More than three-quarters of the original Australian languages have already been lost, and the survival of almost all of the remaining languages [is] extremely threatened.<sup>5</sup>

UNESCO has determined that 2019 is the International Year of Indigenous Languages, and a variety of supporting resources are being developed. By recognising and supporting indigenous languages across the globe, UNESCO aims to:

- increase understanding, reconciliation and international cooperation
- create favourable conditions for knowledge-sharing and dissemination of good practices with regard to indigenous languages

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1 <http://marringamu.com.au/australias-first-languages/>

2 <http://vaclang.org.au>

3 [www.firstlanguages.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=919:why-maintain-languages&catid=30:core&Itemid=359](http://www.firstlanguages.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=919:why-maintain-languages&catid=30:core&Itemid=359)

4 <http://marringamu.com.au/australias-first-languages/>

5 <http://vaclang.org.au>

- integrate indigenous languages into standard settings
- empower indigenous people through capacity-building
- promote growth and development through the elaboration of new knowledge.

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

Ol.1	Australia has two distinct Indigenous groups: Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and within those groups there is significant diversity.
Ol.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
Ol.4	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies have many Language Groups.
Ol.7	The broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies encompass a diversity of nations across Australia.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: various subjects

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

#### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that language is an important part of maintaining law, beliefs and cultural practices
- that some Indigenous languages remain fully functional today, some are in the process of being revived and strengthened, while others have been all but completely lost through the processes of colonisation
- that using endangered languages in songs and videos helps keep them alive.

The students will **understand**:

- that concepts are embedded in Indigenous languages and that these are more easily expressed in the language of the culture
- that creoles (here, Australian Kriol) are fully fledged languages in their own right with grammar and syntax
- that in some parts of Australia, Indigenous people speak their own language(s) as their mother tongue, and English as a second language.

The students will **be able to**:

- explain that Indigenous languages are endangered in Australia and in the world and that there are efforts to prevent their disappearance
- discuss some similarities and differences between the ways in which Indigenous cultures express emotions and those in which the students' own culture expresses emotion.



These activities, as well as those referred to in the resource section below, can be embedded in a variety of subjects as related activities that give context to other topics being studied. Although no subject specifies the learning of the vocabulary of an Indigenous languages (apart from the Aboriginal language subject itself), learning some language can fit into the Arts, in a range of topics: History, when examining any part of Australia; Geography, when studying different regions; Science, when studying Earth Science topics (by linking into a region); English; Technologies, by examining technology used in regional Australia, particularly Aboriginal communities, for communication; and Languages, by comparing vocabulary and grammatical structures.

## Activity summary

### Activity 1: Ngarritj, the corella who speaks Yolŋu Matha

[The 17-minute video about the corella, Ngarritj](#), who lives in Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island) and speaks in Yolŋu Matha is an entertaining, funny and heartwarming story that will engage audiences of all ages. It can be watched purely for entertainment: by watching it, students will see people speaking Yolŋu Matha as their first language, and, indeed, a whole community functioning in an endangered Indigenous language. They will also see lots of references to Yolŋu culture, including aspects such as kinship, ceremony and music. Many students will be surprised simply to see people using an Indigenous language in their daily lives, and this is a valuable learning opportunity in itself.

- Before watching the video, students are prepared by learning about the location, the Yolŋu people and some vocabulary that they will then hear in the film. Here are some ideas:
  - Using Google Maps on satellite view is a good way for students to see the location of Galiwin'ku.
  - Use some of the Yolŋu resources in the list below to gain a basic understanding of Yolŋu culture.
- Then learn a few words that will help sustain students' interest while listening to the dialogue. The words shown in the following table occur in the video in the order shown, and students should be encouraged to listen and look for them in the video.

Ngarritj	The name of the corella in the video. This is a Yolŋu 'skin name', which is something many people have as a type of nickname for their place within the family/kinship structure. Occasionally, skin names are also given to pets as a sign of affection. You'll hear people in the video call Ngarritj 'Uncle' or refer to him as 'my cousin'. This is because their own skin name is related to the Ngarritj name in that particular way.
marrakapmirr	Literally, 'beautiful' and 'beloved', but is used in a variety of related contexts
manymak	'good'
bäyŋu	'nothing'
Ngalalak	Name for the corella species of bird
Yolŋu	The name of the people who live in north-east Arnhem Land
rrupiya	'money' – this is a loan word that has come from Sanskrit through Indonesia. It is one of the words introduced to the area by Macassan seafarers from the port of Ujang Pandang before English colonial arrival.
ŋatha	'food'
mari	'fight'
Marthakal	The name of a region used by organisations in Galiwin'ku
Gopulu	The place where Ngarritj is from
Dirramu	'men' (seen on the sign in the op-shop)
Miyalk	'women' (seen on the sign in the op-shop)

## Activity 2: Kriol story books – Shak en Weil and Mun en Maus

Before beginning this activity, students (and possibly teachers) need to learn what a creole is and, in particular, about the creole used in this book, known as Roper River (Ngukurr) Kriol. Here is a brief summary that explains the genesis of Kriol as spoken in the Northern Territory.

When two groups of people, who can't understand each other's language, begin to interact continuously, a *pidgin* develops for communication. A *pidgin* is a grammatically simplified way of communicating that draws its vocabulary from two or more languages. *Pidgins* are only ever spoken as a second language – all speakers have their own full mother tongue.

The children of *pidgin* speakers, however, often learn the *pidgin* as their own first language, and then, because *pidgins* are limited in both vocabulary and grammar, a development occurs in which the *pidgin* evolves to adopt the complexities of a full language. The *pidgin* thus becomes a *creole* which is a full-fledged language. A *creole* is complex enough that it has a consistent system of grammar, possesses a large stable vocabulary, and is acquired by children as their native language. These three features distinguish a *creole* language from a *pidgin*.<sup>6</sup>

Pidgins and creoles arise suddenly, not through centuries of evolution. The arrival of the English at Port Jackson in 1788 led to the emergence of Port Jackson Pidgin English (PJPE) so that the newcomers and the local Indigenous people could communicate in some fashion. As the colonialists spread out across the continent, PJPE went with them, but soon died out in most areas, except for the Northern Territory where it stabilised into a *creole*, called either Australian Kriol, or by a local designation such as Roper River Kriol. There are currently about 30,000 first-languages speakers of Australian Kriol.<sup>7</sup>

Across Australia, many different language organisations located in areas with a dominant Indigenous population have produced teaching resources for children in schools. Reading in their own language, not just in English, helps children learn to read much more effectively overall, so these books are key to overall literacy development for Indigenous children.

- 1 This activity has students listen to, and read, two childrens' books online: *Shak en Weil* by Joan Brumel and Lily Bennett, and *Mun en Maus*, as told by Annette Murray, to experience the Kriol language, but also to see how much of it they can decipher.
- 2 Students read the book *Shak en Weil* while listening to the online narration of the story, so that they begin to learn to correlate words with the sound of the language. They then read *Mun en Maus* out loud to each other in pairs, seeing if they can work out how to say the words themselves. While Kriol *looks* almost unintelligible to English speakers, the majority of the words sound like similar words in English. Therefore, they need to read out loud in order to work out the words. For example, the word *sambala* doesn't immediately look like anything in English. However, when read out, it sounds very much like 'some fella', which is easily converted into 'someone'. Students are encouraged to experiment with pronunciation until they find the meaning.
- 3 Students can check their success with the English translation provided at the end of the book; however, they shouldn't be given access to this while doing the activity. (It is recommended that you download the PDF, remove the translation page, save, and send that version to students so that they can't scroll down to the answers.)
- 4 Students compare their success rate at decoding the text. Remind them that, although they may think they are hearing some type of juvenile English, a creole language has its own grammar and syntax, just as fully fledged languages do, but that they won't be able to see that themselves.

<sup>6</sup> <http://semantics.uchicago.edu/kennedy/classes/sum07/myths/creoles.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\\_Kriol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_Kriol)

## Activity 3: Crocwise video

As a follow-up to the Kriol activity above, there are plenty of videos for kids that have been made in Kriol that are available on YouTube. Again, these can be watched purely for entertainment to fill five minutes in the day, or they can be listened to closely to hear how Kriol is used to communicate among speakers.

In Activity 2, students learnt that Kriol is difficult to decipher by reading, but much easier to decode when hearing it spoken. Therefore, they should be able to understand most of the [Crocwise video](#) themselves. Due to the aural similarity, they may even think that a lot of it is in English, but it's not. Have them listen closely and identify when they don't understand – in other words, when the Kriol becomes dissimilar from English. This is very obvious during the spoken part of the song.

Watch the [Crocwise video](#) to hear an example of Kriol being used in a public safety awareness campaign. Students will learn about how to stay safe in an area where there are crocodiles – something that the Indigenous children in the Northern Territory have to take very seriously!

## Activity 4: Endangered world languages

This activity broadens the idea of languages being endangered to a global context. The resource is an [interactive online map of the world](#) with every (or nearly every) endangered language marked. When you click on the dots, information for that language opens up, with links.

This is a quick, short activity that can be inserted in many different places in the curriculum. The reason it's included here is because it's an excellent resource that opens up student thinking about how Australia relates to the rest of the world in this matter.

- 1 Have the students choose a region of the world that interests them for a particular reason. If the students come from elsewhere themselves, or even want to go somewhere on a holiday, they may like to investigate the languages of their own region, their ancestors' region/s, or the region they hope to visit.
- 2 The students then use the interactive map to choose a language that is spoken in that region or nearby, for further exploration, either within this resource, or on the internet.
- 3 The students can share their discoveries among themselves, so that they learn about how few speakers are left in some languages around the world – and of course, in Australia as well.

## Links to learning areas

### English

#### Year 8

##### Literature and context

Explore the interconnectedness of Country/Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors (ACELT1806)

- identifying and describing the ways films suggest Country/Place and Identity through language features such as image, soundtrack and narrative control
- selecting aspects of a text related to Country/Place, People, Identity and Culture and adapt it for a new context, noting if changes in one aspect will result in changes in another

## Year 10

### Texts in context

Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices (ACELY1749)

- considering ethical positions across more than one culture as represented in text and consider the similarities and differences
- identifying and explaining satirical events, including events in other cultures, for example depictions in political cartoons
- identifying and evaluating poetic, lyrical language in the depiction of people, culture, places, events, things and concepts in texts

Factors that influence the decisions people make about where to live and their perceptions of the liveability of places (ACHGK043)

- discussing that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples choose to live on their Country/Place or might prefer to if they had the choice

## Music

### Years 7 and 8

Practise and rehearse a variety of music, including Australian music to develop technical and expressive skills (ACAMUM094)

- exploring and manipulating the elements of music within given parameters to create new music, and reflecting upon musical ideas used by Australian composers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists
- Considering viewpoints – societies, cultures and histories: For example – What is the social context of this piece and for whom would it be performed? What is the cultural context of this piece and what does it signify? What instruments and other features of the music indicate it is from a particular time and place?

Identify and connect specific features and purposes of music from different eras to explore viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAMUR098)

- identifying roles and responsibilities in music-making activities and contexts as both performer and audience member
- Considering viewpoints – evaluations: For example – How effectively did the musicians use expressive techniques in their performance? What are the strengths of this performance or composition?

### Years 9 and 10

Plan and organise compositions with an understanding of style and convention, including drawing upon Australian music by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAMUM102)

- planning, recording and communicating ideas in different musical styles, including Australian music by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, using specialised notation and terminology
- composing and arranging music using the elements of music to communicate style and genre, and considering contemporary Australian styles and emerging genres such as Aboriginal hip hop and mash up and classical fusion of instrumentation such as symphonic orchestra and didgeridoo

Analyse a range of music from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider music in international contexts (ACAMUR105)

- discussing the influence of music on the development of personal and cultural identity

## Geography

Year 7

### **Water in the world**

Economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and peoples of the Asia region (ACHGK041)

- exploring the multilayered meanings (material, cultural and spiritual wellbeing) associated with rivers, waterways, waterholes, seas, lakes, soaks and springs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

### **Place and liveability**

Factors that influence the decisions people make about where to live and their perceptions of the liveability of places (ACHGK043)

- discussing that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples choose to live on their Country/Place or might prefer to if they had the choice

Year 8

### **Different types of landscapes and their distinctive landform features (ACHGK048)**

- exploring the names, meanings and significance of landform features from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspective

## History

Year 9

### **Movement of peoples (1750–1901)**

The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH020)

- explaining the effects of contact and categorising these effects as either intended or unintended

### **Making a nation**

Investigate how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices, for example allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor (ACELA1552)

- comparing texts that use evaluative language in different ways – print advertisements, editorials, talkback radio and poetry – and identifying wordings that appraise things indirectly, through evocative language, similes and metaphors that direct the views of the readers in particular ways

# RESOURCES

## National

### **Ngarritj, the corella who speaks Yolŋu Matha [17'30"]**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbSxc6Y1aVA>

### **Online children's stories in Indigenous languages**

These are PDFs of actual books that have been created for use in classrooms where the students speak an Indigenous language as their mother tongue. Some of them also have audio files. There are many different languages represented in this website; some of the books have English translation but some have just the Indigenous language and are probably less useable in a classroom activity.

<http://laal.cdu.edu.au>

<http://laal.cdu.edu.au/record/cdu:31174/info/> *Shak en Weil* in Roper River Kriol – audio

<http://laal.cdu.edu.au/record/cdu:31174/info/> *Shak en Weil* in Roper River Kriol – text

<http://laal.cdu.edu.au/record/cdu:31180/info/> *Mun en Maus* in Roper River Kriol

<http://laal.cdu.edu.au/record/cdu:31476/info/> *Marru arra Mutika* in Djinaŋ, English and Yolŋu Matha from Arnhem Land (for comparison with another language)

### **Be Crocwise – Kriol [2'38"]**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubwA\\_2XVH2A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubwA_2XVH2A)

### **Be Crocwise – background [1'04"]**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dxrJ\\_7TPkA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dxrJ_7TPkA)

### **First Languages Interactive Map**

This will help students locate individual languages across Australia, and provide information about each. Some link to good resources that can then be used in the classroom to learn more about the particular language.

<https://gambay.com.au>

### **Endangered Languages of the World Interactive Map**

This is an interactive map of all the recorded endangered languages throughout the world. Clicking on the dots opens information for each language – the last known number of recorded speakers, and links to further information.

<http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/#/7/-13.052/130.737/0/100000/0/low/mid/high/unknown>

### **Research Unit for Indigenous Language – ‘Word Posts’ Project**

The University of Melbourne's Research Unit for Indigenous Language has a variety of resources. This one is a link to their 'word posts' that appear every three days on Facebook, Twitter etc. These posts feature images of different things (generally nouns), and their words in various Indigenous languages.

<https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/research-unit-for-indigenous-language/resources/language-links#ruil-word-posts>

### **First Languages Australia**

The *First Languages Australia* website is a network that represents many of the regional language corporations across Australia. Its aim is to ensure the survival of Australia's traditional languages into the future.

[www.firstlanguages.org.au](http://www.firstlanguages.org.au)

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages**

The State Library of Queensland provides a resource listing a selection of websites that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and are useful starting points for schools, communities, IKCs and Public Libraries in identifying language resources and other information to assist community language revival.

[www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/atsi/languages/toolkit/indigenous-languages-websites](http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/atsi/languages/toolkit/indigenous-languages-websites)

### **University languages portal Australia**

This is a central resource that provides links to tertiary studies in Australian universities in Indigenous languages where links to learning resources can be found.

[www.ulpa.edu.au/where-can-study-indigenous-languages/](http://www.ulpa.edu.au/where-can-study-indigenous-languages/)

### **Austlang**

This is an online resource designed and developed by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). Teachers can search for resources and information about the language of the local people from their area.

<https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/search>

### **AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia**

This map was created in 1994 to illustrate the diversity of Indigenous languages and cultures across the continent. It can be purchased from AIATSIS.

Online version: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia>

### **AIATSIS Language map activities**

This Narragunnawali resource contains activities to go with the AIATSIS languages map.

[www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/94/languages-map-activity-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR](http://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/94/languages-map-activity-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR)

### **International Year of Indigenous Languages**

The AIATSIS website for the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/IYIL2019>

### **International Year of Indigenous Languages**

UNESCO's website for the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages

<https://en.iyil2019.org>

### **NLA Indigenous Language Resources**

The National Library of Australia has an online guide to assist in identifying specific language group material in their collections.

[www.nla.gov.au/research-guides/indigenous-language-resources](http://www.nla.gov.au/research-guides/indigenous-language-resources)

### **ABC's Mother Tongue Project**

This Narragunnawali resource contains a range of different film clips from the Mother Tongue project, produced by ABC Open. Students are encouraged to appreciate both the diversity and the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, cultures, stories and identities.

[www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/97/mother-tongue-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR&page=2](http://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/97/mother-tongue-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR&page=2)



## Victoria

### **Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages**

<http://vaclang.org.au>

The Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages was established in 1994 to address the issues of language loss and is the state body responsible for coordinating Community Language Programs throughout Victoria. It is focused on retrieving, recording and researching Aboriginal languages and providing a central resource on Victorian Aboriginal Languages with programs and educational tools to teach the Indigenous and wider community about language.

<http://ourlanguages.org.au>

## Northern Territory

### **Charles Darwin University online Yolŋu Matha translation**

Yolŋu Matha words can be searched through a 'fuzzy search' engine, which means words that may have alternate spellings can be found more easily. It can also be searched in English to find Yolŋu Matha translations.

[http://yolngudictionary.cdu.edu.au/Word\\_search.php](http://yolngudictionary.cdu.edu.au/Word_search.php)

[http://yolngudictionary.cdu.edu.au/fuzzy\\_find.php](http://yolngudictionary.cdu.edu.au/fuzzy_find.php)

### **Online Yolŋu–English Dictionary**

This is a downloadable PDF that contains a large introductory section with information about Yolŋu Matha. This is followed by a full, searchable dictionary of Yolŋu Matha words. Students can search English words and find their Yolŋu Matha equivalents; or it can be used to translate Yolŋu Matha to English.

<http://www.goveonline.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/yolgnu-english-dictionary.pdf>

### **My grandmother's lingo**

This Narragunnawali resource is an online resource that uses voice-activated gaming technology to connect users with the story of Angelina Joshua, a passionate and determined young Aboriginal woman from East Arnhem Land's remote Ngukurr community. Angelina is fighting to save her traditional language, Marra.

[www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/162/my-grandmothers-lingo-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR&page=2](http://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/162/my-grandmothers-lingo-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR&page=2)

### **Living archive of Aboriginal languages**

This is a digital archive of endangered literature in Australian Indigenous languages from around the Northern Territory. It contains authentic language materials which can assist in resourcing and supporting teachers to meet the cross-curriculum priority. The open-access archive contains thousands of authentic texts in Indigenous languages of the Northern Territory, many with English translations and rich illustrations. The materials cover a vast array of topics, from traditional stories, ethnobiology, history, bush food and medicine, to tales of contemporary life and translations of English stories, and can be used across all or most learning areas.<sup>8</sup>

<http://laal.cdu.edu.au>

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8 [www.teachermagazine.com.au/articles/teacher-resources-indigenous-language-materials](http://www.teachermagazine.com.au/articles/teacher-resources-indigenous-language-materials)



# 4

## Kinship

### This resource:

- covers the constructs and manifestations of the kinship systems that underpin many Indigenous Australian societies
- contains content for study that can be applied to a range of learning areas, especially the studies of people and communities in both the Geography and Health and Physical Education curricula.

### Content overview

This chapter presents the system of kinship, the fundamental network that ties all things in the world together in Aboriginal societies and their belief systems.

The tasks build students' knowledge and understanding of how a kinship network works, firstly through watching film clips in which Aboriginal people explain their kinship systems and their importance, and then through setting up their own kinship system within the classroom based on Yolŋu *mälk* (skin names).

### Teacher introduction

Kinship is a network of relatedness that classifies not just people, but all living things, constellations and sunrise/sunset, the directions on the compass, features of the natural environment and tracts of land and sea into a system. Although the English word 'kinship' tends to indicate relationships only among people, Aboriginal kinship is an all-encompassing system that applies to everything within the natural world. It shows not only how people, things and places are related to each other; it also prescribes people's responsibilities to each other, and their relationships to the land and natural resources.<sup>1</sup>

All people living within an Aboriginal clan, including those who are not blood relatives, are thus connected to each other in specific formalised relationships, and these dictate how they interact with each other. In Aboriginal societies, this means that everyone always knows how to relate to everyone else, even if they are not personally known to each other. It provides a type of 'mental map' that shows how people should behave towards each other.<sup>2</sup> The same

<sup>1</sup> <https://australianstogether.org.au/discover/indigenous-culture/kinship/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.aboriginalart.com.au/culture/family.html>

relationships that exist between blood relatives are repeated in the relationships among non-blood relatives by applying a system of skin names, known as *mälk* in Yolŋu Matha. The Yolŋu of north-east Arnhem Land have sixteen different skin names, which are assigned at birth and act as a marker of that person within the kinship system. The skin name enables a person to locate his/her connection to all other people outside his/her direct family based on the network of skin name relationships, as shown in Figure 1.

Through the process of colonisation and the opening up of travel and transport, people from outside the kinship system began to visit, live and work in Aboriginal communities. These relationships with non-Aboriginal people were uncomfortable for Aboriginal people since it was unheard of for a person not to be placed within the kinship system. Although today it is very common for people to move around and live in a variety of places, and Aboriginal people have adapted and built relationships with newcomers, it is likely that people remaining any length of time or having sustained engagement in a community will be given a skin name that places them within the kinship network. 'Some non-Aboriginal people have mistakenly believed that this is a sign of acceptance by the people. It is truer to say that it is a mechanism Aboriginal people have employed to make their dealings with non-Aboriginal people more comfortable for themselves.'<sup>3</sup>

Not only are kinship systems far more extensive than the typical family relationships of Western societies, they also use more terms for relationship structures. In general, most kinship systems will have different terms for 'elder brother/sister' and 'younger brother/sister' and for the grandparents on different sides of the family.<sup>4</sup> More significant is the way in which people are classified entirely differently in the two systems. For example, in Yolŋu kinship, one's mother's sisters are seen not as 'aunts' but as other mothers. Likewise, one's aunt's children are not cousins, but brothers and sisters.<sup>5</sup>

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

OI.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
OI.5	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of life are uniquely expressed through ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.
OI.8	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' family and kinship structures are strong and sophisticated.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: HPE, Science, History

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

A number of the resources listed below include videos and charts of kinship networks in different parts of Australia and can be used to help students understand some of the complexities of kinship relations. Visual representations, such as those in Figure 1, can often convey meaning more clearly and concisely than a verbal explanation. As the kinship system involves not just families, but all people, all living things and all aspects of the natural world, it is, by its very nature, highly complicated. Therefore, the suggested activities that follow involve only the relationships among people, and set achievable learning goals.

3 <https://www.clc.org.au/index.php?/articles/cat/aboriginal-kinship/>

4 <https://www.nlc.org.au/about-us/our-culture>

5 [http://www.workingwithindigenoussaustralians.info/content/Culture\\_5\\_Family\\_and\\_Kinship.html](http://www.workingwithindigenoussaustralians.info/content/Culture_5_Family_and_Kinship.html)

## Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that in Aboriginal cultures, all people, plants and animals, ancestral beings, natural features and tracts of land and sea are part of a structured web of connections that is called kinship
- that family and kinship are highly significant to Aboriginal people and govern many of their relationships
- that in many Aboriginal cultures the known world is divided into two moieties, or halves, with everything, including people, being classified into one half or the other.

The students will **understand**:

- that the system of skin names binds all Indigenous people together in a network, which allows them to relate to each other even if they are only meeting for the first time
- that the clan system is an important part of kinship and is the major form of family organisation, especially among the Yolŋu people
- that marriage partnerships, as well as other relationships, need to accord to the rules of the kinship system.

The students will **be able to**:

- describe how traditional performances convey significant and ancient hereditary knowledge
- describe how contemporary performances can be interpreted in different ways by different people, including the artists themselves
- create their own artistic works based on their understanding of this topic.

## Activity summary

### Activity 1: Kinship video analysis

The students will complete the following:

Watch the kinship video on the [Twelve Canoes website](#). To access this in English, select Settings in the top right corner and set the language to English. After completing the activity, it would be good to set the language back to Yolŋu Matha and have the students listen to how the language sounds. Once the language is set, click on the Kinship box.

The students consider and respond to the following questions or devise their own questions.

- 1 What does the kinship law mean? [1'14" Every man, woman and child is related in a known way to everyone else.]
- 2 Apart from people, what else is part of the kinship system? [1'36" All living things, all the plants and the animals, and most other things – land, rivers, objects we make or find.]
- 3 What is one benefit of the kinship system? [3'48" Makes us stronger as families, as a people. It helps to keep us together at a time when our culture is under pressure from the outside world.]

## Activity 2: Skin names

Then, using Figure 1, do the following activity with the class. It will require some preparation and clear explanation; however, it will be worthwhile as the best way to understand kinship is to experience it in some way.

- 1 First, teach the students how to interpret the chart, as follows:
  - a The triangles represent males and the circles represent females.
  - b The equals signs going across the middle of the chart represent the best marriage choice. For example, the male Burrulun will preferably marry a female whose skin name is Njarritjan.
  - c The small 'x' represents a second option for marriage choice. Burrulun would thus marry a female who is Bulanydjan.
  - e The arrows on the outside of the diagram show mother–child relationships. Burrulun's mother is Banadijan, but we don't know what his children will be called as skin names are determined through the mother's line (i.e. his wife's skin name will determine the skin names of his children.)
- 2 Second, assign each student a skin name, doubling up as necessary – giving them all a name tag of their skin name will help with the activity
- 3 The activity itself involves students using Figure 1 to determine who their relatives are, as directed by the teacher. For example, say, 'Everyone find your first choice marriage partner'. (Teachers will find it helpful if they write all the possibilities out for themselves first in order to help the students.)

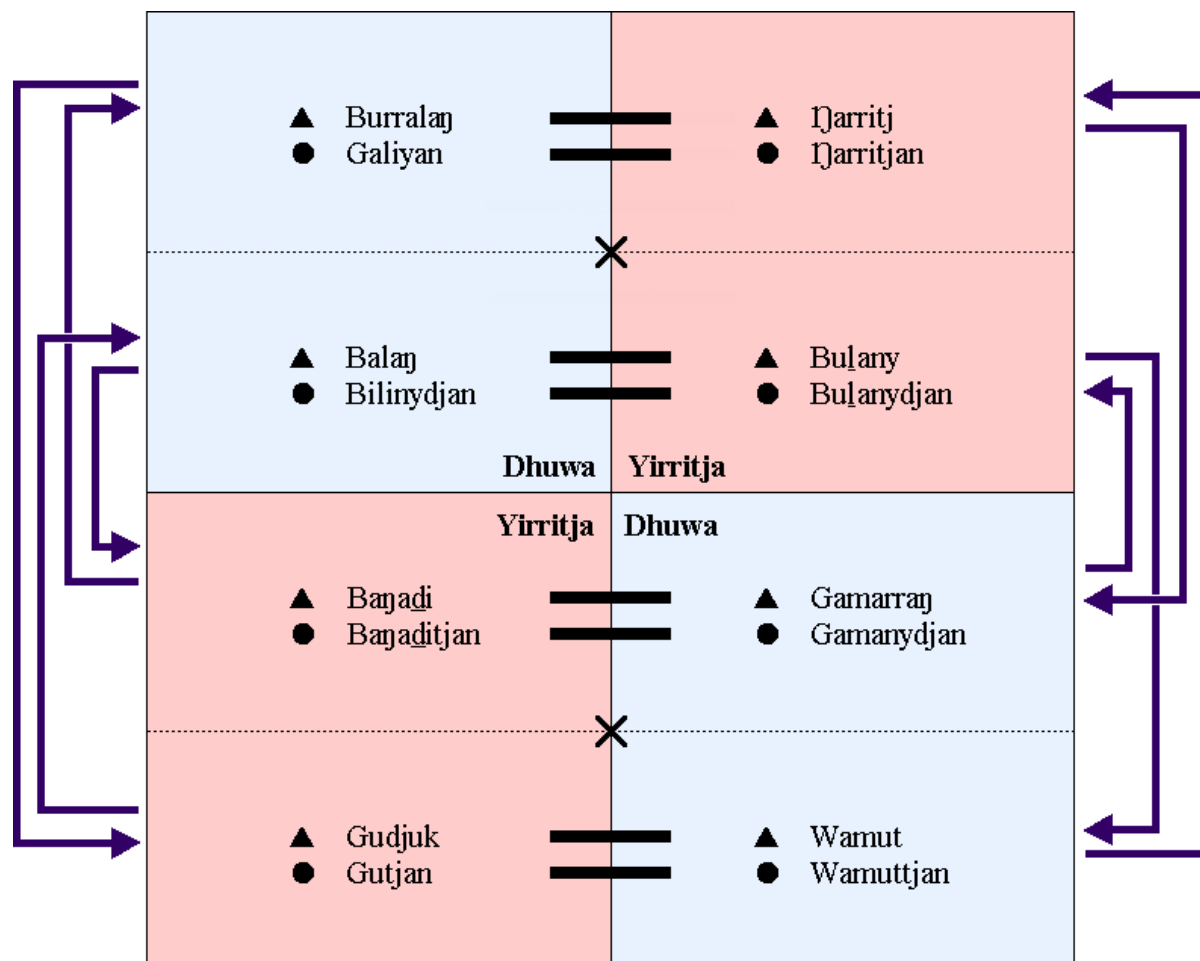
### IMPORTANT NOTES

- Male and female skin names are able to determine:
  - their mother
  - their first (and second) choice marriage partner.
- Only female skin names can determine:
  - son and daughter.
- Male and female skin names can only identify their father, by knowing if their mother has made a first choice or a second choice marriage (or to put it another way, their father is determined as their mother's marriage partner, not by a set relationship pathway on the chart).
- [note to teacher – if you say 'find your mother,' all students will be able to find their corresponding person, however, if you say 'find your son/daughter' only the females will be able to do this]

### Activity 3: Kinship video reprise

The final activity is to watch the kinship video on the Twelve Canoes website again as the students will now be able to better grasp the information. Another video to watch at this point is this [short video](#) about Warlpiri kinship; other recommended videos are starred in the Resources section below.

**Figure 1** Chart showing Yolŋu skin names and their relationships



## Links to learning areas

### Health and Physical Education

#### Years 7 and 8

Investigate the impact of transition and change on identities (ACPPS070)

- examining how traditions and cultural practices influence personal and cultural identities

Investigate the benefits to individuals and communities of valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity (ACPPS079)

- exploring how kinship and extended-family structures in different cultures support and enhance health and wellbeing

#### Years 9 and 10

Critique behaviours and contextual factors that influence health and wellbeing of diverse communities (ACPPS098)

- investigating the role that extended family, kinship structures and broader community play in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

## Science

### Year 10

Transmission of heritable characteristics from one generation to the next involves DNA and genes (ACSSU184)

- investigating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge of heredity as evidenced by the strict adherence to kinship and family structures, especially marriage laws

## History

### Year 7

Key features of ancient societies (farming, trade, social classes, religion, rule of law) (ACOKFH003)

- kinship can be examined as a key feature of how ancient Aboriginal societies functioned

### Year 9

The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH020)

- investigating the forcible removal of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century (leading to the Stolen Generations), such as the motivations for the removal of children, the practices and laws that were in place, and experiences of separation (with particular emphasis here on how kinship systems were disrupted or destroyed, and the effect of that on Aboriginal societies)

## RESOURCES

### National

#### Indigenous Kinship

The kinship system is explained clearly and concisely in the Australians Together website.

<https://australianstogether.org.au/discover/indigenous-culture/kinship/>

#### University of Sydney – Kinship module

This is a series of useful resources including explanatory videos and information PDFs about kinship, published by the University of Sydney.

<http://sydney.edu.au/kinship-module/index.shtml>

[http://sydney.edu.au/kinship-module/documents/learning/Kinship\\_Module\\_Teaching\\_Learning\\_Framework-web.pdf](http://sydney.edu.au/kinship-module/documents/learning/Kinship_Module_Teaching_Learning_Framework-web.pdf)

#### Exploring Aboriginal Kinship Kit

The most comprehensive yet accessible resource on kinship remains the work of Don Williams. The *Exploring Aboriginal Kinship Kit* isn't available for free download but can be purchased here for \$49.95.

[https://ards.com.au/resources/products/exploring-aboriginal-kinship-kit-\(by-don-williams\)/](https://ards.com.au/resources/products/exploring-aboriginal-kinship-kit-(by-don-williams)/)

#### Culture: Family and Kinship

This is on the Working with Indigenous Australians website and has some detail about the kinship system/s of those who were stolen children as well as more generic uses of names.

[www.workingwithindigenoussaustralians.info/content/Culture\\_5\\_Family\\_and\\_Kinship.html](http://www.workingwithindigenoussaustralians.info/content/Culture_5_Family_and_Kinship.html)

## Victoria

### **Country, Kinship, Identity [10'54"]**

This Victorian government website has a 10-minute video in which Victorian Aboriginal people explain various aspects of their kinship and some history of the Lake Tyers Mission. It also has a list of the links to the Victorian Curriculum for History and Civics and Citizenship.

<https://prov.vic.gov.au/index.php/country-kinship-identity>

## Northern Territory

### **The Twelve Canoes Study Guide**

The *Twelve Canoes* website is an excellent, interactive way of finding out about many aspects of Yolŋu culture, including kinship.

[www.12canoes.com.au](http://www.12canoes.com.au)

[www.12canoes.com.au/downloads/studyguide/Twelve\\_Canoes\\_Study\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.12canoes.com.au/downloads/studyguide/Twelve_Canoes_Study_Guide.pdf)

### **Our Culture – Kinship**

The Northern Land Council's website has a comprehensive and accessible page on kinship.

[www.nlc.org.au/about-us/our-culture](http://www.nlc.org.au/about-us/our-culture)

### **Arrente Family System/Skin Names**

The Our Family System/Skin Names website details the kin relationships of the Arrente people from the Alice Springs region.

[www.aboriginalart.com.au/culture/family.html](http://www.aboriginalart.com.au/culture/family.html)

### **Clans and kinship**

The Living Knowledge site has information about Yolŋu kinship and clans.

[http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/learningsites/seacountry/04\\_kinship.htm](http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/learningsites/seacountry/04_kinship.htm)

### **Loved Up – Lore of Love [1'37"]**

A short video clip in which Warlpiri women explain to some young women the kinship system and how it relates to marriage. There is a tab on the page for teachers: 'Education notes'.

<https://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/lore-love/clip3/>

### **Friday Essay: Land, kinship and ownership of 'Dreamings'**

This is an excellent article in *The Conversation*, which explains kinship in an engaging and understandable way, using the Warlpiri as the example. It contains related pieces of art and charts.

<https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-land-kinship-and-ownership-of-dreamings-39637>

### **The Casting of *Ten Canoes* [3'00"]**

An interesting video clip in which the director of *Ten Canoes* explains how the casting of the film was impacted by the kinship structures of the actors

<https://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/balanda-and-the-bark-canoes/clip3/#tab-education>

# 5

# Knowledge

## This resource:

- contains information and activities that highlight examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge of the land and the environment
- shows how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used their knowledge to manage the land and the natural world to create man-made environments, particularly by using fire
- focuses on the specific astronomical knowledge of Torres Strait Islanders and seasonal calendars
- includes examples of programs such as Indigenous Rangers programs, in which Indigenous people use their ancestral knowledge to manipulate and interact with the land and the natural world, specifically in the Torres Strait, and at the Fish River Station on the Daly River.

## Content overview

This chapter presents an overview of the types of knowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have passed down from ancestral times to enable them to survive and thrive on the Australian continent. Starting with the common stereotype of the Indigenous tracker who can find lost people, the chapter describes the gamut of less well-known skills and knowledges that have enabled Indigenous Australians to master living richly and healthily in some of the most unforgiving landscapes on Earth. Included are the sustainability of human systems and natural environments, medicines and healing, fire, astronomy, agricultural practices, land management, Indigenous Ranger programs, and seasons and weather knowledge. This chapter also addresses colonial Australia's failure to recognise the immense wealth of knowledge of the Indigenous people and its subsequent widespread adoption of beliefs about Indigenous people's supposed inferiority – beliefs that, although fully discredited and easily disproved, still lie in the Australian subconscious. Chapters such as this, which provide a thorough summary of the value of Indigenous knowledge, are important to the continued amelioration of such attitudes.

## Teacher introduction

It is remarkable that, over the millennia, Indigenous Australians learnt to live not just *in* their environment, but *with* it, in a way that left few, if any, observable, damaging scars on the landscape. When viewed through the lens of the modern world's problems – climate emergencies, dwindling fish supplies, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, overpopulation,



the depletion of natural resources to power our engines, widespread poverty throughout the world and economic crises, to name a few – the fact that millennia passed here in Australia, relatively untouched by all these things until colonisation, is a measure of how well Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples knew their world and how to use it, without distorting and abusing it.

Sadly, their success at maintaining their living environment – their home for millennia – in a close-to-pristine state, was the very reason that the British failed to respect the claims of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to sovereignty over their lands. ‘They weren’t using it’, is the oft-heard refrain from colonial apologists. Now, thanks to the work of scholars such as Bill Gammage<sup>1</sup> and Bruce Pascoe<sup>2</sup>, it is evident that, far from ‘not using’ their country, Indigenous people created a sophisticated, continent-wide system of land management.

By studying three areas of knowledge and ongoing cultural practices within the natural scientific realm, we can approach an understanding of, and respect for, the ancient knowledge that sustained Australia’s peoples throughout the ages. The examples of environmental management through fire farming, understanding the ebb and flow of the seasons and nature through astronomical observation, and land care through a detailed and complex understanding of environmental interrelationships are but three ways that Indigenous knowledge can help us all to develop a greater understanding of this unique continent.

## Fire

For more than 50,000 years, Indigenous Australians have shaped this landscape using traditional land management practices.

Aboriginal fire management is a body of ancient traditional practices and knowledge about natural systems that are still practised today in some parts of Australia. For tens-of-thousands of years before European colonisation, Aboriginal groups performed cool and controlled burns that limited the incidence and severity of wildfires across the Australian continent. Scholars from a range of disciplines concerned with Australia’s environment, including historians, fire ecologists and botanists, have shown how Australian landscapes were shaped by Aboriginal fire practices. Stephen J. Pyne<sup>3</sup> and Bill Gammage<sup>4</sup> (2011) are among those to have shown how prior to both colonisation and urbanisation, Aboriginal peoples had used fire to promote and distribute plant communities (such as grass or open forest) and sought to distribute trees and plants to promote and protect animals, birds, reptiles and insects.<sup>5</sup>

When Europeans arrived, cultural practices were suppressed, people were displaced and vast tracts of land became depopulated. This has led to large areas that had been carefully managed by Indigenous people becoming much more densely wooded, with thick undergrowth. The result has been an increase in large bushfires and invasive species that threaten both ancient cultures and modern life, as well as precious wildlife.<sup>6</sup> The loss of the mosaic pattern of burning that occurred prior to European settlement has directly resulted in a reduced diversity of wildlife and an increase in raging hot-season wildfires.<sup>7</sup>

Through the activities and resources in this chapter of teachers’ notes, students can learn about Indigenous fire management practices, how these are being reintroduced in some areas of Australia, and their effects.

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1 Gammage, Bill (2011), *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia*, Allen & Unwin.

2 Pascoe, Bruce (2014), *Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or accident?*

3 Pyne, Stephen (1991), *Burning Bush: A fire history of Australia*, Henry Holt and Company.

4 Gammage, Bill (2011), *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia*, Allen & Unwin.

5 <https://indigenouknowledge.research.unimelb.edu.au/>

6 <http://naturesleadingwomen.org/fish-river-australia/>

7 [www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities/tackle-climate-change/climate-change-stories/fighting-fire-with-fire/](http://www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities/tackle-climate-change/climate-change-stories/fighting-fire-with-fire/)

## Astronomy

The ability to link events in the natural world to a cycle that predicts seasonal changes is a key factor in the successful development of Indigenous communities over millennia.<sup>8</sup> Indigenous peoples' study of astronomy and high levels of scientific observation skills gave them a detailed understanding of how everything in nature interrelates and the skills to both benefit from and maintain their environment. These natural barometers are not uniform across the land, as the Australian continent has an enormous diversity of climate conditions and geographical environments; however, one thing that does remain constant across the entire continent is the embeddedness of Indigenous astronomical knowledge in their belief systems and cosmologies.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, everything on the land is reflected in the sky. The sky serves as a scientific textbook, a map, a law book, and a canvas on which complex layers of knowledge are interwoven, linked, and recorded for future generations. The Sun, Moon, and stars encapsulate narratives about social order, seasonal change, the behaviour of plants and animals, navigation, kinship, and spirituality.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have their own astronomers – people who carefully watch the positions of all the celestial objects to inform the community about food economics, ceremony, and travel. In the western Torres Strait, they are called *Zugubau Mabaig*, meaning 'Star Man'. These astronomers carefully observe the positions and properties of the stars to inform a rich corpus of knowledge, a phrase many elders call 'Reading the Stars'.<sup>9</sup>

As can be discovered in the resources listed at the end of this chapter, astronomical knowledge and symbolism is an important part of the belief system in the Torres Strait, and it is prominent in the dances, songs and musical and material culture of the Islanders. This knowledge is encoded in song and dance performance, and astronomically inspired dances, headdresses and dance machines remain a vital and important component of Islander musical traditions and also of the education of each new generation.<sup>10</sup>

The activities and resources in the Astronomy section below are based on Torres Strait Island culture, but teachers are encouraged to extend and adapt the topic to encompass their own local group's astronomical and seasonal knowledges if and where possible.

## Land management

In the past ten years there has been an explosion of interest in, and support for, Indigenous land management programs across Australia. The number of projects and programs involving Indigenous people in managing their own land according to their traditional knowledge is increasing each year. Indigenous Ranger programs are one such branch of this return to Indigenous land management, as is the Indigenous Protected Area scheme.

Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) are a class of protected areas in Australia. An IPA is formed by agreement with Indigenous Australians, declared by Indigenous Australians, and formally recognised by the Australian Government as being part of its National Reserve System.<sup>11</sup> There are currently twenty-five IPAs across Australia, each of which 'is actively managed by its Indigenous owners, who protect their land's plants, animals and cultural sites. The rangers work to control weeds, feral animals and wildfire, and carefully manage visitor impacts'.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> [www.bom.gov.au/iwk/climate\\_culture/Indig\\_seasons.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/climate_culture/Indig_seasons.shtml)

<sup>9</sup> <https://indigenouknowledge.research.unimelb.edu.au/themes/astronomy>

<sup>10</sup> <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1605.08507.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> 'Fact Sheets: Indigenous Protected Areas'. Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. 7 December 2007. <https://web.archive.org/web/20080723205418/http://environment.gov.au/indigenous/fact-sheets/ipa.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20080723230543/http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa/declared/index.html>

There are many online resources about Indigenous Ranger programs that explain the work they are doing and how Indigenous cultures play a significant role in the types of land management practices they are undertaking. The activities below focus on the work being undertaken at the Fish River Station on the Daly River in the Northern Territory.

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

Ol.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
Ol.3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.
Ol.5	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of life are uniquely expressed through ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.
Ol.9	The significant contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the present and past are acknowledged locally, nationally and globally.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: Science

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

#### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a long history of successfully manipulating and managing the environment, particularly with cool-burn fires
- that in many places, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to practise their land management traditions, particularly through the Ranger Programs
- that astronomy is a significant feature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and cultures.

The students will **understand**:

- how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people practise land management
- that, around Australia, special programs are helping to rejuvenate areas that have suffered from Western agricultural and fishing practices
- that the Fish River Station in the Northern Territory is an example of how land management practices are put into operation
- how cool burning practices have been used for millennia to prevent large scale bushfires
- that an oral culture has the capability to encode and transmit complex knowledge on the timescale of thousands of years.

The students will **be able to**:

- explain how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people managed their environments using their scientific knowledge of the seasons, climate, astronomy, biology and geography

- use evidence to explain how traditional land management practices benefit the environment
- suggest ways in which traditional land management practices might benefit specific places in their own areas
- explain how the night sky holds a wealth of scientific and geographic knowledge, which is interpreted and deciphered in different ways by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Activity summary

### Activity 1: Fire debate

- 1 Using the resources in the list below titled “Fire”, students will learn about Aboriginal burning practices (cool burns) and discuss them in comparison with the dominant mainstream practice of letting bushland areas grow naturally.
- 2 Questions for students to address, either individually, or in groups.
  - a What effect does preventive burning of a bushland environment have on the composition of the trees, bushes and grasses that grow in a given area?
  - b What happens to that same environment if it is left to grow naturally?
  - c What are the arguments presented for not doing cool burns as traditionally practised by Aboriginal groups?
  - d What different effects do cool burns and bushfires have on the local wildlife?
- 2 Divide the class into two teams, one in favour of controlled cool burns and one against. Each team should then research their side in more depth and select two or three speakers to represent each group. These speakers should then participate in a debate, where both sides of the argument are presented. If possible, the debate should be presented to an audience outside the class – for example, another class or parents –so that objective observers can both learn from the arguments presented and decide which team has made the best case.
- 3 If your school is located in an area that has an Indigenous Ranger program, or where Elders from your local group hold information about traditional burning practices, you could engage with them about developing an activity that is specific to your location.
- 4 If practical, you could take your class into a ‘natural’ bushland environment in your local area and have the students observe what plants, grasses and trees are growing, the density of the undergrowth and the tree canopy. They should then:
  - a Predict what the environment could be like if it had controlled burning.
  - b Predict what might happen to the environment if a large bushfire went through that area.
  - c Draw conclusions about why.

### Activity 2: Torres Strait Islander astronomy

Before beginning this activity, it will probably be necessary to do some background preparation with the class about the Torres Strait Islands, as they are often not well-known outside Queensland. Good resources about the Torres Strait are listed in the Resources section below. If time permits, any of the three half-hour episodes of *Blue Water Empire*, screened in 2019 on the ABC, are very useful, and the short music videos prepared by school students of the Torres Strait are both enjoyable and an engaging way to introduce the Torres Strait for the first time.

The resources for this particular activity are listed below and numbered to correspond with the activity.

- 1 Students learn that astronomy is an important part of Torres Strait Islanders’ way of living and interacting with the world. They read about the Torres Strait Islander creation ancestor, Tagai, and how this forms one of the most

important beliefs that underpin Torres Strait Islander culture [Resource 1 and Resource 2]. After reading these, either individually or in small groups, students present the information they have discovered to the class, either through discussion or a written format.

- 2 The detailed, yet easily readable information in Resource 3 is then examined by the class. It has two really useful images (of the Torres Strait Islands, and of the Tagai constellation) that can be shared with the students, along with the more detailed information on pages 1–5. The Tagai creation story is told here again on pages 4–5 with more detail. This will build on what they learnt in Resources 1 and 2 with more detail and more sophistication.
- 3 Using Resource 3, students identify and write down (for later use) the six examples given in the last section of the article that show how Torres Strait Islanders use astronomy to determine what is happening with the weather, and the plant and animal life cycles at different times of year.
- 4 Students then create a table, or similar, in which they collate information about astronomical features and the related seasonal events in the Torres Strait. Resource 4 is an interactive seasonal calendar for Erub (Darnley) Island in the Torres Strait. A seasonal calendar is a visual method of showing the distribution of seasonally varying phenomena (for example, economic activities, production activities, problems such as debt, illness/disease, migration, and natural events/phenomena) over time.<sup>13</sup>

Resource 4 needs to be accessed by all students online for this activity. They click on the orange circle in the bottom left to open the ‘wheel’ on the screen. The wheel has detailed information showing the months, the monsoon season names in English, the season names in the language spoken on Erub Island, Meriam Mer<sup>14</sup>, the positions of the Tagai constellation in each month, and graphics showing the relevant plants and animals for each month. Clicking on the name of a month will open up more specific detail for that season.

Students first fill out the table for the examples noted in Step 3 above (about how Torres Strait Islanders apply astronomical information) using the interactive seasonal calendar. Here is an example of how this could be formatted (showing potential student answers in grey):

Event	Month	Season	Astronomical feature	Monsoon season (English)	Monsoon season (Meriam Mer)
Wet season is about to begin	October	Spring	Tagai’s left hand (the Southern Cross) dips into the sea	North-east season	Sager/ Naiger Kerker
Turtle and dugong are mating	November	Spring	The rising of Usal (Pleiades) and Utimal (Orion) (Tagai is below the horizon)	North-east season	Naiger Kerker Kipa Gob
Time to plant gardens in anticipation of the coming Kuki season					
The mating season of the shark is starting	May	Autumn	Baidam (the Big Dipper and Ursa Major) appear over PNG (Tagai is fully visible, tipped slightly to the east)	South-east season	Sager ker ker
Should plant banana, sugar cane, and sweet potato					
The best time to fish			Lunar phases each month		

<sup>13</sup> [https://assets.fauna-flora.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/FFI\\_2013\\_Seasonal-Calendar.pdf](https://assets.fauna-flora.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/FFI_2013_Seasonal-Calendar.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.tstlanguages.org/our-languages/meriam-mir/erub-dialect>

This activity can now be taken in a number of directions if desired. Here are some suggestions:

- a Continue with the table, adding more information derived from the online interactive seasonal calendar from Erub Island.
- b Create a Venn diagram, or similar, that shows information specific to the Erub Island calendar, information specific to the common 12-month/4-seasons calendar, and information relevant to both.
- c Investigate the similarities with a seasonal calendar from another part of Australia, and a different Indigenous group. There are several resources for this listed below.
- d If your school is located in an area where the traditional owners have produced a similar seasonal calendar, you could contact them and engage with them about their calendar. This could become a project where the students work with local elders to make a mural of the local calendar to show in the school, as in the project shown in the document 'Documenting and Sharing the Seasonal Calendar for Erub Island, Torres Strait', referenced below.

### Activity 3: Indigenous knowledge in practice: Fish River Station

Students learn about the Fish River Station project as an example of how areas of Australia are being returned to Indigenous management with the aim of repairing environmental damage and replenishing the native species and their habitats. They produce a product to demonstrate their learning such as a web page, a two-minute explanatory video, an online presentation such as Prezi etc. The student should be able to present the product as part of a class display.

- 1 As a basic introduction to the types of land management projects taking place throughout Australia, students should start by reading the Resource 5 web pages and [watching the video](#). These give a brief summary of Indigenous land management programs – in particular, the Martu Living Desert Project, in which Martu people in the Western Desert are employed to manage and preserve this valuable environmental site by combining modern science with Indigenous ecological knowledge.

The Martu lands have significant conservation values globally, nationally and locally. They are part of the most intact arid ecosystem anywhere in the world and provide one of the last wild havens for some of Australia's iconic but highly threatened desert species.

After [watching the video](#) in Resource 5, they answer the following questions:

- a Describe the different types of environment you see in the first twenty seconds of the video.
  - b How many Martu people are employed on this project?
  - c What equipment can you see being used in the video?
  - d Explain what the elders see in the project.
  - e Explain what the younger people see in the project.
- 4 Students then move on to the Fish River Project resources, where they gather information about the background to the project, the types of activities being undertaken and the benefits to both the people and the environment.
  - 5 Resources 6–10 are all web pages that have information about the Fish River Station program. The class can be divided into groups, which each collect information from one of the resources, or about one topic to do with the project – for example, the history of the project, who is involved, the aims of the project, the plants in the area, the animals in the area, the types of activities being undertaken to repair, maintain or improve the environment.
  - 6 The groups come together, share the information they have discovered and create a visual representation of the data, using both text and images. After this is completed, students then choose one of the areas and try to find further detail or examples, such as the type of crocodile found at the station, the health of the Daly River, or the four Indigenous groups who share the site (Wagiman, Labarganyan, Malak Malak and Kamu clans).



- 7 Finally, the class can again be divided into small groups or pairs. Each pair uses the information collated and shared to create an 'information resource' about the Fish River project. Explain to the students that the information about the project had to be collated from across a number of different websites and videos because there is not a single resource that covers all of the detail.

Therefore, the point of the activity for the students is to create an information resource (web page, Prezi, short video, PowerPoint etc.) that will add a genuine, quality resource to those that already exist, but will contain *all* of the information in one place. This gives the students a sense of purpose and importance to what they are doing. The resources they produce should then be shared widely so that the students can see their work as genuine and relevant, and as filling a hole in the available resources.

## Links to learning areas

### Science

#### Year 7

##### **Earth and Space Sciences**

Predictable phenomena on Earth, including seasons and eclipses, are caused by the relative positions of the sun, Earth and the moon (ACSSU115)

- researching knowledges held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples regarding the phases of the moon and the connection between the lunar cycle and ocean tides
- researching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' oral traditions and cultural recordings of solar and lunar eclipses and investigating similarities and differences with contemporary understandings of such phenomena
- investigating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' calendars and how they are used to predict seasonal changes

Some of Earth's resources are renewable, including water that cycles through the environment, but others are non-renewable (ACSSU116)

- exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' connections with, and valuing of, water and water resource management

##### **Biological Sciences**

Interactions between organisms, including the effects of human activities can be represented by food chains and food webs (ACSSU112)

- investigating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' responses to the disruptive interactions of invasive species and their effect on important food webs that many communities are a part of, and depend on, for produce and medicine

##### **Nature and Development of Science**

Scientific knowledge has changed peoples' understanding of the world and is refined as new evidence becomes available (ACSHE119)

- investigating the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' knowledge in the identification of medicinal and endemic plants

Science knowledge can develop through collaboration across the disciplines of science and the contributions of people from a range of cultures (ACSHE223)

- investigating how land management practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples informs sustainable management of the environment to protect biodiversity



People use science understanding and skills in their occupations and these have influenced the development of practices in areas of human activity (ACSHE121)

- investigating how the knowledge and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are being used to inform scientific decisions, such as the care of Country/Place

### **Processing and analysing data and information**

Construct and use a range of representations, including graphs, keys and models to represent and analyse patterns or relationships in data using digital technologies as appropriate (ACSIS129)

- collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the production of calendars that demonstrate seasonal patterns and relationships using digital technologies

Summarise data, from students' own investigations and secondary sources, and use scientific understanding to identify relationships and draw conclusions based on evidence (ACSIS130)

- acknowledging, analysing and interpreting data and information from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' understandings of Earth's systems and cycles

## **Year 8**

### **Physical Sciences**

Energy appears in different forms, including movement (kinetic energy), heat and potential energy, and energy transformations and transfers cause change within systems (ACSSU155)

- investigating traditional fire-starting methods used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their understanding of the transformation of energy

### **Use and Influence of Science**

People use science understanding and skills in their occupations, and these have influenced the development of practices in areas of human activity (ACSHE136)

- investigating how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples used scientific understandings of complex ecological relationships to develop specific fire-based agricultural practices

### **Planning and Conducting**

Collaboratively and individually plan and conduct a range of investigation types, including fieldwork and experiments, ensuring safety and ethical guidelines are followed (ACSIS140)

- collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the planning of scientific investigations, including considerations of heritage sites and artefacts

## **Year 9**

### **Biological Sciences**

Ecosystems consist of communities of interdependent organisms and abiotic components of the environment; matter and energy flow through these systems (ACSSU176)

- investigating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' responses to the disruptive interactions of invasive species and their effect on important food webs that many communities are a part of, and depend on, for produce and medicine

### **Chemical Sciences**

Chemical reactions, including combustion and the reactions of acids, are important in both non-living and living systems and involve energy transfer (ACSSU179)

- investigating how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples use fire-mediated chemical reactions to facilitate energy and nutrient transfer in ecosystems through the practice of firestick farming

## **Nature and Development of Science**

Scientific understanding, including models and theories, is contestable and is refined over time through a process of review by the scientific community (ACSHE157)

- investigating how fire research has evaluated the effects of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples fire regimes and how these findings have influenced fire management policy throughout Australia

Advances in scientific understanding often rely on developments in technology and technological advances are often linked to scientific discoveries (ACSHE158)

- researching how technological advances in monitoring greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental factors have contributed to the reinstatement of traditional fire management practices as a strategy to reduce atmospheric pollution

## **Planning and Conducting**

Plan, select and use appropriate investigation types, including field work and laboratory experimentation, to collect reliable data; assess risk and address ethical issues associated with these methods (ACSIS165)

- acknowledging cultural heritage protection Acts as they relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in planning field investigations

## **Use and Influence of Science**

People use scientific knowledge to evaluate whether they accept claims, explanations or predictions, and advances in science can affect people's lives, including generating new career opportunities (ACSHE160)

- considering how the traditional ecological knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is being reaffirmed by modern science and how this is generating new career opportunities in the field of restorative ecology

## **Year 10**

### **Earth and Space Sciences**

The universe contains features including galaxies, stars and solar systems, and the Big Bang theory can be used to explain the origin of the universe (ACSSU188)

- investigating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' responses to the disruptive interactions of invasive species and their effect on important food webs that many communities are a part of, and depend on, for produce and medicine

Global systems, including the carbon cycle, rely on interactions involving the biosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere (ACSSU189)

- investigating how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions through the reinstatement of traditional fire management regimes

### **Use and Influence of Science**

People use scientific knowledge to evaluate whether they accept claims, explanations or predictions, and advances in science can affect people's lives, including generating new career opportunities (ACSHE160)

- considering how ecological sciences are recognising the efficacy of traditional ecological practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and how restorative programs based on these practices are generating new career opportunities

## **Evaluating**

Critically analyse the validity of information in primary and secondary sources, and evaluate the approaches used to solve problems (ACSIS206)

- acknowledging the need to critically analyse scientific literature for potential cultural bias towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

# RESOURCES

## Science in the Australian Curriculum

ACARA has developed 95 new elaborations for the cross-curriculum priority, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, which are distributed throughout the F–10 curriculum. These elaborations were developed with the assistance of ACARA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group and Taskforce, and Science and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum specialists, and provide practical examples across all three strands of the science curriculum and all year levels.<sup>15</sup>

<https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures/>

## Fire

### Fighting Fire With Fire

The Nature Conservancy Australia's page on fire management

<https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities/tackle-climate-change/climate-change-stories/fighting-fire-with-fire/>

### Fire's Role in the Australian Environment [4'11"]

An ABC education resource with a focus on the pattern of burning established by Aboriginal peoples before colonisation

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/525643/>

### Aboriginal fire management

The University of Melbourne's Indigenous Knowledges website has teaching activities for many subjects, together with teacher information and links. This is a page for the specific theme of 'Fire'.

<https://indigenouknowledge.research.unimelb.edu.au/themes/fire>

### Fire: A Burning Question

This is an official Australian Curriculum web resource showing how Year 8s at a particular high school develop inquiry skills by focusing on the science and skills that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have developed and still use today in fire making.

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures/illustrations-of-practice/fire-a-burning-question/>

### Wattleridge Fire and Seasons Calendar

Banbai nation people at Wattleridge Indigenous Protected Area in northern New South Wales developed season and fire calendars with the University of New England. The calendars represent annual seasonal changes as well as biocultural factors that indicate the right, and wrong, time to burn.

<https://www.ala.org.au/blogs-news/banbai-nation-community-season-and-fire-calendars/>

### The Nature Conservancy: Making a difference in Australia [3'21"]

A video that discusses how improved burning practices are helping critically endangered species make a comeback.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51LDwRcyJXg>

### Unique Animals of Northern Australia

How critically endangered species are being better managed in the natural environment to secure their future.

<https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/explore/australian-animals/unique-animals-of-northern-australia/>

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15 <https://australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures/>

## Astronomy

### Resource 1

This short article explains the Torres Strait Islander creation story of the creation ancestor Tagai and the constellations in a concise and accessible way, and also describes how Islanders use astronomy to guide their activities.

<http://theconversation.com/a-shark-in-the-stars-astronomy-and-culture-in-the-torres-strait-15850>

### Resource 2

A concise telling of the Torres Strait Islanders' creation belief about the ancestor, Tagai, who became a constellation

<http://aboriginalastronomy.blogspot.com/2012/01/tagai-warrior-from-torres-strait.html>

### Resource 3

This is a longer article with similar information but more detail and more references to the links between Torres Strait Islander culture and astronomy. It also includes the Tagai story, along with some useful images of the Torres Strait and constellations. After page 5, if you wish to continue, the article discusses links between astronomy, and music, dance and culture, and can help to enrich the students' understanding of the prevalence of astronomical phenomena in Torres Strait Island culture.

<https://arxiv.org/pdf/1605.08507.pdf>

### Resource 4

This is a free, online, interactive 'seasons wheel' where students can click on different times of year and see the climate and weather conditions in the Torres Strait, as well as information about what the plant and animal species of the area are doing.

<https://www.crackerjackededucation.com.au/resources/torres-strait-islands-weather-seasons-wheel/>

### Documenting and Sharing the Seasonal Calendar for Erub Island, Torres Strait

This authors of this report, 'Traditional knowledge systems and climate change in Torres Strait', worked with community Elders on Erub Island in the eastern group of islands in the Torres Strait to document the Elders' knowledge of seasonal patterns, including winds, wet and dry seasons, and also patterns in plant, animal and bird life.

<https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/42487/1/131-JCU-McNamara-K-et-al-2010-Documenting-and-sharing-Erub-Island-seasonal-calendar.pdf>

### Curriculum Resource – Astronomy

The University of Melbourne's Indigenous Knowledges website has teaching activities for many subjects, together with teacher information and links. This is page for the specific theme of 'Astronomy'.

<https://indigenouknowledge.research.unimelb.edu.au/themes/astronomy>

### Ancient 'Moon Rock' engravings protected as proof of Aboriginal astronomy

This short article is about the 'Moon Rock' site, located at one of the highest points in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, 20 kilometres north of Sydney's CBD, which includes extensive sandstone engravings by the Garrigal clan of the Cammeraigal peoples. The engravings show the eight phases of the moon.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/the-point-with-stan-grant/article/2016/11/14/ancient-moon-rock-engravings-protected-proof-aboriginal-astronomy?cid=inbody:school-kids-teach-themselves-noongar-astronomy-through-selfpublished-book>

### How astronomy paved the way for *terra nullius*, and helped to get rid of it, too

This website explains how astronomical knowledge of the Torres Strait Islanders was used in the Mabo case to successfully prove to the court that the people had possession and occupation of their lands over many generations.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/10/17/how-astronomy-paved-way-terra-nullius-and-helped-get-rid-it-too?cid=inbody:ancient-moon-rock-engravings-protected-as-proof-of-aboriginal-astronomy>

## **Aboriginal Astronomy**

This web resource explores the many aspects of Indigenous astronomy in Australia, with a specific page for the Torres Strait.

<http://www.aboriginalastronomy.com.au>

<http://www.aboriginalastronomy.com.au/content/community/torres-strait/>

## **Stars that vary in brightness shine in the oral traditions of Aboriginal Australians**

This article describes how new research reveals that Aboriginal oral traditions describe the variable nature of three red-giant stars – Betelgeuse, Aldebaran and Antares – and how this knowledge was embedded in their stories and songs.

<https://theconversation.com/stars-that-vary-in-brightness-shine-in-the-oral-traditions-of-aboriginal-australians-85833>

## **Curricula Project – Astronomy**

This web page links the teaching of Indigenous astronomical knowledge to specific curricular lines of enquiry and outcomes.

<https://www.indigenous.gov.au/teaching-guides/curricula-project/astronomy>

## **Australian Indigenous Astronomy**

This blog is aimed at learning about and sharing the traditional astronomical knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It contains information about astronomical information and projects from different Indigenous people across Australia.

<http://aboriginalastronomy.blogspot.com>

## **Astronomy in Aboriginal culture**

Bhathal, Ragbir, 'Astronomy in Aboriginal Culture'. *Astronomy & Geophysics*, Volume 47, Issue 5, October 2006, pp 5.27–5.30

This article has many examples of Indigenous astronomical understandings, both historical and contemporary, from different places across Australia.

<https://academic.oup.com/astrogeo/article/47/5/5.27/231805>

## **Aboriginal star maps**

This article describes how Aboriginal people navigate their way over long distances using the positions of constellations and other celestial bodies, and how their ancient routes have, in some cases, been adopted for Australia's major highways.

<https://theconversation.com/how-ancient-aboriginal-star-maps-have-shaped-australias-highway-network-55952>

## **Wurdi Youang**

This paper discusses the amazing and ancient Wathaurong stone arrangement located between Melbourne and Geelong and its astronomical indications.

<https://www.atnf.csiro.au/people/Ray.Norris/papers/n258.pdf>

## **Seasons and stars in the Torres Strait Islands**

A resource produced by Education Queensland to teach about the astronomical understandings of Indigenous people.

<https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/k-12-policies/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-perspectives/resources/seasons-stars>

A good teacher resource which tells extensively of various instances of Aboriginal beliefs being represented in the astronomical space

<https://www.assa.org.au/media/2912/aaaip.pdf>

## Indigenous seasons and seasonal calendars

### **Indigenous seasons across northern Australia [1'40"]**

This is an introductory 1'40" video to the idea of seasonal calendars and how Indigenous people link meteorological patterns with changes in plant and animal life across the year.

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/1771788/>

### **Indigenous Weather Knowledge**

The website is a formal recognition of traditional weather and climate knowledge that has been developed and passed down through countless generations by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It contains seasonal calendars for sixteen different Aboriginal peoples from around Australia.

<http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/index.shtml>

### **Indigenous Seasons Calendars**

CSIRO has worked with a number of Indigenous language groups from various parts of Australia to create a series of calendars representing their seasonal and ecological knowledge.

<https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/Environment/Land-management/Indigenous/Indigenous-calendars>

<https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/Environment/Land-management/Indigenous/Indigenous-calendars/About-the-calendars>

### **Indigenous Seasons (Kurna) [3'07"]**

This episode of BTN about the Kurna people, and related teacher resources and classroom activities, are aimed at a primary school audience; however, many of the activities could be easily adapted for lower secondary.

<https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/indigenous-seasons/10522128>

<https://www.abc.net.au/btn/resources/teacher/episode/20171114-indigenouseasons.pdf>

## Land management

### **Resource 5**

'Working with Indigenous Australians for conservation' is an introductory web page that describes how Indigenous people are being employed to work on their own country in land management projects, in particular, those supported by the Nature Conservancy Australia agency. It has a two-minute video in which the Martu people of the Western Desert explain their work in conserving part of the world's most intact desert. (The video is also available separately on YouTube.) The second web page is a brief summary of the Martu lands and has many beautiful pictures of the landscape there, giving students a good idea what the place looks like.

<https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities/tackle-climate-change/climate-change-stories/working-with-indigenous-australians-for-conservation/>

<https://www.kj.org.au/martucountry>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWgZS7UtkoA&feature=youtu.be>

### **Resource 6**

The main web page for an introduction to the Fish River Station project.

<https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities/tackle-climate-change/climate-change-stories/a-landmark-project-at-fish-river-station/>

### **Resource 7 [1'40"]**

A video that explains the Fish River Station project

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=6&v=BH\\_DZjmV88U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=BH_DZjmV88U)

### Resource 8

The Department of the Environment and Energy's web page about the Fish River Station project.

<https://www.environment.gov.au/land/nrs/case-studies/nt/fish-river>

### Resource 9

Although this is a 75-page scientific report about the plant and animal species found at Fish River Station, the first pages of the document are really helpful learning about the Fish River Station project, and it has many good photographs throughout. It is recommended that teachers download the PDF and extract pages 6 and 7 for student use. The whole report is an excellent resource for upper secondary biology studies.

<http://bushblitz.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/bb-FishRiver-NT-2012.pdf>

### Resource 10

These are two related web pages about the women's ranger team at the Fish River Station land management site.

<http://naturesleadingwomen.org/fish-river-australia/>

<https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities/tackle-climate-change/climate-change-stories/women-rangers-in-northern-australia/>

### Indigenous Protected Areas

This Federal Government website outlines the Indigenous Protected Areas program and has information and maps for each one.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20080723205418/http://environment.gov.au/indigenous/fact-sheets/ipa.html>

### Indigenous Protected Areas Maps

<https://web.archive.org/web/20080723232446/http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa/map.html>

### The Nature Conservancy

This resource has information about conservation projects across Australia, many of which have Indigenous input.

<https://www.natureaustralia.org.au>

### Country Needs People

Information about Indigenous Ranger programs and Indigenous Protected Areas

<https://www.countryneedspeople.org.au>

### Indigenous Perspective on Sustainability [3'29']

An ABC education resource where Indigenous people explain their approach to sustainability

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/525907/>

### Bardi Jawi Rangers: Caring for Country [3'01"]

An ABC education resource about the work of the Bardi Jawi Rangers

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/526699/>

### Through Our Eyes

'Through Our Eyes' is a series on YouTube that features Aboriginal Elders and knowledge-holders from the Ngemba, Kamilaroi and Euahlayi language groups describing the land management practices and social, spiritual and cultural knowledge that enabled their people to care for the country for tens of thousands of years.

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5Oe\\_wGmcw4v-oggEKWfOTlCpIsHoJsRV](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5Oe_wGmcw4v-oggEKWfOTlCpIsHoJsRV)



### **Partnerships: Protecting Torres Strait for the future – TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit [4’09”]**

A showcase of the Torres Strait region in terms of its unique cultural and natural values, and some of the many achievements of the TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU) since its establishment in 2006

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBe0juo-AgI>

### **Torres Strait Ranger Program: From humble beginnings [22’46”]**

The Torres Strait Ranger Project began in 2009, and now has thirteen Ranger groups in fourteen communities across the region. It delivers all the ranger programs across the Torres Strait, and this video explains what the rangers do – in particular, the conservation and management of the dugong and turtle species.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtfxBg-oTYY>

### **Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority**

This website is for the NT’s Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, which is responsible for overseeing the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites on land and sea across the whole of the Northern Territory.

<https://www.aapant.org.au>

### **Torres Strait**

#### **Spirituality and religion among Torres Strait Islanders**

This page, published by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, has a good summary of important information and background detail about Torres Strait Islanders.

<https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/k-12-policies/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-perspectives/resources/spirituality-religion>

### **Tagai Buway: ‘Two Worlds’ [3’55”]**

A music video by young Torres Strait Islanders who show their identity and their traditional culture in the modern world through the medium of rap. It has positive, informative lyrics and engaging footage of the Torres Strait showing both modern life and people engaging in traditional dances and ceremony.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0yWYvCj-ic>

### **Blue Water Empire**

A three-part semi-dramatised documentary series giving a unique insight into the compelling history of the Torres Strait Islands, told through key stories by the men and women of the region. It aired on the ABC in July 2019 and is currently available on ABC iView and also through [www.clickview.com.au](http://www.clickview.com.au).

<https://www.abc.net.au/tv/programs/blue-water-empire/>

### **Partnerships: Protecting Torres Strait for the future – TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit**

A showcase of the Torres Strait region in terms of its unique cultural and natural values, and some of the many achievements of the TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU) since its establishment in 2006

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBe0juo-AgI>

### **Myths and Legends of the Torres Strait**

This is a 1970s publication that is available free online and is a rich resource of Torres Strait Islander culture. Teachers should be aware, however, that it is no longer acceptable to refer to people’s beliefs as ‘myths and legends’ as this terminology relegates their beliefs to the status of fiction.

<https://archive.org/details/MythsandLegendsoftheTorresStrait>

### **Torres Strait Island language plan**

This web resource has good information about the critically endangered languages and dialects of the Torres Strait, with short videos of people speaking in these languages as demonstrations. A very good resource to use when introducing the Torres Strait Islands to students.

<https://www.tstlanguages.org>

### **Island Paradise: The Torres Strait [49'58"]**

A documentary that 'explores the history, culture and everyday lives of people living and working in a remote paradise – the Torres Strait Islands'

<https://online.clickview.com.au/libraries/videos/74ef9b2d-e665-d21d-d6bd-2e083f189ecd/island-paradise-the-torres-strait>

# 6

# Art

## This resource:

- is designed to develop student understanding of a variety of Indigenous art styles by examining one style in depth through the activities, and other styles through examining the resources at the end of the section
- aims to increase students' understanding of how Indigenous art can convey significant meaning about their culture and beliefs.

## Content overview

Art is one of the most well-known and easily recognisable parts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This chapter details the early days of the art scene and explains how Indigenous artists were introduced to new types of paints and materials, and easily transferred their skills to new media. The founding of the Papunya Arts Centre, followed by many others in regional and remote areas, gave Aboriginal artists access to materials and a workspace as well as a way of selling their work. Today, these art centres are a hub for many communities and, as well as providing local employment and art for sale in the shop, they run online sales to art collectors all over the world.

## Teacher introduction

There is a great diversity in every aspect across all the art being made by Australia's many different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. Artists may produce work in a typically traditional style, may blend traditional elements with contemporary ideas, or may produce works that are entirely of a contemporary nature. While much of the art produced by Indigenous artists does draw on a sophisticated system of connections, depicted through hereditary design features, there are a growing number of artists whose work is wholly contemporary in style.

Originally, Europeans considered only their own works of art as 'art' or 'high art', and believed that the art of other cultures was primitive. Colonial explorers, anthropologists and collectors took many examples of Aboriginal objects, such as painted shields, from people and put them in private collections or sent them to Europe to be shown in museums as exotica. The refined, international art market for Aboriginal art began to develop in the 1970s. At first, the Western Desert style of dot painting became the most recognised style of design; however, that style is only from one region of Australia. Today, the dot painting style is but one of many commonly recognised styles used by Indigenous people. Within their styles, artists have the right to paint their own hereditary designs, which belong to their clan; unauthorised artists, however, may not use the designs that belong to specific groups of Indigenous people.

The following information, activity and resource list focus on developing students' knowledge about one particular Indigenous art tradition in some depth. The Wandjina genre from the Kimberley region of Western Australia has been selected as there are many good resources available. As well, its design features and what they represent are more easily comprehended by students who are studying Indigenous designs for the first time, as they are less abstract in their nature compared with the 'dot painting' style of the Central Desert or the cross-hatching of north-east Arnhem Land.

It is important for the students to learn about the beliefs and stories that explain the existence of the Wandjina so they gain a respect for their importance and their level of sacredness to the Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wununbal people. As with any specific Aboriginal design, students should not be trying to reproduce it unless working under the guidance of a traditional owner or elder to whom the design belongs. This activity, instead, asks students to extrapolate from what they have learnt about creation spirits and imagine their own.

One step of the activity asks students to research the Wandjina stories and be able to recount them, while another asks them to describe and explain the common design features found in most or all Wandjina paintings. When searching the internet for this, it is inevitable that students will come across sites that proclaim the Wandjina to be aliens, and that they came to Earth in a spaceship. It can be explained to students that the Wandjina's style, particularly their large eyes and 'halo', have been interpreted that way by Westerners due to their similarity to depictions of aliens in Western culture; however, such stories are in no way a part of traditional Aboriginal understandings of these creation spirits.

For an examination of a contemporary Indigenous artist as a comparison, there is an additional activity about the work of Melbourne-based artist and designer Arkie Barton. Her website features her highly colourful paintings on canvas as well as her fabrics, which have been used in fashion design. Barton's work was featured in the highly successful [Blak Design Matters](#) exhibition at the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne in 2018. In an interview about her work, Barton said that she 'is distinctly aware of the "blurred, idealistic view of what Indigenous art is" that many non-Indigenous Australians hold. There's a disconnect. Everyone can recognise traditional [Indigenous] art that graces our souvenir shops and gallery merchandise, but what about our contemporary Indigenous creative movements?'<sup>1</sup> Together with other young artists and designers, Barton is bringing contemporary Aboriginal culture to mainstream Australians through fashion.

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

OL1	Australia has two distinct Indigenous groups: Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and within those groups there is significant diversity.
OL2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
OL3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.
OL9	The significant contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the present and past are acknowledged locally, nationally and globally.

1 [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_au/article/7xbqq9/how-fashion-can-help-us-talk-about-indigenous-culture](https://i-d.vice.com/en_au/article/7xbqq9/how-fashion-can-help-us-talk-about-indigenous-culture)

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

## Visual Arts

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

Through this activity, students will develop their knowledge of the characteristics of art from the north-west Kimberley region of Western Australia.

They will explore ideas and practices used by artists, including practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent different views, beliefs and opinions (ACAVAM114).

### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that the Wandjina are the sacred creation beings of the Kimberley region of Western Australia
- that the Wandjina gave the language, the culture and the laws of the country to three different language groups – the Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wununbal people.
- that the Wandjina are associated with rain and the seasonal regeneration of the land
- that all Wandjina depicted in rock art paintings have similar visual characteristics and design features
- that the Wandjina design is the first Indigenous iconography to be trademarked in Australia. This means that it is now recognised by Australian law as belonging to the Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wununbal people.

The students will **understand**:

- that some people believe that the rock art paintings are actually the original Wandjina themselves in the rock, but that they have been touched up and repainted throughout the generations
- that the Wandjinas can only be painted by the Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunumbal people of the Kimberley, and only after years of ceremony and initiation
- that Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunumbal artists produce contemporary art that is influenced by the Wandjina.

The students will **be able to**:

- recount the story of the Wandjina creator spirits in their own words
- describe the artistic features common to most or all Wandjina paintings and what they represent
- discuss some of the contentious issues around the Wandjina figure being used by others, drawing on both their own opinions and the beliefs of the traditional owners and artists
- create an artwork that reflects their own ideas and imagination about creation beings (without attempting to reproduce complete Wandjina imagery).

# Activity summary

The students will examine the Wandjina through a series of activities designed to develop their knowledge of the rock paintings in the Kimberley and their understanding of Aboriginal creation spirits. Using both their own creativity and the knowledge they have gained, they will create their own artwork (painting or other medium) based on the idea of creation spirits. They will also explore an example of contemporary Indigenous art and fashion through the work of Melbourne-based artist and designer Arkie Barton.

## Activity 1

- 1 View the 18-minute video, [Mowanjum People: Spirit of the Wandjina](#), produced by the Mowanjum Art Centre, which shows Elders describing the Wandjina and their significance, the recent history of the artists' community and also scenes of a ceremony involving singing, dancing and costumes. They will work together in pairs or small groups to recall the main points that they remember from the video, and these are then collated by the teacher into a main bullet point list and/or put into a slide show.
- 2 Examine the Wandjina depictions painted on canvas by contemporary Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunumbal artists on the [Desert River Sea](#) website and create a description of a Wandjina that is based on the features common to all or most of the depictions.
- 3 Undertake a research activity to find out the meaning of the design of the Wandjina. For example, why is there no mouth, and what does the solid circle on their chests represent?

## Activity 2

Research the story of the '[Wandering Wandjinas](#)' that appeared in Perth in 2007 and learn how the public and media were captivated by the images, and what the Aboriginal people from the Kimberley thought of them. They discuss the pros and cons about this occurrence, considering the viewpoints of both the Aboriginal people and the artist.

## Activity 3

To conclude the Wandjina activities, students plan, and then produce, an artwork *in their own style* that shows their understanding and imagination of creation spirits. They present their work to the class and discuss how their representations reveal something they have learnt by studying the Wandjina. This should not use Wandjina design features, but those from the student's imagination.

## Activity 4

Finally, as a comparison, examine the paintings and fashion designs by Melbourne-based artist and designer Arkie Barton. [Her website](#) has many examples of her work, and students can discuss these by comparing them with more traditional representations such as those of the Wandjina. Practically, students can either attempt their own painting in a similarly contemporary style, or work with a small design feature and develop it into a canvas or a screen print in the style of Barton's works.

# Links to learning areas

## Visual Arts

Students draw on artworks from a range of cultures, times and locations as they experience visual arts. They explore the influences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and those of the Asia region.

### Years 7 and 8

Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork (ACAVAM118)

- combining and adapting materials, techniques, technologies and art making processes, reflecting upon techniques used by artists including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists
- Considering viewpoints – forms: For example – Why did the artist choose this style of representation? What other forms and styles suit this message?

Practise techniques and processes to enhance representation of ideas in their art-making (ACAVAM121)

- extending technical competence when using selected techniques, such as printmaking, brush techniques in painting, digital editing, shaping 3D forms

### Years 9 and 10

Conceptualise and develop representations of themes, concepts or subject matter to experiment with their developing personal style, reflecting on the styles of artists, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAVAM125)

- exploring and reflecting on the connections between their own artworks and artworks from different contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks, for example, maintaining a reflective journal of their developing artwork

Analyse a range of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their visual art-making, starting with Australian artworks, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider international artworks (ACAVAR131)

- identifying how visual arts professionals embed their values and beliefs, and how audiences react and interpret the meaning and intent of their artworks differently

## RESOURCES

### Resources from the Activities

#### **Mowanjum People – Spirit of the Wandjina [18'07"]**

This video shows Elders describing the Wandjina and their significance, the recent history of the artists' community and also scenes of a ceremony involving singing, dancing and costumes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pErLYNdATIA>

#### **Kimberley Art Then and Now: Celebrating the diversity of Indigenous culture in the Kimberley**

This art exhibition has drawn together artworks ranging from drawings, photography, ochre art and video to cowhide art and glasswork from 140 Aboriginal artists from the Kimberley. Each artwork has a brief explanation about its content. Teachers could select a number of artworks that relate to a theme, such as water or fire, and use them as examples. There are at least a dozen paintings of Wandjina here that can be used for the activity above.

<http://desertriversea.com.au>



### **‘Wandering Wandjinas’ mystery**

This is a news story from the Perth Now website about the appearance in Perth of Wandjina graffiti.

<https://www.perthnow.com.au/news/wa/wandering-wandjinas-mystery-ng-50f81fec432f89a9e25dd1b79b2f7728>

### **Arkie the Label**

The website of contemporary Indigenous artist and designer Arkie Barton. It has many of her art works displayed, and they are bright and engaging and are good for discussing with students.

<http://www.arkiethelabel.com/art>

### **Other resources**

#### **Blak Design Matters**

This is the website for an exhibition that appeared at the Koorie Heritage Trust in Federation Square in Melbourne in 2018, and featured works from Indigenous artist across the country in many different media such as fashion, architecture and interior design.

<http://koorieheritagetrust.com.au/exhibitions/coming-soon-blak-design-matters/>

#### **Australian Aboriginal Art Education & Teacher Resources**

Although located in Western Australia, this resource is fully applicable to schools in all areas. It is a fantastic resource for teachers as it has lesson plans that are theme-based, language-based, region-based, artist-based and topic-based. Also included are stories, history and Aboriginal art and art styles.

<https://japingkaaboriginalart.com/education/>

#### **Collaborative Art Project (Secondary)**

This is a Narragunnawali classroom resource designed for secondary-level Visual Arts. It contains learning outcomes, inquiry questions and a practical activity.

<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/40/collaborative-art-project-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR>

#### **Sculpture: Wyarra Family group 2010**

This resource is useful at Years 7 and 8, especially with regard to content descriptions that refer to considering the broader context of works of art, such as their social, cultural and historical context. It is also a helpful resource in relation to content descriptions about the importance of connection to country for Aboriginal peoples. Celebrating this connection, Burruwal and Yarinkura's works evoke ancestral spirits.

<https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=207122&PICTAUS=TRUE&TLF=TRUE>

### **Northern Territory**

#### **Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre**

This is the website of the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre and it has many short videos which are great to use in class, as well as images and resources.

<https://yirrkal.com>

#### **National Museum of Australia – Papunya Art**

Considered the birthplace of Aboriginal art, Papunya is one of the best-known centres of Aboriginal art in Australia. The National Museum of Australia's web page about its Papunya collection tells the story of Papunya in detail and how it became to be an important location for Aboriginal art.

<https://www.nma.gov.au/explore/collection/highlights/papunya-collection>

## **Papunya Tula**

The Papunya School of Art is featured in this PDF unit of work.

[https://agsa-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/files/EDU\\_Resource\\_Aus\\_Art\\_PAPUNYA.8dcbfd4.pdf](https://agsa-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/files/EDU_Resource_Aus_Art_PAPUNYA.8dcbfd4.pdf)

## **The String Figures of Yirrkala – ABC Digibook**

This digibook has text, images, a short video and interactive art activities for students to engage in. It is a complete, short unit that would fit well into the Arts.

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/digibook/619169/the-string-figures-of-yirrkala>

## **Yolŋu Sea Country**

This website has concise pages about many aspects of Yolŋu life and culture. The 'Bark Painting' section of the website introduces students to the types of Yolŋu designs and how these are used in artworks. It also includes information about how paintings were used in the Blue Mud Bay Sea Rights native title case.

<http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/learningsites/seacountry/index.htm>

## **Queensland**

### **Ghost Nets of the Ocean**

The art of the Erub Islanders of the Torres Strait is featured in this PDF unit of work.

[https://agsa-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/files/EDU\\_Resource\\_TARNANTHI17\\_ERUB.197654c.pdf](https://agsa-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/files/EDU_Resource_TARNANTHI17_ERUB.197654c.pdf)

## **Queensland Art Gallery – Gallery of Modern Art**

This Indigenous Australian Art collection 'has a focus on contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, printmaking, photography, video and installation. It includes the most significant collection of contemporary Indigenous Australian fibre art from across the country, with objects made from natural and introduced materials, related sculptural objects and paintings and prints which reference fibre and reflect major themes and stories'.

<https://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/learn/collection/indigenous-australia>

## **South Australia**

### **Art Gallery of South Australia – Teacher Resources**

The Art Gallery of South Australia has good, downloadable PDFs about many aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art from different areas of the country. There is a good, general introductory document (also linked below), which teachers will find very helpful in addressing many questions that people ask about Aboriginal art and artists and is an excellent starting point for this topic. There are also PDFs structured as units of work based on a topic, such as a particular Indigenous artist.

<https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/education/resources-educators/>

[https://agsa-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/files/EDU\\_Resource\\_HTAAResource25FAQ2018.024c199.pdf](https://agsa-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/media/dd/files/EDU_Resource_HTAAResource25FAQ2018.024c199.pdf)

## **Tasmania**

### **Aboriginal Art Online – Tasmania**

This website has images and information about Tasmanian Aboriginal Art, particularly the rock carvings that are found all throughout the state.

<http://aboriginalartonline.com/regions-tasmania-php/>

## **One of Manalargenna's people [3'55"]**

Tasmanian Indigenous artist Judith-Rose Thomas talks about her work and how she is continuing traditional Tasmanian Indigenous art. This is an ABC education resource which has extra resources and links.

<https://www.abc.net.au/local/videos/2013/07/08/3797980.htm>

## Victoria

### **Culture Victoria – Koorie Art and Artefacts**

This website has images of art and artefacts, made in Victoria across the range of pre-contact, mission-era and contemporary times, which reflect the richness and diverse voices of Koorie communities. There are also short videos that are very useful for class activities.

<https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/koorie-art-and-artefacts/>

### **National Gallery of Victoria – Indigenous Education Resources**

The NGV's website has eight resources with downloadable PDFs for teachers on Indigenous Art topics. The one here, as an example, is the teaching resource for artist William Barak.

<https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/category/indigenous/?type=education>

[https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ngv\\_edu\\_edres\\_barak.pdf](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ngv_edu_edres_barak.pdf)

## Western Australia

### **Interview with Mowanjum artist Leah Umbagai**

*Wandjinas, ochre and the art of Mowanjum people* is part of the Japingka Aboriginal Art Gallery's website, and is an interview with Mowanjum artist Leah Umbagai in which she discusses important aspects of her people's beliefs and law with regard to Wandjina.

<https://japingkaaboriginalart.com/articles/wandjinas-ochre-and-the-art-of-mowanjum-people/>

### **Wandjina Dreamtime Story**

The Japingka Aboriginal Art Gallery website has an informative article about the Wandjina and their creation stories.

<https://japingkaaboriginalart.com/articles/wandjina/>

### **Wandjina graffiti in Perth**

'Wandjina, graffiti and heritage: The power and politics of enduring image'. This is an article in *Humanities Research* Vol XV. No. 2. 2009 in which the authors describe the events in Perth in 2007 in which graffiti-style Wandjina appeared anonymously all over the city.

<http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p14881/mobile/index.html>

### **West Australian Department of Education**

<http://det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/apac/detcms/aboriginal-education/apac/lesson-plans/the-arts.en?cat-id=9192344>

# 7

# Performance

## This resource:

- contains information about different types of historical and contemporary performance styles and practices of Indigenous people
- presents content for study that centres largely around The Arts curriculum but can also be applied more broadly in the study of Indigenous cultures.

## Content overview

This chapter is designed to show the range of performance styles and genres that have arisen from Indigenous cultures in different parts of Australia. Students have the opportunity to learn about traditional song, dance and ceremonial traditions as well as ways in which Indigenous contemporary performance practices draw on both traditional roots and modern styles.

The tasks engage with dance as a system of artistic expression through which performers express their Indigenous cultures and their artistry. Included as an integrated part of dance performance is music, which is used in both traditional and non-traditional ways in combination with choreography.

## Teacher introduction

### Dance Rites

Each year, the Sydney Opera House hosts the two-day event known as Homeground, a festival of music, dance, art, workshops and markets that aspires to celebrate, safeguard and revitalise traditional cultural practices. The works performed as part of the festival 'span contemporary issues, re-tell forgotten stories and revitalise ancient cultural practices across music, dance, film and theatre'.<sup>1</sup> Since 2015, the Dance Rites competition has been an integral part of the festival, bringing Indigenous dance companies from all over Australia to compete. The site of the Opera House was known as Tubowgule by its owners, the Gadigal people, and was always a place where the local Indigenous people met for ceremony. Homeground aspires to facilitate the continuation of this tradition.

The aim of the Dance Rites competition is to provide a significant and high-profile platform for Indigenous people to perform their traditions in concert with each other, and to provide an opportunity for them to showcase and maintain

<sup>1</sup> [www.sydneyoperahouse.com/events/sydney-opera-house-presents/first-nations.html](http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/events/sydney-opera-house-presents/first-nations.html)

their deep knowledge relating to the physical and spiritual world. Rhoda Roberts, Head of Indigenous Programming at the Sydney Opera House, sees this as a way of maintaining the ‘classics’ of Indigenous culture, as dance is an integral part of the songs and stories that encode each culture’s hereditary knowledge. ‘All cultures keep their classics alive, but if things continue, in thirty years the [Indigenous] songman and woman and their classic art form, and audience, will be entirely lost.’<sup>2 3</sup>

Cecil McLeod, of the combined Koori/Murri dance troupe Koomurri, says, ‘It’s about getting in and doing the ceremonies right, and letting people feel the power of the ceremonies. The year we won ... we didn’t worry about any competition and we focused on coming together as families and communities and making sure this thing continues on – that’s the most important thing we can do’. He continues, ‘It is a big point to make, that culture is still strong. We’ve got it at schools now, a lot of our uncles and aunties are going in there and teaching a lot of artwork and crafts and, most importantly, teaching languages’, he says.<sup>4</sup>

## Ochre Contemporary Dance Company, Perth

The Ochre Contemporary Dance Company was founded in 2012 by Louise Howden-Smith OAM, who is renowned within the Western Australian community for the decade she spent as Executive Director of WA Ballet and for her award as 2014 West Australian of the Year – Arts and Culture. She received a Medal of the Order of Australia for her services to the arts, which includes her work to fulfil her dream of inspiring reconciliation and respect through excellence in contemporary dance. Ochre’s charter is to tell Australian stories through dance, language and music, and to this end it has staged more than a dozen original works. The company and its creative works aspire to unite the spirit of a diverse group of artists who seek an innovative centre and professional infrastructure for Indigenous-inspired dance.

In 2019, Ochre is collaborating with the Indian Daksha Sheth Dance Company to produce a work entitled *Kwongkan*, which is a call to arms concerning climate change. The word *kwongkan* is the Nyoongar word for ‘sand’, and it is that feature which underpins the performance, both figuratively and literally. Creative Director Mark Howett explains the reason for this focus on climate change this way: ‘People connected to sacred lands are at the forefront of the impact of climate change.’ Ochre’s principal Nyoongar dancer Ian Wilkes, Associate Director and co-creator, said, ‘We nurtured this land for over 50,000 years, and now, after only 200, it faces ruin’.<sup>5</sup> Through its unique style, which is a combination of traditional Indigenous dance and contemporary dance, together with its collaboration with non-Indigenous artists, Ochre is a successful example of how Indigenous performance traditions are enriching Australia’s contemporary arts scene.

## Djuki Mala (the Chooky Dancers)

One of the most beloved groups of Indigenous performers would have to be [Djuki Mala \(the Chooky Dancers\)](#), from Galiwin’ku on Elcho Island in Arnhem Land. Djuki Mala rocketed to fame initially not for its traditional dancing, though this is mesmerising and spectacular, but for an interpretive performance of ‘Zorba’s Dance’ from *Zorba the Greek*. A poorly shot video of this impromptu performance, one night in 2007 on a basketball court in Galiwin’ku, went viral on YouTube, bringing the group instant fame. It has now had more than 2.5 million views and the group was invited to Greece to perform the dance by the descendants of the creator of the movie *Zorba the Greek*.

Since then, the dancers have embarked on a big touring circuit that has taken them around Australia and overseas to great acclaim, performing their 2010 piece, *Nurru-milmarrmiriw (Wrong Skin)*, and their eponymous 2012 piece, *Djuki Mala*, as well as numerous other, smaller works. ‘Djuki Mala continue to redefine the unique physical language they are known and loved for by marrying it with acrobatics and diverse flavours of dance and theatre, and their own keen sense of humour’, says one review.<sup>6</sup>

2 [www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-12/dance-rites-contest-celebrates-classics-of-indigenous-culture/9038158](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-12/dance-rites-contest-celebrates-classics-of-indigenous-culture/9038158)

3 <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/qQJyEIA9W6jJJQ>

4 [www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-12/dance-rites-contest-celebrates-classics-of-indigenous-culture/9038158](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-12/dance-rites-contest-celebrates-classics-of-indigenous-culture/9038158)

5 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-15/indigenous-and-indian-performers-unite-kwongkan-perth-festival/10809716>

6 <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/01/06/djuki-mala-dancers-singing-rain>

‘Their performance style fuses traditional and contemporary forms of dance. Dressed in traditional costumes and ochre, with Gara (spears) and Galpu (spear thrower) they create work that is a marvel of timing, comedy and clowning, warming both the heart and soul. Behind the humour is startling movement skill and discipline, drawn from traditional culture and dance. The style of dancing and comedic element of their performance has its origins in Yolngu culture as much as the traditional dance. Clowning within Yolngu Culture has been around longer than many of the traditional dances themselves. It is from this that Djuki Mala’s natural flair for comedy has emerged. Always exuberant and blending their contemporary experience as young people with their traditional culture, their identity as Yolngu people is always in the foreground.’<sup>7</sup>

## 2018 Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony

The large Indigenous component of the opening ceremony at the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast showcased three of Australia’s contemporary Indigenous artists: didjeridu expert and musician Will Barton, Torres Strait Island rapper Mau Power and singer Christine Anu. Will Barton was the creative director for the segment, for which he, as part of the [Yugambeh Museum](#)’s project, established and directed the Bulabula Yarga Four Winds Didgeridoo Orchestra, a group of 250 didjeridu players drawn from throughout Queensland.

The ceremony featured virtuosic solo didjeridu performances from expert Will Barton, in which he showcased a range of playing techniques and styles, many of which he has developed himself throughout his playing career. The Bulabula Yarga Four Winds Didgeridoo Orchestra played a series of works that they had created collaboratively throughout the project, both alone and as accompaniment for Barton’s solos. Torres Strait Island rap star Mau Power was next, performing a composition of his own, which was about the Torres Strait, Queensland, his culture, his place in the world, and humanity itself. The section concluded with a performance by multiple ARIA award-winning singer Christine Anu. Also from the Torres Strait, Anu became famous through her performance of the Warumpi Band’s classic song ‘My Island Home’. Mau Power’s rap song is explored below in the activities. Dance performers were Queensland members of the Bangarra Dance Company.

View the [Opening Ceremony](#).

## Baker Boy

One of Australia’s most successful artists of recent times is Danzal Baker, aka Baker Boy. Baker Boy is a Yolngu rap artist from Milinjimbi and Maningrida in the Northern Territory, and was recently named Young Australian of the Year for 2019. His talents include rap, dance, acting and visual art, and his multilingual rapping in Yolngu Matha languages and English saw him rise to prominence in Triple J’s Hottest 100 competition for 2017. He has since been a winner at the National Indigenous Music Awards and claimed the prestigious Charles Darwin University Art Award at the Northern Territory Young Achievers Awards.

Baker Boy’s growing output of rap songs covers a variety of topics. His 2017 single ‘[Marryuna](#)’, recorded with fellow Yolngu musician Yirrma Marika, inspires pride, passion and hype as it slips ‘seamlessly between English and Yolngu Matha’. The title means ‘to dance with no shame’. This is a message that strikes to the heart of the history of the Indigenous people of Australia, who, for nearly two centuries, were conditioned by white authorities and church missionaries of all denominations to feel shame about their culture, their languages and their Indigenous ancestry. Baker Boy visibly aspires to use his talent and his success to inspire Indigenous youth to embrace their culture and take up leadership positions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.djukimala.com>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.noise11.com/news/danzal-baker-aka-baker-boy-named-young-australian-of-the-year-20190126>

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

OI.1	Australia has two distinct Indigenous groups: Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and within those groups there is significant diversity.
OI.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
OI.3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.
OI.9	The significant contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the present and past are acknowledged locally, nationally and globally.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: Dance and Music

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

Through this activity, students will engage with variety of traditional and contemporary Indigenous dance and music performances and develop their understanding of these styles. They will develop their understanding of how artists draw on their hereditary knowledge and practices in their works. Students will apply their knowledge and understanding of the topic to written and verbal responses and in their own artworks.

#### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- a range of contemporary Indigenous artists who are performing in today's society
- that Indigenous artists can be found across the full range of music, drama, dance, art and multimedia.

The students will **understand**:

- that contemporary Indigenous art and performance is informed by both historical traditions and contemporary styles
- that both traditional and contemporary Indigenous performance styles often convey connections to culture and country.

The students will **be able to**:

- describe how traditional performances convey significant and ancient hereditary knowledge
- describe how contemporary performances can be interpreted in different ways by different people, including the artists themselves
- create their own artistic works based on their understanding of this topic.



# Activity summary

## Activity 1: Contemporary Dance 1

Read about the Ochre Contemporary Dance Company's performances to build knowledge of this group and its aims and [performances](#). The [video interview](#) with choreographer Jessie Martin will support this. Students then watch the Ochre "teaser" [video](#) on YouTube and discuss the types of dance styles being used. If the students need to develop their knowledge of Indigenous dance traditions in order to better understand and identify the types of moves being used, they can prepare by watching videos of traditional dancing listed in the resource section below.

## Activity 2: Dance for Well-Being

Watch the [video](#) of Djuki Mala (the Chooky Dancers) at the 2009 Melbourne Comedy Festival, then read the background to this group in the [Sydney Morning Herald article](#) of 2014. Discuss the ways in which traditional dance and contemporary dance are being used by the six young male dancers of Djuki Mala to improve people's health and wellbeing in their home of Galiwin'ku on Elcho Island.

## Activity 3: Contemporary Dance 2

Students choreograph their own dance performance, to a piece of music of their choice, in which they use both traditional Indigenous dance moves that they have researched and contemporary dance moves. The students give a verbal presentation about the reasons for, and the background to, the moves they have chosen.

## Activity 4: Torres Strait Islander Rap

Watch the Indigenous component of the [Opening Ceremony for the 2018 Commonwealth Games](#), particularly the rap by Mau Power at 10'28" and 11'34". Ideally, students will listen to the rap segment individually through headphones multiple times to assist them in transcribing the lyrics that they can hear and understand. Then, they discuss what he has chosen to sing about in this performance for millions of people around the world.

## Activity 5: Yolŋu Rap

Students learn Baker Boy's song 'Marryuna' by [listening to/watching the track](#) and reading the lyrics on screen. The Yolŋu lyrics all relate to expressions about dancing. They discuss the messages that the song is sending, both to a Yolŋu audience and a non-Yolŋu audience. Students then compose lyrics of their own to replace the chorus lyrics in the original, and then perform the song with their own lyrics. Discuss how their own choice of lyrics relates to the original.

# Links to learning areas

## Dance

### Years 5 and 6

Explain how the elements of dance and production elements communicate meaning by comparing dances from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance (ACADAR012)

- identifying and discussing meanings and significance intended by the choreographer's use of movement, space and energy, referring to their knowledge of the context in which the dance was created, for example, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander dance



## Years 7 and 8

Identify and connect specific features and purposes of dance from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their dance-making, starting with dance in Australia and including dance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACADAR019)

- observing and identifying stylistic similarities and differences in both traditional and contemporary dances, for example, dances from Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people
- investigating the role of dance in transmitting cultural information

## Years 9 and 10

Analyse a range of dance from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their dance making, starting with dance from Australia and including dance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider dance in international contexts (ACADAR026)

- investigating the influence of Australian dance artists, companies and practices, including Australians who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and those of Asian heritage
- identifying the impact of media and social and technological changes on dance practice, for example, interactions between kinaesthetic and visual aspects of dance in forms that incorporate digital components
- Considering viewpoints – philosophies and ideologies: For example – What political statement is this dance work making?

## Music

### Years 5 and 6

Explain how the elements of music communicate meaning by comparing music from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music (ACAMUR091)

- Considering viewpoints – societies and cultures: For example – How do different cultures use music? Why is this piece of music important in this culture?

### Years 7 and 8

Practise and rehearse a variety of music, including Australian music to develop technical and expressive skills (ACAMUM094)

- exploring and manipulating the elements of music within given parameters to create new music, and reflecting upon musical ideas used by Australian composers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists
- Considering viewpoints – societies, cultures and histories: For example – What is the social context of this piece and for whom would it be performed? What is the cultural context of this piece and what does it signify? What instruments and other features of the music indicate it is from a particular time and place?

Analyse composers' use of the elements of music and stylistic features when listening to and interpreting music (ACAMUR097)

- Considering viewpoints – evaluations: For example – How effectively did the musicians use expressive techniques in their performance? What are the strengths of this performance or composition?
- identifying and describing the features and performance practices that help determine a specific musical style or culture

## Years 9 and 10

Analyse a range of music from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider music in international contexts (ACAMUR105)

- comparing and evaluating audience responses and performer roles across a broad range of formal, informal, virtual and interactive settings
- Considering viewpoints – critical theories: For example – How has the rise of technology changed the nature of music? How has technology impacted on audiences, the music industry and the way we consume music?

## RESOURCES

### Resources from the Activities

#### **Reclaiming language through dance**

An interview with Ochre Contemporary Dance Company dancer and choreographer Michael Leslie about his contemporary dance work, 3.3

<https://www.seesawmag.com.au/news/reclaiming-language-through-dance/>

#### **Destination WA – Ochre Dance Company [2'59"]**

A video of an interview with Ochre Contemporary Dance Company dancer Jessie Martin

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2GGtSOK-x0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2GGtSOK-x0)

#### **Ochre Contemporary Dance Company teaser [1'31"]**

This video shows a variety of pieces performed by the company.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3WfGkQChTw>

#### **Chooky Dancers' performance [3'52"]**

The Chooky Dancers' performance at the 2009 Melbourne Comedy Festival

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rl9TBOdUH0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rl9TBOdUH0)

#### **Spirits rise amid sorrow**

This article is about the Chooky Dancers and their work in their hometown of Galiwin'ku.

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/dance/chooky-dancers-spirits-rise-amid-sorrow-20140416-36r54.html>

#### **Commonwealth Games 2018 Opening Ceremony**

Official recording of the ceremony

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=w78EMHsXaeQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w78EMHsXaeQ)

#### **'Marryuna' (lyrics version)**

This is the video of 'Marryuna' that has the lyrics on the screen while it plays.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-Q3azuqW00>

#### **'Marryuna' (official video version)**

This is the official video of 'Marryuna', which was shot mostly in and around inner Melbourne.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afQcYH2nwoM>

## Other resources

### Traditional dance resources

Bunggul (dance) at Milingimbi in Arnhem Land, led by Terrence Gaypalani and Brendan Ganambarr

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0G03d\\_qfvWk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0G03d_qfvWk)

Aboriginal Welcome Dance from the Gamilaraay (Kamilaroi) of northern New South Wales, performed by the Koomurri Dance Group

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUxDNyrCtCo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUxDNyrCtCo)

Kangaroo Dance, introduced by the performers

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-vI3Nf50g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-vI3Nf50g)

### Dance Rites

This is an ABC news article that explains how Dance Rites began and how it celebrates Indigenous culture through traditional dance.

[www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-12/dance-rites-contest-celebrates-classics-of-indigenous-culture/9038158](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-12/dance-rites-contest-celebrates-classics-of-indigenous-culture/9038158)

### Homeground Festival

This is the website for the Homeground Festival that hosts Dance Rites and a number of other cultural activities.

[www.sydneyoperahouse.com/homeground](http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/homeground)

### Ochre Contemporary Dance Company's show *Kwongkan*

This article describes the collaboration between the Ochre Contemporary Dance Company and the India's Daksha Sheth Dance Company and their performance about sacred land and climate change.

[www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-15/indigenous-and-indian-performers-unite-kwongkan-perth-festival/10809716](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-15/indigenous-and-indian-performers-unite-kwongkan-perth-festival/10809716)

### Four Winds Didgeridoo Orchestra

This is an article about the back stories to some of the young didjeridu players who participated in the Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony.

[www.indigenous.gov.au/news-and-media/stories/gearing-play-didgeridoo-orchestra-commonwealth-games-opening-ceremony](http://www.indigenous.gov.au/news-and-media/stories/gearing-play-didgeridoo-orchestra-commonwealth-games-opening-ceremony)

### Yugambeh Museum

This website has a range of cultural resources, including videos on learning the Yugambeh language, and information about the Four Winds Didgeridoo Orchestra that played in the Commonwealth Games.

[www.yugambeh.com/](http://www.yugambeh.com/)

### Djuki Mala (the Chooky Dancers)

The home page of Djuki Mala

[www.djukimala.com](http://www.djukimala.com)

### Baker Boy resources

The homepage for the artist Danzal Baker, aka Baker Boy

<http://aum.net.au/baker-boy>

An article about Danzal Baker's award as Young Australian of the Year 2019

[www.noise11.com/news/danzal-baker-aka-baker-boy-named-young-australian-of-the-year-20190126](http://www.noise11.com/news/danzal-baker-aka-baker-boy-named-young-australian-of-the-year-20190126)

An article in which Danzal Baker talks about his work that saw him achieve Young Australian of the Year in 2019  
[www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/keep-pushing-keep-trying-says-2019-young-australian-of-the-year-20190125-p50toa.html](http://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/keep-pushing-keep-trying-says-2019-young-australian-of-the-year-20190125-p50toa.html)

An SBS news article about Danzal Baker  
[www.sbs.com.au/news/rapper-danzal-baker-earns-australian-award](http://www.sbs.com.au/news/rapper-danzal-baker-earns-australian-award)

### Other related resources

#### **Move It Mob Style**

A series of videos and resources to get students dancing. You can choose a story, watch the videos and download the class activity, then get your students up and dancing to some deadly moves with Move It Mob Style.

<https://moveitmobstyle.com.au/activities/>

<https://moveitmobstyle.com.au/videos/>

#### **Arts Edge WA**

Indigenous dance resources collated by the Western Australian Government

[www.artsedge.dca.wa.gov.au/resources/Pages/Dance.aspx](http://www.artsedge.dca.wa.gov.au/resources/Pages/Dance.aspx)

#### **Bangarra Dance Theatre**

Bangarra Dance Theatre has a whole education section on its website together with videos, activities and teaching notes.

[www.bangarra.com.au](http://www.bangarra.com.au)

[www.bangarra.com.au/youth-outreach/education](http://www.bangarra.com.au/youth-outreach/education)

#### **Skinnyfish Music**

Skinnyfish Music is a company in Darwin that represents many Indigenous artists from the Northern Territory.

[www.skinnyfishmusic.com.au](http://www.skinnyfishmusic.com.au)

# 8

## Storytelling

### This resource:

- is designed to build on the material presented in the book that offers information about well-known large-scale film works such as *Ten Canoes* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and Indigenous literature.
- contains two creation stories in depth – the Wāgilak Sisters of the Dhuwa clans of central and north-east Arnhem Land, and Bunjil of the Wurrundjeri of Victoria – along with references to many available resources that support teaching and learning on these topics
- also contains material regarding other stories from different parts of Australia told through both written word and video resources.

### Content overview

This chapter is intended to provide depth to the study of Indigenous people's narratives and increase students' understanding of the complexities that underpin stories that can seem to be superficial when viewed only on a surface level. It does this by exploring the underlying knowledge layers present in all Indigenous stories that stem from their cosmologies and beliefs about the world and its creation and use.

The tasks are designed to have students engage with stories beyond the literal meanings and explore the 'meanings within meanings' which imbue the narratives with complexity and sophistication.

### Teacher introduction

One of the most significant creation stories in east Arnhem Land is that of the ancestors known as the Wāgilak Sisters (also spelt Wagalak, Wāgilag, Wawalag, Wauwalak). The Yolŋu people have many clans, and this story belongs to the six Dhuwa clans: the Gālpu, Rirratjŋu, Marrakulu, Wāgilak, Liyagalawumirr and Golumala. Although this narrative differs in detail across different clans, it is fundamentally a story of the creation of clan homelands and everything in them by the Wāgilak Sisters as they tried to flee from Witiŋ, the Olive Python. Parts of this story are told in many places, including in descriptions of related artworks in galleries. The ABC animated video of the story, *Dust Echoes*, which appears below in the activities, is a truncated version of this story meant for younger viewers. However, it omits the ending in which the Olive Python regurgitates the Wāgilak Sisters after consuming them. This video is an engaging

way of presenting this story to the students. However, it is highly recommended that further details of this story are included from the notes given here, or from other sources.

## The Wāgilak Sisters' story

The two Wāgilak Sisters, an older sister with a baby son and her pregnant younger sister, leave an area near Roper River in the south and travel northwards towards the sea to escape from men of their clan who are chasing them. Throughout their travels, they change languages as they establish each new clan homeland and bring to life the many plants and animals they encounter by giving them names. Because the sisters were of the Dhuwa moiety, the lands through which they travelled became Dhuwa homelands. They reached the stone quarries at Njilipidji, the main homeland of the Wāgilak clan, which is how this clan received its name.

Exhausted from their travels, they built a hut and rested at a waterhole at Mirarrmina in Liyagalawumirr country. They started a fire and put the animals they had caught over the fire to cook them. However, these animals came back to life and jumped away into a nearby waterhole. The younger sister then gave birth to a son of the Yirritja moiety.

Unbeknown to the sisters, that waterhole was the home of the great Olive Python, Witiitj, who is one of the most powerful ancestral beings. The fleeing animals and the birth of the son awakened this great python, who became enraged. He sprang from the bottom of the waterhole and charged forth, creating a great storm. This was the first ever monsoon, which Witiitj created by sucking water from his waterhole into his mouth and rising up to spit it into the sky. His flickering forked tongue created lightning.

The Wāgilak Sisters realised that Witiitj was trying to wash them into the waterhole, either to drown them or eat them. They frantically beat the ground with their yam-digging sticks, and performed songs and dances in an attempt to stop the rain and keep themselves safe. Their efforts exhausted them, and the Olive Python eventually entered their camp and lulled them to sleep, whereupon he ate them, their children and their dog.

As the storm raged, other reptiles heard and came to the waterhole to observe. Witiitj tried to communicate with them, but they all spoke in different dialects. He said to them that they could share ceremony and each other's law nonetheless. Witiitj began to feel ill and lied to the other reptiles about what he had eaten. Yet they had seen him consume the humans and reminded him that, because he, Witiitj, was also of the Dhuwa moiety, he should not have eaten them. The great Olive Python then rose into the sky and regurgitated the two sisters. They fell to the ground, leaving a deep depression, which became an important ceremony ground that is still there today. Because their two children were Yirritja and not of the Dhuwa moiety, they were not spared.

The dead sisters were then brought back to life by the green ants and caterpillars that bit them. They jumped up, but Witiitj was too quick for them, beating them until they lay dead, and re-devouring them. Again, the python fell to the earth, creating another ceremony ground. Witiitj then crawled back into his waterhole and swam underground to the Wāgilak clan homeland of Njilipidji. There he again regurgitated the sisters, who, this time, turned into stones that are still there today.

The men pursuing the sisters had heard the sound of the python in the thunder and rain, and followed their tracks to the waterhole, where they eventually fell asleep. The Wāgilak Sisters came to them in their dreams and shared with them all the sacred songs and dances that they had performed, as well as songs that the python had sung. They instructed the men to re-enact in ceremony all that had happened and to pass this knowledge onto their descendants. Today, the creation story of the Wāgilak Sisters is still performed in ceremonies, and is represented in many designs and paintings.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This version of the story compiled from <https://www.cooeeart.com.au/marketplace/artists/profile/MarikaWandj/> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=degaaimWJ4Y&app=desktop>

## Bunjil

The Bunjil narratives of the Kulin nations tell the story of the eagle creation ancestor and how the land was made and populated. Bunjil, like the creation ancestors of other Aboriginal groups across Australia, not only engaged in the creation and shaping of the land and animals, but provided the Law to the Boonwurrung (also Bunurong), Wurrundjeri (Woiwurrung), Taungurong, Djadjawurrung and Wathaurung peoples by which they were to live to ensure that they survived and thrived. (There is some complexity in the naming of the people and languages of this region, with some people using the term 'Kulin' while others prefer to identify with the name of their language group. The suffix '-wurrung' attached to a name literally means lip/speech.)

The Bunjil story is reproduced here as told by Boonwurrung woman Carolyn Briggs, on the [Culture Victoria website](#).<sup>2</sup>

Many years ago this land that we now call Melbourne extended right out to the ocean. Port Phillip Bay was then a large flat plain where Boonwurrung hunted kangaroos and cultivated their yam daisy.

But one day there came a time of chaos and crises. The Boonwurrung and the other Kulin nations were in conflict. They argued and fought. They neglected their children. They neglected their land. The native yam was neglected. The animals were killed but not always eaten. The fish were caught during their spawning season. As this chaos grew the sea became angry and began to rise until it covered their plain and threatened to flood the whole of their country.

The people went to Bunjil, their creator and spiritual leader. They asked Bunjil to stop the sea from rising. Bunjil told his people that they would have to change their ways if they wanted to save their land. The people thought about what they had been doing and made a promise to follow Bunjil. Bunjil walked out to the sea, raised his spear and directed the sea to stop rising. Bunjil then made the Boonwurrung promise that they would respect the laws.

The place the Kulin then chose to meet is where the Parliament of Victoria is now located. They debated issues of great importance to the nation; they celebrated, they danced. This land will always be protected by the creator, Bunjil, who travels as an eagle.

In the Resources section below there are some links to more videos and resources about Bunjil, which can be explored to develop a good understanding of the story and the groups of people to whom it belongs. The Monash University site [Country Lines](#) is an excellent collection of animated videos that tell stories from a variety of language groups, many of whose languages are under imminent threat of extinction. These videos were made with the purpose of providing culturally relevant language materials that can be used in the community to support an increase in the use of the language by the local people. However, they are also an excellent source of engaging narratives for students to study.

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

Ol.1	Australia has two distinct Indigenous groups: Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and within those groups there is significant diversity.
Ol.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
Ol.3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.
Ol.5	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of life are uniquely expressed through ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.

<sup>2</sup> <https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/meerreeng-an-here-is-my-country/bunjil/>



# LEARNING ACTIVITIES: English

## What the students will know, understand and be able to do

### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that Indigenous people have large repertoires of narratives comprising shorter stories that explain their cosmologies and their knowledges
- that stories, embedded in song, dance and design, constitute oral tradition
- that writers/orators make specific choices in their use of language to convey meaning.

The students will **understand**:

- how country, place and identity can be conveyed through texts
- how to identify issues such as oversimplification, stereotypes and prejudices in texts
- how the use of a structural device, such as an Indigenous person as narrator, may help Indigenous people to respond sympathetically to the text.

The students will **be able to**:

- demonstrate an increased understanding of Indigenous cultures and their uses of narrative
- explain the presence of deeper layers of meaning within Indigenous narratives that they have studied, and show an increased ability to apply this to unfamiliar narratives.

## Activity summary

### Activity 1

Students watch the [ABC Dust Echoes video](#) of the Wägilak Sisters' story from the Dhuwa clans from central and north-east Arnhem Land, and notate the story into a bullet point list of events. They discuss their initial impressions of the story based on this video version. They then read a more comprehensive version of the story, such as that presented in the 'Teacher introduction' at the beginning of this resource. They then write a response in which they compare and analyse their initial impressions with their subsequent understanding of the story from the written version.

### Activity 2

Students explore the theme of interconnectedness of people and place by examining how the Dhuwa clans, who are descended from the Wägilak Sisters, are responsible for maintaining the knowledge and the laws that have been passed down to them from the events in the story, and how these relate to both place, and its animals and environment.

## Activity 3

Students watch at least three of the short videos about Bunjil that are starred in the resource section below, firstly to learn the story, but then to compare how each author's version of the narrative makes use of metaphor, icons and imagery in the text. They debate which of the versions has a greater impact and why, drawing on their analyses of the texts to inform their responses.

## Activity 4

Students choose a video from the Monash University site [Country Lines](#) that engages their interest, and watch it several times to memorise, or at least internalise, the story. Creating a list of bullet points of the main events will assist with this. The students then take the crux of the story and write a retelling of it into a different context, altering elements such as time, place, age of characters, etc. They can produce their version of the story in a number of ways, such as written text, spoken word, or a visual product such as a video with pictures, drawings or other imagery. They present this to the class and explain how the original story is embedded in their own recreation.

# Links to learning areas

## English

The range of literary texts for Foundation to Year 10 comprises Australian literature, including the oral narrative traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, as well as the contemporary literature of these two cultural groups, and classic and contemporary world literature, including texts from and about Asia.

### Year 7

Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1619)

- building knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the history, culture, and literary heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view (ACELT1620)

- exploring concepts about the criteria for heroism and testing these criteria in a range of texts, including more complex ones where the hero may be flawed

Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts (ACELT1621)

- identifying stereotypes, prejudice and oversimplifications in texts

Recognise and analyse the ways that characterisation, events and settings are combined in narratives, and discuss the purposes and appeal of different approaches (ACELT1622)

- analysing writers' depictions of challenges in texts, for example those faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

### Year 8

Explore the interconnectedness of Country/Place, People, Identity and Culture in texts including those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors (ACELT1806)

- identifying and describing the ways films suggest Country/Place and Identity through language features such as

image, soundtrack and narrative control

Interpret and analyse language choices, including sentence patterns, dialogue, imagery and other language features, in short stories, literary essays and plays (ACELT1767)

- select an aspect of a text such as a sentence pattern or an image or word and adapt it for a new context explaining how the change will affect meaning

## Year 9

Present an argument about a literary text based on initial impressions and subsequent analysis of the whole text (ACELT1771)

- interrogating and making judgments about a text, comparing others' ideas against the student's own and reaching an independent decision or shared consensus about the interpretations and ideas expressed

Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes (ACELT1637)

- taking a particular area of study, a topic or theme and examining how different authors make use of devices like myth, icons and imagery in their work

## Year 10

Compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1639)

- imaginatively adapting texts from an earlier time or different social context for a new audience

Analyse and explain how text structures, language features and visual features of texts and the context in which texts are experienced may influence audience response (ACELT1641)

- looking at a range of texts to consider how the use of a structural device, for example a female narrator, may influence female readers/viewers/listeners to respond sympathetically to an event or issue

# RESOURCES

## National

### Monash Country Lines

This is the website for a project about animating language: celebrating and saving Indigenous Australian stories through film.

[www.monash.edu/it/about-us/news-and-events/latest/articles/2018/animating-language-celebrating-and-saving-indigenous-australian-stories-through-film](http://www.monash.edu/it/about-us/news-and-events/latest/articles/2018/animating-language-celebrating-and-saving-indigenous-australian-stories-through-film)

### Monash Country Lines videos

<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/countrylines-archive/>

### Sharing Stories Foundation – ‘Culture’ and ‘Country’

This is a comprehensive resource which includes teachers' guides and information, films and videos covering a wide range of content descriptions.

<https://sharingstoriesfoundation.org/our-stories/culture/>

### ABC Dust Echoes Digibook

These are twelve animated videos of Indigenous stories with associated teacher resources and worksheets.

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/digibook/2570774/dust-echoes>

## Victoria: Bunjil

First Australians' video of the Bunjil story. These two sites have the same video, narration and music, but a different narrator. The visual quality is better on the SBS version but it needs a login.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajeBg9K1Viw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajeBg9K1Viw)

[www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/video/629718595955/bunjil](http://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/video/629718595955/bunjil)

Story of Bunjil – Bunurong Land Council

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=09PEyXitxuQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09PEyXitxuQ)

Story of Bunjil – Boon Wurrung Foundation

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRFQEyQ1IAg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRFQEyQ1IAg)

Bunjil – Australia: The Land Where Time Began

<https://austhrutime.com/bunjil.htm>

Bunjil the Eagle, animated by a team of artists and narrated by Uncle Ian Hunter

<https://vimeo.com/97185996>

Video of the Bunjil installation at Melbourne Museum, with narrative

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dPry\\_H0Mzw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dPry_H0Mzw)

The Bunjil rock art site in the Grampians

[www.visitmelbourne.com/regions/Grampians/Things-to-do/Outdoor-activities/Walking-and-hiking/Bunjil-Shelter-Stawell](http://www.visitmelbourne.com/regions/Grampians/Things-to-do/Outdoor-activities/Walking-and-hiking/Bunjil-Shelter-Stawell)

Video and article about the plans of two men, Djabwurrung Elder Ted Lovett and local grain farmer Elyjah McLeod, to create a sculpture of Bunjil in the Grampians

[www.thecitizen.org.au/articles/imagining-bunjil-foothills-gariwerd-aka-grampians](http://www.thecitizen.org.au/articles/imagining-bunjil-foothills-gariwerd-aka-grampians)

Culture Victoria – Bunjil: The Time of Chaos, told by Carolyn Briggs, Boonwurrung Elder

<https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/meerreeeng-an-here-is-my-country/bunjil/>

## Northern Territory: Wägilak Sisters

### ABC Dust Echoes Digibook – Wägilak Sisters

This is the animated story of the Wägilak Sisters with teacher resources

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/2570292/wagalak-sisters>

### Dust Echoes – ‘The Wagalak Sisters’

The Australian Teachers' of Media Study Guide and teaching materials by Robert Lewis

[https://abccommercial-production-aws.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/study-guide/assets/sg\\_dustechoesthewagalak.pdf](https://abccommercial-production-aws.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/study-guide/assets/sg_dustechoesthewagalak.pdf)

### Wagalak (Wägilak) Sisters [1'31"]

Slide show by April Maduwul, Elcho Island. This piece is about a story April's grandmother shared with her about country in Galiwinku, Elcho Island and the journey of the Wagalak Sisters

<https://vimeo.com/21056522>

### **Aboriginal Arts: Milinjimbi Didjeridus**

This resource has a didjeridu painted with Wägilak designs, with sound files, as well as part of the Wägilak story.

[www.aboriginalarts.co.uk/vintage/millingimbi/8000.htm](http://www.aboriginalarts.co.uk/vintage/millingimbi/8000.htm)

### **An Introduction to Aboriginal Societies**

This link takes you straight to page 30 in Google Books of the book *An Introduction to Aboriginal Societies*, by William Howell Edwards, which recounts the Wägilak Sisters story.

[https://books.google.com.au/books?id=kF-Pe5WX6UC&pg=PA30&clpg=PA30&dq=wagilak+sisters&source=bl&ots=TLsjyXqhWO&sig=ACfU3U05V\\_t\\_3DA9jNFrfuc6eZScTmntA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEw-j10Ou93MHgAhURU30KHZgbAhEQ6AEwDnoECAEQAAQ#v=onepage&q=wagilak%20sisters&f=false](https://books.google.com.au/books?id=kF-Pe5WX6UC&pg=PA30&clpg=PA30&dq=wagilak+sisters&source=bl&ots=TLsjyXqhWO&sig=ACfU3U05V_t_3DA9jNFrfuc6eZScTmntA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEw-j10Ou93MHgAhURU30KHZgbAhEQ6AEwDnoECAEQAAQ#v=onepage&q=wagilak%20sisters&f=false)

### **National Gallery of Australia**

#### ***Dawidi – Wägilak Creation Story***

This is the National Gallery of Australia's page about the artist David Malangi Daymirringu. It tells the story of the Wägilak Sisters.

<https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=5410&pictaus=true>

#### ***David Malangi Daymirringu***

This is the National Gallery of Australia's page about the artist David Malangi Daymirringu. It tells the story of the Djankawur Sisters.

<https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=102671>

#### ***The Aboriginal Memorial – Arnhem Land***

This page has some background information on Arnhem Land where the Wägilak Sisters and the Djankawur Sisters stories originate.

<https://nga.gov.au/AboriginalMemorial/land.cfm>

### **Cooee Art: Wanjuk Marika**

This website tells the story of the late Rirratjinu Elder Wanjuk Marika, and how he shared his art and culture with the newly arrived Europeans. As Marika is from a different moiety, his creation narrative is about the Djankawur Sisters, who are different from the Wägilak Sisters.

[www.cooeeart.com.au/marketplace/artists/profile/MarikaWandj/](http://www.cooeeart.com.au/marketplace/artists/profile/MarikaWandj/)

# 9

## Native title

### This resource:

- presents the story behind the 1991 Yothu Yindi song 'Treaty' in detail as an example of how the concept of, and the long-term fight for, Native Title have impacted the Yolŋu of north-east Arnhem Land
- contains information about both the Barunga Statement of 1988 and its precedents
- examines the use of a traditional song/dance style in a rock song.

### Content overview

The information, activities and list of resources in this section are designed to allow students to explore one particular story about an Indigenous group's fight for Native Title and control of their land in greater depth. It draws on the 1991 Yothu Yindi song 'Treaty', which successfully raised the issue of both a treaty and Native Title (in this particular case, for the Yolŋu of north-east Arnhem Land) in the public consciousness. The song lyrics refer specifically to the 1988 promise by the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, to deliver a treaty by 1990. However, a careful analysis of the lyrics and the dense imagery in the music video reveals the long struggle of the Yolŋu to maintain ownership of their land through Australia's court system, and their ultimately unsuccessful attempt to prevent the establishment of a bauxite mine on their land.

### Teacher introduction

Australia remains the only Commonwealth country that has not signed a treaty with its Indigenous peoples. Canada and New Zealand, as well as the United States, Sweden, Norway and Finland, for example, have all signed a treaty or treaties with their First peoples, providing them with a road map for better managing issues such as sovereignty and Native Title.<sup>1</sup> While treaties, by their very nature, do not provide all parties with resolution of all their demands, they do give some structure and certainty to negotiations. They also give indigenous people official recognition as a sovereign entity, capable of negotiating with government.<sup>2</sup>

1 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-44392976>

2 [https://www.vic.gov.au/system/user\\_files/Documents/av/Aboriginal\\_Treaty\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](https://www.vic.gov.au/system/user_files/Documents/av/Aboriginal_Treaty_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

The road to a formal treaty between Indigenous Australians and the Commonwealth of Australia, and to a Native Title Act, has been long and complex, and is likely to continue into the foreseeable future. At the time of writing, the federal Coalition government has officially rejected the demands of the '[Uluru Statement from the Heart](#)'. The Uluru Statement is the most recent in a long line of unsuccessful attempts by Indigenous Australians to have the government agree to engage in treaty negotiations and, more recently, constitutional recognition.

The Yothu Yindi song '[Treaty](#)' has been selected here for further study. The aim is to develop students' understanding of one example of how issues surrounding Native Title have played out in Arnhem Land.

'Treaty' was written by Mandawuy Yunupingu AM (1954–2013), Australian of the Year 1992 and founder and lead singer of Yothu Yindi, in collaboration with other musicians including Paul Kelly and Peter Garrett. The song was composed in 1991 as a response to the failure of the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, to honour his solemn promise, made at the Barunga Festival in 1988, to hold negotiations with Australia's Indigenous people for the creation of a treaty by 1990. After three years of inaction, Mandawuy Yunupingu wrote this song while sitting under a large and beautiful tree (now termed 'the Treaty tree' by the locals) at the Birany Birany outstation in coastal Arnhem Land. Written in both English and Gumatj, it was an immediate success on the Aria charts and its album, *Tribal Voice*, reached no. 3. It sold more than 140,000 copies and reached double platinum. This was the first time a song written by an Aboriginal Australian using an Australian language had had such huge chart success.

The story behind 'Treaty' has many layers of meaning and reaches back to the long fight by the Yolngu to regain control of their lands. But primarily, it tells the story of how in 1988, Prime Minister Bob Hawke and the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Minister, Gerry Hand, attended the Barunga Festival of Sport and Culture, south of Katherine in the Northern Territory, home of the Jawoyn people. While there, the Chairs of the Northern and Central Land Councils, Galarrwuy Yunupingu and Wenten Rubuntja, presented Bob Hawke with the Barunga Statement, a painted declaration of the expectations of Indigenous people in the creation of a treaty between Indigenous people and the Australian Government.<sup>3</sup> Its left half is bordered with Yolngu designs painted by Galarrwuy and other Yolngu leaders, and its right half with sacred designs by Indigenous leaders from Central Australia. The English-language document in the centre calls on the Australian Government to negotiate a treaty with the Indigenous peoples of Australia that would recognise their human rights and continuing sovereignty. After treaty negotiations failed to ensue in the following years, the Barunga Statement was installed in the art gallery in the foyer of the Australian Parliament House in Canberra, and it can be seen there today.

The fight for Yolngu to establish Native Title over their lands increased when the federal government, despite having granted Arnhem Land to the Yolngu as an 'Aboriginal Reserve' in 1931, sold a mining lease on the Gove Peninsula without asking, or even informing, the Yolngu. By 1963, the Yolngu had prepared a formal petition to present to the High Court to prove their long-standing ownership and occupation of their land. This took the form of a bark petition in two panels – one Dhuwa and one Yirritja – on which the elders painted their most sacred designs. To the Yolngu, these designs (together with the corresponding songs) are evidence of their ownership of the land, and are equivalent to owning title deeds. This document became known as the Yirrkala Bark Petition, and was sent to Parliament as 'a declaration and proof of continuing ownership of the land in question, and their rights to control what happened on it'.

Negotiations stalled at that point, and in 1968 mining commenced on the sacred sites of the Gumatj and the Rirratjinu. The Yolngu elders took their case to the Northern Territory Supreme Court, where they presented evidence of their continuing ownership and occupation of the Gove Peninsula. This case lasted for three years, and it was widely predicted that the Yolngu – who had an unquestionable, unbroken tenure of the land – would win, but it was a crushing defeat. On 25 April 1971, the Honorable Justice Richard Blackburn handed down his finding, which stated that Yolngu sovereignty was in no way recognised under the Australian Constitution and that, according to the Australian Government, it had ceased on 26 January 1788 when the British First Fleet seized possession of the entire Australian continent at Sydney Cove.<sup>4</sup>

3 <https://aiatsis.gov.au/barunga-statement>

4 [http://www.mabonativetitle.com/lr\\_22.shtml](http://www.mabonativetitle.com/lr_22.shtml)



The [AIATSIS website](#), the ‘Barunga Statement: 30 years since the historic call for a treaty’ [website](#) and the National Film and Sound Archive Treaty [website](#) all provide further rich and interesting detail about this story.

The song itself is a unique composition and was the first song containing lyrics in an Australian language to chart. It has the basic structure of a rock song with an intro, verses, choruses, a bridge and an outro. However, it also includes two sections, sung in the Gumatj language, which are in the style of *djatpanarri*, which is an improvisatory style of song that was popular from the 1930s to the 1970s in Arnhem Land. This particular *djatpanarri* was composed by Rikin Burarrwaja in the 1950s. Its lyrics are broadly translated as a series of encouraging phrases being directed at a person who is improvising a dance. By using a public genre of song – *djatpanarri* – Mandawuy is ensuring that the song is free from any particular clan associations within the Yolŋu and is open to all Australians to enjoy.<sup>5</sup>

Although the lyrics of the song’s two verses recount the Prime Minister’s failed promise, the fundamental point of the piece is actually much more important: that the Yolŋu have never ceded their sovereignty or their authority over their land to the Crown. However, like all of Mandawuy’s songs, it contains a reference to a positive future for all Australians. He offers a vision for an Australia in which both Indigenous and Crown sovereignties are respected and recognised on equal terms. Always a proponent of reconciliation, Mandawuy embeds this idea in the song by using the imagery of two rivers, having been ‘separated for so long’, coming together in a ‘brighter day, when the waters will be one’.

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

OI.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
OI.3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.
OI.6	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples live in Australia as first peoples of Country or Place and demonstrate resilience in responding to historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation.
OI.7	The broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies encompass a diversity of nations across Australia.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: History, Music

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

#### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that Native Title is a system of land ownership where traditional owners are granted ownership of their historic lands and seas
- that some Indigenous groups, such as those in the Torres Strait, have an unbroken line of ownership and use of their land and sea, and maintain their culture
- that other Indigenous groups, such as the Yorta Yorta along the Murray River, have not been able to prove unbroken occupancy due to colonial practices such as moving people to missions in other parts of the state

<sup>5</sup> Corn, Aaron David Samuel, Yunupingu, Mandawuy & Langton, Marcia, & National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia (2009). *Reflections & Voices: Exploring the music of Yothu Yindi with Mandawuy Yunupingu*. Sydney University Press, [Sydney]

- that the Mabo case of 1992 was the first time a court had found in favour of Native Title for Indigenous Australians – in this case, the Mer people from Meriam Island in the Torres Strait
- that this was closely followed by the Wik Peoples vs Queensland case, which was also successful, in 1993.

The students will **understand**:

- that Native Title can only be claimed on Crown land, not privately owned land
- how there were many failed efforts to prove ownership and sovereignty during the twentieth century, one of the most famous being the Yolŋu case, which concluded in 1971
- what ‘sovereignty’ means, with particular reference to Indigenous sovereignty
- how music and art can be used to convey important information and knowledge, such as in the song ‘Treaty’ and in the Barunga Statement.

The students will **be able to**:

- explain what Native Title means, and give examples
- demonstrate their understanding of the song ‘Treaty’, referring to both the music/lyrics and the back story to the song
- explain how a repertoire of sacred hereditary songs, dances and designs function in much the same way that a title deed to land does in the British system.

## Activity summary

### Activity 1

Students listen to the song ‘Treaty’ and watch the video, and identify all the different images that they see (a live concert performance by Yothu Yindi, children on the beach in Arnhem Land, the Barunga Festival, the painting of the Barunga Statement, footage of the Gove mine, footage of ceremonial dancing in the bush). Together with the teacher, they work through these images to learn about the reason that each one appears in the ‘Treaty’ video. They can hypothesise about some of these, but they need to identify the facts involved in the Barunga Statement, the Barunga Festival and the NABALCO mine on the Gove Peninsula.

### Activity 2

In pairs or small groups, the class conducts research into one or more of the following areas. This information is then compiled into a list for the whole class to access for the next activity.

- Biographical detail about Mandawuy Yunupingu, especially his achievements
- Geographical detail about where Barunga and Arnhem Land are located
- Information about the NABALCO mine at Nhulunbuy, footage of which can be seen during the guitar solo in the music video for ‘Treaty’. (The mine today is clearly observable on Google Earth and it is very illuminating to show this to students.)
- Interpretation of the song’s lyrics, including the *djatpanarri* sections
- Both earlier and more recent attempts that Indigenous people have made to negotiate with the Australian Government. These could include the 1963 Yirrkala Petition, the failed 1971 High Court case in which Yolŋu

attempted to prevent the Federal Government allowing a mine at Nhulunbuy, the successful Mabo and Wik cases in 1992<sup>6</sup> and 1993<sup>7</sup>, and the 2017 ‘Uluru Statement from the Heart’<sup>8</sup>

- Images that they collect that are related to any of the above, or to the lyrics of the song (e.g. ‘the planting of the Union Jack ...’)
- Using the list of information constructed in the above task, students undertake a creative task in which they explain all the extra details and deeper meanings within the song ‘Treaty’. This narrative should be delivered in a way that educates people who have no prior knowledge about the story behind the song. One suggestion is to edit a copy of the music video of ‘Treaty’ by adding subtitles to the screen which details the story as the song unfolds.

## Activity 3

Music classes can also undertake an activity based on ‘Treaty’ whereby they analyse the song to determine the use of the elements of music and how these can be used to shape a performance. Examples include the chord patterns, the form of the sections, the key, the tempo, the simplicity of the use of the elements in the chorus to create unity and a catchy refrain. It is also possible to develop a class performance of the song.

## Links to learning areas

### Geography

#### Year 7

Economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and peoples of the Asia region (ACHGK041)

- exploring the multilayered meanings (material, cultural and spiritual wellbeing) associated with rivers, waterways, waterholes, seas, lakes, soaks and springs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- discussing that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples choose to live on their Country/Place or might prefer to if they had the choice

The influence of social connectedness and community identity on the liveability of place (ACHGK046)

- discussing the different types of places where people can feel included or excluded, safe or threatened, and evaluating how this affects perceptions about liveability of places

#### Year 8

Different types of landscapes and their distinctive landform features (ACHGK048)

- exploring the names, meanings and significance of landform features from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspective

#### Year 9

The perceptions people have of place, and how these influence their connections to different places (ACHGK065)

- comparing students’ perceptions [of the] use of places and spaces . . . including Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and reflecting on the differences

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6 <http://mabonativetitle.com>

7 <https://www.wikvsqueensland.com/case.html>

8 [https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru\\_Statement\\_From\\_The\\_Heart\\_0.PDF](https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru_Statement_From_The_Heart_0.PDF)

## Year 10

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' approaches to custodial responsibility and environmental management in different regions of Australia (ACHGK072)

- researching the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in environmental management

## Civics and Citizenship

### Year 8

The types of law in Australia, including criminal law and civil law, and the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customary law (ACHCK064)

- considering the significance of customary law for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Different perspectives about Australia's national identity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and what it means to be Australian (ACHCK066)

- examining contemporary influences on the shaping of Australian national identity, such as the natural environment, immigration, attitudes to Asia and Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians

### Year 10

How Australia's international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHCK093)

- researching the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- identifying how international conventions and declarations have shaped Australian government policies with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

The role of the High Court, including in interpreting the Constitution (ACHCK092)

- examining the jurisdiction of the High Court
- exploring an example of a High Court judgement in interpreting and applying Australian law, such as the Mabo decision or the construction of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge

## Music

### Years 7 and 8

Analyse composers' use of the elements of music and stylistic features when listening to and interpreting music (ACAMUR097)

- Considering viewpoints – evaluations: For example – How effectively did the musicians use expressive techniques in their performance? What are the strengths of this performance or composition?
- identifying and describing the features and performance practices that help determine a specific musical style or culture

### Years 9 and 10

Analyse a range of music from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider music in international contexts (ACAMUR105)

- discussing the influence of music on the development of personal and cultural identity

# RESOURCES

'Treaty' by Yothu Yindi resources

## **Yothu Yindi, 'Treaty' [3'38"]**

Original version of the video clip for 'Treaty'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jf-jHCdafZY>

## **Treaty**

The lyrics of 'Treaty' with some background information.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/read-the-lyrics-of-yothu-yindi-song-treaty>

## **The Barunga Statement**

This is about the petition presented to Bob Hawke in 1988 that sparked the song 'Treaty'. This website gives the context for that, by explaining what the Barunga Festival is, and stories about the people who were there.

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/barunga-statement>

## **Yothu Yindi**

Mushroom Music's home page for Yothu Yindi which gives good, detailed background to the band

<https://mushroommusic.com/songwriters/yothu-yindi/>

## **Treaty by Yothu Yindi – a Trojan horse in the culture wars**

This article about Mandawuy Yunupingu, the band and the song brings in the theme of reconciliation.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/mar/03/treaty-by-yothu-yindi-a-trojan-horse-in-the-culture-wars>

## **Mabo Resources**

### **Mabo: the Native Title Revolution**

The National Film and Sound Archive's website about the Mabo cases has a variety of resources, including teacher notes and links to related films.

<http://www.mabonativetitle.com/resources.shtml>

### **'Advocates or activists: What can lawyers learn from Mabo?'**

This is an article in *The Conversation* that describes many of the interesting details of the Mabo case.

<https://theconversation.com/advocates-or-activists-what-can-lawyers-learn-from-mabo-7443>

### **National Reconciliation Week: The Mabo Decision**

This is a useful two-page summary of the Mabo decision and related areas such as 'Why is native title important?' with suggested discussion topics.

[https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/mabo-decision\\_2017.pdf](https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/mabo-decision_2017.pdf)

### **Remembering Eddie Mabo [2'39"]**

National Film and Sound Archive site about Eddie Mabo with activities and suggested discussion questions

<https://dl.nfsa.gov.au/module/1379/>

## ABC Education Videos – Mabo and Native Title

ABC Education has six videos about Mabo, including transcripts and teacher resources

Native Title in the Making [5'29]

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/1542143/>

Native title begins with an act of recognition [5'55]

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/1542165/>

Balancing opposing views on native title [6'29]

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/1542187/>

The politics of native title [7'01]

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/1542209/>

Celebrating native title on Ruby Tuesday [4'57]

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/1542231/>

Native title: how to free your heart [4'57]

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/1542253/>

## Twenty Years After Wik

'Twenty years after the High Court's Wik decision, how does the "judicial activism" charge stand up?'

This is an interesting article in *The Conversation*, in which the idea of 'judicial activism' is discussed in relation to the Wik and Mabo cases. This is a teacher resource but could be used with upper secondary students.

<https://theconversation.com/twenty-years-after-the-high-courts-wik-decision-how-does-the-judicial-activism-charge-stand-up-56420>

## Other resources

### ABC teaching resource for the Redfern Address [16'54"]

On 10 December 1992, Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating delivered a speech in Redfern, Sydney, at a celebration of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. The speech addressed many of the injustices suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the previous 200 years. Today, it is regarded as a turning point in the process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This resource has the video in full, a transcript, teaching activities and teacher resources.

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/522255/>

## Living by the Sea

This is a painting by Yolŋu man Marrnyula Mununggurr from Wandawuy in north-east Arnhem Land. The Australian National Maritime Museum's website for this painting includes information about the Yolŋu, their connection to the waters, and their Native Title struggles. The painting is part of a series, entitled the Saltwater Project, which was initiated in 1996 to express the rules, philosophies and stories of their region.

<http://collections.anmm.gov.au/en/objects/details/14518/living-by-the-sea;jsessionid=C038D6A7CB840032FEEBC026BABF3F4A>

## Sea Country Website

This website briefly recounts the court case regarding Sea Rights and access to Blue Mud Bay in Arnhem Land.

[http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/learningsites/seacountry/16\\_searights.htm](http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/learningsites/seacountry/16_searights.htm)

### **Twelve Canoes**

This is a comprehensive interactive online resource with information about Yolŋu culture, designed to educate people before (or after) viewing the film *Ten Canoes*. It covers many related areas of Yolŋu life and beliefs that exemplify the ways in which the Yolŋu are intrinsically connected to their lands and waters. This is a very useful context for understanding Native Title.

<http://www.12canoes.com.au>

### **Yothu Yindi, 'Treaty'**

This is a concise explanation of the chart success of the song 'Treaty' as the first song in an Australian language to make it onto the charts.

<https://www.nfsa.gov.au/latest/25-years-treaty>



# 10

# The Stolen Generations

## This resource:

- contains information, activities and resources designed to support learning primarily within the History, English and Music subjects
- presents content that directly relates to selected outcomes in specific subjects and year levels; however, it can be applied more widely into other areas.

## Content overview

The content of this chapter is designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of the conditions, policies and practices that underpinned the forced displacement of Indigenous children in all states and territories of Australia.

The suggested tasks require students to examine oral testimonies and song lyrics by and about Indigenous people who experienced removal by government agents from their families and communities.

## Teacher introduction

The term 'Stolen Generation(s)' first appeared in the early 1980s, coined by historian Peter Read, who published a book by that title in 1981. The practice of state and territory government authorities removing Indigenous children from their families and communities began in the 1800s and continued in an ad hoc way throughout that century, as Indigenous people were moved from their lands onto missions and reserves to make way for the increasing need for territory by colonial settlement.

The practice became more formalised in the twentieth century as state and territory governments passed legislation that gave wide-ranging powers to government agencies to force Indigenous people to live in designated missions and reserves and to remove children to institutions such as homes, orphanages, industrial schools and/or to place them in foster families. Separation of children from their families was usually complete, with no contact being permitted between the children and their families. The majority of the younger children, with no memory of where they had come from, were never able to be reunited with their families.

The practice of removing children from their people had a significant impact on both the individual children themselves and on the many different Indigenous cultures throughout Australia. Children were denied the right to know their

culture, their language and their designated place in the world, leaving many thousands of them with no knowledge of who they were and where they were from. Family members left behind were denied their future generations, to whom they would have passed on their laws, beliefs, language and culture. Along with the loss of Indigenous people to wars, diseases and displacement, the practice of removing their children was one of the final ‘nails in the coffin’ of many of Australia’s individual Indigenous cultures and languages. The authors of the *Bringing them Home* report labelled this practice as genocidal.

When teaching and learning about the Stolen Generations, it is useful to examine the actual policies that underlined the practice in different places around Australia to understand how and why these were implemented. These tables present a representative sample of the relevant parts of these policies.

NEW SOUTH WALES	
1881	A ‘Protector of Aborigines’ is appointed in NSW. The Protector has the power to create reserves and to force Aboriginal people to live on them.
1909 Aborigines Act	The Board vested with power over all reserves including power to remove people from them. Entry onto reserves by non-Aborigines (including ‘half-castes’) forbidden. Duty of the Board to provide for the custody, maintenance and education of the children of aborigines. Board may apprentice ‘the child of any aborigine or the neglected child of any person apparently having an admixture of aboriginal blood in his veins.’
1915 Aborigines Protection Amending Act	Removed the requirement that an Aboriginal child had to be found to be neglected before the Board could remove him/her. ‘The Board may assume full control and custody of the child of any aborigine, if after due inquiry it is satisfied that such a course is in the interest of the moral or physical welfare of such child’ and remove such child to such control and care as it thinks best.
1936 and 1940 Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Acts	Court may order the removal of an ‘aborigine’ who is ‘living in insanitary or undesirable conditions’ to a reserve or a place controlled by the Board or to the State from whence he/she came. An offence to try to communicate with a ward in a home or enter any such home without the consent of the Board. The Board no longer has duty of education of Aboriginal children but still has duty of custody and maintenance. It may establish homes for the reception, maintenance, education and training of wards. Where in the opinion of the Board a ward is not ready for employment or apprenticeship ‘the ward may be placed in a home for the purpose of being maintained, educated and trained.’
1950	Aboriginal children are assimilated into NSW local schools, if all other parents agree. This right of veto is removed in 1960 and by 1968 the few remaining Aboriginal Public Schools are converted to normal public schools.
1969 Aborigines Act	Abolition of Aborigines Welfare Board. Aboriginal children under the care of the Aborigines Welfare Board to become wards of the State.

QUEENSLAND	
1897 Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act	Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders lost their legal status as British citizens and became wards of the state. Minister may order the removal, detention and relocation of Aboriginal people on reserves. providing for the care, custody and education of the children of ‘aboriginals’; providing for the transfer of any ‘half-caste’ child being an orphan or deserted by its parents to an orphanage;
1911 State Children Act	The Director of State Children may place a State child in a receiving depot; detain him/her in an institution registered under this Act; transfer him/her from one institution to another; place out or apprentice him/her; or place him/her in the custody of some suitable person. This action may be taken without reference to parents or relatives of the child.
1934 Protection of Aboriginals ... Amendment Act	The Minister may from time to time cause any aboriginal or half-caste ... to be removed to any reserve, institution, or district and kept there, or to be removed to any other reserve institution or district, and kept there’. If the Minister is of the opinion that any ‘aboriginal’ or ‘half-caste’ is uncontrollable he may order the ‘aboriginal’ or ‘half-caste’ to be kept in an institution.’

QUEENSLAND	
1939 Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act	Director of Native Affairs is the 'legal guardian of every aboriginal child under 21'. And may cause any 'aboriginals' who are camped near a town to 'remove their camp to such other place as he may direct'. Director may cause any 'aboriginals' to be 'removed from any district to a reserve and kept there for such time as may be ordered' or to be removed from one reserve to another.
1965	Director is no longer the legal guardian of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children but may order an assisted Aborigine or Islander who is not residing on a reserve 'to be transferred from any district to a reserve'; and . . . order the assisted Aborigine to be transferred from such reserve to another reserve. The Director could still order the removal of people, including children, between reserves. An assisted Aboriginal person could be detained for up to a year for behaving in an 'offensive, threatening, insolent, insulting, disorderly, obscene or indecent manner' or attempting to or leaving or escaping from the reserve'
1971 Aborigines Act	Abolished status of 'assisted Aborigine.' An offence to be on a reserve unless entitled under the Act to be there. A permit may be revoked by the Director. Regulations may be made with respect to the development, assimilation, integration, education, training and preservation of Aborigines.

NORTHERN TERRITORY	
1911 Aboriginals Ordinance	The Chief Protector becomes the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and 'half-caste' child under 18. Any Aboriginal person can be forced onto a mission or settlement and children can be removed at will. An 'aboriginal or half-caste' remaining within a prohibited area is guilty of an offence and may be removed.
1918 Aboriginals Ordinance	The Chief Protector's powers were extended so that all Indigenous females were under the total control of the Chief Protector unless they were married and living with a husband 'who is substantially of European origin'. Also 'ensured that Aboriginal people could not drink or possess or supply alcohol or methylated spirits, could not come within 2 chains of licensed premises, have firearms, marry non-Aborigines without permission or have sex across the colour line.'
1953 Northern Territory Welfare Ordinance	This makes Aboriginal people (of all ages) wards of the government. If the Director considered it to be in the best interests of the ward, a ward may be taken into custody; a male non-ward may not live with or be in the company of a female ward after sunset.
1955	The NT Government decided that Indigenous children in homes and missions should be moved to homes in the southern States. By the end of the 1960s, children were being placed into foster care as institutions and homes were being closed.
1961 Welfare Ordinance	Extends the definition of ward to include an Aboriginal person under the control of the Qld, WA or SA legislation entering the NT and allows for the removal of wards from the NT

WESTERN AUSTRALIA	
1905 Aborigines Act	Chief Protector of Aborigines became the legal guardian of 'every aboriginal and half-caste child' to the age of 16 years. Minister for Aboriginal Affairs may remove 'aboriginals' from one reserve or district to another reserve or district. Regulations may be made for 'the care, custody and education of the children of aborigines and half-castes' and 'enabling any aboriginal or half-caste child to be sent to and detained in an aboriginal institution, industrial school or orphanage'.
1911 Aborigines Act Amendment	Chief Protector made the legal guardian of all illegitimate 'half-caste' children 'to the exclusion of the rights of a mother of an illegitimate half-caste child.'
1936 Native Administration Act	The Commissioner was the legal guardian of every Aboriginal child in Western Australia to the age of 21 years. He had the power to remove all Aboriginal children, even if they had a 'legitimate' parent or relative and place them in Homes as part of assimilation policies.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA	
1941 Native Administration Act Amendment	Restricted right of Aboriginal people to move from north to south of the State across the 20th parallel of south latitude.
1944 Native (Citizenship Rights) Act	To be granted 'citizenship' under this Act, an Aboriginal person had to convince a magistrate that he/she had severed all ties to extended family and friends (parents, siblings and own children excepted), was free from disease, would benefit from holding citizenship and was 'of industrious habits'.

All other states had legislation that gave similar powers to government officials such as the Protector or Director. Details of all the relevant legislation in all states and territories can be found at [AIATSIS | To Remove and Protect](#).

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

OI.6	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples live in Australia as first peoples of Country or Place and demonstrate resilience in responding to historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation.
OI.8	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' family and kinship structures are strong and sophisticated.
OI.9	The significant contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the present and past are acknowledged locally, nationally and globally.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: History, Music

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

Through this activity, students will learn about the details and the impacts of Australia's child-removal policies that resulted in the Stolen Generations. They will develop their awareness and understanding of artworks that have been created to tell the stories of the people impacted by this practice.

### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that the state and territory governments enacted a range of policies from c. 1910 to 1970 that saw the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their parents and communities to be either fostered by white families or placed in children's homes
- that the aim of the policies was assimilation and ultimate eradication of Aboriginal people by 'breeding out the colour'
- that the policies failed because Australians continued to treat the stolen children, later adults, as Aboriginal and excluded them from many parts of society<sup>1</sup>
- that the trauma caused to Aboriginal people by these practices continues to have significant impact on their lives and mental health today.

<sup>1</sup> <https://australiantogether.org.au/discover/australian-history/stolen-generations/>

The students will **understand**:

- the significance of kinship and family to the maintenance of Indigenous culture and identity
- that the practices of the past, while sometimes well-intended, failed to acknowledge and respect Indigenous people's rights to their family and culture
- that artworks can be used to express people's stories.

The students will **be able to**:

- describe how artworks can express people's stories and feelings
- explain how government policies, such as child removal, can have unintended consequences
- discuss the influence of art on the development of personal and cultural identity
- give examples how Aboriginal people have demonstrated resilience in responding to historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation through art, including literature.

## Activity summary

### Activity 1

Students watch and then discuss the video [Separation: Ruth's Story](#) as preparation for the following activities.

### Activity 2

Students view the music video of the 1990 song '[Took the Children Away](#)' by Archie Roach. The version of the video listed below under 'Resources' includes historical footage.

- They first research Archie Roach's own experience of removal from his mother and his people and subsequent life in a children's home and foster families.
- Following this, students research the Framlingham Aboriginal Mission near Warrnambool and also find the location of a former Aboriginal Mission nearest to where they live.
- Finally, they explore what journalist Iain Shedden means when he says, 'As a member of the Stolen Generations, Roach had a direct line to the pain and suffering indigenous families endured when children were taken from them. He condensed those emotions into a few minutes of music that stands as one of the great Australian humanitarian artistic statements.'<sup>2</sup>

### Activity 3

- Students view the music video for the song '[The Irex](#)', which is a traditional farewell folk song sung by Aboriginal people on the missions in Queensland in the first decades of the twentieth century. The Irex was the name of the boat used to transport people to Palm Island; in other places, the song was the same, but the name of the boat was changed. The video is a scrolling list which records the names of all the Aboriginal people removed in that area in 1922.
- Following this, students research the history of how the Palm Island Mission was gazetted in 1914 as an Aboriginal Reserve, and how the members of more than 50 different language groups from throughout Queensland were

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2 <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/archie-roach-a-voice-for-social-justice/news-story/1335a4fc7bee4cc93ceb048e58056869>

forcibly relocated there, often as punishment for 'being disruptive, being pregnant to a white man, or being born with mixed blood'.<sup>3</sup>

- They discuss the lyrics of the song and debate the seeming incongruity between the optimism, resilience and determination expressed in both the lyrics and the tune and the tragic reality of the situation.

## Activity 4

The final song for students to study is Midnight Oil's '[The Dead Heart](#)', from 1986. They examine this song as an example of an artwork created by non-Indigenous Australians as a response to the Stolen Generations.

- Students look at an example of a website that provides explanations for the lyrics of songs, such as [www.genius.com](http://www.genius.com) or [www.songmeanings.com](http://www.songmeanings.com), and observe how explanatory notes are linked to parts of the text in the lyrics to explain their meaning. Students research the song to find details about its lyrics, and then set up their own webpage or text document in which they annotate the lyrics of 'The Dead Heart'.

## Activity 5

Students will perform some or all of the songs, either by singing along with the recording, or using their own instruments to play the accompaniment and singing the song. Lyrics and chord charts can be freely found on the internet.

# Links to learning areas

## HASS

### Year 6

Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, women and children (ACHASSK135)

- Investigating the lack of citizenship rights for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia, illustrated by controls on movement and residence, the forcible removal of children from their families leading to the Stolen Generations, and poor pay and working conditions
- investigating the experiences of democracy and citizenship of children who were placed in orphanages, homes and other institutions (for example, their food and shelter, protection, education and contacts with family)

## History

### Year 9

#### **Making a nation**

The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH020)

- investigating the forcible removal of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century (leading to the Stolen Generations), such as the motivations for the removal of children, the practices and laws that were in place, and experiences of separation

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3 Meade, Kevin (26 January 1998). 'Cathy Freeman, island of despair's patron saint'. *The Australian*. p. 4.

Year 10

### **Rights and freedoms (1945 – the present)**

Background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for rights and freedoms before 1965, including the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations (ACDSEH104)

- describing accounts of the past experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were forcibly removed from their families

The significance of the following for the civil rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: 1962 right to vote federally; 1967 Referendum; Reconciliation; Mabo decision; Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology (ACDSEH106)

- describing the aims, tactics and outcomes of a particular event in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' struggle for rights and freedoms

## **Music**

### **Years 7 and 8**

Explain how the elements of music communicate meaning by comparing music from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music (ACAMUR091)

- Considering viewpoints – societies and cultures: For example – How do different cultures use music? Why is this piece of music important in this culture?

Identify and connect specific features and purposes of music from different eras to explore viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAMUR098)

- identifying roles and responsibilities in music-making activities and contexts as both performer and audience member

### **Years 9 and 10**

Analyse a range of music from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider music in international contexts (ACAMUR105)

- discussing the influence of music on the development of personal and cultural identity

## **RESOURCES**

### **Resources for the activities**

#### **Separation: Ruth's Story [3'17"]**

In this video, Ruth tells the story of how she and her mother were firstly institutionalised and then separated.

<https://australianstogether.org.au/stories-2/#video-2>

#### **'Took the Children Away' [5'14"]**

Archie Roach's song 'Took the Children Away' is perhaps the most famous among all the songs that have been written and sung by Indigenous people about their history and their experiences with colonisation. In 1992, Archie Roach received an International Human Rights Achievement Award for this song – the first time a songwriter had received this award.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaAXPq0EAr0>

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/archie-roach-wins-major-songwriting-award>



### **Archie Roach: A life in song [53'55"]**

In this episode of *Big Ideas*, Paul Barclay interviews Archie Roach about his life.

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/archie-roach-a-life-in-song/9959300>

### **'The Irex' [2'00"]**

This song is part of the Mission Songs project in which singer/guitarist Jessie Lloyd has collected many old songs that were sung by people living in Aboriginal missions throughout the twentieth century.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBU9rTIH1B0>

### **About the Mission Songs Project**

Comprehensive notes about Indigenous musician Jessie Lloyd and her Mission Songs project, including explanatory notes for ten songs from the days of the Aboriginal missions that she has recorded.

<https://wolfewords.com.au/2017/02/27/jessie-lloyds-mission-songs-project/>

### **Mission Songs Project**

The home page of the Mission Songs project by Jessie Lloyd

<http://missionsongproject.com>

### **Midnight Oil, 'The Dead Heart' [5'14"]**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSHNR3y9www>

<https://www.songfacts.com/facts/midnight-oil/the-dead-heart>

## **Other Stolen Generation resources**

### **Adoption of Indigenous Australian children [1'32"]**

Short video interview with Margaret Valadian about Indigenous children in foster families

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/153540/>

### **Australians Together**

The Australians Together website has a comprehensive resource about the Stolen Generations

<https://australiantogether.org.au/discover/australian-history/stolen-generations/>

### **The Stolen Generation**

Personal accounts from the *Bringing them Home* report.

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/stories-report>

### **Explainer – the Stolen Generations**

This is a concise yet detailed explanation of the Stolen Generations.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/explainer/explainer-stolen-generations>

### **Rabbit-Proof Fence**

*Rabbit-Proof Fence*, the 2002 film directed by Philip Noyce. In 1931, three half-white, half-Aboriginal girls escape after being plucked from their houses to be trained as domestic staff, and set off on a journey across the Outback.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0252444/>

### **Leaping The Fence Of Australia's Past**

*Leaping the Fence of Australia's Past*. An interview with Philip Noyce giving some background to the characters and the actors in the movie *Rabbit Proof Fence*

<http://www.iofilm.com/filmmaking/scriptwriting/2003-12-16-724-leaping-the-fence-of-australias-past>

### **National Apology Speech – Secondary**

The Narragunnawali resource about the National Apology

<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resource/83/national-apology-speech-secondary?subject=18&year=3&searchType=CR&page=2>

### **The Stolen Generations**

A comprehensive PDF resource on the Stolen Generations by Reconciliation South Australia

[http://www.reconciliationsa.org.au/assets/media/files/Education%20Packs/Updated/stolen\\_generations\\_UPDATED\\_23-1-17.pdf](http://www.reconciliationsa.org.au/assets/media/files/Education%20Packs/Updated/stolen_generations_UPDATED_23-1-17.pdf)

# 11

## Making a Rightful Place in the Nation for the First Australians

### This resource:

- summarises the important events that have taken place over the past century in the progression towards an improved place in society for First Australians
- provides students with the opportunity to better understand the 1967 referendum
- examines the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart'.

### Content overview

This chapter traces the development of the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within the sphere of citizenship and their place within the Australian nation. It has been a long road to the present for First Australians since Alfred Deakin (first Attorney-General of Australia and three times Prime Minister) in 1901 deemed them to be on the verge of extinction. It is a road that has not yet ended.

Presented here are details that clarify the 1967 referendum, which is commonly misunderstood as 'giving Aborigines the right to vote'. This section discusses that misconception as well as the actual changes brought about by altering the Constitution and what they meant for Indigenous people. Of note is the comment made by Professor Megan Davis that 'Indigenous rights, land rights, native title rights have come from indigenous activism – tents on the lawn – and the courts. Parliament is always playing catch-up.'<sup>1</sup> The movements for social change that have occurred, even since the early days of William Cooper and Jack Patten, have been led by the people – Indigenous people, together with non-Indigenous supporters. Also of note is the continuing role of Indigenous men and women in military service, especially in the north of Australia.

Finally, the chapter traces the development of NAIDOC Week over the decades to 2019, when its theme was declared to be 'Voice, Treaty, Truth' – the three pillars of the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart', a discussion of which forms the final part of this chapter.

1 'Indigenous Rights, Land Rights': Megan Davis, 'Seeking a Settlement', The Monthly, July 2016; retrieved on April 25 2019, at: [www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2016/july/1467295200/megan-davis/](http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2016/july/1467295200/megan-davis/)

# Teacher introduction

This chapter is mostly about the suggestion to add a preamble to the Australian Constitution and about the Uluru Statement; however, something interesting arising from this chapter that is worth noting, and could be incorporated into a few different topics, is the role of Indigenous service men and women, both during past conflicts and today:

Indigenous service men and women have played an important role from the very first days of Australia's military engagements, and remain especially important today in the north of Australia. Norforce (The North-West Mobile Force) comprises 60% Indigenous Australians, and is one of three Regional Force Surveillance Units employed in surveillance and reconnaissance of the remote areas of northern Australia. Its area of operations covers 1.8 million square kilometres and encompasses the Northern Territory and the Kimberley region of Western Australia – the largest area of any military unit in the world today. The Aboriginal personnel are largely drawn from areas within their patrol operations where they use their intimate local knowledge of the area in their activities.<sup>2</sup>

A number of symbolic actions have been suggested and adopted over the decades that aim to include Indigenous people in public statements, and/or acknowledge past injustices. Small-scale examples include statements of recognition and/or acknowledgement on organisations' websites, or in prominent locations near the entry to a business, school or government office. Indigenous educator Gina Milgate suggests that, rather than see such statements as tokenistic, we can instead interpret them, and therefore value them, as a demonstration of an organisation's willingness to open itself to Indigenous people and make a step, however small, towards positive actions. She says, 'Imagine the difference to an Indigenous parent, walking into a school's reception, and seeing an acknowledgement of Indigenous people on the wall, a mural, or the Aboriginal flag being flown, as opposed to seeing nothing in the environment that might make her feel that this is a place for her and her child'.<sup>3</sup>

On a larger scale have been symbolic events such as the [Apology to Australia's Indigenous People](#) (2008) and the adoption of the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags](#). The Governor-General made a [proclamation](#)<sup>4</sup> on 14 July 1995 recognising the flag of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia and appointing the flag under section 5 of the *Flags Act 1953* as having 'Flag of Australia' status. The Torres Strait Islander flag was also adopted as an official Flag of Australia in the same legislation. These flags can now be flown officially, and their correct use when being flown in conjunction with other flags is outlined in official [protocol](#).

The idea of adopting a preamble to the Australian Constitution that recognises Indigenous people has been discussed for some time now. Note that there is no preamble to the Australian Constitution: the one that is often quoted is not to the Constitution itself, but to the British Act of Parliament (1900) that brought the Australian Constitution into force. Given that lack, adding a preamble to recognise Indigenous prior occupation of the Australian continent has been a popular, albeit symbolic, suggestion. In 1999, as part of the referendum for Australia to become a republic, a second question was asked about adding a suggested preamble to the Constitution. Neither proposal was successful in that referendum. That particular preamble was of a general nature and was wide-ranging, encompassing reference to all the peoples who have come to Australia, including Indigenous people. There was also no parliamentary inquiry or committee process to examine the proposed preamble and receive public submissions. Drafts for the preamble can be found [here](#), and the final text that went to the referendum can be found [here](#).

In May 2018, more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people met at the foot of Uluru in the Northern Territory in the First Nations National Constitutional Convention. Sixty per cent of the attendees were drawn from Indigenous communities across the nation and forty percent from Indigenous organisations and representative bodies

2 <https://www.army.gov.au/our-people/units/forces-command/2nd-division/north-west-mobile-force>

3 <http://www.cse.edu.au/civicism/event/info?reset=1&id=365>

4 <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2008L00209/Explanatory%20Statement/Text>

across a wide field, half of whom were termed 'key individuals'. The convention was convened by the bipartisan-appointed [Referendum Council](#) and its aim was to agree on an approach to constitutional reform to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As the drive to add a preamble to the Constitution recognising Indigenous Australians (as promoted by the 'Recognise' council and campaign) had lost some favour by this time, the Constitutional Convention considered more significant, practical options to suggest to Parliament. As constitutional expert Ann Twomey explains:

When it comes to constitutional reform, the priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is to have their views heard in relation to the making of laws and policies that affect their lives. This ranks above the insertion of formal words of recognition in a preamble and the removal of discriminatory clauses from the Constitution. It is not historic recognition by written words that is sought, but active and ongoing recognition of indigenous voices, allowing them to be heard in the corridors of power.<sup>5</sup>

The resulting declaration, the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart', was a powerful and generous invitation from its authors to transform the push for reconciliation by enshrining a representative 'Voice' for First peoples in the Constitution and forming a Makarrata Commission that would work on agreement-making and truth-telling.<sup>6</sup>

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

Ol.1	Australia has two distinct Indigenous groups: Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and within those groups there is significant diversity.
Ol.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
Ol.4	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies have many Language Groups.
Ol.7	The broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies encompass a diversity of nations across Australia.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: Civics and citizenship, English, History

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

#### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- what a constitutional preamble is
- that the Australian Constitution does not have a preamble, but that consideration is being given to holding a referendum over the proposal to add one
- that the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' is the latest attempt by Indigenous people to request that the government engage in practical reconciliation measures, including:
  - 1 signing a treaty

5 [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick\\_Guides/UluruStatement](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/UluruStatement)

6 [https://www.antar.org.au/sites/default/files/antar\\_annual\\_report\\_2017-18\\_vfa\\_web.pdf](https://www.antar.org.au/sites/default/files/antar_annual_report_2017-18_vfa_web.pdf)

- 2 engaging in a Makarrata process
- 3 establishing an Indigenous 'Voice to Parliament', which would provide feedback to the government on its policy suggestions that directly affect Indigenous people.

The students will **understand**:

- that most countries have a preamble to their constitution, as do the states of Australia
- that Australia is the only former British colony to not have treaty with the Indigenous inhabitants
- that the Uluru Statement provides three ideas about how Australia can engage with formal reconciliation practices with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- that the 1967 referendum was about removing two clauses from the Australian Constitution that made separate provisions for Aboriginal people, and not about giving them the right to vote.

The students will **be able to**:

- explain some of the past attempts to achieve a treaty, constitutional recognition and reconciliation
- discuss the process by which constitutional change can take place in Australia
- explain the meaning of a Makarrata commission and the proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament
- demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which Indigenous people have been disenfranchised by the Australian state
- discuss ways in which they can contribute to reconciliation.

## Activity summary

### Activity 1: What is a preamble to a constitution?

The University of Melbourne's Law School has a [website](#) with a concise FAQ section about the Constitution and, in particular, a preamble. The information there is generally enough to enable students to go ahead with this activity.

The Australian Constitution does not currently have a preamble at all. What is commonly cited as the preamble is actually just the preamble to the British Act of Parliament, passed by the British Parliament in 1900, that brought Australia into being on 1 January 1901.<sup>7</sup>

Although there is currently debate about adding a preamble to the Australian Constitution that recognises Indigenous Australians as the first occupants of this land, some states of Australia have already amended their constitutional preambles to include this. Those states that have done so are Victoria (see below), New South Wales and Queensland.

A section of the preamble to the Constitution of Victoria acknowledges Victoria's Aboriginal people as follows:

#### **1A Recognition of Aboriginal people**

The Parliament acknowledges that the events described in the preamble to this Act occurred without proper consultation, recognition or involvement of the Aboriginal people of Victoria.

The Parliament recognises that Victoria's Aboriginal people, as the original custodians of the land on which the Colony of Victoria was established –

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/constitutional\\_preamble\\_ls,35102.html](https://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/constitutional_preamble_ls,35102.html)

- (a) have a unique status as the descendants of Australia's first people; and
- (b) have a spiritual, social, cultural and economic relationship with their traditional lands and waters within Victoria; and
- (c) have made a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the identity and well-being of Victoria.<sup>8</sup>

Discuss:

- What might be the benefit in having this statement in the preamble to the Victorian Constitution?
- What does it actually say in plain language?
- Why do you think there has not been an attempt at adding this type of statement to the Australian Constitution?

## Activity 2: Write a suggested preamble (or an Indigenous section for a larger preamble)

Based on the Victorian model, write a suggested preamble to the Australian Constitution about Indigenous Australians that could be put to a referendum.

Some points to consider:

- Length – aim for three sentences.
- How you will refer to Indigenous Australians – as owners, custodians, Traditional Owners, former owners or in some other way. Discuss why you chose one over the other, and why you *didn't* choose the others.
- What it is important to include – connection with lands, kinship, responsibility, caring for country, spirituality, etc.

Once this is complete, through a process of elimination, a final version should be chosen, or constructed from combining several together. The preambles can be written on paper and distributed around the room. Students move around the room and tick the ones they think are particularly good. Then there can be a discussion and/or a vote to choose the final version.

## Activity 3: Hold a Class Referendum

If time permits, students can then engage in a mock referendum to adopt the chosen preamble to reinforce the process of how referenda work. Divide the class into groups representing the six states. Each student then votes within their state. Votes in each state are then counted. If 'yes' is in the majority in *at least four of the six states*, then all votes are combined and recounted as one group. If more than 50 percent of the total votes are 'yes', then the referendum has succeeded. If either of these steps results in 'no' in the majority, then it has not succeeded.

## Activity 4: The Uluru Statement

Students watch the Rachel Perkins video [Uluru Statement from the Heart – Secondary Education Tool](#). A suggested set of questions to go with the video appear below with answers, along with suggested research tasks that extrapolate on people and events mentioned in the video. The questions are designed to help students understand some of the more difficult or unfamiliar concepts, or to reinforce important points.

### 1 Who is the message to and from?

To the Australian people from Indigenous people.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/LTObject\\_Store/ltoobjst10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/B7D254A1E88F4E68CA2583B3001D3F50/\\$FILE/75-8750aa221%20authorised.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/ltoobjst10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/B7D254A1E88F4E68CA2583B3001D3F50/$FILE/75-8750aa221%20authorised.pdf)



**2 Who painted the designs around the statement? What do they represent?**

The senior law women of Uluru. The designs represent the Dreamings of that place to express the ancient connection of the people's law with their land.

*Research question: How is this similar to the Yirrkala Bark Petitions and to the Barunga Statement?*

**3 What are the themes of the statement?**

Voice, Treaty, Truth

**4 In what year was the earliest known request from Indigenous people to the government? Who was it from?**

1881, Yorta Yorta people

**5 What did William Barak ask for?**

He said, 'We wish to have freedom for all our lifetime'.

**6 What fell on deaf ears?**

Many thousands of petitions and requests sent to the governments by Indigenous people.

**7 What were the ramifications of the new Constitution in 1901?**

Indigenous people were specifically excluded from the census, and the federal government was not allowed to legislate for them (instead leaving this up to the states and their different approaches and opinions). Indigenous people were locked out of the new democracy, and this was immediately followed by a ban on all Aboriginal people from voting in federal elections.

**8 What happened to the petition written to the king, asking for Aboriginal representation in the Australian Parliament?**

The Victorian government decided that there would be no point sending it, so they just put it away and eventually lost it.

**9 The video asks, 'When the movement for the emancipation of black people was sweeping the USA and Africa', what was happening to Indigenous people in Australia?**

They were isolated in reserves and missions, as wards of the state, children were being removed in the thousands, young men and women exploited for their labour, legislation entrenched segregation against us as law.

**10 What were the three projects undertaken by FCATSI after it was founded in the 1960s?**

Equality of wages, a referendum to change the constitution, and land rights

**11 What will the Voice do if it is enacted? What will it not do? What will it not be?**

The voice would give advice from Indigenous people to parliament about the laws that affect them. It would not be a veto. It would not be a third chamber of parliament.

**12 Why does an Indigenous Voice to Parliament need to be in the Constitution and not just legislated by parliament?**

So that it can't be changed or removed in the future at the whim of the government of the day, only by the Australian people (via another referendum).

**13 What were Lieutenant James Cook's secret instructions in 1769?**

'With the consent of the natives, to take possession of convenient situations in the country ... in the name of the King of Great Britain.'

**14** In your own words, explain what you understand ‘Makarrata’ to mean.

Makarrata captures the idea of two parties coming together after a struggle, healing the divisions of the past; it is about acknowledging that something has been done wrongly and that it needs to be made right.

**15** In 1988, Australia’s bicentenary year, how many people gathered for the protest?

40,000 (the largest protest since the Vietnam War).

*Research question: Bob Hawke’s broken promise of a treaty spawned a song that achieved chart success for a song in an Indigenous language for the first time. Find out about that song (Yothu Yindi’s ‘Treaty’).*

**16** What was overturned by the High Court in 1992?

*Terra nullius.* The High Court affirmed that Indigenous people’s title to land existed before Cook and continues to this day.

**17** What happened in 2000?

Hundreds of thousands of Australians walked across the [Sydney Harbour] Bridge in the name of reconciliation.

**18** After ten years’ work, the then Prime Minister, John Howard, was presented with ‘The Australian Declaration of Reconciliation’. What did John Howard do?

He rejected it.

*Research question: What other formal approaches to the government from Indigenous people have been rejected over the years? Answers include: Yirrkala Bark Petition, Barunga Statement, Uluru Statement (note that, although the then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull dismissed the Statement and its request for a Voice to Parliament, negotiations are ongoing with the current government regarding a referendum).*

**19** Who else has treaties with their Indigenous people?

The USA, Scandinavian countries, and every other Commonwealth nation except Australia.

**20** What is central to solving the relationship between Indigenous people and the nation?

Truth-telling

**21** What is known as ‘the Great Australian Silence’?

The lack of acknowledgement of the land wars.

*Research question: research information about the land wars and the massacres that took place, possibly in your local area or your state or territory.*

**22** How many Queensland Aboriginal people lost their lives in the establishment of that state?

Estimated to be 20,000

**23** What is sovereignty?

Sovereignty is a nation’s power to govern itself, without any interference from outside sources or bodies. Before the arrival of the British, Indigenous Australians had sovereignty over themselves.

**24** What does ‘Sovereignty never ceded’ mean?

To cede something is to give it up, especially unwillingly. The term is usually used in relation to land. This term is often heard in discussions about Aboriginal sovereignty and land, and it means that the Indigenous people *never agreed* to the British taking away their sovereignty or their land. They have never ceded, or ‘given away’, their sovereignty over themselves.

# Links to learning areas

## History

### Year 7

#### **Historical skills**

Perspectives and interpretations Identify and describe points of view, attitudes and values in primary and secondary sources. (ACHHS212)

- exploring the multilayered meanings (material, cultural and spiritual wellbeing) associated with rivers, waterways, waterholes, seas, lakes, soaks and springs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Explanation and communication Develop texts, particularly descriptions and explanations that use evidence from a range of sources that are acknowledged. (ACHHS213)

### Year 8

#### **Perspectives and interpretations**

Identify and describe points of view, attitudes and values in primary and secondary sources. (ACHHS155)

- describing the values and attitudes revealed by a source (such as an individual account) and using additional sources to show how they are broadly representative of the values and attitudes of the society

#### **Explanation and communication**

Develop texts, particularly descriptions and explanations that use evidence from a range of sources that are acknowledged. (ACHHS156)

- using scaffolds illustrating the structural and language features of particular text types (for example, descriptions and explanations) to create a text that communicates specific findings about the past

## Music

### Years 7 and 8

Explain how the elements of music communicate meaning by comparing music from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music (ACAMUR091)

- Considering viewpoints – societies and cultures: For example – How do different cultures use music? Why is this piece of music important in this culture?

Analyse composers' use of the elements of music and stylistic features when listening to and interpreting music (ACAMUR097)

- Considering viewpoints – evaluations: For example – How effectively did the musicians use expressive techniques in their performance? What are the strengths of this performance or composition?
- identifying and describing the features and performance practices that help determine a specific musical style or culture

Identify and connect specific features and purposes of music from different eras to explore viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAMUR098)

- identifying roles and responsibilities in music-making activities and contexts as both performer and audience member

## Years 9 and 10

Plan and organise compositions with an understanding of style and convention, including drawing upon Australian music by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (ACAMUM102)

- planning, recording and communicating ideas in different musical styles, including Australian music by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, using specialised notation and terminology
- 

Analyse a range of music from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their music making, starting with Australian music, including music of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and consider music in international contexts (ACAMUR105)

- discussing the influence of music on the development of personal and cultural identity

## English

Students develop an awareness and appreciation of, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literature.

### Year 7

#### **Literature and context**

Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1619)

- building knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the history, culture, and literary heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

#### **Literacy**

Interpreting, analysing, evaluating Analyse and explain the ways text structures and language features shape meaning and vary according to audience and purpose (ACELY1721)

- explaining the relationship between text features and structures and audience and purpose, such as identifying which group would be the most likely target for the information in an advertisement and justifying why on the basis of textual features

Use comprehension strategies to interpret, analyse and synthesise ideas and information, critiquing ideas and issues from a variety of textual sources (ACELY1723)

#### **Creating texts**

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, selecting aspects of subject matter and particular language, visual, and audio features to convey information and ideas (ACELY1725)

- writing and delivering presentations with specific rhetorical devices to engage an audience

### Year 8

#### **Literature and context**

Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1619)

- building knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the history, culture, and literary heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

## **Interpreting, analysing, evaluating**

Analyse and evaluate the ways that text structures and language features vary according to the purpose of the text and the ways that referenced sources add authority to a text (ACELY1732)

- explaining the relationship between text features and structures and audience and purpose, such as identifying which group would be the most likely target for the information in an advertisement and justifying why on the basis of textual features

Apply increasing knowledge of vocabulary, text structures and language features to understand the content of texts (ACELY1733)

- identifying the meaning of a wide range of words, including technical and literary language in various contexts

## **Creating texts**

Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices, and including digital elements as appropriate (ACELY1736)

- selecting vocabulary to influence meaning and to position and persuade the audience, for example adjusting language to show or acknowledge power

## **Year 9**

### **Language for interaction**

Investigate how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices, for example allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor (ACELA1552)

- comparing texts that use evaluative language in different ways – print advertisements, editorials, talkback radio and poetry – and identifying wordings that appraise things indirectly, through evocative language, similes and metaphors that direct the views of the readers in particular ways

## **Civics and Citizenship**

## **Year 7**

### **Government and democracy**

The process for constitutional change through a referendum (ACHCK049)

- describing the process by which referendums to change the Australian Constitution are initiated and decided

### **Problem Solving and Decision Making**

Use democratic processes to reach consensus on a course of action relating to a civics or citizenship issue and plan for that action (ACHCS058)

- developing a plan of action that incorporates a consultation process to ensure a range of views are heard and people are provided with opportunities to respond

## **Year 8**

### **Citizenship, diversity and identity**

Different perspectives about Australia's national identity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and what it means to be Australian (ACHCK066)

- examining contemporary influences on the shaping of Australian national identity, such as the natural environment, immigration, attitudes to Asia and Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians

### **Analysis, synthesis and interpretation**

Critically analyse information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS070)

- examining language choices in a range of texts to identify purpose, audience and reliability (for example, those used by candidates in an election campaign or by a lobby group)

Use democratic processes to reach consensus on a course of action relating to a civics or citizenship issue and plan for that action (ACHCS072)

- participating in a simulation to achieve consensus (for example, a mock court case or parliamentary committee)
- working in groups to evaluate the options before deciding on any course of action (for example, to influence change relating to a current event or issue)

## **Year 9**

### **Analysis, synthesis and interpretation**

Critically evaluate information and ideas from a range of sources in relation to civics and citizenship topics and issues (ACHCS084)

- explaining the assumptions or missing information that may affect the reliability of an opinion about an issue (for example, commentary from a traditional form of media)

Account for different interpretations and points of view (ACHCS085)

- taking on roles for a discussion to explore various points of view about a contemporary political or social issue

## **Year 10**

### **Citizenship, diversity and identity**

The challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and cohesive society (ACHCK094)

- exploring the concept of 'cohesive society' using examples from contemporary events in Australia or in other countries to identify factors that support cohesiveness
- investigating processes by which individuals and groups resolve differences in Australian communities (for example, negotiation, mediation and reconciliation)

### **Analysis, synthesis and interpretation**

Account for different interpretations and points of view (ACHCS098)

- identifying the values, motivations and contexts which underpin different interpretations about civics and citizenship topics and issues
- developing an evidence-based argument that includes a rebuttal of an alternative point of view

### **Problem-solving and decision-making**

Recognise and consider multiple perspectives and ambiguities, and use strategies to negotiate and resolve contentious issues (ACHCS099)

- identifying civics and citizenship topics and issues that may involve dissent, uncertainty or be open to interpretation and debate
- using skills associated with the negotiation process (seeking to understand other views, applying reason and logic, building on common ground, isolating areas of difficulty, and recording agreements reached)

# RESOURCES

## Uluru Statement

### **Uluru Statement from the Heart – Secondary Education Tool [18’20”]**

Filmmaker Rachel Perkins, with Blackfella Films, directed this video with the purpose of explaining the Uluru Statement in the context of Indigenous people’s engagements with the Australian state. This is an excellent video which is engaging, rich in detail, with many interesting historical photographs.

<https://vimeo.com/346347606>

### **The Uluru Statement from the Heart Explained**

This is the main website about the Uluru Statement.

<https://www.1voiceuluru.org>

### **Uluru Statement: a quick guide**

The Parliament of Australia’s website guide to the Uluru Statement and responses to it

[https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick\\_Guides/UluruStatement](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/UluruStatement)

## 1967 Referendum

### **Reconciliation Australia – 1967 Referendum**

This is Reconciliation Australia’s website about the 1967 referendum and is an excellent summary of the situation of Indigenous people, both before and after the referendum, and of the referendum itself. It is concise and very useful for the classroom.

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/27-may-referendum.pdf>

### **Right Wrongs – an ABC education resource**

This is an excellent, comprehensive resource that is presented in a very engaging way for students, with images and videos, and which covers a wide range of aspects of the lives of Indigenous Australians up until the 1967 referendum, and the referendum itself.

<https://www.abc.net.au/rightwrongs/>

### **‘Right wrongs, write Yes’: what was the 1967 referendum all about?**

A *Conversation* article that summarises the campaign that took place in the lead-up to the referendum in 1967

<https://theconversation.com/right-wrongs-write-yes-what-was-the-1967-referendum-all-about-76512>

### **National Library of Australia’s Digital Classroom**

#### **Timeline – Events that led to the 1967 Referendum**

This is a timeline-based summary of constitutional provisions and government policies that led up to 1967. It is presented in a very student-appropriate way and is ideal for the classroom. The page concludes with suggested classroom activities.

<https://www.nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-10/the-1967-referendum/timeline>

### **ABC’s BtN (Behind the News) – 1967 Referendum [4’04”]**

<https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/1967-referendum/10523010>

Teacher resource with videos and classroom activities <https://www.abc.net.au/btn/resources/teacher/episode/20170523-1967referendum.pdf>



## **National Archives of Australia**

This is a collection of fact sheets from various government departments in the lead-up to the 1967 referendum and the referendum itself. More suitable for teachers' background knowledge than for students.

<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs150.aspx>

## **Other reconciliation and recognition sources**

### **Australians for Native Title & Reconciliation (ANTaR)**

'To engage, educate and mobilise a broad community movement to advocate for justice, rights and respect for Australia's First Peoples.'

<https://www.antar.org.au>

### **Recognition in keeping with the Constitution**

This is a speech given by Former Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, Murray Gleeson, that explains how recognising Australia's First peoples in the Australian Constitution is eminently possible and achievable.

[https://cdn.brandfolder.io/3RTTK3BV/as/putr90-7ew1ns-5sgfef/Indigenous\\_Recognition\\_-\\_Murray\\_Gleeson.pdf](https://cdn.brandfolder.io/3RTTK3BV/as/putr90-7ew1ns-5sgfef/Indigenous_Recognition_-_Murray_Gleeson.pdf)

### **Explainer: What Indigenous constitutional recognition means**

'So what does the Constitution say about race? How do we change it? And what are some of the proposals for what the Constitution might say in future, particularly when it comes to recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Australians?' A good article for classroom discussion.

<https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-indigenous-constitutional-recognition-means-31770>

### **Ergo – State Library of Victoria**

These are teaching resources by the Victorian Government

<http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/teachers/image-study-reconciliation>

<http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/explore-history/fight-rights/indigenous-rights>

### **It's time to recognise Indigenous Australia in our constitution**

This was written immediately after the [Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples concluded](#) its deliberations on reform proposals and discusses constitutional change.

<https://theconversation.com/its-time-to-recognise-indigenous-australia-in-our-constitution-4670>

### **A new preamble for the Australian Constitution?**

This is a teaching resource for upper secondary by ACSA Ideas.

[http://www.acsa.edu.au/pages/images/IDEAS\\_new\\_preamble%201.pdf](http://www.acsa.edu.au/pages/images/IDEAS_new_preamble%201.pdf)

### **Referendum Council**

The Referendum Council was appointed to advise the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition on options for constitutional reform. The council delivered its report in 2017.

<https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au>

### **AIATSIS Teachers' Notes: 1967 Referendum**

This is a set of notes for teachers, and student activities, that are based on an investigation into exactly why the 1967 referendum was considered to be so important by reformers working to improve Aboriginal rights, and the extent to which their hopes for the future have been realised since its passage.

[https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/asp/education/67\\_ref\\_notes\\_final.pdf](https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/asp/education/67_ref_notes_final.pdf)

Dylan Lino, *Constitutional Recognition. First Peoples and the Australian settler state*, Federation Press, 2019.

Shireen Morris, *Radical Heart*, MUP, 2018.

Megan Davis and Marcia Langton, *It's our Country. Arguments for meaningful constitutional reform*, MUP, 2017.

Noel Pearson, 'A Rightful Place. Race, recognition and a more complete Commonwealth', Quarterly Essay E55, September 2014. Black Inc.

# 13

## Looking to the Future

### This resource:

- builds on the two main ideas presented in the text – survival and reconciliation
- suggests activities that enable students to examine effects of historical attitudes towards Indigenous peoples' representation in the Australian nation, and how these continue to change
- through examining media portrayals, introduces the idea of 'humanisation' as a necessary component in reconciliation
- asks students to consider how they can be positive agents of change.

### Content overview

This chapter examines some of the factors that have contributed to the place of Indigenous Australians in the Australian political and social sphere in the current day. The birth of the 'survival' movement, concurrent with the nation's bicentennial celebrations in 1988, was a key moment in the development of a wave of introspection about Australia Day, largely absent before then, that has now become widespread.

This leads to an examination of recent bodies such as the Aboriginal Reconciliation Council (1991), Reconciliation Australia (2001) and the National Indigenous Constitutional Convention (2017) that have undertaken action to try and move Australia forward on the path towards aspects of reconciliation, such as constitutional recognition and a treaty.

### Teacher introduction

In order to move closer to a genuine reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and to the possible inclusions of a statement of recognition in the Australian Constitution and a Voice to Parliament, it will be necessary to bring the majority of the Australian population along on the journey. Education and understanding are key to this process, and to remediating the entrenched attitudes developed through the dehumanising of Australia's First peoples.

For education to redress the historical biases and prejudices that have held back major reconciliation projects to date, its aims need to be twofold: to embrace truth-telling about past and current injustices; and to consider how to resolve Aboriginal Elder Noel Pearson's question, 'How do 10,000 distinct peoples live well and prosper – and get along with each other – within 200 nation-states?' at the Australian level.

Earlier chapters in these teachers' notes contain some activities which address truth-telling about the injustices visited upon Australia's First Nations peoples. In this closing chapter, however, the activities are deliberately designed to stir students to think about the many ways in which they themselves can contribute to a positive, reconciled future, and harness their ideas and experiences to build empathy and understanding.

'Above all else, Reconciliation calls for a generosity of spirit. But we ought, as a nation, to confront the problem, to acknowledge without equivocation the injustices of the past, and move on to a more productive dialogue.'

– The Hon. Sir Anthony Mason AC KBE<sup>1</sup>

## Relevant cross-curriculum priority organising ideas

OI.6	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples live in Australia as first peoples of Country or Place and demonstrate resilience in responding to historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation.
OI.7	The broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies encompass a diversity of nations across Australia.
OI.8	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' family and kinship structures are strong and sophisticated.
OI.9	The significant contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the present and past are acknowledged locally, nationally and globally.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES: English, Civics and Citizenship, Media arts

### What the students will know, understand and be able to do

#### Evidence of learning

The students will **know**:

- that the population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is increasing each year, rather than decreasing
- that reconciliation will remain an important part of the dialogue in Australia
- that all Australians, not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, can benefit materially and spiritually from increased understanding and valuing of Indigenous histories and cultures.

The students will **understand**:

- that the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures within Australian society will continue to grow due to increasing education and social change
- that media arts can play a big role in challenging or supporting people's opinions and assumptions, and that it can be a powerful tool for change
- that racism and prejudice continue to be daily experiences for some Australians.

1 Mason, Anthony. 2002. 'Deakin's Vision, Australia's Progress.' Deakin Law Review 3; 7(1) p. 61  
<http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/DeakinLawRw/2002/3.html>

The students will **be able to**:

- explain their own understanding of reconciliation
- describe how they might be able to contribute to a growing understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's participation and inclusion in Australian society
- articulate their own vision for a future Australia with reference not only to Indigenous people but to people from all countries within a modern Australia.

## Activity 1: Survival

The students will listen to the song '[We Have Survived](#)', by drummer and singer Bart Willoughby and the Adelaide-based reggae band No Fixed Address from their 1982 album, *Wrong Side of the Road*. They will [examine the lyrics](#) and discuss the message that the song communicates to the audience, and why it became a type of anthem for Indigenous Australians.

The students will then be presented with a list (or will find their own) of Indigenous Australians who have, or have had, a place in the public sphere and who, in some way, exemplify 'surviving' as sung about in Bart Willoughby's song 'We Have Survived'. There are many such people mentioned throughout the main text of *Welcome to Country* who are suitable for this activity. **Selecting specific categories of people for the list can tailor this activity to be subject-specific – for example, a list of Indigenous musicians for Music.**

Older students could be encouraged to research people who have played key roles in legal cases such as *Dhakiyarr vs the King*, *Wik Peoples vs Queensland*, *Mabo vs Queensland (2)*, *Milirrpum and Others v Nabalco Pty Ltd*, *Cubillo & Gunner vs The Commonwealth* or the 1967 Referendum. While not all of these cases resulted in a successful ruling for the litigants, they nonetheless all contain examples of strong Indigenous people.

Individually or in small groups, students research their chosen person's life and career, and present this in a format such as a poster, a dossier, a web page or a short film. This should be devised as a tool through which the student can then teach someone else about their chosen person.

Students should then be given the opportunity to present their research to a wider audience, such as:

- an assembly
- students in an older class
- at occasions such as grandparents' day or classwork display for parents
- members of their local community
- a class in a 'sister school' that they might have, either in Australia or overseas
- at a local government function, for example, as a display at a Citizenship Ceremony
- members of their local Indigenous community if an ongoing relationship has been established.

Ideally, this presentation should give students the opportunity to engage in a two-way dialogue with their audience about their learning.

## Activity 2: Time machine

Alfred Deakin and A.O. Neville are transported into the future from the 1910s to 2020.

or

## Activity 2: Letter from the future

Students write to Alfred Deakin and A.O. Neville in the past.

Students will research both:

- Alfred Deakin, and discover that he was a Victorian barrister and politician who:
  - was a leader of the movement for Australian Federation
  - was the driving force in the Australian delegation that negotiated the approval of the Constitution by the British Government
  - played a key role in the development of Australia's Constitution
  - was Australia's first Attorney-General and responsible for the establishment of the High Court
  - was three times Prime Minister of Australia (1903–04, 1905–08 and 1909–10)
  - was one of the chief architects of the White Australia Policy (1901–73).
- Auber Octavius (A.O.) Neville, and discover that:
  - in 1915 he was Western Australia's second appointment to the role of Chief Protector of Aborigines
  - he oversaw the policy of removing Aboriginal children from their families
  - in 1936 he became the Commissioner for Native Affairs
  - in 1947 he published a book, *Australia's Coloured Minority*, which outlined his plan for the biological absorption (disappearance) of Aboriginal people into white Australia.

Students are then told either:

- to prepare for a visit from these two men, who are coming to 2020 in a time machine, to find out if their predictions for the Indigenous people of Australia were right; or
- that they are able to send a letter back in time to these two politicians in response to their predictions, explaining how they were wrong.

To prepare for this activity, students will examine statements below made by the two men, and the context of the time, and then come up with a response or a letter which either:

- explains the richness of Aboriginal culture in Australia today in general
- outlines a particular event or project such as [NAIDOC week](#), the organisation [Reconciliation Australia](#) and its aims, [Indigenous Ranger programs](#), [the Mabo decision](#), the [Bringing them Home](#) report about the Stolen Generations, the [Apology to Australia's Indigenous People](#) by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, the [1967 Referendum](#), or the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#).

If undertaking the time machine activity, some students could role-play Alfred Deakin and A.O. Neville so that other students can present their message to them as a type of dialogue; or they could just present to the class. If doing the 'letter from the future' version of the activity, students should write up their topic in the context of a letter to either of the men, telling them how different the future has actually turned out to be.



'In another century the probability is that Australia will be a White Continent with not a black or even dark skin among its inhabitants. The Aboriginal race has died out in the South and is dying fast in the North and West even where most gently treated. Other races are to be excluded by legislation if they are tinted to any degree. The yellow, the brown, and the copper-coloured are to be forbidden to land anywhere.'

– Alfred Deakin, 1901



MR. A. O. NEVILLE.

'Are we going to have one million blacks in the Commonwealth or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?'

– A.O. Neville, 1937 <sup>2</sup>

In considering the context in which both men made their pronouncements about the 'dying out' of Aboriginal people, it is useful to examine some of the institutions of the day and their unashamed policies of promoting 'whiteness'. Two such examples are the Australian Natives' Association and the Sydney-based publication, *The Bulletin*.



The Australian Natives' Association, despite what might be interpreted from its name, was not an organisation for Indigenous Australians. Rather, its membership was exclusively for white men who were born in Australia, at a time when those born in England still outnumbered the native-born population. Founded in Victoria in 1871, its last functioning chapter was not disbanded until 2009 in Perth, Western Australia. It advocated strongly for Federation and an Australian Constitution, but also for the White Australia Policy, and in particular, the exclusion of Asians. 'To preserve the purity of our race is a duty we owe to those who come after us', one of their motions read.<sup>3</sup>

Another key insight into the times of Alfred Deakin and A.O. Neville is not just the content of the publication, *The Bulletin*, but its very masthead, which, until 1961, proclaimed 'Australia for the White Man'.

Additional to the belief in white supremacy and racial segregation, openly promoted by the politicians of the day, was the commonly held belief that Australia's Aboriginal people were not likely to survive long into the twentieth century. As explained by Russell McGregor in his book



<sup>2</sup> [Anderson, Warwick \(2006\). The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, health and racial destiny in Australia. Duke University Press. ISBN 978-0-822-33840-6.](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20070927211401/http://www.postnewspapers.com.au/20070224/news/001.shtml>



One reason why Aboriginal people were shut out of the national community was that, as an irredeemably primitive race, they were deemed incapable of exercising the rights of citizenship or appreciating its responsibilities. Moreover, they were considered a fleeting problem. Some contemporary commentators lamented their projected extinction; some celebrated the prospect; most simply accepted it as the outcome of inexorable forces of nature over which human beings were ultimately powerless. At the time of Federation, it seemed to settler Australians that the Aboriginal race literally had no future. A forward-looking nation foresaw an Australia devoid of Aboriginal people.<sup>4</sup>

Many pieces of government legislation about Indigenous people, and large-scale projects such as Church-run missions, were founded on this belief, which can be seen in the oft-quoted phrase, ‘smooth the dying pillow’.<sup>5</sup>

### Activity 3

Students watch ‘[The Final Quarter, Extra Time](#)’ to hear a panel of experts discuss their opinions about how the media did or did not contribute to the dialogue around the booing of AFL player and Australian of the Year, Adam Goodes

‘The Final Quarter, Extra Time,’ is a special episode of the Channel 10 show *The Panel*, hosted by Waleed Aly and broadcast on 18 July 2019. The whole half-hour is relevant to the activity, but the main segment occurs between 16’49” and 26’00”, when the panellists discuss the question, ‘How much of what happened [in the Adam Goodes saga] rests with us [the media]?’ (It is desirable that students have the opportunity to see the actual documentary *The Final Quarter*; however, if time prevents that, this activity can be completed fully by only watching the panel conversation about it.)

#### Small group activity

Students should note down their thoughts as they watch the segment and then, in small groups, discuss one or more of the following points, then present their ideas to the class.

- The Fox Footy commentator, Mark Sheahan said, ‘I feel a sense of shame about all of us being so late in protecting Goodes ... We thought our [anti-racism] message was strong, but it was deemed to be not strong enough’.
- The journalist Chip le Grand, from the newspaper *The Australian*, said, ‘I think we saw the best and worst of the media through this ... most of the media comes out looking OK, they called it ... but you had a small number of very loud voices who kept going back, particularly to the incident at the MCG in 2013 as the genesis of it [the booing], which I think is a complete misrepresentation of the situation’.
- Paul Barry, host of the ABC program *Media Watch*, said, ‘The media [as a whole] were actually really good on Goodes. All the front pages of the major newspapers, *The Australian*, *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Herald Sun* and *The Daily Telegraph*, they all came out for Goodes – front page, that’s really good. It’s just a small number of the usual suspects, the right-wing columnists, mainly in the NewsCorp papers, who went for him and, I think, bullied him ... At *Media Watch* we were very critical [of them] ... but we didn’t do it early enough and I really regret that’.

#### Whole class activity: Case study

The segments shown from two of the anti-Goodes media commentators, Alan Jones and Andrew Bolt, are used by the panellists to demonstrate how quoting just a tiny portion – in this case, less than one sentence – of what someone says can completely change the meaning of their words, and can then be used to stir up public sentiment against them.

<sup>4</sup> McGregor, Russell. *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the doomed race theory, 1880–1939*

<sup>5</sup> <https://lists.h-net.org/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-anzau&month=9801&week=b&msg=6C6XT8j04zXGWrpNnAysdA&user=&pw=>

What some media (such as Sam Newman on *The Footy Show*) reported Adam Goodes as saying: 'Racism had a face last night and, you know, it was a thirteen-year-old girl ..'

What Goodes actually said:

'Racism had a face last night and, you know, it was a thirteen-year-old girl, but it's not her fault. She's thirteen, she's still so innocent. I don't put any blame on her. Unfortunately, it's what she hears, the environment she's grown up in.'

Journalist Chip le Grand explained it in this way: 'The thing that Goodes said, that he always got tarred with, was that "racism has a face, and last night it was a *thirteen*-year-old girl". And so, Goodes's critics said that he'd singled out this *thirteen*-year-old girl and held her up as an example of all that's evil about racism, which is clearly *not* what he did. He said that with such sort of sadness, really, and that's what got lost. I think the frustrating thing about it is how easy it was for that misrepresentation to capture the narrative, and trying to argue the counter-view, and point to the other areas in which Adam Goodes went out of his way to try to protect the *thirteen*-year-old girl, seemed like it was falling on deaf ears.'

## Questions

- How do you think you would react if you only heard the reported snippet (less than one sentence), as opposed to how you would react if you heard all three sentences of Goodes' statement?
- Why do you think some media commentators deliberately only tell half the story?
- What damage do you think can be done by such practices, both to the individual and to the audience?
- Do you think that deliberately misrepresenting someone's position, such as what happened with Adam Goodes, is against the Australian Journalists' Association Code of Ethics (1994), the first two points of which are below?

Each member of the Australian Journalists' Association is bound by its rules to observe this Code of Ethics in his [/her] employment:

1. To report and interpret news with a scrupulous honesty.
2. Not to suppress essential facts nor distort the truth by omission or wrong or improper emphasis.<sup>6</sup>

## Behind the scenes

One of the commentators shown criticising Adam Goodes was Andrew Bolt, who, in 2011, lost a court case defending himself and his employer News Corp against a charge of violating Australia's *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cwlth). In explaining his ruling, Justice Bromberg said, '*The lack of care and diligence is demonstrated by the inclusion in the newspaper articles of the untruthful facts and the distortion of the truth ... together with the derisive tone, the provocative and inflammatory language and the inclusion of gratuitous asides.*'<sup>7</sup>

- How many of Justice Bromberg's points (emphasised in the text above) could also be applied to the two short segments you just viewed, in which only part of the first sentence of Adam Goodes' statement was broadcast?

## Positive messages from this activity

It is important for teachers to shape the overall direction of this activity to ensure that the positives from the story are not lost in the controversy of the reporting of the Adam Goodes saga.

Suggested positive outcomes include the following:

- This type of occurrence is now less likely to happen.
- If it happens again, the media will move more quickly to name it and denounce it.

<sup>6</sup> <https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes/Australia-AJA>

<sup>7</sup> <https://independentaustralia.net/business/business-display/andrew-bolt-continues-on-about-adam-goodes,12947>

- The board of the AFL will become involved with such incidents, and will speak out strongly against racism.
- It became clear that racism is far more common in society than people generally admit, and knowing this can help counter it more effectively.
- People who wouldn't normally think about racism towards Indigenous Australians became aware of it through the publicity this incident received, and realised that more has to be done to reduce racism in Australia in general.

Final questions for students to consider privately, without discussion:

- Do you stand up for what you believe in?
- If so, what can you do the next time you see racism?

## Links to learning areas

### English

#### Year 7

##### **Literature and context**

Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1619)

- building knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the history, culture, and literary heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- identifying and explaining differences between points of view in texts, for example contrasting the city and the bush or different perspectives based on culture, gender or age

##### **Creating literature**

Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts (ACELT1805)

- experimenting with different narrative structures such as the epistolary form, flashback, multiple perspectives

#### Year 8

##### **Text structure and organisation**

Analyse how the text structures and language features of persuasive texts, including media texts, vary according to the medium and mode of communication (ACELA1543)

- discussing how particular perspectives of the same event are portrayed through the combination of images and words in various media texts

##### **Literature and context**

Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the values of individuals and groups (ACELT1626)

- investigating texts about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history from different sources and explaining differing viewpoints
- comparing attitudes and ideas in texts drawn from contexts that are different to students' own

## Year 9

### Language for interaction

Investigate how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices, for example allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor (ACELA1552)

- comparing texts that use evaluative language in different ways – print advertisements, editorials, talkback radio and poetry – and identifying wordings that appraise things indirectly, through evocative language, similes and metaphors that direct the views of the readers in particular ways

### Literature and context

Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1633)

- comparing perspectives represented in texts from different times and places, including texts drawn from popular culture
- analysing and identifying how socio-cultural values, attitudes and beliefs are conveyed in texts, for example comparing and analysing perspectives about an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issue reported in commercial media compared to public and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media
- analysing and interpreting assumptions about groups that have shaped or influenced representations of people, places, events and things and identifying how listeners and readers are positioned by these representations

### Texts in context

Analyse how the construction and interpretation of texts, including media texts, can be influenced by cultural perspectives and other texts (ACELY1739)

- analysing literary texts created by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (including documentaries, picture books, print texts and other multimodal texts) and also texts including film produced by and about peoples of Asian background, and considering the different ways these texts represent people, places, things and issues

### Interpreting, analysing, evaluating

Interpret, analyse and evaluate how different perspectives of issue, event, situation, individuals or groups are constructed to serve specific purposes in texts (ACELY1742)

- analysing literary texts debating the reliability of the coverage in a range of news media of a contentious issue such as commercial logging of old growth forests
- evaluating techniques used to construct plot and create emotional responses such as comparison, contrast, exaggeration, juxtaposition, the changing of chronological order, or the expansion and compression of time

## Year 10

### Language for interaction

Understand how language use can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people (ACELA1564)

- identifying language that seeks to align the listener or reader (for example 'of course', 'obviously', 'as you can imagine')
- identifying the use of first person 'I', 'we' and second person pronouns 'you' to distance or involve the audience, for example in a speech made to a local cultural community
- identifying references to shared assumptions
- identifying appeals to shared cultural knowledge, values and beliefs
- reflecting on experiences of when language includes, distances or marginalises others

## Texts in context

Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices (ACELY1749)

- questioning the representation of stereotypes of people, cultures, places, events and concepts, and expressing views on the appropriateness of these representations
- analysing the ways socio-cultural values, attitudes and beliefs are presented in texts by comparing the ways news is reported in commercial media and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media

## Civics and Citizenship

### Year 8

Different perspectives about Australia's national identity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and what it means to be Australian (ACHCK066)

- examining contemporary influences on the shaping of Australian national identity, such as the natural environment, immigration, attitudes to Asia and Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians

### Year 10

How Australia's international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHCK093)

- researching the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- identifying how international conventions and declarations have shaped Australian government policies with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

The role of the High Court, including in interpreting the Constitution (ACHCK092)

- examining the jurisdiction of the High Court
- exploring an example of a High Court judgement in interpreting and applying Australian law, such as the Mabo decision or the construction of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge

## Media Arts

### Years 7 and 8

Plan, structure and design media artworks that engage audiences (ACAMAM069)

- understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols for using images of people

Present media artworks for different community and institutional contexts with consideration of ethical and regulatory issues (ACAMAM070)

- Considering viewpoints – societies and cultures: For example – What features have been omitted or exaggerated in a stereotype? What are the differences between the private sector and the public sector television programming?
- analysing a still image on the basis of photographic composition, image effects (digital and non-digital), and framing, and how they influence meaning, for example, images representing different cultural groups or ethnicities in Australian society, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Identify specific features and purposes of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks including of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media artworks (ACAMAR072)

- Considering viewpoints – evaluations: For example – How are media artworks changed when viewed outside a cultural context? How effective is my image construction in terms of making meaning to me and to others? How can I undertake safe and ethical media practice in online spaces?

## Years 9 and 10

Manipulate media representations to identify and examine social and cultural values and beliefs, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAMAM074)

- experimenting with images, sounds and text to develop representations of current social issues
- exploring the communication of cultural and social values in Australian music videos, such as those by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, for consideration in their own work

Evaluate how technical and symbolic elements are manipulated in media artworks to create and challenge representations framed by media conventions, social beliefs and values for a range of audiences (ACAMAR078)

- deconstructing film or television work that includes representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Analyse a range of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks, including media artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and international media artworks (ACAMAR079)

- examining NITV (National Indigenous TV) news and sports programs to explore how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives create and challenge views in mainstream stories
- explore the role of media makers in challenging prevailing views on issues of contemporary relevance, for example, social and cultural issues presented in Australian film and television

## RESOURCES

**‘We Have Survived’ original version [3’24”]**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVI2CxxvtII>

**‘We Have Survived’ Album version [4’50”]**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuwPTxcu\\_Ug](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuwPTxcu_Ug)

**‘We have Survived’ lyrics**

<https://genius.com/No-fixed-address-we-have-survived-lyrics>

**The Uluru Statement’s home page**

<https://www.1voiceuluru.org>

**NAIDOC Week**

<https://www.naidoc.org.au>

**Reconciliation Australia**

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au>

## **Indigenous Ranger Programs**

[https://www.countryneedspeople.org.au/what\\_are\\_indigenous\\_rangers](https://www.countryneedspeople.org.au/what_are_indigenous_rangers)

## **The Mabo Case**

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/publications/products/case-summary-mabo-v-queensland>

## **The *Bringing them Home* Report**

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/bringing-them-home-report-1997>

## **The Apology to Australia's Indigenous People**

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/apology-australias-indigenous-peoples>

## **The 1967 Referendum**

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/27-may-referendum.pdf>

## **‘The Final Quarter, Extra Time’, hosted by Waleed Aly**

This is available to all schools with a subscription to Clickview at:

<https://online.clickview.com.au/libraries/videos/8d9d95d2-8b0f-4763-59ff-224a67ddc3e4/the-final-quarter-extra-time>

It is also available on Channel 10's online service through subscription. If not a subscriber, it is possible to view programs for free for one month.

<https://10play.com.au/theproject/episodes/2019/the-project-final-quarter-extra-time/tpv190718kgzpz>