Facts and answers to the questions you never had the time to go and research

2018 Edition
Cover story
My search for suitable covers for this book took me deep into my archive of photos I had taken over the years. But none seemed suited. One day I visited Long Bay jail's Boom Gate Gallery, a small gallery selling artworks made by inmates. While I browsed the larger artworks on the walls, a thought flashed through my mind: What if I used a painting, rather than a photo? With new-found interest I looked through the gallery. As I entered its tiny store room, a small painting on the top shelf silently called “Pick me, pick me!” It was a painting so different from all the others: Its centre a freckled area of blue, and all 'art' moved to the side. “That's it,” I sighed, realising its centre was perfect for the book's title.

“Window To The Sky”, 2016, by ‘Pentium’
Boom Gate Gallery, Long Bay Correctional Centre, Matraville, NSW.

Poetry
The poems included in this book were written by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors and sent to me after a call to my subscribers. I've tried to find a balance between authors and considered the poems' value to readers.

Photos
All photos taken by and copyright of Jens Korff, unless noted otherwise.

Note to Aboriginal readers: This publication contains images of persons who are deceased. I apologise for any sadness or distress caused.
Bujarri gamurruwa!

Good day, or welcome, in Sydney’s Gadigal language.

Acknowledgement of Country

I am honoured to be on the ancestral lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional custodians of the continent, pay respect to the Elders of their communities and extend my recognition to their descendants past and present.

About me

I am passionate about sharing my knowledge and helping people teach and learn about Australian Aboriginal culture. Since 2006, I offer in-depth articles and educational resources on my website, Creative Spirits, where you can join my community to receive content not published online, answers to your questions and additional e-learning resources.

My work is used in schools and universities across Australia and has been cited and republished in journals and books, both within Australia and internationally, in print and online.

The National Library of Australia has archived my website because it judged it "to be an important component of the national documentary heritage".

Smart Owls community

If you want to know about new content, get subscriber-only insights, discounts and be among the first to know about new information products you can join my Smart Owls community.

Content from Creative Spirits has been used and published in textbooks, classroom materials, exams and training resources in Australia and Europe.

As a Smart Owl, you’ll take advantage of free benefits:

• Receive exclusive subscriber-only content.
• Save money with discounts on e-learning products (such as this book).
• First to know when I publish a new information product (for example new infographics).
• First to know about a new article about Aboriginal culture.
• First to learn about useful resources I found on the web that help with teaching and learning.

Subscribe today to take immediate advantage of these benefits. You can unsubscribe any time.

Join the Smart Owls community

Sign at Yabun, the Aboriginal event on Australia Day, 2015, in Sydney.
Short table of contents

The story begins........................................................................................................9
Stolen Generations..................................................................................................11
Self-determination..................................................................................................22
Land and Country..................................................................................................30
Jail............................................................................................................................41
Health.....................................................................................................................50
Population...............................................................................................................62
Arts...........................................................................................................................73
Politics.....................................................................................................................85
History timeline.....................................................................................................96
How did you go?........................................................................................................105
Significant Aboriginal days....................................................................................109
Glossary..................................................................................................................126
Aboriginal land councils.........................................................................................132
Spread the word.....................................................................................................134

Sign at Yabun, the Aboriginal event on Australia Day in Sydney, 2015.
# Long table of contents

- **Bujarri gamurruwal** .......................................................... 2
- **Acknowledgement of Country** ........................................... 2
- **About me** ........................................................................ 2
- **Smart Owls community** .................................................... 2
- **Relevance to Australian Curriculum** .................................. 7
- **This is your personal book** .................................................. 7
- **Disclaimer** ........................................................................ 7

**The story begins** ..................................................................... 9

**Stolen Generations** .................................................................. 11

  - Who are the ‘Stolen Generations’? ........................................ 12
  - Why were the children removed? ......................................... 12
  - How many children were taken? ......................................... 13
  - When were the children removed? ....................................... 13
  - Where were the children taken to? ...................................... 13
  - Some say the Stolen Generations are not true ................. 14
  - Weren’t the children removed for their own good? .......... 14
  - What happened to those who were stolen? ..................... 15

**Why is the ‘sorry’ apology to the Stolen Generations important?** .............................................. 17

**Do we need to apologise for something we aren’t responsible for?** ...................................... 18

**How do the Stolen Generations link to other topics?** ............................................................ 18

**Further reading** ..................................................................... 19

**Activities** ............................................................................... 19

**Self-determination** .................................................................. 22

  - What is ‘self-determination’? ............................................ 23
  - Why do Aboriginal people demand self-determination? 24
  - When did the self-determination movement start? ............ 25
  - Who is leading the movement? ......................................... 26
  - How does self-determination link to other topics? .......... 26

**Further reading** ..................................................................... 27

**Activities** ............................................................................... 27

**Land and Country** ................................................................. 30

  - What does land mean to Aboriginal people? ..................... 31
  - How do Aboriginal people relate to land? ....................... 32
  - What is different today than before invasion? ................... 33
  - What are Mabo, terra nullius and native title all about? 33
  - What is the call for land rights about? .............................. 36
  - How does land link to other topics? ................................. 37
### Relevance to Australian Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Stolen Generations</td>
<td>ACDSEH104, ACDSEH106, ACHHK080, ACDSEH020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – Self-determination</td>
<td>ACDSEH104, ACDSEH106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – Land and country</td>
<td>ACHASSK016, ACHASSK049, ACHASSK062, ACHASSK083, ACHASSK089, ACHASSK112, ACHHK077, ACDSEH106, ACHGK011, ACHGK023, ACHGK027, ACHGK072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – Jail</td>
<td>ACHASSK092, ACHHK114, ACDSEH020, ACHCK025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Health</td>
<td>ACDSEH020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – Population</td>
<td>ACHASSK083, ACHHK077, ACHCK066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – Arts</td>
<td>ACHHK116, ACAMAR057, ACAVAM106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – Politics</td>
<td>ACHASSK107, ACHASSK135, ACHHK080, ACHHK114, ACDSEH106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 – History</td>
<td>ACDSEH148, ACDSEH020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of significant Aboriginal days</td>
<td>ACHASSK064, ACHHK063</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### This is your personal book

This book is protected under the *Australian Copyright Act 1968* and all other applicable laws, and all rights are reserved, including resale rights.

I ask you to not share your copy of this book with others — you purchased this book, and you have a right to use it on your devices. Another person, who has not purchased this book, does not have that right.

No part of this document or the related files may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission. You cannot post or publish this document or the information it contains anywhere, including your internal publications or systems.

If you received this publication from anyone other than [www.CreativeSpirits.info](http://www.CreativeSpirits.info), you've received a pirated copy.

### Disclaimer

I have used my best efforts in preparing this book, and the information provided herein is provided “as is.” I make no representation or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties or fitness for any particular purpose and shall in no event be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damage, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.
Any trademarks, service marks, product names or named features are assumed to be the property of their respective owners, and are used only for reference. There is no implied endorsement if I use one of these terms.

Nothing in this book is intended to replace common sense, legal, medical or other professional advice.

Naming Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders

In this book, for brevity and easier reading, I use 'Aboriginal people' to refer to both, mainland Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.


*ustralians are hungry to learn more about their own [Aboriginal] people... It's cool to see that people want healing.*

—Warwick Thornton, Aboriginal director
The story begins

It's a Friday afternoon and you're on your way home. As you're walking towards the train station, out of the corner of your eye, you notice something hanging in a shop window.

For a moment you weigh your tiredness and your urge to just relax at home against the possibility of stopping and checking out the unknown object. Then your curiosity wins.

As you turn and focus your attention on the shop, you realise that it is a small art gallery. The object turns out to be a painting of a group of people seated around a fire as if to talk or listen. Memories flood your brain of outings involving campfires and storytelling, a much younger you immersed in imagining the story you heard.

"Would you like to come inside?" asks a voice.

The campfire dissolves as the voice takes you back into the present. A middle-aged man stands in front of you and looks curiously into your eyes. His gaze is warm and friendly, and there's a depth in his eyes that seems to draw you in.

"I noticed you standing in front of the gallery for a while," he explains. "Come on in!"
You follow him into the gallery, and instantly notice how the air stirs more memories. The smell of paint, wood and eucalyptus leaves mixes with earthy colours, warm reds, browns and fresh greens.

"That painting you were looking at shows a circle sentencing," the man says, "but let me introduce myself first: I'm Anthony McPhee, a Yuin man from Caluga. What's your name?"

You introduce yourself, still surprised that your spur-of-the-moment decision has delivered you to the company of this man.

"Do you know much about Aboriginal culture?" asks Anthony.

Not much, you have to admit. A few things, enough to make you feel uneasy about what happened in the past.

"Not a problem," says Anthony gently, and, pointing to an old couch near the counter at the back of the gallery, he offers you a seat.

"Let me tell you a few things that are important to know about Aboriginal people and their lives today. This will help you understand their current situation and also feel more comfortable when you join conversations. You see, there are still many stereotypes in people's heads about us, but with an open mind and heart it will be easy to replace them with knowledge."

As you settle into the worn couch you feel as if you have become part of the circle of people around the fire on the painting in the window, as if Anthony is one of the storytellers of the group.

Anthony takes a deep breath.
One of the important chapters of Aboriginal history is the Stolen Generations,” Anthony explains. “It’s a dark chapter, full of sadness, pain, anger, trauma and loss.”

“What happened?” you ask. “I’ve heard that term before, but I’m not sure if I understand exactly.”

“See this artwork here—“ Anthony points to a painting that shows a family group sitting very close by each other, somewhere outside. A road leads into the distance, with a white van driving away from the group.

“That’s a family whose children have just been taken away by a government van,” he explains. “They are wailing for their children and comforting each other.”

“But why—?” you start asking before Anthony, who seems to have anticipated your question, starts explaining in more detail.

“Back in those days, the government assumed we would die out soon. So they wanted our children to blend into their society and forget our culture. They wanted them to become ‘white’. It failed,” he says darkly, his eyes staring at some place in the far distance.
“All they created was a lot of pain and suffering. Imagine one day, your children don't return home from school. You find out they have been taken by a government department and sent away. The department won't tell you where, only that you are accused of 'neglecting' them, which you know is a lie. But anything more you try to find out fails. Without your kids you are heartbroken. And without a chance to learn your culture, your children lose an essential part of their heritage.”

“I don't know what to say,” is all you can think of replying.

“And you know what?” says Anthony, suddenly and sharply turning to face you, “it's still happening! You would have thought that there has been a lesson learnt, but even more of our children are taken today”.

Who are the 'Stolen Generations'?

The term “Stolen Generations” is used for Aboriginal children who were (and are) forcefully taken away (stolen) from their families. Many were very young when they were taken, and often never saw their parents, siblings or relatives again.

Because the period covers almost 80 years we speak of “generations” (plural) rather than a single “generation”.

Why were the children removed?

The colonists at the time thought of Aboriginal people as a 'problem' they needed to 'get rid of'. The government set up policies to 'breed out' Aboriginality. Many assumed that Aboriginal people were a 'dying race' and that there was no point in their children learning Aboriginal culture. It would be much better, so it was thought, to teach them skills that served the dominant society.

When Aboriginal children lost contact with their families they also lost their future: their parents were unable to pass on language, tradition, knowledge, art and spirituality. The children were assimilated into mainstream society.

In breaking the ancient circle of life, people hoped to end Aboriginal culture within a short time and get rid of the 'Aboriginal problem'.
Some were also genuinely convinced that they ‘helped’ Aboriginal children have a better life. Behind this thinking was the assumption that Aboriginal culture was inferior and ‘savage’.

**How many children were taken?**

Unfortunately, authorities kept few records of stolen children, and many records were poor, inaccurate or lost. We will never know exactly.

Most sources agree that between one and three in every ten (or 10 to 30%) Aboriginal people now aged over 25 were removed from their families in childhood. This means **tens of thousands** children across Australia.

The number of people who were affected by the removal is much, much larger. Even today, almost every Aboriginal family has a story to tell about family members who were removed.

---

**When were the children removed?**

Children were stolen between the **1890s and late 1970s**. But children continue to be taken away today and in numbers that far exceed those before. That’s why some people talk of an emerging 'new Stolen Generation'.

*If you don't already know, the Stolen Generation scenario still applies today and has been here for a long time and will continue to be here.*

—Paul Ralph, CEO of KARI Aboriginal Resources Inc

**Where were the children taken to?**

The stolen children were put into **missions** and **institutions** often hundreds of kilometres away from their homelands. Girls were trained to be domestic servants and boys to be stockmen or labourers.

Some well-known institutions in New South Wales include the Cootamundra Girls’ Home and the Kinchela Boys’ Home.

When the children reached their early teens they were given to **foster parents**.

---

**Number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in 1997 when the Bringing Them Home report was tabled in Federal Parliament.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2,785</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in June 2016.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>16,846</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In both places they were totally cut off from their families and Aboriginality. They were severely punished when caught speaking their Aboriginal language. Some children never learnt anything traditional and received little or no education.

Many suffered horrific physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and continue to need help to heal. Babies born to girls raped by white men were also taken away from their mothers.

Percentage of all children in care who were Aboriginal in 2014. Percentage of Aboriginal children of Australia’s total child population: 4.4%.

Some say the Stolen Generations are not true

There will always be deniers. The Bringing Them Home report (published in April 1997) is the result of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. The report cites extensive evidence and details the conditions and devastating impact these practices had on people. It contains many testimonies of those who have been removed from their families.

After the publication of the report, all state and territory governments have acknowledged past practices and policies of forced removal of Aboriginal children on the basis of race.

All have also apologised, long before the prime minister did: Western and South Australia, in May 1997; Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales, in June 1997; Tasmania, in August 1997; Victoria, in September 1997; and lastly the Northern Territory, in October 2001.

Poem: Fear

By Cheyanne Thurlow

My life is full of fear and mistrusting everyone
The fear I have carried around for years
It will never fade away
My life is full of changes
But the one thing that keeps coming back
Is the destruction of my childhood
And if I sit and think too much
All my fears will come back like a tornado
So please, God, don’t let this fear destroy me.

Weren’t the children removed for their own good?

Only a very small number of children were removed because their families couldn’t care for them properly. And only a tiny number ended up with foster parents who looked after them well.

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
Evidence shows that the overwhelming number of children suffered serious trauma from their removal.

I grew up feeling alone, a black girl in a white world, and I resented them for trying to make me white but they couldn't wash away thousands of years of dreaming.

—Aunty Rhonda Collard, member of the Stolen Generations

What happened to those who were stolen?

The removal from family and country had dire consequences for the lives of the children:

- **Loss of identity.** Carol Kendall clearly recalls the mixed feelings about finding out who she was: “When I was told I was Koori ... I felt wonderful because this was the first information I had about who I was, me, the real person, and I was Koori. I also felt frightened too because my skin was fair and I thought I wouldn't be accepted by other Koories.”

- **Legal problems.** Aboriginal ex-footballer Sydney Jackson’s “exact age cannot be guaranteed” because “no reference to the birth of Sydney Jackson can be found”. His birthday was “simply assumed” to be 1 July 1944. As a consequence people like Sydney have problems applying for legal documents, such as passports.

50% Chance members of the Stolen Generations and their family are more likely to be charged by police than other Australians.

A local newspaper reports about the national apology. Do you recognise the colours used?

Aboriginal Culture Essentials

Stolen Generations – 15
• **Mistrusting everyone.** Aboriginal elder Professor Lowitja O’Donoghue was brought up in an institution where she never had a real family she could trust. To this day, she has a tendency to hold herself back from everyone but a select few.

• **Substance abuse.** “Most girls became depressed, suicidal and addicted to drugs and alcohol later in life,” says Christina Green, who was sent to the Parramatta Girls Home (one of the institutions to which children were taken) in 1970 for running away from her abusive foster parents.

• **Difficulties with relationships.** The stolen children had no role models for good relationships or parenting. Their relationships can be violent and abusive because the abused have become abusers.

• **Intergenerational trauma.** Parents pass their trauma on to their children. A Western Australian child research survey showed “beyond doubt” the collective harm of being raised in a household affected by forced removals.

• **Loss of language.** “Many of us eventually lost our language ... When some of us finally met our parents, it was almost impossible to bridge the language and culture gap,” remembers Uncle George Tongerie, who had been placed in Colebrook Home at Quorn, South Australia.

---

**Poem: Stolen Generations**

By Adel Haddad

O Mother! O Father! O families of mine
I shed a tear of sorrow whilst I search for you
A tear of sadness and confusion for you are nowhere to be seen
O Mother! O Father! O families of mine
Why was I taken by force?
Why was given to another family
Given a new name in a new State
I yearn for the day to know who am I

My Journey in life took me far and wide
In search of my lost generation
Crying aloud
All is lost. All is forgotten
Language, traditions ancestry all lost and forgotten

O Father! I need you to teach me your traditions
O Mother! I need you to teach me your manners
O Families of mine I need you to surround me
I shed a tear of sorrow and sadness

I am now old with a family that surround me
My eyes have become dim and sad
I am lost completely lost
I am one of many lost through stolen generation
Name and family unknown
In a land that belonged and belong to me.
Why is the ‘sorry’ apology to the Stolen Generations important?

On 13 February 2008, Aboriginal people across Australia were deeply moved and in tears: then-prime minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, finally apologised to the Stolen Generations and said ‘sorry’.

Apologising is usually the first step you take after having done something wrong. In the eyes of many, the apology supports the “process of healing” and helps “heal the scars”.

Many had waited a long time for the federal government to acknowledge their pain. "It's a big weight off my shoulders ... It's the closure I need,” said Aboriginal singer and songwriter Archie Roach.

For others it was an essential step to make the topic known to all Australians. "I fully welcome the apology to the Stolen Generation[s] as a lot of people will now know what took place," says Alec Kruger who gave key evidence for the Bringing Them Home report.

But there were also critical voices who demanded more concrete steps. "Actions speak louder than words," said Norman Stewart, whose father, Roy, had been stolen and was haunted by his horrific memories.

But the Australian government never considered financial compensation to be part of the apology and only a handful of people were able to secure compensation because they had enough evidence to go to court.

Poem: Break Through

By Nola Gregory

As the silent tears fall softly
On a face that's withered and brown
Your hands so tired and weary
On your face is a constant frown
Nobody but you can know the pain
You've dealt with all these years
Searching for a needle in a haystack
For your family – so far yet so near

For so long it's been bottled up inside you
And striving so much to get out
It's like being inside a prison
No one hears as you scream and shout
There's so many mixed up emotions
And so few who really understand
Being torn from your loving family
You were so young and you needed a hand

The years have passed by so quickly
The search so hurtful and long
But today you finally made a break through
And the lead you have is strong
You finally get a number
Of family you can ring
But your hands are damp and shaking
And they may not know a thing
As your fingers dial the number
On the other end is a voice so sweet
You tell her what your name is
And some time you would love to meet
There is silence on the other end
Then you hear a sound coming through
Gut wrenching sobs from that sweet voice
And your tears are falling anew

“You’re my little fair skinned baby
They took you when you were so young
I had my arms wrapped tightly around you
But too many of them and too strong
My heart has been crying for years now
And my tears like a river flowing
I am so glad that you found me
You see my fair skinned baby
They stole you from me – I’m your Mum”

Do we need to apologise for something we aren’t responsible for?

You and I do not have responsibility for what past governments did, but we do have a responsibility to know about and learn from this part of our history.

How do the Stolen Generations link to other topics?

**People:** The people who were stolen were also cut off from their culture. They didn’t know anymore where they belonged, they lost their identity. Many are still searching for their mothers and fathers, and themselves. Parents – and children – mistrust everyone, hold back and won’t open up easily. They deeply distrust government, police and officials, as those were the people who took the children. Others blame their mothers and fathers for not loving and caring for them because they wrongly believe their parents gave them away voluntarily.

**Health:** The traumatic experiences caused deep wounds and horrific pain. Some survivors try to forget and numb their pain with substance abuse. Extended and persistent pain directly affects health and leads to further health problems. Many survivors are depressed or suicidal. Having never learnt how to be a nurturing parent, many stolen people struggle to be good parents themselves or to maintain a relationship.

**Jail:** Some people became violent or committed crimes because they had difficulty overcoming the trauma of being removed from their family and community. Some abuse others because abuse is
all they know. A study found that in 1994 80% of Aboriginal prisoners in NSW were affected by the removal policies.

**Economy:** Members of the Stolen Generations are 10% less likely to find a job than other Aboriginal people.

**Education:** Because they were brought up to be servants or labourers, members of the Stolen Generations often received a poorer education.

Further reading

- [A guide to Australia’s Stolen Generations](#)
- [The prime minister's ‘Sorry’ apology to Stolen Generations](#)
- [Stolen Generations timeline](#)
- [Stories from members of the Stolen Generations](#)
- [Explainer: The Stolen Generations](#)
- [Healing Foundation: The Stolen Generations](#)

### Activities

**Crossword puzzle**

1. Tangible response Stolen Generation members demand from the government.
2. Service that helps people find their stolen relatives.
3. A boys' home in New South Wales.
4. A girls' home in New South Wales.
5. The ________ Them Home Report let Australians know about the Stolen Generations for the first time.

---

[Aboriginal Culture Essentials](#)
Down

2 Goal the government had in mind when stealing children.
4 Many Stolen Generations members lost this element of their life that uniquely describes them.
5 Verbal acknowledgement of the government's responsibility.
6 Girls were sent away to white families as domestic _________.

Quiz

One or more answers might be correct.

1) Which type of racism occurs when Aboriginal peoples are placed at a disadvantage by the policies and structures of government and business? (HSC question)
   (A) Attitudinal
   (B) Implicit
   (C) Institutional
   (D) Overt

2) Who are the Stolen Generations?
   (A) Aboriginal children who were separated from their families.
   (B) Aboriginal students who were taught on missions.
   (C) Aboriginal children assimilated under the ‘White Australia’ policy.
   (D) Aboriginal boys affected by the stolen wages.

3) Which of the below are places where members of the Stolen Generations were held?
   (A) Parramatta Girls’ Home
   (B) Kinchela Aboriginal Boys’ Home
   (C) Bomaderry Children’s Home
   (D) Coolangatta Aboriginal Girls’ Home

4) Which would be one of the most profound effects their removal had on Aboriginal children?
   (A) Concern about limited employment opportunities because all they learnt was how to be a servant or labourer.
   (B) Not knowing who their parents were or which Aboriginal group they belonged to.
   (C) A tendency to hold something of themselves back from everyone but a selected few.
   (D) Difficulties parenting or filling any communal role.

5) Which abuse suffered Aboriginal children in institutions?
   (A) Mental
   (B) Sexual
   (C) Physical
   (D) Emotional
Connect-the-dots

This will show you something safe many members of the Stolen Generations are longing for.
Chapter 2

Self-determination

Let's move to a topic that's close to the heart of many Aboriginal people," says Anthony, recognising the sorrow in your face after learning about the Stolen Generations.

"Do you remember what you wanted most after you had grown up with your parents and started high school, uni or a job?"

Recognising the empty expression in your eyes, resulting from your frantic memory search, and seeing the frowning of your face, Anthony hurries you.

"Do you remember? That longing deep inside you for—"

"Freedom! Autonomy!" he finally exclaims, unable to wait for you any more. "You were yearning to do things your way and break free from the rules of your parents.

"And you know what," Anthony says with a mixture of passion and pain in his voice, "just like you were tired of having your parents tell you what to do, Aboriginal people got tired of listening to governments telling them what was right and what was wrong, especially in the condescending way the officials did.

The number plate of an Aboriginal tour company clearly states its owner's priority for self-determination.
"So my people wanted to break away from the rules of the dominant culture and take their lives into their own hands, determine their own fate. This is now called self-determination."

What is 'self-determination'?

Aboriginal people want to determine their own affairs. They want to make the decisions themselves, and not have the government make decisions for them.

Self-determination is a collective right (belonging to a group) rather than an individual right.

According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, self-determination is the right of all peoples to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development".

A lot still needs to be done for self-determination. Programmes and resources need to be set up to help Aboriginal people rebuild their own decision-making abilities. Governments need to learn to allow Aboriginal people to make their own mistakes, learn what works best for them and how they can successfully implement these strategies.

Self-determination and land rights is not just the power to say no, it's the power to say yes as well. Otherwise what we own is only half of what we're entitled to.

—Noel Pearson, Aboriginal lawyer and elder
Why do Aboriginal people demand self-determination?

To help Aboriginal people make lasting improvements in their communities and workplaces, it is essential that they determine and govern their own affairs.

Research has shown that when people are 'in the driving seat' of their own development, their lives can improve significantly.

Many Aboriginal people's ultimate goal goes one step further. They want to be sovereign, own the land and have the right of self-government. They demand a treaty with the Australian government.

Sovereignty means that, within its boundaries, an Aboriginal nation would no longer be dependent on the Australian government, laws, police and courts, but need only consider public international law in addition to its own.

Poem: Treatise

By Elizabeth Sheppard

Take heed, dear MPs, we are living in interesting times, you must know, for colonial rule has now crumbled, despite all its bluster and blow.

While embedded in Canberran chambers, fulfilling your flowcharted tasks, you may entertain the suspicion, that your service is missing the mark, for plaintiffs are thumping the counter, and Brexit has bankers distraught, and demagogues fear for their safety, and criminals cannot be caught.

It is time to discard broken systems, it is time for stupendous reform; the rich don't need to get richer, dear Members, so stir up a justice storm!

We are the people we've been waiting for.

—Mary Victor O'Reeri, Aboriginal community of Billard, Western Australia

| 81% | Direct Aboriginal expenditure that in 2017 went towards mainstream, rather than Aboriginal-led, services. | Proportion of money some programmes supposed to benefit Aboriginal people actually spend on consultants and bureaucrats. | 92% |

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
Away with austerity measures, 
and on with the good Treaty talk! 
Let those who profit by fracking, 
be starved of their ill gotten rorts!

Let thieves and deceivers be exiled, 
tell bullying cowards to flee;
In the dust of their furious departing, 
we'll plant our friendship trees.

We'll transform our judges to Elders, 
who sit on the earth as their throne;
we'll honour our Uncles and Aunties, 
bring all picaninnies back home,
we'll smoke all our temples with gum tips, 
and sing up the rainmaker songs: 
our rivers will flow with fresh water, 
our people and land will grow strong.

Let teachers teach truth, not ambition!
Let children learn friendship, not hate!
Let farmers grow food, unpolluted!
Let all colours learn to be mates!

On this track to the heart of our Dreaming, 
let terror and fear begone!
Make a highway for love, make a space for peace, 
to clothe these dried up bones!

When did the self-determination movement start?

Many trace the first expression of Aboriginal self-determination to 1972 when the government of Labor prime minister Gough Whitlam replaced a policy of assimilation with self-determination. One important act was the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC, since disbanded).

But, 50 years earlier, Aboriginal activists had already lobbied for self-determination when they formed the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) in April 1925. The AAPA drew inspiration from the ideology and tactics of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded 1914 in Africa and 1917 in the United States.

Victoria has a so-called treaty with Wurundjeri people, covering land from Geelong to Melbourne. One of Melbourne's founders, John Batman, presents deeds which claim to have signed over the land in exchange for axes, flour and other European goods. But the agreement (now also called 'Batman's treaty') is almost immediately overturned by New South Wales Governor Sir Richard Bourke, as NSW was the overseeing colonial government of the area.
Who is leading the movement?

There is no single leader of self-determination. Aboriginal communities, groups and nations are very diverse, and each can initiate their own activities.

Some Aboriginal nations are more active than others and have already declared themselves independent from the government. They made so-called Unilateral Declarations of Independence.

What unites Indigenous leaders around the world is a burning desire for their people to be respected, resourced properly and then left to make their own share of mistakes and their own progress.

― Jeff McMullen, journalist

Poem: *Pride & Honour*

by Dan Davis

Be proud of who you are, let your light shine.
Step out of your comfort zone, cross over that line.

Let people see your glow, show them who you can be.
You were born to be counted, an Aborigine.

Don’t let others put you down, with their tasteless words.
It’s your Culture, your Heritage that needs to be seen and heard.

Lift your head high, Lift up your voice.
To respect, to honour your Culture isn’t a choice.

Be sure to know where you’re from, so you can hand it down.
Follow your family tree, back to your Sacred Ground.

Stand Up, Be Strong, listen to your heart.
Talk to those close to you, scream out to those afar.

How does self-determination link to other topics?

Communities: If you are able to look after your own affairs you have a better chance to solve the problems you are facing since many issues require local knowledge for a local solution.

Flag of the Murrawarri Republic.
The Murrawarri people from the Culgoa River region of northern New South Wales were the first nation to declare their independence on 30 March 2013.

Aboriginal Culture Essentials

Creative Spirits

www.CreativeSpirits.info
Identity and health: When community problems are solved quicker and more efficiently, people feel better understood and heard, which helps them feel and be healthier as well.

Law and justice: As a sovereign group you are saying that you no longer obey the rules of the government in power, which means some of your choices might clash with the government's laws. In the worst cases, this results in fines or jail.

Further reading

- Aboriginal sovereignty in Australia
- The principles of self-determination
- Would a treaty help Aboriginal self-determination?
- Self-determination means consultation with Aboriginal people
- Aboriginal representative bodies
- Australians Together: The Indigenous civil rights movement in Australia – The fight for self-determination
- The case for Indigenous self-determination (Sol Bellear on ABC News)
- Self-Determination and sovereignty of Aboriginal nations and peoples defined

Activities

Crossword puzzle

Across

1. If you are making your own set of these they might clash with the government's.
4. What Aboriginal people want to have with the government.
6. Ultimate goal of Aboriginal self-determination aspirations.

Down

2. Self-determination is when Aboriginal people determine their own _______.
3. Improves significantly when Aboriginal people are in the driver's seat.
5. Self-determination replaced the _______ Australia Policy.
6. _______
Quiz

One or more answers might be correct.

1) What is one of the major benefits of self-determination?
(A) Better local implementation of government policies.
(B) Less paperwork when rolling out support programmes.
(C) Implementing solutions locally rather than nationally.
(D) Problems are solved much quicker.

2) What term best describes the legal recognition of ownership of land and territory, incorporating the right of self-government? (HSC question)
(A) Sovereignty
(B) Social justice
(C) Shared history
(D) Self-determination

3) Who introduced the policy of self-determination?
(A) Indigenous Affairs Minister Gordon Bryant
(B) Prime Minister Paul Keating
(C) Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin
(D) Prime Minister Gough Whitlam

4) What are negative consequences of self-determination?
(A) There are none.
(B) In the short term, administration costs go up.
(C) Conflicts can arise between local and national laws.
(D) People are initially confused about what is right and what is wrong.

5) Which of these events is significant for the path towards self-determination?
(A) When the Whitlam government introduced the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC) in 1972.
(B) Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pouring soil into the hand of Aboriginal man Vincent Lingiari.
(C) When the government repealed the White Australia Policy.
(D) When the Whitlam government introduced the first Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA).
Something Aboriginal people might show after they have finally made a treaty with the Australian government.
Your head is buzzing with new information about self-determination. Your eyes need a break and wander through the gallery, only to get stuck at a large painting opposite the couch where you are sitting.

Large circles dominate the artwork, connected with smaller circles by what looks like connectors or pathways. Semi-circles are littered all over the canvas.

Anthony has followed your gaze. “That is a painting about the artist’s home,” he explains. “The large circles represent important places, the half-circles are shelters or fireplaces. And all is connected via a songline or Dreaming story.

“Aboriginal people and land form a special relationship,” he continues his explanation. “To understand it, imagine this scenario: you own a farm with a beautiful house sitting between sweeping hills. Good pastures feed your animals, a rich forest gives you wood and cool air in summer, and you love swimming in the natural lake. This is what you inherited from your parents, and they from theirs.

“Then, one afternoon, as you walk along paths only you know, you come across a group of tents that have been set up in one corner..."
of your property. As you approach to inquire what all this is about, the squatters yell at you and throw rocks.

“When you return the next morning with your brother, the squatters have doubled in numbers, they have cut down trees for firewood, burnt some of your best field and are using your lake for washing.”

Anthony takes a deep breath to calm himself, visibly emotional.

“How would this make you feel?” he asks, exhaling. “What would you say to your family? This is how invasion began for Aboriginal people. The new people were like a fast-growing, unstoppable and dangerous cancer on their beloved lands.”

What does land mean to Aboriginal people?

For Aboriginal people, land has a very different meaning than for other Australians. They have a deep relationship with it. The land owns Aboriginal people, and every aspect of their lives is connected to it.

They are the custodians of the land, which means their role is to look after it like a mother looks after her child. The wellbeing of the land depends on how well Aboriginal people take care.

Contrary to this, non-Aboriginal people often consider land as something they own, a commodity they can buy and sell, an asset to make profit from, a fertile place to use or exploit (especially if you think of the resources industry).

For Aboriginal people, the health of the land, its waters, creatures, plants and spirits are central to their culture. Land is their mother, is embedded in their culture, and comes with the responsibility to care for it.

The connection to land gives Aboriginal people their identity and a sense of belonging. Many who were removed from their homelands suffered psychologically and physically because that connection was broken.

Imagine a combination of a supermarket, church, museum and university library. Then you might get a slight sense of what land is to Aboriginal people.
Poem: *Mother Earth*
by Nola Gregory

I belong to this land
It runs through my veins
It's the earth in my bones
It's the dry dusty plains
It's the whispering wind
As she blows through the sand
It's the sparkling salt water
That trickles through my hands
It's the feeling I get
When I return to my place
It's deep down inside me
It's my Mother Earth space.

I belong to this Country
I've walked in her dust
I have weathered her storms
I have learned from her past
It is respect for my Mother
It meanders through my mind
It clings to my spirit
To my soul it does bind
When I walk in this place
It's deep down inside me
It's my Mother Earth space.

—in white society, a person's home is a structure made of bricks or timber, but to our people our home was the land that we hunted and gathered on and held ceremony and gatherings.

—Nala Mansell-McKenna, Youth Worker, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre

How do Aboriginal people relate to land?

Aboriginal people have a profound spiritual connection to land. Law and spirituality are intertwined with the land, the people and creation, and these relationships are important pillars of their culture and sovereignty.

The land itself is so integral to an Aboriginal person's being that the landscape is like a second skin. It is also a central element in every Aboriginal art form, whether it be theatre, dance, music or painting. That is why many artists perform best when they are physically in their home country, the place where they were born.

"It's like the love for your mum and dad," says Natasha Neidje, granddaughter of Bill Neidje, the last surviving speaker of the
Gaagudju language, about the love for her land, Kakadu National Park (NT).

Aboriginal people see different layers when they look at land. Where others might see parks and headlands, they see a mythic landscape, a historic landscape, sacred sites and bush food.

There is another task associated with land: telling its stories. Each place has its unique Dreaming stories, and only certain people are allowed, and have the responsibility, to tell them and pass them on.

500,000  Tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions avoided in a year by letting Aboriginal people manage burns.

What is different today than before invasion?

The majority of Aboriginal people are now living in towns and cities, remote from the lands of their ancestors. But this doesn't mean their bond is broken or they have forgotten their obligations. It challenges them to come up with new ways to connect.

“I often wonder how to connect with my country when I'm in the city,” says Francis Rings, an Aboriginal dancer and choreographer with Bangarra Dance Theatre, which is based in Sydney. “For many Indigenous people it's a visceral [intuitive] connection; you look beyond the buildings and concrete and feel a sense of belonging.”

A lot of traditional lands have been, and continue to be, destroyed. This loss “is like ripping pages from our library books,” as Tasmanian Aboriginal activist Jim Everett puts it. “It is like cutting the hearts of our people, cutting our identity and our cultural philosophy that sustains our spiritual connectedness to country.”

Indigenous [fire management] knowledge is really Indigenous science and must be recognised as this.

—David Claudie, Kuuku I’yu Northern Kaanju traditional owner

What are Mabo, terra nullius and native title all about?

When talking about land, three terms recur that are important to understand.

Mabo

Mabo refers to Eddie Koiki Mabo, a man from the Meriam people, who are the traditional custodians of Mer, an island in the Torres Strait between Queensland and New Guinea.

Eddie Mabo was an activist who passionately fought for his people’s rights.
In 1982, Eddie Mabo and four other Torres Strait Islanders wanted their traditional land rights acknowledged. They claimed that their people had continuously and exclusively inhabited their islands and lived in permanent settled communities with their own social and political organisation. Eddie wanted Australia to recognise these rights. He took his legal challenge all the way to the **High Court**.

**Terra nullius**

Before Eddie Mabo submitted his case, it was common belief that Australia had been ‘empty’ before the British invaded. The Latin term for an ‘**empty country**’ is terra nullius.

When the British came to Australia they thought that Aboriginal people had no connection to the land because they could not see settlements, houses or farmed land, signs of ownership they were used to in England.

**Native title**

Native title recognises the **traditional rights and interests** to land and waters of Aboriginal people, but viewed from and recognised by, the Australian legal system.

You can think of native title as a bridge between customary Aboriginal laws, which have existed for many thousands of years, and current Australian laws.

While native title is an **entitlement to land**, it does not cover the **rights** to that land.
Native title allows traditional custodians to negotiate agreements, manage their country, and set terms and conditions for access. Governments and industry have to sit down with the traditional custodians before anything is done on country.

But Aboriginal people first need to claim their land, which can be a very lengthy and complicated process. Australian native title law requires Aboriginal custodians to prove their ongoing connection to the area they claim, a tough task, considering how much disruption happened since invasion.

Contrary to a common myth, Aboriginal people cannot claim your backyard. They can only claim vacant government-owned land, all other land – in the eyes of Australian law – is already someone else’s property.

Native title is the result of a decision the High Court made after Eddie Mabo brought about his case. The court took 10 years to decide. On 3 June 1992 it ruled that:

- England had acquired a title to the land of Australia (meaning Australia as a country had been claimed by the Crown). This title could not be challenged in court.

- Aboriginal people were still entitled to a claim of their own (a native title claim).

- In certain cases, Aboriginal people’s claim could be voided (extinguished) by events that happened after the British arrived and that broke Aboriginal people’s continued connection with their land.

- Crucially, ‘terra nullius’ did not apply to Australia.

Most importantly for Eddie Mabo, however, was that the High Court also recognised that the Meriam people of the Torres Strait held native title over part of their traditional lands.

Unfortunately, Australian governments have since made several amendments to native title law, each reducing Aboriginal people’s entitlements and rights.

It is little understood in the wider community that valid land claims remain the sole form of compensation available to our people in NSW for the dispossession of our lands.

—Bev Manton, Chair, NSW Aboriginal Land Council

Poem: *Land & Country*

By Jodi Sampson

From the black soil banks of the Mehi
to the deep swimming holes of the Mooki,
Both rivers and all those in between are important to me.

With my Sampson-Beale blood lines running from my Dad,
To my Cutmore/Mullins/Carmody lines running from my Mum,
My matriarchal upbringing has been second to none!

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
Strong black women holding families together with their men, A combination of work, blood, sweat and family became their Zen. From the scarred trees to the Bora rings where chanting was free, To the strain of government policies that brought culture to its knees.

For it was forbidden to speak language, dance and paint, It's no wonder when language is spoken, that Migaloos feel quiet “quaint”. Eloquence is by the wayside when our culture is expressed, As a proud Gomeroi man, I feel shame that we are suppressed! But there's hope that Biamee, my creator and friend, When the lightning rods strike hard, there ain't nothing he can't bend!

To the critics of our mob, I say have a good long look at your self, For without land and culture, you may find yourself missing out on good health!

Land and country gives off unexplainable vibes, The language of unspoken, handed down from our tribes.

What is the call for land rights about?

While native title is about Aboriginal people's connection to their land, their call for land rights is about genuine autonomy.

Together with access to adequate housing, land rights are the foundation for an economic base so Aboriginal people can be independent and don't need to rely on government support.

Access, ownership and control of land by Aboriginal people allows for long-term planning and development that will eventually raise their economic, health and social status.

Land rights can also trigger compensation for past dispossession, dislocation and removal from their land, which makes the topic very delicate for governments.

In August 1966, 200 Aboriginal stockmen of the Gurindji people and their families walked off Wave Hill pastoral station in the Northern Territory, initially in protest over their wages. Their strike soon spread to include the more fundamental issue about their traditional lands. The Wave Hill walk-off started the first Aboriginal land claim and is now considered the beginning of the Aboriginal land rights movement.

Percentage Aboriginal people owned of Tasmania before invasion.

Percentage Aboriginal people owned of Tasmania in 2010.

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
How does land link to other topics?

Land is one of the core topics for Aboriginal people. It’s linked to almost every aspect of their culture.

**Arts:** Aboriginal people passionately create artworks of many different kinds about their homeland and its stories.

**Economy:** Working close to or on country is important to many Aboriginal people. Of the top 500 Aboriginal corporations, 17% operate in land management.

**Education** Traditionally, education happened literally on the ground as elders drew patterns (which would later become Aboriginal art) in the sand to teach stories and knowledge. Many stories told today still link to the land’s visual features and explain how they were formed in the Dreaming.

**Health:** Research confirms a strong connection between Aboriginal health and land management. Aboriginal people living on homelands are also less likely to be involved in substance abuse, poor eating habits or violence because they maintain their traditional lifestyle away from the influence of the big towns.

**History:** Aboriginal history is all about land: the thousands of years maintaining and looking after it, the creation spirits that roamed and formed the land, how Aboriginal people helped the first European explorers survive, and the ongoing battle for land rights, access to homelands and preventing the resources industry from destroying the land and its sacred sites.

**People:** The land owns Aboriginal people. They are its custodians, which means their role is to look after it like a mother looks after her child. The wellbeing of the land depends on how well Aboriginal people take care, and Aboriginal people's wellbeing depends on the health of the land.

**Politics:** Australian politicians are constantly tempted, if not pushed, by the resources industry to chip away Aboriginal interests in land. The original native title legislation has been significantly watered down by later amendments. Land remains a constant battle ground between Aboriginal nations and Australian governments.
Self-determination: Reliable land rights are the foundation for an economic base and Aboriginal people taking control of their own affairs.

Spirituality: Aboriginal spirituality is deeply interconnected with land. Aboriginal people express their spirituality with rituals, many of which happen on country. Two important rituals that have survived are the Acknowledgement of Country and the Welcome to Country. The Dreaming explains the creation process with stories almost exclusively related to land.

Further reading

- Meaning of land to Aboriginal people
- 8 major threats to Aboriginal land
- Aboriginal homelands and outstations
- An introduction to native title
- Aboriginal fire management
- Mabo – The Native Title Revolution (digital learning resource)

Activities

Crossword puzzle

Across
4 Adjective describing a higher level of Aboriginal people’s connection to the land.
5 Aboriginal people demand land ______ to build their own economy.
7 Foreign term describing a land belonging to no-one (5 + 7).
8 Aboriginal people believe the land ______ them.

Down
1 Because Aboriginal people don’t own the land, they are a ________.
2 In Australia, Aboriginal people can claim ______ title to land.
3 What land is to Aboriginal people: Their ________.
6 Last name of a Torres Strait Islander who challenged the notion that Australia was ‘empty’.
Quiz

One or more answers might be correct.

1) What term best describes the legal recognition of ownership of land and territory, incorporating the right of self-government? (HSC question)
   (A) Sovereignty
   (B) Social justice
   (C) Shared history
   (D) Self-determination

2) What was the significance of the Mabo decision for Aboriginal people? (HSC question)
   (A) It legislated the right to vote in elections.
   (B) It recognised prior ownership of the land.
   (C) It created equal employment opportunities.
   (D) It provided greater access to health services.

3) What are Aboriginal people in respect to their land?
   (A) Owners
   (B) Administrators
   (C) Custodians
   (D) Keepers

4) What do Aboriginal people see when they look at the land?
   (A) Hunting opportunities, game and shelters
   (B) Sacred sites, rock faces for engravings and corroboree grounds
   (C) Dreaming stories, songlines and star maps
   (D) An historic landscape, sacred sites and bush food

5) How do urban Aboriginal people manage their connection to country?
   (A) They have replaced it with rituals they can do in their homes.
   (B) Plants and pets help remind them of their connection.
   (C) They look beyond the buildings to feel a sense of belonging.
   (D) They travel a lot out of town to compensate for the lack of connection.
Connect-the-dots
Jail

After Anthony finishes his explanations about Aboriginal people’s relationship to land, he pauses for a moment as if his mind wanders off to a faraway place.

You notice subtle changes in his face, his eyes seem clouded and sad, the corners of his mouth point down as if he has just heard some grim news.

"Jail," he says in the voice of someone who has just lost a loved one, "how much do you know about Aboriginal incarceration?"

He gets up and walks to a table next to the cash register. Towers of books and catalogues in all colours and shapes cover most of the space, seemingly without any ordering system. Anthony scans up and down the piles. After a moment he pulls out something near the top of a tower.

"This is a catalogue of an exhibition of works by Aboriginal artists who, at the time of painting their work, were in or had recently been released from a Victorian prison," he explains. "Have a guess what their paintings were about," he invites you, and you notice his face relaxing a little.

"Well?"
“Hmm, about their prison time, their loneliness ... the dark thoughts of regret and remorse?” you offer.

“What exactly do you mean?” asks Anthony.

“Well, I assume painting helps them process that they are now in prison and think about the stuff that brought them inside?”

“The exact opposite! Almost all paintings are about country, its stories and dreamings, and the animals associated with them,” reveals Anthony, and his eyes regain some shine. “Isn’t that interesting?

“But now, let’s look at why they went to prison in the first place,” he says, and his face darkens again. “Prison rates are way out of proportion, in fact, are at crisis levels, yet governments seem not to care.

“It can make you very angry,” he says, choosing these words carefully.

What are Aboriginal prison rates like?

Aboriginal people are massively over-represented in the criminal justice system. They make up only 3% of the total population, yet more than 28% of Australia's prison population is Aboriginal. In Western Australia, Aboriginal people account for 43% of prisoners.

Aboriginal prison rates have risen from 1 of every 7 prisoners in 1992 to 1 of 3 in 2014. If rates continue to increase like this (12 times as fast as non-Aboriginal rates), by 2020 half of Australia's prison population will be Aboriginal. Already half of the 10 to 17-year-olds in jails are Aboriginal.

Aboriginal adults are 16 times more likely to go to jail than their non-Aboriginal peers; young Aboriginal people 24 times.

In 2016, every state except Tasmania jailed children as young as 10 or 11, contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states the minimum age of criminal culpability should be 12.

Former Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd spoke of an Aboriginal incarceration "epidemic", and others found the judicial system to be in "a state of emergency".
What do Aboriginal people go to prison for?

There is an ongoing feeling among Aboriginal communities and legal experts that police victimise Aboriginal people for trivial offences. Check for yourself: would you be likely to go to prison for any of the following offences?

- **Disorderly conduct.** This “incredibly trivial offence” is so common that Aboriginal legal services see it “every day of the week”. People are charged for swearing at police 15 times more frequently than non-Aboriginal people, often while drunk or affected by drugs. In Western Australia, Aboriginal people have been arrested for “shouting”. The practice is so widespread that it’s known as “selective policing”. Some police bait Aboriginal people until they react and then lock them up.

- **Driving unlicensed.** Young people who might never have seen a traffic light or a freeway have difficulties getting a license because remote communities lack trainers and facilities, and the language used for driving tests is hard to understand. Then, when they get repeatedly caught driving...
unlicensed, uninsured and unregistered—a common “trifecta” on court lists—they end up in jail.

• Not receiving court mail. Some Aboriginal people end up in jail because they did not get the postal notifications of court dates, after which bench warrants are issued and bail is unlikely.

• Failure to appear in court. Others simply cannot make it to a court date due to funerals or health problems, and courts are too inflexible to change the date. This is less frequent today because of increased access to communication tools such as mobile phones.

• Unpaid fines. A young Aboriginal woman was held in prison for four days because she hadn’t paid her parking fines.

Aboriginal people in Queensland will always be skeptical of police... They were the people who removed our mothers and fathers. They will continue to be the bogeyman.

—Alf Lacey, Mayor, Palm Island

Poem: A Child's Breath
by Ben Leece

A child's breath
For wheel and spoke
Burnt tyre
Burnt two stroke
Less than you
A child's life
Less than mine
Less than white

43%

Aboriginal share of fine defaulters in Western Australian prisons in 2014.
What can be done to improve this situation?

Here are a few ideas.

- **Stop being “tough on crime”**. The “tough on crime” approach only serves politicians during election time. Far too many minor offenders and fine defaulters are in prison, nearly all of whom are poor. Most of them have not committed what would normally rate as “crime”.

  *Locking us up is not really helping. It’s just making us do more stuff like that.*
  —“Nathan”, 17, detained in Grafton, NSW

- **Better legal representation**. More adequate legal representation would avoid Aboriginal people being remanded for extended periods without contact from a lawyer. Lawyers and advocates need more time and resources when working with government agencies. Some accused cannot choose their preferred legal counsel.

- **Employment & recreation**. Jobs, as well as traineeships for high school students, can give young people something to aim for and stay out of trouble. The same applies for sport, music and IT programmes, or mentoring. Many students have no goals to aim for. Remote communities have few jobs, and people don’t like to travel outside of their local areas.

- **Circle sentencing**. In this approach, selected Aboriginal people (including elders) judge their peers along with jurisdictional experts, trying to avoid a jail term. Culturally appropriate programmes developed for circle sentencing have proven to reduce reoffending rates.

- **Justice reinvestment**. This approach diverts a portion of funds spent on imprisonment to local Aboriginal communities with a high concentration of offenders. Money that would have been spent on imprisonment is reinvested in programmes and services that address the underlying causes of crime in these communities, and the community helps by prioritising its own needs. The challenge for this approach is to provide in-depth teaching and ongoing support to former inmates to stop them from reoffending.

- **Self-determination**. Community empowerment is one of the most powerful ways to reduce Aboriginal prison rates. One-size-fits-all government policies usually don’t work very well as problems and needs vary from community to community.

  Times higher: The likelihood that an Aboriginal person is locked up, compared to a non-Aboriginal Australian.

14

Aboriginal Culture Essentials

Jail – 45
Poem: *Legal Contra Diction*

by John McBain

It happened on Palm Island
Back in two thousand and four
One of them long time locals
Had deadly trouble with the law.

It seems that two fellas
Fell together on the floor
One fella he's still workin'
T'other ain't here no more.

One fella wore a uniform
T'other wore just dark skin
One fella still gets fully paid
T'other won't ever see his kin.

Coroner said he killed him
Government said "No way:
We don't believe our coroner
About what he had to say."

We hear the talk of reconciliation
And how we want it in our land
Yet we can't make our justice
For Aboriginals to understand.

How does jail link to other topics?

Aboriginal prison rates are like an intersection of many roads, each relating to another area of life that is not working properly, delivering Aboriginal people to jail.

**Stolen Generations:** Aboriginal people forcibly taken away from their families as children have suffered terrible trauma and are twice as likely as their peers to be arrested. At sentencing, some courts ignore trauma.

**Politics:** Politicians campaign for votes by promising to be “tough on crime”, a law and order attitude mostly targeting marginalised groups. "We need to be clear, when they talk about 'tough on crime' they mean 'tough on Aboriginal people',” concludes Yuin woman Vickie Roach, a women's prison rights activist. Bureaucracy can also prohibit progress with too much red tape.

**Health:** Life expectancy and overall health are strongly linked to prison and incarceration, especially mental health conditions, alcohol and substance abuse disorders and cognitive disabilities. Drinking too much alcohol during pregnancy can damage the brain of the unborn child, which, among many other issues, can make them vulnerable to poor judgement and committing offences.

**Self-determination:** Without self-determination Aboriginal people depend on government services, which are often inadequate. There is increasing evidence that many people go to prison because there are not enough community-based health and social services,
especially in the areas of housing, mental health and wellbeing, substance abuse, disability and family violence.

**Economy:** Poverty and unemployment, particularly among young Aboriginal people or in rural and remote areas, often spark crimes of need. The Children's Court is often being told imprisonment was the only option because of a lack of accommodation.

### Further reading

- [Aboriginal prison rates](#)
- [Black people – White law](#)
- [What is circle sentencing?](#)
- [The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody](#)
- [Indigenous Imprisonment Fact Sheet](#) (PDF, Law Council of Australia)
- [Aboriginal Prisoners and Offenders Support Service Inc.](#)
- [The Torch](#) (Aboriginal arts in prison programme)

### Activities

#### Crossword puzzle

**Across**

3  Bringing strength to communities, also called __________, is one of the most powerful ways to reduce Aboriginal prison rates.

4  What Australian politicians want to be on “crime”.

5  As an Aboriginal person, if you don’t pay them you go to jail.

6  In ______ sentencing, Aboriginal people judge their own offenders with some experts.

---

[Aboriginal Culture Essentials](#)
Down
1 Justice reinvestment diverts some money spent on imprisonment to help Aboriginal _________.
2 A trivial offence Aboriginal people go to jail for.
3 Aboriginal prison rates are in a state of _________.

Quiz
One or more answers might be correct.

1) What percentage of Australia's prison population is Aboriginal?
   (A) Less than 15%
   (B) Less than 33%
   (C) More than 28%
   (D) More than 49%

2) By which year are Aboriginal people expected to make up half the prison population?
   (A) 2020
   (B) 2025
   (C) 2033
   (D) 2051

3) What brings Aboriginal people into jail?
   (A) Not receiving court mail.
   (B) Swearing at police.
   (C) Driving without a license.
   (D) Unpaid fines.

4) Circle sentencing is an approach where
   (A) the judge sits as an equal in the circle of people concerned with the case.
   (B) Aboriginal people judge their peers along with judicial experts.
   (C) Elders judge their peers at a round table according to traditional law.
   (D) money is invested to prevent Aboriginal people rejoin the circle of crimes.

5) In which other areas of life do high prison rates affect Aboriginal people?
   (A) Health, economy, self-determination, land.
   (B) Employment, housing, country.
   (C) Addiction, life expectancy, self-determination.
   (D) Health, country, literacy.

---

Not a single police officer in any criminal jurisdiction in the Commonwealth has ever been convicted of any offence relating to an Aboriginal death in custody.

—Sam Watson Snr, Aboriginal rights campaigner

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
Prison escape
You look a little tired,” remarked Anthony with an empathetic expression. “Here, have a glass of water!” With that he turns around to a water urn close by and pours water into a paper cup.

You accept the refreshment thankfully, take a sip, and close your eyes for a moment.

“You know,” Anthony says into your momentary darkness, “water is really good for your health, and health is what many Aboriginal people wish they had more of.”

You open your eyes with newly piqued interest. “I've only heard bits and pieces;” you admit, “mostly stuff that's alcohol-related ...”

“I know,” replies Anthony darkly, “a common misconception. Aboriginal health is very similar to the prison rates we just talked about – an area where disadvantage shows a lot, where many tough roads meet. I could spend the next few days explaining details to you, but let me give you a glimpse at the present situation only. Just enough to connect the dots.”

“Yes,” you say as you straighten up your spine with a little crack, “I'm keen to know.”
“Before invasion, we were really healthy people,” begins Anthony. “We ate food rich in minerals and vitamins, which was unprocessed and low in fat and sugars. If we ever got sick we had very effective medicine, even for fractures or severe injuries.

“That all changed with the arrival of the British, who also brought diseases that didn’t exist in Australia. We had no immunity to measles, smallpox or even the flu. My people died by the hundreds from these illnesses. And with the invaders taking over our lands, they destroyed our traditional food and medicine bases. This was the beginning of our cycle of poor health.”

What are some of the main health issues facing Aboriginal people?

Sexual health and abuse
Aboriginal community and family structures that once protected children from sexual abuse are breaking down. Aboriginal children are 2 to 4 times more likely to experience sexual assault than non-Aboriginal children. Not 1 of 300 surveyed Aboriginal people could name a family unaffected by child sexual assault.

Diabetes
Diabetes is “out of control” in Aboriginal communities with some experts having grave concerns about how fast it is spreading. Less than 0.5% of Aboriginal people had diabetes in the 1980s, compared with almost 30% in the 2010s. Aboriginal people are 2 to 10 times more likely to have diabetes. It is twice as common among Aboriginal people living in remote areas, and more common in older people. The death rate from diabetes for Aboriginal people is 17 times higher than for non-Aboriginal people. In 2012, diabetes was the second leading cause of death for Aboriginal people.
Smoking

Between 43% and 54% of Aboriginal people smoke, more than double the rate of other Australians, and up to 80% in some communities. They begin smoking at a younger age and are less likely to successfully quit. Given the many other health challenges, Aboriginal people don’t see smoking as a high-priority health issue. Smoking causes 20% of deaths in Aboriginal communities.

Lower life expectancy

Aboriginal people can expect to die more than 10 years earlier than non-Aboriginal Australians. On average, an Aboriginal man will live 67 years and an Aboriginal woman 73.

According to the United Nations, the quality of life of Australia's Aboriginal people is the second worst globally, while, overall, Australia ranks very high.

Hearing loss

Ear health is another area in crisis. 20% of young Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory suffer from the most severe forms of ear disease, including chronic draining ears (where the ear is continually discharging fluid) or burst eardrums.

This happens because of recurrent middle ear infections, called otitis media. The rate for New Zealand's Maori children is only 4%. Urban Aboriginal rates in Australia are not as high, but still 3 to 4 times higher than in the non-Aboriginal population.

Ten times more Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal people suffer from ear diseases and hearing loss. Ear disease was not a significant problem for Aboriginal people prior to invasion.

Kidney disease

Kidney failure, also called renal failure, is an inflammation of the functional units of the kidney. It is usually associated with poverty. Outbreaks in Australia mainly occur in remote Aboriginal communities and are more likely to affect young children.

Aboriginal patients are 20 to 30 times more likely to have end-stage renal disease. Even Aboriginal patients living in urban areas are nearly 7 times as likely as non-Aboriginal patients to have chronic kidney disease.

---

I always say that when we lose an old person, we lose a library... language and culture.

—Lola Forester, Aboriginal radio presenter
Traditionally, kidneys hold the spirit. If you have sick kidneys, you have a sick spirit.

—Sarah Brown, chief executive of the Purple House dialysis programme

Trachoma

Trachoma is a disease that starts with an infection but gradually turns the eyelashes inwards, which, over time, causes blindness. Spread by poor hygiene, trachoma is considered a disease of poverty, unknown in other developed countries since the 1920s.

It remains endemic in many Aboriginal communities, and governments are unwilling to finance resources to eliminate the disease.

Alcohol consumption

While alcohol is omnipresent at Australian events, so much so that "if you don't drink on these occasions, people ask you what's wrong with you," according to Dan Lubman, director of Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre.

Aboriginal events are almost always alcohol-free (see poster on page 59). Many Australian health surveys have shown that Aboriginal people are less likely than non-Aboriginal Australians to consume alcohol. But those few who do often do so excessively.

Mental health

Aboriginal people have very high rates of anxiety, depression (also nicknamed the 'Black Dog'), youth suicide and cognitive disability. Up to 93% of Aboriginal prisoners have some form of mental illness, and many women due to give birth also battle mental health problems.

Poem: The Black Dog

by Maree Edwards

It's hard to say just where I've been,  
A dark and lonely place.  
To stay in bed and hibernate,  
Would be my saving grace.

The angst of seeing loved ones,  
And friends so near and dear,  
Is just so unexplainable,  
And something not to fear!

But when the phone or doorbell rings,  
I want to run and hide,  
However, there's a mask I wear,  
Within my inner pride.
The churning in my tummy,
My chest a lead balloon,
The cloudiness inside my head,
Is all so out of tune!

Just how to function day by day,
I question every night,
If the Black Dog ever tags you,
You'll feel its ugly bite!

What are the effects of these health issues?

Sexual health & abuse
Children under the age of 10, and as young as 4, are diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomoniasis. As children are exposed to porn they imitate what they watch. Teenagers rape children, and older children rape very young children. Young abuse victims face a litany of physical symptoms later in life, from pelvic pain and stomach aches to more complex conditions such as autoimmune diseases, asthma and diabetes.

Diabetes
Some Aboriginal people have lost limbs to the disease. Access to a dialysis centre is particularly hard in regional and remote areas, and some patients can only occasionally travel back to their families and homelands, causing them additional distress.

Smoking
Smoking causes chronic conditions and diseases, with lung cancer the second largest cause of premature death – only one in three men and half of the affected women will survive it. Around half of Aboriginal mothers smoke during pregnancy, causing Aboriginal
infants to be 6 times more likely to suffer a sudden unexpected death than non-Aboriginal children. Other problems include 'glue ear', which causes hearing loss, learning problems and behavioural problems; asthma, bronchiolitis and chronic lung disease; heart attack or stroke; and coronary disease.

**Lower life expectancy**

If you live a shorter life it's not just you who's missing out, but also your children and grandchildren, who might not even get to know you. It gives you fewer chances to pass on your knowledge and help younger generations have confidence to walk in both worlds.

**Hearing loss**

Ear diseases impair the development of talking and listening skills and reduce the ability to understand. This leads to truancy at school and poor speech. Poor education makes it harder to find a job and a good income, leading to lower living conditions, social exclusion and poorer health, thus completing a long-term cycle of a life of disadvantage. Adults with hearing loss may experience more depression and cardiovascular disease.

**Kidney disease**

Aboriginal people die from kidney disease at more than 15 times the rate of non-Aboriginal Australians. A prominent victim of the disease was Yothu Yindi lead singer Mandawuy Yunupingu. Mothers with kidney damage can pass the disease on to their children and give birth to Aboriginal babies who are smaller and underweight.

**Trachoma**

Eyesight deteriorates slowly over time until the person cannot see anymore, causing all the effects that come with blindness.

**Alcohol consumption**

Alcohol causes well known problems, such as liver cirrhosis and social and financial problems. It can destroy Aboriginal communities and prevent treatment for other health issues.

The average age at death from an alcohol-related cause is about 35 years. Since alcohol mainly affects the brain, consumption during pregnancy damages the developing child's brain, leading to Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. Such children cannot learn or memorise well, have a low IQ, poor growth, problems with motor skills and coordination, social and behavioural problems and are prone to abuse and assault.

---

| Aboriginal Culture Essentials |

32 Average number of weeks young Aboriginal people aged 2 to 20 years suffer from middle ear disease. Same figure for non-Indigenous children: 2 weeks.
One common stereotype of Indigenous Australians is that they all drink alcohol to excess. But the reality is that a smaller percentage of Aborigines drink alcohol than do other Australians.

—Mick Dodson & Toni Bauman, Dodson, Bauman & Associates (legal consultancy)

Poem: *Growing Up*

by Darryn Karpany

Growing up, childhood dreams and goals to aspire to, full of gusto and keen,
Peer pressure is huge, not cool to think or be healthy, unless you are elite.

Disadvantage and lack of recourses, AOD\(^1\) presenting its ugly head for you to beat.
Peer pressure becomes greater, then racism shows it’s ugly head to compete.
Feeling alone, confused, from society you start to retreat.

As you get older things start to get tougher,
your family life starts to suffer.

Life really is nowhere near as good as it use to be,
Seems like it’s just not meant to be.

Then starts the downward spiral – how far will it go?
You don't know,
But at least it's somewhere to fit in/belong,
Somewhere to call home.

Then, one day, you realise just how far your life has gone wrong.
Then starts the battle to turn things around,
because there is time, one day at a time, please,
is the constant thought in your mind.

Then slowly returns the love of self, the zest for life, community heart and drive.
The more stories of Indigenous success and community wellness,
the more you thrive.
Knowing to see a person gain control of themselves & their life,
and what this means to them, for family: hearts renewed,
In your heart you know this is why you do what you do!

Just to see your people receive and have hope,
Because of this you know no matter what life throws at you, you will surely cope.
Because for one to know life, one has to know hope.

\(^1\) AOD = alcohol and other drugs
What causes these health issues? How are they linked to other topics?

**Mental health**

The *invasion* of Australia is responsible for much of Aboriginal trauma. Aboriginal people couldn't cope with the loss of their homelands, the loss of their language and culture, and the loss of their identity. Major *traumatic events* have not yet been fully addressed, for example the previous and current Stolen Generations. Many of these survivors became “fragmented people”. Discriminatory behaviour erodes Aboriginal people’s self-esteem and value within their community.

> The dispossession, loss of identity, loss of land, this has all led to a whole lot of lost people.

—Liz Hayden, Aboriginal Health Unit, Graylands Hospital, Western Australia

**Sexual abuse**

The cycle of child sexual abuse is intergenerational and perpetuated by fear and shame. It began in the late 1800s when *white missionaries* abused Aboriginal children they had vowed to protect. It continued on stations where white farmers and graziers almost routinely raped their Aboriginal employees. Seasonal workers and truck drivers followed in later decades.

Sexual offenders offend because of the damage done to them in their childhood, the pain caused by cultural and identity loss, or the traumas suffered when they themselves became victims of sexual abuse. Unable to deal with the pain they suffered, they do to others what has been done to them.

**Diabetes**

Aboriginal people are more likely to contract the disease because of *economic and social factors* such as dispossession, lack of access to fresh food, insufficient primary health care services, obesity and lower education.

**Smoking**

Smoking can sometimes be traced back to contact of Aboriginal communities with outside cultures (for example the Maccassans), which normalised it in their culture.

During European invasion, many Aboriginal people were *paid in tobacco*, further entrenching the habit into their culture. Many smoke because they've lost a sense of belonging, ancestry and identity, or to cope with depression and anxiety, and manage adversity.
Lower life expectancy

Poor health and nutrition standards are a major contributor to low life expectancy. Poverty is another factor, and about 80% of the life expectancy difference is due to preventable chronic conditions, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Other factors include poor housing, dispossession of homelands, low education level, high unemployment, racism, and the unwillingness or inability of politicians to address Aboriginal problems.

Kidney disease

The reasons for these high rates are complex and likely due to several factors, including increased susceptibility to kidney damage, higher rates of diabetes and obesity, being born prematurely with small kidneys, constant infections, high blood pressure, poor access to good food, smoking, substandard housing or limited education.

Trachoma

The trachoma infection is mainly spread through poor hygiene and living conditions. If Aboriginal people had access to high-quality medical care, the disease could be prevented entirely. Pressing cultural obligations, such as sorry business (mourning the death of someone), prevents some from seeking treatment.

Alcohol consumption

Some drink because they witnessed their peers doing it and want to fit in. Others need it to suppress their pain. Since the European invasion Aboriginal people have been damaged by traumatising upheavals: the loss of land, children, identity, economic opportunities, and in many cases, hope.

They are still fighting for basic human rights. The loss of strict Aboriginal social rules and rituals also stripped away their own identity. Alcohol is used to numb the enduring pain of childhood abuse, violence and bullying.
Further reading

- Diabetes – At crisis levels in Aboriginal Australia
- Smoking – A serious health problem
- Aboriginal life expectancy
- Hearing loss and ear health
- Eye health & trachoma
- Aboriginal suicide rates in Australia
- Alcohol consumption & statistics
- Summary of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- Australia’s health 2016 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report)
- Resources of the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia
- Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of New South Wales
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCO)
- Stories of the National Close the Gap Day 2017 (video)
Activities

Crossword puzzle

Across
1. ________ failure is usually associated with poverty.
5. Aboriginal people's life ________ is 10 years less than that of other Australians.
7. Almost twice as many Aboriginal people ________ than other Australians, many women during pregnancy.
8. This preventable disease spreads by poor hygiene.

Down
2. Almost a third of Aboriginal people have ________ and it's the second leading cause of death for them.
3. Most Aboriginal people consume far less ________ than non-Aboriginal Australians.
4. ________ illness is very common among Aboriginal prisoners.
6. Loss of ________ affects many Aboriginal children and impacts their ability to learn.

Quiz
One or more answers might be correct.

1) Which of the following is the main factor contributing to lower life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? (HSC question)
   (A) Poor access to suitable housing
   (B) The abuse of drugs and alcohol
   (C) Incarceration rates and deaths in custody
   (D) Infant mortality rate and incidence of disease

2) What is true for the following diseases Aboriginal people suffer: Heart disease, type 2 diabetes, chronic liver disease and trachoma?
   (A) They are consequences of transgenerational trauma caused by invasion.
   (B) Only a small minority of Aboriginal people suffers from them.
   (C) They are preventable diseases.
   (D) They are diseases usually found in developing countries.
3) Which of the following statements are true?

(A) Diabetes, which used to spread fast, is now under control in Aboriginal communities.

(B) Aboriginal people die from kidney disease at less than 1.5 times the rate of non-Aboriginal Australians.

(C) Aboriginal smoking rates in urban communities are about half of those of other Australians.

(D) Most Aboriginal people drink less than non-Aboriginal people.

4) What are the main causes for many Aboriginal health problems?

(A) The loss of homelands, language, culture and identity.

(B) The disinterest and lack of commitment of governments in solving the Aboriginal health crisis.

(C) Dispossession, lack of access to fresh food, insufficient primary health care services, obesity and lower education.

(D) Diseases that were introduced by non-Aboriginal people during invasion.

5) What would be a good initiative to help improve Aboriginal people's mental health?

(A) Pay reparation to members of the Stolen Generations.

(B) Repay the stolen wages.

(C) Return stolen homelands.

(D) Pay a significant share of mining profits from stolen lands.

Path puzzle

Three young Aboriginal people want to walk a healthy path back to their family. But only one is successful. Which one? Which health challenges are in the picture?
Now we come to an area I love talking about," a beaming Anthony declares, "Me!"

"Are you one of the Australians who still assume Aboriginal people live out bush somewhere in Central Australia?" he inquires. "I'm not sure why this myth is so persistent. Aren't schools supposed to teach up-to-date facts? Or unis? Well, let me tell you—"

"So you're not wearing your traditional body painting underneath your clothes?" you hear yourself tease Anthony before you had a chance to control your mouth.

Anthony looks as if you had forgotten his name for the umpteenth time.

"If we are talking Aboriginal population statistics," he starts his lecture, ignoring your silly question, "the average Aboriginal person would live in a big smoke suburb in New South Wales or Queensland and be around 15 years younger than the average non-Aboriginal Australian.

"And there is a high chance that your average Aboriginal household is only made up of one single family," he says with his eyebrows raised. "More than a quarter don't even have children."

Beads at a stall on Australia Day, made for Aboriginal people from Queensland.
"What they have in common though, is the double-edged sword of identity," Anthony continues, "and I have to explain that in more detail I suppose."

You nod a few times affirmatively.

"On the one side of the spectrum they are proud as about their Aboriginal heritages. On the other they are unsure, anxious or disappointed and consequently de-identify as an Aboriginal person. It's a nightmare for statisticians who try to explain sudden, significant increases or decreases of our Aboriginal population."

How many Aboriginal people live in Australia?

Many sources quote a percentage, but few keep it up to date. In the 2016 Census **2.8%** of Australians identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

From this census data, the Australian Bureau of Statistics calculated the total number of Aboriginal people to be **649,200**. This is still below the estimated number at the time of invasion (around 775,000). If growth remains steady, the Aboriginal population might reach this number again in 2021.

Aboriginal population in Australia in 2016; percentage in 2011: 2.5%, in 2006: 2.3%.

**650,000** Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2016.

How reliable are these numbers?

Aboriginal population figures depend on census data, i.e. on whether people identify as Aboriginal when they are completing the census form.
And herein lies a problem: a large number of people either don’t answer the Aboriginal question in the census, or change how they identify over time.

It is not unusual for them to identify, de-identify, or re-identify as 'Aboriginal', making this statistic fluid. Statisticians respond by making assumptions and labelling figures as 'experimental estimates'.

What’s the median age of Aboriginal people?

The median age (i.e. where half of them are younger and half of them are older) of Aboriginal people is 22 years, projected to reach 25 by 2026. The median age of the general population is currently 37, expected to rise above 40 by 2026.

Population graphs plot median ages over age groups and allow a quick comparison between two population groups. Australia's general population has the shape of a pear while the Aboriginal population looks like a pyramid (see images on right).

When more than 60% of a population is younger than 30 years, the age structure is called 'youthful', which is the case for the Aboriginal profile. If less than 45% of the population is under 30, the structure is called 'mature', which applies to Australia’s general population.
Most Aboriginal people live in the outback, right?

If asked where the majority of Aboriginal people live, many point to the Northern Territory, and the media isn’t very helpful setting this right.

The **largest number** of Aboriginal people live in **New South Wales and Queensland**.

The **Northern Territory** has the **largest proportion** of its population who are Aboriginal (30%), compared with 4.7% or less for all other states and the Australian Capital Territory.

It’s a myth that most Aboriginal people live in remote desert regions. Three quarters live either in **cities (32%)** or regional areas (43%). Only one quarter live in remote (9%) and very remote (16%) areas.

80%

Percentage of Aboriginal people living in capital cities.

When can one identify as ‘Aboriginal’?

Identity is both a popular and sensitive topic. If your dad is Aboriginal, but your mother Italian, what are you? What if your dad’s mother was Chinese, and his father Aboriginal? What if your mum also has Torres Strait Islander ancestry?

Only you can **choose your identity**. If you don’t feel strongly about your Aboriginal ancestry, you might choose to identify as non-Aboriginal. If you are passionate about it, you don’t want to be anything but Aboriginal.

Many people still believe an Aboriginal person has to have dark skin, brown eyes, curly hair and a broad nose. And many others still expect them to underperform and be traditional. None of this is the norm.

Aboriginal people can have blonde hair, blue eyes, white skin, can excel at school, be university lecturers, lawyers, writers, avant-garde artists, educational pioneers and Australians of the Year.

Let’s be clear, Aboriginal identity is defined by us, no one else. We are a diverse peoples reflecting the contemporary Australia we all inhabit.

—I am often asked, ‘How often do you visit Aboriginal communities?’ And I reply, ‘Every day, when I go home’.

—Prof. Larissa Behrendt, Aboriginal lawyer

—I often asked, ‘How often do you visit Aboriginal communities?’ And I reply, ‘Every day, when I go home’.

—Jody Broun, Co-Chair National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
While Aboriginal identity is first and foremost a personal choice, governments need something more formal. The Australian government defines an Aboriginal person as someone who

- is “of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent”,
- “identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander”, and
- “is accepted as such by the community in which [they] live”.

This is called the ‘three-part definition’ of Aboriginal identity. Unfortunately there is no consistent standard for organisations recognising someone as Aboriginal. People have been known to falsely claim to be Aboriginal to take advantage of benefits, or Aboriginal people were not recognised as such.

Using genetic tests to prove one’s Aboriginality has been rejected because ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are social, cultural and political constructs which cannot be tested objectively.

Percentage of couples in which only one partner was Aboriginal in 2013.

Poem: *White*
by Trent Sellars

I am aboriginal, but I am white.
And I know that’s confusing but just listen alright.

See what makes me this way is the blood in my veins,
Some from Germany, Ireland, and Australian plains,

Now I know what you’re thinking, such a tiny percent?
And you’re right, in terms of science, if that’s your intent,

But as people we’re more than our bio you see,
I am human, I am dreaming, I am spirit, I am me.

My connection to country may be tainted by fate,
For the history of my family is both violent and great,

I am complex in terms of ancestral past,
Call me diluted, weakened, or less than half caste.

But the reason I’m white, if you ponder you might,
Just see that causes are something of height,

My colour is the result of a love between races,
Of the footsteps and risks that my forefather faces,

In a time when their coupling was something of rarity,
My ancestors were brave and sought love as their clarity,

I am proud of my heritage, regardless of my skin,
And this place is my home, it is where I find kin,

I’m aboriginal by spirit, by belonging to this place,
So consider my depth before defining my face.
What's the Aboriginal word for...?

Prior to invasion Aboriginal people spoke about 250 different languages (some sources claim even more) with more than 600 dialects. Many could speak several languages or dialects fluently. Because they had an oral culture, Aboriginal people were masters in remembering, contrary to the dominant Western culture today which relies on writing things down.

145 Aboriginal languages were still spoken in 2005, but 110 of them were critically endangered. Crucially, only a tiny fraction of families speak an Aboriginal language at home.

Some Aboriginal people speak Kriol (across the north of Australia) or Yumplatok (in the Torres Strait), languages that emerged from mixing English with Aboriginal languages.

Aboriginal languages carry cultural heritage, knowledge, tradition, identity and important links to land, stories, Dreaming tracks, botanical, medicinal and navigational techniques. Put differently, the language contains the "essence of the ancestors". But it also records historical experiences of colonialism, racism and prejudice.

Today you find the following broad language groups in mainland Australia (note that spelling can vary): Koori (NSW, VIC, TAS), Murri (NSW, QLD), Yolngu (NT), Anangu (Central), Nunga (SA), Palawa (TAS), Noongar (WA).

There were more speakers of Polish, Macedonian and German in Australia in 2001 than speakers of Aboriginal languages.

Accepting Aboriginal heritage: "Now I'm asking questions"

Zac Williams is a young player with the Greater Western Sydney Giants Australian Rules football club. While he knew about his Aboriginal heritage since a young age, it wasn't until he had established himself as a young star at the Giants that he embraced it.

"My pop was part of that Stolen Generation," Zac says. "He tells me a lot of stories. Stuff like when the police came around and asked for the kids or whatever it was, he'd have to run and hide out the back and wait until they'd leave."

At first, Zac wasn't interested. "I was more the side of 'Yeah, nah I don't really want to worry about that, I'm more into hanging out with my friends'," he recalls. For a long time his Aboriginal heritage took a back seat.

Since then Zac's thoughts about his heritage changed. "I'm starting to see that it's a really important side of who I am. It's important not just for Indigenous people to know, but for everyone to know, so they can learn and grow.

"Now I'm asking questions and trying to understand a lot more."
So when you hear someone asking, “What’s the Aboriginal word for…”, remember that no single word exists. It’s like asking, “What’s the European word for…?”

I never realised that I would share so many connections with Aboriginal people. I always thought that there was some huge divide that could never be crossed. But I was wrong.

— Bo-dene Stieler, non-Aboriginal participant in the First Contact TV series

4 famous Aboriginal people

David Unaipon

You are most likely carrying a famous Aboriginal man in your wallet: David Unaipon (1872–1967) was a Ngarrindjeri man, a preacher, inventor and writer from the Point McLeay Mission, South Australia.

Among his patents is a helicopter design based on the principle of a boomerang. The front of Australia's current 50-dollar note features David Unaipon's portrait, along with drawings of one of his inventions and an extract from the original manuscript of his book Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines.

Neville Bonner

Neville Bonner was Australia's first Aboriginal politician. He became a senator for Queensland and served for 12 years (1971–1983). He was also the first Aboriginal person to sit in federal parliament. A central focus of his work as a politician was improving the conditions of his fellow Aboriginal people. Bonner helped change the face of Aboriginal rights in Australia. He was a man said to never let anger dominate his work.

Bronwyn Bancroft

Bronwyn Bancroft is an Australian artist who is one of the first Australian fashion designers invited to show their work in Paris. Trained in Canberra and Sydney, Bancroft is also an illustrator and arts administrator. In 1985 she established a shop called Designer Aboriginals, selling fabrics made by Aboriginal artists and herself. She is also a founding member of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-
operative, one of Australia's longest running Aboriginal owned and operated art galleries, located in Sydney. Her art work is held by several major galleries in Australia, and features in more than 20 children's books.

**Anita Heiss**

Heiss is one of Australia's best known Aboriginal writers. Her books range from historical novels to children's books and poetry collections. In 2007 she released her first 'chick lit' title (or as she says, tongue-in-cheek, "choc lit") that sought common ground between mainstream and Aboriginal Australia. She is constantly working to enhance her readers' understanding of Aboriginality, earning her the accolade of "destroyer of stereotypes". Heiss is a strong advocate for Aboriginal education and works to ensure that Aboriginal literature is written and produced by Aboriginal writers and companies.

**Poem: My Life is Not Like Yours**

*by David Esdaile*

Don't look at me and sneer. 
Don't look down your nose and judge me. 
Don't patronise and think you know what's best for me. 
My life is not like yours.

I grew up on the edge of town. 
We'd nowhere else to go. 
Our land was stolen long ago and like your cattle we were herded into pens and stalls. 
My life was not like yours.

They took me from my elders and my mum when dad shot through and I was just a kid. 
They fed me, beat me, raped my sisters and made me sit in school to learn my place. 
My life was not like yours.

I had to learn to hunt and scrounge for food. 
I couldn't get a job. 
I didn't have the skills they'd pay me for. 
They said that I was just a lazy bugger sitting in the camp. 
My life was not like yours.

An underclass in our own country, uprooted from our people and our land, we didn't have prescriptions for Valium and Prozac. 
We tried to dull the pain with grog instead. 
My life is not like yours.

I don't bear a grudge. 
I'm not looking for revenge. 
I want to move ahead in harmony and peace. 
There's not much that I need. I'm not a slave to greed. 
My life is not like yours.
How does population link to other topics?

**Health.** When asked about their identity, most Aboriginal people call out their pride. Proud people are strong and confident which helps them feel good and healthy.

**Stolen Generations.** Many Aboriginal people who were stolen as children know so little about their families that they struggle with who they are. Some don't know when to celebrate their birthday because there is no record of it. Many Aboriginal languages are lost because the Stolen Generations policies banned, discouraged and punished Aboriginal people from speaking their languages.

**People.** The Aboriginal population is young: 47% are under the age of 20 and only 9% are older than 54. Combined with a very high percentage of deaths before the age of 65, Aboriginal elders may be passing away faster than they can pass on their culture and knowledge.

**Land.** While the Western Australian government has so far not taken any steps against non-Aboriginal people who live remotely, it has threatened to shut down remote Aboriginal communities.

**Languages.** Those who are still practicing one or more Aboriginal languages speak English as a second, third or fourth language. Bilingual teaching takes this into account and should be the best practice in education.

Further reading

- [Aboriginal population in Australia](#)
- [Racism in Aboriginal Australia](#)
- [How to name Aboriginal people?](#)
- [Aboriginal identity: Who is 'Aboriginal'?](#)
- [Statistical Aboriginal timeline](#)
- [The loss of Aboriginal languages](#)
- [A selection of Aboriginal words in Australian English](#)
- [Preserving Aboriginal languages](#)
- [Walking in two worlds](#) (The story of Junior Dirdi, ABC)
Activities

Crosswords

Across
2 The Aboriginal man living in your wallet is David ______.
4 Before invasion, Aboriginal people had about 250 different _______ groups.
6 When more than 60% of a population is younger than age 30, the age structure is called a ______ population.
7 Where one third of all Aboriginal people (and most Australians) live.
8 People might decide to change how they ________, causing nightmares for Census statisticians.

Down
1 Broad language group of Central Australia.
3 Something you decide for yourself, and the government has a three-part definition for.

5 Current percentage of Aboriginal people in Australia's population (rounded to a single digit).

Aboriginal percentage of population

What is the Aboriginal share of each state and territory's population? Don't forget the ACT.

[Map of Australia with percentage figures]

2.9%   4.2%   3.8%
30%    0.9%   2.3%
4.7%   1.7%   

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
Quiz

One or more answers might be correct.

1) What is the percentage of Aboriginal population in Australia according to the latest census?
   (A) 2.3%
   (B) 2.5%
   (C) 2.8%
   (D) 3.0%

2) The Aboriginal age structure is called “youthful” because...
   (A) the percentage of children is more than 60%.
   (B) more than 60% are younger than 30.
   (C) less than 30% are older than 60.
   (D) most children are born to parents who are younger than 30.

3) Most Aboriginal people live in...
   (A) New South Wales and Queensland.
   (B) New South Wales and the Northern Territory.
   (C) the Northern Territory.
   (D) Queensland and Western Australia.

4) Who determines whether someone is Aboriginal?
   (A) The number of Aboriginal (grand) parents.
   (B) The government’s ‘three-part’ definition of Aboriginal identity.
   (C) The community you were born into.
   (D) You do yourself.

5) Which of the following statements is correct?
   (A) Kriol and Yumplatok are languages commonly spoken across Australia.
   (B) Prior to invasion, Aboriginal people spoke about 600 different languages with countless dialects.
   (C) In New South Wales, Aboriginal people speak Koori and Murri.
   (D) Speaking multiple languages helps reduce diversity.
As darkness falls and the natural light that seeps into the gallery fades, you notice how the mood there changes. Its artificial illumination has a more pronounced effect, creating islands of light that highlight the artworks and their colours.

Like dots of light, you start thinking, when Anthony cuts through your meditation with a question.

"When you think 'Aboriginal art', what comes to your mind first?" he challenges you.

"Dot paintings, large canvasses..." you offer.

"Aha!" he sneers, as if he had set you a trap and waited for that answer. "Just what I thought you'd say."

"Is it not?" you ask, confused. Dot paintings are everywhere and a hallmark of Aboriginal art. Huge canvasses with Aboriginal artwork hang in every major gallery. So what was I wrong about?"

"If you think only in dots and large canvasses about Aboriginal art, you are leaving out thousands of years of our artistic history," declares Anthony in the voice of a teacher. "I think I need to repaint
that area of your memory, eh?” he quips, as if wanting to make up for his earlier harsh tone.

"Do you know how old the dot style is?” he asks.

"Um, I don't know, a few thousand years?” you offer.

"About 45," he declares, as if you had just offended him personally.

"Back in the early 1970s, Aboriginal people from all over the area west of Alice Springs were assimilated in a community called Papunya. There they started to paint on boards and canvases. At first they painted freely, showing secret and sacred things related to ritual and ceremony. Later they realised that these items, which were not to be seen by others, had to be hidden, so they covered them with layers of paint and—dots. And they also used dots as abstracted sacred designs in order to disguise the meanings associated with them.

"And as for large canvases,” Anthony adds, "this is also a recent thing. All we had before invasion was bark or wooden panels, so paintings were pretty small."

Anthony seems to be in lecture mode and oblivious that you opened your mouth to respond.

"Further," he continues, as if talking to the grand jury that had to decide your fate as an ignoramus, "Aboriginal art is about so much more than just paintings. Or just dance. Do you want to hear the list?"

He doesn't wait for an answer.

"Pottery, textile-based art, weaving, jewellery, ceramics, wood carving, miniature carvings, grass weaving, shell stringing, glass work, film-making, theatre, music, storytelling, photography,..."

He is running out of breath.

"...and I haven't even mentioned new media artists!"

"I see," you say. "So dot paintings are just a dot, err, drop in the ocean of Aboriginal art."

"Exactly!" confirms Anthony.
What are some common Aboriginal art forms?

Aboriginal art is as diverse as Aboriginal people. From traditional bark paintings to modern, abstract works, from basket weaving to mixed-media.

Traditional Aboriginal art forms

- rock paintings
- rock engravings (petroglyphs)
- bark paintings
- body paintings
- sand drawings
- stone arrangements
- wood carvings and sculpture (including ceremonial artefacts)
- weaving and string-art
- dance
- song

Traditional painting styles are:

- **X-ray**, where animals are painted showing anatomical features such as organs and bones.
- **Cross-hatch** (rarrk), which was originally traditional ceremonial body painting.
- **Ochre paint**, which combines natural earth pigments with vegetable or animal binders.

Note that although dance, song and paintings are art in themselves, Aboriginal people also use them to pass on knowledge.

There is no one word in any Aboriginal language for the term 'art'. Art forms are viewed as an integral part of life and the celebration of life.

—Penny Tripcony, Manager, Oodgeroo Unit, Queensland University of Technology

Contemporary Aboriginal art forms

- water colour and acrylic painting
- mosaics (e.g. in front of Parliament House in Canberra, and also on the 5-dollar note)
- string and grass weaving
• pottery and ceramics
• textile-based art
• printmaking and fabric printing
• jewellery
• sculpture
• wood carving and miniature carvings
• glass work
• shell stringing and shell necklaces
• film-making
• theatre
• dance
• music
• storytelling
• photography
• new media, e.g. digital art

Contemporary painting styles are:
• dot painting
• colour fields
• ochre painting
• bush medicine leaves

The character and style of traditional Aboriginal art is regional: Aboriginal people from different areas have unique approaches to art.

Dot paintings are specific to the Central and Western desert. Cross-hatching, rarrk design and x-ray paintings come from Arnhem Land. Wandjina spirit beings come from the Kimberley coast. Ochre paints were used in Arnhem Land and the east Kimberley.

Contemporary Aboriginal art is transitioning from a separate, distinct art form to a subset of mainstream art, defined by Aboriginality and its concerns, but less and less distinct in its methods and techniques.

If I can't write it, I can paint it.

—Short Joe, Pormpuraaw Art and Culture Centre, Cape York

Approximate percentage of artists who are women. They produce around 80% of all Aboriginal art products.
Poem: A Painter's Dream
by Nola Gregory

Out the back is an old wooden table
And shelving is seen everywhere
There are paints of all different colours
And brushes all tainted with wear
Empty glass jars are a godsend
Plastic lids are never thrown away
These are the tools of an artist
They are part of the painter's day

The table is all splashed with colour
From the work they have done through the day
They sit there for hours and hours
To create the most awesome display
It has to be just right you see
They will not accept anything less
Their patience and eye for detail
Will certainly pass the test

Just how they do it is amazing
They really are a sight to behold
From the very first stroke of the paintbrush
They create their paintings so bold
They come in all shapes and sizes
The colours are a kaleidoscope dream
And people stand in awe to see them
The artist and their painting scene

Why is Aboriginal art special?

Aboriginal Australian culture is the longest surviving culture in the world because people passed on vital information that ensured their long-term survival in an often challenging environment.

That is why Aboriginal art is rich in spiritual teachings, knowledge, and cultural behaviour, as well as the practical skills and knowledge required to survive. Aboriginal Art has both artistic and anthropological value.

Many artworks contain more than one layer of information. The obvious layer depicts the public version of a Dreaming story. Further layers show information reserved for the community or family; ceremonial and spiritual information can sometimes be depicted in even more layers.

Indigenous art in Australia is becoming a subset of the mainstream art space: defined by race and by its concerns, but less and less distinct in its methods and techniques.

—Nicolas Rothwell, The Australian newspaper
Where can I find Aboriginal art?

The most accessible places to find Aboriginal art are galleries, museums and art centres.

Also visit local markets and fairs and look for stands run by Aboriginal artists. Some prisons have ‘art behind bars’ programmes and might sell artworks via galleries or in a local prison shop.

For rock art and petroglyphs search for publicly accessible sites near you. Remember not to touch or walk on them as Australia’s sandstone is very delicate.

I want to buy some art. What are my steps?

I suggest the following five steps to buy an artwork that you’ll love:

**Step 1:** Find an art style that appeals to you. Follow your intuition and select one that speaks to you personally and spiritually. Visit museums and art galleries to get a feeling for the different styles, or browse online gallery catalogues.

**Step 2:** Check if the artworks are authentic. Unfortunately, due to the popularity of Aboriginal art, there is a high percentage of fake art on the market. As a layperson it is extremely hard to establish the authenticity, so your best bet is to contact the arts centre and ask them, or visit an Aboriginal-owned art centre before you decide where to buy. Check where it was made – fake art comes from India, Indonesia and China.

**Step 3:** Check out the story. Most Aboriginal art comes with a story. Ask the seller for it. Does it resonate with you? Can you find a part of your own story in it? Look at similar works by the same artist.

**Step 4:** Think about it. Walk away and reflect if you really want to buy that particular piece at that price. This helps you avoid an
impulse buy and gives you time to discuss your decision with your partner.

**Step 5:** Buy ethically, i.e. ask yourself: Who sells it? Who benefits and who doesn't? Under what conditions was it created? Ensure your artwork of choice is fairly sourced from artists and that they are treated and paid fairly.

Maximum price of nearly two-thirds of all art products made by art centres. Almost 90% cost less than $1,000. Only about 1% of all products cost more than $5,000.

Percentage of investigated art shops found selling fake Aboriginal art in 2016.

| $250 |

**Tip: Hanging Aboriginal art**

Most art from Central and Western desert is an aerial depiction of the land, and just as there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to hold a map, you can also hang Aboriginal art any way you like.

The artists usually sit on the floor and work around the canvas, so it is not important which way their art is hung. If it is, an arrow on the back of the painting indicates the top.

**Poem: My Art, My Heart**

by Aurore Clediere

One point, one dot
Among a billion stars
One line then a knot
My culture lives through my Art...

Stories of ancestral beings
Secret paths to many different things
A map, a teaching of my way of living

Core of my soul, cleansing flames and sparks
Voice and hand of my feelings
Spread on the fabric and the bark
To show them I haven't given up on their true meaning...

**The $1 copyright breach**

In 1966 one of David Malangi’s designs was reproduced on the Australian 1-dollar-note, originally without his knowledge. When the Reserve Bank learned about this omission the note was already in production.

The Governor of the Reserve Bank then travelled to meet the artist and pay proper compensation. The episode was an important step in recognising Aboriginal painters as artists entitled to copyright.
What are some good Aboriginal movies to watch?

Here is a selection of films that help you see history from an Aboriginal perspective:

**Beneath Clouds**

Set in northern New South Wales, it’s a reflection on what life can be like for young Aboriginal people in rural areas: The overwhelming sense of hopelessness, isolation, anger, desperation, and the constant watchful eye of the authorities.

**Redfern Now**

This TV series received plenty of critical acclaim as a gritty and hard-hitting drama that chronicles the lives of people in the inner-city Sydney suburb of Redfern. It’s compelling and has been lauded as "some of the best television the country has ever produced".

**Cleverman**

Taking place in an Australia of the near-future, a young man named Koen West inherits amazing abilities that make him an Aboriginal superhero, the Cleverman.

**Bran Nue Dae**

If you're addicted to musicals, this is your movie. It's a light-hearted, charming take on the life of a young Aboriginal boy, Willie, in the late 1960s. Willie just wants to escape a religious mission and return home to Broome to be with his girl, Rosie. It's a fast flick to sing along to, perfect for a Sunday evening.

**Ten Canoes**

Praised as a "shimmering beauty", Ten Canoes is the first film to be spoken entirely in Aboriginal languages (with subtitles to your rescue). The film provides important insight into the spirituality of Aboriginal people of the Top End and how their lives might have been before invasion. Prepare for plenty of laughs.
**Samson & Delilah**

Heralded as a film that changed Australian cinema forever, Samson & Delilah is confronting, honest and unlike anything you've ever seen. It follows a young Aboriginal man and woman living in a bleak and remote community.

The devastating effects of a remote location, alcohol and drug addiction, and exploitation have left their home a seemingly devastated place. It's a groundbreaking film, beautiful and essential viewing.

**The Sapphires**

The Sapphires tells the story of four young Aboriginal women and their journey from singing in a small town talent contest to winning a spot performing for troops in Vietnam.

The musical became the highest grossing Australian film ever on an opening weekend. Wry, tongue in cheek and packed with songs you'll know, love, and can couch-dance along to, The Sapphires is great film-making in action.

**Walkabout**

Walkabout sees a young white boy and girl taken into the outback by their father, where he attempts to kill them before taking his own life. Stranded, the young children are near death when they come across a young Aboriginal boy who helps them survive.

The film contrasts the complexities of modern life with the raw, honest and ancient ways of a people who have a profound (and perhaps enviable) relationship with the land.

**Rabbit-proof Fence**

Based on the true story of three Aboriginal girls of mixed heritage who ran away from a mission station in Western Australia. They had been forcibly taken away from their families with the intention of assimilating them into white society and on the assumption that their race would "die out".

This film is a window into a moment in history which is important to remember. An Australian classic.
The Tracker

This film tells the story of a racist police officer in the 1920s, who uses an Aboriginal tracker to hunt down the alleged killer (also Aboriginal) of a young white woman.

But once they are on their way the outback provides a vacuum in which all prejudices are released and the situation begins to escalate. Features beautiful music by Aboriginal singer-songwriter Archie Roach and paintings instead of footage during violent scenes.

First Australians

A comprehensive look at the Aboriginal experience from the arrival of the British First Fleet in 1788, carrying convicts and their military jailers, to the government recognition of the Aboriginal population’s right to native title in 1993.

It's one of the most significant films about post-colonial Aboriginal history. Visceral and educational, a stunningly beautiful piece of filmmaking.

How is art linked to other topics?

Economy: Contemporary Aboriginal art helps Aboriginal communities provide income to families, and is often the only business in small communities. It can also provide vital income for inmates and help them cope with being in prison.

People: Creating art helps strengthen Aboriginal culture by valuing traditional knowledge, which is the basis of Aboriginal art. Young Aboriginal people (re)discover their culture when their Elders teach them. Aboriginal art supports reconciliation, helps lower barriers of prejudice and misunderstanding for non-Aboriginal people. For artists it helps boost their self-respect, standing and confidence.

Language: Aboriginal art has a secondary effect in supporting the language and culture of Aboriginal families who choose to remain on their ancestral lands, often in remote locations.

Health: Art strengthens individuals and communities and helps boost health and well-being. It can also be used as a healing tool in art therapy.

Education: Art has been used for millennia to pass on knowledge. Today Aboriginal artists and curators can teach non-Aboriginal people some of the stories and wisdom that’s behind an artwork.
Further reading

- How to select and buy Aboriginal art
- Aboriginal theatres
- Aboriginal art in contemporary architecture
- Aboriginal art forms: So much more than just paintings
- Art in unusual places
- Are dot paintings a traditional Aboriginal art style?
- Guide to Aboriginal rock art
- The authenticity of Aboriginal art
- Styles of Aboriginal art (Artlandish Aboriginal Art Gallery)
- What is Aboriginal art? (Kate Owen Gallery)

Activities

Crosswords

**Across**

4. Art form that can be traditional, contemporary or both and involves using arms and legs.

**Down**

1. A painting style coming from Arnhem Land. The technique is also very familiar to doctors.
2. Many artworks have some sacred __________ hidden in them.
3. New art form you would have trouble seeing if there was a power failure.
4. You only want to buy Aboriginal art this way.
5. Australian federal politicians walk across this each day they go to work in Canberra. It’s also on the 5-dollar banknote.
Quiz

One or more answers might be correct.

1) Which of the following is true about dot paintings?
(A) Dot paintings developed from artists covering parts of the painting that showed sacred information.
(B) Dot paintings are usually abstract paintings with no story attached.
(C) Dot paintings come from the Central and Western desert.
(D) Dot painting is a traditional art form found all across mainland Australia.

2) What have Aboriginal visual art, dance and film in common?
(A) They are all contemporary art forms.
(B) They all emerged in the 1970s.
(C) They are all forms of Aboriginal storytelling.
(D) They are all art forms mostly used by urban artists.

3) What is a surefire indication of contemporary Aboriginal art?
(A) The use of typical ochre colours: red, orange, brown, black.
(B) The use of dots in the artwork.
(C) The name of the artist.
(D) There is no such sign.

4) Which statement about Aboriginal cultural stories, designs and patterns is correct?
(A) Due to their age these are now public domain knowledge.
(B) They are protected by Australian Competition and Consumer laws.
(C) Each cultural group has their own set for which they hold ownership.
(D) To meet the huge demand, Australia has agreements with other nations, such as India, Indonesia and China, to produce artworks featuring them.

5) When did Aboriginal art become a mainstream area of interest?
(A) In the late 1980s
(B) During the 1960s
(C) In the early 1970s
(D) As early as the 1940s
Night has settled over the town and the quietness in the gallery is rhythmically broken by cars rushing past when traffic lights turn green.

People driving home, you think, wondering how much they know about Aboriginal culture. And whether they’ve ever wandered into an art gallery and had a conversation as good as this one.

“There’s one area you haven’t touched yet,” you say slowly, pushing away your thoughts.

“Oh, there are many areas I haven’t talked about tonight,” replies Anthony. “Which one is on your mind?”

“Politics,” you say dryly. “I’m sure it’s a—“

“Oh my God, politics!” exclaims Anthony, rolling his eyes. “Couldn’t you have picked something less controversial? I f—, umm, well, politicians really, really annoy me,” he says, just catching himself in time not to swear. “I just can’t take them seriously. You know the fly-in fly-out people that work in the mines? Politicians are like that with regard to Aboriginal affairs. Flying in when they get elected, flying out when their time’s up. And not interested much in-between, other than looking good. So difficult to teach! When they want our...

West Australian Aboriginal politician Ken Wyatt, who started his political career in August 2010. (photo: Facebook)
opinion they give it to us, and when they design programmes—
don't get me started."

“Tell me,” you ask innocently.

“Well, for example, there was a local government running an
expensive anti-drug campaign without any prior consultation with
the local Aboriginal community – as they usually don't do. They
picked a campaign slogan — ‘Drugs are Deadly.'” Anthony chuckles
and tries hard not to laugh.

“What about it? Aren't they?”

“Sure, but this slogan is all wrong, sending the opposite message. In
Aboriginal communities ‘deadly’ means awesome or excellent,”
explains Anthony, eyeing you with boyish amusement. “They didn't
do their homework at all.” He takes a breath.

"But this is a red thread through most of Aboriginal politics. Look at
something more serious, the Northern Territory intervention. Same
snake, different skin: only token consultation, a now proven lie of
child abuse and pornography, millions and millions of dollars, and
for what? Not much to show for! No wonder that some of us have
their own definition of ‘politics’. They read it as ‘poly’ and ‘tics’,
meaning many tics, or many blood-sucking parasites.

“Anyway,” Anthony sighs, “let me give you at least a rough outline
about the intervention, as this is one of the most damaging pieces
of s—, err, legislation, that you should know about.”

Why did the government intervene in
the Northern Territory?

In August 2006 the Northern Territory government commissioned
research into allegations of serious sexual abuse of children in
Aboriginal communities. It established an inquiry tasked to find
better ways to protect them. The commission released its findings
on 15 June 2007, now commonly called the Little Children are Sacred
report.

Less than a fortnight after its publication, on 23 June 2007, the
federal government staged a massive intervention in the Northern
Territory, where the commission had collected its data, sending in
hundreds of soldiers.

They called it the ‘Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER)’
and sold it to the public as “all about the safety and wellbeing of
children”. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people quickly labelled it
‘the intervention’.

| This is our holocaust. |

—Statement by local Aboriginal people to Dr Stephen Foster,
district medical ofcer for remote communities
in the Northern Territory.
What did the intervention change?

Legislation passed by both major parties (Labour and Liberal)

- **removed** the permit system for access to Aboriginal land,
- **abolished** government-funded Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP),
- subjected Aboriginal children to teaching in a language they didn't speak for the first four hours at school,
- **quarantined** 50% of welfare payments to buy food,
- **suspended** the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA),
- expected Aboriginal people to lease property to the government in return for basic services,
- **compulsorily acquired** Aboriginal land, and
- **subjected** Aboriginal children to mandatory health checks without consulting their parents, and breaching the sacred oath of doctors.

Overall school attendance rate in both primary and secondary schools after the intervention; rate before the intervention: 62.3%.

Reported incidents of attempted suicide and self-harm after the intervention; before: 57 reported incidents.

How much did the intervention cost?

The original 2007 estimate for the intervention cost was $587 million for the first 12 months, but this quickly escalated to more than $1.3 billion over 4 years.

By 2011, the intervention cost was estimated to have passed **$2 billion**.

How long was the intervention scheduled for?

The government scheduled the initial intervention legislation to go from 2007 to 2012. Late in 2011 it introduced the *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011* to extend the intervention for another 10 years until 2022.
Who supported the intervention?
Both Liberal and Labor governments support the intervention and both made laws for it.

You cannot drive change into a community and unload it off the back of a truck. That is the lesson of the Intervention.


Was the intervention successful?
Evaluating the success is not easy because there is not much objective data available, and the quality of some data has been questioned. While there are many reports about the intervention, most were commissioned by the government.

• Employment and economic participation – 3/10: Little progress had been made and the gap was widening.

• Education – 5/10: Some gains were achieved in certain areas, but overall secondary school attendance rates decreased considerably and there was little change in literacy and even less in numeracy at both primary and secondary levels.

• Health and life expectancy – 4/10: There had been some improvements to Aboriginal child mortality but not enough to close the gap to the non-Aboriginal population. The situation was particularly bad for Aboriginal people living in the Northern Territory, whose life expectancy is nearly 15 years shorter than that of non-Aboriginal Australians.

• Incarceration rates – 0/10: Not only had there been no improvement, the rate of Aboriginal incarceration continually rose. In 2015 there was not even a target for Aboriginal incarceration rates.

• General compliance with human rights – 4/10: The 2007 Intervention legislation is widely regarded as incompatible with international human rights law standards and practices, despite the government insisting otherwise.

• Racial discrimination – 3/10: By suspending parts of the Racial Discrimination Act, the government effectively denied protection to Aboriginal communities affected by the legislation.
• **Right to self-determination** – 2/10: The Intervention disempowered Aboriginal communities. Governance shifted from communities to centralised government agencies. Aboriginal people had 50% of their benefits controlled by government.

• **Rights of children** – 4/10: The Intervention quickly shifted focus from protecting children from sexual abuse to economic and infrastructure development. Intervention policies which were aimed at improving Aboriginal children’s lives did not address underlying and structural causes of maltreatment and abuse.

• **Social and cultural rights** – 3/10: Legislative amendments allowed the government to compulsorily acquire Aboriginal land. It stripped Aboriginal owners of control over their property in order to acquire 65 Aboriginal communities. Income management restricted the right to social security and violated the right to family and private life.

• **Right to be consulted** – 3/10 Every stage of the Intervention since its inception in 2007 has had issues surrounding the level of consultation with Aboriginal communities. Sometimes the government conducted consultations on decisions that had already been made. It used a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach that failed to properly consult with Aboriginal communities.

We were not consulted; the intervention disregards Yolngu governance and law as if it was never there;... it disrespects our land rights, our culture and our rights as human beings.

—Raymattja Marika-Mununggiritj, Co-Director Mulka Multimedia Centre, Yirrkala, Northern Territory

**Poem: Lucky For Some**

by David Esdaile

We’re sitting down to hear you fellers
tell us all what must be done
our life’s a mess no need to tell us
show us how your county’s run

The grog’s a curse we’d like to stop
the young blokes sniffing glue and stuff
so show us how you’ve got on top
of all the things that make life tough

I know you’ve got a plan to follow
dreamed up in some feller’s head
sit down with us and let us tell you
what we need to do instead

—David Esdaile

Aboriginal Culture Essentials

Politics – 89
Who brought us the grog to start with who sat down on all our land who brought clap and flu and sickness so we could no longer stand

Once a horse’s spirit’s broken he’ll do what you ask him to we’ve been hurt by words you’ve spoken but we still know what to do

We can teach our young men courage we can share with those in need we can learn the ancient wisdom we can live without your greed

When you’ve sorted out your problems when your greed is in control we can sit down with each other start to make our country whole.

What was the 1967 referendum about?

The 1967 referendum proposed two things:

1. to allow the Commonwealth government to make laws for Aboriginal people, and

2. to include Aboriginal people in the census.

Prior to the referendum, the constitution explicitly prevented the Commonwealth government from making special laws for Aboriginal people. Its Section 51 read in part:

“51. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: ... (xxvi) The people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws; ..."

After the referendum the words in italics were deleted.

The only other section of the Constitution that referred to Aboriginal people was section 127 which specifies who is to be counted as part of the population of the Commonwealth:

"127. In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted."

After the referendum the entire section was deleted.

You also need to be aware of a few things some people mistakenly associate with the referendum. The 1967 referendum

- did not give Aboriginal people the right to vote. It was already introduced in 1962;
• did not grant them citizenship. By the time of the referendum, most federal and state laws discriminating against Aboriginal people had been repealed;

• was not about equal rights for Aboriginal people. The constitutional change would not impact at all on laws governing Aboriginal people.

What were the results of the referendum?

The 1967 referendum was one of the most successful referenda in Australia's history. No other referendum ever achieved such a high 'yes' vote.

90.8% voted 'yes', 9.2% voted 'no'. Victoria had the highest 'yes' vote (94.7%), Western Australia the highest 'no' vote (19%).

There are no results for the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory because at the time their residents did not have the right to vote in referenda.

Poem: 1967 Referendum

by Nola Gregory

Sailed their boats
Up to our shores
Aimed their guns
And made their laws
No man's land
Was what they said
Did not want to count
One single head

As flora and fauna
We were seen
Did not have a say
In our own dreams
'British subjects'
Was the term they used?
Wasn't even asked
For our important views

Alien Citizens
On our own sand
Treated as foreigners
By treacherous hands
Our rights were shunned
Our lives controlled
We watched in sadness
Saw it all unfold

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
In 2017, Australia Post celebrated the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum with a special stamp.

**Are there any Aboriginal politicians?**

As of 2017 eight Aboriginal people had been, or were still, members of the federal parliament’s House of Representatives:

- Ken Wyatt (2010–)
- Nova Peris (2013–2016)
- Joanna Lidgren (2015–2016)
- Patrick Dodson (2016–)
- Linda Burney (2016–)
- Malarndirri McCarthy (2016–)

Aboriginal people have also served in state and territory parliaments.

**How does politics link to other areas?**

**Health and people:** If politicians stopped implementing blanket solutions for diverse Aboriginal communities there would be much better outcomes for their health and well-being.
**Self-determination:** Politicians have the key to support Aboriginal self-determination but hesitate to unlock the potential. Often Aboriginal communities already know what works and just need support to implement their solutions. But even if they don't know yet, helping them figure it out beats ordering them what to do.

**Land:** The Northern Territory intervention is a powerful example of a wolf in a sheep skin. Sold as “saving the kids” it was in fact a grab for Aboriginal land, driven by the mineral resources it holds. Politics frequently override Aboriginal interests for the benefit of the mining industry and the interests of politicians.

**Media:** Journalists usually report about Aboriginal politics in one of three ways: 1) Just reciting what the government says. 2) Putting a spin on what the government says. 3) Investigating what’s behind what the government says.

**Law and justice:** Come election time, politicians are vying for votes, and one draw card is “being tough on crime”. The laws they make often target Aboriginal people, one reason why their incarceration rates are skyrocketing.

---

**Further reading**

- [Former prime minister Paul Keating's admission of white guilt (Redfern speech)](http://example.com)
- [The Northern Territory intervention](http://example.com)
- [Intervention: Life in a prescribed community – People have given up](http://example.com)
- [Why Aboriginal politics fail](http://example.com)
- [Selected Aboriginal politicians](http://example.com)
- [Stop The Intervention Collective Sydney](http://example.com) (STICS)
Activities

Crossword puzzle

Across
1. Colloquial name for draconian measures by the government following a report about Aboriginal child abuse.
4. Prior to the 1967 referendum, the constitution _________ Aboriginal people from government laws.
5. When trying to solve problems, governments often design _________ solutions.
7. The new name for the NT emergency response legislation in 2012 was 'Stronger _________'.
8. More than _____ per cent voted 'yes' in the 1967 referendum.

Down
2. The second federal Aboriginal parliamentarian was Aden _________ (1999–2005).
3. After the 1967 referendum, the census figures _________ Aboriginal people.
6. During election time, politicians love to be seen as _________ on crime.

Quiz
One or more answers might be correct.

1) Who was the first Aboriginal member of the federal parliament?
(A) Eddie Mabo  
(B) Lois O'Donoghue  
(C) Neville Bonner  
(D) Ken Wyatt

2) The order of policies enacted by the Australian government regarding Aboriginal people were: (HSC question)
(A) Protectionism, Assimilation, Integration
(B) Assimilation, Protectionism, Self-Determination
(C) Self-Determination, Integration, Assimilation
(D) Protectionism, Assimilation, Self-Determination

3) In which year did Aboriginal people gain the vote??
(A) 1962  
(B) 1967  
(C) 1992  
(D) 1946

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
4) What was the result of changes to the Australian Constitution in the 1967 referendum? (HSC question)

(A) Indigenous Australians were recognised as the original owners of the land.

(B) The state governments’ powers to make laws for Indigenous Australians were removed.

(C) Indigenous Australians were given the right to vote and to stand for election to federal parliament.

(D) The Commonwealth was granted power to make laws for Indigenous Australians and to count them in the census.

5) What was not a consequence of the Northern Territory intervention?

(A) Visitors no longer need permits to access Aboriginal land.

(B) The government compulsorily acquired Aboriginal land.

(C) Aboriginal children were no longer taught in their first language.

(D) Half of the welfare payments of an Aboriginal person were quarantined.

---

**The Tasmanian intervention**

Shock! Politicians are out to stage an intervention in Tasmania. Arriving at Devonport, find a path through the maze where you can catch as many politicians as possible and deliver them to the prison at Port Arthur so Aboriginal people are safe.
Chapter 9

History timeline

1900 – 1930s

1901  The government introduces the white Australia policy, trying to ban all non-Caucasian people from entering the country.

1905  The Western Australia Aborigines Act is passed, making the Chief Protector the legal guardian of every Aboriginal child under 16 years old.

1914  Beginning of WWI. Aboriginal people serve in the war despite being prohibited by law from serving. Aboriginal soldiers are among Australian troops at Gallipoli.

1920  Aboriginal population estimated to be at its lowest at 60,000 – 70,000. It is widely believed to be a ‘dying race’.

1925  Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association forms in
1928  Conniston Massacre in the Northern Territory. Europeans shoot 32 Aboriginal people after they attack two settlers. A court of inquiry rules the Europeans' action ‘justified’.

1937  The federal government decides to force Aboriginal people of mixed descent to assimilate into white society, to educate those not living tribally and for all others to remain on reserves. In practice, assimilation policies lead to the destruction of Aboriginal identity and culture, dispossession and the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

1938  26 January: 150 years after the British invasion the Aboriginal Progressive Association declares a Day of Mourning, the first of many Aboriginal protests against inequality, injustice, dispossession of land and the oppressive protectionist policies.

1939  More than 150 Aboriginal people walk off the Cummeragunja Mission station in southern New South Wales in protest against cruel treatment and exploitation. It is the first Aboriginal mass protest in Australia.

World War II begins. Aboriginal people serve in two Aboriginal military units and other sections as formally enlisted soldiers, sailors or airmen.

1940 – 1950s

1940  White Australia policy succeeds: 99% of Australia’s 7 million people are white.

1943  The government exempts certain Aboriginal people from restrictive legislation and allows them to vote, drink alcohol and move freely. Aboriginal people denounce the exemption certificates as ‘dog tags’.

1946  Aboriginal pastoral workers initiate the Pilbara strike in Western Australia over pay, conditions and ill treatment.

1948  The Commonwealth Citizenship and Nationality Act for the first time makes all Australians, including all Aboriginal people, Australian citizens.

The newly-formed United Nations adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which Australia supports.

1949  Aboriginal people can enrol and vote at federal elections if they can enrol for state elections or have served in the armed forces.

1953  The Northern Territory Welfare Ordinance makes Aboriginal people wards of the government, basically making Aboriginal adults and children minors.

Atomic tests on Maralinga lands at Emu Field, South
Australia force hundreds of Aboriginal families to leave their homelands.

1954  Queen Elizabeth visits Australia for the first time and signs laws that permit the ethnic cleansing of the Australian Capital Territory, clearing it of resident Aboriginal people.

1957  Formation of the NADOC - National Aboriginal Day Observance Committee (which later became NAIDOC, with the 'I' for 'Islanders').

1958  Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines established. The title is changed in 1964 to Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

1959  Margaret Williams is the first Aboriginal university graduate with a diploma in physical education.

1960 – 1970s

1962  The government amends the Commonwealth Electoral Act to extend the right to vote to Aboriginal people in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

1963  The Yolngu people of Yirrkala in the Northern Territory send a bark petition to the House of Representatives to protest against mining on the Gove Peninsula.

1965  The government introduces the integration policy, supposedly to give Aboriginal people more control over their lives and society. Charles Perkins leads a freedom ride of Aboriginal people and students in support of Aboriginal rights. The bus ride through several country towns demonstrates the extent of discrimination against Aboriginal people.

1966  Aboriginal stockmen and their families walk off the Wave Hill cattle station in the Northern Territory in protest against intolerable working conditions and inadequate wages. They demand the return of some of their traditional lands. This begins a seven-year fight by the Gurindji people to obtain title to their land.

1967  In a national referendum more than 90% of voters empower the federal parliament to legislate for all Aboriginal people and to count them in the national population.

1969  Aborigines Welfare Board in NSW abolished.

All states have now repealed legislation that allowed forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families under the policy of 'protection'.

Aboriginal Culture Essentials

www.CreativeSpirits.info

History timeline – 98
1970  The community-controlled Aboriginal Medical Service opens in Redfern, Sydney, the first Aboriginal service.

1971  Luritja artist Harold Thomas designs the Aboriginal flag.

NSW Aboriginal Legal Service formed

Neville Bonner becomes the first Aboriginal Member of Parliament.

Aboriginal people are counted in the national census for the first time.

1972  Aboriginal activists pitch an Aboriginal Tent Embassy outside Parliament House in Canberra, demonstrating for land rights.

The government ends the White Australia policy after more than 70 years and introduces a policy of self-determination. The change provides the right to cultural and linguistic maintenance and management of natural resources on Aboriginal land.

1,000 Aboriginal people sign the Larrakia petition, one of the most important documents in the history of their struggle for land rights.

Community-controlled Aboriginal Medical Service is set up in Redfern, Sydney. The first such service in Australia.

1973  The federal government introduces the first Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), employing Aboriginal people for Aboriginal issues.

1975  Racial Discrimination Act passes the federal parliament.

1976  The Commonwealth Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act becomes the most significant land rights legislation in Australia. It transfers reserve land to Aboriginal ownership and administration to Land Councils.

1977  Aboriginal people meet at the Black Theatre in Redfern, Sydney, and form the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and lobby for Aboriginal land rights.

1979  In “Coe vs Commonwealth”, Aboriginal barrister Paul Coe is unsuccessful in challenging the legal concept that Australia had been an uninhabited land which had been settled not conquered.
Poem: *Part of Me is You*

by Rhonda Cotsell

You are everywhere here
Histories, books, movies, on the telly
Newspapers’ words oddly skewed like
A story about someone else.

Black faces, brown, pale-skinned
Everywhere but not next door,
Not in the library where I work,
Not walking down the street of the town where I live,
Except, probably you are, but I don’t know.

The same – same place – same country
But different to mine and not mine
In history pages where my part began.

Invisible black feet tread softly, bare, sure footed,
Leave footprints, leave fingerprints,
Maybe old photos, hands ochre and red, mud plastered
Leave sound, wailing, black voices echoing through bush.

Across cliff faces crackle of fire – crack of rifle
Everywhere on country
Black blood – black blood – black blood
Feeding the root, black heart, still beating,
While I skim the other surface, terra nullius, exiled Scots crofters.

I break in two every time I betray you in ignorance and, once,
innocence
We are born of words that slither and strangle and smear, that tear us apart.

The old Christian promises, the golden rule, love of country and
being Australian too is winning, is not giving up.
Part of me is you.

---

1980 – 1990s

1982  Joe Pat dies in Roebourne gaol, Western Australia, the first Aboriginal death in custody.

1983  The *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NSW)* recognises dispossession and dislocation of New South Wales Aboriginal people and sets up a 3-tiered system of Aboriginal Land Councils (state, regional and local).

1988  Tens of thousands of Aboriginal people march through the streets of Sydney on Australia Day (26 January) to celebrate their survival during the previous 200 years and rename the day ‘Survival Day’.

1989  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) is established as main the Commonwealth agency for Aboriginal affairs.
The government introduces the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, the first policy of its kind to explicitly address the educational differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

1991 The government sets up the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody finds that 43% of the deaths it investigated were of people who were separated from their families as children.

1992 The High Court of Australia hands down its landmark decision in Mabo v Queensland (Mabo case). It rules that native title exists over particular kinds of lands – certain Crown lands, national parks and reserves – and that Australia was never terra nullius (“empty land”).

Torres Strait Islander flag designed.

Labor prime minister, Paul Keating, acknowledges past wrongs perpetrated against Aboriginal people in what became known as the ‘Redfern Speech’ at the launch of the International Year of the World’s Indigenous People.

1993 The federal government passes the Native Title Act 1993. This law allows Indigenous people to make land claims under certain situations. They cannot make claims on privately-owned land.

1996 Aboriginal sprinter, Cathy Freeman, wins a silver medal in the 400 metres run at the Atlanta Olympics, USA, and Nova Peris-Kneebone becomes the first Aboriginal person to win a gold medal for being part of the victorious Australian women’s hockey team.

Northern Territory and Western Australia pass mandatory sentencing laws which affect particularly young Aboriginal people.


1998 People hold the first Sorry Day, one year after the Bringing Them Home report came out, with hundreds of activities around the country.

2000 – today

2000 More than 300,000 take part in the People’s Walk for Reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Cathy Freeman wins gold in the women’s 400m at the Sydney 2000 Olympics.
2004  Casey Donovan, just 16 years old, becomes the youngest and first female winner of Australian Idol, a singing contest. She releases Listen to Your Heart shortly after.

2005  The government dismantles the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

2007  Pat Anderson and Rex Wild release the Little Children are Sacred report which alleges “widespread” sex abuse of children throughout communities of the Northern Territory.

Liberal prime minister John Howard and Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough announce the Northern Territory intervention.

National Indigenous Television (NITV) commences as Australia’s first national 24-hour Aboriginal television service.

Bruce Trevorrow becomes the first person to receive Stolen Generations compensation by a court.

2008  For the first time in government history Aboriginal people perform a Welcome to Country at the opening of the 42nd Parliament after a break.

Labor prime minister, Kevin Rudd, supported by government and opposition members, apologises to the Stolen Generations and says ‘sorry’.

Freddie Timms’ ‘Wunubi Spring’ is the world’s first chemically protected Aboriginal artwork which uses a chemical fingerprint to protect the painting.

2009  Australia supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

2010  The Resale Royalty Right for Visual Artists Act is introduced, entitling all artists to a 5% royalty whenever their work is re-sold.

New South Wales becomes the third Australian state, after Victoria and Queensland, to recognise Aboriginal people in its Constitutional preamble.

2011  Australia Post becomes the first government business enterprise to create a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples gets the first elected board, giving Aboriginal people the first elected national representative body since the abolition of ATSIC.

The Federal Court of Australia rules that prominent journalist and broadcaster, Andrew Bolt, breached the Racial Discrimination Act by challenging the right of people of mixed descent to claim Aboriginal ancestry. He alleges that they fraudulently draw benefits available only to Aboriginal people.
The federal government introduces legislation to extend key Northern Territory Emergency Response measures for a further 10 years.

2012 The Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra celebrates its 40th anniversary.

Western Australia renames the Foundation Day public holiday to Western Australia Day, for the first time in legislation recognising Aboriginal people as the original inhabitants and traditional custodians of Western Australia.

The Australian Ballet announces Ella Havelka, a descendant of the Wiradjuri people, as the first Aboriginal dancer in its 50-year history.

2013 The Northern Territory Country Liberal Party elects Gamilaroi man Adam Giles as Chief Minister. He is the first Aboriginal person to head an Australian government.

Murrawarri people in the Culgoa River region of northern New South Wales declare the sovereignty of their lands under the name of Murrawarri Republic.

The Euahlayi nation in north-western New South Wales also declares independence from the Commonwealth of Australia.

2014 The inaugural Australian Indigenous Fashion Week in Sydney showcases Aboriginal fashion, textiles and accessories from across Australia.

The federal government — without consultation — announces that it would stop providing funding to remote homeland communities, prompting Western Australia and South Australia threaten to close “unviable” communities.

Traditional owners, leaders, elders and community members from across Australia gather in Alice Springs for the Freedom Summit, declaring independence, sovereign power and authority of their nations and peoples.

2015 West Australian Aboriginal MP Ken Wyatt becomes the first Aboriginal Member of Parliament to reach the frontbench, working as Assistant Health Minister.

2016 Aboriginal languages become a new HSC subject, seven years after the NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy was introduced.

A record number of 13 Aboriginal candidates run for the federal election

Winning a Sydney electorate in the House of Representatives for the Labor Party, Linda Burney becomes the first Aboriginal woman with a seat in the federal parliament, where she’s shadow minister for human services.
'Four Corners', the flagship current affairs TV program of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, airs 'Australia's Shame', a documentary on abuse of children in Northern Territory prisons, sparking shock across the world.

The Tasmanian government amends the preamble to the Tasmanian Constitution Act to formally recognise Aboriginal people “as Tasmania’s First People and the traditional and original owners of Tasmanian lands and waters”.

2017 Hip-hop duo A.B Original win the Australian Music Prize, the biggest prize for an album in Australia, with their song Reclaim Australia.

More than 250 Aboriginal leaders from across the country gather at Uluru at the Referendum Council’s National Convention to identify amendments required for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal people, but the government rejects a proposal for a constitutionally enshrined voice to Parliament.

City of Yarra councillors vote unanimously to stop referring to the 26th of January as Australia Day in all official document and not to hold citizenship ceremonies that day, to support a campaign to change Australia Day because it offends Aboriginal people, who commemorate the date they were invaded in 1788. The neighbouring Darebin council follows suit shortly after.

Poem: Colonisation
by Rachael Benbow

When will Colonisation end?
no answer to that, sorry friend.
Many wounds we have to mend
but we both know that this depends
on forces that we cannot bend
Like money, which they will not spend,
And the governmental trend
to claim that racism met its end
so they continue to pretend
that the Colony is our friend.

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
Exam time! Your express journey through Aboriginal culture has come to an end and Anthony would like to know whether you've been paying attention.

Grab a piece of paper, your iPad or note-taking software, and try to answer each question as best as you can.

**Q1:** What have you learned about the Stolen Generations?

**Q2:** How can self-determination help Aboriginal people?

**Q3:** What have you learned about the relationship Aboriginal people have with country.

**Q4:** Why is there a crisis in Australian jails?

**Q5:** As Minister for Health, what would you do to improve Aboriginal health?

**Q6:** Correct three common misconceptions about Aboriginal people.

**Q7:** List as many Aboriginal art forms as you can remember.

**Q8:** You are Prime Minister for a day. Describe how you would roll back the Northern Territory intervention.
For answers to the questions of the final exam, visit this special page on my website.

Want more answers?

I'm sharing exclusive content with my Smart Owl community, answer their questions and invite them to share their ideas. In return they receive valuable practical tips and discounts for events or resources.

Join today to catch the next email I send out – usually on Mondays.

Plus enjoy five welcome emails which share my most popular and important content.

Sign me up, Scottie!

I would just like to thank you for your emails as they are invaluable to my staff who come from mainstream Australia. Once again thank you and keep them coming.

— Julie, health service manager

Treasure hunt

A big change has happened! The Australian government finally takes a serious approach to reconciliation and has asked you to be their Chief Reconciliation Strategist.

Your task: **Find the 3 secret ingredients that help all Australians create a future together.**

Following are your cryptic hints. Each hint forms one part of the final word. Think out of the box and around corners. The answers to most hints are hidden throughout this book.

**Ingredient 1**

- Part 1: There’s a healthy link to more content with three elements in it ending with ‘u’. Take the middle one.
- Part 2: What would caution be without you?

**Ingredient 2**

- Part 1: Where is the Aboriginal baby in relation to ‘Yes’?
- Part 2: Something allowed any time, but just take the male name contained in it.
- Part 3: Something that’s very close to the male you found in part 2. Also often used to describe an audible event.

Aboriginal Culture Essentials

How did you go? – 106
Ingredient 3

- Part 1: How you pronounce the first letter of the last main health issue Aboriginal people face today.
- Part 2: What you find in one of the activities in Chapter 4 with your pen, but also when out in the bush.
- Part 3: Letter that is a kind of shorthand for the first word of the second question I believe you’ll ask about the Stolen Generations.

Got it?

Email your solution to jens@creativespirits.info with the subject line “Treasure hunt solution” and receive a reward for your hard work.

Practical infographics

Use educational infographics to learn or teach about a topic quickly and succinctly.

All infographics are designed to be easily printable, clean and easy to read. They’re being used for assignments, lesson preparation, in cultural awareness classes or to decorate offices and classrooms.

Explore all infographics
Solutions

Chapter 1 – Stolen Generations
Quiz: 1C, 2A, 3ABC, 4B, 5ABCD

Crossword puzzle
across: 1 – compensation, 3 – linkup, 7 – kinchela,
8 – cootamundra, 9 – bringing
down: 2 – assimilation, 4 – identity, 5 – apology, 6 – servants

Chapter 2 – Self-determination
Quiz: 1C, 2A, 3D, 4C, 5C

Crossword puzzle
across: 1 – laws, 4 – treaty, 6 – sovereignty
down: 2 – affairs, 3 – health, 5 – white

Chapter 3 – Land and country
Quiz: 1A, 2B, 3C, 4C, 5C

Crossword puzzle
across: 4 – spiritual, 5 – rights, 7 – terra nullius, 8 – owns
down: 1 – custodian, 2 – native, 3 – mother, 6 – mabo

Chapter 4 – Jail
Quiz: 1C, 2A, 3ABCD, 4B, 5A

Crossword puzzle
across: 3 – empowerment, 4 – tough, 5 – fines, 6 – circle
down: 1 – communities, 2 – swearing, 3 – emergency

Chapter 5 – Health
Quiz: 1D, 2C, 3D, 4AC, 5C

Crossword puzzle
across: 1 – kidney, 5 – expectancy, 7 – smoke, 8 – trachoma
down: 2 – diabetes, 3 – alcohol, 4 – mental, 6 – hearing

Chapter 6 – Population
Quiz: 1C, 2B, 3A, 4D, 5C

Crossword puzzle
across: 2 – unappon, 4 – language, 6 – youthful, 7 – cities,
8 – identify
down: 1 – anangu, 3 – identity, 5 – three

Chapter 7 – Arts
Quiz: 1AC, 2C, 3D, 4C, 5A

Crossword puzzle
across: 4 – dance, 7 – ten canoes, 8 – engravings
down: 1 – xray, 2 – knowledge, 3 – digital, 5 – ethical, 6 – mosaic

Chapter 8 – Politics
Quiz: 1C, 2D, 3A, 4D, 5C

Crossword puzzle
across: 1 – intervention, 4 – excluded, 5 – blanket, 7 – futures,
8 – ninety
down: 2 – ridgeway, 3 – included, 6 – tough

Aboriginal Culture Essentials
Appendix 1

Significant Aboriginal days

📅 26 January – Invasion Day

Australia Day was known by various names until, in 1946, the Commonwealth and state governments agreed to unify the celebrations and call it 'Australia Day'. The day became a public holiday in 1818 (its 30th anniversary).

While a lot of Australians commemorate the day with celebrations and BBQs, to many Aboriginal people there is nothing to celebrate. To them the day marks the loss of the rights to their land, loss of family, loss of the right to practice their culture.

Aboriginal people have different names for this date.

On the 150th anniversary of Australia Day in 1938, William Cooper, a member of the Aboriginal Progressive Association, declared the day a "Day of Mourning", alluding to the annual re-enactment of the landing by the convict fleet of Governor Arthur Phillip. Aboriginal people refused to participate in the re-enactment because it...
included chasing away a party of Aboriginal people (who, by the way, had been carted to this event against their will).

In 1992 the first Survival Day concert was held in Sydney. These concerts are often staged at places in the city with great Aboriginal significance, for example La Perouse or Redfern. Artists play music or dance, there are information booths, arts and crafts stalls, and you can buy food and bush tucker.

Survival Day has become one of the biggest Aboriginal cultural events throughout Australia. You can visit alternative concerts in all major cities.

The name Survival Day signals that Aboriginal culture is still strong and many Aboriginal people's identities are positive and alive despite all that's happened since invasion.

Many Aboriginal people prefer the name Invasion Day for what truly happened when the British landed. In a controversial move the City of Sydney Council decided in July 2011 to use the word 'invasion' in one of its official documents. Many white Australians were affronted by the word and felt it described the past, not the present.

Since 2006 the name Aboriginal Sovereignty Day is also used, reflecting that all Aboriginal nations are sovereign and should be united in the continuous fight for their rights.

A lot of Australians recognise that Australia Day is no longer an appropriate day for celebrations and call for a new day which includes all Australians. Some suggest renaming Australia Day to 'Arrival Day'.

January 26 is important to Aboriginal people for another reason. It's the anniversary of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, set up in Canberra in 1972. Wiradjuri woman Jenny Munro explains how it came about:

“Land rights had been discussed, argued, protested for generations but a 1971 court decision [Milirrpum people vs Nabalco] gave extra impetus to the land rights campaign.

“1971 was the first time Aboriginal people took the issue of ownership of land to the courts. The Milirrpum people in the Northern Territory were resisting a bauxite mine opening up on their territory at Gove [Peninsula], the Milirrpum versus Nabalco case. The Supreme Court judge, [Richard] Blackburn, found that we Aboriginal people didn't have any rights of ownership of our land under common law, particularly in relation to mining claims.

“Then on the 25th January 1972, the Liberal prime minister at the time, Billy McMahon, issued a press statement saying that land rights for our people would never exist. All that we would ever get from any government was a system of perpetual leases on land we already owned and occupied.

“That court decision and the government's reaction was the impetus behind the Black Caucus [a core group of the Redfern 'Black Power movement'] deciding to send four men to Canberra to set up the first Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the 26th January 1972. They were messengers for the group here in Sydney.”

Those four men were Michael Anderson from Walgett, Billy Craigie from Moree, Bert Williams from Cowra, and Tony Coorey from
Tweed Heads. Only Michael Anderson is still alive. He is the leader of the Euhaliya people in northwest NSW and southwest QLD.

What can you do?

- Visit an Aboriginal event on Australia Day. All major cities have a gathering of Aboriginal people where you can share and learn about their culture.

- Chat to an Aboriginal person. Ask them what is important to them on this day and how they view its history.

- Supplement, or replace, your Australian flag with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.

- Learn more about Aboriginal sovereignty and why it is important to Aboriginal people.

- Google "Aboriginal Tent Embassy" to better understand why it was set up. Find out about the four founders.

13 February – Apology Day

On February 13th, 2008, Aboriginal people across Australia were deeply moved and in tears: The Labor prime minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, had finally apologised to the Stolen Generations and said 'sorry'.

For 11 years, former Liberal prime minister John Howard had steadfastly refused to apologise, a view he kept even after the apology. "I do not believe, as a matter of principle, that one generation can accept responsibility for the acts of an earlier generation. I don't accept that as a matter of principle," he said.

Australians thought differently. 78% of the respondents to a Sydney Morning Herald survey thought that Kevin Rudd's 'sorry' apology was excellent or good. Only 6% rated it average or poor, and 16% disagreed with it.

For Aboriginal people the apology was what they had been waiting for, some for decades.

"I feel great. I'm on top of the world, I'm floating on air. It's a big weight off my shoulders... It's the closure I need," said singer and songwriter, Archie Roach who is a member of the Stolen Generations himself. His famous song, "Took The Children Away", is about the issue.

Mary Farrell-Hooker, also a stolen child, said that "the apology will help to heal the scars but it will never heal my pain and hurt".

But not all were elated. Some expected more than just words from the prime minister.

"The word 'sorry' doesn't come near what [my father] went through. They can apologise in a thousand different ways without saying sorry," says Norman Stewart, son of a Stolen Generations member, "actions speak louder than words."
The apology also gave hope to those who were confronted by Australians who denied the Stolen Generations altogether (just like some Europeans still deny the Holocaust). "An apology will mean that people believe us, that this has happened and that we are not liars," said Cahill McCarthy, a stolen child.

In New South Wales, government schools were told to fly the Aboriginal flag and stop lessons during the apology so that students could watch it live on television. Incredibly, many parents were upset about this. Asked whether students should stop classes to watch the speech on TV, more than 70% replied that students should not skip classes to watch. "If my kids' school does this, they're staying home! I'm disgusted!" said Tony, a parent who commented to a newspaper.

Other countries have also apologised to their indigenous peoples.

New Zealand apologised in 1995 to a Maori tribe for stealing 500,000 hectares of land 130 years earlier. That apology became law.

Canada apologised on 11 June 2008 for its past actions that eroded "the political, economic and social systems of Aboriginal people and nations". The government acted on a report tabled two years earlier.

What can you do?

- Watch or read the apology.
- Compare the arguments of both prime ministers for and against the apology.
- Create a word cloud of the apology text. What are the most used words?
- Think of any prejudice or stereotypes you hold regarding Aboriginal culture and write your own apology (be very honest—no-one needs to see it).
- Can you find more apologies made by the Australian government? Whom to?

17 March – National Close the Gap Day

This day is all about Aboriginal health. First organised in 2006, on this day organisations and communities come together to hold events and raise awareness of the health crisis of Aboriginal people.

In 2014 more than 150,000 Australians took part in National Close The Gap Day to show their support, to talk about, to spread the word, and to take action to improve, Aboriginal health.

Did you know that...

- Aboriginal people still die 10-17 years younger than other Australians?
• Aboriginal children suffer 30 times more often from malnutrition compared to non-Aboriginal children?

• 30% of adults in Aboriginal communities are suffering from type-2 diabetes?

• Young Aboriginal people aged 15 to 24 are 6.5 times more likely to have a sexually transmitted infection, compared to young non-Aboriginal people?

• Aboriginal people are 60% more likely to die from all cancer types than non-Aboriginal people, and cancer is their second leading cause of death?

Close The Gap is Australia's largest-ever public campaign to end Aboriginal health inequality. Its goal is to close the health and life expectancy gap between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal Australians within a generation.

The campaign is built on evidence that significant improvements in the health status of Aboriginal peoples can be achieved within short time frames.

Australians can register their Close The Gap Day activity with Oxfam Australia, which offers a wide variety of support material.

What can you do?

• Ask your state premier to ensure that your state government commits to closing the gap.

• Sign the Close the Gap pledge - add your name to more than 185,000 other Australians.

• Read more about Aboriginal health and why it's so important to close the gap.

• Find out more about the Close the Gap campaign.

• Get some Close the Gap student kit and school classroom resources.

More information:

• Oxfam – National Close the Gap Day
• Australian Human Rights Commission – Close the Gap: Indigenous Health Campaign

25 April – Bringing Them Home report

This is the anniversary of the Bringing Them Home (BTH) report, a name commonly used instead of the full name, Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, which was released in April 1997.

The report is the result of a 1995 national inquiry into Aboriginal children who were taken away from their families. The inquiry
responded to increasing concerns that the practice of separating Aboriginal children from their families and its long term effects had never been investigated or even acknowledged.

The inquiry found that the separation of Aboriginal children from their families, and the abuse many of them experienced, had "profoundly disabling" effects and have permanently scarred their lives. The harm continues in later generations, affecting their children and grandchildren.

One witness gave the following evidence: "It never goes away. Just 'cause we're not walking around on crutches or with bandages or plasters on our legs and arms doesn't mean we're not hurting ... I suspect I'll carry these sorts of wounds 'til the day I die. I'd just like it not to be so intense, that's all."

Stolen children suffered horribly. A summary of the findings of the report relating to how the children who were separated from their families fared showed that:

• nationally, between one in three and one in ten Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families and communities between 1910 and 1970;
• institutional conditions were often very harsh;
• education was often very basic;
• excessive physical punishments were common;
• the children were at risk of sexual abuse;
• some found happiness in their new home or institution;
• many lost their heritage;
• those left behind suffered as well; and
• the effects of separation still resonate today.

A 1994 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found that people who were separated from their families are

• twice as likely to assess their health status as poor or only fair,
• less educated,
• less likely to be employed,
• on significantly lower incomes, and
• twice as likely to have been arrested more than once in the past five years.

The inquiry made 54 recommendations. A key one was that reparation be made to Aboriginal people affected by policies of forced removal. The government publishes an annual Bringing Them Home Scorecard report, which tracks its progress (or lack thereof).

The report concluded that "indigenous families and communities have endured gross violations of their human rights. These violations continue to affect indigenous people's daily lives. They
were an act of genocide, aimed at wiping out indigenous families, communities, and cultures, vital to the precious and inalienable heritage of Australia".

The term "Stolen Generations" is now commonly used for Aboriginal people forcefully taken away (stolen) from their families. Because the period covers many decades we speak of "generations" (plural) rather than "generation".

What can you do?

- Read some of the submissions members of the Stolen Generations sent to the inquiry (get some tissues ready).
- Read the guide to the Stolen Generations.
- Download some teacher and student resources from the Australian Human Rights Commission.
- Browse a list of related resources from the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet.

25 April – ANZAC Day

ANZAC Day is also important to Aboriginal people. Few Australians know that many Aboriginal men fought in both world wars and that returning home was shocking, rather than joyful, for many of them.

Aboriginal people were keen to defend Australia during both world wars, but not allowed to join the forces. So they got inventive and pretended to be Maori, Indian or Portuguese.

Hence we can only guess their numbers. It is likely that about 1,000 Aboriginal people joined WWI, and about 5,000 WWII.

While non-Aboriginal soldiers returning home were welcomed as heroes and given parcels of land, Aboriginal diggers had to fight ignorance and racism, were not eligible for returned servicemen land grants or even membership of Returned Services League (RSL) clubs.

Some Aboriginal soldiers were shocked to find that the government had taken their children away while they fought in the war.

"I know of at least one Aboriginal veteran of World War I who was not only denied his pay packet and his pension, but upon his return was given the very same rags he had been wearing the day he volunteered, and sent back to work on a station [farm], as if the trenches and mud and the fighting had never happened," remembered rights activist Gracelyn Smallwood in a reader's letter to the *Koori Mail* Aboriginal newspaper.

And while countless war memorials have been erected (more than 2,300 in New South Wales and 1,400 in Queensland), many don't know that memorials also exist for Aboriginal war veterans.

In Canberra, for example, where the Australian War Memorial towers heavily on a hillside, its tiny unofficial Aboriginal counterpart is hidden away in bushland, a 10-minute walk away.
Did you know?

- Aboriginal people were involved in all of Australia's wars, starting from the First Boer War (1880-1881) in South Africa.
- ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, formed in 1915 to fight in the First World War.

What can you do?

- Research "Aboriginal diggers" and share your most important "aha" moment on Facebook.
- Check if you can join an Aboriginal activity on Anzac Day.
- Get three flowers, one yellow, one red and one dark, and put them on a war memorial with a silent prayer for Aboriginal diggers.
- Find out if there is an Aboriginal war memorial near you.
- See what you can find out about one Aboriginal digger. Who was he? How old? Where did he come from? Why did he join? Did he survive? What did he do after coming back?

26 May – National Sorry Day

The Bringing Them Home Report about the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families recommended that a National Sorry Day be held each year on 26 May "to commemorate the history of forcible removals and its effects".

The first National Sorry Day was held on 26 May 1998, one year after the tabling of the Report.

National Sorry Day is a day to remember the removal of Aboriginal children from their families. A chance for all Australians to recognise the pain thousands of Aboriginal people went through. The children affected are now known collectively as the Stolen Generations.

The first 'Sorry Day' was marked by hundreds of activities around the country. The Australian federal government does not take part in 'Sorry Day', saying people who removed Aboriginal children thought they were doing the right thing and people now should not have to say sorry for what people did in the past. More than one million signatures in thousands of Sorry Books speak a different language.

In response to former prime minister John Howard's refusal to apologise (to apologise was another recommendation of the Report), a popular movement evolved to celebrate Sorry Day in the absence of formal political recognition from the government.

Sorry Day also marks the start of Reconciliation Week. Each year it has a different theme.
Little known fact
Since 2003 Aboriginal Canadians celebrate their National Day of Healing and Reconciliation (NDHR) also on May 26. Canadians chose the same day "to honour the Stolen Generation of Aboriginal Australians as well as the children who attended Indian Residential Schools in Canada".

What can you do?
• Watch the movie 'Rabbit-Proof Fence' to experience how children were removed from their families, and what they did to get back.
• Read stories from members of the Stolen Generations. Find out what happened when and after they were stolen from their loved ones. Did they reunite with their family?
• Find a way to express that you feel sorry about what happened in the past and do it.
• What is Reconciliation Week about? Can you get involved?
• Find out the theme of this year's Reconciliation Week.

27 May – anniversary of the 1967 referendum
Many Australians get the facts wrong about the referendum, held on 27 May 1967:
• The referendum proposed to include Aboriginal people in the census.
• The referendum proposed to allow the Commonwealth government to make laws for Aboriginal people.

It was not about Aboriginal people's right to vote (introduced in 1962) or granting them citizenship (most of the discriminating laws had already been repealed) or equal rights for Aboriginal people.

Two sections of the Constitution discriminated against Aboriginal people.

Section 51 covers legislative powers of the parliament. It details the areas in which the parliament can make laws. Before the referendum it read:

"51. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: [...] The people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws." (my emphasis)
The second section of the Constitution that referred to Aboriginal people was section 127 which tells about who is to be counted as part of the population of the Commonwealth:

"127. In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted." (my emphasis)

9.23% Australians voted "No" and 90.77% "Yes", the highest such vote in history on any Commonwealth referendum to date.

What can you do?

- How many referenda did we have in Australia? What were others about?
- Find out how the text of the constitution was changed after the referendum.
- What might have been a reason politicians decided not to make laws for Aboriginal people?
- What is the second highest approval vote for a referendum?
- Google "Aboriginal constitutional recognition" and compare voices for and against it. Which do you agree with?

### 3 June – Mabo Day

Not many Australians know about Mabo Day. It commemorates Torres Strait Islander Eddie Koiki Mabo's 10-year campaign for Aboriginal land rights that led to a landmark decision of the High Court of Australia, Mabo vs the State of Queensland, which became one of the most famous court cases in Australian history, known commonly as the 'Mabo decision'.

Since 1981 Koiki Mabo and his legal team had fought hard to demonstrate that he and his people had traditional land ownership systems on Mer, Mabo's home island off far north Queensland.

On 3 June 1992 the High Court overturned the legal fiction of terra nullius (Latin for 'land belonging to no-one') which had characterised Australian law with regard to land and title since the voyage and landings on the Australian coast of James Cook in 1770. The court ruled that 'native title' did exist and that the people of Mer had the right to "possess, occupy, use and enjoy" culturally significant land and determine ownership.

Unfortunately Eddie Mabo died five months before the historic decision.

The Mabo decision was a turning point for the recognition of Aboriginal peoples' rights, because it acknowledged their unique connection with the land. It also led to the Australian Parliament passing the Native Title Act 1993.
In the Torres Strait, Mabo Day is a public holiday, and for the rest of Australia it's a chance to remember a man who had a big impact on our history.

In 2013 Australia Post honoured Eddie Mabo with a special stamp. Mabo Day also marks the end of Reconciliation Week.

What can you do?

- Find out where Mer is. Then go island-hopping and explore other Torres Strait islands. (There are three named after weekdays. Which ones?)

- After the decision many Australians feared that Aboriginal people could claim their backyards. Was their fear reasonable? What type of land can Aboriginal people claim?

- Find three ways how Torres Strait Islander culture is different to Aboriginal culture.

- What has been named after Eddie Mabo? Where is he buried? And who is his wife?

- What do Torres Strait Islanders do on Mabo Day?

---

**1 July - Coming of Light Festival**

In 1871 missionary teachers from the London Missionary Society (LMS) arrive in the Torres Strait at Erub Island. They open a school and introduce Christianity to the region.

In 1915 the Church of England replaces the LMS and opens a Torres Strait mission. The majority of Islanders remain faithful adherents of the Church of England until other Christian faiths emerge after World War I.

Christianity impacted profoundly on traditional religious Islander culture, but many integrate religion with their traditional belief systems.

The Coming of the Light festival marks 1 July 1871, the day of the first Christian religious service in Torres Strait, an important day for Torres Strait Islanders, who remain mainly of Christian faith. They celebrate the day with cultural and religious activities.

---

**First week of July – NAIDOC Week**

NAIDOC stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee.

In the 1950s Aborigines Day was observed in July to celebrate Aboriginal culture. The National Aborigines Day Observance Committee (NADOC, without the 'I') was responsible for organising
national activities. At the same time, the second Sunday in July became a day of remembrance for Aboriginal people and their heritage.

In 1975 it was decided that the events should cover a week, from the first to second Sunday in July.

With a growing awareness of the distinct cultural histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the committee's name also included Torres Strait Islanders, represented by the 'I'. The new name has become the title for the whole week.

Each year a theme is chosen to reflect the important issues and events for NAIDOC Week.

Celebrations are held across Australia to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and all Australians can participate.

The Committee makes key decisions on national NAIDOC activities including the focus city, the theme and competition winners.

At the end of every NAIDOC Week, the National NAIDOC Awards recognise the outstanding contributions of Aboriginal Australians at a ceremony and ball event held in the national focus city, the highlight of the year for many Aboriginal people.

What can you do?
• Decorate your office with print-outs of Aboriginal infographics.
• Start your own hall of fame featuring Aboriginal role models.
• Listen to Aboriginal musicians or watch a movie about Aboriginal history.
• Study a famous Aboriginal Australian.
• Research the traditional Aboriginal owners of your area.
• Research Aboriginal history online or visit your library to find books about Aboriginal peoples.
• Visit local Aboriginal sites of significance or interest.
• Host a community BBQ or luncheon.
• Hold a flag raising ceremony.

9 August – International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is observed on August 9 each year to increase awareness of the rights of the world's indigenous population.

Each year the day has a specific theme. In 2015 it was indigenous peoples' access to health care services, as improving indigenous
peoples' health remains a critical challenge for indigenous peoples and the countries they live in.

Events on that day also recognise the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection.

Activities may include educational forums and classroom activities to gain an appreciation and a better understanding of indigenous peoples. Events may include messages from the UN Secretary General and other key leaders, performances by indigenous artists, and panel discussions on reconciliation.

The day was first pronounced by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1994, marking the day of the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, in 1982.

What can you do?

• Find out this year’s theme for the day.
• Which countries other than Australia have indigenous people? What are their population numbers?
• What are examples of Australia’s Aboriginal peoples’ achievements and contributions?
• Examine the details about one celebrated Aboriginal person’s life. What is their contribution? Why are they famous?
• Read up on myths about Aboriginal Australians. Tick the ones which you believe in, and commit to one you can let go of from now on.

28 September – John Pat Day

Let me tell you a true story about a boy from Western Australia.

Sixteen-year-old Aboriginal boy John Pat, from Roebourne, Western Australia, didn't know that 28 September 1983 would be the last day of his life.

It all started when one local Aboriginal boy, Ashley James, was threatened by a drunk off-duty police officer. Ashley was making a purchase from the local bottle shop. The officer was allegedly heard to say, "We'll get you, you black c**t."

He followed Ashley outside to the front of the Victoria Hotel and knocked him to the ground. A brawl ensued between five off-duty police officers and young Aboriginal people.

John Pat tried to intervene, coming to the aid of Ashley. The off-duty police punched him in the mouth, felling him to the ground. A witness would testify, "he fell back, and didn’t get up. I heard his head hit the road." His injuries were horrendous.
Police seemed not to notice. They assaulted him in the police yard following his arrest and placed him in a semi-comatose state in a cell where they left him. That night John Pat died of a fractured skull, haemorrhage, swelling and bruising to the brain, broken ribs and a torn aorta. He was found during a cell check the next morning.

John Pat's death horrified many Australians and in order to reduce the type of racism that led to his death the then Labor prime minister Bob Hawke called for a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The death generated international attention upon the impoverished remote Western Australian town of Roebourne. Roebourne became to Western Australia what Birmingham was to Alabama.

In May 1986 an all-white jury acquitted the four police officers and a police aide of manslaughter.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was established on 16 October 1987 and published its findings in April 1991 making 339 recommendations. These highlighted key areas of urgently required reform, particularly within the criminal justice system, to reduce incarceration rates and Aboriginal deaths in custody.

More than 30 years after John Pat's death more Aboriginal people are in prison than ever before and deaths in custody have not decreased. Not a single police officer has ever been sentenced for any death in custody. Many of the Commission's recommendations have still not been implemented.

Western Australia continues to have the highest rate of Aboriginal imprisonment and the highest rate of Aboriginal juvenile detention.

Each year the anniversary of John's death is an opportunity to remember all people who have died in custody and protest against the unacceptable rate of incarceration of Aboriginal people.

Every 28 September John Pat is remembered at a memorial event at Fremantle Prison, which is now a museum, and where a memorial to John Pat is situated – with an 'Ode to John Pat' engraved in stone.

In 2013 the Pat family received an unreserved apology, moved by Aboriginal Labor MP, Ben Wyatt, and passed unanimously by the Western Australian Parliament. But it cannot ease the loss.

John Pat is buried in Roebourne and his mother visits him regularly. "I had hoped much would change with the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody but sadly it appears little has changed," she says.

What can you do?

- Find the words of the 'Ode to John Pat' and read the poem. How does it make you feel?
- What are the current Aboriginal prison rates? How are they different for adults and young people?
- Compare how many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people are in prison. Why are the figures different?
• Book a visit to a prison that allows tours for the public (or walk around one). How would being inside it change you?

• Check whether you can make contact to a prisoner and start exchanging letters.

9 October – Peter Norman Day

Peter Norman Day is a day for those who are quiet heroes, who silently contribute, help, change, prevail, protest, support, mostly without ever standing in the lime light.

So who was Peter Norman?

Let's go back to 1968. Mexico, South America. The Olympic Games, the 200 metres sprint by the men. A young athlete from Melbourne has just won the silver medal, ahead of the highly fancied American John Carlos and second only to American Johnny Smith.

The two other men belong to the black American team who, back home, were suffering from major human rights abuse. The African-American Civil Rights Movement was on its last legs, Dr Martin Luther King had been assassinated in March that year. Despite winning they would return home to be treated less than human (just like Aboriginal war veterans before). So they hatched a secret plan for their award ceremony.

After all three men had stepped up to the podium, suddenly the two black men raised one arm, their fist clenched, covered by a black glove, as a symbol for human rights. This gesture made history and is now known as the 'one fisted salute'.

Lesser known is that Peter Norman had put his personal sporting glory aside to support his fellow competitors' stance on human rights. Against official policy he chose to wear a badge of the Olympic Project for Human Rights, a move that won him the respect of the Americans — but not Australians.

After returning home Peter Norman was ostracised, shunned and made a nobody, as if he and his Australian track record of 20.06 seconds over 200 metres didn't exist. Despite qualifying, he was excluded from the Australian 1972 Olympic Games team. It made him quit athletics.

In 1985 he contracted gangrene after tearing his Achilles tendon during a charity race, which nearly led to his leg being amputated. Depression, heavy drinking and pain killer addiction followed. He died on 3 October 2006 from a heart attack.

The US Track and Field Federation declared 9 October Peter Norman Day, the day of his funeral, and world champion athletes like Carl Lewis, Michael Johnson and Asafa Powell, all regard Peter Norman as not just their idol, but their hero.

Like Peter Norman supported his black American fellow athletes, we can all support our Aboriginal citizens. We can stand up against racism as we witness it, correct stereotypes as we see them, enlighten people who don't know, and celebrate Aboriginal achievements all across Australia. And many of us already do.
In October 2012 the Australian Parliament officially apologised to Peter posthumously “for the wrong done by Australia”, “the treatment he received upon his return” and Australia’s failure “to fully recognise his inspirational role”.

As of October 2017, Peter Norman’s Australian record still stands.

**What can you do?**

- Find a quiet achiever and give them a token of your gratitude. It could be a card, flowers, sweets, or a text or email.
- Who can you stand up for? Find two things you can do for this person or group and do them. Tweet about it.
- How do you talk about Aboriginal people? Check your words and verify your assumptions. Is your view balanced?
- Find out whether protest marches are planned for the next Australia Day and commit to participating in one.
- Write a thank-you letter to Peter Norman, take a picture of it and share it on this day.

### 16 December – anniversary of Land Rights Act

December 16 is the anniversary of the passing of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act*, an opportunity to remind ourselves how important land is to Aboriginal people.

The NT Land Rights Act became law on 16 December 1976. In the following 30 years the Act enabled the return of more than 50% of the Northern Territory to traditional Aboriginal custodians.

The Act was supposed to give Aboriginal people a strong say over what should happen on their land, through the principle of informed consent. It should have allowed traditional custodians to keep their culture strong and to negotiate constructively with governments and developers over mining and infrastructure projects.

The Act was a consequence of the Wave Hill walk-off in which 200 Aboriginal people walked off a cattle station, initially fighting for equal wages. Their protest soon turned to the core issue, land rights.

Galarrwuy Yunupingu, an Aboriginal leader from the Northern Territory, explains his relationship to the land: "The land is my backbone... I only stand straight, happy, proud and not ashamed about my colour because I still have land... I think of land as the history of my nation."
Aboriginal elder Tom Dystra reflects: "We cultivated our land, but in a way different from the white man. We endeavour to live with the land; they seemed to live off it."

In 2006 the NT Land Rights Act was amended significantly to the disadvantage of Aboriginal people. It allows an unspecified "government entity" to control townships for 99 years and sublease blocks to whomever it wants. Aboriginal people are no longer in control, and they lost their right to negotiate benefits from those who seek to use their land (usually the mining industries).

Media described the 99-year town leases as a "threat like never before" with the potential to "turn traditional ownership upside down". The leases gave the government ownership and control of traditional Aboriginal land, just like it was before the Land Rights Act was passed.

What can you do?

- Find Wave Hill on the map and read up what happened there.
- Track down a map that shows which parts of Australia have been returned to Aboriginal people. How do they correlate to urban, regional and remote areas?
- Aboriginal people say "We don't own the land, the land owns us." What do they mean by that?
- What is your connection to your birth country like? Would you fight tooth and nail for it?
- Take a bushwalk and put yourself into the shoes of an Aboriginal person. What changes for you?
Appendix 2

Glossary

Turn to this glossary when you come across a term you don't know. A current version is also on my website.

**Aboriginal**
Usually refers to the First Peoples of mainland Australia but excludes those of the Torres Strait region. Sometimes used to refer to both (as in this book).

**Aboriginality**
Sometimes used to refer to Aboriginal people's identity, or the combination of cultural heritage, spirituality and relationship with the land.

**APY**
Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) is a large Aboriginal local government area located in the remote north west of South Australia.
**Artefact**

Any object made or modified by Aboriginal people, often stone tools or wooden objects. A group of artefacts (especially stone tools) located on the ground surface is referred to as artefact scatter.

**Assimilation**

A 19th century idea that Aboriginal people should become 'white', convert to Christianity and learn how to work and live as Europeans. From the 1930s assimilation became Australian government policy.

**ATSI**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Note that this abbreviation is not liked by many Aboriginal people due to its use in discriminating contexts.

**Community**

Important elements of a community are country, family ties and shared experience. Community is about connection and belonging, and is central to Aboriginality. Aboriginal people may belong to more than one community.

**Corroboree**

Corroboree is an Eora word that has become part of Australia's identity. It describes a place of ceremony and creative expression, a transformative gathering.

**Country**

A term used by Aboriginal people to refer to the land to which they belong and their place of Dreaming. Aboriginal language usage of the word ‘country’ is much broader than standard English.

**Culture**

Accepted and traditionally patterned ways of behaving, and a set of common understandings shared by members of a group or community. Includes land, language, spirituality, ways of living and working, artistic expression, relationships and identity.

**Custodian**

A person charged with maintaining and passing on particular elements of cultural significance (e.g. knowledge, stories, songs, dances, language, ritual and imagery).

**Customary law**

Also referred to as 'lore', customary laws are based on traditions and customs of a particular group in a specific region.

**Decolonisation**

Describes the ending of colonisation and the liberation of those who were colonised. The process includes dismantling the 'colonial state' and its laws. The ultimate goal is self-determination of those who were colonised. Those who want decolonisation start by...
reconnecting with their family, relations and country, and disengaging with the colonial system.

**Discrimination**
Unfair treatment on the basis of perceived differences between people.

**Dreaming**
The Dreaming has different meanings for different Aboriginal groups. The Dreaming can be seen as an embodiment of Aboriginal creation which gives meaning to everything. It establishes the rules governing relationships between the people, the land and all things for Aboriginal people.

**Elder**
Key go-to person within Aboriginal communities who is respected and consulted due to their experience, wisdom, knowledge, background and insight. Often described as the "custodians of knowledge" or the "libraries" of a community. Elder does not necessarily equate with age.

**First Peoples**
The term First Peoples is often used synonymously for Aboriginal people or Indigenous people.

**Heritage**
That which comes or belongs to one by reason of birth, sometimes also understood as 'descent' when talking about identity.

**Homeland**
Homelands are located on Aboriginal ancestral lands with cultural and spiritual significance to the Aboriginal people who live there. Complex connections to land include cultural, spiritual and environmental obligations, including obligations for the protection of sacred sites.

**Indigenous**
Native to a place or area, originating in and characterising a particular region or country.

**Indigenous Australians**
Term used to refer to the original inhabitants of Australia; always capitalised. Includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Many Aboriginal people don't like the term being applied to them.

**Kinship**
Kinship includes the importance of all relationships, and of being related to and belonging to the land.
**Land Rights**

The struggle by Aboriginal people to gain acknowledgement of prior ownership of colonised land, both legally and morally, and allowing all the accompanying rights and obligations which stem from this association.

**Language group**

Language is linked to particular geographical areas. The term 'language group' is often used in preference to the term 'tribe', and many Aboriginal people identify themselves through their language group.

**Long Grass**

Long Grass describes Aboriginal people living homeless and on the fringes, yet sometimes right in the middle of our cities. It comes from the tall grass usually growing on riverbanks where Aboriginal people often congregate.

**Lore**

The learning and transmission of cultural heritage. See also 'customary law'.

**Mabo**

Eddie Koiki Mabo, whose Murray Island land claim led the High Court to recognise, for the first time, that a form of land title existed prior to Australia's occupation by Great Britain in 1788. The High Court judgment, made in 1993, is usually referred to as the Mabo case.

**Makarrata**

Denotes a compact between the Commonwealth government and Aboriginal people. It comes from a word in the Yolngu language meaning a coming together after a struggle, facing the facts of wrongs and living again in peace.

**Massacres**

Indiscriminate killing of Aboriginal people by government forces, private killing parties and individuals.

**Midden**

An originally Danish word, now used for a large heap of shell and other food remains left by Aboriginal people at camp sites which built up over an extended period of time. Middens are often found near rock platforms and in proximity of fresh water.

**Missions, "mish"**

Areas originally set up and governed by different religious denominations for Aboriginal people to live. Missions implemented government policies. Aboriginal people associate the term with trauma suffered from forced living conditions and abuse, rarely with positive memories. Missions are often colloquially called "mish".
**Mob**
Colloquial term used by Aboriginal people to refer to a group of people they belong to, for example: "That is my mob over there." or "My mob comes from La Perouse."

**NAIDOC**
Stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee.

**Nation**
A nation is a group of Aboriginal people who share the same language and area of land, river and sea that is their traditional land.

**Native title**
Form of land title which recognises Aboriginal people as rightful owners of that land. Involves a prolonged process which often ends in litigation before a court. Native Title (capitalised) refers to the legislation, whereas native title (lower case) refers to the concept.

**National Native Title Tribunal**
An independent statutory body to assist people to resolve native title issues.

**Racism**
Discrimination on the basis of perceived racial differences. Racism takes on many forms, e.g. attitudinal, institutional or cultural.

**Rarrk**
The fine cross-hatching used by artists of western and central Arnhem Land. Similar patterns are known as miny'tji and dhulang in the region's east. The patterns are used to identify clans in the region.

**Reconciliation**
A Commonwealth initiative to promote reconciliation between Aboriginal people and the wider community and to redress Aboriginal disadvantage.

**Reserves**
Areas of land reserved by the Crown for Aboriginal people in the 19th century. Much of this land was later taken from Aboriginal people again. Until the 1970s the remaining reserves were administered and controlled by government.

**Scarred tree**
A tree injured by Aboriginal people to extract a piece of bark for making a canoe, a shelter or utensil. Some trees have been marked for ceremonial purposes only.
**Self-determination**

When Aboriginal people determine their affairs themselves, including decision making, interacting with non-Aboriginal parties and creating the solution to a problem.

**Site**

Aboriginal sites are places of importance and significance to Aboriginal people because they provide a link to former or current traditions, people or practices.

**Songline**

A songline (also known as Dreaming Track) is a path across the land which marks the journey of creator-beings as they created the lakes, rivers, plants, land formations and living creatures during the Dreaming. Songlines are recorded in traditional songs, stories, dance, and painting. One of Central Australia's oldest intact songlines is called the Ngintaka, or Perentie Lizard, dreaming.

**Sovereignty**

Sovereignty is the ultimate power, authority and/or jurisdiction over a people and a territory. No other person, group, tribe or state can tell a sovereign entity what to do with its land and/or people. A sovereign entity can decide and administer its own laws, can determine the use of its land and can do pretty much as it pleases, free of external influence (within the limitations of international law). Sovereignty is a more precise term than self-determination.

**Terra nullius**

A concept in international law meaning 'a territory belonging to no-one' or 'over which no-one claims ownership'. The concept has been used to justify the invasion and colonisation of Australia.

**Torres Strait Islanders**

Refers to the First Peoples of the Torres Strait region (as compared to the mainland people).

**Treaty**

A negotiated agreement with the government to recognise that Aboriginal people have not lost any part of their sovereign existence and status, and that they have always maintained a property right in land and the natural resources according to their law and customs.

**Wandjina**

Striking figure represented by people in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, featuring a halo effect around the face. Wandjinjas are recognised as having a significant role in natural and spiritual events.
Appendix 3

Aboriginal land councils

Here is a list of state or territory Aboriginal land councils and some more regional councils. Contact them if you have a question or require their help.

**Australian Capital Territory**

**New South Wales**
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council: www.alc.org.au
- Sydney: www.metrolalc.org.au

**Queensland**
- Central QALC: represented by North Queensland Land Council
- Cape York Land Council: www.cylc.org.au
Northern Territory

- Central Land Council: [www.clc.org.au](http://www.clc.org.au), covering the southern part of mainland Northern Territory
- Northern Land Council: [www.nlc.org.au](http://www.nlc.org.au), covering the Top End, the northern part of mainland Northern Territory
- Tiwi Land Council: [www.tiwilandcouncil.com](http://www.tiwilandcouncil.com), covering Bathurst and Melville Islands north of Darwin

South Australia


Tasmania

- Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council

Victoria


Western Australia

- South-West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council: [www.noongar.org.au](http://www.noongar.org.au)
- Yamatji Bana Baaba Marlpa Land and Sea Council covers the Murchison, Gascoyne and Pilbara Regions of Western Australia
- Goldfields Land and Sea Council: [www.glsc.com.au](http://www.glsc.com.au), covering land from Wiluna to Esperance on Australia's southern coast
- Kimberley Land Council: [klc.org.au](http://klc.org.au)
- Ngaanyatjarra Council: [www.ngaanyatjarra.org.au](http://www.ngaanyatjarra.org.au), covering communities in the east of Western Australia, but also around Alice Springs, NT

Torres Strait

- Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC): [www.tsirc.qld.gov.au](http://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au), representing Badu, Boigu, Dauan, Erub, Kirriri, Iama, Kubin Community at Moa, Mabulag, Masig, Mer, Poruma, Saibai, St Pauls Community at Moa, Ugar and Warraber
- Northern Peninsula Area Council (NPARC): [www.nparc.qld.gov.au](http://www.nparc.qld.gov.au) is made up of 5 Indigenous communities on the mainland: 3 Aboriginal communities (Injinoo, Umagico and New Mapoon) and two Saibai Islander communities (Seisia and Bamaga)
Appendix 4

Spread the word

Use the social media templates below as inspiration to spread the word about *Aboriginal Culture Essentials*:

**Tweets**

Never thought I could have fun while learning: [https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials](https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials)

Short, fun, cool & awesome: [https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials](https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials)

My first step to fill my gaps: [https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials](https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials)

Just joined Generation Informed: [https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials](https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials)

Awesome classroom resource: [https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials](https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials)

Did all quizzes and scored! [https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials](https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials)
Email

Hi Beautiful_Human,

I just wanted to let you know that I've bought a copy of Aboriginal Culture Essentials, an ebook that gives a brief and engaging introduction into Australian Aboriginal culture.

And it's great!

What I love most about it is / the story that connects all chapters / its short and easy-to-read chapters / the statistics and quotes / how it's engaging and fun.

Check it out – I really recommend it:

https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginal-culture-essentials

Cheers,

xxx

Facebook

Just ficked through the pages of a new ebook about Aboriginal culture.

Loved it! Best part was xxxxx.
Feel confident and better informed with useful, quick and easy-to-read answers.

When were the children stolen? What is self-determination? How relate Aboriginal people to land? What are their current health challenges?

*Aboriginal Culture Essentials* is not like any other textbook. It gives you key foundational knowledge and helps you answer the questions you never had the time to go and research yourself.

Written so you can easily read on the go, it's a book told by someone who was seeking answers to the same questions as you.

Discover valuable information that makes you feel better because you'll be updated on the strong topics of Aboriginal culture – but in an engaging and entertaining way.

*Aboriginal Culture Essentials* is a valuable educational tool with
- simple explanations,
- knowledge in manageable chunks,
- quotes, statistics and break-out stories, and
- quizzes, mazes, connect-the-dots and other activities.

**Jens Korff**

Passion and a desire to know more put Jens on a path to learn about Aboriginal culture. He loves sharing his knowledge with the steadily growing number of visitors to his website and the 'Smart Owls' subscriber community who love the weekly email from a “great communicator with fresh ideas”.

**CREATIVE SPIRITS**
www.CreativeSpirits.info