

Unit 6: SACRED LAND

Level 4 VELS, Years 5 and 6

Overview

During this unit students investigate how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used and cared for the land in the past, and the continuing relationship they still have with it. Students also investigate some of the environmental issues facing Australia and the World today, in particular overuse and waste. They make links between what they have learned about sustainable practices and conservation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and current environmental issues. They explore ways they can make improvements at home and at school.

Understandings

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people see themselves as part creation. They believe they were created from the land by the Creator Spirit who provided for them through the gifts of nature provided from the earth, that which they call *Mother*. They had a sacred responsibility to care for the earth.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used sustainable practices and only took what they needed from the land.
- Human beings impact on the environment both positively and negatively.
- What we do to the environment today impacts on what happens to the environment in the future.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's beliefs about and approaches to land management can continue to contribute to a healthier sustainable environment for all Australians.

Rich Question

Will continuing the practices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people allow us to have a sustainable future?

Contributing Questions

- How do people impact on the environment?
- How did Aboriginal people use and care for the land?
- How do they use and care for it now?
- How much do we need?
- How much do we use?
- If we waste less can we make a difference?
- Why do we need to develop more sustainable practices?
- How can we have a positive impact on the environment?
- What can we learn from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about sustainable land use?

Background Notes

From the Yarra Healing website: essential learnings.

- Victorian Koorie people cared for specific areas of land. Knowledge regarding the extent of and responsibilities for this land was passed on by the Elders through generations. Territories were marked by clearly defined natural boundaries and

comprised of related language groups and clan associations, which in turn gave a person his/her strongest sense of identity.

- Victorian Koorie people see themselves as a part of the environment and formed sustainable relationships with it.
- Indigenous Australian's interaction with the land are based on an understanding of both flora and fauna as life forms which were intimately related to human life. An awareness of the essential integration of humans with the land could be summed up as a deep sense of oneness with the land.
- Indigenous Australian's spiritual relationship with the land ensured that they were conservationists.
- Aboriginal people living in many diverse environments across Victoria had developed effective and economical technologies for sustaining their needs and their environment.
- Natural resources were utilised in accordance with traditional and cultural practices by Indigenous Australians in this country. Strategies such as firestick burning were used in ways that regenerated the vegetation because it encouraged re-growth and attracted animals and insects to various regions of the continent. There was a great respect for the land manifested in patterns of resource use. The use of the land by Indigenous Australians featured practices that would lead to sustainability.
- Respect for and identification with the land, its plants and animals - always an integral part of Indigenous Australian cultures - is something many more Australians are beginning to share.
- In many land management schemes, advice is now being sought from the traditional owners. Indigenous Australians have a custodial link to the land which requires their expertise and knowledge on how to manage the land in their area.
- Not all Victorian Aboriginal people today have a natural environmental expertise, largely because of their long-term dispossession and dislocation. Generally there are people in each community who are able to pass on knowledge about the natural world that was once a part of everyday life.
- Despite massive changes in the environment and in lifestyles due to urbanisation, industrialisation and agricultural innovation, Victorian Aboriginal people's beliefs about and approaches to land management and land care can continue to contribute to a healthier, sustainable environment for all Australians.

From the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne website www.rbg.vic.gov.au

- People from the Kulin Nations had, and still have, an intimate relationship and deep spiritual connection with their land. They had knowledge of the seasons which governed the movements of Aboriginal people within their traditional boundaries, They had intimate knowledge of the plants and their uses, and of animal behaviour. After thousands of years of Aboriginal interaction, the country still provided a healthy lifestyle for the communities. Theirs was not a nomadic hand to mouth existence, but rather an observant, effective and economic strategy within their own traditional boundaries for sustaining their needs in balance with their environment.
- Skills were learned by observation, imitation, real life practice and the all-important oral tradition of the Elders.
- The daily needs and the needs of future generations were synonymous. They knew and more profoundly, lived environmental sustainability.

Resources

Written texts

Aboriginal Australia: Culture and Society series, ATSIC, Canberra, 1990. A magazine series with information about all aspects of traditional Aboriginal life.

Challoner, J, (1993), *Collins Eyewitness Science: Energy*, Harper Collins, Pymble, NSW.

Eidelson, M, (1977), *The Melbourne Dreaming: A Guide to the Aboriginal Places of Melbourne*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Elders: Wisdom from Australia's Indigenous Leaders, 2003, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne.

Gore, A, (2007), *An Inconvenient Truth: The Crisis of Global Warming*, Bloomsbury Publications

Little, L, 2004, *The Mark of the Wagarl*, Magabala Books, Broome, Western Australia.

Randall, B and Hogan, M, 2006, *Nyuntu Ninti; What You Should Know*, ABC books, Sydney.

Scientrific magazine, CSIRO, Nov-Dec 2006. 'Indigenous Science' p 6-7.

Websites

www.dreamtime.net.au/indigenous/index.cfm

www.rbq.vic.gov.au website of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne which also has a resource kit for teachers on their Aboriginal Resources Trail.

www.abc.net.au/tv/carboncops This website contains video clips from the ABC TV program Carbon Cops which examines ways people waste natural resources in their homes and suggestions for reducing this.

www.islandwood.org/kids/impact/footprint.php This website includes a questionnaire to help you calculate how big your environmental footprint is. It also contains information about how this is damaging our world and ways we can reduce this.

www.futurescapes.com.au Gould league website designed to simulate the type of future we could have if we do or don't reduce, reuse or recycle.

www.unicef.org/ To navigate the UNICEF website click on the 'voices of youth' button on the menu at the top of the page. Then click on the 'Explore' button in red at the top of the page. Select the 'Water, environment and sanitation' option on the main menu to find global information about the scarcity and importance of the world's water resources. Includes an interactive game and ideas for how you can make a difference.

www.epa.gov/ Click on the 'for KIDS' button in the left hand menu. This is the comprehensive US website of the Environmental Protection Agency.

www.ollierecycles.com/ Australian website for kids with ideas on reducing reusing and recycling and interactive features and quizzes.

www.yvw.com.au/ The Yarra Valley Water website includes animated explanations with audio of the water cycle and several other aspects of water conservation hosted by Cloudia Raindrop.

www.powerhousemuseum.com/ This website contains an interactive feature where students are able to calculate their impact on the sustainability of the earth by measuring their global footprint. To find this feature click on 'Online Resources' on the top menu. Scroll down the page to find the 'EcoLogical online interactives' icon. Click on this button then click on the 'BIGFOOT interactive' option.

Audio Visual

State of the Planet a BBC DVD 2006

The Australia Today Series: Aboriginal Australians video (1988)

Kanyini Hopscotch Entertainment DVD

An Inconvenient Truth Paramount Home Entertainment, 2007

VELS Links

Standards are indicated in italics.

Physical, Personal and Social Learning Strand

INTERPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Working in teams

At Level 4, students work effectively in different teams and take on a variety of roles to complete tasks of varying length and complexity. They work cooperatively to allocate tasks and develop timelines. Students accept responsibility for their role and tasks. They explain the benefits of working in a team. They provide feedback to others and evaluate their own and the team's performance.

PERSONAL LEARNING

The Individual Learner

They monitor and describe progress in their learning and demonstrate learning habits that address their individual needs. They seek and respond to teacher feedback to develop their content knowledge and understanding.

Managing personal learning

At Level 4, students develop and implement plans to complete short-term and long-term tasks within timeframes set by the teacher, utilising appropriate resources. They undertake some set tasks independently, identifying stages for completion

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

Community engagement

They present a point of view on a significant current issue or issues and include recommendations about the actions that individuals and governments can take to resolve issues. They demonstrate understanding that there are different viewpoints on an issue, and contribute to group and class decision-making.

Discipline Based Learning Strand

ENGLISH

Reading

At Level 4, students read, interpret and respond to a wide range of literary, everyday and media texts in print and in multimodal formats. They analyse these texts and support interpretations with evidence drawn from the text. They describe how texts are constructed for particular purposes, and identify how sociocultural values, attitudes and beliefs are presented in texts.

Writing

At Level 4, students produce, in print and electronic forms, a variety of texts for different purposes using structures and features of language appropriate to the purpose, audience and context of the writing.

Speaking and listening

At Level 4, students plan, rehearse and make presentations for different purposes. They sustain a point of view and provide succinct accounts of personal experiences or events. They adjust their speaking to take account of context, purpose and audience, and vary tone, volume and pace of speech to create or emphasise meaning.

GEOGRAPHY

Students explore how humans have affected the Australian environment. Examples could include: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' care of the land. Using an inquiry-based approach, students explore environmental issues and consider possible solutions to current and future challenges.

Geographical knowledge and understanding

They compare the various ways humans have used and affected the Australian environment. Students recommend ways of protecting environmentally sensitive areas in a sustainable way. They provide examples and evidence based on their inquiries.

Geospatial skills

They research, collect, record and describe data obtained through field study surveys and measurements to form conclusions about the use of resources.

SCIENCE

Science at work

At Level 4, students analyse a range of science-related local issues and describe the relevance of science to their own and other people's lives. They explain how sustainable practices have been developed and/or are applied in their local environment.

Students use the terms relationships and cause and effect when discussing and drawing conclusions from the data they collect.

Interdisciplinary Strand

COMMUNICATION

Listening, viewing and responding

At Level 4, students ask clarifying questions about ideas and information they listen to and view. They develop interpretations of the content and provide reasons for them. They explain why peers may develop alternative interpretations.

Presenting

At Level 4, students summarise and organise ideas and information, logically and clearly in a range of presentations. They identify the features of an effective presentation and adapt elements of their own presentations to reflect them. Using provided criteria, they evaluate the effectiveness of their own and others' presentations.

DESIGN AND CREATIVITY TECHNOLOGY

Investigating and designing

At Level 4, students contribute to the development of design briefs that include some limitations and specifications. Individually and in teams, they use a range of methods to research and collect data in response to design briefs.

Producing

At Level 4, students use their production plan and select and work safely with a variety of materials/ingredients and systems components to produce functional products and/or systems. They use a range of measuring, marking, joining/combining techniques to alter materials and finishing/presentation methods, and operate tools and equipment competently, showing consideration of safety and hygiene, and record their progress.

Analysing and evaluating

At Level 4, students reflect on their designs as they develop them and use evaluation criteria, identified from design briefs, to justify their design choices.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT for visualising thinking

At Level 4, students apply ICT tools and techniques to represent and explore processes, patterns and cause-and-effect relationships. Students use ICT tools and techniques that support the organisation and analysis of concepts, issues and ideas and that allow relationships to be identified and inferences drawn from them.

ICT for creating

At Level 4, students safely and independently use a range of skills, procedures, equipment and functions to process different data types and produce accurate and suitably formatted products to suit different purposes and audiences.

ICT for communicating

At Level 4, students use email, websites and frequently asked question facilities to acquire from, or share information with, peers and known and unknown experts. When emailing, they successfully attach files and they apply protocols for sending and receiving electronic information. They successfully upload their work to a protected public online space. Using recommended search engines, students refine their search strategies to locate information quickly. They evaluate the integrity of the located information based on its accuracy and the reliability of the web host.

THINKING PROCESSES

Reasoning, processing and inquiry

At Level 4, students develop their own questions for investigation, collect relevant information from a range of sources and make judgments about its worth. They distinguish between fact and opinion. They use the information they collect to develop concepts, solve problems or inform decision making. They develop reasoned arguments using supporting evidence.

Creativity

At Level 4, students use creative thinking strategies to generate imaginative solutions when solving problems. They demonstrate creativity in their thinking in a range of contexts and test the possibilities of concrete and abstract ideas generated by themselves and others.

Reflection, evaluation and metacognition

At Level 4, students use a broad range of thinking processes and tools, and reflect on and evaluate their effectiveness. They articulate their thinking processes. They document changes in their ideas and beliefs over time.

| Assessment Strategies | | | |
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| When | What | Why | How |
| Pre and post assessment activity at the start of the unit and the Personalising stage | Concept Map | To establish what students know at the beginning and end of the unit about environmental issues and to track the development of their understandings. Science, Geography | Ask students to individually create a concept map showing what they already know or think they know about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What environmental issues are in the world today? • What are people doing about these issues? Repeat the activity at the end of the unit and ask students to compare. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you know now that you didn't know before? • Have you changed your opinions about any of these issues? • What helped you to learn this? |
| Pre and post assessment activity at the start of the unit and the Personalising stage | KWL | To establish what students know about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used the land and to track the development of their understandings. Civics and Citizenship, Geography | Ask students to record what they know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the way they used the land (K). They also record any questions they have about this- what they want to know (W). At the end of the Building stage ask students to record what they have found out about the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used the land (L). |
| Introduced during the Building stage and used throughout the unit. | Reflective Journal | To gain insight into how the students are feeling about issues raised during the unit, what their personal beliefs are and how they may change. English, Geography, Personal Learning Thinking Processes | Introduce the journal after the Botanic Gardens excursion. Continue to use it for reflection on the issues presented during the unit. If students have not used a reflective journal before this will need to be modelled and reflective language explicitly taught. |
| End of Building stage | Diorama and presentation | To assess students' understandings of what the environment was like before European settlement and how the Aboriginal people used and cared for the land. To assess students' abilities to investigate, design and produce an accurate model, and to give an oral presentation. Geography, English, Communication, Civic and Citizenship, DCT. | Using all the information students have gathered so far they design and produce a diorama depicting an Aboriginal camp-site as it would have been in the local area prior to European settlement. The diorama has to represent as authentically as possible the features students have researched. They then present the diorama to the class and explain what is in the scene and how the Aboriginal people would have been using and caring for the land. They complete self and peer evaluations on their presentations |
| End of Investigating | Advertising campaign | To assess students' understandings of ways they can be environmentally sustainable. Geography, Science, ICT, Civics and Citizenship, ICT | Students form interest based groups to investigate ways of reducing waste at home or school. They present their findings as an advertising campaign designed to encourage students and families to reduce their amount of wastage. The advertising campaign could be in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a video clip • radio advert • an electronically generated brochure They present the advertisement and complete a self and peer assessment. |

BUILDING

Activities planned during this stage of the unit are designed to build the foundational knowledge and skills the students will need to investigate this topic.

| Purpose | Activity | Teacher notes |
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| <p>To gather students' prior knowledge and engage them in the unit.</p> | <p>Pre-assessment tasks Concept Map Ask students to individually create a concept map showing what they already know or think they know about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What environmental issues are in the world today? • What are people doing about these issues? <p>KWL chart Ask students to record what they know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the way they used the land (K). They also record any questions they have about this- what they want to know (W).</p> | <p>Keep these responses for comparison later when students repeat the activities and reflect.</p> |
| <p>To build some background knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and in particular how they felt about and used the land.</p> | <p>Pre-excursion activities Prior to the excursion view video 'The Australia Today Series: Aboriginal Australians' (1988). Discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In small groups discuss what they have found out from the video. Then each student writes two important things they found out on separate pieces of paper. • Use post box strategy to sort the information into categories; family, hunting and food, significant places, religious and spiritual beliefs, change, stewardship-looking after the land, traditions, miscellaneous. • Each group takes a category and sorts through the statements made. They come up with 3-5 statements in their category. • View DVD a second time. Go back into same groups and add any further information and then generate questions. • Share and display the questions on the wondering board. <p>Read information text as a shared text from ATSIC publication 1989 "Culture and Society, Aboriginal Australia: Bush Food", Canberra. Discuss. Add to the discoveries and wonderings board. During the course of the unit revisit the students' wonderings on a regular basis to identify which questions they have discovered answers to.</p> | <p>If students are finding it difficult to pose good questions use a questioning scaffold such as Weiderhold's matrix to help develop richer questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What, where, when, which, who, why, how. • Is, did, can, would, will, might. |
| <p>For the students to gather some first hand</p> | <p>Excursion Excursion to the Botanical Gardens Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Resources Trail. The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne (RBGM) rests on the ancestral lands of the <i>Boon Wurrung</i> and <i>Woiwurrung</i></p> | <p>A teacher resource kit is also downloadable</p> |

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| <p>information about Indigenous plants and food sources. To consider how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used these and what the landscape would have looked like prior to European settlement.</p> | <p>people of the <i>Kulin Nation</i>. For countless generations this special place was a traditional and highly significant camping and meeting place for the local custodians of the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct a class mural using photographs and natural materials of the plants and natural materials seen at the botanical gardens. • Structured writing activity. Each student records 3-5 facts on strips of paper showing something they found out on the excursion. Bundle the strips into categories. Ask students to name the category. This will form the basis of a class information report. Construct an introduction and conclusion together. Groups can then take one bundle each to construct a paragraph of the information report. • Introduce a reflective journal that students record their thoughts, ideas and questions in. | <p>on the Royal Botanic Gardens website.</p> <p>If students have not used a reflective journal before this will need to be modelled and reflective language explicitly taught. They will continue to reflect in the journal during the course of the unit.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>To gather further information about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used the land.</p> | <p>Shared Reading Use the article <i>Taking Care; how Aboriginal people used and cared for their environment</i> Read and discuss the information about how the Aboriginal people in and around Melbourne, prior to European settlement, used and cared for the land. (Extension material can be found in <i>Aboriginal Australia: Culture and Society series, ATSIIC, Canberra, 1990</i>. A magazine series with information about all aspects of traditional Aboriginal life.)</p> <p>Record the information found in the shared reading and any extension articles on a data chart.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="406 1361 1193 1765"> <tr> <td>Life before 1788</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Facts about local Nations</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spiritual beliefs and celebrations</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Food sources</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hunting</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Caring for and using the land</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>Identify some of the places mentioned in the article on a local map.</p> | Life before 1788 | | Facts about local Nations | | Spiritual beliefs and celebrations | | Food sources | | Hunting | | Caring for and using the land | | <p>A copy of the article <i>Taking care...</i> can be found at the end of the unit. This unit contains information specific to the Northwest of Melbourne. For information about other areas of Melbourne see the text: <i>The Melbourne Dreaming: A Guide to the Aboriginal Places of Melbourne</i>,</p> |
| Life before 1788 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Facts about local Nations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Spiritual beliefs and celebrations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Food sources | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hunting | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Caring for and using the land | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>To make explicit the Aboriginal and</p> | <p>Kanyini Watch the DVD <i>Kanyini</i>. Discuss the attitude and philosophy of Bob Randall. Use the page from the book developed from the documentary <i>Nyuntu Ninti; What</i></p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| Torres Strait Islander people's philosophy about caring for the land. | <i>You Should Know</i> , by Bob Randall and Melanie Hogan. Ask the students to consider the page in the book that states: 'We only took what we needed, we never wasted anything.' Discuss as a whole class then ask students to respond to this in their reflection journals. | |
| To assess students' understandings about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people used the land and what the land looked like prior to European settlement. | <p>Diorama Using the information gathered so far students design and produce a diorama depicting an Aboriginal camp-site as it would have been in the local area prior to European settlement. The diorama has to represent as authentically as possible the features students have researched.</p> <p>Presentation of dioramas. Students individually give an oral presentation of their diorama to the whole class or to small groups. They explain what is in the scene and how the Aboriginal people would have been using and caring for the land. They complete self and peer evaluations on their presentations</p> | By developing a criteria or rubric with students it will support them in knowing what is expected of the diorama and the oral presentation. Eg. if the diorama is to be authentic what will it need to show? What makes a great presentation/ oral explanation? |

INVESTIGATING

Activities at this stage of the unit are designed to take the investigation deeper. Students are required to work more independently and apply the skills and the knowledge they have developed.

| Purpose | Activity | Notes |
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| To broaden students' understandings about current environmental issues. | <p>Debono's Thinking Hats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch excerpts from a DVD- Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth' or David Attenborough's 'State of the Planet'. • Discuss; how are we damaging our planet/environment? • Introduce 6 Thinking Hats as a framework that will be used throughout the Investigating stage to think about the issues. Start with 3 hats- White (facts), Black (caution/problems) and Red (how do I feel about this?) • Divide students into 6 groups. Each group works on one of the hats (2 groups will have each colour). Give them 10 minutes to brainstorm and record on poster sized paper what they heard and saw on the DVD. Rotate the posters so each group has the chance to work on each of the 3 hats. Share the posters at the end. | |

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| | <p>Environmental Footprints Read the article from the website; www.islandwood.org/kids/impact/footprint.php as a shared reading text. Discuss some of the reasons why there are environmental problems. Students then explore the website including calculating their own environmental footprint. Discuss the footprints as a whole class. Who made the largest footprint? Who made the smallest footprint? What were they doing that was different? If we take out just one of the contributing elements would it make a difference? Emphasise the main ways we can make a difference to reduce our consumption.</p> <p>Link this back to our quote <i>The Aboriginal people only took what they needed. They didn't waste anything.</i> Ask students to consider these questions and reflect in their journals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much do we need? • How much do we use? • How much do we waste? • Do we destroy things we cannot produce again? | |
| <p>To begin to identify some of the positive steps people are already taking.</p> | <p>Exploring the positives Students identify positive actions people are already taking using resources such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.carboncops • articles from newspapers • guest speakers from local action groups <p>Revisit and add to the 6 Hats activity. Introduce the Yellow hat (positives)- what are the positive things people are doing to improve the situation?</p> | |
| | <p>Sustainability audit Students complete home and school audits of how much we are using and how much we are wasting. Divide students into groups to gather data in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water • rubbish • paper • energy <p>Discuss the impact of this waste on the environment. How much waste do we create? Is it necessary? What is the difference between how much we need, how much we use and how much we waste? What impact does this have on the environment?</p> <p>Introduce the Green hat (creativity) to the 6 Hats framework. Students brainstorm ways we can improve this situation at home or school.</p> | |

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| <p>To assess students understandings of ways they can be environmentally sustainable.</p> | <p>Group Investigations Students form interest based groups (eg. water, rubbish, paper, energy) to further investigate ways of reducing waste at home or school. They present their findings as an advertising campaign designed to encourage students and families to reduce their amount of wastage. The advertising campaign could be in the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a video clip • radio advert • an electronically generated brochure <p>They present the advertisement and complete a self and peer assessment.</p> | <p>Once again criteria or a rubric developed with the students for the advertising campaign will support them in completing the task.</p> |
| <p>PERSONALISING</p> <p>Activities at this stage of the unit are designed to help students reflect on and put into practise what has been learned in real life contexts.</p> | | |
| <p>For teachers and students to assess developments in students' understandings during the course of the unit.</p> | <p>Pre and post tests Students complete the concept map and KWL again. They compare the original to the final version and discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you know now that you didn't know before? • Have you changed your opinions about any of these issues? • What helped you to learn this? | |
| <p>To determine whether students can make the link between the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use and care for the land and environmental issues today.</p> | <p>Reflection In small groups students discuss the focus question: <i>Will continuing the practices of the Aboriginal people allow us to have a sustainable future?</i></p> <p>They then reflect individually in their journals.</p> | |
| <p>To embed learning by applying understandings in a real life context.</p> | <p>Action Discuss the suggestions raised by groups during the advertising campaigns. Complete a PMI on some of the main suggestions. Students then decide on personal and school actions they can take.</p> | <p>It is important that students generate and own the action.</p> |

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| Links to Literacy | Reading for information Locating main ideas Recording and organising information Critical reading- issue analysis Writing explanations Writing information reports Orally giving information and explanation (diorama presentation) Persuasive text- analysis of what makes a good persuasive text (advertisement), creating an advertising campaign oral and written Read Jackie French’s novel “Walking the Boundaries” as a serial story. |
| Links to Numeracy | Reading and interpreting graphs and statistical information Collecting, recording and representing data (group investigations) Percentages and ratios |

Taking Care; how Aboriginal people used and cared for their environment

By Deborah Vietri

Aboriginal people before 1788

At the time of European colonisation there were over 600 different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups who spoke more than 250 different languages. Historically, each person could speak their own language and that of neighbouring groups. Natural features of the land were used as boundaries. There was great diversity among the lifestyles of Indigenous Australians, each group had their own beliefs and culture that was passed down from generation to generation-through songs, dance, art and story telling. Each group was quite unique. The traditional communities moved within their clearly defined boundaries following a seasonal pattern which determined what food sources would be available and which ceremonies were to be performed. Some groups stayed in one place and built more permanent camps containing structures made of stone, bark, wood and mud. Indigenous Australians could cross boundaries with the permission of the local clan. They often did this to trade goods with others.

The Wurundjeri

The first people who lived in the Melbourne area were the Wurundjeri people. They were one of the 5 traditional groups which made up the Kulin Nations that covered the area we know as central Victoria. The Wurundjeri people belonged to the Woiwurrung language group. They had two moiety totems, Bunjil the eagle and Waang the crow. Today the Wurundjeri are the traditional landowners of much of the land in and around Melbourne.

There are several clans within the Wurundjeri area. These include; Wurundjeri-balluk and Wurundjeri-willam towards the east, Ballul-willam to the south, Gunnung-willam-balluk in the northeast, Kurung-jang-balluk and Marin-balluk in the west, and Kurnaje-berreing who were more central to the centre of Melbourne. Within these clans the people lived in smaller 'family' groups of approximately 30-40 people. They moved around their area in order to harvest the food according to seasons. They regularly met as a clan group for special occasions such as corroborees, which kept unity between the groups.

Special places of the Kurung-jang-balluk

The Kurung-jang-balluk lived in the area between the Werribee River and Sunbury. Scientists have found evidence that these people lived in this area for 40,000 years but it is thought that they had been there for a lot longer than that. Cooking sites and scarred trees have been found along the riverbanks including at the Melton Valley golf course. Evidence of flint tool making and axe grinding stones have also been found in the area including a quarry on Mt William near Lancefield where they made their axes, and an axe grinding stone at Mt Macedon.

Sacred sites have also been located in this area. Bullum Bullum (located in Burnside along the Western Highway) means “white butterfly” and represents freedom of expression. It is one of many Aboriginal sites along the Koroit Creek. Most of the places where the Aboriginal people camped were along the rivers or creeks as they provided food and plants that were also used as medicine. Artefacts found at this site show the Aboriginal people camped here over a long period of time. It is a place that has a lot of rare plants and animals.

Other sites include what is now called Hannah Watts Park where the last known corroboree in the area was held in 1863. Corroborees were a celebration where several clans from the same clan group met. During a corroboree there would be dancing and music. Often important tribal issues were discussed; marriages were arranged, goods exchanged, and disputes settled. Sunbury is another area where evidence has been found of these special meetings. Earth rings have been found in several places in Sunbury where it is thought that young boys and women were initiated. It was essential that there was plenty of food to be found in the areas where they had their ceremonies as there were many people to feed and the celebrations went on for several weeks.

Along the Maribyrnong River evidence of the Aboriginal people using traps to catch eels have been found. They camped at Brimbank Park for long periods of time, as the food was abundant there. Archaeologists have discovered 25 places within the park as being significant. These include scarred trees where strips of bark were taken from the trees to make canoes or shelters. They collected shellfish, freshwater mussels, fish, plants and birds to eat. Grasses and bark from trees in the Brimbank Park area were used to make baskets and nets.

Sources of food

There was an abundance of food in this area for the Aboriginal people. Tubers of the yam daisy were a staple food. Large quantities of these were found along the creeks and rivers in the Kurung-jang-balluk's area. During the summer and early autumn was the season for eels. The eels would spend most of the year inland, but in autumn they would migrate to the sea to breed. Then in the spring the young eels would travel upstream back to their inland waterways. At these times the Aboriginal people would set funnel shaped traps made of woven fibres to catch the eels. They also created weirs using boulders and woven rushes to channel the eels into their traps. Kangaroos, birds, possums, bandicoots, reptiles and wallabies were all plentiful in this area that provided good hunting for the men. It was traditional that the men did the hunting and the women and small children gathered the plants. There were many waterways in this area that provided fish. The Kurung-jang-balluk used canoes, spears, nets, lures and sometimes poison to catch the fish.

Caring for and managing the land

For thousands of years Aboriginal people have been caring for and managing their environment. They believe they are part of the land and that all living things are one. This is the basis of their spiritual and religious beliefs. Because they came from the land, and are one with the land, it is natural that they would look after the land. The spirit ancestors charged the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the responsibility of caring for the land.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people only took what they needed for survival. They never over-hunted or over-used a particular area. They didn't stay too long in one place so the areas of vegetation had time to regenerate. They left the best tubers and water plants to ensure they kept growing. They made use of every part of an animal they killed using the meat for food, the skins for cloaks and warmth. They wasted nothing. After eating fruit they would spit out the seeds into fertile ground so new fruit would grow.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people understood the importance of fire in the cycle of life. They carried fire with them either as coals or sticks where the end was alight. They used this to start new fires when they needed them. They used firestick farming methods to catch animals for food but also as a land management strategy. By burning off areas of dead growth it encouraged new grass that attracted animals such as kangaroos. It also meant these areas were less likely to cause major bushfires that would destroy great areas of land. Some of the bush plants only sprouted new seeds after fire.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders used strips of bark to make their canoes and shelters. They did this by cutting strips of bark from living trees. These are the marks seen on the scarred trees in and around Melbourne. Several layers of these strips would provide very effective canoes that could be taken long distances. Using the bark for shelter kept either the rain or sun off the people and then composted into the earth once they moved on to the next place. By taking strips from the living trees the trees continued to grow. They didn't need to cut down trees or entire forests to meet their needs.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had a totem. Totems are an important part of Indigenous identity as it links Indigenous Australians to their country of birth, clan group, spirit ancestors and ultimately to the Creator Spirit. Each totem carried with it specific responsibilities and obligations. These totems identified them as being part of a family grouping. Each person had a special connection with their totem and a responsibility to take care of it. This meant they were not allowed to eat it. It also ensured the preservation of species.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today still have a great respect for and understanding of the land. Some people have lost contact with their heritage but many have had this knowledge passed down to them by their Elders. Totems are still a part of Indigenous identity today for many Indigenous Australians. They still have a great spiritual connection with all living things. The knowledge and sustainable practices of local Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander people are being used more and more to assist in managing the land today in their particular area.