

# THE YAMAJI PEOPLE

YEAR	WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS	
Pre-Primary	Humanities and Social Sciences The reasons some places are special to people and how they can be looked after, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' places of significance (ACHASSK017) (ACHASSK016)	Humanities and Social Sciences How the stories of families and the past can be communicated and passed down from generation to generation (e.g. photographs, artefacts, books, oral histories, digital media, museums) and how the stories may differ, depending on who is telling them (ACHASSK013)
Year 2	Humanities and Social Sciences The importance today of an historical site (e.g. community building, landmark, war memorial, rock painting, engraving) and why it has heritage significance and cultural value for present generations (e.g. a record of a significant historical event, aesthetic value, reflects the community's identity) (ACHASSK045)	
Year 3	Humanities and Social Sciences Language groups of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples divides their Country/Place and differs from the surveyed boundaries of Australian states (ACHASSK066)	
Year 4	Humanities and Social Sciences The diversity and longevity of Australia's first peoples and the ways they are connected to Country/Place (e.g. land, sea, waterways, skies) and their pre-contact ways of life (ACHASSK083)	
Year 7	Humanities and Social Sciences How historians and archaeologists investigate history, including excavation and archival research (ACDSEH001)	
Year 8	Humanities and Social Sciences The spiritual, cultural and aesthetic value of landscapes and landforms for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHGK049)	

## Introduction

Aboriginal people have been living in Australia for more than 65,000 years and have developed a rich knowledge of the land, sea, sky and waterways.

Before European colonisation, there were more than 250 Aboriginal language groups living in Australia. This includes Aboriginal groups from the Mid West who are called the Yamaji people. Within the Yamaji people, there are many smaller Aboriginal groups, each with their own language, culture, beliefs, lore and knowledge.

In Aboriginal culture everyone has a responsibility to care for the environment.

### KWL (Know, Want to Learn, Learned) Chart

As a class (Lower Primary), small group (Upper Primary) or individual (Lower Secondary) record:

- What do you **know** about the Yamaji people, history and culture?
- What do you **want** to know about the Yamaji people, history and culture?

At the end of each topic record: What did you **learn** about the Yamaji people, history and culture?

### What is colonisation?

Colonisation in Australia occurred when English people invaded the country, took control by force and made Australia a colony of England.

### Talking about 'Country'

The word 'Country' when used in an Aboriginal context represents a specific part of the environment that a person is connected to, usually the land where their ancestors came from. Aboriginal people can be connected to more than one Country.

### Lore

A set of rules for Aboriginal people to follow that relate to interaction with their Country and its people.

# Activity 1

Students investigate the number of years that Aboriginal people have been living in Australia through grains of rice or a physical timeline.

## Lower Primary

### PREPARATION

- 1.2 kg rice (1 kg of rice contains approximately 50,000 grains).
- Small trays of rice for students to count.
- Transparent tub/large bowl (to hold 1.2 kg of rice).
- Students seated in view of a handful of rice.

### LESSON

I want you to imagine that one grain of rice is one year. How old are you? Take that many grains of rice and hold them in your hand. Let's count together. Can you count 20, 30 years in rice grains? Let's count together in years.

Now I want to show you how many years Aboriginal people have been living in Australia. How many years do you think this might be? *If students are able, play 'larger or smaller' until they reach 65,000.*

Let's see what this looks like as rice. *Pour 1.2 kg of rice into the tub/bowl slowly.*

Think of all the things that the Aboriginal people would have learned about the land, sea, rivers and animals in this time.

## Upper Primary

## Lower Secondary

### PREPARATION

- A rope at least 10 metres in length (the longer the better).
- Tape on rope to demonstrate each significant date (below).
- A different coloured tape on end of rope to demonstrate time since European colonisation.

### LESSON

Aboriginal people have been living in Australia for more than 65,000 years. One end of this rope represents 65,000 years ago and the other end of the rope represents today. *Using tape, show dates below on rope. Dates are rounded to the nearest 10 years. Some dates are approximate.*

- Archaeologists found artefacts such as grinding stones, flints and ochre (a natural paint used for ceremonies) in Kakadu National Park, in the Northern Territory, that were between **65,000 and 80,000** years old.
- Archaeologists found artefacts in a cave on Barrow Island, near Karratha in Western Australia, that were more than **50,000** years old. The artefacts showed that hunters had used the cave as a shelter.
- Archaeologists found a camping site in a cave south of Geraldton. The cave contained emu egg shells, ochre and animal bones. Objects in the cave were more than **25,000** years old. This cave was named Yalibirri Cave, meaning emu cave, by the Traditional Owners, the Amangu people.
- **20,000** years ago, Australia experienced its most recent ice age. Aboriginal people, with their knowledge of the land, survived this harsh period.
- **2,000** years ago Christians believe that Jesus Christ was born.

- **390** years ago the *Batavia* was shipwrecked at the Abrolhos Islands on its way to the ‘Spice Islands’, present day Indonesia.
- More than **300** years ago people from Indonesia began visiting the north of Australia to trade for sea cucumbers. Aboriginal Australians also visited Indonesia.
- **250** years ago Captain Cook first arrived in Australia.
- **180** years ago explorer George Grey was shipwrecked at Kalbarri and walked from Kalbarri to Perth recording his observations of Aboriginal people.
- **120** years ago Australia became a nation.
- When were your grandparents and parents born?
- When were you born?
- Throughout all this time Aboriginal people have been living in Australia.

### The Coast Tells an Ancient Story

Many ancient Aboriginal sites – many of which are called middens – are found on the coast. These middens are made of shells, stone flakes, bones and more. Aboriginal people left them next to places where they gathered food. The middens tell the story of what Aboriginal people ate, their activities and the animals that were plentiful at the time.

In 2015, archaeologists investigated a midden site located at Oakajee River, north of Geraldton. Radiocarbon dating found this site was 4,500 years old.

## Activity 2

Students compare map of Australia to map of Aboriginal Australia and share their knowledge about local Aboriginal groups and languages.

Lower Primary

Upper Primary

Lower Secondary

### PREPARATION

- Display a map of Australia and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) map of Aboriginal Australia.  
<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia>

Please note: This map does not necessarily provide accurate information about Aboriginal groups and boundaries.

### LESSON

Discuss:

- What are the differences between these two maps?

The Aboriginal map of Australia shows that prior to European colonisation Aboriginal people lived all over Australia and there were many Aboriginal language groups with their own Countries.

Discuss:

- On whose Country is your school located?
- Do you know the names of any of the other Aboriginal groups around your region? Some of these groups may include Yamaji groups such as Amangu, Badimaya, Malgana, Naaguja, Nhanda and Wajarri. Do you know any others?
- Do you know any words in any local Aboriginal languages?
- Many places in the Mid West region have Aboriginal names. Find out the origin of the name of your town using the link below:  
<https://www0.landgate.wa.gov.au/maps-and-imagery/wa-geographic-names/name-history/historical-town-names#G>

## Activity 3

Students discuss an artwork and then create their own artwork in response.

### PREPARATION

Display 'Malgana Dreaming' (see large image on page 11)

### LESSON

#### Lower Primary

Discuss:

- What can you see in the artwork?
- Learning about culture is very important to Aboriginal people. This knowledge is learned from parents, aunties, uncles and grandparents. Who are the people you learn from?
- In Aboriginal culture everyone has a responsibility to care for the environment and their community. How do you care for the environment?

#### Upper Primary

#### Lower Secondary

Discuss:

- Why do you think the artist chose to paint one figure (person) inside another?
- What might this artwork tell you about Aboriginal **family**, **responsibility** and **culture**? Discuss each word at a time and then read the passage 'Aboriginal family, culture and Country – past and present'.

#### Lower Primary

#### Upper Primary

#### Lower Secondary

Discussion or journal writing:

- Why is your family important to you?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each member of your family?
- What does your family do to care for the environment?

Create an artwork that symbolises the roles and responsibilities in your family.



Artist: Bianca McNear - Malgana woman, from Gatharaguda (Shark Bay, Western Australia).

## Aboriginal family, culture and Country – past and present

Family units in Aboriginal society are very large and have ties and responsibility to land and community.

### Child

You learn how Country protects you and what is right and wrong. You develop pride in your history and culture, knowing who you are and where your ancestors came from. You learn about the natural world through observation and practice on Country and in your community.

### Adult

You become a leader and a teacher. You have learnt from your Elders and represent your Country with pride and responsibility. Your learning and knowledge of culture is very important to the future of your family and culture. You help the children learn from their Elders, and assist the wider community to engage with Aboriginal youth and Elders.

### Elder

You are the guides. You connect the community to Country and remind your people of their responsibilities and the challenges we face. You connect the past with the present and guide the community into the future. You teach our traditions and pass on skills, knowledge and personal experiences. You are our spiritual connection to the land.

## Additional resources

- Article: *Indigenous rock shelter in Top End pushes Australia's human history back to 65,000 years.*  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-07-20/aboriginal-shelter-pushes-human-history-back-to-65,000-years/8719314>
- Article: *Earliest evidence of Aboriginal occupation of Australian coast discovered (in WA).*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/may/19/indigenous-australian-life-cave-wa-50000-years>
- Article: *WA cave dig uncovers evidence dating back 25,000 years (Yalibirri Cave).*  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-04/yeallabidde-cave-dig-unearths-ancient-artefacts/7997288>
- Archaeological research paper on Yalibirri Cave.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03122417.2016.1244216>
- Article: *Heritage status for WA ochre mine site (Wilgie Mia, Wajarri Country).*  
<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/heritage-status-for-wa-ochre-mine-site/news-story/73d5ab2ecfa9c1508f34f84d514c10a4?sv=f839e554c22a6fa40b450affac349255>
- Website: *Sharing our pride* includes timeline of dates that relate to Aboriginal history since colonisation.  
<http://www.shareourpride.org.au/sections/our-shared-history/>
- Website: Historical town names in Western Australia.  
<https://www0.landgate.wa.gov.au/maps-and-imagery/wa-geographic-names/name-history/historical-town-names#G>
- Website: City of Greater Geraldton 'Welcome to Country' guide. Contains PDF guide.  
<https://www.cgg.wa.gov.au/live/my-community/aboriginal.aspx>
- Audio: *Why is a Welcome to Country important?*  
<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/2342923/why-is-a-welcome-to-country-important->
- Website: Bundiyarra Wajarri Dictionary App – audio recordings.  
<http://www.bundiyarra.com.au/wajarriApp/>
- Book: *Malgana Wangganyina – Talking Malgana* (2003) Yamaji Language Centre.

- Book: *Badimaya Guwaga – Talking Badimaya* (2014) Bundiyarra – Irra wanga Language Centre.
- Book: *Badimaya Dictionary – An Aboriginal language of Western Australia* (2014) Irra Wangga Language Centre & Yamaji Languages Aboriginal Corporation.
- Book: *Nhanda Wangganhaa – Talking Nhanda* (1998) Yamaji Language Centre.
- Website: AIATSIS Map of Aboriginal Australia.  
<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia>