

# Yingabeal

## Indigenous Geography at Heide

Levels 7 and 8: Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander Peoples  
and Cultures

Heide  
Museum of  
Modern Art

*Heide*

**HTAV**

HISTORY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION of VICTORIA



**Public Record  
Office Victoria**



# Note to Teachers

This unit of work has been designed to fulfil the content requirements of the Victorian Curriculum (History) Year 7 & 8 topic entitled 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Cultures'. It focuses on the Scarred Tree at Heide Museum of Modern Art as a starting point for discussing concepts such as Indigenous geography and wayfinding, Indigenous customs and traditions, food and resources and the importance of preserving Indigenous artefacts and intangible heritage.

This education resource will assist students to develop their knowledge of Indigenous culture and the issues that threaten contemporary Indigenous heritage.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following people for their input into this education resource:

**Kendrah Morgan**

*Curator*

Heide Museum of Modern Art

**Uncle Bill Nicholson**

*Wurundjeri Elder*

Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council

**Dugald Noyes**

*Head Gardener*

Heide Museum of Modern Art

**Dr Jim Poulter**

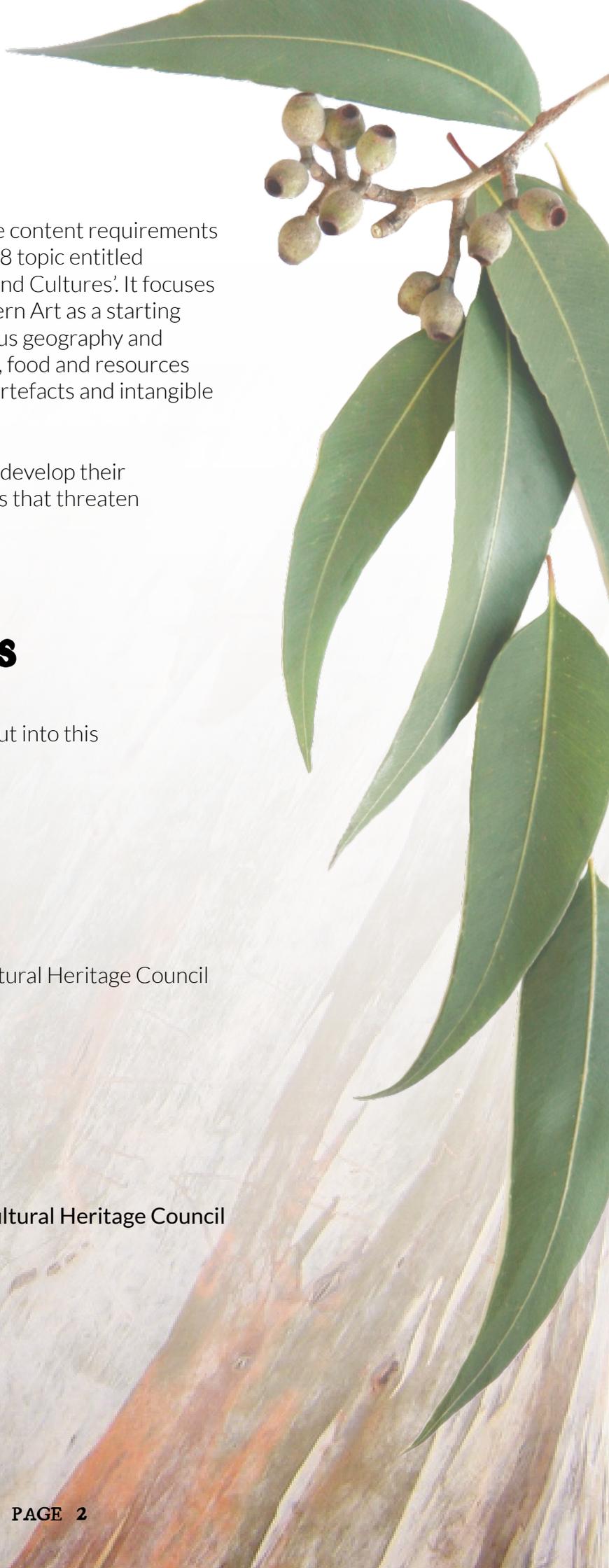
*Local Historian*

**Wurundjeri Tribe Land Compensation and Cultural Heritage Council**

**Stan Yarramunua**

*Artist and musician*

Art Yarramunua



# Curriculum Links

## Victorian Curriculum, Level 7 & 8

### Historical Knowledge

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures*

1. How physical or geographical features influenced the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities, foundational stories and land management practices ([VCHHK105](#))
2. The significant beliefs, values and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures including trade with other communities, causes and effects of warfare, and death and funerary customs ([VCHHK106](#))
3. The nature of sources of evidence about ancient Australia and what they reveal about Australia's ancient past, such as the use of resources ([VCHHK107](#))
4. The importance of conserving the remains of the ancient past, including the heritage, culture and artefacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ([VCHHK108](#))

### Historical Concepts and Skills

*Chronology*

1. Sequence significant events in chronological order to analyse the causes and effects and identify continuities and changes ([VCHHC097](#))

*Historical sources as evidence*

1. Analyse and corroborate sources and ask questions about their accuracy, usefulness and reliability ([VCHHC099](#))
2. Analyse the different perspectives of people in the past ([VCHHC100](#))
3. Explain different historical interpretations and contested debates about the past ([VCHHC101](#))

*Continuity and change*

1. Identify and explain patterns of continuity and change in society to the way of life ([VCHHC102](#))

*Cause and effect*

1. Analyse the causes and effects of significant events that caused change and/or a decline over the period ([VCHHC103](#))

*Historical significance*

1. Evaluate the role and achievement of a significant individual, development and/or cultural achievement that led to progress ([VCHHC104](#))

The full Victorian Curriculum can be accessed at <http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-humanities/history/curriculum/f-10>.

# Introduction

Watch the documentary 'Yingabeal: Indigenous Geography at Heide' before you start using this education kit. The documentary is available at the Heide Museum of Modern Art website,



<https://www.heide.com.au/education/education-resources>.

Before you begin watching the documentary, fill in the left-hand column of the table below, based on your knowledge and assumptions. Then complete the right-hand column after you watch the documentary.



**How did Indigenous people find their way around the bushland prior to the colonisation of Australia by European settlers? Give examples.**

Response prior to watching documentary:

Response after watching documentary:

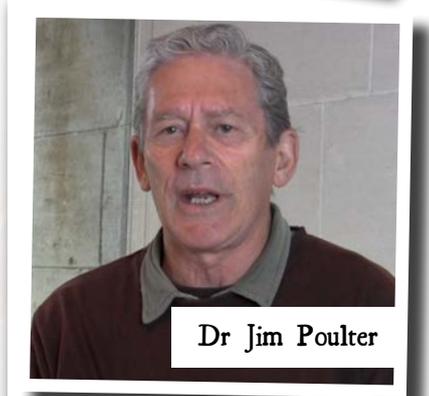
When constructing a documentary, it is important to interview a range of experts in order to create a well-rounded discussion and introduce a range of perspectives.

As you watch the documentary, note down the following information about the people interviewed.

Interviewee

What is this person's area of expertise?

Note down 2-3 pieces of information they contributed to the documentary



# Womin-jeka (Welcome)

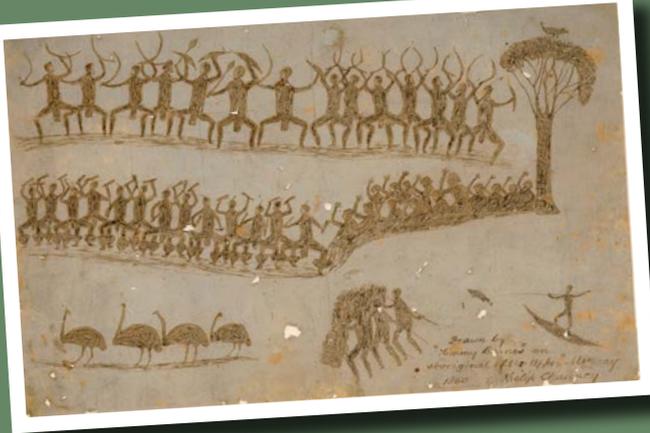
Yingabeal is the name of a scarred tree in the grounds of the Heide Museum of Modern Art in the suburb of Bulleen, Victoria.

Before Heide became an art gallery, it was the home of John and Sunday Reed. They were patrons of the arts who arrived at the property in 1934 and created a place where artists could come to work. After they died, their house became the Heide Museum of Art, a gallery that displays the collection of Australian art that the Reeds built up in their lifetime. But for thousands of years before the arrival of the Reeds, the land belonged to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

Yingabeal, the scarred tree at Heide.  
Image courtesy of the History Teachers'  
Association of Victoria.



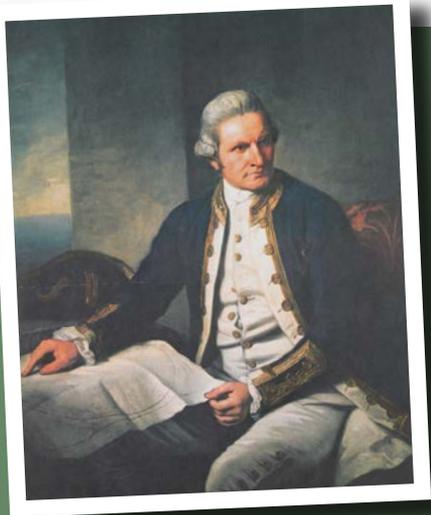
# Yingabeal Timeline



**60,000 + years ago**  
Indigenous societies inhabit Australia



**c. 1300**  
Yingabeal begins to grow



**1700**  
Captain Cook first sights  
Australia



**1650**  
Yingabeal is scarred by the  
Wurundjeri people



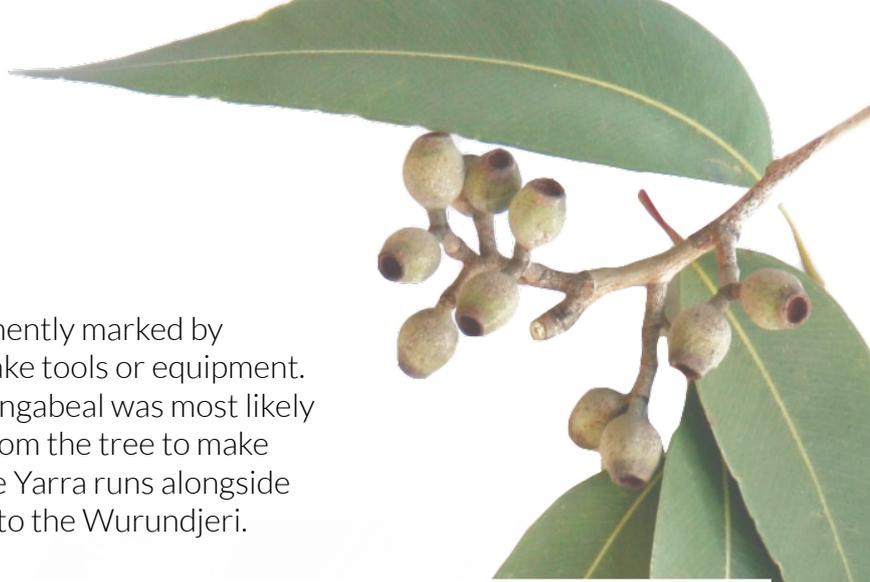
**1934**  
John and Sunday Reed purchase the parcel  
of land on which Yingabeal is located



**1981**  
Heide Museum of Modern Art  
opens as a public art gallery

# What is a Scarred Tree?

Scarred trees are those that have been permanently marked by Indigenous communities using their bark to make tools or equipment. The piece of wood missing from the trunk of Yingabeal was most likely harvested by the Wurundjeri people and cut from the tree to make a small canoe for fishing on the Yarra River. The Yarra runs alongside Heide and provided water, food and transport to the Wurundjeri.

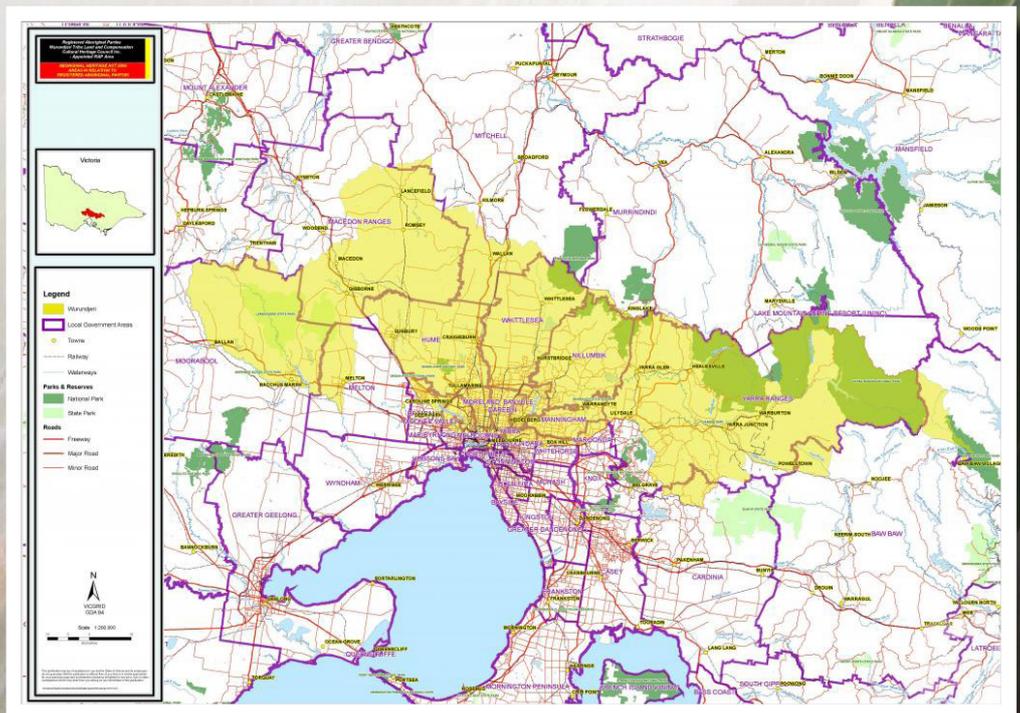


Yingabeal, the scarred tree at Heide.  
Image courtesy of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria.



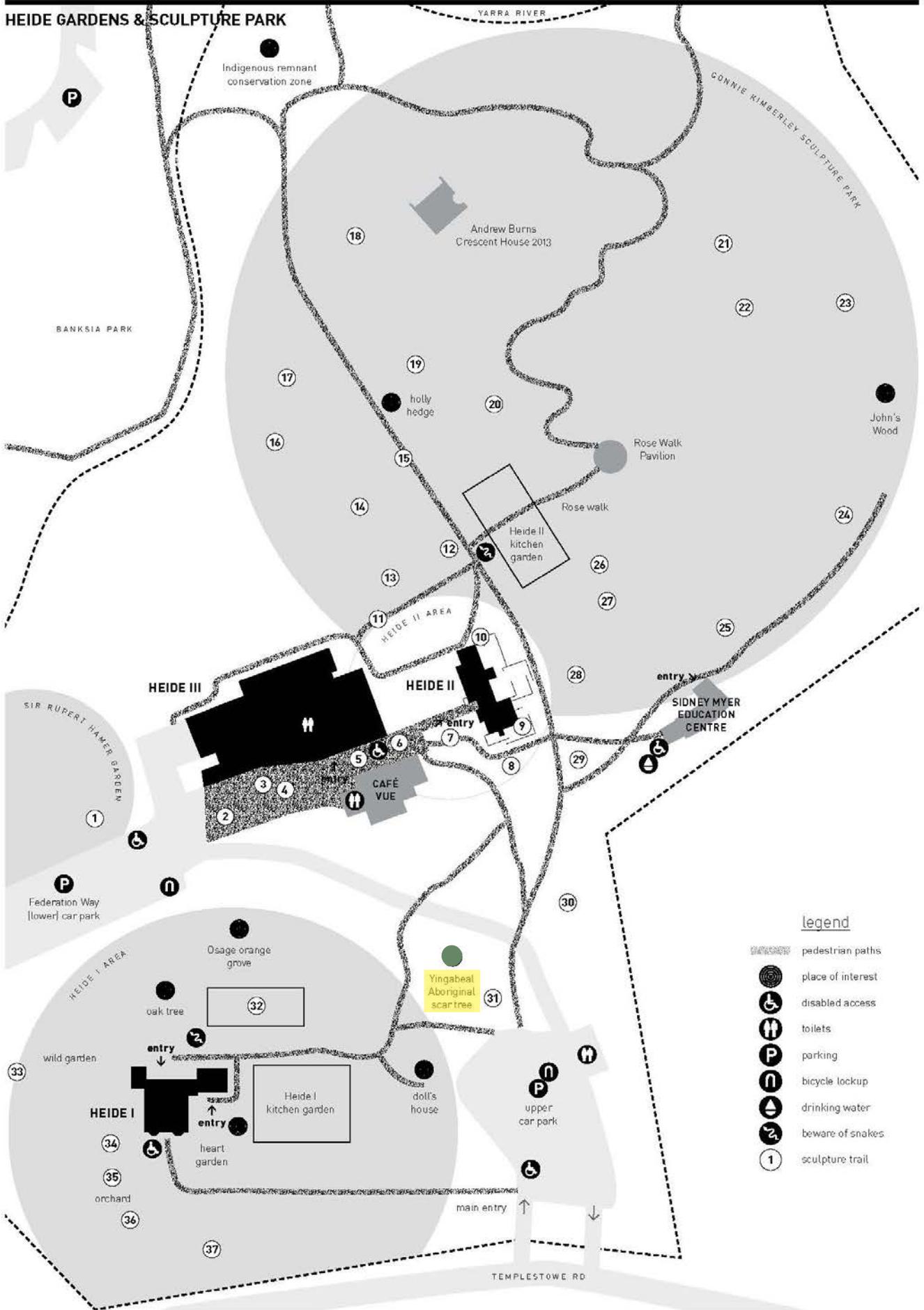
Two men in possum skin cloaks paddle a red gum bark canoe on the Yarra River.  
Photograph by Fred Kruger, c. 1870.  
Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria.

The scarred tree Yingabeal is located on Wurundjeri land at the Heide Museum of Modern Art. The Wurundjeri people are the traditional owners of many parts of Melbourne and regional Victoria. These are marked in yellow on the map below. Their language is called *woiworung*.



Wurundjeri Land Map, Victoria.  
Image courtesy of the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council

# HEIDE GARDENS & SCULPTURE PARK



This map of Heide Museum of Modern Art shows the exact location of Yingabeal. Image courtesy of Heide Museum of Modern Art.

# Communication between Indigenous Groups

Prior to 1788, Australia had hundreds of different language groups, making it difficult for Indigenous groups to communicate with each other. In the documentary, Dr Jim Poulter discussed the tradition of 'singing country' as a passport for Indigenous people travelling through the lands of other tribe. The song was created to praise the country, thereby showing that the travellers were coming in peace.

Even though Indigenous people had different languages and cultural practices, they still had methods of communicating with each other. Important information was sent through a device called a 'message stick'. This was a long, round piece of solid wood, about the length of a banana, with marks and symbols carved into it. Communications between groups were usually initiated for events such as corroborees or when elders wanted to negotiate marriages between younger members. Marriage between tribes were important in maintaining a diverse gene pool.

The symbols on the sticks were pictorial and could be understood by all language groups (much as a 'no smoking' sign is intelligible to people around the world). The person charged with delivering the stick was called the messenger; the messenger's job was to deliver the message stick to the elders of the neighbouring group. Like 'singing country', the stick was a passport to travelling safely through foreign lands.



Singing country was like showing your passport.

## Interactive:

Visit the interactive Victorian languages map at Museum Victoria to hear how different words were pronounced:



<http://museumvictoria.com.au/bunjilaka/visiting/first-peoples/victorian-languages/>

# Bark Objects

The scar on Yingabeal looks too small to be for a canoe; however, as Dr Jim Poulter mentions in the documentary, as the tree heals, the scar shrinks.

Tree bark was needed for making many useful objects such as bark canoes, tarnuks (bowls for collecting or storing food and water) and shields. This illustration shows a man climbing halfway up a tree to find suitable bark. He would make an outline on the bark with a stone axe and then carefully cut a large piece away. It would then be hollowed out, soaked in the river to soften, and dried over a fire to draw out the moisture.

Yingabeal, the scarred tree at Heide.  
Image courtesy of the History Teachers'  
Association of Victoria.



A young man climbing a tree to harvest bark.  
M. Dubourg, 1813.  
Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria.

Stripping bark was more sustainable than cutting down trees to make tools and canoes. It was also used for making quick and light shelters as groups travelled across country.



Australian Aboriginals and humpy in Victorian Alps. , c. 1890-1930. Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria.

A tarnuk is wooden container used for collecting food. This one has been lined with soft paperbark, making it suitable to carry a baby in. Image courtesy of the National Botanical Gardens.



# European Scarred Trees

Many European settlers also adopted the practice of bark-stripping, resulting in European scarred trees. The following features can be used to distinguish European scarred trees:

- European scars occur on a selected range of tree species, mostly stringy bark, messmate and box species. River red gum appears to have seldom been used.
- European bark removal scars are limited to rectangular panels, approximately 1–3 m in length, which reflect their primary use for weatherproofing buildings and other structures.
- European scars are invariably located at the base of a tree, generally ending within 0.5 m of the ground surface.
- Europeans made frequent use of a full size woodsman's axe (10–15 cm L), especially when severing the bark slab near ground level. Steel hatchets were often used at the top of the scar, but never stone tools.
- Cross-diagonal ('zigzag') tool marks are a common feature of European scars, especially at the top of the scar.
- European scars will be less than 170 years in age.<sup>1</sup>

European settlers came to Australia with very little and often made bark huts where they arrived. They used wooden sticks as frames and large sheets of bark to make the walls and floor. They often utilised the skills of local Indigenous tribes to cut the bark for them. Bark huts were considered temporary lodgings until they could build stronger houses from wooden slabs, mudbricks or stone.

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Long, *Aboriginal Scarred Trees in New South Wales: A Field Manual* (NSW: Department of Environment and Conservation, 2005), 32.

Original bark hut, home of Mr and Mrs Tucker outside Nambour, 1905.  
Image courtesy of the State Library of Queensland.



An Australian bush song tells the story of an early swagman who has the misfortune of being poor and having to live in a bark hut where the roof gets blown off and the flies can get in.

### The Old Bark Hut

By Anonymous

#### Verse 1

Oh, my name is Bob the Swagman before you all I stand  
And I've had many ups and downs while travelling through the land  
I once was well-to-do my boys but now I am stumped up  
And I'm forced to go on rations in an old bark hut.

#### Chorus

In an old bark hut in an old bark hut  
I'm forced to go on rations in an old bark hut.

Henry Lawson also wrote a poem about a school, also made of bark slabs.

### The Old Bark School

By Henry Lawson, 1895.

It was built of bark and poles, and the floor was full of holes  
Where each leak in rainy weather made a pool;  
And the walls were mostly cracks lined with calico and sacks –  
There was little need for windows in the school.

# Living Culture

Traditional Indigenous scarred trees have not been made since the early days of European colonisation, as cultural practices began to decline. Consequently, all traditional scarred trees are more than 200 years old. However, as part of teaching young people about their heritage, Indigenous elders are beginning to work with them to create new scarred trees using all the traditional tools and techniques. This is called experimental archaeology. This system of learning is used to help people understand how communities lived in the past.



A young man learns how to create a Viking wall using twigs and mud.

## Activity:

You are applying to your local council for a grant to start an experimental archaeology society in your local area. Write a short letter outlining why learning to make something would be more useful than learning about it from a book and include your proposal for learning to make an ancient Indigenous object. Make sure you include the following information in your proposal:

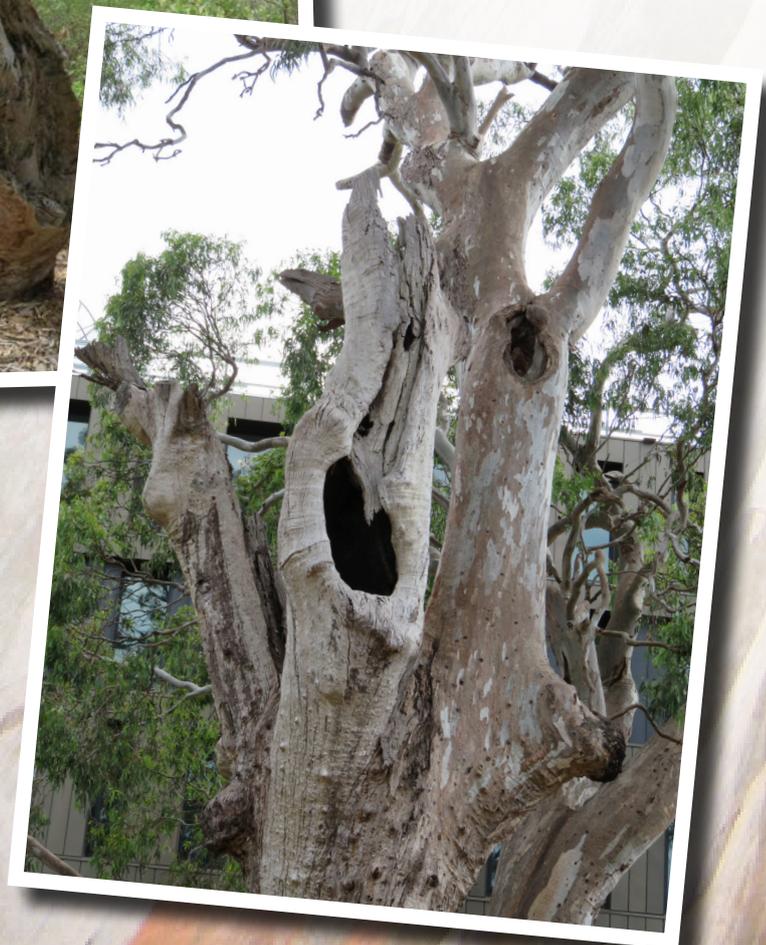
1. The significance of the object you would like to make. What was it used for? Why is it important? What would you learn from making one?
2. How you would learn the skills needed to create the object.
3. How you would sustainably source the materials
4. What knowledge you would want participants to gain
5. Any possible dangers involved with the project
6. What you would do with the finished object.

# Marker Trees

The study of history differs from the study of science in how we collect evidence. The term 'artefact' refers to an object that shows evidence of human impact. For example, a 3000 year old stone is not an artefact, but a 3000 year old stone that has been carved into an axe head is. Indigenous marker trees are ones that show evidence of Indigenous presence. Like with Yingabeal, bark may have been harvested from the trunk for a canoe. In the documentary, Dr Jim Poulter explains that trees were also altered in other ways, such as tying limbs together, to provide sign posts through the bushland.



The fused-limb tree at RMIT, Bundoora has been tied together in an unusual shape, providing evidence of human tampering. Image courtesy of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria.



'The Resource Tree' at RMIT, Bundoora shows evidence of Indigenous communities cutting access holes into trees in order to find food such as possums or bird eggs. Image courtesy of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria.

# Activity:

## Virtual Indigenous Significance Trail Class Project

Visit the online Keelbundoora Scarred Trees and Heritage Trail at RMIT University in Bundoora and click through the tour:



<http://www1.rmit.edu.au/browse/Current%20students%2FServices%20and%20facilities%2FStudent%20Wellbeing%2FNgarara%20Willim%20Centre%2FAbout%20us%2FKeelbundoora%20Scarred%20Trees%20and%20Heritage%20Trail/>

Use this site as a guide to develop your own virtual Indigenous Significance Trail.

Select a significant Indigenous site in your local community or state. These could include:

- A scarred tree like Yingabeal
- An Indigenous monument
- A place name or street sign named after a significant Indigenous individual
- A piece of public art such as a mural or painting.

Each member of the class will be responsible for contributing one entry to an online tour significant Indigenous sites to be produced by your class. The tour can be presented in any agreed format such as an ebook, app, website or digital pamphlet. Each entry must include the following information:

- An image of the site
- The location of the site (include a screenshot from google maps)
- Information about the Indigenous group it relates to
- The age and history of the site
- Why it has been created/preserved
- How it has been preserved
- Any immediate dangers to its survival
- Why it is an important part of Australian history.

Useful research source: Monument Australia,



<http://www.monumentaustralia.org.au/>



Indigenous Service Monument at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne.  
Image courtesy of Monument Australia.

# Activity: Mapping and Signposts

How do we find our way around Victoria? Make a list of tools or information that we can use to find our way through the city or country.

There are many signposts to help us on our travels. What do each of these signposts mean?



Meaning:



Meaning:



Meaning:

Would you know what to do if you came across the 'signpost' below?



The Wurundjeri people used different markers to find their way around Victoria. Because the tree had a scar, it could be easily recognised and let people travelling through the land know where they were.

Yingabeal.

Courtesy of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria.

**In the documentary, what do Uncle Bill Nicholson and Dr Jim Poulter tell us about the function and meaning of marker trees?**

# How did Yingabeal Get its Name?

On 6 October 2013, a ceremony was held at Heide Museum of Modern Art and the tree was given the name 'Yingabeal' by Uncle Bill Nicholson (a Wurundjeri Elder) and Dr Jim Poulter (a local historian). In the Woiworung language (spoken by the Wurundjeri, 'yinga' means 'sing', 'song' or 'singing' and 'beal' is the name for a red gum tree. When placed together, it means 'song tree'. The naming ceremony included traditional dancing and a smoking ceremony. A smoking ceremony is a ritual burning of plant matter to cleanse the location of bad spirits.



Uncle Bill Nicholson, Dr Jim Poulter and Dugald Noyes at the Yingabeal naming ceremony. Courtesy of Heide Museum of Art.



Dancers from the One Fire Dance Troop perform at the naming ceremony. Courtesy of Heide Museum of Modern Art.

# Songlines

The name 'song tree' was given to Yingabeal because it is an important marker tree on a songline. A song line is a pathway across the Australian landscape. It is called a songline because as the Indigenous travelled along the pathway they would sing a song to help them find their way.

Indigenous communities also used songs to help both children and adults remember important information. As they travelled through the countryside, they would sing a song whose lyrics were the directions to their destination. The pathways that they used to walk along were known as 'songlines' because everybody sang as they travelled. These pathways were often along ridgeways so that the travellers were at the highest point and could see out over the land on both sides. This was a way to ensure that they could see any dangers, but also allowed them to admire and appreciate the country.

Have you noticed how pedestrians will always take the quickest route between two points? Often this will mean walking across a lawn rather than using the pathway or crossing the road without using the traffic lights.

In the documentary both Kendrah Morgan and Dr Jim Poulson talk about the way that these songline pathways became well-worn and were adopted by European settlers and eventually became roads.



**The quickest way to enter this bakery is across the lawn, rather than the cement pathway. The constant walking across the grass has created a new pathway. Image courtesy of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria**



**John Reed followed the natural pathways created by the Wurundjeri to lead the cows down to the river. Photograph by Albert Tucker, 1942 Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria**

# Activity: Songlines

Have you ever been taught a song to help you learn something?  
Maybe you learned this song when you were very little:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN**OP**QRSTUVWXYZ  
Now I know my ABC  
Next time won't you sing with me?

**Why does this song make it easier to remember the alphabet?**

Working in pairs, decide on a route between two important places in your school e.g. from your classroom to the library.

Walk the route making an observation of all the permanent features that you notice on your way. It might be classroom doors, trees, lockers or stairs.

Write a list of directions to the tune of your favourite song.

Now provide the instructions and the tune of the song to another pair in your class and get them to follow your instructions. Do not tell them their destination.

**How easily did you find your destination?**

**What made an instruction good or bad?**

**Did you ever go off course? Why? Why not?**

# Loss of Cultural Knowledge

The arrival of Europeans in Australia had a tragic impact on the Indigenous communities. Most were expected to dramatically change their lifestyle, beliefs, language, clothing and housing to become more like the Europeans.

Uncle Bill Nicholson says in the video that he doesn't know many of the Wurundjeri customs relating to the scarred tree. This is due to the impact of colonisation. Children were taken away from their families and sent to live with European families or raised in state institutions. The loss of contact with their families and communities meant that cultural knowledge wasn't handed down through the generations. These children are known as the stolen generation.

While Uncle Bill Nicholson tells us that due to the impact of colonisation, he has gaps in his cultural knowledge, Dr Jim Poulson explains that some stories about the history of the Wurundjeri were handed down to him by his ancestors who had befriended the local community.

Events such as National Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day were founded to allow discussion for the wrongs of the past such as the Stolen Generation.

## Activity:

### National Reconciliation Week



Plan an activity that your class could do for National Reconciliation Week. Visit the website and click on the 'get-involved' page. <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw/get-involved/>

In groups of no more than four work out an activity that could involve everybody and then pitch it to your class.

Make sure you cover the following information in your pitch:

1. How would this help people understand about reconciliation?
2. How much time would be needed to organise it?
3. Would there be any costs associated with your activity?

Once everybody has pitched their idea, take a class vote to decide which one you will choose.

Reconciliation Week is held between 27 May and 3 June every year.



Reconciliation Week is celebrated at the University of Sydney in 2013 with a sea of hands installation with colours representing Aboriginals and Torres Straight Islanders.  
Image: Wiki Commons

## Activity:

### National Sorry Day



Visit the National Sorry Day website <http://www.nsd.org.au/> to learn more about the history of the day.

Make posters to put up in your school on 26th May sharing some of the reasons why it is important to acknowledge this event.

National Sorry Day is held on 26 May every year.

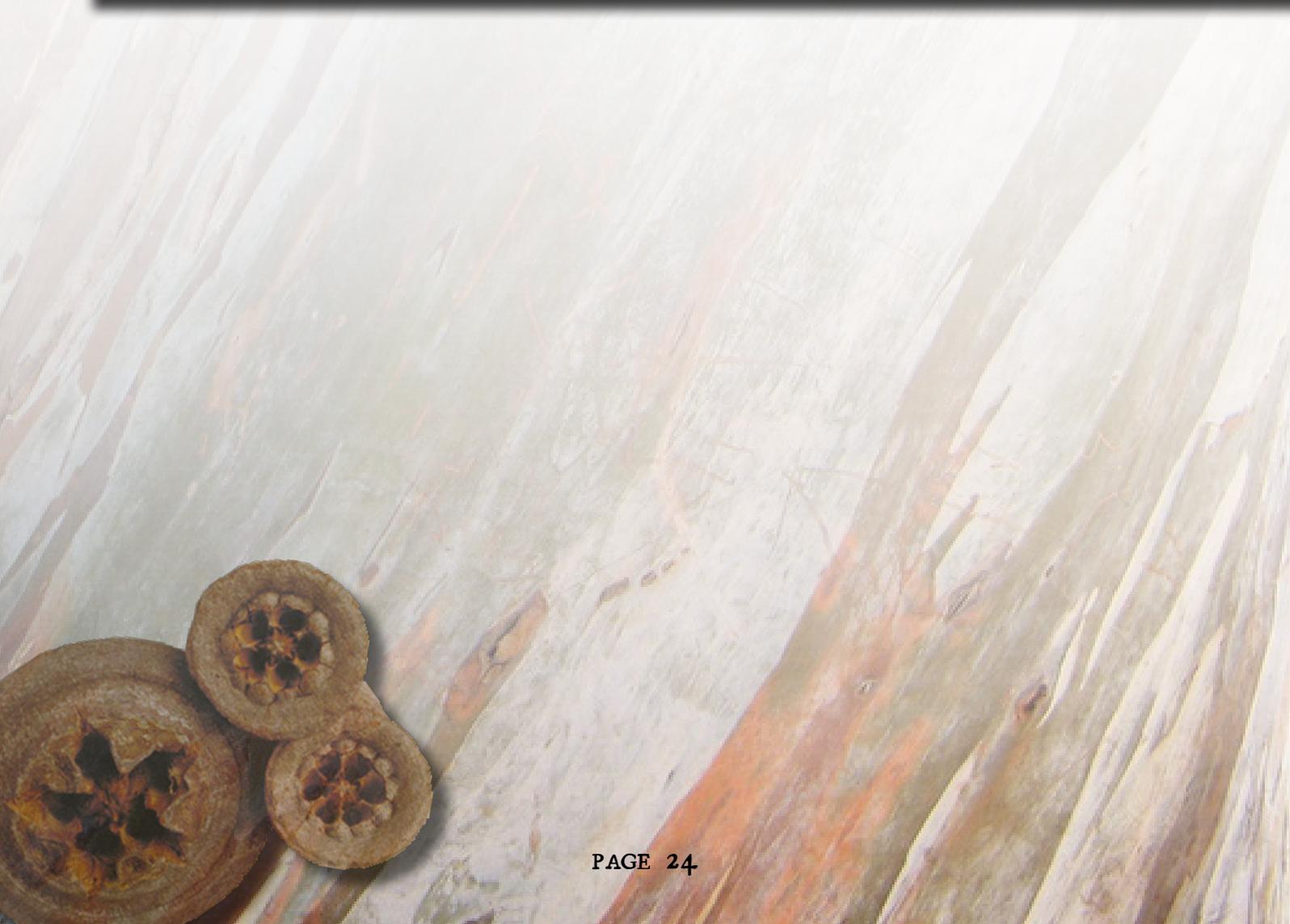
## Interactive:

### Re-Learning Language



Visit the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages website and watch the video of Auntie Joy Murphy, Wurundjeri Elder speak about the process of teaching Woivurrung at Healsville Secondary College.

<http://www.vaclang.org.au/languages/woiwurrung.html>



# Ancestors



Uncle Bill Nicholson and Dr Jim Poulter at the Yingabeal naming ceremony. Image courtesy of Dr Jim Poulter



After spending thirty years with the Indigenous community, Buckley revealed himself to a group of settlers and eventually returned to England.

Source: Buckley discovering himself to the early settlers  
Frederick Woodhouse, 1861  
Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria

In this picture of the Yingabeal naming ceremony, Uncle Bill is holding up a photograph of his ancestor William Barak, a community leader. In most Indigenous ceremonies and at important events, a community leader will give a short speech called 'Welcome to Country' or 'Acknowledgement of Country' where they will formally welcome those present to their tribal lands. This words of the welcome to country are using a variation of the following text:

"I would like to acknowledge the <tribal group i.e. Wunrundejeri>, the traditional owners of the land and pay my respects to their ancestors past and present".

The term 'ancestor' is used across cultures to refer to direct family members who have passed away. Some communities such as in China see their ancestors as spiritual beings and pray to them for luck, prosperity and protection. Rather than being forgotten after they have died, there are still considered to be part of the family.

Indigenous culture also places strong emphasis on remembering family members after they have died. It is also believed that they can return in the form of people, plants or animals. Many dreamtime stories refer to the assistance of ancestral beings in helping their living descendants.

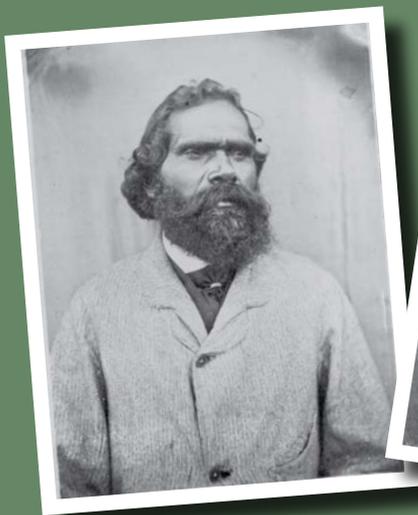
William Buckley was an English convict who was transported to Australia and then escaped from a working party at Port Philip Bay. While making his way through the bushland, he picked up a spear that had marked an Indigenous gravesite. He then came across a group of Indigenous who accepted him into their community as their recognised the spear as belonging to a man who had recently passed away. This story explains his acceptance as the community initially thought that he was the reincarnated spirit of a man who had recently died, thereby also explaining his pale skin.

# Indigenous Elders

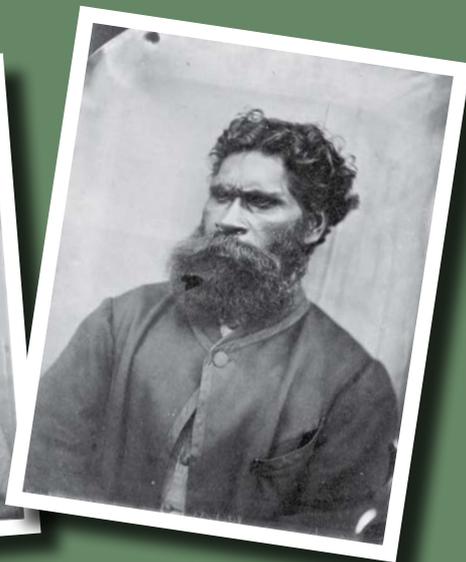
Uncle Bill Nicholson is an Indigenous Elder of the Wurundjeri tribe. Traditionally elders were appointed to these roles of responsibility because they had demonstrated wisdom and strong leadership qualities. Elders can be men or women and are addressed as 'Aunty' or 'Uncle' as a term of respect and also to show that they act as a type of family member to all people in their tribe, not just those that they are biologically related to.

## Activity:

### Indigenous Elders



Simon Wonga - age 37  
Chief of the Yarra Yarra Tribe  
Photographer Carl Walter, 1866  
Image courtesy of the State  
Library of Victoria



William Barak - age 33  
Yarra Yarra Tribe  
Photographer Carl Walter, 1866  
Image courtesy of the State  
Library of Victoria

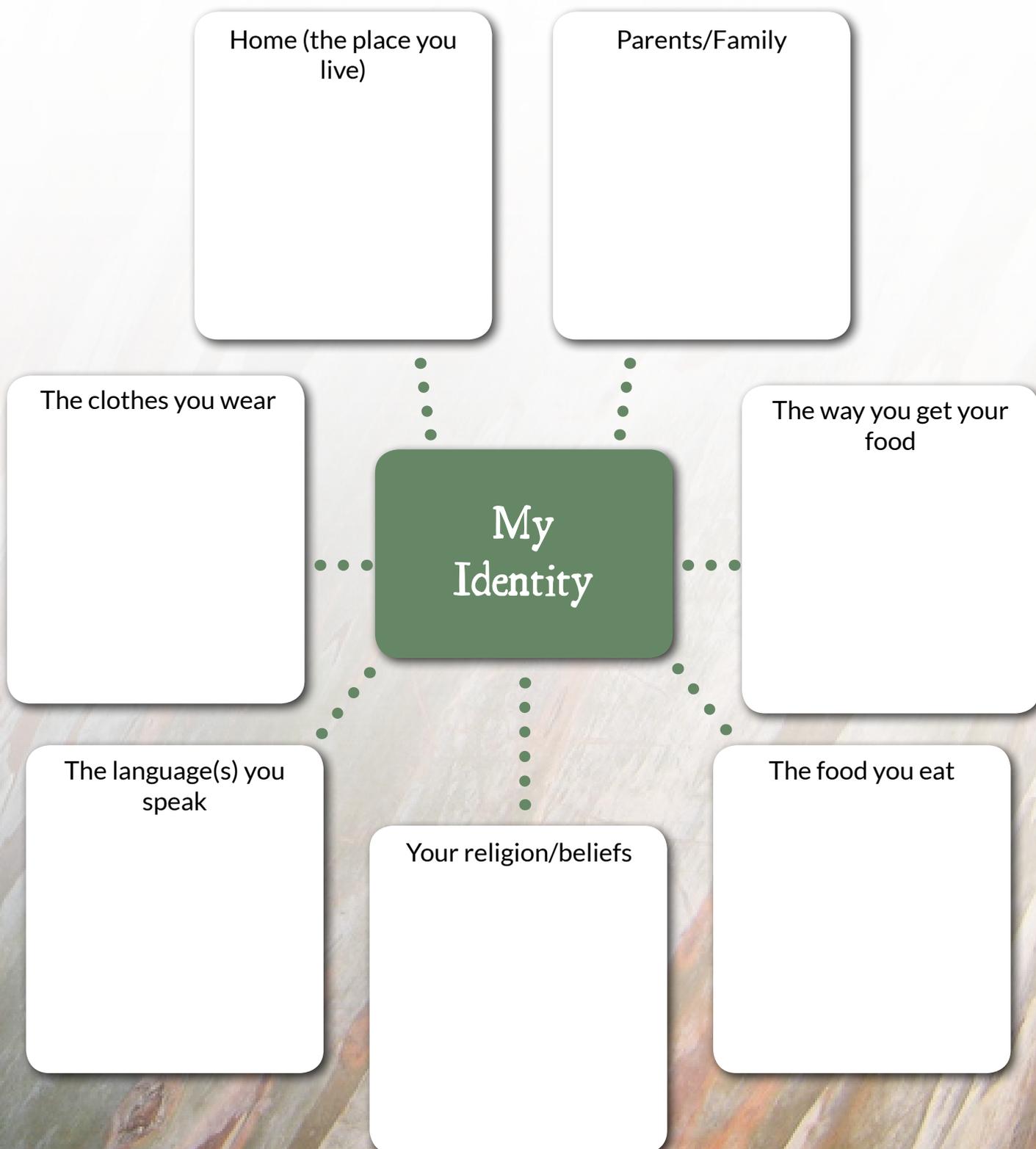
The two Wurundjeri ancestors mentioned during the naming ceremonies are William Barak and Simon Wonga. Do some research on one of these two men and make a short documentary about them including the following information:

- Where they were born and lived
- Evidence of their leadership qualities (why were they important in their community?)
- How they campaigned for Indigenous rights
- Their contribution to keeping Indigenous culture alive
- Their legacy
- The ways that they have been remembered after their death (memorials, places named after them etc.)

# Activity: Indigenous Identity

Many Indigenous communities feel that over the last two hundred years, they have lost much of their traditional skills and identity.

Fill in this mind map with information about the things that make up your identity.



Which of these identity aspects did European settlers try to change about traditional Indigenous lifestyles? What methods did they use to try and change them?

	Before colonisation	After colonisation	Methods used by European settlers to change traditional Indigenous lifestyles
Indigenous language			
Indigenous beliefs/religion			
Home			
Food			
Collecting food			
Clothing			
Family			

**Class discussion: What are the long-term impacts of losing your cultural identity?**

Some issues to might like to consider are immigration, being able to communicate with family members if language is lost and medical history.

# Initiation

In the documentary, Dr Jim Poulson mentions initiation. This term refers to the process of learning all you need to know to become an adult and was an important part of traditional indigenous life. Children were generally initiated between the ages of 10 and 15. They were instructed from an early age by the tribal elders. Some of the important skills and information that children would learn leading up to initiation included: spiritual stories, the history of the tribe and everyday knowledge they needed to survive such as finding food, bush medicine, learning to find their way through the bush and understanding cultural traditions. Skills such as making bark tools and learning to navigate using scarred trees would have fallen into the category of everyday skills.

An initiation ritual also might involve going on a journey to a sacred place or being given a test of pain endurance where the child is scarred or has a tooth removed. The initiation process is often finalised with a ceremony where the children demonstrate that they have learned traditional songs and dances.



Bush medicine is an important in Indigenous tribal life. Children learn to use the resources around them. The leaves of gum trees like Yingabeal were used as an antiseptic. The eucalyptus leaves were soaked in water and the water applied to cuts or injuries.

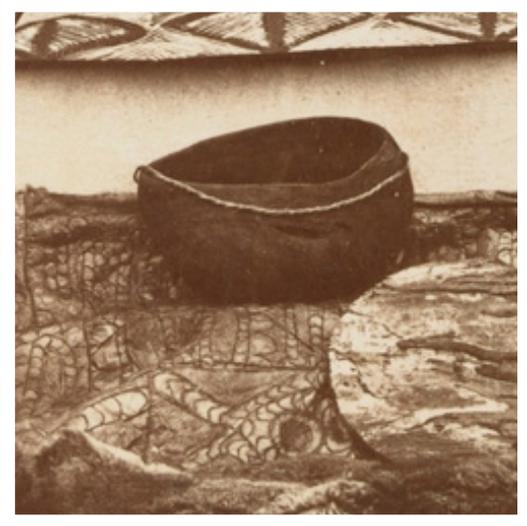
# Activity: Initiation

Look at the list of skills and knowledge that Indigenous teenagers were expected to know by their initiation. Fill in the second column by reflecting on your life and writing down what you expect to learn as you become an adult.

Traditional Indigenous Initiation skills and knowledge	Your equivalent skills/knowledge
Knowing the history of the tribe	
Understanding how the world was created	
Using important markers to navigate across country	
Spending time being instructed by tribal elders	
Finding/hunting edible food	
Learning which plants could be used for medicine	
Making useful tools and weapons	
Learning traditional songs and dances	
Building shelters	
Being able to correctly apply body paint for cultural ceremonies	

# Tarnuks

On Yingabeal we can see some large bumps near the branches. These are called gnarls and can be caused by insect infestation, disease or damage to the trunk while the tree was growing. The Wurundjeri would cut off the gnarls, hollow them out and make them into bowls to carry water. Sometimes these bowls had handles made from string. The string was made by rolling and twisting reeds, bark and other fibrous plants.



Gnarls on Yingabeal. Image courtesy of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria

A Tarnuk bowl with string handle  
Photograph by Fred Kruger, c1878  
Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria

A water bowl like a tarnuk is mentioned in a dreamtime story of Victoria where a spirit accidentally spilled the contents of his magic tarnuk, creating Port Phillip Bay.

Source: Nillumbik Reconciliation Group Inc, 'Wurundjeri Culture resource kit', 2008, p8

Entrance to Port Phillip Bay  
Arthur Willmore, 1857

Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria



# Stone Axes

Axes made from greenstone were used to cut tree bark for making canoes or tarnuks. The raw materials in Victoria were found in a place called *Wil-im-ee Moor-ring* (Mount William), meaning 'home of the axe' in the Woiwurrung language. Tribal groups living close to the greenstone quarry traded the stone with community groups all over Victoria.



Mount William  
(Wil-im-ee Moor-ring)

Mount William  
stone quarry



The stones were sharpened into a pointed edge and then affixed to a wooden handle with tough grasses. Once Europeans arrived, Indigenous people started to use the materials they had brought with them. Stone axes were now replaced by steel ones.



**Illustration of a stone axe (detail)**  
**Aboriginal implements, T Prattent, 1789**  
Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria

The man climbing the tree in the illustration is holding a stone axe created by binding a sharp piece of rock onto a strong wooden handle. One of the ways that historians are able to identify whether a scarred tree is genuine, is by 'toe-holds'. These are small notches cut into the bark of a tree that allows for easy climbing when cutting a tarruk or a canoe. It was important to remove the bark in a vertical piece, rather than from around the circumference of the tree. This is known as 'ring-barking' and can damage the tree.



**An Indigenous man climbs a tree with a stone axe**

**Sketch of Aboriginal Australian life (detail)**  
**Henry Brinton, 1844**  
Image courtesy of the State Library of Victoria



# Activity:

## Bark Canoes



A good example of the way that European materials were incorporated into traditional Indigenous practices is this bark canoe located at the Melbourne Museum.

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/treasures/details.aspx?img=4&Path=6&PID=34>

Read the information about the bark canoe. List 3 pieces of evidence that suggest this canoe was made after European settlement.

1.

2.

3.



Native Bark Canoes  
Photograph by N. J. Caire, c 1886  
Image courtesy of State Library of Victoria

# Intangible Heritage

Unlike European societies that created objects in long-lasting materials such as gold, iron, silver or metals, Indigenous artefacts were made from materials that naturally biodegraded such as wood, animal skin and plant matter. Most surviving artefacts are made from bone or stone. They trod lightly on the environment, using materials such as bark that could be obtained without destroying trees and then letting it decay back into the environment when they had finished with it.

While Indigenous communities practiced sustainability, this is not great for archaeologists who want to find material remains to analyse. Much evidence of Indigenous history is what we call 'Intangible Heritage'. This means that it can't be touched.

Some examples of Intangible heritage include:

- Songs/music/playing an instrument such as the didgeridoo
- Dances
- Religious ceremonies
- Oral history (stories about the history of the tribe that have been passed down through the generations)
- Stories that haven't been written down
- Skills (making canoes, collecting food, navigating bushland).

## Activity:

### Intangible Heritage



Visit the UNESCO website to see a more detailed definition of 'Intangible Heritage' <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>

1. Make an 'explain everything' video to show that you understand the term 'intangible heritage'. Provide an example of 'intangible heritage' from at least three cultures. Watch this sample video – 'What came First – The Chicken or the Egg?' to give you an idea of the style of presentation.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1a8pl65emDE>

# Environmental Dangers to Yingabeal



It is estimated that Yingabeal is approximately 700 years old, but there are several dangers that threaten its long-term survival. A guard has been put up to protect it from possums who eat the new leaves. Other dangers include insect damage, tree diseases and damage from birds

As Victoria continues to have periods of draught, it is important that Yingabeal gets enough water. If trees go too long with insufficient water, it weakens the root system and may cause it to fall over during heavy storms. Bush-fires and lightning strikes are also a potential threat during the hot Australian summers.

Yingabeal.  
Courtesy of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria.

# Preserving Scarred Trees



Yingabeal is a living piece of history and evidence of many different Indigenous practices. However, trees don't last as long as other historical objects such as statues, plates or books, so how have historians and Indigenous community groups preserved scarred trees in the past?

There is a scarred tree in the Fitzroy Gardens in Melbourne that has been preserved in situ (its original place). Even though it is no longer growing, it has been displayed in a way that reminds us that it was once living.



There is a plaque at the bottom of the tree with the following inscription:

The scar on this tree was created when Aboriginal people removed bark to make canoes, shields, food and water containers, string, baby carriers and other items. Please respect this site. It is important to the Wurundjeri people as traditional custodians of the land and is part of the heritage of all Australians. All Aboriginal cultural sites are protected by law.

**The Scarred Tree at Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne**

The Keelbundoora Scarred Trees and Heritage Trail at RMIT University in Bundoora has preserved several Indigenous trees and made an educational walk for students and visitors to campus. One of the trees is called the 'relocated scarred tree'. It was moved as a way of protecting and preserving it.

**The 'Relocated Scarred Tree' on the Keelbundoora Scarred Trees and Heritage Trail at RMIT University, Bundoora**  
Image courtesy of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria.



In the documentary, Dugald Noyes the head gardener at Heide Museum of Modern Art mentions that because Scarred Trees are Indigenous cultural sites, they are protected by the Aboriginal Heritage Act of 2006. The law states that all Aboriginal cultural sites and places in Victoria are protected by law. Aboriginal artefacts are also protected. It is against the law to disturb or destroy an Aboriginal site. Artefacts should not be removed from sites. (Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment)

An important part of Indigenous culture is the belief that important social or sacred objects should be left where they are, rather than be relocated for display. An example of this relates to the returning of Indigenous objects that were taken overseas to institutions such as the British Museum.

In the book 'Templestowe: A Folk History', Hazel and Jim Poulter discuss the loss of many significant scarred trees in the Templestowe area that were destroyed or cut down by landowners in the mid twentieth century. Many were cut down during land clearing to make room for roads, buildings, farmland or orchards. Often they were removed as the farmer had no understanding of their cultural significance.



A canoe tree located in Templestowe in the 1930s that was felled c1948.

Poulter, Hazel, Poulter, Jim (ed.) Templestowe: A Folk History', Red Hen Enterprises, 2015.

Don't touch, pick up or remove cultural materials, such as artefacts or artworks. Often where something was left or made by Aboriginal people thousands of years ago is as important as the artefact or artwork itself.

Aboriginal Cultural Sites and Artefacts: Guidelines for Companies, Developers and the General Public, Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (<http://ymac.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Aboriginal-cultural-sites-and-artefacts-guidelines-APRIL14.pdf>)

## Activity:

### Preserving Scarred Trees



This scarred tree in New South Wales is unusual because it is located inside a museum. <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime/scartree/>

Divide the class into four groups and allocate each group one of the following statements. Each groups should spend 10 minutes brain storming some dot points in response to their statement:

1. It is better for scarred trees to be displayed in museums because...
2. It is wrong to display scarred trees in museums because...
3. It is best to leave scarred trees where they are found even though they will eventually die and rot because...
4. It is best to cut down a scarred tree and relocate them as a sculpture to another outdoor location because....

Report your thoughts back to the class and discuss your answers.