

Highlighted in yellow: Knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their culture. Teachers need to have this knowledge in order to design and implement effective teaching strategies that meet the needs of all students within their classroom.

HIST 106 – Assignment 4 (Site Visit)

The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne was highly respected by the Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung of the Kulin people. The land was used as a meeting place and camping place. The plants were very significant to Indigenous Australians, they were not just there to eat, however they were used in traditional ceremonies. Indigenous Australians lived a completely different lifestyle compared to the non-Indigenous Australians. Aboriginal people lived as hunters and gatherers. They would hunt for food they needed without destroying their environment. They were able to look after their environment and live sustainable lives. The British didn't value their culture; they would give minimal respect and attention to Indigenous Australians. The British started landing and claiming land without permission. However, Aboriginal people were unable to fight for their land due to their lack of land rights. Due to the loss of land, many Indigenous Australians were sent to missions and reserves. Many Aboriginal people did lose control over their lives due to higher authority always watching over them, however they were able to receive a roof over their head and be free from frontier conflict. Aboriginal people were expected to assimilate into western culture. The Aboriginal Boards would control Indigenous Australians and deny them civil rights. Activist groups were formed to stand up for the rights of Indigenous Australians and grant them civil rights.

Land is fundamental to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people. Indigenous Australians don't just see the land as soil and rocks, but as a whole environment that sustains and is sustained by people and culture. During the Aboriginal Heritage walk I got to explore their rich, beautiful culture. The most important message about Australian Indigenous history that was presented at the Aboriginal Heritage walk was that every aspect of their lives are connected to their land. Broome (2010) states that Indigenous Australians "tradition revolved around the land" (p.10). The Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne was highly valued by the Kulin people. The land was a traditional and highly significant camping and meeting

place. The Kulin people had deep connections with the land. They were connected through plants and animals. Plants were many things to the people, not just food. Plants have symbolism, and were used ceremonially. Ceremonies were a tradition for Koori people such as the 'Tanderrum' and the 'Smoking Ceremony'. The 'Tanderrum' is a ceremony opening the bush to a visiting group. The 'Tanderrum' welcomes many cultures to this land and asks all to respect the gifts it has to offer. During the site visit I also experienced a traditional smoking ceremony with Indigenous guides. In a Smoking Ceremony, leaves of three plants are usually used. The Cherry Ballart, River Red Gum and Silver Wattle. The Cherry Ballart symbolises youth. The Wattle represents the elders. And the Red Gum is the most widespread eucalypt in Australia and is symbolic of the entire community and the community's access to the land and its resources. The smoke cleanses the visitor, and was a ritual to discourage bad intent. Indigenous Australians are very connected to their land as their culture and tradition revolves around it.

Aboriginal people had a very different culture compared to non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians have different beliefs and practices. Aboriginal people lived as hunters and gatherers, every clan had their own territory from which they were able to make a living. The Royal Botanic Gardens had many plants and animals that enabled Aboriginal people to hunt for food. Indigenous Australians were able to track down animals, edible plants, and find sources of water. Indigenous Australians culture shaped who they are, their environment, family life and lifestyle (HIST106 Lecture Week 2: 60,000+ years of Australian History). Indigenous Australians survived for many years with a non-agricultural economy, this was sustainable for the land (Broome, 2010). Indigenous people gathered and hunted for food when they needed it. Broome (2010) stated that Indigenous Australians "developed an economy that provided all they desired (p.9). They were able to gather food and water, without destroying the environment. The British didn't understand their Indigenous culture, they believed that Indigenous Australians were the most miserable people in the world as they are always facing starvation, and not having agriculture. James cook perceived them as having no religion and government and living without clothes and shelter (Broome, 2010). Dodson (2003) indicates that "the basic assumption was that Aboriginal people were incompetent to look after their own affairs,

and were degenerates, drunkards and criminals unable to fulfill their status as social subjects” (p. 35). Aboriginal people were not given respect and received minimal attention due to their culture (HIST106 Lecture Week 10: Representations of Indigenous Peoples). There were cultural clashes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians due to their completely different lifestyles, cultural beliefs and practices.

During the 1788-1820 there was growth of the British colony in Australia. The land that Aboriginal people valued like the Botanical gardens was taken from them by the British settlers. The British started behaving like savages landing without permission. The British took over the land and prevented the Aboriginal peoples from using it. Broome (2010) states that they started “unloading strange stores, equipment and animals”(p.16). The Aboriginal people saw that the British settlers were clearing the land, putting up fences, restricting access and introducing different animals; so they started to retaliate against the invasion. However Aboriginal people were unable to do anything, due to lack of land rights. Land Rights were one way which Indigenous Australians can be recognized as owners of their land. It was the only way they could secure their land. During the site I realized how important the land was to Indigenous Australians, and how it would have been devastating for them to see their land taken off them. The push for land rights laws gained momentum with the growing Aboriginal struggle for social justice and equality in the 1960s (Broome, 2010). In 1963, Yolgnu people from Yirrkala in Arnhem Land sent a bark petition to Parliament to protest the proposed use of more than 300 square kilometers of their land for mining. Their battle was lost in the Northern Territory Supreme Court because the Court decided that it could not be recognised by Australian law (Broome, 2010 and HIST106 Lecture Week 9: Civil Rights 2). This was changed by the Mabo case which gave Common Law recognition to native title. During this period Aboriginal people were protesting against poor living and working conditions. Gurindji people walked off Wave Hill in 1966, due to labour issues and land rights. They protested their conditions in which they lived and worked in (HIST106 Lecture Week 9: Civil Rights 2). The protests led to increasing pressure for a means to recognise Aboriginal land rights in Australia.

As many Indigenous Australians were removed from their land. They were often sent to missions and reserves. Reserves did save many Aboriginal people from death at the hands of the white colonists, but it did not save their traditional way of life. The location of missions intentionally isolated Aboriginal people from their own land (HIST106 Lecture Week 5: Missions and Reserves). Missions and reserves forced Aboriginals into European ways of life and Christianity. The reserves and the missions became a way to crush Aboriginality and to convert Indigenous Australians to Christianity (Broome, 2010). They believed by pushing Aboriginals into Western lifestyles and practices they would become less Aboriginal (Lyndon, Jane, and Alan Burns, 2010). Many Indigenous people who were in missions and reserves were controlled over, and had no control over their lives. They had no citizenship rights - anything that Aboriginal people owned or earned came under the manager's control. They were denied citizenship rights and could not own a house or any land (HIST106 Lecture Week 5: Missions and Reserves). Their daily lives were regimented and run by a routine that could not be broken. If rules were not followed punishment would occur, they would not receive meals or they would be separated from their family. In 1863, Coranderrk, an Aboriginal government reserve was established for Aboriginal people who were displaced by the arrival of European settlers (Broome 2010). Coranderrk was a reserve where Indigenous Australians could avoid disease and frontier violence (HIST106 Lecture 5: Missions and Reserves). William Barak was a respected spokesman who stood up for Indigenous Australians. Barak was the acknowledged leader at Coranderrk, he was a successful negotiator who spoke up on the behalf of Aboriginal people (HIST106 Lecture 5: Missions and Reserves). Indigenous Australians had restrictions of rights and freedoms while living in the missions and reserves; however they were able to have shelter, food and be free from conflict.

Aboriginal people were displaced from their way of life, and were forced to submit to European rule. Later they were encouraged to assimilate into western culture. Many people didn't value Indigenous culture as it was very unique and different compared to non-Indigenous Australians culture, this is a reason why many non-Indigenous Australians wanted Indigenous people to assimilate into western culture. Many believed that Indigenous Australians should adapt to the Australian way of life (HIST106 Lecture Week

6: Assimilation). Aboriginal people were controlled by Aboriginal Boards; they would manage their daily lives and work, families and deny them civil rights (Broome, 2010). This policy marked the beginning of arguably the most tragic period of the history, the 'Stolen Generation'. Many thought they were doing the right thing by the children when they took them away and placed them into white families, others had more sinister motives, planning to breed the Aborigines into extinction, so Aboriginality would eventually 'dye out'. Children experienced emotional, physical and sexual abuse when put into new homes, and were left vulnerable to psychological problems (HIST106 Lecture 7: Child Removal). The biological assimilation legislation expanded and strengthened laws governing inter-racial marriage and sexual relations, tightened provisions governing soliciting and provisions regarding use of alcohol, strengthened child removal provisions, widened definition of Aboriginality to bring more people under control of legislation – still worked on a model where people with paler skin were seen as more suited to assimilation. Governments across Australia become obsessed with calculating their Aboriginal populations, and part of this was determining who was Aboriginal and who was not. Also they controlled where Aboriginal could work and could compel employers to pay wages to The Board rather than to Aboriginal workers, in other cases Aboriginal people continued to work for rations (HIST106 Lecture 6: Assimilation). Aboriginal people were forced to assimilate due to their culture and lifestyle; many people are now experiencing psychological problems and poor health.

Indigenous Australians hoped for equality, and to be respected like non-Indigenous Australians. Many people didn't give Aboriginal people respect mainly because they were Aboriginal. Aboriginal activism increased as Aboriginal people wanted civil rights. Activist groups that were interested in Aboriginal Affairs emerged in the 1930s (Broome 2010). Protest groups like the Aborigines' Progressive Association and the Freedom Rides were formed. The APA's key concerns were child removal, loss of reserve lands through grant to white farmers, appalling conditions on reserves, poor schooling, exclusion from social welfare benefits and colour bars in country towns (HIST106 Lecture 8: Civil Rights 1). The Freedom Ride was a significant event in the history of civil rights for Indigenous Australians. The University of Sydney students drew public attention to the poor state of

Aboriginal health, education and housing. They wished to encourage and support Aboriginal people themselves to resist discrimination (HIST106 Lecture Week 8: Civil Rights 1). However, the 1967 referendum gave Indigenous Australians the right to vote, it enabled Indigenous people to be counted in the census and the Commonwealth government could make laws for them. The move towards self-determination was one of the biggest gains made by the Aboriginal protest movement. Aboriginal people have more say in their affairs and more input into the laws and policies that affected their community. Instead of trying to destroy Aboriginal culture the federal government encouraged people to accept it.

Overall, Indigenous Australians highly valued the land of the Royal Botanical gardens Melbourne. They land was used as a gathering and meeting place, where all Indigenous people would get together. The plants were used as food as well as ceremonially. The land and plants were part of their culture, and there tradition ruled around them. Indigenous Australians would hunt and gather for their food, however due to the different lifestyle and cultural practices between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal people were put down. Eventually Indigenous land was taken away by British settlers; the British were landing and claiming land without permission leaving Aboriginal people left with nothing. Due to the loss of land Aboriginal people were sent to missions and reserves. Indigenous people were then forced to assimilate into white Australian culture, and were denied civil rights. Aboriginal people hoped for equality; during the 1930's activist groups were formed and stood up for the rights of Indigenous people.

References

Broome, R. (2010). *Aboriginal Australians: A History Since 1788*. 4th ed., Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Dodson, Michael. "The End in the Beginning: Re(de)finding Aboriginality." In *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, edited by Michele Grossman, 25-42. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003.

HIST106 Lecture Week 2: 60, 000+ years of Australian History

HIST106 Lecture Week 4: The myth of peaceful settlement

HIST106 Lecture Week 5: Missions and Reserves

HIST106 Lecture Week 6 : Assimilation

HIST106 Lecture Week 8: Civil Rights 1- The fight for equality

HIST106 Lecture Week 9: Civil Rights 2- Land Rights and Native Rights

HIST106 Lecture Week 10: Representations of Australian Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives

Lyndon, Jane, and Alan Burns. "Memories of the Past, Visions of the Future: Changing Views of Ebenezer Mission, Victoria, Australia." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 14 (2010): 39-55.