

Stolen Generations Victoria

Second Step

Engaging students with the
Stolen Generations

A resource for Victorian teachers





Acknowledgements

Second Step would not have been made possible without assistance from a number of people.

Firstly, at Stolen Generations Victoria: Aunty Lyn Austin, Uncle Syd Jackson, Jeannie McIntyre and Brad Brown.

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And finally: All the members of the Stolen Generations who have shared their stories, experiences, knowledge and advice.

Alister McKeich

Senior Policy and Education Officer, Stolen Generations Victoria

Keeping up to Date

Stolen Generations Victoria, located in Preston, stays up to date with the latest news, publications and debates regarding the Stolen Generations in Victoria and across the country.

Contact them if you would like to find out more information, or to receive their quarterly newsletter. The organization also has number of members who are willing to speak to students in schools.

Stolen Generations Victoria

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Furthermore, you can book a Stolen Generations Workshop with Banyip Kidjeka. These cultural education workshops focus on the impact of government policies for the removal of Aboriginal children from their families, delivered by two remarkable and inspiring members of the Stolen Generations.

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Artwork

"Cootamundra Girls Home"

The front cover shows a painting by Rita Wenberg titled "Cootamundra Girls Home".

The painting is about a little girl growing up in the home. It shows a young girl who was put in the box room, which was a place where the girls were put in with no windows and they would sleep on the floor. The painting also shows the Old Morgue, where the girls were also placed: you can hear them crying. Then there is another girl, who is trying to keep warm in winter near the chimney outside, and you can also see the girls scrubbing cement at 2am on a winter's morning, and you can also see six sisters.

Photographs

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs in *Second Step* were taken by SGV staff or Alison McColl-Bullock at iCatching Photography:
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Presentation by Syd Jackson

It is with great pleasure that I present *Second Step*, an education resource for teachers. I'd like to do this not just for me, but for my Mission brothers and sisters throughout Australia. While we're all different, and ours is not the only story important to share, the Stolen Generations experience is a key part of our Australian story and one we all need to understand.

For me –if it wasn't for my football, I know my life as part of Australia's Stolen Generations could have been starkly different.

When I read the official government documents, including arrest warrants for me and my sisters all under 7 years of age, I know I am one of the lucky ones who survived – many didn't. I have at least had a life in football and with good friends, but without the love and connection to my mother, father and sisters.

My mother Amy was a good mother, a loving mother. My father Scotty was a good father who worked hard all his 100 plus years, but because he was a half-caste – therefore his children half –caste - both were unfit and we were forcibly removed from them.

We were taken to a sorting out place, and then split up again. I never saw my sisters again until 20 years later.

Many of my Mission friends passed away early because they had a pretty tough life, and even now, I'm forever going to funerals in connection with people I knew at a young age.

I always wonder where I'd be without football. I don't know if I would have had the same opportunities if I hadn't been taken away, and things could have been a lot worse.

But I worked hard for what I got and there was also a lot that I lost in terms of my family, culture, my language and important things like that. I had a lot of help from a lot of people who supported me and I worked hard to reward them by not failing.

When I was recruited from East Perth to Carlton in 1968, Aboriginal players were a rarity in the VFL. No doubt the highlight of my career at Carlton was the 1970 Grand Final against Collingwood. We played in front of 121,000 people – still the record crowd at the MCG today.

I'm one of the more fortunate Stolen Generations members. I got some support after Mission life. Many didn't. There are many faceless people without identities who did not have access to the social benefits this so-called lucky country had to offer. They just disappeared from the community.

They had police problems, no jobs and just couldn't get on in life and they or their families should be compensated. I don't know what adequate is and it will never be enough because they lost their family, their language and their culture and have been discriminated against all their lives in terms of those social benefits.

I was separated from my sisters for more than 20 years. One has since died, along with my mother and father, who I barely knew and met only twice. In the Missions we were used as slave labour to work the farms that kept the white mission owners in the lifestyle to which they were accustomed.

My exact age cannot be guaranteed as a 1968 letter to the WA Government from the State's last Commissioner of Native Welfare, Frank Gare, shows that "records for the period 1940 to 1951 state that no reference to the birth of Sydney Jackson can be found"





It was – and still is, according to all official records – simply assumed that I was born on July 1, 1944. This is a date created for ease of administration by my 'protectors'.

It's important to remember too, that my people were only counted as citizens of this country in 1967. Consider, for how long my people were regarded as non-people and regulated under policies and laws of protection and assimilation that were undoubtedly based on a view that we were less than human, and to be managed in the same way as flora and fauna – and a dying species at that.

This brings me to a more recent and proud Australian history. I was extremely very proud to be a part of the audience when the Australian Parliament finally made a formal apology to those of us taken from our families to 'breed out the colour'.

The 'white halo' view of our past that had been pushed for the previous decade was laid to rest and we can move on in the knowledge our experience has been recognised for the disgrace it was. It's important to note too, that the apology provided by Prime Minister Rudd was recommended just over ten years ago in the Bringing Them Home Report.

Today, people look at me walking around in my suit and doing my work and wouldn't get close to understanding the grief I carry around in my head every day. I can say now though, that while the apology was a long time in coming, it has for me gone a long way to healing and signals to all of us that it's time to stand proud of our Indigenous heritage; to accept the mistakes of the past generations and learn from them; and to work together to build a country that acknowledges with pride the fact that this land we now share was carefully and lovingly cared for over many thousands of years before others arrived to settle just over 200 years ago.

Sorry may just be a word, but it should help the history of our past come back into our curriculum for the current generation to learn. It shouldn't be pushed under the carpet any longer and an apology will mean a monumental weight has been lifted from people's shoulders.

I believe that the apology is a good place to start when teaching students about the Stolen Generations and I hope that *Second Step* will go a long way towards helping teachers engage with the topic. Students who learn about the Stolen Generations will grow to understand that, while the mistakes of the past have been made, the present and future can be made so much better.

Syd Jackson played 136 games for Carlton between 1969 and 1977. In that time he won two VFL flags in 1970 and 1972. He is now an active community member, and on the board of Stolen Generations Victoria.

Welcome to Second Step

The Prime Minister's apology on February 13, 2008, was regarded by many Australians as a significant step towards reconciliation, alongside the 1967 Referendum and the 2000 walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge.

However, for many members of the Stolen Generations, it was considered the first step on a long journey of healing. 'Sorry - the first step', was even spelled out in candles on the parliamentary lawn the evening before one of the most significant events in recent Australian history.

Ever since the *Bringing Them Home* report came out in 1997, advocates of the Stolen Generations had been lobbying government for a formal apology.

An apology from Australia's head of state was not going to be the panacea that fixed everything, but it would acknowledge past injustices that had for so long been debated, deferred and even denied.

This acknowledgement brought about peoples' ability to move forward, heal old wounds and begin the reconciliation process within themselves, their families and in communities across Australia.

In the Prime Minister's speech he recognised the harm done specifically to the Stolen Generations. He stated:

"We [the Parliament of Australia] apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendents and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry."

With these words, the Prime Minister created an opportunity for Australians, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to open the door on this part of the nation's history and look beyond – beyond the past and towards the future.

And this future lies with our children and our young people - our students.

It was with our students' future in mind that *Second Step* was compiled.

It is not designed to represent a 'black armband' view of Australian history but designed to provide a way in which teachers and students can engage with a unique aspect of Australian history – the Stolen Generations.

Second Step has been compiled from Stolen Generations' stories, already-existing education kits, online resources, websites, books, DVDs and more.

The primary background information has come mostly from the Australian Human Rights Commission (previously Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission) *Bringing Them Home* education module.

The *Bringing Them Home* module is a vast and expansive guide and certain sections have been selected to represent a uniquely Victorian experience.

It is hoped that *Second Step* will provide professionals within the Education system with a Victorian-specific guide to teaching Stolen Generations history.

And it is a living history, found from Framlingham to Fitzroy.



There can sometimes be a perception in the public mind that 'real' Aboriginal people live out in the bush or the desert - in remote Western Australia or the outback of the Northern Territory.

This perception was illustrated in August 2008 when outgoing Governor-General Michael Jeffery stated that while the majority of Aboriginal people "were integrated satisfactorily into the country... living normal lives", the 100 000 in northern Australia had been "doing it hard for many years."¹

This train of thought in turn surmises that the Stolen Generations experience happened in some other time, some other place.

But in rural and urban areas in multi-cultural Victoria live Aboriginal people from over 30 different language groups. Victoria was the first state to formally introduce policies by which the government could dictate the removal of Aboriginal children – policies which lasted over a hundred years.²

Many members of today's Victorian Aboriginal communities were either removed from family and community as a child as a direct result of such policies, or are descendents and family members of those who were.

They have stories to share, and knowledge to pass on and it is hoped that *Second Step* will assist teachers in finding these stories.

'Sorry the First Step'
(Photograph by Alan Porritt, AAP)



¹ 'Integration is a farce when so many live in the Third World', *The Age*, Sept. 2, 2008

² "Major changes came after the *British Select Committee* held its inquiry into the treatment of Indigenous people in Britain's colonies. The report noted the particularly bad treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia. The Committee recommended that a 'protectorate system' be established in the Australian colonies. Under this system, two policies were to be adopted:

- segregation, by creating reserves and relocating Aboriginal communities to them
- education, which should focus on the young and relate to every aspect of their lives (cont.)

Victoria was the first colony to [adopt the new system], with its parliament passing the *Aborigines Protection Act* in 1869 and appointing the *Aborigines Protection Board*." HREOC *Bringing Them Home* Education Module, Australia – A National Overview. (HREOC Website, 2007)

Using This Resource

The information in this resource is designed to provide a stimulus for teachers with which to teach aspects of the Stolen Generations. It is also designed to 'arm' teachers with a thorough knowledge and understanding of what can be a difficult subject to teach.

Ideally, this resource would best be suited for Secondary School teachers (years 8, 9 and 10); however, Primary School teachers may gain inspiration and information from *Second Step* in order to teach years 5, 6 and 7 (see VELS links in Appendix Five).

To begin with, some of the challenges of teaching the subject are discussed as are the issues facing the Stolen Generations today. It is important to remember that this is an ongoing historical experience in Aboriginal communities, not merely a distant moment in time.

The subject itself is then divided up into six topics – The Apology, The History, What Was Lost, Victorian Stories, Lasting Effects and The International Context.

Each topic contains themes for discussion, suggested activities and recommended student outcomes as well as background information and a resource guide.

The aim is to provide a thorough overview of the history, issues and current debates surrounding the Stolen Generations; ideally teachers can use it as a possible term-long approach, but aspects of it can be chosen as suited.

The Apology: The Prime Minister's apology has been presented as an opening topic for discussion, primarily because this will most likely be the one aspect of the Stolen Generations most students are familiar with.

It is also a good way to introduce the topic, as it will prompt students to ask why the event happened and delve deeper back in time.

The History: This topic provides an overview of the history of Aboriginal dispossession both in Australia and Victoria, and the laws that were introduced to enforce child removal.

An Australian overview provides an opportunity for compare and contrast activities and demonstrates the wider repercussions of child removal policies, while the Victorian element provides students with a localised context.

What Was Lost: This topic examines Aboriginal life and culture prior to invasion/colonisation. Quite often the basic facts of dispossession get lost in the modern debates and events of our times.

This topic aims to bring back the understanding that, within the Stolen Generations' experience, land, culture, family, language and life was lost, and that ultimately, this is what 'Sorry' is all about.



Victorian Stories: Within our communities there are many removal stories. It is hoped that students will gain empathy for those that were taken, through the reading and listening of poems, stories, oral histories and music that reflect the Victorian experience.

This topic also personalizes the experience for many students, and brings to life the history of our state and country.

Lasting Effects: This section looks at the lasting effects of removal policies on people, their families and communities. This is certainly an important aspect and relates directly back to the Prime Minister's apology.

The International Context: This section provides links to further Australian Human Rights Commission material, aimed at engaging students with the world around them, examining the similarities and differences of indigenous histories and peoples worldwide.

This in turn can illustrate or highlight certain aspects of Aboriginal experiences with dispossession and child removal here in Australia.

Four Appendixes are provided at the back of this resource to provide teachers with additional information, correct use of language and a glossary. These include a Language and Terminology Guide, Stolen Generations Glossary, the background of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and important dates in the Aboriginal community.

A fifth Appendix provides teachers with this resource's links to VELs.



Teaching students about the Stolen Generations: The Challenges

Teaching secondary students about the Stolen Generations can be challenging and demanding. It is an emotional topic which involves serious issues such as child removal, family separation, lost identities and physical and sexual abuse.

Past policies, considered racist in today's context, must also be examined and Australia's history seems to be constantly brought before trial.

However, the Prime Minister's apology on February 13, 2008, opened the door for students and teachers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to engage with this difficult part of Australian history.

Today this engagement can be achieved with the knowledge that Australia is in the process of reconciling its history. There exists a willingness to learn, from both students and teachers alike.

The aim of the Teacher's Guide is to introduce teachers to some of the language, culture and history of Aboriginal people in Victoria.

It can be difficult teaching any aspect of Aboriginal history - the right terminology; the correct use of language; using accurate historical facts. These are just some of the challenges faced by teachers.

Then there is also the feeling as to whether it is 'right' for non-Aboriginal teachers to teach Aboriginal history. This is a personal decision and it is advised, of course, if your school or institution has access to Koori educators, that they are consulted and employed as much as possible.

However, employing Aboriginal teachers isn't always feasible. It is hoped, then, that this section will provide teachers with the background information – and the confidence – to engage with the history, stories, film, literature, art and photography of the Stolen Generations.

Another challenge for teachers is to teach the subject inclusive of and relevant to the nation's multi-cultural students. More than 40 per cent of all Victorians have at least one parent born overseas.³

Yet Aboriginal 'issues' – particularly the government apology surrounding the national Sorry campaign - have generally been regarded as a 'white' issue, summed up by the slogan 'White Australia has a Black History'.

However, *all* of Australia has a black history, and part of the moving on – the next step – is for all Australians to acknowledge and appreciate our unique and amazing Aboriginal culture and heritage – the longest continuing culture in the world.

Taking the topic from the realm of the 'black versus white' to an overall Australian responsibility and celebration also alleviates the burden of teaching a guilt-ridden 'black armband' version of history.

And this is where Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology opened the door. It has now been acknowledged that successive governments implemented destructive policies upon Aboriginal people, and we as a nation can now move forward with the knowledge and understanding of past mistakes, but without the present guilt.

This is an interesting and exciting time in our nation's history and it is important our students can move forward into the future with a greater understanding of the original Australians.

And remember, if you get stuck, look around – there's probably a member of the Stolen Generation close by in your community. Ask them. You may be surprised how willing Aboriginal people are to work with you in the process of reconciliation.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census



Where did the term 'Stolen Generations' come from?

The term 'Stolen Generations' has been used since the early days to describe people who were taken from their family and culture as part of forcible child removal policies.

The plural, 'Generations' is used to highlight the length of time over which Aboriginal children were taken, and to acknowledge that the process caused inter-generational harm.

In 1915, the Honourable P. McGarry, a member of the Parliament of New South Wales, objected to the *Aborigines Protection Amending Act 1915*. The Act enabled the Aborigines' Protection Board to remove Aboriginal children from their parents - without having to establish that they were in any way neglected or mistreated.

McGarry described the policy as "steal[ing] the child away from its parents".⁴

In 1923, an article in the *Adelaide Sun* stated: "The word 'stole' may sound a bit far-fetched but by the time we have told the story of the heart-broken Aboriginal mother we are sure the word will not be considered out of place."⁵

Professor Peter Read famously used the phrase 'The Stolen Generations' as the title to a paper first published in 1981. The paper described the forced removal of children from their families in New South Wales from 1883 to 1969.⁶

Peter Read, along with Oomera Edwards, helped start Link-Up around that time, an organisation dedicated to assist those families separated during the process of child removal to be reunited with their family members and community.

In 1997 the Bringing Them Home report was released. The report was based upon findings of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission's National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

The inquiry investigated numerous cases of forcible child removal around the country. Upon the release of the report the media began to use the term 'the Stolen Generations' to describe the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others who told their stories to the Inquiry.

The Bringing Them Home report, however, did not use this term but rather uses "forcible removal policies" to identify the authority under which children were removed illegally or through "compulsion, duress or undue influence".

It must be noted that the term 'the Stolen Generations' did not originate from the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities and therefore, not all people who were taken from their families as a result of past policies are comfortable with this label.

⁴ *Bringing Them Home* report, Part 2, Chapter 3 (1997)

⁵ Interview with Dr Anna Haebich, *The Stolen Generation*, *Ockham's Razor*, ABC Radio National, broadcast Sunday 6 January 2002, accessed 19 February 2008. Anna is author of *Broken Circles, Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000*, Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press ISBN 1863683054

⁶ Read, Peter *The Stolen Generations; The removal of Aboriginal children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969* (first published 1981)

The Stolen Generations Today

When *Bringing Them Home* was released in 1997, the report concluded that “between 1 in 3 and 1 in 10 Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities between 1910 and 1970.”⁷

Each state implemented different laws over time by which children were removed by way of institutionalisation, foster care, adoptions, indentured labour or taken for use as domestic workers.

Today there are still many members of the Stolen Generations in the Victorian community. Some may have their roots in another state, but were brought to Victoria as a child. Some Aboriginal children were even taken to New Zealand and as far as England.

Removal of this kind has obviously contributed to confusion surrounding identity, not only as an Aboriginal person, but as a community member also.

The terms Stolen Generations, plural, is used to identify that the repercussions of child removal filter down to children and grand children.

This can manifest in a variety of ways. Members of the Stolen Generations who were institutionalised, for example, report never to have felt ‘loved’ by a parent or family.

Subsequently, members may say they have difficulty in showing affection for their own children. This, in turn, can filter down from their children to their grandchildren.

If your school or class has Aboriginal students, chances are they will have a family member (grandparent, aunt, uncle, mother or father) who was removed as a child. There is also a good chance that the student may not even know this.

The Stolen Generations is not an historical event that exists only in the distant past. Of course it is important to understand the historical background but also equally important to remember that many ‘first generations’ members are still alive and face a variety of challenges.

Being raised without their original culture or natural family has caused problems of identity. Some members describe how they were ‘taught’ to be white, while being black.

In many Aboriginal communities, Aboriginality is not derived by the colour of one’s skin, but by heritage and acceptance in the community. This can cause issues of rejection and feelings of grief and loss for someone caught in the middle of two worlds.

Not only do members feel they do not fit in the ‘white’ world, they are cut off from Aboriginal culture at an early age, and thus find no sense of belonging.

Some members suffered sexual and physical abuse while in care, experiences which have had long term effects, including psychological and physical trauma.

⁷ This is not to suggest these are the bracket dates in which the Stolen Generations occurred. The dates are disputed. Within recent Senate Bills (such as the 2008 Stolen Generations Compensation Bill and the 2008 Stolen Generations Reparations Bill) the date 31st December, 1975 has been put forward as the ‘cut off’ date for child removal. This is presumably because in that year, 1975, the Federal Racial Discrimination Act was passed, thereby making any child removal after that date unrelated to basis of race. This, of course, is hotly contested.

Bringing Them Home: A guide to the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families (AIATSIS, 1997)





Members may also talk about the 'shame' of being Aboriginal, of feeling that you were not 'good enough' and of seeing other Aboriginal people in the street and told to stay away – but inside, knowing they were your people, your link to culture.

Not all children who were taken had terrible times. Some had positive experiences in good families and have over the years learned to reconcile their difficult upbringings within themselves and with their adoptive and natural families.

However, the commonality between all Stolen Generations members is the loss of language, land, family and culture.

The Stolen Generations story is not just one of hardship and tears. Like many Aboriginal stories, it is one of learning and survival, and these stories are inspirational as well as sad.

Traumatic stories follow two distinct threads – the hard times, the pain that was experienced, the grief and the loss; and the survival story - how the person came through and dealt with the hardship.

Although a difficult and saddening subject to teach, with the right tools and knowledge, students will find inspiration and deep respect for those people who were taken away and survived.

A good way to demonstrate to students just how current this history is would be to invite a member of the Stolen Generation to come and speak in class.

Teachers are welcome to ring Stolen Generations Victoria on **(03) 9470 3477** and make inquiries regarding this.

Please Note: Teaching Aboriginal Students

It is recommended that, should there be Aboriginal students in your class, they are not singled out as an 'expert' on the subject of the Stolen Generations (or any Aboriginal subject for that matter).

This can cause a deep sense of shame within the student, not only for being singled out, but because there may be much about their own culture they are not aware of.

Show sensitivity and respect – if an Aboriginal student wants to share their experiences, they will do so in their own time, like any other student.

Aboriginal students may also have a parent or grandparent who is a member of the Stolen Generations, which makes them part of that experience, or even have experienced dislocation from family, land and culture via child removal (adoption, foster care) themselves.

This type of sensitivity may also be required if non-Aboriginal students have been removed from family and placed in foster care.



Notes

Topic 1:

The Prime Minister's Apology

Themes for discussion:

- Why did the Prime Minister give an apology?
- The language used in the apology
- Australia's reaction to the apology – before and after
- Should the Prime Minister have apologised?
- The apology in the context of the Stolen Generations
- The apology in the context of reconciliation
- The apology in the context of Australia in the future
- The history of the apology – what led to this event occurring?

Suggested activities:

- **Brainstorm:** what do students know about the apology? Do they understand why it was given?
This could be a good 'opener' in discussing what students do or do not know about the Stolen Generations.
Perhaps also discuss what students know about the Stolen Generations in Victoria.
- **Language analysis:** what type of language was used in the Prime Minister's apology speech and why? Examine phrases such as "this blemished chapter in our nation's history" and "The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history" to examine style.
- **Debate:** should the PM have apologised? Teachers can organise and supervise class debates as to whether the Prime Minister should have apologised. Not all students may agree that an apology was warranted, and sometimes debate can be a tool in which students must justify, and therefore examine, their existing ways of thinking.
- **Participate online:** at the online exhibition 'Sorry Books'
http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/sorrybooks/sorrybooks_hm.htm
Students could start their own school sorry book or exhibition.
- **Real Life Response:** Write in the apology books online - Online Sorry Book:
<http://apology.west.net.au/>
- **Create a timeline:** going back in time, what were the main events that led to the apology to be given? This will provide grounding for more in-depth research in the following topics. The timeline could be drawn or painted as opposed to just written. *Track the History* is a great timeline, available on Australian Human Rights Commission website.
- **Emotional response:** Students could write a letter to the editor of their local newspaper regarding their reaction to the Prime Minister's apology.
- **Survey:** Conduct a survey in your community to find out different people's responses to the Prime Minister's apology. Questions can include: why do people think the apology was given? Did people agree that it should have been given? Do people think it could change Australia's future? Will the apology assist reconciliation?



- **Newspaper clippings:** Find newspaper articles from around February 13 2008 and analyse the articles. Students may also like to compare the articles from some that discuss John Howard's views on saying 'sorry'. This could make a good 'compare and contrast' exercise.
- **Listen:** Find a Stolen Generations member in your community and ask them to come to the school and speak about what the apology meant to them. Get in touch with your local Aboriginal Cooperative or Cultural Centre.
- **Read:** Uncle Murray Harrison's poem 'Our Day'. This poem reflects the feelings of one Stolen Generations member after the apology was given.
- **Discuss:** What does the apology mean for the future? Will this have an effect on reconciliation?
- **Look:** at the photograph 'Sorry the First Step'. What does 'the first step' mean?

Student Outcomes:

- Students link the Prime Minister's apology to historical events and experiences in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia
- Students examine language used in parliamentary speeches and the media to comprehend why certain language styles are used and the effects of such language
- Students gain a basic understanding of the Stolen Generations as an important historical Australian experience and the apology as a recent event within that historical experience
- Students understand that the Stolen Generations experience is a current historical issue
- Students understand that all Australians can play a part in reconciliation

*Auntie Rieo and Jade,
Parliament House, February 13, 2008*



Topic 1: Teacher Background Notes

'Sorry': the unfinished business of the Bringing Them Home report

Coral Dow

Social Policy Section

Parliament of Australia official website

<http://www.aph.gov.au/index.htm>

<http://www.aph.gov.au/LIBRARY/pubs/BN/200708/BringingThemHomeReport.htm>

Introduction

On 26 May 1997 the report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, entitled *Bringing Them Home*, was tabled in Parliament. It received widespread publicity the following day at the Australian Reconciliation Convention in Melbourne and led to continuing public and parliamentary debate about the implementation of its recommendations.

A key recommendation in the report was that reparations be made to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by policies of forced removal. Those reparations should include an acknowledgement of responsibility and apology from all Australian parliaments and other agencies which implemented policies of forcible removal as well as monetary compensation.

State and territory parliaments have apologised specifically to those affected by the policies of separation. Under the Howard Government the Commonwealth Parliament did not agree to a full apology but expressed 'deep and sincere regret' for unspecified past injustices as part of a Motion of Reconciliation on 26 August 1999.

However, on February 13, 2008, the newly elected Rudd Labour Government formally apologised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for past injustices, and specifically for the process of child removal.

Background

The Bringing Them Home report

The report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (the Inquiry), entitled *Bringing Them Home*, was tabled in Parliament on 26 May 1997.

The key findings of the Inquiry were:

- nationally, between one in three and one in ten Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities between 1910 and 1970
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were placed in institutions, church missions, adopted or fostered and were at risk of physical and sexual abuse. Many never received wages for their labour
- welfare officials failed in their duty to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wards from abuse
- under international law, from approximately 1946 the policies of forcible removal amount to genocide; and from 1950 the continuation of distinct laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was racially discriminatory and
- the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continues today. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are six times more likely to be removed for child welfare reasons and 21 times more likely to be removed for juvenile detention reasons than non-Aboriginal children.





The Inquiry made 54 recommendations. A key recommendation was that reparation be made to Indigenous people affected by policies of forced removal. Reparation should include:

- an acknowledgement of responsibility and apology from all Australian parliaments, police forces, churches and other non-government agencies which implemented policies of forcible removal
- guarantees against repetition
- restitution and rehabilitation and
- monetary compensation.

Saying 'Sorry'

Bringing Them Home did not specify the wording of an apology, if an apology should use the words 'apologise' or 'sorry' or what an apology should involve. It did specify that official apologies should be negotiated with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and that the apologies were the responsibility of all Australian parliaments, rather than all governments.

Although the Commonwealth Government did not respond to the report until December 1997 it was evident in the speech that Prime Minister Howard gave to the Australian Reconciliation Convention on the day following the report's tabling that the Commonwealth Government would reject the recommendation of an apology from the Commonwealth Parliament.

John Howard expressed his personal sorrow but stated 'Australians of this generation should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies over which they had no control.' In the following ten years the Prime Minister never changed his justification for opposing an apology.

During the 2007 election campaign he accepted some blame for a breakdown in dialogue with Aboriginal leaders and when Aboriginal delegates turned their backs on him at the 1997 Reconciliation Convention, but remained adamant on the issue of an apology:

"I have never been willing to embrace a formal national apology, because I do not believe the current generation can accept responsibility for the deeds of earlier generations. And there's always been a fundamental unwillingness to accept, in this debate, the difference between an expression of sorrow and an assumption of responsibility."

This argument of accepting guilt for past actions became one of three primary justifications for the rejection of an unreserved apology. The Government further argued that the laws at the time were just: the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Senator Herron, stated, 'an apology could imply that present generations are in some way responsible and accountable for the actions of earlier generations, actions that were sanctioned by the laws of the time, and that were believed to be in the best interests of the children concerned'.

The Government also argued that an apology may have liability implications. In May 1997 Prime Minister Howard said in an interview that 'there are a number of reasons [why the Government had not apologised to Indigenous peoples]: one of them is that a formal unqualified apology does, according to the legal advice we have received, have certain legal implications ...'. The argument that an apology might result in legal liability was countered by the argument that the *Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987* protected statements made in Parliament.

In the public debates that followed, arguments for and against an apology ranged from the elementary view that an apology was not needed because there was no stolen generation, to elaborate legal arguments that an apology was unnecessary because court judgments had decided Commonwealth laws which authorised child removals in the Northern Territory were valid and that administrators of the policies had acted within the law. A later case was decided which gave compensation to an individual who was removed illegally.

Such arguments did not deter state and territory Governments which, since 1997, have all passed motions that include an explicit apology for the forced separation of children. Under the Howard Government the Commonwealth Parliament did not agree to a full apology but expressed 'deep and sincere regret' for unspecified past injustices as part of a Motion of Reconciliation on 26 August 1999.

The Motion of Reconciliation was co-sponsored in the Senate by newly elected Senator Aden Ridgeway, a Gumbaynggir man from New South Wales. The Opposition Leader, Kim Beazley, moved an amendment to replace 'deep and sincere regret' with an apology and with specific reference to the stolen generation:

"unreservedly apologises to indigenous Australians for the injustice they have suffered, and for the hurt and trauma that many indigenous people continue to suffer as a consequence of that injustice; [and] calls for the establishment of appropriate processes to provide justice and restitution to members of the stolen generation through consultation, conciliation and negotiation rather than requiring indigenous Australians to engage in adversarial litigation in which they are forced to relive the pain and trauma of their past suffering."

The amendment was unsuccessful.

Despite arguments against saying sorry many non-government organisations, churches and individuals have apologised or signed the more than 400 'Sorry Books' that have circulated since the inaugural Sorry Day on 26 May 1998, the anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report.

The Howard Government's argument that symbolic measures such as apologies, ceremonies and gestures of reconciliation are less important than practical measures in improving the conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been challenged.





Many Aboriginal Australians in their evidence to the Inquiry spoke of the importance of acknowledgment and apology to their own healing. A paper prepared for the National Sorry Day Committee on progress in the implementation of the Bringing Them Home recommendations reported:

"The journey towards healing for a stolen generations person can be lengthy. Many have not yet started, while others have only just begun. Val Linow tells of the sight of a large white "SORRY" created in the sky above the Sydney Harbour Bridge on the day in May, 2000 when 250,000 people joined in solidarity in walking across that bridge.

Val's experience that day was the start of her personal journey of healing. That so many people cared overwhelmed her and diminished her feelings of anger for her past treatment to an extent that she could begin to forgive and, in doing so, to heal."

The significance, not only of an apology, but of the use of the word 'sorry' to the stolen generations should be noted in this debate. When the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, announced that an apology would be made in Parliament on 13 February 2008, Stolen Generations Alliance spokesperson Christine King's reaction included the part an apology would play in the healing process and the importance of the word sorry: 'Sorry is the most important word because it has great meaning in our community, it means having empathy and compassion and understanding'.



**Aunty Joy and Linda,
May 26, 2008**

Topic 1: Resource Guide

Watch:

- Watch the Prime Ministers apology:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1jeWeDpc68>
<http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,23206140-2,00.html?CMP=KNC-google>
<http://media.smh.com.au/?rid=35435>
- *The Apology*: DVD about February 13, 2008, the history, coverage of the day and what it meant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people. Available from Reconciliation Australia:
<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/i-cms.jsp>
Old Parliament House, King George Terrace, Parkes ACT 2600
PO Box 4773, Kingston ACT 2604
T +61 2 6273 9200
F +61 2 6273 9201
To support Reconciliation Australia you can ring 1300 729 547 during business hours (for the cost of a local call).
enquiries@reconciliation.org.au
- Sky News DVD: available from Stolen Generations Victoria, this is a brief clip from Sky News aired the day before the Prime Minister was due to give the apology. It features an interview with SGV chairperson, Lyn Austin.
- *The Day the Nation Cried*, Richard Frankland, shown on ABCs 'Message Stick'. Available (along with many other documentaries) online at:
<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/messagestick/>

Read:

- Read the Prime Ministers apology plus full speech on February 13:
http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm

Participate:

- Australia-wide Sorry Books:
http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/sorrybooks/sorrybooks_backgrnd.htm
- Online Sorry Book:
<http://apology.west.net.au/>

Links:

- Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation:
<http://www.antarvictoria.org.au/>
- Stolen Generations Victoria:
www.stolengenerationsvictoria.org.au





Resource 1: The Prime Minister's Apology to the Stolen Generations

Available in full on the Australian Prime Minister's website:
www.pm.gov.au

February 13, 2008

"Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia."

Resource 2: 'Our Day' – A poem by Uncle Murray Harrison

Our Day

On the 13th Day of February, a great historic day.
And for the stolen ones, old fears were moved away.
To hear the government say they're sorry, it was such a thrill
To be here with our people, up there on Parliament Hill.

The words the PM spoke, made the darkness part
For this old Koorie man, like music to his heart.
No more clicking locks of that darkened cell
To hear him say I'm sorry broke that awful spell.

Sixty years of carrying such a dreadful load
Made my burden lighter and a light at the end of the road.
For my sisters and my cousins who all were stolen too,
This historic proclamation came too late for you.

We will keep the memories of good times that we had
Where ever your spirits are, we hope that they are glad.
For those of us still living, our healing has began
The journey may be short or long for woman, child or man.

And as we close this chapter of our lives that were stolen away.
In our book of faded footprints we have only this to say.
Our courage is undaunted and our stories they will last
And help the nation remember, this happened in our past.

Mr Prime Minister we thank your government for believing in our need
And to say the words 'I'm Sorry' in word and also in deed.
Let healing come to all, by reading of this tale
And keep forever dreaming for brave hearts never fail.





Topic 2: The History

Themes for discussion:

- The *Bringing Them Home* report – what did the report discover?
- The Stolen Generations – a national overview
- State by state – different laws and policies
- State by state – different stories
- Why did the government want to take children from their parents?
- Past policy in a modern context – would we do this today?
- Focus on Victoria – what were the laws/ policies and stories in Victoria?
- Look at the differences between the other states/ territories and Victoria
- The laws in Victoria
 - 1869 Aborigines Protection Act
 - 1886 Aborigines Protection Act
 - 1890 Aborigines Act
 - 1910 and 1915 Aborigines Act
 - 1957 Aborigines Act
 - 1970 Social Welfare Act
 - 1984 Adoption Act
- Track the changes in the laws and compare them to other laws and attitudes that were changing in Australia (such as the 1967 referendum and the abolition of the White Australia policy) Did these laws reflect the changes in Australian society? What changes were happening? How do these differ from today?
- The history of invasion/ colonisation in Victoria – the 'settlement' of Port Phillip bay and Batman's 'treaty'. The establishment of the reserves and missions – what did this mean for changes in the way of life of Aboriginal people? Especially look at changes in family structure and connection with the land.
- Is the policy of children removal different or the same as other forms of dispossession? Did it have different and particular effects on traditional life?
- The history – 1860 – Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of Aborigines established and child removal begins
- 1869 Act establishes the removal of children as law and taken to reserves at Lake Hindmarsh, Coranderrk, Ramahyuck, Lake Tyers and Lake Condah
- The history of the missions in Victoria

Suggested activities:

- **Examine:** at some of the stories of Aboriginal people who were taken from around Australia – what are the stories telling us? What experiences do they describe?
- **Take on the persona** of one of the people telling a story - write a letter home as if you are that person, describing what has happened to you and how your life has changed. Are the experiences of Aboriginal people different from around Australia?
- **Research and Present:** each individual or group researches one states' Stolen Generations laws and history (available in the Bringing Them Home education module). This can be a good compare and contrast activity and if each individual/ group presents their findings, a good way for a class to gain an awareness of some of the differences in laws, history and therefore human experience.
- **Timeline:** create a timeline for each state to illustrate the different laws – this can be done visually as well as written
- **Examine the laws:** Students examine in detail the laws that were enacted in Victoria. Why were these laws put in place? What were the beliefs and attitudes at the time towards Aboriginal people? How did this impact upon Aboriginal people? Have these attitudes changed today?



- **Debate:** reenact a court or parliamentary setting. Each student is a character – Aboriginal family, politician, health worker, anthropologist, jury, farmer, settler. Each student debates why or why not the removal policies should be put in place, and how the dispossession of Aboriginal people will impact them.
- **Watch:** Students could watch *Rabbit Proof Fence* as a way of examining the historical context. There are many good lesson plans available online that relate to the film. However, go one step further and draw similarities and differences between Western Australia and Victoria.
- **Watch:** The Australian Human Rights Commission's *Bringing Them Home* DVD. This production traces the history of the Stolen generations throughout Australia and is available for free from their website. Teachers can also download specific activities that relate to the DVD and much more.
- **Watch:** Women of the Sun Parts 1-4. This series examines the lives of four Aboriginal women from 1820 – 1980's.
- **Create a Comparative Timeline:** Students can create a timeline which traces Victorian laws concerning Aboriginal child removal and contrasts it against a timeline showing other laws such as the White Australia policy
- **Create a play:** in a play, students could compare traditional Aboriginal family and cultural values and consider what the removal laws did to them. Students could create a play in which the stage is separated into three sides – one side is the traditional family (pre-contact) and the other, their modern descendents. In the middle could be a family from the mid-19th century who has been torn apart due to removal laws.

Student Outcomes:

- Students understand that laws and policies reflected terms and ideas such as Terra Nullius
- Students understand that although the Stolen Generations is a collective experience, individuals' stories are important in understanding the experience
- Students learn to empathise with members of the Stolen Generations
- Students understand that there are both similarities and differences in members of the Stolen Generations' experiences around Australia
- Students understand the differences between each state, and that those differences were caused by the historical settlement of each state
- Students gain a greater understanding of the removal policies and laws in Victoria, how the laws affected people, and how the laws are different from today and reflect different attitudes
- Students gain experience in debating a different point of view, understanding the democratic process and how viewpoints and laws (and people) do not always agree
- Students understand that the history and laws changed over time
- Students understand how the first laws disrupted traditional life and subsequent laws compounded this disruption
- Students understand that child removal, although part of the overall dispossession of Aboriginal people in Victoria, was a unique experience within overall dispossession
- Students understand that laws change over time as attitudes change
- Students understand the use of language can change over time



Topic 2: Teacher Background Notes

The History of the Stolen Generations in Victoria

Colonisation/ Invasion

In the early 1800s, sealers and whalers operating from Bass Strait to Western Australia regularly interacted with Aboriginal people, usually in violent, exploitative ways. Sealers established temporary settlements, coercing Aboriginal women to provide the labour force.

Two official expeditions to establish colonies in what is now Victoria were mounted in 1803 and 1826. The 1803 settlement at Sorrento was abandoned in 1804.

The 1826 settlement at Corinella on Westernport Bay was abandoned in 1828. There is little evidence of interaction between these expeditions and the Boon Wurrung traditional owners.

In 1834, settlers from Tasmania travelled across the Bass Strait to Portland Bay in search of new farmland. A year later, John Batman signed a farcical 'treaty' with the Aboriginal leaders of the Port Phillip Bay clans, which purported to give him ownership of almost 250,000 hectares of land.

The colonial government did not recognise Batman's 'treaty' and his ownership of the land was dismissed when the official Port Phillip settlement was established.

To maintain order in the new settlement on the Yarra, New South Wales Governor Sir Richard Bourke sent a magistrate (Captain William Lonsdale), soldiers, and policemen from Sydney in 1836.

In March 1837 the Governor visited the Port Phillip district and directed that a town be laid out and named Melbourne. In 1839 Charles Joseph La Trobe was sent from England as Superintendent of the Port Phillip district.

By the late 1840s the only parts of Victoria still unoccupied by European colonists were the arid areas in the north-west of the Mallee district and the mountainous and heavily forested parts of Gippsland (then referred to as *Gipps Land*) and the Otway Ranges.

The impact of this rapid European colonisation was an extraordinary decline in the Aboriginal population from an estimated 15,000 to fewer than 2,000 by 1863.

The causes of this excessive mortality included increased intergroup warfare, the violence of settlers and the punitive expeditions of police, intemperance and, above all, the introduction of alien diseases (Barwick 1971).

In response to this situation, the colonial government introduced a series of well meaning but counterproductive measures. The Port Phillip Protectorate (1839 to 1849) issued occasional rations to Aboriginal people in an attempt to induce them to settle at four protectorate stations in the Loddon Valley, the Western District, the Goulburn Valley and near Melbourne.





Three church missions were also established near Colac and on the Murray, but they and the Protectorate lacked the funds to provide adequate food, clothing and medicine (Barwick 1971).

A Select Committee (Legislative Council 1858-59) recommended that the government reserve land for Aboriginal people on their own country and grant funds for the regular distribution of food and clothing. The Board for the Protection of the Aborigines was established in June 1860 to administer this expenditure.

The Board for the Protection of the Aborigines

The Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, together with a number of sympathetic settlers appointed as 'local guardians' and Moravian, Anglican and Presbyterian missionaries, maintained a system of stations, reserves and ration depots; however, it was the board's policy, supported by lack of funds, that the able-bodied should support themselves and their families by working for pastoralists.

In 1869 the Victorian Parliament passed the *Aborigines Protection Act 1869*. This Act gave powers to the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines, which subsequently developed into an extraordinary level of control of people's lives, including regulation of residence, employment, marriage, social life and other aspects of daily life.

One of the regulations made under the Act allowed for 'the removal of any Aboriginal child neglected by its parents or left unprotected'. Children were removed to a mission, an industrial or reform school, or a station.

Another regulation allowed the board to remove any male child under 14 years and female child under 18 years living on reserves and relocate them elsewhere.

These powers of removal were even given to station managers.

These regulations were used to separate Aboriginal children from their parents and to house them in dormitories on the reserves at Lake Hindmarsh, Coranderrk, Ramahyuck, Lake Tyers and Lake Condah.

The full force of this segregation policy came in 1886 when the government amended the 1869 law. Faced with huge financial costs in running reserves and schools, the Board focused on two things:

- keeping 'full-bloods', who were thought to be dying out, on the reserves
- merging 'half-castes' into the white community.

What followed as a result of these new laws was the forced removal of all 'part-Aboriginal' people under 34 years off the reserves and away from their families.

The law also forced mixed-descent children into work. Employment and education were seen as successful ways to merge mixed-descent children into the community.

So, once an Aboriginal child turned 13 they were sent to work or apprenticed - the males usually worked as farmhands, the females as domestic servants. Once they left the reserve, they were not allowed to return without official permission.

Between 1886 and 1923 the number of Aboriginal reserves in Victoria declined from six to one. All Aboriginal people who wished to receive assistance from the board had to move to Lake Tyers, the only staffed institution after 1924.

The number of people there fluctuated, with a maximum of about 290 in the 1930s. There were many Aboriginal people living off the reserve, whether by force or choice.

The policy of excluding so-called 'half-castes' assumed that numbers of Aboriginal people on the reserves would decline so that reserves could be reduced and eventually closed down. The inadequacy and inhumanity of the policy and legislation led to the *Aborigines Act 1910*.

In this Act, Victoria moved away from the extreme control over Aboriginal people established in the nineteenth century. The legal distinction between the rights of the white population of the state and those of Aboriginal people within Victoria's borders was lessened, but not removed (National Archives of Australia 2006).

A growing underclass

In 1957, less than 200 Aboriginal people were reported as living in Victoria. This was based on the number of people living on the reserve at Lake Tyers. Based on these figures, the Victorian Government refused to attend the national conference on the 'Aboriginal problem'.⁸

Of course, there were many Aboriginal people living off the reserve - whether by force or choice. Those not living on the Lake Tyers reserve were denied any welfare assistance from either the government or the Board. Facing hostility from the non-Aboriginal community, they moved into shanty towns on the outskirts of country towns or the sites of former reserves. Aboriginal communities grew in the Goulburn Valley, East Gippsland and along the Murray River. Many also moved to Melbourne.

Although the Board continued to have power over Aboriginal children generally, it was only concerned with the people at Lake Tyers. Despite this, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families continued - largely informally and by private means.

Between 1887 and 1954, private welfare agencies and individuals were authorised to remove Aboriginal children if they suspected the child was neglected. They could assume guardianship of them or send them to an institution. In 1957, there were at least 68 institutions managed by 44 different private agencies.



⁸ SGV Note for Teachers: This may be a good comparison statistic for students. How many Aboriginal people lived in Victoria prior to invasion/ colonisation?



As these removals were informal and private, they were very difficult to control. Often, what was temporary assistance agreed to by the parents ended up being the start of an irreversible removal process. The government found it difficult to keep track of these removals, making it near impossible for parents to locate their children.

Adoption laws were also used by individuals to remove children. The Victorian Adoption of *Children Act 1928* allowed anyone to arrange an adoption, so long as the mother consented. Some Aboriginal parents would later find out they had unknowingly agreed to give up their children, when they thought they were placing them in temporary care.

Self-determination and recognition of past injustices

The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League was established in May 1957. Its members played a role in the formation of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement which pushed for rights for Aborigines across Australia and was behind the 1967 referendum.

The league became a powerhouse of ideas and began to critique the assimilation policy. In 1959 it defined its role as: 'to work towards the complete integration of people of Aboriginal descent with the Australian community with full recognition of the contribution they are able to make'.

It defined 'integration' as the ability of a minority to retain its identity. Aboriginal self-reliance and self-respect were other key aims. The league sought practical help for Aboriginal people (emergency assistance, employment, legal advice) and spoke to countless public and club meetings (Broome 2005).

Following the 1967 referendum, the Commonwealth Government entered into the field of Aboriginal affairs and appointed a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The Act enabled the Minister to review existing laws and policies on Aboriginal people living in Victoria.

Despite this change, the number of Aboriginal children forcibly removed continued to rise, from 220 in 1973 to 350 in 1976. Following the federal election in 1972, the assimilation policy that had dominated Aboriginal affairs for 20 years was replaced by a policy of self-determination.

The policy of self-determination shifted the focus to empowering Aboriginal people to decide on and achieve their own futures. This approach, based on the recognition that Aboriginal people should be actively involved in all decision making that affects their lives, gave support to the development of many Aboriginal organisations in Victoria.

Community control by Aboriginal people came about because too often mainstream services failed to meet community needs. Geographical, financial and cultural barriers made access to services difficult. Mainstream services were found to be unwelcoming and openly discriminatory.

Aboriginal community controlled organisations were seen to better understand Aboriginal people's needs and cultural beliefs and as such to provide a more welcoming, friendly, culturally appropriate service and setting.

Following the lead of the Aborigines Advancement League, the 1970s saw the emergence of a range of key Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

They all performed multiple functions, providing welfare and emergency assistance beyond their legal, health or housing briefs. These organisations were also social and information centres (Broome 2005). The efforts of Aboriginal-operated organisations resulted in a 40 per cent reduction in the number of Aboriginal children in homes as early as 1979.

In 1989 the Victorian Government adopted the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. Under the principle, an Aboriginal family must be the preferred placement for an Aboriginal child in need of alternative care.

This is now included in the main child welfare and protection laws, through the *Children and Families Act 2005*.

The reports of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1987 and the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families which began in 1995 drove further policy and program change in Victoria.

In 1997 a bipartisan initiative in the Victorian Parliament saw the passing of a motion of unreserved apology to Aboriginal people for past government policies of separating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their parents.

Aboriginal people have fought long and hard for their rights, and many important milestones mark modern Aboriginal history.

A number of significant developments at a national and state level have helped to promote a wider understanding within the community of issues facing Aboriginal Australians.

Further reading

Barwick, DE 1971, 'Changes in the Aboriginal population of Victoria, 1863-1966', in DJ Mulvaney & J Golson (Eds), *Aboriginal man and environment in Australia*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, pp. 288-315.

Broome, R 2005, *Aboriginal Victorians: a history since 1800*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, New South Wales.

Clarke, B & Chance, C 2005, *Wisdom man: biography of Banjo Clarke*, Penguin, Australia.

Chesterman, J & Galligan, B 1997, *Citizens without rights: Aborigines and Australian citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Connor, M 2005, *The invention of Terra Nullius*, Macleay Press, Sydney.

Howitt, AW 1996, *The native tribes of south-east Australia*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra (first published in 1906).

Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997, *Bringing Them Home*, National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, Canberra.

Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991, *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody national report*, vol. 1-5, Australian Government Publishing Services, Canberra.

Reynolds, H 1999, *Why weren't we told?*, Viking-Penguin Books, Ringwood.





Topic 2: Resource Guide

Read:

- For overall history of child removal in Australia and a fantastic *Track the History* timeline see HREOC website or SGV website.

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bth/contents.html>

Is That You Ruthie? Ruth Hegarty (University of Queensland Press, 2003)

Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence Doris Pilkington (University of Queensland Press, 1990)

These books have great worksheets attached to them on the Australian Human Rights Commission website.

Watch:

Rabbit Proof Fence (Phillip Noyce, 2002)

Bringing Them Home – An educational DVD available free from Australian Human Rights Commission website – order online at

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bth/contents.html>

Dancing in the Dust (Jenny Lowden Kendall and the Victorian College of the Arts, 2002)

Available from the Catholic Education Office

<http://www.yarrahealing.melb.catholic.edu.au/new/index.html>

Women of the Sun Parts 1-4 (Geoffrey Nottage, James Ricketson, 1981)

Available from Ronin Films educational Video and DVD sales

Links:

- Rabbit Proof Fence Resource Guide
http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/subject_guides__bibliographies/rabbit-proof_fence#intro
- Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stolen_Generations
- Racism – No Way
<http://www.racismnoway.com.au/classroom/factsheets/52.html>
- Reconciliation Victoria
<http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au/>
- Stolen Generations Alliance
<http://www.sgalliance.org.au/>

Research:

The Laws in Victoria

An excellent guide to the specific laws enacted in Victoria (and in states and territories across Australia) overtime can be found at HREOC website:
http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bth/resources/laws_vic.html

Topic 3: What was lost?

Themes for discussion:

- An in depth look at Aboriginal culture pre-settlement, with a particular focus on the role of the family and connection with the land
- It is strongly recommended that teachers take their class on an excursion to your local cultural centre or museum to learn about local Aboriginal culture
- The when, where and who of European colonisation/ invasion in Victoria
- What is the difference between settlement, colonisation and invasion? Whose point of view do these terms represent?
- What was lost during colonisation/ invasion?
- What evidence is there to demonstrate what was lost?
- Compare and contrast Victoria's dispossession to other states in light of what we know about the Stolen Generations
- What types of dispossession were there? e.g. massacres, forced 'move ons', integration, assimilation, child removal policies

Suggested activities:

- **Excursion:** Teachers are strongly recommended to take students to local cultural centre (see list below)
- **Compare:** Students to compare Aboriginal family values and family systems to current day family values and systems
- **Explore:** What students do or do not know about Aboriginal history and culture?
- **Examine:** Have a look at some Aboriginal artwork which relates to family and connection with the land – what do these artworks tell us?
- **Draw:** or paint a series of impressions as an Aboriginal person of your connection with the land, the invasion of the land by Europeans, and then life after European settlement
- **Mapping exercise:** find maps of Victoria your local area and research which Aboriginal communities and language groups live there. Students can create an 'Aboriginal Victorian map' using Aboriginal place names, tribal areas, language groups, cultures etc.
- **Debate:** Hold a debate between two sides – one Aboriginal, one European – as to whether it is 'colonisation' or 'invasion'.



Student Outcomes:

- Students gain a greater understanding of traditional Aboriginal culture, kinship, place and space – this will then inform a greater awareness of the losses sustained after colonisation/ invasion
- Students gain greater empathy for Aboriginal losses, but also greater appreciation for Aboriginal culture, both traditional and contemporary
- Students learn the history of European colonisation in Victoria and the different point of view of 'colonise' versus 'invade'. This creates awareness of historical debates
- Students gain insight into 'Aboriginal Australia' pre-contact and post contact
- Students can compare pre – and post- contact cultures, land and the way Victoria has evolved
- Students gain insight into early European attitudes towards Aboriginal people through the idea of Terra Nullius and 'the other' ie it becomes easier to commit crimes against a group of people who are the 'other', or in the case of Terra Nullius, people who do not 'own' the land.

Lisa and Eva Jo



Topic 3: Teacher Background Notes

Taken from: *Greening Australia Victoria Module 4 : Koori Heritage*, the Victorian Government's Department of Human Services 'Building Better Partnerships' and the Australian Human Rights Commission report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, *Bringing Them Home* (1997).

A Vast History

Aboriginal people have inhabited the land now known as Victoria for at least 30,000 years (Museum Victoria Information Sheet 10317, 2001). Evidence in other states suggest inhabitation of 57 000 years, while some consider Aboriginal inhabitation of Australia as long as 100 000 years.

In Aboriginal culture, the land was created by the journeys of the 'Spirit Ancestors' during a period known as the 'Dreaming' or 'Dreamtime'.

In song, story, poetry, art, drama and dance, the Dreamtime tells how the Spirit Ancestors (each symbolised by an animal which is the totem of the clan) gave life to the land and laid down the Lore – the structure of society, rituals to maintain the life of the land, and rules governing human behaviour.

Traditional Aboriginal people moved within highly defined, ancestral areas utilising the combinations of season, ritual and food availability. Working in this way enabled the communities to meet all their needs with the equivalent of a 3 day working-week (Presland, 1998). This left substantial time for leisure activities, spirituality, family, tool manufacture and other social pursuits.

Language

Victoria's Aboriginal people developed complex traditional cultures. Prior to colonisation/invasion there were approximately 250 Indigenous languages spoken in Australia (approximately 36 in Victoria).

Some of these had several varieties, and there were altogether about 500 language varieties used across Australia. Before colonisation/ invasion, Aboriginal people were capable of fluently speaking five or more languages.

Since this time, more than three quarters of the original languages have already been lost.

It is possible to obtain a map from the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages which shows the original languages and tribal boundaries for Victoria – www.vaclang.org.au





Plants and Animals

One significant activity was hunting - traditionally the man's role. Many ingenious techniques were employed using spears, clubs, snares, nets and camouflage. However the most important technique was the incredible connection that existed with the animals being hunted - an intimate awareness of their behaviour, movements, tracks, even their smell.

Plant collection was principally the women's role, although some minor hunting such as shellfish, eel and possum collection was allowed. When it is considered that around 70-80% of the total diet of traditional Aboriginal people was plants, this truly highlights the vital role that women played in keeping their communities alive and well fed. Digging sticks, woven baskets and other tools were essential articles for the collection of plant materials.

Fire was extensively used as a major land management and agricultural tool. The timing, extent and frequency of burning varied depending on the vegetation type and the season. Areas were burnt in mosaic patterns, maintaining an open structure to the bush and promoting the healthy growth of important food plants such as Murnong (Yam Daisies).

The consistent digging by generations of women collecting the underground tubers of food plants aerated the nutrient-poor soils, working in organic matter and enriching the soil (Zola and Gott, 1992). Little food, whether plant or animal, was wasted. The meat, fur, feathers, bone, oil, sinew, etc. all had many uses.

Much more than just food, plants produced medicines, weapons, dyes, tools, shelter and objects of ceremonial significance. Stone was used for grinding seeds, knives, spear tips and axe heads. In some instances stones were used to build the walls of bark dwellings.

Social Organisation

Aboriginal communities lived in large groups. All groups identified with a highly developed structure of language, marriage and kinship, animal moieties (totems) and an implicit physical and spiritual knowledge of the geography of the land. Approximately 36 distinct Aboriginal community and language groups are recorded to have existed in Victoria at the time of the first contact with Europeans (Clark, 1996).

These larger communities were in turn divided into smaller, well-defined, but related groups, essentially a large extended family of anywhere up to 100 people or more. These groups identified with a particular area of ancestral land which they regarded as their own, passed down from generation to generation, via their Creative Spirits since the beginning of time.

These larger groups normally divided down still further, operating in smaller family collectives while moving within their 'country'. Frequently these separate groups would come together again into their larger community, gathering for important seasonal, social or ceremonial requirements. At particularly sacred times, vast gatherings of these major groups would meet at special places of cultural and spiritual significance.

The significance of blood ties to family and the land were deep. Traditional people regarded themselves not only as protectors or custodians of the land and it's health, but part of the land - the two were considered inseparable.

Family

Despite the effects of invasion, Aboriginal families endeavored to continue the cultural importance of having family values, roles and structure within their mobs.

All members of the family have particular responsibilities, including extended family members. Elders have knowledge, wisdom and advice, from which the younger generations can learn; mothers and fathers have a significant parenting role to their daughters and sons, as well as being role models; Uncles and Aunties show guidance and caring while cousins are treated like brother and sister.

People who are not related are accepted into the family when the elderly members raise them from childhood - they become sons, daughters, sisters and brothers to that family.

Interestingly, the concept of 'half-brother' or 'step sister' does not exist within Aboriginal family structures and language. In Aboriginal culture, close family relationships exist among extended family members, with little or no difference in the sense of kinship between siblings and cousins.

Generally, within the Aboriginal community an older person in the community is referred to as 'aunty' or 'uncle' as a gesture of respect.

These family relationships were much stronger prior to colonisation/ invasion, with more defined roles, traditions, ceremonies, and spiritual and cultural responsibilities.

Members of the Stolen Generations are deeply deprived of these highly significant and important family ties and responsibilities as part of their removal experience as this is a vital part of Aboriginal identity, knowing your culture and your country.





Topic 3: Excursions

It is recommended that the best experience for teachers and students to learn about Aboriginal ways of living prior to European colonisation/ invasion is by visiting one of the local cultural centres, art galleries or museums.

Ballarat – Kirit Barreet Aboriginal Art and Cultural Centre:

www.aboriginalballarat.com.au

Bangerang Cultural Centre, Shepparton:

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~bangercc/choice.html>

Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Centre:

<http://www.brambuk.com.au/>

Budj Bim Tours Heywood:

http://www.glenelg.vic.gov.au/Page/page.asp?page_Id=171

Gippsland:

<http://www.visitvictoria.com/displayobject.cfm/objectid.217D4907-DD24-45B6-A103C8992659E39B/>

Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative:

www.gunditjmara.org.au

Kaawirn Kuunawarn Hissing Swan Arts, Port Fairy:

www.hissingswanarts.com.au

Koorie Heritage Trust:

<http://www.koorieheritagetrust.com/>

Krowathunkooloong Keeping Place, Bairnsdale:

<http://www.visitvictoria.com/displayobject.cfm/objectid.8D302A16-BB5B-4EB1-ADBF1FCFF6BAE94/>

Lake Tyers:

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/Victoria/Lake-Tyers/2005/02/17/1108500206655.html>

Melbourne Museum, Bunjilaka:

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/bunjilaka/>

Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place, East Ringwood:

www.mmigp.org.au

NGV Australia:

http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/ngvschools/programs/prg_indigenous.html

Royal Botanical Gardens:

<http://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/home>

Worn Gudidj/ Tower Hill, Warrnambool:

www.wornkundudj.org.au

Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council, Abbotsford:

http://www.casey.vic.gov.au/communitydirectory/combo_detail.asp?CLUBID=74623&dirFilter=INRESGUIDE

Topic 3: Resource Guide

Links:

A good resource for researching Aboriginal culture and tradition, including the family:

<http://www.dreamtime.net.au/indigenous/family.cfm>

Koori History Website: 200 Years of a Struggle For Justice

<http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/indexb.html>

Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal:

<http://www.culture.gov.au/articles/indigenous/>

Museum Victoria Encounters between Aboriginal and European settlers:

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/encounters/teachers.html>

Lore of the Land:

<http://www.loreoftheland.com.au/teaching/index.html>

Watch:

Frontier ABC Production and education kit

<http://www.abc.net.au/frontier/>

Ten Canoes (Rolf de Heer, 2006)

Although set in the Northern Territory, this film is an interesting look at Aboriginal life pre-colonisation/invasion. A study guide is also available on the website:

<http://www.tencanoes.com.au/tencanoes/default.htm>

Or an excellent website about the traditional life of the Yolngu in Arnhem Land:

<http://www.12canoes.com.au/>

The Tracker (Rolf de Heer, 2002)

Shows frontier life in the bush, 1922.

First Australians, SBS Series, 2008.

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Read:

Koorie Education Kit: Available from Koorie Heritage Trust

An excellent book list is available at the Action for Aboriginal Rights website:

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~aar/books.htm>

Look at a:

Map showing Aboriginal languages of Victoria available from VACL:

<http://www.vaclang.org.au/admin/file/content11/c7/VACL%20Map%20Request%20Sheet.doc>

Tindale's Map of Australia showing Tribal boundaries:

http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/orig/tindale/boundaries_intro.htm

Selection of posters from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. These are information mini- posters which show archeological findings from around Victoria.

Available from their website:

http://www1.dvc.vic.gov.au/aav/heritage/mini-posters/posters%20jul%2008/AA_16_Mini%20poster%20series%2012.06.08.pdf



Notes

[illegible]

Topic 4:

Victorian Stories

Themes for discussion:

- Look at stories in a variety of forms – storytelling, photographs, art, through film and online
- Look at both old and new stories to see if there are similarities or differences in the stories over time
- Research stories against what has been learnt in the previous topics of law and history – brings the dates and laws to life
- How do photographs and art tell stories? Different ways of constructing history
- How did people who were affected by past removal policies survive their experience?
- Were there positive and negative experiences in child removal?
- How do people feel today about their experiences?
- Where do Stolen Generations members' stories fit into Australian history?
- Finding people today who were taken and asking them about their experiences

Suggested activities:

- **Story Timeline:** Using timelines developed in other activities, find peoples' stories and track their story against the timeline
- **Listen:** Ring Stolen Generations Victoria and see if a member can come and speak to the class
- **Create:** Use photos/ art/ stories to reconstruct different versions of history – create a 'photographic history essay'
- **Research:** Use online resources (such as ABC and State Library) to find oral stories, and write stories out of listening to them
- **Drama:** Use online resources to find peoples' stories and re-enact them in a drama form – these could even be filmed
- **Compare:** what was happening to someone at a certain period in time (eg 1900 -1920) and compare what else was happening in Australia/ the world at that time (eg Gallipoli/ WW1)
- **Find:** Students could find modern stories and describe ways in which the person was affected by child removal but also the character/ strengths that resulted from this
- **Photographs:** students could research old photographs and stories from the missions – put together a 'Museum Display' that tell a range of stories
- **Excursion:** students could go on an excursion to one of the old mission grounds
- **Examine:** examine the language used in these laws – do we still use this language today? Why/why not?
- **Watch:** *Dancing in the Dust*, a Victorian film about one girls' experience as part of the Stolen Generations. Available from the Catholic Education Office - <http://www.yarrahealing.melb.catholic.edu.au/new/index.html>



Student Outcomes:

- Students understand that there are a variety of ways to tell stories and record histories
- Students research a variety of stories using a variety of techniques
- Students compare old and new stories to associate the effects of history on people
- Students understand that although the Stolen Generations was a tragic episode in our history, people still survived and some may have even had positive experiences
- Students empathise with people for whom Australian history has impacted upon
- Students place the Stolen Generations experience in Victoria in the broader context of Australian history
- Students understand that child removal policies continued up until the 1970's and that there are still issues with regards to that today – it is current history
- Students understand that child removal affected people for over 100 years – as a result of these multi-generational experiences, there are severe impacts families, communities and culture

Noverlee,
May 26, 2008



Topic 4: Teacher Background Notes

From the *Bringing Them Home* education module:

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/education/bth/download/experiences_resource.doc

What did Aboriginal people experience?

Please Note: This section contains information that may be unsuitable and/or distressing for some students. It includes references to physical and sexual abuse.

During the Inquiry, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission received 535 submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. These submissions told of people's personal experience of removal.

The evidence and stories presented to the Inquiry revealed a number of common experiences:

- lack of stability
- physical and cultural separation
- poor living conditions
- sexual and physical abuse
- absence of any meaningful bonds
- poor education
- exploitation through work.

Overall, the experiences speak of separation from families, communities and cultures on the one hand and removal to oppressive and poor conditions elsewhere. They challenge the justifications of betterment and protection that were used to defend these practices.

Here, *Second Step* has focused on physical and cultural separation, poor living conditions, poor education and exploitation through work.

Should teachers wish to engage students with other aspects listed above, information can be found on the Australian Human Rights Commission website.





Physical and cultural separation

For the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed, the separation from family was total. Contact with family members was at best limited and strictly controlled. During some periods and in some states, contact with family members was actually forbidden by law.

My mum had written letters to us that were never forwarded to us. Early when we were taken she used to go into the State Children's Department in Townsville with cards and things like that. They were never forwarded onto us.

(Confidential evidence 401, Queensland)

Many children were told they were unwanted or rejected by their parents, or even that their parents were dead.

I was trying to come to grips with and believe the stories they were telling me about me being an orphan, about me having no family. In other words, telling me just get up on your own two feet, no matter what your size ... and just face the world ... and in other words you don't belong to anybody and nobody belongs to you so sink or swim. And they probably didn't believe I would swim.

(Confidential evidence 421, Western Australia)

Of course, they were not just removed from their families, but also from their culture and community. This separation was total in the sense that even after they were placed in non-Aboriginal institutions, they were usually forbidden to continue developing their Aboriginal culture.

In most of the missions, homes and institutions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were not permitted to use their languages.

Y'know, I can remember we used to just talk lingo. [In the Home] they used to tell us not to talk that language, that it's devil's language. And they'd wash our mouths with soap. We sorta had to sit down with Bible language all the time. So it sorta whipped out all our language that we knew.

(Confidential evidence 170, South Australia)

In an attempt to force 'white ways' upon the children and to ensure they did not return to the camp on their release, Aboriginality was degraded and Aboriginal people were held in open contempt. This denigration of Aboriginal cultures was among the most common experiences of witnesses to the Inquiry.

All the teachings that we received from our [foster] family when we were little, that black people were bad ... I wanted my skin to be white.

(Confidential evidence 132, Victoria)

Poor living conditions

The conditions on missions, in government institutions and children's homes were often very poor. Conditions in institutions in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Flinders Island (Tasmania) were particularly harsh.

The physical structures of these institutions were often very poor, and resources were insufficient to improve them or to keep the children adequately clothed, fed and sheltered. Overcrowding was also a major problem.

There was no food, nothing. We was all huddled up in a room like a little puppy dog on the floor. Sometimes at night we'd cry with hunger. We had to scrounge in the town dump, eating old bread, smashing tomato sauce bottles, licking them. Half of the time the food we got was from the rubbish dump.

(Confidential evidence 549, Northern Territory)

Lack of financial support from governments was a major reason for the poor conditions in institutions. Many government policies reflected a desire to save expenditure on Aboriginal welfare, and the institutions were a prime target for cost cutting. The various Aboriginal Protection Boards were often under financial pressure. The same situation applied to the missions, some of which received no government funding at all.

Discipline and punishment was also quite severe in the institutions. For example, in 1935 the NSW Aborigines Protection Board set up an inquiry into the conduct of a manager at Kinchela Boys' Home. This followed allegations of his drunkenness and ill-treatment of residents. The Board informed him:

that on no account must he tie a boy up to a fence or tree, or anything else of that nature, to inflict punishment on him, that such instruments as lengths of hosepipe or a stockwhip must not be used in chastising a boy, that no dietary punishments shall be inflicted on any inmate in the Home.





Poor education

One of the overall justifications for removing Aboriginal children was to educate them. Policy after policy, law after law emphasised the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to receive an education.

Evidence submitted to the Inquiry showed that in reality, there was little if any education on the institutions and missions. Where there was education, it was of little value.

I didn't have much schooling ... Now, thinking about it, we were told from the outset that we had to go to the mission because we had to go to school, but then when we got in there we weren't forced to go to school or anything.

(Gertie Sambo quoted by Rintoul 1993 on page 89.)

Most of the education provided was training in domestic service or manual labour. The education essentially ensured a ready supply of cheap skilled labour for missions, governments and industry.

I finished school in fifth grade. I think I was 17. I did alright at school but they wouldn't allow us to go on. They wouldn't allow us to be anything. I would have liked to be a nurse or something but when I finished school they sent me to work as a domestic on stations.

(Confidential submission 277, Queensland)

Exploitation through work

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were sent to work from a young age after being removed and trained. Exploitation was characteristic of this work. The institutions and homes provided a supply of cheap labour to missions, governments, farmers, mining operations and other industries. Indigenous girls were usually sent off to work as domestic servants.

The wages received were much less than those received by non-Aboriginal workers, and many only received rations in return for work. In some states and territories, they only received a small proportion of their meagre earnings as pocket money. Most went to the government or Aborigines Protection Boards and was spent on the child's behalf. The rest was held in trust until the child was 21 years old.

Many apprentices never received the money owed to them.

We never, ever got our wages. It was banked for us. And when we were 21 we were supposed to get this money. We never got any of that money ever. And that's what I wonder: where could that money have went? Or why didn't we get it?

Topic 4: Resource Guide

Interact:

Looking Back, Moving Forward – The Journey of the Stolen Generations of Victoria: educational CD Rom available from Koorie Heritage Trust

Watch:

Journeys From Heartache to Hope (South Australia Media Resource Centre, 2008) Stories of survival from 8 Aboriginal women from South Australia

Land of the Little Kings (Des Kootji Raymond, 2000) Featuring Archie Roach, who traces his own, and other peoples', stories of being taken away.

Why Me? (Rick Cavaggon, 2007) Features the stories of five people who were taken as children, and are now adults struggling with their past.

Listen:

'Took the Children Away' A song by Archie Roach, available on the album *Charcoal Lane*

Nobodies Children (2004), *Stealem Away* (2006) and *Cry Stolen* (2007) are albums available from the Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Cooperation.

See their website: <http://www.kimberleystolengeneration.com.au/>

Museum of Victoria - 'Hidden Histories' (oral histories of Indigenous people in Victoria)
http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/hidden_histories/histories/

Read:

Footprints: The Journey of Lucy and Percy Pepper (National Archives of Australia and Public Records of Victoria, 2008) The story of the Peppers demonstrates the struggles of an Aboriginal family in Victoria

Home Larrisa Behrendt (University of Queensland Press, 2004) Garibooli is happy living in the camp with her parents and her precious brother, Euroke, until the day two strange white men come and take her away. Renamed Elizabeth she is sent to work as a housemaid for a privileged white family, never to see her family, or her land, again.

Us Taken Away Kids – Commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Bringing Them Home Report A summary of the BTH report, plus stories and poems from around Australia, available from HREOC



Research:

Stories of Stolen Generations on the ABC

http://www.abc.net.au/missionvoices/stolen_generations/stories_of_stolen_generations/default.htm

Links:

Mission Voices, ABC Website:

<http://www.abc.net.au/missionvoices/>

Receive a visit:

From a member of Stolen Generations Victoria. Phone 03) 9470 3477
– we have members all over the state.



People lay flowers on a wreath to acknowledge the Stolen Generations, Federation Square, May 26, 2008

Resource 1: 'It's Not About' – lyrics by Brian Morley

Song lyrics by Brian Morley,
his response to the Prime Minister's apology

It's Not About

It's not about the money
It's not about the toys
But all about the hugs and kisses
I missed when I was a boy, a boy

It's not about the trips away
Or the shoes upon my feet
But all about my brother gone
And my sister not to meet

It's not about intentions
The road to hell is paved
But all about the damage done
How many can be saved?

You tell me I was better off
I should be glad
I say to you, you would not know
No wonder I've been sad

You tell me I was better off
I should be glad
I say to you, you would not know
No wonder I've been mad

Well what about recompense
What is the sum?
I don't know can ever make up
For what has been done

It's not about a trip of guilt
On the boardwalk of shame
But all about all of us
Ourselves we can reclaim

You tell me I was better off
I should be glad
I say to you, you would not know
No wonder I've been bad





Resource 2: Personal stories from the Australian Human Rights Commission website

The following stories were received as submissions to the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

Paul

For 18 years the State of Victoria referred to me as State Ward No 54321.

I was born in May 1964. My Mother and I lived together within an inner suburb of Melbourne. At the age of five and a half months, both my Mother and I became ill. My Mother took me to the Royal Children's Hospital, where I was admitted.

Upon my recovery, the Social Welfare Department of the Royal Children's Hospital persuaded my Mother to board me into St Gabriel's Babies' Home in Balwyn ... just until Mum regained her health.

If only Mum could've known the secret, deceitful agenda of the State welfare system that was about to be put into motion - 18 years of forced separation between a loving mother and her son.

Early in 1965, I was made a ward of the State. The reason given by the State was that, 'Mother is unable to provide adequate care for her son'.

In February 1967, the County Court of Victoria dispensed with my Mother's consent to adoption. This decision, made under section 67(d) of the Child Welfare Act 1958, was purportedly based on an 'inability to locate mother'.

Only paltry attempts had been made to locate her. For example, no attempt was made to find her address through the Aboriginal Welfare Board.

I was immediately transferred to Blackburn South Cottages to be assessed for 'suitable adoptive placement'. When my Mother came for one of her visits, she found an empty cot. With the stroke of a pen, my Mother's Heart and Spirit had been shattered. Later, she was to describe this to me as one of the 'darkest days of her life'.

Repeated requests about my whereabouts were rejected. All her cries for help fell on deaf ears by a Government who had stolen her son, and who had decided 'they' knew what was best for this so-called part-Aboriginal boy.

In October 1967 I was placed with a family for adoption. This placement was a dismal failure, lasting only 7 months. This family rejected me, and requested my removal, claiming in their words that I was unresponsive, dull, and that my so-called deficiencies were unacceptable.

In the Medical Officer's report on my file there is a comment that Mrs A 'compared him unfavourably with her friends' children and finds his deficiencies an embarrassment, eg at coffee parties'.

Upon removal, I was placed at the Gables Orphanage in Kew, where I was institutionalised for a further two years. Within this two years, I can clearly remember being withdrawn and frightened, and remember not talking to anyone for days on end.

I clearly remember being put in line-ups every fortnight, where prospective foster parents would view all the children. I was always left behind. I remember people coming to the Gables, and taking me to their homes on weekends, but I would always be brought back. Apparently I wasn't quite the child they were looking for.

My dark complexion was a problem.

The Gables knew my dark complexion was a problem, constantly trying to reassure prospective foster parents that I could be taken as Southern European in origin.

In January 1970, I was again placed with a foster family, where I remained until I was 17. This family had four natural sons of their own. I was the only fostered child.

During this placement, I was acutely aware of my colour, and I knew I was different from the other members of their family. At no stage was I ever told of my Aboriginality, or my natural mother or father.

When I'd say to my foster family, 'why am I a different colour?', they would laugh at me, and would tell me to drink plenty of milk, 'and then you will look more like us'.

The other sons would call me names such as 'their little Abo', and tease me. At the time, I didn't know what this meant, but it did really hurt, and I'd run into the bedroom crying. They would threaten to hurt me if I told anyone they said these things.

My foster family made me attend the same primary and secondary school that their other children had all previously attended. Because of this, I was ridiculed and made fun of, by students and teachers.

Everyone knew that I was different from the other family members, and that I couldn't be their real brother, even though I'd been given the same surname as them. Often I would run out of class crying, and would hide in the school grounds.

The foster family would punish me severely for the slightest thing they regarded as unacceptable or unchristian-like behaviour, even if I didn't eat my dinner or tea. Sometimes I would be locked in my room for hours.

Countless times the foster father would rain blows upon me with his favourite leather strap. He would continue until I wept uncontrollably, pleading for him to stop.

My Mother never gave up trying to locate me

Throughout all these years - from 5 and a half months old to 18 years of age, my Mother never gave up trying to locate me.

She wrote many letters to the State Welfare Authorities, pleading with them to give her son back. Birthday and Christmas cards were sent care of the Welfare Department. All these letters were shelved. The State Welfare Department treated my Mother like dirt, and with utter contempt, as if she never existed. The Department rejected and scoffed at all my Mother's cries and pleas for help. They inflicted a terrible pain of Separation, Anguish and Grief upon a mother who only ever wanted her son back.

In May 1982, I was requested to attend at the Sunshine Welfare Offices, where they formerly discharged me from State wardship. It took the Senior Welfare Officer a mere twenty minutes to come clean, and tell me everything that my heart had always wanted to know.



He conveyed to me in a matter-of-fact way that I was of 'Aboriginal descent', that I had a Natural mother, father, three brothers and a sister, who were alive.

He explained that his Department's position was only to protect me and, 'that is why you were not told these things before'. He placed in front of me 368 pages of my file, together with letters, photos and birthday cards. He informed me that my surname would change back to my Mother's maiden name of Angus.

The welfare officer scribbled on a piece of paper my Mother's current address in case, in his words, I'd 'ever want to meet her'. I cried tears of Relief, Guilt and Anger. The official conclusion, on the very last page of my file, reads:

'Paul is a very intelligent, likeable boy, who has made remarkable progress, given the unfortunate treatment of his Mother by the department during his childhood.'

Confidential submission 133, Victoria. When Paul located his mother at the age of 18 she was working in a hostel for Aboriginal children with 20 children under her care. She died six years later at the age of 45. Paul's story appears on page 68 of *Bringing Them Home*. Last updated 2 December 2001.

Aunty Rieo and grandchildren



Karen

I am a part Aboriginal woman, who was adopted out at birth. I was adopted by a white Australian family and came to live in New Zealand at the age of 6 months. I grew up not knowing about my natural Mother and Father. The only information my adoptive parents had about my birth, was the surname of my birth Mother.

I guess I had quite a good relationship with my adoptive Mum, Dad and sisters. Though my adopted Mother said I kept to myself a lot, while I was growing up. As I got older I noticed my skin colouring was different to that of my family.

My Mother told me I was adopted from Australia and part Aboriginal. I felt quite lonely especially as I approached my teens. I got teased often about being Aboriginal and became very withdrawn and mixed up, I really did not know where I belonged.

As a result of this I started having psychiatric problems. I seem to cope and muddle along.

I eventually got married to a New Zealander, we have two boys, who are now teenagers. One of our boys is dark like myself, and was interested in his heritage. I was unable to tell him anything, as I didn't know about it myself.

My husband, boys and myself had the opportunity to go to Melbourne about 7 years ago on a working holiday for 10 weeks. While in Melbourne I went to the Aboriginal Health Centre and spoke to a social worker, as I had a copy of my birth certificate with my birth Mother's name on it. The social worker recognized my Mother's surname 'Graham', and got in touch with my aunty, who gave me my Mother's phone number.

I got in touch with my birth Mother and made arrangements to meet her. I have a half brother and sister. My birth Mother and Father never married, though my Father knew my Mother was pregnant with me.

My Mother did not know where my Father was, as they parted before I was born. My sister decided to call a local Melbourne paper and put our story in the paper on how I had found them after 29 years.

My Father who was in Melbourne at the time, saw the article and a photo of my Mother and myself in the paper. He recognized my Mother and got in touch with her. My Mother and I had been corresponding, after we returned to New Zealand.

For her own reasons, she would not give my Father my address, so my Father went through the social service agency and got in touch with me two and a half years ago. I have met my birth Father, as I had a family wedding in Melbourne shortly after he made contact with me, so I made arrangements to meet him.

We kept in contact with one another, but I feel we will never be able to make up for lost time, as my birth parents live in Australia and myself in New Zealand.

I still feel confused about where I belong, it has been very emotional and the result of this caused me to have a complete nervous breakdown. I am on medication daily and am having to see a counsellor to help me come to terms and accept the situation, where I am at right now and to sort out some confused feelings. My adoptive family really don't want to know too much about my birth family, which also makes it hard.

I feel that I should be entitled to some financial compensation for travel purposes, to enable us to do this.

Confidential submission 823, New Zealand. Karen's story appears on page 244 of *Bringing Them Home*.



Notes

Topic 5: Lasting Effects

Themes for discussion:

- Stolen Generations experience is a unique part of Australian history
- Stolen Generations experience is also unique in the context of Aboriginal history – not just 'lumped in' with the general dispossession discourses
- The apology was a significant step towards reconciliation but there are still other steps to be taken
- The Stolen Generations experience is a 'living history' ie the effects of past removal policies still affect people today
- With better understanding and awareness people can make a difference to those peoples effected by the Stolen Generations experience

Suggested activities:

- **Consider:** the Victorian experience of the Stolen Generations and place it within the broader experiences in other states (that were discussed in Topic 2). What are the similarities/ differences?
- **Question:** How does the apology relate to the Victorian experience?
- **Discuss:** ways in which people can further reconciliation within their local area – real world activities such as write to local MP or write a letter to the papers
- **Research:** another country where child removal was a policy and compare to the Victorian experience
- **Get involved:** Consider some of the health/education/prison statistics available (such as Oxfam) and discuss how the Stolen Generations experience may have contributed to that
- **Get out there:** Perhaps organize an excursion to a 'charity' such as Oxfam to learn more about community involvement and volunteering

Student Outcomes:

- Students understand the 'place' of the Stolen Generations in Victorian and Australian history
- Students engage with current debates/ attitudes surrounding the Stolen Generations
- Students understand that the Stolen Generations experience has an affect on people today
- Students engage with and discuss ways to further promote reconciliation
- Students recognize that everyone can have a part in reconciliation
- Students begin to see the global context of indigenous child removal and therefore Indigenous dispossession world wide



Topic 5: Teacher Background Notes

The Effects Across Generations

When the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission heard testimonies from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were removed as children, it heard of their immediate experiences when they were younger. It also heard of the effects that these experiences had on their lives as they grew into adults.

The effects of this history on peoples' lives and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are many and varied. The Inquiry found there were a number of common effects, drawn from the testimony of witnesses and research:

- separation from primary carer
- mental and physical health problems
- delinquency and behavioural problems
- undermined parenting skills
- loss of cultural heritage
- broken families and communities
- racism.

Here, Second Step has focused on loss of cultural heritage, broken families and communities, and racism.

Should teachers wish to engage students with other aspects listed above, information can be found on the Australian Human Rights Commission website.



Uncle Talgium (Chocko)

Loss of cultural heritage

One principal effect of the removal policies was the severe erosion of cultural links. This was of course the aim of these policies. The children were to be:

- 'prevented from acquiring the habits and customs of the Aborigines' (South Australian Protector of Aborigines in 1909)
- 'merged into the present civilisation and become worthy citizens' (NSW Colonial Secretary in 1915).

The intended aim and result of the removals was to prevent Aboriginal children from cultivating a sense of Aboriginal cultural identity while they were developing their own personal identity.

When we left Port Augusta, when they took us away, we could only talk Aboriginal. We only knew one language and when we went down there, well we had to communicate somehow. Anyway, when I come back I couldn't even speak my own language. And that really bugged my identity up. It took me 40 odd years before I became a man in my own people's eyes, through Aboriginal law. Whereas I should've went through that when I was about 12 years of age.

(Confidential evidence 179, South Australia)

In a child's early years, both family and culture are important in developing their personal identity and sense of self. Family and culture also strengthen a person's sense of belonging and personal history. For those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were removed, family and culture were replaced by institutions and non-Aboriginal homes - a culture both artificial and alien to them.

For many of those removed, this lack of cultural heritage and knowledge continued through their adult lives as they grew up in a non-Aboriginal culture. Some were even denied knowledge of their Aboriginality. Finding this out many years later would change their lives dramatically.

As mentioned, the aim of these policies was to assimilate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children into non-Aboriginal society so they could 'become worthy citizens'. As many of the submissions and histories show, the reality was that those removed could not assimilate into non-Indigenous society. They faced continued discrimination.

Many witnesses to the Inquiry spoke of their strong sense of not belonging either in the Aboriginal community or in the non-Aboriginal community.

I felt like a stranger in Ernabella, a stranger in my father's people. We had no identity with the land, no identity with a certain people. I've decided in the last 10, 11 years to, y'know, I went through the law. I've been learning culture and learning everything that goes with it because I felt, growing up, that I wasn't really a blackfella. You hear whitefellas tell you you're a blackfella. But blackfellas tell you you're a whitefella. So, you're caught in a half-caste world.

(Confidential evidence 289, South Australia)

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures were not destroyed by these policies, and continue to exist, they were profoundly changed as a result.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, this has had a major practical impact on their ability to claim native title.





Broken families and communities

The trauma of forcible removal of children affected the parents and other relatives left behind as well as the children taken. Evidence put before the Inquiry clearly established that families and whole communities suffered grievously upon the forcible removal of their children.

The Inquiry drew on psychological research into the effects of child adoption on the parents and other family members. The research found the effects to be similar to those where the child has died.⁹

For example, evidence suggested that Aboriginal men lost their purpose in relation to their families and communities. Often their individual responses to that loss took them away from their families: on drinking binges, ending up in hospitals following accidents or assaults, in a gaol or lock-up, or prematurely dead.

The interesting thing was that he was such a great provider ... He was a great provider and had a great name and a great reputation. Now, when this intrusion occurred it had a devastating impact upon him and upon all those values that he believed in and that he put in place in his life which included us, and so therefore I think the effect upon Dad was so devastating. And when that destruction occurred, which was the destruction of his own personal private family which included us, it had a very strong devastating effect on him, so much so that he never ever recovered from the trauma that occurred ...

(Confidential evidence 265, Victoria)

However, the effects went beyond the family members and had a significant impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Parenting roles, nurturing and socialising responsibilities are widely shared in Indigenous societies. Relatives beyond that of the immediate family have nurturing responsibilities and emotional ties with children as they grow up. When the children were taken, many people in addition to the biological parents were bereft of their role and purpose in connection with those children.

Often, communities would not just lose children, but also entire families. Some Aboriginal families would exile themselves, leaving their community, out of a fear that their children would be taken away if they stayed.

But there was an even greater impact on communities. When a child was forcibly removed, the community's chance to maintain itself in that child was lost. A community's continued existence depends, amongst other things, on reproduction. A society's future lies in its children.

In North America, where similar policies of removal were in place, a Congressional Inquiry found that the removal of Indian children had a severe impact on Indian tribes, threatening their existence.

[Children are] core elements of the present and future of the community. The removal of these children creates a sense of death and loss in the community, and the community dies too ... there's a sense of hopelessness that becomes part of the experience for that family, that community ...

(Lynne Datnow, Victorian Koori Kids Mental Health Network, evidence 135)

⁹ Margaret van Keppel and Robin Winkler speaking at the Third Australian Conference on Adoption in 1982

Racism

Those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were placed in institutions faced a hazard over and above that experienced by non-Aboriginal children who were institutionalised. This was the continual condemnation and attack upon their Aboriginality and that of their families.

Many witnesses to the Inquiry spoke of an uncertainty of how to feel about their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, some even feeling negative about it.

At the core of these policies was a value judgement based on race. They imposed European culture as a positive in preference to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture, which was over and again presented as a negative. Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children would come to internalise this racism. In other words, they would judge themselves according to these standards.

I didn't know any Aboriginal people at all - none at all. I was placed in a white family and I was just - I was white. I never knew, I never accepted myself to being a black person until - I don't know - I don't know if you ever really do accept yourself as being ... How can you be proud of being Aboriginal after all the humiliation and the anger and the hatred you have? It's unbelievable how much you can hold inside.

(Confidential evidence 152, Victoria)





Ruby Hunter performs on May 26, 2008

Topic 6: The International Context

This topic leads into a whole other field of study. Policies in the US, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa also had comparable effects on the Indigenous peoples of those nations, and would make an interesting compare and contrast study.

Interestingly, on June 11, 2008, the Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, offered a full apology on behalf of all Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system.

"The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history," Prime Minister Harper said. "Today, we recognize this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country. The Government of Canada sincerely apologises and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly."

This system forcibly removed Indian children and placed them into 'boarding schools' and during this process, culture, land and language were lost. A similar system was implemented in the United States, known as Indian Boarding Schools.

Students may like to examine the language used in both Kevin Rudd and Stephen Harper's speeches - they might find them surprisingly similar!

Another good activity would be to compare the historical experiences of these nations, and also what current governments have done to achieve reconciliation. Similar studies could be carried out taken into context South Africa's apartheid system and subsequent Truth and Reconciliation Council, and land rights issues in New Zealand.



Wreath laid for Sorry Day, 2008



Topic 6: Resource Guide

Links

The International context: For great resources from NZ, SA and Canada see Australian Human Rights Commission website

- Canadian Human Rights Commission: <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/>
- Kids' Stop — Indian and Northern Affairs Canada: <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/index-eng.asp>
- History of the First Nations: <http://www.tolatsga.org/Compacts.html>
- Details of the Residential Schools Settlement: <http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/English.html>

- New Zealand Human Rights Commission: <http://www.hrc.co.nz/>
- The New Zealand Wars: <http://www.newzealandwars.co.nz>
- Waitangi Tribunal — Schools Section: <http://www.knowledge-basket.co.nz/waitangi/school/school.html>
- For information on the Treaty of Waitangi <http://www.ots.govt.nz/>

- South African Human Rights Commission: <http://www.sahrc.org.za/>
- Children Rights and Law Reform in South Africa - An update from the Juvenile Justice Front: <http://www.dci-au.org/html/sa.html>
- The Story of Africa - BBC World Service: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index.shtml>
- South African History Online: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/>
- Embassy of South Africa - The Hague: <http://www.zuidafrika.nl/>

Second Step Conclusion

The introduction to this resource stated that each traumatic story has two threads in the tale – the hardships, grief and loss; and the story of survival - how the person overcame their experience and what they learnt.

It is important to remember this second strand of the Stolen Generations' story; otherwise it can leave one feeling overwhelmed. So, a good way to round off the teaching module is to revisit the opening topic – the Prime Minister's apology.

Perhaps go over the initial brainstorming, and see what students have now learnt. Do they have a better understanding of why the apology was given? Has students' knowledge of Stolen Generations history and experiences increased? Are students able to identify and explain what happened in their local area and why?

If a few of these questions can be answered then the 'second step' of reconciling Australia's Stolen Generations history has been achieved.

It is imperative for students to understand the whole story, which can be saddening. But students ought also to recognise that the people who went through those experiences, and their families who continue to feel the effects, are part of an incredibly resilient group of people.

Aboriginal communities in Victoria are today stronger than ever, with a resurgence of culture, language, land and lifestyle in the last 25 years. This is reflected in a number of ways, such as the teaching of Aboriginal languages in schools across Victoria¹⁰ and reports that some schools are starting their school assembly with a traditional welcome to country alongside the national anthem.

Members of the Stolen Generations are moving forward in what is termed the 'journey of healing' and will continue to fight for justice, recognition and reconciliation. Just as Aboriginal culture is a 'living culture', so is the Stolen Generations experience 'living history' - looking back but moving forward.

Australia has become far more accepting and proud of its Aboriginal heritage and history and teachers have a unique opportunity in playing a significant, and positive, role in continuing the process of reconciliation within their local area.

For any further questions, information or consultation please do not hesitate to contact staff at Stolen Generations Victoria.



¹⁰ "1,427 children in Victorian Primary schools in 2006 and 27 students in Secondary schools making this a total of 1,454 children who are learning an Indigenous language in Victoria." (Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages)

Appendix One:

Language and Terminology

Today, just as attitudes towards Aboriginal culture are changing, terms used to describe Aboriginal people are continually evolving. This makes sensitivity to appropriate forms of address and terminology particularly important.

Please Note: This section draws largely on a similar section contained in Communicating Positively: a guide to appropriate Aboriginal terminology produced by NSW Health, however some modifications have been made to acknowledge views and circumstances within the Victorian Aboriginal community.

Aboriginal or Aborigine

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is:

- a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent;
- who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; and
- is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.

Not all Aboriginal people are dark skinned.

- It is offensive to question the quantum of Aboriginal blood or to expect an Aboriginal person to divide their Aboriginality into parts.
- Terms such as 'full-blood', 'half-caste' and 'quarter-caste' were derived from destructive government policies of the past and as such are highly offensive.

Although it is grammatically correct, the term 'Aborigines' has negative connotations for some Aboriginal people. 'Aboriginal person' or 'Aboriginal people' can be used as an alternative.

The term 'Aboriginal' is not generally inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people, and reference to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should therefore be made where necessary.

Always capitalise the 'A' in 'Aboriginal' as you would other proper nouns and names such as 'Australian' or 'Minister'. The word 'aboriginal' with a lower case 'a' refers to an aboriginal person from any part of the world and as such does not necessarily refer to the Aboriginal people of Victoria.

It is offensive when literature for distribution within the Aboriginal community refers to Aboriginal people or communities with a lower case 'a'.

Do not use 'Aboriginal' as a noun; it should only be used as an adjective.

- The government's new strategy will support increased business with Aboriginals.
- The government's new strategy will support increased business with Aboriginal people.

Never abbreviate the term 'Aboriginal' because this is offensive.

Both 'Aboriginal people' and 'Aboriginal peoples' are acceptable depending on the context. For example:

- 'At the time of European colonisation, there were approximately 600 Aboriginal peoples.'

Note that in this instance 'peoples' is used to describe the groups of Aboriginal people, each with their own language, cultural practices and beliefs.

- 'At the time of European colonisation, there were between 300,000 and one million Aboriginal people living in Australia.'

Indigenous people or peoples

The Macquarie Dictionary defines 'indigenous' as 'originating in and characterising a particular region or country'. Based on this definition, an indigenous person is a person originating in or characterising a particular region or country.

Because 'indigenous' is not specific, some Aboriginal people feel the term diminishes their Aboriginality and must be avoided. While the term 'Indigenous' will sometimes be found in government publications it is recommended that the terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' are used.

Torres Strait Islander or Torres Strait Islander person

A Torres Strait Islander or a Torres Strait Islander person is a person or descendant from the Torres Strait Islands, which are located to the north of mainland Australia.

In the 1996 and 2001 Censuses, people could be recorded as being of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002).

The term 'Torres Strait Islander' refers to people of Torres Strait Islander origin, whether or not they are also of Aboriginal origin.

Always capitalise 'Torres Strait Islander'. Never abbreviate the term 'Torres Strait Islander' because this is offensive.

Koori and other terms

'Koori' and other terms are directly derived from Aboriginal languages and are the names often used by Aboriginal people in specific areas when referring to themselves.

Note that many Aboriginal people from other areas of Australia reside within Victoria and still use their traditional names.

Some examples of these terms are:

- *Koori* or *Koorie*, which is a New South Wales term that is used by many Aboriginal people in Victoria and New South Wales
- *Palawa*, which is usually used by Aboriginal people in Tasmania
- *Murri*, which is usually used by Aboriginal people in north-west New South Wales and Queensland
- *Nunga*, which is usually used by Aboriginal people in South Australia
- *Yolngu*, which is usually used by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (north-east Arnhem Land)
- *Anangu*, which is usually used by Aboriginal people in Central Australia
- *Noongar*, which is usually used by Aboriginal people in south-west Western Australia.

Always check with the local Aboriginal community about using this type of terminology. There are many Aboriginal language groups within the above mentioned areas and the use of such terms can be restrictive.

Also, people may be living or working in one particular area, but be from another. For example, a person from Queensland may be living and working in Bendigo and refer to themselves as a 'Murri'.





Community

There are many different perspectives on what is a 'community'. Non-Aboriginal people often use 'community' to refer to a particular geographical locality. For example, the expression 'Echuca Aboriginal community' generally refers to all the Aboriginal people living in and around Echuca (including across the Victorian and New South Wales border) or a specific section of that community.

It is important to understand, however, that a great many Aboriginal people were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands to live elsewhere. For instance, the traditional owners of Ballarat land are the Wathaurong people.

Today the 'Ballarat Aboriginal community' comprises Aboriginal people from many areas of Victoria and Australia. Therefore, an Aboriginal person may belong to more than one community; for example, where they come from, where their family is, and where they live or work.

Community is about interrelatedness and belonging and is central to Aboriginality.

It is generally acceptable to use the term 'community' to refer to Aboriginal people living within a particular geographical location while remaining mindful of the diversity of Aboriginal people within that 'community'.

Country

'Country' is a term used to describe a culturally defined area of land associated with a particular culturally distinct group of people or nation.

For example:

- Swan Hill is in Wemba Wemba country.

Use 'country' to refer to a particular culturally defined area of land, such as 'Kerrup Jmara country', 'Dja Dja Wrung country' or 'Wathaurong country'.

Elder

An Elder is an identified and respected male or female person within the community who is able to provide advice, offer support and share wisdom in a confidential way with other members of the community, particularly younger members (Forrester & Williams 2003).

In some instances, Aboriginal people above a certain age will refer to themselves as Elders; however, it is important to understand that in traditional Aboriginal culture, age alone does not necessarily mean that one is a recognised Elder.

It is also important to note that some communities will have very few recognised Elders.

The use of Elder (note the upper case 'E') is generally acceptable, but it is important to be aware of the differences in meaning outlined above.

Mob

'Mob' is a term identifying a group of Aboriginal people associated with a particular place or country.

'Mob' is an extremely important term to Aboriginal people because it is used to identify who they are and where they are from. 'Mob' is generally used by Aboriginal people and between Aboriginal people.

Therefore, it may not be appropriate for non-Aboriginal people to use this term unless this is known to be acceptable to Aboriginal people.

Traditional owner

A 'traditional owner' is an Aboriginal person or group of Aboriginal people directly descended from the original Aboriginal inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land or country and who has or have a cultural association with this country which derives from the traditions, observances, customs, beliefs or history of the original Aboriginal inhabitants of the area.

Colonisation vs Invasion

European colonisation occurred at the time of the landing of the First Fleet in 1788. Although there were between 300,000 and one million Aboriginal people living on the mainland at that time, the British Government asserted a right to sovereignty and ownership of the land.

This was accompanied by a drastic decline in the Aboriginal population from massacres and disease and the traditional ways were destroyed as hunting grounds were taken over for grazing and agriculture, causing Aboriginal people to be treated as trespassers on their own land under European law.

While the term 'invasion' is not usually used in the public sphere to describe this process, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (and others) assert that this was really the case.

Subsequently, protest marches under the name 'Invasion Day' are held on January 26 (Australia Day) also referred to as Survival Day.





Pre and post contact

'Pre contact' and 'post contact' refer to the period before and after European colonisation. 'Pre contact' and 'post contact' are the preferred terms for referring to the period before and after European colonisation.

The terms 'pre history' and 'post history' are not acceptable because they imply that Australian history did not begin until the landing of the First Fleet and subsequent European colonisation, and that Aboriginal culture has no history.

Women's business

Women's business pertains to female-specific health and wellbeing and spiritual matters that traditionally men must not observe. For example, matters relating to the female anatomy, spiritual ceremony and the maintenance of women's sites of significance are considered women's business and only women should be privy to these matters.

In Victoria today it is respected that many women still have strong beliefs surrounding women's business; however, for others this is respected but they may not practice it.

Men's business

Similarly, men's business pertains to male-specific health and wellbeing and spiritual matters that traditionally women must not observe. For example, matters relating to the male anatomy, spiritual ceremony and the maintenance of men's sites of significance are considered men's business and only men should be privy to these matters.

In Victoria today it is respected that many men still have strong beliefs surrounding men's business; however, for others this is respected but they may not practice it.

Appendix Two:

Stolen Generations Glossary

Please note: The information in this chapter has been taken from the Australian Human Rights Commission website.

Adoption

When a child is legally taken into the permanent care of individual(s) other than the biological parent/s.

Alienation

Alienation (from one's land) is loss of property ownership rights through transfer of those rights from one person or group to another person or group.

Apartheid

This term comes from South Africa and literally means 'apartness' in the Afrikaans language. It refers to the country's former policy of political, economic and social segregation and discrimination on the grounds of race, and means any such segregation and/or discrimination in broad political, economic and/or social contexts.

Assimilation

In 1937, the Commonwealth government held a national conference on Aboriginal affairs which agreed that Aboriginal people not "of full blood" should be absorbed into the wider population. The aim of assimilation was that the "Aboriginal problem" would ultimately disappear - that Aboriginal people would lose their identity in the wider community.

Breach

A breach occurs if a legal obligation is broken or not fulfilled.

British Select Committee

A committee established by the British Government in 1837 after the massacres of local people in several British colonies. The Committee was asked to conduct an inquiry into the treatment of Indigenous people in the colonies, including Australia.

Custody

Guardianship or protective care over someone. It can refer to a person who has legal responsibility for a child.

Customary law - international context

A long established tradition or practice becomes customary law if it is consistently and regularly observed. Customary law is one of the main sources of international law.

Foster care

The upbringing of children who are believed to be without parental support or protection. Foster care can be in a private home or a public institution. Foster care is different from adoption as the foster parent(s) do not have legal custody over the child.

Full-blood

A race based term which referred to Indigenous people whose parents were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 'unmixed' ancestry. It is a part of the language of assimilation.





Half-caste

A race-based term that classified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of mixed Indigenous and European descent. 'Half-caste' people were defined as those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who had one Indigenous parent. Now accepted as an offensive term and no longer used to refer to Aboriginal peoples in official records.

Imperialism

Imperialism refers to a policy of acquiring dependent territories and enforcing its rule over those territories, leading to the formation of an empire. The laws of the imperial nation are introduced throughout its empire. The laws are enforced locally through agents of the empire appointed to or located in the acquired territory.

England was a major imperial nation and formal control of its colonies in Australia continued until the end of the 19th Century.

Industrial schools

Industrial schools were places where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were often sent once they had been removed from their families, to be trained so they could be placed in apprenticeships or employment.

Children attended classes if they were young and worked in industrial schools if they were older. Girls generally did laundry and domestic work while boys mostly did farm work.

Legal guardian

When a person, is not capable of managing themselves independently, they are cared for by a guardian (according to the law). A guardian can be a parent, or someone appointed by the courts. The guardian has custody of the person, and makes decisions on their behalf.

At various times the Chief Protectors of Aborigines were the legal guardians of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia.

Mandatory sentencing

Mandatory sentencing laws were introduced in Western Australia and the Northern Territory in 1996 and 1997 respectively. These laws require courts to impose minimum sentences of detention or imprisonment for people convicted of certain offences, removing discretion for sentencing from the courts.

Martial law

This refers to law that operates under military rule. It can refer to military control over all civilian activities in a declared war zone. It can also refer to a situation where a country's existing laws are suspended and a military government takes control.

Mission

A term loosely used to refer to reserves, government stations and Christian institutions where Aboriginal peoples were placed. Many of the "missions" were established and run by missionaries and were used to restrict the movements of Aboriginal peoples. In most states, missions were regulated by State Governments after Aborigines Protection Boards were set up.

Mixed-descent

A term that was used to describe people who have both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry.

Native Title

Native Title is the recognition in Australian law that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had a system of law and ownership of their lands before European settlement. It was first recognised in common law in the Mabo case (1992) by the High Court, which overturned the idea of terra nullius (that the continent belonged to no-one at the time of European colonisation). The native title of a particular group depends on the law and customs of those people.

Octoroon

A race based term used to classify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of mixed descent. According to this logic, an 'octoroon' has seven white great-grandparents out of eight. They are described as being one-eighth Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Protectionism

This involved a range of practices and beliefs about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be 'managed' by governments and their institutions from the 1850s to the mid 1900s.

Different State and Territory laws established protection boards and native affairs departments which managed the protection/segregation of a considerable number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Protectors

The Protectors in each state administered government protection policies. They had wide ranging powers, including giving permission to marry, control over movements to and from reserves, social contact between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the removal of children from their families.

Quadroon

A race based term that was used to classify Indigenous people of mixed descent. It referred to children who had a 'full-blood' Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person as one of their four grandparents. They were described as being 'one-quarter Aboriginal'.

Reconciliation process

The process, which began in 1991 when the federal Parliament created the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. The process aimed to increase understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands' history, cultures, past dispossession and present disadvantage in the lead-up to the Centenary of Federation, 2001).

The 25-member council included 12 Aboriginal people, two Torres Strait Islanders and 11 other Australians. The Council presented its report in December 2000. The Report, Australia's challenge put forward a range of recommendations to government to address the 'unfinished business' of reconciliation.

At the completion of the ten years, and after delivery of its report, the Council was replaced by Reconciliation Australia, a foundation established to continue the Council's work.





Regulations

The legal rules by which a policy is carried out. Regulations can be changed, for example through a change in parliamentary legislation.

Reparations

The process of making amends and compensating for wrongs which have been done. According to international legal principles, known as the van Boven principles, reparation has five parts:

- acknowledgment and apology;
- guarantees that these human rights won't be breached again;
- returning what has been lost as much as possible (known as restitution);
- rehabilitation; and
- monetary compensation.

Royal Commission

A person or group of people who are appointed by government to investigate an issue that is of major concern to the general public. A Royal Commission has specific and wide-ranging powers and well-defined terms of reference which determine the extent of its investigation. A Royal Commission can compel witnesses to give evidence. It reports to parliament on its findings and makes recommendations.

Segregation

The policy and practice of separating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from non-Aboriginal people. This was usually brought about by the creation of reserves and missions for the exclusive use of Indigenous people. Segregation has been associated historically with protectionism.

Self-determination

Self-determination is the right of all people to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (article 1 on the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*).

Self-management

The recognition of Indigenous people's right to manage their own affairs with sufficient control over land and natural resources to preserve the cultures of Indigenous groups.

Separatism

A system where different laws and regulations apply for different racial groups. In Australia's context Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had a different set of laws applied to them from those applied to non-Aboriginal people.

State Ward

A child who is declared to be under the care of the State (government). A court order can declare that a child is to be made a ward of the state.

Terms of reference

Terms of reference is a set of key statements or questions which outline the scope of a formal inquiry or investigation and indicate what the inquiry is required to investigate and report upon.

Terra nullius

This is a Latin term meaning 'not inhabited' or 'empty land'. It is a term which became important during the period of intense colonisation in the 19th century.

Under old international law, a new colony could be formed if:

- a treaty was made with the original inhabitants (New Zealand)
- the land was gained through conquest (Canada)
- there were no inhabitants (Australia)

In 1992 the Australian High Court recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island native title rights had survived the British colonisation of Australia.

Title

The legal right to ownership of property.

Treaty

A treaty is a formal agreement between two or more parties who seek to have their relationship with each other clearly defined.

Reference list

- <http://www.macquariedictionary.com.au>
- <http://www.nntt.gov.au/>
- <http://www.reconciliation.org.au>



Appendix Three:

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Flags

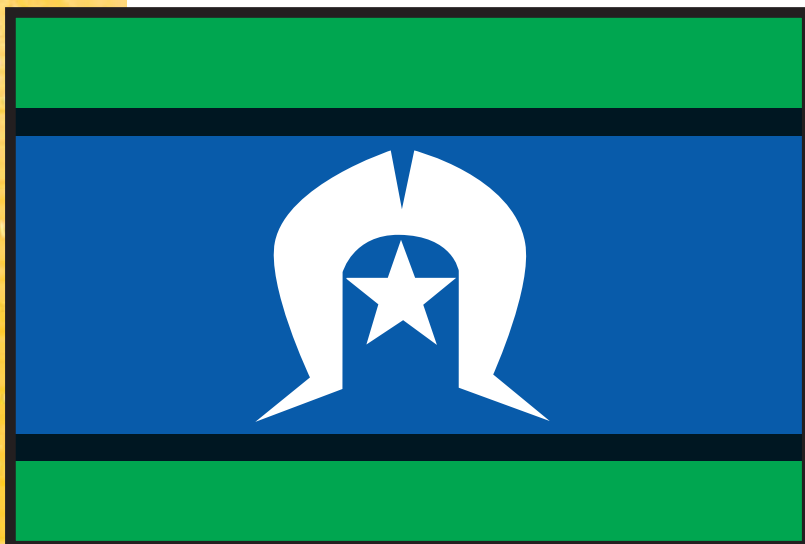
The Aboriginal flag is a recognised flag of Australia under s. 5 of the *Flags Act 1953*. The Aboriginal flag was designed in 1971 by Harold Thomas, an Aboriginal artist. The flag was designed to be an eye-catching rallying symbol for the Aboriginal people and a symbol of their race and identity.

The black represents the Aboriginal people, the red represents the earth and their spiritual relationship to the land as well as the blood spilled in the fight for recognition and justice, and the yellow represents the sun, the giver of all life.



The Torres Strait Islander flag is a recognised flag of Australia under s. 5 of the *Flags Act 1953*. The Torres Strait Islander flag is attributed to the late Bernard Namok of Thursday Island. The flag is emblazoned with a white Dari (headdress), which is a symbol of Torres Strait Islanders.

The white five-pointed star beneath it symbolises the five major island groups and the navigational importance of the stars. The green stripes represent the land, the black stripes represent the people, and the blue represents the sea. The flag as a whole symbolises the unity of all Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Appendix Four: Community events - key dates

The key dates and events below are significant to Aboriginal people and communities. Teachers are able to show their support for Aboriginal people by attending and acknowledging these events and dates with their students.

26 January - Survival Day

Aboriginal Australians choose to mark Australia Day as a day to highlight the invasion of Australia by Europeans and to acknowledge the survival of their cultural heritage.

13 February - National Apology Commemorated

26 May to 3 June - National Reconciliation Week

This week begins with National Sorry Day on 26 May and ends with Mabo Day on 3 June.

26 May - National Sorry Day

This day marks the anniversary of the 1997 tabling of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, *Bringing Them Home* (April 1997).

3 June - Mabo Day

This day commemorates the anniversary of the 1992 High Court decision in the case brought by Eddie Mabo and others, which recognised the existence in Australia of Native Title rights. On the tenth anniversary of this day in 2002 there were many calls for the day to become a public holiday, an official National Mabo Day.

First full week of July - NAIDOC Week

The first Sunday of July sees the beginning of a week dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people to celebrate NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Day Observance Committee) Week. It is a celebration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people of their survival.

It is also a time for all Australians to celebrate the unique contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions and cultures and to bring issues of concern to the attention of governments and the broader community.

Each year NAIDOC has a theme. Past themes have included:

- 1972: 'Advance Australia Where?'
- 1990: 'New Decade - Don't Destroy, Learn And Enjoy Our Cultural Heritage'
- 1996: 'Survive - Revive - Come Alive'
- 2000: 'Building Pride In Our Communities'
- 2005: 'Our Future Begins With Solidarity'.

4 August - National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day

This day was first observed in 1988 and each year it has a special theme. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care have always produced a poster to celebrate the day.



Appendix Five:

Second Step links to VELs

Level	Strand	Domain	Learning focus	Second Step links
4	Discipline-based learning	History	[Students] learn about the organisation and lifestyle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the past, the impact of European settlement and as enduring cultures today. They learn about the significance of key events [and] people in Australia's history (for example, William Barak) that have brought about change. Through structured activities they explore links and comparisons with contemporary Australia.	Students examine life for Aboriginal people pre-contact and the effects of child removal policies in contributing to dispossession and break down of Aboriginal cultures. Students also examine how Aboriginal lifestyles have changed over time and can see the link between the Prime Minister's apology (a contemporary event) and child removal (an historical event).
4 (Years 5 & 6)	Discipline-based learning	Geography	Students explore how humans have affected the Australian environment. Examples could include: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' care of the land; clearance by farmers and subsequent problems of land degradation and salinity; and protection of the natural environment through the creation of nature parks, national parks and marine parks.	Students examine the way Aboriginal people traditionally lived, their relationship between land and culture, and how that resonates in a modern context through disruption of traditional land practices.

Level	Strand	Domain	Learning focus	Second Step links
4 (Years 5 & 6)	Physical, personal and social learning	Civics and Citizenship	[Students] consider the effects of Australian federation on the democratic rights of different groups of people such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women and non-British migrants. They consider the experiences of diverse cultural groups, including Indigenous communities, and their contributions to Australian identity. They consider the values important in a multicultural society such as respect and tolerance.	Students will gain an understanding of the way laws and parliamentary decisions affect people; in this case, Aboriginal families and communities. Students will also examine the rights of different communities over time, and how the parliamentary process has changed these rights. Students will also gain an appreciation for Aboriginal experiences and contributions to Australian society.
5 (Years 7 & 8)	Discipline-based learning	Geography	[Students] identify patterns of distribution and occurrence of major physical features and their interrelationship with human activities such as farming, fishing, manufacturing and settlement. Students become aware of contrasts within the regions of Australia and those surrounding it ... They develop an appreciation of differences in the culture, living conditions and outlooks of people, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in these areas.	Students will examine how, over time, Aboriginal settlements were shifted in and around Victoria. They will also examine why this occurred, and the effects this migration had on traditional land practices, culture and the family. Students will examine the laws surrounding forcible migration, and understand what the ties that link land, community and culture mean for Aboriginal people in Victoria today.





Level	Strand	Domain	Learning focus	Second Step links
5	Physical, Personal and Social Learning	Civics and Citizenship	Students learn about significant milestones in the development of Australian law, governance and rights ... They consider examples of the fight for political rights [including] Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and the vote for women.	Students will learn about the different laws in Victoria, and how those laws change over time. They will also begin to understand that citizens of Australia have a role to play in the parliamentary process and will gain an appreciation for the fight for rights of Aboriginal communities in Victoria.
6	Discipline-based learning	History	Students examine the impact of European colonisation of Australia, including the representation of that settlement as invasion. They learn about the struggles and successes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to gain political and social rights, and their campaigns for land rights and self-determination. They investigate the contribution of significant Australians such as ... Charles Perkins. Students analyse significant events and movements which have resulted in improvements in civil and political rights for groups of Australians and describe the contributions of key participants and leaders in these events.	Students will understand the Stolen Generations experience in a broader context, and how Aboriginal people have struggled to have these experiences recognised by the wider community. Students will also analyse past events in order to gain a better understanding of the present and the future.

Level	Strand	Domain	Learning focus	Second Step links
6	Physical, Personal and Social learning	Civics and Citizenship	Students investigate some historical and contemporary issues, such as ... Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recognition in the Australian Constitution. They explore human rights issues at the national and international level, including an investigation of the human rights of Indigenous communities and other groups within Australia ... Students explore Australia's multicultural society. They learn about the past and present policies of government in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and immigration.	<i>Civic knowledge and understanding</i> Students describe the origins and nature of Australia's federal political system and present a considered point of view on an issue about change in the political system and the law. They can explain and debate a point of view on a modern, political issue such as the recent apology to the Stolen Generations.



Notes

[illegible]

