



Kirrenderri
HEART OF THE CHANNEL COUNTRY
EDUCATION RESOURCES

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This project was developed in partnership between The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum, Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation, and researchers from The University of Queensland.



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND**
AUSTRALIA



**Queensland
Government**

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INTRODUCTION

This is a story of the power, strength, and resilience of the Mithaka People of South West Queensland. For over 200 years, Aboriginal people have been fighting for their right to walk freely on their own Country and to care for it their way. They have seen the loss of species from the failed sheep industry and successive cattle industries since the 1800s. They witnessed the Maralinga nuclear testing in the 1950s, some 1,500 kilometres away to the south-west. Uncles, Aunties, and Grandparents tell of seeing a large mushroom cloud, followed by a cold wind days later that covered everything with dust. These events have made a lasting impact on the lives of our people.

Mithaka determined Country is a 33,000km² area in the heart of the Channel Country. A place of beautiful red sand dunes and rocky plains, it is located west of Windorah and east of Birdsville. After Native Title determination on 27 October 2015, the Traditional Owners voted in their first directors who established the representative body, the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation (MAC). The corporation has three core values that underpin every decision made: Care for Country, Care for Culture and Care for Our People.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

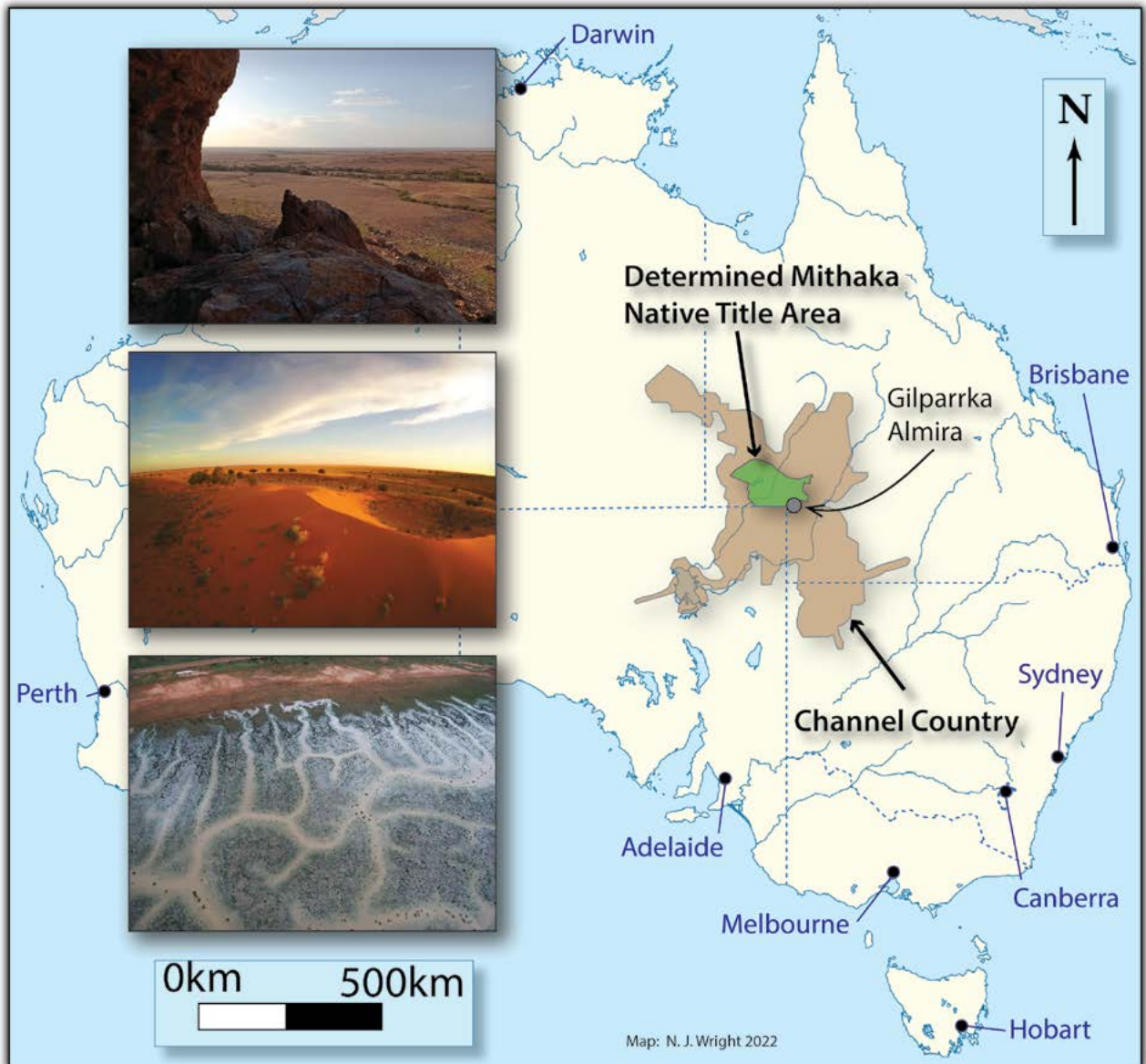
Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country explores the complex interconnectedness of generations of Channel Country People. At first look, the exhibition encompasses 130 years of stories, beginning with accounts by the author Alice Duncan-Kemp to the contemporary lived experiences of Mithaka People. We learn to see that the Channel Country has been the intersection for Aboriginal trade networks connecting across the continent for thousands of years. It is a place with a very deep past.

Highlighting the long-standing relationship between the University of Queensland Anthropology Museum and donors to its collection, the exhibition features material donated by Alice Duncan-Kemp, whose family owned and ran Mooraberrie cattle station in Channel Country. Carved wooden objects were given to Alice by stockmen and community members, which she subsequently donated to the Anthropology Museum in the mid-1950s. These add a wonderful personal dimension to the story as Alice wrote detailed observations in her published books about Aboriginal people and their country. This rich resource of knowledge is presented alongside recent archaeological discoveries, which have the potential to inspire a complete reimagining of the complexity of Australia's Aboriginal past.

These historic landscapes hold the stories of some of Australia's ancient trade and exchange networks. The sites clearly illustrate production on an industrial scale at the largest Aboriginal stone quarry known, offering evidence of food harvesting, storage, trade and village-style settlements.

Exhibition visitors can explore the resilience of relationships forged on Channel Country from the late 1890s to the present between Aboriginal and pioneering families, with continuing ties to Country, the cattle industry, and supporting industries.

The exhibition is a result of the ongoing cultural mapping research work instigated by the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation, with contributions by a collaborative research team from The University of Queensland, The Australian National University and ongoing research into the rich resource of Alice Duncan-Kemp Archives by historians and scientists.



Map showing the determined Mithaka Native Title area in green (300,000km²) and the larger Channel Country region in brown (approx. 300,000km²).

Inset photographs also show the Channel Country landscape.

Map: N. J. Wright, 2022

HOW TO USE THE *KIRRENDERRI* LEARNING RESOURCES

Learners and educators are invited to use these resources to engage with the *Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition.

The resources are for Year 7 to 10 students and align with the Australian Curriculum, version 9. Each resource listed in the table below has been designed as a lesson consisting of multiple learning activities. Educators can split longer resources into more than one lesson or choose to deliver only some of the activities. Educators can adapt the materials into units they already teach by using the curriculum links in each resource as guidance.

The learning resources complement a visit to the exhibition but can still be used if a visit is not possible. Embedded links provide access to online content, including sound and video files. Additional learning material is highlighted throughout the resources and in the 'Find out more' section at the end. 'Create a postcard' and 'People of Channel Country - gallery trail' are designed for informal activity-based learning within the exhibition.

TITLE OF RESOURCE	CURRICULUM LINKS		
MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE	Year 7 History	Year 7 & 8 Geography Year 7 & 8 Science	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority
STONE TOOL TECHNOLOGY	Year 7 History	Year 8 Geography Year 8 Science	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority
WATER: LIFEBLOOD OF CHANNEL COUNTRY	Year 7 Geography	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority	Sustainability cross-curriculum priority
GOING HOME, BY TRACEY HOUGH	Year 8 English	Year 9 English	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority
CREATIVE WRITING WITH OBJECTS	Years 7, 8, 9 English	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority	
INSCRIBED LANDSCAPES	Year 7 and 8 Visual Arts	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority	
FOOD SUSTAINABILITY	Year 9 Geography	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority	Sustainability cross-curriculum priority
MAKING A NATION	Year 9 History	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority	
NATIVE TITLE	Year 10 History	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority	
CARING FOR COUNTRY	Year 10 Geography	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority	Sustainability cross-curriculum priority

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE

SUMMARY

Excavation is one research method archaeologists use to systematically record human activity in places. Another is archaeological surface survey which allows them to map different features in the landscape. This evidence can tell rich stories about the way people lived in the past. Archaeologists working with Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation and the Mithaka community used both methods to learn more about mysterious features in the landscape that looked like mounds. These learning activities provide opportunities to explore different methods used by archaeologists, learn about technological innovation and manufacture of stone tools by Mithaka People in the past, and to consider the meaning of these different types of evidence.

LEARNING

Learning Intention: Understand methods and sources for investigating archaeological sites, and the importance of these activities for conserving the heritage of First Nations Peoples in Australia.

Success Criteria: Use relevant methods to investigate a landscape and identify features.

CURRICULUM LINKS

History, Year 7: Deep time history of Australia:

- How First Nations Australians are the world's oldest continuing cultures, displaying evidence of both continuity and change over deep time ([AC9HH7K03](#))
- The different methods and sources of evidence used by historians and archaeologists to investigate early societies, and the importance of archaeology and conserving the remains, material culture and heritage of the past ([AC9HH7K08](#))

Geography, Year 7 and 8: Landscapes and landforms:

- The spiritual, aesthetic and cultural value of landscapes and landforms for people, including Country/Place of First Nations Australians ([AC9HG8K03](#))
- Collect, organise and represent data and information from primary research methods, including fieldwork and secondary research materials, using geospatial technologies and digital tools as appropriate ([AC9HG7S02](#)) ([AC9HG8S02](#))

Science, Year 7 and 8: Science Inquiry:

- Plan and conduct reproducible investigations to answer questions and test hypotheses, including identifying variables and assumptions and, as appropriate, recognising and managing risks, considering ethical issues and recognising key considerations regarding heritage sites and artefacts on Country/Place ([AC9S7I02](#)) ([AC9S8I02](#))
- Write and create texts to communicate ideas, findings and arguments for specific purposes and audiences, including selection of appropriate language and text features, using digital tools as appropriate ([AC9S8I08](#))

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority, country/place:

- First Nations communities of Australia maintain a deep connection to, and responsibility for, Country/Place and have holistic values and belief systems that are connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways ([A_TSICP1](#))



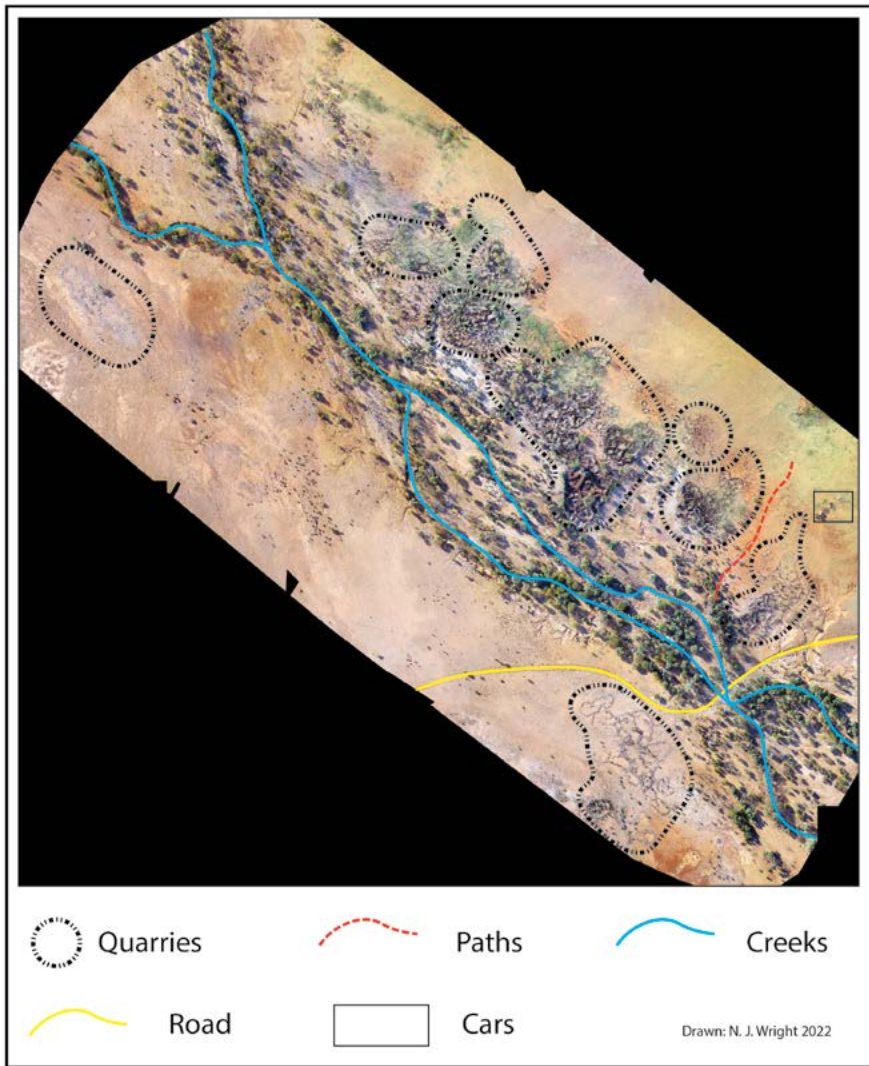
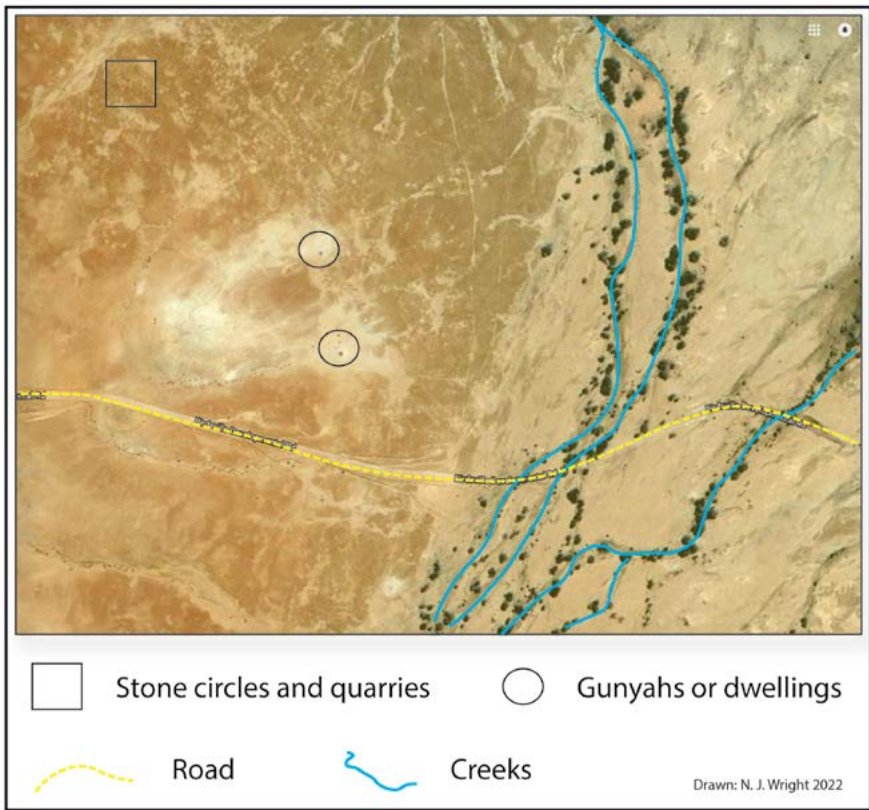
Remains of a gnyah, a dwelling constructed by Mithaka People in the past 2020. Photo: N.J. Wright

ACTIVITY 1 | INTERPRETING THE LANDSCAPE

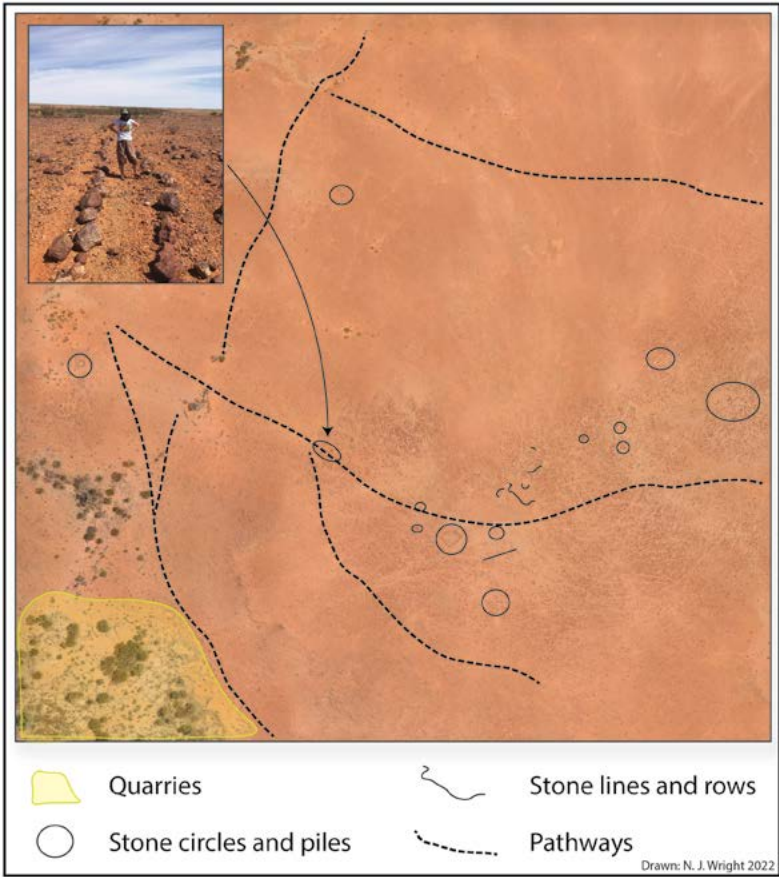
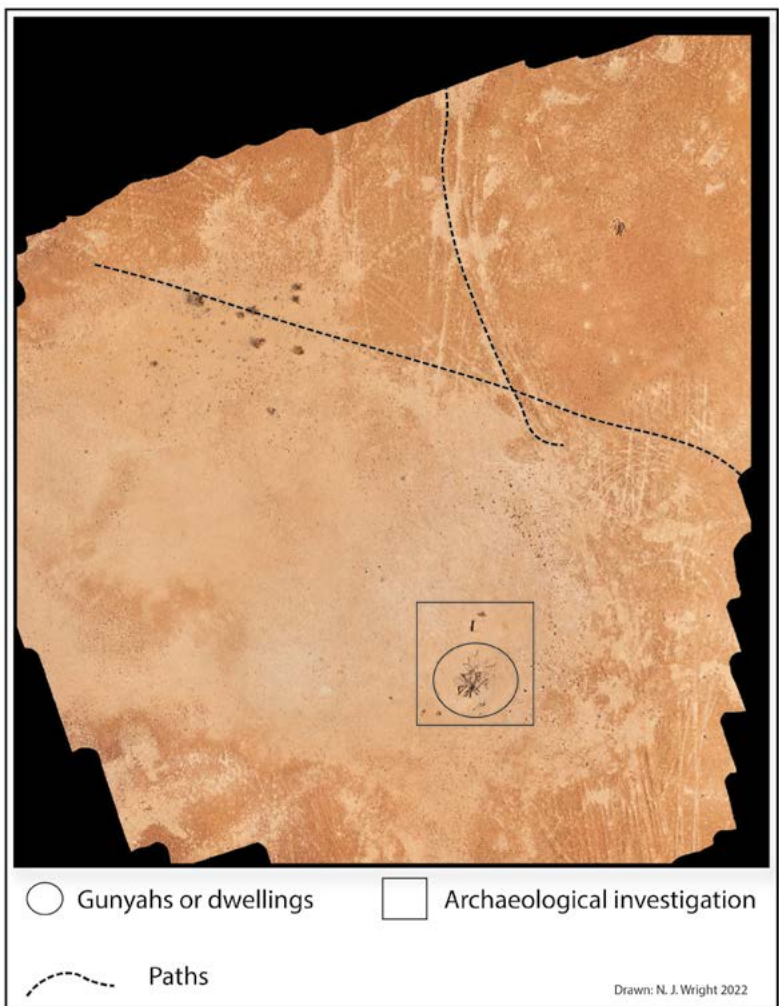
Examining maps and aerial photographs helps archaeologists identify distinctive features in the landscape. They look for clusters or patterns which could indicate human activity. There might be evidence for how places have been used or inhabited in the past, or signs that there is more to look at under the ground through excavations.

1. **Examine** the aerial images below and **identify** geographical features in the landscape.
2. Using the table, **sort** the geographical features into **A**: Naturally made, and **B**: Constructed by humans
3. Can you see a relationship between the location of features that you listed in column A with the features listed in column B?

A: Naturally made	B: Constructed by humans



Annotated aerial images: N.J. Wright, 2022



Annotated aerial images: N.J. Wright, 2022

ACTIVITY 2 | LOOKING DEEPER

Scientific techniques offer another source of information about the landscape. Some archaeologists use methods like magnetometry and Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to collect information about a site of interest. These methods look deeper and see more than the human eye.

Listen to the recording about [magnetometry](#), and look at the 3D image of a gunyah

Discuss the following questions:

- What is magnetometry?
- What does a magnetometer look for?
- What is GPR?
- Why is it useful to be able to see below the surface without digging a hole?
- What did the magnetometer reveal about the Mithaka sites that the archaeologists were investigating?

Use the transcript 'Mapping the landscape Activity 2' if required.

USEFUL VOCABULARY

Geophysical: connected with the scientific study of the physics of the earth including magnetism

Mineralogy: the scientific study of minerals

Anomalies: a thing or situation that is different from what is normal or expected

ACTIVITY 3 | ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURFACE SURVEY AND MAPPING

Now that you have learned more about some of the methods that archaeologists use, conduct your own **surface survey** of a site.

This could be a group survey of an area in the school grounds or, alternatively, somewhere outside of school. Every group will need a copy of the 'surface survey record sheet' below, a pencil, a notebook, and flags to identify objects you find in the landscape.

SURFACE SURVEY:

In groups, **use the record sheet** to complete the following activities:

1. **Look** around you and make notes on the overall landscape. Make a **sketch** of the area. The record sheet has some prompts to help you.
2. Next, form a line across the survey area. Each person needs to keep the same distance apart from the person to their right. Walk forwards, **looking closely at the ground** for any features (holes, structures, etc), artefacts, or things that look different. If you find something, shout out and everyone in the group waits while the find is recorded.

MAP A SECTION OF THE SITE:

After surveying the larger area, work together to **record** a smaller site in more detail:

1. Use string, pegs, and a measuring tape to **plot** out a 2m x 2m area into **a grid**. Remember to measure carefully.
2. Next, **draw** the grid out on paper.
3. Finally, carefully **mark out any features or items** you have found on the ground into your own corresponding grid. Try to be as accurate as possible.

Educators prompt: Consider placing some items in advance for groups to discover. Depending on the site and group size, you can modify the sizing of the 2m² section.

RECORD AN OBJECT:

If you have time, select one of the objects you found to record.

Either draw the object to scale using graph paper to plot out the size. Add notes to the drawing recording anything like colour or material. Alternatively, use a tablet or phone equipped with the free Polycam app to make a 3D image: <https://poly.cam>

Photogrammetry is the process of creating 3D images from many 2D photographs. Using Polycam, walk around the object and take many photographs to cover its different angles. You may want to place the object on a white piece of paper to help avoid any distracting background. Polycam will process the images for you to create a 3D image that you can tilt, rotate, and share with others.



Grinding stone set, Morney Plains Quarry, 2021. Courtesy Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation. Photo: C. Warner

These artefacts were found together, showing how stone was mined and processed at the quarry site. A large silcrete cleaver (bottom left) was used to wedge sandstone slabs out of the bedrock. The sandstone would then be shaped as a grindstone blank (right), in this case using a silcrete hammerstone (top left) that was also found with the set.

Name(s):	Date:
Location of site:	
Initial notes on the site: 1. Size of area? 2. Geology - any stones or large rocks on site? e.g., Gravel, boulders, sand, volcanic rock. 3. Soil type and colour. e.g., stony red earth, light brown clay, etc. 4. Weather, e.g., light rain, wind, sunny, temperature. 5. Any water nearby? e.g., creek, pond, ocean. 6. Any other general comments on the landscape?	
Sketch a map of the site with an arrow showing the direction you walked. Mark anything you find on your map, e.g., any holes, structures, artefacts, or objects:	
Additional notes on artefacts or objects you find (e.g., a stone tool, a brick, an animal bone):	

Print page and continue over or on another sheet of paper if needed

STONE TOOL TECHNOLOGY

SUMMARY

Archaeologists have been investigating a large network of quarries on Mithaka Country in the Channel Country of South West Queensland. The quarries were the source of raw material for stone tools. This raw material and tools made from it often travelled many hundreds or thousands of kilometres through exchange networks between different First Nations communities across Australia.

As well as being important places for obtaining natural resources, quarries were often places where young people learned skills from their Elders. Stone tools are complex and have been developed over thousands of years. People had to learn about and practice making tools before they became experts.

These activities offer opportunities to learn about technological innovation and manufacture of stone tools in the past by Mithaka People. Learners find out how to identify stone tools, and what to do if they find one. Some activities complement a visit to the exhibition, observing and analysing objects up close and discovering more about the social and cultural significance of stone tools and quarry sites for First Nations communities in the Channel Country.

LEARNING

Learning Intention: how to identify stone tools and what to do if you find them.

Success Criteria: Ability to identify different types of stone tools and an understanding of ethical practice in relation to finding and conserving stone tools.

CURRICULUM LINKS

History, Year 7: Deep Time History of Australia/The Ancient World

- The technological achievements of early First Nations Australians, and how these developed in different places and contributed to daily life, and land and water source management ([AC9HH7K05](#))
- The different methods and sources of evidence used by historians and archaeologists to investigate early societies, and the importance of archaeology and conserving the remains, material culture and heritage of the past (The ancient world) ([AC9HH7K08](#))

Science, Year 8: Science as Human Endeavour/Science Inquiry

- Investigate how cultural perspectives and world views influence the development of scientific knowledge ([AC9S8H02](#))
- Analyse data and information to describe patterns, trends and relationships and identify anomalies ([AC9S8I05](#))
- Write and create texts to communicate ideas, findings and arguments for specific purposes and audiences, including selection of appropriate language and text features, using digital tools as appropriate ([AC9S8I08](#))

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority, country/place, culture, and science elaborations:

- First Nations communities of Australia maintain a deep connection to, and responsibility for, Country/Place and have holistic values and belief systems that are connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways ([A_TSICP1](#))
- First Nations Australians' ways of life reflect unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing ([A_TSIC2](#))



Large quarry located on Channel Country, 2020. Photo Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation

ACTIVITY 1 | HOW DO YOU KNOW A HUMAN MADE THIS?

Archaeologists study **artefacts**, things that are made or used by humans. Artefacts can be seen and are tangible, which means they can be touched by the person studying them. Many artefacts can be seen in the *Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition.

HOW CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A ROCK AND A STONE TOOL?

Certain features help archaeologists to identify a stone tool from a naturally occurring rock. Sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference. A person long ago may have found a rock and used it like a hammer for bashing or grinding. They might not have needed to add a handle or to sharpen the edges for cutting. Once a person uses or modifies the rock, then it becomes an artefact – a stone tool.

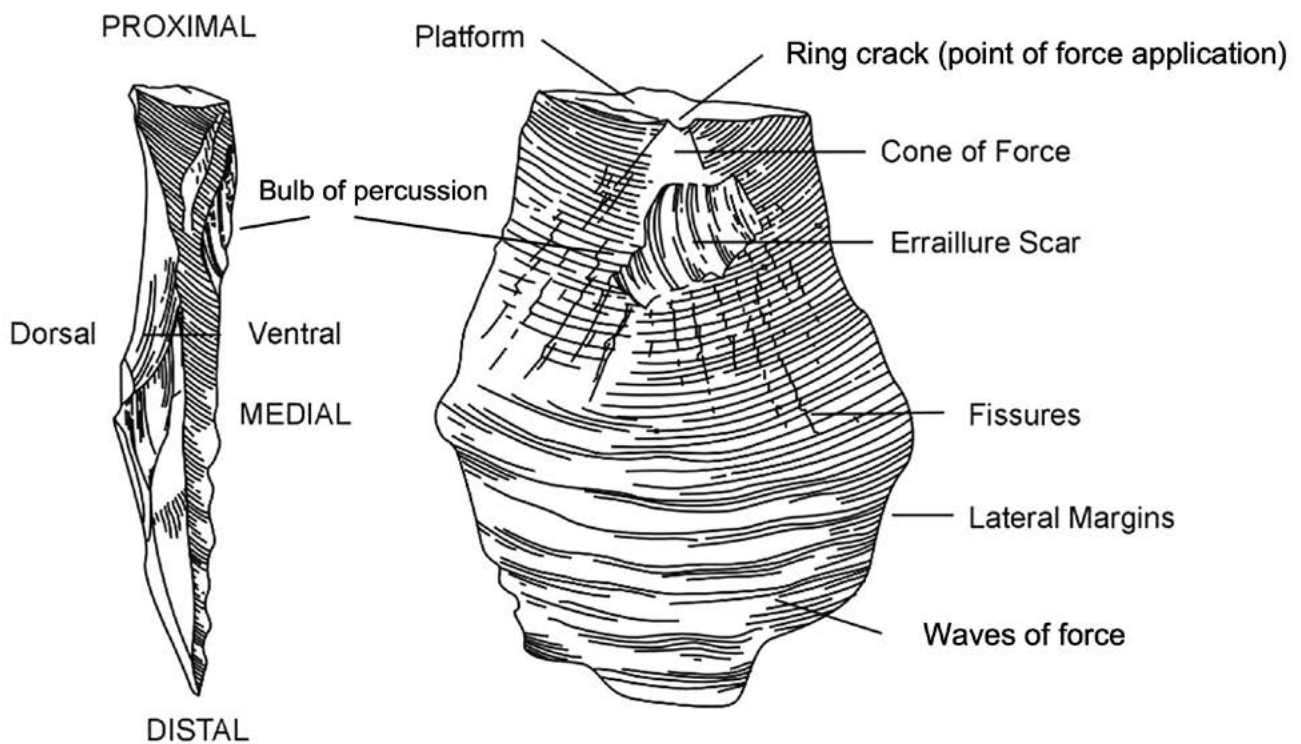
Often the evidence of human usage is difficult to see and can only be detected by an archaeologist who specialises in the study of stone tools. Microscopic examination of the surfaces of stone tools can also reveal evidence of wear, because tiny scratches are made on the tool when it is used. Sometimes microscopic traces, or residues, of blood, hairs, feathers, starch grains, resins, and plants remain on the tool's surface. This provides additional, sometimes very personal, information about how the tool was used.

One type of stone tool that is commonly found is a **flaked stone tool**. They are made by a person hitting a stone, called a **core**, with another stone, called a **hammerstone**. This process of breaking up raw material to create a flaked stone tool is called **knapping**.

Discuss what other processes you think could cause fractures in a stone?

Educators prompt: frost, fire, erosion, river transport, weathering

The diagram below shows some of the fracture features and the names for the different parts of a flaked stone tool. The **platform** is the flat part at the top of the flake where the hammerstone struck the core. The **bulb of percussion**, or **bulb of force** is a bulge just below the platform. These features can be seen on the **ventral** side of the tool.



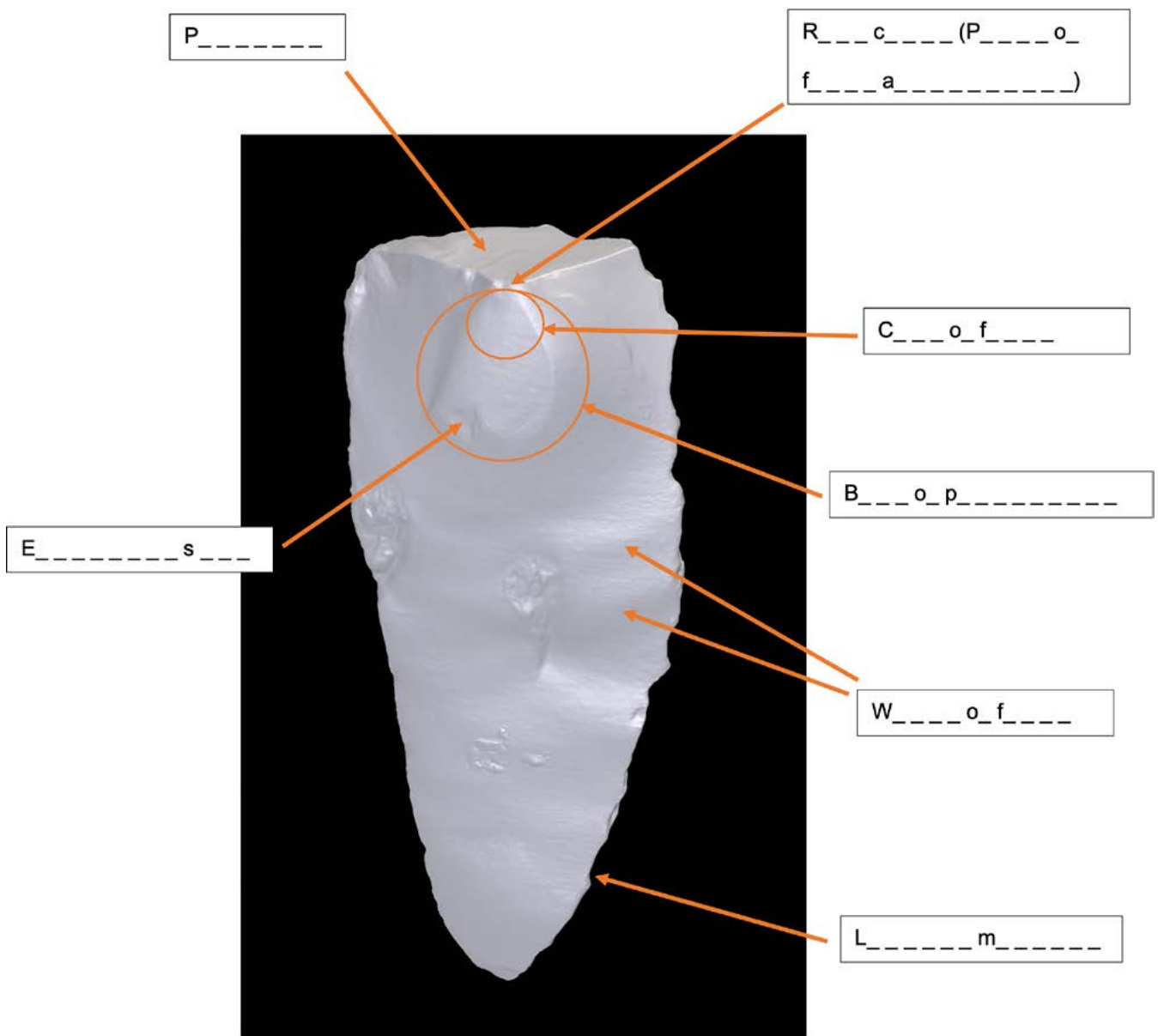
Look at this picture of a flaked stone tool below, or at the 3D example:

<https://une.pedestal3d.com/r/JMNWabitx8>

Alternatively, look closely at flaked stone tools on display in the *Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition.

Use the diagram above to help **identify** and **record** the different parts of a flaked stone tool. Either add labels directly onto the image below or make a simple sketch drawing to scale of the 3D or exhibition examples. Identify the **dorsal**, **ventral**, **proximal** and **distal** sides.

Hint: use the diagram below to help identify the features or select 'annotations' on the 3D model.



FURTHER CLUES

If you think you have found a stone tool while out in the landscape, remember to look carefully on the ground around the possible artefact. There may be other clues to help identify if something was made by a human. For example, you may see other **flaked tools, hammerstones, or cores**.

If you think you have found a broken stone tool, then the other pieces could be lying nearby.

This is because stone tools can **fragment** (or break apart) due to heat, cold conditions, or mechanical fracture from farming or traffic. Archaeologists often uncover stone tools that people threw away because they could no longer be used.

Look for any incomplete stone tools in the *Kirrenderrri* exhibition. Why do you think these are broken?

Hint: look for the **leilira blades**.

ACTIVITY 2 | DIFFERENT TOOLS, DIFFERENT TASKS

A quarry is a place where large amounts of stone are dug out of the ground. Quarries on Channel Country were sources for the raw materials for Mithaka People to make different tools. This includes grinding stones, which were exchanged over a huge network that stretched thousands of kilometres.

Listen [Joshua Gorringe discussing the quarries on Mithaka country](#) (time stamp 08:25)

Different tools were used for different tasks. Looking carefully at different types of stone tools can help us identify what they might have been used for.

Look at the displays in the *Kirrenderrri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition or explore some of the 3D images here: <https://archaeology.une.pedestal3d.com/grid> — (filter for 'Stone Tools from Australia')

Educators prompt: 2D versions of these images without any associated labels can also be printed for learners to use.

Individually or in groups, **identify** the following types of tools:

1. Grinding stone
2. Flaked stone tool
3. Axe head
4. Hammerstone

Consider the **shape** and any other **properties** of the rock. Make notes of any ideas you have about how people used them. Be as specific as possible. For example, a sharp flaked stone tool may have been used as a spear tip for hunting animals.

Educators prompt: cutting, grinding, hunting, making other tools.

Discuss your identifications with others in your group or class.

ACTIVITY 3 | THE HUMAN STORY BEHIND STONE TOOLS

Stories about how people made and used stone tools cannot be understood by simply looking at the material or shape and size of a tool.

Read this quote by Rodney McKellar, Mithaka Cultural Advisor:

“I think, how many people used this tool, or was it a community stone, like a hammer stone we found right in the middle of the quarry. That’s what I think when we find something significant. European people who have no connection to this country may think of it as just a rock or a stick, an inanimate object, but we think about how much work has gone into making the tools, and how they were used and by whom and for what reason. For us, for many Indigenous people, these objects have a much greater significance.”

Rodney McKellar, 2021.

Discuss the following questions:

- How could you find out more about the human story behind a stone tool found on a site like one of the Mithaka quarries?
- What sort of questions would you ask someone about the stone tool?
- What does Rodney McKellar suggest are the different perspectives that people might have when they find a stone tool?

Educators prompt: speaking with Traditional Owners or Indigenous Rangers, reading historical accounts, looking for similar material in a museum.

ACTIVITY 4 | WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU FIND AN OBJECT OR ARTEFACT?

Watch and listen to the interviews with Joshua Gorringe and Tracey Hough of Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation to find out more about what to do if you find an artefact:

- Interview with Joshua Gorringe **(Time stamp 09:36 - 12:31)** www.vimeo.com/709759102
- Interview with Tracey Hough **(Time stamp 12:24)** www.vimeo.com/709758193

Visit the *Kirrenderrri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition, look for the story of the stone tools returned to Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation by Margaret Paterson.

Hint: look for the text panel ‘Returning Stone Tools to Mithaka’

Discuss the following:

- What should you do if you find a stone tool on the ground?
- Why is it important not to take any objects you find home with you?
- Why do you think Margaret Paterson returned the stone objects to the Mithaka community all those years later?
- Do you think Margaret Paterson made the right decision returning the stone tools? Why do you say that?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Owen, T., White, B. and Newchurch, J. (2021) Kurna Stone Artefacts: Some methods of analysis

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353969948_Kurna_Stone_Artefacts_Some_Methods_of_Analysis

WATER: LIFEBLOOD OF THE CHANNEL COUNTRY

SUMMARY

Water is an important resource for First Nations Peoples. It has cultural, social, spiritual and economic significance. Cooper Creek and the Georgina and Diamantina Rivers flow through the landscape of the Channel Country. They take water from as far north west as the Barkly Tablelands north of Camooweal and flow all the way towards Lake Eyre/Kati Thanda in South Australia. This huge area is one of the planet's most spectacular natural phenomena. It is internationally recognised as one of the world's last great internally draining and free-flowing wetland systems. These waters are the basis for the strong relationships between land, plant, animal and humans over tens of thousands of years.

"The water is a source of healing when we are sick, and it provides us with many spiritual and cultural interests. For it is our lifeblood which we need to survive. It allows us to continue our ceremonies which incorporate our rich and unique culture that is still strong today. For it is these sources of water which provide an adequate and valuable food source rich in fish and other foods for my people"

- George Gorringe, Mithaka Elder.

These learning activities encourage engagement with geospatial technology and cartography skills to understand the connections between water and trade routes. It also encourages consideration of threats posed to this important untouched free flowing desert river system.

LEARNING

Learning Intention: Understand the significance of river systems for First Nations Peoples in the Channel Country and the connection with First Nations trade routes.

Success Criteria: Use cartography skills to interpret a map of the Mithaka Country area and write reflectively on the significance and conservation of river systems.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Geography, Year 7, Water in the World:

- Classification of environmental resources and the way that water connects and changes places as it moves through environments ([AC9HG7K01](#))
- The economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including First Nations Australians ([AC9HG7K03](#))
- The causes and impacts of an atmospheric or hydrological hazard, and responses from communities and governments ([AC9HG7K04](#))

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority, Country/Place, and culture:

- First Nations communities of Australia maintain a deep connection to, and responsibility for, Country/Place and have holistic values and belief systems that are connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways ([A_TSICP1](#))
- First Nations Australians' ways of life reflect unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing ([A_TSIC2](#))

SUSTAINABILITY CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY, WORLD VIEWS & FUTURES:

- World views that recognise the interdependence of Earth's systems, and value diversity, equity and social justice, are essential for achieving sustainability [\(SW1\)](#)
- Sustainable design requires an awareness of place, past practices, research and technological developments, and balanced judgements based on projected environmental, social and economic impacts [\(SD3\)](#)
- Sustainable futures require individuals to seek information, identify solutions, reflect on and evaluate past actions, and collaborate with and influence others as they work towards a desired change [\(SF2\)](#)

ACTIVITY 1 | VOCABULARY ACTIVATION

Name as many words for bodies of water as you can.

Educators prompt: Ocean, river, creek, etc. You are looking for the word 'channel' to be mentioned. If not, introduce learners to **channel** - a passage through which water can flow.

Are you familiar with the following vocabulary?

Distribution, trade, exchange, grinding stones, pigments, hatchets.

Create a **glossary** with brief definitions for each word.

As a group, **discuss** why you think these things are important for First Nations People in Australia.

Distribution: the way things are divided or spread out

Trade: the activity of buying and selling, or exchanging, goods or services between people

Exchange: act of giving or taking of something in return for another

Grinding stones: stone tool used to grind materials like seed, animal bone, pigments, and resin, and used to sharpen and smooth wooden and stone tools

Pigment: a substance used to add colour to other materials

Hatchet: a small axe with a short handle

ACTIVITY 2 | WHAT DO YOU NOTICE?

Channel Country is approximately 300,000km², which is bigger than the United Kingdom. **Look** at the map below showing Channel Country (figure 1).

Estimate the size of Channel Country in relation to places in mainland Australia. For example, how big is it in relation to Tasmania? ACT? Victoria? Find out the size in km² of these locations to see how they compare.

Use the Google Earth Timelapse feature to search for Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation, Windorah, QLD.
Use the zoom out feature to widen the map scope, and you can slow down the time-lapse feature to 0.25x.

<https://earthengine.google.com/timelapse/>

The map shows the changes to the rivers and lakes over time as the rivers and lakes fill and dry up. Remember that this area is called Channel Country.

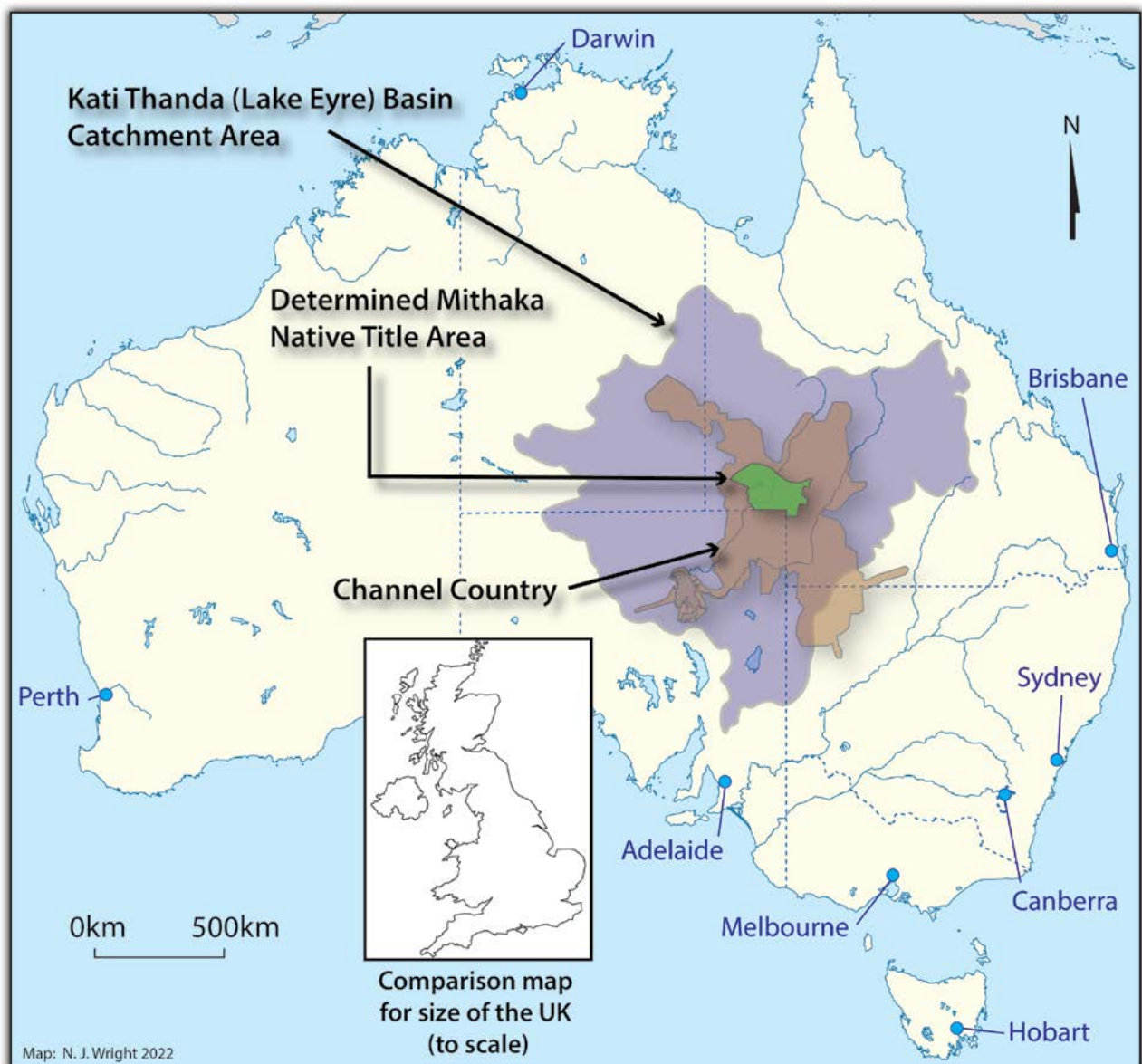


Figure 1: Map showing Channel Country. N. J. Wright, 2022

ACTIVITY 3 | CARTOGRAPHY SKILLS

The map below (figure 2) was based on research by archaeologist Professor Isabel McBryde in 1987. The map shows a small outline of Australia with an orange rectangle, which represents the colourful and more detailed area shown.

In pairs, **examine** figure 2 to answer the following questions:

1. What do the black arrows represent?
2. What do the black triangles represent?
3. What does the black square represent in the top left corner of the map?
4. What is the orientation of the map?
5. Look at the scale at the bottom of the map. Approximately how wide is the area represented by the map?
6. How many different water sources can you count?
7. There are three different circles, a grey circle, a black circle outline and a grey circle with a cross. Explain what the three different circles represent.
8. What other things were found near the circles? (Hint: look for the squares, triangles, and dots)
9. Where are the distribution and exchange centres located? (Hint: it has something to do with water)
10. Why do you think the distribution and exchange centres are located close to water sources?
11. Find out why did colonists call the lake 'Lake Eyre'.
12. What is the First Nations Peoples' name for the lake, and do you know the First Nations names for any other landforms in Australia? Discuss the naming of landforms by colonists, and why it is important to use names given by local First Nations Peoples.

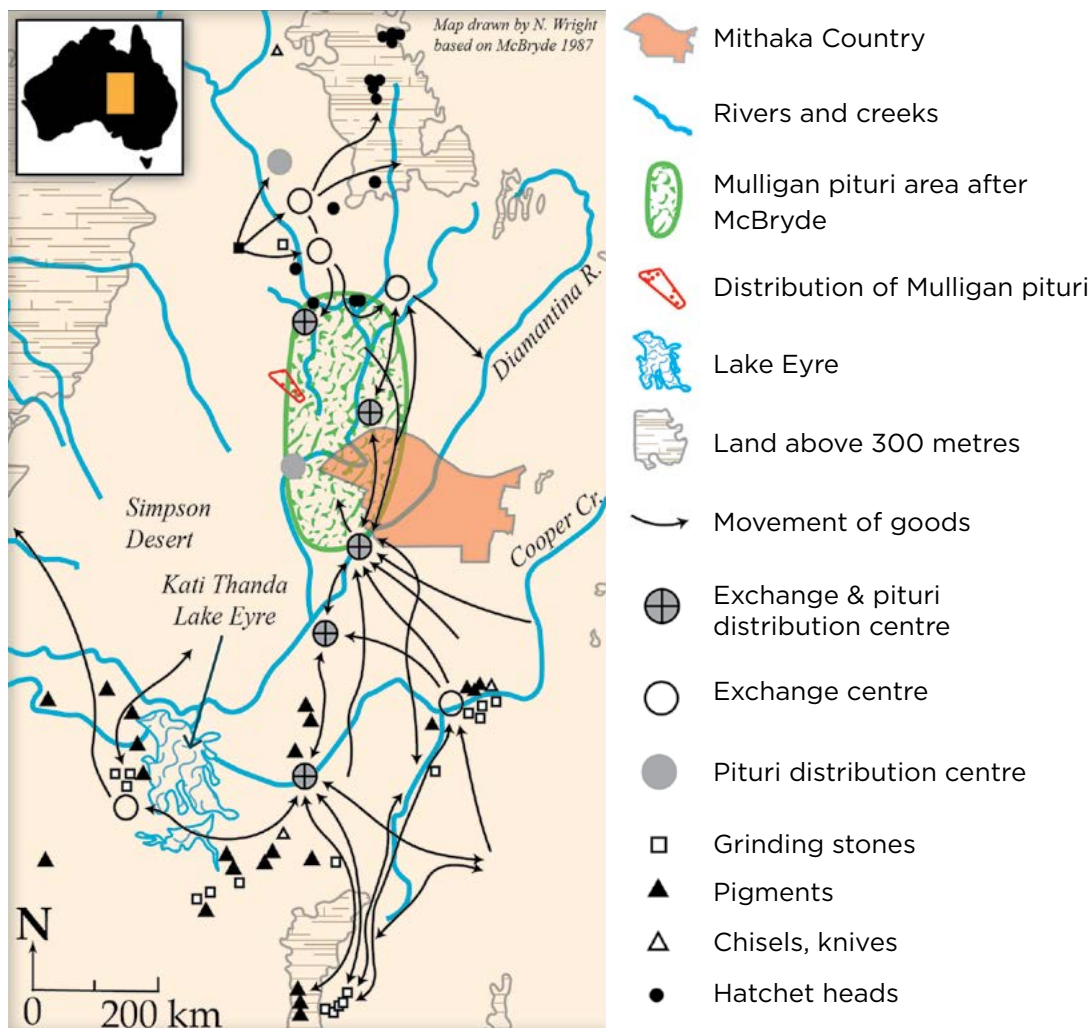


Figure 2: Map showing archaeological discoveries and trade networks of First Nations Peoples in Channel Country. Map: N. J. Wright, 2021 based on McBryde, 1987

ACTIVITY 4 | REFLECTING AND ACTION

Fracking happens deep below the Earth's surface, where there are rocks that hold natural gas or oil. Scientists drill a hole into the ground and then they send a mixture of water, sand, and chemicals down the hole. The pressure from this mixture breaks the rocks, creating tiny cracks. The cracks allow the natural gas or oil to escape from the rocks. It travels up the hole and can be collected at the surface. This is then used as energy.

Fracking has several negative consequences:

- **Air Pollution:** Fracking typically produces methane emissions, which reduce air quality. Methane gas also significantly contributes to global warming.
- **Water Contamination:** Toxic chemicals used in fracking can contaminate groundwater and surface water. This poses risks to both human consumption and ecosystems.
- **Health Concerns:** Due to toxic air pollution resulting from fracking, health effects include childhood leukemia, cardiac problems, asthma symptoms, birth defects, headaches, and even links to cancer.
- **Water Consumption:** Fracking consumes billions of gallons of water each year, which could otherwise be available for human use.
- **Environmental Issues:** Fracking and associated infrastructure interferes with a river system's natural flow, depriving large areas of water. This impacts on the ecosystem and on pastoral land. Cultural sites and values have also been at risk from direct impacts and changes in flood flows due to fracking.

Brainstorm ways you can promote awareness about water issues in your community.

Write a reflective paragraph that discusses the importance of water conservation and sustainable practices.

Create a poster, infographic, or short video to educate people about the Channel Country's water resources and the success of the fracking ban.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Use the following resources to help inform your research:

Cooper Basin Map:

www.qra.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Cooper_Base_Map%20LD_0.pdf

Gas and oil ban in Queensland Channel Country:

www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2023-12-22/gas-and-oil-ban-in-qld-channel-country/103258202

Fracking banned in Queensland's Channel Country:

www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-04/fracking-banned-in-queensland-s-channel-country/104173972

Lock the gate – Channel Country gas impacts:

www.lockthegate.org.au/channel_country_gas_impacts

Queensland's Channel Country, worthy of protection - Western Rivers Alliance:

www.westernriversalliance.org.au/queensland_s_channel_country_worthy_of_protection

GOING HOME, BY TRACEY HOUGH

SUMMARY

First Nations Peoples have told stories for generations to communicate their knowledge of origins, creation, people, places, animals, Country, skies, waterways, climate change, law/lore, family, ancestors, and the devastating impact of colonisation. Storytelling is an important way for Mithaka People to share knowledge with others. Storytelling helps us think and learn about the world around us. It is also a way to record, share, and celebrate First Nations languages in Australia.

These learning activities explore a story written by Tracey Hough, one of the Directors of the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation. Learners are encouraged to examine language features and reflect on the themes of the story. Learners will also research other First Nations languages and compile a resource to share with others.

LEARNING

Learning Intention: Analyse a story written by a Mithaka author and develop knowledge of First Nations Peoples' languages.

Success Criteria: Creation of a resource to share First Nations language words with others.

CURRICULUM LINKS

The following English curriculum links are from the **Australian Curriculum version 9.0:**

English, Year 8, Language for interacting with others & Literature and contexts:

- Recognise how language shapes relationships and roles ([AC9E8LA01](#))
- Explain the ways that ideas and points of view may represent the values of individuals and groups in literary texts, drawn from historical, social and cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide ranging Australian and world authors ([AC9E8LE01](#))

English, Year 9, Language for interacting with others & Literature and contexts

- Recognise how language empowers relationships and roles ([AC9E9LA01](#))
- Analyse the representations of people and places in literary texts, drawn from historical, social and cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors ([AC9E9LE01](#))

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority, Country/Place, and culture:

- First Nations communities of Australia maintain a deep connection to, and responsibility for, Country/Place and have holistic values and belief systems that are connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways ([A_TSICP1](#))
- First Nations Australian societies are diverse and have distinct cultural expressions such as language, customs and beliefs. As First Nations Peoples of Australia they have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural expressions, while also maintaining the right to control, protect and develop culture as Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property ([A_TSIC1](#))
- First Nations Australians' ways of life reflect unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing ([A_TSIC2](#))

ACTIVITY 1 | READING AND DISCUSSION

Read the following story and author’s statement by Tracey Hough, who is one of the Directors of Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation. Discuss the questions that follow.

GOING HOME, BY TRACEY HOUGH - AUTHOR’S STATEMENT

“I wrote Going Home because I want to see our language in books for children to read. Growing up there were very few stories where I felt represented as an Aboriginal that I could relate to. Going Home is a story of a young boy going camping on his mother’s Country. It tells of his interactions with anthropomorphic animals who explain to him the importance of Country, how we are connected to Country, and that we must look after Country and each other. I use some of the Mithaka language from a dictionary compiled by Australian Linguist Gavan Breen using words he gathered from some Elders in the Channel country, my Grandad Bill Gorringer included, with the English meaning after the word. Ideally, I would love to have a young Indigenous person to do the artwork for my story.”

GOING HOME, BY TRACEY HOUGH, 21 AUGUST 2021

“Wei, ngaRi ning ini!”

The boy froze on the edge of the embankment. He slowly moved away from the edge watching the clumps of dirt roll towards the brown water. His heart was racing as he turned to see who had yelled at him. Standing next to a gnarled paperbark tree was a dusty, copper skinned boy about his own age wearing nothing but a pair of ragged dirty shorts, holding what looked like a spear. They stared at each other for a moment.

“What did you just say?” asked the boy.

“I say, ‘you might fall’. Them banks is steep and slippy and dat water is cold an mikaRi, deep.”

“Oh, thanks. Are you camping here too?” asked the boy.

“Nah dis my country.”

“That’s what my Mum says too.”

“You my countryman then.”

“What do you mean?”

“Dat mean, you my mob, my family. You Mithaka man.”

“What are those other words you use? I don’t understand them.”

“They my lingo, your lingo too wei, boy. Come, I show you our country.”

The boys followed the muddy river, stopping at a small billabong that branched off the river. It was surrounded by more stunted gnarled paperbark trees. It was cooler in the shade around the billabong.

Suddenly, a splash in the water startled the boy and he stumbled away from the water’s edge. The copper-skinned boy was holding his belly and laughing.

“Ere, why you run. This my friend ngampurru, yellowbelly. He just saying ello to his countryman.”

The boy slowly came back to the edge of the billabong and saw a fish had popped its head out of the muddy water and said,

“Ello ngathara, my brother, good to see you come home.”

“Um, hello...fish.”

“Ngampurru, say it, dat mean yellowbelly, dat what I am,” said the fish. “Look behind you, pandi come to say ello too.”

“What?” the boy turned and was face to face with a dingo. Frozen and not daring to breathe, he heard ngampurra and the boy laughing.

“Dis pandi, dingo dog. He come to say ello too. He won’t bite you, you his ngathara, brother,” said the boy.

“Ello my brother boy, welcome home,” said pandi.

“Um, hello pandi. Why do you all keep saying I am your brother?” asked the boy.

“Cause we all family,” said the copper-skinned boy.

“But he is a fish, and he is a dingo,” the boy said.

“Yeah?”

“But how can we be brothers, ngathara, with animals?” asked the boy.

“We all family, we all belong to this country, and we all look after each other,” answered the boy.

“But don’t you eat fish?”

“Yeah, but we all have our place on dis country. We care for it, it cares for us. Gives food and shelter. We only use what we need to live,” said the boy.

“I think I know what you mean. Like you respect each other and keep a balance, take only what you need so there is plenty for the future.”

“Yeah, you got it. If we took too much and waste food or water, then our country get sick and then we all suffer, you know.”

“Yeah, I do. We learn this in school, about how they are cutting down too many trees and mining and how this is causing problems for the water and for people.”

“Dats what is wrong now, our country get sick and not enough tucker, food, and water for everyone, and dats a big problem for you fullas now,” said the copper-skinned boy.

“Will! Will! Where are you baby!” that’s my Mum, come and meet her she will be so surprised to meet you all,” said Will.

When he looked to see what they would say he was alone. Pandi, ngampurra and the copper-skinned boy had disappeared.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) What language features and text structures does Tracey Hough use and what effect does this have on the story?
Hint: think about rhythm, tone, perspective, dialogue, and imagery.
- 2) What contemporary issues does Tracey Hough raise in the story?
- 3) Why do you think the author uses Mithaka language words?

ACTIVITY 2 | RESEARCHING AND CREATING

Conduct **research** to find out some words in the First Nations language or languages local to where you live. You might already know some words? Perhaps you use them at home or in other places?

Create a resource to teach these words to Prep and Year 1 students. You could create:

- A children’s picture book that uses language
- A 1-minute video to teach these words
- Vocabulary posters for the wall

Alternatively, develop your own idea for a resource. Think about where you could share your resources. For example, if you are in a Prep to Year 12 school, you could arrange to read your story in another class.

FURTHER RESOURCES

First Languages Australia interactive map: <https://gambay.com.au/languages/>

CREATIVE WRITING WITH OBJECTS

SUMMARY

First Nations Peoples have told stories for thousands of generations to communicate their knowledge of origins, creation, people, places, animals, Country, skies, waterways, climate change, law/lore, family, ancestors, and the devastating impact of colonisation. Storytelling is an important way to share knowledge with other people. It is also a way to think and learn about the world around us. These activities encourage learners to look carefully at the material in the *Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition and create a story inspired by the objects.

LEARNING

Learning Intention: Research different material to creatively weave into an original piece of writing.

Success Criteria: A story, poem, or song that includes objects selected and researched from the *Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition.

CURRICULUM LINKS

English, Years 7-9, Literacy - Creating texts:

- Year 7: Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, selecting aspects of subject matter and particular language, visual, and audio features to convey information and ideas ([ACELY1725](#))
- Year 8: Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices, and including digital elements as appropriate ([ACELY1736](#))
- Year 9: Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that present a point of view and advance or illustrate arguments, including texts that integrate visual, print and/or audio features ([ACELY1746](#))

ACTIVITY 1 | RESEARCHING OBJECTS

Visit the *Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition. Choose five objects that you see on display and include them into a piece of creative writing. This can either be a story, a poem, or even a song.

While you are in the gallery, **look** closely at the objects. What are they? What are they made of? Who might have made, used, or owned them? How were they made? What was maker thinking when they made them?

Read any accompanying written information in the exhibition as this will also tell you more about the objects.

ACTIVITY 2 | WRITING

Compose a story, poem, or song including the things you have been researching from the exhibition. You could incorporate some of the themes you learned about on your exhibition visit. Add images of any of the objects to your writing. If you use language other than English at home or in another context, you could include non-English words in your writing.

ACTIVITY 3 | REFLECTING

Share your writing with others in your group or class. Which is your favourite piece of writing and why? Did you find it hard to include all five objects? If so, why?

Educators prompt: share the favourite piece with Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation: macAdmin@mithaka.org.au

INSCRIBED LANDSCAPES

SUMMARY

The creativity of Mithaka People is connected to ancestors and Elders, and to the land, sky, waterways, and ecosystems of the Channel Country. Archaeologists have been investigating a significant place on Mithaka Country known as Gilparrka Almira, which is a rock art engraving site. The *Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition also features portable objects created by Mithaka People, including boomerangs inscribed with designs inspired by Channel Country landscapes.

Learners are encouraged to engage with art inscribed in and inspired by the landscape using available materials and different techniques. They are invited to consider use of raw materials, the connection of artworks to place, and the social and cultural significance of art in different forms for First Nations Peoples in contemporary and past times.

LEARNING

Learning intention: Understand the social and cultural significance of art for First Nations Peoples in Australia, considering use of materials and artworks' connection to place.

Success criteria: Create artwork inspired by connections to personally significant places.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Visual Art, Years 7 and 8:

- Experiment with visual arts conventions and techniques, including exploration of techniques used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to represent a theme, concept or idea in their artwork ([ACAVAM118](#))
- Develop ways to enhance their intentions as artists through exploration of how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes ([ACAVAM119](#))
- Identify and connect specific features and purposes of visual artworks from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their art-making, starting with Australian artworks including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples ([ACAVAR124](#))

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority, Country/Place:

- OI.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
- OI.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.



Drawing of the rock art at Gilparrka Almira, 2020. Illustration: E. Pease



Gilparrka Almira rock art engraving site on Mithaka country, 2020. Photo: M. Giorgi

Access 3D image of site here: <https://poly.cam/capture/45C2276C-9E0E-4767-BE2A-1FD9E1AE9B42>

Short film: 3D image of Gilparrka Almira rock art engraving site: <https://vimeo.com/721291090>

Short film: Section of Gilparrka Almira rock art engraving site: <https://vimeo.com/721291839>



Link to 3D image of Gilparrka Almira rock art engraving site on Mithaka Country

ACTIVITY 1 | DISCUSSING

Look at the 2D and 3D images of the Gilparrka Almira rock art engraving site on Mithaka Country and the images of the incised boomerangs. Alternatively, visit the *Kirrenderrri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition to see the images and boomerangs on display.

Read the following quote by Tracey Hough, one of the Directors of Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation, about a visit to the University of Queensland Anthropology Museum with Joshua Gorringe to research Mithaka cultural material:

“On our visit to The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum and inspection of the artefacts on display, we saw that the boomerangs had tapered tips, shaped like a curved ‘V’. Joshua said it was probably to reduce the noise of the boomerang when flying through the air. Joshua is a helicopter and drone pilot and said the shape of the rotor blades are tapered to reduce noise. So instead of the ‘wop wop’ noise of a rounded tip, the noise is reduced with the tapered tips.”

As a class or in groups, **discuss** the following questions:

- What do you see?
- What processes and materials did the artist use?
- What does the quote by Tracey Hough tell you about the different aspects to consider when analysing artworks and carvings?
- What do we know about the artist(s)? And how could you find out more?



Attributed to Moses Yoolpee.
Incised boomerangs, 1874-1934, Mooraberrie
The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum, 2022.
Photo: C. Warner

ACTIVITY 2 | RESEARCHING

It is believed that a man named Moses Yoolpee carved the two boomerangs you can see in the photographs and the exhibition. He is thought to have inscribed shapes showing the distinctive channels, rivers, and sandhills of Channel Country. Moses was inspired by the significant places around him. What places are significant to you? What patterns, shapes and colours do you see in your daily life?

Conduct visual **research** by taking photographs and/or making sketches and notes in a visual art diary of:

- 1) Materials you see in your daily life that could be used to create a sculpture or artwork.
- 2) Places you feel a sense of personal connection to or are significant in your life.



Attributed to Moses Yoolpee.
Incised boomerangs (detail), 1874-1934, Mooraberrie
The University of Queensland Anthropology Museum, 2022.
Photo: C. Warner

ACTIVITY 3 | CREATING

Create an artwork inspired by connections to a place that is significant to you. Take **inspiration** from your own research and from a visit to the exhibition.

ACTIVITY 4 | REFLECTING

In groups, **present** your own artworks. **Discuss** the different meanings encoded in your own work. **Evaluate** use of materials and form to communicate personal viewpoints on a place. **Consider** why it is important not to imitate Moses Yoolpee's designs, but to create your own original artwork.

Educators prompt: Opportunity to connect with the Australian Curriculum version 9.0 for Year 8, Visual Arts, 'investigate the diversity of First Nations Australians' artworks and arts practices, considering culturally responsive approaches to Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights' [AC9AVA8E02](#)

FOOD SUSTAINABILITY

SUMMARY

For thousands of years First Nations People lived a sustainable existence, yet the introduction of pastoral and agricultural farming techniques by European colonists led to the degradation of the environment and the loss of many ancient First Nations food harvesting techniques. In her book *Our Sandhill Country*, Alice Duncan-Kemp, the daughter of a pastoralist in the Mithaka region, records her observations about the food practices of the Channel Country People.

These learning activities focus on sustainable food practices of First Nations Peoples. Learners are encouraged to examine extracts from the historical memoirs of Alice Duncan-Kemp to discover the vast array of native foods that were available in south-western Queensland at the turn of the 20th century. Learners will also reflect on the current unsustainable farming and pastoral (over-grazing) methods and suggest ways that we can incorporate sustainable food practices into today's society.

LEARNING

Learning Intention: Understand the sustainable techniques used by First Nations Peoples to harvest and prepare food.

Success Criteria: Write a speech or letter to the local council, urging them to fund a sustainable food project based on First Nations food practices or the current issue of coal seam gas fracking in Channel Country.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Geography, Year 9, Biomes and Food Security/ Geographies of interconnections:

- The effects on environments of human alteration of biomes to produce food, industrial materials and fibres ([AC9HG9K02](#))
- Challenges to sustainable food production and food security in Australia and appropriate management strategies ([AC9HG9K04](#))
- The ways that places and people are interconnected with other places through trade in goods and services, at all scales ([AC9HG9K07](#))

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority - Country/Place:

- First Nations Australians' ways of life reflect unique ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing ([A_TSIC2](#))

Sustainability cross-curriculum priority - World views & Futures:

- World views that recognise the interdependence of Earth's systems, and value diversity, equity and social justice, are essential for achieving sustainability ([SW1](#))
- Social, economic and political systems influence the sustainability of Earth's systems ([SS3](#))
- Sustainable design requires an awareness of place, past practices, research and technological developments, and balanced judgements based on projected environmental, social and economic impacts ([SD3](#))

ACTIVITY 1 | DISCUSSING

Discuss what you know about the word **sustainability** and how it might connect with the mass production of food.

- Explain how food is produced for the supermarket.
- Do you consider current farming techniques to be sustainable? Why/why not?
- What kind of food production might be more or less sustainable than others?

Next, discuss what you already know about the food practices of First Nations Peoples. Remember that these practices would differ between different groups depending on the geographical location of their land. For example, First Nations Peoples who lived near the ocean would have access to different foods than those who lived in inland Queensland.

ACTIVITY 2 | LISTENING

Listen to the audio file of [Alice Duncan-Kemp's biography](#).
Use the transcript 'Food Sustainability Activity 2' if required.

ACTIVITY 3 | LOCATING

Read through the extracts from Alice Duncan-Kemp's book *Our Sandhill Country* about the food practices of the Aboriginal people that she witnessed.

Identify the different foods and food practices that Alice Duncan-Kemp writes about and categorise them into the different food groups.

To record your findings, use a table with the following headings:

MEAT/FISH/PROTEIN	VEGETABLES	FRUITS	GRAINS/SEEDS	PREPARATION AND COOKING TECHNIQUES

EXTRACTS FROM ALICE DUNCAN-KEMP'S *OUR SANDHILL COUNTRY:*

EXTRACT 1: “They were scouring the sandhills for edible bulbs and roots... From their belts hung dozens of the blue poorakier and paely ooras (desert rats and mice). They carried in their hands or beneath their armpit neatly tied bundles of a soft, dark green plant called “Shooting” plant or Scurvy-grass. It is a small bunchy plant with fleshy stalks and thickish pointed leaves. The fruit, a longish thin pod, when ripe splits open with a snapping sound into two narrow strips... [they] search the sandhills after heavy rains for this interesting plant, stripping it of leaves and pods.” Page 14-15

EXTRACT 2: “Several displayed varieties of wares for sale, including dozens of green brown-speckled plovers’ eggs carefully wrapped in grass. Emu’s and broлга’s eggs too were much in evidence.” Page 18

EXTRACT 3: “...children... gathered armfuls of Brogil-a-ri or Wild Spinach from the sandy stretches, and rosy Pigweed for salads, and Mungaroo, a fleshy-leaved plant, or the water-bearing Par-a-keel-ya—all were palatable vegetables when cooked... The nut-grass Mungaroo, mustard cress, and many others could be eaten raw.” Page 29

EXTRACT 4: “... they were extremely fond of white ants roasted or in their natural state...[they] would set out bright and early, following the drays and knocking over the mounds as they passed. It was strenuous work, as ant citadels were built to last...” Pages 20-21

EXTRACT 5: “Lying in the sandy beds of the creeks is the freshwater mollusc or mussel... [they] like this mussel.” Page 44

EXTRACT 6: “Here are two [large] edible frog...which live for years deep down in the mud of dry creeks... [They], digging down into the beds for soaks, reach the blue-black mud, four or five feet from the sandy surface, and find the frogs—the very large grey-green one and the minute red-capped singing frog, as well as some species of fish.” Page 45

EXTRACT 7: “Over 15 miles of country [they] picked up hundreds of these mantises and tied their bodies into a capacious (large) coloured handkerchief, intending to roast them on hot stones...” Page 61

EXTRACT 8: “With daylight the boys dug the goanna out and cooked it on the coals for breakfast.” Page 63

EXTRACT 9: “They would find the red, rosy Pigweed spread over gravelly flats or about the sandhills; the thick parsnip like root of the yalka, which they roasted on the coals; woolitcha, or the circular leaved mustard plant, growing flat on the ground with thickish, fleshy leaves. [They] eat it with their meats. [They] scraped the sands for the witooka, a brittle, radish-like root, or dug for sweet-onion bulbs called tallculli.... These are a few of the hundreds of plants that [they] have access to, and value for food and medicinal purposes.” Page 69

EXTRACT 10: “When the rains draw near [they] wander up and down the creeks scoring or cutting the bark with a tomahawk. After the rain, they visit the scored trees and gather the minni, a thick sweet honey coloured gum; a great delicacy...” Page 75

EXTRACT 11: “A fascinating art... was winnowing seed food, or yandyng as they called it. With a few skilful twists of the wrist they could make a clean separation of seeds and husks or sand. The seed-food was placed...in a Coolamon; by the time it reached the second vessel the seed was clean and ready for grinding and baking.” Page 84

ACTIVITY 4 | EVALUATING

Examine the list of foods you have noted in your table. Make a **judgement** on the sustainability of these foods. How does that compare to the sustainability of current farming practices? In groups, **debate** the following: to what extent were historical food practices of Mithaka People more or less sustainable than contemporary farming practices?

ACTIVITY 5 | CREATING

Write a persuasive letter or speech that will be delivered to the local council, urging them to put more funding into local sustainable farming projects. Alternatively, develop an advertising campaign using images and interviews. You can research the impact of our current farming practices and compare them to the sustainable farming methods used by the First Nations Peoples. Be sure to suggest native Australian food alternatives and a campaign to introduce people to the more sustainable foods.

Or,

Write a persuasive letter or speech that will be delivered to the local council to inform them of the current and pressing issue of coal seam gas fracking in the Channel Country. Alternatively develop an advertising campaign using images and interviews. This fracking will have a lasting irreversible and detrimental effect on the lands and waters for generations.

Use the <https://www.lockthegate.org.au/> and <https://www.westernriversalliance.org.au/> websites to help your research.



10 Mile quarry site, geophysical survey image, 2020. Photo Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation

MAKING A NATION

SUMMARY

In 1889, a 5-day peace ceremony known as the Debney Peace was performed between First Nations People and pastoralists in the Channel Country region. This historic event is important today for Mithaka People as a very rare example of a peace treaty, brokered by European settlers in collaboration with First Nations representatives from various areas of Channel Country.

According to historian Tom Griffiths:

“The Debney Peace’ was a formal agreement between pastoralists and First Nations people but it was also designed to keep at bay that third murderous force, the Native Mounted Police. The district leader of the Native Police, Senior Inspector Robert Kyle Little (1841-1889), approved Debney’s consultations with Indigenous leaders in the region, although he died of sunstroke in Birdsville four months before the ceremony took place. However, his assent to the negotiation was important. It is unlikely that the Inspector wrote down any details of the peace negotiations, for they could have constituted recognition of a state of war. Nor was it in the interests of pastoralists to advertise their willingness to negotiate with the original owners for that could have signalled weakness. To be effective, the Debney Peace needed to be known among First Nations people, a select group of local pastoralists and the leadership of the Native Mounted Police. But otherwise it was not for public report. This is why knowledge of the event survives only in the early oral history written down by Alice Duncan-Kemp.”

(Excerpt from Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country exhibition publication, p.24)

Learners are encouraged to evaluate sources of evidence for reliability and usefulness. Many items relating to the Debney family and the Debney Peace can be seen in the *Kirrenderri, Heart of the Channel Country* exhibition.

LEARNING

Learning Intention: Understand the nature of the contact and conflict that was happening on Mithaka Country between the First Nations People and the pastoralists.

Success Criteria: Evaluate a historical source for reliability and usefulness.

CURRICULUM LINKS

History, Year 9, Making and transforming the Australian nation 1750-1914:

- The causes and effects of European contact and extension of settlement, including their impact on the First Nations Peoples of Australia ([AC9HH9K03](#))
- Different experiences and perspectives of colonisers, settlers and First Nations Australians and the impact of these experiences on changes to Australian society's ideas, beliefs and values ([AC9HH9K06](#))
- Continuities and changes and their effects on ways of life and living conditions, political and legal institutions, and cultural expression around the turn of the 20th century in Australian society ([AC9HH9K05](#))

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority, Country/Place:

- The occupation and colonisation of Australia by the British, under the now overturned doctrine of *terra nullius*, were experienced by First Nations Australians as an invasion that denied their occupation of, and connection to, Country/Place ([A_TSICP2](#))
- First Nations communities of Australia maintain a deep connection to, and responsibility for, Country/Place and have holistic values and belief systems that are connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways ([A_TSICP1](#))

ACTIVITY 1 | PRE-LISTENING VOCABULARY

As a group **discuss** the words in bold below:

Pastoralist a grazier or landholder raising sheep, cattle, or other livestock, often on a large scale

Detrimental has a harmful or damaging effect on something

Depleted to reduce something by a large amount so that there is not enough left

Coerced to make somebody do something by using force or threats

Dispersion the process of sending somebody or something in different directions

Negotiations formal discussion between people who are trying to reach an agreement

Exploited to treat a person or situation as an opportunity to gain an advantage for yourself

Educators prompt: Gauge learners' understanding of the words by asking them to hold their fingers up as follows, and explain the more difficult words to them.

1 finger = I have never heard of this word

2 fingers = I have heard it, but I am not sure what it means

3 fingers = I think I know what it means

4 fingers = I could confidently use it in a sentence

5 fingers = I can easily explain the meaning to someone else.

ACTIVITY 2 | LISTENING

Listen to the [story of the Debney Peace](#) and answer the questions below. Use the transcript 'Debney Peace Activity 2' if required.

1. What impact did sheep and cattle farming by Europeans have on the land?
2. How did sheep and cattle farming impact the First Nations People living in the Channel Country area?
3. Explain the role of the Native Mounted Police in Queensland.
4. In your opinion, why do you think it took 2 years to organise the Debney Peace?
5. Why do you think that the pastoralists kept this peace negotiation a secret?
6. What injustices were suffered by the First Nations People after the Debney Peace?

ACTIVITY 3 | ANALYSING SOURCES

Analyse sources 1 and 2 and answer the questions.

SOURCE 1:

Extract about George Debney from *Our Channel Country: Man and nature in South West Queensland*, written by Alice Duncan-Kemp and published in 1961.

"This area was not only a fine cattle property and the hunting-grounds of fast-fading aborigines, but it was history, rich and colourful. Riding back to camp, musterers passed a flattened sandstone knoll known to old hands as Debney's Rock; This was the exact spot where in 1889 George Debney, owner of Monkira station, made a successful attempt to bring about a cessation of hostilities between white settlers and the Aboriginal owners of the land..."

He was, in the years to come, one of the greatest bushmen of all time and a great humanitarian...

An untiring explorer, he did much to open up the Diamantina Georgina channel country and bred the finest Shorthorn beef herd out in that part at that time.

He knew thirty Aboriginal dialects; he could tell from a broken spear-head or shaft or the print of a bare foot what man had passed that way and to what tribe he belonged."

1. **Reliability:** This source was published in 1961, 72 years after the Debney Peace, and 53 years after George Debney passed away. Alice herself was only 7 years old when George Debney died. How reliable is this source in giving us an accurate description of George Debney?
2. Alice Duncan-Kemp was on friendly terms with the First Nations People of the area. Do you think she would have had reliable information about the amount of Aboriginal languages George Debney could speak? Why/why not?
3. **Usefulness:** How useful is this source in understanding how respected George Debney was by the people in the Channel Country area?
4. **Locating evidence:** What evidence does Alice Duncan-Kemp present to cause the reader to think that George Debney was a good man?
5. **Motive:** What motive might Alice Duncan-Kemp have had to publish information about the Debney Peace more than 70 years after it occurred?
6. Why do you think that George Debney needed to learn 30 different Aboriginal languages? Why might historians question the accuracy of this statement?
7. **Implicit understanding:** What is Alice Duncan-Kemp implying when she writes: *"he could tell from a broken spear-head or shaft or the print of a bare foot what man had passed that way and to what tribe he belonged."*

SOURCE 2

Photograph of the Sandstone Knoll where the Peace Ceremony took place.



Large quarry located on Channel Country. Photo: Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation

1. Describe the geographical features that you see in the landscape.
2. What evidence can you see that water may be available near this area?
3. Why do you think that this particular location was chosen as a meeting place for many of the communities in the Channel Country area?

ACTIVITY 4 | DISCUSSING AND RESEARCHING

Do you know the word diplomacy or diplomatic?
What does it mean?

Diplomatic: connected with managing relations between countries

In groups, **discuss** the following questions:

1. Explain why it is important to have diplomatic relations between different cultural groups?
2. What purpose might the diplomatic meeting, that is now referred to as the 'Debney Peace', have served?
3. Find out the meaning of the Yolngu word 'makarrata'. Explain why this is important to the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' (2017). Check the links below under 'Further resources'.

Research the history of the Welcome to Country/Acknowledgement of Country. How long has this been a tradition? What is the difference between a Welcome and an Acknowledgement of Country? What was the purpose of this? What is the reason we continue this custom now?

LISTENING COMPREHENSION ANSWERS:

1. What impact did sheep and cattle farming by Europeans have on the land? Sheep and cattle had a detrimental effect on the land as their hooves were destructive to the native grasses.
2. How did sheep and cattle farming impact the First Nations People living in the Channel Country area? The introduction of these animals destroyed food sources, and they contaminated the waterholes that were used by the First Nations People.
3. Explain the role of the Native Mounted Police in Queensland. The Native Mounted Police were employed by the Queensland Government to get rid of the Aboriginal groups that were living in Queensland. This allowed the pastoralists to expand their land holdings even further. The Native Mounted Police did this by killing off many Aboriginal people.
4. In your opinion, why do you think it took 2 years to organise the Debney Peace? Answers could include: groups lived very far apart in Channel Country and it may have taken a while to communicate to all of the people invited. Perhaps they were reluctant to trust the white pastoralists considering they had taken their land and resources. Time was also needed to prepare food and other provisions for the ceremony.
5. Why do you think that the pastoralists kept this peace negotiation a secret? Answers could include: it was not a popular opinion of the governments and the general public that people should negotiate with Aboriginal people. There were many people with racist attitudes and they might lose economic connections if they were seen to be siding with the Aboriginal people.
6. What injustices were suffered by the First Nations People after the Debney Peace? After the negotiations, First Nations People became workers on the pastoral stations, but they were exploited did not receive fair pay and sometimes they were only paid in food and clothing.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Griffiths, T. (2022) 'Friday essay: 'but we already had a treaty' – Tom Griffiths on a little known 1889 peace accord': <https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-but-we-already-had-a-treaty-tom-griffiths-on-a-little-known-1889-peace-accord-182511>

Uluru Statement from the Heart: <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/>

SBS website with Uluru Statement from the Heart in 80 languages:

<https://www.sbs.com.au/language/ulurustatement>

NATIVE TITLE

SUMMARY

This learning activity focuses on the meaning of Native Title and the Native Title determination of Mithaka Country. Learners are encouraged to gain a deeper understanding of what Native Title means and what legal processes occur for Native Title to be determined.

LEARNING

Learning Intention: Understand the significance and limitations of the Native Title Act of 1993.

Success Criteria: Summarise a section of the Federal Court document on the determination of Native Title documents, making notes on the effects of European colonisation of the region.

CURRICULUM LINKS

History, Year 10, Building Modern Australia:

- The causes of First Nations Australians' campaigns for rights and freedoms before 1965, such as discriminatory legislation and policies, the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations ([AC9HH10K09](#))
- The continuing efforts to create change in the civil rights and freedoms in Australia, for First Nations Australians, migrants and women ([AC9HH10K13](#))
- The significant events and methods in the movement for the civil rights of First Nations Australians and the extent to which they contributed to change ([AC9HH10K11](#))

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority - Country/Place:

- The occupation and colonisation of Australia by the British, under the now overturned doctrine of terra nullius, were experienced by First Nations Australians as an invasion that denied their occupation of, and connection to, Country/Place ([A_TSICP2](#))



Windorah, April 2022. Photo: Roxy Weston

ACTIVITY 1 | VOCABULARY

Look at the map below showing Channel Country and the Mithaka Native Title Area. **Discuss** the concept of Native Title:

- Have you heard this term before?
- Do you know what it means?



ACTIVITY 2 | LISTENING

Listen to the [Native Title Definition](#). Use the transcript 'Native Title Activity 2' if required.

After listening, in your own words **explain why** Native Title Act was a significant change in Australian legislation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In your response **discuss** some of the inherent flaws that hinder Aboriginal People from claiming Native Title.

For example, consider how long it took for Mithaka People to be granted Native Title. Many of the claimants and people who have first- and second-hand knowledge required for a claim could pass away while a claim is being considered. If the government finds issue with the claim and denies it, those people with the vital historical and cultural knowledge are no longer around to support the claim.

ACTIVITY 3 | UNDERSTANDING

Watch the first 3 minutes of the video [Interview with Joshua Gorringe](#), General Manager of Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation. Use the transcript 'Native Title Activity 3' if required.

As you are watching, think about the following questions:

1. Why is it important for cultural sites of First Nations Peoples to be mapped and documented?
2. Why is cultural heritage so important to Joshua Gorringe?
3. Where was the final determination of Native Title read out? Why do you think it was important this reading happened on country?

Once you finish watching, **write down your answers** to the three questions.

ACTIVITY 4 | RESEARCHING

Conduct **research** on the Mithaka Native Title determination.

Access the Native Title determination document here:

[Gorringe on behalf of the Mithaka People v State of Queensland \[2015\] FCA 1116](#)

1. Look for clause number 6. What activities can Mithaka People conduct on their land under the Native Title agreement?
2. Scroll down to Schedule 1 - DETERMINATION AREA. What different ways does the document use to determine the area that is included in the Mithaka Native Title Area?
3. Scroll to the section The Mithaka People, their society and history. Look for item number 13 and read through Dr Murphy's Report provides the following summary of the impact of European settlement in the region. Find three ways European colonisation has impacted the lives of Mithaka People.

ACTIVITY 5 | REFLECTING

Write a reflective paragraph about the impacts of European colonisation on the Mithaka People. Use evidence from 'Dr Murphy's Report' to support your argument.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation (2022) About us - Mithaka People and Country:

<https://mithaka.org.au/about-us/>

National Museum of Australia (n.d.) Overturning Terra Nullius: 1992:

High Court decision in Mabo case recognises native title, *Australia's Defining Moments in the Classroom*:

<https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/mabo-decision>

CARING FOR COUNTRY

SUMMARY

For tens of thousands of years, First Nations Peoples have been caring for Country and maintaining a balance with the environment. These learning activities focus on the concept of sustainable methods of land management that are practised by Australian First Nations Peoples.

Learners will explore cultural preservation techniques that are being used on Country by Mithaka People today. Learners are encouraged to take a proactive approach in informing others about the current environmental management techniques that Mithaka People are using.

LEARNING

Learning Intention: Understand how Mithaka People Care for Country.

Success Criteria: Create a social media campaign informing people about the environmental management that is being done by the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Geography, Year 10, Environmental Change and Management:

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' approaches to custodial responsibility and environmental management in different regions of Australia ([ACHGK072](#))
- Environmental world views of people and their implications for environmental management ([ACHGK071](#))

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority, Country/Place:

- OI.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.
- OI.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.

Sustainability cross-curriculum priority - Futures:

- OI.7. Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments.
- OI.8. Designing action for sustainability requires an evaluation of past practices, the assessment of scientific and technological developments, and balanced judgements based on projected future economic, social and environmental impacts.

ACTIVITY 1 | DISCUSSING

Discuss the following words or phrases. Have you ever heard of these words?

Do you know the meaning?

- *Repatriate*
- *Keeping place*
- *Pastoral industry*

Educators prompt:

Repatriate: to restore or return people or things to the country/place of origin, allegiance, or citizenship.

Keeping place: spaces managed by an Aboriginal community that house objects, art, and information about their history, heritage, and culture.

Pastoral industry: farming that is aimed at producing livestock, rather than growing crops.

ACTIVITY 2 | LISTENING

Listen to the [interview with Tracey Hough](#), one of the Directors of the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation, and answer the questions below:

Educators prompt: While listening, pause the video and elicit responses as you go.

1. How do the traditional owners of Mithaka country work together with scientists and researchers to do their research? (Time stamp 7:53 - 9:21)
2. What are some of the key discoveries that the Mithaka People have learned from the research teams? (Time stamp 9:22)
3. What modern technology is used to lessen the impact of the research on the land? What are the advantages of this technology? (Time stamp 11:00)
4. What steps should a person take if they find a cultural artefact? (Time stamp 12:23)
5. What should you do if you find human remains? (Time stamp 13:10)
6. Why is Channel Country significant for Australian history? (Time stamp 14:09)
7. Why is the Channel Country river system important? What are the environmental plans for the future of this area? (Time stamp 14:42)
8. Explain the importance of the Ranger program on Mithaka country. (Time stamp 16:49)
9. Explain the purpose of the keeping place. (Time stamp 18:10)

ACTIVITY 3 | RESEARCHING

Research the concept of 'Care for Country' and take notes. Next, research the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation and the methods they are using to Care for Country. You can also use the information from Tracey Hough's interview.

<https://mithaka.org.au/> also has information.

ACTIVITY 4 | CREATING

In groups or individually, **create** a social media campaign that could be used as a resource to teach people about the core values of the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation. The three core values of the Mithaka People are: Care for Country, Care for Culture, and Care for our people. The focus of the campaign is **Care for Country**.

Follow these four steps:

1. Choose a social media platform: Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook, etc.
2. Decide what messages you would like the audience to learn about the sustainable land use.
3. Narrow your research down to 5 key points that you think are important to share.
4. Create 5 social media posts based on the Mithaka value of Care for Country.
You can use online programs like Canva or Piktochart to create your posts.

Your social media posts should:

- Include the concept of Care for Country
- Have an eye-catching design and visual appeal
- Avoid overloading the post with too much text

ACTIVITY 5 | REFLECTING

Share your posts with the rest of the class or group. Decide which posts are the most visually appealing. Which posts have a message that most aligns with the Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation?

Pick the top social media posts that were created. Your teacher/educator can email them to macAdmin@mithaka.org.au to share on their Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation social media feed.

EXHIBITION ACTIVITY — CREATE A POSTCARD

Alice Duncan-Kemp (1901-1988) regularly wrote and sent letters and postcards to her friends and family. Postcards have gone out of fashion today. Digital technology allows us to instantly communicate through text messages, emails, and social media.

Pick up one of the blank postcards in the gallery and sketch something you see in the exhibition. This could be an object, a photograph, or something else you take inspiration from. You can add a note to the postcard if you like.

Take away your postcard to send someone in the mail or give to them.



Portrait of Alice Duncan-Kemp, her personal typewriter, the author's copies of *Where Strange Gods Call*, *Where Strange Paths Go Down*, *Our Sandhill Country*, Paul Poulsen Studio portrait of Alice Duncan-Kemp and photographs from the author's collection (installation view), 2022. Courtesy of H. Spring and Alice Duncan-Kemp Archive. Photo: C. Warner

LORRAINE MCKELLAR AND WILL KEMP

What important work do Lorraine McKellar and Will Kemp perform?

MOSES YOOLPEE

What were some of the events of Moses' early life?

How did Moses spend his later life?

What role did he play in the lives of the Duncan girls?

MARGARET PATERSON (LOOK FOR RETURNING STONE TOOLS TO MITHAKA)

How did Margaret come into possession of the stone tools?
What was the event that made her want to return the stone tools?
How did the stone tools make their final journey home?
Summarise what Tracey Hough says about the repatriation of the stone tools.

GEORGE DEBNEY (LOOK FOR A FRONTIER HISTORY)

Who were the Native Mounted Police?
What was the Debney Peace?
How long did it take to organise?
Who were the three key groups who needed to recognise the peace?

KIRRENDERRI EXHIBITION

TRANSCRIPTS

TRANSCRIPT - DEBNEY PEACE ACTIVITY 2

Adapted from Tom Griffiths, 'The Mithaka teachers of Alice Duncan-Kemp'

The late 1800s was not a peaceful time in Queensland. There was a lot of conflict between the pastoralists and the First Nations Peoples. You see the **pastoralists** were expanding their property rapidly without consideration of the Aboriginal people who had lived there for generations. With the pastoralists came sheep and cattle and these animals were **detrimental** to the native grasses and waterholes that the First Nations People relied upon for their survival. Not only were these vital resources being **depleted**, but much violence was being inflicted on the traditional owners of the land.

The Queensland Government funded an organisation called the Native Mounted Police force. This group consisted of Aboriginal troopers—who were often taken from faraway lands and **coerced** into joining—and was led by European officers. Their job was to remove the First Nations People from their land by what the government called “**dispersal**”. Dispersal was just a coded way of saying murder. The Native Police would track and kill Aboriginal groups and often burn the bodies. This was a very violent and traumatic period.

In May 1889, a pastoralist named George Debney organised a 5-day peace ceremony that was orchestrated by the Mithaka People. This became known as the “Debney Peace”. Yet, this peace ceremony did not happen overnight. It took two years to organise. Located near a waterhole on a sandstone knoll, this five-day ceremony took place in a neutral area that had been used for tribal **negotiations** since ancient times. More than 500 Aboriginal people from the Channel Country, along with a group of selected pastoralists, came together to negotiate peace. This peace treaty was also designed to keep away the Native Mounted Police. However, it was not in the best interests of the pastoralists to advertise that they were willing to negotiate with the traditional owners, therefore there is very little written record of this event. The knowledge of the event only survives through the writings of Alice Duncan-Kemp, whose father arrived in the area around the time of the “Debney Peace”. She published several books. She wrote down the oral histories of the “Debney Peace” many decades later.

The First Nations Peoples were forced to deal with the long-term settlement of the pastoralists, but were often **exploited**, paid incredibly low wages or were paid only in food and clothing. Without this skilled and effective Aboriginal workforce, the pastoralists would likely not have thrived on the land.

TRANSCRIPT - FOOD SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVITY 2

Adapted from the Alice Duncan-Kemp entry in the [Australian Dictionary of Biography](#)

In 1901, Australia was federated, that means that all of the separate colonies in Australia came together to create one nation. 1901 was also the year that Alice Duncan was born in Charleville, Queensland. Her mother was the daughter of a Sydney solicitor, and her father was a Scottish born station manager. Sadly, when Alice was only about 6 years old her father passed away, but her mother bravely stayed on in the vast arid land and continued to raise cattle on her property. Her mother received help from the local Aboriginal people, and Alice befriended the Aboriginal people who worked on the station.

Alice grew up and married her husband Fredrick Clifford Kemp. He became the manager of a bank and he and Alice moved around to many country towns in Queensland.

In 1933, Alice Duncan-Kemp published a memoir called “*Our Sandhill Country*”. She wrote about bush life, droughts and floods, musters and race meetings, pastoralists and stockmen as well as the landscape and flora and fauna. However, she also wrote about food and cultural practices of the Aboriginal people that she interacted with. Alice published three other books in the 1950s and 1960s that had similar themes to her first book.

Alice Duncan-Kemp was very open minded for her time as she believed that Aboriginal Australians were the true owners of the land. She also believed that the Aboriginal people had a complex system of law, and that the introduction of cattle to the land was detrimental to the food supply of the Aboriginal people. Additionally, she talked about the importance of women's ceremonies and women's country, the cultural differences between language groups, and the techniques employed to increase the natural stock of available food.

Alice passed away in 1988 at the age of 87.

TRANSCRIPT - MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE ACTIVITY 2

Magnetometry is a **geophysical** instrument. It works by measuring small variations in the Earth's magnetic field caused by the presence of iron minerals. These variations can be caused by large features such as metal associated with non-Indigenous sites, and by more subtle features associated with burning, which changes the **mineralogy** of the soil. This change is often seen in Indigenous campfires. Magnetometers can be used for surveying the land or water. They are the preferred method for archaeological investigations as they are fast and are good at mapping features directly below the surface.

A common use of magnetometry is to find former villages by detecting iron under the ground. This can include small-scale villages or camps and important historical settlements. However, often individual houses or dwellings from earlier time periods, such as the Indigenous sites in Australia can be difficult to detect due to the small size of features like postholes. In Mithaka Country, gunyahs were the individual housing units used by Aboriginal people. They are dome-shaped pit dwelling wooden structures about 5 metres in diameter, often containing numerous hearths inside and outside their dwellings and situated on mounded earth.

Sometimes archaeologists gather data about a place or a feature they are sure exists, so that they can then compare that data with a site that is still a mystery to them. For example, surveying the known standing gunyahs on Mithaka Country was important for providing information for investigating an area with some possible gunyahs located 200 metres to the east. This area contained several campfires, stone tools, scarred trees, and at least eight earth mounds. Many **anomalies** were detected throughout the area, indicating that this could be a village site. While the anomalies do not form any noticeable regular pattern, they contain similar magnetic values, sizes, and shapes to those observed at the two known gunyahs. Interpretation of the anomalies suggests that there might be a higher level of human activity in this area, including activities such as cooking, sweeping, and so on.

Evidence for potential villages in this part of Australia may help us to understand how people managed to adapt to the Channel Country landscape.

TRANSCRIPT - NATIVE TITLE ACTIVITY 2

To understand what Native Title is, you have to go back a little way in history and learn about a Torres Strait Islander man, Eddie Koiki Mabo. In 1982, Mabo led a group of Eastern Torres Strait Islander People in a fight for legal ownership of the Island of Mer. They took this fight to the most important legal court in Australia, the High Court. For more than 10 years the Meriam People researched and wrote 4000 pages of evidence showing that for 100s of years, generations of their people had occupied the land. In 1992—ten years after the case had begun—the High Court ruled that the Meriam People did in fact hold traditional ownership of the lands of Mer. This became known as the “Mabo Decision”. Sadly, Eddie Mabo had passed away a few months before the decision was handed down.

This decision led the Australian Government to introduce the Native Title Act of 1993. This was a way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to claim their lands. However, that new Act had some flaws. The only land that was able to be claimed was vacant Crown land, (which means empty land that is owned by the state), national parks and some land that was leased by the government. The Act also says that the government has priority over this land.

The other problem was that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People must go to court to prove that they have continually kept their traditional links with the land.

Now this was a problem. You see, for the previous 200 years of colonial occupation of Australian lands, the First Nations Peoples have been subject to frontier violence, such as poisoning and massacres of many of their people, as well as dispossession from their traditional lands. Also, there is the tragedy of children being stolen from their families and country. Therefore, because there were big gaps where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People were forced from their lands, it made it almost impossible for most groups to be able to prove continual occupation. Although there were flaws in the Native Title Act, it was a significant victory for the First Peoples of Australia.

In 2002, the Mithaka People first lodged a claim for Native Title. After 13 years of hard work by the Mithaka People, in 2015, Native Title status was granted. The land that was granted was over 55,425 square kilometres, which is almost as big as the entire state of Tasmania.

TRANSCRIPT - NATIVE TITLE ACTIVITY 3

My name is Joshua Gorringe, General Manager of Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation. I manage the day-to-day operations of Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation on the ground and on country out in far Southwest Queensland. We have three separate arms of Mithaka, we have rural operations, land management and cultural heritage as well as we do a lot of research stuff with the universities as well.

Why should cultural sites be mapped and documented? (time stamp 00:00:43)

Sites should be documented to help protect the sites for one; it gives us – as Mithaka People, a better understanding of what we can map, and map the cultural sites around our area. It also helps the pastoralists out, the mining companies, whoever we are doing the clearings for – councils. It gives them an accurate record that we've done a clearance and that the area has been cleared of anything cultural. The report has also got, yeah, whether we find anything culturally sensitive, on the sites but the biggest reason, it's a huge thing to have the documentation to back what someone saying that they've got the country cleared. It's probably the most important part of cultural heritage management is to have documentation and having well documented sites of significance on country.

Cultural heritage to me is probably one of the biggest things we as traditional owners have to be mindful of, purely because that's the thing that connects us to our country. The cultural aspects, our country, our artefacts. It all come back to what it means to have our culture and our connection to our country. Without our culturally significant places, we don't have a connection to country I suppose.

Mithaka Native Title determination (time stamp 00:02:20)

We started down the Native Title path in the late 90s and we got our final determination in October 2015, out at Windorah which was great that we could have it on country for the determination to be read out by the federal court judge. We got granted 33,000km² of country between Windorah, Birdsville and Bedourie. The only town that we've got in our Native Title determined areas is called Betoota, where there's population of one.

FIND OUT MORE

LINKS EMBEDDED IN RESOURCES

Interview with Joshua Gorringe: <https://vimeo.com/709759102>

Interview Tracey Hough: <https://vimeo.com/709758193>

Interview with Shawnee Gorringe: <https://vimeo.com/709787794>

Magnetometry: <https://vimeo.com/708081066>

3D image of gunyah: <https://vimeo.com/721292346>

Google Earth time lapse: <https://earthengine.google.com/timelapse/>

Queensland's Channel Country, worthy of protection - Western Rivers Alliance:

https://www.westernriversalliance.org.au/queensland_s_channel_country_worthy_of_protection

Lock the gate – Channel Country gas impacts: https://www.lockthegate.org.au/channel_country_gas_impacts

Short film - 3D image of Gilparrka Almira rock art engraving site: <https://vimeo.com/721291090>

Short film - Section of Gilparrka Almira rock art engraving site: <https://vimeo.com/721291839>

Moses Yoolpee biography: <https://peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/biography/yoolpee-moses-31849>

Story of Debney Peace: <https://vimeo.com/708079701>

Alice Duncan-Kemp's biography: <https://vimeo.com/708067199>

Alice Duncan-Kemp, entry in Australian Dictionary of Biography:

<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/duncankemp-alice-monkton-12444>

Native Title definition: <https://vimeo.com/708095428>

Mithaka Native Title determination document:

<https://www.judgments.fedcourt.gov.au/judgments/Judgments/fca/single/2015/2015fca1116>

FURTHER READING

Interested readers can consult the following in addition to the published works featured in the learning resources:

- Agnew, N., Deacon, J., Hall, N., Little, T., Sullivan, S. & Taçon, P. (2015) *Rock Art: a cultural treasure at risk*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust
https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/pdf_publications/pdf/rock_art_cultural_treasure.pdf
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