



# **Humanities and Social Sciences: History**

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Teaching and learning exemplar | Year 5

**The Pinjarra Massacre: Truth-telling**

**An apology on October 28, 2025 to the  
Bindjareb Noongar people by  
His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM  
Governor of Western Australia**



## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Welcome. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

## **Acknowledgement of thanks**

The Authority extends its thanks to everyone involved in the development of this teaching and learning exemplar. The Authority thanks the traditional owners and Elders who have shared their knowledge with the Reference Group formed to provide advice on the development of this exemplar. Beyond the Reference Group, the Authority thanks other individuals who have provided feedback.

The Authority thanks His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM Governor of Western Australia and Mrs Darrilyn Dawson and their team at Government House.

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The pamphlet, ‘An Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834’, along with the ‘TRUTH HEALING GROWTH Medallion’, are available to view upon request at the State Library of Western Australia under the call number PR16070/1-2. For more information, view the associated archive listing on the State Library of Western Australia's catalogue: [Encore -- An apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834](#).

‘TRUTH HEALING GROWTH Medallion’ designed by Lucas Bowers, The Perth Mint.

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## **Disclaimer**

Any resources such as texts, websites and so on that may be referred to in this document are provided as examples of resources that teachers can use to support their learning programs. Their inclusion does not imply that they are mandatory or that they are the only resources relevant to the course. Teachers must exercise their professional judgement as to the appropriateness of any they may wish to use.

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## This exemplar

This Humanities and Social Sciences teaching and learning exemplar articulates the curriculum content mandated in the *Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline* (the *Outline*). It provides approaches to teaching and learning reflective of the Principles of Teaching and Learning included in the *Outline*. This exemplar demonstrates a sequence of teaching and learning for eight lessons.

## Using this exemplar

This teaching and learning exemplar provides suggestions to support the delivery of the mandated curriculum content. The exemplar provides:

- the mandated curriculum content to be taught at each point of the teaching and learning sequence and suggested resources
- learning intentions and support notes that may provide focus questions and additional information and/or examples to assist with the interpretation of curriculum content
- support notes to assist teachers to unpack the curriculum content and support teaching and learning experiences
- teaching and learning experiences that outline the structure of the lesson. These explicitly state each activity that the lesson will progress through and the key focus area/s
- reference to teacher support resources and professional learning to support cultural responsiveness and trauma-informed practice when delivering the content.

The content descriptions addressed in this teaching and learning exemplar are:

- The patterns of colonial development and settlement and how this impacted upon the environment and the daily lives of the different inhabitants.
- The contribution or significance of **one** individual or group in shaping the Swan River Colony, including their motivations and actions.

## Lesson sequence outline

|                               | Lesson | Lesson summary                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Country and people            | 1      | The European perspective of Boorloo Perth explored through viewing primary source materials                                                                                                     |
|                               | 2      | The Bindjareb Noongar people, Traditional Owners of the land in the Pinjarra area, and what life was like prior to colonisation                                                                 |
| The effects of colonisation   | 3      | The factors that influenced the settlement of places in Western Australia during colonisation                                                                                                   |
|                               | 4–5    | The effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and significant events leading up to the Pinjarra Massacre                                                        |
| The Pinjarra Massacre         | 6      | The significant events of the Pinjarra Massacre, October 28, 1834                                                                                                                               |
| Truth-telling and remembrance | 7      | <i>An Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834: An address by His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM Governor of Western Australia</i>                                  |
|                               | 8      | Symbols of reconciliation within <i>An Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834: An address by His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM Governor of Western Australia</i> |

## Important information for teaching this unit

This teaching and learning exemplar includes a range of lessons covering challenging and sensitive content from Australian history, including colonisation and the 1834 Pinjarra Massacre.

### Trauma-informed practice

Trauma-informed practice is an approach where schools and school staff recognise the impact of trauma on students, staff and community members and respond by creating safe and supportive learning environments that prioritise wellbeing, engagement and positive relationships. When using this teaching and learning exemplar, teachers should refer to the resources included in Appendix B for support in managing material that may impact on themselves, their students and members of the school community.

The resources listed below and in Appendix B are provided to support teachers in delivering this content appropriately and safely.

Department of Education – Education Resources – Trauma Informed Practice

<https://myresources.education.wa.edu.au/programs/trauma-informed-practice>



[Staff from the Department of Education Western Australia, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia and Catholic Education Western Australia can access trauma-informed practice modules through this link.]

Berry Street – Trauma-informed instructional strategies: Enhancing learning for all students



<https://www.berrystreet.org.au/news/berry-street-education-model-trauma-informed-instructional-strategies>

Beyond Blue – Trauma-informed strategies for educators



<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/trauma-informed-strategies-for-educators>

Information regarding broad policies and strategic plans that underpin and inform the exemplar are provided below. This is not an exhaustive list; rather, it is a starting point for ongoing professional learning. Many of the ideas raised in the teaching of one topic will also be relevant to other topics across the curriculum.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration



<https://www.education.gov.au/indigenous-education/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>

FIRST framework



<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/first-framework>

Building a culturally responsive Australian teaching workforce



<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/cultural-responsiveness/building-a-culturally-responsive-australian-teaching-workforce>

OUR FUTURE, OUR PATHWAY: The NATSIEC Strategic Plan 2025-2029



<https://natsiec.edu.au/posts/strategic-plan>



The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Guide to evaluating and selecting education resources

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/education/guide-evaluating-and-selecting-education-resources>



Australian Human Rights Commission – National Anti-Racism Framework

<https://humanrights.gov.au/resource-hub/by-resource-type/reports/race/anti-racism-framework>



Department of Education – Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/jjpzned>

## **Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories**

### **Challenging and sensitive content**

To effectively deliver challenging and sensitive content in ways that foster safe, inclusive and supportive learning environments, teachers are encouraged to approach topics in a manner that:

- handles sensitive issues impartially
- addresses challenging and sensitive content with respect and curiosity
- fosters critical and creative thinking, empathy, intercultural understanding and social awareness among students.

### **Cultural sensitivity statement**

Teachers and students are advised that some of the resources used in this lesson contain images, voices, videos or names of deceased persons.

The cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the wellbeing of all students is a priority in the delivery of all lessons. Each lesson includes a cultural sensitivity statement. These statements flag the relevant contents of the recommended resources, so teachers can prepare themselves adequately for their own wellbeing as well as prepare their students and create safe spaces for them to learn effectively.

## **Principles and protocols for teaching and learning – Cultural safety and responsiveness**

### **Voice and representation**

- Use a range of resources, including those produced by or developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, that provide an active voice and a range of perspectives.
- Respect the knowledge held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about their histories and cultures.
- Use language and terms preferred in a particular area or location and acknowledge that language in primary source materials reflects the time in which they were created and may not be appropriate in contemporary society.

### **Local and community context**

- Contextualise content for the community in which the curriculum is being delivered, where appropriate, in teaching and learning programs.
- Include, where possible, and within the bounds of the curriculum, case studies, examples and issues that align with the locality and context of the school.
- Build learning on local and regional cultural knowledge and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, developed in partnership with local communities.

### **Teacher capacity and practice**

- Access culturally considered professional development on trauma-informed practice for staff, students and families (Appendix B).
- Develop confidence and capability to teach and learn about, and alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Apply culturally responsive teaching practices that are effective for not only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but all students.
- Develop ability to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in ways that promote reconciliation and truth-telling.

### **Historical terminology**

- This exemplar includes reference to some historical documents, policies and texts that contain language that is now considered outdated or inappropriate. These terms reflect the norms and attitudes of the time in which they were written. They do not represent the values we uphold today – values that emphasise respect, inclusion and understanding.
- In the classroom, teachers should approach these resources with care and an awareness of context, with the aim of helping students engage critically with history, understand how language evolves and recognise the importance of creating inclusive communities. When students encounter language that is now considered outdated or inappropriate, teachers should encourage open discussion, guided by empathy and a commitment to learning from the past.
- Using respectful and inclusive language and terminology is an essential part of reconciliation. It strengthens relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community, and models the values this exemplar seeks to promote.

### **Spelling variations**

It should be noted that spelling variations occur in writing in English at the time of the settlement and in Noongar. The spelling of Noongar, Nyoongar and Nyungar is an example of these variations.

## Resources legend

The following symbols are used in this teaching and learning exemplar to provide teachers with information on the nature of the resources included in the lesson sequence.

| Symbol                                                                              | Name                     | Description                                                        | Examples of use                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | Multimedia               | Video or audio materials to be shown to the class                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• video clip</li><li>• documentary</li><li>• podcast</li></ul>                                                                       |
|    | Webpage                  | Online information source                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• news article</li><li>• museum website</li><li>• government website</li></ul>                                                       |
|    | Student resource         | Resource that students need to access for learning                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• student worksheet</li><li>• graphic organiser template</li><li>• interactive webpage</li></ul>                                     |
|    | Lesson materials         | Materials that require teacher preparation prior to lesson         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• collection of images</li><li>• card-sort activity</li><li>• materials for practical activities</li></ul>                           |
|  | Teacher support resource | Additional information to support teachers in the suggested lesson | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• thinking routine instructions</li><li>• example of completed graphic organiser</li><li>• additional information on topic</li></ul> |

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## Links to electronic resources

This sequence of lessons may utilise electronic web-based resources, such as videos and image galleries. Teachers should be present while an electronic resource is in use and close links immediately after a resource, such as a video, has played to prevent default ‘auto play’ of additional videos. Where resources are referred for home study, they should be uploaded through a system that filters advertising content, such as Connect.

## Catering for diversity

This exemplar provides a suggested approach for the delivery of the curriculum and reflects the rationale, aims and content structure of the learning area. When planning the learning experiences, consideration has been given to ensuring they are inclusive and can be used in, or adapted for, individual circumstances. It is the classroom teacher who is best placed to consider, respond to and accommodate the diversity of their students. Reflecting on the learning experiences offered in this exemplar will enable teachers to make appropriate adjustments to better cater for students’ gender, personal interests, achievement levels, socio-economic, cultural and language backgrounds, experiences and local area contexts.

## Australian colonies

This teaching and learning exemplar supports the teaching of a sequence of lessons, using the mandated Humanities and Social Sciences curriculum for Year 5 History. The lessons in this exemplar aim to support students' understanding of key historical concepts, knowledge and skills as they apply to aspects of Australian history. These include the patterns of colonial development and settlement, impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, significant events and individuals that shaped the colonies, experiences of diverse groups and the apology given by His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson AC APM Governor of Western Australia to the Bindjareb Noongar people on October 28, 2025. The skills of locating and collecting information from primary and secondary sources, identifying different perspectives in information and data, considering different points of view and drawing conclusions are an integral part of the lessons.

The lessons in this exemplar are designed to be taught chronologically, with a focus on truth-telling, healing and growth contributing to reconciliation in Western Australia.

The exemplar assumes that the students have studied the Year 4 History curriculum and teachers have already delivered the Year 5 content description on the economic, political and social reasons for establishing British colonies in Australia after 1800.

For historical context of the significant events and individuals included in this exemplar, see 'An Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834: Address by Chris Dawson AC APM Governor of Western Australia, Tuesday October 28, 2025' (Appendix A).

The following videos will also provide context:

Government House Western Australia – *Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Full Interview Video*  
<https://vimeo.com/1193094488?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci> (45 minutes)

Government House Western Australia – *Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Classroom Video*  
<https://vimeo.com/1191463549?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci> (11 minutes).

### **The Pinjarra Massacre: Truth-telling**

The Pinjarra Massacre is a significant example of the effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was the only known massacre in Australia that was directly led by a Governor. On October 28, 1834, Sir James Stirling, Western Australia's first Governor, led a punitive expedition of armed mounted police, soldiers and colonists to Bindjareb Noongar Country, which is the area also known as Pinjarra. The group of Bindjareb Noongar people were ambushed on the banks of the Murray River, and many innocent people were massacred during the attack.

On October 28, 2025, 191 years after the Pinjarra Massacre took place, Governor Dawson apologised for the historical actions of Governor Stirling. Governor Dawson delivered the apology on Bindjareb Noongar Country, on the site that the massacre took place and during the ceremony, exchanged trees as symbols of peace and reconciliation.

This exemplar acknowledges the continuous connection of the Bindjareb Noongar people to Boodja (Country) in the region prior to colonisation and their resilience throughout significant change and conflict following the establishment of the Swan River Colony. It also references the significant individuals who were involved in the Pinjarra Massacre and in 'An apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834', delivered to the Bindjareb Noongar people on October 28, 2025, which conveyed the commitment of Governor Dawson to walk alongside the Bindjareb Noongar community.

The full transcript of Governor Dawson's apology to the Bindjareb Noongar people can be found on the following pages. When referred to as the transcribed speech, this is known as 'The Governor's Apology'.

The exemplar uses the historical moment of The Governor's Apology as an opportunity to promote truth-telling in the curriculum.

## The Governor's Apology

I firstly thank you for the welcome to this sacred country from the Bindjareb people of Noongar nation. I thank the Elders, the Birdiya Maaman and Yorgas for their invitation.

When I was sworn in as the 34th Governor of Western Australia, I set a priority that I would do all I could to improve the betterment of Aboriginal People across our State.

On swearing my oaths of office as Governor, I stated that FAITH, HOPE and LOVE are powerful in shaping why and how we all, as people of Western Australia, can continue to live our lives, in the freedom and beauty we enjoy.

I undertook to uphold these oaths, not be captured by tradition but be a respectful custodian and use the opportunity to advocate, support and encourage the young leaders of today to further the reconciliation between our Aboriginal people and all West Australians.

To me, that meant telling the TRUTH in all the complexities of the past, in order to HEAL in the present and do all I could to contribute to the GROWTH of trust and reconciliation.

This is what today is about.

TELLING THE TRUTH – KARNADJIL

HEALING – WUNGENING

GROWTH – BOORDIYA

Governor Stirling came to this place in 1834 with an intent to punish the Bindjareb Noongar people.

I come to this place today as a Governor with a different intent.

I come here on the invitation of the Bindjareb Noongar people. I come here on foot, unarmed, to walk softly on this country.

I come with my HEART – my KOORT – to say SORRY. I come here today and say sorry for the dreadful wrongs perpetrated by the first Governor of Western Australia, Sir James Stirling, to Bindjareb Noongar people on this Boodja.

Captain Stirling, as he then was, first visited the Derbal Yirrigan in 1827, which he then named the Swan River.

He recorded in his journal that when he first saw three Aboriginal Noongar men, that they “...seemed angry at our invasion of their territory”.

In 1834, following five years of colonisation, the relationship between the British settlers and the Aboriginal population in Western Australia was very tense.

Aboriginal people and white settlers were killed, often in reprisal attacks, in the lead up to the Pinjarra massacre.

Colonists were allocated traditional Aboriginal land by Governor Stirling, where they then farmed and reared livestock.

Native animals were an important food source for both Aboriginal and settler people. Settlers' livestock were also killed by both Aboriginal people and colonists as a food source.

This struggle over both land and food, and clash of culture, led to reprisal attacks on both sides.

Following settler grievances and calls for protection, Governor Stirling then formed an intent to punish the Bindjareb Noongar tribe.

In October 1834, Governor Stirling leading a party of 25 men, rode from Perth to Pinjarra in the south-west of Western Australia.

This journey was documented in detail by the only unarmed member of Stirling's party, the Colony's Surveyor General, John Septimus Roe.

The culmination of this trip was the deaths of multiple Aboriginal people of the Bindjareb Noongar tribe. These deaths were previously referred to as the "Battle of Pinjarra". Most historians now refer to October 28, 1834, as the "Pinjarra Massacre".

Governor Stirling described it as a "skirmish".

However, first-hand accounts, which have been researched using both primary sources and historical accounts, confirm that Governor Stirling's intent on travelling to Pinjarra was punitive.

I have personally read from the handwritten journals of Governor Stirling and the Surveyor General John Septimus Roe. I will be quoting direct from those primary source documents. These quotes are not my own or some other historian's interpretation.

They are from the people who were here on that fateful day.

The party of 25 armed men, organised and led by Governor Stirling, fired on men, women and children. An initial encounter resulted in the spearing of Superintendent Ellis of the Mounted Police, who later died of his wounds, and a speared trooper who survived.

The Aboriginal males who threw the spears were fatally shot. The tribe ran from that initial encounter to the river. Men, women and children were surrounded and overpowered in a riverbed.

In the words of Surveyor General Roe:

"In a few minutes the loud shouting & yelling of the natives told us the whites were discovered, and firing immediately commenced on the left bank. Not having a gun, I was directed to take charge of the ford with the baggage and 4 soldiers, while the remainder of the force followed the Gov upwards – the firing continued upwards & followed the retreating voices of the natives for upwards of an hour."

Surveyor General Roe recorded:

"After the first charge which killed 4 or 5, the natives retreated to the river intending apparently to cross over by another ford about ½ a mile lower down – in this they were completely frustrated by meeting the remainder of the armed force, headed by the Governor, just as part of them were ascending the bank.

"In this dilemma they took to hiding themselves amongst the bushes & dead logs on the river banks, and were picked off by the party on either shore. This was not however done without much resistance on part of the natives, who, although secreted in very small & scarcely discernible holes &

places, & in many instances had immersed themselves in the water, having only their nose & mouth above water, nevertheless threw numerous spears with amazing precision & force.

“In this way between 15 and 20 were shot dead, very few wounded being suffered to escape, until at length, it being considered that the punishment of the tribe for the numerous murders it had committed, was sufficiently exemplary, the firing ceased, and the party secured 8 women & several children prisoners.”

Governor Stirling reported killing 15 Aboriginal people, with the death of one of his party, Mounted Police Superintendent Ellis. Other estimates stated a much higher casualty number of the Bindjareb Noongar people were killed. The precise number of deaths of the Aboriginal population are now impossible to determine.

It has been noted in the records that women and children were numbered amongst the dead and injured. Oral histories handed down amongst the Bindjareb Noongar give a much higher casualty figure.

Subsequent reporting by Governor Stirling in a despatch to Colonial Secretary Stanley in November 1834 made it clear that he had been determined to put a “check” on the tribe and that the surviving Aboriginals “were then informed that this punishment had been inflicted”.

Governor Stirling recorded he gathered the women and children of the tribe and issued a warning that further deadly punishment could be inflicted.

In a letter to the British authorities, Stirling wrote of the incident: “The natives very resolutely stood their ground, as I am informed, and threw a volley of spears, by which Captain Ellis was wounded in the head, and one of his men in the right arm, and another was unhorsed, stunned, and dismounted by the blow, and having his horse speared.

“Captain Ellis’ party was thus put into great peril, but at this critical moment, the men with me in position, and commenced firing, and threw the natives into confusion, they fled to a ford about 100 yards, below the other, but being headed then, by the Corporal’s party, they were forced back into the bed of the stream.

“The upper ford being also occupied by Mr Roe, as well as the two banks they were thus completely surrounded and overpowered, the number killed amounted probably to 15 men.

“The women were kept, until after our company had been collected round the two wounded men, they were then informed that the punishment had been inflicted, because of the misconduct of the tribe, that the white men never forgot to punish murder, and that on this occasion the women and children had been spared, but that if any other person should be killed by them, not one would be allowed to remain alive this side of the mountains.”

As Governor of Western Australia, I come to you today to say: I AM DEEPLY SORRY FOR THE ACTIONS OF MY PREDECESSOR AND FOR THE PAIN AND SUFFERING HE CAUSED.

I say sorry to the Bindjareb people, who still feel the trauma of the punishment inflicted on their ancestors that day, when so many innocent lives were taken.

The time has come – and the time is right – for the Governor to acknowledge the truth of the past actions of a predecessor.

I have a deep hope and faith that a process of healing and growth will follow. I believe this action will be a significant step along the pathway to meaningful reconciliation.

As a symbol of that faith, I today present the Bindjareb Noongar people an offering of peace – a young sapling from an Olive tree planted by Governor Stirling in 1835, which still grows in the grounds of Government House today.

In return, I am willing to receive from the Bindjareb Noongar people a Jarrah tree from this land to be planted at Government House, as a reciprocal symbol of reconciliation, peace and hope.

These young trees are physical embodiments of a regeneration of respect and the rekindling of trust. I pray for healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

As these trees grow and mature, as their roots take hold, they will stand as a physical representation of our resolve to walk in unison and growth.

My call to all Western Australians, is that we speak the TRUTH. That we do as much as we can to assist in the HEALING of our community between all people.

That we GROW in unison to make us stronger, resilient and be a land and a people of FAITH, HOPE and LOVE for our present and our future generations.

Thank you.

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## Lessons 1–8

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## Lesson 1

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### Cultural sensitivity statement

Teachers and students are advised that some of the resources used in this lesson contain images, voices, videos or names of deceased persons.

This lesson is designed to strengthen the understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives are diverse, within and across communities. Teachers should consider whether the activities and resources in this lesson are appropriate for their students and school context.

Teachers should consider appropriate trauma-informed practices when teaching this lesson (Appendix B).

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### Western Australian Curriculum

#### History

- The patterns of colonial development and settlement and how this impacted upon the environment and the daily lives of the different inhabitants

#### Questioning and researching

- Locate and collect information and/or data from a range of appropriate primary sources and secondary sources
- Record selected information and/or data using a variety of methods

#### Analysing

- Identify different perspectives in information and/or data
- 

### Teacher information

It is recommended that, before commencing the lessons teachers spend time setting class expectations for empathy and respectful listening when discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories. This could be done in the form of a *Y-chart* that exemplifies what respect looks, sounds and feels like (sample in Appendix B).

These expectations will help create a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. Class expectations may include:

- we treat stories and cultures with respect
- we use respectful and appropriate language
- we show care and consideration for everyone's feelings
- we can ask questions to support our learning
- we learn from mistakes – if we say something wrong, we listen, apologise and try again.

The paintings included in this lesson represent what was important to the colonists in the Swan River Colony. They reflect how Europeans viewed Boorloo and the surrounding lands as well as their own place in the colony. It is important to recognise that they do not represent Aboriginal people's connection to the land. When using these sources, students will need to consider whose perspectives are shown, whose are missing and how artistic choices shape our understanding of colonial experiences in the Swan River Colony.

## Resources



National Museum of Australia – *Captain Stirling's Exploring Party 50 Miles up the Swan River* by W.J. Huggins, 1827 (on the Founding of Perth webpage)

<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/founding-of-perth>



Potter Museum of Art – Robert Dale: *Panoramic view of King George's Sound, part of the colony of Swan River* 1834

<https://art-museum.unimelb.edu.au/resources/21x10/panoramic-view-of-king-georges-sound-part-of-the-colony-of-swan-river-1834/>



K20 Center – T-chart

<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/86>



Project Zero – See, Think, Wonder

<https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/see-think-wonder>

## Lesson outline

| Learning intention                                                                                                                                                           | Success criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>examine primary sources to understand how European colonists viewed Boorloo and the surrounding lands.</li></ul> | <p>Students can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>identify the perspective presented in primary sources</li><li>locate information in primary sources</li><li>explain the difference between primary and secondary sources.</li></ul> |

## Introduction

- In pairs, students make a list of ideas about what we use to learn about the past.
- Review/introduce what is meant by primary and secondary sources by categorising the ideas with a call-out and class *T-chart*. Identify primary sources, such as contemporaneous paintings, diaries, letters, objects, photographs and recordings, and secondary sources, such as books, newspaper articles and cartoons.
- Establish the differences between primary and secondary sources.
- Using the questions below, view and discuss a painting that reflects how Europeans viewed Boorloo and the surrounding lands, such as *Captain Stirling's Exploring Party 50 Miles up the Swan River* by W.J. Huggins, 1827 (Appendix B, Artwork A):
  - What do you notice?
  - What does the painting tell you about the location?
  - What does it tell you about the people pictured?
  - What might this tell you about the point of view of the artist?
  - Whose story does this painting seem to tell?
  - Why is this painting historically important?
  - What would you tell people about this painting?
- Discuss why the painting was created, what story it tells and whose stories were omitted.

**Main activity**

- Provide students with access to the Potter Museum of Art website that shows Robert Dale's artwork (Appendix B, Artwork B).
- Explain to the students that this artwork was drawn by Assistant Government Surveyor Robert Dale in 1832 and then translated into a hand-coloured aquatint in 1834 by Robert Havell.
- Explain that the artwork shows the land of the Menang Noongar people, which later became Albany.
- In pairs, students complete a *See, Think, Wonder* organiser to gather and reflect on the information provided in the image.

**Review of learning**

- Invite pairs of students to share some of the ideas they recorded about the artwork. Reflect on the landscape, clothing, shelters, interactions and technology.
- Discuss how artworks can reflect the views and experiences of the artist.
- Chart and display the 'I wonder ...' questions for later.

## Lesson 2

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### Cultural sensitivity statement

Teachers and students are advised that some of the resources used in this lesson contain images, voices, videos or names of deceased persons.

This lesson is designed to strengthen the understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives are diverse, within and across communities. Teachers should consider whether the activities and resources in this lesson are appropriate for their students and school context.

Teachers should consider appropriate trauma-informed practices when teaching this lesson (Appendix B).

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### Western Australian Curriculum

#### History

- The patterns of colonial development and settlement and how this impacted upon the environment and the daily lives of the different inhabitants

#### Questioning and researching

- Locate and collect information and/or data from a range of appropriate primary sources and secondary sources
  - Record selected information and/or data using a variety of methods
- 

### Teacher information

Teachers should review the websites used in the main activity before providing students access. Several of the websites relating to the Bindjareb Noongar people include references to the Pinjarra Massacre, which will be explored in Lesson 6. Teachers should use their professional judgement to determine whether it is appropriate for students to access these websites in full, or whether selected sections should be provided instead.

### Resources



South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council – Interactive Map of the Noongar Land Estate  
<https://www.noongar.org.au/land-base-map>



Pinjarra: Shire of Murray – Bindjareb Boodja (section titled ‘The World’s Oldest Living Culture’)  
<https://pinjarra.destinationmurray.com.au/culture-history/bindjareb-boodja/>



Students will need access to the source materials located in Appendix B



The Dawes Hub – The Legacy of the Bindjareb/Pindjarup People  
<https://thedaweshub.com/community/the-legacy-of-the-bindjareb-pindjarup-people/>



Pinjarra: Shire of Murray – Bindjareb Boodja (section titled ‘A resourceful culture’)  
<https://pinjarra.destinationmurray.com.au/culture-history/bindjareb-boodja/>

## Lesson outline

| Learning intention                                                                                                                                                                                      | Success criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>locate information in primary and secondary sources to identify what life was like for the Bindjareb Noongar people before colonisation.</li></ul> | Students can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>identify some culturally appropriate and respectful ways to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history</li><li>describe how the Bindjareb Noongar people lived in Pinjarra before colonisation, including their food, water, shelter, family life and connection to land.</li></ul> |

### Introduction

- Show students the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council's *Interactive Map of the Noongar Land Estate* and explain that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia is made up of many different and distinct groups with their own cultures, customs, languages and laws. The boundaries are not fixed or intended to be exact.
- Acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the world's oldest surviving cultures and have a deep, ongoing connection to Country/Place.
- Locate Whadjuk and Bindjareb Country.
- Discuss how we can learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history in culturally appropriate and respectful ways, including:
  - engaging with local Aboriginal communities
  - learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices by using oral histories, stories, articles and resources created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
  - recognising diversity of cultures.
- Ask students to share their prior learning of what life was like for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples before colonisation. Support this activity by encouraging students to think about topics such as: shelter, food and water, use of the land, family, ceremonies.
- Clarify that life was not identical for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups as cultures, languages and environments varied.
- Explain to students that they are going to look at what life was like for the Bindjareb Noongar people before colonisation. Display the Shire of Murray's *Pinjarra* website (*Pinjarra* resource), and read and discuss the paragraph 'The World's Oldest Living Culture' to the students.
- Review the 'I wonder ...' questions from Lesson 1 and discuss any that may have been answered by the *Pinjarra* resource.
- Recap the meaning of primary and secondary sources and ask students to explain which the *Pinjarra* resource would be and why.

### Main activity

- Provide students with access to primary and secondary sources about life for the Bindjareb Noongar people before colonisation (Appendix B and websites listed under Resources).
- Pose the question: What was life like for the Bindjareb Noongar people before colonisation?
- In pairs, students read the sources and gather information about different areas of life, such as shelter, food and water, family and community, land and environment. Students record notes in a graphic organiser (Appendix B).

**Review of learning**

- Ask pairs of students to recount their findings to the class.
- Allow students time to add information to their graphic organiser.

## Lesson 3

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### Cultural sensitivity statement

Teachers and students are advised that some of the resources used in this lesson contain images, voices, videos or names of deceased persons.

This lesson is designed to strengthen the understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives are diverse, within and across communities. Teachers should consider whether the activities and resources in this lesson are appropriate for their students and school context.

Teachers should consider appropriate trauma-informed practices when teaching this lesson (Appendix B).

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### Western Australian Curriculum

#### History

- The patterns of colonial development and settlement and how this impacted upon the environment and the daily lives of the different inhabitants

#### Questioning and researching

- Locate and collect information and/or data from a range of appropriate primary sources and secondary sources
  - Record selected information and/or data using a variety of methods
- 

### Teacher information

Teachers will need to decide how students are going to view John Septimus Roe's map. The notes on the map are easier to read when accessed online, as students will be able to zoom in on those areas.

### Whadjuk Noongar place names

Kinjarling – Albany: place of gentle rain

Mandoon – Guildford: place of many trees

Boorloo – Perth

Goolamup – Kelmscott: place of young men

Walyalup – Fremantle: place of walyo (woylie)

### Resources



Museum of Perth – *View from Mount Eliza* by Frederick Garling, 1827 (on the Aboriginal Places & Life (Prior to 1829) webpage, and in Appendix B)

<https://www.museumofperth.com.au/aboriginal-places-life-prior-to-1829>



Arrowsmith, J. (1839). [Map of the colony of Western Australia developed from the surveys of John Septimus Roe]. (Appendix B)

<https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-230642590/view>

### Background reading for teachers on the colonisation of places in Boorloo Perth



ABC Education – The Colonisation of Perth

<https://www.abc.net.au/education/digibooks/the-colonisation-of-perth/101750514>



Curtin Radio – This is Fremantle: A Look in Freo's History & Culture

<https://www.curtinradio.com.au/this-is-fremantle-a-look-in-freos-history-culture/>



Barbara Dundas – The Historic Town of Guildford – Between Sea and Scarp

<https://www.guildford.asn.au/documents/NGHC.pdf>



City of Cockburn – Cockburn History

<https://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/Cockburn-History>



Everything.Explained.Today – Kelmscott, Western Australia Explained

[https://everything.explained.today/Kelmscott%2C\\_Western\\_Australia/](https://everything.explained.today/Kelmscott%2C_Western_Australia/)

## Lesson outline

| Learning intention                                                                                                                                                                           | Success criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore the different factors that influenced the settlement of places during the colonisation of Western Australia.</li> </ul> | <p>Students can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>locate information in primary sources</li> <li>explain why Pinjarra was identified as a good place to establish a colony</li> <li>identify impacts to the local Bindjareb Noongar people and the environment when Pinjarra was colonised.</li> </ul> |

## Introduction

- Using Frederick Garling's painting of the Swan River (Appendix B), ask students to give reasons why they think the place was chosen to start a colony. Ask students to consider what resources in the environment would be important for the colony to be successful. Make a list of the resources given.
- Explain to students that the areas colonised first in Western Australia were: Albany, Perth, Fremantle, Guildford, Cockburn and Kelmscott.
- Show the class John Septimus Roe's map of the colony of Western Australia (Appendix B). Explain that the map was produced from surveys that were completed by the first Surveyor General of Western Australia.
- Discuss how the map has been divided and labelled.
- In pairs, ask students to locate Albany, Perth, Fremantle, Guildford, Cockburn and Kelmscott. Ask them to identify similarities and differences between John Septimus Roe's map and a current map of Western Australia.
- As a class, use John Septimus Roe's map to identify what might have influenced the colonisation of these places, such as rivers and oceans providing fresh water, transport, fertile soil and/or land suitable for grazing animals.
- Introduce students to Whadjuk Noongar place names and their meanings, focusing on the original place names for where settlements were established. Guide students to identify that Noongar place names in Western Australia often refer to natural features of the land.

## Main activity

- Provide students with a copy of a section of John Septimus Roe's map of the colony of Western Australia (Appendix B).
- Explain to students that they are going to locate the Murray region and Pinjarra on this map.
- Ask students to use colours to highlight features that suggest this was a good place to settle. Students may colour rivers and sections of land or highlight words written on the map.

- In pairs, students use this information to write the impacts that early colonisation would have had on the environment, e.g. altering the environment to make way for crops and roads.

**Review of learning**

- Ask students to share the environmental impacts that they recorded.
- With each suggested impact, highlight how this would have affected the local Aboriginal people, e.g. displacement, loss of land, access to food sources and water was disrupted.

## Lessons 4–5

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### Cultural sensitivity statement

Teachers and students are advised that some of the resources used in these lessons contain images, voices, videos or names of deceased persons.

These lessons are designed to strengthen the understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives are diverse, within and across communities. Teachers should consider whether the activities and resources in these lessons are appropriate for their students and school context.

Teachers should consider appropriate trauma-informed practices when teaching these lessons (Appendix B).

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### Western Australian Curriculum

#### History

- The patterns of colonial development and settlement and how this impacted upon the environment and the daily lives of the different inhabitants
- The contribution or significance of **one** individual or group in shaping the Swan River Colony, including their motivations and actions

#### Questioning and researching

- Locate and collect information and/or data from a range of appropriate primary sources and secondary sources
- Record selected information and/or data using a variety of methods
- Use ethical protocols when gathering information and/or data

#### Analysing

- Identify different perspectives in information and/or data
- 

### Teacher information

Teachers will need to acknowledge to students that there are a variety of perspectives to investigate in the context of the events discussed in the lesson, i.e. some Aboriginal people worked to defuse conflict, and some European people were understanding of the difficulties colonisation had brought to Aboriginal people.

Teachers are advised that the suggested conflicts for research involve the killing of Aboriginal people, settlers and animals. Teachers should read the website materials and use their professional judgement to determine whether these topics and materials are appropriate for their students and school context.

These lessons have been developed to support honest and respectful learning about the past. By examining historical events, students can better understand the impacts of colonisation, the resilience of the Aboriginal people and the importance of truth-telling in the journey to reconciliation.

## Resources

-  The Teacher Toolkit – Think-Pair-Share  
<https://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/think-pair-share>
-  K20 Center – T-chart  
<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/86>
-  Students will need access to the source materials located in Appendix B

## Websites for main activity

-  The Dawes Hub – The Legacy of the Bindjareb/Pindjarup People  
<https://thedaweshub.com/community/the-legacy-of-the-bindjareb-pindjarup-people/>
-  Britannica Kids – Yagan  
<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Yagan/631538>
-  Kiddle – Calyute facts for kids (sections titled ‘The Flour Raid’ and ‘The Attack on Peel’s Property’)  
<https://kids.kiddle.co/Calyute>

## Lesson outline

| Learning intention                                                                                                                                                                                  | Success criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>investigate the impact of colonisation through exploring the conflicts between the Bindjareb Noongar people and European colonisers.</li></ul> | Students can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>identify what is meant by ‘conflict’ by identifying three causes of conflict</li><li>identify factors that caused conflict from the perspective of the Bindjareb Noongar people and the perspective of the colonisers.</li></ul> |

## Introduction

- Explain to students that conflict occurs when people disagree because of wants, needs, beliefs or goals. Establish that conflict does not always mean violence. Brainstorm other words for differing degrees of conflict, e.g. fight, disagreement, argument etc.
- Use a *Think-Pair-Share* strategy to discuss when conflicts occur in the students’ personal lives. Examples of conflicts could include: arguments over bedtimes, disagreement over whose turn it is on the play equipment, or fights over the rules in four square.
- As a class, draw out the causes of conflict.
- Present students with sources about initial contact between Aboriginal people and European colonisers (Appendix B). Ask students to read the sources with a partner and brainstorm what caused conflict between the colonisers and the Bindjareb Noongar people.
- As a class, discuss the information in the sources, using questions such as:
  - How were the relationships between Aboriginal people and European colonisers described?
  - How were Aboriginal people affected when European settlements expanded?
  - What conflicts have you identified?
  - Why did the attitude of the Europeans lead to conflict?
- As a class, complete a *T-chart* to show what each group thought, comparing the Bindjareb Noongar peoples’ perspectives with the colonisers’ perspectives. For example, the groups had

different belief systems about property, beliefs about the land and its ownership, and understanding of society's rules and punishments.

**Main activity**

- Explain to students that there were a number of conflicts that affected the Bindjareb Noongar people.
- Provide students with a list of appropriate websites as well as a list of years where significant topics or events led to a conflict, such as Thomas Peel (1830), Yagan (1832), flour rations (1834) and missing horse (1834). Students work in pairs to research their chosen topic/event and make notes on what the topic/event was and how it affected the Bindjareb Noongar people and the colonists.
- Additional task: Students could research the contributions, motivations and actions of Calyute, an Aboriginal resistance leader of the Bindjareb Noongar people.

**Review of learning**

- Place the conflict events in chronological order and ask students to present their findings to the class.

## Lesson 6

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### Cultural sensitivity statement

Teachers and students are advised that some of the resources used in this lesson contain images, voices, videos or names of deceased persons.

This lesson is designed to strengthen the understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives are diverse, within and across communities. Teachers should consider whether the activities and resources in this lesson are appropriate for their students and school context.

Teachers should consider appropriate trauma-informed practices when teaching this lesson (Appendix B).

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### Western Australian Curriculum

#### History

- The contribution or significance of **one** individual or group in shaping the Swan River Colony, including their motivations and actions

#### Questioning and researching

- Locate and collect information and/or data from a range of appropriate primary sources and secondary sources
- Record selected information and/or data using a variety of methods

#### Evaluating

- Draw and justify conclusions, and give explanations, based on the information and/or data displayed in texts, tables, graphs and maps
- 

### Teacher information

Please be aware that this lesson is directly focused on teaching the events of the Pinjarra Massacre itself; both teachers and students may find this information confronting and challenging. Please ensure that any members of the classroom are supported should they find the nature of this lesson distressing. The resources provided in Appendix B are recommended as a support for this lesson.

The websites listed are teacher reference materials that contain historical primary resources with outdated terminology. Teachers will need to explain to their students that the language used in the source materials for the main activity is historical and does not represent appropriate language use of today.

### Resources



Bindjareb Park – Pinjarra Massacre site

<https://bindjarebpark.com.au/pinjarra-massacre-site/>



Britannica Kids – Pinjarra Massacre

<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Pinjarra-Massacre/628925>



Freotopia – The Massacre of Pinjarra 1834

<https://freotopia.org/events/pinjarra.html>



University of Newcastle – Colonial Frontier Massacres, Australia, 1788 to 1930

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>



Project Zero – See, Think, Wonder

<https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/see-think-wonder>

## Lesson outline

| Learning intention                                                                                                                                                                                   | Success criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>examine historical sources to understand the events of the Pinjarra Massacre and the impact on the Bindjareb Noongar people.</li> </ul> | <p>Students can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify what is meant by a ‘massacre’</li> <li>identify what a source tells us about the Pinjarra Massacre</li> <li>explain how the author’s perspective might influence the way an event is described.</li> </ul> |

## Introduction

- Ask students to share reasons why, after five years of colonisation, the relationship between colonisers and the Aboriginal population in Western Australia was very tense. List the ideas given in a chart or on the whiteboard.
- Explain to students that in October 1834, Governor James Stirling rode from Perth to Pinjarra with a party of 25 men to attack the Bindjareb Noongar people. This event is known as the Pinjarra Massacre.
- Clarify the meaning of the word ‘massacre’. Ensure you consider a dictionary definition.
- Show students *Map 14: The Scene at Pinjarra at 9:00 a.m. on 28 October 1834* according to Green (Appendix B). Ask students to complete a *See, Think, Wonder* activity.
- As a class, review the activity. Teachers may need to discuss the map in more detail, ensuring students understand the landscape, position of the people and weapons used.

## Main activity

- As a class, read the excerpts from the journal of Surveyor General John Septimus Roe and the unidentified eyewitness account given to the Perth Gazette (Appendix B). Clarify any challenging language. This could be done by having students individually highlight words that they do not know, looking them up and then discussing as a class. As an optional addition, the class could develop a word wall for these terms.
- Discuss the sources using the following questions:
  - Whose points of view are presented?
  - Which words in the text give you a clue about the attitudes of the author to the Bindjareb Noongar people?
  - What do we learn from the sources about what happened to the Bindjareb Noongar people?
  - What words in the texts show that this was a massacre?
  - How would the Bindjareb Noongar people have passed on knowledge of this event?

**Review of learning**

- Students record a reflection on their learning about the Pinjarra Massacre. Reflections could include what students have learned that they didn't know before, why they think it is important to learn about the Pinjarra Massacre and further questions that they have.
- Model a short example response to students that demonstrates use of respectful language and shows how to move past retelling facts by including personal reflection and simple perspectives that clearly state why this history is important today.

## Lesson 7

---

### Cultural sensitivity statement

Teachers and students are advised that some of the resources used in this lesson contain images, voices, videos or names of deceased persons.

This lesson is designed to strengthen the understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives are diverse, within and across communities. Teachers should consider whether the activities and resources in this lesson are appropriate for their students and school context.

Teachers should consider appropriate trauma-informed practices when teaching this lesson (Appendix B).

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### Western Australian Curriculum

#### History

- The contribution or significance of **one** individual or group in shaping the Swan River Colony, including their motivations and actions

#### Questioning and researching

- Locate and collect information and/or data from a range of appropriate primary sources and secondary sources
- Record selected information and/or data using a variety of methods

#### Evaluating

- Draw and justify conclusions, and give explanations, based on the information and/or data displayed in texts, tables, graphs and maps

#### Communication and reflecting

- Present findings, conclusions and/or arguments, appropriate to audience and purpose, in a range of communication forms and using subject-specific terminology and concepts
- 

### Teacher information

Teachers will need to view the *Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Classroom Video* to ensure it is appropriate for the students in their context. The video uses the words ‘killed’, ‘massacre’ and ‘punish murder’.

Teachers will need to read The Governor’s Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre in full prior to the lesson. The full apology must be presented to students.

### Resources



Government House Western Australia – Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project  
Classroom Video  
<https://vimeo.com/1191463549?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci> (11 minutes)



Government House Western Australia – An apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834  
<https://govhouse.wa.gov.au/2025/10/an-apology-for-the-pinjarra-massacre-of-october-28-1834/>

-  Reconciliation Australia – What is reconciliation?  
<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/what-is-reconciliation/>
-  Narragunnawali – What is a RAP?  
<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/raps/what-is-a-rap>
-  The Teacher Toolkit – Think-Pair-Share  
<https://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/think-pair-share>
-  The Teacher Toolkit – Stop and Jot  
<https://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/stop-and-jot>

## Lesson outline

| Learning intention                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Success criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognise the significance of The Governor’s Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre, and explore why truth-telling and reconciliation are important for healing and building respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community.</li> </ul> | <p>Students can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain why The Governor’s Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre was made</li> <li>define the meaning of ‘truth-telling’ and explain why it is important in understanding history</li> <li>identify ways reconciliation can help communities and strengthen relationships.</li> </ul> |

## Introduction

- Discuss the different meanings of the word ‘sorry’.
- Ask students to consider: What is an apology? Why and when do people apologise?
- Ask students what it means when someone in power apologises. Explain that apologies are made by governments to acknowledge harm done in the past.
- Review/introduce the term ‘reconciliation’.
- View the *Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Classroom Video* and discuss with students the research process Governor Dawson and his team completed when writing the apology. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:
  - What is the role of a state records office?
  - Why did Governor Dawson want to view the primary source materials?
  - Why were the primary source documents viewed before secondary sources?
  - Why did Governor Dawson use extracts from the primary source materials in the apology?
- Introduce the term ‘truth-telling’ in the context of reconciliation. Explain to students that Governor Dawson states in the video, ‘the truth needed to be told’. Discuss this statement and truth-telling using the following questions:
  - What does truth-telling mean when we learn about the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
  - Why is learning about conflicts in the past an important part of truth-telling?
  - How can truth-telling turn into meaningful action?
- Explain to students that people cannot heal from a history that society has not honestly identified, and this means talking about the past, naming the harm caused, listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ lived experiences and identifying what follows once we know the truth.

**Main activity**

- Provide students with a complete copy of The Governor's Apology (Appendix A).
- Read the first page of The Governor's Apology together and discuss the language used, such as the use of Noongar, capitalisation of certain words or phrases, and words showing respect or regret.
- Place students with a partner to reread and discuss The Governor's Apology. Ask the students to do the following:
  - Highlight the sections where Governor Dawson has identified the truth in his apology.
  - Complete an activity such as *Stop and Jot*. Provide students with sticky notes or paper to record details from The Governor's Apology that they found interesting, surprising or need further clarification on.

**Review of learning**

- Invite students to contribute to a discussion to clarify and summarise their learning.
- Create a class statement about what truth-telling means.

## Lesson 8

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### Cultural sensitivity statement

Teachers and students are advised that some of the resources used in this lesson contain images, voices, videos or names of deceased persons.

This lesson is designed to strengthen the understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives are diverse, within and across communities. Teachers should consider whether the activities and resources in this lesson are appropriate for their students and school context.

Teachers should consider appropriate trauma-informed practices when teaching this lesson (Appendix B).

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### Western Australian Curriculum

#### History

- The contribution or significance of **one** individual or group in shaping the Swan River Colony, including their motivations and actions

#### Questioning and researching

- Locate and collect information and/or data from a range of appropriate primary sources and secondary sources
- Record selected information and/or data using a variety of methods

#### Evaluating

- Draw and justify conclusions, and give explanations, based on the information and/or data displayed in texts, tables, graphs and maps
- 

### Teacher information

The tree exchange associated with The Governor's Apology is highly symbolic, representing life, growth and the building of respectful relationships. Understanding this symbolism helps students see reconciliation not only as words but as actions that foster healing, connection to Country and mutual respect.

### Resources



Government House Western Australia – An apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834

<https://govhouse.wa.gov.au/2025/10/an-apology-for-the-pinjarra-massacre-of-october-28-1834/>



Government House Western Australia – European Olive

<https://govhouse.wa.gov.au/office-of-the-governor/the-gardens/significant-trees/european-olive/>



Reconciliation Australia – What is reconciliation?

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/what-is-reconciliation/>



Project Zero – Gallery Walk

<https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/gallery-walk>

## Lesson outline

| Learning intention                                                                                                                           | Success criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• explore how symbols can represent connection to Country and reconciliation.</li></ul> | Students can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describe what the trees symbolised at The Governor's Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre</li><li>• develop a symbol to represent reconciliation and explain the choices made.</li></ul> |

### Introduction

- Revisit the full text of The Governor's Apology with the students.
- Focus on the exchange of the trees. Discuss the symbol of the tree exchange as truth, healing and growth.
- Show the students an image of the European olive tree at Government House and discuss the concept of an olive branch as an international sign of peace. Explain to the students that the eucalyptus jarrah tree will be planted next to the olive tree.
- Discuss the symbolism of the exchanged trees growing together with the roots in the same Australian soil, the trees being watered by the same rain clouds over Western Australia and the sharing of the same sunlight.
- Identify the importance of trees in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture with a *Call out* strategy. Ideas may include shelter, food source, medicine, meeting place and connection to ancestors.
- Review what the different parts of the tree can symbolise in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and reconciliation, such as:
  - Roots – connection to the Country and ancestors
  - Shade – care, safety, protection
  - Growth – healing and continuing the journey to reconciliation.

### Main activity

- Discuss with students the symbols that they feel could represent reconciliation and encourage them to explain the meanings behind their choices.
- Students create an artwork of their own symbol to represent reconciliation.
- Alternatively, students could create an artwork of the jarrah and olive trees growing together.
- Students identify, and record underneath their artwork, a personal action they can take to contribute towards reconciliation.

### Review of learning

- Display the artworks and do a *Gallery Walk*.
- Discuss the personal actions that the students have written and ask students to share what changes for them now that they have learned this truth.
- Identify how, as a class, we can act differently now that we know the truth.



## **Appendix A**

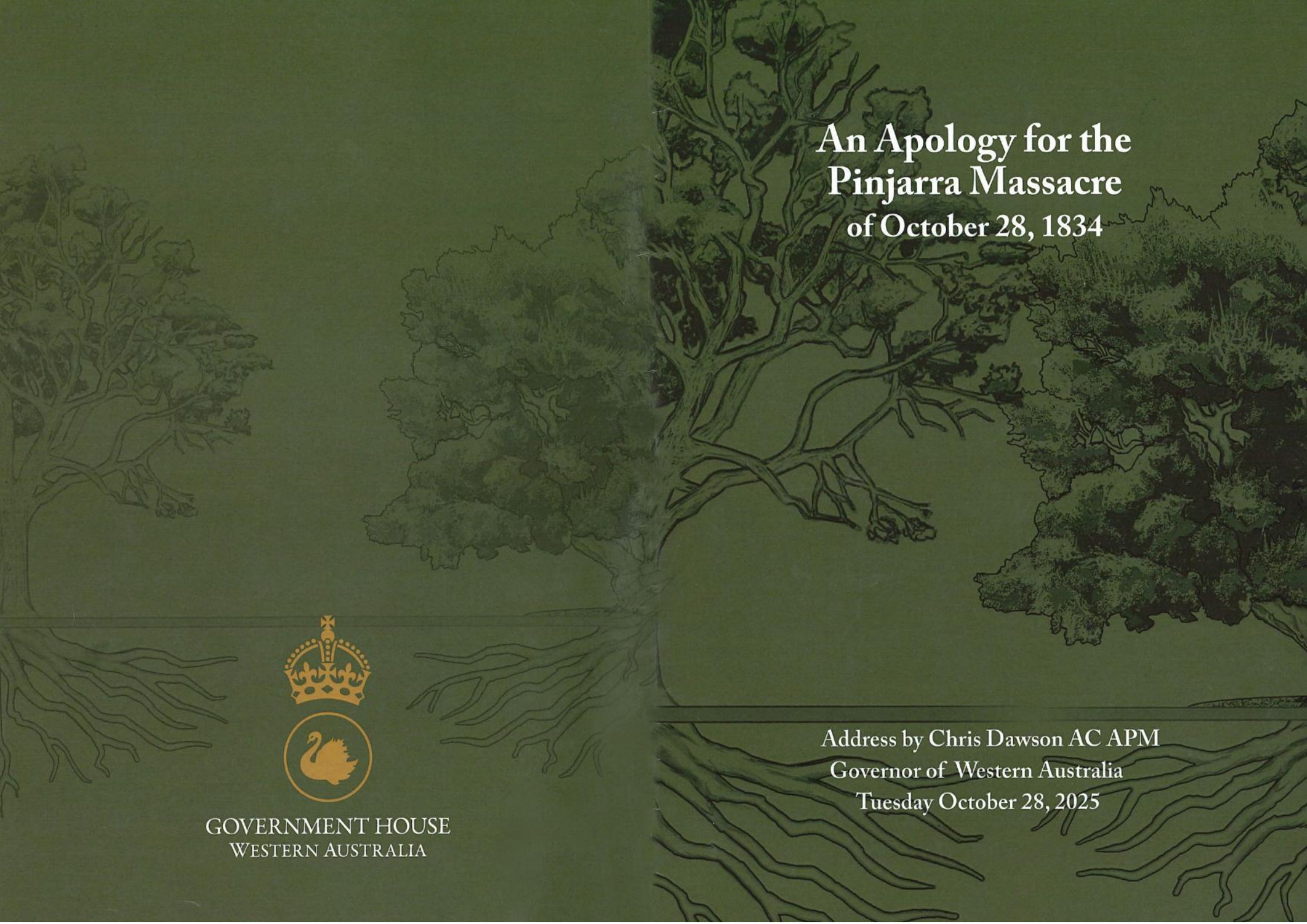
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An Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of  
October 28, 1834:

Address by His Excellency the Honourable  
Chris Dawson AC APM

Governor of Western Australia

Tuesday October 28, 2025



# An Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834



GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Address by Chris Dawson AC APM  
Governor of Western Australia  
Tuesday October 28, 2025

# THE PINJARRA MASSACRE

## A Brief Historical Context

October 28, 2025 is the 191st anniversary of a massacre which occurred on Bindjareb Boodja – which was led by Western Australia's first Governor, Sir James Stirling.

The Bindjareb Noongar people, one of the 14 clans who make up the larger Noongar Nation, have been continuous custodians of their country for thousands of years.

The role of Governor in the 1800's, before the formation of the Western Australian parliament was significantly different in the exercise of executive powers than compared to modern times.

As the first Governor, Stirling held executive power over the early Swan River Colony. He held authority to establish the colony, administer justice, explore the

territory, allocate land - and direct military action.

The first five years of the Swan River Colony was beset with killings of Aboriginal people, livestock and settlers.

Settlers were granted land by the Governor over traditional Aboriginal territory.

Governor Stirling was also being requested to provide further safeguards for settlers due to the killings and tensions between Aboriginal people and settlers.

Governor Stirling organised and then led a group of 25 men, riding from Perth to Pinjarra.

This journey was contemporaneously documented in detail by the only unarmed member of Stirling's party, the Colony's Surveyor General, John Septimus Roe.

The culmination was the deaths of multiple indigenous people of the Bindjareb Noongar tribe. One of Stirling's party later died from his injuries.

There are varying accounts and estimations of the number of Aboriginal people killed, ranging from 15 from Governor Stirling's account to more than 80 casualties.

The actual number is impossible to determine.

For many years, the Bindjareb Noongar people have stated that the loss of life of Bindjareb Noongar men, women and children has wrongly been described as a skirmish or battle when it was a massacre.

There has never been accountability for the wrongdoings which occurred during the punitive expedition to Pinjarra, led by Governor Stirling.

The Bindjareb Noongar people killed in this massacre had not been subject of any judicial or fair trial process that warranted their mass execution.

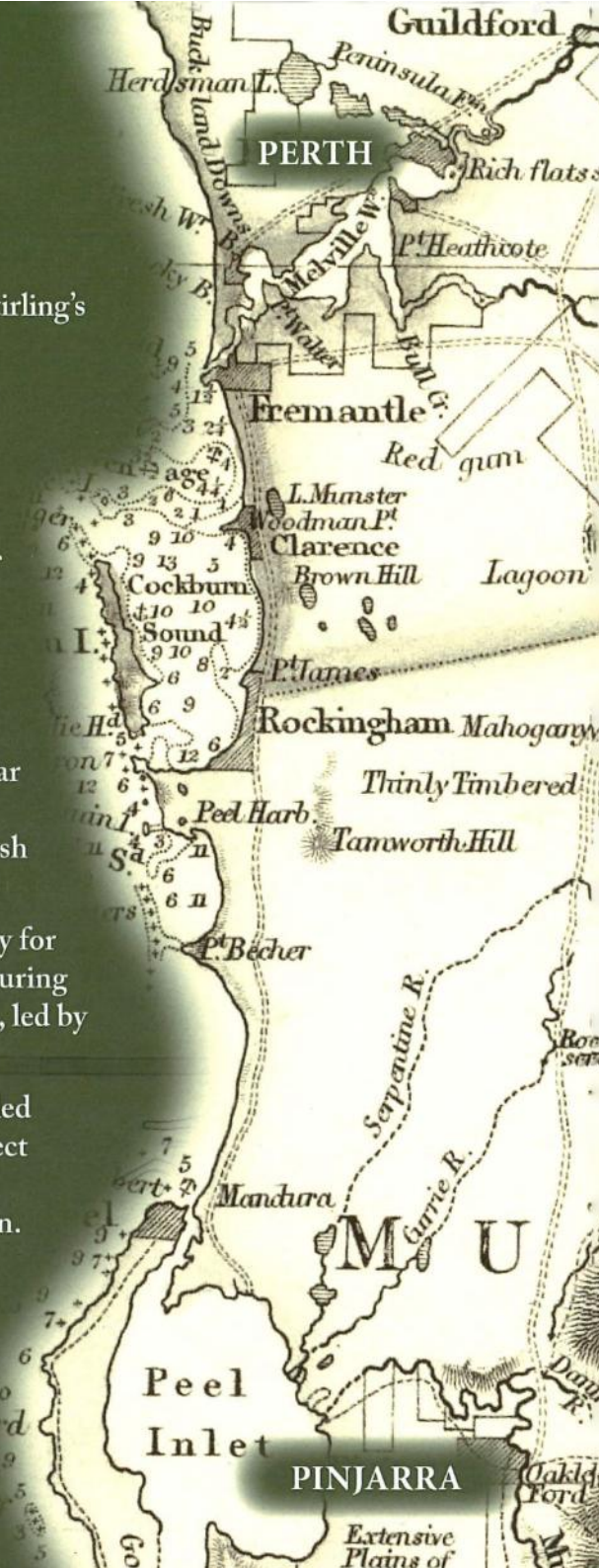
Despite the years which have passed, the trauma from that punishment is still felt by Western Australia's Aboriginal population.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land throughout all of Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community.

We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life in this state.

We pay our respects to all members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.



## The Governor's Apology

I firstly thank you for the welcome to this sacred country from the Bindjareb people of Noongar nation. I thank the Elders, the Birdiya Maaman and Yorgas for their invitation.

When I was sworn in as the 34<sup>th</sup> Governor of Western Australia, I set a priority that I would do all I could to improve the betterment of Aboriginal People across our State.

On swearing my oaths of office as Governor, I stated that FAITH, HOPE and LOVE are powerful in shaping why and how we all, as people of Western Australia, can continue to live our lives, in the freedom and beauty we enjoy.

I undertook to uphold these oaths, not be captured by tradition but be a respectful custodian and use the opportunity to advocate, support and encourage the young leaders of today to further the reconciliation between our Aboriginal people and all West Australians.

To me, that meant telling the TRUTH in all the complexities of the past, in order to HEAL in the present and do all I could to contribute to the GROWTH of trust and reconciliation.

This is what today is about.

TELLING THE TRUTH – KARNADJIL  
HEALING – WUNGENING  
GROWTH – BOORDIYA

Governor Stirling came to this place in 1834 with an intent to punish the Bindjareb Noongar people.

I come to this place today as a Governor with a different intent.

I come here on the invitation of the Bindjareb Noongar people.

I come here on foot, unarmed, to walk softly on this country.

I come with my HEART – my KOORT – to say SORRY.

I come here today and say sorry for the dreadful wrongs perpetrated by the first Governor of Western Australia, Sir James Stirling, to Bindjareb Noongar people on this Boodja.

Captain Stirling, as he then was, first visited the Derbal Yirrigan in 1827, which he then named the Swan River.

He recorded in his journal that when he first saw three Aboriginal Noongar men, that they “...seemed angry at our invasion of their territory”.



In 1834, following five years of colonisation, the relationship between the British settlers and the Aboriginal population in Western Australia was very tense.

Aboriginal people and white settlers were killed, often in reprisal attacks, in the lead up to the Pinjarra massacre.

Colonists were allocated traditional Aboriginal land by Governor Stirling, where they then farmed and reared livestock. Native animals were an important food source for

both Aboriginal and settler people. Settlers' livestock were also killed by both Aboriginal people and colonists as a food source.

This struggle over both land and food, and clash of culture, led to reprisal attacks on both sides.

Following settler grievances and calls for protection, Governor Stirling then formed an intent to punish the Bindjareb Noongar tribe.

In October 1834, Governor Stirling leading a party of 25 men, rode from Perth to Pinjarra in the south-west of Western Australia.

This journey was documented in detail by the only unarmed member of Stirling's party, the Colony's Surveyor General, John Septimus Roe.

The culmination of this trip was the deaths of multiple Aboriginal people of the Bindjareb Noongar tribe.

These deaths were previously referred to as the "Battle of Pinjarra". Most historians now refer to October 28, 1834, as the "Pinjarra Massacre".

Governor Stirling described it as a "skirmish".

However, first-hand accounts, which have been researched using both primary sources and historical accounts, confirm that Governor Stirling's intent on travelling to Pinjarra was punitive.

I have personally read from the handwritten journals of Governor Stirling and the Surveyor General John Septimus Roe. I will be quoting direct from those primary source documents. These quotes are not my own or some other historian's interpretation.

They are from the people who were here on that fateful day.

The party of 25 armed men, organised and led by Governor Stirling, fired on men, women and children. An initial encounter resulted in the spearing of Superintendent Ellis of the Mounted Police, who later died of his wounds, and a speared trooper who survived.

The Aboriginal males who threw the spears were fatally shot. The tribe ran from that initial encounter to the river. Men, women and children were surrounded and overpowered in a riverbed.

In the words of Surveyor General Roe:

*"In a few minutes the loud shouting & yelling of the natives told us the whites were discovered, and firing immediately commenced on the left bank. Not having a gun, I was directed to take charge of the ford with the baggage and 4 soldiers, while the remainder of the force followed the Gov upwards - the firing continued upwards & followed the retreating voices of the natives for upwards of an hour."*

Surveyor General Roe recorded:

*"After the first charge which killed 4 or 5, the natives retreated to the river intending apparently to cross over by another ford about 1/2 a mile lower down - in this they were completely frustrated by meeting the remainder of the armed force, headed by the Governor, just as part of them were ascending the bank. In this dilemma they took to hiding themselves amongst the bushes &*

*dead logs on the river banks, and were picked off by the party on either shore. This was not however done without much resistance on part of the natives, who, although secreted in very small & scarcely discernible holes & places, & in many instances had immersed themselves in the water, having only their nose & mouth above water, nevertheless threw numerous spears with amazing precision & force. In this way between 15 and 20 were shot dead, very few wounded being*



*suffered to escape, untill at length, it being considered that the punishment of the tribe for the numerous murders it had committed, was sufficiently exemplary, the firing ceased, and the party secured 8 women & several children prisoners."*

Governor Stirling reported killing 15 Aboriginal people, with the death of one of his party, Mounted Police Superintendent Ellis. Other estimates stated a much higher casualty number of the Bindjareb Noongar people were killed.

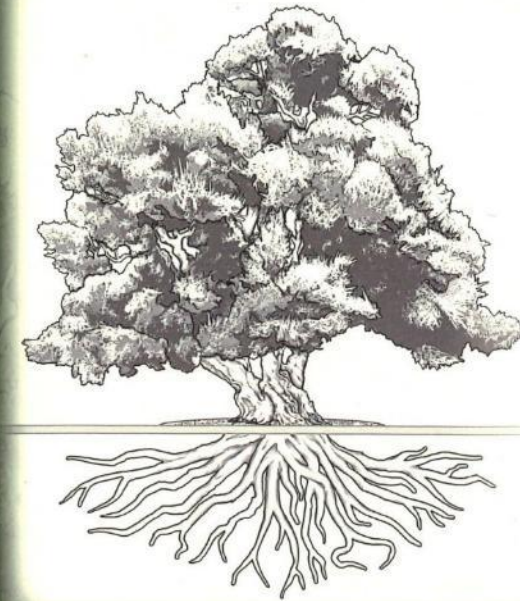
The precise number of deaths of the Aboriginal population are now impossible to determine. It has been noted in the records that women and children were numbered amongst the dead and injured. Oral histories handed down amongst the Bindjareb Noongar give a much higher casualty figure.

Subsequent reporting by Governor Stirling in a despatch to Colonial Secretary Stanley in November 1834 made it clear that he had been determined to put a "check" on the tribe and that the surviving Aboriginals "were then informed that this punishment had been inflicted".

Governor Stirling recorded he gathered the women and children of the tribe and issued a warning that further deadly punishment could be inflicted.

In a letter to the British authorities, Stirling wrote of the incident:

*"The natives very resolutely stood their ground, as I am informed, and threw a volley of spears, by which Captain Ellis was wounded in the head, and one of his men in the right arm, and another was unhorsed, stunned, and dismounted by the blow, and having his horse speared. Captain Ellis' party was thus put into great peril, but at this critical moment, the men with me in position, and commenced firing, and threw the natives into confusion, they fled to a ford about 100 yards, below the other, but being headed then, by the Corporal's party, they were forced back into the bed of the stream. The upper ford being also occupied by Mr Roe, as well as the two banks they were thus completely surrounded and overpowered, the number killed amounted probably to 15 men. The women were kept, until after our company had been collected round the two wounded men, they were then informed that the punishment had been inflicted, because of the misconduct of the tribe,*



## Olive tree

*Olea europaea*

Planted at Government House by Governor Stirling around 1835

*that the white men never forgot to punish murder, and that on this occasion the women and children had been spared, but that if any other person should be killed by them, not one would be allowed to remain alive this side of the mountains".*

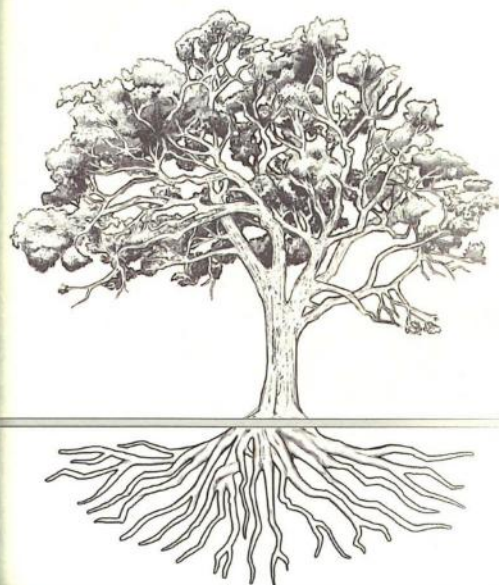
As Governor of Western Australia, I come to you today to say: I am deeply sorry for the actions of my predecessor and for the pain and suffering he caused.

I say sorry to the Bindjareb people, who still feel the trauma of the punishment inflicted on their ancestors that day, when so many innocent lives were taken.

The time has come – and the time is right – for the Governor to acknowledge the truth of the past actions of a predecessor.

I have a deep hope and faith that a process of healing and growth will follow. I believe this action will be a significant step along the pathway to meaningful reconciliation.

As a symbol of that faith, I today present the Bindjareb Noongar people an offering of peace – a young sapling from an Olive tree planted by Governor Stirling in 1835, which still grows in the grounds of Government House today.



## Jarrah

### *Eucalyptus Marginata*

Over thousands of years Noongar people have shared a deep spiritual and practical bond with drarraly (Jarrah) trees

In return, I am willing to receive from the Bindjareb Noongar people a Jarrah tree from this land to be planted at Government House, as a reciprocal symbol of reconciliation, peace and hope.

These young trees are physical embodiments of a regeneration of respect and the rekindling of trust. I pray for healing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

As these trees grow and mature, as their roots take hold, they will stand as a physical representation of our resolve to walk in unison and growth.

My call to all Western Australians, is that we speak the TRUTH. That

we do as much as we can to assist in the HEALING of our community between all people.

That we GROW in unison to make us stronger, resilient and be a land and a people of FAITH, HOPE and LOVE for our present and our future generations.

Thank you.

Chris Dawson AC APM  
Governor of Western Australia  
Tuesday October 28, 2025

## TRUTH - KARNADJIL

In 1834, Western Australia's first Governor, Sir James Stirling, led an armed group of 25 men to Bindjareb country, who then conducted a massacre against the Bindjareb Noongar people, killing multiple innocent victims.

This massacre is more than just a conflict between two armed groups. After an initial encounter on the banks of the river, the Bindjareb Noongar people escaped into the river and were faced with Governor Stirling's party, who fired continuously at the Bindjareb Noongar people for over one hour.

Governor Stirling himself admitted this action was a punishment.

## HEALING - WUNGENING

As a gesture of reconciliation and peace, on 28 October 2025 – 191 years to the day of the massacre - current Governor Chris Dawson AC APM travelled to Bindjareb Noongar country and apologised for the historical actions of his predecessor.

Governor Dawson said, "I believe this action will be a significant step along the pathway to meaningful reconciliation."

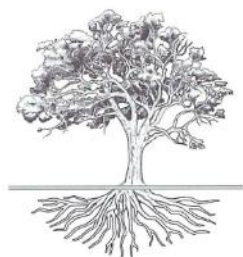
## GROWTH - BOORDIYA

In symbolic acts of reconciliation, Governor Dawson gave the community a propagated olive tree from the original tree planted in 1835 by Governor Stirling in the grounds of Government House, Perth.

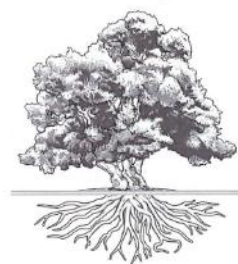
In return, the Bindjareb Noongar people gifted the Governor a tree, native to the area of Bindjareb country, to be planted on the grounds of Government House.

This medallion depicts on the obverse the Government House Olive tree and the inscription TRUTH • HEALING • GROWTH. The reverse depicts the Pinjarra tree, with the same three words in Noongar dialect.





# An Apology



## Truth - Karnadjil

In 1834, Western Australia's first Governor, Sir James Stirling, led an armed group of 25 men to Bindjareb country, who then conducted a massacre against the Bindjareb Noongar people, killing multiple innocent victims.

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## Healing - Wungening

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Governor Dawson said, "I believe this action will be a significant step along the pathway to meaningful reconciliation."

## Growth - Boordiya

In symbolic acts of reconciliation, Governor Dawson gave the community a propagated olive tree from the original tree planted in 1835 by Governor Stirling in the grounds of Government House, Perth.

In return, the Bindjareb Noongar people gifted the Governor a tree, native to the area of Bindjareb country, to be planted on the grounds of Government House.

The medallions mounted here depict the Government House Olive tree and the inscription TRUTH • HEALING • GROWTH. The reverse depicts the Pinjarra tree, with the same three words in Noongar dialect.



By Command of the Governor

His Excellency the Honourable  
Chris Dawson AC APM  
Governor of Western Australia

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The pamphlet, ‘An Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834’, along with the ‘TRUTH HEALING GROWTH Medallion’, are available to view upon request at the State Library of Western Australia under the call number PR16070/1-2.

For more information, view the associated archive listing on the State Library of Western Australia's catalogue:

[Encore -- An apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834.](#)

‘TRUTH HEALING GROWTH Medallion’ designed by Lucas Bowers, The Perth Mint.



## Appendix B

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### Resources

## Cultural responsiveness and trauma-informed practice resources

The following resources are available to support teachers' professional development in the areas of cultural responsiveness and trauma-informed practice. Teachers should consider using these resources to support managing material in this teaching and learning exemplar that may impact on themselves, their students and members of the school community.

Department of Education – Education Resources – Trauma Informed Practice

 <https://myresources.education.wa.edu.au/programs/trauma-informed-practice>

[Staff from the Department of Education Western Australia, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia and Catholic Education Western Australia can access trauma-informed practice modules through this link.]

Berry Street – Trauma-informed instructional strategies: Enhancing learning for all students

 <https://www.berrystreet.org.au/news/berry-street-education-model-trauma-informed-instructional-strategies>

Beyond Blue – Trauma-informed strategies for educators

 <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/fact-sheets/grief-trauma-and-critical-incidents/trauma-informed-strategies-for-educators>

Narragunnawali – Professional Learning

 <https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/professional-learning>

Well Mob

 <https://wellmob.org.au/>

Reconciliation Australia

 <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>

Healing Foundation – Education Toolkits and Lesson Plans

 <https://healingfoundation.org.au/resources/education-toolkits-lesson-plans/>

CEWA Strategic Wellbeing Framework

 <https://www.cewa.edu.au/publication/cewa-strategic-wellbeing-framework/>

The following resources are available for Department of Education employees through Ikon:

 <https://ikon.education.wa.edu.au/-/access-cultural-responsiveness-hub/>

 <https://ikon.education.wa.edu.au/-/promoting-tolerance-and-addressing-racism>

 <https://ikon.education.wa.edu.au/-/support-a-student-affected-by-abuse-or-neglect>

## Teacher resources

The following websites contain information for teachers to build their own knowledge and understanding about the colonisation of Boorloo Perth, the Pinjarra Massacre and The Governor's Apology. The material included in this exemplar is intended to support teacher understanding of the historical context and key events relating to the curriculum content, and to assist in teaching these topics in an accurate and culturally informed way.

## Noongar pronunciation and language support

Teachers can refer to the following websites for guidance on the pronunciation of Noongar language used in this teaching and learning exemplar.



Noongar Boodjar Language Cultural Aboriginal Corporation

[https://noongarboodjar.com.au/spelling-and-pronunciation/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1773196474.8931090831756591796875](https://noongarboodjar.com.au/spelling-and-pronunciation/?doing_wp_cron=1773196474.8931090831756591796875)



Noongar Words List – Noongar Dictionary

<https://www.mayakeniny.com/language-list/>

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander picture books

Teachers may wish to incorporate a selection of picture books that represent authentic perspectives and cultural knowledge from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The texts can be used to explore themes such as connection to Country/Place, community, truth-telling and reconciliation. Teachers should select books created or endorsed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and illustrators to ensure cultural authenticity.



*The Mark of the Wagarl* by Lorna Little and Janice Lyndon, Magabala Books, 2012



*Finding Our Heart* by Thomas Mayo and Blak Douglas, Hardie Grant, 2020



*Somebody's Land* by Adam Goodes, Ellie Laing and David Hardy, Allen & Unwin, 2021

## Other teacher resources



Government House Western Australia – Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Full Interview Video

<https://vimeo.com/1193094488?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci> (45 minutes)



Government House Western Australia – Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Classroom Video

<https://vimeo.com/1191463549?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci> (11 minutes)



Green, N. (1984). *Broken Spears: Aboriginies and Europeans in the Southwest of Australia*. Focus Education Services.



Narragunnawali – Curriculum-Resources

<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resources>



SBS – Learn – Resources – Humanities and Social Sciences

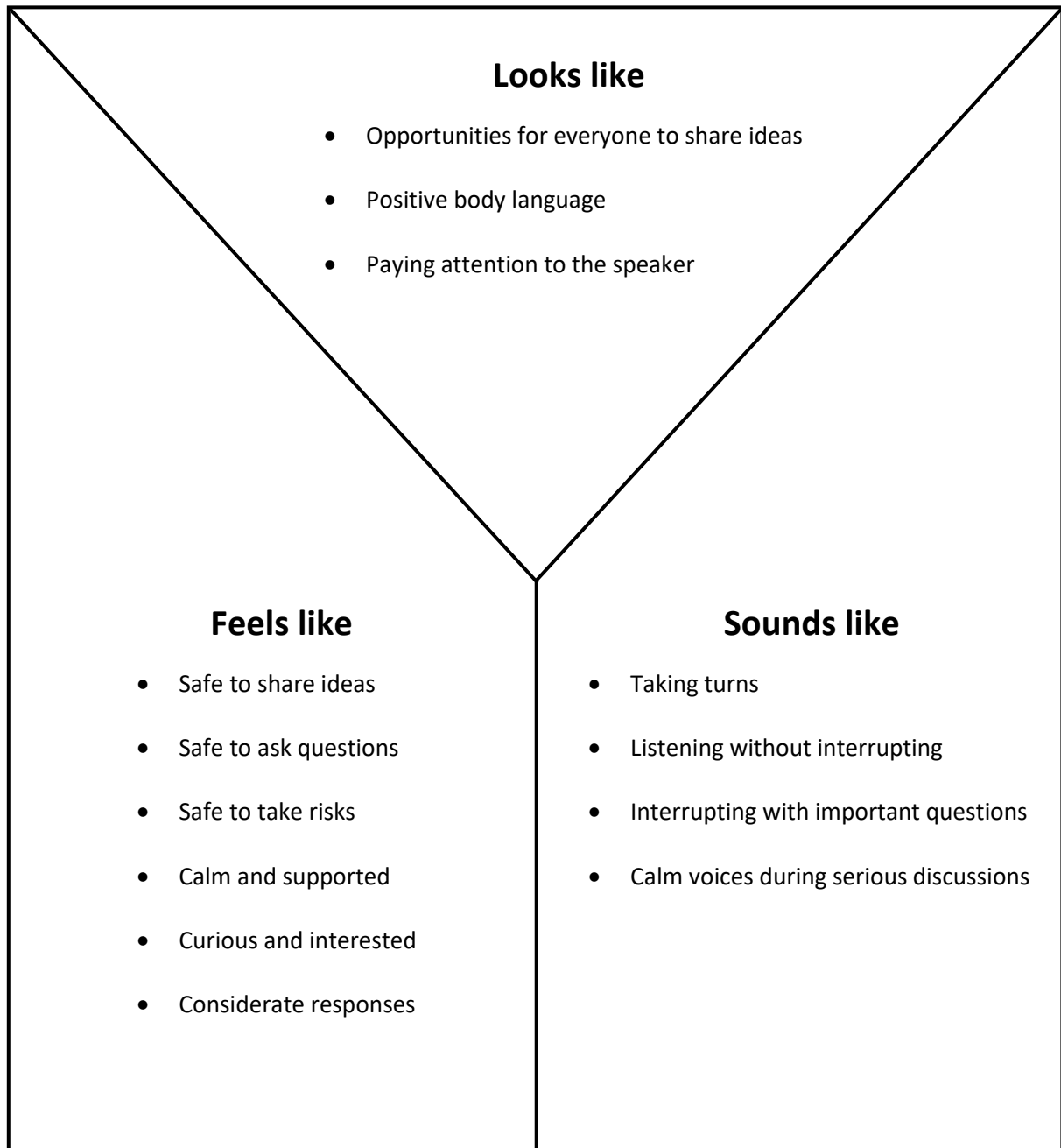
[https://www.sbs.com.au/learn/resources/?\\_subject\\_filter=humanities-social-sciences](https://www.sbs.com.au/learn/resources/?_subject_filter=humanities-social-sciences)



National Indigenous Times | Australia's Indigenous News & Views

<https://nit.com.au/>

## Lesson 1: Sample Y-chart: Establishing class expectations on respect



## Lesson 1: Artworks

### Artwork A



*Captain Stirling's Exploring Party 50 Miles up the Swan River*  
Painting: Huggins, 1827

### Artwork B



*Panoramic View of King George's Sound, Part of the Colony of Swan River [detail]*  
Painting: Dale, 1834

## **Lesson 2: Bindjareb Noongar people – Excerpt from *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1***

### **Bindjareb Nyungar boodjar use in the region**

The use of boodjar (land) by Bindjareb Nyungars both before and after Wadjella contact is well documented. Local Nyungar families have always been highly dependent on their capacity to utilise and guarantee the sustainability of the country's natural resources. To assist in ensuring economic survival, Nyungars have always taken a great deal of care in conferring responsibility and obligations to local descent or family groups. Bindjareb Nyungars in the area were, and continue to be, responsible for a number of ritually significant places, rights of access, knowledge and ceremonial duties.

Protocol and rights over specific tracts of boodjar had to be respected by visiting Nyungars. Breaches to these protocols, in the form of illegal trespassing, vandalism to the environment or theft of local resources were and continue to be taken very seriously.

If for social, spiritual or economic reasons neighbouring Nyungar groups needed to travel through Bindjareb Nyungar boodjar, the onus was on them to comply with certain obligations and regulations. Part of these conditions included the expectation that visitors announce their arrival, bring enough daadja (meat) mereny (food) and goods for exchange for their travels, and generally honour and respect the country and local Nyungars. These obligations both guaranteed the preservation of Nyungar economic and ecological systems as well as affirming the pivotal role of reciprocity in Nyungar life.

Nyungar knowledge, as it is communicated through Nyungar education and Wadjella records demonstrates that highly intricate and sophisticated land management skills have been practised by Bindjareb Nyungars. Through the combining of 'fire stick farming' methods and other hunting and food gathering techniques, Bindjareb Nyungars have been able to maximise their access to a vast range of material resources without overly exploiting or damaging on-going food sources.

History particularly shows that the Bindjareb Nyungars were amongst the most accomplished of fishing peoples. Food collected from the rich estuary and river systems in what now is known as the Peel Inlet area included a wide variety of reptiles as well as birds, eggs, frogs, fish, tortoise, marron, jilgies and coonacs. Nyungars used a combination of techniques ranging from gidgying (spearing), netting and hand seizing to secure their catch.

So rich was the fish and other food stock that every year many Nyungars from the surrounding areas (such as Perth, Brookton, Pingelly, Bunbury and Collie) would come to the district to share the harvest and attend local Nyungar meetings (see for example Gibbs, 1987, and Hammond, 1933). There is some evidence that contrary to conventions which would make such interactions brief, large numbers-of Nyungars from surrounding groups would often stay for extended periods in Bindjareb Nyungar boodjar (Hammond). According to Bates (cited in White, 1985) neighbouring Nyungars may have spent as long as two to three months in the region.

The very word Mandurah, which is derived from the Nyungar word Mandjar, pays testament to the magnitude of trading and interaction in the area. According to George Fletcher Moore (1884), the Swan River Colony's Advocate General in the early years, Nyungars referred to Mandjar as a type of fair where people from different districts gathered and bartered with one another for products unique to their respective areas.

Amongst the many significant sites with respect to Bindjareb Nyungar boodjar use is the old mungah (fish trap) located in the Barragup area. Hammond (1933) provides early Wadjella documentation which supports local Nyungar knowledge of the significance of the Barragup fish-traps or weirs.

The Nyungars constructed and maintained fish harvesting traps that were essentially stone and wicker fences, designed in such a way as to maximise the catching of fish such as sea salmon as they migrated between the ocean and Lake Goegrup. During the summer months Goegrup Lake acted as a nursery for spawning fish. As the fish grew into adults and the salinity levels in the lake decreased they were forced to pass through the mungah (traps) in order to migrate down the river into the estuary and ocean. Each year Nyungars would rebuild the mungah in a narrow neck of the Serpentine River where the water depth was round the four foot mark.

The practice of annually harvesting fish in the Barragup area provided conditions that promoted regular meetings for spiritual, trading and educational purposes. Hammond (1933) reported that hundreds of people would come from the eastern and northern districts and the broader Southwest area, to gather at Barragup and feast on the fish; Gibbs (1987) estimated that attendance at Barragup was between 200 to 300 during these community meetings.

Visits to the ngarri boringur (brothers of the salmon) also involved the performing and sharing of various ceremonies and rituals. Such rituals are documented in early Wadjella writings; for example, Daisy Bates (in White, 1985) provides an account of the Kalda Kening (sea mullet dance) and the Ngarri Maia (salmon song). This ceremony was performed and shared by Nyungar boodier (leaders) at Barragup just prior to the annual harvest of fish from the mungah. In the performance of such ceremonies the assistance of spiritual ancestors were requested to assist in the harvesting of fish. It was most important that nyarri boringur or the appropriate local custodians coordinate these activities by doing the actual singing and fishing lest the fish be frightened by the smell of outsiders.

There is evidence of other ceremonies taking place at sites around the Barragup mungah during these community gatherings. These include the exchange of karla (fire); 'marriage' preparation and betrothal observance, initiation ceremonies, educational exchange, recreational activities such as the playing of a team game involving the use of red gum nuts and bent sticks, and other public demonstrations of etiquette such as 'babbin' (friendship compacts between ngoon or brothers), moonya (where special yoks or women had the title of Moyan conferred upon them) (McGann, Underwood, Martin, & Campbell-Smith, 1994).

Trade was an important aspect of economic survival. The Bindjareb Nyungars traded with neighbouring groups (Moore, 1884; Grey, 1840), and there was also evidence of exchanges with people as far away as the Gasgoyne (Hammond, 1933). Nyungars were renowned for their craftsmanship in fashioning a variety of hunting and ceremonial items; for example, the strong and straight throwing gidgee-borryl (quartz edged spear).

Due to the abundance of fish and the prolonged periods of social interaction, sites in the Peel area were and, in many ways continue to be important as centres of communication. The chief means of communicating with other groups of Nyungars was by the sending of a message or letter stick. Usually a message stick would be sent through the various Nyungar areas to announce events such as a death, invite neighbours to an approaching cultural event (such as ceremonies at the Barragup fish trap), to warn other groups of Nyungars who had breached various laws, and to organise the distribution of Nyungars across various areas in order to ensure the conservation of food supplies.

Message sticks would be sent along various paths in order to reach as many areas as possible. Due to their economic, cultural and geographic location sites around Pinjarra, Barragup and Mandurah were of central importance in relation to the exchange of letter sticks between Nyungars.

(Contos, Kearing, Murray Districts Aboriginal Association, et al., 1998)

**Lesson 2: Graphic organiser example**

| Shelter | Food and water | Family and community | Land and environment | Other information |
|---------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
|         |                |                      |                      |                   |

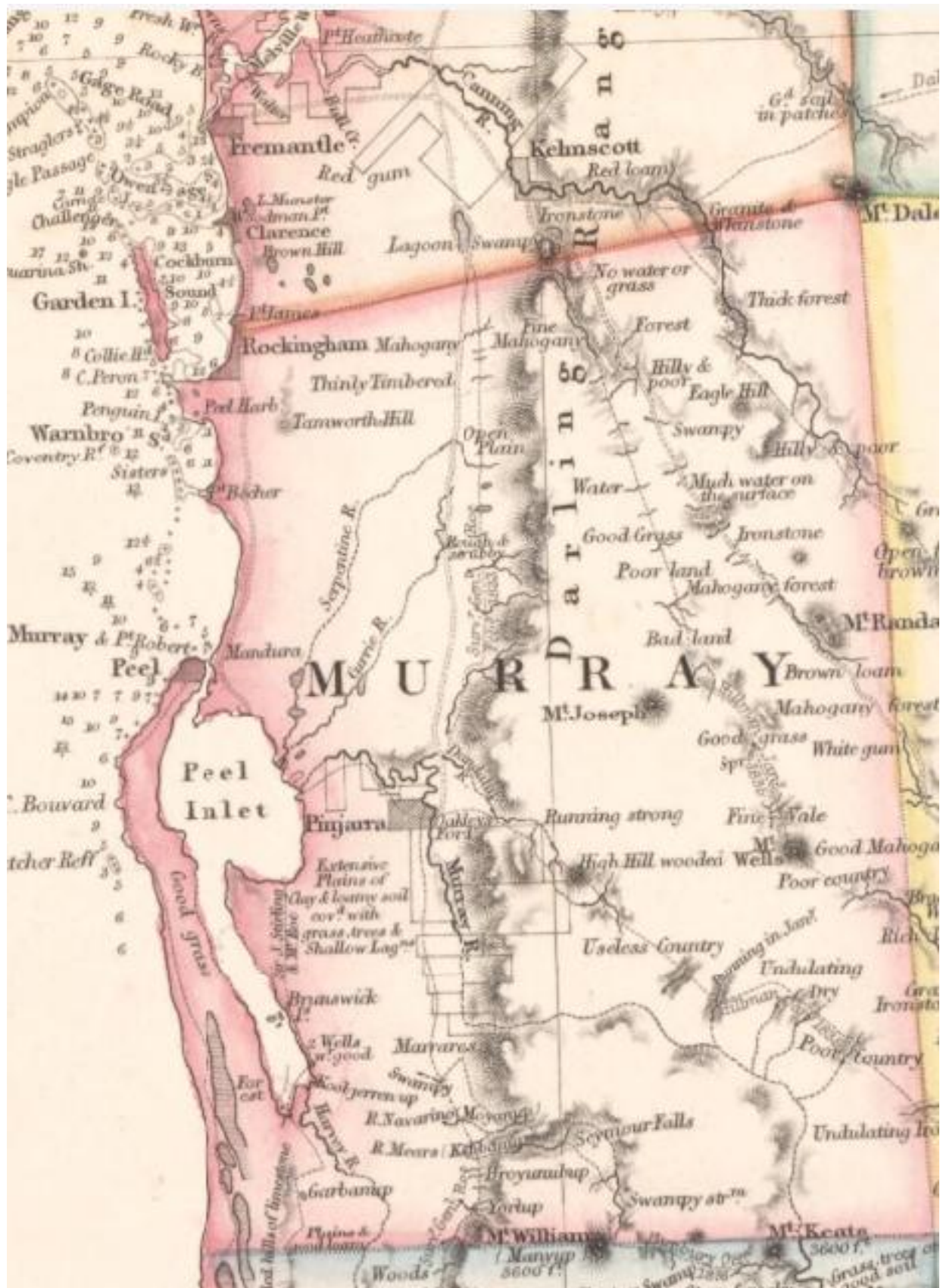
### Lesson 3: Painting



*View from Mount Eliza*

Painting: Garling, 1827

### Lesson 3: Map of the colony of Western Australia, developed from the surveys of John Septimus Roe



Map: Arrowsmith, 1839

## **Lessons 4–5: Initial contact sources**

### **INITIAL CONTACT – Excerpt from *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1***

As was typically the case, Nyungar - Wadjella relations were initially cordial. This perhaps largely reflected the fact that local Nyungars were well accustomed to regular visits from 'outsiders'. The Nyungars also thought, in these early years, that the Europeans were 'djenga', or returned spirits of dead relations, coming to stay. However, as it became evident that Wadjellas had neither any intention of respecting local protocol, following Nyungar legal obligations, or of leaving, relations often deteriorated. The fundamental differences between the groups became clear. Difference was not of itself a negative thing to the Nyungar people. They had sophisticated social systems to deal with incorporating outsiders. However, for the Wadjella, difference was largely equated with inferiority and ineptitude.

(Contos, Kearing, Murray Districts Aboriginal Association, et al., 1998)

### **Aboriginal life impacted by settlers**

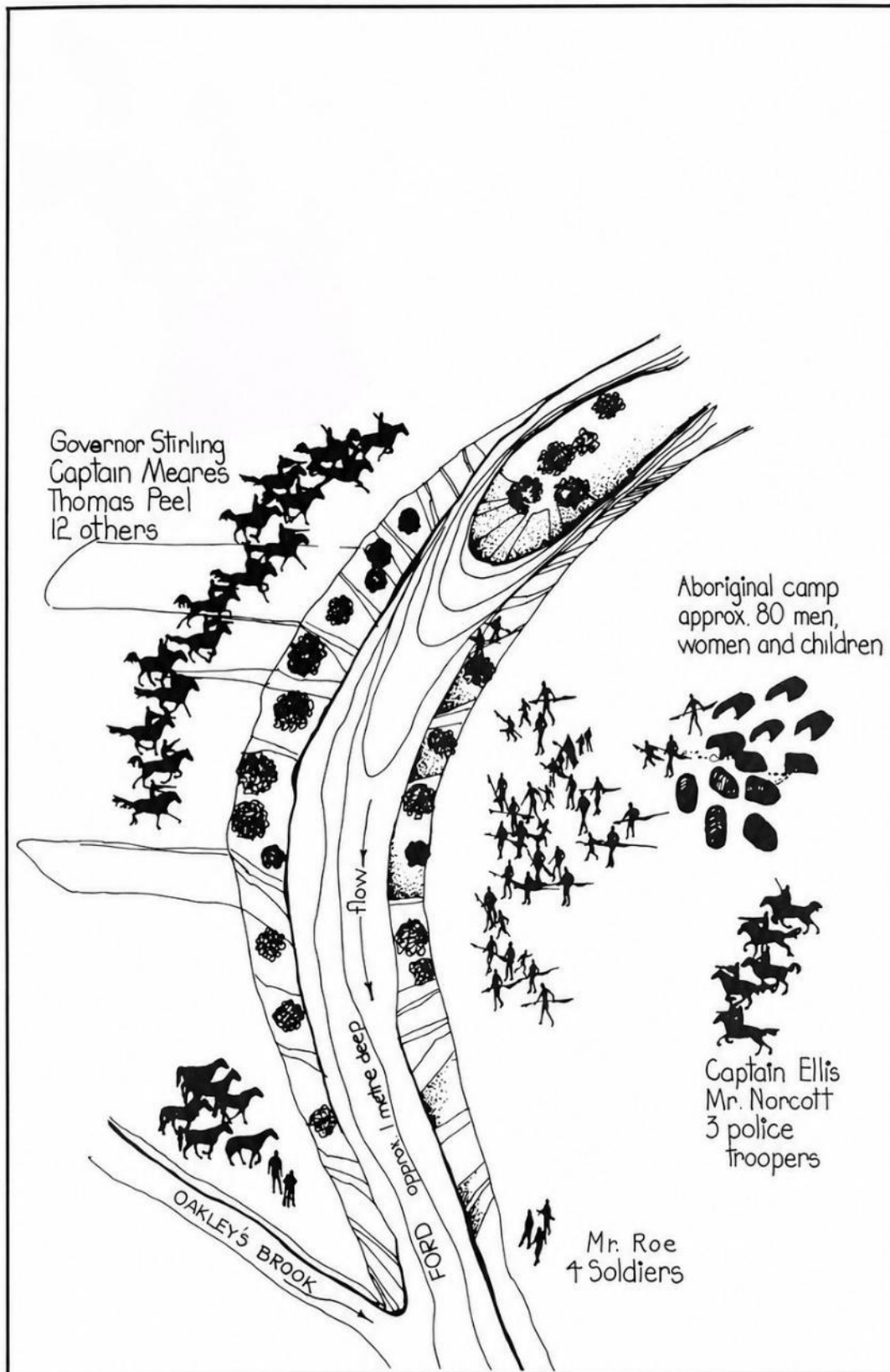
When the local Aboriginal people, the Whadjuk, first saw big sailing ships coming down the Swan River they thought they were big birds flapping their wings and bringing ancestors back to the land.

Even though they didn't speak the same language, some of the colonists got along well with the local Aboriginal people — they traded food and animal skins and taught each other words in English and Whadjuk. But Whadjuk people were also forced away from their travel routes and hunting grounds to areas without drinking water and with little food to eat.

There were many cultural misunderstandings between the European settlers and the Whadjuk, who didn't understand why they weren't allowed to eat things the British introduced to the area, such as cows, sheep and corn.

(Nannup, 2022)

## Lesson 6: Pinjarra Massacre scene



MAP 14: The scene at Pinjarra at 9.00 a.m. on 28 October 1834.

Map: Green, 1984

## **Lesson 6: Pinjarra Massacre sources**

### **Source 1: Excerpts from the journal of John Septimus Roe**

In a few minutes the loud shouting & yelling of the natives told us the whites were discovered, and firing immediately commenced on the left bank. Not having a gun, I was directed to take charge of the ford with the baggage and 4 soldiers, while the remainder of the force followed the Gov upwards – the firing continued upwards & followed the retreating voices of the natives for upwards of an hour.

After the first charge which killed 4 or 5, the natives retreated to the river intending apparently to cross over by another ford about ½ a mile lower down – in this they were completely frustrated by meeting the remainder of the armed force, headed by the Governor, just as part of them were ascending the bank.

In this dilemma they took to hiding themselves amongst the bushes & dead logs on the river banks, and were picked off by the party on either shore. This was not however done without much resistance on part of the natives, who, although secreted in very small & scarcely discernible holes & places, & in many instances had immersed themselves in the water, having only their nose & mouth above water, nevertheless threw numerous spears with amazing precision & force.

(Roe, 1834–1838)

### **Source 2: Excerpts from an ‘unidentified eyewitness’, who supplied his account to the Perth Gazette**

The instant the police were observed approaching about 200 yards distance, the natives, to the number of about 70, started on their feet, the men seized their numerous and recently made spears, and showed a formidable front; but finding their visitors still approached, they seemed to feel unable to stand a charge and sullenly retreated, gradually quickening their pace until the word ‘forward’ from the leader of the gallant little party brought the horsemen in about half a minute dashing into the midst of them, the same moment having discovered the well known features of some of the most atrocious offenders of the obnoxious tribe. One of these, celebrated for his audacity and outrage, was the first to be recognized, at the distance of 5 or 6 yards from Mr Norcott, who knew him well, and immediately called out “these are the fellows we want, for here’s the old rascal Noonarr”; on which this savage turned around and cried, with peculiar ferocity and emphasis “Yes, Noonarr, me”, and was in the act of hurling his spear at Norcott in token of requital for the recognition, when the latter shot him dead. The identity of the tribe being now clearly established, and the natives turning to assail their pursuers, the firing continued and was returned by the former with spears as they retreated to the river.

(The Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal, 1834)

## Acknowledgements

### Appendix B: Resources

- Lesson 1 Huggins, W. J. (1827). *Captain Stirling's Exploring Party 50 Miles up the Swan River* [Painting]. Retrieved February, 2026, from <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/founding-of-perth>
- Dale, R. (1834). *Panoramic View of King George's Sound, Part of the Colony of Swan River* [Painting]. Retrieved February, 2026, from <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/founding-of-perth>
- Lesson 2 Contos, N., Kearing, T. A., Murray Districts Aboriginal Association, et al. (1998, June). *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1*. Murray Districts Aboriginal Association, pp. 8–10.
- Lesson 3 Garling, F. (1827). *View from Mount Eliza 1827* [Painting]. Retrieved April, 2026, from <https://www.museumofperth.com.au/aboriginal-places-life-prior-to-1829>
- Adapted from: Arrowsmith, J. (1839). [Map of the colony of Western Australia developed from the surveys of John Septimus Roe]. Retrieved February, 2026, from <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/catalog/3017593>
- Lessons 4–5 Contos, N., Kearing, T. A., Murray Districts Aboriginal Association, et al. (1998, June). *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1*. Murray Districts Aboriginal Association, p. 11.
- Nannup, N. (2022, May 6). *Aboriginal Life Impacted by Settlers: Whadjuk People Displaced* [Transcript]. ABC Education. Retrieved February, 2026, from <https://www.abc.net.au/education/aboriginal-life-impacted-by-settlers-whadjuk-people-displaced/13868458>
- Reproduced by permission of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation – Library Sales  
ABC Education © 2022 ABC
- Lesson 6 Adapted from: Green, N. (1984). Map 14: The Scene at Pinjarra at 9:00 a.m. on 28 October 1834. *Broken Spears: Aboriginies and Europeans in the Southwest of Australia*. Focus Education Services, p. 103.
- Source 1 adapted from: Roe, J. S. (1834–1838). [John Septimus Roe's field book number 3]. Retrieved April, 2026, from <https://archive.sro.wa.gov.au/index.php/informationobject/browse?topLod=0&query=JSRoeFB3>
- Source 2 adapted from: Encounter with the Natives in the Pinjarra District, on the Banks of the Murray. (1834, November 1). *The Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*. Retrieved February, 2026, from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/641213/401>

